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Employment growth through wildlife tourism in the State: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

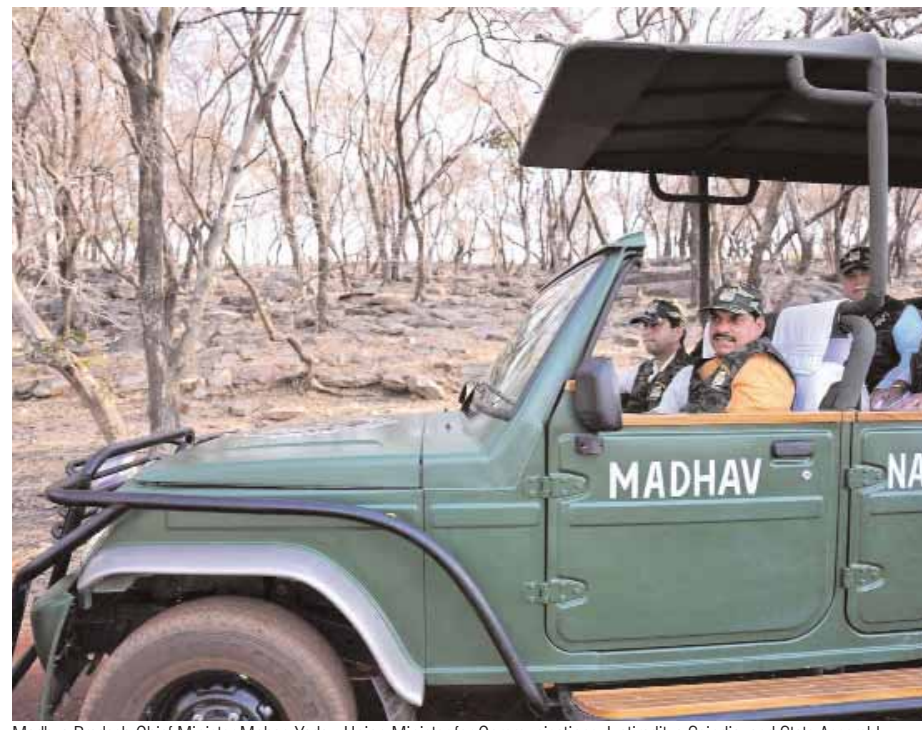
Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated the newly established "Madhav Tiger Reserve" in Shivpuri on Monday. This is Madhya Pradesh's 9th and the country's 58th national tiger reserve. During the event, Dr. Yadav released a tigress brought as part of the reintroduction process into the open habitat of the reserve. He remarked that this day is historic for the Chambal region, as the Madhav Tiger Reserve is witnessing the reestablishment of tigers. Thanks to the conservation efforts led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the state has been granted its 9th national tiger reserve. The Chief Minister expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Modi for the central government's support. He also unveiled the official

logo of the tiger reserve and inaugurated its boundary wall. **A Unique Coexistence of Wildlife and Humans in Chambal**
Dr. Yadav emphasized that the state government is making every possible effort to boost wildlife tourism in the Chambal region. Madhya Pradesh is rich in forest resources and home to a large number of wildlife species. With cheetahs in Kuno, gharials in the Chambal River, and now tigers in Madhav National Park, the area is set to become a major tourist attraction. Chambal is a rare place where wildlife and humans coexist harmoniously. With the state government's initiatives, tourism in this region will flourish, creating employment opportunities and paving the way for new developmental projects in the Gwalior-Chambal area.

Yadav highlighted that Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of tigers in India and the world, earning it the title of "Tiger State." The Chambal region was the only remaining area in the state without tiger movement, and this gap has now been filled. On the birth anniversary of Late Madhavrao Scindia, the inauguration of this tiger reserve marks another step towards the holistic development of the state. The Chief Minister stressed the immense potential for wildlife tourism in Madhya Pradesh, stating that the Madhav Tiger Reserve will create history. This region, already home to bears, leopards, deer, chinkaras, wolves, jackals, porcupines, pythons, and vultures, will now be recognized for tiger rehabilitation as well. Reaffirming the government's commitment to wildlife con-

servation, Dr. Yadav stated that while developing the new tiger reserve, special care will be taken to maintain the coexistence of other species. He clarified that this is not a zoo but an open habitat, accessible to both wildlife and the general public. As part of the event, the Chief Minister unveiled the Madhav Tiger Reserve logo and inaugurated the boundary wall of Madhav National Park. Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region, Jyotiraditya Scindia, expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Yadav for gifting the historic Madhav Tiger Reserve to the Gwalior-Chambal region. He noted that after Panna Tiger Reserve, this is the third national park in Madhya Pradesh to be revived. This development has significantly boosted the prospects for wildlife tourism in

the Chambal region. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the extinct cheetah has been successfully reintroduced into Kuno National Park. Previously, on March 10, 2023, three tigers were released into Madhav National Park, and today, another tigress has been introduced. With the combined area of Kuno and Madhav Tiger Reserves exceeding 3,000 square kilometers, this region will play a key role in wildlife conservation. Union Minister Scindia assured full support in the development of Madhav Tiger Reserve alongside Chief Minister Dr. Yadav. The event was attended by Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Narendra Singh Tomar, Energy Minister Pradyumn Singh Tomar, Minister of State for Forests Dilip Singh Ahirwar, and several other public representatives.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia, and State Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar enjoy a safari at Madhav Tiger Reserve after inaugurating it in Shivpuri district. Pioneer photo

Kalpataru 2025 concludes at IIFM Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal, successfully hosted "Kalpataru 2025", from March 6-8, alongside the grand alumni meet, Reminiscence, on March 7-8. The event concluded on a high note with the Kalpataru 25 Annual Gathering, graced by distinguished dignitaries, including Padma Shri awardee Bheru Singh Chouhan as the Chief Guest and Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), SCRB, MP, Chanchal Shekhar as the Guest of Honour. In his address, Dr. K. Ravichandran, Director, IIFM, underscored the institute's commitment to holistic development and its vision for the future. The dignitaries lauded IIFM for its efforts in fostering

a vibrant academic and extracurricular culture. The three-day Kalpataru 2025 commenced on March 6 with Guts and Glory, a competitive challenge that saw participation from 15 teams, with Team Hanuman emerging victorious. The Treasure Hunt attracted 54 teams, with Shashi Dharan, Shreyas, and M.G. Gowda clinching the top spot. Sports and cultural events remained the highlight of the fest. The Fusion Championship, featuring various sporting activities, witnessed an enthusiastic turnout, with the team led by Harsh Tawri securing first place. On March 08, the literary event Kaavyam, a poetry competition, crowned Shrishti Agarwal as the winner. The fest also featured exciting basketball and volleyball matches between students and faculty members.

Madhya Pradesh heats up: Mercury touches 38 degrees in several cities

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The day temperature in Madhya Pradesh has touched 38 degrees. On Monday, the day temperature in Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain-Gwalior divisions increased by 1 to 4 degrees. Ratlam and Damoh were the hottest. The maximum temperature here was 38 degrees. Mercury has also risen in Narmadapuram, Mandla-Shivpuri. According to the Meteorological Department, the day and night temperature will increase further. Gwalior, Chambal and Ujjain divisions were the hottest and would remain on the higher side on Tuesday. The temperature in Bhopal was recorded at 35.4 degree celsius on Monday and an increasing trend of day temperatures would

The temperature in Bhopal was recorded at 35.4 degree celsius on Monday and an increasing trend of day temperatures would be witnessed as per the Met.

Earlier in the month due to icy winds, the state experienced severe cold for four days. This broke the record of the last 10 years in many cities including Bhopal. Cold wave swept through many cities, while the night temperature reached 6 degrees. Small cities like Rajgarh, Shajapur, Umariya, Mandla, Naugaon and Malajkhani remained the coldest, but now the mercury has started rising. This is happening due to the reduction in the effect of icy winds. Due to this,

the night temperature has also increased. During the last 24 hours, the weather remained dry in all the divisions of the state. Day temperatures rose appreciably in districts of the Gwalior division, with no significant changes observed in the districts of the remaining divisions. They rose above normal in districts of Narmadapuram, Ujjain, Jabalpur, and Sagar divisions, and rose appreciably above normal in districts of Gwalior division, while remaining normal in all the remaining divisions of the

CM expresses gratitude on Governor's address

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expressed his gratitude to Governor Mangubhai Patel for his address in the Assembly, stating that the Governor had presented a roadmap outlining the state government's policy and intent. He mentioned that members of the Assembly would have a detailed discussion on it the following day. Dr. Yadav emphasized that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision is to strengthen and empower India while ensuring inclusive development and welfare for all. The democratically elected state government is committed to fulfilling this vision. He further stated that the upcoming budget for the next financial year would align with public aspirations.

During his interaction with the media at the Assembly premises, Chief Minister Yadav highlighted that the success of the Global Investor Summit has propelled the state towards industrialization and other developmental activities. In this context, a new Tiger Reserve is being inaugurated in the Chambal region, boosting tourism-related activities. Additionally, he mentioned the Ken-Betwa Link Project and the Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal Link Project, which will ensure water availability in the Sheopur, Morena, Gwalior, Shivpuri, and the entire Chambal belt. This will not only secure irrigation and drinking water supply but also provide water for industrial activities, thereby facilitating the expansion of agricultural and industrial development in the region.



Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel addresses the house on the first day of the budget session of Madhya Pradesh State Assembly in Bhopal on Monday.

Stage collapses during Kisan Congress protest, several leaders injured

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Several leaders of Kisan Congress sustained injuries after a stage collapsed during a protest on the first day of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly's budget session. The incident occurred at Rangmahal Square, where a demonstration was being held to raise farmers' issues. During the program, a small bullock cart, symbolizing agrarian concerns, was placed on the stage with paddy and a plough. As leaders and workers climbed onto the stage to worship the cart and pose for photographs, the crowd swelled to nearly 150 people, despite the stage's capacity being only 30-40 people. Under the excessive load, the stage started creaking and eventually collapsed, causing chaos. Several individuals were trapped under tables and chairs, while many

Following the collapse, Kisan Congress workers continued their march, prompting police intervention with water cannons

workers, including women Congress members, suffered serious injuries. More than ten Congress leaders, including Madhya Pradesh Kisan Congress President Dharmendra Singh Chauhan, were reportedly injured. Congress Vice President Rajiv Singh and spokesperson Roshni Yadav were admitted to Siddhanta Hospital, while former MLA Ravi Joshi and Shailendra Patel were taken to Smart City Hospital for treatment. Singh had to undergo surgery, with Dr. Subodh Varshney, Director of Siddhanta Hospital, confirming that the operation would take three to four hours. Although he was out of danger, he had sustained

a deep wound on his hand. Following the collapse, Kisan Congress workers continued their march, prompting police intervention with water cannons to disperse the crowd. Reacting to the police action, Leader of Opposition Umang Singh accused the government of suppressing farmers' voices, stating that whenever Congress raises concerns for farmers, they are met with water cannons and cane charges. Congress State President Jitu Patwari later visited the injured leaders and assured that their condition was stable. Criticizing the government, he alleged that farmers were not receiving fair prices for their crops and

that their voices were being ignored. "What kind of arrogance is this? Farmers come to present a memorandum, yet the government refuses to listen," Patwari remarked, adding that Congress would fight for farmers with full commitment. Former Leader of Opposition Govind Singh termed the stage collapse a BJP conspiracy, claiming that the ruling party deliberately weakened the stage structure to disrupt the protest. He alleged that permission for strong pillars was denied, leading to the collapse under excess weight. In anticipation of the protest, police had barricaded roads from Rangmahal Square to Roshanpura Square since the morning. The stage was erected on the road itself, leading authorities to deploy water cannons, tear gas, and heavy security forces at the site.

8 killed, 13 others injured after an SUV collides head on with truck

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Eight people lost their lives, and 13 others were injured in a head-on collision between an SUV and truck in the City Kotwali area of Sidhi, Madhya Pradesh, around 2:30 am near the Upni Petrol Pump. Among the deceased, five were women and three were men while six children were among the injured who escaped the accident. The victims were traveling in two separate vehicles, one heading to Jhokhon in Maihar for a Mundan Sanskar ceremony and the other traveling from Sidhi to Bahri. The incident was promptly reported by passing villagers and other drivers, who alerted the police and ambulance services. The injured were quickly rescued and taken to nearby hospitals, with eight of the critically injured referred to Rewa for further treatment. The authorities are currently investigating the cause of the collision. The deceased have been identified as Kunjal Sahu (32), Etwariya Sahu (48), Ganga Sahu (60), Etwariya Sahu (50), Sukharjua Sahu (34), Phoolkali

Sahu (50), Sushila Sahu (40), and one unidentified individual. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has expressed grief over the untimely death of eight devotees in a road accident late night near Upni village in Sidhi district. CM Yadav has given instructions to approve an amount of Rs 2 lakh each from the Chief Minister's Discretionary Fund to the families of the deceased, Rs 1 lakh each to the seriously injured and Rs 50,000 each to the general injured. CM Yadav has said that late night, senior officials of the police administration reached the spot and arranged for the treatment of the injured with the help of local citizens and the seriously injured passengers have been referred to Rewa. Chief Minister Yadav expressed condolences to the affected family and prayed to Lord Mahakal to give peace to the departed souls in his lotus feet and strength to the bereaved family to bear this immense sorrow. CM Yadav also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. It is noteworthy that eight passengers died in a terrible collision between a passenger vehicle going to visit Maihar Mata and a truck late on Sunday night.

Dr Prema Upadhyaya awarded at Mumbai

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Former Air Marshal of Indian Air Force Dr Pawan Kapoor conferred "Pioneer Women of Progress Award" to Dr. Prerna Upadhyaya, Medical Director of Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital at Mumbai on International Women's Day. Dr Upadhyaya during last 30 years had successfully performed over one lakh cataract surgeries in the hospital based at Sant Hirdaram Nagar Bhopal. Apart from this, she had also done more than 2200 eye transplants, since 1994. International NGO Six Sigma awarded Dr. Prerna for her lifetime contribution in the field of eye care. Six Sigma also felicitated J&K cadre IPS officer and encounter specialist Shahida Ganguly Tigress of Kashmir and Mangesh Nayak who captured live a dreaded terrorist Kasab, who was the one of the main culprits of 2008 Mumbai terror attack. This felicitation event was organized by Dr. Pradeep Bhardwaj, CEO of Father of Mountain Medicine and Mrs. Anita Bhardwaj, Director of Six Sigma Awards.

AIIMS Bhopal participated in car rally to promote organ donation

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhopal actively participated in the Organ Donation Awareness Car Rally, reaffirming its dedication to healthcare advocacy and organ donation awareness. The rally was organized under the joint aegis of the Gandhi Medical College Alumni Organization and Kiran Foundation, with the objective of dispelling myths about organ donation and encouraging more individuals to pledge their organs for saving lives. Governor Mangubhai Patel flagged off the Organ Donation Public Awareness Car Rally from Raj Bhavan, marking the commencement of this significant initiative. The rally started from Atal Path, Smart City New Market, and culminated at Gandhi Medical College (GMC), Bhopal, where a press conference was held to highlight key initiatives planned during the Jubilee Year. The event was graced by the presence of several esteemed dignitaries, includ-

ing the MP Alok Sharma. Additionally, members of the Nursing Home Organization, Indian Medical Association, Physician Forum Association, and Bhopal Orthopedic Society joined hands in this noble initiative, demonstrating a unified commitment to promoting organ donation. Dr. Bhavana Sharma and Dr. Yogesh Niwariya from AIIMS Bhopal actively participated in the rally, further strengthening the institute's representation at the event. Speaking on the significance of the event, Prof. Singh said, "Organ donation has the power to save multiple lives. AIIMS Bhopal has consistently worked towards raising awareness about brain-dead organ donation and facilitating transplant procedures. Our participation in this rally underscores our dedication to this humanitarian cause and aligns with our mission to create a healthier society. We urge people to come forward, dispel myths, and pledge their organs to make a meaningful difference."

TFL Pickleball tournament season one concludes



Bhopal: Bhopal witnessed a thrilling sporting spectacle as the three-day TFL Pickleball Tournament Season One concluded with a grand finale at Top Serve, Chuna Bhatti, on Sunday night. The tournament, which featured 75 participants across six categories, marked the first successful pickleball event organized by TFL and the 13th overall in its sporting initiatives. The event was inaugurated by Bhagwan Das Sabnani, MLA,

South West Assembly, who extended his congratulations to the organizers and participants. He emphasized that introducing a new sport like pickleball would significantly contribute to enhancing the sports culture in the region. The tournament was spearheaded by Arjun Shukla, Co-Founder of TFL, who has been actively working towards promoting sports culture in the city. The competition saw intense matches

across multiple categories, with players showcasing exceptional skills and sportsmanship. Following the resounding success of TFL Pickleball Season One, the organizers are now gearing up to host more tournaments across Central India. The initiative aims to further bolster the sports ecosystem in Bhopal and provide athletes with a dynamic and competitive platform to excel in this emerging sport.

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Language war intensifies



DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

Parliament resumed its second leg of Budget Session with a massive confrontation between the Centre and the Opposition over the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) in Tamil Nadu (TN), instigating a fresh round of language war.

Face-off was also witnessed in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha over alleged discrepancies in voter lists leading to several adjournments. At one point, Speaker Om Birla cautioned the Opposition to either to fall in line or face strict action.

DMK MP Kanimozhi filed a notice for breach of Parliamentary privilege against Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in response to his remarks on the NEP issue and TN Chief Minister MK Stalin. The TN government and the Centre have been at loggerheads over the implementation of the new NEP and the three-language formula.

Pradhan criticised the TN government for refusing to implement the NEP and Stalin doing a "U-turn" on the issue for "politics," which drew protests from the DMK and other Opposition members disrupting proceedings in the upper house.

"They are dishonest and they are ruining the future of the students of Tamil Nadu ... They are misleading the people," Pradhan said while replying to a query on the Centre not releasing funds for the PM Schools for Rising

India (PM SHRI) scheme.

Hitting back, the DMK said it had clearly told the minister "we cannot accept" the NEP "in full" and the three-language formula "is not acceptable to Tamil Nadu". It said the Centre cannot stop the release of budgetary allocation for education on the issue of implementing the NEP.

Stalin too hit out at Pradhan, alleging he spoke with "arrogance" and asked him to "control his tongue". The TN CM asserted that the state government did not come forward to implement the Centre's PM SHRI scheme and when that is the case, he said nobody could persuade him further in this regard.

They are dishonest and they are ruining the future of the students of Tamil Nadu ... They are misleading the people.

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN, UNION EDUCATION MINISTER

DMK MPs also raised slogans of "stop the victimisation of south Indian states". Congress' Karti Chidambaram said there was societal and political unanimity in Tamil Nadu about non-acceptance of the three-language policy.

Remarks by DMK member Dayanidhi Maran drew a sharp rebuke from Speaker Om Birla, who warned him of strong action. "Be careful while speaking, whatever you said was not on record. Had it been on record, I would have ensured proper action against you. I will do it. You say the same thing on record and

I will take action against you immediately," the Birla said.

The Speaker asked Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju to bring a resolution for action against Maran and if the government fails then Speaker will have to act. "I will not tolerate any harm to the dignity of the House," the Speaker said.

In his reply, Pradhan said the DMK-led Tamil Nadu government has changed its stand on implementing the centrally-sponsored scheme PM SHRI which envisaged strengthening the schools managed by central, state or local bodies.

The state concerned has to sign an MoU with the central government that it would implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and in return, the central government provides the funds.

"The Tamil Nadu government had initially agreed to sign the MoU. But now they have changed the stand. Many non-BJP-ruled states, including Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, have signed the agreement," the Minister said.

DMK member Kanimozhi told the House that she was "very pained and hurt" by a particular word used by the minister. "The truth is that the chief minister of Tamil Nadu had written to the minister as well as the prime minister saying that we have issues with NEP and cannot accept it in total. He had also requested to release the funds," she said.

Fashion show in picturesque Gulmarg angers Kashmir Assembly

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

A fashion show organised during the holy month of Ramzan by two Delhi-based designers in the famous ski resort of Gulmarg has created a piquant situation for Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah as it was seen by the religious clerics and common Kashmiris as 'an act of spreading obscenity' and hurting their 'religious sentiments'.

Though the event was organised in Gulmarg on March 7 but Chief Minister Omar Abdullah came in the line of fire on Monday after several members belonging to the Opposition benches cornered him on the floor of the Assembly demanding action against the organisers and those who facilitated the event in the valley.

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Sunil Sharma openly challenged the Chief Ministers' claim that he was unaware of the event.

Sharma alleged his (Omar Abdullah) family members own the hotel where the event took place.

Omar, however, clarified that it was a private function without any government involvement.

Former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti also criticised the event, calling it "deplorable" and an attack on Kashmiri values. She said, "It is deplorable that private hoteliers are allowed to promote such vulgarity through these events, which blatantly contradict our cultural values. The government cannot absolve itself of responsibility by labelling this a private affair."

Talking to reporters outside the legislative Assembly Sunil Sharma Monday said, "Omar Abdullah lies both inside the Assembly and outside. How is it possible that such a



How is it possible that such a big function was happening in a hotel owned by your relatives and you had no idea? He should accept the truth instead of lying

SUNIL SHARMA, LOP JAMMU ASSEMBLY

big function was happening in a hotel owned by your relatives and you had no idea? You must have organised this programme yourself. Now, since people have raised this issue, you are claiming an inquiry will be conducted. He should accept the truth instead of lying," Sharma said.

He added that the excise department had issued a short-term licence for the event, suggesting that authorities had prior knowledge.

On Sunday Mirwaiz Umar Farooq also criticised the event and issued a warning saying that "obscenity" in the name of tourism promotion will not be tolerated.

As the visuals of the fashion show started trending on various social media platforms it prompted Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to order an inquiry into the matter. Abdullah responded to Umar

Farooq's post, saying the shock and anger are totally understandable.

"The images I have seen show a complete disregard for local sensitivities and that too during this holy month. My office has been in touch with the local authorities and I have asked for a report to be submitted within the next 24 hours. Further action, as appropriate, will follow from this report," the chief minister wrote on X.

Following criticism of the event, designers Shivan and Narresh posted a statement of apology on their official X page.

"We deeply regret any hurt caused by our recent presentation in Gulmarg during the holy month of Ramadan. Our sole intention was to celebrate creativity and the ski & apres-ski lifestyle, without any desire to offend anyone or any religious sentiments.

"Respect for all cultures and traditions is at our heart, and we acknowledge the concerns raised. We sincerely apologise for any unintended discomfort and appreciate the feedback from our community. We remain committed to being more mindful and respectful," they said in the statement.

Vanuatu dumps Lalit Modi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES
 ■ New Delhi/Port Vila

Fugitive businessman and former Indian Premier League (IPL) founder Lalit Modi's citizenship of Vanuatu was cancelled by island nation's Prime Minister Jotham Napat on Monday. He said the fugitive was attempting to avoid his extradition.

On March 7, Modi filed an application with the Indian high commission in London to surrender his Indian passport. He is known to have acquired citizenship of Vanuatu, a South Pacific Island nation. He left India in 2010 and is said to have been living in London.

An official media release by the Republic of Vanuatu stated, "I have instructed the Citizenship Commission to cancel the Vanuatu passport issued to Lalit Modi following recent revelations in international media."

"While all standard background checks, including Interpol screenings, conducted during his application showed no criminal convictions, I have been made aware in the past 24 hours that Interpol twice rejected Indian authorities' requests to issue an alert notice on Lalit Modi due to lack of substantive judicial evidence," the statement said. Napat said any such "alert" would have triggered an automatic rejection of Lalit Modi's citizenship application.

The release also stated that the "Prime Minister emphasised that holding a Vanuatu passport is a privilege, not a right, and applicants must seek citizenship for legitimate reasons."

"None of those legitimate reasons include attempting to avoid extradition, which the recent facts brought to light clearly indicate was Modi's intention," the statement said.

India sent a request to the government of Vanuatu to cancel Modi's passport along with certain details of his case, it was learnt.

The Vanuatu prime minister suggested that the application for citizenship of the island nation by Lalit Modi should not have been accepted by the authorities in his country.

Gun violence chokes national highway

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A man was shot dead in Ghazipur flower market in the early hours of Monday allegedly due to a rivalry between two sparring groups of the area. Following the murder, the friends and family of the deceased, Rohit, 32, allegedly sat in protest on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, causing traffic disruption up to several kilometers during the morning peak hours. Local residents blocked traffic, demanding swift action against the culprits responsible for the murder of a 32-year-old man. The traffic jam during the morning peak hour led to longer office hours. Several students who were supposed to appear in the Board examination were also stuck in the traffic.

Massive jam from Akshardham to Ghaziabad, forced Delhi Traffic Police has issued a travel advisory stating that traffic movement is affected on both carriageways of NH-24 due to the protest. "Commuters heading towards Indirapuram and Ghaziabad are advised to avoid NH-24 and use Noida Link Road as an alternate route. The incident has heightened tensions in the area, with allegations of organised crime and illegal activities surfacing.

According to police, the victim, identified as Rohit Chawda, was shot dead near Phool Mandi on National Highway-24 late Sunday night. According to Delhi Police, they received a medico-legal case (MLC) report from Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, where Chawda was declared dead on arrival after suffering a gunshot wound. He was a resident of Ghazipur village and lived with his maternal uncle. The incident



took place around 2 am in the Ghazipur area

Police said they have registered a case under sections of the Arms Act and for murder and two suspects have been detained. Multiple teams are investigating the case. "We received information that a man was injured. When police reached the hospital, we found that he had been shot. Two people have been detained, and further investigation is underway," said Vineet Kumar, Additional DCP-I, East District. The murder triggered strong protests in the area. Locals blocked the main road and raised slogans demanding immediate action.

One of the protesters, Virender Singh said, "We have a Hindu brother here in Ghazipur village. He was shot at night by jihadists. He was from the Gujar community. It happened around 2am. The problem was that these people were dominating the area, collecting money, and running illegal businesses. This brother spoke out against them and said

this kind of domination won't be allowed. Because of that, he was shot twice and died on the spot. His name was Rohit. He was from Ghazipur, and his father is not around. He lived with his maternal uncle. He had three brothers, and he was the oldest."

Another protester, Chaudhary Karam Singh Rawat, said, "This is about the Delhi Police and the administration. If they wanted, they could have arrested the person who killed our child by now. We are suffering because of this. Muslims from Rohingya have settled here with money. If they wanted, the police could have arrested them by now. If we don't get justice, there will be violence and bloodshed. The road will be blocked until we get justice."

Lambasting the BJP government, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said that the law and order situation in Delhi has completely collapsed under BJP's "double-engine" government, with criminals operating fearlessly and broad daylight murders becoming routine.

Beleaguered Air India grounded by two hoax bomb threats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Two Air India international flights had to turn back mid air after a security threat and clogged toilets respectively. An Air India flight en route to New York returned to Mumbai after a note threatening a bomb blast was found inside the toilet. The note was reportedly found by a passenger. It read: "There is a bomb in the flight." Over 322 people including 19 crew members were on board when the flight took off and landed safely at the Mumbai Airport. The aircraft underwent mandatory checks by the security agencies. In a separate incident another Air India flight en route from Chicago to Delhi had to return to Chicago after flying for more than 10 hours on Thursday following a technical glitch that left 11 of its 12 toilets unusable.

An Air India (Boeing 777-300 ER aircraft) flight travelling to New York returned to Mumbai four hours after take-off after the crew received a threat. According to flight tracking website Flightradar24, the Air India flight, which was headed to New York's John F Kennedy International Airport, was diverted to Mumbai over Azerbaijan. Following its landing, bomb-detection procedures were carried out.

According to sources, the threat is believed to be a hoax. The flight took off from Mumbai around 2 am in the morning and returned to Mumbai around 10.30 am. Flight number AI-119, from Mumbai airport to John F Kennedy airport in New York, takes about 15 hours to complete the journey.

The flight, Air India has said, will now take off at 5 am Tuesday. Air India said in a statement that the decision to return to Mumbai was taken after a potential secu-

rity threat. It said the passengers have been provided accommodation, meals and other support.

"A potential security threat was detected mid-flight on AI119 operating Mumbai-New York (JFK) today, 10 March 2025. After following the necessary protocols, the flight air-returned to Mumbai, in the interest of the safety and security of all on board. The flight landed safely back in Mumbai at 1025 Hrs (local time)," the airline said.

According to the airline, the flight landed safely back in Mumbai at 1025 am (local time). "The aircraft is undergoing mandatory checks by security agencies, and Air India is extending its full cooperation to the authorities," it said. The flight has been rescheduled to operate at 5 am on March 11. All passengers have been offered hotel accommodation, meals, and other assistance until then, the airline said. "Our colleagues on the ground are making sure to minimise the inconvenience caused to our passengers by this disruption. As always, Air India accords the highest priority to the safety of passengers and crew," it said.

In another incident, an Air India flight en route from Chicago to Delhi had to return to Chicago after flying for more than 10 hours on Thursday following a technical glitch that left 11 of its 12 toilets unusable.

According to flight radar 24.com, the Boeing 777-337 ER aircraft returned to Chicago's ORD airport after being airborne for over 10 hours. The Boeing 777-300 ER aircraft, which accommodates more than 340 passengers across first, business and economy classes, is equipped with 10 toilets, including two designated for first-class travellers.

Metro network in India accelerates to be third largest in world

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Keeping with the pace of 'Viksit Bharat', India is on the tracks to overtake United States to become the world's second largest operating metro system of the world.

Currently, according to the Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri, India has the third largest metro network system in the world with 1,011 km in length. Centre has sought the support of State governments to come forward to develop the new age local transportation system and to become the world's largest metro network.

"We started metro projects in 2002 at the time of Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. Today, we have 1,011 km of metro projects operating in 23 cities. In addition to that, we have another 979 km under construction. Metro is either in operation or under construction in 29 cities in the country," Puri said in Parliament.

He said that between 2002 and till date, India has the third largest operating metro system in the world after China and the US, and we are at 1,011 km, and America at about 1,400 km.

"In becoming the second largest network of urban transport... We need the cooperation of state governments. We have all state governments cooperating with us, some more effectively than others. I find that when proposals are sent to us in a comprehensive way, then the chances of the proposal getting approved is higher," Puri said.

He also said land and urban transport are State subjects, but the Central government supports states in establishing metro networks in terms of financial support and funding from external agencies.

Replying to supplementaries in the Rajya Sabha during Question Hour, the minister said he cannot give an assurance to a Member of Parliament on a capital-

intensive project, as the projects require detailed examination in terms of finances and feasibility.

He also urged states to send detailed project reports, along with relevant documentation, to enable the Centre to examine them expeditiously.

In Delhi, we have about 400 km in NCR region and at any given day, we have more than 70 lakh people using the metro system.

HARDEEP SINGH PURI, UNION MINISTER

He was responding to a question on the metro rail project in Chennai, cleared by the Union Cabinet last October. Puri was also asked about clearing pending projects for the Madurai and Coimbatore metro projects, to which the minister said he cannot give an assurance without a proper examination of the projects.

To a question on the minister giving an assurance on Madurai and Coimbatore projects, the minister said, "It is not my job as a cabinet minister to give assurances on the floor of Parliament without the proposal having examined and the implications having examined".

He stressed that all capital-intensive projects will go through detailed scrutiny, and only then, they will be approved. Each project is evaluated in terms of its viability.

He said that for any metro project to progress, it is important that the central government receives a detailed project. The DPR from Madurai and Coimbatore had a composite mobility plan missing at that time, he stressed, adding that all state government should forward their plans with proper documentation.

"In Delhi, we have about 400 km in NCR region and at any given day, we have more than 70 lakh people using the metro

system," he said while giving an example of a successful transport system.

He also informed the central government approved 28.5 Km for the metro system in Gurugram and the NCRTC corridor, connecting Gurugram, was kept on hold by the AAP government for three years.

"Now with the change in the government in Delhi, I am sure we will be able to get this done as well. We could not have moved from zero in 2002 to 1,011 km unless the state governments cooperated," he noted.

Speaking about the Chennai metro project, the minister, who held the charge of Housing and Urban Development earlier, on behalf of his colleague Manohar Lal Khattar said the Chennai metro has a long history, and the proposal was originally sent to us in 2017 for 107 km of metro at a cost of Rs 85,000 crore.

Governor highlights Rs 30 L Cr investment proposals

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Assembly's budget session began on Monday with Governor Mangubhai Patel's address, highlighting the state government's achievements over the past year and outlining plans. He emphasised the river-linking projects initiated in the last year and the steps taken to attract investment from both domestic and foreign industrialists. Governor Patel mentioned that investment proposals worth over Rs 30 lakh crore have been received, and efforts are underway to bring them to fruition. Additionally, power connections are being offered to farmers at just Rs 5. In his address, the Governor referred to the policy deci-

sions and welfare schemes implemented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Central government for the inclusive development of the country. The Governor spoke about the river linking projects, particularly the Ken-Betwa project, which will ensure drinking water and irrigation in 10 districts in the Bundelkhand region. The Parvati-Kalisindh river linking project will benefit 11 districts in the Malwa region. The Ken-Betwa project will not only benefit Madhya Pradesh but also a larger area of Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, the Parvati-Kalisindh River will benefit Rajasthan. The third project, the Tapti-basin recharge, will equally benefit Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Referring to the GYAN

MP BUDGET SESSION

(Gareeb, Yuva, Annadata, and Nari) mantra coined by PM Modi, Governor Patel said his government in Madhya Pradesh is in mission mode for these four sectors. Speaking about the Mukhyamantri Kisan Kalyan Yojana, the Governor said his government is providing Rs 6,000 to 80 lakh farmers through direct benefit transfer (DBT). This year, the state has transferred Rs 1,624 crore directly to farmers' accounts as the third installment. Under the scheme, Rs 4,000 crore had been transferred during the past year. The Governor mentioned that his government is procuring wheat at Rs 2,600 per quintal, which includes Rs 2,425 per quintal minimum support

price and Rs 175 per quintal bonus. The procurement will start on March 15 this year. Additionally, the Madhya Pradesh government will provide Rs 4,000 per hectare to paddy farmers and will procure soybeans at Rs 4,892 per quintal. Millet producers will also get Rs 3,900 per hectare. The irrigation facility in the state will reach 100 lakh targeted hectares by 2028-29, up from the existing 50 lakh hectares. The Governor said his government is committed to making farming free from power expenses in the coming three years by providing 30 lakh solar irrigation pumps. The state is on top with seven lakh hectares of micro irrigation facility attained by December 2024. The Madhya Pradesh govern-

ment is also providing financial support for taming bovine family members. An assistance of Rs 40 per bovine family member per day is available, up from the earlier Rs 20 per member. The Governor said meritorious students received laptops and scooters. A total of 89,710 students received a combined amount of Rs 224 crore in their accounts, while 7,832 students received scooters free of cost. Referring to three medical colleges started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Governor said the Madhya Pradesh government will start 12 new medical colleges on a public-private partnership model. On housing, he highlighted that 36 lakh houses had been completed, and another 13 lakh houses were under construction.



Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel addresses the house on the first day of the budget session of Madhya Pradesh State Assembly in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo



Muslim devotees during a Roza Iftar programme hosted by Rameez Qureshi, Vice-President BJP Minority Cell district Bhopal, during the holy month of Ramadan at Jumerati in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Bomb hoax at St Mary's Convent School

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A bomb threat sent via email to St Mary's Senior Secondary Convent School in Tulsī Nagar on Monday afternoon caused panic among students and staff. The threat, which came shortly after the completion of board exams, prompted an immediate evacuation and a thorough security sweep of the premises. According to TT Nagar Police Station House Officer (SHO) Sudhir Aarjaria, the school administration alerted authorities as soon as they discovered the email. Police rushed to the scene, and a bomb disposal squad, along with a dog squad, was deployed to inspect the school. Higher officials were also informed, and emergency protocols were swiftly implemented. As the news spread, there was

chaos in and around the school. Students were initially assembled on the ground before being escorted out of the premises. The bomb squad conducted a meticulous search of all classrooms and the entire school campus. However, no suspicious object or explosive material was found. Despite the lack of specific details in the email regarding the location or source of the threat, authorities treated the matter with utmost seriousness. The situation caused widespread concern among parents and local residents. Following a thorough inspection, the threat was declared a hoax. The police have launched an investigation to trace the origin of the email and identify those responsible for spreading panic. Security has been heightened in the area, and officials have urged schools and institutions to remain vigilant against such threats.

MKVCL issues safety advisory to consumers

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Ahead of the peak fire season in the city, which coincides with summer, the Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company (MKVCL) on Monday urged consumers to deal with short circuits with utmost seriousness. In an advisory issued to residents, the company warned that even minor short circuits at homes or establishments should not be ignored, as negligence can lead to major accidents. Residents have been advised to call an electrician immediately if they notice any electrical faults. Authorities emphasised that public cooperation is crucial in preventing electricity-related accidents.

Residents facing power lines have been encouraged to report complaints through the toll-free helpline 1912

Officials have stressed the importance of proper earthing before wiring a house and advised against using sub-standard or cheap wiring. According to estimates, most short-circuit incidents occur due to poor-quality wiring or ageing electrical setups. The company has urged people to replace old wiring with standard-compliant alternatives to minimise the risk of electrical fires. A small act of

carelessness, they warned, could lead to significant losses. Residents facing issues with power lines have been encouraged to report complaints through the toll-free helpline 1912, the Ujwal app, or the nearest distribution centre. The company has also cautioned against attempting to repair domestic electrical appliances, wiring, or switches without professional help. With safety as a priority, officials advised households to keep electrical switches, sockets, and devices out of children's reach, avoid overloading circuits, and install properly rated MCBs and cut-outs. They also recommended an annual inspection of wiring, fittings, and earthing by experienced electricians to prevent electrical hazards.

Two outsourced employees of SAI academy attempt suicide

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Two employees including a woman employee, upset over being fired from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Academy in Ratibad tried to commit suicide by consuming poisonous substance. The employees who have attempted suicide are outsourced employees. It is being told that five people have been fired with immediate effect and dejected over this step, attempted to end their life. Both employees who consumed poison were admitted to JP Hospital where the condition of the woman remains critical. Meanwhile, a video of the woman drinking phenyl has also surfaced. After which the employees

created a ruckus in the academy. Regarding the whole matter, Ratibad police station in-charge Ras Bihari Sharma said that at present there is no information about the incident in the police station. On receiving the complaint, further action will be decided after investigating the matter. The woman's husband Raju Loht said that my wife Neetu and I both have been working in Sai Academy for 18 years. Both of us are looking after sanitation work. Three months ago a person came to us. He said that the company which was given the contract for outsourced employees in the academy has been changed and the contract has been given to another company. If you want to continue the job, you will have to

pay Rs 25,000 each. After this, this person demanded Rs 5 lakh from all 22 outsourced employees. We had shot a video of this man, this incident is three months old. We complained about this to all the officials of the academy. But no action was taken. Raju said that nothing was said to us for three months, on Monday, when we suddenly reached the job, I, my wife, Suresh Fakira, Pradeep and Ganesh Ram were informed that we were fired from the job. Whereas, money was never demanded from us before. Money was demanded for the first time. When we did not give, action was taken. Saddened by this, my wife and Suresh went to the washroom and drank the phenol kept there.

Narayan audits sanitation efforts

Bhopal: Municipal Commissioner Harendra Narayan on Monday audited the civic body's sanitation effort across various neighbourhoods in the state capital before instructing officials to step up cleanliness drive. He told municipal teams to ensure better sanitation, improve public feedback collection, and address visible cleanliness issues with full dedication. During his inspection, Narayan stressed the need for enhanced visual cleanliness, thorough back-lane sanitation, and preventing water accumulation on roads. Expressing dissatisfaction with citizen feedback progress, he urged officials to accelerate public participation.

At Bhadbhada, he personally supervised fire extinguishing at a garbage heap and ensured its immediate removal. Narayan visited key locations, including Link Road 3, MANIT Square, Nehru Nagar, Kotra, Bhadbhada, Suraj Nagar, Gauregaon, Ratibad Road, and Kerwa Dam Road. Through video conferencing, he directed officials to maintain top-notch cleanliness and improve the city's sanitation ranking. He emphasised dust removal from central and side verges, better upkeep of green areas, and intensified waste collection in commercial zones. Additionally, he instructed officials to prevent roadside water flow and enhance back-lane cleanliness for an improved urban appearance.



A joint meeting was held at Indore collector office which was attended by Indore collector Ashish Singh, Indore Police Commissioner Santosh Singh and the organizers of holy procession which is known as 'Ger', taken out on the occasion of Rang Panchami, scheduled on March 19, this year. Pioneer photo

Bhopal to develop dense forests using Miyawaki technique

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Bhopal will soon see the development of dense urban forests at five locations using the Miyawaki technique, an innovative afforestation method that accelerates forest growth. A meeting chaired by Collector Kaushalendra Vikram Singh was held at the district collectorate on Monday to identify plantation sites. Officials were instructed to select sites in line with the tree plantation targets set for different departments. The Miyawaki technique involves planting a mix of native species close together, creating self-sustaining, fast-growing forests that mature ten times faster than conventional plantations. The initiative aims to enhance the city's green cover and pro-

mote ecological sustainability. In rural areas, 50,000 saplings will be planted across 121 locations in Fanda Gram Panchayat and Berasia Janpad Panchayat. Meanwhile, Bhopal Municipal Corporation plans to plant over 1.5 lakh saplings at seven to eight urban sites, including Kajlikhedha, Adampur Chhawani landfill, Jamboree Maidan, BHEL plantation site, Kaliyasot riverbanks, Suraj Nagar, Bada Talab, Chhota Talab, Airport premises, Barkhedha Pathani, and Laharpur Dam. The project will be implemented in collaboration with social organisations. Ram Aastha Mission Foundation has identified five key locations for developing dense forests using the Miyawaki technique—Bhopal Airport

area, Kaliyasot, Kerwa Dam, Berasia's Barrikheda Gram Panchayat, and Gaushalas in Sukhi Sewaniya. The initiative will employ an Indian adaptation of the technique, incorporating wet waste from the city, water hyacinth from lakes, discarded flowers from temples, organic manure from Gaushalas, and decomposed animal remains for mulching purposes. Experts, including Tanmay Jain from Ram Aastha Foundation, retired IFS officer Ramesh Prasad Singh, retired Colonel Hemant Kakkar, and Dr Shraddha Agrawal, presented a detailed plan for the project. The meeting was attended by ADM Siddharth Jain, Bhupendra Goyal, Ankur Meshram, District Panchayat CEO Ila Tiwari, and other officials.

BoB Bhopal Zone celebrates Women's Day

Bhopal: To highlight the role of women in the progress of society and the nation, and to honor their invaluable contributions, Bank of Baroda, Zonal Office, Bhopal organized an event on March 7, 2025, under the chairmanship of Sanjeev Menon, General Manager (Zonal Head), Bhopal Zone, to mark International Women's Day. The event was graced by Megha Parmar, the first woman mountaineer from Madhya Pradesh to conquer Mount Everest, as the chief guest. In her address, she emphasized the significance of women's empowerment, urging women to become self-reliant and move forward with determination and strong willpower. Presiding over the event, Sanjeev Menon, General Manager (Zonal Head), stressed the importance of women's empowerment and lauded the efforts of all female staff members. He encouraged them to continue contributing towards the upliftment of women

in their roles as bankers. Vipin Kumar Garg, Deputy General Manager (Compliance & Assurance), also acknowledged the contributions of women employees, stating that women today stand shoulder to shoulder with men in every sector. He recognized the significant role of women employees in the bank's growth and urged them to contribute towards the economic and social upliftment of women in society. The event also saw participation from staff members of the Bank of Baroda, Zonal Office, Bhopal, who shared their insights on women's empowerment. A large number of female employees from the Zonal Office and various branches from Bhopal were present.

Lax enforcement of anti-smoking laws fuels public health crisis

KISHAN SINGH RANA ■ Bhopal

Despite the growing incidence of oral cancer, anti-smoking laws remain poorly enforced in the state capital. Public smoking and illegal tobacco sales continue unchecked, contravening regulations under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA). Though government agencies and social organisations come together to mark Anti-Smoking Day on March 12 this year, their efforts find little resonance on the streets, where these violations remain rampant. The law prohibits smoking in public places and bans the sale of tobacco to minors, imposing an Rs 200 fine on violators. It also mandates that tobacco shops be at least 100 yards from schools and allows designated smoking

areas only in large hotels and restaurants. However, these rules are routinely flouted. Bus stands such as ISBT, Nadra, Berasia, and Putlighar, classified as public spaces, have numerous tobacco stalls, and smoking is rampant. Similar violations occur outside Hamidia Hospital and the Red Cross Hospital, where vendors openly sell tobacco despite the health risks. Residency Tiraha, lined with tea and paan shops, has become another hotspot for smokers, disregarding government regulations. Bhopal's Chief Medical Health Officer, Prabhakar Tiwari, stated, "Drug inspectors regularly impose fines, with over 50 cases recorded each month. Special surveys are conducted in areas surrounding educational institutions to keep these products away from minors.

According to the law, selling tobacco products to minors incurs a fine of Rs 200 for both the first and second offences. However, even if a vendor repeatedly commits the offence, the fine remains Rs 200." The health impact of unchecked tobacco use is evident in the city's rising oral cancer cases. Cigarettes, bidis, and hookah are major contributors, alongside exposure to carcinogens from the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, which exacerbate the growing incidence. Loose cigarettes and bidis, banned under the law, are still sold openly, defying regulations that mandate the sale of full packs only. Despite a 28% GST on tobacco, Bhopal has over 55 tobacco-selling shops within every one-kilometre radius, worsening the problem. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) tracks cancer

through Population-Based Cancer Registries (PBCR) to inform policymakers. Yet, India remains home to 10 million adolescent tobacco users, including 13% of boys and 7% of girls, despite rules barring tobacco shops within 100 metres of schools. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies tobacco use as an epidemic, attributing eight million deaths worldwide annually to direct or second-hand exposure. India, the world's largest tobacco consumer, struggles with enforcement despite government efforts. Bhopal's widespread violations of regulatory provisions highlight the urgent need for stricter enforcement and harsher penalties. Without immediate intervention, public health risks will continue to rise, undermining anti-smoking regulations and exposing residents to preventable diseases.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
QUALITY CONTROL UNIT DIVISION
PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT, BHOPAL
 E:mail eephedqcbpl@mp.gov.in Telephone No.0755-2661511
 Shyamla Hills, Bhopal (M.P.)
 Bhopal, Dated : 07.03.2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Online digitally sealed tenders are invited on behalf of the Governor of M.P. for the following work in Form "C" From Manufacturer or their authorized Agency to be provided for "Supply of T.C. BUTTON BITS AND HAMMERS". Tender can be purchase from 07.03.2025 to 28.03.2025 at 16:00 hours & submission of tender 28.03.2025 at 16:00 hours. Envelop "A" will be open on 01.04.2025 at 16:00 hours Website: www.mptenders.gov.in. (E-Tender No 2025_PHEHD_407693_1, Date 07.03.2025).

S. No.	Name of work	Probable amount of contract	Earnest Money	Cost of tender documents	Time allowed for completion
1	Supply of T.C. BUTTON BITS AND HAMMERS"	-	Rs. 200000.00 (Rs. Two Lakh Only)	Rs. 2000.00 (Rs. Two Thousand Only)	3 Months

1. Detailed condition can be seen in this office in working hours.
 2. Date of purchase of tender : 07.03.2025 to 28.03.2025 upto 16:00 hours.
 3. Date of submission of tender: 07.03.2025 to 28.03.2025 upto 16:00 hours.
 4. Pre Bid Meeting Held on Dated: 13.03.2025 at 16:00 hours.
 5. Envelop A will be open on dated : 01.04.2025 at 16:00 hours.

Ashish Martand
 Executive Engineer
 Quality Control Unit Division, Bhopal

G-24108/24

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.

Corporate Office: Unit No.802, Natraj Rustomjee, Western Express Highway and M.V.Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai-400069
 Sehore Branch : Office No. 5, First Floor, Tamrakar Mall, Commercial Plot No. 15, Sharda Nagar, Sehore - 466001, (Madhya Pradesh)

Authorized Officer : Lokendra Rathore, Mob.: 9977783890

PROPERTY FOR SALE UNDER PROVISIONS OF SARFAESI ACT, 2002 THROUGH PRIVATE TREATY

Whereas the Authorised Officer, Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL) has taken the Possession u/s 13(4) of the Securitisation & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (The SARFAESI Act, 2002) of the property ("The Secured Asset") given below The Authorised Officer has received offer of Sale from some interested party against the above mentioned Secured Asset under the SARFAESI Act for recovery of the Secured Debt. Now, the Authorised Officer is hereby giving the Notice to Sale of the above said property through Private Treaty in terms of rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. The Details of the Account are as follows:

Loan Code No./ Branch	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrowers	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Reserve Price (RP)	Total Outstanding Loan Amount	Description of the Secured Asset
(Loan Code No. 14200000013/ Sehore Branch)	Sandeep Verma (Borrower) Shobha Bai Verma (Co-Borrower) Shubham Yadav (Guarantor)	11-07-2023 & ₹ 5,90,365/-	₹ 2,55,000/-	₹ 8,28,087/- as on date 25-02-2025	All that part & parcel of property bearing, K H No. 85 1 1 Kha Plot No. 20, 21 Ward No.11 Bhawanikunj Colony Ichawar Near Jena Convent School, Sehore, Madhya Pradesh, 466115 Boundaries: East: Other's Property, West: Purchaser Land, North: Plot No. 22, South: Road

The Authorised officer will hold auction for sale of the Secured Asset on 'As is where is Basis', 'As is what is basis' and 'Whatever is there is basis'. AHFL is not responsible for any liabilities whatsoever pending upon the said property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to accept or reject the offer without assigning any reason whatsoever and sale will be subject to confirmation by Secured Creditor. On the acceptance of offer of proposed buyer, he/she is required to deposit 25% of accepted price inclusive adjustment of Earnest Money Balance immediately and the balance amount shall be paid by the purchaser within 15 (fifteen) days from date of acceptance of Offer by the Secured Creditor. The proposed buyer is to note that in case of failure of payment of balance amount by him/her within the time specified, the amount already deposited shall stand forfeited and property will be resold accordingly.

This is **15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT, 2002** is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s), Co-Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the above described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL) Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" and to the amount due to Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd., in full before the date of sale, auction is liable to be stopped.

If the Borrower(s), co-borrower(s) has any buyer who is ready to purchase the mortgage property/secured asset at price above the given reserve price then Borrower(s), Co-borrower(s) must intimate to AHFL on or before 25-03-2025 AHFL shall give preference to him. If Borrower(s), co-borrower(s) fails to intimate on or before 25-03-2025 the AHFL will proceed sale of property at above given reserve price.

The Date of Auction is fixed for 25-03-2025

Place : Madhya Pradesh, Date : 11-03-2025

(Authorised Officer)
 For Aadhar Housing Finance Limited

ED raids Bhupesh Baghel



Gathering during raids by the ED on premises linked to Chaitanya Baghel in connection with an alleged liquor scam in Bhillai on Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Raipur

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday raided the premises of former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister and Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel as part of a money laundering investigation against his son in the alleged liquor scam case, official said.

The premises of Bhupesh Baghel's son Chaitanya Baghel in Bhillai (Durg district), an alleged close associate of Chaitanya Baghel, Laxmi Narayan Bansal alias Pappu Bansal and some others are also being searched under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

Chaitanya Baghel shares the Bhillai accommodation with his father and hence the premises are being covered. He (Chaitanya Baghel) is suspected to be the "recipient" of the proceeds of crime of the liquor scam, they said.

About 14-15 premises are being raided in the state, they said. The Congress said the raids against the Baghels were a "con-

spiracy" to "manage headlines" on a day when Parliament's Budget session reconvened and the government faced questions from the opposition on multiple issues.

Soon after the searches, a number of Congress leaders and workers gathered outside Baghel's house in Bhillai.

They staged a protest outside the house against the ED and claimed it to be a conspiracy by the Centre. The ED earlier said the Chhattisgarh liquor "scam" resulted in "massive loss" to the state exchequer and filled the pockets of the beneficiaries of a liquor syndicate with more than ₹2,100 Crore of proceeds of crime.

The ED had arrested former minister and Congress leader Kawasi Lakhma in this case in January apart from Anwar Dhebar, the elder brother of Raipur Mayor and Congress leader Aijaz Dhebar, former IAS officer Anil Tuteja, Indian Telecom Service (ITS) officer Arunpatti Tripathi and some others as part of this investigation.

The alleged liquor scam in the central Indian state, as per the ED, was orchestrated between 2019 and 2022 when

Chhattisgarh was ruled by a Congress government led by CM Baghel.

Assets worth about ₹205 Crore of various accused have been attached by the agency as part of this investigation till now.

The Supreme Court in 2024 had quashed ED's first ECIR (FIR) in this case that was based on an Income Tax Department complaint. The federal agency later filed a fresh case after it asked the Chhattisgarh EOW/ACB to file a fresh FIR against the accused on the basis of material shared by the anti-money laundering agency. The EOW/ACB registered the FIR on January 17 last year; about a month after the BJP defeated the incumbent Congress government in the assembly polls, and named 70 individuals and companies, including former Excise Minister Kawasi Lakhma, former Chief Secretary Vivek Dhand and others.

According to the Enforcement Directorate, the alleged commission generated through illegal sale of liquor was shared "as per the directions from the highest political executives of the state."

Indian-origin drug lord Shawn Bhinder arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Police on Monday said it has arrested an Indian-origin transnational drug lord, wanted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in connection with one of the largest narcotics seizures in the US, in Ludhiana.

Shehnaz Singh, also known as Shawn Bhinder, had been operating under the guise of a transportation business in Canada since 2014 and allegedly facilitated the movement of drugs from Colombia to the US and Canada via Mexico, the police said.

After a crackdown by the FBI, Bhinder, a native of village Mandiala in Batala who had been residing in Brampton in Canada, managed to give a slip to the FBI sleuths and clandestinely landed in India, Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said adding that the Punjab Police successfully tracked and arrested him from the jurisdiction of Ludhiana. He was wanted by the FBI in one of the largest drug seizures in the US on February 26, 2025, where the agency had arrested six of his associates and seized 391 kg methamphetamine, 109 kg cocaine, four sophisticated weapons and vehicles from their possession.

The six arrested by the FBI were identified as Amritpal Singh alias Amrit alias Bal, Amritpal Singh alias Cheema, Taqdeer Singh alias Romi, Sarabjit Singh Saabi, Fernando Valladares alias Franco and Gurlal Singh.

The arrest came amid Punjab government's ongoing "Yudh Nashian Virudh" (war against drugs) campaign, launched on February 25.

The DGP said Bhinder was also wanted in an Arms Act case registered in December 2024. The Tarn Taran Police had arrested five members of the notorious Jaggu Bhagwanpuria and Amritpal Bath gang in the case, leading to the recovery of a significant cache of arms and ammunition from their possession.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Ferozpur Range) Swapan Sharma accompanied by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Tarn Taran Abhimanyu Rana said preliminary investigations



Punjab Police take away Shehnaz Singh alias Shawn Bhinder, a trans-national drug lord wanted by the FBI-USA after his arrest in Tarn Taran on Monday

reveal that Bhinder played a key role in transporting large consignments of drugs across international borders using trucks and trailers.

He said it was found during interrogation that "accused Shawn Bhinder, operating under the guise of a legitimate transportation business in Canada since 2014, allegedly facilitated the movement of drugs from Colombia to the US and Canada via Mexico."

Probe also revealed that Bhinder, along with his accomplices, was transporting approximately 600 kg of cocaine from Colombia every week, he added.

SSP Rana said the accused's network is believed to have ties with notorious drug traffickers, including Amritpal Singh alias Baath and Gurjant Singh Bholu Havelia. Further investigations are on, he added.

Karnataka gangrape 'very unfortunate', says HK Patil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil on Monday called the recent rape of an Israeli woman and a home stay operator near Hampi "very unfortunate" and assured that the State Government is seriously considering ways to strengthen the security for tourists so that such incidents don't recur. Patil said he will request Home Minister G Parameshwara to convene a meeting of very senior officers to discuss the same.

Speaking to reporters here, the Minister said, "It is very unfortunate that such a crime is committed in Hampi and around. In fact, government has taken all serious measures to summon the people who are involved, and we are trying our best to give courage to the victims. In fact, the government is seriously thinking of how to strengthen the security for tourists." The Law Minister said he will sit with Parameshwara with his suggestions and request him to convene a meeting of very senior officers.

"We will evolve some very strict measures so that this type of incidents doesn't repeat anytime," he assured.

Responding to a question about alleged drug and ganja abuse in the area of Aneundi near Hampi and if the government needs to relook at the security parameters, Patil said, "The incident makes us emotionally feel like that. We will consider all aspects and even if it is necessary to take a re-look at the security parameters and other measures to be initiated about home stays, resorts etc. The government will definitely take them up."

According to the police, two women including a 27-year-old Israeli tourist, were allegedly gang-raped and assaulted while stargazing near Hampi on Thursday night, police said. Three male tourists who were with the women were also assaulted and pushed into a canal and one of them was found dead.

Newlywed couple found dead after wedding ceremony in UP

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

What was meant to be the beginning of a lifetime together ended in unimaginable tragedy. A newlywed couple was found dead in their room barely hours after their wedding, shrouding the family in grief instead of celebration. The groom was discovered hanging, while the bride lay lifeless on the bed, raising suspicions of murder and suicide.

The groom Arvind Yadav (25), a resident of Sahadatganj in Ayodhya, had married Pooja Verma (23), daughter of Omprakash Verma from Delhi Saraiya on March 7.

Their wedding was filled with joy and festivities, but before the couple could step into their new life together, the celebrations turned into mourning.

The wedding procession returned home on Saturday night, and the family was busy preparing for the reception scheduled for the next day. However, on Sunday morning, when Arvind and Pooja failed to emerge from their room, the family members became anxious. Calls went unanswered and after multiple attempts, a relative peered through the window and found Arvind hanging and Pooja lying on the bed.

Panic spread and the door was broken. According to the initial findings, Pooja has injury marks around her neck, suggesting a struggle, while Arvind's death appeared to be a suicide. The families

immediately informed the police.

Arvind and his elder brother, Rakesh, had worked tirelessly to support their family after losing their father several years ago. While Rakesh worked as a truck mechanic, Arvind was a skilled tile worker. Their mother arranged the marriage. The couple had reportedly been in touch for over a year before their wedding.

Police sources indicated that the presence of broken bangles and signs of struggle suggested foul play. SSP Rajkaran Nayyar stated, "The room was locked from the inside, ruling out forced entry. We have sent the bodies for post-mortem, and forensic findings will help determine the exact cause of death."

Friends and neighbours described Arvind as a soft-spoken man. He was known for his simplicity and devotion. His unexpected death has left the family in shock.

Meanwhile, Pooja's family, who had been living in Delhi, is struggling to come to terms with the tragedy. Her mother, inconsolable, said, "We never imagined that a moment of happiness would turn into a nightmare."

As investigators piece together the final moments of the couple's lives, unanswered questions remain as a result of sudden conflict, or was there an underlying reason that no one saw coming? For now, a home that was supposed to be filled with wedding joy has instead been silenced by an unfathomable loss.

Yogi govt to revise land circle rates in many districts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Yogi government, striving to make Uttar Pradesh a leading state, is set to revise land circle rates in multiple districts, including Lucknow. Prioritising areas where rates have remained unchanged for years, the process has already been completed in 37 districts since January 1, 2024, with ongoing and upcoming revisions in others.

Notably, the primary beneficiaries of this revision will be farmers, as it will enable them to receive fair compensation for their land during acquisitions under law. This focus aligns with the government's vision of advancing development projects across the state.

As per Rule 4(1) of the Second Amendment Rules of the Uttar Pradesh Stamp (Property Valuation) 2013, District Magistrates are responsible for setting the minimum price per hectare or square metre for agricultural and non-agricultural land in August each year. If necessary, they may also revise these rates mid-year. This provision has facilitated the completion of the revision process in 37 districts this year.

In a recent review meeting chaired by the Chief Secretary, directives were issued to expedite the revision process in districts that have been pending for years.

These districts include Lucknow, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Bagpat, Etawah, Kannauj, Hapur, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Ayodhya, Ambedkarnagar, Etah, Kasganj,

CM approves key decisions benefiting farmers

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

In a major announcement ahead of Holi, the Uttar Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has approved several key decisions benefiting farmers, urban infrastructure and industrial expansion. The highlight of the Cabinet meeting was the increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of wheat by ₹150 per quintal, raising it from Rs 2,275 to ₹2,425 per quintal for the Rabi marketing year 2025-26.

Wheat procurement in Uttar Pradesh will take place from March 17 to June 15, 2025 with around 6,500 purchase centres to be set up across the state by eight agencies, including the Food Department's marketing branch.

The Cabinet has also taken a significant step towards digitalisation by phasing out physical stamp papers valued between ₹10,000 and ₹25,000, replacing them with e-stamps. This move aims to enhance transparency and curb irregularities in stamp transactions. Stamps worth over ₹5,630 crore will be bid out, and existing physical stamp papers will remain valid only until March 31, 2025.

Muzaffarnagar, Badaun, Jhansi, Jalaun, Lalitpur, Sant Kabirnagar, Kaushambi and Prayagraj. The process will be initiated

soon in these areas. Meanwhile, revision is underway in districts such as Shamli, Saharanpur, the UP Cooperative Spinning Mills Sangh Limited in Kanpur, to the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) for industrial use. This includes land in Mahmudabad (Sitapur) 71.02 acres, Fatehpur 55.31 acres, Mauauma (Prayagraj) 85.24 acres, Bahadurganj (Ghazipur) 78.92 acres, Kampil (Farrukhabad) 82.15 acres and Bulandshahr 78.56 acres. The decision is expected to boost industrialisation and generate employment opportunities in these regions.

Additionally, the Cabinet has approved the transfer of 0.8 hectares of land free of cost to the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for setting up the Defence Testing and Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS) under the Lucknow node of the Defence Industrial Corridor. The DTIS facility will serve as a Common Testing Facility Centre for defence units, providing essential product testing and certification services.

"These decisions reflect the state government's commitment to economic growth, urban modernisation, and infrastructural development across Uttar Pradesh," Suresh Khanna, the Finance Minister told reporters post-Cabinet here on Monday.

Mirzapur, Aligarh, Banda, Hamirpur, Agra, Sultanpur, Amethi, and Gautam Buddha Nagar.

Clashes in Madhya Pradesh, 13 arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ MHOW/INDORE

Thirteen persons have been arrested in connection with clashes in Madhya Pradesh's Mhow town after stone pelting at a rally celebrating the Indian cricket team's victory in the ICC Champions Trophy final, officials said on Monday.

Four persons suffered injuries in the incident which took place late on Sunday night, Indore Collector Ashish Singh told reporters.

According to police, there were five incidents of violence in different areas of the town, located in Indore district, and three cars and several two-wheelers were attacked and set afire. The collector said the police have so far arrested 13 persons on charges of indulging in arson and violence in Mhow town, where the situation is currently under control.

Soon after getting information about the violence, police reached the spot and made efforts to restore peace in the troubled area, he said. So far, 13 persons have been arrested and an FIR registered in the matter. Action under the stringent National Security Act (NSA) will also be taken against some of them, he said.

Some more FIRs will also be registered in connection with the incidents on the basis of people's statements, the collector said, adding that some videos related to the incidents have also surfaced. "Peace is



Police personnel try to douse a fire after clashes that broke out during a rally celebrating the Indian team's victory in the Champions Trophy final in Mhow in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday

restored in the area at present. Nobody will be spared and stringent action will be taken against those responsible for it (violence)," he said.

The collector also appealed to the people not to spread rumours/messages on social media and warned of action against those indulging in such acts.

Asked about the reason behind the incidents, the collector said it started from near a mosque, where those already taking out a procession had some dispute with another group, following which they manhandled each other.

The procession was taken out from different areas and later one of the groups had a dispute with others over bursting of firecrackers, as per the initial reports, he said. After a probe, it will be clear and

who all are responsible for it, the official said. Meanwhile, Mhow police station in-charge Rahul Sharma said three cars and a dozen two-wheelers were attacked and set ablaze. The police were investigating all five incidents in Taal Mohalla, Sewa Marg, Patti Bazar, Manek Chowk and Jama Masjid areas, he said.

The entire CCTV footage and videos shot by people on mobile phones were being examined to identify those who indulged in the arson, vandalism and stone-pelting, the official said. A large contingent of security personnel arrived in Mhow late Sunday night, he said.

Senior police officials also reached Mhow, located 25 kilometres from the Indore district headquarters, and took stock of the situation.

BJP MLA close to Adhikari joins TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In what is being viewed as a counter-move by the Trinamool Congress against Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari's efforts to strengthen saffron organisation in the backyard of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at Bhawanipore in South Kolkata, the TMC again on Monday drew BJP blood getting yet another saffron MLA to join its ranks.

Saffron MLA from Haldia Tapasi Mondal along with a senior party leader Shyamal Maity joined the TMC in presence of State Minister Arup Biswas bringing down the number of BJP legislators in the State to about 65 (down from 77 in 2021). Haldia is in East Midnapore district. Mondal's big leap to the TMC a year ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections could deal a crucial blow to the BJP's fortunes in East Midnapore district, party sources said. Her switching sides may also dent Adhikari's influence in East Midnapore which is also regarded as the Adhikari family's "exclusive fief" where even Mamata Banerjee fears to tread, insiders say.

Adhikari not only hails from the same district but also is an MLA from the Nandigram adjoining Haldia.

"I was not impressed by the fiercely divisive politics being played by the likes of Suwendu Adhikari in the State ... I along with some others tried to raise this issue

within the party forum but we were ignored," Mondal said adding "on the other hand I felt that I should be a part of Mamata Banerjee's developmental works in the State ... so I decided to switch over to the TMC."

Incidentally Mondal won the Haldia seat on CPI(M) ticket in 2016 in but changed sides and joined the BJP before the 2021 Assembly elections when Adhikari himself left the Trinamool Congress to join the saffron outfit. Shyamal Maity another influential BJP leader from the district too joined the TMC alleging, "The BJP-led by Suwendu Adhikari is trying engineer riots in Bengal ... they are trying to break the traditional unity in diversity here."

Adhikari however refused to comment on Mondal's quitting his party.

The Monday's development comes against the backdrop of Adhikari announcing his plans to take the Chief Minister on from Bhawanipore seat in South Kolkata from where she has been winning since the past two terms. Adhikari earlier said, "We have called a meeting of our party leaders in Bhawanipore and we will defeat Mamata Banerjee here ... in fact she has no safe seat in Kolkata city save Metiabruz," which is dominated by minority population. Incidentally the TMC had trailed in five out of seven councillor seats in Bhawanipore in 2024 general elections.

The TMC hunting down Tapasi Mondal

from Adhikari's own backyard is considered a countermove of the Chief Minister to restrain and confine him within East Midnapore at least for the time being, experts said. Meanwhile, in a parallel development the BJP MLAs staged a walkout from the State Assembly after two of its legislators were forced out by the marshals at the order of Speaker Biman Bandopadhyay with whom the saffron legislators allegedly entered into a verbal spat.

"We were asking general questions related to the issues of the State ... that is the right and also the duty of the Opposition ... one of our MLAs Hiran Chattopadhyay was asking about a statement made by the Chairman of the Public Service Commission he raised the issue of West Bengal Right to Service Act Commission being defunct ... The Speaker would not allow that issue to be raised ... an altercation followed and the Speaker directed the marshalls to shove two BJP MLAs out of the House," said Shankar Ghosh saffron a legislator. Another MLA was suspended.

Subsequently Adhikari marched with the MLAs to the Raj Bhavan from where he launched a scathing attack on the Chief Minister, saying, "Mamata Banerjee is going to be defeated ... she and her TMC will be out of power next year ... just wait and watch ... we are taking programmes accordingly."

Editor's TAKE

Veni, Vidi, Vici...

Team India lifts Champion's trophy after its convincing win over New Zealand

In a moment of glory that will be etched in the annals of cricketing history, Team India triumphed over New Zealand by four wickets to claim the prestigious ICC Champions Trophy in Dubai. It was a victory built on sheer determination, extraordinary skill, and unwavering composure under pressure. The win not only solidifies India's dominance in the white-ball game but also reaffirms cricket's role as a unifying force in the country.

From the very first match of the tournament, India exuded an aura of invincibility. The final against New Zealand was no exception. Restricting the Kiwis to a manageable 251-7, the Indian bowling attack—led by the mesmerising spin quartet of Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarty, Axar Patel, and Ravindra Jadeja—choked the opposition with relentless precision. Their 38 overs were a masterclass in control, stifling the run flow and forcing mistakes from the New Zealand batters.

Despite an early setback with Virat Kohli's dismissal, Rohit Sharma took charge, setting the tone with a swashbuckling 76. His aggression ensured that India never fell behind the asking rate. KL Rahul, displaying nerves of steel, finished the chase with calculated precision, epitomizing India's new-found ability to remain composed in high-pressure situations.

Cricket in India is more than just a sport—it is a cultural phenomenon that binds people across diverse backgrounds. From the bustling streets of Mumbai to the remote villages of Jharkhand, the game ignites passion, fosters a shared national identity, and transcends all barriers of class, religion, and language.

This Champions Trophy victory serves as yet another reminder of the unifying power of cricket. The entire nation erupted in celebration, as millions came together to revel in the team's success. This win is not just about silverware—it is about inspiring a generation, bringing people together in collective joy, and reinforcing the sport's unparalleled significance in the Indian ethos.

Winning an ICC event is always a morale booster, and this triumph will serve as a catalyst for greater success. For Team India, it instills belief and momentum as they gear up for future global tournaments. Rohit Sharma's leadership, the resurgence of spin dominance, and the depth in both batting and bowling ensure that India will remain a formidable force in world cricket.

Beyond the current squad, this victory will inspire countless young cricketers who dream of donning the blue jersey. Seeing their heroes lift the Champions Trophy will fuel aspirations across the country, encouraging budding cricketers to work harder and aim for the grandest stages.

Accolades pour from all quarters on team India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the Indian cricket team and said they have played wonderfully through the tournament. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said India's run in the Champions Trophy was marked by brilliant individual performances. Former Delhi CM and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal also extended his congratulations to the Indian team.

This Champions Trophy triumph is a testament to India's cricketing excellence and a harbinger of more success to come. The synergy between experienced stalwarts and young stars showcases a team that is built for sustained dominance.

As India basks in the glory of yet another ICC triumph, one thing is certain—this victory is not just about cricket, but about a nation united by its love for the game, standing tall on the world stage, and looking ahead to an even brighter future.

Leaderspeak



Right now, I am taking things as they come. It wouldn't be fair for me to think too far ahead. At this moment, my focus is on playing well and maintaining the right mindset. I don't want to draw any lines and say whether I will or won't play in the 2027 World Cup. There's no point in making such statements right now. Realistically, I have always taken my career one step at a time. I don't like thinking too far into the future, and I haven't done so in the past either. For now, I am enjoying my cricket and the time I spend with this team.

ROHIT SHARMA, CAPTAIN TEAM INDIA



India Braces for Impact as Trump's Reciprocal Tariffs Take Effect on April 2

With key sectors like pharmaceuticals and automobiles at risk, India could face an annual trade loss of up to \$7 billion. There is an urgent need to find a diplomatic solution before it escalates into a full-fledged trade war

US President Donald Trump's announcement of reciprocal tariffs on India, set to take effect on April 2, has caused serious concern in New Delhi. India's high import taxes on American goods have long been a contentious issue, now straining trade relations further.

This move is not without consequences. It puts key exports such as jewelry and pharmaceuticals at risk, potentially leading to a significant annual loss of up to \$7 billion for India. The looming question is: How much will this trade war cost India? Can New Delhi negotiate a way out before the damage is done? This million-dollar question keeps policymakers and trade experts on edge, underscoring the gravity of the situation.

India currently imposes much higher import taxes on US products than the US does on Indian goods, with a gap exceeding 10 percentage points. If the US lowers these tariffs, India's exports to the US could decline by \$2 Billion to \$7 Billion in the financial year 2025-26, according to India Ratings and Research.

India maintains a trade surplus of over \$36 Billion with the United States. The share of Indian exports to the US rose from 16.9 per cent in 2019-20 to 17.7 per cent in 2023-24, which may have prompted tariff actions by the Trump administration.

During his campaign, Trump criticised Indian tariffs on several US exports and suggested the possibility of imposing reciprocal taxes on Indian goods.

He believes it is time for the US to use tariffs to establish fairer trade. "Under the Trump administration, you will pay a tariff, and in some cases, the cost will be passed on to consumers," he stated, insisting that the US will no longer tolerate unfair trading practices.

India imposes tariffs as high as 100 per cent on certain US products, creating what the Trump administration views as an unfair trade system. On April 2, reciprocal tariffs will take effect, meaning that any tariffs imposed by India will be matched by the US.

Additionally, if India uses non-monetary barriers to limit US market access, the US will implement similar restrictions.

A report by Crisil Intelligence warns that these reciprocal tariffs could significantly harm India's exports, which contribute



about 22 per cent of the country's GDP. Coupled with the challenges posed by slowing global trade growth and rising economic uncertainties, this situation could further strain India's economy. In response, the Commerce and Industry Ministry has initiated stakeholder consultations to assess the potential impact of increased US tariffs.

According to a recent Crisil Intelligence report, India's wide tariff gap with the US could have serious consequences if the US moves to equalise tariffs. Bloomberg economists echo this concern, noting that India's economy may face significant setbacks.

Industry and trade experts in India argue that certain top exports—such as automobile parts, electronics, textiles, diamonds, jewelry, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals—could be severely affected if the US imposes restrictions. The most vulnerable sectors include chemicals, metal products, and jewelry, followed by automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and food products.



KALYANI SHANKAR

Furthermore, if President Trump penalises US companies employing imported talent, India's outsourcing and IT services industry could face significant constraints.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal began his US visit on Monday to meet with the new US Trade Representative, Jamieson Greer, who is overseeing the implementation of Trump's tariff plan. Greer was also part of Trump's first administration, which targeted China and, in doing so, opened export opportunities for India, particularly in the electronics sector.

Further, if President Trump penalises US companies employing imported talent, India's outsourcing and IT services industry could face significant constraints.

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Despite these tariff disputes, the United States remains India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$118.2 Billion in the 2024 fiscal year. India maintained a trade surplus of \$36.8 Billion during this period. Trump has criticised India for imposing 100 per cent tariffs on automobiles, claiming such trade imbalances have allowed foreign countries to take advantage of the US for decades.

Like with other trade partners, the Trump administration intends to use tariffs as leverage to expand market access for American goods in India.

New Delhi must act quickly to address this challenge. One option is to engage in negotiations and lower tariffs. Both sides aim to increase market access, reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepen supply chain integration.

India should focus on bilateral negotiations to lower tariffs and diversify its export markets. This strategy could help India navigate the impending trade challenges more effectively. A balanced, give-and-take approach will be key to overcoming this situation.

(The author is a popular columnist. Views expressed are personal)

The Unmatched Multitasking Skills of Women

SECOND Opinion



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Accelerate Action, the theme of this year's International Women's Day is both timely and vital. It is of the utmost importance to take a moment to contemplate the unique skills that women possess, which even the most advanced AI-driven robots cannot replicate. Even though artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionised sectors by simplifying jobs and increasing productivity, it is still incapable of matching the nuanced and deeply human multitasking talents that women easily demonstrate daily. Women can accomplish several tasks with empathy, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, which are attributes that no algorithm can completely replicate. Women can perform multiple tasks simultaneously.

Multitasking encompasses not only the simultaneous execution of many tasks but also the capacity to manage diverse jobs with effortless proficiency. In both professional and domestic settings, women manage multiple tasks, including swift decision-making, emotional acumen, and innovative problem-solving. In the professional environment, women frequently lead high-stakes projects, coach peers, and manage team relationships while also addressing personal obligations. Within the household, they effortlessly transition between roles as carers, financial strategists, educators, and providers of emotional support. Their capacity

to sustain equilibrium in these intersecting domains is a challenge that AI finds difficult to understand, much less to implement. One of the defining strengths of women's multitasking abilities is their agility in decision-making, even in the most unpredictable situations. AI operates within predefined parameters and algorithms, excelling in structured environments where data is abundant. However, real life is often chaotic, requiring decisions to be made with incomplete information, intuition, and adaptability—qualities that women exhibit daily.

Consider a nurse in a hospital emergency room who is simultaneously monitoring multiple patients, making split-second decisions, and comforting distressed families. Her ability to assess a patient's condition, liaise with doctors, and offer emotional support all at once goes beyond mere task execution—it embodies human instinct, prioritisation, and care. No AI-driven robot can truly replace such intricate decision-making layered with empathy. While AI can enhance efficiency, automate routine tasks, and provide data-driven insights, it lacks the human touch that is central to multitasking.

AI-driven robots may be able to perform designated tasks in controlled environments, but they do not possess the depth of human interaction, compassion, or intuition required in complex, real-world situations. Women's multitasking is not just about efficiency but also about the ability to connect, empathise, and inspire—traits that no AI can

replicate. While we are moving further into an era driven by artificial intelligence, the objective should not be to replace the multitasking abilities of women; rather, it should be to improve such abilities with technology while ensuring that their human strengths continue to be prioritised. India offers countless examples of women who exemplify unparalleled multitasking abilities in varied fields.

To cite a few, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, the founder of Biocon, Chanda Kochhar, the former CEO of ICICI Bank, Dr N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary, DSIR and Director General, CSIR, Dr. Tessy Thomas, the first woman to lead an Indian missile project and hundreds of others. As we celebrate International Women's Day 2025, it is essential to recognise that while AI can augment specific tasks, it can never replicate the intricate multitasking abilities of women. Women's ability to think, feel, and act simultaneously with an unparalleled blend of intuition, intelligence, and empathy remains their superpower—one that even the most advanced robots cannot match.

'Accelerate Action' should not be about replacing human capabilities with AI but about leveraging technology to enhance and support women's indispensable contributions to society. The future of progress lies not in automation alone but in the harmonious coexistence of human intelligence and technology, with women leading the way in shaping a world that values both efficiency and empathy.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Freebies or political bribes?

Madam — The newly formed Delhi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government approved the Mahila Samridhi Yojana on Women's Day, providing ₹2,500 to women from economically weaker sections. With a budget allocation of ₹5100 Crores, women earning up to ₹2.5 Lakh annually and aged 18-60 years are eligible. But one thing I am unable to understand is what crime those women have done who are above 60 years or those who earn more than ₹2.5 Lakhs. Why didn't you specify these conditions in the manifesto? Didn't you know it was a ploy to garner votes that wouldn't be fulfilled after you win the elections?

Though we should not forget that PM Modi started this 'revadi' war of free LPG, free PDS, free housing, free MODI care, and free "Samman" of ₹6000 to Kissans. Actually, the freebie culture is the biggest drain on taxpayers' money. It is open bribery. The politicians are feeding parasites, which will harm the country. There will be no funds for development. Why not the Election Commission (EC) stop this malpractice for free and fair elections? Whatsoever, when the opposition distributes freebies, it's called 'loot' in the name of the Gandhi-Nehru family, but when the BJP distributes freebies, it's called 'seva'. In reality, all governments are going back, but how will the country progress? We will never be a developed nation as people make the nation, and our people vote for a five kg ration and ₹2500.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

India wins Champions Trophy

Madam— Apropos to "Champions bring the trophy home! Jai Ho," published on March 10, 2025. India clinched a thrilling four-wicket win over New Zealand to clinch the marquee ICC event for a record-breaking third time. Under Rohit Sharma's captaincy, Team India has now won the Asia Cup, ICC T20 World Cup and ICC Champions Trophy and overall this is the seventh ICC white ball trophy for Team India.

When pace sensation Bumrah was ruled out for the Champions Trophy, it was believed that it was going to be a huge setback for Team India, but without him and only Shami to spearhead the pace attack, our fast bowling arsenal looked really thin, but our spin quartet bowled like a well-oiled machine, turning the screws on opposition batsmen with relentless precision.

Our batting line-up was versatile and reliable, and everyone chipped in to the tournament with four all-rounders; our team's balance was perfect. And just to remember that players like Pant, Jaiswal and Arshdeep could not even get a game in the tournament goes to show the depth of our talent pool.

The Indian team is now second place in the ICC Trophies list behind Australia, with only the ICC WTC trophy missing from the cabinet. The men in blue have once again proved that they have what it takes to win!

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

Conflict in Syria

Madam — At a time when Muslims around the world are observing the holy month of Ramadan, Syria has witnessed another wave of violence that has claimed hundreds of lives in just the last two days. The humanitarian situation remains critical with widespread displacement, heavily damaged infrastructure and nearly 15 million people in need of humanitarian support.

Dead bodies lying in streets are suggesting a danse macabre in the coastal region of the country, particularly in Latakia and Tartus provinces. This is the deadliest sectarian conflict since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad in December 2024. Though the interim government has blamed the killing of two Syrian defence personnel in an ambush in Latakia province by Assad militia remnants for triggering the violence, the deep involvement of the army in violent retaliation against Alawites and Christians, who largely support Assad, proves that this violence has been engineered by the interim government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa itself.

Besides this escalated violence being a serious jolt to peace efforts in the country, the way all ethnic groups are reluctant to shun violence, the future of stability and peace appears to be bleak in the country. Partitioning Syria into two separate nations based on the Sunni and Shiite populations holds the key to the solution to this problem.

MANOJ PARASHAR | GHAZIABAD

OPPOSITION CRITICISES GOVERNMENT

The main opposition party, Congress, on Tuesday questioned the government's decisions and accused it of putting the economy in crisis. They said that the economy is being overtaken by a crisis created by the government. Congress launched a scathing attack on the government by targeting the increasing prevalence of gold loans in the country. Congress general secretary and communication in-charge Jairam Ramesh, citing the Reserve Bank of India's February data, said that a massive jump of 71.3 per cent has been seen in gold loans. Ramesh also said on X, "India's economy is caught in a crisis created by the government. The macroeconomic slowdown that continues till 2024 has led to a 300 per cent jump in gold loans in the last five years. The gold loan figure has crossed the level of ₹1 Lakh Crore for the first time.

Bank loans have slowed down in every sector from housing to cars, but crisis loans like gold loans are at their peak. Not only this, the report of Niti Aayog shows that gold loans account for 40 per cent of all loans

issued to women. The number of women taking loans by pledging gold has increased by more than 22 per cent in the last five years.

Should it be considered that the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme, launched with great fanfare by the Narendra Modi government, has proved to be a 'complete failure' like demonetisation and the 'Make in India' initiative? Rising prices, falling private investment, and rising unemployment issues are badly affecting the common people. Perhaps due to these reasons, gold loans have become a big failure.

The gold kept in homes is taken out only in case of emergency. This is not just an allegation of the opposition, but RBI also seems to be unhappy and concerned with this trend. That is why RBI is planning to implement a strict underwriting process for gold loans, to ensure ethical business practices and financial stability. This includes better background checks of borrowers and monitoring of the end use of funds to prevent irregularities found in recent audits.

JANG BAHADUR SINGH | JAMSHEDPUR

Spiralling food subsidy: The urgent need for reform

FIRST Column India's food subsidy bill continues to rise despite budget projections suggesting otherwise. Without structural reforms in procurement and distribution, the financial strain on the exchequer is set to escalate, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of India's food security programmes

In the Union Budget for 2025-26, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated ₹203,420 Crore for food subsidy which is a marginal three per cent increase from the revised estimate (RE) for the current financial year (FY) at ₹197,000 Crore. The RE for FY 2024-25 by itself is lower than the budget estimate (BE) of ₹205,250 Crore she had fixed while presenting that budget on July 23, 2024.

Food subsidy payments during FY 2023-24 and FY 2022-23 were ₹211,394 Crores and ₹287,000 Crore respectively. From these numbers, one gets a sense that since FY 2022-23, food subsidies have been on a downward trajectory. This may not reveal the true picture.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the Centre asks the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food and organize its distribution to around 820 Million people for free. The entire cost i.e. MSP (minimum support price) paid to farmers plus handling and distribution cost (HDC) is reimbursed to the FCI or other state agencies as a subsidy. The money comes from the Union Budget's allocation for 'food subsidy'.

While, the PMGKAY has been in force since January 1, 2023, before that, the Centre was giving food to 820 Million persons (seven kg of cereals per person per month to 120 Million poorest of the poor persons covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana or AAY families and five kg of cereals per person per month to the remaining 700 million) at a heavily subsidized price of ₹23/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

In addition, since April 2020, it has been giving five kg of food per person per month for 'free' to all 820 Million beneficiaries under PMGKAY to mitigate the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic. From January 1, 2023, it merged the free part of PMGKAY with the regular food security schemes under NFSA. This arrangement will continue for five years till the end of CY 2028 as per the announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2023. Against this backdrop, FY 2022-23 was an unusual year as 700 Million beneficiaries got five kg of cereals each per month for free under the PMGKAY. In addition, during April - December 2022, they got five kg of cereals each at a throwaway price of ₹3/kg and ₹2/kg for rice and wheat, respectively under the NFSA.

Likewise, beneficiaries under the AAY received five kg each per month under PMGKAY throughout the FY plus seven kg a month at ₹3/2/kg for rice/wheat during April - December 2022 under the NFSA. It was a doubling of the quantity supplied at throwaway/zero price during nine months of the FY that contributed to an unusually high subsidy outgo of ₹287,000 Crore. During FY 2023-24, the 'double quantity' effect was not present as



five kg a month supplies to all beneficiaries at ₹3/2 per kg under the NFSA were withdrawn. This should have led to a massive reduction in subsidy outgo from the FY 2022-23 level. But, that didn't happen. The payments during FY 2023-24 were substantial at ₹211,394 Crores. A hike in MSP of all 14 Kharif crops by 5-10 per cent announced in June 2023, besides an increase in HDC, led to higher subsidy payment.

Look at things from another angle. While, presenting the budget for FY 2023-24, Sitharaman had kept the BE for food subsidy at ₹197,000 Crore. Against this, RE turned out to be ₹14,394 Crore more indicating that the potential savings in subsidy due to dissipation of 'double quantity' effect were partially offset by increase in MSP and other costs associated with distribution of food.

Coming to FY 2024-25, the FM has put the RE for the year at ₹197,000 Crore which is even lower than the BE of ₹205,250 Crore. This is anomalous. Only a month before the presentation of the bud-



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get for FY 2025-26, the prevailing situation was pointing towards a slippage of around ₹20,000 Crore from the BE. The higher subsidy requirement of about ₹225,000 Crore was expected primarily due to the rising costs of holding on to a huge stockpile of rice, besides the increase in MSP of wheat and rice.

Then, as part of the central pool stock, the FCI was holding around 50 Million ton including 34 Million ton of rice and 16 Million ton of wheat (this stock excluded 34 Million ton of rice receivable from millers). The stock was against the buffer of 21.41 Million ton for January 1. Put simply, the stock holding was four times what was required.

At a fundamental level, the problem lies in the government using state agencies not just to meet

food requirements under the PMGKAY but also to extend price support to farmers. Under what has come to be known as 'open-ended' procurement, it buys from farmers unlimited quantities at MSP. For the last many years, the FCI has been procuring over 50 Million tons of rice every year even while supplying around 36 - 38 Million tons under PMGKAY to the states.

This mismatch has inevitably led to a huge pile-up of stocks and associated high carrying costs which bloats the subsidy bill. The Centre has pinned its hope of trimming subsidy (as per RE) on liquidating its burgeoning stocks. But, given the situation on the ground, this seems unlikely. Till about a month back, response to the open market sale of rice by FCI from its stocks was poor with only 0.7 million tons of rice sold at the subsidised rate of ₹28/kg (during 2023-24 also, the agency could sell only 0.1 million tons).

A recent order from the food ministry let state governments and their corporations purchase up to 1.2 million tons of rice, and ethanol distilleries

buy up to 2.4 million tons at a reduced rate of ₹22.55/kg - a 20 per cent discount from the earlier price of ₹28/kg - won't make any dent on the mammoth stocks.

The actual subsidy outgo during FY 2024-25 will be close to ₹225,000 Crore instead of ₹197,000 Crore being the RE given in the budget. Considering that the agencies will be saddled with high stocks even during FY 2025-26 and further annual increase in the MSP and HDC (in the past, MSP of paddy and wheat has been increasing 6 - 7 per cent in kharif and rabi seasons annually and this trend is expected to continue), it is unlikely that subsidy payments will be contained within the budgeted level of ₹203,420 Crore. Far from a declining trend that the figures mentioned in the budget would seem to suggest, food subsidy has actually been on a rising trajectory and this trend will continue in the future as well. How the Scheme has been crafted, an escalating trend is inevitable. The coverage of PMGKAY is 'universal' (820 Million beneficiaries and at least 100 Million waiting to be included), assurance of giving them 'free' food eternally, purchase of 'unlimited' quantum of food from farmers at MSP resulting in high stocks with FCI and agencies and associated high carrying cost, reimbursement of handling and distribution cost to them on 'actual' basis and pilferage of subsidised food.

Conclusion

The trajectory of food subsidy in India is not on a downward slope, as the budget figures might suggest, but rather on a continuous rise due to the structural inefficiencies within the system. The universal coverage of PMGKAY, along with the open-ended procurement of food grains at MSP, has resulted in excessive stock accumulation, driving up costs related to storage, handling, and distribution.

Despite attempts to trim the subsidy bill through stock liquidation, market demand has remained weak, making a significant reduction in expenditure unlikely.

Moreover, factors such as annual increases in MSP and handling costs, as well as the Supreme Court's directive to include an additional 100 million beneficiaries under food security programs, will only exacerbate the financial burden.

While the budgeted estimate for FY 2025-26 has been set at ₹203,420 Crore, the actual expenditure is expected to exceed this projection, just as it has in previous years.

Unless the government undertakes fundamental reforms, such as rationalising procurement, improving targeting mechanisms, and curbing inefficiencies, food subsidy will continue to spiral upwards.

(The author is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)

Trump's reciprocal tariffs and the US trade deficit: A deeper look

During a recent meeting, US President Donald Trump praised Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling him "a great leader." However, in the same breath, Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on India, labelling the country as the "tariff king" and "a hard place to do business." He blamed India's high tariffs for the growing trade deficit between the two nations.

Trump's proposed reciprocal tariff policy means that the US will impose equivalent tariffs on countries that charge higher tariffs on American exports. He argues that the US trade deficit stems from high tariffs imposed by other countries on US goods. The US exports goods worth approximately \$2 Trillion globally while importing around \$3.3 Trillion, leading to a trade deficit of about \$1 Trillion. The US has a trade deficit with 57 countries, a trade surplus with 39, and negligible trade with 122. But is high tariffs the primary cause of this deficit?

US Trade Deficit with Major Countries

The United States has significant trade deficits with several countries, with China leading the list at a deficit of \$300 Billion, resulting from \$148 Billion in exports and \$448 Billion in imports. Mexico follows with a trade deficit of \$157 Billion, as the US exports \$323 Billion while importing \$480 Billion. Vietnam ranks third, with a deficit of \$109 Billion, based on \$10 Billion in exports and \$119 Billion in imports. Other major trade deficit partners include Germany (\$86 Billion), Canada (\$78 Billion), Japan (\$75 Billion), and Ireland (\$66 Billion). South Korea (\$55 Billion), Taiwan (\$50 Billion), and India (\$47 Billion) also contribute to the overall trade imbalance. Additional countries with notable trade deficits include Italy (\$46 Billion), Thailand (\$43 Billion), Malaysia (\$28 Billion), Switzerland (\$25 Billion), and Indonesia (\$18 Billion). The remaining nations on the list are Austria and France, each with a \$14 Billion deficit, Cambodia (\$12 Billion), Sweden (\$10 Billion), and Slovakia (\$8 Billion). These figures highlight the countries where the US imports significantly more than it exports, contributing to its overall trade deficit.

Is High Tariff the Reason for the US Trade Deficit?

China, the country with which the US has the highest trade deficit, has an effective tariff of just 3.07 per cent and a Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff of 3.09 per cent. Despite accusations of unfair trade practices and currency manipulation, China has successfully positioned itself as the "factory of the world," offering competitively priced goods.

Mexico, the second-largest contributor to the US trade deficit, is deeply integrated with the US economy. Under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), most US products enter Mexico duty-free, provided they meet rules-of-origin requirements.

Despite this tariff-free access, the US still records a \$157 Billion trade deficit with Mexico, showing that tariffs are not the root cause.

Vietnam has emerged as a manufacturing powerhouse, with its exports tripling from \$124 Billion in 2012 to \$384 Billion in 2022. Yet,



ANANT SWARUP

its effective tariff rate stands at just 1.07 per cent, with an MFN rate of 4.98 per cent. The growth of Vietnam's exports is primarily due to low labour costs, streamlined supply chains, and favourable trade agreements rather than high tariffs.

Similarly, Germany, which exports and imports roughly \$1.6 Trillion worth of goods annually, has an effective tariff of 1.44 per cent, almost the same as the US's 1.54 per cent. Despite these comparable rates, the US still has an \$86 Billion trade deficit with Germany.

This raises the question: if high tariffs were the primary cause of trade deficits, why does the US have such a significant gap with Germany?

Among the 20 countries with which the US has the highest trade deficits, only South Korea (8.88 per cent effective tariff) and India (11.36 per cent effective tariff) impose relatively higher tariffs. However, many of these countries themselves have global trade deficits, meaning other nations successfully export to them even when the US struggles.

The Real Cause of the US Trade Deficit

The primary reason for the US trade deficit is not high tariffs abroad, but rather the changing structure of the US economy. Over time, the US has shifted away from low-cost, labour-intensive manufacturing, outsourcing these industries to other countries while focusing on high-tech and specialised production.

Moreover, many US multinational corporations manufacture abroad and re-import goods, which increases the trade deficit. However, the royalties and profits earned by these companies are not factored into trade deficit calculations.

Additionally, the US services trade is often overlooked. In 2022, the US exported \$900 Billion worth of services while importing \$671

Billion, resulting in a \$200 Billion services trade surplus-which offsets part of the goods deficit.

Economic research has shown that imposing high tariffs does not necessarily boost manufacturing or enhance economic integration.

While it may be a politically attractive move, trade wars often lead to long-term economic damage. Trump's decision to escalate tariffs will shape global trade dynamics in the coming years, and its real impact remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The US trade deficit is a complex issue influenced by multiple factors beyond high tariffs. While President Trump has targeted countries like India for their tariff policies, data shows that the largest trade imbalances exist even with nations that have low tariffs, such as China, Mexico, and Germany.

This suggests that tariffs are not the primary cause of the deficit. Instead, the shift in the US economy toward high-tech industries, outsourcing of manufacturing, and global supply chain strategies play a more significant role.

Additionally, US multinational corporations manufacture goods abroad and re-import them, further widening the trade gap.

The services sector, which generates a trade surplus for the US, is often overlooked in trade deficit discussions. Economic research suggests that imposing high tariffs does not necessarily revive domestic manufacturing but can lead to broader economic consequences.

As Trump's tariff policies unfold, their long-term impact on global trade and the US economy remains uncertain.

In 2023, the US-India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at \$190.08 Billion (\$123.89 Billion in goods and \$66.19 Billion in services trade). That year, India's merchandise exports to the US stood at \$83.77 Billion, while imports were \$40.12 Billion, leaving a trade gap of \$43.65 Billion in favour of India.

The country's services export to America was \$36.33 Billion in 2023, while imports were aggregated at \$29.86 Billion. The trade gap (difference between imports and exports) was \$6.47 Billion in favour of New Delhi.

During 2021-24, America was the largest trading partner of India. The US is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. India has received \$67.8 Billion in foreign direct investments from America during April 2000 and September 2024.

Thus India will have to diversify its export basket and reduce its American-centric approach to tide over the losses that might result from the Trump imposed tariffs.

(The author is former Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce; views are personal)

Holistic approach to overcoming addiction

Harilal Gandhi was addicted to alcohol. He tried in vain to give up drinking but could never kick the habit and eventually succumbed to the lethal disease called alcoholism. He became a quotidian smoker.

Gandhiji's son was also said to have committed adultery and for a brief turned an apostate as he got converted to Islam to be known as Abdullah Gandhi.

Tobacco and excessive consumption of alcohol lead to severe physical and psychological disorders. It has a deleterious and debilitating effect on the human body. Any individual can be addicted to sex, substance, food (bulimia), cinema, television, or even social media. Such addictions weaken our resolve diminish our aura and deplete our physical and mental energy.

Addiction is a compulsive, chronic, physiological, or psychological need for a habit-forming substance, behaviour, or activity having harmful physical, psychological, or social effects and typically causing well-defined symptoms (such as anxiety, irritability, tremors, or nausea) upon withdrawal or abstinence.

Talking of smoking, some lawmakers came up with outlandish theories stating that there is inadequate Indian evidence to correlate tobacco and cancer.

WHO estimates that tobacco caused 8.5 Million deaths in 2024 and over 100 million deaths over the 20th century. Similarly, the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention describes tobacco as "the single most important preventable risk to human health in developed countries and important cause of premature death worldwide."

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart attacks, strokes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) including emphysema and chronic bronchitis and cancer (particularly lung cancer, cancers of the larynx and mouth, and pancreatic cancer).

Cigarettes sold in underdeveloped countries tend to have higher tar content and are less likely to be filtered, potentially increasing vulnerability to tobacco smoking-related diseases in these regions.

Given this grim scenario, how does one quit smoking and or those addicted to Bacchus, give up drinking? It is recommended to take up courses in the Art of Living to combat these addictions.

We need to breathe properly to increase our Prana level to combat these addictions. The pivot of the Art of Living Courses is the unique breathing technique called the Sudarshan Kriya.

Sudarshan Kriya harmonises the rhythms of the body and emotions and puts them back in tune with the rhythms of nature.

Being in sync, we feel positive about ourselves, love flows naturally in all relationships (say what was lacking between Gandhiji and his son Harilal Gandhi).

Sudarshan Kriya's technique enables us to skillfully use the breath to feel positive about ourselves and our lives and start having control over our emotions. It reinforces the default rhythm within an individual and negative emotions of discontent and unhappiness get purged.

Regular practice of Sudarshan Kriya, pranayama, yoga, and meditation brings about a 360-degree change in the personality of an addict or a person who is only looking back in anger.

A renowned cardiologist from Hyderabad, Dr Ramachandra of Sri Sri Holistic Hospitals recommends Sudarshan Kriya to all his patients for a quick rehab. Further, he opines this breathing technique is almost akin to hyperventilation and relaxes an individual tremendously. Regular practice of this breathing technique infuses energy, prana, and optimism and puts a person in an auto mode (default mode of nature).

We are cannonaded with almost 60,000 thousand thoughts a day. Most of them are negative in nature. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says breath is like a string and your mind is like a kite. Proper breathing ensures you float and do not crash land in the journey of your life.

So let us breathe our problems away.

Conclusion

In a world where addiction to substances and behaviors can erode physical and mental well-being, finding effective ways to reclaim control is essential. Harilal Gandhi's struggles serve as a stark reminder of how unchecked dependencies can lead to suffering, not just for the individual but for their loved ones as well.

The impact of smoking, alcoholism, and other addictions is undeniable, with grave consequences on health and longevity. Yet, amidst this challenge, hope lies in adopting holistic wellness practices. Sudarshan Kriya, pranayama, yoga, and meditation offer scientifically backed methods to counter addiction and regain inner harmony.

These techniques not only cleanse the body and mind but also foster emotional resilience, allowing individuals to break free from destructive habits.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Government controlling Railway Board: Opposition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Railways (Amendment) Bill 2024 was passed in Rajya Sabha on Monday, with Opposition MPs accused the Government of trying to take control of the Railway Board and avoiding scrutiny by a parliamentary panel. The bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha in December last year, seeks to enhance the functioning and independence of the Railway Board. Responding to the charges of the opposition, Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that new amendments are meant for simplification and for reforms and infrastructure upgrade.

With the inclusion of the Railway Board under the 1989 Railway Act, the appointment, qualifications, tenure and criteria for the Chairman and Members of the Board will be the responsibility of the Central Government.

The Bill also includes provisions to appoint an independent regulator that will oversee matters like fare determination and ensure the competitiveness of the Railways.

"You have just gone for 'governmentalisation' of the Railway Board," Congress member Vivek K Tankha said while initiating discussion on the bill.

Alleging that under the proposed legislation there is no liberty and sovereignty of the Railway Board, he said, "The very freedom of the Railway Board is lost



Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Monday

PTI

and the functional autonomy of the Railway Board is lost. It is nowhere to be seen."

Demanding that the Railway Board must be given autonomy, Tankha said, "If you are thinking about the modernisation of the Railways, then India cannot have a modern railway system if the

Railway Board is not autonomous.

If you are not empowering your institutions, if you are not allowing freedom of decision making to your institutions, India is not going to become a developed country."

He also demanded accountability from the Minister for accidents and stampedes

at railway stations, including the recent one in the national capital.

Expressing similar sentiments, Sushmita Dev (TMC) said the proposed legislation is repealing the 1890 and 1905 Acts and "the provisions of 1905 Act have been inserted into the 1989 Railway Act", which is a "200 section Act and covers almost every subject and every issue in the Railways Ministry".

"Was it not the apt time for the Railway Minister to review that entire Act of (19)89, make amendments to it and then send that bill to an appropriate committee for scrutiny? Why is it that the government shy away from a standing committee, from a select committee?" Dev asked.

She further said, "There could only be one reason that these committees will actually compel the Minister for a reality check, a reality that he is not comfortable with". Taking part in the discussion, Manoj Jha, RJD, said overall members are expressing their concerns over the situation of the Railways more than speaking on the Bill.

"Where I come from, the names of the trains like Shramshakti, Shramjeevi, Jansadhaaran - reflect the situation there. We still don't have any Vande Bharat train," he said, asking if 100 per cent electrification was required for railways.

He also alleged that during the Mahakumbh, the regular coolies at the Prayagraj railway station were replaced

by outsourced coolies.

Haris Beeran of Muslim League asked if there was any consultation with stakeholders and "if not, the Bill should be referred to a committee".

P Sandosh Kumar of CPI asked the Minister to "focus more on Rail than Reels", and alleged that during the 10 years of the NDA regime, there were 678 railway accidents - which is 68 accidents per year and is increasing day by day.

At least 15 per cent of security-related posts are vacant, he said, adding steps should be taken to fill these posts while asking the minister to restore the discount for senior citizens in Railways.

Refuting the charges by the opposition members, BJP member Subhash Barala said the bill aims to make the functioning of railways more smooth and transparent, more accountable and all the railway zones and the divisional managers would be given more autonomy and financial powers.

Similarly, BJP's Geeta alias Chandraprabha and Sikandar Kumar said the Bill will strengthen the Railway board by giving it more power. It gives a legal sanction to the railway board by amending the Act. So far, the board has been functioning without constitutional sanction.

Subhash Khuntia of the BJP said his state Odisha is being ignored by the Railways, and JMM's Sarfraz Ahmad expressed similar sentiments that

Jharkhand hasn't been given its due despite the state contributing a lot of revenue to the country. Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda JD (S) welcomed the Bill while lauding Vaishnaw's performance as the Railways Minister.

Taking part in the discussion, NCP's Prafful Patel highlighted the importance of Railways in the country's transportation system, saying it has the "same importance today as they did years ago". Dharmshila Gupta (BJP) said the Bill would give the Railway Board more rights and strengthen the required legal framework to provide stability to railway employees.

Brij Lal (BJP) said the Narendra Modi-led government has taken various measures to improve the Railways, including boosting its network connectivity, safety, security and cleanliness, among others. He said there was a notable decrease in terrorist incidents, particularly involving Railways after the current dispensation first came to power in 2014.

Pradeep Kumar Verma (BJP) termed the proposed legislation a "revolutionary step" towards the 'Modi Ki Guarantee' and a crucial step towards reforming the Indian Railways, which will help realise the vision of better rail connectivity for the middle class.

He said the Bill provides higher autonomy to the Railway Board and will enable the railways to undertake various reforms.



VP Dhankhar recovering at AIIMS in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar is recovering at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, and his progress is satisfactory, sources said on Monday. He was admitted in the hospital on Sunday after he complained of uneasiness and chest pain.

Dhankhar, 73, was admitted to the critical care unit under Dr Rajiv Narang, head of cardiology at AIIMS Delhi. A group of doctors is monitoring his condition. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the hospital on Sunday afternoon and inquired about Dhankhar's health. In a social media post, the Prime Minister said, "I pray for his good health and speedy recovery."

Set up fast track court for cyber crimes: BJP MP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Issues including cyber crimes and bank frauds besides meagre salary of Asha workers were flagged in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. Rajya Sabha BJP member Sanjay Seth expressed concern over the rising cases of cyber crimes and bank frauds in the country and demanded setting up of a fast track court to deal with such frauds.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the House, Seth said a large number of people use digital and online payment systems, but due to inadequate security measures, many of them lose their hard-earned income to cyber frauds within seconds.

He cited an incident where a person committed suicide after losing the money he had accumulated for his daughter's marriage to a cyber fraud. He also said senior citizens too lose their pensions to cyber frauds.

Seth stressed that while digital India is being promoted in the country, the financial security of citizens too should get equal priority. He made a strong case for technical upgradation to strengthen cyber security in banks, including small and rural banks.

The BJP MP said a special fast track court should be set up for speedy justice to victims. He also suggested setting



Sanjay Seth speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament

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up a fund to compensate victims of cyber frauds. Seth urged the government to take stringent and effective measures against cyber crimes to safeguard hard-earned income of citizens.

In her Zero Hour mention, BJP MP Rekha Sharma expressed concern over the problems faced by the Asha workers appointed under the National Health Mission.

She said Asha workers serve as the backbone of the rural and community health care system, acting as a crucial link between the government and peo-

ple. They implement key health care initiatives, including maternal and child health services, immunisation drives, disease prevention program and various welfare schemes.

Sharma said despite the indispensable role of improving public health, Asha workers continue to receive a meagre honorarium that does not reflect the importance of their work.

Many of them work tirelessly without fixed salaries, relying only on incentives that are often delayed and insufficient, she said. She further said Asha workers lack essential social security benefits such as pension, healthcare system insurance and maternity benefit, leaving them vulnerable and financially insecure. "I urge the government to take immediate steps to address the long-standing issue. Asha workers must be provided with a fixed monthly salary in addition to their incentives, ensuring fair compensation for their invaluable services."

Moreover, they should be brought under the coverage of social security schemes such as employee state insurance, health insurance, to safeguard their future," the BJP MP said. Sharma also stressed the need to set up a structured mechanism to review their wages periodically and address grievances related to the payment delays.

Calcutta HC's Justice Joymalya Bagchi appointed as SC judge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Justice Joymalya Bagchi, a judge of the Calcutta High Court, was on Monday appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court. The apex court collegium had recommended his name on March 6. His appointment was announced by Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Social Media platforms.

Justice Bagchi would have a tenure of more than six years in the top court, during which he will also serve as the Chief Justice of India.

As per the current seniority list, after retirement of Justice K V Viswanathan on May 25, 2031, Justice Bagchi, born on October 3, 1966, would assume the office of Chief Justice of India till his retirement on October 2, 2031.

While HC judges retire at the age of 62, SC judges demit office on attaining the age of 65 years.

Justice Bagchi was appointed a judge in the Calcutta High Court on June 27, 2011. He was transferred to the Andhra Pradesh High Court on January 4, 2021.

Justice Bagchi was repatriated to the



Justice Joymalya Bagchi

ANDRA PRADESH HIGH COURT

Calcutta High Court on November 8, 2021, and has been functioning there since then.

He has served as a judge of High Courts for more than 13 years. During his long tenure, Justice Bagchi acquired significant experience in diverse fields of law.

Once he takes oath, the Supreme Court will have 33 judges against its sanctioned strength of 34.

Two engineers held for killing auto driver in Gurugram

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram police have arrested two engineers for allegedly killing an auto driver over a dispute of parking an auto, police said.

The deceased was identified as Sonu (22), originally a resident of Gaya in Bihar.

The arrested accused have been identified as Jaideep and Mani Shankar Shukla.

Based on a complaint filed by the deceased, a case of murder was registered against both the criminals at the DLF Phase-2 police station.

Jaideep earlier was associated with an IT company; now he used to supply food.

According to the police, the victim driver had parked his auto on the side in U Block of DLF Phase-3 on Sunday evening around 6 pm.

At the same time, Jaideep and Mani Shankar was passing the spot and asked the auto driver to remove the auto from the spot.

Thereafter, a verbal spat occurred

between them, and in a fit of rage, the duo accused assaulted the auto driver brutally and fled the spot. It is being said that the victim was drunk at the time of the incident.

Somehow the victim was admitted to the civil hospital in Gurugram in critical condition, and later he died during the treatment. The hospital administration informed the police about the matter.

Upon receiving information, a police team reached the spot, took custody of the body, and placed the body for an autopsy.

"The body has been taken into custody and sent for postmortem. The accused behind the incident have been arrested," the investigation officer said.

During interrogation, the accused revealed that they had worked together in an IT company. After losing his job, accused Manishanker had gone to his home.

He came back to Gurugram about two months ago and was staying with accused Jaideep in his room and was looking for a job.

Opposition parties walks out of Rajya Sabha after notices rejected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress and some other Opposition parties staged a walk-out from the Rajya Sabha on Monday after their notices for discussions on issues ranging from 'duplicate' voter ID cards to US funding to voter turnout were rejected, even as Union minister J P Nadda insisted that the government is ready to discuss any issue provided they are under the rules.

The opposition MPs raised slogans after Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Harivansh, said a dozen notices under Rule 267, which calls for setting aside the business of the day to take up discussions on urgent matters, have been rejected.

Citing the rejection, Harivansh did not allow Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge to make his submission.

The opposition MPs then protested for a while before staging a walkout.

Leader of the House and Union minister Nadda termed the walkout "irresponsible behaviour" and suggested that the opposition MPs, including Congress chief Kharge, should go for a refresher course on the rules of the House.

He also termed the practice of oppo-



LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi speaks in the House during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi, Monday

PTI

sition MPs giving notices under Rule 267 despite elaborate ruling by the chair a "vicious design to demean the institution of Parliament". "They are not interested in debate. They want to give an impression that the government does not want to answer queries or enter into a debate. "The government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is ready to discuss anything under this roof. But there are certain rules and regulations for debates in

the House," Nadda said, adding that the MPs will get an opportunity to raise their issues during the debate on the Union Budget over the next 10 days. "We are ready for that discussion. There is a provision for short duration discussions and there is a provision for long duration discussions. They (opposition) don't read the rules," Nadda said, as he asked the opposition MPs to first read the rules and learn to debate. "This is irresponsible behaviour

Delhi court rejects parole plea of MP Rashid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi court on Monday rejected the plea of jailed Jammu and Kashmir MP Engineer Rashid seeking custody parole to attend the upcoming Parliament session.

Additional sessions judge Chander Jit Singh dismissed the plea and posted the order on Rashid's regular bail plea on March 19.

On March 3, the court asked the NIA to respond to the plea, following which it reserved its verdict after hearing the arguments.

The application, filed by advocate Vikhyat Oberoi for Rashid on February 27, sought the relief on the grounds that Rashid was a parliamentarian and needed to attend the upcoming session to fulfil his public duty.

Sheikh Abdul Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, defeated Chief

Minister Omar Abdullah in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in Baramulla.

Rashid's regular bail application is currently pending before the court. The second part of Parliament's Budget session would begin on March 10 and end on April 4. The judge on September 10 granted interim bail to Rashid to enable him to campaign for the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Rashid surrendered himself before Tihar Jail on October 27.

Rashid has been lodged in Tihar jail since 2019 after he was arrested by the NIA under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in a 2017 terror funding case.

Elections to the 90-member J-K assembly were held in three phases from September 18 to October 1.

The results were declared on October 8 in which the National Conference-Congress alliance attained a clear major-

ity with 48 seats. The Delhi High Court on February 24 directed the sessions judge to expeditiously decide the bail plea of Rashid in the case.

The high court passed the directions in view of a December 24, 2024 order, by which the sessions court requested the district judge to transfer the case to a court designated to try lawmakers.

Rashid's name cropped up during the investigation of Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Watali, who was arrested by the NIA for allegedly funding terrorist groups and separatists in the Kashmir Valley. The NIA filed a chargesheet against several persons, including Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik, Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed and Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin, in the case.

Malik was sentenced to life imprisonment by a trial court in 2022 after he pleaded guilty to the charges.

India should protect its national interest while negotiating with US, says SJM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India should give priority to bilateral trade agreements over multilateral deals and protect its national interest, especially that of farmers and small entrepreneurs, while negotiating with the US amid President Donald Trump's "frontal attack" on the global free trade system, the RSS-affiliate SJM said on Monday.

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch's (SJM) national council passed a resolution in this regard at its meeting in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, it said in a statement.

The two-day meeting, which deliberated on a host of issues, including strengthening India's economy amid a changing geopolitical scenario and the Trump administration's policy of reciprocal tariffs, concluded on Monday.

"After taking over as US president, Donald Trump has launched a frontal attack on the global free trade system by announcing his intent to impose higher tariffs (on reciprocal basis) on imports from many countries around the world," the resolution said.

The move is intended to bring back manufacturing to the US so that the issue of unemployment is addressed, it said.

"The national council of Swadeshi Jagran Manch strongly suggests that Bharat should enhance its foreign trade with bilateral trade agreements rather than multilateral trade agreements," the resolution said.

"However, while entering into bilateral trade agreements with the US and other countries, national interests should be protected, especially (the

interests of) our farmers and small entrepreneurs," it added.

The resolution underlined that the Union government has been protecting the interests of farmers and their livelihood while negotiating trade agreements. "This policy needs to continue," it said.

The SJM's resolution appreciated the government's efforts to enhance foreign trade in Indian Rupee and said the efforts should also be taken to ensure that foreign currency and payment systems like SWIFT are not allowed to be used as "pressure tactics".

"The whole world is passing through a syndrome of geo-economic fragmentation and the key to success in this scenario is the policy of 'Nation First'" it said. The resolution also appealed to people to use Indian products.

Pak Prez presses for strengthening capacities to deal with terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday pressed for strengthening security capacities and enhancing the capabilities of law enforcement agencies to deal with the increasing cases of extremism and terrorism.

Addressing a joint session of the parliament at the beginning of the second parliamentary year amidst protests by the opposition led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Zardari also asked parliament to tackle "deprivation and inequality" to address the issue of terrorism.

Zardari said that the authorities were aware of the "external support and funding" that terrorists were getting and causing human and financial losses to Pakistan but also emphasised to address the local factors. He, however, did not name any country or organisation.

"At the same time, we should not forget that militancy finds roots in deprivation and inequity, so we must focus on the development of regions most affected by terrorism and create employment," the president said.

"Parliament needs to play a role in rebuilding a consensus to tackle extremist ideologies as well as the militancy that supports such violence," he said.

In view of the current internal and external security challenges, Pakistan needs to strengthen its security capabilities and enhance the capacity of the law enforcement agencies to effectively deal with terrorism, Zardari said.

He also urged the government to promote good governance and political economic stability, while appreciating it for improving the economic outlook of the country.

Zardari also said that the high rate of population growth along with strategic drift in the administrative machinery increased governance issues manifold and asked the parliament to work seriously by playing its role in a real re-set of the governance and service delivery outcomes.

"As far as the government is concerned, ministries too need to redefine their vision and objectives, and understand that pressing issues faced by the people of Pakistan have to be resolved within a certain time frame," he said. "We need to deliver tangible benefits to restore the trust of the people in democratic institutions."

"I would urge all of you to empower our people, make decisions of national importance with consensus, encourage domestic and international investments for economic growth and job creation, foster social and economic justice, and ensure fairness and transparency in our system," he said. He also highlighted the importance of investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities to address the sense of deprivation of the masses and also talked about improving the taxation system and reforming the IT industry.

He urged the federal and provincial governments to increase allocations for the education sector in the upcoming budget and provide more opportunities

through scholarships and financial assistance programs.

Zardari noted that Pakistan must aim for stability and self-sufficiency in food production and called for the agriculture sector to be strengthened to ensure sustainable water management and to manage the "growing threats of climate change".

While speaking about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar Port, he said the two projects remained central to Pakistan's vision of connectivity.

"These projects must be fully realized so that Pakistan can serve as a gateway for international trade, linking Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East," he said.

The president said that Pakistan would further cement its All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China and continue to support the One-China Policy.

The president also reiterated Pakistan's support for the people of Kashmir and the country's commitment to the Palestinian cause.

Opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf created a ruckus by shouting slogans and protesting throughout the speech of the president against the alleged rigging of last year's elections and political victimization of its leaders, including the imprisonment of party founder Imran Khan.

Zardari, who is serving as the country's president for the second time, has already addressed the joint sitting of parliament seven times, including once during the present regime last year, which is a constitutional duty of a president.

Over 30 nations likely to participate in Paris planning talks on security force for Ukraine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Military officials from more than 30 nations will take part in Paris talks on the creation of an international security force for Ukraine, a French military official said Monday.

Such an international force would aim to dissuade Russia from launching another offensive after any ceasefire in Ukraine comes into effect.

The long list of participants in Tuesday's discussions will also include Asian and Oceania nations that will join remotely, the French official said.

The international makeup of the meeting offers an indication of how broadly France and Britain — which are working together on plans for the force — are casting their net as they aim to build what the French official described as a coalition of nations "able and willing" to be part of an effort to safeguard Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire.

The French military

official spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the blueprint for the force that is shrouded in secrecy and the Paris talks that will consider it.

The force being envisaged by France and Britain would aim to reassure Ukraine and deter another large-scale Russian offensive after any ceasefire, the official said. It could include heavy weaponry and weapons stockpiles that could be rushed within hours or days to aid in Ukraine's defense in the event of a Russian attack that shatters any truce, the official said.

The French-British blueprint will be presented to military officials from more than 30 nations in the first part of Tuesday's talks, the official said.

The talks' second part will include "more precise and concrete" discussions where the participants will be invited to say whether and how their militaries might be able to contribute, the official said. "It's not, This is what we need," the

official said. "It's more, What are you bringing to the pot?"

The official stressed, however, that the ultimate decision on whether nations take part in the force would be taken at a political level, by government leaders.

Chiefs of staff — or, in Canada's case, their representative — from nearly all of 32 nations of the NATO military alliance will attend the Paris discussions. Three NATO nations will be absent but were invited: The United States, Croatia and Montenegro, the official said.

Also attending will be the chiefs of staff of Ireland and Cyprus and a representative from Austria — all nations that are not NATO members but are in the European Union.

North Korea fires several ballistic missiles into sea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

North Korea fired several ballistic missiles into the sea on Monday, South Korea's military said, hours after South Korean and US troops kicked off their large annual combined drills, which the North views as an invasion rehearsal.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missile firings, North Korea's fifth missile launch event this year, were detected from the North's Hwanghae province but gave no further details such as how far they flew. Earlier Monday, the South Korean and US militaries began their annual joint military exercises, which are scheduled to last 11 days.

The Freedom Shield command post exercise began after the South Korean and US militaries paused live-fire training while Seoul investigates how two of its fighter jets mistakenly bombed a civilian area during a warm-up drill last week.

The drills' start drew the condemnation of nuclear-armed North Korea, which issued a government statement calling the exercises a "dangerous provocative act" that increases the risks of military conflict. About 30 people were injured, two of them seriously, when two South Korean KF-16 fighter jets mistakenly fired eight MK-82 bombs on a civilian area in Pocheon, a town near the North Korea border, on Thursday.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER: RWSS DIVISION:BERHAMPUR
Near Jarada Bunglow, Pin- 760004, Ph. 0680-2296344
eerwss_bam@nic.in rwssbam@gmail.com

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING
Bid Identification No. EERWSSBAM-ID-16-OF-2024-25

The Superintending Engineer, RWSS Division, Berhampur, Ganjam on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids in Double Cover system according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in online mode for electrification works in Ganjam District from the eligible contractors as per DTCN.

1	Name of the work	Execution of different works of different P.W.S. Scheme in Ganjam District.
2	No of Work (Tender)	01 Nos.
3	Estimated cost (Approximate)	178.02 Lakhs
4	Period of completion	210 days
5	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the Portal.	From 12-03-2025 at 11.00 hrs to 31-03-2025-02-2025 up to 17.00 hrs
6	Last date & time for seeking clarification	28-03-2025 up to 17.00 hrs
7	Dt. of opening of bid	02-04-2025 at 11.00 hrs
8	Late date / Time for receipt of bids in the Portal	31-03-2025 up to 17.00 hrs
9	Name & address of the Officer inviting tender.	Superintending Engineer, RWSS Division, Near Jarada Bunglow, Berhampur-760004, Dist. Ganjam, Odisha.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>
OIPR-29035/11/0010/2425

Superintending Engineer
RWSS & S Division, Berhampur

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL — II, DELHI.
4th FLOOR JEEVAN TARA BUILDING
PARLIAMENT STREET NEW DELHI — 110001.

Notice under section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institutions Act 1993 read with rule 12 of 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rule) 1993 in the matter of
OANO 663/2022
HDFC BANK LTD.

DATE: 31.01.2025
APPLICANT

VERSUS

RESPONDENT
RAJESH ANAND
To, Defendant D. Shri Rajesh Anand S/o Harkishan Lal Anand
Kar Links O-13 Basement Left Side Opposite Park Lajpat Nagar-II New Delhi - 24 Also At L 104-105 3rd Floor Lajpat Nagar - II New Delhi - 24

Whereas the above-named applicant (s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 49,509.65/- (RUPEE TWENTY FIVE LAKH FORTY NINE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED NINE AND SIXTY FIVE PAISE ONLY)** against you and where as it has been shown that the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 27.05.2025 at 11.00 A.M. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence. All the matters will be taken up through video Conferencing and for that purpose: (i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/software; (ii) "Meeting ID" and Password for the date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar shall be displayed in the daily case list at DRT Official Portal i.e. ort.gov.in in any emergency qua the Advocate/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 23748478. Give notice under my hand and seal of the Tribunal this the 31th day of Jan.2025 By order of the Tribunal, Section Officer DRT-II, Delhi

PAUL MERCHANTS FINANCE PRIVATE LIMITED

Notice is hereby given for the information of all concerned, that Gold ornaments pledged with the under mentioned branches of the company under respective loan numbers, which were overdue for redemption and which have not been redeemed by the concerned customers so far in spite of repeated notices by the company, will be auctioned at the concerned branch offices of the company on **Thursday 20th March, 2025** as per the following details:-

1. Karawal Nagar Branch - Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, K-74, Main Road, Karawal Nagar, Delhi. Pin code - 110094. Phone - 8644864544 Loan Number - 219210000000097, 219210000000099, 219210000000203, 219210000000246, 219210000000249, 219210000000256, 219210000000267, 219210000000288, 219210000000289, 219210000000299, 219210000000309, 219210000000319, 219210000000320, 219210000000325, 219210000000334, 219210000000350, 219210000000351, 219210000000385, 219210000000405 (Time 11:00 AM).

2. Kartar Nagar Branch - Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, J-33, Main Road, Kartar Nagar, 4th Pusta, Delhi. Pin code - 110053. Phone - 9504666226 Loan Number - 209210000000553, 209210000000576, 209210000000601, 209210000000608, 209210000000612, 209210000000645, 209210000000645, 209210000000661, 209210000000684, 209210000000685, 209210000000686, 209210000000687, 209210000000688, 209210000000689, 209210000000690, 209210000000691, 209210000000692, 209210000000693, 209210000000694, 209210000000695, 209210000000696, 209210000000697, 209210000000698, 209210000000699, 209210000000700, 209210000000701, 209210000000702, 209210000000703, 209210000000704, 209210000000705, 209210000000706, 209210000000707, 209210000000708, 209210000000709, 209210000000712, 209210000000717, 209210000000718, 209210000000719, 209210000000720, 209210000000721, 209210000000722, 209210000000723, 209210000000724, 209210000000725, 209210000000726, 209210000000727, 209210000000728, 209210000000729, 209210000000730, 209210000000731, 209210000000732, 209210000000733, 209210000000734, 209210000000735, 209210000000736, 209210000000737, 209210000000738, 209210000000739, 209210000000740, 209210000000741, 209210000000742, 209210000000743, 209210000000744, 209210000000745, 209210000000746, 209210000000747, 209210000000748, 209210000000749, 209210000000750, 209210000000751, 209210000000752, 209210000000753, 209210000000754, 209210000000755, 209210000000756, 209210000000757, 209210000000758, 209210000000759, 209210000000760, 209210000000761, 209210000000762, 209210000000763, 209210000000764, 209210000000765, 209210000000766, 209210000000767, 209210000000768, 209210000000769, 209210000000770, 209210000000771, 209210000000772, 209210000000773, 209210000000774, 209210000000775, 209210000000776, 209210000000777, 209210000000778, 209210000000779, 209210000000780, 209210000000781, 209210000000782, 209210000000783, 209210000000784, 209210000000785, 209210000000786, 209210000000787, 209210000000788, 209210000000789, 209210000000790, 209210000000791, 209210000000792, 209210000000793, 209210000000794, 209210000000795, 209210000000796, 209210000000797, 209210000000798, 209210000000799, 209210000000800, 209210000000801, 209210000000802, 209210000000803, 209210000000804, 209210000000805, 209210000000806, 209210000000807, 209210000000808, 209210000000809, 209210000000810, 209210000000811, 209210000000812, 209210000000813, 209210000000814, 209210000000815, 209210000000816, 209210000000817, 209210000000818, 209210000000819, 209210000000820, 209210000000821, 209210000000822, 209210000000823, 209210000000824, 209210000000825, 209210000000826, 209210000000827, 209210000000828, 209210000000829, 209210000000830, 209210000000831, 209210000000832, 209210000000833 (Time 11:00 AM).

3. Kiriari Branch - Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, Khasra No. 1012, Sulamanagar, Kiriari-Delhi. Pin code - 110096. Phone - 8968866676 Loan Number - 211210000000099, 211210000000203, 211210000000206, 211210000000209, 211210000000214, 211210000000219, 211210000000224, 211210000000229, 211210000000234, 211210000000239, 211210000000244, 211210000000249, 211210000000254, 211210000000259, 211210000000264, 211210000000269, 211210000000274, 211210000000279, 211210000000284, 211210000000289, 211210000000294, 211210000000299, 211210000000304, 211210000000309, 211210000000314, 211210000000319, 211210000000324, 211210000000329, 211210000000334, 211210000000339, 211210000000344, 211210000000349, 211210000000354, 211210000000359, 211210000000364, 211210000000369, 211210000000374, 211210000000379, 211210000000384, 211210000000389, 211210000000394, 211210000000399, 211210000000404, 211210000000409, 211210000000414, 211210000000419, 211210000000424, 211210000000429, 211210000000434, 211210000000439, 211210000000444, 211210000000449, 211210000000454, 211210000000459, 211210000000464, 211210000000469, 211210000000474, 211210000000479, 211210000000484, 211210000000489, 211210000000494, 211210000000499, 211210000000504, 211210000000509, 211210000000514, 211210000000519, 211210000000524, 211210000000529, 211210000000534, 211210000000539, 211210000000544, 211210000000549, 211210000000554, 211210000000559, 211210000000564, 211210000000569, 211210000000574, 211210000000579, 211210000000584, 211210000000589, 211210000000594, 211210000000599, 211210000000604, 211210000000609, 211210000000614, 211210000000619, 211210000000624, 211210000000629, 211210000000634, 211210000000639, 211210000000644, 211210000000649, 211210000000654, 211210000000659, 211210000000664, 211210000000669, 211210000000674, 211210000000679, 211210000000684, 211210000000689, 211210000000694, 211210000000699, 211210000000704, 211210000000709, 211210000000714, 211210000000719, 211210000000724, 211210000000729, 211210000000734, 211210000000739, 211210000000744, 211210000000749, 211210000000754, 211210000000759, 211210000000764, 211210000000769, 211210000000774, 211210000000779, 211210000000784, 211210000000789, 211210000000794, 211210000000799, 211210000000804, 211210000000809, 211210000000814, 211210000000819, 211210000000824, 211210000000829, 211210000000834, 211210000000839, 211210000000844, 211210000000849, 211210000000854, 211210000000859, 211210000000864, 211210000000869, 211210000000874, 211210000000879, 211210000000884, 211210000000889, 211210000000894, 211210000000899, 211210000000904, 211210000000909, 211210000000914, 211210000000919, 211210000000924, 211210000000929, 211210000000934, 211210000000939, 211210000000944, 211210000000949, 211210000000954, 211210000000959, 211210000000964, 211210000000969, 211210000000974, 211210000000979, 211210000000984, 211210000000989, 211210000000994, 211210000000999, 211210000001004, 211210000001009, 211210000001014, 211210000001019, 211210000001024, 211210000001029, 211210000001034, 211210000001039, 211210000001044, 211210000001049, 211210000001054, 211210000001059, 211210000001064, 211210000001069, 211210000001074, 211210000001079, 211210000001084, 211210000001089, 211210000001094, 211210000001099, 211210000001104, 211210000001109, 211210000001114, 211210000001119, 211210000001124, 211210000001129, 211210000001134, 211210000001139, 211210000001144, 211210000001149, 211210000001154, 211210000001159, 211210000001164, 211210000001169, 211210000001174, 211210000001179, 211210000001184, 211210000001189, 211210000001194, 211210000001199, 211210000001204, 211210000001209, 211210000001214, 211210000001219, 211210000001224, 211210000001229, 211210000001234, 211210000001239, 211210000001244, 211210000001249, 211210000001254, 211210000001259, 211210000001264, 211210000001269, 211210000001274, 211210000001279, 211210000001284, 211210000001289, 211210000001294, 211210000001299, 211210000001304, 211210000001309, 211210000001314, 211210000001319, 211210000001324, 211210000001329, 211210000001334, 211210000001339, 211210000001344, 211210000001349, 211210000001354, 211210000001359, 211210000001364, 211210000001369, 211210000001374, 211210000001379, 211210000001384, 211210000001389, 211210000001394, 211210000001399, 211210000001404, 211210000001409, 211210000001414, 211210000001419, 211210000001424, 211210000001429, 211210000001434, 211210000001439, 211210000001444, 211210000001449, 211210000001454, 211210000001459, 211210000001464, 211210000001469, 211210000001474, 211210000001479, 211210000001484, 211210000001489, 211210000001494, 211210000001499, 211210000001504, 211210000001509, 211210000001514, 211210000001519, 211210

SEBI tightens norms for SME IPOs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Markets regulator SEBI has notified a stricter regulatory framework for small and medium enterprise (SME) IPOs by introducing a profitability requirement and capping a 20 per cent limit on offer-for-sale (OFS).

The reforms aim to provide SMEs with a sound track record an opportunity to raise funds from the public while protecting investor interests.

This move follows a rise in SME issues, which has driven significant investor participation.

With regard to profitability criteria, SEBI said SMEs planning to launch an IPO are required to have a minimum operating profits (earnings before interest, depreciation and tax or EBITDA) of Rs 1 crore for at least two out of the three previous financial years.

Also, the OFS component by selling shareholders in SME IPOs has been capped at 20 per cent of the total issue size. Additionally, selling shareholders will not be allowed to offload more than 50 per cent of their existing holdings, SEBI said

in a notification dated March 4. Further, promoters' shareholding over the Minimum Promoter Contribution (MPC) would be subject to a phased lock-in period. Half of the excess holding would be released after one year, while the remaining 50 per cent would be unlocked after two years.

The allocation methodology for non-institutional investors (NIIs) in SME IPOs would be aligned with the approach followed in main-board IPOs to ensure uniformity.

"Further SEBI has increased the minimum application size for SME IPO to two lots making entry stricter to avoid unnecessary speculation in SME IPO. This would help protect the interest of gullible investors who generally invest looking at the escalating share price," Makarand M Joshi, founder and Partner of corporate compliance firm MMJC and Associates, said. The amount allocated for general corporate purpose (GCP) in SME IPOs has been capped at 15 per cent of the total issue size or Rs 10 crore, whichever is lower.

SME issues will not be permitted to use IPO proceeds to repay loans taken from

promoters, promoter groups, or related parties, whether directly or indirectly.

"Objects of the issue should not consist of repayment of loan taken from the promoter, promoter group or any related party, from the issue proceeds, directly or indirectly," SEBI said

The Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) for SME IPOs must be made available for public comments for 21 days. Issuers will be required to publish announcements in newspapers and include a QR code for easy access to the DRHP.

Joshi said DRHP pertaining to IPO on the SME segment, which was till now cleared by the stock exchange, would now be available for public comment on the SME exchange, website of the issuer and merchant banker to the issue. The public would be made aware by way of a public advertisement that SME IPO DRHP is available for public comment.

This would allow the public at large to submit comments or raise complaints on draft red herring prospectus of companies going for IPO on small and medium enterprises segment, he added.

SME companies would be allowed to

raise funds through further issues without migrating to the main board, provided they comply with the SEBI (LODR) rules applicable to main Board-listed entities.

"Where the post-issue paid-up capital pursuant to further issue of capital, including by way of rights issue, preferential issue, bonus issue, is likely to increase beyond ₹25 crore, the issuer may undertake further issuance of capital without migration from SME exchange to the main board, subject to the issuer undertaking to comply with the provisions of LODR Regulations, 2015, as applicable to companies listed on the main board of the stock exchange(s)," the regulator said. SME-listed entities will have to comply with related party transaction (RPT) norms applicable to the main board-listed companies.

To give this effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has notified ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirement) Rules.

Driven by the strong performance of India's equity markets, the number of public issues by SMEs has significantly increased over the past two years.

Goyal to discuss trade issues with export councils

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will on Thursday hold discussions with export promotion councils on trade issues amid the threat of imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the US, an industry official said.

In the meeting, exporters are expected to raise issues pertaining to the proposed bilateral trade agreement between India and the US, the official added.

The meeting assumes significance as the minister has recently returned from Washington after holding trade talks with his US counterparts.

An industry official said the exporting community is concerned about the threat of the US to impose reciprocal tariffs as it could impact India's exports to America, which is its largest trading partner. However, they added that if the US would give duty concessions under the proposed trade agreement to India, sectors like textiles, handicrafts, leather, and gems and jewellery would get a boost.

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has said that India should open

its agri sector also.

India has by and large protected the agri sector in all the free trade agreements as the segment involves the protection of the interest of millions of domestic farmers, who are engaged in sustenance farming. Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal on Monday told a Parliamentary panel that negotiations are still on and no agreement on trade tariffs has been reached so far between India and the US.

The Commerce Secretary briefed the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs on US President Donald Trump's recent claims that India has agreed to reduce its tariffs "way down" while Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri briefed the committee on China and Europe.

India has not committed to anything on trade tariffs to the US, he told the panel.

Last week, US President Donald Trump said India has agreed to cut its tariffs "way down" as he reiterated his claim that the country charges America massive tariffs that make it difficult to sell products there.

Rupee sinks 36 paise against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi



The rupee depreciated by 36 paise to close at a week's low 87.31 against the US dollar on Monday due to volatile crude oil prices amid tariff uncertainties worldwide and unabated outflow of foreign funds.

A weaker American currency failed to support the local unit as a sell-off in the domestic equity market hit the sentiment adversely, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened weak at 87.24 and touched the day's low of 87.36 amid intense volatility. The unit touched an intraday high of 87.16 before ending the session at 87.31 against the greenback, registering a loss of 36 paise from its previous closing level.

Earlier, the domestic currency had recorded a steep single-day loss of 47 paise against the dollar on February 25.

On Friday, the rupee appreciated 17 paise to close at 86.95 against the US dol-

lar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.15 per cent at 103.65.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.28 per cent to \$70.56 per barrel in futures trade. Domestic equity markets closed lower with the 30-share BSE Sensex falling by 217.41 points, or 0.29 per cent, to 74,115.17, and the Nifty losing 92.20 points, or 0.41 per cent, to close at 22,460.30. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 485.41 crore on a net basis on Monday, according to exchange data.

The latest RBI data released on Friday showed the country's forex reserves dropped by \$1.781 billion to \$ 638.698 billion in the week ended February 28. The overall forex kitty had jumped by \$ 4.758 billion to \$ 640.479 billion in the previous reporting week.

On the global macroeconomic froth, the US Labour Department data on Friday showed increased hiring activity in February though the unemployment rate rose slightly to 4.1 per cent. Economists say the outlook remains cloudy with President Donald threatening a trade war and purging the federal workforce.

Energy conclave Gridcon 2025 to discuss issues in power sector

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi



A significant step towards strengthening India's Power Grid and fostering innovations in renewable energy integration, Union Minister of Power and Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal, inaugurated GRIDCON 2025 — The International Conference cum Exhibition on March 9, 2025.

The grand event was held at IICC, Yashobhooni, Dwarka, New Delhi in the presence of Union Minister of State for Power and New and Renewable Energy, Shripad Yesso Naik.

GRIDCON 2025 is organised by the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), from March 9 to March 11, 2025, under the patronage of the Ministry of Power and in association with CIGRE India. The inaugural event was graced by prominent power sector professionals from across the world. It was attended by RK Tyagi, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of POWERGRID, along with Directors and senior

officials from the Ministry of Power, POWERGRID, and other public sector undertakings (PSUs) in the energy sector.

Over 2,000 conference delegates, 150 technical papers, 150 exhibition companies, and representatives from 30 countries, making GRIDCON 2025 a truly international event. Industry leaders, researchers, academicians, and global experts in power transmission, distribution, and smart energy solutions related matters were presented in the conclave.

The central theme of GRIDCON 2025 is "Innovations in Grid Resilience", focusing on cutting-edge technologies, infrastructure advancements, and smart solutions that will revolutionise: Renewable Energy Integration, Grid Resilience and Stability, Smart Asset Management, Digital Transformation in the Power Sector.

The event aims to create a collaborative platform where industry experts, policymakers, and researchers can exchange ideas, showcase innovations, and discuss best practices for shaping the future of the power grid.

Domestic commercial vehicle volumes to grow 3-5 per cent: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Domestic commercial vehicle industry's wholesale volumes are expected to grow 3-5 per cent year-on-year in FY26, rating firm Ibra said on Monday. This follows a flat volume movement estimated in FY25, marred by the demand slowdown in the first half of the fiscal due to the general elections, it said in a statement.

"Resumption of construction and infrastructure activities, steady rural demand along with higher replacement sales stemming out of ageing fleets and government mandates are the likely driving factors to propel the said volume expansion towards the end of FY2025 and through FY2026," Ibra Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head Kinjal Shah said. The sustained push in infrastructure development, a steady increase in mining activities and the improvement in roads/highway connectivity are expected to support volumes going forward, she added. The replacement demand would also remain healthy, primarily due to the ageing fleet, estimated at 10 years for the medium and heavy commercial vehicles (M&HCVs), and is expected to aid the industry volume expansion in the medium term, Shah stated.

Among the various sub-segments, the M&HCV (trucks) wholesale volumes are likely to grow by 0-3 per cent year-on-year in FY26 after seeing a flatish growth or marginal contraction in FY25, Ibra said. Wholesale volumes for the domestic light commercial vehicles (LCV trucks) are expected to see a modest 3-5 per cent YoY expansion in FY26.

Gold falls ₹150 to ₹88,750

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Falling for the third day in a row, gold prices retreated by ₹150 to ₹88,750 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid a weak trend in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled lower at ₹88,900 per 10 grams on Friday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped by ₹150 to ₹88,350 per 10 grams from the previous close of ₹88,500 per 10 grams.

Silver prices also declined by ₹250 to ₹99,250 per kg, snapping the four-day winning run.

Comex gold futures for April delivery fell 0.32 per cent to \$ 2,904.80 per ounce in the international markets. Meanwhile, spot gold also fell 0.13 per cent to \$2,905.31 per ounce.

"Gold and silver saw profit-taking from recent highs due to a rebound in US bond yields. The US administration's decision to delay Mexico tariffs by a month added to the cautious sentiment. However, a weakening dollar, which fell to a five-month low and recorded its worst weekly decline since November 2022, provided tailwinds for gold and silver," Rahul Kalantri, VP Commodities, Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Silver futures for May delivery traded lower at \$ 32.80 per ounce.

Real money gaming industry bodies issue code of ethics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Industry bodies representing online real money gaming companies, AIGF, EGF and FIFS, have jointly signed a "code of ethics" which their member companies will adopt for promoting user safety and responsible gaming practices, including KYC verification, spending limit etc, a joint statement said on Monday. The members of these gaming industry bodies include Dream11, My11Circle, Khelo Fantasy Live, SG11 Fantasy, WinZO, Games24x7, Jungle Games etc. "The All India Gaming Federation (AIGF), the Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS), and the E-Gaming Federation (EGF), today jointly signed a 'Code of Ethics' (CoE)

"The CoE is aimed at enforcing consistent standards of user safety across the industry through the implementation of responsible gaming and advertising policies and mandates annual third-party audits and comprehensive reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency," the statement said.

The statement claimed that CoE has been created based on global best practices and lays down a strong framework for responsible gaming, such as age-gating, adopting stringent KYC and enabling user-set spending limits and self-exclusion. "It will apply to all online gaming

operators who are members of the federations and offer skill-based real-money gaming services in India and safeguard the interests of over 50 crore Indian gamers," the statement said.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT are yet to execute online gaming rules that were released in April 2023.

Tamil Nadu has earlier banned Real Money Games (RMG) but in February issued stringent rules to regulate these platforms, including a ban on minors from playing on these platforms, spending limit, blank hours from 12 am midnight to 5 am when no login in the games should be allowed.

The CoE signed by the gaming industry bodies includes age gating, no operations in restricted states, and a robust KYC mechanism, safeguarding data, appropriate management of player funds, ensuring integrity and fairness in gameplay. "Through collaboration with other industry federations, we are setting new benchmarks for ethical gaming, strengthening the credibility of India's online gaming sector, and building a sustainable, globally competitive ecosystem." All India Gaming Federation (AIGF) CEO Roland Landers said.

E-Gaming Federation (EGF) CEO Anuraag Saxena said that national interest, consumer interest, and the industry's interest have all suffered too long.

RBI to push payment innovations, says Governor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Reserve Bank will continue to promote innovations in payment systems with soft touch regulations within regulatory guardrails and expand the reach of UPI for more efficient cross-border payments, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Monday.

In his address at the Inauguration of Digital Payments Awareness Week 2025 here, the governor said apart from the RBI, the government and other important stakeholders like banks and payment system operators have also taken a number of initiatives to encourage the adoption of digital payments.

"While these efforts have produced results, as visible in the huge growth of digital payments, there is still a lot more to be done. Going forward, we will work on three broad areas," he said.

The areas are soft-touch regulations to continue promoting innovation, promote awareness generation, and more efficient cross-border payments.

"We will continue to encourage innovation while promoting safety and security through soft touch regulations," the RBI chief said and added that the central bank has adopted a soft-touch approach to regulating the payments ecosystem and fin-techs.

With these regulations, he said the RBI attempts to balance these divergent sets of expectations. "Our approach has been to put in place regulatory guardrails within which all stakeholders are free to operate."

While mentioning that initiatives to encourage the adoption of digital payments have produced results, Malhotra said there is still a lot more to be done.

On cross-border payments, the governor said while in domestic payments, the success of UPI has propelled India to a leadership position with a share of 48.5 per cent in global real-time payments by volume, "we will endeavour to make cross-border payments more efficient."

As per a World Bank report, it has been estimated that in 2024, India received remittances totalling approximately USD 130 billion.

"We need to address the challenges of high cost, slow speed, and insufficient access and transparency in cross border payments... We will continue to expand the reach of UPI bilaterally by linking UPI with fast payment systems of other countries," Malhotra said.

The RBI will also explore the possibility of linking payment systems other than UPI to facilitate efficient cross-border payments. "We will continue our engagement in a multilateral project called Project

Nexus to enable instant cross-border retail payments," he added.

Malhotra further said though much progress has been made in the development, spread and adoption of digital payments, there is a lot of scope to further deepen and expand digital payments in the country.

In January 2025, more than 20 billion payments worth almost Rs 250 trillion were made in India through digital modes. Digital payments have become the preferred mode of payment for many of us.

"However, surveys have shown that nearly 40 per cent of our adult population still do not use digital payments. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of awareness or familiarity with using digital payments," he said.

The 5th Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) is being observed from March 10 to 16.

DPAW is an initiative to highlight the impact and importance of digital payments and to create awareness about the safe usage of digital payment products.

Under the mission 'Har Payment Digital', the theme for the current year is 'India Pays Digitally'.

This theme reflects India's transformative journey toward a digitally empowered citizenry, with the ubiquity and convenience of digital payments, the RBI said.

Government seeks Parliament nod to spend ₹51,463 Crore extra in FY25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The government on Monday sought Parliament nod to spend a net additional ₹51,462.86 crore in the current financial year ending March, with a large chunk going towards pension and subsidy fertiliser.

The gross additional spending sought by the government is over ₹6.78 lakh crore, of which ₹6.27 lakh crore would be matched by savings and receipts. The net additional spending by the government would be ₹51,462.86 crore in the current fiscal, as per the second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha.

The additional expenditure includes ₹14,100 crore to the department of fertilisers, including subsidies for urea and P&K fertiliser. An additional allocation of ₹13,449 crore has been provided for the pension of government employees, including ₹7,000 crore towards the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS).

The total spending also includes a defence pension of ₹8,476 crore and ₹5,322 crore to the Department of Telecommunications.

An additional ₹2,186 crore funds have been allocated to the agriculture department and ₹3,722 crore to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for meeting additional expenditure to meet the resource gap.

IN BRIEF

VIT-AP UNIVERSITY'S GRAND CONCLUSION OF VITOPIA 2025 ANNUAL SPORTS AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Amaravati: The VITOPIA 2025 Annual Sports and Cultural Festival concluded successfully on March 9, 2025. On this occasion, the University Chancellor, Dr G Viswanathan, emphasised the importance of promoting sports and cultural activities along with academics and expressed the university's support for these initiatives.



GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY WON 1ST RUNNERS UP TROPHY AT NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL



Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University won the first runners-up trophy of 38th Inter University National Youth Festival 2024-25, held at Amity University, Noida in Uttar Pradesh. This prestigious event, organised under the banner of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), witnessed participation from over 2500 students across 148 universities in India, showcasing exceptional talent in various cultural disciplines.

ADMISSION TO GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY ONLINE COURSES TILL MARCH 31

Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University has extended the last date for admission to University Grants Commission — Distance Education Bureau (UGC-DEB) entitled online programs for the current academic session (Jan-March 2025) until 31st March 2025, as per the latest UGC-DEB notification.



VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF (DR) KARAMJEET SINGH ESTABLISHED THE ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY ON GNDU



Amritsar: Under the visionary leadership of Prof (Dr) Karamjeet Singh, VC, Guru Nanak Dev University, the university is proud to establish the Animal Welfare Society on campus. This initiative reflects GNDU's commitment to fostering a compassionate and responsible approach to animal welfare while promoting a holistic learning environment.

Indian shuttlers to face challenge at All England Championships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Birmingham

Grappling with injuries, health setbacks and poor form, Indian shuttlers will face one of their toughest challenges when they aim to capture the elusive All England Championships beginning here on Tuesday.

Since Prakash Padukone's historic win in 1980 and Pullela Gopichand's triumph in 2001, no Indian has managed to capture the coveted All England title — one of the sport's most prestigious crowns after the Olympics and World Championships.

In the past two decades, Indian badminton has soared to new heights, with stars like PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, and Kidambi Srikanth claiming major titles. However, none have been able to conquer the All England Championships, despite their numerous successes on the world stage. Saina and Lakshya Sen came close in 2015 and 2022, finishing as runners-up, while Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand reached the semifinals in consecutive editions. Every year, the Indian contingent sets its sights on this historic title, and yet, the elusive crown continues to slip through their grasp. This year, the challenge will be even greater as India's top shuttlers arrive in Birmingham with a host of difficulties, including injury concerns and inconsistent



form. After a disappointing Paris Olympics, the Indian shuttlers struggled to get off the mark in 2025. Sindhu faced injury woes, HS Prannoy made a slow recovery from a bout of chikungunya, Lakshya Sen has battled poor form, and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy is coping with the loss of his father who died last month. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, is back after recovering from a hamstring injury that forced her withdrawal from last month's Asia Mixed Team Championships. The 29-year-old, who hired Indonesian

coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama in January, will face Korea's Ga Eun Kim in the opening round. A potential second-round clash against China's Han Yue awaits, with Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung likely to challenge her in the quarterfinals. Lakshya, who was fourth at the Paris Olympics, enjoyed a semifinal run in the previous edition of the All England but has struggled in the new season with two first-round exits and a second-round finish. The 23-year-old, who claimed bronze at the 2021 World Championships, will open

his campaign against Japan's Koki Watanabe. A victory could set up a showdown with Indonesia's Jonatan Christie in the second round.

Prannoy, who has slipped to World No. 30 after a tough year, is yet to progress beyond the second round in 2025. The 32-year-old, who was hampered by chikungunya ahead of the Paris Olympics, will open his campaign against France's Toma Junior Popov.

In men's doubles, Asian Games champions Satwiksairaj and Chirag Shetty, who are seeded 7th, have been India's most consistent performers, with strong showings at Malaysia and India Opens this year. The Indian duo will open against Denmark's Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard.

In women's doubles, World No. 9 Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will meet Chinese Taipei's Shuo Yun Sung and Chien Hui Yu, while Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto will face another Taipei pair — Pei Shan Hsieh and En-Tzu Hung. Among other competitors, Malvika Bansod will take on Jia Min Yeo of Singapore.

In mixed doubles, India will be represented by three pairs — Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde, Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha, and Sathish Karunakaran with Aadya Variyath.

Lyon 2-0 win at Nice



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Coach Paulo Fonseca watched from the stands and saw his substitutions pay off as Lyon won 2-0 at Nice to maintain its push for a Champions League spot.

Fonseca began his nine-month touchline ban in Ligue 1 after aggressively confronting referee Benoit Millot last Sunday. He saw his team struggle in the first half as Nice striker Gaëtan Laborde hit the post in the driving rain.

On Sunday, Lyon punished Nice when midfielder Ryan Cherki scored one minute after coming on. He latched onto a pass from Brazilian midfielder Thiago Almada and finished confidently in the 78th minute.

The 21-year-old Cherki has been linked with a move to a big club since breaking onto the scene as a precocious teenager five years ago, and this was his career-high sixth league goal.

The lively Almada then found Ghana forward Ernest Nuamah with a first-time pass and Nuamah — who came on midway through the second half — expertly curled the ball into the top left corner in the 83rd.

Sixth-placed Lyon is two points behind Lille in fifth and Monaco in fourth. Third-placed Nice is only four points ahead of Lyon with the top four earning a Champions League spot.

Rosenior's first season in charge of Strasbourg is still going along nicely as the Alsace-based club won 1-0 at Nantes to strengthen its grip on seventh place. The 40-year-old Englishman, whose father enjoyed a career as a bustling striker in the 1980s, played in the Premier League for Fulham, Reading and Hull as a defender. Rosenior's coaching

career started three years ago with a brief stint at English club Derby and he then took charge of Hull. He was among the nominees last season for manager of the year in the second-tier Championship.

Rosenior has turned Strasbourg into a well-organised team which has a strong defense and is dangerous counter-attacking down the flanks.

Strasbourg's goal came in the 79th when Félix Lemaréchal turned in a cross from tricky right winger Dilane Bakwa.

Other results

At the bottom, strugglers Le Havre and Saint-Etienne drew 1-1 to stay deep in relegation trouble.

Lucas Stassin opened the scoring in the 10th following a scramble and Abdoulaye Touré equalised for Le Havre in first-half stoppage time.

Midtable Brest won 2-0 at home to Angers. Forward Abdallah Sima headed home from a corner against his former club, but left the field close to halftime with an adductor muscle injury. He was replaced by Romain Faivre, who scored the second goal.

Auxerre lost 2-0 at home to Auxerre to stay 15th and one place above Le Havre in the relegation playoff spot. Saint-Etienne is 17th and Montpellier last in the 18-team league.

Auxerre's goals came in the first half from Canada forward Theo Bair and Hamed Traoré with his 10th of season.

All players in this weekend's games have "WO=MAN" written on the back of their jerseys instead of their names as part of the French league's initiative centered around International Women's Day. Runaway leader PSG won 4-1 at Rennes on Saturday and is 16 points clear of Marseille, which conceded a stoppage-time goal in a 1-0 home loss to Lens on Saturday.

Hockey India announces record prize pool of ₹12 Crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Hockey India has announced a record prize pool of Rs 12 crore for its seventh Annual Awards for which 32 players have been nominated across eight categories.

The event is scheduled to be held on Saturday here, to celebrate the finest performances of the 2024 season.

One of the key highlights is the coveted Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of the Year, which will honour the best male and female players.

Young players have also been given the spotlight, with Jugraj Singh Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Men) and the Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Women).

In addition, individual excellence across various positions will be recognised

through awards such as Baljit Singh Award for Goalkeeper of the Year, Pargat Singh Award for Defender of the Year, Ajit Pal Singh Award for Midfielder of the Year, and Dhanraj Pillay Award for Forward of the Year.

This year's awards will commemorate the 50th anniversary of Indian men's team's historic World Cup victory on the same date in 1975 — the country's first and only world title to date.

Adding to the significance, 2025 marks 100 years of Indian hockey, as the country became affiliated with the International Hockey Federation (FIH) on November 7, 1925. India's Olympic bronze medal-winning team will be felicitated, along with the men and women teams that won the Asian Champions Trophy last year.

The Junior Asia Cup-winning men and women teams will also be honoured dur-

ing the award ceremony.

"The Hockey India 7th Annual Awards 2024 is a celebration of the extraordinary talent we have in Indian hockey. It's not just about recognising individual achievements but honouring the collective spirit of Indian hockey that has shone through in 2024," HI president Dilip Tirkey said in a statement.

Nominees for Hockey India Annual Awards 2024 are:

Hockey India Baljit Singh Award for Goalkeeper of the Year 2024: Bichu Devi Kharibam, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, PR Sreejesh, Savita.

Hockey India Pargat Singh Award for Defender of the Year 2024: Sanjay, Amit Rohidas, Harmanpreet Singh, Udita.

Hockey India Ajit Pal Singh Award for Midfielder of the Year 2024: Jarmanpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Nilakanta Sharma,

Sumit. Hockey India Dhanraj Pillay Award for Forward of the Year 2024: Lalremiami, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Navneet Kaur.

Hockey India Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Women - Under 21): Beauty Dungdung, Deepika, Vaishnavi Vithal Phalke, Sunelita Toppo.

Hockey India Jugraj Singh Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Men - Under 21): Arshdeep Singh, Amir Ali, Shardanand Tiwari, Arajjeet Singh Hundal.

Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of the Year (Women): Savita Punia, Salima Tete, Sangita Kumari, Navneet Kaur.

Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of the Year (Men): Abhishek, Hardik Singh, Harmanpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh.

Mumbai City eye ISL play-offs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Mumbai City FC will need a point against Bengaluru FC to qualify for the Indian Super League (ISL) play-offs when the two sides face each other here on Tuesday.

Placed seventh with 33 points, Mumbai City need just a draw to edge past the sixth-positioned Odisha FC (33 points) and finish on top-six.

The Islanders, however, are winless in their previous four games, drawing and losing twice each.

The Blues have already made the cut for the top-six, and are presently fourth in the standings with 38 points from 23 games.

The Blues have faced losses in three of their last four encounters against the Islanders, failing to find the back of the net thrice on the bounce, which are arguably unwanted records they will want to set clear before the playoffs begin.

Talismanic Sunil Chhetri, who has decided to come out of international retirement to help the national team qualify for the 2027 Asian Cup, has converted four spot-kick this season, and if he scores against Mumbai City FC, he will become the first player to reach 10 goals



against the Islanders in the ISL.

The two sides have played 17 matches so far, with Bengaluru FC winning six games and Mumbai City FC emerging victorious nine times. Two games have produced draws.

Bengaluru FC head coach Gerard Zaragoza said that the Islanders will present a tough challenge in the coming game.

"Mumbai City FC will play this match like one final. It's difficult to play against teams like this, but we want to win this game," he said.

Mumbai City FC head coach Petr Kratky too acknowledged the strength of Bengaluru FC.

"Bengaluru FC are a good side. They have quality in them and there is a reason why they are in the playoffs," he said.

Commonwealth Games Federation renamed to Commonwealth Sport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) on Monday changed its name to Commonwealth Sport, saying it was a transition from being a governing body to becoming a "movement". The decision to change its name was announced on the occasion of Commonwealth Day — March 10.

"From Commonwealth Day 2025 onwards, the Commonwealth Games Federation will be known as Commonwealth Sport," the governing body of the Commonwealth Games and Commonwealth Youth Games said in a media release. "The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) is changing its public brand name to Commonwealth Sport. This brand development signifies the organisation's transition from a 'Sports Federation' to a 'Sports Movement,'" it added. Commonwealth Sport CEO Katie Saddleir said, "The

brand name Commonwealth Sport demonstrates a stronger, more unified purpose that resonates with our audience on a deeper level."

The 'Commonwealth Games Federation' will be retained as the name of the legal entity only. Meanwhile, King Charles, the Patron of Commonwealth Sport, will officially launch the inaugural Commonwealth Sport King's Baton Relay for the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games at Buckingham Palace on the Commonwealth Day on Monday. King Charles will place his message to the Commonwealth into the first Baton, passing it to the first baton-bearer, Sir Chris Hoy, and starting the relay with 500 days to go to the Opening Ceremony of Glasgow 2026.

The Baton Relay will be the longest-ever relay for a Commonwealth Games, with the Commonwealth Games Associations in the 74 nations and territories each having up to six days to organise their series of activities.

Sukant, Nitesh win gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Paris Paralympics champion Kumar Nitesh and Sukant Kadam secured gold medals in SL3 and SL4 categories respectively, leading India's charge at the Spanish Para Badminton International 2025 - II in Vitoria, Spain.

Nitesh registered a 21-19 21-19 win over Japan's Daisuke Fujihara in the final of the SL3 category, while Sukant defeated fellow Indian Tarun 21-13 21-10 in the SL4 category on Sunday. "I'm happy to start 2025 with a gold medal. Every match here was a learning experience, and I'm glad I could perform consistently. This win gives me great motivation for the rest of the season," Sukant said in a press release. In SH6 category, Nityashre emerged victorious, defeating Poland's Szmigiel in the final to claim a top podium finish. In men's doubles, Nitesh Kumar and Tarun edged past India's Jagadesh Dilli and Naveen Sivakumar 21-14, 23-25, 22-20. The mixed doubles events also saw a strong Indian presence. Krishna Nagar and Nityashre triumphed over England's Shephard and Choong with a dominant 21-14, 21-11 victory to clinch gold in the SH6 category. Nitesh Kumar, pairing with Manisha Ramadass, added another gold to India's tally in the SL3-SU5 category, defeating Sweden's Rickard Nilsson and Denmark's Hello



Change of Name

Myself Vinay presently known as Vinay, having been ordained as a monk through Shri Anandpur Trust at the premises of Shri Anandpur Trust Ashok Nagar, I hereby solemnly declare to abandon the use of my former name so hereafter request all persons in general, relatives and friends in particular, at all times hereafter to designate and address me as may be called, known and distinguished not by my former name Vinay but by the assigned name Nirbhay Bramh Anand

Old name: Vinay
New Name: Nirbhay Bramh Anand
Address: P.O. Shri Anandpur 473331 Ashok Nagar MP

Change of Name

Myself Renu Bathla presently known as Renu Bathla, having been ordained as a monk through Shri Anandpur Trust at the premises of Shri Anandpur Trust Ashok Nagar, I hereby solemnly declare to abandon the use of my former name so hereafter request all persons in general, relatives and friends in particular, at all times hereafter to designate and address me as may be called, known and distinguished not by my former name Renu Bathla but by the assigned name Dharam Pritam Anand

Old name: Renu Bathla
New Name: Dharam Pritam Anand
Address: P.O. Shri Anandpur 473331 Ashok Nagar MP

Correction of Name

I am Mrs. Asha Dubey wife of late Shri Umashankar Dubey resident of House No. 4/1, Zamani Road, Ward No. 02, Pyasa Nagar Old Itarsi, Tehsil Itarsi District Narmadapuram. My name is Asha Dubey in my Aadhar Card, PAN Card and other documents. My husband late Shri Umashankar Dubey was a soldier. In his service record of service no. 14281036 W rank Nayak, my name is Asha Devi and my date of birth is 11.03.1955. Whereas in all my documents my name is Asha Dubey and my date of birth is 13.06.1952, which is my correct name and correct date of birth. It is that my name and date of birth in the service record of my husband late Shri Umashankar Dubey should be corrected and my name should be Asha Dubey and date of birth should be 13.06.1952. For this I have submitted an affidavit. Hence know the information Applicant Smt. Asha Dubey wife of late Shri Umashankar Dubey resident of House No.4/1, Zamani Road, Ward No.02, Pyasa Nagar Old Itarsi, Tehsil Itarsi District Narmadapuram.

Inter Milan 2-1 victory over Fiorentina in Serie A

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Milan

Napoli kept up the pressure on Serie A leader Inter Milan as it finally got back to winning ways with a 2-1 victory over Fiorentina.

Romelu Lukaku on Sunday scored one and set up the other for Giacomo Raspadori to help Napoli move back to within a point of Inter, which fought back from two goals down to beat Monza 3-2 on Saturday.

Atalanta proved it is very much among the fray with a statement 4-0 win at fourth-placed Juventus to close the gap back to three points to Inter.

According to statistics provider Opta, it was the first time Juventus had lost a league match at home by four goals in nearly 60 years — since a loss by the same score to Torino in October 1967.

Atalanta's title credentials will be truly tested next weekend when it hosts Inter.

Fiorentina's hopes of making it into the top four diminished after its fourth loss in five league matches. Napoli also came into the match on a mediocre run, having drawn four of its past five matches and losing



the other.

But the hosts took the lead in the 26th minute following great work from Scott McTominay as he cut inside from the left and unleashed a

shot that former Manchester United teammate David de Gea could only parry into the path of Lukaku, who tapped in the rebound.

Giovanni Di Lorenzo hit the cross-

bar for Napoli as Fiorentina had De Gea to thank for a number of impressive saves that kept it in the match.

Napoli eventually doubled its lead on the hour mark with a team move that ended with Lukaku playing a through ball for Raspadori to sweep into the bottom right corner. Fiorentina pulled one back six minutes later as a backheeled flick from Moise Kean released Albert Gudmundsson to drill low into the near corner.

Head-to-Head

The match in Turin was a head-to-head battle for third place, with just three points separating Atalanta and Juventus. The league's top scorer, Mateo Retegui, gave Atalanta the lead in the 29th from the spot after United States international Weston McKennie was penalized for handball. It was Retegui's 22nd goal in Serie A this season — seven more than nearest challenger Kean.

A combination of the woodwork and Juventus goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio prevented Atalanta from doubling its lead on the stroke of half-time but Marten de Roon did get the visitors' second within a minute of the restart after Ademola Lookman's

effort was parried.

Davide Zappacosta all but sealed the match in the 66th and Lookman capped a fantastic performance from him and Atalanta 11 minutes later.

That started a mass exodus of Juventus fans and the ones who remained loudly booed the team at full time.

Fast goal Matias Soule scored after only 22 seconds to set Roma on its way to a 1-0 win at relegation-threatened Empoli.

Opta said it was Roma's fastest goal in a Serie A match (since that data started being collected in 2004).

It was a fifth straight win in all competitions for Roma, which visits Athletic Bilbao in the second leg of the Europa League round of 16 on Thursday.

Roma also extended its unbeaten run in Serie A to 12 matches, leapfrogging Fiorentina into seventh. In-form Bologna

Bologna continued its fine form with a 2-1 win at 10-man Hellas Verona.

That was a third straight win for sixth-place Bologna, which has only lost one league match in 2025 — a run of 11 games.

I am not retiring from ODI format: Rohit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

India skipper Rohit Sharma has dismissed the speculations about his career after winning the ICC Champions Trophy (CT), saying that he is not quitting the ODI format anytime soon. Since the tour of Australia, speculations were rife about Rohit's future in the team as well as his position as captain but a match-winning 76 in the final against New Zealand on Sunday has given him a new lease of life.

"I am not going to retire from this (ODI) format. Going forward please don't spread rumours," Rohit said at the post-match press conference after India beat New Zealand by four wickets to clinch the trophy. He was expectedly quizzed about his future plans and he said that things will remain as it is.

"No future plans. Jo ho raha hain, woh chalta jayega (Whatever is happening will keep continuing)," Rohit added.

Rohit said his aggressive approach in the Power Play segment was a decision taken with a specific aim in mind.

The Mumbai man flew off the blocks in the first 10 overs making 49 before eventually getting out for a 83-ball 76.

"I haven't done anything different today as I have been doing in the last 3-4 matches. I know how important it is to make runs in Power Play because we have seen that after 10 overs, it becomes very difficult



when the field spreads and spinners come." The nature of the Dubai pitch too played its part in him adopting a quick fire approach to batting.

"It becomes tough also because the pitch is already slow. So, it is very important for you to take chances from the top.

"I pick the bowler and where I can charge him and where I can play the shot. In that, you may not see that many big runs. Today after that 10 overs, I changed my game a bit. I had to play for a long time," he added.

However, Rohit admitted that contributing to the team's win as a batter was a very satisfying experience. "You get a lot

of happiness when you win a match and you make a contribution in it, it feels even better. I made a lot of contributions in the 2019 World Cup, but we did not win.

"So, there was no fun in it. Even if you make a sudden run and win the match, you get more satisfaction and happiness. So, I think it was very important for me to do something and contribute and keep the team in a winning position," he noted.

The demotion of KL Rahul to No. 6 has been discussed threadbare in recent times, but Rohit said the management is delighted to see the wicketkeeper batter making consistent efforts in his new role.

"It is very important for everyone to

contribute in their own way. When we discussed KL's batting position, we discussed quite deeply about how calm he is when he is batting. The pressure doesn't get to him.

"We wanted that calmness in the middle order. Also, we wanted to use a left-hander (Axar Patel) in the middle. That actually worked out in both ways for us," he said. Rohit said Rahul's contributions have been important for the team despite not scoring any big knocks.

"KL has been doing a lot of challenging work for the team for so many years now. I am very happy with how he managed to pull through this tournament and bat it in the pressure situation — both in the semi-finals and this game as well.

"The contribution may not be 70-80, but those 30-40s are very important for the team. When you are chasing, it can get tough. But with KL being there, we know that he has got that mind where he keeps himself calm and keeps the dressing room also very calm," he explained.

The 37-year-old also praised Shreyas Iyer for playing significant knocks from No. 4. "He is very, very important in that middle phase for us. The partnerships with all the batters who were batting with him... That semifinal against Australia, his alliance with Virat was very important. Even against Pakistan and New Zealand, the league game that we played was important.

We learned from past defeats in ICC knock-out games: Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

Superstar Virat Kohli says lessons learned from tough defeats in past ICC knock-out games have paved the way for India's second major title in less than 12 months.

India won the T20 World Cup in June last year and on Sunday, they lifted the Champions Trophy for the third time.

It was a total team effort from Rohit Sharma's men over the course of their campaign in the UAE.

"It's been a long time since we've had a Champions Trophy, and the format is really good. This was our aim. After a tough tour of Australia, we came here and won a big tournament, which has once again boosted our confidence as a team," Kohli told the host broadcaster.

"Throughout the tournament, different players stepped up in different matches. There were moments in past tournaments where we weren't able to finish games or capitalise on crucial situations. But this time, we learned from those experiences."

The experience of Rohit and K L Rahul towards the end got India over the line in the final against New Zealand.

"That's why you back experienced players - they have faced these moments before, and when you apply those learn-



ings and work hard, you get a chance to turn things around," Kohli said.

"The way KL (Rahul) finished in the last two matches is a testament to that experience. When you've been in those situations before and couldn't cross the line, there's always a desire to get another opportunity and overcome it. And that's exactly what we did."

India were by far the best team in the combination. They picked as many as five spinners and that worked well for them on the slow wickets of Dubai. In the playing eleven, India had four spin options.

"One thing we kept emphasising throughout the tournament was focusing on our skills - how good we are, not how good the opposition is. Despite all the challenges, this is why you play the game - for these big tournaments."

Manchester United draws 1-1 with Arsenal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

A stunning double save from David Raya denied Bruno Fernandes a dramatic late winner for Manchester United against Arsenal in the Premier League.

Raya's heroics salvaged a 1-1 draw for Arsenal at Old Trafford but its Premier League title looks all but out of reach with runaway leader Liverpool 15 points clear at the top of the standings.

"I don't want to say that, but today the frustration is that we haven't won our game. We know the urgency and we are obligated to win every single match," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said after watching his team drop points for a third straight league game.

And it could have been worse for second-placed Arsenal if not for Raya's brilliance. In added time the goalkeeper flung himself in front of Fernandes' effort from close range and then leapt to his feet to claw the spinning ball away just before it crossed the line.

Chelsea moved up to fourth in the standings after a 1-0 win against Leicester and Tottenham battled back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Bournemouth.

United fight

After fan protests in the street, United's players produced one of their most spirited performances of the season to draw with

Arsenal. Thousands of United supporters marched in unity to protest the club's ownership before kickoff. But on the field Ruben Amorim's team produced a unified display of its own.

Fernandes fired home a free kick from around 20 yards in first-half added time and only a slew of missed chances stopped United from extending its lead after the break, with Joshua Zirkzee and Noussair Mazraoui forcing saves from Raya.

Arsenal leveled through Declan Rice in the 74th, but needed Raya again to prevent Fernandes late on.

Amorim accepted that United, which was forced to cede possession for much of the game, will have to be more adventurous if he is to achieve his goal of returning the 20-time champion to the summit of English and European soccer.

And he believes there's another way to bring the good times back to Old Trafford. "What I can say is we need more Brunos, that is clear," the United head coach said.

"Not just the quality and the character, he makes some mistakes, but in this league the availability is so important and he is so decisive with and without the ball."

The draw moved United up to 14th in the 20-team standings on 34 points. Last season the once dominant United endured its worst league campaign in 34 years when it finished in eighth place. It is currently eight points off 10th-placed Fulham.

Chelsea rises

Marc Cucurella struck a 60th-minute winner against Leicester at Stamford Bridge after Cole Palmer's first-half penalty was saved.

Victory boosted Chelsea's chances of a return to the Champions League next season, moving it ahead of four-time defending champion Manchester City, which lost 1-0 to Nottingham Forest a day earlier.

The 2021 Champions League winner has not qualified for European club soccer's top competition for the last two years.

But Enzo Maresca's team took full advantage of City's latest loss by edging out relegation-fighting Leicester and climbing into the top four.

Cucurella's long-range effort was drilled low into the corner to beat Leicester goalkeeper Mads Hermansen.

Earlier, Hermansen had been the visitors' hero when diving low to save Palmer's penalty in the 22nd. It was the first time Palmer had failed to score from the spot in the league in 13 attempts. His 100% record from his previous 12 was a league record, according to the competition's stats provider Opta.

Spurs fightback

Son Heung-min's late penalty completed an unlikely comeback after Champions League-chasing Bournemouth had dominated the chances at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Rohit exceptional knock took the match away from us, says Mitchell Santner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

New Zealand skipper Mitchell Santner admitted that his Indian counterpart Rohit Sharma's exceptional knock was the difference between the two teams in the Champions Trophy final, and termed the four-wicket defeat as a "bittersweet end."

Rohit made a fluent 76 off 83 balls as India chased down 252 in a close finish here on Sunday.

"I think the way Rohit Sharma played kind of took it away from us, I think, obviously, India here understood the conditions in Dubai perfectly and played some good cricket. Yeah I guess it's kind of bittersweet at the end," said Santner in the post-match press conference.

Santner said he was "proud" of his side despite the surrender in the title clash.

"I think we came up against a good side in the final. We challenged at times throughout this game, which was pleasing and I think there were probably a couple of small moments where we let it get away from us.

"But yeah, incredibly proud of this group the way we've kind of gone about it throughout this tournament," he added.

Santner said the Kiwis were prepared to tackle the DICS pitch and conditions, which were vastly different from Lahore,



the venue of their semifinal win over South Africa. "I guess we just keep coming up against India, which is always a challenge. We knew the conditions were going to be slightly different again from the semifinal, but we were ready for that.

"I thought we still put in a pretty good performance, and we took India deep. But I guess there's always a few moments in every game, let alone every final, where you can potentially look back at," he said.

Santner also conceded that they missed Matt Henry after he was ruled out of the

title clash with a shoulder injury.

Pacer Henry was the highest wicket-taker in the event with 10 scalps.

"He's an outstanding bowler. We've seen he seems to be able to nip it on wickets that don't look like they should nip so I guess we missed that today.

"I feel for Matty - he's a massive team man and he looked pretty distraught. You know, we just kind of said, like, let's do it for him. He tried everything he could to be ready for this game and unfortunately for us he wasn't quite there," he noted.

It required lot of preparation: KL Rahul after excelling in new role



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

KL Rahul is delighted after successfully migrating to No. 6 batting slot, and termed it as a result of his unrelenting "preparation" and improving his game constantly.

Rahul, who usually bat No. 5, was pushed down a position lower in the Champions Trophy, and made 140 runs in four innings here.

"It's really pleasing for me. The work that I'm putting in to different roles requires a lot of preparation, work outside the cricket field, thinking about how I need to take each game and how I need to perform in different situations and watch some of the players that bat at 5, 6 and how they've been successful," said Rahul following India's Champions Trophy triumph on Sunday.

Rahul said he was happy to take up that new responsibility for the team.

"I've been taught from a very early age by my coaches that cricket is a team game and whatever the team requires of you, you need to be able to accept that and find a way to put in performances for the team and understand what your role is, understand what the responsibility is, understand what it takes to be successful batting in different positions," he added. True to those words, Rahul adapted well to the situation in the semifinal against Australia and in the final against New Zealand, producing small yet significant knocks.

The Bengaluru man made an unbeaten 42 against the Aussies while his collected 32 not out helped India come out of a

tight chase against the Kiwis successfully. Overall, he made just 140 runs but he made it at a strike-rate of 98, indicating the impact those runs had on the course of the game.

Skipper Rohit Sharma indicated as much. "The pressure doesn't get to him with that calmness, we wanted that calmness in the middle. I'm very, very happy with how he managed to pull this tournament and batted in the pressure situation, both in semifinals and this game as well. "The contribution may not be 70-80, but those 30-40s are a very, very important one," said Rohit. Now, Rahul has a Champions Trophy to show for his efforts, and he was pleased as punch. "I'm very happy at the moment, ICC victories are not so easy to get. It's my first run so I'm very happy over the moon and really happy with the way we've played this entire tournament and it's been a complete team effort," he noted. Rahul was an assured presence behind the stumps as well, pulling off important stumping and catches. The 32-year-old was chuffed because 'keeping was not an easy task in these conditions where spinners dominated.

"It's not something very new and the role of a wicketkeeper batsman that I'm doing here in the Indian team, I think from 2019 or 2020. I do wicket keeping in IPL as well. "But I think this is the most challenging place that I've kept wickets in. I worked really hard and I have to mention our fielding coach Dilip sir also, he worked very hard with me...his tips and whatever he noticed about my keeping, so it worked," he added.

Pakistan miffed at no representation at closing ceremony of Champions Trophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi

The ICC's failure to invite a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official on stage for the closing ceremony of the Champions Trophy has not gone down well with the tournament host.

A source said that the PCB's chief executive officer Sumair Ahmed, who was also the director of the tournament, was present at the venue but was not invited for the ceremony. Pakistan hosted an ICC event after 29 years with all India games scheduled in Dubai as part of the competition's hybrid model.

"PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi didn't go to Dubai because of prior commitments as federal minister for interior but the PCB CEO was sent to represent Pakistan at the

final and closing presentation," the source said. He said for some reason or misunderstanding, the PCB official was not called on the podium, from where ICC chairman Jay Shah, BCCI president Roger Binny and secretary Devajit Saikia gave away the medals, trophies, and jackets to the players.

The source added that perhaps the CEO might not have been able to communicate properly to the ICC people responsible for organising the final ceremony and was left out. Pakistan as hosts of the Champions Trophy, thus, didn't have any representation on the podium.

The PCB is expected to take up the matter with the ICC as to why its CEO was not invited on stage for the closing ceremony. Meanwhile, former fast bowler Shoaib

Akhtar also questioned the absence of PCB officials from the post-match presentation ceremony after the final of the tournament.

"India has won the Champions Trophy but I noticed there was no representative from the PCB after the final. Pakistan was hosting the Champions Trophy. I do not understand it," Akhtar said in a video posted on social 'X'.

"Why was nobody (from PCB) there to present the trophy? It is beyond me. It is something to think about. This is the world stage, you should have been here. Feeling very down to see that," Akhtar added. BCCI president Binny presented the white jackets to India and the medals to match officials, while ICC chairman Shah handed the trophy to Rohit Sharma and gave the medals to the Indian players.

Harry Brook pulls out of IPL deal with DC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

England batter Harry Brook faces a two-year ban from the IPL after pulling out of his deal with Delhi Capitals ahead of the tournament beginning March 22. Brook, who has made himself unavailable for the second straight season, apologised "unreservedly" to the franchise and its supporters. "I have made the very difficult decision to pull out of the upcoming IPL. I apologise unreservedly to the Delhi Capitals and their supporters," Brook wrote on social media.

"It is a really important time for England cricket and I want to fully commit to preparing for the upcoming series. "In order to do this, I need time to recharge after the busiest period in my career to date. I know not everyone will understand, and I don't expect them to, but I have to do what I believe is right and playing for my country remains my priority and focus." England will play India in a home Test series in June, which will be followed by the much-anticipated Ashes from November to January.

The 26-year-old Brook had earlier withdrawn from the 2024 edition of IPL



following the death of his grandmother.

Any foreign player who missed the IPL after getting picked at the auction faces two-year ban from the IPL unless he is injured. "Any (overseas) player who registers for (an) auction and, after getting

picked at the auction, makes himself unavailable before the start of the season will get banned from participating in the IPL/IPL auction for two seasons," as per the BCCI document shared with teams last year.

Government asks IPL to ban tobacco, alcohol advertising

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Health Ministry has instructed the Indian Premier League to ban all forms of tobacco and alcohol promotions, including surrogate advertisements, during the tournament beginning March 22. In a letter to IPL chairman Arun Dhumal, Director General of Health Services Atul Goel said cricket players, who are role models to the youth of India, should not be directly or indirectly connected to any form of tobacco or alcohol advertising.

"IPL should strictly implement the regulations banning all forms of tobacco/alcohol advertising, including surrogate advertisements, within the stadium premises where the games and related IPL games/events are held as well as during telecast sessions on national television," Goel wrote.

"The sale of tobacco/alcohol products in all affiliated events and sports facilities. "Discourage promotion of sports persons (including commentators) who directly or indirectly endorse products directly or indirectly linked to alcohol or tobacco," the letter stated.

Majority of the Indian population is glued to television sets when the IPL is on, making the tournament a darling of the advertisers. "India is experiencing a significant burden of Non Communicable disease Cardiovascular diseases, Cancer, Chronic Lung Disease, Diabetes, Hypertension etc. Which accounts for more than 70 per cent deaths annually.

"Tobacco and alcohol use are key risk factors for NCDs. We rank second in tobacco-related deaths worldwide; with nearly 14 lakh annual deaths while alcohol is the most common psychoactive substance used by Indians," Goel said further.

He added that cricketers have a moral obligation to promote public health.

"Cricket players are role models for the youngsters for promoting a healthy, active lifestyle, IPL being the largest sports platform in the country, has a social and moral obligation to promote public health and support health initiatives of the government," added Goel.