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# 'State Govt fails to provide security to women'

Congress holds demo

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The crimes against women like molestation, rape and gang-rape are surging day by day in the State, alleged members of the Congress while holding a demonstration before the ADM office here on Monday.

Later, Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Bhakta Charan Das and other senior party leaders submitted a memorandum addressed to the Governor.

The agitators said the women in the State are feeling unsafe. More than 50 per cent of the State's population is women. But the State Government is not providing protection to them. Then, how they are claiming of working for a developed Odisha? This has become a big question mark.

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Assembly (MLAs).

A revelation in the Odisha As-

sembly on Monday brought to

light the number of criminal cases

registered against former and sit-

ting Members of Parliament (MPs)

and Members of the Legislative

According to a written response

provided by Parliamentary Affairs

Minister Mukesh Mahaling in re-

sponse to a question by Opposi-

tion Deputy Leader Prasanna

Acharya, a total of 22 cases have

been registered against former and

current MPs along with 39 crimi-

The data further highlights that

former and sitting MLAs are fac-

ing a total of 115 cases with 418

The All India Democratic Stu-

dents' Association (AIDSO) held a

convention on Sunday demanding

reopening of all the government

schools which have shut down,

holding of students' union elec-

tions and filling up of vacant posts

of teaching staffs, Lecturers and

scrapping of the National Educa-

The AIDSO also demanded

stopping of privatisation and

commercialisation of education,

ensuring safety of students and

tion Policy 2020.



In the last eight months under the BJP rule, there have been 54 cases of gang-rape, rape and raperelated deaths. No district in the State has been spared from this

criminal cases registered against

Out of these, 384 cases are cur-

rently under trial while trial is com-

pleted in 14 cases. Additionally, in-

vestigations are underway for 43

Among these cases, 198 have

been identified as purely political

in nature. The disclosure of such

legal entanglements of public rep-

resentatives has sparked discus-

sions regarding the accountability

and integrity of elected officials in

With these revelations, political

and legal experts anticipate further

debates on the necessity of strict

measures to ensure transparency

and accountability in the State's

tion of liquor and narcotic prod-

Many students, teachers and

parents from different districts at-

tended the convention. The speak-

ers opposed the National Educa-

tion Policy and discussed about it

The convention was presided

over by AIDSO State president

Somnath Behera. Former Utkal

University professor Birendra

Nayak was the chief speaker.

Saptadarshini Biswal offered a vote

State

"demerits".

AIDSO

political landscape.

Hold students' union polls: AIDSO

Present, ex-MPs, MLAs

facing 418 criminal cases

menace, said Bhakta Das.

Former PCC president Jayadev Jena said that on one side, the BJP government is giving Rs 5,000 to women and thinking that they are God, but they are not preventing the crimes against them. Senior leader Srikant Jena said the double-engine government is not concerned about crimes against women.

# Smart Grid workshop held at IIT BBS



PNS BHUBANESWAR

The 4th National Workshop on Recent Developments in Smart Grid Technologies (NWSGT-2025) was held at the IIT Bhubaneswar on March 7 and 8. The workshop focused on the major theme of "Electric Mobility and Smart Grids".

Trilochana Panda, Managing Director of GRIDCO, chief guest and Prof Sukumar Mishra, Director, IIT (ISM), Dhanbad, guest of honour, addressed the inaugural function and spoke on various aspects of the emerging Smart Grid and EV technologies.

Prof SR Samantaray, coordinator of the programme, delivered the

inaugural address. Prof V Pandu Ranga, Dean (CE), presided over the meeting. Prof C Perumalla, cocoordinator, proposed a vote of thanks.

The valedictory function was graced by BB Mehta, Director, SLDC, OPTCL, as the chief guest. The event included keynote addresses and demonstrations on emerging trends in EV charging systems, vehicle-to-grid and grid-to-vehicle interactions, protection and control systems for the smart grid including renewables, EV and storage, energy management systems for the evolving microgrid and smartgrids, etc. The workshop attracted a large participation including industry and academia.

# Jayanaryan's statement unfortunate: U Sammilani

PNS BHUBANESWAR

ambalpur MLA Jayanaryan Mishra opposing the State Anthem and his statement regarding it is highly unfortunate, said the Utkal Saammilani on Sunday.

Utkal Sammilani general secretary Dillip Dashsharma strongly opposed Mishra's statement and said Mishra has been elected five times as MLA from 2000 except once. He was a minister and Leader

of Opposition in the Assembly. But during the singing of the State Anthem 'Bande Utkal Janani' in the House, he never opposed it. Why is he opposing it now, questioned Dashsharma. Sammilani president Ananta Prasad Jena said that in the 'Utkal Lakshmi' poem by eminent poet Gangadhar Meher, the boundaries of Utkal have been mentioned in detail. So, Mishra's statement is confusing and meant to serve his

# Torture of Army officer, flancée Probe panel submits report to State Govt

treasurer

PNS BHUBANESWAF

The Justice Chitta Ranjan Das Commission, constituted to probe the alleged police excesses on a serving Army officer and his fiancée, on Monday submitted its report to the State Government.

The judicial commission handed over the 282-page report to the Home Department.

The commission has examined as many as 525 affidavits and questioned at least five persons during the probe that began on October 1, 2024

As per the complaint, around 12 people travelling in three cars intercepted the vehicle of the Indian Army officer near Patharagadia in

the capital city in the late hours of September 15, 2024.

The Army officer and his fiancée were returning home after closing the latter's restaurant.

The hooligans hurled abuses at the army officer and passed lewd comments towards his fiancée. They dragged the army officer and thrashed him when he tried to re-

The miscreants threatened the couple of dire consequences when the Army officer tried to videorecord the incident in his mobile

The couple, somehow, managed to escape and rushed to the Bharatpur police station to lodge an FIR against the miscreants.

The army officer and his fiancée reached Bharatpur police station around 2 am and urged the cops to depute a police control room (PCR) van to arrest the miscreants.

The couple alleged that the Bharatpur police subjected them to torture instead of acting on their complaint.

As per the allegations, the cops put the fiancée of the army officer in the custody and tortured her. It has been alleged that the police officials stripped the woman and sexually assaulted her in the custody.

The fiancée of the Army officer reportedly bit the hand of a woman cop while trying to resist the custo-

dial torture meted out to her.

dial torture meted out to her.

The Bharatpur police later arrested the woman and produced her in a local court. She was sent to judicial custody after the court rejected her bail plea.

The Orissa High Court, however, granted bail to the woman, who had been admitted to AIIMS, Bhubaneswar following the incident

The alleged torture to the Army officer and his fiancée by the cops has triggered a nationwide furore.

The government has suspended five police official, including the Bharatpur PS IIC, in connection with the incident and ordered a Crime Branch probe in this connection

#### Interview of the week

# Bring politics back to its ethical, value-based roots



**SUGYAN CHOUDHURY** 

Santosh Kumar Mohanty, a dis tinguished figure in Odisha's political and spiritual landscape, carries forward the legacy of his illustrious father Late Satya Priya Mohanty, a former Cabinet Minister and an ex-Speaker of the Odisha Legislative Assembly. Born in the eventful year of 1947, Mohanty pursued his higher education at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, before stepping into the political arena. Inspired by Biju Patnaik, he took on key roles such as Chairman of Balianta Panchayat Samiti and Chairman of OTDC. He contested the 2009 Lok Sabha elections as a Congress candidate from Bhubaneswar but faced defeat.

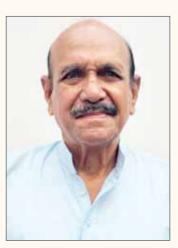
However, politics was just one dimension of his life. A transformative encounter Durgacharan Mohanty, a saintly household figure, marked the beginning of his deep spiritual journey. This quest led him to study world philosophies and religions, culminating in his 1,300-page mini-encyclopedia, "Heritage of India and Swami Nigamananda". His literary contributions include works such as Bhakti Yoga and Sri Shankaracharva: Life and Philosophy while his latest project, Science of Devotion, remains his current focus.

In 2024, Mohanty travelled to the United States to preach and propagate the teachings of Swami Nigamananda, bringing the essence of Indian spiritual wisdom to an international audience. His journey continues, blending politics, spirituality and literature into a remarkable legacy.

In an interview to *The Pioneer*, *Mohanty* spoke to *Sugyan Choudhury* on the many aspects of his life.

What motivated you to enter politics?

My father Satyapriya Mohanty was a freedom fighter and a Cabinet Minister with decades of political experience. As his only son, I had the privilege of interacting with several political stalwarts, including Nabakrushna Choudhury, Dr Harekrushna Mahtab, JB Pattnaik and Biju Pattnaik. Although my childhood dream was to become a pilot, it was Biju Pattnaik who strongly



SANTOSH KUMAR MOHANTY

urged me to step into politics.

Reflecting on the 2009 elections, where you secured 1,47,712 votes but fell short of victory, what were the key challenges you faced during your campaign?

When I was given the ticket, the Congress party in Odisha was already going through a difficult and fragile phase. I was well aware that the odds were against me. Today, the political landscape has shifted significantly-winning an election is often dictated by financial power and campaign expenditure rather than principles and public service.

My father was a man of integrity and idealism. He always told me, "If you buy votes with money, you will never truly work for the welfare of the people because their votes were purchased, not earned." His words left a deep impact on me, and I followed the same ethical path in my political career.

However, modern politics has become deeply entangled with money and muscle power. If a candidate spends ?2 crore on an election, they inevitably seek ways to recover that amount during their tenure. But this should never be the true purpose of politics.

How do you perceive the evolution of politics over time?

Politics has undergone significant changes. I am not against transformation, but surviving in today's political climate has become incredibly challenging. The concept of power corridors existed even during Chanakya's era, and they remain a reality today. However, what concerns me is that we are gradually drifting away from the core ideals and fundamental objectives of politics. True politics should be about service, vision and leadership, not about wealth or influence. The challenge now is to bring politics back to its ethical and value-based roots.

What inspired you to delve into

the study of comparative religion?
My spiritual journey was deeply influenced by my revered Gurudev Paribrajakacharya Sadguru Swami Nigamananda Deb, who mastered the four paths of Tantra, Gyana, Yoga and Prema. His teachings, as documented in his books Tantrik Guru, Gyani Guru, Jogi Guru and Premika Guru, inspired me to study the diverse religious philoso-

phies of the world. Through my exploration, I discovered a common thread of harmony among different religions, as envisioned by Sadguru Nigamananda. My extensive research on this subject is reflected in my book, Heritage of India and Swami Nigamananda, which seeks to bridge the spiritual wisdom of various traditions.

Your articles highlight issues such as industrial pollution and waste management. What inspired you to focus on these environmental concerns?

Since ancient times, nature has been revered as sacred. Our Vedic sages emphasized the philosophy, "Commend Nature by obeying Nature." Unlike today's approach, which seeks to dominate and exploit nature, our ancestors lived in harmony with it. However, modern civilization's relentless pursuit of control over nature has led to severe ecological consequences. The devastating Los Angeles wildfires serve as a stark reminder of nature's retaliation against human excesses. In the grand ecological system, interdependence and sustainability go hand in hand. While nature provides abundantly for our needs, human greed has led to environmental degradation, resource depletion, and a drastic imbalance. I strongly believe that mental pollution-our unchecked desires and destructive mindset-is the root cause of environmental pollution.

What motivated you to start writing, and how do you select the topics for your articles?

Writing, for me is an inner calling. We come across countless articles on various subjects, but certain issues resonate deeply, sparking a need to express and explore them further. That becomes the driving force behind my writings. Initially, my focus was on social and environmental concerns such as industrial pollution and ecological crises. However, over time, my interests have shifted towards spiritual themes, where I now devote my writings to deeper philosophical and religious explorations

As the president of Nilachala Saraswata Sangha, Puri, what are your future plans for the organisation?

Nilachala Saraswata Sangha (NSS) was established in 1934 by Thakur Sri Sri Nigamananda with a profound mission to propagate Sanatan Dharma, promote ideal education (Satsikhya) and serve humanity by recognising service to mankind as service to God. Today, NSS has expanded to over 200 branches worldwide, and we have outlined structured programmes to further its objectives. "God exists"-this is an axiomatic truth, and NSS remains steadfast in its efforts to spread this divine message to the world.

### US-returned engineer excels in dragon fruit farming

PNS BHUBANESWAR

In a shift from traditional farming of staple grains and cash crops, Odisha is witnessing rapid growth in the exotic farming sector. The latest success in this regard has come from Raichhapal village under Kuarmunda block in Sundargarh district, where dragon fruit cultivation has taken off.

A glaring example is the success story of Arunachari Pulwarti, a resident of Basanti Colony in Rourkela, who worked as an IT engineer in the US for 10 years before returning home four years ago. Passionate about horticulture, he decided to pursue dragon fruit

farming and began cultivation in June last year, planting 1,200 saplings in two phases on his 1.5-acre farm.

Using organic farming techniques, his crops have grown rapidly and his efforts have now borne fruit with large batches of dragon fruit being ready to harvest, making him self-sufficient while also inspiring others.

"I am an IITian and received good job offers after returning to India. However, I wanted to do something impactful for society, and it was when I came across dragon fruit farming. India has a large scope for it, but currently, the awareness is pretty low," stated Pulwarti.

Assistant Director of the Horticulture Department in Panposh Dushmant Kumar Behera confirmed that the climate here is suitable for dragon fruit farming and also stated that the government would spread awareness regarding its cultivation to help local farmers.

Meanwhile, the fields of Badakumari village in Umarkote block of Nabarangpur district are filled with lush, red strawberries. Using organic methods, modern farming techniques and with support from the Horticulture Department, farmers here have mastered the art

Currently, strawberries are being sold at Rs 150 to Rs 180 per kg.

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# Language war intensifies



**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA** New Delhi

arliament 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 lan-

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 do it. You say the same thing on record and

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 budgetry 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 I will take action against you immediately," the

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

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-BJPruled 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

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

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 Farooq's post, saying the shock and such a big function was happening in a hotel owned by

truth instead of lying - SUNIL SHARMA, LOP JAMMU ASSEMBLY

your relatives and you had no

idea?He should accept the

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

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.

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, desingers 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

"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 Abdullah responded to Umar said in the statement.

# Large-scale Bangladeshi infiltration suspected

A total of 3,738 infiltrators in State identified PNS BHUBANESWAR

arrest of 10 Bangladeshi nationals from the Bhubaneswar railway station by the Special Task Force (STF) of the Crime Branch on Sunday has led to apprehensions of possible large-scale infiltration racket operating in the State.

Police have launched an indepth investigation to unearth how these individuals entered India, who facilitated their movement and whether they had prior visits to the

"The Bangladeshi nation-

team raided the spot and apprehended 10 persons, including a juvenile and three women. As they could not produce any valid travel documents, they were liable under Section 14 of the Foreigners Act. All of them were arrested and produced before the court," said STF DIG Pinak Mishra.

Mishra further said that in this particular case, they are trying to ascertain how they infiltrated, their entry route, their facilitator and how many times they had visited India prior to this. Whether there is a major organised racket behind this infiltration and

als entered in an other aspects are also being unauthorised manner. On looked into, he said, adding, getting information, a special "We have got some information and we are in touch with other agencies as well."

> Meanwhile, as per the latest data provided by Chief Minister Mohan Majhi in the State Assembly on Monday, a total of 3,738 Bangladeshi infiltrators have been identified across various districts of the

The data was revealed by the Chief Minister while replying to a question raised by MLA Manas Dutta.

The breakup of infiltrators in the State is Bhadrak 199, Kendrapada 1,649, 17, Bhubaneswar Jagatsinghpur 1,112, Malkangiri 655

and Nabarangpur 106. The infiltration of illegal migrants has raised security

concerns, especially in border

and coastal regions in the country. Odisha too has a vast coastline making it vulnerable to infiltrations. Over the past ten years, as many as 41 criminal cases have been registered against

Bangladeshi nationals in Odisha, further intensifying the need for stricter border surveillance and legal mea-

Authorities have been urged to take stringent actions, including verification drives, deportation processes, and policy-level interventions to curb the growing infiltration issue.

#### Opp's protests stall Assembly proceedings tated BJD and Congress ■ BJD decries Jayanarayan's

Koshal merger remark

Congress raises issue of rising atrocities against women

PNS BHUBANESWAR

he Odisha Assembly was thrown into chaos on Monday as opposition BJD and Congress disrupted proceedings over the recent controversial remark by BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra and rising atrocities against women in the State.

Carrying placards, the BJD and Congress members stormed into the Well of the House during the Question Hour, raising slogans and forcing Speaker Surama Padhy to adjourn the session three times until 4 pm. The disturbances caused a complete disruption of business, preventing discussions in the Question Hour and Zero Hour and on the adjournment

The first adjournment occurred at 10:43 am, lasting until 12:09 pm followed by another from 12:22 pm to 1 pm and the final adjournment took place from 1:10 pm to 4 pm.

The House convened at 10:30 am to begin the day's business, starting with a one-minute silence to honour former Minister and BJD leader Ananta Charan Das, who passed away on Sunday

However, trouble erupted as soon as the House moved to the Question Hour. Agi-

members rushed into the Well of the House, chanting slogans and disrupting the proceedings. Some members even attempted to reach the Speaker's podium and grab her microphone, but security personnel intervened.

The BJD strongly objected to the controversial statement made by Jayanarayan Mishra during an official event in Sambalpur on Saturday, accusing him of trying to divide Odisha by raising the Koshal state issue. The BJD demanded an apology from Mishra, who was absent in the session, and a statement from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on the matter.

Meanwhile, Congress MLAs raised slogans about the increasing crimes against women in Odisha. The Congress also staged protest demonstrations outside district Collector offices across the

In Nayagarh

Man 'kills' two minor

the rising atrocities. Despite Speaker Padhy's at-

tempts to restore order by urging the opposition members to return to their seats, the protests continued unabated. After the first adjournment, BJD and Congress members staged a dharna to support their demands. BJD members protested near the Madhubabu statue while Congress members held their dharna near the Mahatma Gandhi statue.

When the House reconvened at 12:09 pm, the uproar continued as both opposition parties rushed to the Well again. Amid the continuing protests, the Speaker adjourned the session once more at 12:22 pm until 1 pm. The disturbances persisted when the session resumed at 1 pm, prompting the Speaker to call for another adjournment from 1:10 pm to 4 pm.

### In State ■ Rs 6,500-cr tax collected from tobacco in 10 yrs

The Odisha Government has collected a massive Rs 6,595 crore as taxes from pan masala, gutkha and tobacco over the past ten years.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi presented this data in the State Assembly while responding to a question by MLA Tankadhar Tripathy on Monday.

The State has witnessed a steady annual rise in tax collection from the pan masala and gutkha products.

In the financial year 2024-25 alone, Rs 1,047 crore has so far been collected. Odisha receives supplies of pan masala, gutkha and tobacco from 16 different States across India.

The increasing revenue highlights the high consumption of these products, raising concerns over public health



despite the economic benefits. The government is expected to balance revenue generation with regulatory measures to curb tobacco consumption and its associated health risks.

The consumption of gutkha and tobacco poses severe health risks, affecting millions of people worldwide. These products contain carcino-

the risk of oral, throat and lung cancer. Prolonged use leads to addiction, causing severe damage to the gums, teeth Additionally, tobacco con-

and overall oral hygiene. sumption contributes to cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure and respira-

tory issues.

#### Rs 6,436-cr budget for SC, ST, Minority welfare Castes (SC) and 5.06% minori-Presented in

Assembly RAJEEV RATHAN BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government on Monday presented the budget for the Department of Scheduled Tribes & Scheduled Castes Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare for the 2025-26 financial year in the State Assembly.

The budget underscores the government's commitment to the socioeconomic development of marginalised commu-As per the 2011 Census,

Odisha's population com-

prises 22.85% Scheduled

Tribes (ST), 17.13% Scheduled

ties. The total budget allocation for the department in 2025-26 stands at Rs 6,436.99 crore, reflecting a 12% increase from the Rs 5,749.79 crore in 2024-25. The budget includes Rs 5,242.25 crore for programme expenditure and Rs 1,193.79 crore for administrative expenditure. Under major schemes, State-funded initiatives have received Rs 3,699.56 crore while Centrallysponsored schemes and projects have been allocated Rs 1,392.68 crore and Rs 150 crore, respectively.

The budget focuses on educational upliftment, economic empowerment, and the welfare of minorities and backward classes. In the education

sector, scholarships for 11.14 lakh students in 2024-25 have been increased to Rs 1,426.26 crore. The Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Yojana will provide Rs 5,000 assistance per student, benefiting three lakh ST students. The Anwesha scheme Initiative for English-medium education has been allocated Rs 158.08 To improve the lives of minorities and backward-class

communities, special schemes have been introduced for health, sanitation and livelihood improvement. Infrastructure support and financial assistance will be provided in minority-dominated areas to ensure equitable develop-

## sons to remarry Detained by

police PNS NAYAGARH

Police on Monday recovered bodies of two minor brothers from a house at Dhanchangada village under the Fatehgarh police

station in Nayagarh district.

One of the deceased was stated to be around 14 years old while the other was 11 years old.

A case of suspected murder has emerged after locals alleged that the father of the deceased minors killed the duo as he wanted to tie the knot again following the death of his first wife.

However, the family

members claimed that the minor boys killed themselves after they came to know about their father's second marriage plans.

According to reports, the accused Prakash Mohanty's wife passed away three years ago, leaving their two sons in his custody. On March 9, a proposal for his second marriage was received.

The grandfather of the victims confirmed this detail and stated that they allegedly took their own lives after being unable to bear the news.

Reports said the Fatehgarh police have detained Prakash and initiated an investigation after taking into account the allegations levelled by locals.

# State-wide crackdown on sand mafia

transport vehicles seized

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Police has launched a State-wide crackdown on illegal sand and minor mineral smuggling. The move aims at curbing the dominance of sand mining mafia, who are a threat to local resources as well as the community.

The drive was launched following the directions of Director General of Police (DGP) YB Khurania.

Senior police officials in different districts carried out extensive raids against sus-



pected illegal sand mining operations. Numerous district police units have remained on high alert, actively conducting operations designed to dismantle sand smuggling net-

In a series of operations on Sunday, police forces executed independent raids on several illegal sand extraction

These joint efforts led to the confiscation of 136 vehicles, including tractors, trucks, and tippers carrying drained sand unlawfully. As a result, 119 cases have been registered and 123 individuals were arrested. Residents have also been

urged to report any suspicious sand or morum trading they observe in their vicinity to the authorities, as police are set to continue the crackdown. It is said that by taking a stand against illegal sand mining, communities help protect vital environmental and economic resources.

### Biswanath Das' birth anniv held in B'pur

The 137 birth anniversary of former Odisha Chief Minister and former Uttar Pradesh Governor Biswanath Das was observed by members of the Odia Language Movement and Cultural Reform Organisation near the Biswanath Das statue in the premises of the Municipal Corporation guest house here on Saturday.

Prominent personalities, educationist including Harekrishna Panda, Pankaj Kumar Nayak, Pramod Kumar Sahu, Prashant Kumar Satapathy, S Nageswar Prusty and Bidyadhar Maharana, along with members of the Jai Jagannath Morning Walk



Club, paid floral tributes. Participants recalled Biswanath Das' contributions to governance, social service and the freedom movement.

Organisation president Trinath Maharana emphasised the significance of Das' legacy in shaping Odisha's political and social landscapes. The event concluded with a collective homage to the great leader, reaffirming his lasting influence on the State's history.



Sri Maa Budhi Santani Thakurani, a sacred and culturally significant event, will be celebrated this year in Brahmapur. As part of the festival's traditional rituals, the planting of the Subha Khunti will take place at a designated location near Peetam

House on Desibehera Street.

In accordance with timehonoured customs, the traditional Sidhanti has designated March 12 (Wednesday) as the auspicious date for this ritual. The planting ceremony will occur during the intervening night from 9:30 pm to 2:30 am, ensuring that the occasion aligns with the sacred timings.

Festival organiser P Durga Prasad Desibehera has extended a warm invitation to the community for their participation and cooperation in



making this momentous event a success.

"I invite everyone to join in the celebration. Your active participation will help preserve our cherished customs, and together, we can honour the blessings of Maa Budhi Santani Thakurani," said Desibehera.

The festival is open to all, and the entire community is encouraged to come together and celebrate the grace and divine presence of the goddess.

#### Booth-level workers are BJP's strength: Majhi



PNS ■ KEONJHAR

 ${
m T}$ he booth-level workers are the strength of the BJP, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, addressing the party's booth-level workers at a felicitation ceremony in Keonjhar on Sunday,

Majhi said the BIP is a party with difference where one ordinary member can be a Chief Minister or President of the country. But for this one is required to work sincerely. He also congratulated the boothlevel workers and said due to their tireless efforts the BJP is in power both at State and Centre.

He appealed to them to work in the same spirit for the coming days so that Odisha

would be a developed State and Keonihar the number one district in the State.

Majhi also mentioned about many new projects for Keonjhar district like: the mega steel plant at Patna, three barrages along the bank of Baitarani to irrigate one lakh acre of land,

On the occasion, Majhi felicitated newly-elected BJP district president Sukdev Mahanta and 45 Mandal presidents those who had come from different parts of the district.

Telkoi MLA Fakir Mohan Naik, Patna MLA Akhila Charan Naik, district BJP president Sukhdev Mahanta and many other party senior leaders were present.

#### **Women's Day**

#### Time to celebrate R'gada SP Swati's bold anti-ganja drive from 61 acres of land in 82

BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA

In less than 80 days, 12,38,500 ganja plants were destroyed from 436.5 acres of hilly land under the leadership of Rayagada district SP Swati S Kumar. The efficient team, led by her, destroyed ganja cultivation on the spot and smugglers were taken to task. According to sources, the

ganja destruction drive started from the day Swati took over as SP of Rayagada. Padmapur, Chandrapur, Gudari and Gunupur blocks of Rayagada district have become major hubs for cannabis cultivation, a team was formed under Swati, which registered 39 cases in just 78 days, destroyed 436.5 acres of can-

nabis cultivation from 582 dif-

ferent spots and destroyed

12,38,500 cannabis plants. High tech methods like use of google maps, drones, etc were used to map the exact spots of cultivation. Apart from that local tip offs were received

18 cases have been registered in the Padmapur block destroying 7,950 cannabis plants in 271 different places in 219.5 acres of hilly land. Similarly, 12 cases were registered in Gudari block and 41,000 cannabis plants were destroyed in 148 acres of land in 200 different patches of dense forest. 9 cases were reg-

from the spies.

istered in Chandrapur block and 101,000 cannabis plants were destroyed in 82 patches in 61 acres of land. One case was registered in Gunpur Putasingh area and 27,000 cannabis plants were destroyed in 9 acres of land in 12 spots. In Padmapur block, cannabis cultivation was destroyed in Ashargudi, Nandra and Mahadimba villages of Nuagarh panchayat, cultivation was also destroyed in many places in Simiri, Likitipadar villages of Guluguda panchayat. 101000 ganja plants were destroyed

patches in Sanpankal, Siripur, Badpankal, Godengi, Surulu, Bhanuguda villages of Bijapur panchayat under Chandrapur police station. 401000 ganja plants were destroyed from 130 acres of land in 200 spots in Gunjuguda, Ramvi, Dukdapanga, Natangi, Dumna, Khairguda, Siriguda, Tangarma, Racham, Hatibari, Adi villages under Gudari police station and 27000 ganja plants were destroyed from 9 acres of land in 12 patches in Pindagudi village of Bhimpur panchayat under Putasing police station.

It was not an easy task. Police held awareness meeting with various elected representatives, and gentries in Kendugada area and motivated the public to stay away from the illegal cultivation.

#### In Jajpur— MLA helps accident victim's family



ajpur district's Dharmasala MLA Himanshu Sekhar Sahoo has always been in public domain even before being elected as a legislator for his philanthropic activity. He stands by the underprivileged, depressed and needy, whether it may be a cyclone, flood or any other disaster.

Recently, he has donated 2 lakh rupees to the family of a person who died in a road accident in Kaima in Jajpur district. As per the information,

loaded tractor collided with a bike rider at the embankment road on the Kelua river at Gopanagar of Kaima panchayat. The bike rider died at the spot and the pillion rider sustained severe injuries. The victims were taken to the nearest hospital. MLA Sahoo expressed his deep condolence to the bereaved family and donated 2 lakh rupees to the fam-

Moreover, he has arranged for seamless medical treatment to the injured person.

#### Priyanka to land in Koraput to shoot for SSMB29



PNS **KORAPUT** 

Renowned filmmaker SS Rajamouli has commenced the shooting of his highly-anticipated action-adventure film, tentatively titled 'SSMB29', in the picturesque district of Koraput. The production has attracted significant attention with Tollywood heartthrob Mahesh Babu and Malayalam superstar Prithviraj Sukumaran joining

the team on location.

The film's shooting is currently taking place in Semiliguda, specifically in the Talimali Hills. Since last Thursday, the location has been bustling with activity as the film crew sets up for major scenes. Along with Rajamouli, superstar Mahesh

Babu and actor Prithviraj Sukumaran are also present for the shoot.

Meanwhile, reports suggest that global star Priyanka Chopra is all set to land in Koraput and join Mahesh Babu. Rajamouli is planning to shoot a few crucial scenes of the film in Koraput. If reports are to be believed, the versatile actress is all set to arrive in Odisha in a day or

"SSMB29" boasts a substantial budget, reportedly ranging from Rs 1,000 to 1,500 crore, making it one of the most expensive Indian films to date. The movie is also expected to be released in multiple languages, including Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi and Kannada.

# JSWF-ATDC sewing unit holds Rojgar Mela

#### 200 get benefit in Jharsuguda

PNS JHARSUGUDA

In a bid to promote skillbased employment, the JSWF-ATDC Sewing cum Production Centre at Sripura Panchayat successfully organised a Rojgar Mela, providing job opportunities for trained candidates in the textile and apparel industry.

The event saw participation from around 200 skilled individuals seeking placements in leading companies, including **Exports** (Bhubaneswar), VICTUS Dyeing (Tiruppur), Page Industries Limited - Jockey (Chakardharpur, Odisha), and Aditya Birla Fashion Retail Ltd (Bhubaneswar). These firms conducted screening processes, offering employment prospects to the trained



Vice-President of HR at JSW BPSL, Sambalpur, JP Singh as the chief guest. In his address, he underscored the importance of self-empowerment for women, emphasizing how skill training fosters independence and financial stability.

Head of CSR at JSW BPSL, Sambalpur, and JSW EUL, Jharsuguda, Vishal Raj attended as the guest of honour. highlighted

expanding their income opportunities, reinforcing the organization's dedication to sustainable development.

Additionally, Placement Head of ATDC Manju Singh provided valuable insights into the evolving demands of the textile sector. She stressed ATDC's strong industry linkages, which have played a crucial role in securing promising job opportunities for trained professionals.

The Rojgar Mela marked a significant step in the ongoing efforts to create sustainable livelihoods. By connecting skilled workers with reputed employers, JSWF-ATDC continues to strengthen socioeconomic growth, ensuring long-term empowerment and self-reliance for women through employment and entrepreneurship.

# JSW honcho gets Best CEO award



PNS BHUBANESWAR

hrough a range of initiatives in CSR, sustainability and manufacturing excellence, the JSW Group has focused on empowering women and local communities across Odisha, striving to generate value for all its stakeholders.

In recognition of JSW's commitments to the State of Odisha, Anil Kumar Singh, President & Whole Time Director of JSW BPSL and JSW Utkal Steel, was conferred with

the esteemed Best CEO award. The award was presented by Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati at the Mining & Infrastructure International expo 2025 held in Bhubaneswar on Sunday.

The selection for this prestigious award was made by a distinguished panel, chaired by Supreme Court Justice (Retd) Arijit Pasayat, Chairman of the SIT, and convened by Dr TK Chand, former CMD of Nalco and an industry expert.

### Generis Teacher Sir Girish

he valedictory function of Sir Girish Chandra Patnaik Birth Centenary celebration was held on March 6 here. Former MLA Padma Charan

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Navak presided

The meeting was graced by Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of the Eastern Media Limited as chief guest. He observed that for the betterment of Odisha and the Indian nation we do need more and more of talented and philanthropic teachers like late Girish Chandra Patnaik who did serve selflessly and ethically as the headmaster of several high schools of Odisha. Besides, he served as an assistant teacher in LN High School, Eranch, Niali, Cuttack Vivekananda and Vidyapeetha, Bahugram,

Cuttack. At the start of the function, the guests presented the Girish Chandra Patnaik Smruti Samman (Memorial Award) to Kulamani Sukla, former headmaster of Puri Zila High School for his dedicated work

of teachership An English Book: "Sui

Patnaik's Ethical Greatness", edited by B Ramchandra CST Voltaire was released on the occasion and the same was distributed among all the former students of Patnaik present in the meeting. columnist Eminent

Adhyapak Biswaranjan joined the celebration as chief speaker. He opined that education is an never ending exercise and it must produce students of high character and commitment for the good governance of Odisha and In-

Former Income Tax Commissioner Manoranjan Panigrahy in his address emphasized the several good qualities of Patnaik.

bureaucrat Former Aurobindo Behera welcomed the guests and Babaji Kumar of the Centenary Committee presented a report on the activities undertaken by the committee throughout the

Secretary of the Centenary Committee B Ramchandra CST Voltaire gave an introductory speech. Malay Kumar Tripathy, gave the vote of

# ECoR Engineers' Assn holds AGM



PNS BHUBANESWAR

he 12th Annual General Meeting of East Coast Railway Engineers' Association (ECoREA) was held at Mancheswar on Sunday. PP Beura of Mancheswar Carriage Repair workshop welcomed the engineers attending from different parts of the country representing their Zonal Associations.

A new Zonal Executive Body for ECoREA was formed. Former president Bobin Mohanty was felicitated on his retirement from service and a song was released. The other retired members of the association were also felici-

In the elections held, Bobin Mohanty, IA Khan, Bishnu Prasad Dash and Sudhanshu Satpathy were elected as advisor, president, general secretary and finance secretary, respectively. A technical souvenir "Technowave" was released on the occasion followed by a power point presentation on topic "Recent Technical Advancements on Indian Railways". The central executive meet-

ing of the All India Railway Engineers' Federation (AIREF) was held in the afternoon. Many decisions were taken in this meeting. The meeting was presided over by working president Manoj Pandey and conducted by secretary general Bishnu Prasad Dash. In the end, finance secretary general Sunil Kumar Pandey proposed a vote of thanks.

### **Centurion Univ**

# 3-day techno-science fest, Gajajyoti ends

Gajajyoti 2025, the 14th Annual Techno-Science-Management-Cultural-Literary-Skills Fest at Centurion University, began with a spectacular start on March 5 at the Bhubaneswar campus.

The festival, which ended on March 7, brought an exciting blend of innovation, entertainment and skill develop-

The opening day featured the much-anticipated Open Day and Mega Centurion Expo, where attendees explored the university's advancements and Global Technology Entities (GTET). The event provided students, faculty, and staff an opportunity to introduce their families and friends to the university's dynamic ecosystem.

The visitors gained firsthand insights into Centurion University's pioneering research, hands-on learning ap-

proach, and commitment to bridging academics with practical industry exposure.

The inaugural ceremony was marked by a vibrant social, technical cultural processhowcasing the university's diverse talent and creativity. Adding to the excitement, a food fest brought together a variety of culinary delights, celebrating regional and international flavours. The open mic session saw enthusiastic participation from students and faculty, setting an inspiring and energetic tone for the festival.

Vice-Chancellor of Centurion University, Odisha, Supriya Pattanayak expressed her enthusiasm for the event, stating, "Gajajyoti is more than just a festival; it is a celebration of creativity, knowledge, and collaboration. It embodies the spirit of Centurion University, where innovation and culture come together to shape future leaders.

We are delighted to see such incredible participation and energy from our students, faculty, and alumni. The threeday event is also an opportunity for students, faculty, and everyone at the university to unwind, relax, and have a great time.'

The evenings of March 6 and 7 featured 50+ performances, ensuring a captivating experience filled with music, dance, and cultural show-

# **ED raids Bhupesh Baghel**



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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Raipur

he 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 Bhilai (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 Bhilai 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 "conspiracy" 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 Bhilai. 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 Arunpati 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

ernment-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.

Chhattisgarh was ruled by a Congress gov-

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 Batth gang in the case, leading to the recovery of a significant cache of arms and ammunition from their possession.

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



Puniab 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 rom 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

### **Karnataka** gangrape 'very unfortunate', says HK Patil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

−arnataka 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 Anegundi 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 parametres and other measures to be initiated about home stays, resorts etc. The government will definitely

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.

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, Mauaima (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

the transfer of 0.8 hectares of land free of

cost to the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)

for setting up the Defence Testing and

Additionally, the Cabinet has approved

these regions.

#### Newlywed couple found dead after wedding ceremony in UP

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE** ■ Lucknow

hat 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 Deli 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 have 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 postmortem, 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 fam-

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 was 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

he 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, Baghpat, Etawah, Kannauj, Hapur, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Ayodhya, Ambedkarnagar, Etah, Kasganj,

#### **BISWAJEET BANERJEE** Lucknow

n a major announcement ahead of Holi, the Uttar Pradesh government-Lled 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 initi-

To accelerate the Agra Metro Rail Project, the Cabinet has approved the transfer of 8,684.68 square metres of land from the Horticulture and Food Processing Department and 20,753 square metres from the Home Department to the Housing and Urban Planning Department. The land will be leased to the Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation for 90 years at a nominal price of ₹1, with provisions for renewal

**CM** approves key decisions benefiting farmers

In a boost to urban development, the State Smart City Mission has been extended for two more years, covering all 17 municipal corporations in Uttar Pradesh. Initially launched for five years, the scheme includes 10 smart cities selected by the central government in 2019-20, along with seven additional cities Ghaziabad, Meerut, Firozabad, Ayodhya, Mathura-Vrindavan, Shahjahanpur and Gorakhpur identified by the State Government. This extension aims to further improve urban infrastructure and modernisation efforts.

The Cabinet has also approved the transfer of 451.20 acres of land, previously owned by closed spinning mills under

Meanwhile, revision is underway in dis-

tricts such as Shamli, Saharanpur,

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 gov-

ernment'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

¬hirteen 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



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 incharge 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

ated soon in these areas.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

n what is being viewed as a countermove by the Trinamool Congress Lagainst Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu 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 Adjhikari 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 Suvendu 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 Suvendu 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.

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

The TMC hunting down Tapasi Mondal



# Veni, Vidi, Vici...

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

n 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 Chakravarthy, 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

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 pours 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.

\_eaderspeak

Right now, I am taking things as they

come. It wouldn't be fair for me to

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

I am enjoying my cricket and the time I spend with

future, and I haven't done so in the past either. For now,

ROHIT SHARMA, CAPTAIN TEAM INDIA

think too far ahead. At this

this team.

# 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

S 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

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 trad-

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

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

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.



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

straints. 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.

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

ccelerate 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 AIdriven 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



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

to sustain equilibrium in these intersecting 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

'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 allrounders; 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!

#### **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 I GHAZIABAD

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

#### **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 percent 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 issued to women. The number of women taking loans by pledging gold has increased by more than 22 percent

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' initia tive? 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

C FIRST Olumn

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

n 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 ₹2/3/1 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-

UTTAM

vailing 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 cen-

get for FY 2025-26, the pre-

tral 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 pileup 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.

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

Despite attempts to trim the subsidy bill through

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 funda-

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 a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)

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

uring 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,



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 manufac-

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.

turing or enhance economic integration.

#### 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 longterm 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 loses that might result from the

Trump imposed tariffs.

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

# Holistic approach to overcoming addiction

arilal 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.

Abdullah Gandhi.

Tobacco and excessive consumption of alcohol lead to severe physical and psycho-

logical 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

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.

es 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 skill-fully 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

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 individ-

ual 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 graph land in the journey of your life.

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 wellbeing, 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 controling Railway Board: Opposition**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

ailways (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 upgra-

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

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

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

He also demanded accountability from the Minister for accidents and stampedes at railway stations, including the recent by outsourced coolies. 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

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 constitution-

Subhashish 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 Devegowda JD (S) welcomed the Bill while lauding Vaishnaw's perfor-

mance 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

Brij Lal (BJP) said the Narendra Modiled 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



#### **VP Dhankhar** recovering at **AIIMS in Delhi**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

rice-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

ssues 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 concerns 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

up a fund to compensate victims of cyber frauds. Seth urged the government to take stringent and effective measures against cyber crimes to safeguard hardearned 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 meager 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 longstanding 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

ustice 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

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

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

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

¬he 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

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

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

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

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

'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

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

⊣he Congress and some other Opposition parties staged a walkout 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

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

by the opposition... In a way, it is an attempt to malign Parliament and democracy," Nadda alleged. "They (opposition MPs) should go for a refresher course. They should understand the rules and regulations (of the House). The government is ready to discuss anything," Nadda added. Earlier, Harivansh said 12 notices had been received under Rule 267. Tiruchi N Siva of DMK, CPI's Santosh Kumar P, Vaiko of MDMK, CPI's P P Suneer, and P Wilson of DMK demanded discussions on concerns regarding the upcoming delimitation exercise in the southern states. Trinamool Congress members Saket Gokhale and Sagarika Ghose, along with Pramod Tiwari and Ajay Maken of the Congress demanded discussions over the alleged lapse by the Election Commission in issuing multiple 'duplicate' voter ID cards across states.

While Sanjay Singh of AAP demanded a discussion on the financial loss incurred by the small investors due to the continued decline in stock market indices. Ramji Lal Suman of the Samajwadi Party called for a discussion over a statement made by US President Donald Trump on American funding to increase voter turnout in India.

# 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.

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

Additional sessions judge Chander Jit

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 Ŕashid, popularly known

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

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 Conferenceas Engineer Rashid, defeated Chief 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 Salahudd, 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

ndia should give priority to bilateral trade agreements over multilater-▲ al 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 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 interests 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.

# WORLD 09

## Pak Prez presses for strengthening capacities to deal with terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

akistan 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

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 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.

Žardari, 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

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

**NORTHERN RAILWAY** 

E-TENDER NOTICE

SMM/EMU/GZB acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender

Name of Work: Micro Controller Based electronic speed Indicating Recording

System for tower wagon as per RDSO specification: MP 0.3700-07 Rev.07 Aug-201

Last Date & Time of Submission of tender bid of tender : 31.03.2025 (11:00 Hrs.

5. Date of Time of Opening of tender document : 31.03.2025 (11:00 Hrs.)

against tender no. 46245351A Dt-06.03.2025. The details are as under:

Approx. cost of work : Rs. 63,72,000/-

Quantity: 30 Set

Group

seen : www.ireps.gov.in

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.

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Rakesh Kumar S/o Late Om Prakash Gupta R/o A 112, Swasthya Vihar Delhi-110092, my and his family has severed relations with my younger brother Mukesh Kumar alias Mukesh Gupta alias Lappe S/o Late Om Prakash Supta R/o 1131/33 First Floor Chandni Chowk, Delhi-110006 due to his wrong conduct and wrong deeds. My client shall not be responsible for any act and conduct done by him.

Pradeep Mahajan (Advocate)

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that, J. Anil Jolly, 5/0 Late Shri
Shakti Prakash Jolly, R/O B-120, SFS RPS Flats,
Sheikh Sarai, Phase-1, New Delhi-110017, and
owner and in physical possession of DDA Bultiup Freehold Flat No.14, on First and Second
Floor, RPS Flats, Category MiG, situated at
Sheikh Sarai, Phase-1, New Delhi-110017, Avithhas been allotted by DDA vide FileNo.1-48(12)7
6. The Original Allotment Letter, Possession
Letter, Possession Slip, NOC for Electricity and
Water connection, Niutation/substitution Lett
er and other related documents etc. of said flat
have been lost. An F.I.R./NCR lodged in Crime
Branch, Police Station, New Delhi, NCR/LR No.
2656074/2025 dated 10.03.2024. Any person
(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original docume
ts may write/contact with above named
person at above address/Phone: 9810155333
within 15 days from the date of publication of
this notice.

**Earnest Money Deposit** 

category

173862

120366

133740

66870

173862

Reserved

category

86931

60183

66870

33435

86931

PUBLIC NOTICE
Since Mr. Deenak Kataria my client seeking a ne loan for the property i.e. House no. 575, ard asuring 220 sq. mtrs., situated at Sector: measuring 220 sq. mtrs., situated at Sector 5 Tehsil and Gurgaon, Haryana 122001, Haryana hereinafter referred to as "said property". Tha Mr. Deepak Kataria and previous owner ha made us understand that the said property wa transferred several times on the basis of re allotment issued by HUDA. Earlier, Mr. M.C Aror as owner but died leaving behind legal heirs Mrs hawla. Whereas, Mrs. Padma Arora also died a

Chawla. Whereas, Mrs. Padma Arora also died and leaving behind Will No. 513, dated 05.07.2016. Thereafter, Mrs. Deepika Chawla had given affidavit and relinquished of her rights in the said property in the HUDA. Now, Mr. Saurabh Arora were absolute owner of the said property. Now, I would like to amounce to general public that any person who is having any right, title or interest against that property/share or documents may come to our Delhi office within seven days and render their claim with documentary valid evidence. If any clean the same would be treated as unclaimed and unrebutted and moved forth accordingly.

MIS PASS & ASSOCIATES LLP MIS 132, L.C.F., Malviya Nagar New Delhi-110017, Mob: 9991116006

#### System (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. (ii) Please refer to the tender document for all terms and conditions

(iii) No manual offers are acceptable

No. PM-Shri/CW/Tender/24-25/86/2025/271

No.: 46245351A Date: 06.03.2025 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

Name of work

Major repairing of

PM-Shri Dhupdhara

High School under

Rongjuli block

Goalpara district

Major repairing of

HS School under

Hoiai-Municipality

block in Hojai district

Major repairing of

PM-Shri Boko High

School under Boko

block and PM-Shri

Bamunigaon High

Chaygaon block in

Major repairing of

R.K.S High School

PM-Shri Borjuri

under Bajiagaon

block in Nagaon

Major repairing of

Barpatradole High

Gaurisagar block and

PM-Shri Banmukh

HS School under

Sivasagar block in

Sivasagar district

School under

district

PM-Shri

School under

PM-Shri Abdul Hasib

DETAIL NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

administrative reasons. All other terms & conditions of the tender remain the same.

Approximat

e value of

(in lakh)

86.931

60.183

In continuation to the tender notice No. PM-Shri/CW/Tender/24-25/86/2025/109 dated 17/02/2025, the last

date for submission of tenders for the following 5 (five) groups is extended upto 20/03/2025 due to

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office

of the undersigned during office hours from 10-03-2025 (1100 hours) to 20-03-2025 (1400 hours). The

Time of

completi

months)

Tend

fee

1204

1337

1739

Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be Note: (i) The tenderers must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procuremen

### North Korea fires several ballistic missiles into sea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

orth 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 Korean border, on Thursday.

#### **CHANGE OF NAME**

Tamolipura, PO- Salempur,

Teh- Sapotara, Dist- Karouli,

Rajasthan- 322202, declare that

Hitesh is my Son, but in his

School records, his name has

been recorded as Hitesh

Prajapat, whereas as per his

Birth Certificate & Aadhar Card,

his correct name is Hitesh,

which may be amended

PD(1658)C I, No.14846655H HAV/ SHT

Vivek, Serving at- 226 Coy ASC (Sup) Type G Delhi Cantt-

Mahmoodpur, Dist.- Sultanpur,

U.P. 228125. declare that in my

Army Service record, my mother's name & DOB has been

wrongly recorded as Shila Singh

(DOB 01/07/1965), whereas he

correct name & DOB is Sheela

Singh (DOB 05/06/1965) which

I, No.14848050A L/Nk/Hk P

Othiyathur, Dist- Villupuram,

Tamil Nadu- 605701, have

changed my son's name from

Omeshwar to S. Omeshwar,

vide affidavit dated 10/03/2025

I, Rohit Nayak, Father of-

No.16026699K Hav Ajit Kumar

Nayak, R/o- Anuary, Cuttack,

Odisha- 754009, have changed

my name from Rohit Nayak to

Rohit Kumar Navak, vide

affidavit dated 10/03/2025

I, MINATI NAYAK, MOTHER of-

No.16026699K Hav Ajit Kumar

Nayak, R/o- Anuary, Cuttack,

Odisha- 754009, have changed

my name from Minati Nayak to

Bauri Dei, vide affidavit dated

10/03/2025 before Notary

Public Delhi.

before Notary Public Delhi.

before Notary Public Delhi.

may be amended accordingly.

Suresh R/o-

R/o- Vill & Post

PD(1659)C

Vill/Post-

PD(1660)C

PD(1661)C

PD(1662)C

accordingly.

I, Kshirod Biswas, Father of I, Johari Lal Prajapat, R/o-Vill-No.15771110X BHM(GNR) Ashok Biswas, R/o- Vill-Angali Villa, PO- N C Pukur, Teh- Barrackpore, Dist- 24 Parganas (N), W.B.- 700122, have changed my name from Kshirod Biswas to Khirod Biswas, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

#### PD(1655)C

I, K Anjalatchi W/o-No.14848050A L/Nk/Hk P Suresh R/o- Vill/Post Othiyathur, Dist-Villupuram, Tamil Nadu- 605701, have changed my name from K Anjalatchi to Anjalatchi, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

#### PD(1656)C

I, Tasli Mun Khatun, Mother of- JC-472987A Sub Md Zafar Ali Khan, R/o- West Side Bfc Field, Bara, Ghazipur, U.P.-232325, have changed my name from Tasli Mun Khatun to Taslimun Nessa, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

#### PD(1657)C

I, Bhavia Mehta, D/o Dalip Mehta, R/o 147, Ground Floor, Pocket A-3, Sector 7, Rohini, Delhi - 110085, have changed my name from Bhavia Mehta to Bhavya Mehta for all purposes

PD(1664)C I, Ruksana, W/O, Sh. Shakir, House No, 340, Mavi Mohalla. Tekhand, Okhla Industrial Area Delhi-110020, have changed my name to Ruksana Parveen (Both are same Person).

PD(1663)C

#### 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, RWS&S 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 at11.00 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 Superintending Engineer

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 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rule) 1993) in the matter of DATE: 31.01.2025 OANO 663/2022

VERSUS RAJESH ANAND RESPONDENT

Kar Links 0-13 Basement Left Side Opposite Park Lajpat Nagar-ii New Delhi - 24 Also At L 104-105 3rd Floor Lajpat Nagar - II New Delhi - 24

To, Defendant DI, Shri Rajesh Anand S/o Harkishan Lal Anand

Whereas the above-named applicant (s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 25,49,509.65 /- (RUPEE TWENTY FIVE LAKH FORTY NINE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED NINE AND SIXTY FIVE PAISE ONLY) against you and where as it has been shown to 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 rideo 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 cause list itself at DRT Official Portal i.e. drt.gov.in (iii) In any exigency qua that the Advocate/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 23748478. Given under my hand and seal of the

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 GOLD AUCTION NOTICE which nave not use in research of the company, will be auctioned at the which have not been redeemed by the concerned customers so far in

By order of the Tribunal, Section Officer DRT-II, Delhi

oncerned branch offices of the company on **Thursday 20th March, 2025** as per the following details:-1. Karawal Nagar Branch - Paul Merchants Finance Pyt. Ltd. K 274. Main Road. Karawal Nagar, Delhi, Pin code 10094. Phone - 8644964544 Loan Number - 219210000000197, 219210000000199, 219210000000203 219210000000746, 219210000000049, 219210000000256, 21921000000257, 219210000000288, 219210000000298 219210000000299. 219210000000305. 21921000000309. 219210000000319. 21921000000320 19210000000325, 219210000000334, 219210000000350, 219210000000351, 219210000000395, 21921000000040

**2. Kartar Nagar Branch –** Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, J-33, Main Road, Kartar Nagar, 4th Pusta, Delhi. Pin ode - 110053. Phone - 9501466626 Loan Number - 20921000000553, 20921000000576, 209210000000601, 209210000000608, 209210000000612, 209210000000645, 209210000001045, 209210000001061 209210000001064, 209210000001065, 209210000001066, 209210000001070, 209210000001087 209210000001090, 209210000001091, 209210000001093, 209210000001112, 209210000001117, 209210000001129 209210000001133, 209210000001134, 209210000001141, 209210000001154, 209210000001174, 209210000001190, 209210000001192, 209210000001236, 209210000001237, 209210000001284, 209210000001314, 209210000001345 209210000001357 (Time 11:00 AM). 5**. Kirari Branch -** Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, Khasra No.1012, Suleman Nagar, Kirari-Delhi. Pin code

110086. Phone - 8968866676 Loan Number - 211210000000199, 211210000000203, 211210000000206 211210000000209, 211210000000234, 211210000000400, 21121000000432, 21121000000450, 211210000000461 :11210000000473, 211210000000475, 211210000000486, 211210000000490, 211210000000491, 211210000000496, 211210000000507,211210000000524,211210000000539,211210000000546,211210000000560,211210000000561 . Mohan Garden- Delhi Branch - Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, Ground Floor, Plot No.8,9,F- Block, Moha

Sarden, New Delhi . Pin code - 110059. Phone - 8264133393 Loan Number - 202210000000380, 202210000000383, 20221000000404, 202210000000407, 202210000000410, 202210000000619, 202210000000621,202210000000643,202210000000671,202210000000700,202210000000701 202210000000708, 202210000000709, 202210000000742, 20221000000757, 202210000000768 202210000000784.20221000000802.20221000000804.20221000000815(Time 11:00 AM). . Najafgarh Branch - Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, Ground Floor, Rz3, B Block, Old Roshanpura, Najafgarh est Delhi. Pin code - 110043. Phone - 8427733393 Loan Number - 203210000000470, 203210000000473

203210000000487. 203210000000787. 20321000000805. 20321000000808. 20321000000815

203210000000816, 203210000000817, 203210000000819, 203210000000839, 203210000000867

203210000000893, 203210000000894, 203210000000895, 203210000000899, 203210000000908

203210000000923, 20321000000933 (Time 11:00 AM). i**. Sonia Vihar-** Delhi Branch - Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd, Property No.D-296, Illrd Pusta, Mainmarke oniavihar, Delhi. Pin code - 110094. Phone - 8699033393 Loan Number - 197210000001457, 19721000000148 (Time 11:00 AM). It may please be noted that if the auction does not get completed on the above stated day due to any reason, th

same will be conducted on 27th March 2025 at the same place and time without any further notice Note: Paul Merchants Finance Private Limited, on its sole discretion has the authority to remove any of th

ornaments under any loan account from the auction list without prior information.

Note: Bidders are requested to produce Identity Card, PAN Card & TIN Number in case of registered dealers Successful bidder shall be requested to transfer the full auction amount to the company by RTGS/any othe

Authorized Signatory Paul Merchants Finance Pvt. Ltd. For any clarification regarding the above notice, please contact at 0172-5041717 or the concerned branch

PUBLIC NOTICE

be known to all that I, REENA KAWATRA N/O SH. GIRISH KAWATRA R/O DDA JANTA FLAT NO.490, SECOND FLOOR, POCKET-Q DILSHAD GARDEN, DELHI-110095 owner Flat No.490, ON SECOND FLOOR, UNDER JANTA CATEGORY, POCKET-Q, SITUATED AT DILSHAD GARDEN, DELHI-110095. The original documents i.e. DEMAND-CUM-ALLOTMEN to this effect has been lodged in P.S.Crime Branch in vide S.O. No.430/2014 & LR No.265 194/2025 dated 10.03.2025. Any person(s) cla ng any right, interest, having any objection and in possession of original document ay write/contact with above named person above address/phone No.9999055882 thin 15 days from the date of publication o his notice.The person claiming any righ nterest, objections with respect to th perty can personally inform or write to Dy rector (LAB) H or Director (H)-1, D Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given that the Hon'ble Delhi High Court in the case titled as 'Mrs. Payal Kapoor & Anr. Vs Mr. Pankai Jain & Ors. C.S. (OS) No.3156 of 2015 vide its order dated 27.02.2019 has ordered a status quo qua the estate of late Mr. D.K Jain. This estate includes 50 percent shares in M/s. Edenpark Hotels Private Ltd. which owns and operates 'The Qutab Hotel' situated at Shaheed Jeet Singh Marg, New Delhi. Therefore, all persons are harred from creating any third-party interest or encumbrance on the properties of the said Company, including the 'Qutab Hotel and Mr. D.K. Jain (Luxor Group India) shares and properties'. Any transaction in violation of the restraint Order would be illegal, void and unenforceable in law. The general Public is therefore advised to desist from entering into any such transaction, as any violation of the status quo Order of the Hon'ble High Court would amount to its contempt The undersigned has peremptory instructions from his Client (Ms Priya Jain, Plaintiff No. 2) to initiate appropriate legal action against any person contravening the directions of the Hon'ble Court.

Anand S Jondhale ADVOCATE

Group -19

-20

Online mode of submission for both technical and financial bid is mandatory.

2. There are 5 groups and one bidder can participate in more than one group. But no bidder will be awarded more than 2 groups of work, even if their financial bids rank at L1.

 A hard copy of the technical bid submitted online is also to be submitted at the office of the undersigned on or before 20-03-2025 upto 1400 hours for evaluation purpose. For any discrepancy between the online bid and the hard copy of the bid, the online bid will govern and will be considered for evaluation.

4.Along-with the hard copy of the technical bid, the following documents must also be submitted on or before 20-03-2025 up to 1400 hrs :-

a. Original Power of Attorney for signing the bid, if any.

b.Copy of bid security/ EMD submitted online at www.assamtenders.gov.in. c.Copy of tender fee submitted online at www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Bidders are advised to scan their original technical papers at a resolution of 100 dpi (in colour

mode) in ".pdf" format for multiple pages with maximum file size of 25 MB. If the file size exceeds 25 MB, the bidders are advised to create multiple files and upload the same in "Upload Additional Document" stage

In the event of date of bid opening being a holiday, the activities will take place on the next working day. 7.All the interested bidders are requested to read the bid document carefully before submission of their Sd/-Mission Director.

Janasanyog/CF/3966/24/11-Mar-25



Samagra Shiksha Axom Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Rs. 46,00,000/-

**CLIX CAPITAL SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED** NOTICE OF SALE THROUGH PRIVATE TREATY Registered Office: Aggarwal Corporate Tower, Plot No. 23, 5th Floor, Govind Lal Sikka Marg, Rajendra Place, New Delhi-110008 SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE ASSETS CHARGED TO CLIX CAPITAL SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OI

SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 (SARFAESI ACT).

The Authorized Officer of CLIX CAPITAL SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED (hence will be known as "CLIX") has taken over possession of the schedule property(ies) u/Section 13(4) of the SARFAESI ACt. Public at large is informed that the secured property(ies) as mentioned in the Schedule are available for sale through Private Treaty, as per the terms agreeable to the CLIX or realisation of CLIX's dues on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" Name of the owner of the property (Title Deed holder/s) / Demand Notice amount Description of the Property

1. SANTOSH KUMARI, 2. PRAMOD KUMAR, 3. DEEPIKA, ALL AT - B 58 MANSA RAM PARK UTTAM NAGAR NEW DELHI-110059, Loan Account No(s). UPPER GROUND FLOOR (REAR SIDE/EASTERN SIDE 000708982120010001, Rs. 7284085.784 (along with future interest and charges pactruing after 25-Aug-21 till the total realisation of loan amount. Rs. 4,60,000/-Standard terms & conditions for sale of property through private treaty are as under:
(1). Sale through Private Treaty will be on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS". (2.) The purchaser will be required to deposit 25% (1). Sale through Private Treaty will be on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS". (2.) The purchaser will be required to deposit 25% of the sale consideration on the next working day of receipt of CLIX's acceptance of offer for purchase of property and the remaining amount within 15 days thereafter. EMD amount shall be remitted through NEFT / RTGS / Funds Transfer in favor of "Clix Capital Services Pvt. Ltd.", Bank Name - ICICI Bank, IFSC Code - ICIC0003419, Bank Account No - 341905000665. (3.) The purchaser has to deposit 10% of the offered amount along with application which will be adjusted against 25% of the deposit to be made as per clause (2) above. (4.) Failure to remit the amount as required under clause (2) above will cause forfeiture of amount already paid including 10% of the amount paid along with application. (5.) In case of non-acceptance of offer of purchase by the CLIX, the amount of 10% paid along with the application will be refunded without any interest. (6.) The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the CLIX. The Authorized Officer / Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third-party claims / rights / dues. (7.) The purchaser should conduct due diligence on all aspects related to the property (under sale through private treaty) to his satisfaction. The purchaser shall not be entitled to make any claim against the Authorized Officer/Secured Creditor in this regard at a later date. (8.) The CLIX reserves the right to reject any offer of purchase without assigning any reason. (9.) In case of more than one offer, the interested parties may contact the Authorized Officer for further details / clarifications and for submitting their application. (11.) The purchaser has to bear all stamp duty, registration fee, and other expenses, taxes, duties in respect of purchase of the property. (12.). Sale shall be accordance with the provisions of SARFAESI Act / Rules. (13.) For any detai

Authorized Officer, CLIX CAPITAL SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED

On as is where

# **SEBI tightens norms for SME IPOs**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

arkets 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

With regard to profitability criteria, SEBIsaid 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

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

"Further SEBIhas 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

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

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 SMÉ IPÓ 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, ncluding 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

ommerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goval 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

¬he 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 for-

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 dolRUPEE ₹ VS DOLLAR \$ 1 USD = 87.33 INR\*

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 ing the federal workforce.

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 485.41crore 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 purg-

#### **Energy conclave Gridcon 2025 to** discuss issues in power sector



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

ening 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, Yashobhoomi, 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 POWER-GRID, 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 relted 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

omestic commercial vehicle industry's wholesale volumes are expected to grow 3-5 per cent year-on-year in FY26, rating firm Icra 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," Icra 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 flattish growth or marginal contraction in FY25, Icra 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

alling 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 win-

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.

dhe 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

Digital Payments Awareness Week 2025

here, the governor said apart from the RBI,

the government and other important

stakeholders like banks and payment sys-

tem operators have also taken a number

of initiatives to encourage the adoption of

results, as visible in the huge growth of dig-

ital payments, there is still a lot more to

be done. Going forward, we will work on

continue promoting innovation, promote

awareness generation, and more efficient

tion 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 reg-

ulating the payments ecosystem and fin-

"We will continue to encourage innova-

The areas are soft-touch regulations to

"While these efforts have produced

In his address at the İnauguration of

Malhotra said on Monday.

three broad areas," he said

cross-border payments.

digital payments.

### Real money gaming industry bodies issue code of ethics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

ndustry 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 join statement said on Monday. The members of these gaming industry bodies include Dream11, My11Circle, Khelo Fantasy Live, SG11 Fantasy, WinZO, Games24X7, Junglee 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 lavs 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.

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

**T**he government on Monday

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

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

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

#### INBRIEF

#### **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.

#### RBI to push payment innovations, says Governor PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi With these regulations, he said the RBI Nexus to enable instant cross-border

attempts to balance these divergent sets

of expectations. "Our approach has been

to put in place regulatory guardrails

encourage the adoption of digital payments

have produced results, Malhotra said

within which all stakeholders are free to operate." While mentioning that initiatives to

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

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

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

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.

Week (DPAW) is being observed from

Under the mission 'Har Payment Digital', the theme for the current year is 'India Pays Digitally'. This theme reflects India's transforma-

tive journey toward a digitally empowered citizenry, with the ubiquity and convenience of digital payments, the RBI said. PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

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.

Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha.

Telecommunications.

# Indian shuttlers to face challenge at All England Championships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Birmingham

rappling 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 bad-

minton 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 Treesa 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 Irwanshyah 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 firstround 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 32year-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 Treesa 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

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

oach Paulo Fonseca watched from the stands and saw his substitu-✓ tions 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 Benoît 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 Rayan 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

Liam 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 counterattacking 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. Reims 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 stoppagetime goal in a 1-0 home loss to Lens

### Hockey India announces record prize pool of ₹12 Crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

ockey India has announced a record prize poor or to 12 care its seventh Annual Awards for record prize pool of Rs 12 crore 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 covet-

ed 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

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 medalwinning 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: Lalremsiami, 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, Araijeet Singh 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,

### Mumbai City eye ISL play-offs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

umbai 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 pro-

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

he Commonwealth Games purpose that resonates with our audience Federation (CGF) on Monday L 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 —

"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 Sadleir said, "The

brand name Commonwealth Sport demonstrates a stronger, more unified

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 batonbearer, 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 longestever 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 ŜL3 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, Nithyashre 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 Nithyashre 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 Rickad Nillson and Denmark's Hello Sofie Sagoy with a convincing score of 21-9 and 21-15.

Meanwhile, Alphia James fought hard in the women's singles final but had to settle for silver after going down to Switzerland's Ilaria Olgiati.

### Inter Milan 2-1 victory over Fiorentin in Serie A

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Milan

apoli 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 fourthplaced 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.

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

Fiorentina's hopes of making it into the

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 crossbar 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 utes later as a backheeled flick from

Head-to-Head

The match in Turin was a head-to-head battle for third place, with just three points

Moise Kean released Albert Guðmundsson to drill low into the near corner.

corner. Fiorentina pulled one back six min-

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 halftime 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

Matías Soulé 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

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.

### Toss-up between Axar, Rahul for Delhi Capitals captaincy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

eading all-rounder Axar Patel and senior keeper-batter KL Rahul are ✓ the two contenders for Delhi Capitals captaincy in the upcoming Indian Premier League season with the multi-skilled Gujarat man having his nose slightly ahead.

It is understood that the franchise bigwigs will be announcing the name of their new captain in the next few days, having waited for the Champions Trophy to end.

Delhi Capitals will have a short training-cum-simulation camp in Delhi before flying to Visakhapatnam for their first two games. Axar, Rahul, Kuldeep Yadav, South Africa's Tristan Stubbs, Australian Jake Fraser McGurk and Mitchell Starc are set to gather in Visakhapatnam on March 17 and 18. With Rahul and wife Athiya Shetty expecting their first baby, the senior player could miss a game or two depending on the due date.

Into his seventh season with the Capitals, the 31-year-old Axar, who has played 150 IPL games, scored 1653 runs at a strike rate of nearly 131, and took 123 wickets at an economy rate of 7.28, looks a more likely candidate to lead the team

than Rahul, who will be donning the Delhi blues for the first time.

However, Rahul has been an IPL captain for some years now and has led Punjab Kings and Lucknow Super Giants in the past. LSG reached two play-offs during his time at the franchise although in one of those, he was injured for the better part of the season.

Rahul, who will turn 33 on April 18, has scored 4683 runs at a strike-rate of 134 plus, the runs coming mostly while batting in the top three. He has also struck four centuries across 132 games.

While his strike-rate in the power plays has often been criticised, Rahul has a phenomenal record between 2018 and 2024, amassing more than 500 runs in six out of seven seasons. The only season he scored less was in 2023 when he got 274 runs in nine games before getting injured. In four of those six seasons, he had sur-

Axar's captaincy at the IPL level is not yet proven while Rahul has led for some years. The composition of Delhi Capitals squad is such that it is very difficult to have a foreigner as captain unless one is looking at Stubbs, who will probably be a sureshot pick across conditions.

# I am not retiring from ODI format: Rohit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

ndia 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

"We wanted that calmness in the middle order. Also, we wanted to use a lefthander (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 semifinals 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

uperstar Virat Kohli says lessons learned from tough defeats in past learned from tough deteats in past ICC knock-out games have the 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

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

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

"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

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 complete ed 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

ew 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 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  $\bar{s}$ hould 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: KI Rahul after excelling in new role



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Duba

**▶** L 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 sig-

nificant 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

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

"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,"

#### **Pakistan miffed at no representation at | Government asks IPL to ban** closing ceremony of Champions Trophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA | Karachi

¬he 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 jacketsto 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. ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD., O/o Sr. GENERAL MANAGER, HIRAKUD HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT, POST BOX, NO. 5, BURLA - 768017, DISTRICT: SAMBALPUR (ODISHA), INDIA

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Superintending Engineer

Dhenkanal (R&B) Divsion, Dhenkanal

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The Superintending Engineer Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Building work as detailed below : 04 Nos Building Works Nature of work 3. No. of work 04 Nos. 4. Bid Cost. : ₹ 6,000/- each Class of Contractor "C' & 'B' License Availability of Bid Documents in the From 10.00 AM of 12.03.2025 to 5.00 PM of 26.03.2025 website Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 27.03.2025 at 11:00 AM. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender

# tobacco, alcohol advertising

¬he 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 Indian Premier League 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.





Mob-9437018866, E-mail-dfo.sambalpur@odisha.gov.in

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Forest Officer, Sambalpur Forest Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites sealed tenders from reputed Agencies having valid GSTIN and PAN Registration No. to organized the Regional Kalinga Herbal Fair 2024-25 at Sambalpur. The tender papers with detailed terms and conditions documents can be downloaded from website https://odishaforest.in/ https://sambalpur.odisha.gov.in/ https://smpbodisha.in from 11:00 Hours of 08.03.2025 to 16:00 Hours of 17.03.2025. The Tender Papers can be submitted at the below mentioned address on or before 17.03.2025 till 4.00 PM by Speed Post/ registered post/ by hand only. The tender will be opened in the office of the undersigned on 18.03.2025 at 11.30 AM. Post/Courier: Divisional Forest Officer, Office of the DFO, Sambalpur Forest Division, Near Jail Chowk, Sambalpur, Pin-768001.

Email-id: dfo.sambalpur@odisha.gov.in

**Divisional Forest Officer** Sambalpur Forest Division



NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement

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Rs.21.34 Lakhs to Rs.79.69 Lakhs (Approx.).

:- 2 (two) months to 3 (Three) months 3. Date & time of availability of bid document :- From 11 A.M of dt.10.03.2025 to

5.00 P.M. of dt.18.03.2025. Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal :- 18.03.2025 up to 05.00 P.M.

:- 19.03.2025 at 12.30 P.M.

Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid :- The General Manager WATCO Division, Cuttack-753003

Odisha, Ph.(0671)2547115, email:gmwatcoctc@gmail.com 7. The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only.

Further details can be seen from the web site www.tendersodisha.gov.in