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Language war intensifies



DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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DHARMENDRA PRADHAN, UNION EDUCATION MINISTER

DMK MPs also raised slogans of "stop the victimisation of south Indian states". Congress' Karti Chidambaram said there was societal and political unanimity in Tamil Nadu about non-acceptance of the three-language policy. Remarks by DMK member Dayanidhi Maran drew a sharp rebuke from Speaker Om Birla, who warned him of strong action. "Be careful while speaking, whatever you said was not on record. Had it been on record, I would have ensured proper action against you. I will do it. You say the same thing on record and I

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fashion show in picturesque Gulmarg angers Kashmir Assembly

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

- SUNIL SHARMA, LOP JAMMU ASSEMBLY

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

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

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

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

Abdullah responded to Umar Farooq's post, saying the shock and

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

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

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

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

Vanuatu dumps Lalit Modi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ New Delhi/Port Vila

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gun violence chokes national highway

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi



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

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

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

around 2 am in the Ghazipur area. Police said they have registered a case under sections of the Arms Act and for murder and two suspects have been detained. Multiple teams are investigating the case. "We received information that a man was injured. When police reached the hospital, we found that he had been shot. Two people have been detained, and further investigation is underway," said Vineet Kumar, Additional DCP-I, East District. The murder triggered strong protests in the area. Locals blocked the main road and raised slogans demanding immediate action.

One of the protesters, Virender Singh said, "We have a Hindu brother here in Ghazipur village. He was shot at night by jihadists. He was from the Gujar community. It happened around 2am. The problem was that these people were dominating the area, collecting money, and running illegal businesses. This brother spoke out against them and said this kind of domination won't be allowed.

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

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

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

Beleaguered Air India grounded by two hoax bomb threats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Metro network in India accelerates to be third largest in world

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

Replying to supplementaries in the Rajya Sabha during Question Hour, the minister said he cannot give an assurance to a Member of Parliament on a capital-intensive project, as the projects require detailed examination in terms of finances and feasibility.

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

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

- HARDEEP SINGH PURI, UNION MINISTER

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

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

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

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

"In Delhi, we have about 400 km in NCR region and at any given day, we have more than 70 lakh people using the metro system," he said while giving an example of a successful transport system.

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

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

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

**Editor's
TAKE**

Veni, Vidi, Vici...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leaderspeak

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

ROHIT SHARMA, CAPTAIN TEAM INDIA



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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

Despite these tariff disputes, the United States remains India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$118.2 Billion in the 2024 fiscal year. India maintained a trade surplus of \$36.8 Billion dur-

ing this period. Trump has criticised India for imposing 100 per cent tariffs on automobiles, claiming such trade imbalances have allowed foreign countries to take advantage of the US for decades.

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

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

India should focus on bilateral negotiations to lower tariffs and diversify its export markets.

This strategy could help India navigate the impending trade challenges more effectively. A balanced, give-and-take approach will be key to overcoming this situation.

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

The Unmatched Multitasking Skills of Women

**SECOND
Opinion**



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPPOSITION CRITICISES GOVERNMENT

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

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

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

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

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

JANG BAHADUR SINGH | JAMSHEDPUR

Letters to the Editor

Freebies or political bribes?

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

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

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

India wins Champions Trophy

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

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

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

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

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

Conflict in Syria

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

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

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

MANOJ PARASHAR | GHAZIABAD

Spiralling food subsidy: The urgent need for reform

FIRST Column

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

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

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

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

While, the PMGKAY has been in force since January 1, 2023, before that, the Centre was giving food to 820 Million persons (seven kg of cereals per person per month to 120 Million poorest of the poor persons covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana or AAY families and five kg of cereals per person per month to the remaining 700 million) at a heavily subsidized price of ₹2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

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

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



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

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

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



UTTAM GUPTA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

US Trade Deficit with Major Countries

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

Is High Tariff the Reason for the US Trade Deficit?

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

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

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

Vietnam has emerged as a manufacturing powerhouse, with its exports tripling from \$124 Billion in 2012 to \$384 Billion in 2022. Yet, its effective tariff rate stands at just 1.07 per cent, with an MFN rate of 4.98 per cent. The growth of Vietnam's exports is primarily due to low labour costs, streamlined supply chains, and favourable trade agreements rather than high tariffs.

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

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

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

The Real Cause of the US Trade Deficit

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

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

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

Billion, resulting in a \$200 Billion services trade surplus-which offsets part of the goods deficit. Economic research has shown that imposing high tariffs does not necessarily boost manufacturing or enhance economic integration.

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Holistic approach to overcoming addiction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So let us breathe our problems away.

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Limited

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Limited is celebrating Electricity Safety Awareness Week across the state nowadays. During this awareness week, various awareness activities are being organized not only to the employees of the Electricity Board about their safety, while the general public of the state is also being made aware about the protection of sky electricity, domestic power current and other power commotion.



CSR ACTIVITY: Donation of Ambulance By Sbi

Chandigarh: Under CSR initiative, State Bank of India, Chandigarh Circle donated an ambulance to Serve Humanity, Serve God Charitable Trust in the presence of Shri. Binod Kumar Mishra, Deputy Managing Director (HR & CDO), Shri. Rajeev Kumar, Chief General Manager, (HR), Corporate Centre Mumbai, Shri. Krishan Sharma, Chief General Manager, SBI Chandigarh Circle, staff members of Local Head Office and representatives from the NGO. The NGO headed by Shri. Swarnajet Singh (President) operates from Village Madenhari, Kharar, Punjab focusing on rehabilitating and supporting spinal cord injury (SCI) patients. The NGO gives free of cost treatment. Through this endeavor the Bank has emphasized its commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility. This initiative is a part of SBI's CSR endeavours, reflecting our deep-rooted commitment to community welfare.



The Indian Bank Officers Association (AIBOC), Chandigarh organized

Chandigarh: Association Organized International Women's Day and Distributed Sewing Machines The Indian Bank Officers Association (AIBOC), Chandigarh organized a grand celebration of International Women's Day (Sheroes 3.0) and Holi Milan Samaroh on Sunday, March 9 at Hotel Turquoise, Chandigarh. The event commenced with the presentation of floral bouquets to Mr. S.K. Ghoshal (General Manager) and Mr. Sankar Raju V (Deputy General Manager).



On the occasion of International Women's Day a seminar was organized by Staff Training Centre, Panchkula Punjab National Bank for retired women staff members. The event was presided over by Gupinder Kaur Chief Manager.



W.E.E.D initiative launched to empower women entrepreneurs

Mohali: The Women Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development (W.E.E.D) initiative, a structured one-year program dedicated to fostering women-led start-ups, was officially unveiled at an event held at Mohali. W.E.E.D, is a brain child of Navneet Kaur Dhillon, a former Femina Miss India World, actress, and entrepreneur. She said, "W.E.E.D initiative is designed to address key areas vital for business where we will provide women entrepreneurs access to a strong network of mentors, investors, and experts."

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank, Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi- 110005. The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE It is informed to general public that Veena Rani wife of Om Parkash son of Hani Chand R/o Adarsh Nagar, Mandi Dalwadi Distt. Sira is owner of A shop SCF bearing Property Tax ID No. 10/10/174 measuring 13'0" x 36' 0" i.e. 54 sq. yards situated at New Anji Market, B-Block, Mandi Dalwadi vide sale deed no. 3980 dated 08.11.2006 some-where. If any person have any objection regarding mortgage of said property or have claim any right in above mentioned property, he/she should file an objection in writing along with 14 days of the publication of this notice.

The Singh Co-op. House Building 1st Society Limited (Regd. No. 512) Village Butera, U.T., Chandigarh PUBLIC NOTICE It is hereby notified for the information of general public and all the concerned that the following applicant have applied for transfer of Share/ Flat and execution of Sub Conveyance Deed before the Managing Committee of the Society/ Registrar, Cooperative Societies, U.T., Chandigarh, as per notification issued by Finance Department, Chandigarh Administration:-

The Tribune Friends Cooperative House Building (First) Society Ltd Regd. No 650 Dt. 28.5.2003, Sector 50-D, Chandigarh. PUBLIC NOTICE It is hereby notified for the information of general public and all the concerned that the person have applied for issue of NOC/ Permission/ transfer of Share/ Flat for enrollment as member/ execution of Sale Deed before the Managing Committee of the Society/ Registrar, Cooperative Societies, U.T., Chandigarh, as per notification issued by Finance Department, Chandigarh Administration:-

PUBLIC NOTICE This is for notice of general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by name of GREEN GOLD PARTY. The office of the party is located at Gali No.8, Shiv Mandir Colony, Safiyabad, Sonapat, Haryana - 131013. This Party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951.

Form No. 3 [See Regulation-15(1)(a)] / 16(3) DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL CHANDIGARH (DRT 1) 2nd Floor SCO 33-34-35 Sector-17A, Chandigarh. Case No.: OA/97/2023 Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993.

Public Notice It is informed to General Public that Smt. Reena W/o Sh. Mandeep Singh has lost his previous Sale deed no. 4086 dated 24.09.1999 in favour of Sh. Sanjeev Kumar S/o Sh. Almasar for Property i.e. House having Property ID No. 10/BU/56, Old PID No. P01701261369. Part of bearing Khawat No. 4633, Kharsa No. 2808 (1-2) and Khawat No. 4636, Kharsa No. 2808 (1-14), measuring 80 Sq. Yards. Situated at New Rishi Nagar, Hisar Tehsil & Distt. Hisar. If any person has objection then file replies along with proof of ownership within 15 days before the undersigned. After lapsed of stipulated period no claim will be accepted regarding the above said property.

अवसरक सूचना मगर परिवरक टैगान के प्रोपर्टी टैगान के अनुसार विलेजमें में PUID No. 3F1P3L94 बार्ड नं 09 पर श्री वीरल पुर गोविंद राम के नाम पर दर्ज है। अब इन प्रोपर्टी आर्डीनर पर अना नाम पर दर्ज कराने के लिये सूचित, सोच पुर वीरल निवासी बार्ड नं 09 गौतान जिला सोनीपत, मोहाई नं 8168225309 नं इस कार्यालय में अपना आवेदन पत्र में स्व-श्री वीरल पुर गोविंदराम का मूल्य प्रमाण पत्र व जमीनदर गौतान द्वारा सर्वेकर्ता / सत्यापित गौतान आर्डीनर तथा अन्य आवश्यक दस्तावेज सबित प्रस्तुत किया है।

TATA MEMORIAL CENTRE HOMI BHABHA CANCER HOSPITAL AND RESEARCH CENTRE, PUNJAB (Grant-in-Aid Institute under Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India) HBCHRC/PP/LAP/2025/01 Date: 06-03-2025 DISPENSARY PROCUREMENT CELL Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Punjab Venue: Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Research Centre, Plot No.1, Medicity, New Chandigarh, SAS Nagar, Mohali-140901 (Punjab)

DISTRICT DEFENCE SERVICES WELFARE OFFICE TARN TARAN EMPLOYMENT NOTICE The following staff required on Contractual Basis for 11 Months in District Defence Services Welfare Office, Tarn Taran For Pre-recruitment Training Centre

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Form No. 3 [See Regulation-15(1)(a)] / 16(3) DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL CHANDIGARH (DRT 1) 2nd Floor SCO 33-34-35 Sector-17A, Chandigarh. Case No.: OA/97/2023 Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993.

DIRECTORATE OF PUNJAB STATE LOTTERIES DRAW TIME: 06:00 PM ONWARDS RESULT OF PUNJAB STATE DEAR 10 GOLD MONDAY WEEKLY LOTTERY MRP Rs 10/- Per Ticket 1st Prize Amount (10)Rs.10,00,000/-, Common to all series (On last 4 digits) (Seller Prize Amount Rs.500/-, Total Prize Amount Rs.10500/- each) 9590

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SEBI tightens norms for SME IPOs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SME companies would be allowed to

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

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

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

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

Goyal to discuss trade issues with export councils

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has said that India should open

its agri sector also.

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

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

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

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

Rupee sinks 36 paise against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Gold falls ₹150 to ₹88,750

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

Real money gaming industry bodies issue code of ethics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Industry bodies representing online real money gaming companies, AIGF, EGF and FIFS, have jointly signed a "code of ethics" which their member companies will adopt for promoting user safety and responsible gaming practices, including KYC verification, spending limit etc, a joint statement said on Monday. The members of these gaming industry bodies include Dream11, My11Circle, Khelo Fantasy Live, SG11 Fantasy, WinZO, Games24X7, Jungle Games etc. "The All India Gaming Federation (AIGF), the Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS), and the E-Gaming Federation (EGF), today jointly signed a 'Code of Ethics' (CoE)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RBI to push payment innovations, says Governor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Energy conclave Gridcon 2025 to discuss issues in power sector



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

Over 2,000 conference delegates, 150 technical papers, 150 exhibition companies, and representatives from 30 countries, making GRIDCON 2025 a truly international event. Industry leaders, researchers, academicians, and global experts in power transmission, distribution, and smart energy solutions related matters were presented in the conclave. The central theme of GRIDCON 2025 is "Innovations in Grid Resilience", focusing on cutting-edge technologies, infrastructure advancements, and smart solutions that will revolutionise: Renewable Energy Integration, Grid Resilience and Stability, Smart Asset Management, Digital Transformation in the Power Sector.

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

INBRIEF

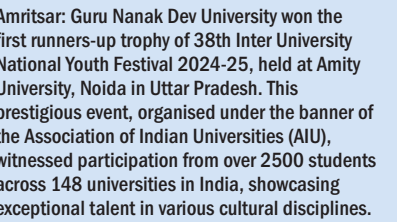
VIT-AP UNIVERSITY'S GRAND CONCLUSION OF VITOPIA 2025 ANNUAL SPORTS AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL

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



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

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



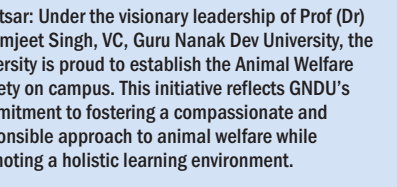
ADMISSION TO GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY ONLINE COURSES TILL MARCH 31

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



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

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



I am not retiring from ODI format: Rohit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

India skipper Rohit Sharma has dismissed the speculations about his career after winning the ICC Champions Trophy (CT), saying that he is not quitting the ODI format anytime soon.



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

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

"I am not going to retire from this (ODI) format. Going forward please don't spread rumours," Rohit said at the post-match press conference after India beat New Zealand by four wickets to clinch the trophy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It is very important for everyone to

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

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

India won the T20 World Cup in June last year and on Sunday, they lifted the Champions Trophy for the third time. It was a total team effort from Rohit Sharma's men over the course of their campaign in the UAE.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Manchester United draws 1-1 with Arsenal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

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

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

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

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

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

United fight

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chelsea rises

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spurs fightback

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

title clash with a shoulder injury.

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

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

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

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



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pakistan miffed at no representation at closing ceremony of Champions Trophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Harry Brook pulls out of IPL deal with DC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

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

"It is a really important time for England cricket and I want to fully commit to preparing for the upcoming series.

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

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



following the death of his grandmother.

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

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

Government asks IPL to ban tobacco, alcohol advertising

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

Majority of the Indian population is glued to television sets when the IPL is on, making the tournament a darling of the advertisers. "India is experiencing a significant burden of Non Communicable disease Cardiovascular diseases, Cancer, Chronic Lung Disease, Diabetes, Hypertension etc. Which accounts for more than 70 per cent deaths annually. "Tobacco and alcohol use are key risk factors for NCDs. We rank second in tobacco-related deaths worldwide; with nearly 14 lakh annual deaths while alcohol is the most common psychoactive substance used by Indians," Goel said further.

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

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