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INSIDE

WORLD 8
EU LEADERS OPEN
EMERGENCY SUMMIT ON
DEFENCE AND UKRAINE AID



INDIA BREACHED IN UK



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a conversation with Director and CEO of Bronwen Maddox at Chatham House in England

concluding an interactive session at the institute, home to Royal Institute of International Affairs, on Wednesday evening. The external affairs minister was in London as in the first leg of his six-day visit to the UK and Ireland from Tuesday that is aimed at exploring ways to further boost bilateral cooperation. "We have seen the footage of a breach of security during the visit of the external affairs minister to the UK," ministry of external affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "We condemn the provocative activities of this small group of separatists and extremists," he said. "We deplore the misuse of democratic freedoms by such elements. We expect the host government in such cases to fully live up to their diplomatic obligations," Jaiswal added. Videos posted on social media showed a small group of pro-Khalistan protesters holding yellow flags were shouting slogans against India and Jaishankar on the opposite side of the road from Chatham House.

Rana seeks stay of extradition to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ NEW YORK

Mumbai terror attack accused Tahawwur Rana has moved an "emergency application" with the US Supreme Court against his extradition to India, claiming that he will be tortured there since he is a Muslim of Pakistani origin. Rana, 64, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, is currently lodged at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles. He is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks. Rana has filed an "Emergency Application For Stay" with the Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States and Circuit Justice for the Ninth Circuit. President Donald Trump last month announced that his administration approved the extradition of "very evil" Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the 26/11 attacks, "to face justice in India". This followed the rejection of his review petition by the Supreme Court in January. Now, Rana is seeking a stay of his extradition and surrender to India pending litigation (including exhaustion of all appeals) on the merits of a petition he filed in February. In that petition, Rana argued that his extradition to India violates United States law and the United Nations Convention Against Torture "because there are substantial

grounds for believing that, if extradited to India, petitioner will be in danger of being subjected to torture." "The likelihood of torture in this case is even higher than as petitioner faces acute risk as a Muslim of Pakistani origin charged in the Mumbai attacks," the application said. The application also said that his "severe medical conditions" render extradition to Indian detention facilities, a "de facto" death sentence. It cited medical records from July 2024 showing that he has multiple "acute and life-threatening diagnoses", including multiple documented heart attacks, Parkinson's disease with cognitive decline, a mass suggestive of bladder cancer, stage 3 chronic kidney disease, and a history of chronic asthma, and multiple COVID-19 infections. "Accordingly, petitioner certainly has raised a credible, if not compelling, factual case that there are indeed substantial grounds for believing he would be in danger of torture if surrendered to Indian authorities. "Further, because of his Muslim religion, his Pakistani origin, his status as a former member of the Pakistani Army, the relation of the putative charges to the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and his chronic health conditions he is even more likely to be tortured than otherwise would be the case, and that torture is very likely to kill him in short order."



Trump issues last warning to Hamas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Wednesday issued what he called a "last warning" to Hamas to release all remaining hostages held in Gaza, directing a sharply worded message after the White House confirmed that he had recently dispatched an envoy for unprecedented direct talks with the militant group. Trump, in a statement on his Truth Social platform soon after meeting at the White House with eight former hostages, added that he was "sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job." "Release all of the Hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is OVER for you," Trump said. "Only sick and twisted people keep bodies, and you are sick and twisted!" The pointed language from Trump came after the White House said Wednesday that US officials have engaged in "ongoing talks and discussions" with Hamas officials, stepping away from a long-held US policy of not directly engaging in the militant group.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Babbar Khalsa terrorist arrested

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a major counterterrorism operation, the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) and Punjab Police have arrested a suspected terrorist linked to Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI. The suspect, identified as Lazar Masih, a resident of Kurliyan village in Ramdas area of Amritsar, Punjab, was nabbed around 3.20 am in Uttar Pradesh's Kaushambi district. Addressing a press conference in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) Prashant Kumar said Masih had planned a major terrorist attack during the

Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. The Maha Kumbh was held at Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26. "However, due to intensive security checks at the religious gathering, he failed to execute his plan," he said and added: "The arrest of the terrorist also verifies smuggling of arms and drugs from Pakistan into India". He added the UP STF succeeded in recovering some explosives material and illegal arms from the terrorist. Among the seizures made are three active hand grenades, two active detonators, one foreign-made pistol and 13 cartridges of foreign make, the officer said. Besides, a white coloured explosive powder, an Aadhaar card

with a Ghaziabad address, one mobile phone without SIM card was also seized from his possession, he said. According to security officials, Masih was actively working for Swaran Singh, also known as Jeevan Fauji, the head of BKI's Germany-based module. He was reportedly in direct contact with ISI handlers based in Pakistan. Investigators revealed that Masih had escaped from judicial custody in Punjab on September 24, 2024, and had been evading arrest since then. His capture is being considered a significant breakthrough in preventing potential terrorist activities in India.

MARKETS



WEATHER



Wankhede returns to Mumbai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has set aside the transfer of IRS officer Sameer Wankhede from Mumbai to Chennai, saying the revenue department "patently violated" its own guidelines. Wankhede, a 2008 batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer, made headlines for allegedly demanding ₹ 25 Crore from Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan's family by threatening to implicate his son Aryan Khan in the Cordelia cruise drug bust case during his tenure in the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Mumbai in 2021. The principal CAT bench comprising Justice Ranjit More and member Rajinder Kashyap found procedural lapses and potential bias in the transfer decision issued by the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. The tribunal said while government officers had an all-India service liability, transfer policies must be implemented in a fair, transparent, and just manner. "We are well aware of the facts that it is a settled law that a transfer, which is an incident of service, is not to be interfered with by the courts, unless it is shown to be clearly arbitrary or vitiated by mala fides or infraction of any professed norm or principle governing the transfer."

Motor mouth cleric derides Shami



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

All India Muslim Jamaat President Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Bareilvi has criticised Indian cricketer Mohammed Shami for not fasting during Ramadan. The cleric stated that fasting is an obligatory duty in Islam, and anyone who deliberately avoids it is committing a sin. Maulana Razvi claimed that by choosing not to fast, Shami had committed a grave wrongdoing in the eyes of Islamic law. "Islam mandates fasting as one of its fundamental obligations. If a healthy person does not observe Roza, they are guilty in religious terms. Mohammed Shami was seen drinking water during a Champions Trophy match, which means he was not fasting. This is a serious offense in Islam," he said.

The cleric added that since Shami was playing a match, it indicated that he was physically fit. "If he was capable of playing, he was also capable of fasting. By drinking water in public, he has sent the wrong message to the community. He will have to answer to God for this," Maulana Razvi asserted. The cleric's remarks have sparked mixed reactions. While some religious figures expressed their disappointment, others defended the cricketer, arguing that professional athletes often have different requirements due to the physical demands of their sport. Maulana Zaheer Khan calls the controversy uncalled for. "Islam is a progressive religion. It has some prohibitions for persons keeping Roza. It is up to a person to keep Roza on that

day or not. In case of Shami, he is on national duty and it is of paramount importance that his body remains hydrated during each game. So, drinking water or not keeping roza on match days is permissible," he said. Shami's coach, Mohammed Badruddin, dismissed the criticism, asserting that the bowler was not in the wrong. "Nothing is above the nation. Shami is playing for his country, and that should be the priority," he stated. Senior BJP leader and MLC Vijay Bahadur Pathak defended Shami and said that sports and religion should not be intertwined. "Shami is a dedicated athlete who has brought glory to India on multiple occasions. If he felt fasting might affect his performance, it must have been a difficult decision for him. He is a proud Indian, and his commitment to the game should not be questioned," Pathak said. Shami played a crucial role in India's four-wicket victory over Australia, helping the team secure a spot in the Champions Trophy final. The Indian bowling attack, led by Shami, restricted Australia to 264 runs, with the pacer claiming three wickets for 48 runs in his 10-over spell. This is not the first controversy to emerge during the tournament.

RSS ignites Marathi-Hindi fire in Mumbai

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Hours after he was pilloried by political leaders of all hues for his statement that "those coming to Mumbai from outside need not necessarily learn Marathi," a chastened RSS leader Bhaiyyaji Joshi on Thursday did a U-turn and said, the language of Mumbai is Marathi and it is natural to expect living in the metropolis "to learn, understand and read Marathi". On a day when Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Uddhav Thackeray demanded that Bhaiyyaji Joshi be booked for sedition for his statement, Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnis was forced to intervene in the matter and issue a statement in the state Assembly saying that "Marathi is the language of Mumbai and Maharashtra. It is an integral part of Maharashtra's cultural heritage" and it will be "respected and preserved". Seeking to douse the political fire unleashed by Joshi, Fadnis made a categorical statement in the state Assembly. "Marathi is the language of Mumbai, Maharashtra, Maharashtra. The state government and the people living here should adopt it. Marathi language is a part of the culture and identity of the state, and it should be the duty of every citizen to learn it. The Marathi language will be



respected and preserved in Maharashtra, and it is an integral part of our cultural heritage." After the chief minister's statement, Joshi issued a clarification on his stand on the importance of Marathi in Mumbai and Maharashtra, seeking to end the raging controversy over the remarks that he reportedly made at a function held at Ghatkopar in north-east Mumbai on Wednesday night. Speaking at a function held at Ghatkopar, Joshi had said: "Mumbai does not have a single language, Mumbai has many languages. Different areas have different languages. For example, the language of Ghatkopar is Gujarati. Similarly, you will find fewer people speaking Hindi in Girgaon. There, you will find people speaking Marathi...people coming to Mumbai may necessarily have to learn Marathi".

Before long, Joshi came in for a severe flak from leaders of different political parties, including the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), Sharad Pawar-headed NCP (SP) and Congress. Demanding that Joshi be booked for treason, Uddhav Thackeray dared the RSS leader to make such remarks in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal and come back. "Just because the Marathi mannos does not complain that does not mean that you can say anything and get away. Bhaiyyaji Joshi should be booked for treason. How can Bhaiyyaji Joshi make such a statement? This is what I call it sadist mentality. This is a ploy to break Mumbai. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had indulged in this kind of divisive tactics during the campaigning for the state Assembly polls when he spoke about 'batenge toh katenge'"

the Sena (UBT) chief said. "Marathi is our state language, and such a statement amounts to treason." Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut said. "Bhaiyaji Joshi is trying to divide Mumbai on the issue of language. Kem cho, kem cho seems like this is the only thing that will be heard in Mumbai now," NCP (SP) group leader Jitendra Awhad said. "Mumbai, along with Maharashtra, has Marathi as its primary language. However, RSS leaders have historically shown a bias against Mumbai's Marathi-speaking populace," Maharashtra Congress general secretary Atul Londhe said. Sena (UBT) leader Aadiya Thackeray also hit out at Joshi saying: "The language of this land is Marathi, just like Tamil is in Tamil Nadu and Kannada is in Karnataka. The ideology of the BJP is to keep disrespecting Maharashtra. Yesterday, Suresh Bhaiyya ji said that the language in Ghatkopar could be Gujarati, but this is absolutely not possible. The language of Mumbai is Marathi. This government even halted the Marathi Bhasha Bhavan in Mumbai because they want to disrespect Maharashtra and the Marathi language," Aditya said.

First woman officer tames Jaguar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, Flying Officer Tanuska Singh has become the first woman pilot permanently assigned to IAF's Jaguar fighter jet squadron. It marks a significant step in gender inclusion in combat roles. The officer will shortly report for duty. While other women have flown the Jaguar during training, Tanuska's permanent induction into the squadron is a first. The Jaguar is a key tactical strike aircraft for the IAF, known for its precision attack capabilities. Hailing from a family having served in the armed forces, Tanuska initially considered a career in the Indian Army. However, she shifted her focus to the Air Force after learning about the opportunities available to women. She underwent training at the Air Force Academy in Dundigal, Telangana, followed by specialised training on the



Hawk MK 132 aircraft. Born in Uttar Pradesh, she has lived in Mangaluru since 2007. She completed her schooling in Suratkal and later studied in Mangaluru. She also earned a BTEch in electrical and electronics engineering in 2022. Incidentally, the first batch of three female pilots - Avani Chaturvedi, Bhawana Kanth and Mohana Singh were inducted in Indian Air Force

fighter squadron on 2016. Squadron Leader Mohana Singh later made history as the first female fighter pilot in the country to be cleared to fly the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas fighter jet last year. Mohana Singh, along with Avni Chaturvedi and Bhawana Kanth, was part of the trio of female pilots in the Air Force's fighter streams. In the early days, the three pilots flew various aircraft from the Air Force's fighter fleet. Currently, they are flying the regular fleets of Su-30MKI and LCA Tejas Indian Air Force (IAF), the world's fourth-largest air force, currently accounts for around 20 women fighter pilots. The service opened its fighter stream to women, a watershed in India's military history, in 2016. It has opened all frontiers for women and is giving them opportunities on a par with their male counterparts.

PERENNIAL TOURISM



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit at Harsil, in Uttarakashi district of Uttarakhand

PTI

MP to partner with Raj govt for Lord Krishna Pathway: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Dr. Mohan Yadav said that the Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan governments share a unified vision regarding Lord Shri Krishna's Pathway. In collaboration with the Rajasthan government, efforts will be made to develop Shri Krishna's Pathway. In contrast, support from the Gujarat government will be sought to develop Lord Shri Krishna's Gujarat Gaman Path. The Chief Minister emphasized that while Lord Shri Krishna's divine form is praiseworthy, the government will also highlight his other significant aspects for society. These include his education in Ujjain, his deep friendship with Sudama, his love for the Vanvasis, and his exemplary role in the Guru-Shishya tra-

dition. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav made these remarks while chairing a meeting of the Subject Expert Committee on Shri Krishna's Pathway at the Chief Minister's residence (Samatva Bhavan) on Thursday. Yadav emphasized that all committees should be actively engaged in the development of Shri Krishna Pathway. He directed that archaeologists, religious leaders, and renowned writers of Lord Krishna literature should also be included in the committee to enrich its efforts. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav further stated that, in addition to the meeting held in Bhopal, committee meetings should also take place in Ujjain as well as in key locations in Rajasthan, such as Jaipur, Bharatpur, Braj, Chaurasi Kos, or any other significant site. This

initiative will help create a positive environment for Shri Krishna Pathway in both states. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav highlighted that ancient history mentions Lord Shri Krishna's travels across various regions of India (Jambudweep). He instructed the committee to identify and document all such places associated with Lord Krishna's visits. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav proposed that Ujjain's Sandipani Ashram be developed as the central hub for the growth and promotion of Shri Krishna Pathway. During the meeting, committee members noted that while Lord Krishna traveled extensively across regions such as Mathura, Ujjain, Dwarka, Braj Mandal, Mewat, Hadaut, Malwa, Nimar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Vidarbha, and

Maharashtra for the welfare of the people, Ujjain remained the primary center of his travels. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav stated that the government's participation in religious festivals has significantly increased across the state. Events such as Shastra Puja on Dussehra, Govardhan Puja on Diwali, and the recent celebration of Geeta Jayanti have been organized with great enthusiasm. Additionally, the decision to implement a liquor ban in 17 holy and religious cities has sent a positive message to society. During the meeting, committee members provided valuable suggestions. Dr. Yadav emphasized that the government will work with a dedicated focus on the development of Shri Krishna Pathway. He further stated that in the future, other Leelas

of Lord Shri Krishna will also be integrated into this initiative. In the meeting, senior members of the committee, Minister of State in Rajasthan Government, Omkar Singh Lakhawat, former Director of Maharaja Vikramaditya Shodhpeeth, Padmashree Bhagwati Lal Rajpurohit, Culture Advisor to the Chief Minister, Shriram Tiwari, Shailendra Sharma of Ujjain, Raman Solanki and all other members, Additional Chief Secretary in Chief Minister's Office, Rajesh Rajoura, Additional Chief Secretary Higher Education Anupam Rajan, Additional Chief Secretary Sanjay Shukla, Principal Secretary Culture and Tourism Sheoshakar Shukla and other officers were present. Commissioner and Collector Ujjain also participated in the meeting virtually.



Smoke billows from a house after a massive fire erupted at Durga Nagar slum neighbourhood near Habibganj Naka in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

MP government cracks down on corporal punishment in schools

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In a significant move to protect students from physical and psychological abuse, the Madhya Pradesh Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) has issued a directive prohibiting corporal punishment in all schools across the state. The directive applies to both government and private schools, reinforcing legal measures against such practices. According to the notification sent to District Education Officers (DEOs), corporal punishment, along with any form of physical or mental harassment and discrimination, is a violation under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The directive specifically references Section 17(2) of the RTE Act and Section 323 of

the Indian Penal Code (IPC), emphasizing that offenders will face strict legal consequences. Education authorities have been instructed to proactively identify, prevent, and take swift action against such cases to ensure a safe learning environment for students. The decision follows a recommendation from the Madhya Pradesh Child Rights Protection Commission, which had urged the School Education Department in February to take stern action against corporal punishment. The DPI's directive reflects the government's commitment to ensuring a respectful and abuse-free education system for all students. As part of the initiative, District Education Officers (DEOs) and school administrators have been instructed to conduct regular inspections

and establish grievance redressal mechanisms for students to report any instances of abuse. Authorities have been asked to remain vigilant and ensure immediate intervention in cases of corporal punishment. The directive also mandates sensitization programs for teachers and staff, focusing on alternative disciplinary methods that foster a nurturing and positive educational environment. Child rights activists and education experts have welcomed the move, stating that eliminating corporal punishment will contribute to students' mental and emotional well-being. Educationists emphasize that punishment-free learning spaces promote creativity, confidence, and a deeper engagement in academics. The directive also aligns with

national and global efforts to uphold children's rights in education. Organizations advocating for child welfare have stressed the importance of consistent implementation and strict enforcement to ensure the success of this initiative. The state government has reiterated its commitment to making schools safer and more inclusive. Parents, students, and stakeholders are encouraged to report any violations, ensuring that every child in Madhya Pradesh receives education in a safe and supportive environment. With this move, Madhya Pradesh joins the growing list of states taking progressive steps to eliminate outdated and harmful disciplinary practices, fostering a culture of respect and learning in schools.

Effective implementation of NEP to enhance education quality

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The National Education Policy-2020 is being implemented effectively by the School Education Department to enhance the quality of education in the schools of the state. For the implementation of the policy, 14 committees of senior officers have been constituted by the State Government under the chairmanship of Commissioner and Director level. These committees are related to various groups and areas of the National Education Policy. The state government has constituted a task force under the chairmanship of the School Education Minister. Senior officers of the School Education Department are ex-officio members in this.

Government and non-government educationists have also been included in the committee. Discussion among members Discussion has also been held among the members for the National Education Policy and implementation. In this, expert speeches have been given in coordination with Azim Premji Foundation. During the orientation, the Head of the Department of NCERT also gave information about the National Curriculum Foundation (NCF) Stage Development Process and State Curriculum Foundation (SCF) Stage. The New Education Policy (NEP) Tracker is being regularly updated as per the guidelines of the National Education Policy by the Central Government. Equitable and Inclusive

Education 9550 new children with special needs (CWSN) have been identified in the state and their enrollment in classes 9 to 12 has been ensured. Along with this, 8500 teachers in the state have also been given special training in 2 sessions in the year 2024 for teaching children with special needs. Resource centers have been developed by the School Education Department in all the development blocks. Emphasis on Vocational Education In the new education policy, emphasis has been laid on providing vocational education in schools. Vocational education is being conducted in 2383 schools in the state. In these, about 4 lakh students have been enrolled and arrangements have been made to provide them vocational

education in 14 trades. Agriculture faculty is being run in 798 higher secondary schools of the state and agriculture trade in 465 higher secondary schools. Under the STARS project, vocational education has been started for dropout students along with regular students in 100 schools. Labs for 2 vocational trades are being built in every CM Rise school of the state. Robotics labs have also been established in 52 CM Rise schools of the department. Apart from the currently running IT courses, new courses like AI coding are being prepared with the help of Pt. Sundarlal Sharma Institute of Vocational Education. Under Tuning of School, 520 schools have been tuned, under which these schools exchange best practices among themselves.



Students participate in 'Nutan Bhavya-2025' Contest at Government Sarojini Naidu Girls PG College in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Inspiring journeys of change shared at AIR-UNICEF gathering

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

All India Radio (AIR) Bhopal, in collaboration with UNICEF, organized a story-sharing event in Bhopal, providing a platform to highlight stories of change, women making a difference, and young men working towards gender equality. The event featured inspiring stories of individuals who overcame challenges and broke societal barriers. Notable participants included Rani Bhargava, a sarpanch advocating for gender equality and Bal Panchayat; Gauranshi Sharma, a badminton player and UNICEF India Youth Advocate who won a mixed doubles medal at the Deaflympics; Yogita Raghuvanshi, India's first female truck driver; and Dr. Sakshi Bharadwaj, an urban forestry expert leading climate action in Bhopal. Other speakers included mental health counselor Pallavi Sharma, entrepreneur and organic farmer Dr. Pratibha Tiwari, cancer survivor and advo-



cate Preeti Uikey, and gender champion Adarsh Pasi. Radio professionals from AIR Bhopal, Radio LakeCity Voice, and Radio Azad Hind, along with social media influencers, attended the event to amplify these stories. The inspiring narratives will be recorded by AIR and broadcast on radio and social media platforms to mark International Women's Day under the theme 'For All Women and Girls: Rights, Equality, Empowerment'. Speaking at the event, Rajesh

Bhatt, Programme Director at AIR Bhopal, emphasized the role of radio, particularly AIR, in encouraging women's participation and empowerment. "We have provided a platform for these stories across our programs, and we will continue to do so," he said. Anil Gulati, Officer-in-Charge of UNICEF Madhya Pradesh, expressed gratitude to AIR for its collaboration, stating, "Your stories of change will inspire others to take positive action towards gender equality and empower-

ment." Dr. Prashanth Kumar, Health Specialist at UNICEF, highlighted the importance of adolescent mental health, while Pooja Singh, Social Specialist, spoke on the progress made toward gender equality and the road ahead. Yeshwant H. Chivande, Head of AIR Bhopal Cluster, also addressed the gathering on the importance of women's empowerment. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Anamika Chakravarty, Programme Executive at AIR Bhopal. The program was anchored by Shivangi Singh, Anoop Kumar, Abhishek Sharma, and Moulshree Saxena. Dr. Rachana Dubey, Director IEC health joined the programme and shared that on March 8, National Health Mission, Government of Madhya Pradesh, is organising a Walkathon called Shakti to spread awareness on the comprehensive health of women and upcoming state of art centre at Katju Hospital.

DIG Amit Sanghi emphasizes cyber fraud awareness at ICOME Gwalior

PNS ■ GWALIOR

Journalism is a mission, and it's evident in the fact that during the freedom struggle, journalism was the biggest medium to awaken the spirit of patriotism in the people, thus making a special contribution in the freedom struggle. In the current environment also, journalism is playing its important role in nation building. Media is proving to be helpful in assisting the police to work positively and increase their courage. These were among some of the views expressed by Gwalior Range DIG Amit Sanghi while addressing the citizens at the International Center of Media Excellence (ICOME) located at Padav, Gwalior. The meeting was specially organized to create awareness on the topic of cyber fraud and ways to avoid it. DIG Sanghi said that the simplest and best way to avoid cyber fraud is awareness because whatever happens in cyber fraud depends on the individual. Till the time he or she does not

share the bank details or OTP with anyone, they cannot become a victim of cyber criminals. He added that if one shares the information knowingly or unknowingly, then he or she can become a victim. Therefore, it becomes necessary to be aware, be alert and inform the police in time. Sanghi also shared his experience of service in Gwalior as SP and opined that Gwalior is a great place to work as the public here is always alert and cooperative. He further praised the City of Music and said that art has always had a great influence here. Earlier, the director of the center Dr. Keshav Pandey honored him by presenting shawl, coconut and memento on behalf of the organization. During this, officials and intellectuals associated with various social, educational, sports, music, journalism and other organizations welcomed him with garlands and felicitated him. The program was conducted by Mahesh Mudgal and Deepak Tomar expressed gratitude.

March nights turn cold in Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

With the changed weather conditions night temperatures dipped to cold levels, lowest night temperature was recorded at 6 degree celsius in Kalyan (Shajapur) and Girwar (Shahdol) on Wednesday. Cold has struck for the first time in March. A drop in day and night temperature has been recorded in all the cities of Madhya Pradesh including Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Gwalior-Jabalpur. In Bhopal, the mercury dropped to 9.8 degrees, on Thursday after mercury rose to 30.2 degrees. The wind at a speed of 20 to 25 km per hour during the day was witnessed. According to the Meteorological Department, the weather has changed due to active western disturbance in North India. There has been snowfall in the mountains and cold winds are blowing. Due to this, there has been a significant drop in the night temperature. The weather will remain the same for the next two days. There may be a drop of 2 to 3 degrees.

Center of excellence at AIIMS Bhopal to tackle severe malnutrition

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The AIIMS Bhopal has taken a significant step towards combating Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). A Center of Excellence has been established under the Department of Pediatrics, in collaboration with the National Health Mission, Madhya Pradesh (NHM-MP) and UNICEF. This center will provide advanced medical assistance for SAM cases, particularly for non-responsive and critically ill children. Severe cases are being treated at the AIIMS Bhopal Severe Malnutrition Advanced Referral and Treatment (SMART) Unit. The Center of Excellence is dedicated to providing high-level technical support, promoting research, and conducting training programs on SAM management. In this regard, the state government organized a two-day divisional-level residential F-SAM training program for Feeding Demonstrators and ANMs/Staff Nurses working in Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs). The objective of this training was to enhance the treatment and management of severely malnour-

ished children. On March 4, 2025, the training participants visited the Center of Excellence at AIIMS Bhopal, where they received practical training in malnutrition management. They attended sessions on diet preparation, anthropometric assessment, and identifying danger signs in admitted children. Additionally, they observed the early intervention and counseling rooms and gained knowledge about the available resources for SAM management. The training program saw participation from Feeding Demonstrators, Staff Nurses/ANMs, as well as esteemed experts, including Dr. Neera Chaudhary (Joint Director, Health Services, Bhopal Division), Dr. Shobha Khot (Retired Pediatrician), Dr. Suresh Kumar, and Mrs. Rajkumar Chauhan. Dr. Bhavana Dhingra (Nodal Officer of the Center of Excellence and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at AIIMS Bhopal) emphasized the importance of early identification of malnutrition, adherence to structured treatment protocols, and regular follow-ups.



Police personnel check private vehicles using hooters at polytechnic square in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Nishatpura police arrest two burglars, recover stolen goods

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Nishatpura police arrested two accused involved in theft and burglary after receiving information. The suspects, identified as Shahrukh Ali alias Umesh (23) and Vishal Oswal (19), were found on an e-rickshaw attempting to sell stolen goods. Upon questioning, the duo admitted to breaking into an unoccupied house in Sanjeev

Nagar Colony using an iron rod to steal items. The goods included a Sony 65-inch TV, an Oppo mobile, a gold mangalsutra pendant, silver anklets, and several other items, all of which were seized. The stolen goods matched items from a previous crime, and the accused were arrested and presented in court. In a separate operation, the Piplani police arrested vehicle thief Brajesh Adivasi (20) and

his brother-in-law Rahul Medha (26). Brajesh, who had been evading arrest for long, was involved in stealing motorcycles and a passenger auto across multiple police station areas. The police had previously seized several stolen vehicles and had been tracking Brajesh's movements. On March 5, 2025, the police arrested him and Rahul after they attempted to deliver a stolen motorcycle.

State's current budget to be doubled in the next five years

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that the empowerment of a nation depends on the empowerment of its states. He advocated for an increase in the states' share of central taxes and revenue grants, highlighting that states work towards their goals with their capacity and limited resources. Enhanced financial grants from the central government would enable states to achieve long-term objectives more efficiently. He stressed that a Vikasit Bharat requires a Vikasit Madhya Pradesh, urging an increase in the states' share of central taxes from 41 percent to 48 percent. This, he asserted, would strengthen states and take national development forward. Yadav emphasized that Madhya

Pradesh, being a large state, has equally significant needs. He stated that the central and state governments share the common objective of establishing a welfare state, which can be achieved through better coordination and mutual harmony. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav made these remarks while addressing an important meeting with the chairman and members of the 16th Central Finance Commission at the Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Center on Thursday. During the meeting, he outlined the state's expectations from the Finance Commission and highlighted the need for financial resources to achieve Madhya Pradesh's long-term development goals. Yadav said that Madhya Pradesh is the most progressive state in the country, rapidly advancing

in agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, forests, tourism, urban development, and industrial growth. He highlighted the need for increased financial support and grants from the central government to accelerate development in these sectors. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav affirmed that Madhya Pradesh is committed to contributing to the vision of a Vikasit Bharat and pledged to fulfill the resolution of a Vikasit Madhya Pradesh. He stated that the state's current budget stands at approximately Rs 3.5 lakh crore, intending to double it in the next five years. The Chief Minister informed the Finance Commission that Madhya Pradesh is actively collaborating with the neighbouring states on river-linking projects to enhance water sharing. He highlighted the Parvati-

Kalisindh-Chambal (PKC) river-linking project, which is being implemented in partnership with Rajasthan, with the Central Government allocating Rs 90,000 crore for this national project. Similarly, the Ken-Betwa Link National Project is progressing in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh. Chief Minister Yadav acknowledged Prime Minister Narendra Modi for performing the Bhoomi Pujan of both these crucial projects, bringing pride to Madhya Pradesh. Additionally, the state is now working with Maharashtra on the Tapti River Project. Dr. Yadav emphasized the remarkable progress in irrigation over the past two decades, stating that while only 7 lakh hectares of agricultural land were irrigated 20 years ago, the state now irrigates over 48 lakh hectares.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to river-linking initiatives, considering it a priority to ensure water availability for farmers. Furthermore, he noted that due to pro-farmer policies, there has been significant increase in the adoption of organic farming across the state. Yadav stated that Madhya Pradesh's 18 new industrial policies have significantly boosted investor confidence, attracting substantial investments. The state has received investment proposals worth Rs 30.77 lakh crore through the RICand the Global Investors Summit (GIS) in Bhopal, reflecting the growing trust of investors in Madhya Pradesh. To further streamline business operations, the government is establishing industry cells in every district collectorate.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during a meeting with 16th Finance Commission at Kushabhau Thackeray convention center, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo



A scene from the play 'Kela' staged during Agha Festival at Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Two-day convention of WCRMS concludes

PNS ■ JABALPUR

The Western Central Railway Mazdoor Sangh (WCRMS) successfully concluded the second day of its 12th annual convention on March 6, 2025. The event, which focused on employees' demands, witnessed enthusiastic participation from railway workers, including youth and women employees. During the youth session, City Congress Committee President, Saurabh Nathi Sharma, addressed the gathering, highlighting the union's commitment to advocating for the implementation of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). He reaffirmed that railway employees and WCRMS are determined to push for OPS enforcement at the national level. The union's President, C.M. Upadhyay, and General Secretary,

Ashok Sharma, assured employees that a national protest from March 7 to March 21 will be organized to push for OPS. The event also included a women's session as part of the International Women's Day celebrations. Dr. Gita Pandey, Deepa Nair, Vijay Laxmi Gurta, and other prominent speakers addressed the concerns of women employees, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding their rights and ensuring a secure workplace. Chief Guest Aksha Mokdar, along with Seema Mehra and Mrs. Anjali Loke, supported key proposals to improve the working conditions of women railway employees. The convention concluded with a strong commitment to continue advocating for employee rights and workplace safety for all railway staff.

Maiden PCOS workshop in state on Sunday

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The state capital will host the first workshop on Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) in Madhya Pradesh at Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Centre on March 9. A Walkathon will be organised on March 8 at 7 AM on Atal Path to celebrate Women's Day. The theme, "Walk for Health, Walk for Awareness", will see participation from women representing social and government institutions, along with many students. Dr Rachna Dubey from NHM stated that the Public Health & Medical Education Department is organising the

event to promote awareness about women's health and reproductive well-being. Several programmes are being conducted for International Women's Day. During the workshop, medical professionals from across the state will discuss the latest technologies and research on preventing and treating PCOS. Dr Dubey said the workshop will bring together national-level experts, including gynaecologists, diabetes specialists, skin specialists, fitness experts, nutritionists, and psychiatrists. These experts will provide in-depth discussions on PCOS from multiple medical perspectives, making this the first such workshop in Madhya

Pradesh. In a major initiative for women's health, Dr Dubey revealed that the Public Health & Medical Education Department is developing a Women's Health Centre at Kailash Nath Katju Civil Hospital, Bhopal. The centre will provide comprehensive gynaecological services, including treatment for PCOS, fibroids, infertility, cancer care, and menopause counselling. Dr Dubey emphasised that PCOS is not a single disease but a collection of symptoms. With a holistic approach, women will achieve better overall health and receive specialised medical care at a single centre.

Two major fire incidents in the city in 24 hours

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the past 24 hours, two major fire incidents in the state capital have caused significant damage to businesses, with goods worth lakhs reduced to ashes. A devastating fire broke out in eight furniture shops in the Karond area, while another blaze engulfed an interior design office at Mansarovar Complex on Hoshangabad Road. Timely intervention by fire brigade teams and local shopkeepers helped contain the damage and prevent further escalation. The first fire erupted around 2 AM on Wednesday night in furniture shops along the roadside in Nabi Bagh, Karond. The flames spread rapidly, con-

suming eight out of the 17 shops in the area. Nishatpura police confirmed that the shops, constructed with tin sheds, were highly susceptible to fire, making it difficult to control the blaze. Firefighters battled the flames for three hours before successfully bringing the situation under control. Despite their efforts, nearly half of the shops suffered irreparable damage, with furniture worth lakhs completely gutted. Authorities stated that had the fire not been controlled in time, the situation could have been catastrophic, as a wheat field located behind the shops posed an additional risk of spreading the fire further. In a separate incident, a fire

broke out in a closed interior design office at Mansarovar Complex on Thursday morning. Alert shopkeepers noticed smoke rising from the shop and quickly took action, using the fire safety system installed in the complex to prevent the fire from spreading. Anil Chug, President of the Mansarovar Complex Vyapari Association, praised the swift response of local shopkeepers, stating, "As soon as the fire alarm rang, shopkeepers rushed to the scene and managed to control the fire before it could spread. This quick action helped prevent a major disaster." Fire brigade personnel also arrived on the scene to ensure complete extinguishing of the flames.

BMC tracks down medical waste offender

Bhopal: In a plot straight out of an Agatha Christie book, Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) workers tracked down a person responsible for dumping medical waste in the open and slapped him with a Rs 6,000 spot fine on Thursday. The chase began after municipal workers discovered the waste during an inspection near Kaliyasot Dam in Kolar Zone 18. The civic body employees searched through the waste and found a prescription that led to Deepak Thakur, a resident of Sarvdharm Colony, who was later fined Rs 6,000 for dumping the waste at a public place. Meanwhile, the BMC anti-encroachment squad carried out a large-scale operation

across multiple areas, including Bagmugaliya, Jatkhedi, Lalghati, ISBT, MP Nagar, Bittan Market, Nehru Nagar, and Arera Hills. Illegal stalls, temporary structures, carts, sheds, and unauthorised kiosks were removed, and various items such as weighing machines, folding tables, crates, lights, and autorickshaws were seized. The operation covered busy streets, markets, and corridors to clear public spaces and ensure smooth movement for pedestrians and vehicles. The BMC has urged residents and businesses to follow regulations and avoid encroaching on public spaces. Strict penalties will continue for those violating cleanliness and urban planning rules.

Work on Nemawar water supply project progresses

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The work of water supply project in Nemawar of Dewas district is being carried out at a rapid pace by Madhya Pradesh Urban Development Company, an undertaking of the Urban Development and Housing Department. Under this project, a state-of-the-art water purification plant is being constructed for the supply of pure water in Nemawar area. The cost of the project is around Rs 21 crore. A water purification plant of 2.21 million liters per day (MLD) capacity is under construction to purify water in Nemawar. This plant will play an important role in boosting the water supply system of the area. Apart

from this, two overhead tanks of 100 kilolitres and 500 kilolitres capacity are also being built for storage of water. Their construction is going on at a fast pace. Along with Nemawar, the construction of new intake well on the Narmada bank for the supply of Narmada water in Khategaon Municipal Council area is also going on at a rapid pace. To provide pure water to every house,

about 37 km long water distribution line is being laid, out of which 13 kilometer pipeline has been laid so far. Under this scheme, tap water connections are to be given to about 1200 houses. Out of these, connections have been given to 576 houses. After the completion of this project, more than 6 thousand residents of Nemawar will get supply of pure and safe water. Nemawar project is being completed with the assistance of Asian Development Bank. Its total cost along with operation and maintenance of the project is about Rs 21 crore. After the completion of the project, a regular supply of pure water will be ensured to the residents of Nemawar, which will improve their health and standard of living.



Jesus and Mary Nursery School, Mhow marked 28 years of dedicated service in pre-primary education with a grand celebration. The 26th batch of U.KG students was given a warm and heartfelt send-off during a Graduation Ceremony organized in their honor. The event was graced by Mrs. Cynthia James, a renowned educationist, as the chief guest. Among the esteemed guests in attendance were Col. DCV Shah, Lt. Col. Birmati Singh, Dr. Rohit Maheshwari, and Dr. Shweta Maheshwari. The ceremony was well-attended by proud parents, who were mesmerized by the cultural performances presented by the young students. The event was a joyous occasion, celebrating the achievements of the graduating class while marking another milestone in the school's journey of excellence in early childhood education. Pioneer photo

Relief refuses to stop by street-side sellers in the city

KISHAN SINGH RANA ■ BHOPAL

Street vendors in Bhopal continue to face eviction despite paying tehbazari, the municipal hawk fee. Their daily struggle raises questions about the government's commitment to their rights and the effectiveness of policies meant to protect them. In 2023, the then Chief Minister abolished the tehbazari system, bringing hope to thousands of street vendors, hawkers, and handcart pushers who had long suffered harassment under the system, which required them to pay a fixed amount for registration to avoid eviction. Apart from the rollback of tehbazari, the government had also spoken of creating designated vending zones where vendors could conduct business without fear of removal. The promises, however, rang

hollow in March last year, when the Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) reinstated tehbazari, requiring vendors to pay a daily fee of Rs 20 to Rs 30. With their receipts in hand, street vendors set up their carts and stalls across the city, only to be driven away later by municipal officials. The primary reason cited for these evictions is traffic congestion, as stalls and carts on busy roads slow down the movement of vehicles. Municipal staff often seize goods to clear these areas, leaving vendors helpless. City Mission Manager Shweta Sahu stated that a total of 80,826 street vendors have been registered and issued ID cards. These cards permit them to sell goods while moving around the city, but they are not allowed to stay in one place for more than three minutes. If they do, the municipal corpo-

ration is authorised to take action against them. The eviction of street vendors despite their registration goes against the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), implemented in 2014. The scheme mandated the creation of vending zones to provide a stable working environment for street vendors. The state government, municipal bodies, the district collector's office, and the revenue department were expected to work together to establish these zones. However, according to Sahu, hawkers' zones and street vending zones are essentially the same—a statement that vendors strongly contest. Badri, a golgappa seller at MP Nagar, expressed his frustration. "On one hand, they take money from us for the fee, and on the other hand, they keep

driving us away. I just don't understand what the government wants from us." Abhishek Rai, who operates a paan kiosk near Chetak Bridge, believes vendors are unfairly targeted. "Many shopkeepers in MP Nagar encroach on roads, but the government only sees us. Either they should tell us where to set up our stalls or stop charging us money." As the conflict between policy and practice continues, Bhopal's street vendors remain caught in an uncertain and unjust situation—paying fees for the right to sell while still being treated as encroachers. With BMC officials refusing to comment further and a clear disconnect between livelihood policies for the urban poor and the ongoing anti-encroachment drive, it seems respite for those forced by poverty to sell their wares on the streets is still a long way off.

Outsourced employees plan stir on March 9-10

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Outsourced and temporary employees in Madhya Pradesh have intensified their protest against the government, preparing for a two-day demonstration on March 9-10. Street meetings were held on Thursday at JP Hospital, Nutan College, and the Directorate of Public Instruction DPI to mobilise support. Protest leader Vasudev Sharma accused ministers of insulting workers. He stated that the Education Minister compared guest teachers to illegal occupants, the Health Minister called outsourced employees beggars, and the Labour Minister went further by labelling the entire working class as beggars.

कार्यालय जिला शिक्षा अधिकारी जिला भोपाल
क्रमांक./जि.शि./आई.सी.टी./निविदा/2024/300 भोपाल दिनांक 04.03.2025

भोपाल जिले के चयनित विद्यालयों हेतु आई.सी.टी. लैब स्थापित किये जाने हेतु जेम पोर्टल के माध्यम निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
ई-निविदा (संशोधित)
जिला शिक्षा अधिकारी जिला भोपाल द्वारा समग्र शिक्षा अभियान अंतर्गत जिले के शासकीय विद्यालयों में निम्नानुसार कार्य के लिए जेम पोर्टल के माध्यम से ऑनलाइन निविदाओं आमंत्रित की जाती है :-

क्रमांक	कार्य का विवरण	निविदा क्रमांक	निविदा आरंभ दिनांक	निविदा समाप्ति दिनांक
1.	आई.सी.टी.	GEM/2025/B/5966109	20.02.2025	13.03.2025

इच्छुक निविदाकार जेम पोर्टल पर ऑनलाइन निविदाओं में भाग ले सकते हैं। कार्य का विस्तृत विवरण एवं शर्तें जेम पोर्टल पर देखी जा सकती हैं।
जिला शिक्षा अधिकारी
जिला भोपाल

G-23876/24

यूको बैंक UCO BANK
(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम) (A Govt. of India Undertaking)
UCO Bank Birla Nagar Branch, Gwalior

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) RULE 8 (1)
Whereas, The undersigned being the authorized officer of the UCO Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Act, 2002 (54 of 2002)) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (2) read with (Rule 3) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002 issued demand notice dated 17/12/2024 calling upon the borrower & Co-borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice below plus interest and Bank charges within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
The borrower and Co-Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of power conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002 on this the 5th day of March of the year 2025.
The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank, Birla Nagar Branch, Gwalior for an amount mentioned below and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name & Address of Borrower	Description of Property & Property Owner	Amount Outstanding
Borrower: M/s Ratiram Halwai & Catering Works Proprietor Mr. Ratiram Kushwah S/o Mr. Chotelal Guarantor-Mrs. Nisha Kushwah W/o Ratiram Kushwah	M.P. Housing board colony House no. CL-207, WARD -18 Situated at DD NAGAR (Deendayal nagar), Maharajpura, Gwalior Registered With Sub-registrar, Gwalior On 29-12-2005 Book no. A-1, Volume no. 16520 page 83-91 Registry no. 3389 (G) Owned by Mr. Ratiram Kushwah & Mrs. Nisha Kushwah Boundaries: East: Plot No. CL 1/206, West: Plot number CL 1/208, North: Colony Road, South : Plot no. CL 1/165	₹ 12,90,135.96/+interest & other charges

Place : Gwalior, Date : 05-03-2025
Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

PM reviews progress in cooperative sector, seeks focus on export markets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of the cooperative sector and emphasised the need for partnerships with global cooperative organisations to expand the Indian cooperative sector and stressed promoting organic products through cooperative organisations.

He also suggested focusing on export markets and developing a soil testing model through cooperatives to improve agricultural practices.

Modi emphasised the need for healthy competition among cooperative organisations, the statement said. He also emphasised the importance of documenting the assets of cooperative organisations to ensure transparency and suggested promoting cooperative farming as a more sustainable agricultural model.

Modi also recommended the use of digital public infrastructure (Agristack) to expand agriculture and related activities in cooperative sector and highlighted the importance of integrating UPI with RuPay Kisan Credit Card to facilitate financial transactions.

During the meeting here, discussions were held on promoting "Sahkar Se Samruddhi" bringing transformation through technological advancements in the cooperative sector, plans to increase the participation of youth and women in cooperatives, and the various initiatives of the Ministry of Cooperation, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi PTI

The meeting was attended by Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah. Prime Minister Modi emphasised the need for partnerships with global cooperative organisations to expand the Indian cooperative sector and stressed promoting organic products through cooperative organisations.

He also suggested focusing on export markets and developing a soil testing model through cooperatives to improve agricultural practices.

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Modi also recommended the use of digital public infrastructure (Agristack) to expand agriculture and related activities in cooperative sector, providing farmers with better access to

Realising the vision of 'Sahkar Se Samruddhi', the ministry has formulated a draft of the National Cooperation Policy 2025 through an extensive consultation process.

The objective of National Cooperation Policy 2025 is to facilitate the systematic and holistic development of the cooperative sector, with a focus on accelerating rural economic development, while prioritising women and youth.

It aims to promote a cooperative-based economic model and establish a robust legal and institutional framework, the statement further said.

Furthermore, the policy endeavours to deepen the grassroots impact of cooperatives and significantly enhance the contribution of the cooperative sector to the overall development of the country, it said.

Since its inception, the ministry has undertaken 60 initiatives across seven key areas to promote and strengthen the cooperative movement, it added.

These initiatives include the digitization of cooperative

institutions through the National Cooperative Database and Computerisation Projects, as well as the strengthening of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). Additionally, the ministry has focused on enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of cooperative sugar mills.

The Centre has implemented various schemes for cooperative societies through a "whole of government approach", integrating over 15 schemes from more than 10 ministries at the PACS level, the statement said.

As a result, there has been diversification in cooperative businesses, additional income generation, increased opportunities for cooperatives, and improved accessibility of government schemes in rural areas, it said.

Annual targets have also been set for the formation of these cooperatives, the statement said.

To promote cooperative education, training and research and to provide skilled professionals, a Bill to convert IRMA Anand into

'Tribhuvan Cooperative University' and make it an Institution of National Importance has been introduced in the Parliament, the statement said.

Prime Minister Modi was briefed on the growth of cooperatives and their vital role across various sectors. Cooperative sector's contribution to India's economy, particularly in agriculture, rural development, and economic inclusion was highlighted, the statement said.

During the meeting, it was highlighted that presently, one-fifth of the country's population is associated with the cooperative sector, which includes over 8.2 lakh cooperative institutions spanning more than 30 sectors, with a membership exceeding 30 crore individuals.

The meeting was also attended by Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation, Ashish Kumar Bhutani; Principal Secretary to the PM PK Mishra; Principal Secretary-2 to the PM Shaktikanta Das; Advisor to the PM Amit Khare; and other senior officials.

Indian national Shahjadi Khan buried in Abu Dhabi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Indian national Shahjadi Khan was buried on Thursday in Abu Dhabi as per regulations of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Shahjadi, a caregiver from Uttar Pradesh's Banda district, was executed last month after a court found her guilty of allegedly murdering a child.

"Burial of Shahjadi Khan, an Indian national, was conducted on Thursday in Abu Dhabi as per regulations of the UAE authorities," MEA said.

"Prior to her burial, the authorised representatives of Shahjadi's family paid respect to the mortal remains. They also attended the funeral prayers at the mosque as well as the burial at the Baniyas cemetery," it said.

Embassy officials assisted the authorised representatives in this regard as well as attended the last rites, it added.

Congress slams new panopticon Income Tax law

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday alleged that the new income-tax law which will help the tax officials to have access to the e-mails, social media and bank accounts of all assesseees, which will lead to India becoming a surveillance state.

Congress spokesperson and the head of the party's social media department, Supriya Shrinete, said this is a warning for everyone as e-mail, social media, bank and trading accounts are under an attack now.

"They spied on us with Pegasus. Now, they'll take away our personal lives altogether. Under (Prime Minister Narendra Modi's) new income tax law, the government is quietly giving tax officials the power to break into your digital life. No warrant, no notice — mere suspicion is enough to strip you of your privacy. This is surveillance. And we must all oppose it unequivocally," the Congress said from its official X handle.

Shrinete, in a post on X, said, "Warning: Your email, social media, bank and trading accounts are under attack."

"The new income tax law allows tax officials unrestricted access to your emails: read your private conversations; your social media: monitor your posts, messages and interactions; your bank accounts: track every rupee you earn and spend; and your trading accounts: watch your investments and financial moves."

"They need NO proof to do so, just suspicion. A government with unchecked power. The Modi government with that has been misusing agencies to silence critics and crush Opposition will now do this: harass and intimidate citizens, settle political scores by targeting opponents, weaponise tax department to destroy reputations and lives. This is nothing but surveillance. Will you just stay silent or look the other

Frame more vibrant medical curriculum, says Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister JP Nadda has advocated the inclusion of the latest technological advancements, artificial intelligence, telemedicine and digital healthcare in the revised medical education curriculum.

In his address at a post-budget webinar series organised by the Health Ministry on Wednesday, he sought the framing of a curriculum that is more vibrant, meaningful and fit to current challenges and makes optimum use of existing infrastructure and medical faculty.

He emphasised the need for adding soft skills to increase the empathy, ethics and communication skills of the medical students and said that

"the biggest investment is the investment in people".

Nadda underlined that the government was working with a "holistic approach" that focuses not only on the curative aspect but also on the preventive, palliative and rehabilitative approach to patient care.

"We are also trying to include AYUSH and other medical services to ensure the availability and access to healthcare for the people."

Addressing the event, Nadda said, "Since cancer treatment is a lengthy process with a long cycle of chemotherapy, the government is focusing on engaging with Day Care Cancer Centres rather than big hospitals to ensure engagement of patients post-chemotherapy sessions."



Union Health Minister JP Nadda Pioneer Photo

"The government will establish Day Care Cancer Centres in all district hospitals over the next three years. Two hundred of these will be set up this year itself."

Underlining the importance of strengthening the medical health system, Nadda reiterated the budget announcements of introducing new medical seats and highlighted the government's efforts to ensure the availability and accessibility of quality healthcare to people through more than 1.75 Lakh Ayushman Aarogya Mandirs. The minister said that the number of medical colleges has increased from 387 in 2014 to 780 now and underlined that there has been a 130 per cent rise in the

education, early clinical exposure for students, and enhanced communication skills for both students and faculty. Highlighting the developments made in medical infrastructure for cancer care, Nadda mentioned the establishment of the National Cancer Institute at AIIMS-Jhajjar, the upgradation of Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute in Kolkata and the setting up of oncology departments in all 22 AIIMS.

Citing a recent LANCET study, he underlined that "timely cancer treatment initiation has improved significantly because of the Ayushman Bharat Jan Aarogya Yojna. Patients enrolled under AB-PMJAY saw a 90 per cent rise in access to cancer treatment within 30 days."

Multilateralism struggling with global challenges, says Brazil Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Ongoing geopolitical challenges like wars, trade disputes and technology conflicts are weakening the trust among countries and making climate action more difficult, Brazil's Environment and Climate Minister Marina Silva said on Thursday.

Silva, who was in India to attend TERI's World Sustainable Development Summit, told journalists that while multilateralism is struggling to fully address global challenges, it remains the only viable path forward.

She also acknowledged that the US decision to pull out of the Paris Agreement "does influence to a certain extent" the goals Brazil has set for this year's UN climate conference (COP30) in Belem.

"We do have a very challenging confluence of multiple factors that are worrisome for climate action in general. This increasingly-complex geopolitical context - wars in different regions or countries, trade disputes, tariffs and technology disputes — may all impact climate progress. They may drain resources and also hamper confidence and trust among parties. So we have a

triple negative effect," she said.

The minister warned that short-term trade protectionism may bring temporary gains but, in the long run, leads to inflation, economic instability and food insecurity.

She stressed that two major global challenges — health and climate change — cannot be solved without international cooperation.

There is growing scepticism about multilateral efforts, particularly in climate negotiations, following the disappointing outcome at COP29 in Baku, the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and Argentina signalling its intention to do the same.

"Baku represented a disappointment... This climate of disappointment after the COP was due to developed countries not fulfilling their commitments, which leads, on one hand, to a loss of credibility and a deficit of implementation. This is now even more difficult to handle because it also results in a deficit of confidence," Silva said in response to a question from PTI.

Developed countries, historically responsible for most of the greenhouse-gas

BJP wins MLC polls in Andhra Pradesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday thanked the people of Telangana for their support to the BJP in Members of the Legislative Council (MLC) elections. The BJP has won two out of three MLC seats there. Elections were held on February 27.

"I thank the people of Telangana for blessing @BJP4Telangana with such phenomenal support in the MLC elections. Congratulations to our newly elected candidates," Modi said in a social media post.

"I am very proud of our party Karyakartas working among the people with great diligence," he said.

In another post, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the victory of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidates in the graduate MLC elections in Andhra Pradesh.

"Congratulations to the winning candidates. The NDA governments at the Centre and in Andhra Pradesh will keep serving the people of the state and take the state's development

ED conducts raids in money laundering case against SDPI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted nationwide searches on Thursday as part of a money laundering investigation against the SDPI, the political outfit of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI).

The searches come after the federal probe agency arrested Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) national president MK Faizy on March 3 at the Delhi airport. He is currently in ED custody.

The searches were carried out at two locations in Delhi, including the SDPI headquarters in Nizamuddin West, Thiruvananthapuram and Malappuram in Kerala, Nandyal in Andhra Pradesh, Pakur in Jharkhand, Thane in Maharashtra, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Lucknow and Jaipur, said officials.

The ED said, after the arrest of Faizy, that there was an "organic" relationship between the two outfits and that the PFI (Popular Front of India) was carrying out its criminal activities through the SDPI.

The PFI was banned by the Union government in September 2022, calling it an unlawful association and accusing it of indulging in terrorist activities. Multi-agency searches by the ED, NIA and various state police organisations preceded the PFI ban. The SDPI was founded in 2009 and is also registered as a political party with the Election Commission of India.

The ED told the court, while seeking Faizy's remand earlier this week, that PFI and SDPI were "organically" linked and that SDPI was nothing but the "political front" of PFI and was "funded and controlled" by the latter.

The anti-money laundering agency said that it had evidence to state that there was a "deep-rooted" nexus between the two organisations, as there was "overlapping" membership of their cadres, involvement of PFI office bearers in the founding of SDPI, and the utilisation of each other's assets.

CREA report highlights severity of winter air pollution in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) in its report, highlighted the severity of winter air pollution in India, revealing that 173 out of 238 cities recorded PM2.5 levels exceeding the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) of 40 µg/m . Aizawl, Mizoram recorded the lowest winter-average PM2.5 level at 7 µg/m , making it the cleanest city in the analysis.

Not a single city met the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline of 5 µg/m , underscoring the widespread air quality crisis, the report said.

According to the report,

Delhi was the most polluted city in India during winter 2024-25, with an average PM2.5 concentration of 159 µg/m throughout the season. During the previous winter (2023-24), Delhi also topped the list with a higher average of 171 µg/m .

Byrnihat in Meghalaya followed closely in winter 2024-25, recording a PM2.5 concentration of 157 µg/m . Other cities among the top 10 most polluted included Hajipur, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, Noida, Patna, Asansol, Durgapur, and Charkhi Dadri. The top 10 most polluted cities are located in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, West Bengal, and Assam along with Delhi.

Moreover, none of the 238 cities analysed met the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guideline of 5 µg/m , emphasising the scale of air quality challenges. Winter refers to the period from October 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025 (winter 2024-25).

On a broader state level, Rajasthan (34 cities), Bihar (24 cities), and West Bengal (7 cities) had all monitored cities exceeding NAAQS. Similarly, Maharashtra (30 out of 31 cities), Odisha (15 out of 16 cities), and Uttar Pradesh (15 out of 20 cities) had a high proportion of cities with winter PM2.5 levels above the national standard.

The report said over the 151-day winter period, 100 cities featured in the top 10 most polluted cities are listed at

least once. Of these, 44 cities (52 days), and Bahadurgarh (47 days). Aizawl, Mizoram recorded the lowest winter-average PM2.5 level at 7 µg/m , making it the cleanest city in the analysis. The top 10

least polluted cities included six cities from Karnataka, three from Tamil Nadu, and one from Mizoram.

Among the 98 NCAP (National Clean Air Programme) cities with Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS) data, 78 recorded winter-average PM2.5 levels above NAAQS, while all 98 exceeded the WHO's recommended limit. Similarly, in 140 non-NCAP cities, 95 surpassed NAAQS, and all remained above WHO guidelines. This highlights that air pollution is not limited to NCAP cities but extends to a wider set of urban areas.

"Data gaps remain a challenge in assessing air pollution

trends comprehensively. During winter 2024-25, no CAAQMS data was available for any day from stations in Darbhanga, Ernakulam, Hosur, Kochi, Kozhikode, Pathardih, and Thoothukudi. Additionally, 44 cities had less than 80 per cent data coverage, including 21 cities in Haryana. While all 24 cities in Haryana initially had data available at the start of winter, several monitoring stations stopped reporting by December. By the end of the season, only Charkhi Dadri, Faridabad, and Gurgaon met the 80 per cent data coverage threshold, while data from the remaining 21 cities, crucial for assessing winter pollution, was unavailable," the report said.



India Gate Ranjan Dimri

Global economies grappling with population crisis: Chandrababu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday stated that the world's leading economies are grappling with a population crisis. Speaking at a book launch, Naidu emphasised that while these countries possess advanced resources such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cutting-edge technologies, they lack a sufficient workforce to operate them. "All top countries in the world are struggling. There is no population. AI and technology exist, but there are no people to operate them," he said. Citing examples of Europe, China and Japan, Naidu noted that ageing populations have become a significant challenge for these economies. However, he suggested that



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu during book launch of 'World History' written by former Minister Daggubati Venkateswara Rao in Visakhapatnam PTI

India remains largely unaffected by this issue. Over the past few months, the TDP supremo has urged the people of Andhra Pradesh to have more children to counter the declining population trend. Naidu also highlighted that India is at a pivotal moment in history. Recalling the Liberalisation,

Privatisation, and Globalisation (LPG) reforms introduced in the early 1990s under the Congress government, he said India gained a "first-mover" advantage in the

Information Technology sector. Expressing confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, Naidu asserted that Andhra Pradesh would achieve similar progress through its Swarna Andhra 2047 initiative. Despite Andhra Pradesh facing multiple challenges, Naidu reaffirmed his determination to navigate them, envisioning the Telugu people as a globally leading community. Comparing the state's current situation to being on a "ventilator," he stated that he regularly seeks support from the central government to address its issues. On Thursday, he also requested assistance from Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The event in the port city was attended by former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and Sitharaman.

School paint sparks allegations of saffronisation in Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
BHUBANESWAR

The BJP government in Odisha has decided to paint all government school buildings with a shade of orange, prompting the Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) to allege that it is part of the ruling party's attempt at saffronisation of education. The BJD, on the other hand, asserted that the BJD, during its 24-year rule till June 2024, had painted school buildings green and student uniforms were green and white, similar to the party's colour code. The Odisha State Education Programme Authority (OSEPA) has recently issued an instruction to all district collectors about painting school buildings with 'Orange Tan-N' colour. "The government has been pleased to approve the new colour code. In this context, it is requested to issue suitable instructions to concerned field

functionaries for adoption of the approved colour code in all government schools, including PM SHRI schools, during construction, repair and renovation works," OSEPA state project director Ananya Das wrote to all collectors, who are the chairpersons of Samagra Shiksha in districts. This order would be in supersession of all previous instructions related to the colour code of school buildings, she said. Responding to the development, senior BJD leader Prasanna Acharya said it is "sheer politics and condemnable". "It is a peculiar psychology. I don't understand why this government is making such bogus decisions. What is the purpose? Can you change the education system by changing the colours? Can you infuse more energy among the children by changing the colour?" he asked. Alleging that the BJP is trying to infuse politics in the minds of schoolboys and girls,

Acharya claimed that nothing positive would be achieved by such a decision which involved crores of rupees of from the state exchequer. In his reaction, School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond said the previous BJD government had changed the colour of the schools and painted them with their party colour code. "We are not changing the colour of the school buildings. It was the BJD government which had changed the colours of school uniforms to buildings. The decision will create a good environment and the schools will look attractive," Gond said. In October last year, the BJP government changed the colour of the school uniforms of students studying in classes nine and 10 of government and aided schools. The new uniforms have a combination of light brown, chocolate and clay-baked yellow colours.

BJP brawls, walks out in Jharkhand Assembly, demands higher pensions for widows, PwDs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
RANCHI

BJP legislators on Thursday created a ruckus in the Jharkhand assembly, demanding an increase in the pension of widows and Persons With Disabilities (PwDs). The saffron party MLAs demanded a hike in the pension so that these people get financial assistance at par with beneficiaries of the 'Maiyan Samman Yojana'. The BJP legislators trooped into the well of the House, seeking a reply from the JMM-led government to their demand, and later staged a walk-out. They asked the government whether it intended to raise the pension amount of widows, physically challenged persons and elderly people at par with the beneficiaries of 'Maiyan Samman Yojana'. Under this scheme, the government provides ₹2,500 per month to women beneficiaries in the age group of 18 and 50 years. The government assured the agitating members that it would consider the demand. BJP MLA Satyendra Nath Tiwary first raised the issue during question hour. Replying to this, scheduled caste, tribe and backward class welfare minister Chamra Linda said 'Maiyan Samman' and pension are two different programmes. "Maiyan Samman is a government's women empowerment programme, while the pension scheme is run under the Centre-state share arrangement. There are complications in increasing the pension amount. If the Centre increases its share, we will also hike our share," Linda said.



Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren with his wife and JMM MLA Kalpana Soren during the Budget session of the state Assembly in Ranchi PTI

Tiwary said the population of widows in Jharkhand is around 2.85 lakh, while the number of physically challenged persons is around 72,000. "They receive only ₹1,000 a month, while 'Maiyan Samman' Yajana beneficiaries monthly receive ₹2,500. Interestingly, cooks in schools and health sahiyas (assistants) get monthly remuneration of ₹2,000, which is lower than the benefit of Maiyan Samman scheme," Tiwary said. Congress MLA Rameshwar Oraon also urged the government to address the alleged disparity. State minister Sudivya Kumar said that the government would soon increase the remuneration of cooks and health sahiyas to ₹3,000. BJP MLA Shatrughan Mahto again brought up the issue in a starred question. Dhanwar MLA and Jharkhand BJP president Babul Marandi said widows and physically challenged persons

should get a pension, which should be at par with the benefits of 'Maiyan Samman Yojana'. "I want to ask the government if it is in favour or not of the pension hike." Replying to this, parliamentary affairs minister Radha Krishna Kishore said that they would study the pension system of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh and then will consider the demand. BJP legislators sought a specific reply from the government if it would increase the pension amount of widows and physically challenged persons. Subsequently, they trooped into the well of the House and raised slogans against the government. Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahato urged them to go back to their seats as the government assured them to consider the matter. The BJP legislators, however, continued to create a ruckus in the Assembly and then walked out of the House.

Haryana CM urges CRPF trainees to serve impartially

PARVESH SHARMA ■
GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini called upon the trainee officers of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to take a pledge to carry out their duties impartially and fearlessly. He also urged them to always be ready to protect the law and the Constitution, safeguard the rights of the people with sensitivity and stand firm in their commitment to truth, honesty and dedication, regardless of the circumstances. The Chief Minister was speaking as chief guest at the passing out parade ceremony of 55th batch of directly appointed Gazetted Officers of the CRPF in Gurugram on Thursday. A total of 39 trainee officers, including two women officers, passed from the CRPF academy after completing a rigorous training program. He expressed confidence that these 39 trainee officers would discharge their responsibilities

with utmost honesty and devotion, contributing to the integrity, unity, and sovereignty of the nation in line with the proud legacy of the CRPF. Commending the CRPF for its invaluable contribution to the country's internal security, the Chief Minister described the force as the backbone of country's security. He also commended the CRPF for adopting modern technologies and training techniques, which are helping to develop professional and capable officers prepared to face any challenges in the field. The Chief Minister further encouraged the newly passing out officers to engage in constant learning, stressing that ongoing education and re-learning are essential for success. He highlighted that the CRPF is progressing towards modernisation and empowerment, ensuring that the force remains equipped to tackle evolving security challenges. "Congratulating the trainee officers, their families, and the entire CRPF, the Chief



Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini during the passing out parade of the 55th batch of DAGOs at CRPF Academy in Gurugram Pioneer Photo

Minister expressed his confidence that these officers would make significant contributions to the country's internal security and nation-building," he said. Saini also recalled the historic decision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow women in the Armed Forces, recognising the power of half the nation's population.

He thanked the Prime Minister for this initiative, which has led to the recruitment of many women in the Armed Forces. "The Haryana Government has also encouraged women to serve in the police force, with women currently making up 10 percent of the state police. The State government aims to increase this figure to 15 per-

cent in the near future, he added. Highlighting the Haryana government's commitment to strengthening security forces, the Chief Minister said that special attention has been given to technical upgrades, resource enhancement, and the expansion of training facilities to better equip police force for any challenges they may face. "In addition, the state has established a dedicated Sainik and Ardh-Sainik Welfare Department to support ex-servicemen and paramilitary forces. In cases of martyrdom, families of Haryana soldiers serving in the armed forces and paramilitary forces receive a financial assistance of ₹1 Crore, along with a government job for one family member. To date, 415 dependents have been provided with jobs," he informed. Director General CRPF Gyanendra Pratap Singh, Director CRPF Academy Sunil Kumar Jha and others dignitaries were also present on this occasion.

Congress to challenge BJP on key issues in Haryana Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
CHANDIGARH

The budget session of Haryana Assembly, which will begin here on Friday, is likely to be a stormy as the Opposition Congress will likely corner the ruling BJP over a host of issues, including unemployment, paper leak, rising debt, law and order and farmers' plight. According to the tentative schedule of the Budget session, the session will begin with the Governor's Address on Friday. There will be general discussion in the House on the Governor's Address on March 10, 11 and 12. The Budget estimates for 2025-26 will be presented on March 13 by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, who also holds the Finance portfolio while general discussion on the budget will take place on March 17 and 18. As per the tentative schedule, the Budget session will continue till March 25. Congress leader and former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda has said his party will strongly raise the issues including 'paper leak, unemployment, law and order and corruption'. "It has become clear to the entire state that the BJP is protecting the paper leak mafia, because one paper after another is getting leaked and there have been scams in every paper from the state board exams to recruitment

under this government," Hooda said recently. "One after the other, scams, including those related to mining, are being exposed. Corruption, unemployment and crime are continuously increasing in the state," Hooda alleged. The damage to farmers' crops because of recent heavy rain, "deteriorating law and order, rising debt" and other issues will also be raised by the party, he said. Indian National Lok Dal has said the party will prominently raise various issues related to public interest during the Budget session. Meanwhile, with the Assembly session beginning Friday, the Congress party is yet to name the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader. After BJP rode to power for a third consecutive term in Haryana in last year's Assembly polls, the Congress MLAs have attended three sittings of the Assembly without a Leader of Opposition. Meanwhile, during the Budget session, the government is going to bring a fresh version of the bill on the regulation of travel agents. Chief Minister Saini had recently said the travel agents involved in sending the state youth abroad through illegal routes are being identified and strict action will be taken against them. Saini had also said the government has made full planning to implement the 'Lado Lakshmi Yojana'.

Ahead of the October 2024 Haryana polls, the BJP had promised ₹2,100 to women as monthly financial assistance for the women under this scheme if the party returned to power. The Budget session is coming up and we will be making the provision of its budget, Saini had said. Meanwhile, ahead of the presentation of the Budget, Saini, in recent weeks, held pre-budget consultations with diverse groups to gather valuable suggestions. He also sought suggestions from ruling and opposition MLAs. Saini had on Tuesday said that the state budget for 2025-26 will be growth-oriented, with a special focus on sectors such as agriculture, education, health, sports, infrastructure, and women empowerment. He emphasised that the budget will lay a strong foundation for the state's progress and contribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) by 2047. "Our goal is to present a budget that drives prosperity for every citizen of the state," he added. Saini said the state government is working to improve the lives of people through various reforms. The state government has brought about a revolutionary change in governance over the past 10 years, marking the most significant transformation in over a decade, Saini added.

Abhishek conspicuously absent from TMC meeting

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

Amid speculations of an widening crevice between Mamata Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek who is also the Trinamool Congress (TMC) general secretary the latter on Thursday remained conspicuously by his absence in the crucial core committee meeting of the party that the Bengal Chief Minister had constituted last week to deal with the alleged permeation of electoral rolls with "ghost voters" - as an alleged "part of BJP's ploy to win the next year's State elections." The leaders of the core committee - comprising Firhad Hakim, Subrata Bakshi, Arup Biswas among others considered close to the Chief Minister - met on Thursday to discuss the issue of "spurious" electoral rolls. According to sources close to the junior Banerjee he would hold a separate meeting on March 15 where he is likely to call all district and block level leaders. Though sources in the TMC said that much should not be read about Abhishek Banerjee's Thursday's developments there was hushed talks about his absence from the meeting. The junior Banerjee who is also an MP from Diamond Harbour constituency is reportedly unhappy with the way his own coterie being marginalised in the party. Incidentally the issue became public recently when Abhishek



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee PTI

himself clarified his stand from a public platform. He told a party organisation meeting called by the Chief Minister at Netaji Indoor Stadium that rumors were being fanned that he was moving away from the party which he vowed to be untrue. "There is a propaganda in the social media that I am quitting the party. This is being done by the vested interests in the BJP. But I must say that I am not a traitor like Suvendu Adhikari or Mukul Roy. I had identified them as traitors who were betraying the party. I will not join the BJP come what may even if they cut my throat. I will still shout 'Mamata

Banerjee Zindabad. I will not join BJP. I will not betray the TMC or Mamata Banerjee," Abhishek had told the party members in presence of the Chief Minister. Meanwhile, in a related development senior TMC leaders including Subrata Bakshi, Firhad Hakim, Arup Biswas, Chandrima Bhattacharya and Ritabrata Banerjee on Thursday met the Chief Electoral Officer to discuss the permeation of fake voters in the electoral rolls. "We have alerted our leaders down the line and a statewide scrutiny is on. Hundreds of fake names are appearing that have been included in the voters' list. Many of these people live outside

Bengal and have different EPIC numbers in some cases they have the same EPIC numbers. This is a big scam and we have alerted the CEO about this and scrutiny will continue," said Bhattacharya. Earlier the Chief Minister had alleged that the BJP was filling the voters' list with ghost voters in order to win the 2026 Assembly elections like they allegedly did in Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi. "The leaders in Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi could not catch this trick but here we have caught it and will purge all the voters' lists clean. We will defeat the BJP once again," she said.

Army hosts 'Arunachal Pradesh - India Centric Geospace' seminar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
DIBRUGARH

The Indian Army hosted a two-day seminar titled 'Arunachal Pradesh - India Centric Geospace' in Assam's Dibrugarh district, an official release said on Thursday. The two-day seminar, which began on Wednesday at Dinjan Military Station, was attended by senior military officials, policymakers and scholars. It provided valuable insights into the region's geopolitical, economic and development aspects, it added. Leading scholar and commentator on transboundary rivers, climate change and the Arctic, Uttam Kumar Sinha, emphasised the need for India to enhance its river management capabilities independently rather than reacting to China's activities. He stressed a scientific, sustainable and people-centric approach to infrastructure development.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A game changer

The strengthening of EU-India ties offers a promising path towards stability, prosperity and technological advancement

The European Union's outreach to India has gained significant momentum, marking a new chapter in their strategic relationship. In the wake of global disruptions, including the shifting stance of the United States under Donald Trump-characterised by tariffs, the withdrawal of support for Ukraine, and disengagement from Gaza-the strengthening of EU-India ties emerges as a stabilising force in global geopolitics. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's recent visit to India underscores the EU's commitment to deepening ties with New Delhi. Meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Hyderabad House, von der Leyen expressed the EU's high regard for India as a partner. She emphasised that as the two enter the third decade of their strategic partnership, "the best is yet to come." This sentiment reflects the EU's vision of India as a key player in shaping global economic and political landscapes. A focal point of their discussions was the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a crucial initiative aimed at boosting connectivity, trade and energy cooperation.



Given the evolving geopolitical dynamics, this corridor could serve as a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative, ensuring a more diversified and resilient global supply chain. A significant highlight of the India-EU partnership is its deepening engagement in digital and technological arenas. With India emerging as a technological powerhouse and the EU striving for digital sovereignty, collaboration in these areas can create a formidable synergy. The EU's focus on clean energy aligns with India's ambitious renewable energy goals. Such initiatives can help India and the

EU lead the global transition towards a sustainable future. Beyond technology and energy, trade remains a cornerstone of EU-India ties. Both sides are actively negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that could unlock significant economic potential. The EU is India's second-largest trading partner and a comprehensive trade agreement would not only boost exports but also enhance supply chain resilience, particularly in a world grappling with economic volatility. With Trump's protectionist policies disrupting global trade, an EU-India trade pact could serve as a counterweight, ensuring that both economies remain competitive and open to global commerce. The collaboration on supply chain resilience will also be crucial in mitigating risks associated with overdependence on specific markets. With Trump's policies creating uncertainty in trans-Atlantic relations and global trade, the EU's pivot towards India reflects a strategic recalibration. The EU recognises India's growing role as a stabilising force in global affairs-both as a democratic counterweight to authoritarian regimes and as a crucial player in maintaining a rules-based international order. The EU-India partnership stands at a defining moment. With digital collaboration, green energy initiatives, and robust trade negotiations at the forefront, this relationship could reshape global economic and political alignments.

PICTALK



An Indian myna perches on a red silk-cotton tree (Bombax ceiba), in Nadia

One of the bigger challenges in life is to find an answer to a question dealing with life itself. The glib belief is that every problem has a solution. A wise-crack has rightly commented that every problem has a solution but the solution creates a problem of its own. If it were a simple, straightforward dimension, such as that, there would be nothing to worry about because problems and solutions would be in a dyadic relationship.

The problem arises when a problem is not solvable because two sides want a solution on their terms or indeed have no solution at all. This need not necessarily be an act of mischief, but it may be a simple case of jealousy/envy or indeed a bitter competitiveness that brooks no solution at all. The first exposure to such an intractable jungle-like situation today is that the two parties concerned themselves do not see a solution worth pursuing. This may be because of many reasons, one of them being that the person concerned may genuinely believe he has an upper hand and that he is not going to lose that advantage. Very often, this gets intertwined with ego, worth, or dislike.

If there are stakeholders beyond this, of a variety which see an advantage in the contending parties being maintained as contending parties, or there is a personal dislike between the two people concerned, then also a solution becomes well-nigh impossible. Thus, it is that certain problems have subsisted beyond generations and led to devastating wars which ultimately wiped out both parties, and there was nothing for the winner to take away at all.

The story of the Mahabharata is a telltale story of the winners ultimately having nothing to gain, at least for the generation in play. In more recent times, World War I and World War II did not produce any obvious winners, and the world went



back to a full circle. The better-known cases of history have similar dots on a lesser scale and indeed, this can be true also in personal lives.

The long and short of it is, it takes more than a 'win' to become a winner. At a different scale altogether, personal dislikes and prejudices can be so large that one adopts an attitude where one concludes that, irrespective of the nuances, one will simply not work towards a solution. Here again, the resolution of the conflict becomes difficult. Hence, it is a fortunate situation where both sides want a situation of solution and therefore are open to it. This is so often a given in this set of circumstances that to pray for it would be to hope for the near impossible.

To expect divine grace to sort out the situation may be the only route forward. Other factors prevent a meaningful resolution of a conflict, one being a gender dimension and another as sibling rivalry. Be that as it



THUS, IT IS THAT CERTAIN PROBLEMS HAVE SUBSISTED BEYOND GENERATIONS AND LED TO DEVASTATING WARS WHICH ULTIMATELY WIPED OUT BOTH PARTIES AND THERE WAS NOTHING FOR THE WINNER TO TAKE AWAY AT ALL

may, it is necessary to recognise that no conflict can be eternal either. While it is true that generations have transferred the conflict from one to another, the nature of the conflict itself became an impediment to solutions, and if nothing else, the ego factor may become a primary determinant of the way forward.

Under such circumstances, the generational transformation of the rivals involved alters the nature of the solution that is feasible.

Indeed, no solution is feasible unless it is doable and sustainable. People often align together because of their own needs and then find arguments to sustain their position. In many cases, logic gives way to simple impulses and a non-thinking solution takes hold of the operationally powerful. The operationally powerful impose their solution, and the predictable happens.

The flawed solution is subverted by the party whose basic need for advantage

flowing out of the conflict was not met. Under such circumstances, it may be useful to suspend the conflict and learn to live with it rather than solve the problem. Avoiding a problem or indeed learning to live with it may at times be a solution. This can follow many routes including not letting the problem escalate.

The enigmatic context is that very often, as the needs of the combatants change, the search for solutions also becomes elusive. This is because one has no use for "the solutions".

The times have changed, and the solutions are passive because there is nothing left to enjoy in becoming a winner. It is therefore important to realise, in many cases, that a solution is only a solution if it makes winners of all concerned. However, that may be another matter altogether.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BLUE ECONOMY NEEDS PROTECTION

Madam — Kudos for 'Balancing growth and conservation' (March 6) for highlighting the most sensitive issue of conservation at Kerala's Quilon fish bank. This is only one of the several aspects of conservation, and its ignorance has a massive, devastating effect on the blue economy and fishing community. Fifty-six percent of our coastal population is directly and indirectly dependent on the blue economy. The conservation aspect of sustainable growth and development has long been ignored by the policymakers. The political ecosystem is insensitive to conservation. In fact, extensive conservation projects need to be conceived and implemented on all river fronts, particularly in the hilly areas. In the absence of geological studies and research and conservation, mass destruction of life and property in hills is caused by torrential rains and floods.

Several rivers are disappearing fast, causing mass annihilation of flora and fauna as well as cultivation. The Geological Survey of India should carry out wide-ranging and widespread surveys and research in hills, riverbeds, and coastal regions to ascertain and fetch fresh data. The Archaeological Survey of India should engage conservation architects for carrying out conservation of excavation sites, historic places and buildings, ancient temples, river fronts, and coastal regions. Against all beliefs and perceptions, the conservation projects are potential employers and sources of revenue. Unfortunately, our engineering colleges are producing fewer conservation architects. Urban development is incomplete without conservation. Oceanic studies and research institutions should be established in all potential regions for sustainable growth and development.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

US IMPOSES HEAVY TARIFF

Madam — US President Trump launched trade war against America's three biggest trade partners, drawing immediate retal-

PM Modi inaugurates Vantara



The recent visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the inauguration of Vantara - Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre in Gujarat's Jamnagar has hit the headlines with heart warming pictures of the PM spending happy moments with the animals there. Spread over 3,000 acres, Vantara - a brain child of Anant Ambani of the Reliance group is all set to become the world's largest zoo and

rehabilitation centre. The world class rehabilitation centre is equipped with modern veterinary technology, including ICU, MRI, CT scan, X-ray, dialysis, ultrasound and endoscopy units, besides research institutions and academic hubs.

Vantara which received the prestigious 'Prani Mitra' national award focusses on rescue, rehabilitation and protection of animals globally. The facility has through its various operations rescued abused, injured and endangered animals from different parts of the globe. The rehabilitation center has been designed to recreate a natural and nurturing environment akin to the lush habitats from which the rescued animals hail from.

M Pradyu | Kannur

proceedings against US at the WTO on the additional tariffs. Trump's new tariff imposition will certainly rattle financial markets, raising concern about renewal inflation and business uncertainty in US and abroad.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

CONG LEADER COURTS CONTROVERSY

Madam — Congress spokesperson Sharma Mohamed stirred controversy by calling Rohit Sharma "fat for a sportsman" and the "most unimpressive" captain India has had. Congress is already losing deposits and the recent debacle at Delhi elections proved their worth and the high command must have decent control over the cadres by teaching them how to talk on a public platform. In a historic achievement, India captain Rohit has become the first captain to lead his team to the final in all four major Men's ICC tournaments.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A parent's reflection on society and the next generation

I was raised with the values of respect, resilience and financial prudence principles. yet, I sometimes wonder if these values still carry the same significance



SANJAY CHANDRA

I was born in a middle-class family 66 years back, less than 12 years after independence. My father was an engineer in a state government department. I came across my mother's diary a few years back. She had spent her life painstakingly balancing a low government income against the rising expenses of bringing up three children. My parents inculcated in us the value of money.

Another value that was deeply ingrained into our psyche by them was to respect everyone. I was taught that relationships were more important. A look of reproach from my mother was enough for me to realise my mistake if I was disrespectful.

This is what I tried to pass on to my children. I often look at them with pride. Having lived a better part of my life trying to hold on to these values, I now find myself at crossroads. Rapid urbanisation has resulted in concentration of bigger population in apartments. Technology has evolved like never before to provide faster modes of communication. Society WhatsApp group is unfortunately used by a few people at the expense of har-



monious relationships. Recently, I found myself at the receiving end of a vitriolic diatribe. My fault was that I had taken the initiative of organising a cultural and literature festival.

I sincerely believe that our youngsters need more exposure to the arts to navigate an increasingly fast-paced and more stressful world than what we grew up in. The language used by a few of these persons, who have claimed to be my good friends and neighbours over the past eight years, left me nonplussed at best and painfully hurt at worst. It should not have surprised me. These very people have been habitually doing the same followed by profuse apologies as it suits them. It just seems expedient to them in the murky world of society

politics. It does not matter to them if their actions are derogatory.

The condominium seems to be mirroring the happenings beyond the residential complex. I am left wondering that what is mirroring the happenings beyond the residential complex. I am left wondering that what factors that should create a unified society, are used to divide.

It is at times like these that I start doubting the values inculcated by my parents, and that in turn, I expect my children to follow. I talked to many other residents working with me for the festival. They were also indignant and sad about the way things were turning out to be. They had their own stories to narrate. One lady was rudely told to curb her flair for taking good initiative. Another lady was left with only four

other friends when it was time to pitch in. The majority suffers in silence at the hands of the minority. It made me rethink if our parents were wrong in turning us what many may call timid to suffer mental anguish. I also debated if we passed the right values to our children.

We were unanimous in our shared belief. I derived strength as I looked around, and talked to these parents, many of whom were younger. We have been right in teaching our children to be better humans.

Our children are better than us. They are putting the same technology to better use. #Me Too, Girls' Right to Education, Let's Talk, Good Touch Bad Touch are only a few of the initiatives that they are pursuing with single-minded devotion to make this a better world. I am confident that they will set better examples for the next generations to raise their voices and not suffer in silence against the bullies

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE RISE OF EU-INDIA DIGITAL COOPERATION

The EU and India are strengthening ties in digital governance, AI and semiconductor resilience



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Even as President Trump of the USA was busy being the world's most popular content creator, the global forces were turning the gears of a strategic realignment. After the televised, admonishment of Ukrainian President Zelensky by US President Trump and his VP JD Vance, the former was seen with several leaders of the European Union. As the case may be European leaders didn't have much to offer to Ukraine, except a subtle message to make peace with the US President. It may be a matter of time, before, Ukrainian President Zelensky has to evacuate his bunker office in Kyiv and perhaps make way for a more, current US head of state worldview representative. The message for the world was clear, the US would no longer be happy to bankroll, what it considers vague political narratives, potentially considered to be the hallmark of a free liberal world order.

This world order, incidentally a post-World War creation, by the US, ensured free fair open markets, meant for the prosperity of all. What this free world order has achieved in the past many decades can be debated, however, it has ensured the US retains its supremacy in the economic prosperity index and so have many of the aligned nations including India (since the 1990s). Just before the US and Ukraine visible spat, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen led a large delegation of senior ministers to Delhi to re-establish the high-level EU India Trade and Technology Council conversations. Given the current geo-political landscape, one of the major focus areas was Digital Economy and Governance.

The European Union (EU) and India reaffirmed their commitment to deepening digital cooperation, emphasising shared values through their Working Group 1 on Strategic Technologies, Digital Governance, and Digital Connectivity. Both sides pledged to accelerate human-centric



digital transformation and advance key technologies, including AI, semi-conductors, High-Performance Computing and 6G, to benefit both economies and societies. The two parties agreed to enhance research and innovation to improve competitiveness and economic security while promoting a cyber-secure global digital ecosystem. They also stressed the importance of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in fostering inclusive digital economies. Both sides committed to ensuring interoperability between their respective DPIs, safeguarding human rights, and protecting personal data and intellectual property. They also discussed mutual recognition of e-signatures to facilitate cross-border digital transactions.

On semiconductor collaboration, the EU and India focused on strengthening the resilience of supply chains and expanding joint research in areas such as chip design and sustainable technologies.

The two sides underscored their shared commitment to the responsible development of AI, agreeing to further cooperation through joint projects and the development of frameworks for ethical AI. They also plan to enhance cooperation on large language models and AI applications in sectors like climate change and bioinformatics. They also committed to implementing the Global Digital Compact, which was endorsed at the UN General Assembly in September 2024, and ensuring continued global support for multi-stakeholder internet governance at the upcoming World Summit on Information Society +20. It may be the right click for both the EU and India. The EU and India are seizing the opportunity to strengthen their digital and technological ties. Their renewed partnership signals a commitment to fostering a resilient, secure, and inclusive digital future, underpinned by shared values and mutual economic interests. As old alliances shift, new partnerships may define the contours of the evolving world order.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Namaste at Oscars: Indian cinema has arrived



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

Indian storytelling captivates and inspire audiences worldwide. With the right strategy, this moment can shape the future of Indian cinema



The Namaste at the Oscars 2025 has reinforced the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: "The world is one family," a vision that transcends borders yet thrives on respect, mutual interdependence and a shared spirit of creativity. This symbolic gesture was not merely a greeting but a powerful moment of inclusivity, reflecting cinema's unique ability to bring together artists, audiences and creators from across the globe. This moment at the Academy Awards highlighted how soft power is no longer confined to diplomacy alone; it now permeates events, institutions, and cultural exchanges. Cinema, often regarded as the perfect brand platform for fostering relationships, stood at the centre of this phenomenon.

The Namaste was a gateway, introducing the legacy of Indian storytelling to a diverse global audience and reinforcing the deep cultural interconnect between nations through the lens of cinema. Beyond its immediate impact, this gesture has set the stage for the future of the Oscars and similar global platforms. It paves the way for cultural ethos to play a larger role in how nations and their creative industries collaborate and connect. A simple, well-timed Namaste has given Incredible India a renewed global identity, transforming its participation in world cinema from occasional recognition to strategic influence.

Conan O'Brien's decision to open the Oscars with Namaste was not accidental. It was a statement, an acknowledgement that Indian cinema is no longer at the periphery of global storytelling. This was not a token mention of India, nor was it a cursory reference to its billion-strong audience.

This was a recognition of India's growing cinematic legacy and influence. India has long been part of Oscar history, but often through an external gaze. Films like Gandhi (1982) won big, Lagaan (2001)



A SIMPLE, WELL-TIMED NAMASTE HAS GIVEN INCREDIBLE INDIA A RENEWED GLOBAL IDENTITY, TRANSFORMING ITS PARTICIPATION IN WORLD CINEMA FROM OCCASIONAL RECOGNITION TO STRATEGIC INFLUENCE.

came close, and Slumdog Millionaire (2008) swept the Academy Awards, yet these narratives were largely shaped by Western filmmakers. The paradigm began to shift with R (2022), which not only won an Oscar for Naatu Naatu but also forced global audiences to acknowledge the unapologetic, high-energy storytelling of Indian filmmakers.

This shift was further cemented when Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine as Light (2024) won the Grand Prix at Cannes, a rare honour for Indian cinema. Films like Chaitanya Tamhane's The Disciple (2020), Rima Das's Village Rockstars (2017), and Nandita Das's Manto (2018) have been steadily breaking barriers, proving that Indian cinema is no longer defined by stereotypes but by diverse, powerful narratives.

The power of this Namaste must be harnessed beyond the Oscars. As India gears up for Cannes 2025, this moment should serve as a launching pad for stronger positioning. India's representation at global film festivals must be strategic; ensuring that films sent to these platforms reflect the depth, diversity, and dynamism of Indian storytelling.

The Cannes Film Festival has already been a crucial stepping stone for Indian cinema. From Neecha Nagar (1946) winning the Palme d'Or to Masaan (2015) winning the Un Certain Regard prize, India's legacy at Cannes has been long-standing. However, now is the time to transition from isolated wins to sustained influence.

The government and industry stakeholders must work together to ensure that Indian cinema is

not just participating but actively shaping the conversation. One powerful example of how such moments create ripples is Life of Pi (2012). When director Ang Lee won the Oscar for Best Director, he greeted the audience with a Namaste, acknowledging the deep Indian cultural influence on the film.

That moment reinforced India's storytelling traditions, but the Namaste at the Oscars 2025 is even more significant; it wasn't just about one film, it was about the entire Indian cinematic movement.

India must now leverage this momentum through platforms like WAVES, the country's film export initiative. WAVES has the potential to push Indian cinema into untapped markets, ensuring that films from independent, regional, and mainstream creators reach wider international audiences.

By riding the wave of this Namaste moment, WAVES can position Indian cinema not just as entertainment, but as a formidable cultural force. Strategic collaborations, international distribution networks, and dedicated Oscar campaigns must now be part of the plan.

If South Korea could orchestrate a global push for Parasite (2019), resulting in its historic Oscar win, India must now do the same, systematically pushing its best films into the international awards circuit.

This is not just about recognition; it's about claiming a rightful place in world cinema. The Namaste at the Oscars 2025 should serve as a wake-up call, a reminder that Indian cinema has evolved from

a land of fantasy to a nation of action. It is no longer a question of whether Indian films will win the Oscar; it is now a matter of when and how often. India is no longer a guest at the global film table-it is a host, a creator, and an influencer.

The Namaste was not just a greeting; it was an invitation for the world to recognise Indian cinema's true potential. The time to capitalise on this moment is now. With the right vision and action, this could be the defining decade when Indian cinema not only participates in global storytelling but leads it.

The world has acknowledged India. Now, Indian cinema must ensure that every frame, every story, and every festival presence echoes the power of that Namaste. The Namaste at the Oscars 2025 was more than a greeting-it was a defining moment for Indian cinema on the global stage. It symbolised India's growing influence in storytelling, marking a shift from sporadic recognition to strategic presence. To sustain this momentum,

India must leverage platforms like WAVES, push for global collaborations, and ensure strong representation at festivals. The world has acknowledged India's cinematic potential; now, it is time for Indian cinema to lead. With the right strategy, this moment can shape the future, ensuring that Indian storytelling continues to captivate and inspire audiences worldwide.

(The writer is former civil servant writes on cinema and strategic communication. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan)

Ganges dolphin resurfaces in Charikadia river after 25 years

The conservation of the Gangetic dolphin is not just about protecting a single species; it is intrinsically linked to keeping the Ganga clean

The recent sighting of the endangered Ganges dolphin (Platanista gangetica) in Assam's Charikadia River at Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur district, has sparked immense interest. Locally known as Sihu, this marks the first recorded presence of the species in the river since 1998, ending a 25-year absence. The prolonged disappearance of the Ganges dolphin from this waterway had fueled concerns over its dwindling numbers and possible extinction.



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

tems in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, including the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems. However, their population has now become fragmented, with significant numbers surviving only in isolated sections of these river systems. The Ganges dolphin is a unique freshwater species that is functionally blind and relies

on echolocation to hunt. Despite its remarkable adaptations, the species faces severe threats, primarily due to habitat degradation from large-scale development projects, including dam construction, drainage works, and embankments.

Pollution further exacerbates the risks to their survival. Recognizing the urgent need for conservation, India has taken steps to protect the Ganges dolphin. The National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC), the country's first dedicated research facility for this species, was inaugurated on March 4, 2024, in Patna, Bihar. Located on the Patna University campus, near the Ganges River, the center spans 4,400 square meters and aims to conduct in-depth research

on dolphin behavior, survival, and threats.

It also provides training to fishermen, equipping them with conservation techniques to protect dolphins during fishing activities. Despite conservation efforts, human infrastructure projects continue to pose significant challenges. The collapse of a four-lane bridge under construction over the Ganga River at Sultanganj-Agwani in Bihar for the third time has drawn attention to the environmental impact of such developments. In 1990, the Bihar government declared a 60-km stretch of the Ganga River from Sultanganj to Kahalgaon as the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, aiming to protect the species while promoting eco-tourism. Recognizing the ecological



significance of the Ganges dolphin, the Government of India designated it as the national aquatic animal in October 2009 during the inaugural meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA), chaired by then-Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

The Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary currently hosts approximately 250 dolphins, frequently observed between Shankar Talkies and

Manik Sarkar Ghat. While government agencies have made efforts to protect the species, conservationists emphasize that illegal sand mining must be curbed to ensure its survival. Large-scale sand extraction disrupts river ecosystems by altering water flow and destroying the dolphins' habitat and food sources, such as small fish. Mechanized sand mining further exacerbates environmental damage, creating deep trenches that negatively impact

river health. Experts warn that unless illegal activities are controlled, the already fragile dolphin population will continue to decline. On a more optimistic note, Union Water Resources Minister C.R. Patil has stated that the Namami Gange Mission-a large-scale initiative aimed at rejuvenating the Ganga-has contributed to a rise in the dolphin population. Experts view this as an encouraging sign of improving environmental conditions. According to the Wildlife Institute of India, approximately 4,000 Gangetic dolphins currently inhabit the Ganga and its tributaries, with nearly 2,000 residing in Uttar Pradesh alone. In response, the Uttar Pradesh government has introduced a tourism policy designating a dolphin sanctu-

ary within the Chambal Sanctuary to bolster conservation efforts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's launch of Project Dolphin has significantly increased public awareness of the species. This initiative strengthens conservation measures while promoting the ecological health of the Ganga River. Further emphasizing its commitment to protecting the species, the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife has designated October 5 as National Dolphin Day. With increasing awareness and conservation initiatives, there is renewed hope that these remarkable creatures will continue to thrive in their natural habitat.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

EU leaders open emergency summit on defence and Ukraine aid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ BRUSSELS

Facing the prospect that the United States might cut them adrift under President Donald Trump, European Union leaders launched a day of emergency talks Thursday in a bid to beef up their own security and ensure that Ukraine will still be properly protected.

Friedrich Merz, the likely next chancellor of Germany, and summit chairman Antonio Costa discussed over breakfast in Brussels ways to fortify Europe's defences on a short deadline.

Merz pushed plans this week to loosen the nation's rules on running up debt to allow for higher defence spending. Meanwhile, the 27-nation bloc was waking up to news that French President Emmanuel Macron would confer with EU leaders about the possibility of using France's nuclear deterrent to protect the continent from Russian threats.

It all underscored the sea change that has taken place in the two months since Trump took office and immediately started questioning the cornerstones of cooperation between the United States and Europe that had been the bedrock of Western security since World War II.

"Given these profound shifts in US policy, and the existential threat of another war on the continent, Europe must manage its essential defence tasks," the European Policy Center think tank said in a commentary.

The bloc will "take decisive steps forward," Macron told the French nation Wednesday evening. "Member states will be able to increase their military



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of the European Council to discuss continued support for Ukraine and European defense, in Brussels on Thursday. PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

spending" and "massive joint funding will be provided to buy and produce some of the most innovative munitions, tanks, weapons and equipment in Europe," he said.

Adding to the ebullient message, he said that "Europe's future does not have to be decided in Washington or Moscow." Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is taking part in the summit.

Limited room to increase spending: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has proposed a plan to loosen budget rules so countries that are willing can spend much more on defense.

Her proposal is underpinned by 150 billion euros (\$162 billion) worth of loans to buy priority military equipment. Most of the increased defense spending would have to come from national budgets at a time when many countries are already overburdened with debt.

France is struggling to reduce an excessive annual budget deficit of 5% of GDP, after running up its total debt burden to 112% of GDP with spending on relief for businesses and consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Five other countries using the euro currency have debt levels over 100% of GDP: Belgium, Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal. Europe's largest economy, Germany, has more room to borrow, with a debt level of 62% of GDP.

Pressing security needs: Part of any security plan is also to protect the increasingly beleaguered position of Ukraine. A Russian missile killed four people staying at a hotel in Zelenskyy's hometown overnight. He said that a humanitarian organisation's volunteers had moved into the hotel in Kryvyi Rih, in central Ukraine, just before the strike.

The volunteers included Ukrainian, American and British nationals, but it wasn't clear whether those people were among the 31 injured. Early this week, Trump ordered a pause to US military supplies to Ukraine as he sought to press Zelenskyy to engage in negotiations to end the war with Russia, bringing fresh urgency to Thursday's summit.

Thursday's meeting is unlikely to address Ukraine's most pressing needs. It is not aimed at urgently drumming up more arms and ammunition to fill any supply vacuum created by the US freeze. Nor will all nations agree to unblock the estimated 183 billion euros (\$196 billion) in frozen Russian assets held in a Belgian clearing house, a pot of ready cash that could be seized.

Still, the Europeans underlined the importance of the moment. "Europe faces a clear and present danger on a scale that none of us have seen in our adult lifetime. Some of our fundamental assumptions are being undermined to their very core," von der Leyen warned in a letter to the leaders ahead of their meeting.

But perhaps the biggest challenge for the EU will be to take a united stance at a moment when it's fractured, since much of what the bloc does requires unanimous support. Hungary is threatening to veto part of the summit statement on Ukraine. Even if the challenges are so daunting, Thursday's summit is unlikely to produce immediate decisions on spending for Ukraine or its own defenses. Another EU summit where the real contours of decisions would be much clearer is set for March 20-21.

France steps in to provide military intel to Ukraine as US freezes vital information

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ PARIS

France is providing military intelligence to Ukraine after Washington announced it was freezing the sharing of information with Kyiv, French defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu said Thursday. The US said Wednesday it had paused its intelligence sharing with Ukraine, cutting off the flow of vital information that has helped the war-torn nation target Russian invaders, but Trump admin-

istration officials have said that positive talks between Washington and Kyiv mean it may only be a short suspension. American intelligence is vital for Ukraine to track Russian troop movements and select targets.

Speaking to France Inter radio on Thursday, Lecornu said France is continuing its intelligence sharing. "Our intelligence is sovereign," Lecornu said. "We have intelligence that we allow Ukraine to benefit from." Lecornu added that following

the US decision to suspend all military aid to Ukraine, French President Emmanuel Macron asked him to "accelerate the various French aid packages" to make up for the lack of American assistance.

Lecornu said that in the wake of the US decision, shipments of Ukraine-bound aid departing from Poland had been suspended, adding however that "Ukrainians, unfortunately, have learned to fight this war for three years now and know how to stockpile."

Macron offers French nuclear deterrence to protect Europe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron said Wednesday he will discuss with European allies the possibility of using France's nuclear deterrent to protect the continent from Russian threats, amid concerns over potential US disengagement. France is the only nuclear power in the European Union. Macron, in a televised address ahead of a special European summit Thursday, described Russia as a "threat to France and Europe," and said he had decided "to open the strategic debate on the protection of our allies on the European continent by our (nuclear) deterrent."

Macron said Russia is now spending 40% of its state budget in military spending, with plans to expand its army by 2030 with 300,000 additional soldiers, 3,000 tanks and 300 jet fighters. "Who can believe that today's Russia will stop at Ukraine?" Macron asked.

EU leaders are set to address the issue of nuclear deterrence, among other topics, during the Thursday summit in Brussels focusing on support for Ukraine and European defense. European NATO allies have for decades counted on the powerful US deterrent.

"Europe's future does not have to be decided in Washington or Moscow," Macron said, insisting that "the innocence of the last 30 years" which followed the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, is "now over."

Allies need to make sure Russia would not invade Ukraine again after a potential peace deal is signed, Macron said. This means providing "long-term

support for the Ukrainian army" and possibly deploying European forces, he said. Those forces "would not fight on the front line, but they would be there, on the contrary, once peace has been signed, to guarantee that it is fully respected," Macron detailed. He said that a meeting of army chiefs of staff of European nations willing to be involved is to be held in Paris next week.

US President Donald Trump has pushed for Europe to carry more of the burden of protecting the continent, and Trump administration officials have indicated that the current US level of engagement may not be forever.

Macron also said he hoped to convince Trump not to impose tariffs on imports from Europe. Trump has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on European goods, arguing that the European Union has deliberately undermined trade with the US, which EU leaders have denied.

S Korean fighter jets accidentally drop bombs, injuring 8 people

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ SEOUL

Two South Korean fighter jets accidentally dropped eight bombs on a civilian area during a joint live-fire exercise with the US military on Thursday, injuring eight people, officials said.

The MK-82 bombs released by the KF-16 fighter jets fell outside a firing range, the air force said in a statement. It apologised and expressed hopes for a speedy recovery of the injured and said it would offer compensation and take other necessary steps.

The air force said the fighter jets were taking part in the one-day firing drill

with the US military in Pocheon, a city close to the heavily armed border with North Korea.

The air force also said a committee would investigate the accident and examine the scale of the damage inflicted.

An unidentified air force official told local reporters that a pilot of one of the KF-16s had entered wrong coordinates for a bombing site. An unidentified Defence Ministry official told reporters that further investigation was needed to determine why the second KF-16 also dropped bombs on a civilian area.

In a televised briefing, Pocheon

Mayor Paek Young Hyeun called the bombings "awful" and urged the military to halt drills in the city until it formulates reliable steps that can prevent a recurrence. He said that Pocheon, a city of 140,000 people, provides three major firing ranges for the South Korean and US militaries.

Park Seong-sook, a 70-year-old eyewitness who was not hurt in the bombing, said she thought "a war has broken out." "It was such a loud sound," she said, adding that it left her trembling with fear. The military said later Thursday it has decided to suspend all live-fire drills across South Korea.

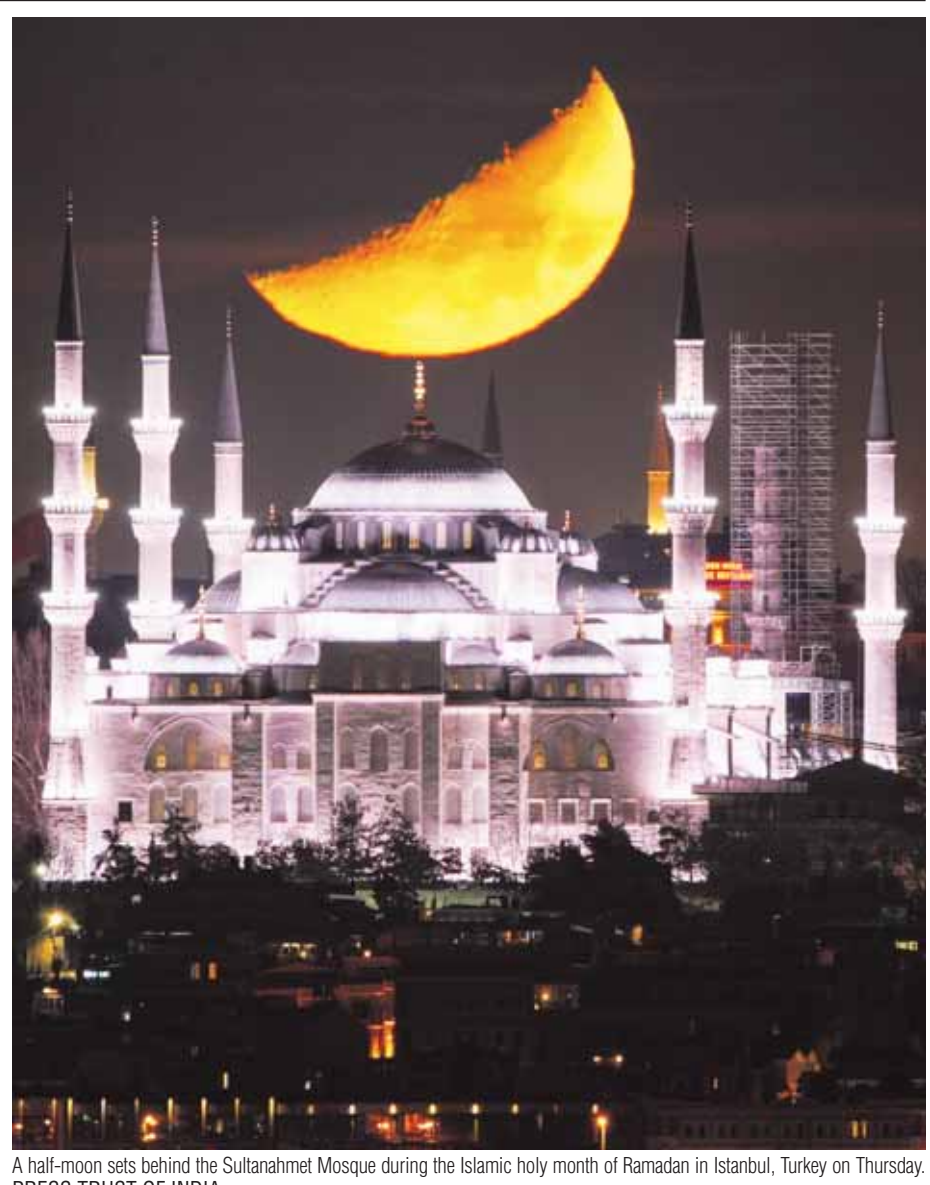
with the US military in Pocheon, a city close to the heavily armed border with North Korea.

Russian missile kills 4 in Zelenskyy's hometown hotel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ KYIV

In Ukraine, a Russian ballistic missile killed four people staying at a hotel in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown during the night. Zelenskyy said a humanitarian organisation's volunteers had moved into the hotel in Kryvyi Rih, in central Ukraine, just before the strike, including Ukrainian, American and British nationals.

He didn't say whether those people were among the 31 injured. Russia fired 112 Shahed and decoy drones, as well as two ballistic Iskander missiles, at Ukraine overnight, the Ukrainian air force said.



A half-moon sets behind the Sultanahmet Mosque during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in Istanbul, Turkey on Thursday. PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NZ diplomat in London loses his job over Trump remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND)

New Zealand's most senior envoy to the United Kingdom has lost his job over remarks he made about US President Donald Trump at an event in London this week, New Zealand's foreign minister said Thursday.

Phil Goff, who is New Zealand's High Commissioner to the UK, made the comments at an event held by the international affairs think tank Chatham House in London on Tuesday. Goff asked a question from the audience of the guest speaker, Finland's Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen, in which he said he had been re-reading a famous speech

by former British wartime leader Winston Churchill from 1938, when Churchill was a lawmaker in the government of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Churchill's speech rebuked Britain's signing of the Munich Agreement with Adolf Hitler, allowing Germany to annex part of Czechoslovakia. Goff quoted Churchill as saying to Chamberlain, "You had the choice between war and dishonour. You chose dishonour, yet you will have war." Goff then asked Valtonen: "President Trump has restored the bust of Churchill to the Oval Office. But do you think he really understands history?"

As the audience chuckled at the New Zealand envoy's question, Valtonen said she would "limit myself" to saying that

Churchill "has made very timeless remarks," according to video of the event published by New Zealand news outlets. Valtonen's speech on Tuesday was billed as covering Finland's approach to European security at an event entitled Keeping the peace on NATO's longest border with Russia.

In response to questions from reporters, Foreign Minister Winston Peters said that Goff's remarks were "disappointing" and made the envoy's position "untenable."

"We have asked the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Bede Corry, to now work through with Mr. Goff the upcoming leadership transition at the New Zealand High Commission in London,"

Peters said in a written statement. Goff has been New Zealand's envoy to the UK since January 2023. He did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Officials were "in discussion with High Commissioner Goff about his return to New Zealand," according to a written statement from New Zealand's foreign minister, which did not divulge more detail.

Former Prime Minister Helen Clark — who was Goff's boss during his time as a lawmaker — denounced his sacking in a post on X, where she wrote the episode was "a very thin excuse" for removing a "highly respected" former foreign minister from his diplomatic role.

'Bear with me', Trump says as both farmers, consumers brace for tariff effects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ OMAHA (US)

Farmers and meat producers across the US can expect the new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China and the retaliatory action from those countries to hurt their bottom lines by billions of dollars if they stay in place a while, and consumers could quickly see higher prices for produce and ground beef. But some of the impact on farmers might not be felt until the next harvest and some products might actually get cheaper in the short run for consumers if exports suffer.

And the price of corn, wheat and soybeans accounts for relatively little of the price of most products. Plus, President Donald Trump could offer farmers significant aid payments, as he did during the trade war with China during his first administration, to offset some of the losses. In his address to Congress

Tuesday night, Trump argued that agricultural imports hurt American farmers and asked them to "bear with me again" as he seeks to protect them. He didn't mention any additional aid.

"I love the farmer," he said. If the tariffs make farmers uneasy about investing in expensive tractors and consumers worry so much about groceries that they cut other spending, that would hurt the economy overall and could even lead to a recession. And consumers were already worried about record egg prices amid a bird flu outbreak.

"Exactly how strong our economy is over time has a lot to do with US consumers' comfort with continuing to go out to restaurants and continuing to buy washers and dryers and just that general activity. And a lot of what we're talking about here is probably going to slow some of that," said Glynn Tonsor, an agricultural econ-

omist at Kansas State University. The situation has some farmers stocking up on equipment and supplies in preparation for prices to go up, but it's not like they can easily buy all their fertilizer ahead of time. And consumers might have a hard time stockpiling perishable products like avocados and ground beef.

The details of how the tariffs are implemented and whether any products are excluded will also matter. **How will farmers be hurt?:** Corn and soybean prices for this year's harvest already fell roughly 10% since the tariffs were first announced a couple of weeks ago.

Joe Janzen, an agricultural economist with the University of Illinois, said that has "snuffed out" any profitability in those crops. He called Trump's comments that farmers may be able to sell more of their products at home "at best tone deaf." "There is no domestic market

for the amount of corn, soybeans, wheat, and other agricultural products that we now export in significant quantities," he said.

Meanwhile, as crop prices decline, farmers might see their fertilizer bill jump because 85% of the potash American farmers use in fertilizer comes from Canada, which also supplies some nitrogen fertilizer as well. The Fertilizer Institute President and CEO Corey Rosenbusch said "an open, fair, predictable and transparent trade environment between the U.S. and Canada is vital."

"We need potash to raise healthier crops," said Minnesota farmer Danny Lundell, who hosted Gov. Tim Walz on his corn and soybean farm near Cannon Falls on Tuesday. "And it doesn't matter if you're big, medium or small, it's going to affect you." But Iowa State agricultural economist Chad Hart said many farmers applied fertilizer to

their fields last fall and may not have to pay the higher fertilizer bills until later.

What about meat prices?: The United States imports a lot of lean beef to mix with fattier beef produced at American plants to make hamburger, and that imported beef will get more expensive because nearly half of it comes from Canada and Mexico. That's likely to show up in grocery stores in six to eight weeks.

America exported more than \$1.8 billion worth of chicken and another \$8.4 billion in red meat to Mexico, Canada and China. These tariffs could easily lead to a 10% drop in exports, Tonsor said. If farmers aren't able to move that much meat overseas because of tariffs, they can seek to sell more domestically — but they'll likely have to discount prices. Bad for farmers, but potentially good for consumers. The impact will vary by prod-

uct. For instance, demand for steaks and bacon may remain relatively steady because little of that is exported, but the price of hams could drop in the US because Mexico is a major buyer of those. The price of specialty cuts like beef tongue that are almost entirely exported will plummet.

Livestock producers will see a bit of relief because the cost of the feed they use will decline, but Tonsor said they will still lose money overall.

How do farmers feel about this?: "Farmers are very concerned," said Steve Kuiper, a director at the Iowa Corn Growers Association. "People just aren't buying stuff," he said, which is hitting big companies like John Deere and local suppliers that sell their equipment.

That's the case for farmers who grow table crops as well as commodities. Katy Rogers, who manages an organic farm outside Indianapolis, said that as

soon as Trump started talking about tariffs she bought everything she thought would see a price hike in the coming months.

Kuiper hopes that the impacts of tariffs can be mitigated and eventually lead to a more level playing field that benefits farmers. He wants to see trade open with more countries. For instance, he said that for corn, China had already been favoring trade with Brazil, so he instead sees opportunity in places like India.

But Trump has threatened additional reciprocal tariffs on other countries on April 2, which could make it harder for farmers to shift their exports to other countries. **What is the lasting impact?:** Trump can do a lot to ease farmers' pain with aid payments. He gave them more than \$22 billion in aid payments in 2019 and nearly \$46 billion in 2020, though that year also included aid related to the pan-

dem. But Janzen notes that Trump is working to drastically slash spending across the federal government.

Walz, who lost his bid to become vice president last fall, said the tariffs will hurt trading relationships and prompt buyers in China, Mexico and Canada to look elsewhere. Some trade experts question how long Trump's tariffs will last as they boost prices for American consumers, including his base voters, who have long complained about inflation and rising food prices. "It is going to do nothing to help with the food inflation in the US," said Timothy Wise, author of "Eating Tomorrow" and expert on agricultural trade between Mexico and the US "I don't see it as sustainable. I don't find it plausible that corporate folks who surround Trump are going to sit back and allow him to destroy their foreign markets."

China's premier & American president: Two leaders, two speeches, two differing world visions

AP ■ BEIJING

Their words came just an hour apart this week — two major speeches by two of the world's most powerful leaders, delivered on opposite sides of the planet. Together, they illustrate the very different approaches the world's 21st-century powers are taking to achieve their respective national ambitions.

government's performance last year and its plans for 2025. He spoke from the stage of a grand, theatre-like chamber in the Great Hall of the People, a monumental, communist-era edifice on Beijing's renowned Tiananmen Square. China's top leader, Xi Jinping, sat on the dais behind him. The thousands of delegates arrayed before them politely applauded at the appropriate junctures.

in the cheerleading way of American politicians pumping up support for their policies. He promised steps — including cutting energy costs — to defeat inflation, a pain point for many Americans. And he pledged to put more tariffs on imports, a move he claimed would boost US industries but threatens to upset the global trade order and inflict pain on China and its export-dependent economy.



deflation than inflation. But Li acknowledged the other challenges the economy faces, chiefly falling real estate prices and depressed consumer spending.



He reaffirmed Beijing's "unswerving commitment" to opening up. "Regardless of changes in the external environment, we should remain steadfast in our commitment to opening up," Li said. "We

will continue to expand our globally oriented network of high-standard free trade areas." In a statement that no doubt referred in large part to the United States, he cautioned that "an increasingly complex and severe external environment may exert a greater impact on China in areas such as trade, science and technology."

our auto workers and companies from economic destruction." Beijing, on the contrary, is betting on a greener economy. Li said it would be a priority to accelerate "green transition" for "all areas of economic and social development". China already has the world's largest electric vehicle industry. Echoing earlier pledges by Xi, Li said China would "actively and prudently" work towards carbon peak and carbon neutrality.

with impacts on both the economic and military rivalry between the two. Trump made no mention of technology except to say that it would help build "a golden dome" missile defense shield over the U.S. He declared his focus as commander-in-chief to be "building the most powerful military of the future." One measure, he said, was to resurrect the American shipbuilding industry. Li's report touched on defence only briefly but said China would "speed up the development of new combat capabilities."

PUBLIC NOTICE: My Clinet's Ramniwas S/o late Sh. Rajpal & Sunita W/o Ramniwas R/o H.No-603 Village Tahirpur Sarla Delhi-110095 be at know to public...

PUBLIC NOTICE: To be known to all that I, Push Latag Vag W/o Late Sh. Ashok Kumar Vig R/o House No. B-22/1401, Toliya, Violent Sector-65, Gurgaon, Haryana-122102 mutatee/owner of flat bearing No. 61-F, Second Floor, under LIC category, Pocket K, situated at Sheikh Sarai-II, New Delhi-110017.

PUBLIC NOTICE: It is brought to the notice of the Public in general that my client Devesh Gupta son of Shri Deepak Gupta resident of K/1-88 Block-I, Kirti Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh 201002 has lost/misplaced all original documents i.e. allotment letter, possession letter, share certificate, Conveyance Deed and Related Payment receipt etc. of his Flat No. E-33, Mount Everest CGHS Ltd., Plot No. 17, Sector-09, Dwarika, New Delhi. In this regard, FIR/NCR has been lodged on Delhi Police online portal vide LR No.2639431/2025 dated 04/03/2025.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Max Multi Speciality Centre, Panchsheel Park & Max Institute of Cancer Care, Lalpat Nagar will be destroying medical records related to the treatment and/or test performed of its patients at the Centre pertaining to the period January - 2021 to December - 2021.

PUBLIC NOTICE: It is to inform that certain individuals are misusing the stamp of Advocate SHALU Enrollment No. D/267/2012 and representing wrongfully before District Court at Gautam Buddha Nagar. Everyone is requested to check the Delhi Bar Council Identity Card before signing any Document/Affidavit/Vakalatnama.

MAX Healthcare PUBLIC NOTICE: DESTRUCTION OF MEDICAL RECORD OF PATIENTS. Notice is hereby given that Max Multi Speciality Centre, Panchsheel Park & Max Institute of Cancer Care, Lalpat Nagar will be destroying medical records related to the treatment and/or test performed of its patients at the Centre pertaining to the period January - 2021 to December - 2021.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given to the Public that the Sale Deed executed between Subhash Chander Sumran and M/s Northern Strips Ltd through its Director Praveen Bansal is registered for the residential property bearing No.106 for land measuring 13.12Biswa out of Kharsa No. 144/106 (00.13.12) in the extended Lal Dora of Village Kanjhawala, Delhi having registration No. 2831, book No. 1 volume No. 153 page No. 25-35 dated 03.10.2019 before Sub Registrar SR VI D Rohini Delhi has been lost. LR No. 2635836/2025 dt. 03-03-2024 is lodged in PS, Crime Branch, Delhi. If found kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address.

PUBLIC NOTICE: It is to inform that certain individuals are misusing the stamp of Advocate SHALU Enrollment No. D/267/2012 and representing wrongfully before District Court at Gautam Buddha Nagar. Everyone is requested to check the Delhi Bar Council Identity Card before signing any Document/Affidavit/Vakalatnama.

CHANGE OF NAME: I, No.15432404W Hav (Cik Sd) Ashik Kumar Singh, R/o- Vill- Ainy Hatinsii, PO & Teh- Kaiserganj, Dist- Bahraich, U.P.- 271903, have changed my son's name from Aarav Singh to Raghuvver Singh, vide affidavit dated 06/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Max Multi Speciality Centre, Panchsheel Park & Max Institute of Cancer Care, Lalpat Nagar will be destroying medical records related to the treatment and/or test performed of its patients at the Centre pertaining to the period January - 2021 to December - 2021.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given to the Public that the Sale Deed executed between Jagdish Chander Sethi and M/s Northern Strips Ltd through its Director Praveen Bansal is registered for the residential property bearing No.106 for land measuring 13.12Biswa out of Kharsa No. 144/106 (00.13.12) in the extended Lal Dora of Village Kanjhawala, Delhi-110081 having Registration No. 2832, Book No. 1 volume No. 153 page No. 34-44 dated 03.10.2019 before Sub Registrar SR VI D Rohini Delhi has been lost. LR No. 2636625/2025 dt. 03-03-2024 is lodged in PS, Crime Branch, Delhi. If found kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address.

PUBLIC NOTICE: May it be known that my client(s), Sunil K/ Gupta & Veena Gupta, R/o House No. 32, First Floor, Pocket-9, Sector-22, Rohini, Delhi-86 do hereby cut, sever all their ties with Ardit Gupta (Son), Twinkle Garg (Daughter in Law), Sovika Gupta (Grand Daughter). We disown them & declare that they shall not get any share in our moveable & immovable property. Whosoever deals with them shall do so at their own risk and my client shall not liable for the same.

PD(1635)C I, Nirmala, Mother of No.14868601F NK Mahadik Mahesh D, R/o- A/P Dhumalwadi, Tal- Koregaon, Dist- Satara, Maharashtra-415010, have changed my name from Nirmala to Nirmala Dadaso Mahadik, vide affidavit dated 06/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1636)C I, JC-733683L Sub Sudhir Kumar, R/o- Vill- Dabadua, PO- Daulatpur (Baldeo), Teh- Mahawan, Dist- Mathura U.P.- 281301, have changed my son's name from Rahul Kumar to Rahul Deshwar for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 06/03/2025 before Executive Magistrate, Delhi Cantt.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE: The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Gati Shakti Unit/Delhi, DRM Office, New Delhi-110055 invites e-tender for the under noted work: 1 Name Electrical work in connection to (A) Sahibabad-Ghaziabad: Replacement of work of automatic section with Distributed Electronic Interlocking (B) Delhi and its Sara Rohilla - Replacement of signalling gears with Electronic Interlocking (C) Replacement of signalling gear on age cum conditional basis with EI at 6 stations i.e. GRA, BZJT, KUN, BZK, SHDM & MOY

PD(1637)C I, Kaushalya Singh, Mother of No.15801804P NK(GNR) Rohit Kumar Singh, R/o Vill- Sahari Chak, PO- Hardi Chak, Dist- Gorakhpur, U.P. have changed my name from Kaushalya Singh to Kaushalya Devi, vide affidavit dated 06/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

Name of the Hospital Contact person Details Date of medical records to be destroyed: Max Multi Speciality Centre Panchsheel Park, NH-10, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110017

Office of the Superintending Engineer 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering) E-TENDER NOTICE: The Superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 07/03/2025 & onwards on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in

KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS! MORE HOLI FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2025

In order to clear extra rush of passengers during the upcoming Holi Festival, Railways have decided to run the following additional Holi Festival Special Trains as per details given below :-

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 02436/02435 New Delhi-Patna Jn.-New Delhi Reserved Vande Bharat Holi Special Train. 22 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 02436 Ex New Delhi on 08.03.2025 to 20.03.2025 (Except Monday) and 02435 Ex Patna Jn. on 09.03.2025 & 21.03.2025 (Except Tuesday).

STOPPAGES: Ghaziabad, Kanpur Central, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar & Ara Jn. stations. ACCOMMODATION: Executive & Chair Car.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 09425/09426 Sabarmati Jn.-Haridwar Jn.-Sabarmati Jn. Holi Special Train. 14 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 09425 Ex Sabarmati Jn. on 09, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27 & 30.03.2025 (Thursday & Sunday) and 09426 Ex Haridwar Jn. on 10, 14, 17, 21, 24, 28 & 31.03.2025 (Friday & Monday).

STOPPAGES: Mahesana Jn., Palampur Jn., Abu Road, Pindwara, Falna, Marwar Jn., Beawar, Ajmer Jn., Madar Jn., Kishangarh, Jaipur Jn., Gandhi Nagar Jaipur, Bandikui Jn., Alwar, Rewari, Gurgaon, Delhi Cantt., Delhi Jn., Ghaziabad, Meerut City, Muzaffarnagar & Roorkee stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 04829/04830 Jodhpur Jn.-Gorakhpur Jn.-Jodhpur Jn. Holi Special Train. 08 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 04829 Ex Jodhpur Jn. on upto 27.03.2025 (Thursday) and 04830 Ex Gorakhpur Jn. on 07.03.2025 to 28.03.2025 (Friday).

STOPPAGES: Merta Road Jn., Degana Jn., Choti Khatu, Didwana, Ladnun, Sujargarh, Ratangarh Jn., Churu Jn., Sadulpur Jn., Loharu, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Gurgaon, Delhi Cantt., Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Lucknow, Ayodhya Cantt., Ayodhya Dham Jn., Mankapur Jn., Basti & Khalilabad stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 04821/04822 Bhagat Ki Kothi-Haridwar Jn.-Bhagat Ki Kothi Holi Special Train. 08 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 04821 Ex Bhagat Ki Kothi on 10.03.2025 to 31.03.2025 (Monday) and 04822 Ex Haridwar Jn. on 11.03.2025 to 01.04.2025 (Tuesday).

STOPPAGES: Jodhpur Jn., Gotan, Merta Road Jn., Degana Jn., Choti Khatu, Didwana, Ladnun, Sujargarh, Ratangarh Jn., Churu, Sadulpur Jn., Hisar, Jakhaj Jn., Sunam Udham Singh Wala, Dhuri Jn., Patiala, Rajpura Jn., Ambala Cantt. Jn., Saharanpur & Roorkee stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 06073/06074 Trivandrum North-Hazrat Nizamuddin-Trivandrum North Holi Special Train. 04 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 06073 Ex Trivandrum North on 07.03.2025 to 14.03.2025 (Friday) and 06075 Ex Hazrat Nizamuddin Jn. on 10.03.2025 to 17.03.2025 (Monday).

STOPPAGES: Kollam Jn., Kayankulam Jn., Chengannur, Tiruvalla, Kottayam, Ernakulam Town, Aluva, Thrissur, Palakkad Jn., Podanur Jn., Tiruppur, Erode Jn., Salem Jn., Jolarpettai Jn., Katpadi Jn., Chittoor, Tirupati, Renigunta Jn., Gudur Jn., Nellore, Vijayawada Jn., Warangal, Balharshah, Nagpur Jn., Rani Kamalapati, Bina Jn., Virangana Lakshmbhai Jhansi, Gwalior Jn., Agra Cantt Jn. & Mathura Jn. Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 05007/05008 Gorakhpur Jn.-Amritsar Jn.-Gorakhpur Jn. Holi Special Train. 08 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 05007 Ex Gorakhpur Jn. on 08.03.2025 to 29.03.2025 (Saturday) and 05008 Ex Amritsar Jn. on 09.03.2025 to 30.03.2025 (Sunday).

STOPPAGES: Khalilabad, Basti, Gonda Jn., Burhwal, Sitapur Jn., Bareilly, Moradabad, Saharanpur Jn., Yamunanagar Jagadhri, Ambala Cantt., Dhandari Kalan, Jalandhar City & Beas stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 04380 Yog Nagari Rishikesh-Ahmedabad Jn. Holi Special Train. 01 Trip.

DATE OF RUN: 04380 Ex Yog Nagari Rishikesh on 07.03.2025 (Fri). STOPPAGES: Haridwar Jn., Roorkee, Tapri Jn., Meerut City, Ghaziabad Jn., Mathura Jn., Kota Jn., Nagda Jn., Ratlam Jn. & Godhra Jn. stations. ACCOMMODATION: General.

For any kind of information, passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTEs App.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 05045/05046 Lal Kuan-Rajkot Jn.-Lal Kuan Holi Special Train. 16 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 05045 Ex Lal Kuan on 09.03.2025 to 27.04.2025 (Sunday) and 05046 Ex Rajkot Jn. on 10.03.2025 to 28.04.2025 (Monday).

STOPPAGES: Kichha, Baheri, Bhoji Pura, Izzatnagar, Bareilly City, Bareilly Jn., Badaun, Soron Shukar, Kasganj, Hathras Jn., Mathura Cantt., Mathura Jn., Bharatpur, Dausa, Jaipur Jn., Phulera Jn., Nawa City, Kuchaman City, Makrana Jn., Degana Jn., Merta Road Jn., Gotan Jodhpur Jn., Luni, Samdhari Jn., Mokalsar, Jalor, Modran, Marwar Bhnimal, Raniwara, Dhanera, Bhildi Jn., Patan, Mahesana Jn., Viramgan Jn., Surendranagar & Wankaner Jn. stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 05193/05194 Chhapra-Mtyr Captain Tushar Mahajan-Chhapra Holi Special Train. 08 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 05193 Ex Chhapra on 10.03.2025 to 31.03.2025 (Monday) and 05194 Ex Mtyr Captain Tushar Mahajan on 12.03.2025 to 02.04.2025 (Wednesday).

STOPPAGES: Chhapra Kacheri, Masrakh, Dighwa Dubauli, Thawe Jn., Tamkuli Road, Padrauna, Kaptanganj Jn., Gorakhpur Jn., Khalilabad, Basti, Gonda Jn., Burhwal, Sitapur, Sitapur City, Shahjehanpur, Bareilly, Moradabad, Laksar Jn., Roorkee, Saharanpur, Yamunanagar Jagadhri, Ambala Cant Jn., Dhandari Kalan, Jalandhar Cantt., Pathankot Cantt., Kathua & Jammu Tawi Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 08895/08896 Gondia Jn.-Chhapra-Gondia Jn. Holi Special Train. 01 Trip.

DATE OF RUN: 08895 Ex Gondia Jn. on 11.03.2025 (Tuesday) and 08896 Ex Chhapra on 13.03.2025 (Thursday).

STOPPAGES: Dongargarh, Raj Nandgaon, Durg, Raipur Jn., Bhatpara, Usalpur, Pendra Road, Anuppur Jn., Shahdol, Umaria, Katni, Maihar, Satna, Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chheoki, Ghazipur City & Ballia stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 08863/08864 Gondia Jn.-Chhapra-Gondia Jn. Holi Special Train. 01 Trips.

DATE OF RUN: 08863 Ex Gondia Jn. on 12.03.2025 (Wednesday) and 08864 Ex Chhapra on 14.03.2025 (Friday).

STOPPAGES: Dongargarh, Raj Nandgaon, Durg, Raipur Jn., Bhatpara, Usalpur, Pendra Road, Anuppur Jn., Shahdol, Umaria, Katni, Maihar, Satna, Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chheoki, Ghazipur City & Ballia stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 04280 Lucknow Jn.-Sabarmati Jn. Holi Special Train. 01 Trip.

DATES OF RUN: 04280 Ex Lucknow Jn. on 07.03.2025 (Friday).

STOPPAGES: Kanpur Central, Tundia Jn., Agra Fort, Achhnera Jn., Bharatpur Jn., Bandikui Jn., Jaipur Jn., Phulera Jn., Ajmer Jn., Abu Road, Palampur Jn. & Mahesana Jn. stations. ACCOMMODATION: Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 04382 Bareilly-Sabarmati Jn. Holi Special Train. 01 Trip.

DATES OF RUN: 04382 Ex Bareilly on 08.03.2025 (Saturday).

STOPPAGES: Ramganga Bridge, Kasganj Jn., Hathras Road, Mathura Jn., Bharatpur Jn., Bandikui Jn., Jaipur Jn., Phulera Jn., Ajmer Jn., Abu Road, Palampur Jn. & Mahesana Jn. stations. ACCOMMODATION: General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 04680 Amritsar Jn.-Kathihar Jn. Holi Special Train. 01 Trip.

DATE OF RUN: 04680 Ex Amritsar Jn. on 07.03.2025 (Friday).

STOPPAGES: Beas Jn., Jalandhar City Jn., Ludhiana Jn., Sirhind Jn., Ambala Cantt. Jn., Saharanpur, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjehanpur, Hardoi, Lucknow Jn., Rae Bareilly Jn., Ma Belhadevi Pratargarh Jn., Varanasi Jn., Ghazipur City, Ballia, Suraimanpur, Chhapra, Hajipur Jn., Barauni Jn., Begu Sarai, Khagaria Jn., Mansi Jn., Saharsa Jn., Banmankhi Jn. & Purnia Jn. stations. ACCOMMODATION: Sleeper & General.

Table with 4 columns: Train No., ARR., DEP., STATIONS. 05060 Azamgarh-Secunderabad Jn. Holi Special Train. 01 Trip.

DATES OF RUN: 05060 Ex Azamgarh on 07.03.2025 (Friday). STOPPAGES: Mau Jn., Belthara Road, Salempur Jn., Bhatni Jn., Deoria Sadar, Gorakhpur Jn., Basti, Mankapur Jn., Ayodhya Dham Jn., Ayodhya Cantt., Lucknow, Kanpur Central, Orai, Virangana Lakshmbhai Jhansi Jn., Lalitpur, Bina Jn., Bhopal Jn., Itarsi Jn., Betul, Nagpur, Chandrapur, Balharshah, Sirpur Kaghnazgar, Kaptipet Jn. & Kacheguda Stations. ACCOMMODATION: Sleeper & General.

GST Council reconstitutes GoM on GST revenue analysis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council has reconstituted the Group of Ministers on GST revenue analysis which will suggest sector-specific issues that need policy intervention, and the feasibility of a unified enforcement platform to check

tax evasion. The GST Council, in its 55th meeting on December 21, 2024, had decided to reconstitute the Group of Ministers (GoM) on GST revenue analysis with a revised ToR. The GoM was first set up in 2019. The reconstituted GoM on 'Analysis of Revenue from

GST' under Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, would have nine members including from the states of Bihar (Samrat Chaudhary), Chhattisgarh (O P Choudhary), Gujarat (Kanubhai Desai), Andhra Pradesh (P Keshav), Maharashtra (Ajit Pawar), Punjab (Harpal Singh

Cheema), Tamil Nadu (Thangam Thennarasu) and Telangana (M B Vikramarka). As per the expanded ToR, the GoM would analyse the state-wise revenue collection trend, including the identification of revenue patterns across sectors and regions. It would also review details of revenue from the inter-state

outward supply. It would also conduct a review of sector-wise analysis and identify sector-specific issues that need policy intervention or enforcement measures. The GoM would also analyse the effect of macroeconomic policy changes and geographical factors on GST revenues, challenges faced by

agrarian and smaller states, and analyse the impact of amendments made in GST acts and rules. Goods and Services Tax (GST) was rolled out on July 1, 2017. Since then the Act and its rules have been amended to make it easier for businesses after approval of the GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister and

comprising state counterparts. The GoM would 'review and recommend harmonisation of anti-evasion, audit, scrutiny tools developed by various agencies (NIC, GSTN, DGARM, state governments) to create a unified enforcement and compliance platform'. It would also suggest suitable measures/policy intervention

for course correction for revenue augmentation, particularly for states suffering high revenue shortfall. The expanded ToR of the GoM comes at a time when another GoM, under Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, is already working on rationalisation of GST rates and slabs.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. : T_23-24_Anti_Graffiti_RT1/NOTICE Date : 06.03.2025
E-TENDER NOTICE
 Coach MLR Workshop, Jhansi for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender from reputed contractors for following work:-
Tender No. : T_23-24_Anti_Graffiti Qty.: 100 Coaches
Description of work: Supply and Apply anti-graffiti coating on side wall of Railway coaches.
Tender cost : Rs. 32,68,482.00 (Rs. Thirty-Two Lakhs Sixty-Eight Thousand Four Hundred Eighty-Two only)
Completion period : 12 months Earnest money : Rs. 65400/-
Tender doc. cost : Rs 0.00/-
 1. Tender will be closed at 12:00 Hrs on 05.04.2025 and is available on Indian Railway E-Tendering website www.ireps.gov.in. For detailed information please visit Indian Railway E-Tendering website www.ireps.gov.in. Tenderers should watch the website for the corrigendum/addendum to the NIT/e-tender document, if any as there will not be any separate communication for the same. **43125 (C)**
 © PRONCR North central railways © proncr © PRONCR www.nctr.indianrailways.gov.in

HDFC BANK
 Registered Office: HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400 013 and having one of its office as Retail Portfolio Management at HDFC Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, I-Think Techno Campus, Kanjurmarg (East), Mumbai - 400042.
 We understand your world

SALE INTIMATION AND PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.

The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loans/Overdrafts/Against Securities.
 Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loans / facilities terms, the below loan accounts are classified as NPA (Non-Performing Asset). The Bank has issued loan recall notice to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard.
 The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose of the Securities on or after 14th March 2025 for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are hereby notified to treat this as a notice of sale in compliance of section 176 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 4th Mar 2025	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXX2830	SUKHADA GODBOLE	1,02,404.00	07-Mar-25

Date: 07.03.2025
 Place: MADHYA PRADESH
 HDFC BANK LTD.

Ashwini Vaishnav launches IndiaAI compute portal, dataset platform AIKosha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ NEW DELHI

Marking a year of the IndiaAI Mission, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Thursday launched the IndiaAI compute portal and dataset platform AIKosha, among a slew of other initiatives under the IndiaAI Mission, aimed at improving access to AI and fostering innovation. The compute portal will provide access to compute more than 18,000 GPUs, cloud storage and other AI services to students, startups, researchers, academia, and government departments. The platform aims to streamline access to high-quality non-personal datasets

for AI innovation. The Minister for Electronics and IT also launched AIKosha — an all-in-one dataset platform providing resources, tools, and expert mentorship to help transform potential ideas into industry solutions. Datasets will be available for model builders and developers to work with and launch India-specific AI models. The compute portal will be used to develop India's own foundational model, Vaishnav said, adding that the preparedness for India's own foundation model is progressing well and as many as 67 applications have been received. Citing India's mission to the moon, he said the mission was conducted at a fraction of the

cost of other countries' moon missions and the same model will be followed for the foundational model and India will build it at a fraction of cost of what other countries are doing it. In 3-4 years, India should have its own GPUs competing at the global stage, Vaishnav said, adding that the cost of using these GPUs is historically low at less than ₹100/hour. MeitY Secretary S Krishnan said the launch of the compute portal will enhance the way AI gets rolled out and implemented across the country. "The AI Compute Portal is the largest component of the India AI mission. Almost about 45 per cent of funds (of India AI Mission) are earmarked for that particular area," Krishnan said. Technology, specially AI, can be an enabling factor in achieving the 2047 Viksit Bharat dream, he added. Further, MeitY launched a competency framework for AI and public sector officials, and the India AI Startups Global Acceleration Programme. The ministry also awarded students under the India AI Fellowship programme, and recognised 30 selected AI applications. In March last year, the cabinet approved the IndiaAI mission with a budget outlay of Rs 10,371.92 crore. It intends to establish a comprehensive ecosystem catalyzing AI innovation through public-private partnerships. The mission is implemented by 'IndiaAI' Independent Business Division (IBD) under Digital India Corporation (DIC).

India Semicon Mission-2 in the works: IT Secretary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ GANDHINAGAR

The government is ready with an outline of next phase of India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) and discussions are internally for its rollout, a senior government official said on Thursday. Speaking at IESA Vision Summit, Ministry of Electronics and IT Secretary S Krishnan said the government is also mulling supporting ambitious chip design projects in the country as well as semiconductor packaging designs. "The next stage of ISM is in the works. We have had discussions, discussions with many of the stakeholders, including many amongst you, as to how to design the programme. The design and the outline is ready, and there's undergoing detailed discussions internally in the government," he said. Krishnan in his virtual speech said that the second phase of ISM proposes to provide support for gases and other elements that are required for semiconductor production. He said that the first phase of ISM had a total outlay of ₹76,000 Crore comprising ₹65,000 Crore for chip manufacturing units, ₹10,000 Crore for modernising semiconductor lab at Mohali and ₹1,000 Crore for the design-linked incentive scheme.

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 Corporate Identity Number: L64920MH1994PLC334457
PUBLIC NOTICE
 This is to inform the Public that Auction of pledged Gold Ornaments will be conducted by TruCap Finance Limited on 24th March 2025 at Harda at 11:00 A.M.
 Branch address: TruCap Finance Limited, Ground Floor, Dubey Building, Beside Nehru Park, Gate No. 1, Maharana Pratap Ward, Ward No. 19, Behind Priyanka Nursing Home, Harda (MP) - 461331.
 The Gold Ornaments to be auctioned belong to Loan Accounts of our various Customers who have failed to pay their dues. Our notices of auction have been duly issued to these borrowers.
 The Gold Ornaments to be auctioned belong to Overdue Loan Accounts of our various Customers mentioned below with branch name.
Harda Branch: GL000000207922, GL000000210368, GL000000260019, GL000000257687, GL000000262549, GL000000299129, GL000000293623, GL000000300170, GL000000299173, GL000000302010.
Khirkia Branch: GL000000201284, GL000000201250, GL000000209303, GL000000210141, GL000000212550, GL000000252621, GL000000256633, GL000000256167, GL000000260812, GL000000254667, GL000000289835, GL000000250495, GL000000252486, GL000000255244, GL000000258767, GL000000294572, GL000000296243, GL000000247203, GL000000255679, GL000000260070, GL000000262060, GL000000289893, GL000000293702, GL000000292965, GL000000294583, GL000000300832, GL000000183965, GL000000184386, GL000000177673, GL000000181129.
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 This is to inform the Public that Auction of pledged Gold Ornaments will be conducted by TruCap Finance Limited on 24th March 2025 at New Market, Bhopal at 11:00 A.M.
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Sensex rallies 610 points to reclaim the 74,000 mark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rallied nearly 610 points to reclaim the 74,000 mark while Nifty closed above 22,500 on Thursday following heavy buying in Reliance on easing crude oil prices and firm global trends after US President Donald Trump softened stand on tariffs. Recovering from early losses, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 609.86 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 74,340.09, marking its second straight day of gains. During the day, it surged 660.57 points or 0.89 per cent to hit a high of 74,390.80. The broader Nifty of NSE

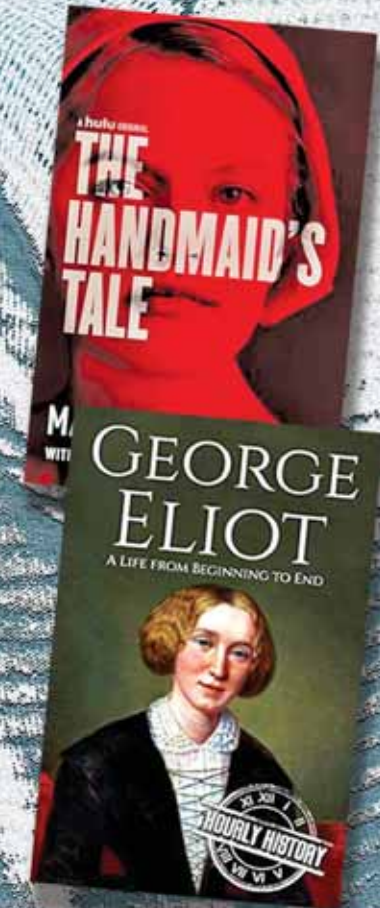
advanced 207.40 points or 0.93 per cent to close at 22,544.70. In the session, the 50-share barometer jumped 219.15 points or 0.98 per cent to hit an intraday high of 22,556.45. From the Sensex pack, Asian Paints, NTPC, Reliance Industries, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finserv, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Adani Ports and SEZ, Axis Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Bajaj Finance were the major gainers. Tech Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Zomato, Tata Motors, and IndusInd Bank were the laggards. "The Indian indices exhibited resilience, owing to positive global cues following Trump's softened tariff stance on automakers from Canada and Mexico amidst the weakening dollar index," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said. A correction in crude oil prices, influenced by a slowdown in demand and further economic stimulus from China, ignited optimism in the energy and metals sectors, Nair added. Broader markets also closed higher with the BSE smallcap gauge climbing 1.63 per cent and midcap index advancing 0.65 per cent. Among the BSE sectoral indices, Energy, metal, Oil and Gas, Commodities, Utilities, Services, Power, healthcare, FMCG and Industrials were the gainers.

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VOICES THAT SHAPED THE WORLD

For centuries, women writers have challenged norms, reshaped narratives and transformed literature with their powerful voices, says SAKSHI PRIYA



THE ROAD AHEAD
TODAY, WOMEN WRITERS DOMINATE BESTSELLER LISTS, WIN PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS AND CONTINUE TO REDEFINE LITERATURE. MARGARET ATWOOD'S THE HANDMAID'S TALE REMAINS RELEVANT IN DISCUSSIONS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS. BERNARDINE EVARISTO BECAME THE FIRST BLACK WOMAN TO WIN THE BOOKER PRIZE, PROVING THAT DIVERSE VOICES CAN NO LONGER BE SIDELINED. IN INDIA, WRITERS LIKE MEENA KANDASAMY, AVNI DOSHI AND JANICE PARIAT ARE PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF STORYTELLING; ENSURING WOMEN'S NARRATIVES REMAIN AT THE FOREFRONT OF LITERARY DISCOURSE.

WHY WOMEN'S STORIES MATTER
WOMEN'S LITERATURE IS NOT A NICHE; IT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR COLLECTIVE HUMAN EXPERIENCE. IT CHALLENGES STEREOTYPES AND DEEPENS EMPATHY. EVERY BOOK WRITTEN BY A WOMAN CARRIES WITHIN IT THE STRUGGLES, DREAMS AND HISTORIES OF THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE HER.



For centuries, women have used literature as a means of resistance, self-expression and transformation. Yet, history has often overlooked their contributions, celebrating male writers while marginalising women's voices. From medieval poets to contemporary literary powerhouses, women writers have not only broken barriers but also redefined storytelling, shaping cultural and social narratives across the world.

The Struggle for Recognition
In earlier times, societal norms denied women access to education, making it difficult for them to enter the literary world. Many resorted to pseudonyms to get published. Mary Ann Evans wrote as George Eliot, while the Brontë sisters first published under the names Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Even Jane Austen's early works were signed "By a Lady." Despite these challenges, their narratives carried immense depth, challenging gender roles, class structures and moral dilemmas in ways that few male writers dared to explore.

In India, the struggle was even more pronounced. For centuries, women's stories remained within the oral tradition, passed down through generations but rarely written. It was only in the 19th century that writers like Toru Dutt and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain began breaking societal constraints. Hossain's *Sultana's Dream*, published in 1905, imagined a world where women ruled and men were confined to their homes, questioning patriarchal norms in a way that was revolutionary for its time.

The 20th century marked a turning point globally and in India. Women writers not only published under their real names but also dictated literary trends. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* questioned the systemic suppression of women's voices in literature.



Nobel laureate Toni Morrison chronicled the Black female experience in America with unmatched brilliance. Meanwhile, Amrita Pritam became a literary icon with her evocative poetry on *love and Partition*, particularly *Ajj Akhaan Waris Shah Nu*. Mahasweta Devi's writings on tribal communities and marginalised women forced society to confront uncomfortable truths.

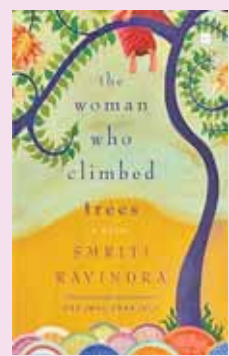
Literature as Change
Women's literature has never been just about storytelling, it has also been a tool for activism. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* laid the foundation for feminist thought. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* exposed racism and

misogyny with raw honesty. In India, Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* challenged conservative mindsets with its bold depiction of female desire. Kamala Das's poetry and autobiographical works fearlessly explored themes of identity, love and rebellion, inspiring generations of women to embrace their truths.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* reframed gender discussions for a new generation. In contemporary Indian literature, writers like Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri and Perumal Murugan continue to challenge social norms, bringing stories of the unheard into mainstream cultural consciousness and discourse.

THIS WOMEN'S DAY, LET US NOT ONLY CELEBRATE WOMEN WRITERS BUT ALSO READ THEM, AMPLIFY THEIR VOICES AND RECOGNISE THEIR ROLE IN SHAPING OUR WORLD, ONE STORY AT A TIME

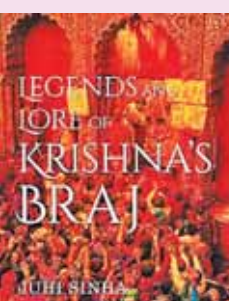
MARCH READS



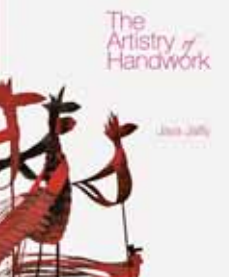
Book: *Woman Who Climbed Trees*
Author: Smriti Ravindra
Publisher: HarperCollins
Price: ₹599



Book: *Everything the light touches*
Author: Janice Pariat
Publisher: HarperCollins
Price: ₹599



Book: *Legends and lore of Krishna's Braj*
Author: Jui Sinha
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹1750



Book: *The Artistry of Handwork*
Author: Jaya Jaitly
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹395

Strength, Sisterhood & Survival

Fearless & Unstoppable
For the trailblazers, risk-takers and rule-breakers who refuse to conform. **Lessons in Chemistry** by Bonnie Garmus - A brilliant scientist-turned-TV-star shakes up the male-dominated world of the 1960s. **Great Circle** by Maggie Shipstead - A daring female pilot battles societal constraints to chase her dream of flying.

With Women's Day approaching, we celebrate the resilience, strength and complexity of women through literature. From fearless heroines to deep explorations of sisterhood, identity and psychological suspense, these books capture the essence of being bold, unapologetic and true to oneself.

Stronger Together
Because the women who stand by us, our friends, sisters and chosen family, shape who we become. **Everything I Know About Love** by Dolly Alderton - A raw, witty memoir on friendship, heartbreak and growing up.

Unapologetically Herself
For those embracing every part of who they are. **Open When** by Julie Smith - A heartfelt guide to self-care, resilience and mental well-being. **The Path to Self-Love** by Ruby Dhal - A warm, empowering roadmap to putting yourself first. **The Book You Want Everyone You Love to Read** by Philippa Perry - A witty and wise take on relationships, self-discovery and emotional well-being.

Women on the Edge
Complex heroines, unsettling twists and gripping suspense that will keep you hooked. **Strange Sally Diamond** by Liz Nugent - A woman with a traumatic past unearths chilling family secrets. **None of This Is True** by Lisa Jewell - A journalist's chance meeting with a mysterious woman spirals into a terrifying nightmare.



None of This Is True by Lisa Jewell - A journalist's chance meeting with a mysterious woman spirals into a terrifying nightmare. **The Crash** by Freida McFadden - Trapped in a snowstorm, a pregnant woman realises her safe haven isn't what it seems. **The Wrong Sister** by Claire Douglas - A dark, twisted tale of sisterhood gone terribly wrong.



Book: *The Artistry of Handwork*
Author: Jaya Jaitly
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹395

Books That Uplift and Inspire Women

BY TEAM VIVA

Here's a specially curated list of books from Rupa and Aleph, celebrating the strength, resilience and brilliance of women.

She Storms the Norms - Anisha Motwani & Priyadarshini Narendra
A powerful sequel to *Storm the Norm*, this book shares inspiring stories of women who have shattered societal barriers and self-doubt to redefine success. A must-read for those who dare to challenge the status quo.

About the Authors
Anisha Motwani is a business leader, speaker and author of the bestselling *Storm the Norm*. She serves as an independent director on various boards and has been recognised among the '50 Most Powerful Women in Indian Business' by Business Today. Priyadarshini Narendra is a marketing and strategy expert with decades of experience in advertising, consumer research and consulting. She has authored fiction books and contributes to discussions on women in the workplace.

1700 in 70: A Walk for a Cause - Gita Balakrishnan
Follow architect Gita Balakrishnan's extraordinary 1,700-km journey across India on foot, exploring design's impact on life and culture. A story of endurance, discovery and the power of walking with purpose.

About the Author
Gita Balakrishnan is an architect and founder of the Ethos Foundation, which promotes design awareness. An avid marathon runner, she has embarked on multiple walking expeditions, advocating for the role of design in everyday life.

Beyond the Bell: Preparing Students for Life - Chitra Prasad
A transformative guide on holistic education, this book goes beyond academics, focusing on life skills, values and personal growth to help students thrive in a rapidly changing world.

A Stitch in Time: The Biba Story - Meena Bindra
The inspiring journey of Meena Bindra, who built Biba from a home-based venture into a fashion empire. A compelling story of passion, perseverance and the rise of India's fashion industry.

About the Author
Meena Bindra, a pioneer in Indian fashion, founded Biba, transforming the salwar kameez into a modern style statement. From a small home-run business to a leading brand, her journey is a testament to innovation and determination.

These books offer wisdom, courage and motivation, perfect for Women's Day and beyond.

A Story of True Friendship

A touching story celebrating the strength, trust and support found in women friendships across generations, says TEAM VIVA

As International Women's Day approaches, there is no better time to celebrate the power of friendship, resilience and support. *The Wall Friends Club* by Varsha Seshan beautifully captures the essence of human connection, showing how even the most unexpected friendships can shape our lives in meaningful ways. Told through an epistolary format, the novel follows two young protagonists, Anandi and Sriya, who form an unlikely bond through letters slipped into a hidden gap in a wall. Despite never meeting, their relationship grows into something deeply special, proving that true friendship goes beyond physical presence. Varsha Seshan, speaking about the book, shares, "I love letters, old-fashioned letters, not just emails. I also had several pen pals as a child, which made me wonder ... could two children who never meet grow to be the best of friends? An epistolary novel has always seemed an exciting genre to explore, so here is my first one: *The Wall Friends Club*." At its core, the story is about breaking barriers, embracing differences and find-



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: *The Wall Friends Club*
Edited by: Varsha Seshan
Publisher: HarperCollins
Price: ₹175

ing comfort in the written word. Anandi and Sriya start as strangers, hesitant yet curious, unsure of who will find their letters. But as their exchanges continue, their letters become a refuge, a place where they can share their dreams, fears and small moments of joy. Their honest and heartfelt conversations reflect the beauty of friendships where trust and support come naturally, unburdened by the complexities of adulthood. *The Wall Friends Club* truly special is its timeless message about women's friendships. It reminds readers, especially girls, of the importance of lifting each other up rather than competing or tearing each other down. The characters, though young, face real struggles, doubts, insecurities and moments of self-reflection. Their journey resonates with anyone who has ever felt unsure about their place in the world or struggled to find their voice. Since *International Women's Day* is around the corner, this book is a perfect fit as it carries a powerful message about kindness, connection and the importance of supporting one another.

We will play according to situation: Ravindra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ LAHORE

Dashing New Zealand opener Ravindra feels adapting to the conditions will be key to succeed on an "unknown" Dubai surface in the Champions Trophy (CT) final against India on Sunday. Except the group match against India in Dubai, New Zealand have played all their games in Pakistan. The Kiwis had also played two games in Lahore during the preceding tri-series involving Pakistan and South Africa. India, on the other, have played all their matches in Dubai and are familiar with the conditions. "We do not quite know what the Dubai pitch is. We saw in our (group) game against India the ball turning but the other day didn't turn so much. We found ourselves adapting and playing according to situations, which we will need to do on Sunday again. "We will see in the next couple of days and hopefully it's a good cricket wicket," said



Ravindra after an emphatic 50-run win over South Africa in the semifinal here on Wednesday. Ravindra scored only six against India in the group, falling to Hardik Pandya while going for an upper cut, but the left-hander hopes for a better outing in the final. "You get out pretty much every time you bat. Hopefully I can bat for a longer period of

time and continue to play well for my team," he said. He is also aware about the expectations from the side in any big ICC event. "Whenever you approach a tournament, you expect hopefully to be among the top four teams and lucky enough we have been consistently good over a period of time. "We are happy with our preparation, coming here

early, we can see we are cooking reasonably well. Trust and ability around the group is great." Ravindra (108) smashed his second century of the tournament on Wednesday and together with Kane Williamson (102) starred in New Zealand's win. Senior middle-order batter Daryl Mitchell, who made 49 off 37 balls in the semifinal,

said the loss to India in the group stage is a thing of the past not and the final will be a new day. "The final is a new day and really excited to stuck into that challenge and adapt to whatever conditions and surfaces we get on the day and find ways to win moments throughout that game. "Hopefully, we can put some pressure on them and walk away with white jacket," he said. Mitchell is not interested in poking his nose in the talks surrounding an unfair advantage to India because of playing all their matches at one venue. "Just really happy with winning the game today and moving onto the final, it's an exciting opportunity," Mitchell said. "That's the nature of international cricket. We do a lot of travelling and we are used to that. It's not for me to decided how the tournament should be planned. I am just excited to be in an ICC final and looking forward to play in a few days time."

300 women boxers to compete in national championship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 300 pugilists will compete for glory at the 8th Elite Women's National Boxing Championship in Greater Noida from March 21-27. Organised in association with the UP Boxing Association, the tournament returns to the venue that hosted its last edition in 2023. Held under the World Boxing and Boxing Federation of India (BFI) competition guidelines, the championship is open to boxers born between January 1, 1984, and December 31, 2005. Each state unit can field a maximum of 10 boxers, with entries by numbers closing on March 10 and final name confirmation due by March 15. The action officially begins on March 20 with the arrivals, draw, and technical meeting. The opening rounds will take place from March 21 to 24, followed by the quarter-finals



on March 25 and the semi-finals on March 26, leading up to the finals on March 27. The tournament will follow a three-round format, with each bout consisting of three-minute rounds with a one-minute rest period. The ten-point must-scoring system will be in place, and all matches will adhere to World Boxing Technical & Competition Rules. Boxers will also be required to undergo a daily weigh-in throughout the competition. Beyond the 300 competing boxers, the championship will also bring together over 100 coaches and support staff, along with 60 technical officials, ensuring a top-tier spectacle. Defending champions Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) will be looking to retain their title after a dominant performance in the previous edition, where they clinched five gold medals, one silver, and two bronzes. RSPB nudged Haryana by eight points, the latter finishing second with seven medals, including three golds, three silvers, and a bronze.



We are still evolving as a team: Rob Walter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ LAHORE

Yet another knockout stage heartbreak at yet another ICC event. But perennial bridesmaid South Africa remains on the right track two years before the ODI World Cup at home, feels the team's head coach Rob Walter after its semifinal exit from the Champions Trophy here. Having topped their group, South Africa came up short in the second semifinal against New Zealand here on Wednesday night and went down by 50 runs in a chase of 362. Walter said there are enough positives to take back home notwithstanding a tough loss. "You know, in the wins, we managed to put some significant partnerships together. We had guys contributing significantly with the bat. From a bowling point of view, I think our biggest development was our accuracy. We were able to be very accurate as a seam unit," said Walter in the post-match press conference. "And that's something that we have been working really hard on. Every game we play is a learning opportunity. We just keep trying to take the little lessons. Today is a hard lesson, you feel it a little bit more, because it's the end of a campaign. "But we certainly continue to keep learning from things, little bits here and there, that we can do better. We're still evolving as a team; there's no doubt in my mind. Two and a half years to 2027 and that's

the eyes on the prize," he added. The 2027 ODI World Cup will co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Walter was expectedly asked about South Africa going down in a knockout game of another global event. Last year, the Proteas lost the T20 World Cup final to India from a commanding position. "I don't think it was any one particular thing that resulted in the loss, probably a couple. We could have handled the last 10 overs (while bowling) a little bit better. They got away from us a little bit. "There was a period sort of in the middle of the innings where Kane (Williamson) and Rachin (Ravindra) started to up their rates a bit. And we missed a few opportunities there," he explained. "...When we were batting. We were just starting to get going and that partnership got broken and really slowed us down in the middle and obviously we saw Dave (Miller) play unbelievably well in the end to get a hundred... You know you're just one partnership away from doing something special," said Walter. With Williamson and Ravindra easily manipulating the bowlers, it seemed South Africa ran out of ideas. However, Walter did not agree to that. "No, I don't think that's entirely accurate. We certainly tried to change it up, we tried to change the pace. I think the ball wasn't really gripping at that stage in the early phases, so the ball kept sliding on."

Gujarat Giants eye on WPL playoffs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ LUCKNOW

With two consecutive wins firming up their bid for a spot in the Women's Premier League (WPL) playoffs, Gujarat Giants will look to carry forward the momentum in their top-of-the-table clash against Delhi Capitals here on Friday. Gujarat Giants were languishing at the bottom of the WPL points table but two big wins — by six wickets over Royal Challengers Bengaluru and by 81 runs against UP Warriorz — have propelled them to the second position in the five-team points table. On Friday, the second-ranked Giants, with six points in as many games, will have the perfect opportunity to put their recent ascent to test against a formidable Delhi Capitals, who sit atop the table with 10 points. Delhi Capitals, who have already booked a place in the playoffs, would be keen to record a win and take their tally to 12 points and, in the



process, also better their net run rate to seal their spot in the final. It seems like things are falling in place at last for the Giants, who showed determination against all odds to beat RCB in a low-scoring thriller, with skipper Ashleigh Gardner (58 not out) and Phoebe Litchfield (30 not out) taking the side over the line. The Giants then demolished UP Warriorz by 81 runs in their previous outing, riding on Beth Mooney's stunning 96 not out and a collective show from their bowlers to

restricted the opponents to a mere 105 in pursuit of 187. The huge win not only lifted the Giants from the last spot but also improved their NRR to 0.357 from -0.450, better than the third-placed Mumbai Indians (0.166) with whom they are tied on six points. Additionally, with MI having three more games left, the Giants will be keen to keep their fate in their hands and not depend on the outcomes of other games. Giants' pacers, in particular, exploited the new ball and

conditions to good effect, blowing away UP Warriorz's batting after Mooney missed recording the first-ever ton by any player in this WPL. Their recent performances would surely fuel their fire but the Giants will have to be wary of the all-round strength of the Delhi Capitals, who too would be keen for a win, for it would help them finish at the top and qualify directly for the final. Currently, Delhi Capitals hold the top spot with 10 points from seven matches. They are in pole position to finish first, which would ensure direct entry into the title round. The teams finishing second and third will face off in the Eliminator next week. Meg Lanning has blown hot and cold this season but still remains dangerous, while India batter Shafali Verma (260 runs) has lit up the tournament with her aggressive stroke-play. Jess Jonassen has made all-round contributions for Delhi with 128 runs and joint second-highest nine wickets.



PSG lose to Liverpool in Champions League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain's (PSG) wasteful finishing came back to haunt the French team in a 1-0 loss to Liverpool in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16. Harvey Elliott's late goal on Wednesday punished PSG at Parc des Princes. It was only Liverpool's second attempt on target compared to a whopping 28 for PSG. Wasted chances galore hampered PSG during the group stage — where it lost to Arsenal, Atletico Madrid and Bayern Munich, scoring just one goal in those three games. But coach Luis Enrique's side had turned the corner in fine style with 40 goals scored in 10 straight wins before this game. PSG had 12 attempts on goal in the first half alone where Liverpool could not cope with PSG's pace, movement and constant positional switches on a night where Liverpool's 30-goal top scorer Mohamed Salah was kept quiet. Luckily goalkeeper Alisson was at his defiant best, however, making nine saves overall. The imposing Brazilian twice denied Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and kept out attempts from Bradley Barcola and Ousmane Dembélé. There were also bad misses from Barcola and midfielder João Neves, who both shot over from good positions. Kvaratskhelia thought he had

scored with a brilliant curling shot from the right of the penalty area in the 20th minute but the Georgia star's effort was ruled out for a razor-thin offside following a video review. VAR went in Liverpool's favour a second time minutes later, when referee Davide Massa checked for a red card check to see whether Ibrahim Konaté had pushed Barcola in the back. But no foul was given. Kvaratskhelia went close with a free kick early in the second half and had another low shot saved. Former England captain David Beckham was among the crowd at Parc des Princes. He played half a season for PSG after joining in 2013 during the start of the club's Galactico era and then retired. It was turning into a night of frustration for this PSG side. A corner almost went in, until Liverpool midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai stuck a leg out on the line. Then, with the clock ticking, Alisson made the save of the night when he somehow got both hands at full stretch to substitute Désiré Doué's bending shot from 20 meters. Luis Enrique said before the game that Liverpool were Europe's counterattack specialists and he was proved right. The return leg is on next Tuesday at Anfield and the winner faces either Aston Villa or Club Brugge in the quarterfinals.

India have 'real clarity' on how they want to operate in Dubai: Williamson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ LAHORE

New Zealand batting mainstay Kane Williamson reckons India have "real clarity" on how they want to operate in Dubai, having played all their Champions Trophy (CT) games at the same venue but his team will also be reasonably well-prepared for the tournament finale due to its limited past familiarity with conditions. Williamson did not specifically say that India had an advantage of playing at one venue, choosing to compare it to New Zealand's understanding of conditions in Lahore, where they beat South Africa on Wednesday to set up a final clash against the Rohit Sharma-led side in Dubai on Sunday. New Zealand had played two games in Lahore during the preceding tri-series involving Pakistan and South Africa. "I suppose having played there on a number of occasions; there's real clarity in how they want to operate," said Williamson when asked if India go into the final with an advantage of knowing the



conditions. "A little bit like our opportunity here, having played a number of times at this venue as well and I think that's part and parcel in cricket," he added. Having scored a hundred in the semifinal, Williamson is high on confidence and looking forward to the final. "It is what it is (India play all games in Dubai). Our focus is the next match, the location of that match, the opposition,

they're all factors. Obviously, we played India once there," he said. "The conditions are different, so it's important that we try and take away some of those positives and be nice and clear in how we're trying to operate come two or three-days' time in the final," he said referring to New Zealand's loss to India in the group stage. Both Williamson and Rachin Ravindra struck hundreds to fashion New Zealand's emphatic win. Williamson called Ravindra, who has score two hundreds in three games, a special talent. "It's a final, so it's exciting. If we go back to Rachin, an incredibly special talent. It's always great to bat with him. He goes out and he puts the team first and he plays with that freedom. "When we were out there batting together, there were moments where there were some good spells and it was a little bit challenging. We tried to feed off each other and keep each other focused on the job," Williamson said.

Aravindh defeats Giri in Prague Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ PRAGUE

Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram crashed through the defenses of super-solid Anish Giri to jump in to sole lead after the end of the seventh round of Prague Masters chess tournament now underway here. It was Aravindh all the way while R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with pre-empt rating favourite Wei Yi of China. Aravindh took his tally to five points out of a possible seven and now enjoys a half point lead over Praggnanandhaa who needs to catch up. With just two rounds to come, Sam Shankland of United States defeated Quang Leim Le of Vietnam. Interestingly, both Quang Leim and Giri had drawn the first six games and the axe fell on them at the same time. In the other decisive game 16-



years old Gurel Ediz of Turkey scored over local Nguyen Thai Dai Van to reach a fifty percent score while David Navara of Czech Republic played out a draw with Vincent Keymer of Germany. Aravindh on five and Pragg on 4.5 are now followed by Wei Yi, Ediz, Keymer and Shankland on 3.5 points each and these four are a half point behind Giri. Navara and Le.Dai Van is alone at the bottom now with 2.5 points in his kitty. The

battle lines are drawn between the two Indians only. Aravindh is a cool customer in normal positions with a deep eye for tactical complexities and a rare chance against Giri provided him to dismantle the king side and enter record books. There are as many as five Indians in top 15 live world rankings and Viswanathan Anand stands at number 15. Aravindh at 14, entered the top fifteen for the first time ever. It was a Queen's gambit

declined wherein Giri overestimated his chances and pushed his king side pawns in trying to secure a space advantage. Aravindh came up with a shocker on his 24th turn when he put his knight in front of a pawn and it was a one-way tide thereon. Black's attack was soon impossible to handle and Aravindh won in 39 moves. Praggnanandhaa started with the English opening against Wei Yi and the game took shape in a Tarrasch defense wherein the Chinese was under some pressure but never really out of the game. The Indian won a pawn to reach a rook and pawns endgame and despite having a passed pawn deep outside the position was technically drawn. The game lasted 61 moves. In the challengers' section, Jonas Buhl Bjerre added to the woes of lone Indian Divya Deshmukh who remained at

the last spot on 1.5 points from seven games. The lead in this section is shared by Bjerre and Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan on 5.5 points each. Results round 6: Quang Leim Le (Vie, 3) lost to Sam Shankland (Usa, 2.5); R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 4.5) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 3.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 3) lost to Aravindh Chithambaram (Ind, 5); Gurel Ediz (Tur, 3.5) beat Nguyen Thai Dai Van (Cze, 2.5); David Navara (Cze, 3) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 3.5). Challengers: Richard Stalmach (Cze, 3) drew with Fintel Vaclav (Cze, 3); Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 1.5) lost to Jonas Buhl Bjerre (Den, 5.5); Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 5.5) beat Ivan Salgado Lopez (Esp, 3.5); Marc'andria Maurizzi (Fra, 4) beat Nemech Juchym (Cze, 2); Ma Qun (Chn, 4) drew with Stamatis Kourkoulous-Arditis (Gre, 3).

Mushfiqur Rahim retires from ODIs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ DHAKA

Veteran Bangladesh wicket-keeper batter Mushfiqur Rahim has retired from ODI cricket with immediate effect. The 37-year-old was part of Bangladesh's squad that exited the Champions Trophy (CT) from the group stage. He made the announcement on social media. "I am announcing my retirement from the ODI format as of today. Alhamdulillah (Thank God) for everything. While our achievements may have been limited on a global level, one thing is certain: whenever I stepped onto the field for my country, I gave more than 100 per cent with dedication and honesty," Rahim wrote on his official Facebook page. "The last few weeks have



been very challenging for me, and I have come to realise that this is my destiny. "Lastly, I would like to deeply thank my family, friends and my fans for whom I have played cricket for the last 19 years," he added. Rahim made his ODI debut almost 20 years ago and ended up representing the country in 274 ODIs, aggregating 7795 runs at an average of 36.42. Only Tamim Iqbal (8357 runs) has

scored more ODI runs than him for Bangladesh. He has also played 94 Tests and 102 T20s. In the team's disappointing Champions Trophy campaign, Rahim failed to score against India before making just two runs against New Zealand. Rahim has already retired from the shortest format but in the longest format, he is on course to become first from his country to play 100 Tests.