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TRUMP VOWS TO TARIFF INDIA BACK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump criticised the high tariffs charged by India and other countries, terming them as "very unfair" and announced reciprocal tariffs from April 2 on nations that impose levies on American goods. Trump made these remarks in an address to the Joint Session of the Congress on Tuesday. It was the first address of his second term in the White House. On January 20, Trump was sworn in as the 47th President of the US. "If you don't make your

product in America, however, under the Trump administration, you will pay a tariff and in some cases, a rather large one," Trump said. "Other countries have used tariffs against us for decades and now it's our turn to start using them against those other countries. On average, the European Union, China, Brazil, India, Mexico and Canada - have you heard of them? And countless other nations charge us tremendously higher tariffs than we charge them," Trump said. "It's very unfair. India charges us auto tariffs higher than 100 per cent." In February, President



President Donald Trump gestures as he addresses a joint session of Congress at the Capitol in Washington PTI

Trump said that his administration would "soon" impose reciprocal tariffs on countries such as India and China, reiterating what he had said during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US capital last month. Trump has made it clear to Prime Minister Modi that India will not be spared from Washington's reciprocal tariffs and emphasised that "nobody can argue with me" on tariff structure. "China's average tariff on our products is twice what we charge them. And South Korea's average tariff is four times higher. Think of that. Four times higher. And we give so much help militarily

and in so many other ways to South Korea. But that's what happens. This is happening by friend and foe," Trump said. "We've been ripped off for decades by nearly every country on earth, and we will not let that happen any longer," Trump said. Asserting that this system is "not fair to the United States" and never was, Trump said that reciprocal tariffs will kick in from April 2. "Whatever they tariff us, other countries, we will tariff them. That's reciprocal, back and forth," Trump said amid applause from Republican lawmakers. **Continued on page 2**

Canada slams US trade war

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ TORONTO

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday called American tariffs "very dumb" and said that US President Donald Trump is appeasing Russia while launching a trade war against Canada. In a news conference, Trudeau said that Canada would plaster retaliatory tariffs on more than \$100 Billion of American goods in response to Trump's tariffs. "Today the United States launched a trade war against Canada, their closest partner and ally, their closest friend. At the same time, they are talking about working positively with Russia, appeasing Vladimir Putin, a lying, murderous dictator. Make that make sense," a visibly angry Trudeau said.

specific American, Donald," Trudeau said. "It's not in my habit to agree with the Wall Street Journal, but Donald, they point out that even though you're a very smart guy, this is a very dumb thing to do." Later Tuesday, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said the US would likely meet Canada and Mexico "in the middle", with an announcement coming as soon as Wednesday. Lutnick told Fox Business News that the tariffs would not be paused, but that Trump would reach a compromise. "I think he's going to figure out, you do more, and I'll meet you in the middle in some way," Lutnick said. A senior government official said Trudeau told the premiers of Canada's provinces in a call Tuesday afternoon that he hopes to speak to Trump on Wednesday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly about the call. In a post on Truth Social earlier Tuesday, Trump said: "Please explain to Governor Trudeau, of Canada, that when he puts on a Retaliatory Tariff on the US, our Reciprocal Tariff will immediately increase by a like amount!" Trump has threatened Canada's sovereignty, provoking anger in the country. Canadian hockey fans have been booing the American national anthem at recent NHL and NBA games. Trudeau channelled the betrayal that many Canadians are feeling. **Continued on page 2**

CBI Bofors next

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has sent a judicial request to the United States (US) seeking information from private investigator Michael Hershman, who had expressed willingness to share with Indian agencies crucial details about the Rs 64-Crore Bofors bribery scandal of the 1980s, officials said Wednesday. Hershman, head of the Fairfax Group, visited India in 2017 to attend a conference of private detectives. During his stay, Hershman appeared on various platforms, alleging that the investigation into the scam was derailed by the then Congress government and stated he was willing to share details with the CBI. He had claimed in an interview that he was appointed by the Union Finance Ministry in 1986 for investigation of violation of currency control laws and money laundering by Indians abroad and tracking of such assets outside

India and some of them pertained to the Bofors deal. The CBI also approached the Finance Ministry seeking documents pertaining to engagement of Hershman and if any report was submitted by him but the records of that time could not be furnished to the agency. The agency took note of Hershman's claims in several interviews and announced in 2017 that the matter would be investigated according to due process. The need for Letters Rogatory arose because letters and reminders to the US authorities on November 8, 2023, December 21, 2023, May 13, 2024, and August 14, 2024, did not yield any information. A Letter Rogatory is a written request sent by the court of one country to the court of another country to obtain assistance in the investigation or prosecution of a criminal matter. The requests to the Interpol also did not yield any outcome. **Continued on page 2**

CBI signals rail to haul promotion system

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

After several rail officials were nabbed in a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) trap pertaining to cases related to jobs, promotions in the Indian Railway networks, the Railway Board in a high level meeting on Wednesday decided that all departmental promotion examinations for the 13 Lakh rail employees will be done by the Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) via centralised examination through Computer Based Test (CBT) aptitude. Sources in the railways said all zonal railways will have to prepare a calendar for the examination and all examinations will be conducted on the basis of a calendar only. "This has been decided after a long experience of transparent, fair, and highly appreciated examinations conducted by RRB in recent years," sources said.



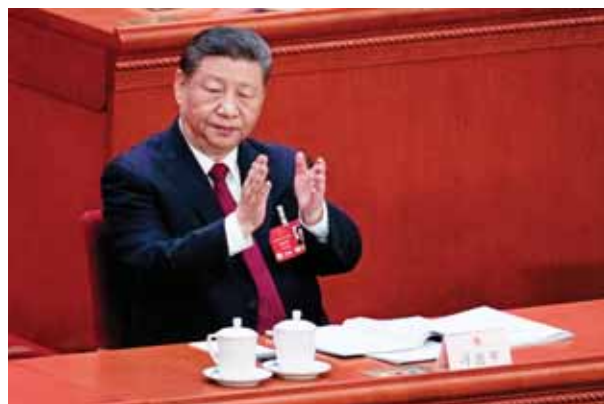
A day earlier in a massive crackdown the CBI arrested 26 railway officials, including a senior divisional electrical engineer of East Central Railway for allegedly leaking papers of a departmental examination and seized ₹1.17 crore cash during its raids. The railway officials were arrested on Monday night for allegedly leaking papers of

examination for the elevation to posts of chief loco pilot at Mughal Sarai, the agency said, adding the exam was to be conducted on Tuesday. The arrest came just a fortnight after the central probe agency arrested five railway officers, including two of the Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS) posted in Vadodara Division, for alleged bribery in favouring candidates in departmental examination, officials said on Wednesday. As of now, there used to be internal vacancies and promotions were 'fixed', which had a huge nexus from top officers to other stakeholders, making it a huge racket and cartelisation for the stakeholders. The decision was taken after the days' meeting reviewed how the RRB is used to conduct examination without any complaints, with all the transparency. **Continued on page 2**

China raises stakes for India, US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ BEIJING

China on Wednesday announced a 7.2 per cent increase of its national defence budget totalling to \$249 billion this year amid its hectic efforts to modernise armed forces, including fast paced development of warships and new generation fighter jets. The planned defence expenditure for the country is 1.784665 Trillion yuan (about \$249 billion) this year, according to a draft budget report submitted to China's Parliament by Premier Li Qiang, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Last year, China increased its defence budget by 7.2 per cent to about \$232 Billion (1.67 Trillion yuan). China has the world's second-largest military budget after



Chinese President Xi Jinping applauds during the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China PTI

the US whose latest defence spending amounted to over \$890 Billion as proposed by President Donald Trump. The Chinese defence spending is amounting to three times that of India's \$681,210 Crore

(\$78.8 Billion). China's defence budget figures are viewed by critics with scepticism in the light of massive military modernisation, including building aircraft carriers, rapid

construction of advanced naval ships and modern stealth aircraft being carried out at a feverish pitch by the Chinese military. Announcing the annual budget which includes the defence spending at the opening of the annual session of China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC) Chinese Premier Li Qiang said last year, China made major new progress in national defence and military development. Li emphasised on the Chinese President Xi Jinping's core leadership of the ruling Communist Party as well as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the military follow the party leadership. Xi is also the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) which is the overall high command of the military. **Continued on page 2**

Senior IPS daughter into gold smuggling

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Wednesday said that the gold bars seized from Kannada actress Ranya Rao at the Kempegowda International Airport were valued at ₹12.56 Crore. Rao is the stepdaughter of senior IPS officer Ramachandra Rao, a senior police official said. The DGP-rank officer is currently serving as the Chairman and Managing Director of the Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited. Her father Rao said he was not aware of daughter's activities. "She got married four months ago and hasn't visited us since. We are unaware of her or her husband's business dealings. This has come as a huge shock and disappointment. The law will take its course," said Rao, adding "she has let us down." The total seizure in the case stood at ₹17.29 Crore, including assets worth Rs 4.73 Crore, marking a significant blow to organised gold smuggling networks. **Continued on page 2**



According to DRI officials, the 14.2 kg haul is one of the largest gold seizures at Bengaluru airport in recent times. In a statement, the Ministry of Finance said the DRI successfully intercepted a passenger carrying foreign-origin gold bars worth ₹12.56 crore at the Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru. "Acting on specific intelligence, DRI officers intercepted an Indian woman, aged around 33, who had arrived from Dubai to Bengaluru on an Emirates flight on March 3. Upon examination, gold bars weighing 14.2 kg were found ingeniously concealed on her person," the statement read. **Continued on page 2**

Naxal as maid nabbed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi police Crime Branch has arrested a 23-year-old woman Naxal operative from Jharkhand, who had been living in the national capital and working as a domestic helper under a false identity, from Pitampura area of outer Delhi. The accused, identified as "R," had been residing in Pitampura since 2020 and was taken into custody following a crime branch operation based on secret intelligence. Originally, a resident of Village Kudaburu in West Simbhum district of Jharkhand, she was wanted in connection with multiple police encounters and was booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Arms Act, Explosives Act, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, according to Delhi Police. On March 26, 2023, a non-bailable warrant was issued against her by a court in Jharkhand. The alleged Naxalite arrived in Delhi in 2020 and after assuming a false identity took up work as a domestic helper in Noida and various parts of Delhi, eventually settling in Pitampura. "Based on months of

surveillance and intelligence gathering, the crime branch received credible information about the presence of a Maoist extremist in the National Capital Region (NCR)," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Vikram Singh said. The officer further said that on March 4, the team carried out a raid in Maharana Pratap Enclave, Pitampura, resulting in the arrest of the Naxalite. The accused was born into a farming family and was recruited into the CPI (Maoist) faction at the age of 10. "She received intensive training for five years at a camp led by a commander named Ramesh in Jharkhand's Kolhan forest. The training covered handling sophisticated weapons such as INSAS rifles, SLRs, LMGs, hand grenades and .303 rifles," DCP said. In 2016, she joined the CPI (Maoist) extremist group led by Ramesh, whose camp was situated in the hills of the Kolhan forest. At the time, the camp accommodated 300-450 individuals, including 40-50 women, 4-5 children of her age. Her involvement in Naxal activities began when she was 10-years-old. **Continued on page 2**



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Profit After tax	₹ 11,477 CRORE	↑ 15%
Total income	₹ 40,805 CRORE	↑ 18%
Disbursement	₹ 1,45,647 CRORE	↑ 19%
Disbursements in Renewable	₹ 17,612 CRORE	↑ 79% YOY
Net NPA	0.74%	↓

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Beginning of a trade war

What began as a threat by Trump is now a full blown trade war as Canada, China and Mexico retaliate the US tariffs

The trade war initiated by President Trump against China, Canada, and Mexico has set off a chain reaction of retaliatory measures, creating uncertainty in global markets and posing risks to economic stability. While the administration aims to address specific national concerns through these tariffs, the broader implications suggest potential harm to both the US and global economies. As the situation evolves, careful consideration of the long-term consequences is essential to mitigate adverse effects on world trade. As promised by him in his campaign, President Donald Trump launched a bold series of tariffs aimed at imports from China, Canada, and Mexico, a move that significantly escalated global trade tensions and set off a swift chain reaction of retaliatory measures. The president signed executive orders that imposed a 25% tariff on all goods from Mexico and Canada, and a 10% tariff on Chinese imports. The administration argued that these measures were necessary to tackle issues related to illegal immigration and drug trafficking to protect American industries. In an effort to minimize any disruptive effects, an additional 10% tariff was applied to Canadian energy exports, including electricity, natural gas, and oil.



The response from the targeted countries was swift and forceful. Beijing retaliated by announcing tariffs of up to 15% on key U.S. agricultural products such as chicken, pork, soy, and beef, while also expanding restrictions on U.S. businesses. In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau countered with 25% tariffs on \$155 billion worth of American goods. Similarly, Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum imposed retaliatory tariffs against the United States, criticizing the unilateral decision and warning of its adverse effects on both national and foreign companies operating in Mexico. Analysts have warned that the tariffs could significantly hinder economic growth, with projections suggesting a contraction of 2.8% in U.S. GDP. The increased tariffs were also expected to drive up consumer prices, adding to existing inflationary pressures and potentially prolonging periods of high interest rates. Global markets reacted negatively, with major U.S. stock indexes and shares in the automotive sector experiencing notable declines. Industries reliant on international supply chains, particularly the automotive sector, braced for production delays and increased costs as a result of these disruptions. The Trump administration maintained that these tariffs were a necessary tool to pressure foreign nations into addressing issues like drug trafficking and to incentivize domestic production. But the reality is different. The tariffs could ultimately have a net negative effect on the U.S. economy by driving up prices, reducing output, and dampening employment growth. In the unfolding saga of international trade, while the US administration's objective remains focused on addressing pressing national concerns, the broader consequences of this trade war hint at potential long-term harm for both the U.S. and the global economy.

Balancing growth and conservation

Large-scale dredging and resource extraction projects at Kerala's Quilon Fish Bank have sparked concerns over marine biodiversity loss and ecological stability

India's ambitious Blue Economy vision is reshaping the way the country engages with its vast marine resources. At the heart of this transformation is Kerala, with the Quilon Fish Bank emerging as a crucial player in sustainable fisheries. However, recent concerns over large-scale dredging, resource extraction, and the long-term impact on marine biodiversity have raised important questions about balancing economic growth with ecological stability.

The Quilon Fish Bank, known for its rich biodiversity and high productivity, is among India's most significant fishing grounds. Spread across Kollam and Alappuzha districts, this region is a vital breeding ground for numerous fish species and shrimp. Kerala's fisherfolk have long depended on these waters for their livelihood, making sustainable fisheries management crucial for the state's economy and food security.

However, recent developments, such as the planned dredging of 242 square kilometres of the seabed in Kollam, have sparked widespread concern. Reports indicate that India's Geological Survey has identified 7.45 billion tonnes of sand in Kerala's coastal and offshore areas. While the government sees this as an opportunity for economic development, local communities fear it may lead to habitat destruction, loss of fish stocks, and increased coastal erosion. The controversial dredging project is part of a larger Blue Economy initiative aimed at tapping into the ocean's resources for economic growth.

While this approach has potential, questions remain about its long-term sustainability and impact on Kerala's delicate marine ecosystem. The Blue Economy concept emphasizes responsible and sustainable use of marine resources to drive economic progress. India, with its vast coastline and rich maritime heritage, has identified the Blue Economy as a critical driver of growth in the 21st century. The government's policy framework seeks to integrate economic growth with environmental conservation.

While large-scale resource extraction, such as sand mining and deep-sea fishing, forms part of this vision, efforts are also being made to minimize ecological disruption. Scientific research, eco-friendly technologies, and strict regulations are being implemented to ensure sustainability.

One of the key objectives of India's Blue Economy plan is to modernize the fisheries



sector. Investments in advanced fishing infrastructure, cold storage facilities, and alternative livelihood programs, such as seaweed farming and mariculture, are providing fishermen with new income opportunities. These initiatives aim to reduce dependence on overfished species and promote a more balanced marine ecosystem. Despite the promising aspects of the Blue Economy, concerns remain about its impact on marine biodiversity.

ing not just marine species but also the livelihoods of thousands of fishing families. Experts warn that Kerala's geographical location-between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats-makes it particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation.

To address these concerns, the government has been expanding Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to safeguard critical habitats. These conservation zones play a vital role

India refine its own Blue Economy strategy. Kerala's government has also taken steps to enhance coastal resilience. Large-scale coastal protection projects, such as artificial reefs and mangrove restoration, are being undertaken to mitigate the impact of erosion and habitat loss. However, these efforts need stronger support from the central government to ensure long-term effectiveness. The future of the Quilon Fish Bank and Kerala's fisheries sector hinges on finding a middle ground between economic growth and environmental sustainability. While resource extraction and development projects are necessary for progress, they must be undertaken with strict environmental safeguards.

A multi-stakeholder approach involving the government, local fishing communities, environmentalists, and global experts is essential. Policymakers must prioritize scientific research and ecological impact assessments before approving large-scale marine projects. Empowering local communities with alternative livelihood options, enhancing conservation efforts, and enforcing stricter regulations on resource extraction can help ensure a sustainable future for Kerala's fisheries. India's Blue Economy vision holds immense promise, but its success will ultimately depend on how well it balances development with ecological responsibility.

(The writer is associate professor at Centre For South Asian Studies; views are personal)

THE QUILON FISH BANK IS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF THIS DILEMMA. DREDGING AND SAND MINING, WHILE ECONOMICALLY LUCRATIVE, HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DISRUPT FISH BREEDING CYCLES, ALTER OCEAN CURRENTS, AND INCREASE VULNERABILITY TO COASTAL EROSION

The Quilon Fish Bank is a prime example of this dilemma. Dredging and sand mining, while economically lucrative, have the potential to disrupt fish breeding cycles, alter ocean currents, and increase vulnerability to coastal erosion. The fragile balance of Kerala's coastal ecosystem is already under stress due to climate change and unregulated fishing practices.

Further extraction of marine resources could push it to a tipping point, endangering not just marine species but also the livelihoods of thousands of fishing families. Additionally, advanced monitoring systems are being introduced to track fish migration patterns and regulate fishing activities, ensuring long-term marine health.

Countries like Norway, Japan, and Australia have successfully implemented sustainable fisheries policies that balance economic interests with conservation. Learning from these models can help

PICTALK



A squirrel perches on a branch of red-silk cotton tree while feeding on flowers in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

When yesterday's children return as tomorrow's hope

SECOND Opinion



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Time flies. A whole lifetime can sometimes feel like a fleeting frame in the vast reel of existence. Few things make me more aware of this than watching children grow. I have no children of my own to mark the passing years with each birthday they celebrate, but as a mentor and educator, I have been surrounded by young minds in various stages of becoming. I have watched them transition from wide-eyed learners to self-assured adults, carving out their place in the world. Yesterday, one of my earliest students visited me with his fiancée and parents, carrying wedding invitations, gifts, and a bouquet of memories from a time when he was just a six-year-old in shorts and tees. His visit felt like the culmination of a week steeped in nostalgia—a week in which I found myself thinking of all my past students, reaching out to some to check on their progress and well-being.

I was astonished at how they had grown—some still scaling academic heights with degrees and doctorates, others, like the one who visited me, embracing both career and companionship, settling into the rhythms of love and domestication. Not all seem set to become super achievers. Some were slow starters who gained momentum in the later years, some who were primed to blaze the trail, falling short in the end game. As I sat across from my former student, now a confident young professional with clear eyes and measured words, I found

The rise in youth crime in Kerala is a stark reminder of the challenges this generation faces. Where did we go wrong, and how can we build resilience alongside success?

myself reflecting on the delicate threads that connect our journeys to the broader tapestry of societal evolution.

They carry with them innovative solutions to problems we have long considered intractable. They approach challenges with a fluidity and adaptability that my generation often struggles to comprehend. Their apparent detachment from traditional structures is not apathy, but rather a reconfiguration of priorities, a reshaping of engagement that might prove transformative for our world. Yet this hopeful vision is not with-



out its shadows. The recent surge in youth-involved drug cases and violent crimes in Kerala sends tremors through our collective conscience. Young people, barely past adolescence, find themselves entangled in webs of addiction, exploitation, and criminality that threaten to define their entire existence. The

juxtaposition is jarring—young minds full of promise alongside peers whose potential is squandered in the pursuit of momentary escape or misguided power. This stark contrast forces us to confront uncomfortable questions about the environments we create, the values we embody, and the support systems we provide for our youth. Where exactly have we faltered? Perhaps in our haste to prepare children for success, we have neglected to equip them for struggle.

In our eagerness to protect them from hardship, we may have inadvertently shielded them from the very experiences that build resilience. In our focus on academic achievement, we might have overlooked the cultivation of emotional intelligence and moral courage. It's hard to put a finger on the fault lines that have caused the fractures. In the face of these complex challenges, I find solace in the knowledge that those who have passed through my classroom have largely become contributors to society rather than detractors from it. This is not entirely to my credit. Countless factors shape a person's trajectory, but I take quiet pride in having played some role in their formation. To have contributed, even modestly, to the development of honest, thoughtful, and capable individuals is perhaps the greatest measure of success in a mentor's life. Our purpose in this world is not measured by personal achievements or accolades, but by the lives we touch, the potential we help nurture, and the humanity we help foster.

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

Letters to the Editor

Textile industry needs support

Madam — Apropos of the article 'Export Potentials of Punjab ...' (March 5), presents an interesting reading. But the trend in the country remains different. Only slogans galore and solutions are nil. The second largest provider of employment is the cotton industry in India. The direct employment it provides is around 40 million. Besides this, there are micro units and allied feeding industries providing employment to many more millions. The cotton business has been suffering for years due to various internal as well as external factors. In the same way, the spinning mills also feel suffocating due to various factors. Declining exports, unviable cotton prices, growing costs of manufacturing, and a number of such factors are quoted to be disturbing the functioning of mills. It is a pity that a good number of mills are closing their operations, throwing millions of workers out of their jobs, besides their due negative impacts on export earnings.

The industry, with debt-funded capex, finds it too difficult to manage the show anymore. Actually, in most of the mills, the number of permanent workers availing themselves of employee-related benefits is too low, and the vast section of the workforce is made up of contract, outsourced, casual, contingent, and barrack segments, who are paid too little and do not avail themselves of any benefits meant for permanent workers. In spite of such huge savings from the labour component, the mills are closing down due to various reasons that the governments

can alone resolve. For example, the cost of power is felt to be unviable. Export subsidies need to be provided. In the absence of required intervention from the state or the Union governments, a good number of mills are already closed, and many are nearing closure. It is said even banks are not inclined to advance these industries anymore. It is time to attend to this segment as a priority, as slogans are not a solution.

A G RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

Lasting peace in Manipur

Madam— Apropos of the editorial 'A fresh start or fleeting relief?' (March 4), it is very apparent that the Union Government's efforts and monitoring of Manipur ethnic violence for quite a long time are bearing fruit and steadily succeeding for normalcy. Unless the roots of the ethnic violence and secessionist underground activities are identified and addressed, the violence may erupt again. Drug trafficking, opium cultivation, missionaries' separatist activities, and foreign intervention from across the border must be handled iron-handedly.

The arms and ammunition snatched by warring outfits from the police and paramilitary forces should be recovered, and no mercy should be shown to those who attacked police and armed forces. The Parliament should approve the extension of the President's rule, and rather, Manipur should be directly ruled by the Centre as a Union Territory until complete normalcy is restored. The neighbouring states of Manipur should not feel the heat and face the consequences

of ethnic violence in Manipur. The opposition parties should work in unison with the Union Government in resolving Manipur violence and restoring peace.

VISHAL MAYUR | TUMAKURU

Supreme Court warns influencers

Madam — The Supreme Court's call for regulating digital content to uphold morality while protecting free speech is crucial. The rise of social media influencers like Ranveer Allahbadia has raised serious concerns about the unchecked spread of vulgarity under the guise of free expression. His content, deemed obscene by many, is a clear example of why stricter guidelines are necessary. While free speech is a fundamental right, it does not give anyone a license to propagate content that corrupts young minds and disrespects societal values.

The court's decision to allow Allahbadia to resume his show was not well received. Although it imposed moral restrictions on incoming content, individuals engaging in vulgarity should be banned for at least a year. This would make them aware of the mistakes they have made in reality shows, ensuring that they feel the consequences of their actions. Such punishment should serve as a lesson for future generations to refrain from committing similar acts. The influence of such YouTubers extends to millions, and their impact on impressionable audiences cannot be ignored. The government must implement robust regulations to ensure that digital platforms maintain ethical standards.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

INDIA BEATS AUSTRALIA



The other back-to-back victory of Team India in the ICC Champions Trophy semifinals against Australia has filled Indians with extreme aspiration of becoming champions. We are just a step away from the dream of becoming champions. The last time Team India lifted the Champions trophy was in 2013. Despite Australia giving a challenging chaser score of 264 runs to India, the partnership by the batting order, bowling, and fielding has made India win by four wickets. Now that India has made a glittering entry to the finals of the ICC Champions Trophy for the third time, let us all make figures crossed for the victory of

India in the finals as well. Now that the Indian cricket team has done their hat trick of three successive entries in the finals, let's pray that India will lift the trophy by naming the third title to her name as Champions.

It's time for all eyes to be on Dubai International Stadium for the thrilling final match. We really wish to see Rohit Sharma's squad turn champions. Cricket fever will be in full swing on the upcoming Sunday to thrill the whole world of cricket lovers. We are hopeful for India to make the podium finishes with the trophy in hand and joy in the eyes.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR



FIRST COLUMN

AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI



Understanding God and the Guru

A true guru recognises his limitations, serving only as a guide who connects disciples to the divine



We must understand the distinction between these fundamental entities in our lives. First, let me enumerate some commonly known qualities of God. He is omnipotent. This word is defined as having unlimited power. Only God fits this description. Is He not the Creator of innumerable galaxies? Similarly, God is omniscient. This word is defined as knowing everything. Who else except God fits this description? How much can a mere mortal know?

Albert Einstein famously said, "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know." Then, God is omnipresent too. This word is defined as being present everywhere at the same time. And God is one and we are many. Lord Krishna states, "An eternal soul is My part only." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) Let us see how a genuine guru fares in these characteristics. He knows that whatever he has learnt in terms of spiritual knowledge, oratory skills, etc., is due to God's empowerment. God is much pleased by preaching amongst devotees. A genuine guru realizes that the source of his knowledge is God only. As regards omnipresence, a genuine guru humbly accepts that he is severely limited in being present with his disciples. Additionally, a genuine guru never claims any similarity with God except being part of God. Because God is completely different from us.

A genuine guru knows this fact more than others, who are not so knowledgeable. Being an incarnation of God never crosses his mind, because he knows that God incarnates for specific purposes. A guru's role is extremely limited. It is just to help get his disciples connected with God. And he strictly avoids attracting them to himself personally. Adi Shankaracharya is the role model for him, who preached "bhaja govindam." Now I will take up the famous verse, which is, "gurur brahma, gurur vishnu, gurur devo maheshvara, gurur sakshat parambrahma tasmai shri gururve namah."

Can any mere mortal claim to be Brahma or Vishnu or Mahadeva, never mind all three of them? It is ludicrous to even imagine. These are manifestations of God, not some ordinary entities; they are eternal, whereas we are subject to repeated birth and death till liberated. So what is the meaning of this verse? It is simply that whatever a guru speaks has sanction from God; he is not deviating from His instructions. He is simply conveying the essence of His teachings.

That is how he represents God. A genuine guru ensures that he protects his disciples from any harm by his inappropriate actions. He does not promise anything more than helping them to establish a good connection with God. He tries to become a role model for taking shelter from God because that is how all can benefit. He knows that he cannot give anything more.

He is aware of his severe limitations in this regard. He guides his disciples to get connected to God such that they can get what all God can give. (9.25) The conclusion is to seek help from a genuine guru, who can help in progressing in our eternal journey. And we should never get side-tracked by hopes of easy gains, because there are none. We have to deserve all that we hope to get including liberation by our efforts, not someone else's.

A genuine guru knows this fact and never leaves any doubt in the minds of those who trust him. He thus gets respect from his disciples, which he richly deserves. Additionally, some disciples may serve him personally and some may donate so that the guru can maintain himself.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

A model of stability from China

While Western democracies struggle with internal gridlock, economic and stagnation, China's governance model continues to chart a course of long-term strategic vision



The Financial Times recently published an article on the question of who will succeed Xi Jinping. But perhaps the real question is not one of succession but of continuity—of how a governance model rooted in long-term vision, pragmatic adaptability, and national rejuvenation sustains itself beyond the tenure of any single leader. Unlike Western portrayals, often laden with exaggerated spectres from 'debt traps' to 'authoritarianism,' there are profound lessons to be drawn from China's trajectory—especially as Western democracies now find themselves gasping for air in the suffocating embrace of their contradictions. "Democracy is a failed joke," Ai Weiwei, the Chinese contemporary artist, remarked in a recent interview with The Independent—and perhaps never has this assertion been more starkly evident than in the shambolic decline of the liberal order. Governance, once regarded as the solemn responsibility of those entrusted with the future of their nations, has in the West deteriorated into little more than a revolving spectacle of populist theatre, corporate capture, and institutional paralysis. It is within this continuum that China now prepares to convene its most pivotal political gathering of the year—the Two Sessions.

The third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) and the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), scheduled to commence on 4 and 5 March respectively, are not mere ritualistic formalities but the very engine of governance in a system defined by strategic foresight rather than short-term electoral expedience. The Western world, entrapped in the myopia of its dysfunction, looks upon this grand assembly with bewilderment, unable to comprehend a system where efficiency supersedes obstruction and where governance is an instrument of civilisation rather than a battleground of perpetual paralysis.

As Beijing convenes these pivotal sessions, it does so with a purpose that far surpasses the partisan gridlock that has crippled Washington under Trump and reduced Brussels, under Ursula von der Leyen's leadership, to a stage of waning relevance. History does not bestow hegemony upon the indolent. It is earned through foresight, discipline, and a genuine commitment to civilisation's progress. The Western model, long heralded as the apex of governance, is now fraying



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at the seams, consumed by internal strife, economic stagnation, and an ever-widening gulf between the governed and their rulers. Meanwhile, the Chinese model, grounded in the philosophical profundity of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, marches forward with unparalleled

resolve. "The path of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the only correct path for building a modern socialist country," Xi Jinping declared in his report at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017. What have the last few decades illuminated since China's opening up? "Reform and opening up is the key

definitive proclamation for a new global paradigm—one where dialogue supplants discord and where stability is not held hostage to the whims of declining empires. The very existence of Western diplomacy has been predicated upon coercion, economic subjugation, and military adventurism. China, by contrast, has demonstrated that genuine global leadership lies not in the proliferation of conflict, but in its resolution.

This year's Two Sessions will reaffirm Beijing's role as an indispensable mediator of international crises, bringing adversaries to the negotiating table in a manner that the West, mired in its moral hypocrisy, has repeatedly failed to achieve. Consider the diplomatic masterstroke that saw China facilitate a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia—two historical adversaries long ensnared in the machinations of Western interventionism. This ethos extends to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, where China,

to the Western penchant for war profiteering. While NATO expands its influence under the guise of security, China constructs bridges of diplomacy, demonstrating that true global leadership lies not in fuelling divisions but in fostering dialogue. But China's vision does not stop at terrestrial affairs.

This year's Two Sessions will be held at the next frontier of human progress—space—becomes a new high-tech battlefield. While Western nations hoard technological advancements for geopolitical leverage, China has advanced an inclusive vision of cosmic exploration. The construction of the Tiangong space station, the pioneering lunar projects, and the Mars exploration programme are not mere scientific endeavours; they are emblematic of a civilisation that aspires not merely for national greatness but for the collective progress of humanity.

The essence of the Two Sessions lies in the articulation of a governing philosophy rooted in long-term vision, adaptability, and the pursuit of collective progress. It is not governance dictated by ephemeral political cycles but by a civilisation's deeper consciousness—one that understands its historical responsibility not only to itself but to the broader trajectory of human development. In an era where artificial intelligence and artificial general intelligence are reshaping economies, governance, and even social structures, China does not see these advancements as instruments of control or geopolitical leverage but as elements of a broader mission: ensuring that technological evolution remains a force for human cohesion rather than fragmentation. What China has proven is that reform is not an event; it is the flow of history recognising its potential. Simultaneously, the shifting currents of global trade, exacerbated by protectionist measures and economic fragmentation, have reinforced the necessity of an alternative economic logic—one not shackled to the fluctuations of political expediency but rooted in the principle of enduring equilibrium. True strength is not found in dominance, but in resilience—the ability to absorb, adapt, and outlast. This defines China's approach to trade tensions: rather than engaging in tit-for-tat economic skirmishes, the focus is on structural reinforcement—building self-sufficiency in critical sectors while ensuring that economic interdependence remains a mechanism of stability rather than vulnerability.

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

WHILE WESTERN ECONOMIES DROWN IN INFLATIONARY QUAGMIRES AND INSTITUTIONAL CRISES, CHINA HAS CHARTED A PATH OF ECONOMIC REJUVENATION THROUGH INDUSTRIAL UPGRADING, AND THE INDOMITABLE PURSUIT OF TECHNOLOGICAL SELF-RELIANCE

choice that determines the fate of contemporary China," Deng Xiaoping once asserted. This ethos continues to guide China, as the nation refines its developmental trajectory with an adaptability that the West, bound by ideological rigidity, can scarcely fathom. China is not merely asserting its presence but reshaping the very contours of the global order. The Two Sessions have highlighted the profundity of China's economic strategy—one that is not predicated on the ephemeral illusions of speculative capitalism but on tangible infrastructural and technological advancement. While Western economies drown in inflationary quagmires and institutional crises, China has charted a path of economic rejuvenation through high-quality development, industrial upgrading, and the indomitable pursuit of technological self-reliance.

Yet the significance of the Two Sessions transcends economic imperatives. It is also a

in defiance of Western inertia, has actively pursued dialogue among Palestinian factions. The hypocrisy of the liberal order is laid bare when the so-called torchbearers of democracy selectively disregard the suffering of those who do not fit within their geopolitical calculus.

Beijing, undeterred by such duplicity, has asserted itself as an honest broker of peace, proving that a multipolar world is not an abstraction but an unfolding reality. Even in the maelstrom of the Ukraine conflict, where Western powers have inflamed tensions rather than defused them, China's peace proposal has emerged as the only substantive roadmap towards de-escalation. President Xi Jinping has consistently emphasised that "confrontation, sanctions, and pressure will not solve the problem... what is needed is a mindset of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security," resonating ever more powerfully in contrast

Healthcare divide: How tier-II and III cities are transforming medical access

Investments in advanced medical technology and government initiatives like Ayushman Bharat are making healthcare more accessible in tier II and III cities

Healthcare facilities in tier-II and III cities have long struggled with the disparity between affordability and accessibility of quality healthcare services. These cities often lack well-equipped medical centres, forcing patients to travel to nearby metropolitan areas for advanced treatment. The shortage of trained medical professionals further exacerbates the problem.

The doctor-to-patient ratio in these cities remains significantly below the WHO-recommended standard of 1:1000, often reaching alarming ratios such as 1:25,000. The Accessibility Gap One of the major factors behind this situation is the concentration of healthcare resources in metropolitan areas. Government hospitals in smaller cities often grapple with overcrowding, long waiting lines, and outdated infrastructure. Meanwhile, private hospitals that offer advanced treatments are often unaffordable for the majority of the population. This leaves patients with limited options, pushing them to seek care in distant metro cities.

However, in recent years, several hospitals in tier-II cities have made significant strides in bridging this gap. The emergence of well-equipped hospitals outside major metropolitan areas is proving to be a game-changer for patients who previously had to travel long distances for treatment. Health Institutions like Subharti Hospital in Meerut exemplify how tier-II cities are evolving to provide comprehensive and affordable healthcare not only under



KRISHNAMURTY

the Ayushman Bharat Mission but also for uninsured patients, reducing dependence on metropolitan hospitals.

Ayushman Bharat and Affordability

One of the biggest challenges in tier-II and III cities is making advanced healthcare both available and affordable. Many private hospitals offer high-end treatment facilities, but their pricing structures make them inaccessible to a significant portion of the population.

To address this issue, some hospitals are designing cost-effective treatment models that prioritize patient affordability without compromising on quality. Additionally, government schemes and insurance programs such as Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY need to be further expanded and better implemented in these regions. Many eligible patients are unaware of their entitlements under schemes like PMJAY, leading to underutilization of available resources. Increased awareness and streamlined implementation of such initiatives can make a significant difference in ensuring financial accessibility to quality healthcare.

Advancements in Medical Technology Traditionally, hospitals in non-metro areas have



been perceived as lacking advanced infrastructure and specialized treatment options. However, this perception is gradually changing.

Many healthcare institutions such as Subharti Hospital in Meerut are now investing in cutting-edge medical technology, including advanced imaging facilities such as digital PET scans, high-resolution MRI and CT scans, and modern oncology treatment options like chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

The availability of these services locally is significantly reducing the burden on patients who would otherwise have to commute to larger cities.

A breakthrough in Meerut is the introduction of comprehensive treatment centres, particularly in fields like oncology. Cancer patients, for example, often face logistical and financial challenges when forced to visit different hospitals for diagnosis, surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy.

The integration of these services under one roof in tier-II cities is improving patient outcomes and reducing treatment delays. Subharti Hospital, for instance, has emerged as a reliable healthcare provider in Western Uttar Pradesh, offering a full spectrum of oncology services in a single location, saving patients valuable time and resources.

The Road Ahead

Ensuring quality healthcare in tier-II and III cities requires a multi-pronged approach that includes expanding medical infrastructure, ensuring equitable resource distribution, increasing investment in medical education to address the shortage of trained professionals, and encouraging partnerships to enhance healthcare accessibility. As healthcare in India evolves, tier-II and III cities are poised to play a crucial role in expanding medical access beyond metropolitan areas.

Continuous efforts are needed to overcome existing challenges and create a healthcare system that is truly inclusive and accessible to all. With a focused approach towards affordability, accessibility, and technological advancements, the future of healthcare in non-metro regions holds immense potential. By addressing these challenges head-on, tier-II and III cities can become the next frontier in India's healthcare transformation.

(The writer is the Deputy Medical Superintendent of Subharti Hospital, Meerut. Views expressed are personal)

Real Madrid defeats Atletico 2-1 in Champions League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ MADRID

A superb goal from Brahim Diaz helped Real Madrid maintain its dominance of the Madrid derby in Europe's biggest stage with a 2-1 victory over bitter rival Atletico in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Tuesday.



— in the 2015 quarterfinals and 2017 semifinals. Playing at home at Santiago Bernabeu stadium, Real Madrid took the lead on its first chance through a great goal from Rodrygo.

Atletico patiently waited for an opportunity. It came in the 32nd minute and Julian Alvarez seized it with a spectacular strike.

Arsenal, which returned to the Champions League after a six-year absence last season, got off a shaky start and Jurrien Timber scored against the run of the play with a header at the far post, just after PSV hit the woodwork.

A silly foul from Thomas Partey on Luuk de Jong in the box gave PSV some hope before halftime and Noa Lang converted. But PSV crumbled once back from the locker room.

Dortmund held Last season's runner-up Borussia Dortmund is evenly matched with Lille ahead of the second leg after Hakon Arnar Haraldsson's goal salvaged a 1-1 draw for the French team.

Aston Villa wins away Aston Villa shook off its poor away form, and it was largely due to an own goal from a rival player.

Looking demoralized, the hosts then conceded a late penalty that was converted by substitute Marco Asensio.



WPL: UP Warriorz to face Mumbai Indians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ LUCKNOW

Time is running out for UP Warriorz, who face a must-win situation against Mumbai Indians in their Women's Premier League match here on Thursday.

It was a disappointing homecoming for the Warriorz, who were comprehensively beaten by Gujarat Giants at the Ekana Stadium in their previous fixture.

The 81-run defeat not only pushed them to the bottom of the points table but also dented their net run rate.

On a pitch that played true and offered value for shots, the Warriorz's batting unit however failed miserably, raising serious concerns about their approach and execution.

consider restoring Voll to her preferred opening role — a position where she flourished in the Women's Big Bash League. Grace Harris, who has shown glimpses of form, will be crucial in the middle order.



A Sharath announces retirement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ CHENNAI

Indian table tennis legend A Sharath Kamal will hang up his racket and the iconic bandana later this month, having stayed at the top of his game for more than 22 years.

had enough. "Not saying I am letting it go completely, but this is certainly the end for us on the big tables, in front of the big crowds."

For the better of the past two decades, Sharath inspired the younger generation to take up the sport before Manika Batra emerged to share that responsibility.

reason he could sustain himself for so long," Mehta told PTI. As any elite athlete, Sharath had his share of ups and downs.

Another unthinkable happened when he and Manika teamed up to land a historic mixed doubles bronze in Jakarta. Even Sharath did not see it coming on the highly competitive continental stage.

India to perform better in Special Olympics World Winter Games, says Mandaviya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ NEW DELHI

Union Sports Minister Manuskh Mandaviya on Wednesday expressed the confidence that India would surpass its highest-ever gold-medal tally when the country's athletes compete in the Special Olympics World Winter Games, scheduled in Turin, Italy from March 7 till 17.

India is sending a strong 49-member contingent including 30 special athletes for the Winter Games, which were last held in 2017 in Austria where the country won 73 medals, including 37 gold.



Games, India won 37 gold medals, and this time I am confident we will perform even better," said Mandaviya during a sendoff function held at the Dhyaan Chand National Stadium.

athletes in various Indian cities including Chandigarh, Narkanda, New Delhi, Gwalior, Noida and Gurgaon to help them prepare well.

Cindy Ngamba set for a pro debut on all-female fight card

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ LONDON

Something stood out to Cindy Ngamba as she glanced around when Friday's all-female boxing event was first announced.

born Ngamba thought she was about to be deported from Britain. Now she's set to make her professional debut at Royal Albert Hall.

The 26-year-old Ngamba tries not to think ahead too much. That's because she knows circumstances can change so quickly.



at age 11 — her father and siblings live here, too — in Bolton, just north of Manchester, and set about learning English and trying to fit in. She picked up boxing at age 15, and it became an escape from the stress of worrying about her residency status.

could have arrested me at any moment," she said. "I visualized that they could arrest me in the street or in my house, in school or with my friends. I never knew it was going to be at an immigration center where I usually (went) every weekend."

LeBron James becomes first to score 50,000 combined points in NBA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ LOS ANGELES

LeBron James is well on his way to rewriting every previous definition of basketball longevity, and the 40-year-old star is now racking up numbers the NBA has never seen before.

where I'm from. Picking up the game when I was a little kid and having a love for the sport, and hoping that someday I'd be able to play at the highest level.



last month's seismic trade with the Dallas Mavericks has invigorated both James and the Lakers, who look like

championship contenders with a seven-game winning streak and 17 victories in their last 20 games.

"It's amazing, watching him do this stuff at this age," said Doncic, who had 30 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds against New Orleans. "It's just unbelievable, that 50K points. I can't even explain how insane that is.

decline in his 40s. He was named the NBA's Western onference player of the month earlier Tuesday after he averaged 29.3 points, 10.5 rebounds, 6.9 assists and 1.2 steals in February while playing more than 35 minutes per game for the Lakers, who went 9-2 to surge into second place in the West.

surpassed Michael Jordan's total of 5,987 during the Cleveland Cavaliers' Eastern Conference finals game at Boston. James then became the top scorer in regular-season history on Feb. 7, 2023, when he topped Abdul-Jabbar's record of 38,387 points during the Lakers' game against Oklahoma City.

