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HYDERABAD

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# Quetta quakes under terror | Foreigners Act merged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Karachi

everal passengers were injured when gunmen attacked a train in Pakistan's troubled Balochistan on Tuesday, prompting the provincial government to direct authorities to take "emergency measures".

Jaffar Express, with around 500 passengers on board in nine coaches, was on its way from Quetta to Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa when it was fired on between Gudalaar and Piru Koneri areas, according to officials.

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed that it seized control of the train by derailing it, killed six security personnel and took over 100 passengers, including active duty personnel, into custody. However, there was no independent confirmation of their claim.

In a statement, the BLA warned that if the Pakistan military launches an operation, "all hostages will be executed". The group is banned in Pakistan, the UK and the US

Official data on casualties was not available, but security sources said that the train driver and several passengers were injured in the gunfire.

There are reports of intense firing at a Jaffar Express, which was heading from Quetta to Peshawar, between Pehro Kunri and Gadalar," Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind said.

Rescue teams and security forces have reached the scene, and an operation is underway to track down the assailants. Emergency has been declared in the local

Security sources said that the operation will continue till the elimination of the last terrorist. Railway officials confirmed that the train's driver sustained serious injuries, and an emergency relief train has been dispatched to assist.

Controller Railways Muhammad Kashif said that the train, comprising nine coaches, had around 500 passengers on board. 'The train was stopped by armed men

in Tunnel No 8," the controller said. There are 17 tunnels in this area on the railway line and due to the difficult terrain, rich province.



the speed of the train is often slow.

The Balochistan government directed local authorities to take "emergency mea-

A provincial government statement said an emergency was imposed at Sibi hospital and ambulances and security forces were on their way to the site.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the incident, saying: "The beasts who fire on innocent passengers do not deserve any concessions.

In the past, the railway tracks in this area have been attacked by Baloch militants using rockets or remote-controlled bombs, and the BLA claimed responsibility for most of the attacks.

In October last year, Pakistan Railways announced the restoration of train services between Quetta and Peshawar after a suspension of more than a month and

Balochistan has witnessed an uptick in terrorist attacks over the past year. In November 2024, at least 26 people were killed and 62 injured after a suicide blast ripped through a Quetta Railway Station.

Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups frequently carry out attacks targeting security personnel, government projects and the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects in the oil and mineral-

### **US deports senior Pakistan diplomat**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Islamabad

BHUBANESWAR

S authorities denied entry to Pakistan's ambassador to Turkmenistan and deported him from Los Angeles, a media report said on

Ambassador KK Wagan, who holds a valid US visa and all necessary travel documents, was stopped at Los Angeles airport by US immigration authorities, The News quoted diplomatic sources as saying.

"Ambassador KK Wagan was deported from the US. He had an immigration objection, which led to his deportation," a senior foreign ministry official said.

The officials forced him to return to his last port of departure, raising concerns about diplomatic protocol and the nature of the decision.

Foreign Office confirmed the envoy had gone to the US on a private visit.

It said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was looking into the matter and an inves-

tigation was underway. The Foreign Office also advised avoid-

ing any speculation in the matter. Earlier, sources said the US immigration system flagged Wagan over "controversial visa references", leading to his immediate deportation. It remains unclear what specific concerns triggered this response from American authorities. Wagan is a seasoned diplomat with extensive experience in Pakistan's foreign ser-

Over the years, he has held several key assignments, including second secretary at the Embassy of Pakistan in Kathmandu, deputy consul general at the Consulate General of Pakistan in Los Angeles, deputy head of mission and ambassador in Muscat, Oman, head of mission at the Embassy of Pakistan in Niamey, Niger, Overseas Pakistanis, Consular Affairs, and Crisis Management Unit Director General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in

# with Immigration Bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

**¬**he new Immigration and Foreigners Bill 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha on Tuesday to strengthen and streamline the rules relating to immigration and foreigners' entry and exit. The new bill is expected to replace the current colonial era laws including the Foreigners Act, 1946, the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000. The Opposition objected to the new Bill, saying there are certain provisions violating fundamental rights mentioned in Constitution like preventing entry of persons who are not in the good books of Government.

Rejecting suggestions that the Parliament lacked the legislative competence to bring the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the Central government has all the rights under the Union list to bring legislations on the subject. He asserted that while tourists were welcome to come to India, it was the government's responsibility to ensure peace and sovereignty of the nation remain intact.

The objective is to enhance national security, control immigration procedures, and introduce stricter penalties on foreigners who violate entry and stay conditions, said Minister Rai. The bill mentions that any foreigner posing a threat to national security, sovereignty or the integrity of the nation will not be allowed into the country or will be denied the permission to stay in India. The bill mandates registration for foreigners upon arrival, restricting their movement, name changes, and access to protected and restricted areas.

Transport carriers like Airlines carrying foreigners without valid documents

#### **FEATURES OF NEW BILL**

- Foreigner posing a threat to national security, sovereignty or the integrity of the nation will not be allowed
- Registration for foreigners upon arrival, restricting their movement, name changes, and access to protected and
- Airlines carrying foreigners without valid documents will be held liable and can
- If a foreigner is denied entry, the carrier will be responsible for their immediate removal from India
- Educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes will have to report of foreign nationals to immigration
- Arriving in India without a valid passport or visa may attract imprisonment of up to five years and a fine of up to ₹5 Lakh
- Foreigners using forged documents could face a jail term of two to seven years, with fines ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹10 Lakh
- Overstaying, violating visa conditions or trespassing in restricted areas could result in three years imprisonment and fine of up to ₹3 Lakh
- No person can not leave the country if their presence is required by any authorised agency.

to ₹5 lakh. It could also lead to potential seizure of their transport if penalties are not paid. If a foreigner is denied entry, the carrier will be responsible for their immediate removal from India. Educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes will have to report of foreign nationals to immigration authori-

As per the bill, violations will attract heavy penalties. Arriving in India without a valid passport or visa may attract will be held liable and can be fined up imprisonment of up to five years and a within 14 days of arrival.

fine of up to ₹5 lakh. Foreigners using forged documents could face a jail term of two to seven years, with fines ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹10 lakh. Additionally, overstaying, violating visa conditions or trespassing in restricted areas could result in three years imprisonment and fine of up to ₹3 lakh.

The bill also gives authority to immigration officers to arrest individuals without a warrant and gives powers to the central government to regulate the movement of foreigners. Further, no person can not leave the country if their presence is required by any authorised

Opposing the bill at the introduction stage, Manish Tewari (Congress) said the bill is violative of multiple provisions of the Constitution and various laws. He said the bill violates the principle of fundamental rights and the government may use the provisions of the proposed law to deny entry to those who are not in sync with the ideology of the ruling dispensation of the day.

Saugata Roy of the TMC said the proposed law could prevent inflow of talent from outside in various fields. In his remarks before formally introducing the bill, Rai said the draft law seeks to correct overlapping and duplicate provisions in prevailing laws governing immigration and foreigners in the country. The legislation is aimed at streamlining various services related to immigration and foreigners, including their entry, exit and stay in India. According to existing laws, all foreign-

ers on long-term (more than 180 days) student, medical, research, employment, missionary and project visas are required to register with the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) or the Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO) concerned, having jurisdiction over the place where the foreigner intends to stay,

# Panic as tusker spotted near AIIMS in BBSR the animal. Forest officials are

 $oldsymbol{A}$  wild tusker was spotted near the cashew field close to AIIMS Bhubaneswar on Monday night, triggering panic among the local residents.

There is apprehension that the elephant might create destruction if it enters the human settlement within the The Forest Department is

making efforts to guide the tusker back into the Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary. Official sources said efforts would be made to drive back the elephant during evening hours.

"A woman had first spotted the elephant and later raised an alarm. We have heard that the elephant has also damaged a boundary wall in the



Another local resident said,

"It is quite natural to fear as we usually move in the area and anything can happen if

settlement. Authorities have urged resi-

dents to remain cautious and maintain a safe distance from

Session adjourned

NALINI SAHU BHUBANESWAR

several times

continuously monitoring the situation and have been making public announcements through loudspeakers, advising people to stay alert and avoid unnecessary movement in the affected areas. Earlier, a baby tusker had been spotted near the

Chandaka jungle boundary

adjoining Niladri Vihar in

Bhubaneswar in November On March 24, 2023, a herd of four elephants, including a tusker, two female elephants and a calf, strayed into the

Sikharchandi Hill area from the nearby Bharatpur forest. Three elephants had en-

tered Ganesh Vihar near Sikharchandi, causing damage to property on June 20, 2023.

# NNKS members, police clash in city



PNS BHUBANESWAR

**IV** avnirman Krushak Sangathan (NNKS) members on Tuesday held a demonstration here and tried to march towards Lower PMG Square alleging large-scale Katni-Chatni during sale of paddy at the madis.

But while the agitators led

**BJP, Congress MLAs scuffle in Assembly** 

by NNKS chief Akshaya Kumar tried to break the barricades and march towards the Lok Seva Bhawan, they were prevented by police forces .This led to a scuffle and many agitators were detained.

In the scuffle, Kumar fell sick and was shifted to the Capital Hospital.

The NNKS members alleged that during paddy procurement at the mandis, about 5 to 10 kg are being cut off from every quintal by the cooperative society secretar-

ies, middlemen and millers. The NNKS chief was sitting on a dharna for the last 24 days, but no minister or gov-

ernment official came to hold

bers decided to organise a padyatra and agitate to press frothier demands, said the agitators.

Earlier, several BJD leaders, including Pratap Jena and Debi Prasad Mishra came to the dharna site and pledged support to the NNKS' agita-

## 'Unruly' behaviour Bahinipati suspended from Assembly



PNS BHUBANESWAR

Ongress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati was on Tuesday suspended from the State Assembly for seven days following an incident of alleged unruly behaviour in the House.Government Chief Whip Saroj Kumar Pradhan proposed Bahinipati's suspension. After considering the matter, Speaker Surama Padhy took action against him.

In protest of his suspension, Congress members staged a dharna in the House, wearing

as a mark of protest against the Speaker's ruling. The BJD MLAs also protested the suspension and staged a walkout. Congress MLAs and PCC

president Bhakta Charan Das staged a dharna at the Gandhi statue on the premises of the Assembly. Das said the Congress would boycott the Assembly on Wednesday.

On Monday, Bahinipati had allegedly broke the Speaker's podium microphone. He continued his alleged disruptive behaviour on Tuesday as well.

#### The Odisha Assembly descended into chaos on Tuesday as ruling BJP and opposition Congress members entered into a scuffle in the

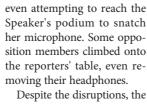
House, leading to multiple adjournments of proceedings. The disturbance began during the Question Hour when BJP legislator Jaynarayan Mishra rushed toward Congress MLA Tara Prasad

Bahinipati, who was standing in front of Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mohapatra as he responded to a question. The situation was already tense as opposition members

from the BJD and Congress raised their voices during the minister's reply. As soon as the Question Hour began, BJD and Congress members entered the well of the

House, waving placards and

posters, chanting slogans and



Singhkhuntia to answer.

Speaker continued with the proceedings and directed Forest Minister Ganesh Ram

However, further chaos erupted when opposition

members tried to obstruct the reply of Urban Development Minister Mohapatra. This led to BJP members rushing to defend the minister, sparking a physical confrontation inside the Well of the House.

and Congress' Rajan Ekka. The

treasury bench members at-

A scuffle broke out between Jaynarayan Mishra and Tara Prasad Bahinipati as well as between BJP's Ashok Mohanty

tempted to push opposition members back to their seats, further intensifying the disor-As the tumult persisted,

Speaker Surama Padhy adjourned the session several

times, first until noon and then for three additional intervals. Outside the House, Bahinipati accused Mishra of grabbing his shirt collar and

pushing him, explaining that

he had been requesting the minister to halt his reply due to the unruly atmosphere in the

Bahinipati said he had folded his hands in plea, but Mishra's response was to physically confront him.

While the BJP and Congress members were engaged in the scuffle, the BJD members, though present in the Well, refrained from physically participating in the scuffle.

The opposition parties were protesting separate issues: BJD members called for a statement from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi regarding Mishra's controversial remark about the merger of the former Koshala region with Odisha while Congress members protested the rise in crimes against women in the State.

The protests continued throughout the day, with opposition members standing on the reporters' table and raising slogans. After the session was adjourned again at noon, BJP

members, including Irashish Acharya, Babu Singh, Laxman Bag and Upasana Mohapatra, demanded action against opposition members for their disruptive behaviour, accusing them of disrespecting the Speaker. The Speaker then adjourned

the House until 2 pm, and as protests persisted, the proceedings were further delayed until 4 pm. In the midst of the disruption, separate meetings were held by the BJD and BJP legis-

lature parties to discuss their strategies. While Chief Minister Majhi was absent, Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo presided over the BJP meeting. Meanwhile, Congress MLAs staged a sit-in near the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Assembly grounds. The previous day had also seen turmoil, and tensions remained high as the opposition continued to express displeasure over the Speaker allowing Question Hour to proceed amid protests.

Know Odisha's major

planetariums

Astronomy, particularly

astrophysics and space sci-

ence, evokes some kind of cu-

riosity among people. But do

you know how many plan-

etariums are there in Odisha?

Pathani Samanta Planetarium

has been a major centre of at-

traction in Bhubaneswar.

Named after odisha's legend-

Harichandan Mahapatra

Samanta, popularly known as

Pathani Samanta, it was dedi-

Chandrasekhar

8, 1990.

astronomer

Since its inauguration, the

# Air Force Assn signs pact with BRIDGE Bharat

For innovation. research,

entrepreneurship PNS BHUBANESWAR

In a major step towards empowering its veterans, the Air Force Association (AFA) Odisha, the apex body of the State for Air veterans, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the BRIDGE Bharat Council for Promotion of Innovation, Research and Entrepreneurship here on Sunday.

The MoU was signed between Gp Capt J Brahma (retd), President AFA Odisha and Wing Cdr M Jeyakumar (retd), founder & director of BRIDGE Bharat Council. Gp Capt Anirudha Senapati (retd), Wing Cdr PC Pattnayak (retd) and representatives of all district chapters of the State were witnesses



to the event.

The objective of the collaboration is to create employment opportunities, skill development programmes and entrepreneurial support for Air Veterans, said Sqn Ldr AK Panda (retd), secretary of the AFA Odisha.

Further the partnership would leverage the expertise of veterans in corporate, academic and MSME sectors while facilitating new career pathways for them

The MoU would provide employment assistance by connecting veterans with job opportunities in corporate and other sectors. In the entrepreneurial support front, it would provide mentorship and guidance for veterans who aspire to start their own

businesses.

For skill development and re-skilling, the MoU would facilitate training programmes to equip veterans with relevant industry skills. Extending networking and collaboration for Air veterans, it would strengthen the professional ties between veterans and industry leaders for career

# Naveen to attend meeting on delimitation issue

BJD confirms after Maran meets Patnaik PNS BHUBANESWAR

 $T_{ ext{he Biju Janata Dal (BJD)}}$ has confirmed its participation in the meeting convened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on the issue of electoral constituency delimitation and reorganisation.

The announcement came after DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran met BJD president Naveen Patnaik here on Tues-

Maran, accompanied by Tamil Nadu Industries Minister TRB Rajaa, extended an official invitation to Patnaik for the meeting. Stalin has called for a special discussion on the delimitation issue, which is scheduled to be held in Chennai shortly.

Meanwhile, BJD leaders have stated that a separate meeting will soon be held in Bhubaneswar to analyse the tion on Odisha. The party is exdiscussions before taking a final stand on the matter.

share will be reduced while the it. Regarding the meeting on

Maran also met State Congress president Bhakta Charan Das here and invited him to the

potential impact of delimitapected to engage in extensive

Dayanidhi Maran said, "He (Naveen Patnaik) shares our concerns and fears that unfair delimitation will not be good for our States. There are seven States-Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Punjabthat will be directly affected by the delimitation in which our northern States' share will increase. These States are developing States which controlled the population, and now we are being made to pay the price for March 22, he (Patnaik) confirmed that he would definitely attend and share his views and he will fight along with us."

ronment. Schools and colleges

should implement counselling

services, stress management

programmes, and peer sup-

port groups to help students

cope with stress. Encouraging

open conversations about

mental health and reducing

stigma will enable students to

seek help without fear of judg-

Parental involvement is

also crucial in identifying early

visited the planetarium during 2024-25 (up to January 2025). The total revenue collection stood at Rs 34,53,460.

The second planetarium of Odisha is in Burla, Sambalpur, which has been named after eminent aerospace scientist and the 12th President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. The planetarium was inaugurated

Around 39, 713 visitors visited the planetarium during 2024-25 (up to January) to

cated to the public on January As per available information, around 1, 60,000 people visit the planetarium every year since 2013 after digitisation during 2012. About 1, 45, 119 visitors had

in September 2017.

witness the shows displayed in Odia, Hindi and English. The total revenue here, during the period, stands at Rs 7, 51, 510. The Pathani Samanta Museum at Khandapada was es-

tablished in December 2016. Around 15, 365 visitors visited the museum during 2024-25. There is no entry fee for the

## Thinkers' Club webinar 'Vedas first spiritual books of Sanatanis'

The Thinkers' Club here arranged its 114th webinar over the zoom platform to discuss on the relevance and importance of the Vedas in the present time and its impact on the society.

The meeting was inaugurated by Professor Dr Prafulla Mishra, former vice president of the Beda Bhawan Nyasha of Uijaini. Dr Gopal Chandra Dash, a researcher and a scholar of the Vedic studies, joined as the chief speaker. Barada Das co-ordinated the

According to Professor Mishra, Vedas are the first spiritual books of the Sanatanis. They were written nearly 6 to 7 thousand years back. Though the calculation of exact time is controversial, existence of the scriptures is of paramount importance. The Sanatan religion is the actual religion but others are fractions. (Sampradaya), he said.

Vedas are the store house of all knowledge. They contain

all aspects of human endeavour. Astrology, medicine, Statecraft, politics, economics, literature and many other branches of knowledge are embodied in the Vedas. The ancient Rishis of this country narrated the shlokas (hymns) of the Vedas to their disciples and it is carried down till to-

day, he added. Since in the initial stage, the letters and writing was not available, these sacred texts were in oral form; they were remembered by people and recited before the learners.

Dr Gopal Dash, complemented the sayings of Prof Mishra in his speech. According to him, the Vedas are a great ocean of knowledge.

Answering to the queries of the listeners and viewers he said, Vedas do not describe worship of images. Vedas do not treat women differently. God is one. Who is neither visible nor touchable. He can be only realized with deep

sense of submission, he said. Among others, Club president Barada Das spoke.

# State borrows Rs 21,177 cr in 9 months

#### Reveals CM Majhi in Assembly

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government has borrowed Rs 21,177.99 crore from multiple sources between June 2024 and February 2025, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi disclosed in the State Assembly on Monday.

Responding to a query by BJD MLA Goutam Buddha Das, the CM said the funds were borrowed to finance several infrastructure upgrades and welfare projects, including currently ongoing ones at several parts of the State.

Majhi detailed all the sources and the funds borrowed from each of them with the highest of Rs 9,000 crore being open market loans.

1. Rs 9,000 crore from open market loans.

Celebrate women

The Women Wing of

(OASME) organised

"HerStory 2025," a flagship

event celebrating women who

The event was inaugurated

by Director, MSME, Govern-

Gupta. Chairperson, OASME

Women's Wing Jyotirmayee

Mohanty said, "HerStory

2025" is poised to be a land-

mark event that inspires, em-

powers, and celebrates women

who are breaking barriers and

shattering glass ceilings. With

of

lead and inspire, here.

enterprises

India PK

who lead

Medium

ment

2. Rs 7,149.56 crore from the Central Government.

3. Rs 2,750 crore from Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation (OMBADC).

4. Rs 2,370 crore from State CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund).

5. Rs 2,261.16 crore from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

6. Rs 2,352.73 crore from net Provident Fund deductions.

Majhi, who also holds the Finance portfolio, said that the loans are allocated to capital-intensive sectors like irrigation, energy, roads, disaster management and urban infrastructure.

Notably, during the same nine-month period, the State repaid Rs 14,970.97 crore of previous loans, reflecting a strategy to balance new borrowings with fiscal responsi-

speakers, entrepreneurs, and

artists, the event promises to

be an unforgettable experience

that will leave attendees moti-

vated, informed, and con-

The event also included live

"HerStory 2025" gathering

promises to be an unforget-

table experience. This empow-

trailblazing women achievers,

dynamic entrepreneurs, and

brings together

product launches by women-

led startups.

# 72 student suicides reported in 5 years

Informs CM Majhi in Assembly

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Charan Majhi on Monday informed the State Assembly that 72 students of government and private schools and colleges have died by suicide in the past five years from 2020 to 2025 in different parts of the

His reply came in response to a question raised by Congress MLA Sofia Firdous.

Majhi elaborated on the possible reasons, highlighting issues such as mental stress, harassment by accused indi-

inspiration, networking, and

celebration. The event fea-

tures a grand award ceremony

honouring extraordinary

women who have broken bar-

riers and set benchmarks in

their respective fields," said

vice chairwomen, OASME

Women's Wing Amrita Patra.

Wing Anwesha Rout stated,

"Let's inspire, motivate, and

empower each other to

achieve greatness. Join the

movement and be part of

Secretary, OASME Women's

viduals, psychological imbalances, restrictions on phone usage in school hostels, academic pressure, misunderstandings with friends, family disputes, romantic entanglements and exam-related de-

pression.

The disclosure has raised policymakers, educators and mental health experts, prompting discussions on the need for enhanced student support systems, mental awareness

programmes and policy interventions to mitigate such incidents in the future. Authorities are expected to take necessary steps to address this alarming trend and ensure a safer, more supportive environment for students.

Mental wellness plays a vital role in shaping a student's academic performance, emotional stability and overall wellbeing. In today's fastpaced and competitive world, students face immense pressure from academics, social expectations and personal challenges. Without proper mental health support, they may experience anxiety, depression and feelings of hopelessness, which can lead to extreme consequences like sui-

Promoting mental wellness in educational institutions is essential to creating a supportive and nurturing envi-

signs of distress and providing reassurance. By fostering a culture of care, understanding, and professional support, we can ensure that students feel valued, heard, and empowered to navigate challenges without resorting to harmful

#### OASME women wing holds 'HerStory' Journalist Protection Act recommended

Standing Committee RAJEEV RATHAN **BHUBANESWAR** 

By Legislative

Udisha is set to introduce a Journalist Protection Act following recommendations from a Legislative Standing Committee. The committee has emphasised the need for special provisions to safe-

guard journalists and

strengthen media policies. A key recommendation is expanding the Gopabandhu Journalist Health Insurance Scheme to cover journalists' parents. The insured amount should be increased from Rs 5

lakh to Rs 10 lakh per annum the need for wider publicity of to ensure better healthcare coverage. The committee has also recommended conductsion policy for their financial security.

To strengthen the Information and Public Relations Department, the committee has suggested appointing more Sub-Divisional Public Relations Officers (SDIPROs) and District Public Relations Officers (DIPROs). It has also proposed digital preservation of old Odia films, documentaries and biopics with an allocation of Rs 15 crore for archival work.

The committee has stressed

government schemes through newspapers, television and radio. District-level exhibiing a census of working jour- tions should be organised to nalists and formulating a pen-raise awareness about government programmes achievements.

It has also urged the government to fill vacant positions in the Information and Public Relations Department to enhance public communication

The committee, chaired by MLA Babu Singh, has MLAs Byomkesh Roy, Sushant Kumar Raut, Ananta Narayan Jena, Prashant Kumar Jagdev, Padmalochan Panda, Akash Dasnayak and Sofia Firdous as its members.

#### HerStory 2025." its power-packed lineup of thought leaders for a day of 'Export Promotion for MSMEs'

programme held at UCCIL

PNS BHUBANESWAR

entrepreneurship awareness programme titled "Export Promotion for MSMEs" was organised here by the Central Tool Room & Training Centre, (CTTC) Bhubaneswar in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Export Organisations, Odisha Chapter (FIEO-OC) and the Utkal Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd (UCCIL).

UCCIL secretary, who is also the Board Member CTTC, Dr Sanjeev Mahapatra opened the session with the UCCIL president Dr Prabodh Mohanty, Dr KM Rajan, Se-



nior Manager (Training), CTTC, Kamal Kanta Sahoo, Head, FIEO-Odisha Chapter, Union Ministry of Commerce, CR Mishra, Founder, PANA-CEA IMPEX, Bhubaneswar and Biswa Ranjan Rath, Export Advisor from USA along with Er JK Rath, vice-president Industry, UCCIL-cum-Board Member CTTC, on the dais.

UCCIL president Dr

Mohanty said such workshops would definitely strengthen the MSME exporters of Odisha. Secretary Dr Sanjeev Mahapatra threw light on the interlocking brick machines which his company is exporting as a case study. JK Rath spoke on the precision machining which MSME exporters should take advantage of. Dr KM Rajan said MSME entrepreneurs can be

trained and rendered support on precision machining as per the requirement of the importers from CTTC. Biswa Ranjan Rath referred to the products which could be exported to the USA. Kamal Kanta Sahoo spoke on market linkages and role of FIEO in supporting MSME entrepreneurs. CR Mishra explained documentation for

# Grackdown on sand mining mafia 360 held, 524 vehicles seized across State Drive to

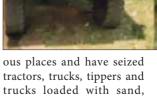
continue, says DGP

PNS BHUBANESWAR

A State-wide crackdown on illegal extraction and transportation of minor minerals has led to the arrest of over 360 persons and seizure of 524 vehicles over the past four days.

Director General of Police (DGP) YB Khurana on Tuesday said strict action is being taken against the sand, gravel and stone mafia during the ongoing operation against illegal extraction and transportation of minor minerals.

Police in coordination with the Mines Department have been conducting raids at vari-



Khurania said.

While 360 people have been arrested, over 100 others have been issued notices so far' and 456 cases have been registered against the sand and stone mafia across the State. Besides, 524 tractors, trucks, tippers and trucks loaded with sand have been seized.

The DGP said people can also provide information to the police regarding the smuggling of sand and gravel.

Notably, the crackdown against illegal mining of minor minerals followed a directive

issued by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja on March 6 during a videoconference with district Collectors and SPs. They were asked to intensify enforcement drives and conduct raids in the sand and stone quarries to curb illegal mining and transportation of minerals.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements

# Mineral transport scam Raids continue on Raja Chakra's properties

A joint team comprising officials from the Crime Branch Economic Offences Wing (EOW) and the Special Task Force (STF) on Tuesday carried out searches at Bonai, Gopalpur Port and Keonjhar targeting BJD leader Raja Chakra's offices.

Meanwhile, a crucial hearing was scheduled in the Orissa High Court on the day regarding Raja Chakra's interim protection. The EOW is expected to submit evidence in court seeking the withdrawal of his interim protection.

The ongoing investigations have intensified amid allega-



tions of financial irregularities, drawing significant political and public attention.

Earlier, the EOW, along with the STF, had conducted extensive raids on properties

linked to Raja Chakra across various locations, including Keonjhar, Koida, Dhamra and Gopalpur. These operations led to the seizure of approximately 200 benami (anonymous) accounts and 20 vehicles associated with the BID leader.

'SSMB29' in Deomali in

Koraput district, where film-

ing is underway under tight

The State Government has

made a three-layer security

arrangement at Talamali Hill-

top, Deomali, and surround-

ing areas to ensure smooth

filming and crowd control.

Local administration officials

have been closely monitoring

the situation with police

checkpoints set up at strate-

gic points to restrict

'SSMB29' is said to be an

situation worsened after a vil-

lage meeting held to resolve the

issue being a failure, resulting

in villagers attacking each

other with lathis and other

weapons. Among the injured

are three villagers from

Ramayapatna and five from

Katuru, who were rushed to

hospital for treatment.

Clash between villages over river mouth dispute

Congress activists gherao K'pada DM

unauthorised access.

The EOW detained two close associates of Raja Chakra, Susant Samal and Prabhat Pattanayak, for questioning regarding their suspected roles in the multi-crore scandal involving the cooperative society. Both are key figures within the Suakati Gandhamardhan Loading Agency and Transport Cooperative Society in Keonjhar.

In Ganjam **-**

40 Arrested

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ BRAHMAPUR

I ension flared up in the

coastal belt of Ganjam district

as a violent clash erupted be-

tween the villagers of

Ramayapatna and Katuru

over the de-silting of a river

mouth on Monday. What be-

gan as a heated argument over

digging and filling the estuary

soon escalated into a full-

fledged confrontation, leaving

eight people, including

The dispute arose when one

group attempted to dig open

the river mouth while the op-

posing side tried to fill it back,

leading to a violent scuffle. The

women, injured.



action-mythology film set against the backdrop of dense jungles, starring Mahesh Babu, Priyanka Chopra and Prithviraj Sukumaran. Core scenes have already been filmed over the past two days with Rajamouli and other key team members arriving ear-

Local artisans and cultural groups have been roped in to add authenticity to the film's portrayal of indigenous heri-

A Katuru villager alleged,

"At first, they put their dried

fish out in the sun, then they

started to lay rods and beams

and later, they brought in

With escalating tensions,

the police administration

swiftly imposed Section 163 to

maintain law and order. Three

JCBs to build jetties."

tage with several tribal dance sequences reportedly included. Meanwhile, the film crew has been spotted exploring nearby locations like Gupteswar and Duduma waterfalls, hinting at additional shooting sites in the region.

The film is expected to bring widespread attention to Koraput's natural beauty and tribal heritage, potentially giving a significant boost to local tourism.

deployed in the area.

Brahmapur SP Dr Sarvana

Vivek M personally visited the

spot, accompanied by Sadar

SDPO Sitanshu Kumar Parida

Bibekananda Swain, to assess

the situation. Despite efforts

to mediate for peace, hostility

between the two groups con-

In response to the volatile

situation, Chikiti Tehsildar

Bishwaranjan Kanhar also

visited the affected area to

oversee law and order. Police

arrested 40 individuals from

both villages, 21 from

Ramayapatna and 19 from

Katuru, on Tuesday in connec-

tion with the clash.

Golanthara IIC

#### **INBRIEF**

#### 150 units of blood collected at XIM

Bhubaneswar: The NSS Cell of XIM University organised a blood donation drive in collaboration with the Red Cross Society. A total of 150 individuals donated blood. The event not only fostered awareness about the importance of blood



donation but also showcased the dedication of the NSS team and student youth volunteers in driving meaningful social impact. The event was graced by Registrar of XIM University Fr. S Antony Raj and NSS Coordinator of XIM University Dr Jyoti Ranjan Sahoo.

#### IMFA appoints Saunak Gupta as CFO

Bhubaneswar: The Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys Ltd (IMFA) has announced the appointment of Saunak Gupta as its Chief Financial Officer (CFO) consequent to the retirement of Prem Khandelwal as CFO & Company Secretary. Gupta is a qualified Chartered Accountant, Company Secretary and Cost Accountant who has worked in diverse industries such as Blue Star, Wipro, Berger Paints



and PwC in a career spanning 26 years. IMFA MD Subhrakant Panda said, "I am sure Saunak will contribute significantly to the company's growth trajectory."

#### |Criminal held in Baleswar; gun seized

Baleswar: A notorious criminal was arrested and forwarded to court after being booked under relevant Sections of the BNS and Arms Act on Tuesday. He was identified as Kartik Samal, a resident of Juriapatana in Oupada block under the Nilgiri police station in the district. He was involved in illegal Hanuman coin transactions, poaching of wildlife and smuggling of wildlife products. For a long time, he was under scanner of enforcement agencies. A police team led by Nilgiri SDPO Pramod Nayak raided his house on Monday and found five fake Hanuman coins, a mouser, four live rounds and some wildlife products besides cash of Rs 2.35 lakh. Further investigation was in progress to identify his associates.

#### |Man gets 10-yr RI for raping minor in K'mal

Phulbani: A POCSO Court in Phulbani in Kandhamal district on Tuesday sentenced a person to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for raping a minor girl in 2016. The convict, identified as Bachan Digal, was also directed by the court to pay a fine of Rs 11,000. In default, he has to undergo another five months' imprisonment. The court also districted the District legal Services Authority (DLSA) to provide a compensation of Rs 7

#### Youth found dead in Chhatrapur lodge

lakh to the victim.

Chhatrapur: A dead body of a youth was found in a locked room of a lodge 'Asha Pride' on the side of NH-16 in Chhatrapur of Ganjam district. The deceased was identified as Pramod Kumar Mahakud of Rourkela. Mahakud had attended a party with seven of his friends and it was suspected that he died due to excess liquor consumption. Suspicious hotel workers informed police in the morning when he did not open the door. Police reached the spot along with a forensic team and began interrogating all his friends who attended the party on Monday night.

#### Pioneer Puri Correspondent's mother passes away

Puri: The Pioneer's Puri Correspondent Saroj Kumar Mishra's mother Usharani passed away on Tuesday last in her Puri residence. She was 80 and is survived by three sons Saroj, Sisir, Sameer and a married daughter Pramodini. Besides, son in-law Debasis, daughter in-law Gita, Sujata, Manaswini, grandson Sibu and granddaughters Sriya and Dipali were present at her deathbed. She was



# **Insurance claims unpaid** Farmers lodge protests in Bargarh



he farmers in Bargarh district staged protests on Monday over pending insurance compensation and input assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.

The United Farmers Organisation, Bheden Block Branch, had planned a rail blockade at Bargarh Road Railway Station from 9 am, demanding their dues. However, police intervened overnight, detaining farmer leaders and stopping vehicles carrying protesters. The railway station was heavily guarded by police and the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

In response, the farmers blocked the Bargarh-Bheden road at Baramkela intersec-

On the occasion of Inter-

national Women's Day 2025,

a beach cleanliness drive and

oath-taking ceremony was

organised by Humara

Bachpan Trust (HBT) under

Enhancing Climate Resilience

of Indian Coastal Communi-

ties (ECRICC) programme at

Maa Baliharachandi Beach,

The event saw the partici-

pation of 70 stakeholders, in-

cluding the Range Officer, For-

ester, Forest Guard, and

Squads of Brahmagiri Wild-

life Range, alongside commu-

nity leaders such as the BLF

president of Brahmagiri

Block, GPLF president of

Palank GP, secretary, Commu-

Brahmagiri.

tion, 15 km away from here, bringing traffic to a standstill.

The agitation stems from grievances over losses caused by cyclone Migjom in December 2023. Farmers claim they have not received compensation despite multiple appeals to the administration. They also allege that many have been deprived of their rightful payments due to bureaucratic hurdles.

Despite several meetings between farmers organisations, district officials, and insurance companies, no resolution has been reached. Frustrated by delays, farmers went ahead with their planned protest. Authorities continue to monitor the situation as tensions rise in the

Women's Day: Baliharachandi beach cleaned nity Resource Person - OLM,

Executive Committee members, and WSHG representa-

tives. The core and extended members of the ECRICC team also took part in the initiative. The cleanliness drive, aligned with this year's theme, "Accelerate Action," emphasized the role of women in environmental sustainability and climate resilience. The

oath-taking ceremony reaffirmed commitment to protecting nature, sustainability, and women's leadership in climate action. The observance called for urgent and collective efforts to integrate gender-inclusive approaches in climate solutions, recognizing women as key drivers of positive envi-

ronmental change.

Over law and order situation, rising violence against women PNS 

KENDRAPADA Hundreds of activists of

District Congress Committee, led by Dr Sipra Mallik, gheraoed the collectorate here Monday over deteriorating law and order situation and rising violence against women. This was according to a State wide call given by the PCC president. A rally was organised from

Tinimuhani to collectorate where hundreds participating alleged that the Mohan Majhi led BJP government in the State has utterly failed to control law and order situation during its eight months in



"Law and order situation has gone to its nadir whereas incidents of women atrocities, rape, and harassment of women in the State are on the rising side. The BJP government failed to control the rising trend of violence to

women," said the leaders. Dr Mallik alleged the BJP

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's history was

shaped by trailblazing women

like Tulasi Munda and

Shailabala Das. Their contri-

butions span social reforms,

education, politics, and litera-

ture, leaving a lasting impact.

ous history was not shaped in

a day. Rather, hundreds of in-

dividuals toiled across gen-

erations to give us the land

that today holds immense sig-

In the background of cel-

ebration of this year's Interna-

tional Women's Day, here is a

look at Odia women who be-

came torchbearers of change

and shaped this State's history

From social reformers and

freedom fighters to pioneers

in literature, politics, and

sports, these women have left

an indelible mark on Odia so-

region of Keonjhar, Tulasi

Munda is a beacon of hope and

Born in 1947 in the tribal

and outlook forever.

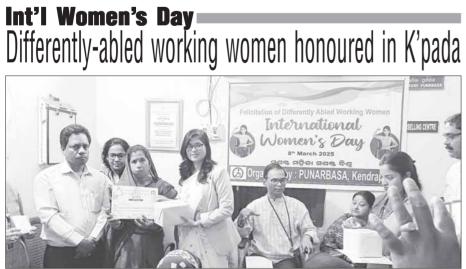
Odisha and its rich, glori-

women in Odisha. She cited about 1,600 women atrocities cases and 54 rape cases which struck Odisha during BJP's eight months rule.

Though the violence to women is on rise, but the district administration and law enforcing department remain mute spectator and failed to women atrocities, alleged

She also alleged that the BJP government has been disbursing money to the account of women under Subhadra yojana, but failed to protect the women from being tortured. The Congress activists later provided a memorandum to the district adminis-

#### government has failed to encremated at the Swargadwar. take adequate steps to check tration for the Governor. Odia women who continue to be torchbearers



#### By PUNARBASA RAJESH BEHERA KENDRAPADA

The PUNARBASA celebrated the International Women's Day in a unique way by felicitating the differentlyabled women volunteers engaged under the Samagra Sikhya at the Panchayat level for promoting inclusive education by identifying and assisting children with disabilities in villages of Kendrapada district

A total nine differently abled Inclusive Education Volunteers engaged in different blocks of Kendrapada district, namely Ranjita Sahoo, Annapurna Samal, Manjulata Sahoo, Jayanti Nayak,

Kirtilata Chamilini Nayak, Jayanti Kumari Khatua, Swarnaprava Swain and Chandrama Rout were felicitated

Senior Judge and Secretary, , District Court , Kendrapada tive taken by the organization PUNARBASA by recognizing contributor of society.

ture, in the Department of Economics of Kendrapada Autonomous college, who was the speaker, emphasized the equal contribution of women along with men as a great tradition of Indian so-

of a few differently abled special children, those undergoing therapy in PUNARBASA rehab centre were also felicitated for their incomparable patience and perseverance, including Sunita Das, Dharitri Nayak , Jahanara Begum, Samina Khatun and Sandhyarani Panda. Three distinguished women who are closely associated in rendering their services to the differently abled community directly or indirectly were also felicitated for their spon-

The programme was coordinated by the chief advisor of the organization Biraja

nized its transformative power and dedicated her life to eradicating illiteracy among tribal children, establishing several schools in mining areas and providing free education to thousands. Moreover, her relentless efforts uplifted countless families, breaking the cycle of pov-

In recognition of her contributions, she was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2001. Rama Devi Choudhury was

a prominent freedom fighter and social reformer, affectionately known as the "Mother of the Masses."

India's independence move-

Sarala Devi was the first Odia woman to join the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921, breaking societal norms to fight for India's freedom.

However, her contributions extended beyond activism. Not only was she a prolific writer but she was the first woman elected to the Odisha Legislative Assembly in 1936.

Annapurna Maharana was a devoted social activist who worked tirelessly for the upliftment of Odisha's tribal communities. Following in the footsteps of her mother, Rama Devi, she opened a school for tribal children and campaigned for social reforms.

Maharana passed away in 2012 but her efforts in promoting education and healthcare among the marginalized communities have been instrumental in fos-

tering social change. Shailabala Das, a pioneering figure in women's education in Odisha, donated her residence to establish the first women's college in the State, now known as Shailabala Women's College in Cuttack.

A beacon of change, her commitment to women's empowerment through education laid the foundation for future generations of educated and independent Odia

Pratibha Ray, born in 1943, is a renowned Odia writer whose works have crossed regional boundaries. As the first Odia woman to receive the prestigious Jnanpith Award, her novels and short stories explore complex social issues, women's rights, and human relationships. Additionally, her literary contributions have enriched Odia literature and brought it to the national forefront.

Dutee Chand, born in 1996 in Jajpur, Odisha, is a celebrated sprinter who has brought laurels to the State and the country.

At the 2019 World Universiade in Naples, she became the first Indian woman to win a gold medal in the 100meter race at a global competition. Chand was also only the fifth Indian to participate in the women's 100 metres at the Olympics when she qualified for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

Parbati Giri, affectionately known as the 'Mother Teresa of Western Odisha,' was a dedicated freedom fighter and social worker. Joining the Quit India Movement at the tender age of 16, she was imprisoned for her activism. Post-independence, she fo-

cused on social welfare, establishing orphanages and working tirelessly to improve healthcare and education in rural areas. Tribhuvana Mahadevi was

a formidable ruler of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty in ancient Odisha during the 9th century. Ascending the throne after her husband's death, she effectively quelled internal rebellions and defended her kingdom against external threats.

Moreover, her reign is noted for administrative efficiency, economic prosperity, and cultural patronage, including the construction of temples that stand as architectural marvels today.

Nandini Satpathy was a formidable presence in Indian politics. Beyond her status as the first woman Chief Minister of Odisha, she was also instrumental in encouraging women's participation in politics and implemented various welfare schemes aimed at improving the socioeconomic status of women and children in the state

# Upadhyaya,

District Legal Cell Authority Sumitra Sahoo, who was the chief guest, praised the initiathese silent and unnoticed Dipti Ray, the Senior Lec-

On the occasion mothers taneous support and contri-

education for Odisha's tribal communities. Despite lacking formal education herself, she recogerty and ignorance.

Playing a pivotal role in

ment, she led the Quit India Movement in Odisha and endured imprisonment for her activism. Beyond the struggle for freedom, Rama Devi championed women's rights, establishing the Seva Ghara in Cuttack to empower women through education and vocational training

# Northeast's contribution is important: Shah

nion Home Minister Amit Shah Tuesday said the contribution of the northeastern region will be most important in the making of a developed India.

Addressing the North-East Students' and Youth Parliament organised by the Student Experience in Inter-State Living (SEIL), he also said the Narendra Modi government is fully committed to the development, unity and peace of the northeast.

The northeast is very close to the heart of Prime Minister Modi and the Government of India, he said. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the northeast the focal point of every programme of the Central government. The contribution of the northeast will be the most important in the building of a developed India,"

The home minister highlighted the region's immense potential to attract global attention, especially from a tourism perspective. He also praised the youth of the northeast for having the highest IQ in India and noted that the region is home to some of the most hard-working tribes.

Shah emphasised the northeast is a land of diversity with over 220 tribal groups, 160 tribes, 200 dialects and languages, 50 unique festivals, and more than 30 worldrenowned dance forms.

He acknowledged that despite its many unique qualities, the northeast lagged in development due to a time when insurgency and separatism were fuelled by creating various illusions and disputes

Violence, bandhs, drugs, blockades, and regionalism fragmented the region, causing a divide not only between the northeast



Home Minister Amit Shah during the Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday

and the rest of the country but also among the states within the region, the Union home minister pointed out.

As a result, the region faced a 40-year delay in development, with terrorism and separatist groups being the primary obstacles during this period, he said.

The home minister said whenever the BJP came to power, it always prioritised the Northeast. He mentioned that previously, there was no separate ministry for such a large and underdeveloped region, but it was established during the government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Under Prime Minister Modi, the northeast has come under the focus of every programme of the Union government, he said, adding the greatest achievement of the Modi

government is reducing the distance between the region and the rest of India.

Shah announced that by 2027, all state capitals in the northeast will be connected by rail, air, and road networks. He said Prime Minister Modi not only enhanced physical connectivity between the northeast and the rest of India but also worked to bridge the emotional divide.

Maintaining that the northeast is now experiencing peace, he highlighted that the Modi government kept the region at the heart of every plan, engaging in discussions with insurgent groups one by one, understanding their concerns and working to bring them into the mainstream through

The home minister said that between

2004 and 2014, there were 11,000 incidents of violence in the region, whereas from 2014 to 2024, the number decreased by nearly 70 per cent, dropping to 3,428.

He said there has been a 70 per cent reduction in the death of security forces and an 89 per cent decline in civilian deaths.

The Modi government has signed agreements with all insurgent groups, leading to over 10,500 rebels surrendering their weapons and reintegrating into the mainstream, Shah added while underlining that in the past 10 years, as many as 12 significant agreements had been signed with insurgent groups.

He highlighted the significant benefits the region has gained from space technology under the Modi government, with around 110 schemes being implemented through the North Eastern Space Applications

For flood management in the Northeast, Shah said satellite mapping and topography have been used to plan the construction of more than 300 Lakes in the region, which will ensure permanent flood management.

The Union government has increased the budgetary provisions for the region and in comparison to 2014-15, the allocation for the region has been increased by 153 per cent during 2024-25, he said.

The minister also mentioned that for better connectivity, ₹41,000 Crore has been spent on roads and ₹47,000 Crore spent separately on rural roads.

In a way, the Modi government has spent ₹90,000 Crore in the northeast specifically for roads, he said, adding 64 new air routes were started for air connectivity ₹4,800 Crore was spent on the Vibrant Village programme, while ₹18,000 Crore was allocated for the railways.

### **Dharmendra Pradhan slams** Opposition over language row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

nion Education Minister Dharmedra Pradhan on Tuesday lashed out at the Opposition amid the ongoing row over the three-language formula in NEP. While speaking in the Rajya Sabha, he said that the world is discussing multilingualism asking the opposition, "where are we trapped?"

He also spoke about the opposition's allegations that the government wants to divide society while using languages. He said that Modi govt will never use language to do such 'sin.'

Pradhan also spoke about the uproar over his statement in Rajya Sabha where he accused DMK of "ruining the future of the students" by raking three-language formula. "For past 24 hours, I have heard a lot but I am an Odiya person and I come from the first state which was formed on linguistic lines," he said.

Later after the adjournment of the upper house Pradhan took to social media to share the exchange of letters between the Central Education Department and Tamil Nadu education department.

Pradhan said a day earlier DMK MPs and TN chief minister MK Stalin accused him of misleading the Parliament regarding Tamil Nadu's consent for establishment of PM-SHRI Schools.

"I stand by my statement made in the Parliament and am sharing the consent letter from Tamil Nadu School Education Department dated 15th March 2024," he said sharing the letter. "DMK MPs and CM can stack lies as high as they want, but the truth doesn't bother knocking when

it comes crashing down. The DMK dispensation led by CM Stalin have a lot to answer to the people of Tamil Nadu. Raking the language issue as a diversionary tactic and denying facts as per their convenience will not shield their governance and welfare deficit," Pradhan said.

Why this sudden change of stance on NEP? Definitely for political brownies and reviving DMK's political fortunes. This retrograde politics of DMK is a great disservice to the bright future of Tamil Nadu and its students. I humbly request CM to not view NEP 2020 from a political lens. Please prioritise interest of our children in Tamil Nadu over political gains, the education minister added.

Opposition members had accused the government of forcibly thrusting on States the NEP and impinging on their autonomy. Ritabrata Banerjee (TMC) and Kanimozhi NVN Somu (DMK) accused the Centre of withholding funds meant for education programmes in opposition ruled states of West Bengal and

Sanjay Singh (AAP) raised concern over the high rate of school dropout in India and said the country cannot aspire to be a 'Viksit Bharat' unless education is universal. He also criticised the government for cutting funds allocated for various schemes related to the education sector.

Commenting on the issue of alleged Hindi imposition, Manoj Kumar Jha of RJD stressed on the need to treat each language in the country equally and likening India to a building built from 'bricks of same size, he said if one is treated bigger than the other then the entire building will

### **Centre bans two Kashmir-groups** for anti-national activities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

dhe Awami Action Committee (AAC), headed by Kashmir's influential cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and Jammu and Kashmir Ittihadul Muslimeen (JKIM), led by Masroor Abbas Ansari, were on Tuesday banned by the Centre for their alleged anti-national activities, supporting terrorism and fuelling secessionist activities.

Farooq is the chairman of the separatist amalgam All Parties Hurriyat Conference and head cleric of Srinagar's Jamia Masjid, Kashmir's grandest and most influential mosque, where he delivers sermons. Ansari is also a senior leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and a Shia leader of Kashmir

In a notification, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said the AAC is also indulging in unlawful activities that are prejudicial to the integrity, sovereignty and security of the country. In a separate notification, the MHA said the JKIM is indulging in unlawful activities, which are prejudicial to the integrity, sovereignty and security of the country. Its members have remained involved in supporting terrorist activities and anti-India propaganda for

Considering all the facts available, the MHA declared both groups outlawed for five years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, according to the notifications.

fuelling secessionism in J and K, it said.

The home ministry said the leaders and members of AAC have been involved in mobilising funds for perpetrating unlawful activities, including supporting secessionist, separatist and terrorist activities in J and K.

It said the AAC and its members by their activities show sheer disrespect towards the constitutional authority and constitutional set up of the country and the outfit is involved in promoting and aiding the secession of J and K from India by involv-

ing in anti-national and subversive activities, and sowing seeds of disaffection amongst people.

The AAC is exhorting people to destabilise law and order, encouraging the use of arms to separate J and K from the Union of India and promoting hatred against the established government, it said.

The notification said and cited several cases and charge-sheets filed by the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) against the members of the AAC for their alleged involvement in unlawful activities.

The cases registered against AAC leaders like Umar Farooq, Mushtaq-ul-Islam, Nisar Ahmad Rather and Nisar Ahmad Bhat include shouting slogans against the integrity of India and delivering a speech stating that they would struggle till J and K is not separated from the Union of India, and for also pelting stones.

Another case against Umar Farooq was for supporting the 'hartal' call given by Syed Ali Shah Geelani on August 3, 2011 and for instigating the general people and the youth of the valley for waging war against the sovereignty of India. On the JKIM, the home ministry said the leaders and members of JKIM have been involved in mobilising funds for perpetrating unlawful activities, including supporting secessionist, separatist and terrorist activities in I and K.

It said the JKIM and its members by their activities show sheer disrespect towards the constitutional authority and constitutional setup of the country and are involved in promoting and aiding the secession of J and K from India by indulging in anti-national and subversive activities, sowing seeds of discontent among the people and inciting people to destabilise law and order. It is also encouraging the use of arms to cause secession of J and K from the Union of India and promoting hatred against the established

### Uproar in Rajya Sabha over unparliamentary remark by Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

ajya Sabha witnessed an uproar on Tuesday over an unparliamentary remark by Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, who apologised to the Chair while clarifying that it was meant for the government that was "trying to create a regional divide"

Earlier, the Upper House proceedings were adjourned for about 40 minutes as opposition MPs trooped into the well claiming raw deal southern states will get in the redrawing of constituencies solely on the basis of population.

As regards Kharge, as the House took up a discussion on the working of the Education Ministry soon after the Question Hour, several opposition members were on their feet demanding an apology from minister Dharmendra Pradhan for his remarks against the Tamil Nadu government. Pradhan on Monday slammed the Tamil Nadu gov-

ernment for its stand on the three-language policy under the National Education Policy (NEP), accusing it of "ruining the future of the students" in the state for politics. On Tuesday, as Deputy Chairman Harivansh called Congress leader Digvijay Singh to initiate a discussion on the working of the education ministry, DMK MPs, who came dressed in black to oppose delimitation and NEP, were on their feet demanding an apology from Pradhan.

Amid the uproar, Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge stood up to intervene. Even though the Chair said the Congress president had already been given an portunity to speak in the morning, Kharge said the education minister was not in the House at that time. "This is a dictatorship," he said.

As the Chair said it was Singh's turn to speak, Kharge said the opposition was prepared to corner the gov-

Kharge used a Hindi expression to mean that the opposition would "hit back" at the government, leading to an uproar from the treasury benches that claimed the expression was "unparliamentary". Leader of the House JP Nadda intervened and said the expression used by the Leader of Opposition is condemnable and sought an apology from him.

Kharge immediately apologised for using the expression, and also clarified that it was not meant for the chair but for government policies. "I am sorry, I was not speaking about you, it was about government policies. I am sorry if you were hurt by my remarks,



during the Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi

I apologise to you," he said. Nadda said it is good that Kharge apologised to the Chair, and appreciated his gesture, adding the remarks are still condemnable if they were meant for the government. During his reply in Lok Sabha on the Central funds for the PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme on Monday, Pradhan had called the MK Stalin government of Tamil Nadu "dishonest" and "uncivilised", evoking protests from the DMK MPs.

Meanwhile, Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for about 40 minutes as opposition MPs trooped into the Well of the House over the raw deal southern states will get in the redrawing of constituencies solely on the basis of population. Opposition MPs gave notices under rule 267 seeking setting aside of the listed business of the day to take up a discussion on concerns of southern states over delimitation.

The notices were rejected by the chair as not adhering to rules. However, DMK's R Girirajan managed to raise the issue through a zero hour mention. After that, the MPs were up on their feet shouting slogans and

trooped into the Well. Deputy Chairman Harivansh said the matter has already been raised and asked members to return to their seats. But the MPs some of them, particularly those from southern states, wearing black shirts - continued their protest. Shortly thereafter, Harivansh adjourned proceedings till 12 noon. In his zero hour submission, Girirajan said states

such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab that had implemented family planning would stand to lose parliamentary seat representation. And states with poor family planning programmes

and higher fertility rates like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan would gain many of the seats transferred from better performing states. Southern states have seen their share in the overall

population of the country drop over the past decades while the share of those in the north has risen. If population is made the sole basis of delimitation

or redrawing of Lok Sabha constituencies, the proportion of MPs that south sends in Parliament will fall as compared to the present.

Describing political disenfranchisement in the

south when the delimitation freeze ends in 2026 as a "grave threat" to federal structure of Indian democracy, Girirajan said "delimitation disproportionately penalises southern India progressive states like Tamil Nadu, while rewarding those who failed to control their population in last three decades".

#### PARLIAMENTARY PANEL TO LAUNCH WEBSITE FOR ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

the Parliamentary panel examining one nation. I one election' bill's will soon launch a website to invite suggestions from across the country on the issue. BJP leader P P Chaudhary, the chairman of the Joint Committee on the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, said the panel was working with full transparency and wanted to ensure that everyone got an opportunity to share their views on the issue of simultaneous polls.

Chaudhary said a presentation of the website was organised for panel members and Committee will also issue an advertisement inviting memoranda from across the country on simultaneous elections. He said that elections were conducted simultaneously across the country from 1952 to 1967, when the cycle was broken.

# BJP to open 200 day cancer care centres this year: Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The government aims to open 200 day cancer care centres in the country in 2025-26 where basic facilities to patients would be provided and such cenbe established would in all districts in the next three years, Health Minister J P Nadda said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. He also informed the house that Mission Steering Group of the National Health Mission has decided to raise the incentives of ASHA workers, and the government will go ahead with it amid demands for enhancing the remuneration of such workers from some states.

On cancer care, replying to supplementary queries during Question Hour, the minister said the government is trying to make healthcare affordable, accessible and equitable by giving technical and financial support to states.

"As per the recent Lancet report, the Avushman Bharat has made a big contribution and cancer treatment has started within 30 days of screening under this programme," the health minister said, amid thumping of desks by treasury benches.

Nadda said the Union Budget has announced the opening of day cancer care centres in every district. "In 2025-26, we are going to open 200 day cancer care centres and will open such centres in all the districts of the country in the next three years," he said on the steps taken by the government in providing treatment to can-



The minister also said there are 22 AIIMS with full-fledged oncology departments and all central hospitals have oncology departments for the treatment of

To another question, Nadda said the Gorakhpur All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is functioning and its OPD and IPD are operating in full swing.

The Union Health Ministry has signed an MoU with BHU to convert its medical college to AIIMS-like institution and their budgeting is also being done. "We will take it forward," he said.

As regards ASHA workers, Nadda said Mission Steering Group of the National Health Mission has decided to raise the incentives of ASHA workers. The Mission

Steering Group (MSG) is the highest policy-making and steering institution under the National Health Mission (NHM).

Replying to supplementaries during the Question Hour, Nadda lauded the work done by ASHA workers across the country in helping reduce infant and maternal mortality rates, and the government recognises their role at the grassroots level.

"ASHA workers are doing a very good job and have my full appreciation for them because, at the grassroots level, their efforts have helped reduce maternal mortality, IMR Infant Mortality Rate and under-five mortality rate levels," the health minister told the Upper House.

"I would like to enlighten the House that a week ago, there was a meeting of the mis-

sion steering group of the NHM where we have seen to it that the ASHA workers, due to their activities There has to be enhancement of their financial part, which the mission steering group has given the permission, and we will be going forward with it,"

In response to another question that the Health Ministry is yet to pay pending dues to the Kerala government, he said, "As far as the Kerala government is concerned, the Government of India has given all its due, but the utilisation certification has

"The moment the certification comes, the amount to the ASHA workers and the state of Kerala would be given accordingly. But at this point, our share has been given to ASHA workers and the government," the minister said amid uproar by opposition members.

Meanwhile, MPs of the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala held a protest in Parliament, demanding that the honorarium of ASHA workers be raised to ₹21,000 and they should receive ₹5 Lakh as retirement benefits

Responding to another question in the Rajya Sabha on making doctors' recruitment time-bound, Nadda said, "There is no financial constraint on creating infrastructure. But we are trying that states should enhance their capacity building."

"We are also working on national quality assurance standards to help improve the quality. We are also doing capacity building and are monitoring the work of states," the Union health minister said.

## **AIMPLB** to protest against Waqf **Amendment Bill on March 17**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

→he All India Muslim Personal Law Board(AIMPLB)on Tuesday announced it will hold a protest against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill on March 17 at Jantar Mantar here to invoke the conscience of "secular" political parties, including those part of the NDA gov-

The 'dharna' was to be held on March 13 but has been postponed in view of holidays on account of Holi and Parliament may also not meet that day, the board's spokesperson SQR Ilyas said. He also said that many MPs have been invited for the protest. The AIMPLB spokesperson said that after careful consideration, the Board has come to the conclusion that the proposed legislation will pave the way for the "usurping" of Waqf properties and it was

a "direct attack" on Muslims. He said the AIMPLB had facilitated over 3.6 crore responses via emails to sugges-

tions sought by the parliamentary panel. The bill amounts to "discrimination" as it calls for having non-Muslim members in Waqf boards and councils when no such provision is there in the management of the endowments of Hindus and Sikhs, the

spokesperson said. In a statement, AIMPLB general secretary Maulana Fazlur Raheem Mujaddidi and Ilyas said that despite five crore Muslims sending emails to the joint committee against the Bill and extensive rep-

resentation by the Muslim Personal Law Board, prominent national and state-level Muslim organisations, and key individuals, the government has not only refused to reconsider its stance but has made the bill even "more stringent and controversial". In democratic countries, any law or bill is usually discussed with its primary stakeholders before being introduced in the legislature. However, this government has followed an "authoritarian approach" from the very beginning, they said. "The three farm laws were passed in Parliament without any consultation with farmers. It was only after prolonged and determined protests by farmers that the government was forced to withdraw them," the statement said, adding the AIMPLB will run a nationwide campaign against the bill.

When the bill faced severe criticism from the opposition parties, a 31-member joint committee was formed, but it, being dominated by ruling party members, made superficial modifications and further tightened the bill, it claimed.

The committee outrightly rejected the well-argued objections and reasonable suggestions from the Muslim community as well as the 44 amendments proposed by opposition members who were part of the committee, the statement said. "The Muslim Personal Law Board engaged with opposition leaders as well as heads of the BJP's allied parties to convey the Muslim community's well-founded objec-

# Ashes and colours: Unique Holi celebration in UP

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE** ■ Varanasi

n an intense celebration, devotees and Naga Sadhus marked the tradition of playing Holi with funeral ashes at Manikarnika Ghat on Tuesday, blending spirituality with the raw symbolism of

The event, known as 'Chita Bhasma Holi' or 'Masan Holi,' saw ascetics wielding tridents and swords, while one, adorned with a garland of human skulls, performed a fierce 'Tandava' dance. Foreign tourists and devotees joined in, smearing themselves with ashes and colors, adding to the mystique of the ritual.

Gulshan Kapoor, the organiser of the event, explained that the celebration followed an elaborate 'aarti' of Baba Mahashamshan Nath at noon and lasted for about an hour. Preparations for the event begin six months in advance, with two to three sacks of ashes collected daily



from the cremation ground to ensure an ample supply for the ritual. Despite its growing appeal, the practice has drawn criticism from religious scholars. Kashi Vidvat Parishad and other groups have questioned its legitimacy, arguing that there is no scriptural basis for householders celebrating Holi at a cremation ground. "This ritual misleads people and contra-

dicts traditional beliefs," stated Ramnarayan Dwivedi, general secretary of the Kashi Vidvat Parishad. He emphasised that Holi is meant to be celebrated in a joyous environment, not in a space associated with mourning and the final rites of life.

Due to safety concerns and the massive turnout, the Mahashamshan Nath Temple Committee advised women against participating in the event to prevent overcrowding and potential chaos.

Rajesh Mishra, a devotee from Prayagraj: "Playing Holi with ashes at the Mahashamshan is an otherworldly expe-

rience. It reminds us of the transient nature of life and deepens our spiritual connection with Lord Shiva.

Swami Anand Giri, a Naga Sadhu: This tradition honors Shiva and his divine companions. The world sees fire and

death here, but for us, this is where true

liberation begins. The origins of this unique celebration trace back to the legend of 'Rangbhari Ekadashi, when Lord Shiva is believed to have brought Goddess Parvati to Kashi after their celestial wedding. While gods, celestial beings, and humans celebrate Holi, Shiva's spectral companions-spirits, ghosts, and other ethereal beings-are left out. To

include them, Shiva is said to play Holi

with funeral ashes at the Mahashamshan.

Every year, thousands of visitors from across the globe gather in Kashi to witness and partake in this spiritual and thoughtprovoking Holi, which offers a profound reflection on life and death.

## DGP under lens in gold smuggle case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bangalore

**⊣**he Karnataka government has appointed Additional Chief Secretary Gaurav Gupta to probe the role of DGP rank officer K Ramachandra Rao, if any, in the alleged gold smuggling activity of his step daughter and Kannada actress Ranya Rao.

Chief Minister's office informed media on Tuesday that an order appointing Gaurav Gupta was issued on Monday

The government also ordered a CID investigation into alleged lapses and dereliction of duty of police officers at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA),

Ramachandra Rao is presently serving as the Managing Director of the Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation.

The government order said, "ACS Gaurav Gupta has been appointed as the Investigating Officer to investigate the facts

and circumstances leading to the availment of the protocol related facilities and the role of the Director General of Police of the State, IPS cadre, Ramachandra Rao, Managing Director, Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Corporation in this case.

The Investigating Officer should commence the probe immediately and submit its report within a week, the order said.

The Director General of Police and Inspector General of Police (Head of Police Forces), and Secretary, Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department have also been directed to provide all necessary documents and assistance for the said investigation

The order said the actress Ranya Rao was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence while "she was illegally transporting gold bars from Dubai to

During the investigation of the case, it was reported in the media that the arrested Ranya misused the courtesy facilities

provided to high-ranking officials at airports, the order said.

"It was also reported that Ranya misused the protocol services provided to her by her father Ramachandra Rao, IPS. And used the name and address of the person and the protocol services provided to her to evade checks at airports," the order said.

The Criminal Investigation Department has also been directed to probe dereliction of duty following reports that there were lapses by police personnel when Ranya was going to and coming from foreign countries, the order said.

Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized Gold bars worth ₹12.56 Crore from Ranya at Kempegowda International Airport here on March 3.

The next day, the DRI said it seized gold jewellery worth ₹2.06 Crore and cash amounting to ₹2.67 Crore from her residence in Bengaluru.

While Directorate of Revenue Intelligence is probing the matter, the CBI too has joined the investigation.

# BJP leaders belittle Muslims ahead of Holi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE LUCKNOW

s Holi draws near, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Uttar Pradesh, including a minister, have sparked controversy with inflammatory remarks targeting Muslims. UP Minister and State Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board chairman Raghuraj Singh advised Muslims to wear a "hijab made of tarpaulin" to protect themselves from Holi colors, while BJP lawmaker Ketki Singh suggested constructing a separate ward for Muslims in the proposed Ballia Medical College to "ensure the safety of Hindus."

Amid tensions over Holi coinciding with Friday prayers this year, Raghuraj Singh made a provocative statement, suggesting that just as mosques are covered with tarpaulin to prevent them from being stained by Holi colors, Muslims should also don "tarpaulin hijabs" while stepping

out.
"If they want to protect their white caps

and clothes from colours, they should wear a hijab made of tarpaulin," Singh said. He further claimed that Holi revelers do not check where their colours land and, therefore, it was up to Muslims to shield themselves. Mosques in Shahajahnpur are being covered with tarpaulin to protect from colours. The Clerics there announced that Namaz would be offered at the prescribed time of 12.30 pm. Singh did not stop at Holirelated comments.

He also made a controversial statement about Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), asserting that he would donate all his wealth to build a Ram temple inside the university and personally lay the founda-

In another incendiary remark, BJP MLA from Bansdih, Ketki Singh, called for Muslims to be treated in a separate facility within the soon-to-be-constructed Ballia Medical College. She claimed that mixing Hindu and Muslim patients could pose a health risk.

"When Holi, Ram Navami, or Durga Puja happens, Muslims complain. The same could happen in hospitals. I urge Maharaj Ji (Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath) to allocate funds for a separate building and a separate wing for Muslims so that Hindus feel safe while getting treated," she stated.

Her speech took an even more contro-

versial turn when she suggested that

Hindus could be at risk due to unhygienic practices. "We don't know who spits on what before we receive it," she remarked, insinuating that sharing hospital spaces with Muslims could lead to contamina-The statements have triggered wide-

spread outrage, with opposition parties and activists condemning them as blatant attempts to communalize Holi and deepen religious divisions.

Critics argue that such remarks are not just inflammatory but also unconstitutional, reinforcing religious discrimination in public institutions.

### **Odisha Assembly erupts in chaos** as BJP, Congress members clash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bhubaneswar

¬he Odisha Assembly on Tuesday plunged into chaos when members of the ruling BJP and Opposition Congress scuffled in the well of the House leading to adjournment of the proceedings several times

Tension erupted in the House during Question Hour when senior BJP lawmaker Jaynarayan Mishra rushed towards Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati, who was standing in front of Urban Development Minister KC Mohapatra when the minister was replying to a ques-

The minister was giving the reply amid ruckus by Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Congress members.

Earlier, Bahinipati attempted to climb the Speaker's podium in order to stall the proceedings but failed, with Speaker Surama Padhy allowing Question Hour amid the din. Thereafter, he approached the minister asking him to stop giving the reply as the opposition members were protesting in the well.

"Mishra caught hold of my shirt collar and pushed me. I was requesting minister Mohapatra to stop giving a reply when the House was not in order. requested him with folding hands. But, Mishra suddenly came up to me and caught hold of my collar," Bahinipati told reporters outside the House.

bench rushed to the well of the House and

scuffled with the Congress members who were present there and raised anti-govern-As the chaos prevailed, Speaker Padhy

first adjourned the proceedings till noon and, later three more times. While the BJP and Congress members

were engaged in pushing one another, the BJD members, though present in the well, did not participate in the scuffle. The Opposition BJD and Congress

members were protesting on different While the BID members demanded a

statement from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi over Mishra's remark referring to the merger of erstwhile Koshala with Odisha in 1936 as a "historical mistake, Congress MLAs agitated over the alleged increase in the crimes against women in the state.

The Opposition members were also seen standing on the reporters' table and raising slogans. The Speaker later extended the adjournment for 10 minutes from noon, and then again till 2 pm.

When the House reassembled at 2 pm, several BJP members, including Irashish Acharya, Babu Singh, Laxman Bag and Upasana Mohapatra, demanded action against the opposition members for "continuously disrupting the proceedings and disrespecting the woman Speaker of the

As the Opposition protests continued, Soon, other members of the treasury the Speaker adjourned the proceedings

#### Haryana reviews Gurugram's road development projects **PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ Gurugram Road from Vatika Chowk to NH-48 and S Dhesi, Principal Advisor, Urban

Development, to Government of Haryana chaired a meeting to review the ongoing road infrastructure development projects being executed by Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) on Tuesday.

Emphasising timely execution, he issued strict instructions to expedite all ongoing projects and to accelerate the pace of work in order to meet the defined time-

Present in the meeting were Shyamal Misra, Chief Executive Officer, GMDA and senior officers of the Authority. During the meeting, it was informed by

the Infra one division that the Authority had floated the tender to engage the Consultant for the work of upgradation of Southern Peripheral road from Vatika Chowk to NH-48 via elevated corridor as well as provision of interchange to NH-248A at Vatika Chowk.

The authority will allot the work this week to the Consultant for preparation of the Detailed Project Report and the bids for this project will be invited by August.

Dhesi directed the team to strictly adhere to the timelines as this prestigious



DS Dhesi, Principal Advisor, Urban Development to Government of Haryana chaired a meeting to review the projects executed by GMDA

project on completion will provide highpeed and seamless connectivity between the newly constructed Dwarka Expressway, NH-48 and the Gurugram-Sohna elevated corridor.

Additionally, the provision of an interchange at Vatika chowk will also provide a direct connection between SPR and Gurugram-Sohna expressway which will greatly reduce the traffic congestion at Vatika Chowk, Subhash chowk and along service roads of Gurugram-Sohna highway, which will be of immense benefit to the commuters.

GMDA will also initiate the work of special repair of the Southern Peripheral

the agency has been directed to mobilise the resources to commence the work within a week, officials said.

The works pertaining to streetscaping of MG Road, redevelopment of Hamilton Court Road and Vyapar Kendra Road and other works pertaining to special repair of master roads being undertaken by GMDA were also discussed. Instructions were issued by Principal

Advisor to closely monitor the agencies, accelerate the pace of work, set defined targets and milestone and ensure adherence to the timelines in all projects being undertaken by the Authority.

CEO GMDA further emphasised the need to enforce impactful implementation of all ongoing tasks to bring a visible change on ground in a shorter time frame to derive maximum utility of all infra development projects.

The matter of the upcoming metro project in the city was also deliberated and CEO GMDA said that regular coordination meetings are being chaired with GMRL and other concerned stakeholders to expedite the scope of all development works under Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority jurisdiction for the metro project.

# TMC, BJP seek removal of fake voters

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

mid the ongoing row over duplication of voters' identification numbers both the Trinamool Congress and the BJP leaders from Bengal on Tuesday moved the Election Commission of India (ECI) with a demand to strike out the names of fake voters from the electoral rolls.

While the BJP's move is reportedly aimed to offset Mamata Banerjee's drive against "ghost voters" allegedly introduced in the electoral rolls by the saffron outfit to win elections the TMC'sidea is to maintain its pressure both on the Commission and the BJP ahead of the next year's Assembly elections

Among the senior BJP leaders who met Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Kumar were State party president Sukanto
Assembly Suvendu Adhikari Majumdar, MPs Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato, Khagen Murmu and others, sources said.

Demanding a revision of voters' lists, Majumdar said that unlike in other States it was difficult to scrutinise the voters' lists in Bengal considering TMC violence in regions. "There is so much violence in the interior areas that it is difficult to carry out scrutiny. So we have asked the ECI to review the voters' list by using technology. These must be sanitised before the elections," he said.

'Technology can be used in a way. For instance if there are one lakh pensioners whose pension get closed (due to death). These names can be gathered and from that list and can be removed from the voters' list," he said adding names from burial grounds and crematoriums too can be taken digitally for updating electoral

While Bengal Chief Minister Mamata



Banerjee has alleged that the BJP had influenced the election panel and introduced thousands of "ghost voters" in the electoral rolls the BJP has claimed that about 17.5 lakh Rohingya voters have infiltrated the voters' lists.

"The names of Rohingya infiltrators have to be struck out in order to ensure free and fare election or else there is no point holding elections," Murmu who is an MP from Malda North said. Recently a Bangladeshi national from his constituency was identified who was functioning as a Panchayat Pradhan representing the TMC. Senior party leader Dilip Ghosh said that "TMC cannot win without false votes and rigging that has been the history of Bengal in the past 10 years. In every Assembly constituency they include 5,000-6,000 false voters before the Assembly polls."

The Trinamool Congress on the other hand followed Mamata Banerjee's guidelines asking for a "robust verification system" to check the veracity of names being registered in the electoral rolls online.

Referring to the concerns raised in other States regarding the arbitrary deletion of names of existing voters, the leaders said, "We have told the Commission that names are being deleted and added at will. There is no mechanism to check and determine how many names have been deleted and how many of them have been added. No one has any clue, so there is a need for the ECI to release a separate list of deletion and addition or modifica-

Earlier the Bengal Chief Minister had lambasted the BJP for introducing "fake names" in voters' lists and winning State elections one after the other by applying "immoral tactic." She told in a party organisational meeting in Kolkata how, "The BJP has filled voters' lists with ghost voters in Maharashtra, Haryana and Delhi and won the elections there. The opposition leaders in those States failed to catch their tricks but here we have caught them. Already there are hundreds of names coming out with duplicate ID voters' numbers, mostly these names are from Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat.

The Chief Minister constituted a scrutiny committee led by senior leaders who were tasked with identifying the fake voters following which the TMC embarked on scrutinising the lists.

"Thousands of fake voters have been identified in South 24 Parganas, Hooghly and other districts," said senior party leader Firhad Hakim adding, "the BJP cannot even win 10 percent seat if the voters' lists are duly cleaned."

### Haryana **delays ₹2,100** monthly aid for women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chandigarh

The issue of providing ₹2,100 monthly assistance to women under 'Lado Lakshmi Yojana' is under consideration and the Haryana government will decide on it soon, state minister Krishan Kumar Bedi informed the Assembly on Tuesday.

Ahead of the October 2024 Haryana Assembly polls, the BJP had promised to provide the amount to women each month if it returned to power. During the Question Hour in the Assembly, Congress MLA Pooja sought to know from the government the time by which the monthly assistance is likely to be disbursed to the women of the state. In his reply, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister, Krishan Kumar Bedi referred to the BJP's poll promise and said, "It is under consideration and the government will take a decision on this soon," Bedi informed the House. Asking a supplementary question, the Congress MLA said, "I am surprised that this kind of reply is being given in the House. Is this the seriousness of the government?" "During the polls, this was the BJP's

first promise to women. They spoke of giving financial assistance to women. And now, five months later, this matter is under consideration. I am asking a clear question about the definite time when the scheme will be implemented,"

## Tharoor pushes for inclusions of disabled in the mainstream PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Delhi

dvocating for urgent steps to ensure inclusion of disabled people in the mainstream, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Tuesday called for overhauling of the conventional paradigm so that the legislative framework does not look like relics of a bygone era. Pointing to gaps in policies, and seek-

ing urgent steps to ensure budget allocations are adequately spent, Tharoor said that it is incumbent upon us to reconceptualise disability inclusion not merely as a social imperative but as an economic and political necessity. Speaking at an event, Empowering Inclusion: A Dialogue on Disability, Politics and Economic Inclusion' organised by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), Tharoor gave a clarion call to "work collaboratively towards a future where the principles of equality, dignity and inclusion are not mere aspirations but lived realities". "While our legal edifice recognises disability as a critical dimension of human identity, the implementation of these rights has not kept pace with the nation's aspirations. In our contemporary socio-political milieu, persons with disabilities are still under-represented in governance, sidelined in policy deliberations, and overlooked in budgetary allocations," he said. Rajya Sabha MP Dr Fouzia Khan highlighted the urgent need to streamline



Congress MP Shashi Tharoor

data on disability. "In 2025 census, we should have a separate segment for disabled people. In the absence of accurate data, resource allocation and effective policy intervention becomes a big hurdle," Khan said.

BJP MP Pratap Sarangi called for creation of a more humane and equitable society. He said the disabled needs empathy to be able to realise their true potential and join the social and economic mainstream. Former Maharashtra MLA and Prahar

Janshakti Party founder Bachchu Kadu highlighted the need to streamline budgetary allocations and ensure their judicious use so that the benefits reach the





# Beyond the rhetoric

It is time to go past symbolic gestures and confront the harsh reality of Women's dignity

ven as we celebrated International Women's Day, just two days later, we reported three deeply disturbing incidents: the rape of an Israeli tourist in Hampi, a man creating a public nuisance in Pune by urinating at a crossroads, and the blaring of obscene songs in Bihar. These incidents may seem unrelated, but they share a troubling common thread-our society has become morally degraded, indifferent to the dignity of women, and increasingly insensitive to gender equality.

This decline in values is occurring in a country that once revered womanhood, placing women on a high pedestal. The famous sloka from the Manusmriti, 'Yatra naryastu pujyante ramante tatra devta' translates to, "Where women are honored, divinity blossoms there." It serves as a reminder that women should be respected and valued in society. Historically, women like Apala, Ghosha, Lopamudra, and Gargi were esteemed figures in ancient India. In modern times, countless women have made significant contributions across various fields. Yet, given the current state of affairs, one might wonder if the gods have already abandoned us.

What has gone wrong? Why do we see such pervasive misogyny and moral decline in a country that once celebrated womanhood? When did we lose our way? Blaming Western influence for our own degeneration is a weak excuse. The truth is, while women have been at the forefront of progress, they have also endured some of the harshest forms of patriarchy. From domestic violence to workplace discrimination, Indian women continue to struggle against entrenched biases, even from socalled educated and cultured men who conveniently abandon their ideals when it comes to gender equality.

The three incidents reported may not be the norm, but they are symptomatic of a larger, deeply rooted issue. Over the years, we have only reinforced the objectification of women. Just glance at advertisements where women are reduced to eye candy, Bollywood films where they play second fiddle to male protagonists, or popular fiction where they are confined to stereotypical roles of homemakers and child-rearers. Even the comments from the politicians in the recent past have been rather uncharitable about women. The problem runs deeper than we acknowledge. Society as a whole must awaken to the true power of women and respect them for their inherent worth, not just as decorative figures.

What can be done? First, we must recognise and admit that the state of women in India is deplorable. Ignoring the issue or brushing it under the carpet will not help. When stand-up comedian Vir Das made a pointed remark about how India worships women by day and violates them by night, all hell broke loose. Yet, outrage cannot erase the painful truth. Hypocrisy and pretense cannot change the truth. Token gestures and symbolic celebrations are past their expiry date—it is time for real action. Stronger laws may be part of the solution, but they must be backed by proper implementation. (It is worth noting that the conviction rate for crimes against women remains abysmally low) More importantly, we need to instil respect and gender sensitivity in men from an early age. Boys must be taught that their sisters have the same rights as they do, and society must reinforce this equality at every level.

The time for complacency is over. A cultural shift is needed-one that does not just pay lip service to gender equality but actively fosters a safer, more just environment for women. Only then can we truly claim to honour and respect them. Let us make a beginning. We at The Pioneer have taken an initiative and would like our readers to join us in our campaign to awaken the society from its deep slumber.

<u> <sub>s</sub>eaderspeak</u>

I am on a multi-nation trip to the

Indo-Pacific, a region I know very

well having grown up as a child of the

First stop: Honolulu where I'll visit IC

troops engaging in training.

Pacific. I will be going to Japan, Thailand, and India, with

a brief stop in France enroute back to DC. Building strong

communication are vital to achieving President Trump's

TULSI GABBARD, US INTEL CHIEF

relationships, understanding, and open lines of

objectives of peace, freedom and prosperity.

partners and INDOPACOM leaders, and our

# The Unfinished Fight for Gender Equality

The latest data from global institutions paint a troubling picture—economic and political inequality persist, genderbased violence remains rampant. "Accelerated Action" must become a force for real, urgent change

■ he calendar page has turned and March 8, International Women's Day (IWD), fades into the rear-view mirror. Yet, the echoes of pronouncements — of "Accelerated Action" the very theme of IWD 2025 - still reverberate. Newspapers, policymakers, and government and international organisations have once again performed their ritual - churning out reports and issuing platitudes, all while the chasm of the gender gap yawns wider. They speak of strengthening the "fairer sex" — a term that dares to confine the boundless potential of women. Let us be clear: this is not about "disparities." This is about the brutal, systemic discrimination that chokes life from women's ambitions, both in the intimate spaces of their lives and the cold, unforgiving arenas of their professions. "Accelerated Action" is not a theme; it is a desperate, overdue demand for momentum - a seismic shift towards an unrelenting dismantling of the barriers and biases that have held women hostage for far too long.

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2024 'Global Gender Gap Report', highlights the slow progress in achieving gender equality, with the global gender gap now 68.5 per cent closed, an increase of just 0.1 per centage points from the previous year. Health and Survival (96 per cent) and Educational Attainment (94.9 per cent) are near parity, but Economic Participation (60.5 per cent) and Political Empowerment (22.5 per cent) remain significantly unequal. The report also points to regional disparities that persist, with Europe (75 per cent) leading the charge, North America (74.8 per cent), and Latin America and the Caribbean (74.2 per cent), while Southern Asia (63.7 per cent) and the Middle East and North Africa (61.7 per cent) lag behind. Iceland, Finland, and Norway are top performers, while Bangladesh, Iran, and Sudan struggle with gender inequality. At the current pace, full gender parity will take until 2158, far beyond the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target.

In economic participation, women form 42per cent of the workforce but hold only 31.7 per cent of senior leadership roles. The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) gender gap is stark, with women representing only 28.2 per cent of the STEM workforce versus 47.3 per cent in non-STEM sectors. Political empowerment has improved, with women occupying 33 per cent of parliamentary seats, nearly double the 18.8 per cent in 2006. The report further emphasises the role of caregiving policies, noting an increase in maternity leave from 63 to 107 days since 1970, while paternity remain underrepresented in politics (27 per



leave remains low at nine to 15 days. The report issues a compelling call to action, urging governments, businesses, and civil society to accelerate efforts toward gender equality. As the report emphasises, Achieving gender parity is not just a moral imperative, but an economic necessity. Closing gender gaps will drive productivity, sustainability, and societal progress vorldwide".

Further, the UN Women's Report on Women's Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing" (2025) is worth a reflection, which assesses global progress on gender equality since the 1995 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action'. While 1,531 legal reforms have been enacted, disparities persist - women earn 20 per cent less than men, perform three times more unpaid care work, and only 63 per cent of working-age women are in the labour force compared to 92 per cent of men. Gender-based violence remains widespread, affecting 736 Million women globally, with 53 per cent of women in Europe and Central Asia facing online abuse. Maternal mortality rates have stagnated, and 236 Million additional women and girls are projected to face food insecurity by 2050 due to climate change. Further, Women



cent of parliamentarians) and peace processes (10 per cent of negotiators in 2023). Despite 112 countries adopting national action plans on women, peace, and security, only 28 per cent have allocated sufficient funding.

accelerate change, the "Beijing+30 Action Agenda" outlines six urgent priorities, such as 'bridging the digital gender divide, 'eradicating violence against women, 'ensuring equal political representation' and 'securing climate justice for women'. Governments must significantly increase funding, implement stronger accountability measures, and prioritise gender-sensitive policies.

Achieving gender equality requires bold, immediate action, ensuring all women and girls have equal rights, opportunities, and safety in every sphere of life. Amidst all the celebrations - and resolutions - that marked IWD 2025, it is equally critical to reflect on the 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2025' that reveals a global regression in women's rights, marked by intensified oppression in numerous regions. Afghanistan witnessed the Taliban's extreme gender-based restrictions, effectively eliminating women from public life through bans on education and employment, alongside reports of severe abuses. In Sudan, conflictdriven sexual violence became a weapon of war, with widespread rape and forced mar-

Moreover, the enduring issue of Crime Against Women (CAW) significantly hinders the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by undermining progress across a broad spectrum of objectives, specifically impeding SDG-3 concerning good health and well-being and SDG-5 dedicated to gender equality, as the repercussions of CAW permeate and disrupt these interconnected areas of social, economic, and gender equality. The road to true gender equality remains long and arduous. While progress has been made, systemic barriers, deep-rooted discrimination, and rising global challenges continue to hinder women's empowerment and safety. The need for sustained, bold, and transformative action is urgent.

(The writer is programme executive Gandhi Smriti Sansthan. Views expressed are personal)

# Navigating coercion and gaslighting

am writing this column on a Friday. Exactly a week ago, around this time, a slanging match took place in the Oval Office in full view of the media. As people all over watched the drama unfold, I shook with vicarious consternation when a war-time leader was psychologically conquered by two men who are the powers that be of the Western world. It was a scene that felt unsettlingly familiar, not just as a geopolitical showdown, but as a stark example of

the pressures we all face in the presence of unchecked authority. President Trump set an uneasy tone to the meeting right from the word go when he made a stinging remark about President Zelensky's attire as soon they met. Although it was made to sound casual, the dig was front and centre, and the former's discomfort was more than obvious. What I saw that day was a slice of life we've all been part of, in some form or another at work, at home, and in relationships where authority looms large, demanding submission in the face of power imbalances. I cringed at the memories it evoked - of gaslighting and manipulative episodes from my own life - and found myself wondering: What should we do when we're subjected to such mortifying treatment, especially when it is unexpect-

What mental attitude can we adopt in these moments? How do we respond to coercion that seeks to dismantle our courage,



'unkindest cuts of all' that come our way?

selves emotionally. Often, bullies thrive by distorting reality — by twisting words, fabricating narratives, and making us feel inadequate, indebted, or small. The psychological manipulation is insidious. But when we step back and see the game being played, we can detach ourselves from the emotional quagmire they attempt to drag us into. It's not about denying the truth of our emotions, but about observing them, ques-

tioning their source, and not letting them define us.

Self-validation is the cornerstone of this mental fortitude. In a world where we are conditioned to seek external approval. it is easy to fall prey to manipulation. But when we ground our self-worth in our understanding of who we are, we become less susceptible to intimidation. No longer will we bend or contort ourselves to meet others' expectations. We are enough as we are. And then comes emotional detachment. Bullies feed on emotional reactions. They want us to react, to flinch, to show weakness. The key is not to suppress our feelings but to cultivate a calm, observational stance. When we resist the urge to react impulsively, we throw them off balance. A composed response, or better still, a poised silence, often speaks louder than any words we could muster in the heat of the moment. In the face of a verbal barrage, sometimes doing nothing is the most powerful response. A dignified silence unset-

and what kind of armour can protect us from the tles them because it signals that we are not easily provoked. In those moments, we reassert control without uttering a sin-The first step is awareness. Recognising the gle word. In situations where we are pushed into a corner, we power play for what it is allows us to protect our-can reframe the narrative by presenting the facts. For instance, if we are pressured to express forced gratitude, we might say, "We have both benefited from this collaboration." By putting the truth back at the centre, we dilute their leverage and reinforce our agency. Ultimately, the key is knowing our boundaries and refusing to make concessions that compromise our dignity. The moment we yield to unfair demands, we allow the cycle of manipulation to continue. So, we must know when to say "No" and stand firm in that decision. But all of this requires confidence, and confidence, like

any armour, is built over time. The inner dialogue we carry with ourselves matters immensely. Bullies may make us doubt our worth, but we must reprogram that narrative, affirming daily that we are deserving, and that we need not bend in the face of coercion. Preparing ourselves for difficult conversations through rehearsal and mental preparation can transform panic into poise. In the end, the most profound defence against power plays, gaslighting, and coercion is an unwavering nonchalance. Confidence isn't loud or brash. It is quiet and unshaken. It is the knowing that no matter the forces that may try to knock us down, we are unyielding. We stand tall, not because we are immune to the pain, but because we refuse to let it define us.

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

# Letters to the Editor

#### **India's Golden Shift**

Madam— India has always had a deep-rooted connection with gold, a metal that symbolises wealth, financial security, and cultural heritage. From weddings and festivals to religious ceremonies, gold plays an essential role in the lives of Indians.

However, this strong demand for physical gold has led to an over-reliance on imports, contributing significantly to the country's current account deficit and putting pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Recognising this economic challenge, the Government introduced the Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) scheme in 2015 under the broader Gold Monetisation Scheme to provide an alternative means of investing in gold while reducing dependency on imports. Over time, SGBs have emerged as an effective financial instrument, gradually shifting India's gold investment landscape towards a more structured and sustainable model.

The SGB scheme was designed to offer the benefits of gold investment without the challenges associated with owning physical gold. These bonds are issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on behalf of the government, making them a secure and reliable investment. Each bond is denominated in grams of gold, allowing investors to own gold in a digital or paper form rather than in physical form.

ANUSHKA BOHRA, UJJAIN

#### **America First, World Last**

Madam— It appears that United States (US) President Donald Trump is determined to disrupt global amity with unilateral declarations, whether on tariffs or wars. He thinks of America as the overlord and the countries on the earth as vassals. Before the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-President Trump meeting in Washington DC, he made a scathing attack on the BRICS nations over de-dollarisation attempts and declared that "BRICS

He accused the grouping of being made for a 'bad purpose.' He asserted that he had conveyed to the BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa - that they would be "hit by a 100 per cent tariff" if "they want to play games with the Dollar," adding a warning that "The day they mention that they want to do it, they will come back and say, we beg you, we beg you."

The response to Donald Trump's threats came from Brazil's President Lula da Silva, who said bluntly that "BRICS+ is committed to ending US Dollar dominance no matter what."

President Trump announced unilaterally that India had agreed to slash its tariffs. He said "India charges us massive tariffs. Massive, they have agreed, by the way, they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody

is finally exposing them.' HARIDASAN RAJAN, KOZHIKODE

#### **Mark Carney replaces Trudeau**

Madam—The 23rd and a decade old ruling President of Canada, Justin Trudeau is all set to leave Canadian President office. The coalition government which Trudeau has been balancing since last few years has finally come to an end with the election of Mark Carney as Canada's next President.

Mark election to the apex post is been done at a critical juncture, as there has been so many fragilities for Canada to be handled around. He is supposed to settle down, a long list of issues both domestically and internationally for

Today, Canada is juggling to manage many of its internal problems like increasing food and housing prices, its trade and tariff war with the US, at the same time, it has been trying to find out a solution about the US idea of land

Not only this of coping some of the regional issues, Canada currently hold worst relations specially with India because of her Khalistani supporting commitments. The new appointment of Mark Carney is welcoming. We hope that Canada will be able to find out the appropriate solution of its domestic and international problems and will stand fairly without any bias on account of her internal turbulences. The change in leadership is the must requirement of Canada at this critical time period.

KIRTI WADHAWAN, KANPUR

#### **WOMEN'S AWARDS UNDER FIRE**

he recent controversy over the Chief Minister's award to a woman on Women's Day in Haryana has raised serious questions. For many years, the Mahila Awards have stood as shining symbols of recognition, highlighting women's achievements in fields where they

have often been marginalised. These awards are more than just an inspiration for inclusion, they aim to honour outstanding achievements in a society that has often overlooked women's contributions. However, the integrity of these awards is now at risk, challenged by political influences and changing cultural attitudes. The future of the Mahila Awards depends on society's ability to find a balance between fairness, recognition and inclusiveness. It is important how we honour women's achievements going forward. The Women's Awards have historically played a vital role in acknowledging and honoring female achievements in a variety of fields. Whether in literature, science, sports, or film, these awards have provided much-needed recognition in areas where women often face challenges. However, in our rapidly changing social and political climate, the significance and necessity of these awards are coming

under scrutiny. In the past, the Women's Awards represented a hard-earned acknowledgment of excellence in fields where female talent was often overlooked.

They were symbols not just of inclusion, but of resilience, determination, and pioneering success. Today, however, these awards are at risk of losing their integritynot because of a decline in women's achievements, but because their original meaning of recognition is being blurred, politicised, or discarded altogether.

At a time when inclusivity is claimed to be embraced, the unique purpose of the Women's Awards risks backfiring. Some argue that gender-specific awards should no longer exist in a society that aims for equality. But does true equality come from eliminating platforms that once amplified women's voices? Rather than creating a level playing field, we are seeing a worrying trend: the mixing, repurposing, or outright removal of awards designed to honor women's contributions.

In today's cultural climate, where representation is often prioritised, some awards have shifted the focus from true achievements to a focus on

PRIYANKA SAURABH, HISAR

# **Europe: The Unraveling of a Continent in Denial**

As the continent clings to outdated illusions of dominance, the war in Ukraine has exposed decades of strategic miscalculations and betrayals. Now, with Washington shifting priorities and internal fractures deepening, Europe faces a stark choice: reclaim sovereignty or fade into irrelevance



he spectacle that unfolded in the Oval Office of the White House last week was nothing short of a geopolitical farce-Volodymyr Zelensky, once the West's prized emissary of democracy, now reduced to a beleaguered supplicant before Donald Trump and his inner circle. The desperation in his voice was palpable as he attempted to navigate the most humiliating moment of his political career with forced composure. But Trump appeared to be sizing up the Ukrainian president for obsolescence, searching for a more pliable figure to serve American interests in Ukraine. The bitter irony of history plays out in cycles, and it seems Zelensky is now on the cusp of becoming the sacrificial lamb for the West's mounting failuresmuch like past puppets discarded when their usefulness waned.

Yet this moment is more than just an embarrassing episode for Ukraine's leader; it is emblematic of a much deeper malaise-a reckoning that Europe itself can no longer evade. The European continent, which for centuries positioned itself as the epicentre of enlightenment, democracy, and civilisation, is now teetering on the precipice of its catastrophic undoing. The Ukraine war, a conflict exacerbated by the very hands that claim to seek peace, is but a symptom of an existential crisis decades-if not centuries-in the making.

Europe's ruling elite, basking in the illusions of their hegemonic past, have orchestrated betrayal after betrayal, not only against external powers but also against their long-term survival. The great deception played on the USSR, for instance, was a masterstroke in Western duplicity. The fall of the Soviet Union was not an organic collapse but a carefully engineered dismantling, with Europe-hand in hand with the United States and Britain-undermining Moscow's geopolitical reach under the guise of partnership. Vladimir Putin himself, in his now-infamous 2007 Munich speech, laid bare the West's treachery: "What happened to the assurances given by Western partners after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are these declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said: 'The fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee. Where are these guarantees?

These assurances were nothing more than words on paper-meaningless in the grand chessboard of Western hegemony. NATO expanded, encircling Russia, reneging on every commitment, demonstrating that Europe had no intention of honouring its promises. The deliberate humiliation of Russia post-1991-the eastward march of NATO, the exploitation of Russian economic vul-



nerabilities under Western-advised 'shock therapy'-was an act of strategic subjugation. And yet, in an extraordinary twist of fate, the very forces that dismantled the USSR are now engineering their disintegration.

History is rife with European fragmentation, political betrayal, and self-inflicted wounds. The Treaty of Versailles, a document intended to secure peace after the First World War, instead laid the foundation for the Second, as European powersdrunk on their perceived victory-imposed punitive measures that sowed the seeds of future destruction. The division of Germany, the appeasement of Hitler at Munich, and the Cold War partitions across the continent all serve as testaments to the European elite's tendency to manufacture crises rather than resolve them.

The Napoleonic Wars saw Europe in constant flux, with alliances forged and broken in pursuit of hegemonic domination. The Concert of Europe, an attempt to stabilise the continent in the 19th century, ultimately disintegrated as



nationalist movements undermined its very premise. European unity has historically been an illusion-punctuated by moments of cooperation swiftly followed by bitter enmities. And yet, despite this bloodstained history, modern European leaders refuse to acknowledge the destructive cycle they are perpetuating in

Europe, shackled by its servitude to American interests, blindly followed Washington into every geopolitical quagmire-be it in Iraq, Libya, Syria, or now Ukraine-without considering the longterm consequences. The current conflict in Ukraine is not an aberration; it is the logical culmination of decades of strategic miscalculations. The EU, by choosing to weaponise Ukraine as a

imperial ambitions and battering ram against Russia rather than seeking diplomatic equilibrium, has sealed its fate. Instead of charting an independent course towards true strategic autonomy, Europe doubled down on its vassal status to the United States, believing that this alignment would ensure perpetual dominance. But as the tides shift-with Washington's attention pivoting towards Asia and Trump poised to prioritise 'America First' over NATO's European commitments-the continent is waking up to a grim reality: it has no viable future without a fundamental realignment.

The past century has been a cycle of European duplicity-not only against Russia but also against the Global South. Latin America, Africa, and Asia suffered under colonial plunder and economic subjugation, all dressed in the language of progress. The European elite, now feigning moral righteousness in Ukraine, were the very architects of untold misery across the world. France still holds African nations in a monetary stranglehold through the CFA franc, Britain continues to exert

undue influence in its former colonies, and European financial institutions dictate the economic policies of entire regions. The same Europe that lectures Russia on sovereignty had no qualms about redrawing borders, toppling governments, and instigating wars to maintain its

But this project is now crumbling under its contradictions. The rise of multipolarity-with China, Russia, and the Global South forging alternative economic and political alliances-signals the twilight of Western supremacy. Europe, so accustomed to imposing its will on others, now finds itself adrift: incapable of self-reliance, bereft of true leadership, and, most damningly, out of time.

Macron's recent overtures regarding European nuclear deterrence-an implicit admission that American security guarantees are no longer sacrosanct-reveal a bloc scrambling for existential answers. Yet even now, the European elite refuse to acknowledge their culpability in this crisis. Instead of introspection, they escalate their reckless adventurism, funnelling billions into Ukraine in a deluded attempt to 'bleed Russia dry'a strategy eerily reminiscent of Cold War-era hubris, but one that now imperils Europe itself.

As a result, inflation, energy crises, deindustrialisation, and mounting social unrest are becoming the new normal. The EU, having sanctioned itself into economic paralysis, is watching its industrial base erode while American corporations feast on the carcass of what was once the world's most formidable economic bloc. Germany, the economic engine of Europe, is faltering under the weight of its self-imposed dependence on American diktats. The Franco-German axislong heralded as the linchpin of European unityis fracturing under competing interests. Southern Europe resents Northern Europe's austerity, Eastern Europe is increasingly questioning Brussels' authority, and Britain has already jumped ship.

This is Europe's moment of reckoning. It must either embrace true emancipation-breaking free from the yoke of outdated political dominion, reconciling with Russia, and forging a future dictated by its sovereign interests-or continue its descent into irrelevance. The choice is stark. The EU can either learn from history or become its latest tragic casualty.

The lesson of the USSR should not be lost on Europe. Superpowers do not fall in a day-they rot from within, weakened by arrogance, strategic miscalculations, and a failure to adapt to shifting geopolitical realities. Europe stands at that precipice now. The only question that remains is whether it dares to step back before the abyss swal-

(The (The writer is a journalist and a policy analyst. Views expressed are personal)

# How Three New Societies Are Shielding Agriculture from Global Trade Shocks

→ he world is witnessing a major realignment in global trade as the US tariff war disrupts supply chains and reshapes agricultural exports. Countries that once relied on established trade routes are now facing uncertainty, forcing them to look for alternative suppliers. In this evolving landscape, many fear that India's agriculture exports might be affected, but the reality is different. India is not just insulated from these shocks; it is positioned to thrive. The reason behind this resilience lies in a historic transformation—the creation of three new multistate cooperative societies.

These cooperatives are more than just policy initiatives, they are a strategic shield, ensuring that Indian farmers, agribusinesses, and exporters do not become victims of global trade volatility. Instead of fearing disruptions, India is using this moment to expand its global agricultural footprint, leveraging the power of cooperatives to make its exports stronger, more competitive, and more farmer-centric. The US has been engaged in a prolonged trade war, particularly with China and the European Union.

American tariffs on Chinese goods led to retaliatory measures, including high tariffs on US agricultural products such as soybeans, corn, and pork. These policies disrupted global supply chains, forcing importing countries to search for new suppliers. Historically, such trade wars create volatility, where smaller agricultural exporters struggle to compete with larger economies.

Many feared that India, which is still building its export infrastructure, might lose out in the global realignment. However, this time, India has turned the challenge into an opportunity-by strategically strengthening its cooperative economic framework to ensure that Indian agriculture emerges stronger, not weaker.

The government's bold decision to establish three new multistate cooperative societies has changed the game for Indian agriculture exports. These cooperatives are not just support structures; they are economic engines, ensuring that Indian farmers and agri-businesses are directly connected to global markets without dependency on middlemen or volatile international policies. The National Multi-State Cooperative Export Society is the backbone of India's new export strategy, enabling farmers to directly participate in exports, giving them better prices, and eliminating exploitative middlemen.

By standardising quality, improving logistics, and ensuring compliance with global trade requirements, this cooperative will make India a reliable alternative to disrupted supply chains elsewhere. The National Multi-State Cooperative Organic Society will capitalise on the growing demand for organic and chemical-free produce, helping Indian farmers secure premium prices

in global trade. This structured, cooperativedriven supply chain will allow India to emerge as a leading supplier of organic food. The National Multi-State Cooperative Seed Society will strengthen both domestic productivity and India's growing seed export market by ensuring that farmers have access to high-quality, export-

By reducing dependency on foreign seed corporations, India will minimise trade risks and position itself as a global leader in agricultural



inputs. Unlike previous trade disruptions where Indian farmers suffered from price fluctuations, this time, India is protected by a cooperative-led economic framework that ensures direct market access, diversified global partnerships, and better price stability.

With cooperatives facilitating direct exports, India's agricultural trade is

less dependent on traditional intermediaries, making it immune to tariff shocks. While many countries struggle due to over-dependence on the US or China, India has expanded trade agreements with the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, ensuring multiple market opportunities. By focusing on processed and high-value agricultural goods, India is building a resilient trade model that rithstands market fluctuations.

Moreover, removing middlemen and securing better trade deals through cooperatives guarantees that farmers are not at the mercy of international price crashes. The rising global demand for organic and speciality agricultural imports further strengthens India's position as a key supplier, allowing the country to fill the supply gaps created by disrupted trade routes. While many countries are struggling with the effects of the US tariff war, India is building a future-proof agricultural

The creation of these three multistate cooperatives is not just a response to global trade challenges—it is a proactive step towards making India the world's next agricultural export powerhouse. By embracing cooperative-led trade, direct farmer participation, and a strong focus on value addition, India is proving that no tariff war can derail its agricultural success story.

Instead of being vulnerable to shifting trade policies, Indian farmers are now in control, charting a new course for global leadership in agriculture. This transformation is not just about increasing exports; it is about reshaping the very foundation of India's rural economy through cooperation. As the world looks for stable, reliable,

and high-quality agricultural suppliers, Indiapowered by its new cooperative revolution—stands ready to meet this demand. However, the success of this model will depend on the cooperation among cooperatives, ensuring that they work in harmony to create a seamless economic framework that benefits farmers at every level. The cooperative economic framework is not just about collective trade-it is about collective

It is a movement that redefines how India participates in global trade, ensuring that its farmers are not just contributors but decision-makers in the global agricultural economy. By fostering deeper collaboration between cooperatives, ensuring knowledge-sharing, and building an ecosystem of trust, India is setting an example for the world on how cooperation can drive economic strength.

#### Conclusion

India's response to global trade disruptions is not just defensive—it is transformative. By establishing three powerful multistate cooperative societies, the country has ensured that its agricultural exports are resilient, competitive, and farmer-dri-

These cooperatives are more than economic instruments; they are a strategic shield that insulates Indian agriculture from tariff shocks and volatile global policies. Instead of relying on traditional supply chains, India is proactively building new trade alliances, particularly in the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia. By focusing on high-value and organic products, streamlining logistics, and removing exploitative middlemen, the country is positioning itself as a reliable glob-

The National Multi-State Cooperative Export, Organic, and Seed Societies collectively empower farmers, giving them direct market access and better price stability.

As the world searches for stable agricultural partners, India is emerging as a global leader, proving that cooperative-led trade is the key to sustainable growth. This is not just about increasing exports; it is about reshaping India's rural economy and ensuring that farmers are at the center of global trade. The cooperative movement is India's answer to economic resilience, making its agriculture future-proof.

This is not just a policy shift; it is a transformation that will define the future of Indian agriculture for decades to come. Cooperation is not just a principle—it is the foundation of India's new economic resilience.

Jai Kisan! Jai Cooperative Movement!

(The writer was a member of the high level MSP committee, linistry of Agriculture. Views expressed are personal

# The Qualities That **Shape Our Destiny**

**RAJYOGI** 

BRAHMKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

ccording to scriptures, there are about 36 divine qualities (36 Gunas), and if one does not have any one of these divine qualities, then it means he/she has the opposite-the demoniacal qualities-which, as everyone knows, result in peacelessness, disease, sorrow, and suffering. Most people do not yet know that the absence of one or the other divine quality is the

cause of one or the other kind of human misery.

They, therefore, try to find out its cause in the political, economic, cultural, or social system. The truth, however, is that positive or negative qualities manifest themselves through human behaviour or human activity, whether it be a political, economic, cultural, or social activity. One should, therefore, try to trace the negativity and work for positivity in human behaviour rather than search for the cause elsewhere.

The present society has made marvellous progress in various fields, but emotionally, it is much weaker.

Man has not been able to control his impulsiveness, ambitions, anger, and anxiety. There is thus a lot of imbalance created by rapid and great advancement in science and technology on the one hand and a lack or absence of parallel progress in emotional maturity, self-control, and ethical abilities on the other hand.

This has resulted in many problems that we are facing today. It can thus be said that the qualities in man determine the quality of his life and his peaceful and happy, or peaceless and sorrowful state. But it is a pity that man has been trying to find happiness in ruling over big territories, possessing a lot of property or wealth, and having a great many comforts.

He has, therefore, been making efforts to have economic prosperity even by adopting demoniac qualities. He has been trying to achieve success, name and fame, or political and economic power even if his soul had to give up the divine qualities and resort to negative or demoniacal qualities. This has led to the corruption of the soul. degeneration of society, and peacelessness and suffering of various kinds.

If we accept this analysis of our present predicament, then we have to admit that we have had a fall in moral values and divine qualities, and what we require today is to extricate and uplift ourselves from this situation with the help of education that can restore the divine qualities in us. Our other efforts to make the world a better place to live in would be of no avail unless and until there is a qualitative change in our nature and

Complete peace, it should be remembered,

comes from complete purity or full-fledged divine nature. Even a fraction of one demoniacal quality leads to a lessening of peace in that pro-

It should also be noted that demoniacal qualities have linkages among themselves, even as divine qualities are connected among themselves and strengthen and sustain each other. So,

portion, if not more.

liberation from one negative quality leads to at least some liberation from other negative qualities. Thus, even our little effort to inculcate, in ourselves, some divine qualities ultimately leads to a great overall change in our nature and results in enhancement in the quality of our

inner happiness. In the current state of the world, where materialism is often prioritized over spiritual growth, the loss of divine qualities has become more evident. People are increasingly finding themselves trapped in cycles of stress, competition, and dissatisfaction, despite

their material success. This is because material achievements, while significant, cannot replace the profound peace and contentment that come from living a life grounded in divine principles. The more we focus on accumulating wealth and power at the expense of our inner values, the more we drift away from true happiness. Moreover, demoniacal qualities such as greed, envy, and pride not only harm the individual but also have a ripple effect on society as a whole. They lead to corruption, injustice, and conflicts that disrupt social harmony and undermine collective well-being. In contrast, divine qualities like compassion, humility, and selflessness create an environment where mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation can flourish. This, in turn, lays the foundation for a society that is not only prosperous but also peaceful and just.

One must, therefore, in one's interest and in the interest of building a better world, pay attention to the task of restoration of divine qualities and elimination of devilish qualities or negative traits. In this lies not only the hope for our liberation but also the key to improving the overall conditions of the world.

To conclude, the true happiness and peace stem from divine qualities, not material success. The pursuit of wealth and power at the expense of inner values leads to suffering and societal decay. By cultivating compassion, humility, and selflessness, we can restore harmony, uplift humanity, and create a just, peaceful world for future generations.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist. Views expressed are personal)

# WORLD 08

# Ukrainian launches biggest drone attack on Russia in three years

## Russian air defences shoot down 337 drones over 10 regions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Moscow

→he Russian military said its air defences shot down 337 Ukrainian drones over 10 Russian regions overnight in what appears to be the biggest Ukrainian drone attack on Russia in three years, hours before key Ukraine-US talks were to start on Tuesday.

The attack, which killed one person and wounded several, came as a Ukrainian delegation was to meet with America's top diplomat in Saudi Arabia about ending the three-year war with Russia

There was no immediate comment from Ukrainian officials on the attack.

The talks in Saudi Arabia reflect a new diplomatic push after an unprecedented argument erupted during President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's February 28 visit to the White House.

Most of the drones — 126 of them were shot down over the Kursk region across the border from Ukraine, parts of which Kyiv's forces control, and 91 were shot down over the Moscow region, according to a statement by Russia's Defence Ministry.

Other regions listed in the statement included Belgorod, Bryansk and Voronezh on the border with Ukraine and those deeper inside Russia, such as Kaluga, Lipetsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Oryol and Ryazan. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said over 70 drones targeted the Russian capital and were shot down as they were flying toward it.

The governor of the Moscow region surrounding the capital, Andrei Vorobyov, said that one person was killed and nine



This photo released by Moscow Region Governor Andrei Vorobyev official telegram channel shows damaged and burnt cars following a Ukrainian drone attack in Domodedovo, outside Moscow, Russia on Tuesday

were wounded in the attack, which also damaged several residential buildings and a number of cars. Another person was wounded on a highway in the Lipetsk region, Gov. Igor Artamonov said.

Sobyanin said the roof of a building in Moscow also sustained damage, which he described as "insignificant".

Footage of the building, published by RIA Novosti, showed a charred spot on the facade of a multi-story residential building near the roof, with bits of the building's lining stripped off.

Flights have been temporarily restrict-

ed in and out of six airports, including Domodedovo, Vnukovo, Sheremetyevo and Zhukovsky just outside Moscow, and airports in the Yaroslavl and Nizhny Novgorod regions.

Train traffic through the Domodedovo railway station in the Moscow region has also been briefly halted, local officials reported.

Local authorities also reported downing drones in the Tula and Vladimir regions adjacent to the Moscow region. It wasn't immediately clear why those regions weren't mentioned in the Defence

In the Saudi city of Jeddah, there was no immediate US response to the drone barrage as Secretary of State Marco Rubio and his delegation, including national securitv adviser Mike Waltz, were preparing to meet Zelenskyy's team.

Ukraine is expected to propose a ceasefire covering the Black Sea and long-range missile strikes, as well as the release of prisoners, according to two senior Ukrainian officials.

The officials also said Kyiv is ready to sign an agreement with the United States on access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals a deal that US President Donald Trump is keen to secure.

On his plane to Jeddah, Rubio said the US delegation would not be proposing any specific measures to secure an end to the three-year conflict but rather wanted to hear from Ukraine about what they would be willing to consider.

"I'm not going to set any conditions on what they have to or need to do," Rubio told reporters accompanying him. "I think we want to listen to see how far they're willing to go and then compare that to what the Russians want and see how far apart we truly are." Rubio said the rare earths and critical minerals deal could be signed during the meeting but stressed it was not a precondition for the United States to move ahead with discussions with either Ukraine or the Russians.

He said it may, in fact, make more sense to take some time to negotiate the precise details of the agreement, which is now a broad memorandum of understanding that leaves out many specifics.

# **UK** fears environmental damage as ships burn after North Sea collision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

ritish officials were concerned about possible environmental damage on Tuesday and looking for answers a day after a cargo ship carrying a toxic chemical hit a tanker transporting jet fuel for the US military off eastern England, setting both vessels ablaze.

Jet fuel from a ruptured tank poured into the North Sea after the Portugal-registered container ship Solong broadsided the US-flagged tanker MV Stena Immaculate

The collision sparked explosions and fires that burned for 24 hours. Footage filmed from a helicopter on Tuesday morning showed the fire appeared to be out on the tanker, which had a large gash on its port side.

British government minister Matthew Pennycook said it was a "fast-moving and dynamic situation".

He said air quality readings were normal and the coast guards "are wellequipped to contain and disperse any oil spills", with equipment including booms deployed from vessels to stop oil spreading, and aircraft that can spray dispersants

The collision triggered a major rescue operation by lifeboats, coast guard aircraft and commercial vessels in the foggy North Sea.

All but one of the 37 crew members from the two vessels were brought ashore in the port of Grimsby, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) north of London, with one hospitalised. One crew member was missing, and the coast guards suspended the search late Monday.

UK Marine accident investigators have begun gathering evidence of what caused the Solong, bound from Grangemouth in

Scotland to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, to hit the stationary tanker, which was anchored some 10 miles (16 kilometers) off the English coast.

The investigation will be led by the US and Portugal, the countries where the vessels are flagged.

The 183 metre (596 foot) Stena Immaculate was operating as part of the US government's Tanker Security Program, a group of commercial vessels that can be contracted to carry fuel for the military when needed.

Its operator, US-based maritime management firm Crowley, said it was carrying 220,000 barrels of Jet-A1 fuel in 16 tanks, at least one of which was ruptured. The company said it was unclear how

much fuel had leaked into the sea. The Solong's cargo included sodium

cyanide, which can produce harmful gas when combined with water, according to industry publication Lloyd's List Intelligence. It was unclear if there had been a leak.

Greenpeace UK said it was too early to assess the extent of any environmental damage from the collision, which took place near busy fishing grounds and major seabird colonies. Énvironmentalists said oil and chemi-

cals posed a risk to sea life including whales

and dolphins and to birds, including puffins, gannets and guillemots that live on coastal cliffs. Tom Webb, senior lecturer in marine

ecology and conservation at the University of Sheffield, said wildlife along that stretch of coast "is of immense biological, cultural and economic importance". "In addition to the wealth of marine life

that is present all year round, this time of the year is crucial for many migratory

# EU says members must use defence loan to buy European, not American

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Brussels

¬ uropean Union countries must purchase military equipment made in Europe under a new loan programme meant to help the continent provide for its own security, a top EU official said Tuesday, even though most of its defence materiel currently comes from US suppliers. At a summit last week, the EU's 27

leaders weighed a European Commission proposal for a new loan plan worth 150 billion euros (USD 163

It would be used to buy air defence systems, drones and "strategic enablers" like air transport, as well as to boost cybersecurity.

 $P_{\text{news}}^{\text{ope Francis woke up Tuesday to good}} \\ \text{news} \quad \text{from } \quad \text{his doctors: They} \\$ 

upgraded his prognosis and say he is no

longer in imminent danger of death as a

result of the double pneumonia that has

kept him hospitalized for nearly a month

in the longest and gravest threat to his

woods yet, however. Doctors are still

cautious and have decided to keep him

hospitalised for several more days to

receive treatment, not to mention a

period of rehabilitation he will likely

But the doctors said he remains stable

and has consolidated improvements in

recent days, according to blood tests and

his good response to treatment. Francis,

who has chronic lung disease, is still

The 88-year-old pope isn't out of the

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

12-year papacy.

"These loans should finance purchases from European producers, to help boost our own defence industry, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told EU lawmakers.

Von der Leyen said the "contracts should be multiannual, to give the industry the predictability they need' and that the priority should be for countries to buy equipment together in groups "because we have seen how powerful this can be".

European NATO members have placed about two-thirds of their orders with US companies in recent years, but they are being spurred into action by the Trump administration's warnings that they will have to provide for their own security, and Ukraine's, in future.

Pope no longer in immediate danger, says doctors

help him breathe.

using supplemental oxygen during the day and a ventilation mask at night to

said Francis woke up around 8 am after a

quiet night. The Argentine Jesuit has

regularly been sleeping in while at

Gemelli hospital, given his usual wakeup

"guarded" prognosis for the pope,

meaning they determined he was no

longer in imminent danger as a result of

the original respiratory infection he

arrived with on Feb. 14. But their caution

remained, given Francis' fragility and

clinical picture and the important

infectious picture presented on

admission, it will be necessary to

continue medical drug therapy in a

"In view of the complexity of the

risks of other complications.

Late Monday, doctors lifted their

time at the Vatican is around 4:30 am.

In an early update Tuesday, the Vatican

France wants the commission to put more money into the loan plan and has also insisted that it should only be spent in Europe. Spain, one of five countries using the euro single currency with a debt level of over 100 per cent, wants free grants rather than loans.

 $E\bar{U}$  leaders are due to endorse the loan plan, which the commission believes would benefit around 20 countries whose borrowing costs would be higher than that of the executive branch, at another summit late next week.

It's part of a package of measures including an easing of budget rules for defense spending and a reshuffling of EU money – that the commission hopes could generate up to 800 billion euros (USD 874 billion) for security priorities.

hospital setting for additional days," the

In a sign of his improved health,

Francis followed the Vatican's weeklong

spiritual retreat via videoconference on

Monday in both the morning and

afternoon sessions, something he was

likely to continue to do through the

The retreat, an annual gathering that

kicks off the Catholic Church's solemn

Lenten season leading to Easter,

continues through Friday. The Vatican

has said Francis would participate "in

spiritual communion" with the rest of the

Francis could see and hear the Rev.

Roberto Pasolini, preacher of the papal

household, but the priests, bishops,

cardinals and nuns gathered for the

retreat in the Vatican auditorium could

Vatican statement said.

hierarchy, from afar.

not see or hear him.

week.

# Chinese parliament's annual meet ends amid rumours over missing Chairman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

The annual meeting of the Chinese parliament ended with rumours swirling around the absence of its chairman Zhao Leji and concerns over the slowing economy amid Trump's tariff war as well as sluggish domestic consumption.

Curtains came down on the week-long annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC) on Tuesday as about 3,000 lawmakers much on the expected lines endorsed the government work report, the budget, besides the 2025 plan for national economic and social development. The annual session attended by Chinese

President Xi Jinping, who also heads the Communist Party and the country's military, ended on a note of uncertainty over the absence of Zhao since Monday.

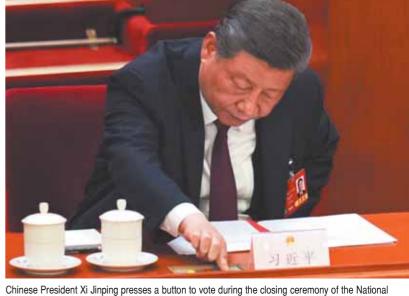
However, it was officially clarified Zhao, 68, was absent because of "respiratory tract infection".

For the first time in recent history, the chairman of China's top legislative body was absent at the closing of its parliamentary meeting, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

It is also the first time in decades that the NPC closing meeting was not attended by all Politburo Standing Committee members, it said.

On Monday, Zhao was also absent from the closing of the annual session of the advisory body of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which also holds its meeting every year along the NPC.

Zhao, chairman of the NPC and former secretary of the powerful anti-corruption body, is ranked third after Xi and Premier Li Qiang in the hierarchy of the powerful seven-member Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC).



People's Congress held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday.

However, CPC's power structures declined in stature under Xi who is in his unprecedented third five-year term following his designation as the core leader of the party, next only to the party founder Mao

For the second year, Premier Li's annual press conference, a long-standing practice at the end of the NPC meeting, has been scrapped.

It has been a political norm for all the top leaders of the CPC to attend the opening and closing ceremonies of the annual NPC and CPPCC sessions, known as the two sessions since the 1980s, as political endorsement of the national legislative and political advisory sessions, according to the

The annual event also serves as a platform for party and government bosses to hear the views of Chinese elites outside the party regarding China's most pressing issues.

The parliamentary session also ended on a note of concern over Trump's tariff war against China and his strategic pivot against Beijing with overtures to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who shared a close alliance with Xi over the years, especially after his Ukraine war.

While negotiating with Trump to end the Ukraine war, Putin is also constantly in touch with Xi, assuring his commitment to continue China-Russia friendship.

# **Indian student goes missing** in Dominican Republic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

20-year-old Indian student has gone missing while on vacation in the Dominican Republic and US federal law enforcement agencies are working with authorities in the Caribbean country in the probe into her disappearance.

Sudiksha Konanki is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States. A student at the University of Pittsburgh, Konanki was vacationing with five female college friends at a resort in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, when she went missing on March 6, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office said in a statement Monday.

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) said it continues to assist and support the US federal law enforcement agencies working with the Dominican National Police and others to determine Konanki's whereabouts and what may have happened

Konanki was on a spring break trip in Punta Cana and was last seen in the early

morning of March 6. "The ongoing investigation includes wideranging search efforts, along with a review of surveillance video and telephone records. Interviews are also continuing with anyone who may have seen or been with Konanki before she went missing," the LCSO statement said. The statement said the LCSO has filed for a Yellow Notice (worldwide police alert for a missing person) to be issued by

A report in ABC News said three Dominican officials involved in the investigation told the outlet "over the weekend that Konanki is believed to have drowned in the ocean". The LCSO cautioned against drawing any unsubstantiated conclusions, saying there has been considerable public speculation about what may have happened to Konanki and who may be involved.

"We caution anyone from drawing any unsubstantiated conclusions and are committed to ensuring that a thorough investigation is conducted before any conclusions are reached," it said.

The LCSO said it is hopeful for Konanki's safe return and "we are committed to supporting this investigation and her family in every way possible". The LCSO is working closely with federal partners at the US Department of State, FBI,

DEA, Homeland Security Investigations

(HSI), and the University of Pittsburgh

Police concerning the ongoing investigation

by the Dominican National Police.

Pakistan Ambassador to Turkmenistan deported from Los Angeles: Report PRESS TRUST OF INDIA | Islamabad

→he US authorities denied entry to Pakistan's ambassador Turkmenistan and deported him from Los Angeles, a media report said on

Ambassador KK Wagan, who holds a valid US visa and all necessary travel documents, was stopped at Los Angeles airport US immigration authorities, The News quoted diplomatic

sources as saying. "Ambassador KK Wagan was deported from the US. He had an immigration objection which led to his deportation," a senior foreign ministry official said.

The officials forced him to return to his last port of departure, raising concerns about diplomatic protocol and the nature of the decision.

Foreign Office confirmed the envoy had gone to the US on a private visit. It said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was looking into the matter and an

investigation was underway. The Foreign Office also advised avoiding any speculation in the matter. Earlier, sources said the US immigration system flagged Wagan over "controversial visa references", leading to his immediate deportation.

# Former Philippine leader Duterte held on International Criminal Court warrant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manila

¶ormer Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested by police at Manila's international airport Tuesday on order of the International Criminal Court in connection with a case of crime against humanity filed against him, the Philippine government said.

Duterte was arrested after arriving from Hong Kong and police took him into custody on orders of the ICC, which has been investigating the massive killings that happened under the former president's deadly crackdown against illegal drugs. President Ferdinand Marcos' office said in a statement.

The ICC launched an investigation into drug killings under Duterte from Nov. 1, 2011, when he was still mayor of the southern city of Davao, to March 16, 2019, as possible crimes against humanity.

Duterte withdrew the Philippines in 2019 from the Rome Statute in a move human rights activists say was aimed at

escaping accountability over the killings. The Duterte administration moved to suspend the global court's investigation in late 2021 by arguing that Philippine authorities were already looking into the



court of last resort — didn't have jurisdic-

Appeals judges at the ICC ruled in July 2023 the investigation could resume and rejected the Duterte administration's objections. Based in The Hague, the Netherlands, the ICC can step in when countries are unwilling or unable to prosecute suspects in the most heinous international crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

succeeded Duterte in 2022 and became entangled in a bitter political dispute with the former president, has decided not to rejoin the global court.

But the Marcos administration has said it would cooperate if the ICC asks international police to take Duterte into custody through a so-called Red Notice, a request for law enforcement agencies worldwide to locate and temporarily arrest a crime suspect.

# WORLD 09

# Trump overstepped his authority in freezing funding for USAID: Judge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

resident Donald Trump overstepped his constitutional authority in freezing P constitutional authority almost all spending on US humanitarian and development work abroad, a federal judge ruled, saying the administration could no longer simply sit on the tens of billions of dollars that Congress has appropriated for foreign aid.

But Judge Amir H Ali stopped short of ordering Trump officials to use the money to revive the thousands of contracts they have abruptly terminated for US aid and development work around the world.

Ali's ruling Monday evening came hours after Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that the administration had finished what has been a six-week purge of programmes of the six-decade-old US Agency for International Development, cutting 83% of them. Rubio said he would move the remaining aid programmes under the State Department. Rubio made his announcement in a post on X, in one of his few public comments on what has been a historic shift away from US foreign aid and development, executed by Trump political appointees at the State Department and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency teams. Rubio in the post thanked DOGE and "our hardworking staff who worked very long hours to achieve this overdue and historic reform" in foreign aid.

Trump on Jan 20 issued an executive order

third-most

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Islamabad

resulting health issues.

the report noted.

microns during November.

recommended limits.

Evaluation, reported Dawn.

Pakistan ranks

polluted country

akistan ranked the third most polluted country in 2024

when it faced unprecedented smog, according to a report

on Tuesday. According to Swiss air technology company IQAir's 2024 World Air Quality Report, Chad topped the rankings for the most polluted country, followed by Bangladesh,

Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and then India,

Pakistan last year witnessed unprecedented smog levels, espe-

cially in Punjab, where the situation was declared a "calami-

ty" and around two million people had to seek treatment for

including imposing lockdowns and closing schools.

The government took various steps to combat pollution,

For Pakistan, the average concentration of particles less than

2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) was 73.7 micrograms per cubic

metre (μg/m ) — nearly 15 times higher than the safe levels

set by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the report said.

lution last year remained the same as in 2023, it added.

Interestingly, despite the record smog, Pakistan's average pol-

In the Central and South Asia region, Pakistan ranked sec-

ond - just behind Bangladesh - with Lahore, Multan,

Peshawar and Sialkot among the 15 most polluted cities in the

region. "Pakistan faces persistently high levels of pollution from

various sources, including biomass burning, industrial activ

ities, vehicular emissions, brick kilns, and construction dust,"

Compared to 2023, Peshawar, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and

On the other hand, the PM2.5 readings for Karachi

The report said five Pakistani cities saw levels rise above 200

The study was based on "more than 40,000 air quality mon-

About seven in 10 people in Pakistan faced health issues

itoring stations across 8,954 locations in 138 countries, terri-

tories, and regions analysed by IQAir's air quality scientists".

because of smog, according to a report by international insights

firm Ipsos. Readings for Chad were 18 times higher than WHO

safe levels, while those for India were 10 times more than the

Air pollution — atmospheric and domestic — was the main

environmental risk to health in 2021, responsible for 8.1 mil-

lion premature deaths worldwide, according to estimates in the

"State of Global Air 2024" report carried out by the Health

Effects Institute and the Institute for Health Metrics and

12 dead, dozens hurt as

bus overturns on

Johannesburg, emergency services said.

because of the fatalities, Nthladi said.

Lahore witnessed a spike in their annual average readings, while

declined from over 55 micrograms per cubic metre in 2023 to

Faisalabad saw a negligible rise, according to the report.

around 46 micrograms per cubic metre in 2024.

in 2024: Report

directing a freeze of foreign assistance funding and a review of all US aid and development work abroad. Trump charged that much of foreign assistance was wasteful and advanced a liberal agenda.

Rubio's social media post Monday said that review was now "officially ending," with some 5,200 of USAID's 6,200 programmes eliminated. Those programmes "spent tens of billions of dollars in ways that did not serve, (and in some cases even harmed), the core national interests of the United States," Rubio wrote. About 1,000 remaining contracts would now be administered by the State Department, he said.

Democratic lawmakers and others call the shutdown of congressionally funded programmes illegal, saying such a move requires Congress' approval. In his preliminary injunction Monday, Ali said Trump could not simply ignore most of what is roughly \$60 billion in foreign assistance funding that was given to USAID and State by Congress, which under the US Constitution has the authority to spend money.

"The constitutional power over whether to spend foreign aid is not the President's own and it is Congress's own," Ali wrote, adding elsewhere that Trump officials "offer an unbridled view of Executive power that the Supreme Court has consistently rejected".

But Ali declined the request from nonprofit groups and businesses to revive the cancelled contracts for foreign assistance work around the world, saying it was up to the administration to make decisions on specific contracts. The mass contract cancellations also were a separate matter than the funding freeze that two global health groups, the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition and the Global Health Council, had originally gone to court to challenge, he said.

Ali also ordered Trump officials to pay all of the roughly \$2 billion it owed to aid groups and businesses up to mid-February, and ordered them to do it at a pace of at least 300

Despite claims from the administration it was continuing to fund at least life-saving programmes in its foreign aid freeze, USAID staffers and the agency's nonprofit and business partners say all payments through USAID were cut off until recently, and that USAID's payment system itself disabled by Musk's DOGE.

had rejected the Trump administration's appeal in the case.

USAID supporters said the sweep of the cuts have made it difficult to tell what US efforts abroad the Trump administration actually supports.

administration does not support democracy programmes, they don't support civil society... they don't support NGO programmes," or health or emergency response, said Andrew Natsios, the USAID administrator for Republican former President George W

#### "MAMTA" Plot No. 5, PSP Pocket

Sector-8, Dwarka, New Delhi Tel: 011-45681521 / 8383818700 FOUND CHILDREN-DISPLACED FROM PARENTS Name: Prateek



Sex : Male DOB:25/05/2020 DOA: 21/06/2024 Complexion: Wheatish Height:96 cm

If anyone has any information of the child please contact

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

& Smt. Rishu Kumar owner of the SECON FLOOR WITHOUT ROOF RIGHT PROPERT FLOOR WITHOUT ROOF RIGHT PROPERTY NO-1-72 AREA 100 SQYARDS KHASRA NO-435, NAWADA, MOHAN GARDEN BLOCK-J, UTTAM NAGAR NEW BELH-110059 and Smt. Deepti Kumar & Smt. Rishu Kumar purchased aforesaid property from 5n. Khem Chand vide notarized GPA, ATS ad Will dated 11.02.2022, hereafter 5mt. Deepti Kumar & Smt. Rishu Kumar executed Self Sale deed registered as doc no.2025/25/15/337,dated 21.02.2025, and he have also not original Survivor certificate of 5mt. Shanti Devi. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 8 days of this publication.

#### KOVALAM INVESTMENT AND TRADING COMPANY LIMITED

#### CIN: L65910PB1981PLC023058

Regd. Office: Premises Oswal Woollen Mills Limited, G.T. Road, Sherpur, Ludhiana-141003 PB, Ph.: +91-161-5066605, www.owmnahar.com/kovalam, E-mail: kovalam@owmnahar.com

#### **NOTICE OF POSTAL BALL**OT

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the provisions of Sections 110 and 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 ("the Act") read with rules made thereunder, Regulation 44 of Securities and Exchange Board of Índia (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements Regulations, 2015 ("SEBI Listing Regulations") read with various circulars including latest General Circular No. 09/2024 dated September 19, 2024 issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (the "MCA Circulars") for seeking approval of the Members of the the Kovalam Investment and Trading Company Limited ("the Company") by way of special Resolutions for the Special Businesses items set out in the Postal Ballot Notice along with Explanatory Statement which has been sent electronically to the Members whose email address is registered with the Depositories/Depository Participant(s), Registrar and Share Transfer Agent viz. Alankit Assignments Limited and the Company, as on Friday, March 07 2025, i.e. the Cut-off date. The Company has completed electronic dispatch of the Postal Ballot Notice on Tuesday, March 11, 2025.

The Postal Ballot Notice is available on the Company's website at www.owmnahar.com website of Stock Exchange i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and the said notice is also available at the CDSL's website at www.evotingindia.com. Members who have not received the Postal Ballot Notice may download it from the above-mentioned websites. The documents referred to in the Postal Ballot Notice are available for inspection electronically. Instructions for remote e-voting:

In accordance with the MCA Circulars, the Company is providing to its Members, the facility to exercise their right to vote on the resolution proposed in the said Postal Ballot Notice by electronic means ("remote e-voting") only and hard copies of Postal Ballot Notice along with Postal Ballot Forms and pre-paid Business envelope will not be sent to the Members fo this Postal Ballot. The communication of the assent and dissent of the Members would take place through remote e-voting process only. The Company has engaged the services of CDSL as the agency for providing e-voting facility. The voting through electronic mode shall commence from Friday, March 14, 2025 (09:00 A.M.) and shall ends on Monday, April 14, 2025 (05:00 P.M.)

E-voting will not be allowed beyond the aforesaid date and time and the remote e-voting module shall be disabled by CDSL for voting thereafter.

Manner of remote e-voting by Members holding shares in dematerialized form, physical form and for Members who have not registered their email addresses and process of temporary registration of email address have been provided in the Postal Ballot Notice. A person, whose name is recorded in the Register of Members/List of Beneficial Owners as

on the Cut-off date shall only be considered eligible for the purpose of remote e-voting Voting rights shall be in proportion to the paid up equity share capital of the Company as on Cut-off date. A person who is not a Member as on the Cut-off date shall treat this notice for information purpose only.

#### Manner of registering/updating email addresses:

i. For Members holding shares in physical form- Please provide necessary details like Folio No., Name of shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), PAN (self-attested scanned copy of PAN card), AADHAR (self-attested scanned copy of Aadhar Card) along with Form ISR-1 prescribed by SEBI vide Circular no. SEBI/HO/MIRSD/MIRSD\_RTAMB/P/CIR/2021/655 dated 03.11.2021 the latest being SEBI Circulars March 16, 2023, May 17, 2023 and November 17, 2023 by email to Company at kovalam@owmnahar.com or to the RTA at virenders@alankit.com. The said form is available on the website of the Company i.e. www.owmnahar.com under Investors section. ii. For Members holding shares in Demat form- Please update your email id & mobile no with your respective Depository Participant (DP)

The resolutions, if approved by the Members of the Company shall be deemed to have been passed on the last date of e-voting i.e. Monday, April 14, 2025. The result of e-voting shall be declared, within two working days from the last date of e-voting i.e., on or before Wednesday, April 16, 2025 (05:00 P.M. IST) and will be updated along with Scrutinizer's Report on company's website i.e. www.owmnahar.com and on CDSL's website i.e www.evotingindia.com and on BSE website: www.bseindia.com.

M/s P.S. Dua & Associates, Practicing Company Secretaries (CP No. 3934) has been appointed as the Scrutinizer for conducting the Postal Ballot process through e-voting mechanism only in a fair and transparent manner.

Members who have any queries or issues regarding remote e-Voting from the CDSL e Voting System, you may contact Mr. Rakesh Dalvi, Sr. Manager, (CDSL.) Central Depository Services (India) Limited, A Wing, 25th Floor, Marathon Futurex, Mafatlal Mill Compounds, N M Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (East), Mumbai - 400013 or send an email to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com or call toll free no. 1800 21 099 11 or contact Ms. Jyoti Sud, Company Secretary and Compliance Officer of the Company, Premises Oswal Woollen Mills Ltd, G.T. Road, Sherpur, Ludhiana-141003 Ph. 0161-5066605, Email:

By order of the Board of Directors For Kovalam Investment and Trading Company Limited

Place: Ludhiana Date: March 11, 2025

(Jvoti Sud) **Company Secretary** 

# **Syrian Kurds celebrate deal with Damascus**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Qamishli (Syria)

n the city of Qamishli in northeast Syria, revellers took to the streets after the announcement of a breakthrough deal between the central government in Damascus and local Kurdish-led authorities, dancing and chanting "One, one, one — the Syrian people are one," as cars drove by honking in celebration. The scenes of elation following Monday night's declaration came in sharp contrast to the grim scenes in coastal communities wrecked by days of clashes that broke out last week between government forces and armed groups affiliated with deposed President Bashar Assad. Monitoring groups said hundreds of civilians were killed in revenge attacks, primarily targeting members of the Alawite religious minority to which

A new wave of refugees in Lebanon: Some families took refuge in a Russian air base in the coastal province of Latakia as thousands more fled to neighbouring Lebanon, mostly through irregular border crossings in the country's north. The UN refugee agency reported at least 7,616 people had fled to northern Lebanon

where humanitarian

organisations were

handing out food and

PUBLIC NOTICE

SH. MAJOR PRATAP SINGH MEHLAWAT, S/OLAT SH. MAJOR PRATAP SINGH MEHLAWAT, R/ 42,WOODVILLE ROAD,GOLDERS GREEN

42,WOODVILLE ROAD,GOLDERS GREEN, LONDON one of the purchaser/owner of PROPERTY NO.A-52,THE GOVERNMENT SERVANTS CHBS LTD.,VASANT MARG, VASANT VHAR, NEW DELHII, have applied for freehold in DDA. The original documents i.e. PERPETUAL SUB-LEASE DEED of the above said property have been lost. An LR No.2661138/2025 dated 11/03/2025 to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Any person (s)claiming any right,interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 9810031551 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to

any right, interest, objection with respect this property, can personally inform or write the Deputy Director (CS)or Director(RL),Dell Development Authority, Vikas Sadan, Ner Delhi-110023.

MECHANIZED LAUNDRY/KAMAKHYA

E-Tender Notice No. SrCDO-

Laundry-KYQ-24-25 Dated: 06-03-

2025. E-Tenders are invited by the

undersigned for the following works:

Name of work: Comprehensive

Operation and handling of Linens at

with transportation, loading, unloading

of linens in trains at Kamakhya station

for a period of two years. Tender

Value: ₹9,90,47,414.82/-. Earnest

Money: ₹6,45,200/-. Date and time

of closing of tender: 13.00 hrs. of

27-03-2025. The complete information

with the tender documents of above

e-tender will be available in website

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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समक्षः न्यायालय पीठासीन अधिकारी, कमर्शियल कार्टे सं.—1, गौतमबुद्धनगर। मूलवाद सं—231 सन 2024 मैमर्स शिव महिमा हैन्डीकृापटस, 5 गढी माजरा

निकट वरदान मल्टी स्पेशिलिटी अस्पताल, मेरठ

रोड गाजियाबाद द्वारा प्रोपराईटर श्रीमती नीरज अग्रवाल आय 52 वर्ष आधार नम्बर 220810311784

मोबाईल नंबर–9873785477 ईमेल–anilanand

VERSUS 1. मैसर्स शिवम फूड्स 2. श्री विजय ओहरी (पार्ट्नर) 3. पवनीस सूरी (पार्ट्नर) 4. करण सहग्ल

(पार्टनर) पता बी—79 जी.टी. करनाल रोड

. इन्डस्ट्रीयल एरिया नई दिल्ली–110033 मोबाईल

9810150721 ईमेल gtk@bikanervala.com

........DEFENDANT हरगाह वादी ने आपके नाम एक नालिश बाबत

धनवसूली अंकन 6,00,727/ — रूपये दायर किया

है लिहाजा आपको हुक्म होता है कि बतारीख 28.

04 2025 बक्त 10 बजे दिन के असालतन या

मार्फत वकील के जो मुकदमें के हालात से करार

वाकई वाकिफ किया गया हो, और कुल उमूरात

है कि उसी रोज अपने जुमला दस्तावेज पेश करें

जिन पर आप बताईद अपनी जबावदेही के

इस्तदमाल करना चाहते हो। आपको इत्तला दी

जाती है कि अगर बरोज मजकूर आप हाजिर न

होंगे तो मकदमा वगैर हाजिरी आप मसमअ और

फैसला होगा। बवक्त मेरे दस्तखत और मुहर

अदालत के आज बतारीख 13 माह 12 सन 2023

कमर्शियल कोर्ट सं.-2 गौतमबुद्धनगर

आदेशानुसार / मुंसरिम

का जारी किया गया।

Sr. CDO/Guwahati

...Plantiff

www.ireps.gov.in

2008@Gmail.com

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Certificate(s) No. 769 for Equity 3780 Shares face value Rs.17-Folio No. 00033691 Dist. Nos. 157160185 to 157163964 of Kajaria Ceramics Limited registered in the name(s) of Roxana Daraius Marker (Deceased) and Esther Daraius Marker has / have been lost or mislaid and the undersigned has / have applied to the Company to issue duplicate Certificate(s) for the said shares. Any person who has a claim in respect of the said shares Certificate(s) should lodge such claim with the Company at its Registered Office Kajaria Ceramics Limited, SF-11, Second Floor, JMD Regent Plaza, Mehrauli Gurgaon Road, Village Sikanderpur, Ghosi, Gurugram, Haryana, 122001 within 15 day of the publication of this notice, After which no claim will be entertained and the Company will proceed to issue duplicate and the Company will proceed to issue duplicate
Certificate(s)

Name(s) of Shareholder(s) ESTHER DARATUS MARKER

Date: 12-3-2025

#### **COMPREHENSIVE OPERATION PUBLIC NOTICE** AND HANDLING OF LINENS AT

The Public at large is hereby informed that Late Lt.Col Sanjay Ahlawat S/o Col Harpat Singh ( r/o D 811 Jalvayu Towers, Sector 56 Gurgaon, 122011 Haryana was having residential property in joint ownership along with his wife Mrs. Anupma Ahlawat , in our project Vatika Gurgaon 21, flat no F3/1401 varika Gurgaon 21, flat no F3/1401 admeasuring1245sq.ft which his/her legal heirs Mrs. Anupma Ahlawat, Miss. Ekta Ahlawat , Mr.Shubham Ahlawat requested the company to be transfer to her daughter Miss Ekta Ahlawat Any person having any objection on this please may contact the company officer details as under within 15 days after which No Claim. Vatika Limited

A 002, Ground Floor, Block A. Vatika INXT City Centre, Sector 83, Gurugram, Haryana, India 122012

Notice is hereby given that my client Swant Prasad Yadav is in process to purchase the Flat no. 106, on First Floor, in Tower–D1, project in Pearl Residency, Situated in Koyal Enclave, Ghaziahad IJP (availing loan from HDFC Bank Ltd) from Chandra Prakash Yadav, whereas Chandra Prakash Yadav is the Allottee of the said Flat vide Allotment letter dated 7/5/2018 issued by Mis Delhi Metro Welfare Dragnization(DMWO). My client confirmed that his seller Chandra Prakash yadav is not having Driginal Allotment Letter dated 7/5/2018 issued by Mis Delhi Metro Welfare Organization(DMWO) in its favor and The online FIR has already been lodged on dated 5/2/2025 in lieu of that. All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortigage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, ficense, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned fellow within 7 days from the

are nereby requested to nour, the same in wring to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.

Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahaluxmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Valshali, Gzb., U.P., Mob. 9810063351

t is publicly notified that the Residential Plot No. 36, Block-A, Sector-19, Noida has been allotted/transferred in the name of U.B. Dhyani. /o Late Raja Ram Dhyani R/o A-36, Sector-19, अहम मुतिल्लका मुकदमा का जबाव दे सके, हाजिर हो और जवाबदेही दावा की करें। आपको लाजिम Noida and Mr. U. R. Dhyani had executed a will on dated 26.08.2000 at Noida in favour of Mr. Anil Dhyani S/o Late U. R. Dhyani R/o -36, Sector-19, Noida presently residing at 1104, Konark Orchid Apartments, Kesnand oad. Wagholi. Pune. Maharashtra-412207 ınd Mr U. R. Dhyani S/o Late Raja Ram Dhyani has expired on 18.10.2014. So with the help f the notice it is informed the transfer of the bove said plot goes in favour of Mr. Anil Ohyani S/o Late U. R. Dhyani on the basis of he registered will. All related people are informed that if someone has any objection about the transfer of the above property, they an submit their objection in Noida Authority Residential department with all document proof within 30 days from the publishing date of this information Anil Dhyani

registration under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Act.

Companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the companies (Authorised to Register) Rules, 2014]

pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after fifteen days hereof but before the expiry of thirty days nereinafter to the Registrar of Companies at Delhi that SONI SILVER ART JEWELLERY a Partnership Firm, may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares

- the company areas follows:
- · To take over the running business of the Partnership Firm "Soni Silver Art Jewellery" and to carry on the business of dealers and traders in all types of artificial jewellery whether made of silver or semi precious or any other metal and allied products
- and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at J-90, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-110027.
- 4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at Central Registration Centre (CRC), Indian nstitute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Plot no. 6, 7, 8, Sector-5, IMT Manesar, District Gurgaon (Haryana) Pin code 122050 within twenty one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.

Dated this 12th day of March 2025.

1. Deepak Arora (Partner) 2. Amit Arora (Partner)

#### UJJAIN SMART CITY LIMITED

Mela Office, Kothi Road, Ujjain (M.P.) 456001 Ph. 0734-2525856

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No. USCL/366 Tender ID: 2025\_UAD\_405964\_1 दिनांक 11.03.2025 Ujjain Smart City Limited Invites Interested parties:- "Supply Installation, Commissioning, and Testing of Digital Gallery at Ujjair Planetarium (Tara Mandal) including Operation and Comprehensive Maintenance for five years under Ujjain Smart City". Interested bidders may purchase and submit their proposals online at

www.mptenders.gov.in. **Earnest Money Deposit** 1,50,000/-Cost of Document 1,50,00,000/-Probable Amount of Contract 11.03.2025 Pre-Bid Meeting Date 18.03.2025 26.03.2025 up to 17:00 PM Last date for submission of Technical and Financial Bid (Online)

For more details, please visit https://www.mptenders.gov.in. Any Corrigendum or amendments shall be published on this website only.

Office of the Managing Director
Uttarakhand Co-Operative Dairy Federation Ltd.
Mangal Parao, Haldwani - 263139 (Nainital) Uttarakhand

पत्रांक ः सी-5611/यू०सी०डी०एफ०/निविदा/2024-25 Tender date extension notice

Short term tender notice number 34/UCDF/2024-25 dated 07.03.2025 has been published by UCDF on 08.03.2025 for the supply of frozen peas and frozen cut vegetables and strengthening of ETP of Champawat and Dehradun Milk Union. The following amendments are being made in it. The tender form can be obtained from UCDF or downloaded from the website www.ucdfaanchal.com. The tender can be submitted in UCDF office till 2.00 pm on 22.03.2025. Which will be opened on the يال المساقلة Managing Director Managing Director المساقلة المساقل

he original allottee of Type-1 Residential Flat No. II- 425, Jalvayu Vihar, Sector-25, Noida, Distt. BNagar, U.P., had sold the said property on Special Power of Attorney (SPA) basis to Bela hadha d/o Shri G.P.Chadha r/o A-299. Defence olony, New Delhi 110024 which is duly egistered in the office of S.R. Noida, with bahi o.4 Jild 1490 Page No.371, Document No. 1280, AD Book No.4, Jild 1562 Page No. 45/50 on Dated 23/04/1991, and the Agreement to Sell was executed, which was not Registered. So it is formed to all concerned that the said flat in going to the transferred in favour of Meera Sharma S/o G.P. Chadha & W/o Joginder Kumar Sharma, r/o A-299, Defence Colony, New Delhi objection he/she may file his/her objection along with sufficient proof in the Group Housing Department of Noida authority within 30 days rom the date of Publication of this Notice.

publication of the notice. Raiinder Kaur

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of MR. MANO SHARMA who is purchasing Plot No. 843 are measuring 350 Sq. Yards, situated at Urba Estate Gurgaon, Haryana from Ms. Monik Mehta D/o Rajinder Kumar Dutta, previousl Ms. Monika Mehta owned the said propert through Re-Allotment Letter after the death of Mr. Surinder Dutta and Mr. Surinder Dutta whend the said property through Rend. Will said property through Rend. Will said property through Rend. Mr. Surinder Dutta and Mr. Surinder Dutta owned the said property through Regd. Wild dated 07.06.2001 & Re-Allotment Letter, now MR. MANOJ SHARMA intends to purchase the same and intend to mortgage against the financial assistance from Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited. That, Original Sale Deed dated 05.10.1987 executed by Urmil Chopra in avour of Rajinder Kumar Dutta in respect of Plot No. 943 is not available/lost. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/ or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned about his objections within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. Lucem Legal LP Plot No.136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049; Contact # 011-40046316

19, Air Force Station, Kheriya, Agra, U.P., who is the original allottee of Type-2 Residential Flat bearing No. C- M-266, First Floor, In Block-M. lalvayu Vihar, Sector-25, Noida, Distt. GBNagar, U.P., had sold the said property on Specail Power of Attorney (SPA) basis to Mr. Gautam De s/o Late Rohini Kumar, r/o M-266. Jalvayu Vihar, Sector-25, Noida, U.P., which is duly Registered in the office of S.R. Noida, Page No.96, AD Book No.4, Jild 21, Page No.69-74 on Dated 07-12-1992, and the not Registered. So it is informed to all concerned that the said flat in going to the transferred in favour of Aniruddha De s/o Mr. Gautam De r/o M-266, Jalvavu Vihar, Sector-25, Noida, U.P. on basis of SPA. If any one has/have any objection he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Group Housing Department of Noida authority within 30 days from the date of publication of

General public is hereby informed that I, Rajinder Kaur, W/o Late Sh. Inderjit Singh substitution of the share of my husband Late Sh. Inderjit Singh in property no. D-360 Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024, in the name of Rajinder Kaur, on the grounds of death of Sh. Inderjit Singh (demised or 02.02.2022). If there are any objections claims from the general public on this application, the same shall be communicated to L&DO with the supporting documents through registered post or by visiting L&DC at Nirman Bhawan. New Delhi or through an email at Ido@nic.in, within 30 days of the

PUBLIC NOTICE

Address: D-360, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024 Phone: +91 9891365535/ +91 9818950925

PUBLIC NOTICE Just to inform to the public at large that Sm Jaya Joshi W/o Sh. Bhaskar Joshi who i purchasing the Dwelling Unit/Flat No. 801 on 8° Floor, area measuring 800 sq. ft. Situated in the Posidaria purchasing the Dwelling Unit/Pat No. 801, on 8" Floor, area measuring 800 sq. ft., Situated in the Residential Colony known as The Geeta Niwas EWS Co-Op Group Housing Society Ltd. Plot No. GH-01, in Sector-48, Faridabad, Tehsill Badkhal & Distt. Faridabad, Haryana from Sh. Rajeev Garg owner vide Transfer Deed dated 21.08.2023 (Vide Doc. No.4140) executed 21.08.2023 (Vide Doc. No.4140) executed Smrt. Rani and same to be finance & mortgage 21.08.2023 (Vide Doc. No. 4140) executed by Smt. Rani and same to be finance & mortgage by Muthoot Homefin (India) Ltd.(MHIL). That, Original Conveyance Deed dated 20.09.2013 (Vide Doc. No.7389) executed by The Geeta Niwas EWS Co-Op Group Housing Society Ltd. In favour of Smt. Rani has lost/misplaced. So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/title/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lienetc. Lucem Legal LtP B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector 2, Noida, UP-2013011 Contact#0120-4269379

This is to inform to all concern that Wg. Cdr. ent to Sell was executed, which was www.ireps.gov.in

E-Tender Notice No. 25-Wagon-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of work: Outsourcing of various activities which include welding, Door Repair, Replacement of defective door, EM Pad Change, Adapter Change in Goods Sick Line & Yard examination at New Jalpaigur for a period of 2 years. Tender Value: ₹1,55,43,749.41/-. Earnest Money: ₹2,27,700/-. Date and time of closing of tender: 15.00 hrs. of 28-03-2025 & opening at 15.30 hrs. of 28-03-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available in website

Sr. DME/Katihar NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

#### PM SHRI KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA KHICHRIPUR

#### Near shiv Mandir Block-6, Delhi-110091 E.Mail. pmshrikvkhichripur@kvsrodelhi.in Tel: 011-21200604 Affiliation No. 2700043 CBSE School ID-29001 PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya Khichripur, Delhi-110091

#### Part Time/Contractual Teacher Interview Notice

In PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya Khichripur, Walk-in-Interviews will be held on 18/03/2025 at 08:30 AM in the premises of PM SHRI KV Khichripur for preparing the panel of PGTs, TGTs, Primary Teacher, Sports Instructor, Computer Instructor, Music &

Dance Instructor, Yoga Instructor, Special Educator and Nurse on fully part time contractual basis for the academic session 2025-26. For more information/details please visit the Vidyalaya website https://khicharipur.kvs.ac.in. Notice for Registration of Firm/Supplier

Registration from registered firm to supply various items & services to PM SHRI KV Khichripur are invited by registered post/E-mail latest by 31.03.2025. For more information/details please visit the Vidyalaya website https://khicharipur.kvs.ac.in.



#### SOUTHERN STAR CO-OP. (U) T/C SOCIETY LTD.

Corp. Off.: Star Tower, DDA Market, New Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi-60 Phone: 011-44424444, 011-28741800-01 e-mail: sstarsociety@yahoo.com, website: southernstar.org

**GSTIN: 07AACAS4763M1Z1** 

#### **GOLD AUCTION NOTICE**

The pledgors, in specific and the public, in general, are hereby notified that public auction of the gold ornaments pledged in the below accounts is proposed to be conducted at the Corporate office at New Rajendra Nagar on 23-03-2025, Sunday, from 12:00 noon onwards. The Gold ornaments being auctioned have been pledged by various borrowers who have failed to close the loan account and redeem the pledged gold ornaments despite being notified by letters send by the registered post/speed post. The list of pledges taken up for auction has also been displayed at the corporate office and the respective branches. Please note that the items remaining un-auctioned shall be auctioned on any other date without further notice. Changes, if any, in the venue and date of auction shall be displayed at the venue on the date of action mentioned above and no further notice regarding the change of date and venue shall be issued.

#### List of pledges:-

Date.: 12-03-2025

BH 6144 SANEESH KUMAR, V.S., 6057, 6234 ARUN KUMAR, N. DG 16124 DILIP KUMAR NAIR DW 1350 SAJU BABU HQ 14560 SAM MATHEW, M., 14540 AMMINI, JP 13987 RAJESH, V.S., MV 19729,19777 MANJU VIJAYAN,17622 SAJI,PV 6557 JINCY, T.S., 6531 CHACKO STEPHEN, 6299 SAJNA, M. SUNNY

Persons wishing to participate in the above auction shall do so. Terms& conditions

(P.N. VENIKITESWARAN POTTY) Hony. Secretary

### highway in South Africa PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ JOHANNESBURG bus overturned on a highway on Tuesday and A passengers were thrown out of it, killing at least 12 people and injuring 45 in the South African city of

said William Nthladi, a spokesperson for the city's Ekurhuleni Emergency Management. "On arrival we found patients lying across the road," Nthladi said.

Emergency crews were trying to lift the bus back onto its

wheels to see if any more victims were trapped underneath it,

The early-morning crash happened on a highway near Johannesburg's main OR Tambo International Airport. The bus was lying on its side near the edge of the highway. It had been transporting people from the township or Katlehong, east of Johannesburg, officials said.

Nthladi said 12 people were declared dead at the scene of the crash by paramedics. Nthladi said he also couldn't give exact details on the extent of the injuries but said they ranged from serious to

critical. The driver was among those taken to the hospital. No other vehicle was involved in the crash and officials weren't yet able to determine the cause. Police are investigating and the crash was being treated as a crime scene

back payments a day.

Ali's ruling came after the Supreme Court

'The patterns that are emerging is the

n from M/s Can Fin Homes Ltd. and internace for the House No. 3126/106 Admeasur

#### Form No. URC-2

Advertisement giving notice about

[Pursuant to section 374(b) of the

. Notice is hereby given that in

2. The principal objects o

3. A copy of the draft memorandum

Name(s) of Applicant

# IndusInd Bank stock tanks 23 per cent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

ndusInd Bank on Tuesday fire fought the fallout of a ₹2,100 Crore discrepancy in accounting, saying it has enough reserves and capital to cover for it, but the management's assurance failed to arrest the free fall of shares which tanked over 27 per cent on the bourses.

IndusInd Bank CEO and Managing Director Sumant Kathpalia said that the accounting lapse was noted around September-October last year and the bank gave a preliminary update to the RBI about this last week. The final number will be known after the external agency, which the bank has appointed, finalises its report by early April. In a stock exchange filing, private sector lender IndusInd Bank on Monday disclosed that the bank has noted some discrepancies in its derivatives port-

The bank's profitability and capital adequacy remain healthy to absorb this one-time impact. The issue was identified by the bank

- SUMANT KATHPALIA

of about 2.35 per cent of the bank's net worth as of December 2024 as per its internal review. Analysts peg the discrepancy at ₹2,100 crore in absolute terms. The bank has, in parallel, appointed an external agency to independently review and validate the internal findings. "The bank's profitability and capital adequacy remain healthy to absorb this one-time impact. The issue was identified by the bank. The bank has enough reserves and capital to manage this," Kathpalia said. Shares of IndusInd Bank nosedived 27.17 per cent to close at

the stock had hit its 1 year low of ₹649 a piece, down 28 per cent over Monday's closing price of ₹900. In an analyst call late on Monday night, Kathpalia said that the discrepancy in the derivative portfolio has been accumulated in the book over a period of 5-7 years prior to April 1, 2024.

The discrepancy in IndusInd Bank's treasury business went unnoticed despite multiple audits like that of internal, statutory, and compliance, as well as by the RBI. He said the bank started reviewing its internal trade book after the RBI circular in September 2023 which mandated that internal trade in derivatives were to be discontinued from April 1, 2024.

"We started observing discrepancies in our (derivatives) business in October, and then we hired external agency to review our business. That is why we are comfortable that by March end or early April, we (external agency report) should be able to identify the gaps," Kathpalia said. Kathpalia said that IndusInd Bank had

given a "preliminary update" about this discrepancy to the banking regulator RBI last week. Asked in the analyst call as to whether this discrepancy has had a bearing on his re-appointment as MD and CEO, Kathpalia said, "Of course this would have a bearing because they were aware of the issue". The RBI last week approved only one year extension to Kathpalia till March 23, 2026, as against three years proposed by the bank's board. "I don't know what's the rationale for them to give me 1 year. But I think they are uncomfortable with the way my leadership skills of running the bank is and we have to respect that. This is a litmus test for the bank, from a succession point we see how to take the bank forward. I don't think the BAU (business as usual) of the bank will suffer, I don't think the growth agenda will get off the track," Kathpalia said.

### India imports 44.19 lakh tonnes DAP till February of FY25: Government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

ndia has imported 44.19 lakh tonnes of Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP), a key fertiliser, till February of this fiscal, the government data showed.

The country had imported 55.67 lakh tonnes in the entire 2023-24 fiscal.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Anupriya Patel noted that the domestic production of urea and P&K (phosphatic and potassic) fertilisers has increased in India in the last 10 years.

She said urea production has increased from 225 lakh tonnes per annum during 2014-15 to 314.07 lakh tonnes in the last financial year.

"In case of Phosphatic & Potassic fertilisers (P&K), the companies are free to import /produce fertiliser raw materials,

intermediaries and finished fertilizers as per their business dynamics," Patel said.

Based on the requests, the new manufacturing units or increase in manufacturing capacity of existing units have been recognised/taken on record under the NBS subsidy scheme, with a view to boost manufacturing and make the country self-reliant in fertiliser production.

She said the production of P&K fertilizers has increased from 159.54 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 to 182.85 lakh tonnes in 2023-24.

As per the government data, India imported 55.67 lakh tonnes of DAP in 2023-24, of which 22.28 lakh tonnes (40.02 per cent) came from China.

Till February of 2024-25 fiscal, the country has imported 44.19 lakh tonnes of DAP, of which 8.47 lakh tonnes (19.1 per cent) were from China.



### Sensex settles almost flat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Mumbai

enchmark BSE Sensex recovered Bmost of its losses to close marginally down in a volatile session on Tuesday even as private lender IndusInd Bank slumped 27 per cent and global markets declined on US recession worries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex settled down by 12.85 points or 0.02 per cent at 74,102.32 with half of its constituents closing lower. The index opened sharply down and slumped further 451.57 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a low of 73,663.60 in early deals following weak global trends. The barometer later recovered losses to close almost flat. Analysts said late-buying in select bluechips such as ICICI Bank, Reliance and Airtel helped recover losses.

The broader Nifty of NSE advanced 37.60 points or 0.17 per cent to close at 22,497.90, rebounding from the day's lows. The index rose by 61.8 points or 0.27 per cent to hit a high of 22,522.10.

Shares of IndusInd Bank plummeted by more than 27 per cent to close at Rs 655.95 apiece on BSE after the private sector lender reported some discrepancies in its deriva-

tives portfolio. During the day, the stock of Mumbaibased lender tanked 28 per cent to hit a 52week low of ₹649 per share. Additionally, the shares emerged as the major laggard on the 30-share BSE barometer. Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Zomato, Hindustan Unilever, Power Grid, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, and Tata Consultancy Services were among the laggards in the Sensex pack.

On the other hand, Sun Pharmaceuticals, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, HCL Technologies, Maruti Suzuki India, Larsen and Toubro, Reliance Industries, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Titan were the gainers. "Despite significant sell-offs in the US and other Asian markets driven by concerns over an economic slowdown caused by the ongoing trade war, the domestic market is showing signs of a gradual recovery. "Its relatively lower volatility can be attributed to a moderation in valuations, following recent corrections, along with supportive factors like falling crude oil prices, an easing Dollar Index, and expectations of a rebound in domestic earnings," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The attention remains on the upcoming retail inflation data, which could provide insights into potential interest rate cuts, Nair

Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said markets remained volatile but managed to close slightly in the green amid mixed signals. A weak global outlook led to a gap-down opening, but selective buying in heavyweight stocks helped recover losses, he added. Analysts said that US President Donald

Trump's flip-flop tariff policy and the high uncertainty has started impacting US stock markets with benchmark indices tanking up to 4 per cent on Monday.

The BSE Smallcap gauge fell 0.70 per cent, however, the midcap index went up 0.72 per cent. Among the BSE sectoral indices, Realty, Telecommunication, Energy, Oil and Gas, Commodities, Consumer Discretionary, Healthcare, Capital Goods, Consumer Durables and Metal were among the gainers. FMCG, IT, Utilities, Auto, Bankex, Teck and Focussed IT were the laggards. As many as 2,506 stocks declined while 1,466 advanced and 119 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Despite the market ended in the negative zone. The market capitalisation of BSElisted firms edged up by ₹ 39,721.99 crore to ₹3,94,25,540.72 crore (\$4.51 trillion). In Asian markets, Tokyo and Seoul ended lower, while Hong Kong settled flat. Shanghai stock markets finished in the green territory. European markets were largely positive in the mid-session deals.

# Telecom subscriber base grows to 1,189.92 million in December 2024: Trai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

¬he total telephone subscriber base in India grew marginally to 1,189.92 million in December 2024 with Jio adding the highest number of subscribers in both mobile and fixed-line segments, a Trai report released on Tuesday said.

Total telephone subscribers stood at 1,187.15 million in November, according to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai). Reliance Jio Infocomm was the fron-

subscribers, followed by Bharti Airtel (289.31 million), and Vodafone Idea (126.38 million). While urban telephone subscriptions rose from 659.87 million in November

trunner with 476.58 million broadband

to 663.37 million in December, rural subscriptions fell from 527.27 million to 526.56 million during the same period.

a monthly growth rate of 0.17 per cent.

Wireless teledensity increased to 81.67 per cent at the end of December, against 81.59 per cent at the end of November. Reliance Jio added 3,906,123 wireless

subscribers, while Bharti Airtel saw a net addition of 1,033,009 subscribers during the period. Vodafone Idea lost 1,715,975 wireless subscribers, according to the data. BSNL and MTNL lost 316,599 and 896,988 wireless subscribers.

Private access service providers held 91.92 per cent market share of the wireless subscribers whereas BSNL and MTNL had a market share of only 8.08 per cent. Wireline subscribers increased from 38.50 million at the end of November 2024 to 39.27 million at the end of December 2024. The Overall Wireline Tele-density in India increased from 2.73 per cent to 2.79 per cent.

Reliance Jio topped the charts, adding 6,56,823 wireline subscribers. It was followed by Bharti Airtel and Tata Teleservices, who added 1,62,945 and 9,278 wireline subscribers, respectively.

BSNL emerged as the biggest loser in the segment. The company lost 33,306 subscribers. BSNL's sister-concerned MTNL lost 14,054 subscribers.

Total broadband subscribers rose marginally from 944.76 million in November to 944.96 million in December, according to the data. As of December 31, 2024, the top five

broadband service providers who held over 98 per cent market share were Reliance Jio Infocomm (476.58 million subscribers), Bharti Airtel (289.31 million subscribers), Vodafone Idea (126.38 million subscribers), Bharat Sanchar Nigam (35.33 million subscribers), and Atria Convergence Technologies (2.27 million subscribers).

While Reliance Jio grabbed a 50.43 per cent market share, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea held 30.62 per cent and 13.37 per cent share of broadband services at the end of December 2024.

### **SEBI cuts timeline** for completion of rights issue for equity shares to 23 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

arkets regulator SEBI on Tuesday reduced the processing time for La rights issue of equity shares to 23 days in a bid to make it a preferred route of fundraising.

Separately, the regulator has provided flexibility of allotment to specific investors in the rights issue and discontinued the current requirement of filing draft offer with it for issuance of its observation, instead it will be filed with stock exchanges for its in-principle approval, as the entity is already a listed entity.

The moves would facilitate ease of doing business and enable faster rights Under the framework, rights issues will

be completed within 23 working days from the date of board of directors of the issuer approving the issue, SEBI said in a circular. This was against the present average timeline of 317 days.

This mechanism would be even faster than the preferential allotment route that takes 40 working days.

In addition, the move would give existing shareholders of the company an opportunity to participate even more, in the future potential growth of the com-

Sebi said that rights issues will be kept open for subscription for a minimum period of seven days and for a maximum period of 30 days. In a separate notifica-tion, SEBI said, "The issuer shall file the draft letter of offer with the stock exchange(s)".

The exchanges and depositories have been directed to develop a system for automated validation of the applications in a period of six months.

Also, SEBI has rationalised the content of Letter of Offer to contain only the relevant incremental information regarding rights issue - object of issue, price, record date and entitlement ratio among others It has abolished the mandatory requirement of appointment of a merchant banker by an issuer and making it optional subject to completion of rights issue within the timeline of 23 working days. SEBI has mandated the appointment of a 'monitoring agency' to supervise the use of proceeds from all types of rights issues of equity shares.

Currently, an issuer offering securities worth less than ₹50 crore through a rights issue is not required to rope in a monitoring agency.

# Wireless subscribers grew from 1,148.65 million in November 2024 to Rupee recovers 10 paise against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

he rupee pared early losses to settle higher by 10 paise at 87.21 against the US currency on Tuesday as the dollar fell to a four-month low level and crude oil prices also stayed subdued.

À volatile trend in domestic equity markets and foreign capital outflows amid fear of recession in the US and traderelated uncertainties restricted the recovery in the local curren cy, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened lower at 87.37 and touched the day's low of 87.39 against the greenback in early trade. The unit later rebounded up to

against the dollar, 10 paise higher compared to its previous closing level. On Monday, the rupee crashed 36

paise to close at 87.31 against the Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at

Mirae Asset Sharekhan, attributed the rupee's recovery to weak tone in the US dollar index and a decline in the US 10year treasury yields. He said that weak crude oil prices and

mixed-to-positive domestic markets



87.17 before ending the session at 87.21 supported the rupee but FII outflows capped sharp gains.

Going further, Choudhary said. "Traders may take cues from JOLTS job openings data from the US. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the inflation data from the US and India this week. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹86.95 to ₹87.40,"

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.58 per cent at 103.35, close

November 5.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 0.71 per cent higher at US 69.77 per barrel in futures trade, struggling to reclaim the crucial \$70-a-barrel Domestic equity markets set-

to the level seen on

tled almost flat with the 30share BSE Sensex falling marginally by 12.85 points, or 0.02 per cent, to 74,102.32, and the Nifty gaining slightly by 37.60 points, or 0.17 per cent, to close at 22,497.90. Foreign institutional investors

(FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹2,823.76 crore on a net basis on Tuesday, according to exchange

On the global macroeconomic front, US President Donald Trump sought to downplay business concerns over the uncertainty

caused by his tariff moves and has not ruled out the possibility of a recession triggered by higher prices in the coun-

Meanwhile, China has retaliated Trump's 20 per cent tariff on Chinese imports with an additional 15 per cent tax on key American farm products, including chicken, pork, soybeans and beef. The escalating trade tensions led to a crash in the US markets on Monday.

# **INDIAWOOD** 2025 Concludes at India Expo **Mart and Centre**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

NDIAWOOD 2025, the premier trade fair for woodworking and furniture ■ manufacturing, concluded at the India Expo Mart and Centre (IEML), Greater Noida, Delhi NCR. Marking its 25-year milestone, the event attracted over 600 brands from 30+ countries, reinforcing India's stature as a global manufacturing hub. Key highlights included Surface in Motion, which showcased surface technology innovations, the India Mattresses Expo and Wood+ in Architecture and Design, bringing together architects and

industry leaders. With best technology, AI-driven automation, and sustainable materials on display, INDIAWOOD 2025 set the stage for future advancements in the woodworking sector. Leading brands such as Biesse, HOMAG, Felder, SCM and INOX played a significant role in shaping the event's success. These industry giants showcased groundbreaking innovations, from high-performance woodworking machinery to premium materials and smart manufacturing solutions.

#### YELO hosts women achievers awards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

nder the leadership of Chairperson Dr Payal Kanodia, the Young FICCI Ladies Organisation (YFLO) hosted the Young Women Achievers Awards 2025 at the iconic National Gallery of Modern Art, Jaipur House.

Marking a confluence of excellence and empowerment, the event honored exceptional young women under 45 who are redefining leadership across diverse fields. Embracing the theme 'Unleash: Mind | Body | Soul,' the event was graced by actress Shabana Azmi, writer poet Javed Akhtar and Director General, NGMA, Dr. Sanjeev Kishor

The event celebrated 21 distinguished awardees, with the top 10 honorees Devita (Entrepreneurship), Princess Gauravi Kumari (Social Entrepreneurship), Harshdeep Kaur (Performing Arts Singer), Flt. Ltr. Urvashi Tomar (Service to Nation), Mangala Bai Marawi (Art), Isha Talwar (Performing Arts - Film & Entertainment), Amruta Karvande (Service to Humanity), Priya Mishra (Art), Kulsum Shadab Wahab (Social Impact), and Taniyaa Bakshhi (Health and Wellness). The evening also paid tribute to

India's legendary artists, Arpana Caur, Madhavi Parekh, and Anjoli Ela Menon, honoring their immense contributions to the world of art.

#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

industan Zinc Limited (NSE:

HINDZINC), India's largest and the world's second largest integrated zinc producer, announced the signing of a power delivery agreement (PDA) with Serentica Renewables, a leading renewable energy company in India.

The latest power delivery agreement augments Hindustan Zinc's round-theclock renewable energy up to 530 MW from previously signed PDA of 450 MW, increasing the overall renewable energy contribution to over 70 per cent of its total power requirement. This is a first-of-itskind round-the-clock renewables PDA that guarantees a minimum of 315 MW uninterrupted power supply through every 15-minute time block

The resulting project will build new solar, wind and energy storage on multiple sites across the country and integrate several existing renewables projects. Developed under a captive structure, the project will be strategically spread across high-resource locations in India and is set to be fully operational by 2027. This innovative hybrid solution eliminates Hindustan Zinc's reliance on other conventional power sources by delivering seamless, reliable energy through advanced storage systems and market

This landmark agreement marks a fun-

Sustainability at Hindustan Zinc is about future-proofing our business and driving long-term value through innovation

**Hindustan Zinc signs PDA with Serentica Renewables** 

- ARUN MISRA

damental shift in industrial power procurement, moving beyond traditional round-the-clock (RTC) models to an advanced, Time Block-Based firm Renewable Energy solution. Unlike conventional renewable energy agreements, this PDA ensures a precisely scheduled and dispatchable power supply using a combination of solar, wind, and cuttingedge energy storage technologies. Through advanced forecasting, grid management, and energy storage innovations, Serentica is enabling industries to transition towards clean energy without compromising on stability or operational effi-

Serentica is playing a critical role in advancing India's net-zero ambitions, leveraging technology-driven solutions to provide firm, reliable, and cost-effective renewable power to energy-intensive industries.

Recognised as the world's most sustainable metals and mining company for the second consecutive year by the S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment 2024, Hindustan Zinc con-

tinues its journey towards achieving Net Zero by 2050 or sooner. The company is focusing on decarbonising its operations by increasing the quantum of renewable energy in its energy mix, enhancing operational efficiencies to reduce energy consumption and transitioning to cleaner fuels & electric vehicles.

Through these strategic initiatives, the company has achieved a 14 per cent decrease in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions intensity compared to the base year 2020. Notably, Hindustan Zinc started receiving the first flow of renewable power from Serentica's 180 MW solar park that was utilised in the production of Asia's first low carbon 'green' zinc -Speaking on the occasion, Arun Misra,

CEO - Hindustan Zinc Limited, said, "Sustainability at Hindustan Zinc is about future-proofing our business and driving long-term value through innovation. As the world transitions to a low-carbon economy, we embrace our Sensitivity: Public (C4) dual role as a leader in this transformation and as an active participant with our critical metals like zinc and silver. This agreement marks a significant step in our climate action strategy. By securing 70 per cent of our power from renewables we are targeting nearly 70 per cent reduction in carbon emissions setting sights on our goal of achieving net zero by 2050 or sooner."

# Maradona medics face homicide trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Buenos Aires

even members of the medical team that treated Argentine soccer great Diego Maradona before his death will go on trial for homicide starting Tuesday in Buenos Aires.

The case revolves around allegations that negligence by the health care professionals contributed to the World Cup winner's death in 2020 at the age of 60, which triggered an outpouring of grief in his native Argentina and across the world.

Maradona suffered a heart attack at his rented house in Tigre, an affluent district north of Argentina's capital Buenos Aires, where he had been recovering from surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain weeks earlier.

Widely perceived as one of the sport's greatest players, Maradona famously led Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup and inspired his compatriots with a rags-to-riches story that vaulted him from poverty in the hardscrabble outskirts of Buenos Aires to international reverence. Maradona had struggled with drug addiction, obesity and alcoholism for decades, and reportedly came close to death in 2000 and 2004. But prosecutors concluded that — were it not for the negligence of his doctors — his death could have been avoided.

Seven of the eight medical professionals who have been charged in the case, including Maradona's brain surgeon, psychiatrist and nurses, are now standing trial for culpable homicide, a crime roughly commensurate with involuntary manslaughter.

They deny wrongdoing but could face up to 25 years in prison.

#### Who is on trial?

Maradona's neurologist, Leopoldo Luque, served as Maradona's personal doctor for years and performed the surgery that removed his brain blood clot



on November 3, 2020. Luque oversaw Maradona's hospital-to-home transition after the surgery. The swift discharge raised questions at the time, with some experts suggesting that Maradona should have stayed longer in the hospital after his operation.

Psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov had prescribed Maradona's medications. There was no alcohol or illegal drugs detected in the toxicology test performed after Maradona's death. But the report said Maradona had psychotropic drugs for anxiety and depression in his system when he died. The five other defendants this week include: Carlos Diaz, an addiction specialist who had overseen Maradona's treatment for alcohol dependency; Nancy Forlini, a doctor who had helped manage Maradona's home care; Mariano Perroni, a nursing coordinator; Ricardo Almirón, another nurse who tended to the former athlete and Pedro Pablo Di Spagna, a clinical physician.

A third nurse, Gisela Dahiana Madrid, has asked to be tried separately by jury at

a later date. The prosecutor's office assembled a medical board made up of a dozen experts — including forensic doctors, cardiologists, psychiatrists and toxicologists — to see if there was evidence of Maradona's medics committing culpa-

ble homicide. In an explosive 2021 report, the board accused the soccer star's medical team of acting in an "inappropriate, deficient and reckless manner." "The home confinement did not comply with norms and protocols," the report said.

The experts also questioned why Maradona had been released so soon from the hospital after his operation when he was unable to care for himself and had limited or no access to critical medical devices, like an oxygen tube and a defibrillator, which administers an electric shock to restore heart rhythm.

The team's failure to properly monitor Maradona contributed to his death, the panel determined, describing his treatment as beset by "deficiencies and irregularities." For instance, the report said,

medics overlooked Maradona's "unusual body swelling," a sign of possible heart failure. Maradona agonised for more than 12 hours before his heart attack, the panel added. Exacerbating concerns, Maradona had not undergone any heart or lab tests in the two weeks leading to his

To make its case, the prosecution will present more than 120,000 messages and audio recordings from private conversations between doctors and others involved in Maradona's care.

All eight medical professionals deny any wrongdoing. They described Maradona as a difficult patient who resisted treatment. "The death occurred unexpectedly, suddenly, during sleeping hours, without offering us any time," said Luque, the neurologist. In response to the damning medical panel report, the defense commissioned its own forensic study to support its claim that Maradona's death "was sudden and without agony."

Luque stressed that it was Maradona himself who insisted on home-hospitalization. Maradona secluded himself during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, as his chronic health problems made him more vulnerable to becoming infected and more likely to become severely ill.

The isolation unleashed depression and anxiety for the superstar in early 2020, according to hundreds of pages of court documents reviewed by The Associated Press. Maradona turned to alcohol, a vice that had long played a role in his troubled

As Maradona's trusted doctor, Luque conducted a series of medical tests and discovered a subdural hematoma, or bleeding around the brain. After receiving emergency surgery, Maradona left the hospital and headed to a rented home near his older daughters. Doctors encouraged him to pursue treatment for his alcoholism at a clinic, but Maradona would accept nothing but outpatient care.



## Injured Neymar criticised for missing semifinal with Santos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sao Paulo

eymar's justification for missing a semifinal with Santos was criticised because he was seen at Carnival last week. Santos lost to archrival Corinthians 2-1 on Sunday in the semifinals of the Sao Paulo state championship, and Neymar sat on the bench for all 90 minutes. On Monday, he said he had a minor injury without elaborating.

Days earlier, the striker was pho-

tographed at Rio de Janeiro's Sambadrome,

the venue for the glitzy Carnival parade. Neymar, who rejoined his boyhood club Santos in January, attended the Carnival parade only hours after being substituted in the second half of another Sao Paulo state championship match on March 2 because of an apparent left thigh injury.

He recently recovered from an ACL tear that sidelined him for more than one year. Santos did not reveal Neymar had any injuries before Sunday's semifinal.

"All I wanted was to be on the pitch and help my teammates in some way," Neymar said on Instagram. "But last Thursday I felt a discomfort that prevented me from being on the pitch. We took a test this morning and I ended up feeling it again."

Santos coach Pedro Caixinha said he asked Neymar to stay on the bench despite the injury.

"It was just a discomfort, but it meant he couldn't participate. It was my request and he agreed to be with the squad," Caixinha said in a news conference after his team's elimination. "He's a different player, he is enlightened and has fantastic energy. Neymar suffered a lot for not being able to participate in the game."

Still, many pundits accused Neymar of not focusing on his career, which he is trying to revive at the Brazilian club following spells at Barcelona, Paris SaintGermain and Al-Hilal.

"He chose Carnival over the semifinal," popular pundit Walter Casagrande Jr Said on his social media channels. "Neymar's behavior of the last five, six years has come back. He switches the professional side for pleasure and fun."

Santos president Marcelo Texeira told local media that Neymar was examined several times from Friday to Sunday and all of them showed he was unfit to play against Corinthians.

"It is a precaution, we understood we shouldn't (play him)," Teixeira said. "It is not about the national team, it is because he had not conditions (to play). He is in a process of recovery. We need to understand that."

Spanish newspaper Marca described the Brazilian player's week as "Neymar's saddest Carnival after being tossed by Barcelona; on the bench and knocked out."

Later, amid the heavy criticism against its star player, Santos published a video of a tearful Neymar talking to his teammates in the dressing room before the semifinal.

"It is very hard to be out in moments like this. I am trying to control myself in every way, not show the sadness I am feeling," the striker said. "If you can, run for me. I wish I could be with you, running for each of you. You don't know how desperate I am in my heart."

The 33-year-old striker has three goals and three assists in seven matches for Santos since his return. Those stats convinced Brazil coach Dorival Jr. To recall him for World Cup qualifiers this month against Colombia and Argentina.

Neymar's next match for Santos is likely on March 29, after the international window, in the opening round of the Brazilian league against Vasco da Gama. Santos was promoted to the country's top league after its 2023 relegation.

# World Para Athletics Grand Prix off to a sedate start

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

¬he absence of star para athletes like javelin thrower Sumit Antil and discus exponent Yogesh Kathuniya came as a dampener as India began its campaign in the three-day World Para Athletics Grand Prix on a sedate note here

With the Para Athletics World Championships scheduled in September, several top Indian athletes are missing the Grand Prix because "they are training as per their international schedule", said Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) president and two-time gold-medallist javelin thrower at the Paralympic Games Devendra Jhajharia.

In the absence of several Indian and foreign para athletes, who had initially confirmed their participation but pulled out for various reasons, there were several events where the participation was a bare minimum -- in some disciplines just one athlete participated.

The men's high jump T42 final — for those with single above the knee amputations or a disability that is comparable – saw just one athlete, Ramsingbhai Gobindbhai Padhiyar, competing and taking the top spot. Three others — Lokesh Mantra, Shailesh Kumar and Varun Singh Bhati — pulled out. In men's javelin throw (F33, F34) — for

those with a moderately affected movement and coordination across the whole body, or affecting part of the body which affect their movement to a high degree in the legs — only two para athletes took part with Uzbekistan's Oybek Egamnazarov emerging on top with a best throw of 18.05m. India's Devershee Sachan came in second with a best of 11.34m.

In men's 100m (T11, T12) sprint near-total visual impairment — Brazil's Joeferson Marinho de Oliveira won the gold clocking 11.17 seconds, while Vishnu (12.39 sec) and Pragadeeshwara Raja

Moorthy (12.94 sec) of India finished second and third in a three-man field. Another Indian, Ramanjee did not start.

"If I look at it from the point of an athlete, this is a very big tournament," said Jhajharia, one of the legends of Indian para games. "Every athlete has a dream of playing for the country and that has been

"As a PCI president, I am happy that we have been able to organise such a great event in the country. This will benefit our athletes as we will be hosting the Worlds in September, so we have got the opportunity to conduct a major event before

### **Kush Maini** promoted to reserve driver's role at Alpine Formula 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

ndia's Kush Maini was on Tuesday promoted to the reserve driver's role at the ▲ Alpine Formula 1 team ahead of the season opener in Melbourne on March 16.

Maini competes in the Formula 2, a

feeder series to Formula 1. The 24-yearold from Bengaluru joined Alpine's junior driver program in October 2023 and now joins Franco Colapinto, Paul Aron and Ryo Hirakawa in the pool of reserve drivers of the F1 team. "Maini's duties will involve offering valuable support to the team's car development and set-up objectives using the driver-in-loop simulator at Enstone, as well as participating in its TPC (testing of previous cars) Programme aimed at improving skills at the wheel of a contemporary, modern Formula One car," said Alpine in a statement. For the majority of Formula 1's 75-year-old history, teams would have only one reserve driver but that trend has changed of late with multiple drivers performing that role.

For Maini, the development comes as a big boost as he aims to become the third Indian to compete in Formula 1 after Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok.

The Indian racer will represent DAMS in his third Formula 2 season which is run concurrently on select Formula 1 weekends. He finished 11th and 13th in drivers' standing in 2023 and 2024, totalling five podiums including a victory in Hungary.

"Since joining the Alpine Academy ahead of last year, I have been incredibly welcomed in the entire Alpine family and I am thankful to Flavio and Oliver for their continued support.

"I am looking forward to getting more track time in Formula One machinery in this role and to build on what I have already learned with the team in 2024. "I'm very excited to begin the role as soon as possible but for now my focus is on my third season in Formula 2 kicking off this weekend in Australia," said Maini. Alpine Academy director Julian Rouse said Maini's performance during testing of previous cars was impressive.

"Kush has impressed the team across his TPC performances and Formula 2 results whilst we have been working with him and we expect he will continue to do so in 2025.

# PCB slashes match fees in domestic cricket

n a stunning development, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has resorted to cost-cutting measures including slashing the match fees of players in domestic cricket, raising questions about the financial health of the sport's apex body in the country.

The PCB has reduced the match fees of cricketers participating in the upcoming National T20 Championship from 100,000 rupees per match to 10,000 per match with reserve players getting 5000 per match. The tournament begins on March 14.

The reduction in match fees has caused concern among players and the board is also considering spending less on development of domestic cricket. According to sources, the head of domestic cricket in the PCB, Abdullah Khurrum Niazi, has been "reducing facilities" for domestic players in the last few months. "The players who were first being offered accom-

modation at five-star and four-star hotels are now being offered cheaper accommodation. Air travel has also been reduced for them besides fees," a source said.

Another source said that outstanding payments from last season are yet to be cleared for players and umpires.

Additionally, the PCB is yet to implement an annual pension increase for former Test cricketers, as mandated by board policy. The irony, according to one source, is that while match fees for players are being reduced, officials taking these decisions are getting monthly salaries

The PCB at the same time is also paying hefty monthly salaries to national selectors and even mentors appointed with five teams for the just-concluded Champions Cup. Mentors Misbah ul Haq, Waqar Younis, Shoaib Malik, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Saqlain Mushtaq, on two-year contracts, are said to be paid around 5 million per month.

# Newcastle warmed up for **English League Cup final**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

ewcastle warmed up for the English League Cup final by laboring past West Ham 1-0 in the Premier League on Monday.

Saudi-owned Newcastle will return to London to face Liverpool at Wembley on Sunday, seeking its first domestic trophy since the 1955 FA Cup.

However, Eddie Howe's men will doubtlessly need more penetration if they are to beat an in-form Liverpool.

Newcastle rose three places into sixth in the Premier League but it was a lackluster performance in a stuffy encounter that provided few moments of excitement. The only goal came from Bruno Guimaraes in the 63rd minute. Harvey Barnes lofted a ball into the six-yard box and the Newcastle captain got the slightest of touches to take it past the

Guimaraes said all focus will turn to Wembley as Newcastle prepares for a potentially historic occasion.

"It is massive for the club's history and we want to be part of it," the Brazilian said. "We know we're going to play against one of the best teams. "I believe that we can win. In a final

anything can happen. I believe our fans can make the difference for us. We want to make history for this club. It is a long time for the fans without a trophy."

West Ham, meanwhile, lamented a loss that robbed it of its first hat trick of wins since December 2023. It sits 16th in the 20-team Premier League.

"We started both halves very well, it was a tight game, and we're disappointed with the goal," Hammers boss Graham Potter said. "I felt for the players because they gave everything — not enough to win the game but enough to get something from it.

## out of All England **Championships**

**Prannoy bowed** 

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Birmingham

ndia's HS Prannoy bowed out of the All England Championships on ■ Tuesday, suffering a straight-game defeat to France's Toma Junior Popov in the men's singles opening round. On a comeback trail, Prannoy, a

bronze medallist at the 2023 World Championships and Asian Games, fought for 53 minutes before going down 19-21, 16-21 to Popov, who is currently ranked 17th in the world.

The 32-year-old, ranked 29th, had his chances in the opening game, leading 6-1 and 15-12, but faltered in the face of the relentless pressure of Popov, who turned the game around from 16-18 to 19-18 before taking the lead. Popov grew in confidence after the change of ends, moving from 5-3 to 13-9. Prannoy fought back to level at 13-13, but Popov surged ahead as the Indian crumbled.

# Andrea Kimi Antonelli is Lewis Hamilton's successor at Mercedes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

ndrea Kimi Antonelli once hid in a stack of tires to get through secu-A stack of the Formula 1 padrity and into the Formula 1 padrity and into the Formula 1 padrity is dock. Now the 18-year-old Italian is Lewis Hamilton's successor at Mercedes. Antonelli is among F1's biggest intake of new drivers in years as top teams put some trust in youth. Six of the 20 drivers on the 2025 grid are starting their first full seasons in F1. Some could potentially compete for wins. Others already risk losing a hard-won F1 seat. An unexpectedly talented Formula 2 field last season came at a time when some F1 teams were keen to move on from older drivers like Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas. Switching in 2025 gives teams a chance to let youngsters gain experience before the F1 car design rules change radically for 2026.

#### **Andrea Kimi Antonelli**

Stepping into a seven-time champion's shoes at Mercedes puts the spotlight on Antonelli, who is set to become the third-youngest F1 driver ever. The Italian wants to be known as just "the next Mercedes driver" because of Hamilton's legacy. The first time Antonelli visited an F1 paddock was age eight in 2014 when



support series — hid him in a stack of tires under an umbrella to get past security and into the German Grand Prix. "That was a really cool experience," he said last month. Antonelli had a stellar record in junior series and was sixth in F2 last year but a heavy crash in practice for Mercedes at Monza in August was a tough introduction to F1. **Liam Lawson** 

in this list because he's taken part in 11 F1 races since 2023, though never a full season. He says he'll feel "more like a rookie" at the start of the season on tracks he hasn't raced before. Partnering four-time champion Max Verstappen as the replacement for Perez is a daunting task for Lawson, who knocked Verstappen out of qualifying in only his third F1 race in Singapore in 2023. The New Zealander

needs to justify Red Bull's decision to elevate him over his 2024 teammate and former roommate Yuki Tsunoda, who outperformed Lawson over their six races together last year.

#### **Oliver Bearman**

It's less than a year since Bearman burst onto the scene in F1 with a combative seventh-place finish for Ferrari in Saudi Arabia while Carlos Sainz Jr Was sidelined because of surgery. He'd never previously raced in Jeddah and was racing with two days' notice. Bearman beat experienced teammate Nico Hülkenberg in two races for Haas later that year and is now a fulltime Haas driver for 2025. Bearman remains part of Ferrari's junior program but displacing regular Ferrari drivers Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc is unlikely any time soon.

Jack Doohan

The son of legendary motorcycle world champion Mick Doohan enters 2025 with his F1 career under threat as soon as it has begun. Alpine's decision to sign ex-Williams driver Franco Colapinto as reserve means a would-be replacement is available if Doohan doesn't impress team management. "You're always going to have pressure on your shoulders because you're

The Australian driver placed third in F2 in 2023 but didn't race at all last year until a surprise entry for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Finishing 15th, he was far off the pace of teammate Pierre Gasly in seventh.

in such a cut-throat sport," Doohan said.

### Isack Hadjar

Lawson's promotion to Red Bull left an opening at its second team, now rebranded Racing Bulls, for F2 runner-up Hadjar. The French driver arrives at a team with a history of changing drivers mid-season if they don't perform. Even eight-time Grand Prix winner Daniel Ricciardo didn't last a full year there

#### **Gabriel Bortoleto**

Despite winning the F2 title last season, beating Hadjar, Antonelli and Bearman, Bortoleto's arrival in F1 has been overshadowed by his former rivals. That's partly because his new team Sauber struggled last year and is marking time before a full rebrand as the Audi works team in 2026. With a helmet design paying tribute to three-time champion Ayrton Senna, Bortoleto is F1's first full-time Brazilian driver since 2017.

# The Pioneer BHUBANESWAR | WEDNESDAY | MARCH 12, 2025

# Sports ministry revokes suspension imposed on WFI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

he Sports Ministry has revoked the suspension imposed on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), ending the months of uncertainty surrounding the sport and paving the way for resumption of activities, including selection trials for the upcoming Asian Championship in

The ministry had suspended the WFI on December 24, 2023 for lapses in governance and procedural integrity by the new body, which was elected on December 21. It had asked IOA to form an ad-hoc panel to run the affairs of the

The Sanjay Singh-led body had announced the conduct of Under-15 and Under-20 National Championships in Nandini Nagar, Gonda — the stronghold of former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh — and the choice of venue irked the government since the former BJP MP was

facing charges of sexual harassment. The ministry, in its order issued on Monday, said that the WFI has taken compliant measures, so in larger interest of the sport and athletes, the ministry has decided to lift the suspension.

There were complaints that the WFI was still operating from the residence of Brij Bhushan, prompting the ministry to form a verification committee, which performed a spot inspection and found that the Federation had shifted its office to East Vinod Nagar in New Delhi.

The ministry was satisfied with the corrective measures taken and considering that not having a competent body in place will affect Indian wrestlers' medal chances at 2026 Asian Games and 2028 Olympic Games, it ended the suspension.

"I thank the government for taking this step. It will allow us to function smoothly. It was needed for the sake of the sport. The athletes were suffering for lack of competitions," Sanjay Singh said.

The ministry, though, has asked the WFI to follow certain directions, such as the Federation has to ensure that there is a balance of power among the elected office bearers, and it keeps itself disassociated from the suspended/terminated

It may be noted that Prem Chand Lochab, the new general secretary, was elected from the rival camp and the ministry's directive could be understood in that context.

I thank the government for taking this step. It will allow us to function smoothly. It was needed for the sake of the sport

undertaking in this regard within 4 weeks. Any violation of the undertaking will invite appropriate legal action, including the action under the Sports Code," the ministry said in its order.

It also said that the WFI must ensure that the selection for all international events should be done in a free, fair and transparent manner as per the extant provisions of the Sports Code and the other latest instructions issued in this regard along with regulations issued from timeto-time by the UWW (United World Wrestling).

The WFI president said there is nothing that can't be followed.

'We have already shifted to a new office and soon we will call for an EC meeting and also issue a circular for the selection trials. We have no issues in following these instructions," he said.

The Asian Championship is scheduled to be held in Amman, Jordan from March 25. The Indian wrestlers missed out on "The EC of the WFI must give an competing in Ranking Series tourna-



ments in Zagreb and Albania due to the ministry's suspension and the court cases filed by prominent wrestlers Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Satyawart

The Indian wrestlers could have missed participation in the World Championship

also last year but after they protested outside the residence of Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, they were allowed to participate.

The wrestlers, who had led the protest against Brij Bhushan, had contended that the WFI did not have the authority to pick national teams since it was suspended.

The court had directed the Indian Olympic Association to restore the ad-hoc panel for managing the WFI but the sports body had refused, saying UWW, the world governing body, recognises only the WFI and won't accept entries from the ad-

The UWW, which lifted its suspension on WFI on January 13, 2024, had threatened IOA to suspend WFI again if there

was interference in its governance. "We are so relieved that this suspension has been lifted. There was a compete lull, the young wrestlers were suffering for no fault of theirs. They were missing tournaments, there was no national camp. The suspension should have been lifted long back," said a coach associated with a leading training centre in Haryana.

Vinesh, Bajrang and Sakshi Malik had accused Brij Bhushan of sexual abuse of junior wrestlers and held a long protest at Jantar Mantar. An FIR was lodged and the former BJP MP is facing a trial in the case. Brij Bhushan has denied the charge.

Vinesh later joined the Congress and won the Julana seat during the Haryana state elections last year. Bajrang was appointed chief of All India Kisan Congress (AIKC).

### **New Zealand** rest T20 regulars for series against **Pakistan**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Wellington

ew Zealand have rested a majority of their T20 regulars for the home series against Pakistan with the IPL around the corner.

The series, comprising five T20Is, begins March 16 while the IPL begins

Michael Bracewell, who was one of the main performers for New Zealand in the Champions Trophy (CT), will lead the side in the absence of Mitchell Santner.

Besides Bracewell, six more players in the T20 squad featured in the 50-over Champions Trophy. New Zealand lost the final to India on Sunday.

Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra and white-ball captain Santner were unavailable for selection due to IPL commitments. Kyle Jamieson and Will O'Rourke have been included only for the first three games of the series, as the selectors seek to manage the workload of the pace bowlers returning from the Champions

Matt Henry, who finished as the leading wicket-taker in the tournament despite missing the final through injury, has been selected for games four and five, subject to further assessment once the ODI squad arrives home on Wednesday.

Bevon Jacobs, who was part of the squad for the recent T20 series against Sri Lanka, was unavailable due to IPL commitments, while Kane Williamson wasn't considered for selection after making himself unavailable.

Selector Sam Wells said the Pakistan series was important for several reasons. "We're certainly starting to narrow our

sights on the ICC T20 World Cup in India next February and March," he said. "We made it clear in our planning and

communication with players that availability for that tournament and the build-up to it was required to be considered for this series against Pakistan. "Half of this squad is only returning

from the Champions Trophy on Wednesday and so we're going to need to manage those players really carefully," he

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

eople who know Gautam

Gambhir, describe him as some-

one "boringly consistent", some-

An experiment is out of question.

He loves wearing his denims for casual gatherings and it has not changed

team after Rahul Dravid ended his stint

with the T20 World Cup triumph in

The man from Delhi's Old Rajinder

Nagar has witnessed some heartbreak-

ing and baffling defeats as well as suc-

cess. He has seen both ends of the spec-

trum with high of Champions Trophy

The CT win has come like a breath

of fresh air and 'Guru Gambhir' will get

a chance to analyse the big picture as

Indian cricket is expected to undergo

a sea-change in the next two crucial

It won't be wrong to say that

Gambhir has completed his probation

period and will get into a phase where

he would have three distinct challenges,

starting with the Test tour of England.

That will be, as usual, right after the

(CT) and low of six Test losses.

one who has not even changed his eat-

ing pattern in the last 20 years

for years.

# Focus on playing for country: Pant to budding cricketers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

ndia wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant feels the lure of the IPL is understandable but budding cricketers should always focus on playing for the country as "everything else" follows thereafter

Pant, who was part of India's triumphant Champions Trophy squad but did not get a game, made his international debut back in 2017.

"Since childhood, I had only one dream-to play for India. I never even thought about playing in the IPL. I think today, people are more focused on the IPL. Of course, it's a great platform, but I believe that if your goal is to play for your country, everything else-including the IPL-will eventually fall into place," Pant told JioHotstar. "If you have that bigger mindset, suc-

cess will follow. I always believed that I would play for India one day, and God has been kind. At 18, I got the opportunity to make my debut, and I am grateful for that," said the 27-year-old.

Pant is known for flamboyant style of



play and some of his trademark shots include a one-handed six with the bat often slipping out of his hands. He

explained why that happens frequently.
"I think it mostly happens because I hold my bottom hand very lightly. I mainly try to use my bottom hand for support because, at times, it starts dominating. So, I focus on gripping my top hand tightly," said Pant.

"But when I overreach—especially when the ball is too wide or too short—

it's not always in the ideal hitting zone. Sometimes, the shot I attempt may only have a 30-40 per cent success rate, but depending on the match situation, I'm willing to take that risk. That's my

"When I take that chance and overreach, I need to do something to maintain balance. At times, it may look like I'm throwing the bat, but in reality, I'm just trying to make the most of that delivery. If my bat slips, if it's not in my hand, or even if it hits my head-my only focus at that moment is finding the boundary."

Pant said being a gymnast in his younger days has also helped him as a

"I used to do gymnastics as a kid. My gymnastics coach always told me that it would come in handy in life.

"Basu Sir, our Indian team trainer, once told me in 2018-19, 'Thank you to your gymnastics coach because what he taught you in childhood is still benefiting you today.

I kept practicing hand springs, and it has played a huge role in my fitness for

### PCB files formal complaint with ICC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Karachi

he Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is still waiting for a "formal clarification" from the ICC on the issue of not have their representative on stage for the closing ceremony of the Champions Trophy in Dubai.

India beat New Zealand by four wickets in the title clash on Sunday to win the tournament for the third time. "We have filed a formal complaint with

the ICC as what happened is unacceptable to us," a PCB official said on Tuesday. The

The reasons being given for not having our COO and tournament director on stage for the final presentation make no sense to us

- PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD

controversy erupted when Sumair Ahmed, who is the chief operating officer of the PCB and was also the tournament director of the Champions Trophy, was not invited on stage for the final presentation.

BCCI president Roger Binny presented the white jackets to India players and the medals to match officials, while ICC chairman Jay Shah handed the trophy to skipper Rohit Sharma and gave the medals to the winners. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia and New Zealand Cricket's CEO Roger Twose were also present on stage.

The reasons being given for not having our COO and tournament director on stage for the final presentation make no

# Victorious Indian cricketers return home ahead of IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

return home following their triumph in the Champions Trophy (CT) in Dubai. After leading India to their second ICC title in nine months, skipper Rohit landed back in Mumbai on Monday night.

The squad members have got a week off before they join their respective IPL teams ahead of the tournament beginning March 22.

"All the players with families left from Dubai on Monday. There are some players who have stayed back for a couple of days," a BCCI source told

With players preferring to rest ahead of the two-month-long IPL, the BCCI did not plan a felicitation for the team like it did when the squad returned

from Barbados following the win in the T20 World Cup. The players had also →he Indian cricketers, led by Rohit met Prime Minister Narendra Modi fol-Sharma, have made a quiet lowing their return from Barbados via a special flight back in July.

Head coach Gautam Gambhir and pacer Harshit Rana landed in Delhi on Monday night. Superstar Virat Kohli had left the team hotel with wife Anushka Sharma right after the team returned from the Dubai International Stadium late on Sunday night.

Shreyas Iyer, who played a big role in the middle order, will captain Punjab Kings and will join the team on March 16. India beat New Zealand by four wickets to win their third Champions Trophy. They were the only unbeaten side in the eight-team tournament.

Though Pakistan were the tournament hosts, India played all their games in Dubai as per the agreed hybrid model.

### MCG to host a night match between Australia, England Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Melbourne

**◄**he 150th anniversary test between Australia and England will be held under lights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground from March 11-15, 2027. Cricket Australia announced Tuesday that the historic match will be the first day-night men's test at the MCG.

The famous stadium on the edge of downtown Melbourne hosted the first cricket test in 1877 and the centenary test between Australia and England in 1977. Australia won by a 45-run **AFFIDAVIT** 

margin in both of those matches. By virtue of an affidavit

"The 150th anniversary test at the MCG will be one of the great cricket events, and playing under lights will be a fantastic way to celebrate both our game's rich heritage and test cricket's modern evolution," Cricket

said. "It will also help ensure more people are able to attend and watch what will be a fantastic occasion.

"The Centenary Test created many iconic performances, including David Hookes' five consecutive boundaries off Tony Greig, Rick McCosker batting with a broken jaw and Derek Randall's defiant century, and I'm sure the 150th test will create its

own lifelong mem-

Balasore

CHHAKA

hereby

sworn before the Executive

SING,son of Late Budhia

Sing, At-Halupatana, Po-Nua-

parhi, P.S-Remuna, Dist-Bala-

declared that I have changed

my name from RABI SING(

Old Name) to CHHAKA SING(

New Name). CHHAKA SING

and RABI SINGis the Same

and onePerson. That now

onwards I shallbe known as

CHHAKA SING for all future

do

Magistrate,

on10/03/2025,

sore,Odisha

purposes.

#### I, Rabi Shankar Bhoot, aged

about 49 years, S/o- late Om Prakash Bhoot, w.n- 6, PO- Rairangpur, PS- Rairangpur (T) Dist-Mayurbhanj do hereby declare that Miss Raina Bhoot is my daughter and was studying in Kerala Public school, Rairang-In her school records my name

**AFFIDAVIT** 

is mentioned as Ravi Shankar Bhoot whereas in her birth certificate my name is recorded as Rabi Shankar Bhoot.By virtue of an affidavit bearing no. 12047 dated 21.02.2025 before the Court of Executive Magistrate Rairangpur, I, declare that Rabi Shankar Bhoot and Ravi Shan kar Bhoot is one and the same person. The purpose of this affidavit is to produce it before the concerned Authority

#### **AFFIDAVIT** By virtue of an affidavit

sworn before the Notary Kendrapara Town, I, Satyabrat Das aged 45 years S/O Basudev Das of village Khadianga.Po-Kendrapara,Ps-Kendrapara Town, Dist-Kendrapada declare that I have purchased scheduled mentioned land from Kailash Nath Mohanty,S/o- Surendranath Mohanty, of village Sunailo, Po-Kendrapara, Ps-Kendrapara Town Dist-Kendrapara on dt 05.10.2015 vide RSD No-1093502191 and obtained Khatiyan,but previous Khatiyan bearing No- 497/82,Plot No-110/1, Area Ac 0.055dec and previous RSD No- 3061 on dt. 08.06.1984 which was name of the vender said Kailash Nath Mohanty was lost on dt.03.03.2025 at place of Kendrapara Court premises

Satyabrat Das

#### Challenging two-year cycle to start for coach Gautam Gambhir with England tour Sanju Samson has found his mojo although Rishabh Pant will be around and so would be Yashasvi Jaiswal. There is a prolific powerplay wicket-taker in Arshdeep Singh and at least

But when it comes to cricket, his T20 spectacle known as IPL with no brain is always ticking and seeking solutions to various strategic problems. time for preparation. His second big challenge will be the 2026 T20 World It has been eight months since Cup in India and Sri Lanka where Gambhir took charge of the national

> defending their title. And last but certainly not the least is 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa, which will be a helluva challenge. If one segregates Gambhir's coaching across formats, he has already built a fabulous core for the T20 team with Surva at the helm.

> Suryakumar Yadav's men will be

Even as Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja walked into the sunset in shortest format, their absence was hardly felt as the new brand of cricket that India has been playing in T20 is earning them fans globally.

He has unearthed a gem in Abhishek

When Varun Chakravarthy and Jasprit Bumrah would bowl during a global meet (World T20) those eight overs would be a nightmare for batters. three seam all-rounders in Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Shivam Dube. Surya and Axar along with Hardik are old guards in this team. It is a team which has all its bases covered and is

running on auto-pilot with a tweak here But it is the other two formats where Gambhir, the strategist, the disciplinarian and the man-manager would have to merge for results.

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have made it clear that they are not retiring from ODIs anytime soon. Retirement is an individual call and both have performed in Champions Trophy.

But during the 2027 World Cup Gambhir won't have the option of using four specialist spinners and create magic with totals in range of 240-250. Scores will be on higher side and the

question is if Rohit with his short and aggressive bursts can do enough along with Kohli, who is now more of an anchor now. Rohit has said that he won't retire but was also unsure of his participation in the 2027 World Cup. Here, Gambhir will have to step in. Gambhir's, 'team first' philosophy won't change. He loaths the superstar culture. He has immense respect for performers which is seniority neutral.

It will not be a surprise if he demands a bit of clarity both from the board as well as national selection committee as to how they plan to see Rohit in ODI scheme of things with only 27 ODI games ahead of World Cup. Another issue to ponder over would be the next captain? Shubman Gill is a terrific ODI player and has been Rohit's deputy but Hardik Pandya is also a good leader, who believes in implementing the coach's strategy to the 'T'.

He did that well in Gujarat Titans with another football team-like head coach Ashish Nehra at the helm.

In immediate future, Gambhir will also have to deal with Test cricket squad where he would face the maximum In case Rohit plays and has Jaiswal

and KL Rahul in top-three, where will it place Shubman Gill, the Test crick-Will he get all three Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Mohammad

swing and seam will be the order of the And what happens to that one middle-order slot that has been India's Achilles heel for some time. Shall Karun Nair fit in there or Shreyas Iyer

Siraj in best shape for the series where

'Guru Gambhir' has some really tough choices to make but he has never been afraid of making bold decisions.

should regain his Test place?

Sd/-

Chhaka Sing

GOVERNMENTOF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAHITI: PIPILI Email-ori-pipili@nic.i

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR THE WORK NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Tendering

No. 1295 /Date. 10.03.2025

The OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, Pipili, Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage Rate Bids through e-Tendering in conformity with the terms and conditions of the Detailed Tender Call Notice(DTCN) in Single Bid system from Class of Contractors as mentioned in Col.6 of table registered with the State Governments and contractors of equivalent Grade/Class registered with Central Government/MES/Railways for execution of Civil Works requirements given in the DTCN on percentage Rate Bids to be eventually drawn up in the standard P1 Contract Form. The bid should be submitted on-line in the website by eligible class of contractors .The bidders should have the necessary Portal Enrolment (with his own Digital Signature Certificate). The registered bidders of outside Odisha can also participate in this process, after ecessary Portal Enrolment, but shall have to subsequently undergo registration with the appropriate authority of the State Government before signing agreement.

SL No	Name of the Work	Estimated Civil cost (in Rs.)	Cost of Tender paper in Rs./	EMD (in Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Time of completion	Grant	BID Identific ation No.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Additional Classroom at Chaudaman Nodal U.P School at Chaudaman	14,28,148/-	7,080/-	14,281/-	D & Equivalent	90days	S & ME Deptt./2024- 25	16/ Pipili/ 2024-25
2	Additional Classroom at Govt. U.G High School at Kamakantia	13,90,730/-	7,080/-	13,907/-	D & Equivalent	90days	S & ME Deptt./2024- 25	17/ Pipili/ 2024-25
3	Additional Classroom at Sastriji Nodal U.P School at Madhipur	14,94,554/-	7,080/-	14,946/-	D & Equivalent	90days	S & ME Deptt./2024- 25	18/ Pipili/ 2024-25
4	Additional Classroom at Kothasahi Primary School at Kothasahi	14,28,148/-	7,080/-	14,281/-	D & Equivalent	90days	S & ME Deptt./2024- 25	19/ Pipili/ 2024-25