LUCKNOW, SATURDAY MARCH 1, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹3

3:00 pm

Established 1865

MONEY 10
EXPENDITURE AT MAHA KUMBH TO

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I: DELHI I LUCKNOW I BHOPAL I BHUBANESWAR I RANCHI I RAIPUR I CHANDIGARH I DEHRADUN I HYDERABAD I VIJAYWADA



PRASANNA SINGH

A stock market downturn, as and when it happens, invariably catches people, and usually these are always retail investors, off guard. We are seeing this play out in India's leading indices over the past three months as well. In a sort of slow motion glide that seems to have suddenly picked up pace this week, provoking this article as well. India's leading stock exchange barometers have all hit new 'lows'. There is a need to qualify that because these are corrections when seen from the

SENSEX IN A TAILSP

September. So if the Nifty Mid-cap and small cap indices both hit their peaks early in September, the broader indices comprising the BSE Sensex and the Nifty 50, comprising larger cap stocks, actually hit their highs in the final week of September, on September 27. Today, while the large caps indices are down 155 points from their peaks, the mid cap and small cap indices are down 21 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Of course, the correction in many hyped stocks is even worse.

For crores of retail investors who had piled into stocks after watching a breathless post-COVID rally that rarely stuttered, it has been agonising, watching their 'wealth' evaporate. Especially when peaks these indices hit, all in we consider how even at the peak,

many complained that the rise has been driven by a few, select stocks disproportionately. Leaving only index fund holders uniformly

SO WHY DID THE MARKETS **CORRECT SO STEEPLY?**

The answer lies in the previous rise itself. Like almost all sustained bull markets, the highs the market saw in September was the fag end of a period of sustained growth, a lot of it is not justified anymore by the quarterly results many key sectors and firms showcased between Q2 and Q3. Worse, when compared to global peers, India's markets were once again trading at a premium, at par with, or higher than most global markets bar the still frothy US markets. A premium, most foreign investors seem to have

MARKETS SENSEX 73,198.10 **↓** -1.90% Prev close 74,612.43

decided, is not justified in a volatile global environment. And followed it with almost 2 Lakh Crores of sustained selling since.

12:00 pm

1 US\$ = 87.46 INR

All the anecdotal and actual signals were blinking red, namely, the stamped like rush for IPOs

among firms and investors alike. and perhaps the worst of all, a quiet reducing of stakes in many firms by promoters. As always, among all the reasons trotted out to explain these warning signs, perhaps the most silly, and eventually foolish one as always, was that 'this time it's different'. It never is.

India's growth prospects have become almost mythical now, in how there is a bull case for 10 per cent GDP growth, yet, we always find our economy overheating at the first signs of a sustained period of 8 per cent growth or even less. Brought down by rising inflation, corruption scandals, or yet another election or oil price spike. The recent trend towards giveaways without a funding plan has not

The final trigger for the slide in 2025 has largely been the Trump administration and its actions, threatened or otherwise. If there is one thing that the market does not like, it is uncertainty. And the Trump administration has added dollops of it to global trade and markets including India with its tariff threats and actions.

For many investors this is their first experience with a correction this sharp and long. And they will seek to find answers in every argument, right from the decision to raise capital gains tax on stock market gains, to the tougher rules for FII investments, or the government's apparent pause on further public sector privatisation. Perhaps all of these make a good

point, or perhaps not. After all, wasn't this the year when domestic investors had all but made foreign investors irrelevant according to many claims, including from the government? Clearly not, as we can see. Quite simply, sentiment has turned, and from a change in direction, taken a complete U-turn it would appear. That is not quite as uncommon or improbable as it seems, as stock markets are prone to going to extremes in either direction. One feels we are quite close to the point where the downturn might have gone well beyond what fundamentals justify. But readers will do well to remember that eventually, one thing that the stocks markets do best consistently is reward performance. So firms that meet their projections for three or more without fail, will quarters eventually find their efforts

Continued on page 8

41 trapped in Uttarakhand avalanche

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE DEHRADUN/NEW DELHI

snowfall Uttarakhand resulting in an avalanche led to at least 41 Border Roads Organisation workers (BRO) being buried in the high altitude border village of Mana, Chamoli district on Friday. The workers were clearing snow when they were trapped. The snowslide had initially buried 57 men but 16 were pulled out safely. There was no immediate news of casualties and rescue efforts were on.

Later, 32 of total 57 workers were rescued on Friday, sources said. The avalanche has buried a camp of the BRO between Mana and Badrinath and multiple teams battled



Rescue operation underway after BRO labourers got trapped under an avalanche, in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand

rain to rescue the workers, sources said. Mana, three kilometres from Badrinath, is It was also learnt rescue

tough terrain, heavy snow and the last village on the India-Tibet border at a height of 3,200 metres.

operations have been halted due to bad weather and the impending danger of more avalanches.

It will restart when the weather improves, sources

Himachal Pradesh and higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir also saw snowfall and rain. Several northern states including Delhi, Punjab and Haryana received rainfall leading to a dip in temperature.

As regards the mishap in Uttrakhand, the avalanche buried a camp of the BRO between Mana and Badrinath, Chamoli District Magistrate Sandeep Tiwari said as multiple teams battled tough terrain, heavy snow and rain to rescue the workers.

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HM directs Delhi Govt, Police to act tough on Bangladeshis



HM Amit Shah with Delhi CM Rekha Gupta chairs a meeting to review law and order situation in Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reviewed law and order situation in the national Capital with Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta while directing Delhi police to take action against the networks that help illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas entering India, to take measures to ensure women safety, and ensure ruthless

action against inter-state gangs. It was the first top level interaction after BJP came to

The AAP regime did not attend such meetings in its 10-year rule.

A key decision taken in the meeting was regarding the expeditious disposal of the 2020 Delhi riots cases. Shah urged the Delhi government to appoint special prosecutors to ensure speedy trials, as per the MHA. Another policy shift was announced regarding construction-related matters, where it was decided that Delhi police permission would no longer be required. The Union Home Minister said strict action should also be taken against police stations and sub-divisions that consistently perform poorly.

On traffic congestion, Shah said the Delhi Police should identify the places witnessing traffic jams daily and the Delhi police commissioner and chief secretary should meet and find a quick solution to this.

Continued on page 8

Heatwave days ahead in March

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Tndia is likely to witness above-normal maximum temperatures in most parts between March and May. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), more heatwave days are also likely to be witnessed across most parts of the country during the months.

IMD data shows India also recorded its warmest February in 124 years with an average temperature of more than 22°C. For the first time, the minimum

average temperature across the country was recorded at over 15°C, which is the warmest. recorded ever. In terms of the average maximum temperature, February 2025 has been the second warmest, iust behind the corresponding month in 2023. In terms of the maximum average temperature, February 2025 has been the second warmest, iust behind the corresponding month in 2023. The reverse happened in 2022. April of that year in north India was the hottest on record, while

to normal. The IMD attributed the unusual rise in temperature to a presence of strong easterly blocking the cool sea breeze.

temperatures in Feb were close

WEATHER



40°C in the plains, and also the temperature is 4.5°C or more above normal.

upcoming hot weather season (March to May (MAM)), above-normal maximum temperatures are most likely over most parts of the country, except over southern parts of Peninsular India, and isolated pockets of Northeast India where normal to belowmaximum normal temperatures are likely. The above-normal minimum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country except some isolated southernmost regions of Peninsular India where normal minimum temperatures are

"Monthly maximum temperatures for March are likely to be above normal over most parts of India, except over some southernmost parts of Peninsular India, where below normal maximum temperatures are likely. During winds, which they said were this period the above normal monthly minimum The IMD declares a heatwave temperatures are likely over

most parts of the country except some parts of Northwest India and South Peninsula, where normal minimum temperatures are most likely," the IMD said.

According to IMD, abovenormal heatwave days are likely over most parts of central India and adjoining northern parts of South Peninsula and some areas of The IMD said during the northwest and east India.. Analysis of IMD's century-

long temperature data shows the October-December postmonsoon season is warming at a rate of 1.01°C per century, followed by the January-February winter months at 0.73°C. Pre-monsoon (March-May) and monsoon (June-September) seasons are warming at relatively slower rates of 0.62°C and 0.45°C respectively. Delhi recorded its warmest February night in 74 vears, with the minimum temperature at Safdarjung reaching 19.5°C on Thursday — the highest for the month in the period between 1951to 2025, according to the IMD. Meanwhile, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said, "Delhi recorded its lowest AQI in 2025, today, with average AQI clocking 121, as per the daily AQI Bulletin by CPCB. Average AQI of 121 for Delhi on Friday is the lowest during January - February in last three years since 2023."





(Left to right): LoP Atishi interacts with police personnel after allegedly being stopped from entering the state Vidhan Sabha premises on Friday and Delhi Assembly Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer speaker, Vijendra Gupta

Delhi Speaker, Atishi engage in letter war

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

letter war erupted between the Aletter war erupted between the Delhi Assembly speaker, Vijendra Gupta and the Leader of Opposition (LoP), Atishi on Friday, following the suspension of 21 MLAs from the Vidhan Sabha, with Atishi calling it an "insult to the people's mandate" while Speaker Vijender Gupta defended the move, citing parliamentary rules and past disruptions.

The controversy deepened when the suspended MLAs including former chief minister Atishi were prevented from entering the Assembly premises the next day while attempting to hold a protest at the Mahatma Gandhi statue. The LoP termed the move "unprecedented" and accused the BJP government of "crossing all limits of dictatorship" by stifling the Opposition's

"The Opposition was expelled from the House for chanting 'Jai Bhim' slogans, while BJP MLAs continued raising 'Modi-Modi' slogans without any repercussions. Preventing Opposition MLAs from entering the Assembly premises is a blatant insult to democracy," Atishi asserted. "This is an insult not only to the MLAs but also to the mandate given by the people," she

Responding to Atishi's claims, the Speaker rejected the allegations of bias and accused the Opposition of disrupting the proceedings of the House. He defended the decision to bar the suspended MLAs from the premises, citing Assembly Rule 277, which states that "A member who has been suspended from the service of the House shall be barred from entering the premises of the House and from taking part in the proceedings of the House

and Committees".

Gupta also criticised the Opposition's conduct, stating that disruptions had begun even before the LG's address. Referring to the Speaker's election on February 24, he wrote, "It should have been a dignified process. Unfortunately, the process was marred by sloganeering and disruption by the opposition members. Despite this unbecoming conduct, I exercised restraint and did not take any disciplinary action."

Regarding the LG's address on February 25, Gupta pointed to the fifth schedule (code of conduct rules), which mandates that interruptions during the LG's speech be treated as "disrespect towards the Lt Governor and contempt of the House". He said suspending the MLAs was not an arbitrary decision but based on clear parliamentary rules. Coninued on page 8

rewarded.

Bureaucrat back at SEBI, after stormy Buch era

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, the L government's divestment man who played a key role in sale of Air Índia as well as listing of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), has been appointed as head of SEBI, marking return of bureaucrat at the helm of market regulator.

Pandey, the top bureaucrat in the Finance Ministry, will replace Madhabi Puri Buch, whose term ends Friday as chairman of the SEBI.

Buch, 60, who was the first woman and the only person from the private sector to head SEBI, had a tumultuous three-vear term marked with allegations of conflict of interest as well as sweeping overhaul of regulations. Prior to her, the position was mostly held by bureaucrats.

A career bureaucrat, Pandey, 59, is currently the finance secretary and is known to be stickler for rules and a clean image. He will have a threevear term.

He is the second bureaucrat from the finance ministry to have been appointed to key roles in the financial sector since December. His colleague in charge of the revenue department Sanjay Malhotra was in December appointed as Governor of the Reserve Bank of India

A 1987-batch Odisha-cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Pandey has been the longest serving divestment secretary, serving for over five years. The role of finance secretary was added to his portfolio in September last year by virtue of him being the senior most among the secretaries in the finance

ministry.

Continued on page 8

home preserved to keep identity alive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ITANAGAR

In a fast-changing world, where traditions are often forgotten, a young woman is ensuring her community's heritage lives on-not in books or behind glass, but within the very walls of her home.

Leike Chomu, a 24-year-old from the Monpa community in western Arunachal Pradesh, has turned her 200-year-old ancestral house into a living museum.

More than just a collection of artefacts, the museum itself is a piece of history-built using ancient Monpa techniques with mud and stone. "It's about keeping our cultural

identity alive," Chomu said. The idea was mooted by WWF India as part of its efforts to safeguard the unique heritage of the Monpa However, community. transformation of the house into a museum was something she took on personally.

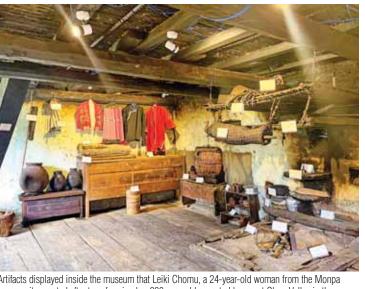
From restoring the structure, conserving artefacts and setting up the space to make it accessible to visitors, Chomu has been actively involved in every step.

"For me, this is more than just a project. It is my family's legacy," she

modernisation rapidly With changing traditional lifestyles, she wanted to safeguard Monpa knowledge and everyday practices before they faded away.

Instead of creating a conventional museum with only artefacts, this initiative preserves the house itself, showcasing Monpa architecture, lifestyle, and traditions, Chomu said. Visitors don't just see historical objects. They can experience how the Monpa people lived centuries ago, she added.

After months of dedication, the museum was formally launched on October 5 last year. Since then, many tourists and culture enthusiasts have



Artifacts displayed inside the museum that Leiki Chomu, a 24-year-old woman from the Monpa community, created after transforming her 200-year-old ancestral home, at Chug Valley in the Dirang area of West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh

'They are amazed that the museum isn't just about objects but the house itself, its architecture, the way of life, and the stories it holds. Visitors appreciate the authenticity, often describing it as a rare and immersive experience that feels like stepping back in time," Chomu added.

Some have even mentioned that walking through the house gives them a deep sense of connection to

the Monpa heritage.
Originally from Chug Valley under
Dirang in West Kameng district of
the northeastern state, Chomu holds a BSc degree in agriculture with a background in agroecology. Her deep connection to the land and traditional knowledge has fueled her passion for heritage preservation.

I have worked to preserve and transform it into a living museum," she explained.

The museum is my ancestral house

Continued on page 8

Chess colossus, Boris **Spassky dies at 88**

Boris Spassky, a Soviet-era world chess champion who lost his title to American Bobby Fischer in a legendary 1972 match that became a proxy for Cold War rivalries, died Thursday in Moscow. He was 88.

The death of the one-time chess prodigy was announced by the International Chess Federation, the game's governing body. No cause was given. Spassky was "one of the greatest players of all time," the group said on the social platform X. He "left an indelible mark on the game." The televised 1972 match with Fischer, at the height of the Cold War, became an

international sensation and was known as the "Match of the Century." When Fischer won the

international chess crown in Reykjavik, Iceland, the then-29-year-old chess genius from Brooklyn, New York, brought the US its first world chess title. Fischer, known to be testy and difficult, died in 2008. After his victory of Spassky, he later forfeited the title by refusing to defend it.

Former world champion Garry Kasparov wrote on X that Spassky "was never above befriending and mentoring the next generation, especially those of us who, like him, didn't fit comfortably into the Soviet machine."

Continued on page 8



DECLARATION FORM IV (SEE RULE 8)

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13. Sarnath Securities Pvt. Ltd

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16. Rainbow Productions Ltd. Shobori Ganguli, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to

the best of my knowledge and belief.

Place: Lucknow Dated: March 1st, 2025 SHOBORI GANGULI

LDA team evicts encroachers

Lucknow (PNS): The anti-encroachment squad of the Lucknow



NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohd Parvez Alam to Parvez Alam, Parvez Alam S/o Garibus Salam R/o 12/471 Gwaltoli KanpurNagar

NOTICE

I, Shishankumar Mohanlal Agarwal S/o Mohanlal Agarwal, R/o. 4/94B, Vijyantkhand, Gomtinagar, Lucknow- 226010 has declare that, I have changed my name from Shishan kumar to Shishankumar Mohanlal Agarwal for all purposes And Both the names belongs to me.

NOTICE

My name Chandranshu has been registered in my passport (No.1046112) my actual name is Chandranshu Dwivedi which is registered in my aadhaar and pan card. In future i should be known and identified by both the names. Chandranshu dwivedi S/o Yogesh Kumar Dwivedi R/o-554/1547, Lane No.-05, Pawanpuri Alambagh, Lucknow. U.p.- 226005

REQUIRED

Adharshila College of Professional Courses (ACPC) Raj Nagar, NH-232, Raibareli Post:-Asst. Professor for Home Science 01, Geography 01, Psychology 01. Eligibility: -55% Marks in Related Subject in M. A. with NET/Ph.D **Pay Scale**: - As per Lucknow University / UGC norms. Contacts:-9454855857, 8299214485, 9453848622 Manager Manager (Chandra Prabha Singh)

NOTICE

Nagar for all future purposes

I have changed my daughter's from name Satwika Mishra To Gauri Mishra D/o Shailendra Mishra R/o L.I.G.64 Barra -3 Kanpur

Development Authority (LDA) conducted a raid in the Bakshi Ka Talab area, demolishing four unfinished structures and evicting unauthorised occupants from 20 bighas of land. Despite several anti-encroachment drives carried out by the LDA in the outskirts, no such raids had been conducted in this area until now. The LDA vice-chairman became aware of significant encroachments in BKT during a review meeting held in the last week of December 2024. It was noted that no anti-encroachment operations had been carried out there for the past 18 months. Upon discovering the encroachments, the VC directed the field staff to investigate the status of the land where the unfinished structures had been built and identify any instances of forcible land grabbing or forged documentation. The probe was initiated last month, and the findings presented last week revealed that the structures had been erected unauthorisedly. Led by Madhvesh Kumar, the in-charge of Zone 5, the squad reached the site at 9:30 am. The drive lasted for two and a half hours. The land's fencing will be continuing on Saturday.



NOTICE

I have changed my name from Raish Alam Saiyad to Rais Alam. In future i shall be known as Rais Alam. Rais Alam, Chaman Ganj, Manjhanpur, Kausambhi

I Vandana Gupta W/o Manoj kumar Gupta, R/o: B-240 Awas Vikas Colony, Unnao has been lost my Original Allotment Letter above house issued by U P Awas & Vikas Parishad, Unnao Aff. No. 46AE 551836.

NOTICE

I am Vikas Srivastava resident of C Shyam Nagar Kanpur. I have changed my son's name from Amay Srivastava to Advik Srivastava. In future he will be known and recognized as Advik Srivastava.

NOTICE

I have changed my son's name from Akshat Singh to Aarush Singh. In future he will be known by his new name Aarush Singh only. Anita Singh W/o Ramakant Singh R/o Naubasta kalan, Chinhat, Lucknow.

सूचना

सूचित हो कि मेरे दुकान संख्या स. 17CP-163 स्वर्ण जयंती मार्केट, इंदिरानगर, लखनऊ का अलॉटमेंट एवं पजेशन लेटर वास्तव में खो गया है। राकेश शुक्ला पुत्र अंबिका शुक्ला निवासी नाला बेगमगंज 249/14, राजाबाजार, लखनऊ।

NOTICE

To be informed that in my high school mark sheet and certificate class - 10 ,by mistake my father name is incorrectly mentioned DHANPAL VERMA While his Correct name is DHANPAL SINGH, please change my Father name All future purposes. Anshika Verma D/o Dhanpal Singh and Meena Verma R/o-647B/I-PN-120(K-934),paramount Society Janki puram Garden Janki puram Lucknow UP-

'Harassed' by village head, woman hangs self to death

PNS LUCKNOW

Ayoung woman hanged herself to death allegedly due to harassment by the village head in Nigoha, police said. The deceased's brother claimed that Navneet Rawat, the village head, frequently visited their home when his sister was alone. "He gained her trust by speaking sweetly and even gave her a mobile phone to stay in touch. Later, he refused to marry her," he alleged.

According to the brother, Navneet's father Ramdin Rawat was the previous village head, and Navneet used to visit their house during elections. Initially, they assumed he was canvassing for votes, but even after winning, he continued visiting.

"He would sit in our house for hours, often coming when no one else was around," he said. He further alleged that Navneet regularly met his sister when she was alone and spoke about marriage. "He would leave before our

mother returned from the fields. When my sister pressured him to marry her, he kept making excuses. On Tuesday, he called her to meet him, but when she insisted on marriage, he beat her up and threw her out. When she threatened to go to the police, he warned her that he would leak her photos and videos," he said.

Distressed, the girl returned home in tears and confided in her mother. Her mother advised her to speak to Navneet

9, including minor, held for attacking private bus driver, conductor

Lucknow (PNS): Eight accused were arrested, and a juvenile was detained for allegedly attacking the conductor and driver of a private bus running between Delhi and Lucknow in Krishna Nagar on Thursday. The attack allegedly stemmed from a dispute after the bus driver and conductor failed to pick up the prime accused, Shahzad, from his designated boarding point at Akshardham in Delhi.

Shahzad, who had booked the bus ticket from Delhi to Lucknow, could not reach the pickup location on time. In a fit of rage, he allegedly gathered a group of accomplices and, armed with knives, robbed the bus driver and conductor. According to a statement from

the police here, the incident of robbery and assault was uncovered during a joint operation conducted by the Southern Zone Surveillance Cell of the Lucknow Police Commissionerate and Krishna

Nagar police. In total, eight people were arrested, and one juvenile was taken into custody. The arrested individuals include the prime accused Shahzad Khan (27), Mohammed Qadir (23), Fahad Khan (23), Badal Singh (23), Aviral Srivastava

(19), Mohammad Muaz (18), Mohammed Adil (27), and Adil alias Sheebu (24).

The police also recovered the looted mobile phone, a knife, and three motorcycles used in the crime. They were booked under sections 352, 109(1), 309(4), and 351(2) of the BNS. The incident unfolded on February 25 when Shahzad missed the bus. He plotted to take revenge on the bus conductor.

On the night of February 26, Shahzad and his eight associates waited in ambush near Baravirwa Nahariya crossing. As the bus approached, they surrounded the conductor, Ankit, and allegedly attacked him with a knife, leaving him seriously injured. They allegedly stole his mobile phone before fleeing the scene.

The police registered a case and launched an investigation. They formed five teams to track down the perpetrators. Using CCTV footage, call detail records (CDR), and ground intelligence, the police identified the suspects. On the night of February 26, all eight accused were arrested near Malhaur station, and the juvenile was taken into custody.

the next morning, but before she could, she ended her life. Police said the girl was alone at home when she took the extreme step.
"Her father and other family

members were working in the fields. Neighbours saw her hanging from the ventilator grill and alerted the family. Her father rushed home and took her to the hospital, where doctors declared her dead," a police official said.

Locals said the girl had been in contact with Navneet over the phone, and her family had warned her multiple times. Police confirmed that a case had been registered. "The body has been handed over to the family after the post-mortem. Further action will be taken based on the evidence," they

Meanwhile, an FIR has been

filed against an Instagram user for allegedly tampering with a photo of Dr Arvind Rajbhar, UP's former minister of state and national general secretary of the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party. The case was registered on Thursday under Section 351(4) of BNS and Section 66D of the IT Act following a complaint from Dharam Prakash Chaudhary, the state office incharge of the party. In the FIR, Chaudhary, a resident of Sonha in Basti, stated that he had seen a video on social media in which a young man named Vivek Pasi had edited Dr Rajbhar's photo in a fake and objectionable manner.

Grandparents among three kin hacked to death by youth

In a shocking incident, a youth allegedly hacked three of his relatives, including his grandparents, to death with a shovel in the early hours of Friday. Police reached the scene soon after being alerted and sent the bodies for postmortem, while the accused were arrested.

The incident took place in Motiram Adda Koiran Tola under the Jhagaha police station area. As per reports, Ramdayal

Maurya allegedly killed his grandfather Kuber Maurya (72), grandmother Draupadi Devi (70), and Kuber's elder brother Sadhu Maurya (75) by attacking them with a shovel. The motive remains unclear, but police said Ramdayal is suspected to be mentally unstable. Northern Superintendent of Police Jitendra Srivastava said that as soon as the police were informed, they rushed to the scene and arrested the accused. Further action is being taken based on a complaint filed by

the family, he added. According to police, Ramdayal first attacked a cow tied outside the house early Friday morning. When his grandfather Kuber tried to stop him, he became enraged. Kuber fled toward the fields, but Ramdayal chased him and struck him on the head with the shovel, killing him on the spot. Hearing the commotion, Sadhu rushed to

Draupadi tried to intervene but met the same fate. After killing them, Ramdayal dragged the bodies and sat beside them. Villagers overpowered him and informed the police.

At the time of the incident, Ramdayal's mother Kushmavati was at home, while his father Vijay Bahadur had been away since Thursday night.

Police said Sadhu Maurya was unmarried and had lived with his younger brother Kuber all his life. Kuber had two sons— Vijay Bahadur and Mewalalbut the family was already in disarray. Mewalal was recently released from jail in a molestation case, and Vijay Bahadur was frequently absent from home.

Meanwhile in Bahraich, a 10year-old mentally challenged boy allegedly beat his one-year-old sister to death with bricks and sticks in a village in Bahraich district, police said on Friday. The children's grandfather, Ramanand Mishra, from Rehua Mansoor village, reported the incident to police on Thursday evening. He stated that his grandson, while playing inside the house, hit his younger sister on the face with a stick and a piece of brick, killing her on the spot.

CO DK Srivastava said that Ramgaon police have registered a case under relevant sections and sent the body for postmortem, while further investigations are ongoing.

Stolen transformer oil used by quacks for potency, pain relief

Members of the gang involved in the theft of oil from electric transformers revealed that local quacks used it to create medicines for male potency and joint pain relief, police said on Friday. The disclosure was made by the accused arrested in a police encounter in the state capital on Wednesday night, leaving the police stunned. The gang leader, known as Guru,' who trained the arrested accused, is cur-

rently absconding.

During interrogation, the accused revealed that quacks purchased transformer oil from them at a lucrative price.

These quacks used the oil to create remedies for joint pain and male potency enhancement. The accused explained that the demand for oil is higher in rural areas. Their business operin a three-tier system. People buy the oil from quacks to massage areas suffering from joint, knee, and bone pain, paying a premium for these services," police said.
The gang leader, Ranjit Yadav, hails from

Ghanshyampur in Kakori. Over the past two months, he and his gang have stolen oil and copper coils from more than 12 transformers, primarily in rural areas. Ranjit admitted to selling both copper coils and oil to private traders. During questioning, it was revealed that an elderly man had trained Ranjit in the art of transformer theft.

The elderly man called 'Guru', who had previously been involved in transformer thefts, later made Ranjit his disciple and handed over all operations to him.

'Guru' now purchases and sells the stolen goods. Ranjit views him as his mentor and disclosed to the police that it was 'Guru' who first taught him how to trip high-voltage lines and

steal copper and oil. The police are currently conducting raids in search of Ranjit's mentor. The gang has connections with nearby districts, and Ranjit, who leads a six-member team, is an expert at tripping the 11,000-volt lines using ropes. According to police sources, Ranjit sold the stolen copper in Lucknow and Unnao to individuals who use it for making utensils and wires. Following Ranjit's revelations, the police are focusing on arresting the traders and scrap dealers involved.

WOMAN KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP

An unidentified vehicle fatally struck a woman in the Gomti Nagar area here while she was on her way with her son to bring food for her daughter-in-law, who was admitted to the hospital. The accident occurred on Shaheed Path near the Husadiva intersection.

Soon after being hit by the vehice woman was taken to the hospital, but doctors declared her dead upon arrival, according to the police. Pankaj Sahu, a resident of Juggaur and an advocate, informed the police that around 11 pm on Wednesday, his mother Shiv Devi Sahu was travelling with his younger brother Pawan to Ram Manohar Lohia's Mother and Child Institute.

They were near the Husadiya intersection when a speeding vehicle hit their bike from behind. The driver then fled the scene," he said.

The police reached the location and transported Pankaj's mother and brother to the hospital, where doctors pronounced the woman dead. The body was handed over to the family after a post-mortem examination.

Inspector, Gomti Nagar, Rajesh Kumar Tripathi, stated that no formal complaint had been filed yet, and further action would be taken based on the complaint once received.

IPS officer of 1989 batch seeks VRS as DG (Training) and will

Lucknow (PNS): Ashish Gupta, an IPS officer of the 1989 batch and posted as DG (Rules & Manuals), has sought voluntary retirement (VRS) from the government. Gupta still has about 22 months

left until retirement, but he has applied for VRS, giving a notice of three months. Earlier, IPS Aseem Arun had

taken VRS to foray into politics. Besides, Amitabh Thakur, Rajesh Krishna, and Rakesh Shankar, all officers of the IPS cadre of Uttar Pradesh, have been given compulsory retirement by the government.

Ashish Gupta, who did BTech and MBA in Computer Science from IIT-Kanpur, remained as the CEO of the counter-terrorism IT infrastructure 'Natgrid' (National Intelligence Grid) in the National Investigation Agency (NIA), an important project of the Central government.

Apart from this, he has also served as Additional Director General in the Border Security Force (BSF). Gupta's name is among the few officers who have also served at the international level.

In the years 2000-2002, he also led the Indian contingent of the United Nations Peace Mission in Kosovo. His wife, Tilottama Verma, a 1990 batch IPS officer, is currently posted

retire in November 2025. Sources said that Ashish Gupta, who is the second senior-most IPS officer of UP, was kept on the waiting list for about six and a half months after being suddenly called to UP from central deputation in December 2022. After this, on June 24, 2023, he was given the charge of DG (Rules & Manuals). It is believed that due to the

long wait and dissatisfaction with the current posting, he has sought VRS. His retirement was due in December 2026. Besides Gupta, who was given an insignificant posting by the government after a long wait, another senior officer. Aditya Mishra, also of the same 1989 batch and third in the seniority list of IPS officers of the UP cadre, returned to UP on January 27, 2025, but he has not received any posting till now and is put on the waiting list. He will retire in June this year. Similarly, DG-level officer Renuka Mishra, an IPS officer of the 1990 batch, is also waiting for deployment for almost a year after being removed from the DG (Police Recruitment Board) post. According to sources, there is a possibility of a large-scale administrative reshuffle in UP Police as the Maha Kumbh has already concluded.

ED seizes three closed sugar mills owned by BSP ex-MLC, kin Lucknow (PNS): The Lucknow

Zone team of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seized three closed sugar mills owned by sugar mill scam accused BSP's former MLC from Saharanpur, Mohd Iqbal, and his relatives. These sugar mills are in Baitalpur, Bhatni, and Shahganj in Uttar Pradesh. Their value is around Rs 10 billion. The exercise was carried out on Thursday evening.
The seized sugar mills are M/s

Melo Infratech Pvt Ltd, M/s Dynamic Sugar Pvt Ltd, and M/s Honeywell Sugar Pvt Ltd. The CBI had registered an FIR in this case. It was alleged that Iqbal and his associates had fraudulently acquired many sugar mills in U through the disinvestment process. The ED investigation revealed that these individuals had procured the sugar mills at a very low price. This acquisition was done through auction. The investigation also made it clear that the market value of the sugar mills was much higher than the prices at which they were sold. The money earned from Iqbal's illegal earnings was used in this purchase and sale. The probe further revealed that many properties were also taken in the name of Iqbal's relatives. In the purchase of the sugar mills, the money was shown to have been paid from the bank accounts of these relatives.

City institutes celebrate National Science Day

Lucknow (PNS): National Science Day was celebrated at various science institutes across the city on Friday, marking the commemoration of a significant scientific milestone—the announcement of the Raman Effect by Sir CV Raman on this day (February 28) back in

At the Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (CSIR-IITR), head of the Chemistry department at Lucknow University, Prof Anil Mishra, emphasised the importance of positive thinking, risk-taking, and resilience. He highlighted essential traits

such as curiosity, patience, creativity, collaboration, and communication—qualities that the youth of today must cultivate to drive the nation's progress and embrace the vision of a Viksit Bharat. He also discussed how stress and anxiety, major causes of depression and diseases, could be avoided. The event featured an open-day scientific exhibition that showcased the latest innovations and technological advancements at CSIR-IITR, attracting over 400 school students and faculty members from various educational institutions.

Meanwhile, the National

Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) celebrated the occasion by organizing an 'Open Day'. Over 500 students from 10 schools and colleges visited NBRI's labs, plant houses, herbarium, and research facilities. The institute's scientists and experts provided insightful interactions, discussing the ongoing R&D activities and accomplishments of the institution.

At Lucknow University, the Zoology department held a special lecture by Dr Anju Patel on the theme Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for Developed

In the biotech sector, students from Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University participated in the National Science Day celebrations at Biotech Park, in collaboration with the AKTU Innovation

Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) also celebrated the day by highlighting its major accomplishments over the past year. They revealed several collaborative efforts, including the development of a drug for chronic kidney disease-induced osteoporosis with Zydus Lifesciences Ltd.

Agri-processing plant to come up in Farrukhabad

Lucknow (PNS): Som Group of Companies is set to establish a state-of-the-art integrated agriprocessing plant at the Khimsepur Industrial Area in Farrukhabad district. To be set up with an investment of up with an investment of approximately Rs 570 crore, the project will span across 40 acres of land. The integrated agri-processing plant will host facilities for the production of ethanol, starch, gluten, and distilled the production of the starch agriculture and starch agriculture. tillery products, as well as beverages, carbonated water, and by-products such as cattle feed. Secretary of the Infrastructure and Industrial Development Department and CEO of Invest UP, Abhishek Prakash, said the state government has announced more than 30 policies to attract investment in various sectors, and UP consistently ranks in the 'Top Achievers' category in Ease of Doing Business (EODB).

The company received the allotment letter on Friday for the land parcel of 40 acres from the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSI-DA). Deepak Arora, CEO of the Som Group of Companies, said that the plant is expected to commence commercial production within 15 to 18 months after receiving the necessary approvals.

Stalin falsely accusing imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu, says RLD

National general secretary of Rashtriya Lok Dal, Anil Dubey, has asked the Samajwadi Party and Congress, the main components of the INDIA bloc, to clarify their stance on the opposition to the New Education Policy 2020 by DMK.

Talking to reporters in Lucknow on Friday, he said that DMK is engaging in petty politics by opposing the three-language formula in Tamil Nadu, and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and his government are falsely accusing the imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu. "Stalin says that he is in favour of being multilingual, but making Hindi compulsory in the state is not acceptable to his government," Dubey said. Dubey further said that in 1968, during the time of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, a three-language formula was introduced, under which it was decided that Hindi, English, and a regional language would be taught in all the states. "Even at that time, this formula was not implemented in Tamil Nadu; only

Tamil and English were imple-

mented. This formula was also adopted in 1986, but the Tamil Nadu government opposed it. The Tamil Nadu government is opposing national unity by opposing this formula. In 2020, a new education policy was introduced, which stated that the formula of Hindi, English, and a regional language should be implemented in the state, and no language will be forcibly imposed. With the aim of strengthening national unity, the Central government is working to encourage the Hindi language in non-Hindispeaking states so that national unity can be made more al unity can be made more powerful and strong, but the chief minister of Tamil Nadu and his government are opposing it," Dubey countered. He said that instead of rising

above narrow thinking about language, the chief minister of Tamil Nadu and his ministers are opposing this formula due to political interests, and they have a long history of opposing it. During the freedom struggle in 1918, Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi had established the Hindi Prachar Sabha in South India, Dubey recalled, nothing that the Tamil Nadu government is weakening national unity and integrity by stopping the teaching of Hindi because it feels that the implementation of the threelanguage formula will change the colour of politics and the level of education will not improve, so it is opposing it. "Similarly, the new education policy is working towards sav-ing regional Indian languages, including Hindi and English, but the people of the country want to know why the main components of the INDI alliance, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh

Meanwhile, national secretary of Rashtriya Lok Dal Anupam Mishra said Hindi is, languagewise, the soul of India. Mishra said Stalin, in view of the

Yaday, are silent on this.

new education policy, was aiming at fulfilling his political ambitions by stirring up the language row. "Stalin is least bothered about the unity and integrity of our country," he added. Mishra said that in India, over 52 crore people speak Hindi, and in this way, Hindi may be termed as the soul of our country, language-wise. "Hindi is the most written, spoken, and understood language in our country," he added.

UP Council thanks PM, CM for | CM: Kumbh has given message of 'Ek 'successful' Maha Kumbh

 $T^{\text{he Uttar Pradesh Legislative}}_{\text{Council}} \text{ on Friday expressed gratitude to Prime}$ Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for the "successful organisation" of the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj.

BJP member Vijay Bahadur Pathak presented a proposal in the House, stating, "This Council extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi for his able guidance and to Honorable Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his strong leadership in organising the Maha Kumbh, where over 66 crore devotees took a holy dip in the sacred Triveni."

Pathak further said the Council formally acknowledged the efforts of both leaders in ensuring the grand event's success.

Prime Minister Modi on Thursday likened the massive Maha Kumbh congregation to the newly awakened consciousness of a nation breathing freely after breaking the shackles of a mindset steeped in cen-

turies-old slavery. "The Maha Kumbh has concluded. The 'mahayajna' of unity has concluded," PM Modi wrote in a blog, a day after the 45-day religious exercise concluded, and said the country has to now march together with a similar spirit of self-confidence and unity to fulfil the

goal of 'Viksit Bharat'.
The prime minister said more devotees than anyone could imagine took the holy dip in Sangam, asserting that India is now forging ahead with a new energy and this points to a turn of era which will write India's



Faithful carry 'rudraksha' garlands used at a site of the Kumbh mela after performing performing rituals following the conclusion of Maha Kumbh 2025 at Sangam in Prayagraj on Friday

He offered an apology to ment said over 66 crore people "Mother Ganga, Mother Yamuna, Mother Saraswati" as well as the people, who he said are a form of God to him, for any shortcoming in the services rendered.

PM Modi noted that making arrangement for an event unfolding at such an enormous scale was not an easy task. Pilgrims almost double the US population participated in the Maha Kumbh, he added. The administration had made its estimate based on the experience of previous Kumbhs, he said, noting that the real numbers turned out to be more than imagined. At least 30 devotees died on January 29 during a stampede at the Maha Kumbh, which drew devotees in huge numbers from across the country and abroad. The Uttar Pradesh govern-

visited the sacred site in Prayagraj since the Maha Kumbh began on January 13. The Uttar Pradesh government has announced a special ₹10,000 bonus and the 'Maha Kumbh Seva Medal' for 75,000 police personnel who served during the "historic gathering", Chief Minister Adityanath said on Thursday. The personnel will also receive a one-week phased leave as a token of appreciation for their efforts in managing the grand religious event, he said.

Speaking at a special event at the Ganga Mandapam in Prayagraj on Thursday, Adityanath praised the police force's patience and discipline, acknowledging the challenging crowd management during the 45-day pilgrimage. of ₹3.5 lakh "Our personnel were even minister said.

pushed by people at times but they displayed remarkable resilience and patience," he

Describing the Maha Kumbh as the world's largest and most historic gathering, Adityanath credited its success to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary leadership and the collective efforts of the security personnel. He highlighted how the event seamlessly blended faith and economy, drawing 66.3 crore devotees and contributing significantly to Uttar Pradesh's economy. "This was not just an event of faith; it was an economic phenomenon. The state government invested ₹7,500 crore in Prayagraj's infrastructure, and in return, the economy saw an unprecedented boost of ₹3.5 lakh crore," the chief

Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' to world

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said that the Maha Kumbh 2025 at Prayagraj has sent the message of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Sarvasamaveshi Bharat' (One India-Great India-Inclusive

India) to the whole world. In a post on X in Hindi, Adityanath said, "Under the successful guidance of respected Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, the grand gathering of faith, unity, and equality, Maha Kumbh-2025, Prayagraj, has sent the message of One India-Great India-Inclusive India' to the whole world.



"Crores of devotees coming from India and abroad are overwhelmed and feeling blessed by taking a dip of faith in the holy Triveni. The clean, safe, and well-organised conduct of the grand festival of Sanatan culture and humanity has become a sub-

ject of study for the entire world," he said.

Adityanath also thanked Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, who in a post on X on Thursday had congratulated him on the successful completion of the Maha Kumbh. "Today, I spoke to the hon-ourable Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath ji, over the phone and congratulated him on the successful completion of the historic and grand event of the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh. This grand and huge event presents a wonderful glimpse of our eternal culture, faith, and traditions," Vishnu Deo Sai wrote on X. "Also, I expressed my heartfelt grati-

tude to him for allocating four and a half acres of land in the Maha Kumbh Mela premises for the devotees of Chhattisgarh state. In this pavilion, about 50,000 devotees from Chhattisgarh took advantage of free accommodation, food, and other facilities and received the virtue of bathing in the Sangam," he said.

"Once again, hearty congratulations and thanks to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ji and his entire team for this grand event organised under the excellent management of the Uttar Pradesh government and in the presence of the saint community," Vishnu Deo Sai

Special cleanliness drive begins

A 15-day special cleanliness drive began at the Maha Kumbh Mela grounds on Friday following the conclusion of the mega event on February 26, the Uttar Pradesh government said.

After the Maha Kumbh ended. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had honoured sanitation workers for their service during the 45-day event, and directed officials to ensure that the Mela grounds are cleaned.

Špecial officer Akanksha Rana is spearheading the cleanliness drive, in which 'Swachhata Mitras' and 'Ganga Sewa Doots' are actively participating to restore the sanctity of the site, the government said in a statement. Over the next 15 days, the Sangam ghats, Mela ground roads, and permanent as well as temporary infrastructure



Swami Chitanand Saraswati, President of Praman Niketan, during a cleaning drive at the Sangam after the conclusion of Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj on Friday PTI

will be cleaned, it said. "Maha Kumbh, the world's largest human congregation, witnessed over 66 crore devotees taking holy dip in the Triveni Sangam. In keeping with Chief Minister Adityanath's commitment to a clean and divine Maha Kumbh, more than 15,000 sanitation workers and 2,000 Ganga Sewa

Doots played a crucial role in maintaining hygiene and cleanliness throughout the event," the statement said.

'To sustain this cleanliness even after the Maha Kumbh, the chief minister has emphasised the need for continued sanitation efforts in and around the Prayagraj region, ensuring that pilgrims visiting the place after the festival experience a clean and sacred environment," it added. As many as 1.5 lakh temporary toilets installed for the Maha Kumbh will be dismantled and removed as part of the special drive. All waste generated during the event is being systematically processed and disposed of at the Baswar plant in Naini, the statement said. The temporary pipelines laid by the Urban and Rural Water Corporation, streetlights installed by the electricity department, and tents and pavilions used by the seers and Kalpvasis are also being dismantled as part of the clean-up effort, it added.

The Prayagraj Municipal Corporation is actively working to enhance greenery and sanitation in the city to maintain its aesthetic and environmental appeal, the statement

Maha Kumbh opens new avenues for religious tourism in state

Maha Kumbh 2025 has opened new avenues for spiritual tourism in Uttar Pradesh, strengthening the state's position as a major religious destination, according to an official statement released on Friday. During this grand event, the Uttar Pradesh government developed five key spiritual corridors, aimed at enhancing connectivity to prominent religious sites across the state, the statement said. During his visit to Prayagraj on Thursday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath acknowledged the contributions of police personnel, sanitation workers, healthcare staff, boatmen, media professionals, and transport operators. expressing gratitude for their efforts in ensuring the smooth execution of the festival. He also highlighted the significance of these newly developed corridors, which will allow pilgrims to travel conveniently across Uttar Pradesh's sacred sites, giving a major boost to spiritual tourism in the region.



A devotee performs rituals at the Sangam in Prayagraj on Friday

Prayagrai-Vindhyachal-Kashi **Corridor:** This corridor will allow devotees to travel from Prayagraj to Vindhyachal Devi Dham and then to Kashi (Varanasi). It is a significant route for devotees of Shakti and Lord Shiva, offering a spiritual

Pravagrai-Avodhva-Gorakhpur Corridor: This corridor connects sites related to Lord Ram and the Gorakhnath tradition. Devotees can take a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj,

journey through these sacred

visit places like Lete Hanuman Temple, Akshay Vat, and Saraswati Koop, then proceed to Ayodhya for Ram Lalla's darshan. From Ayodhya, devotees can travel to Gorakhpur to visit the Gorakhnath Temple.

Prayagraj-Lucknow Naimisharanya Corridor: This route takes devotees from Prayagraj to Naimisharanya via Lucknow. Naimisharanya Dham is one of the 88 sacred pilgrimage sites of Hinduism, known as the meditation site of 88,000 sages. It is closely asso-

ciated with Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, Goddess Sati, and Lord

Prayagraj-Rajapur (Banda)-Chitrakoot Corridor: Linked to Lord Ram's exile, this corridor takes devotees to Chitrakoot Dham, home to sacred sites like Kamadgiri Parvat, Ramghat, and Hanuman Dhara. The route also passes through Rajapur (Banda), the birthplace of Goswami Tulsidas, the revered poet-saint who wrote the Ramcharitmanas, Vinay Patrika, and other Hindu scriptures.

Prayagraj-Mathura-Vrindavan-Shuk Teerth Corridor (via Bundelkhand Expressway): This corridor allows devotees to travel via the Bundelkhand Expressway to Mathura-Vrindavan and then to Shuk Teerth, a place known as the meditation site of Maharishi Shukracharya. Pilgrims can visit Mathura-Vrindavan, the birthplace of Lord Krishna, and explore sites connected to his childhood and divine pastimes.

Govt must spend Kumbh earnings on compensation, public welfare: AKY



Tn response to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government's claims that the Maha Kumbh has generated income worth lakhs of crores of rupees, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yaday said this income must be spent to compensate the families of devotees who lost their lives in accidents and for the treatment of those who were iniured.

In a statement on Friday, Akhilesh said the tradition has been that whatever was earned from Kumbh was donated to

"The Bharatiya Janata Party government must follow suit and spend the income from Kumbh on ex gratia to the families of Kumbh pilgrims who died or were left injured in accidents. The income earned must also be spent on tracking down thousands of pilgrims who are missing. Then, shopkeepers who had put up stalls at Kumbh and suffered losses must also be compensated," he said. "From the income earned

during Kumbh, the government must announce a Holi bonus for each and every individual who was engaged as a worker for the Mela," he added.

Akhilesh said that, drawing

inspiration from Kannauj and take lessons in morality emperor Harshvardhan, a major chunk of the income must be spent on infrastructure development in Prayagraj.

"Lakhs of crores of rupees, that have been earned, must also be spent on setting up a centre where people can be inspired to speak the truth its religious norms.

verka

and self-correction," Akhilesh said.

He accused the Bharatiya Janata Party government of only focusing on drawing eco-nomic benefits and political mileage from organising Maha Kumbh instead of living up to

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Chief Regional Manager, Regional Office, Kanpui

Govt approves new medical colleges in Baghpat, Kasganj

 $T^{he\,Uttar\,Pradesh\,government,\ in\ line\ with\ its}$ commitment to the 'One District, One Medical College' (ODOM) initiative, has approved the establishment of new medical colleges in Baghpat and Kasganj dis-tricts, officials said here on Friday.

This development aims to enhance healthcare accessibility for residents of these districts. In addition, the government has also given the nod to establish a medical college in Hathras under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Furthermore, the satellite centre of King George's Medical University (KGMU) in Balrampur district is set to be upgraded into a fullfledged medical college, further strengthening the state's medical infrastructure, officials added.

Chief Minister Yogi Aditvanath remains committed to ensuring that every district in Uttar Pradesh has a medical college. The approval of medical colleges in Baghpat, Kasganj, and Hathras marks a significant step towards this goal. These projects have been sanctioned under the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme, which promotes the expansion of healthcare services through government and private sector collaboration, officials noted.

Expanding healthcare facilities is a top priority for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The establishment of medical colleges in every district will not only improve access to healthcare but also give a significant boost to medical education in Uttar Pradesh, they added. During the recent meeting, Chief Minister Yogi highlighted that this initiative is a strong step towards building a 'New Uttar Pradesh,' where every citizen will have access to quality medical care. He directed officials to ensure the timely completion of these medical college pro-

The Yogi government's decision to set up new medical colleges will not only enhance healthcare services but also create new job opportunities for youth. These colleges will increase the number of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, and other healthcare professionals in the state, officials said. Additionally, the government has ensured that modern facilities are made available in these institutions, providing students with high-quality medical education comparable to top institutions in the country, officials added. Chief Minister Yogi also

instructed officials to maintain strict quality standards in the construction and operation of these colleges. In the meeting, the chief minister approved the lowest bidder proposal for operating medical colleges in Baghpat, Kasganj, and Hathras under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

Furthermore, the government has decided to upgrade the KGMU satellite centre in Balrampur into a full-fledged medical college. This development will be a major advantage for Purvanchal and nearby regions, providing advanced medical care to patients from remote areas, officials said.

UP govt prioritises skill dev, job generation

The Yogi government has taken historic steps to prioritise skill development and employment generation for the youth of Uttar Pradesh, according to an official statement released here on Friday. To strengthen technical education, over 1.90 lakh seats have been made available across 286 State Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). Notably, 47 ITIs have dedicated women's branches, while 12 institutes are exclusively for women, accelerating the state's women empowerment initiatives, the statement said.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath envisions equipping youth with modern technological skills rather than confining them to traditional jobs. In line with this vision, the 2025-26 budget includes provisions to expand training programmes in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Robotics, and other cutting-edge technolo-

gies, the statement said.
To further enhance self-employment opportunities and skill development, the government has laid out a comprehensive plan. With a focus on preparing youth for global competition, a plan has been set to train 54,833 candidates under the Pradhan Mantri Shikshuta Protsahan Yojana.

Additionally, under the Uttar Pradesh Kaushal Vikas Mission, 15.25 lakh youths have received free employment training over the last six years, with 5.71 lakh successfully linked to jobs or self-employ-

ment, the statement said. Recognising that technical expertise is the future, the government has made significant strides in enhancing youth competency through ITI and apprenticeship programmes. So far, 2,54,335 youths have gained employment opportunities in industries and the MSME sector through these initiatives, the statement said.

Further strengthening self-employment and startups, the Yogi government aligns with Central schemes like 'Make in India' and 'Startup India. ITIs and other training institutes are introducing new-age courses, ensuring industry partnerships that provide direct employment opportunities for skilled youth, the statement added. Women empowerment holds a special place in the 2025-26 budget. While 12 ITIs are exclusively dedicated to women, 47 other ITIs have dedicated women's branches offering specialised courses such as Computer Operator and Programming Assistant, Civil Engineering, Information Technology, Power Electronics, Cosmetology, and more.

ders are hereby Invited for the purchase and supply of following items Name of Work/Item Period/Tentative Qty For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh Hiring a professional agency for Designing, Creating and Executing a comprehensive branding and advertisement solution for Milkfed For Verka Chandigarh Dairy Sealed tender for hiring of five seater Tata Xenon/ Mahindra Bolero pickup double cabin or equivalent vehicle along with driver For Verka Mohali Dairy a) Contract for providing security personnel's. b) Hiring of insulated & refrigerated vehicles with different capacities for supply of verka milk and milk products. vehicles may b creased or decreased c) Housekeeping and letting filled milk pouch handling activities For Verka Ludhiana Dairy Job contract for packing of liquid milk, dahi and lassi in pouches and cleaning of milk plastic trays. For Verka Patiala Dairy Hiring of Vehicles:i. Tata 207, Mahindra Maxi truck etc. for transportation of milk from 02 No's societies/farms at MCC samana route no.28 & route no.42. Double cabin pickup vehicle for LN2 gas supply route. Tata 207, Mahindra Maxi truck etc. for supply of Verka Cattle Feed, mineral mixture, ghee etc. to societies/farms. For Verka Hoshiarpur Dairy Advertisement material. (Flexi board, flexi banner, star flex banner vinyl board, glow sun board, gum sheet sticker, pamphlets, danglers sun board, wall painting, vehicle painting, standies, canopies). For Verka Sangrur Dairy Allotment of Verka Milk booths on rent. Annua Three Years Civil Hospital Tapa Civil Hospital Bhadau ii. Corrugated tray for PP bottles cap. 180ml. iii. Printed shrink sleeve rolls for PP bottles cap. 180ml. iii. Printed shrink sleeve rolls for PP bottles cap. 180ml. iv. Conduction aluminium lid foil for PP bottles cap. 180ml. 01.04.2025 to 31.03.2027/ 15 No's i. Can route vehicles for lifting of milk from DCS to MCC Capacity:- 1 Ton to 2 Ton. ii. Insulated Single portion road milk tankers (Capacity- 10000 Ltr.) for the transportation of milk from BMC/ MCC to Verka Amritsar Dairy. Supply of Indonesian Steam coal. 10 No's 1500 MT d) Outsourcing of security, housekeeping & horticulture activities. For Verka Mega Dairy, Bassi Pathana Loading/Unloading of Verka milk & milk products corrugated boxes Annual Annual

 For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in. 2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only

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'ONOE' to bring long-term development: Trivedi Couple among four killed

National spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rajya Sabha MP Dr Sudhanshu Trivedi said that if we want long-term stability in the country, we need everyone's cooperation on the issue of 'One Nation One Election' (ONOE). Expressing his views while addressing the intellectuals and students at a seminar on ONOE organised in

Swatantrata Bhawan Auditorium, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Thursday, he said if elections are held once in five years, then we can make long- term plans for development.

"Under the leadership of BJP, our MPs and MLAs are constantly engaged in serving the public and Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not take a single holiday in 10-and-ahalf years", he said, adding that if we all have to make India a developed nation then we have to free ourselves from the mentality of slavery and have to be proud of our heritage. Understanding our duties, we have to collectively discharge them", he said.

"When the Constitution makers conceptualised democracy, they had decided to hold simulelections. taneous Simultaneous elections were held from 1952 to 1967", he said, adding that for the country's economic development,



BJP spokesman Dr S Trivedi addressing a seminar on ONOE at BHU in Varanasi

working with concentration, transaction in India or tech revbetter coordination of economic resources and healthy competition in politics towards each other, all the chief ministers (CMs) and the prime minister should work together. Dr Trivedi said there should be better social harmony in the society so that the election surcharge does not come again and again. Therefore, it is necessary that the PM and the government constitute a committee and according to it there should be the idea of ONOE and this is in accordance with the basic spirit of the constitution makers, he said and added that those who are opposing have opposed every new effort. "Whether it bringing digital

olution, these people were standing against GST but whether anyone wants to move or not, the country has decided to move in the direction of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat", he said. Dr Trivedi said that during the elections held in 1996-97-98, PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee had said that election is the heartbeat of democracy and rapid heartbeat is a sign of ill health. "From 1989 to 2014 there was instability in the country because governments kept coming and going but in 2014 a stable government was formed in the country under the leadership of PM Modi which took decisions in public and national interest", he said,

very intelligent, who knows very well where to vote and where to give a shock. He said no one becomes a leader through political process, leaders emerge from among the public. "Atal and Modi first became leaders and then PM. Whereas in Congress, one first became PM and then became leader", he said and added that this time in the Union Budget, a provision of ₹500 crore has been made for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in agriculture, health and education sectors which show that India is rapidly progressing towards the world position. He said the goal of developed India will be through ONOE and when the mentality of slavery is left, the importance of 'One Nation' will also be understood. "The previous governments adopted the mantra of divide and rule and created caste and high-low differences among us. We got Swaraj in 1947 but we did not get independence because even after India got Swaraj, foreign influence dominated India," he said. "When the Modi government took over the reins of the country, the common man did not even have his own bank accounts. PM Modi opened accounts for the common man and transferred the benefits of government schemes to those accounts through direct benefit transfer. This benefited the common

accounts have been opened and ₹2 lakh crore of poor people are deposited in those accounts. Through this new system, the Modi government strengthened the life of the common man and eliminated the middlemen", he said, and added that when it came to digital transactions, P Chidambaram had said that the people of India are less educated and therefore, the system of digital transactions will flop, whereas the Modi government promoted it as a result of today which we have left America and China behind. The seminar was chaired by former Governor of Bihar and Meghalaya Fagu Chauhan. The topic was introduced by Dr Mayank Narayan Singh, founder of Kashi Manthan. On the occasion BIP's regional president Dilip Patel, Uttar Pradesh minister Dr Dayashankar Mishra Dayalu, MLAs Dr Neelkanth Tiwari and Saurabh Srivastava, district president and MLC Hansraj and MLC Vishwakarma, city BJP chief Vidyasagar Rai, Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, state BJP treasurer Manish Kapoor, regional media in charge Navratan Rathi, co-media in charge Santosh Solapurkar, Nirmala Singh Patel, Namrata Chaurasia, Geeta Shastri, Naveen Kapoor, Jagdish Tripathi and others were present.

as car collides with truck

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

 $F_{\text{ple, died and one was}}^{\text{our people, including a cou-}}$ injured when their speeding car collided head on with a truck on Kanpur-Sagar national highway in Mahoba on Friday morning. Due to high speed, the car got stuck under the truck killing three persons on the spot. Two injured were taken to a hospital where a woman also died. They were returning to Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) from Prayagraj. The accident took place near Bara Nullah on the highway. After colliding with the truck, the car got stuck under it and dragged for 50 metres. Traffic movement remained disrupted for about one hour after the incident. Police rushed to the spot which, got the entangled car out of the truck with the help of a JCB following which the traffic was restored. The deceased included Naresh Nagar, son of Sidhnath, Awadhesh Nagar son of Babulal and Bhura Gurjar. Injured Puja Nagar, daughter of Anoop Singh, was undergoing treatment at the hospital. Meanwhile a bike-borne facto-

rv worker was killed after being hit by a speeding dumper laden with building material on Jhansi-Kanpur highway in Kanpur Dehat early on Friday



morning. The dumper dragged the worker along with bike up to 70 metres due to which he died on the spot. On getting information police rushed to the spot and sent the body for autopsy. Vivek (24) of Chhataini under Bhognipur police station in Kanpur Dehat, was employed in plastic pipe factory in Jainpur (Akbarpur). He left for the factory on Friday morning. As soon as he reached near Digh on Jhansi-Kanpur highway, the speeding dumper hit him from behind and dragged him work-er with his bike up to 70 metres. In the incident the

bike was badly crushed. Devipur outpost in charge Ramkishun Verma sent the body for an autopsy. Station House Officer (SHO) Bhognipur Anjan Kumar said raids are being conducted in search of the absconding dumper driver. He said that he had not received any complaint from from kin of the deceased so far. In yet another incident, an

elderly man riding a bicycle was fatally knocked down by a speeding unidentified vehicle on Maitha-Rania road under Sheoli Kotwali police station area of Kanpur Dehat on Thursday evening. Police sent the body for autopsy. Devi Prasad (65) belonging to Manda Maitha village was going to Ata Chakki in Kurian Nivada on the bicycle. On the way, he was knocked by the unidentified vehicle on Rania road due to which he died on the spot. His irate kin staged a protest while his wife Ram Devi became unconscious. The people tried to block the road but Sheoli Kotwali in charge pacified the issue and sent the body for an autopsy. Kotwali in charge said efforts are on to locate the absconding vehicle driver. On receipt of autopsy report, further action will be initiated in the matter, he said.

IIM Calcutta emerges champion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE KANPUR

 $T_{\text{concluded the NTPC}}^{\text{he NTPC Ltd successfully}}$ Electron Quiz 2025 grand finale at NTPC Power Management Institute (PMI), Noida. After a highly competitive contest, IIM Calcutta emerged as the champion, showcasing its exceptional analytical and problem-solving skills, while FMS, Delhi became the first runner-up and another team from IIM Calcutta was the second runner-up.
Director (HR), NTPC, Anil

Kumar Jadli, congratulated all the participants for their exceptional display of critical thinking and competitive spirit. NTPC Electron Quiz has been nurturing young talents and cultivating a platform for knowledge sharing for the last two decades, he said. He motivated the participants to channel this energy towards achieving their personal and professional goals while contributing to nation building.

Over 700 teams pa this month-long annual event Shandilya and Shashank Tyagi that took place across nine from FMS, Delhi, received

Kanpur (PNS): Noted Dhrupad singer of the city Ayush Dwivedi has been con-

ferred the 'A' grade artiste

award by Akashwani and Doordarshan. The award was

given after the Central

Audition Board heard his

recording. Ayush is the

youngest artiste of the city and

the third to get this prestigious

award. He is a disciple and son

of renowned Dhrupad maestro



IIM Calcutta emerged winners in NTPC Electron Quiz 2025.

locations: Ranchi, Patna, Lucknow, Raipur, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Noida. After intense nine regional and three semi-final rounds, six teams qualified for the grand finale held on Friday at PMI, Noida.

The champions, Pivus Kedia and Amartya Saha from IIM Calcutta took home cash prize of ₹50,000, while the first runners-up comprising Ankita

₹30,000. The second runnersup team comprising Komal Vasudeva and Arava Arun from IIM Calcutta received ₹20,000 cash prize.

As NTPC marks its golden jubilee, this edition of the Electron Ouiz continues to promote industry-academia collaboration and encourage students to showcase their analytical and problem-solving lls, reinforcing NTPC's com mitment to knowledge development and future leadership.

13 Agriculture students who have been appointed as Route Officers (Operation) by Shwetdhara Milk Producer Co. Dhrupad singer conferred 'A' grade artiste award Ltd and four Agriculture students who have been selected Pt Vinod Kumar Dwivedi. as inspectors (Trainee) by SRS He had the opportunity to showcase his talent in many Certification GmbH. Five BTech Food Tech stuprestigious music concerts, dents have been selected as including Harballabh Sangeet Sammelan, Tansen Samaroh, Saptak Music Festival, Sangeetshri Festival USA,

quality associates by BVEG Foods Pvt Ltd. Prof Tripathi further added, "We are in discussion with several nationalised companies who are likely to conduct campus interviews soon. We are confident that our students will continue to excel in

placement drive their placements."

25 SHUATS students

selected during

PNS PRAYAGRAJ

total of 25 students of Sam

Aligginbottom University

of Agriculture, Technology and Science (SHUATS) have been

selected by four companies

during a campus placement drive held on Friday.

According to Director, Career

Planning and Placement, Prof Dr Ashok Tripathi, "After sev-

eral rounds of interviews, 25

students have successfully

cleared the final round of selec-

tion. We are proud of achieve-

ment of our students and grate-

ful to the companies for provid-

ing them with this opportuni-

The selected students included

three BTech Agriculture stu-

dents who have been selected

by Escorts Kubota Ltd. Besides.

The selected students have attributed their success to the academic environment of the university and the quality edu-cation provided by faculty members.

SHUATS is a premier institu-tion of higher learning in India. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in agriculture, technology and

NEWLYWED WOMAN DIES: A 22-year-old newly married woman died under mysterious circumstances in Ajehra village of Phulpur. She was identified as Poonam of Koiravandih Atanpur village of Bahria and was married to Arun Kumar of Ajehra village. She had reached her in-laws house after the 'vidai' ceremony on February 26. After all the rituals were completed, Poonam's health suddenly started deteriorating around 8 pm on Thursday night. She was immediately taken to a hospital and the doctors declared her

On getting information about the matter police outpost in charge Naveen Kumar Singh reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem exami-nation. Inspector Praveen Kumar Gautam said the father of the deceased has not accused anyone. The police is investigating the matter.

DM inspects Vikas Bhawan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

During an inspection of Vikas Bhawan on Friday, District Magistrate Jitendra Pratap Singh said all the officers should ensure presence in their offices between 10 am and 12 noon and resolve grievances of people. He also inspected the DRDA, DSTO, district panchayatraj officer and district agriculture officer offices. During the inspection, he

found many discrepancies, including absence of employees, pathetic condition of toilets etc. He inspected the help



District Magistrate Jitendra Pratap Singh inspecting attendance register in presence of CDO Diksha Jain at Vikas

desk set up by the social welfare and DUDA department at the main gate of the Vikas Bhavan and found one employee of DUDA department pre-

sent on the spot. In the help desk register of Social Welfare department, only five names were found entered in the whole day. On this, he directed the chief development officer to assign some other additional work to the employee. At the DRDA office, he checked the register where signatures were put without the stamp of name and designation of the officer concerned.

Programmes being run to prevent AIDS discussed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

n advocacy meeting/work-An advocacy meeting, work shop on the topic 'From HIV negative at-risk clients' was organised by the Sampoorna Suraksha Kendra (SSK) department under the National AIDS Control Programme in the auditorium of SSPG Divisional Hospital here on Friday. The programme was inaugurated by Divisional Additional Director/ Chief Superintendent Dr SP Singh. Dr Singh said the Health department is continuously providing better treatment and counselling

to HIV-infected people. In this sequence, the programmes being run to prevent AIDS were

discussed in detail in the work-

shop. Awareness about control



ple is being done at the Sampoorna Suraksha Kendra. In this centre, started in 26 districts, HIV-infected people are continuously getting better treatment and counseling.

District Tuberculosis Officer Dr Piyush Rai said all details of the patients coming to the ART Centre, including Sampoorna Suraksha Kendra, are kept confidential and they are tested and treated only after counselling. If anyone wants to take consultation or get tested they can contact these government centres without hesitation and without any fear. On the occasion Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Ami Singh said that SSK is also being operated successfully in Varanasi to provide better health facilities to AIDS patients. HIV-infected people are treated here. The workshop was chaired by SSK in charge Dr Mukund Srivastava. Vinay Mishra from Social Welfare, District Inspector of Schools, officers of Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK), Women and Child Development Welfare department, doctors and all employees from BHU ART Centre, Pt Deendayal Upadhyay Hospital's ART Centre, ICTC, DSRC, TI, OST PDDU, One Stop Centre were present in this programme.

Lecture series launched to celebrate, preserve Odisha's rich cultural, literary heritage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja Odia Chair established by Government of Odisha at Faculty of Arts, BHU, has launched a bimonthly lecture series aimed at cele-brating and preserving Odisha's rich cultural and literary heritage. The series provides a platform for distinguished scholars, researchers and artistes to share their insights with the BHU academic community. The inaugural lecture in this series was delivered on Thursday by Dr Rabi Narayan Mohanty, Head, Department of Architecture, Planning, and Design, IIT (BHU), on 'Kalinga Art and Architecture - A Brief Introduction'. In his talk, Dr Mohanty provided an overview of the art, architecture and planning of Kalinga temple towns. He also discussed the transformation of the built environment of Puri, a renowned sacred town of the Kalinga region. The session was chaired by Prof Maya Shankar Pandey, Dean, Faculty of Arts, BHU. Prof Gopabandhu Mishra, Coordinator, Odia Chair, outlined the objectives and future activities of the

Odia Chair. Prof Pradosh Mishra welcomed the guest and moderated the session, while Dr Amiya Kumar Samal proposed the vote of thanks. **EXHIBITION:** A solo painting exhibition of Varanasi-based painter Moumita Roy is being organised at the Ahivasi Art Gallery located in the Faculty of Visual Arts in Banaras Hindu University (BHU). This three-day exhibition will remain open till March 1. It was inaugurated on Thursday by renowned painter S Pranam Singh and Prof Uttam Dixit, Dean of the Faculty of Visual

Moumita Roy received her painting education from the Faculty of Visual Arts, BHU in 2011. Three series of paintings painted by Moumita Roy are being displayed in this exhibition, which is an attempt to display Indian culture through colours and shapes. The first of the three series attempts to display South Indian culture by depicting the sea with bright colours, garlands of white flowers, banana leaves, lotus and decorative ornaments of temples, which reflects her experience of her visit to Chennai.

$T^{\text{he Youth Festival 'Udaan -}}_{\text{2025' got off to a colourful start on Thursday at DAV PG}$

Uttarpara Sangeet Chakra, Balgandharva Sangeet Samaroh and All India Music Festival and gave voice to different

films, albums and applications.

College. On the first day of the three-day Youth Festival organised under the aegis of IQAC, competitions were organised in the genres of fine arts, literature, theatre and song and music. The play 'Pagla Ghoda', written by renowned play-wright Badal Sarkar, dedicated to women's pain was staged. The participants decorated rangoli on the theme of

women empowerment. On the day, various cultural programmes were held. In the theatre competitions, the short play 'Barf' was the first to be staged in which the sorrow of a Kashmiri woman being childless was depicted. After this, there was a soulful enactment of 'Pagla Ghoda' written by the famous Bengali dramatist Badal Sarkar. The drama depicting the feelings of the departed soul distressed by the act of the young men who came to cremate the body of the newlywed woman at the cremation ground brought tears to the eyes of everyone present in the auditorium.

The team of youngsters Raj, Shivam and Gaurish moved everyone by enacting the story of Jauhar based on the valour



'Udaan-2025' gets off to colourful start

Students presenting programme in youth festival at DAV PG College in Varanasi

of Rani Padmavati in mime, while Pawan, Akshay Kumar and Mudit tickled everyone by mimicking Sunny Deol, Salman Khan and Sanjay Dutt in mimicry.

They also surprised everyone by imitating the sounds of nature, river, birds and musical instruments. The agony of transgenders was also shown in mono acting. In solo dance, Navya Keshav, Shreya, Shri, Anshika, Ishant mesmerised Kathak, with Vijayalakshmi Das' Odissi and Isha Vishwas' Bharatnatyam also left an indelible mark in evervone's heart.

In fine arts, Rangoli was made on women empowerment in the fine arts genre, while the youth also participated in mehndi, sketching, cartoon, painting, on-spot photogra-phy. Apart from the first stage quiz in the literature genres, competitions of turn coat, conversation and essay were organ-

SEMINAR: A two-day international seminar was organised by the Bengali Department of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) on the occasion of the birth centenary of eminent film director, actor and litterateur Ritwik Ghatak. The function started on Friday with Mangalacharan (invocation) which was presented by Abhishek Tripathi and Swapna

Mishra (Sanskrit Department). Thereafter, the guests garlanded the statue of Mahamana Malviya and lit the lamp. Kulgeet was presented by Payel Mukhopadhyay and Palak. The guests were welcomed by the Head of the Department and organiSing secretary Dr Sumita Chatterjee.

Speaking about the relevance of Ritwik Ghatak in today's context, coordinator of the seminar, Dr Antara Das said that Ritwik's film was restored at the Cannes Film Festival and from 2017 the Indian film industry has also started preserving his work. Chief guest Prof Ashish Tripathi, Hindi Department, discussed various aspects of Ritwik's cinema through films like Meghe Dhaka Tara', 'Suvarna Rekha' etc and defined him as

a poetic literary director. The keynote speaker Dr Gautam Chatterjee analysed various technical details related to Ritwik's cinema. He was the first to use light bouncing. He threw light on the use of cinematography etc in various films. Special guest, student advisor Dr Binayak Dubey expressed his views on Ritwik Gĥatak.

Shubhankar Mukhopadhyay from America presented his speech on the topic 'Ritwik Ghatak: Anarchy of Industry'.

Workshop to enhance scientific awareness



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE KANPUR

The Christ Church College I marked National Science Day with a special programme, the 'HAM Radio Workshop' jointly organised by the Departments of Physics and Chemistry on Friday. The workshop aimed to enhance scientific awareness and education among students while providing hands-on experi-ence in HAM radio operations. The celebrations began on Thursday with a poster presentation and model exhibition, organised by Pragyan (Physics Society). Open to all students, the exhibition showcased innovative and creative projects, setting the stage for the main event. The inaugural ceremony on Friday was graced by the presence of Principal Prof Joseph Daniel who emphasised the importance of integrating science with technology to foster innovation. He commended the efforts of the organising departments in successfully hosting the workshop.

Chief guest VK Arya delivered a keynote address on the critical role of HAM radio communication in disaster management. He highlighted how HAM radio operators provide essential communication services during emergencies when conventional networks fail. Encouraging students to take up HAM radio as a hobby, he underscored its potential in saving lives and supporting disaster relief efforts.

The event also featured Dr Raghvendra Kr. Chaudhary, a distinguished faculty member from the Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT Kanpur, as the guest of honour.

India-EU agree to conclude FTA by year end

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday agreed to conclude an ambitious India-EU free trade deal by this year amid fears that the Trump administration's threat of higher tariffs could adversely impact the global economy. In their talks, both the leaders

also decided to expand twoway defence cooperation, especially in the Indo-Pacific with Vonder Leyen announcing that the European Union (EU) was looking at firming up a security and defence pact with India in line with its partnerships with close allies Japan and South Korea.

The deadline for concluding the trade deal that would be the largest of its kind globally came over 17 years after the two sides first began Negotiations for the pact was re-launched in June 2022 after well as on geographical beneficial bilateral free trade

due to a gap in ambition.

"Today, we have decided to create a bold and ambitious roadmap for the India-EU partnership for the period beyond 2025. It will be launched during the next India-EU summit," Modi said. India is set to host the summit later this year.

The negotiations for the deal were not moving forward ostensibly in view of the EU's persistent demands to New Delhi cut tariffs on cars, wine and agricultural products. The EU Commission

president, accompanied by the College of Commissioners or senior political leaders of the bloc's member nations began her two-day India visit on Thursday. It is the first such visit after the European parliamentary elections in June last.

In his media statement, Modi indicated resolve by the two sides also to move forward on negotiations investment protection pact as



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen near a bus powered by hydrogen fuel cell technology at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Friday

mutually

indications as part of broader efforts to boost investments. "We have prepared a blueprint for collaboration in the areas trade, technology, investment, innovation, green growth, security, skilling and mobility," he said. "We have directed our teams to

conclude

agreement by the end of this year," he said Echoing Modi, Von der Leyen said, "We have tasked our teams to build on this momentum and finalise our free trade agreement before the end of this year." "We are expecting a lot of our trade negotiators, we told them they should surprise us," she said.

the growing India-EU cooperation on defence and security as a symbol of "mutual trust" and that both sides will take forward the engagement in areas of cyber security, maritime security and counter-terrorism. Both sides agree on the

importance of peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," he said, welcoming the EU's decision to join the India-backed 'Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative'. 'We will work together on

triangular development projects for sustainable and inclusive development in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa," Modi said. Von der Leyen said now is the

time to step up India-EU security and defence cooperation on land, sea and in space. She called the Indian Ocean as a "lifeline for global trade" and said ensuring its security is vital, not just for India but for the whole world. The remarks came amid China's increasing "We' should also explore expanding our joint naval exercises, building on our very successful operations in the Gulf of Guinea and the Red Sea," the European

Commission chief said.

Finally, we should deepen cooperation in protecting the cables that ensure data connectivity between India and the European Union, she said. In his remarks, Modi said the India-EU strategic partnership is "natural and organic" and that it is based on "trust" and shared belief in democratic values. "We welcome the new visa cascade regime of the EU. This will provide better mobility to the abilities of India's talented youth," he said. On connectivity, Modi said concrete steps will be taken to take forward the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC). Economic

"I firmly believe that "IMEEC" shall serve as an engine that drives global commerce, sustainable growth and prosperity in the days to come."

EU exploring security, defence pact with India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The European Union (EU) is **1** exploring a security and defence pact with India in line with its similar partnerships with close allies Japan and South Korea. The announcement, seen as

significant, was made by European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen ahead of her wideranging talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In an address at a think-tank, she pitched for taking the EU-India strategic partnership to the next level to effectively

deal with various geopolitical headwinds. Security should be a core part of our new strategic partnership with India, Von der Leyen said. "This is why I can announce that we are exploring a future Security and Defence

Partnership with India in the mould of the partnerships we have with Japan and South

"This will help us step up our work to counter common threats whether on crossborder terrorism, maritime security threats, cyber-attacks or the new phenomenon we see: attacks on our critical infrastructure," she said. The president said there is a

lot that both India and the EU can build on.

"For instance, the recent collaboration on maritime security. And I am delighted at India's interest in joining defence industrial projects under the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation," she said. Von der Leyen said India is working hard to diversify its military supply and to access new capabilities and that both sides can help each other to deliver on "our security objectives".

"For instance, we can join forces where we have technology and expertise, such as on cyber security, space and drones. This is not only about stability in our respective regions," she said.

Technology to play pivotal role on combat future: CDS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

With warfare increasingly becoming "networked, digitised and intelligent", techniques nology would play a pivotal role in deciding the outcome of combats in the future, Chief of Defence Staff General (CDS) Anil Chauhan said here on

Addressing the Chanakya Dialogues conclave here on the "Bharat 2047: Atmanirbhar In War" theme, he said datacentric warfare includes looking at network security, redundancy, latency in data flow and the use of artificial intelligence as well as storage, collection and analytics of

Pitching for developing indigenous capabilities for defence manufacturing, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh said the Indian Air Force would prefer a "homegrown" system even if it trying to separate that. We are gives "slightly lesser trying to nominate a theatre performance." He made this commander who would be assertion in his address at the

robotics and automation, including support from space General Ghouhan told the and cyber," he said. humans and machines, and among machines in the future. decisions taken during combat

increasingly becoming digitised, networked and intelligent. So in future, I think technologies like artificial intelligence, data analytics and supercomputing will play a pivotal role in deciding the outcome of combat," Chauhan said. "The Indian armed forces actually want to transit to data-centric warfare intelligentised warfare."

Explaining the concept of Theater Commands, the Chief of Defence staff described it as an attempt to separate force generation from force

application.
"Till now, both these responsibilities were vested with the service headquarters or the service chiefs. He was responsible for recruitment, training, equipment acquisition and maintenance, among others," the CDS said.

"So force generation and force application was responsibility. Now, we are capable of carrying out multi-Chanakya Dialogues. domain operation, that means Referring to the trends in in all the three domains,

General Chauhan use data analytics so that We all know that warfare is are better and faster," adding

that with advances in drone technology, the speed of warfare may also be higher. IAF chief said there is a need for manufacturing at least 35-40 military aircraft in India every year and stressed the target is not impossible to meet. He said the IAF's first priority when it comes to acquisition, is "anything that is home grown". "So I'm very convinced in my mind that even if a home grown system gives me a slightly lesser performance... If it is 90 per cent or 85 per cent of what I get in the world market, we will go for home grown system because that is the only way we can get over with always looking outward to get our

systems," he said. 'But at the same time, a home grown system cannot just happen overnight. It will take time and it needs to be supported. So for that, Indian Air Force is fully committed to any R&D project," he said.

He said India needs to develop capability to produce at least 35-40 fighter aircraft every year to meet the requirements of replacing aging fleets.

"If some private industry comes in for a make in India, sav we add possibility of combat between future wars, one may be able to maybe 12-18 aircraft per year from their side. So we are reaching that number. So that

Systems needed to check suicides in IITs, IIMs: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Supreme Court on Friday said incidents of suicides in IITs and IIMs were "extremely unfortunate" and assured a robust mechanism to check such cases. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was informed by senior advocate Indira Jaising that in past 14 months, 18 suicides took place in Indian Institutes Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

"It is extremely unfortunate what is happening. We will create a robust mechanism to check this situation. We will take this issue to the logical conclusion," said the Bench. Jaising, appearing for the mothers of students Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, who allegedly died by suicide after caste-based facing discrimination,

universities and colleges hadn't given entire data on suicides taking place in their campuses despite a court order.

While Vemula, a PhD scholar at Hyderabad Central University died on January 17, 2016, Tadvi, a student at TN Topiwala National Medical College, died on May 22, 2019, she was subjected to purported discrimination by three doctors in her college. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the

Centre, said the University Grants Commission (UGC) formulated regulations, which took care of majority of the concern raised by the petitioners, and were uploaded on its website

inviting suggestions and objections from the public. Jaising said 40 per cent of the universities and 80 per cent of the colleges had not created equal exportunity cells in equal opportunity cells in their campuses. The bench asked Jaising and other counsel appearing in the matter to give suggestions on the draft regulations and directed the UGC to look into

these suggestions.

Jaising urged the court to give a hearing before finalisation of the regulations, but Mehta opposed it saying every other person would seek a personal hearing, if allowed. "If they want to give any suggestions, then they can do so through the website but personal hearing cannot be allowed," he submitted.

The bench told Jaising it appreciates the cause raised by the petitioner and assured that court would take it to its logical conclusion. The matter was posted after eight weeks. On January 3, the court called it a sensitive issue mechanism effective caste-based discrimination in educational institutions in the country.

New financial laws pave way for investment in India: Birla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ **NEW DELHI**

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Lon Friday stressed that the recent initiatives in simplification and transparency in financial laws have provided an enabling environment for investment in India. Today's India with deeper democratic spirit, stable Government and visionary leadership, is a land of immense opportunities for the investors, he noted. The fastest growing economy in the world is a favourite destination for investment across the world, he added.

Birla made these remarks in his inaugural address at the two-day symposium on 'Adoption to Changing landscape: My Viksit Bharat -2047' organised by the Northern India Regional Council, Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI) at New Delhi. Members of Parliament Faggan Singh Kulaste, Bansuri Swaraj also spoke on the occasion.

Referring to legal reforms in India, Birla noted that for the first time in India, an effort has been made to change colonial laws to repeal th redundant laws and to make new laws which are in sync with the hopes and aspirations of people of New



'Adoption to Changing landscape: My Viksit Bharat - 2047'

India. Mentioning about GST, proposed income tax legislation, changes in labour laws and company laws, Lok Sabha Speaker emphasised that these initiates reflect the vision of the leadership to take the country on the path of progress and prosperity. New laws are not only simple, transparent and progressive but also inclusive to improve the life of the last person in the country on mass the society, he observed. production with minimum Progressive laws always take consideration changing requirements of the country and the society and

Mentioning that India's financial institutions are its strength, Birla noted that our financial institutions command respect all over the Ĥailing world. contributions of the ICAI, Birla opined that this institution not only plays an important role in ensuring transparency in financial system but also for guiding cost. Playing a vital role in strengthening potential of the country, the ICAI, with its management skills, is improving the lives of the people.

SC relief for Isha Foundation in environment norms violations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

▼n a relief to Isha Foundation, the Supreme Court refused to interfere with a Madras High Court order quashing notices of the TN pollution body over the alleged violation of environmental norms and ordered no against its yoga and meditation centre.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh upheld the Madras High Court order quashing notices of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) against Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation over construction in the foothills of Velliangiri mountains in Coimbatore without prior environmental clearance.

While asking for no coercive action against the yoga and meditation centre, it asked for compliance with all the environmental norms and directions of the TNPCB.

The top court, however, said environmental norms.



for regularising construction as it ruled in the peculiar facts circumstances of the case. Tamil Nadu advocate general PS Raman said the government only wanted the order not to be treated as a shouldn't inhibit any future inspection of the properties and the centre should comply

immunity or exemption from compliance its order was not a precedent The court's concern only the competent authority

with environmental norms.

The bench said there was no

the structure. Senior advocate

illegal related to the dismantling of Rohatgi, appearing for Isha Foundation, said the state authorities should not be allowed to inspect the centre as the same thing would "permanent gate pass" and happen. Raman said the town and country planning authorities should be allowed to carry out the inspection so to prevent the construction of any other building in the area for the area was in the vicinity of a protected forest. The bench said a prior nod of

would be required in case of expansion of the centre. On February 14, the bench pulled up the state pollution control board for moving after two years against an order that quashed a showcause notice issued against Isha Foundation for flouting allegedly environmental norms.

It termed the petition filed by the TNPCB as a "friendly match" played by bureaucrats wanting the apex court's stamp on the petition's dismissal. The showcause was issued to

foundation constructing buildings between 2006 and 2014 buildings without reportedly obtaining mandatory environmental clearances but the Madras High Court quashed it.

On December 14, 2022, holding that the facilities set up by Isha Foundation in Coimbatore would fall under the education category, the high court set aside the

Storage capacity of 155 reservoirs improved compare to last year: CWC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The total live storage capacity of the 155 reservoirs monitored by the Central Water Commission (CWC) stands at 180.852 Billion Cubic Meters (BCM), which is approximately 70.15 per cent of the total estimated live storage capacity in the country, according to the latest bulletin of the CWC.

While the overall storage has improved compared to the same period last year, significant regional disparities highlight the challenges faced by certain states.

As of Thursday, the live storage available in these reservoirs is 93.529 BCM, representing 52 per cent of their total capacity.

is notable improvement compared to the same period last year when the live storage was 78.633 BCM and the normal storage (average of the last ten years) was 81.497 BCM.

The current storage is 119% of last year's storage and 115% of the normal storage. Water stress continues in the

northern region that encompasses the states of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan. The 11 reservoirs in this

region have a total live storage capacity of 19.836 BCM, but only 28 per cent of this capacity is currently filled.
This is significantly lower

than last year's 37 per cent and the normal storage of 40 per cent. Key reservoirs like Pong Dam and Thein Dam are reporting storage levels as low as 40 per cent and 32 per cent of their capacity, respectively.

The eastern states, including Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bengal, Tripura, Nagaland and Bihar, have 25 reservoirs with a total capacity of 20.798 BCM. The current storage is 51 per cent of capacity, slightly lower than last year's 53 per cent and the normal storage of 55 per cent. Reservoirs like Chandan Dam in Bihar are critically low, with 0% storage, while others like Maithon Dam in Jharkhand are nearly full. The western states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa are faring better, with 50 reservoirs holding 64 per cent

37.357 BCM. This is higher than last year's 54 per cent and the normal storage of 49 per cent. Major reservoirs like Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat and Jayakwadi in Maharashtra are reporting

of their total capacity of

healthy storage levels. The central states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Pradesh Madhya Chhattisgarh have 26 reservoirs with a total capacity of 48.227 BCM. The current storage is 54 per cent of capacity, better than last year's 51 per cent and the normal storage of 48 per cent. However, reservoirs like Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh are struggling, with

Rajnath releases 'Sashakt Bharat' magazine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released the first edition of Ministry of Defence's bi-annual Hindi magazine 'Sashakt Bharat.' The magazine comprises poems on the valour, patriotism and sacrifices of the Armed Forces personnel as well as articles on the policies of the Government written by the personnel of the Ministry, irrespective of their ranks, showcasing inclusivity and unity in diversity.

The defence minister appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Defence wing of the Department of Official Language promoting Hindi. The objective of magazine is to highlight the creative talent defence ministry. The eversion of the magazine will be available on the official (https://mod.gov.in/).

Wonder how Jaipur becomes 'smart' by damaging Jal Mahal lake?: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

 $T^{\text{he Supreme Court on}}_{\text{Friday slammed the Nagar}}$ Nigam Jaipur Heritage For damaging Jal Mahal lake and contaminating its water by permitting a night market in

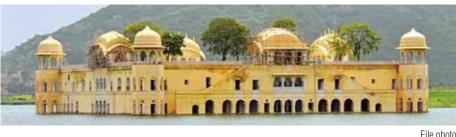
the vicinity.
A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said due to the negligence and Nigam Jaipur Heitage, Jal of the lake," it said. Mahal lake was "completely The court, therefore destroyed".

Today, we see municipal commissioner appearing online with a board of smart city behind him. We wonder how will the city of Jaipur become 'smart' by damaging Jal Mahal lake virtually behind repair. We note that an expert committee has not been appointed for

The court, therefore, directed

the Jaipur civic body to appoint Environmental Engineering Research Institute to give a comprehensive report on immediate measures to stop pollution and restoration and

preservation of the lake. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Nagar Nigam Jaipur Heritage challenging illegal acts of the Nagar restoration and preservation November 3, 2023 order of the



which banned the night near the lake while directing permission from the eco-

National Green Tribunal market and other activities the civic body to seek

monitoring committee. The top court noted the municipal corporation headquarter released dirty sewage water into the lake from time to time. It also examined an affidavit of the civic body's chief executive officer in which he referred to a project report by the tourism department and said the project had nothing to do with restoration and preservation of the lake.

The NGT had found the night market was organised within the eco-sensitive zone of Nahargarh Wildlife Sanctuary without obtaining permission as per eco-sensitive zone and without consent of ESZ monitoring committee.

The tribunal's order came on a plea filed by RTI activist Rajendra Tiwari against the night market and discharge of untreated water into the water body.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION----

Lawbreakers as lawmakers

Eradication of the influence of criminality in politics must be taken up on priority

In recent years, the issue of criminalisation in politics has increasingly come under scrutiny. With more politicians facing criminal charges and convictions, questions have arisen about whether the legal framework governing their disqualification from contesting elections is adequate. The ongoing debate, highlighted by a recent Supreme Court case challenging the constitutional validity of limiting disqualification periods, brings to the fore not only legal interpretations but also the broader menace of criminal influences in our political system. A petition filed before the Supreme Court has argued for a lifetime ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections. The petitioner contends that limiting disqualification to a fixed period—currently six years after release for offenses under Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951—undermines constitutional provisions designed to keep criminals away from power. In response, the Centre has defended the existing provisions, arguing that a lifetime ban is "unduly harsh" and



that it would amount to directing Parliament to frame a law in a particular manner—an overreach of judicial power. The government's counter-affidavit emphasises that there are numerous penal laws that operate within a time-bound framework, ensuring that deterrence is balanced against the need to avoid undue

This legal tussle highlights a crucial policy debate: should convicted politicians face an indefinite prohibition from electoral participation, or is a fixed term of disqualification both constitutional and proportionate? The government argues that the current system, which temporarily excludes convicted individuals,

respects the principles of proportionality and reasonability. In its view, the legislative choice to limit the disqualification period is designed to offer both a punitive and rehabilitative measure while preserving democratic participation. Beyond legal debates, the deeper issue remains the rising tide of criminality within political circles. Criminal elements entering politics not only threaten the integrity of democratic institutions but also erode public trust. Politicians with a history of criminal behaviour may be more likely to engage in corrupt practices, undermining the rule of law. As criminalisation in politics becomes more pronounced, the call for stringent measures intensifies. Addressing the criminalisation of politics requires a multi-pronged approach that extends beyond the question of lifetime bans. Parliament could consider revisiting and potentially tightening the eligibility criteria for political candidates. Whether through a longer ban or additional restrictions for those convicted of certain serious crimes, legislative reforms should aim to disincentivise criminal conduct. There may be strong arguments for and against the life ban of convicted persons becoming lawmakers but one thing all can agree upon is that we do not need them in our parliament or state assemblies. How to do it is not difficult but who will bell the cat?



Strengthening public

institutions in the digital age



Digital transformation is reshaping public policy, it is imperative that we embrace it without compromising our enduring commitment to integrity



ate about governance, institutional resilience and public policy, exploring how institutions can adapt to the digital age. Imagine a world where policies are debated, revised and reshaped in real time—governance moving as quickly as a trending hashtag. That world isn't coming; it's already here. Public institutions, once the reliable backbone of governance, are now transforming rapidly.

Social media, instant communication, and shifting public expectations have redefined how governments interact with citizens. Decision-making, once a structured process guided by expertise and long-term planning, now occurs in an environment where public sentiment can change overnight. This new landscape offers both opportunities and challenges. Increased public engagement promotes transparency and participation but also demands rapid responses. Today's challenge isn't just about efficient policy implementation—it's about balancing speed with thoughtful deliberation and adaptability with estab-

A New Era of Governance

Historically, governance followed a deliberate, structured path. Political leaders set broad directions, while institutions provided continuity, expertise, and safeguards. Decision-mak-

am a civil servant passion- ing was data-driven and refined through expert consultation with a focus on long-term national interests. Then the digital revolution changed everything. Social media now plays a central role in shaping public discourse, often setting the agenda before formal institutions can respond.

A 2023 Pew Research study noted that nearly two-thirds of adults in democratic nations now rely on social media for political news. This shift has empowered citizens and made governance more transparent and participatory, but it has also heightened expectations and pressured institutions to act swiftly.

Adapting Without Losing

The solution is not to resist change but to adapt strategically. Governments worldwide are using digital platforms to improve service delivery and civic engagement. For instance, India's Digital India initiative has streamlined public services online, while Singapore's Smart Nation program uses data analytics to enhance urban planning and governance. These examples show that when technology is integrated thoughtfully, it can boost both effectiveness and accessibility. Adaptation goes beyond digDECISION-MAKING,

ONCE A STRUCTURED **PROCESS GUIDED BY EXPERTISE AND** LONG-TERM PLANNING, NOW

OCCURS ENVIRONMENT WHERE PUBLIC SENTIMENT CAN CHANGE **OVERNIGHT**

taining the integrity of governance. Institutions must prioritise expert-driven decision-making to ensure that policy shifts are well-considered rather than merely reactive. Preserving institutional memory through thorough documentation and continuous training ensures that experienced civil servants provide continuity, anchoring governance in expertise rather than short-term trends. The Importance of Public

ital tools—it requires main-

Trust At its core, governance depends on public trust. Institutions thrive when they are seen as credible, reliable, and fair. Trust is built through transparency, efficiency, and ethical practices.

Governments that openly communicate their policies decision-making processes foster confidence among citizens. Estonia's e-Governance model, which gives citizens real-time access to government records, is a prime example. Efficiency is governance accessible are key to maintaining public trust. When institutions deliver results fairly and efficiently, they not only function better-they strengthen democ-

Finding the Right Balance

The digital age demands a balance between responsiveness and deliberation. Institutions must embrace innovation without becoming reactionary, listening to public sentiment while ensuring that policies are grounded in data, analysis, and long-term planning. Quick decision-making should never come at the expense of depth and foresight. This balance distinguishes effective governance from mere administration. Institutions that thoughtfully adapt are not just keeping pace with change—they are actively shaping the future of governance.

Looking Ahead

Public institutions are more than policy enforcers; they are the foundation of national stability and progress. As governance continues to evolve, these institutions must lead through innovation, efficiency, and an unwavering commitment to public trust. The digital age presents both challenges and opportuniequally critical. Reducing ties. Institutions that adapt administrative delays, stream- wisely will define the future lining processes, and making of governance—not solely through speed or efficiency, but with foresight, trust and enduring strength.

(The writer is DGP & Head of Harvana State Narcotics Control Bureau; views *expressed are personal*)

Rupee depreciation calls for structural reforms



Despite notable gains such as a reduced trade deficit, emerging challenges including global tariff tensions highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms

ver the past decade (2014-2024), the compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of India's exports of goods and services in USD terms has fallen sharply to about 5 per cent, compared to 17.9 per cent during 2004-2014 and 12.7 per cent in the period 1994-2004. This decline in export growth has coincided with a significant depreciation of the Rupee, which now trades at roughly Rs 86/87 per USD, a stark contrast to the Rs 60.50 per USD seen in 2013-14. In contrast, between 2000 and 2012, the Rupee remained relatively stable-with occasional appreciation driven by robust export growth at an impressive 19.5 per cent CAGR in USD terms.

This historical perspective demonstrates that a strong, stable Rupee is not an inherent barrier to export performance. In fact, the key to sustained export growth lies in enhancing overall economic efficiency. This efficiency is shaped by a broad range of policies and regulations that affect factors such as capital, energy, logistics and raw materials. By improving these inputs, India can propel

exports forward while maintaining Rupee stability.

A weak Rupee, however, tends to deter global investors. Given that domestic savings alone cannot fulfill India's vast investment requirements, a steady inflow of global funds remains essential until the country transitions into a "Trade-Surplus Nation." Recent changes in US leadership have sparked a tariff war, adding another layer of complexity to India's export environment.

Despite the sluggish export performance in the past decade, the country achieved a notable reduction in its trade deficit-from 4.3 per cent of nominal GDP in 2004-2014 to an average of 2.5 per cent in 2014-2024-primarily due to lower import volumes. In 2024, inward foreign remittances surged to \$129 billion, the highest globally, which ing the current account deficit (CAD) from 1.7 per cent of GDP in 2013-14 to about 0.7 per cent. Consequently, Forex reserves swelled to 18.3 per cent of nominal GDP, underscoring the positive impact of these remittances. Looking ahead, potential chal-

lenges loom. Aggressive deportation policies by the US could discourage migration, thereby diminishing remittance flows. Moreover, if India shifts its oil and gas import sources from Iran, Gulf nations, and Russia to the US, the resulting higher import bill may widen the trade deficit. In response, India must marshal all available policy tools to boost exports, reduce imports, and eventually become a trade-surplus nation. Facilitating legal migration remains crucial until domestic job creation can sustain remittance inflows, which are vital for

curbing the CAD. To further stimulate export growth, targeted export incentives for manufactured and agro-based goods should be implemented, while the untapped potential of service exports-ranging from

played a crucial role in reductourism and healthcare to education and professional consultancy-must unlocked through dedicated policies. Additionally, reducing petroleum imports requires massive investments in railway infrastructure and expanded public transportation to lower fuel demand, and increased spending on petroleum exploration is the need of the hour. Enhancing domestic produc-

tion of thermal coal and adopting innovative measures to reduce gold imports, such as a revised gold deposit scheme, are also essential steps. Finally, attracting global funds through measures like reducing capital gains tax on foreign portfolio investments (FPIs) and encouraging long-term borrowing via bonds backed by sovereign guarantees will help meet India's investment needs. Overcoming outdated colonial-era business and taxation laws remains critical. A second wave of structural reforms is needed to stabilise the Rupee, secure higher GDP growth, and elevate India's stature on the global stage.

(The writer is an industrial*ist; views are personal)*

TRUMP'S GOLD CARD PLAN

better place now than the US.

BRUTAL MURDERS SHOCK NATION Madam— The nation is shocked at the brutal and spine-chilling crime of a 23year-old man, who killed as many as five people, including his close relatives and girlfriend, within a few hours at various places in a radius of 15 kilometres in Thiruvananthapuram. By using a simple mallet, he has repeatedly hammered and finished the victims and then coolly surrendered at the police station on his own. It was by sheer luck that the sixth victim, his own mother, survived the attack, though she is still in serious condition. Even though the family was reportedly facing financial hardship, what prompt-

CBSE clarifies language policy

Madam — US President Donald Trump has announced a new visa program that will offer a 'gold card' with a potential pathway to US citizenship for \$5 million (approx Rs 43 crores), which could significantly benefit Indian graduates and investors. It seems like a sale of citizenship for money. He is not even asking them to start a business, create jobs, or anything. Moreover, why should one spend 5 million dollars to go to the USA? With that money, they can lead a royal life (invest 5 million in India and get 14 per cent annualised ROI compared to 5 per cent in the US) in India itself, with their own thriving business and stay close to near and dear ones, which is a much

This is a simple sale of citizenship. This is nothing, but this Trump statement looks a bit stupid! Because, how many students in India will have 5 million dollars to buy a gold card? And which company will be ready to pay 5 million dollars for hiring an Indian employee in the US on a gold card? Is Trump thinking logically, or is he just high on the dose of fake nationalism? This far-right politics is turning the politicians into real fools. Whatsoever, Golden Visa is very

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad



efers to Editorial 'Simmering Linguistic Tension' (February 28), first Tamil Nadu and now Punjab is raising unnecessary controversy over regional languages, that too owing to the CBSE draft norms (not final) for conducting the 10th class board exams. The Punjab government's hasty decision of imposing the Punjabi language on all 10th class examinations in the state of all

crime was nothing but the grave impact of drugs. In fact, Kerala has been reeling under the threat of drugs for quite some time now.

All kinds of drugs have been flowing into the state purportedly with the connivance of those in authority. It is a painful truth that a large number of youngsters, including students, are under the influence of drugs. However, the government has not taken any concrete steps to contain this serious menace. The present situation in the state is bound to ruin the young generation completely. As such, the government must take prompt and stern action against the drug mafia.

T T Sakaria | Delhi

AFGHANISTAN STUNS ENGLAND

Madam — Afghanistan pulled off a historic eight-run victory over England, proving once again that cricket is a game of glorious uncertainties. The hero of the night was 23-year-old Ibrahim Zadran, who played a breathtaking knock of 177 off 146 balls, the highest individual score ed the man to commit such a heinous by any Afghanistan batsman in ODIs. His

boards, whether Central or State, is uncalled for. This irrational decision has been announced without taking stakeholders-students and teachers-into confidence. It is nothing else but the imposing of the state's will and Punjabi language on innocent students.

How can a student who has never studied Punjabi suddenly take an examination of the same language in the 10th class? It is impossible and irrational. The CBSE was quick to clarify and assure that all regional languages, including Punjabi, will be included in the class 10 board exam. After this clarification and assurance, the Punjab government should immediately withdraw its decision of making Punjabi a mandatory language in all boards' examinations in Punjab.

Vinay Kr Malhotra | Ambala Cantt

fearless stroke play propelled Afghanistan to a challenging total of 325 for 7 despite England's experienced bowling attack.England's chase was anchored by Joe Root, who counterattacked with a brilliant 120 off 111 balls, keeping his

team in the hunt. However, Afghanistan's fiery fast bowler Azmatulla Omarzai turned the game on its head with a sensational 5/58. This is the second time in a row that Afghanistan has beaten England in an ICC tournament. This and Zadran's pedigree once again advertised Afghanistan's evolution as a rapid cricketing force.Despite a late fightback, England fell short by eight runs, handing Afghanistan one of their most significant victories in cricket history. This match will be remembered as a testament to Afghanistan's rising stature and the sheer unpredictability that makes cricket a thrilling spectacle.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

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FIRST COLUMN

THREE LEVELS OF CONTROL

Beyond our inner self, natural and material limitations shape our behaviour and outcomes



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

e, human beings, are under control at three levels. The first one is at the level of self. We have been blessed with faculties such as mind, intelligence, etc. And we have free will to decide what we would like to think, decide and do. However, thinking and deciding are in our control, but being able to do is not. Our actions are limited by circumstances, instruments we have, how much we can apply ourselves and providence of course.

Then, there are constraints like limited knowledge, facilities, nature, etc. Knowledge is unlimited, but we can have very limited knowledge only. Even good knowledge of a subject is difficult, never mind of countless subjects. This restricts us greatly. Nature is another limiting factor. The three modes of material nature, which are goodness, passion and darkness, determine how we would act manner. For example, a man predominantly in the mode of goodness will generally act wisely.

The same cannot be said about persons under the control of the modes of passion and darkness. They make many mistakes. And we all generate 'karmas' (deeds) by minds, words and bodies (senses). These actions of ours, both good and bad put us in the control of the Divine Authority, appointed by God; it works under the superintendence of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 9.10) Imagine the extent of their work.



They have to be alert to record all our actions 24x7. This is nothing compared to what they have to do to decide our rewards and punishments, their timings, etc. In this, they have to correlate how these will impact others associated with us. Therefore, the Divine Authority may delay the punishment to make its effect on the family a little less harsh.

But the guilty person has no hope of reprieve even if the punishment is to be delayed to the next life. Our 'karmaphalas' (fruits of actions) are carried from life to life. If the job of the Divine Authority is mind-boggling, what God does is simply unimaginable. God has to watch the interest of all His devotees, no matter where they are. Then, He must appropriately respond to our prayers every time. He must also guide us if we sincerely seek it. Additionally, God must help if we deserve to come out of troubles we have gotten into due to our past 'karmas'. This is nothing compared to what God does for the Creation; He has to keep it going for millions of years for us souls. Imagine if there was dissolution every hundred years or so. How will we feel?

Then, God has innumerable galaxies to control. He has many planets where we can go to from the earth planet. There is heaven, where pious acts take us for limited periods. This is like going on a vacation to a dream place. There are many such planets which are higher and higher ending in the 'Vaikuntha' planet, which is the abode of God. Only those, who have been liberated reach there.

They get freed from the cycle of birth and death. They remain there for good. Knowing all this, we must become wise, really wise. We must seek the shelter of God beginning now, not later. We must follow dharma to please God. God will guide and help. The divine Authority will be giving us more rewards than punishments, which we can tolerate easily. And we will be our best friends.

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

Finding money for 'freebies': BJP faces an uphill task



UTTAM GUPTA

The challenge now is not just about delivering on electoral promises but also about balancing an already precarious fiscal equation that could see deficits skyrocket



aving swept the polls in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi with a clinching 2/3rd majority, Rekha Gupta-led BJP - government faces the daunting challenge of having to find money to fulfil its poll promises. Amongst others, the BJP had promised Rs 2,500 a month to women under Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY); Rs 21,000 to pregnant women; LPG cylinders for Rs 500 and nant women; LPG cylinders for Rs 500 and free cylinder on Holi and Diwali; a stipend of Rs 1000 a month to SC students pursuing technical and vocational courses; free education for needy students from KG to PG; free travel for students on Delhi Metro; Atal Canteens in Jhuggi Basti clusters providing nutritional meals for Rs 5 only; implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme and additional cover of Rs 5 lakh for senior citizens. BJP had also vowed to continue all existing schemes such as free electricity and free water (for monthly consumption up to a specified threshold) run by the erstwhile AAP - dispensation under the then Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal.

How much will these freebies cost? Let us look at the Mahila Samridhi Yojana

(MSY) under which the party has promised BE DISCONTINUED. to give cash assistance of Rs 2500 per month to every woman. The number of women above the age of 18 years in Delhi is around 6700,000. @ Rs 2500 per month or Rs 30,000 annually to each woman, giving cash assistance to them all will require Rs 20,100 crore per annum (0.67x30,000). The assistance to pregnant women @Rs 21,000 per woman, taking a total of about 1500,000 pregnant women will cost around Rs 3150 crore annu-

As for subsidy on LPG, take consumption of 4 cylinders (14 kg each) per household (HH) in a year. The current cost of supplying a cylinder is around Rs 1000. For two WHICH WOULD BE cylinders (Holi and Diwali) promised to be given free, the subsidy will be Rs 2000 whereas for the other two to be given @ Rs 500 each, the outgo will be Rs 1000. This gives an annual subsidy of Rs 3000 per HH. The current population of Delhi is 330 lakh. Taking an average of 4 members per HH,

NOW, CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF BJP PROMISES. MODI HAS GUARANTEED THAT EXISTING SCHEMES WON'T

SO, FREE ELECTRICITY/ WATER COSTING RS 11,000 CRORE WILL STAY. ADD TO THIS, THE **FRESH** GUARANTEES AT LEAST ABOUT

RS 30,000 CRORE

we get a total of over 82.5 lakh HHs. Multiplied by Rs 3000 being the subsidy per HH, the annual outgo comes to Rs 2500 crore. Look at free education for needy students from KG to PG. According to the latest data available, around 10 per cent of Delhi's population was considered below the poverty line in 2011-12. On this basis, the number of poor persons comes to 33 lakh (330x0.1). About one-third of this or 11 lakh would be persons in the studying age 4 – 25 years. Taking the average expense of educating a child in India at the bare minimum of Rs 20,000 per annum, the total annual expense on "needy students" in the city would be about Rs 2200 crore (0.11x20,000). The additional burden of these four promises alone on the Delhi government's budget is Rs

(20,100+3150+2500+2200). Other freebies would bloat this figure by several thousand crore. Let us take the total to be around Rs 30,000

What is the current state of Delhi's

finances? For the current financial year (FY) 2024-25, the total expenditure of the Delhi government is estimated at Rs 76,000 crore. This includes revenue expenditure (RE) of Rs 61,000 crore and capital expenditure (CE) of Rs 15,000 crore. Against this, the total revenue receipts or RR (tax plus non-tax receipts including transfer from the Central government) is estimated at around Rs 58,000 crore. That leaves a revenue deficit or RD (RR - RE) of Rs 3000 crore. This is disconcerting when seen in the backdrop of Delhi's potential to generate substantial surplus given two fundamental factors working to its advantage.

First, due to its special status of being NCT, three major functions namely law and order, police and land come under the Centre's jurisdiction hence, the latter foots the bill for expenses on those functions. Second, Delhi being a major hub of economic activity, its propensity to garner its tax revenue in terms of higher GST collection besides VAT on petrol and diesel and excise duty and VAT on alcohol (these products are outside the GST regime) is

The RD will increase drastically when we consider the cost of servicing the loans taken by various departments of the Delhi government such as the Delhi Jal Board (DJB): over Rs 70,000 crore and Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC): Rs 60,000 crore (according to the CAG, these are cumulative losses of DTC as at end of FY 2021-22 and would have ballooned further during the following three FYs till end March 2025).

The liability for servicing those debts is vested entirely in the NCT government and should be reflected in its balance sheet. Look at the fiscal deficit (FD) which is the excess of total receipts over total expenditure. For FY 2024-25, it is estimated at Rs 18,000 crore which is 80 per cent higher than the FD during FY 2023-24 at Rs 10,000 crore. The surge is despite a steep reduction of over 30 per cent in CE from the budget estimate (BE) of Rs 22,000 crore for FY 2023-24 to Rs 15,000 crore for FY 2024-25

If interest payments on loans taken by DJB and DTC (Rs 130,000 crore plus) which are merely adding to the mountain of debt on the books of those departments year after year are also included, the FD would be much higher. The situation had come to such a pass that the then CM Atishi had approached the Centre seeking a loan of Rs 10,000 crore from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). The precar-

iousness of the state's finances has a lot to do with the galloping freebies and irregularities and mismanagement in running various schemes and overall governance on a monumental scale. During 2024-25, the cost of free electricity and free water alone is estimated to be about Rs 11,000 crore. According to CAG, during 2015-16 and 2021-22, the losses of DTC went up by Rs 35,000 crore and that was due to both free bus rides and misgover-

Now, consider the impact of BJP promises. Modi has guaranteed that existing schemes won't be discontinued. So, free electricity/water costing Rs 11,000 crore will stay. Add to this, the fresh guarantees which would be at least about Rs 30,000 crore. This takes the RE from Rs 61,000 crore during FY 2024-25 to Rs 91,000 crore during FY 2025-26 (assuming all other things remain unchanged). The RR is Rs 58,000 crore, we get RD of Rs 33,000 crore - up from Rs 3000 crore budgeted for FY 2024-25.

The incumbent government has also promised to clean Yamuna River, clean the air, renovate/build roads, cleanse the drainage systems, build and renovate hospitals and schools in fact, take up and complete a host of physical and social infrastructure projects needed for ensuring a good quality life for Delhiites. That means even if CE is restored to 2023-24 level Rs 22,000 crore, that won't be enough. Even with this insufficient level, the total expenditure will be Rs 113,000 crore. Minus RR of Rs 58,000 crore, we get FD of Rs 55,000 crore. Put simply, the Centre will have to arrange for at least Rs 55,000 crore to enable the BJP to live up to its promises for

(The writer is a policy analyst;

India's solar surge: Powering the journey to net zero 2070

India is charting an ambitious course toward Net Zero 2070, with solar energy emerging as the mainstay of its renewable revolution

rndia's steadfast commit- able targets but exceeded them, ment to achieving Net Zero by 2070 is catalysing a dramatic shift in its energy sector, with solar power emerging as the principal driver of this transformation. Abundant sunlight, rapidly decreasing technology costs, strong government support, and an expanding skilled workforce have combined to place solar energy at the heart of India's renewable strategy. While the country has celebrated significant milestones in solar adoption, it also faces multifaceted challenges that require innovative policy interventions and strategic foresight to sustain its momentum.

Over the past decade, India has in solar energy. The nation not only met its ambitious renew-

with solar power now accounting for over 60 per cent of its renewable energy mix. By 2024, India surpassed the 100 GW milestone, establishing itself as a global leader in solar energy. For example, Rajasthan's solar capacity exceeds 24 GW. Rapid expansion is evident in a 19 per cent increase in solar generation from 2023 to 2024, with solar installations making up over two-thirds of new renewable

India's role in the International Solar Alliance underscores its commitment to global solar collaboration, as the initiative seeks to mobilise over \$1 trillion in investments for develachieved remarkable progress oping countries. National agencies, particularly the Solar Energy Corporation of India,



DISHA SHARMA

have been vital in driving the development and implementation of solar projects under the National Solar Mission. Despite these impressive achievements, significant obstacles remain on the path to full solar integration. One major challenge is the limited connection of solar installations to the national grid, with only 16 per cent of capacity currently integrated. This gap

restricts the country's ability to fully exploit its vast solar potential. Moreover, there are stark regional disparities in solar development. While states like Rajasthan and Gujarat lead the charge, many eastern and northeastern regions lag behind, resulting in an uneven distribution of renewable resources. Financial hurdles also pose

serious challenges. Although government subsidies help reduce costs, the high initial capital required for large-scale installations, coupled with elevated interest rates and delayed payments, discourages private investment. Manufacturers struggle with a shortage of competitively priced solar cells, a problem compounded by strict Domestic Content Requirements that strain pro-



duction capabilities. These financial constraints not only hinder current project deployment but also threaten future expansion in the sector.

Another critical issue is India's heavy reliance on imported components. Despite having a domestic module production capacity of around 11 GW, India still depends on global supply chains for essential items such as polysilicon,

wafers, and solar cells. This dependency leaves the country vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, particularly amid geopolitical tensions and trade imbalances, as China continues to dominate global solar manufacturing. Furthermore, the starcity of critical minerals like cobalt, nickel, and lithium—vital for solar panel production—further complicates efforts to build a self-sufficient solar industry.

Local challenges add another layer of complexity. Land acquisition for solar projects often faces resistance from local communities and farmers, leading to protests, legal disputes, and, in some cases, violent confrontations. In Rajasthan, disputes over land rights have led to project cancellations, highlighting the

need for transparent and inclusive processes that respect local interests and ensure fair compensation. Addressing these local concerns is essential for fostering community support and facilitating smoother project implementa-

To overcome these challenges, India must adopt a multifaceted strategy. Strengthening policy frameworks to provide long-term stability is crucial, as is enhancing inter-state cooperation and ensuring reliable access to energy data for effective monitoring. Public-private partnerships can expand solar adoption in underserved regions by providing risk mitigation instruments to attract investment. Promoting domestic manufacturing of solar panels and key components will reduce import dependency and bolster energy security. Additionally, investing in workforce development to build a skilled labor pool for solar installation, maintenance, and manufacturing will be vital for sustaining industry growth. By focusing on robust policy support, financial innovation, domestic manufacturing, and community engagement, India can significantly unlock the full potential of its solar resources. With sustained government backing and strategic collaboration between public and private sectors, the nation is wellpositioned to lead the global solar revolution.

(The writer is assistant professor IIM Mumbai; views are personal. Inputs from Supriya Kaushik and Asmita Tewari)

US temples to hold prayers for Sunita, Wilmore

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Coming 2nd March, all Hindu temples across USA would reverberate with Mrityunjaya Mantra, S h i v a s h t a k a m , Mukundashtakam etc rendered by the followers of Sanatana Dharma. Their mission is to ensure the safe and speedy

return of the two US astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams who have been stranded in the International Space Station since June 2024 due to technical hitch of the Boeing Starliner Commercial Space Vehicle, which took them to the space, both the astronauts are held up in the ISS since then and waiting for the replacement vehicle to be flown to the space craft to bring

The stranded period saw the astronauts setting up many records in their space mission. Sunita Willaims is all set to join the top league of 12 elite astronauts who have spent maximum time in space missions. The duo is expected to fly back to earth in March 2025 though they were expected to return to NASA after en eight day space sojourn

them back to earth.

in February 2024.



showing the world that one can

overcome obstacles and adversities. Their individual faith/dharma plays an important role in keeping them strong. We are inspired by Sunita Williams' strong belief how it is helping her overcome obstacles that came her way in the duration of this ordeal." said Tejal Shah, a lead figure in organising the mass prayer meet. She said in a release that the event is being held to show the strong support as all compatriots, US Hindus are standing by our astronauts.
"Hindu Temples across USA have decided to organise a collective prayer for their safe return. Our faith will certainly add positive energy and vibes to bring desired conclusion to the mission they are on," said

Cong leaders suspended from Chhattisgarh assembly

PTI ■ RAIPUR

Congress legislators were suspended briefly from the Chhattisgarh legislative assembly on Friday after they raised slogans accusing the BJP-led state government of intimidating the Opposition using Central

agencies. The proceedings of the House were first adjourned for 10 minutes, following which the Congress MLAs trooped into the well and raised slogans against the

government. legislators Congress disrupted the Question Hour and alleged that Central agencies are being misused

intimidate Opposition.

This led to an uproar in the House, and Speaker Raman Singh had to adjourn the proceedings for 10 minutes.
Once the proceedings resumed, the opposition party MLAs continued raising the issue and entered the well of the House, sloganeering against the government and were suspended as per the

Congress members walked out of the House after the Speaker announced their suspension, and they boycotted the proceedings for the day. The Speaker later revoked

assembly rules.

their suspension.

Talking to reporters on the assembly premises, Leader of Opposition Charan Das Mahant accused the BJP of murdering democracy.
He claimed Central agencies

were conducting a recee of the state Congress president, Deepak Baij.

The BJP is trying to intimidate elected zilla panchayat and janpad panchayat members of the Congress (to allegeldy influence the election of presidents of these bodies), Mahant said.

"We raised the issue in the assembly. We have boycotted the assembly proceedings for the day," he said.

Sensex in a tailspin

In India's case, quality managements will always command a premium eventually, as we still grapple with worries on the corporate governance, especially at the end of a bull run that we saw peak in

September. So very simply, don't panic, especially if you can wait for the market to turn. Even as we write this, the second advance estimates for GIP growth indicate that the economy grew 6.2 per cent in Q3, and is on course for 6.5 per cent for the full year,

growth in the second quarter ending in September 2024. This is a time to stick to your high conviction stocks. Quality managements and a strong record have always found backers willing to pay a premium in India. For the

rest of you, if the year delivered great profits till September for you, it might be time for some loss harvesting before the financial year closes. And yes, there is every chance that this action, multiplied millions of times over by many investors, will ensure there is no immediate respite in this financial year from

new financial year starting April 2025, there is much to look forward to in terms of positive cues, including steps from the government to confidence. restore 'Capitulating' and selling everything at a loss at these lows with vows to never return will not be a good idea unless you really believe a low stock price will actually

hurt the prospects of the firm

behind it as well. If not, hold

tight, the ride might be

bumpy, but you can still

reach the finish line happy.

— The writer is Market analyst and Group Editor,

Pune rape accused arrested

TN RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

45-hour-long Arter manhunt that involved use of drones and sniffer dogs, the Pune police on early Friday finally arrested 37-year-old man who allegedly raped a 26year-old woman inside an empty bus parked at the State Transport (ST) depot at Swargate in Pune.

Having learnt that he was hiding in a paddy field native village of Gunat in Shirur taluka of Pune district, the police used drones and sniffer dogs to track down the accused, Dattaray Ramdas Gade.

Late on Thursday night, the accused - who was very feeling both hungry and thirsty -- stepped out of the paddy fields and headed to the home of a family member living in the village for food. However, the villagers alerted the police that he was spotted in the village. After that he had gone back to the paddy field to hide.

During the search that continued in the paddy fields, the police arrested Gade from the same paddy field at 2 am. They later took him to Pune where he was subjected to medical tests.

A high drama preceded Gade's arrest, when the police mistakenly arrested his brother, who is a look-alike of the accused. However, within 15 minutes, the investigators realised that SaurEnergy.com | they had arrested a wrong



Police guard at the Swargate Bus Stand after the alleged rape of a 26-year-old woman inside a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation in Pune

Mahanagar

man. Within the next couple of hours, the police landed the right accused from the nearby paddy field.

It may be recalled that in the early hours of Wednesday, the accused — who had led the victim woman inside an empty bus on the false pretext that the bus she wanted to take had on another platform of the sprawling bus depot -fled the scene, after perpetrating sexual assault on her.

The incident took place at around 5.30 am on Wednesday at the Swargate bus complex - which houses two bus depots run by the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation

Mahamandal Ltd (PMPML). The victim woman was waiting for a Paithan-bound bus at one of the platforms the when approached her and told her the bus had arrived at another platform. The woman trusted him and accompanied him to an empty bus parked at a deserted spot on the Swargate bus depot premises. According to the complaint lodged by the victim woman with the police, it was still dark when she boarded the bus. The accused quietly followed her inside the bus, forced himself on her and raped her. He fled the scene

falling markets. But in the "These two astronauts are After slipping to 5.4 per cent A home preserved to keep identity alive

From page 1

"Coming from a family deeply tied to agriculture and local traditions, this project is especially meaningful to me. It's not just about preserving history but about keeping our cultural identity alive for future generations," she claimed.

Restoring and maintaining a 200-year-old structure, while assistance for its upkeep and keeping it authentic, was not

easy, she noted. Preserving artefacts, convincing community elders

showcasing their heritage, and attracting tourists and researchers to sustain the museum in the long run are the hurdles, Chomu said.

"So far, there has been no financial support from the state government for this project. I hope that in the future, the government will recognise the importance of this heritage and provide

expansion," she said.
The initial funding and support came from WWF India, but beyond that, she has the importance of been managing the museum

through personal efforts. "Since this museum is still a work in progress, there's a lot more to be done, and I am continuously working on ways to improve and sustain it," she

envisions Chomu transforming the museum into a cultural hub where visitors can actively engage with Monpa heritage rather than just observe it.

She plans to introduce storytelling sessions with community elders to share oral traditions, a small library featuring Monpa history and

folklore, and eco-tourism initiatives such as a rest area near the museum where visitors can relax and experience traditional Monpa hospitality.

She also hopes to collaborate with local artisans and researchers to document and indigenous promote craftsmanship and traditions. Additionally, she aims to employment

opportunities for local women by involving them in museum activities such as handicrafts. storytelling, and hospitality

trapped in Uttarakhand

Mana, three kilometres from Badrinath, is the last village on the India-Tibet border at a height of 3,200 metres. Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh said all efforts were being taken to rescue the trapped personnel utilising all available resources. Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and took stock of the trapped people under an avalanche, saying the government's priority is to safely evacuate all those who are out of reach. According to the district magistrate, the 57 labourers were at the camp when the avalanche struck between Mana and Mana pass in the

Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and SDRF left for the spot, about 300 km from the state capital Dehradun, amid continuing snowfall and rain. "Out of the 57 BRO labourers trapped in the avalanche, 16 have been rescued. Efforts are on to rescue the rest. The help of ITBP and other departments is being taken in the rescue operations. Our disaster management department and the entire administration is fully alert," Dhami informed the media. Officials had been on alert for bad weather and its possible impact. The Defence Geoinformatics Research Establishment (DGRE) in Chandigarh had issued an

on Thursday for places located above 2,400 metres in Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Pithoragarh and Bageshwar districts. The MeT office in Dehradun also predicted isolated heavy rain and snowfall in locations

Friday morning. In New Delhi, NDRF said it is rushing four teams to Chamoli.

situated at 3,500 metres and

above in these districts on

Chief of NDRF Piyush Anand said apart from these teams, another four units have been kept on standby.

Rains pounded Jammu and Himachal Pradesh for the third day on Friday, prompting authorities to close schools in several avalanche warning for a districts. The mercury

dropped in most parts of Punjab and Haryana due to the rain.

immediately afterwards.

strategic The Jammu-Srinagar national highway, which was closed around 7 pm on Thursday, also remained closed due to snow accumulation between Ramsoo and Qazigund, and shooting stones, landslides and mudslides at various places between Nashri and Banihal. Overnight snowfall affected rail, air and road connectivity in Kashmir, according to officials.

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday extended the winter vacations for schools in the Valley and winter zone areas of the Jammu division by six days in view of the weather conditions.

Chess colossus, Boris **Spassky dies at 88**

Spassky emigrated to France in 1976. On its website, the chess federation called Spassky's match with Fischer history of the game. Yugoslav grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric said that Spassky's secret strength "lay in his colossal skill in adapting himself to the different styles of his opponents," the Washington Post reported.

The chess federation called Spassky "the first genuinely universal player" who "was not an opening specialist, but he excelled in complex and dynamic middlegame

element."

At the time of their famous match, the Soviet Union had compiled an unbroken streak of world chess championships "one of the most iconic" in the that stretched back decades." After his loss, Spassky went home to a cold reception in the Soviet Union, where he had become a national disappointment, the Post said. He said he was not allowed to leave the country, and his marriage, his second, fell apart. "I feel at home at the chessboard," he was quoted as saying in a recollection of the Reykjavik match published by the World Chess Hall of Fame in 2022, the Post said.

Javed, Kangana settle defamation case

Actress Kangana Ranaut on Friday settled the defamation case filed against her by veteran lyricist Javed Akhtar, which had been ongoing for over four years, through mediation. The BJP MP also apologised for the "inconvenience" caused to the screenwriter.

The duo appeared before a special court here on Friday and informed it of their decision to withdraw the complaints they had filed against each other. After the court appearance, the actor also posted a photo on her social media platform along with Akhtar, stating that they have resolved the legal matter.

The court will pass a formal order on this later in the day. The actor said she made the statement against Akhtar due to misunderstanding, and apologised for the inconvenience caused to him due to it. Akhtar had filed a complaint against Ranaut in 2020, alleging that she had defamed and damaged his 'immaculate reputation' by dragging his name into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death in an interview with a news channel in July

Ranaut had later filed a cross complaint against Akhtar, alleging criminal intimidation

and insult to modesty.
She had claimed that during her meeting with Akhtar at his residence in 2016, he criminally intimidated her, demanding that she apologise to a co-star. Ranaut's lawyer Rizwan Siddiquee and Ákhtar's advocate Jay Kumar Bhardwaj said the matter was settled through an hour-long mediation before a special magistrate court in Bandra.

Ranaut stated before the mediator that she made the statement due to misunderstanding and she has decided to withdraw it, Bhardwaj said.

Ranaut has apologised to Akhtar for inconvenience caused to him due to her statement, he said, adding that she has undertaken not to make such a statement in future. Siddiqque said, "We were looking for mediation for a long time. We had exchanged drafts also. Finally we have resolved the case."

There were no issues, only the wordings were to be decided, which was done today. We prepared the draft, signed it and both the cases were with-drawn today," he added.

Delhi Speaker, Atishi engage in letter war

Responding to AAP's allegations, Speaker Gupta said in the Assembly, "LoP Atishi has written a letter to me and is continuously misleading people. I want to make it clear that the dignity of the House has to be maintained, especially during LG's address. According to the definition of the Delhi Assembly as per rule 277 of the rule book, the whole premises of the building are included. "According to the rule when a member is suspended from the House then that means barred from the whole premises. In the future too, if there will be any misconduct then the same kind of action will be taken," he said.

he said.

On February 25, 21 AAP

MLAs including Atishi were
suspended for three days for
allegedly disrupting
Lieutenant Governor V K
Saxena's inaugural address.
The AAP members had raised slogans protesting the alleged removal of portraits of B R Ambedkar and Bhagat

Singh from the chief minister's office in the Assembly. The Speaker ordered their suspension through a majority vote and had them marshalled out of the House.

Meanwhile, chaos continued outside the Delhi Assembly on Friday. Earlier in the day, AAP MLAs reached outside the Delhi Assembly premises at around 2 pm when the assembly proceedings began. The police stopped everyone by putting up barricades. When Atishi asked why they were being stopped, the police said that they were not even allowed to enter the premises. The former Delhi chief minister has called the incident deliberate targeting of opposition leaders.

Atishi expressed concern over the events in the Delhi Assembly, where she claimed that opposition MLAs faced discriminatory treatment for their protests. Atishi also wrote to President Droupadi Murmu, seeking an appointment to discuss what she described as the "murder of democracy" in Delhi.

As the Secretary in the Department of Investment Public Asset Management, he oversaw the sale of loss-making national carrier Air India to the Tata

Group in October 2021. He also oversaw the listing of India's biggest insurance company LIC in May 2022. Although, Buch in her threeyear tenure made significant strides in areas like faster settlements in equities, enhanced FPI disclosures and increasing mutual fund penetration through Rs 250 SIP, the last year of her tenure was marked by heightened controversy, when she battled a series of allegations by Hindenburg Research and the Congress party, while simultaneously dealing with in-house employee protests against alleged "toxic work

culture". Against this backdrop, the government opted for a seasoned bureaucrat Pandey,

in handling government's disinvestment privatisation programmes, to head the regulatory body.

for sticking to the rule book and getting the work done. It was under his tenure as DIPAM secretary, that Air India was privatised after

when markets are witnessing bear pressure following a streak of capital withdrawal by foreign institutional investors (FIIs). Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have

government equity in public sector companies, as well as the Department of Public

who had extensive experience Enterprises (DPE). He assumed the charge of the

Soft spoken Pandey is known

many unsuccessful attempts in the past. Pandey will take over as the head of the SEBI at a time

withdrawn more than Rs 1 lakh crore since January. Pandey was the longestserving secretary in the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), a department in the finance ministry that manages

revenue department on January 9, after his predecessor Sanjay Malhotra moved to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as its governor. Pandey played a key role in the framing of the 2025-26 Budget, which gave tax reliefs totalling Rs 1 lakh crore to the middle class. middle class. He was also involved in the drafting of the new Income Tax Bill, which seeks to replace the 64-year-

old Income Tax Act, 1961. In his over-five-year stint (October 24, 2019 to January 8, 2025) at the DIPAM, Pandey took forward disinvestments of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) as he implemented the public sector enterprises (PSE) policy, which intended to minimise the presence of the government in the PSEs across all sectors of the economy.

Besides Rs 18,000-crore privatisation of Air India, Pandey also oversaw the

Bureaucrat back at SEBI, after stormy Buch era privatisation plans of the IDBI Bank. The bidders are currently undergoing the due-

diligence process.
Pandey holds an MA in

economics from the Panjab University, Chandigarh and an MBA from the University of Birmingham (UK). He has worked in various capacities in the government of Odisha and the Union government. In the early part of his career, Pandey served as the administrative head in the departments of health, general administration, commercial taxes, transport and finance. He also served as the executive director of the Odisha State Finance Corporation and managing director of the Odisha Small Industries Corporation.

At the Centre, his previous positions include Joint Secretary, Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog), Joint Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat and Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce.

HM directs Delhi Govt, Police to act tough on Bangladeshis

From page 1

Besides the top brass of Delhi including Commissioner Sanjay Arora, Home Minister Ashish Sood and other senior officials of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Delhi government, who are responsible for law and order

and coordination.
Sources said the meeting came a day after Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan and Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra reviewed steps to transform the Yamuna's ghats along the line of the Sabarmati river front in Gujarat. Several issues related to policing and the law and order situation in Delhi from women's safety to tackling traffic congestion -

came up for discussion during

the meeting. During the meeting, Amit Shah directed strict action against networks facilitating the entry of Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants into the country, assisting them in obtaining documents and enabling their stay. "The issue of illegal intruders is also related to national security and it should be dealt with strictly, and they should be identified and deported," Shah stated.

The Home Minister said it should be the Delhi Police's priority to eliminate interstate gangs in the city ruthlessly. Action must be taken with "top to bottom and bottom to top approach" in narcotics cases, and such networks should dismantled, he said. The meeting was

attended by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Delhi's Home Minister Ashish Sood, Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora and other senior officials.

Shah said it should be the Delhi Police's priority to eliminate interstate gangs in the city ruthlessly. Action must be taken with "top to bottom and bottom to top approach" in narcotics cases, and such drug networks should be dismantled, he said. Referring to the BJP winning the Delhi assembly polls this time after a gap of over 26 years, the Union home minister asserted that the double-engine government in Delhi will work with double speed for a developed and safe capital as expected by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Shah also emphasised the

need for a 'Monsoon Action should be formed in II Plan' to address water-logging issues in the capital, instructing the Government to identify affected areas and take preventive measures. Further, he directed

authorities to take strong action against underperforming police stations and sub-divisions. "Strict action should be taken police

against Delhi's police stations, sub-divisions consistently perform poorly," he said.

"The Delhi Police should start the recruitment process for additional posts soon. DCP-level officers should visit police stations, organise public hearing camps and solve their problems," he said. The Union home minister said new security committees

clusters for the safety of women and children there. Officials privy to the deliberations at the meeting said, the Home Minister asserted that the double engine government of Delhi "will work with double speed for a developed and safe Delhi" in line with the expectations of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

...Whenever the Government of India sought details on small issues that were causing big problems to Delhi, the then (AAP) government of Delhi never cooperated on it... Detailed discussions were held on where and what things need to be fixed... Primary discussions were held in Delhi from the point of view of women's safety, and soon, work will be done on

making policies on this... Solutions to issues related to PWD were discussed, and national security and international gangs, which are a problem for the security system of Delhi, there was also an in-depth discussion on that...", Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said after the meeting.
Delhi's Home Department's

minister Ashish Sood said, several key issues were discussed, including jail reforms. prosecution procedures

improvements in collector offices. He said that one of the main concerns raised during the meeting was "the safety of women, with officials focusing on identifying dark spots and enhancing CCTV coordination to prevent crime

Israel's army admits failures leading to Oct 7 attack

n investigation by the Israeli military has determined that Hamas was able to carry out the deadliest attack in Israeli history on October 7, 2023, because the much more powerful Israeli army misjudged the militant group's intentions and underestimated its capa-

The findings, released Thursday, could pressure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to launch a widely demanded broader inquiry to examine the political decision-making that preceded the attack, which triggered the war in Gaza.

Many Israelis believe the mistakes of October 7 extend beyond the military, and they blame Netanyahu for what they view as a failed strategy of deterrence and containment in the years leading up to the

That strategy included allowing Qatar to send suitcases of cash into Gaza and sidelining Hamas' rival, the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority. The prime minister has not taken responsibility, saying he will answer tough questions only after the war, which has been next week.

The military's findings are in line with past

paused for nearly six weeks by a tenuous

Despite public pressure, including from the families of the roughly 1,200 people killed in the October 7 attack and the 251 taken as hostages into Gaza, Netanvahu has resisted calls for a commission of

The military's main findings were that the region's most powerful and sophisticated military misread Hamas' intentions, underestimated its capabilities and was wholly unprepared for the surprise attack by thousands of heavily armed militants in the early morning hours of a major Iewish holiday.

In comments made to military commanders Monday, and shared with the media on Thursday, the army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, said he took responsibility for the army's failures.
"I was the commander of the military on

October 7th, and I have my own responsibility. I also carry the weight of all your responsibility — that, too, I see as mine," said Halevi, who announced his resignation in January and is set to step down

conclusions reached by officials and analysts. The military released only a summary of the report and military officials outlined its findings.

"October 7 was a complete failure," said one military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regula-

A central misconception was that Hamas, which seized control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority in 2007, was more interested in governing the territory than fighting Israel, the inquiry found.

The military also misjudged the militant group's capabilities. Military planners had envisioned that, at worst, Hamas could stage a ground invasion from up to eight border points, the official said. In fact, Hamas had more than 60 attack

Intelligence assessed in the aftermath of the attack has shown Hamas came close to staging the offensive on three earlier occasions but delayed it for unknown reasons, the official said.

The official said that in the hours before the attack, there were signs that something was amiss, including when Hamas fighters switched their phones over to the



Israeli network

The perception that Hamas did not want war guided decision makers away from taking action that night that might have thwarted the attack. The Israeli military official said intelligence shows that Yahya Sinwar, a mastermind of the October 7 attack who was killed last October, had

of rockets that allowed thousands of fighters to burst through the security fence or fly over it on hang gliders. They knocked out surveillance cameras and quickly overwhelmed hundreds of soldiers stationed along the border.

From there they advanced to key highway intersections and attacked troops disbegun planning it as early as 2017.
With the military off guard on a holiday weekend, Hamas launched a heavy wave

patched to the area, including some senior officers, disrupting the military's command and control, according to a second military official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. For the first three hours after the attack, Hamas fighters marauded through border communities and a music festival with little resistance. That was when most of the 251 hostages were taken and most people were killed, the official said. The official said the chaos led to friendly fire incidents, although he said there were not many, with-

out disclosing a figure. It took hours for the military to regain control and days until the area was fully cleared of militants. According to the first official, the report blamed the military for being overconfident in its knowledge and not showing enough doubt in its core concepts and beliefs. The summary said a key lesson was that Israel could not let a threat develop on its border. It spelled out several recommenda-

tions, including creating special units meant to prepare for such sur-

prise and large-scale events, as well as reform in the military intelligence department that would foster "openness, scepticism, listening, learning.

It did not place blame on any individual soldiers or officers, but is likely to pave the way for a reckoning in the military and eventual dismissals.

Some high-ranking officers other than Halevi have also resigned, including the

former head of military intelligence.

Israel, Hamas have begun negotiating next phase of Gaza ceasefire, says Egypt

AP ■ KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP)

Negotiations between Israel and Hamas on the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire began Thursday, Egypt said, averting a collapse ahead of Saturday's expiration of the agreement's first phase.

Officials from Israel, Qatar and the United States started "intensive discussions" on the ceasefire's second phase in Cairo, Egypts state information service

'The mediators are also discussing ways to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as part of efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population and support stability in the region," its statement said.

Phase 2 talks are meant to negotiate an end to the war, including the return of all remaining hostages in Gaza who are alive, and the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the territory. Return of remaining deceased hostages would

happen in Phase 3.

According to Israel, there are 59 remaining hostages — 24 of whom are still believed to be alive.

It will be difficult to reconcile a deal with the war objectives of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has called for dismantling Hamas' govern. ing and military capabilities. After suffering heavy losses in the war, Hamas has nonetheless emerged intact during the ceasefire, and the group says it will not give up its weapons.

Hours before talks began, an Israeli official said the country would not withdraw from a strategic corridor in the Gaza Strip as called for under the ceasefire, a refusal that could severely complicate negotiations with Hamas and key mediator Egypt at a sensitive moment

for the fragile truce. Overnight, Hamas released the remains

of four hostages in exchange for over 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned swap of the ceasefire's first

phase. US President Donald Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, was expected in

the region in the coming days. **Blatant violation:** An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said the army needed to remain in the so-called Philadelphi corridor, on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, to prevent

weapons smuggling. Separately, Defense Minister Israel Katz said at a meeting with local leaders that he had seen tunnels penetrating the border on a recent visit to the corridor, without providing evidence or elaborating on Israel's plans. Egypt says it destroyed the smuggling tunnels from its side years ago and set up a military buffer zone to halt smuggling.

Hamas said any Israeli attempt to

maintain a buffer zone in the corridor would be a "blatant violation" of the ceasefire agreement. The militant group says that sticking to the agreement is the only way for Israel to secure the release of dozens of hostages still held in Gaza.

as supposed to begin withdraw ing from the Philadelphi corridor on Saturday, the last day of the first phase, and complete it within eight days. There was no immediate comment about the corridor from Egypt, which is opposed to any Israeli presence on the Gaza side of its border.

Remains of 4 hostages identified: The remains released Thursday were confirmed to be those of Ohad Yahalomi, Itzhak Elgarat, Shlomo Mantzur and Tsachi Idan, according to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represents families of the captives.

China to send Pak astronaut as first foreign guest to its space station

PTI BEIJING/ISLAMABAD

hina plans to send an astronaut from its allweather ally Pakistan as the first foreign

guest to its space station Tiangong. China and Pakistan on Friday signed an agreement including bilateral efforts to select and train Pakistani astronauts and then send some of them to Tiangong, currently orbiting 400 kilometres above the earth, China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said in a news release here.

The agreement to send the Pakistani astronaut in space was signed by the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) and Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) at a ceremony attended by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, state-run China Daily reported. China has been launching satellites for Pakistan

for the past few years to help its close ally.
The Chinese space station, which has been in orbit for nearly four years, is regarded as a rival to Russia's international space station Mir, currently in orbit.

China built Tiangong after the country was reportedly excluded from the International Space Station (ISS) over concerns that China's space programme is manned by its military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

China's space station is also seen as a new field of competition between China and the US. The two robotic arms of the station, especially the long one which has the ability to grab object including satellites from space, drew international concerns.

China has earlier announced plans for the further development of space programmes, which included launching a manned lunar mission, construction of a lunar space station, exploration of habitable planets and extra-terrestrial life to expand its space programme in the next few

Deputy Director of the Chinese Manned Space Agency Lin Xiqiang told media here earlier that China plans to land astronauts on the moon before 2030 while the US plans to put its astronauts back on the lunar surface in 2025.

Students-led political party to be launched amid unrest in Bangladesh e-Islami ameer Shafiqur claimed nearly 1400 lives.

PTI DHAKA

Bangladesh on Friday is set to witness emergence of a political party led by students who spearheaded the 2024 street campaign that led to the toppling of the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime.

A large stage is ready in central Dhaka's Manik Mia Avenue for the launch of 'Jatiya Nagorik Party' or National Citizen Party (NCP) led by the key-figures of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, also called Students Against Discrimination (SAD).

The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement led a mass uprising leading to the ouster of Hasina's over 15 years of rule on August 5 last year. Three days later, Muhammd Yunus assumed charge as the Chief Adviser of the Interim government, effectively the prime NCP leaders said they expected around 3,00,000 people, including students from across the country, at the launch event. "People from all the 64 districts are to join our inauguration alongside the family members of those who gave their lives in the July-August mass uprising," a spokesman of the new party's media cell said. "We have also invited the leaders of major political parties," he added. The new party is being launched with the blessings of Yunus, who took over as the Chief Adviser as the SAD nominee in August 2024.

NCP leaders said Yunus was also invited to their launch cer-

The other high-profile invitees include Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson and ex-premier Khaleda Zia; her son and acting BNP chairper-son Tarique Rahman; BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir; Jamaat-

Rahman, and leaders of several Islamic, rightist and leftwing parties and groups. BNP had earlier expressed

skepticism about the neutrality of the Yunus' interim administration ahead of expected general elections in December this year, particularly after he extended his support for the proposed student-led party while three of their representatives were serving as advisers, equivalent to ministers, in his government. One of the advisers, entrusted

tion ministry, Nahid Islam, however, resigned earlier this week to head the NCP amid the criticism that the new party was being floated using the advantage of being part of the government.

with the portfolio of informa-

A recent UN fact-finding report suggested policed actions during the uprising and subsequent violence

Bangladesh witnessed a resurgence of unrest since February 5 this year when protestors burned and demolished the residence of the country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, coinciding with her daughter Hasina's previously announced virtual address to students from India. The protesters set on fire or ransacked the houses and business establishments of the Awami League leaders and supporters across the country. Bangladesh's security forces have arrested over 8,600 people in a two-week crackdown named 'Operation Devil Hunt' that targeted gangs allegedly linked with the ousted Hasina

The arrests came amid growing concerns about rising crime levels, particularly in Dhaka, with police saying the number of robberies had doubled since

government.

killed, 20 hurt in Pak mosque blast

Apowerful blast killed at least five people and injured 20 others during Friday prayers at a mosque in northwest Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province ahead of the fasting month of Ramazan, police said. The blast claimed the life of

Hamidul Haq Haqqani, chief of his own faction of the Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) and caretaker of the Madrassa-e-Haqqania, located in Akora Khattak town

of Nowshera district, Chief during 'Jumma' prayer. n confirmed. Born in 1968, Hamidul Haq became chief of his JUI (Sami Group) after the death of his father Maulana Sami ul Khyber Haq. IGP, Pakhtunkhwa, IGP, Zulfiqar Hameed said the blast is suspected to be a suicide bombing

and Hamidul Haq appeared to be the target. "We had provided six security guards to Hamidul Haq," he said. DPO Nowshera district Abdur

Rasheed said the blast occurred

madrassa propagates the Hanafi Deobandi school of Sunni Islam. It was founded by Maulana Abdul Haq along the lines of the Darul Uloom Deoband seminary in India, where he had taught.

It has been dubbed the "University of Jihad" due to its methods and content of instruction, along with the future occupations of its alumni. A number of leading members of the Taliban, including former chief Akhtar Mansour, Rescue teams rushed to the site and removed the bodies and

evacuated the injured to the hospital. An emergency was declared in both Nowshera and Peshawar hospitals. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur

and Governor Faisal Karim Kundi have condemned the suicide blast. The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leaders have appealed for blood donation for the injured.

Quake rattles Kathmandu PTI KATHMANDU

At least four people were Ainjured in Kathmandu and elsewhere due to a strong earthquake in the neighbouring Sindhupalchowk district early

Friday morning.

The quake measuring 6.1 magnitude was recorded at 2.51 am with its epicentre at Bhairabkunda, Sindhupalchowk district, 65 km east of Kathmandu, according to the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre.

Some houses in Sindhupalchowk district developed cracks after the tremor hit the district. Besides Kathmandu valley, the earth-quake was also felt by people in southern and eastern Nepal, according to officials.

The earthquake prompted many people in Kathmandu and nearby areas to come out of their houses in panic. Two people were injured in Kathmandu while an inmate of Chautara prison was injured as he tried to escape following the earthquake.

An elderly man was injured in a village in Sindhupalchowk district as he tried to exit his house soon after the earthquake, officials said. Nepal lies in one of the most active tectonic zones, making the Himalayan nation extremely vulnerable to earthquakes. The worst quake it has so far witnessed was in April 2015 when a 7.8 magnitude quake killed more than 9,000 people and damaged over 1 million



Indonesian Muslim women buy vegetables to prepare for the holy month of Ramadan at a market in Jakarta, Indonesia on

Russian, US diplomats meet in Istanbul AP ISTANBUL

Russian and US diplomats met in Istanbul on Thursday to discuss normalising the operation of their respective embassies after years expelling each others' diplomats.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the talks followed an understanding reached dur-ing President Donald Trump's call with Russian President Vladimir Putin and contact between senior Russian and US diplomats and other officials in Saudi Arabia.

Speaking during Thursday's

meeting of the Federal Security Service, Putin hailed the Trump administration's "pragmatism and realistic view" compared with what he described as the "stereotypes and messianic ideological cliches" of its predeces-

'The first contacts with the

new US administration encourage certain hopes," Putin said. There is a mutual readiness to work to restore relations and gradually solve a colossal amount of systemic strategic problems in the global architec-

Putin said that "part of Western elites are still determined to maintain global instability" and could try to "disrupt or compromise the dialogue that has begun," adding that Russian diplomats and security agencies should focus their efforts on thwarting such attempts.

Return to civilised communication: In Riyadh, Moscow and Washington agreed to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties. That includes restoring staffing at embassies, which in recent years were hit hard by mutual expulsions of large numbers of diplomats, closures of offices, and other

A US Embassy official in Ankara confirmed that the Istanbul talks focused on the issues affecting the operation of respective diplomatic missions.

restrictions.

Later Thursday, a spokesman for the US State Department said: "The United States raised concerns regarding access to banking and contracted services as well as the need to ensure stable and sustainable staffing levels at the US Embassy in Moscow. Through constructive discussions, both sides identified concrete initial steps to stabilize bilateral mission operations in these areas."

Panama, Costa Rica turning into 'black hole' for migrants, deportees from US, observers warn

AP MIRAMAR (PANAMA)

Officials in Costa Rica and Panama are confiscating migrants' passports and cellphones, denying them access to legal services and moving them between remote outposts as they wrestle with the logistics of a suddenly reversed migration flow. The restrictions and lack of transparency are drawing criticism from human rights observers and generating increasingly testy responses from officials, who say their actions are aimed at protecting the migrants from human traffick-

Both countries have received hundreds of deportees from

various nations sent by the United States as President Donald Trump's administration tries to accelerate deportations. At the same time, thousands of migrants shut out of the US have started moving south through Central America - Panama recorded 2,200 so far in February. "We're a reflection of current

United States immigration policy," said Harold Villegas-Román, a political science professor and refugee expert at the University of Costa Rica. "There is no focus on human rights, there is only focus on control and security. Everything is very murky, and not transparent." Deportations and reversed

migration: Earlier this month, the US sent 299 deportees from mostly Asian countries to Panama. Those who were willing to return to their countries - about 150 to date — were put on planes with the assistance of United Nations agencies and paid for by the US.

Ruiz-Hernandez, Carlos Panama's deputy foreign minister, said Thursday a small number are in contact with international organisations and the UN Refugee Agency as they weigh whether to seek asylum in

"None of them wants to stay in Panama. They want to go to the US," he said in a phone interview from Washington. "We cannot

give them green cards, but we can get them back home and for a short period of time provide them with medical and psychological support as well as hous-

Despite Trump's threats to retake control of the Panama Canal, he said Panama had not acted under US pressure. "This is in Panama's national interest. We are a friend of the US and want to work with them to send a signal of deterrence."

Ruiz-Hernandez said some of the deportees remaining in Panama would be given the option of staying at a shelter originally set up to handle the large number of migrants mov-ing north through the Darien

Gap. One Chinese deportee currently detained in the camp, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid repercussions, said she wasn't given a choice.

She was deported to Panama without knowing where they were being sent, without signing deportation documents in the US and without clarity of how long they would be there. She was among the deportees who were moved from a Panama City hotel where some held up signs to their windows asking for help to a remote camp in the

Darien region. Speaking to the AP over messages on a cellphone she kept hidden, she said authorities confiscated others' phones and offered them no legal assistance. Others have said they've been unable to contact their

lawvers. "This deprived us of our legal process," she said.

Panama President Jose Raul Mulino, asked about the lack of access to legal services on Thursday, questioned the idea that migrants would even have lawyers. "Doesn't it seem like a coincidence that those poor people have lawyers in Panama?" Mulino said.

Black hole for deported migrants: Costa Rica and Panama have so far denied press access to facilities where they are holding migrants. Panama had

initially invited journalists to the Darien this week, but ultimately canceled the visit.

"Panama cannot end up becoming a black hole for deported migrants," said Juan Pappier, deputy director of Human Rights Watch in the Americas. "Migrants have the right to communicate with their families, to seek lawyers and Panama must guarantee transparency about the situation in which they find themselves."

Costa Rica has faced similar criticisms from the country's independent human rights entity, which has raised alarm over "failures" by authorities to guarantee proper conditions for deportees arriving.

GDP growth rate 6.2 per cent in Q3

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tndia's economic growth rate decelerated to 6.2 per cent in the October-December quarter this fiscal, mainly due to poor performance by mining, manufacturing and all other sectors, with the exception of agriculture.

However, on a sequential basis, the economic growth rate in the third quarter showed improvement over 5.6 per cent recorded in the second quarter.

second quarter.

The GDP (gross domestic product) growth was 9.5 per cent in the October-December 2023 quarter, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Eriday.

growth too slipped to 7 per cent from 10 per cent a year ago.

However, the output of the farm sector increased by an impressive 5.6 per cent during the quarter compared to a growth of 1.5 per cent in the year ago period.

advance estimate for the showed that the electricity,

estimate released in January.
The manufacturing sector's output growth, as per the gross value added (GVA), in the third quarter dipped to 3.5 per cent from 14 per cent

in the year-ago period.

Mining and quarrying production growth slowed to 1.4 per cent in the third quarter from 4.7 per cent a year ago.

The construction sector growth too slipped to 7 per

Statistical Office (NSO) on Friday. to a growth of 1.5 per cent in the year-ago period. The national accounts data

advance estimate for the showed that the electricity, year 2024-25, against the current fiscal and pegged the gas, water supply, and other First Revised Estimate of

economic growth at 6.5 per cent against 6.4 per cent 5.1 per cent in the third estimated in the first advance quarter against 10.1 per cent a vear earlier.

> The GVA growth in the services sector – trade, hotel, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting – was 6.7 per cent during the third quarter

against 8 per cent.
Financial, real estate and professional services grew by 7.2 per cent in the third quarter over 8.4 per cent

Public administration, defence and other services posted 8.8 per cent growth, marginally up from 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of the last fiscal.

"Real GDP or GDP at Constant Prices is estimated to attain a level of ₹187.95 Lakh Crore in the financial

GDP for the year 2023-24 of ₹176.51 Lakh Crore. The growth rate in Real GDP The NSO revised upwards during 2024-25 is estimated at 6.5 per cent as compared to 9.2 per cent in 2023-24," the NSO statement said.

According to the statement, nominal GDP or GDP at Current Prices is estimated to attain a level of ₹331.03 Lakh Crore in 2024-25 against Rs 301.23 lakh crore in 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 9.9 per cent.

The real GDP or GDP at Constant Prices in Q3 of FY 2024-25 is estimated at ₹47.17 Lakh Crore over ₹44.44 Lakh Crore in Q3 of FY 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 6.2 per cent, it

The nominal GDP or GDP at Current Prices in Q3 of FY 2024-25 is estimated at ₹84.74 Lakh Crore against ₹77.10 Lakh Crore in Q3 of

the GDP growth for 2023-24 to 9.2 per cent from 8.2 per cent estimated earlier.

"Real GDP or GDP at

constant (2011-12) prices for the years 2023-24 and 2022-23 stands at ₹176.51 Lakh Crore and ₹161.65 Lakh Crore, respectively, showing a growth of 9.2 per cent during 2023-24 compared to a growth of 7.6 per cent during 2022-23," it said.

Per Capita Income i.E. Per Capita Net National Income at current prices is estimated at ₹1,69,145 and ₹1,88,892 respectively for 2022-23 and

2023-24, it noted. The NSO has also revised GDP estimates for the first and second quarters of this fiscal to 6.5 and 5.6 per cent from 6.7 per cent and 5.4 per



Expenditure at Maha Kumbh to push GDP growth in Q4: CEA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A significant pick up in the government capex and additional expenditure linked to Maha Kumbh congregation are expected to push the fourth quarter GDP growth to 7.6 per cent, required to achieve an overall reconomic expansion of 6.5 economic expansion of 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal, Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said on Friday.

Briefing media on the third quarter GDP number, he said the data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) augurs well, and the upwardly revised 6.5 per cent GDP estimate for the current

financial year is realistic.

During the third quarter ended December 2024, India's economic growth rate decelerated to 6.2 per cent against 9.5 per cent a year ago, mainly due to poor performance by mining, manufacturing and all other sectors, except agriculture. NSO also released the second advance estimate for the current fiscal and pegged the

economic growth at 6.5 per cent against 6.4 per cent estimated in the first advance estimate released in January. To achieve 6.5 per cent growth, India's GDP has to

grow at 7.6 per cent in the fourth quarter, which, according to experts, is economy is on to optimistic.

Nageswaran noted that 7.6 per cent growth is realistic and can be achieved during the fourth quarter.

"There are some good "There are some good developments, such as a very significant pickup in government capex and the additional expenditure that we are seeing happening because of the footfalls in Maha Kumbh...That we have been seeing," he said.

Amidst external negative factors, he said, there are incremental positive factors, making a good case for implied growth of 7.6 per cent being attained in the fourth quarter.
Asked about the stock

market fall, he said looking at the long-term prospects of the Indian economy compared to other places and looking at the historical track record of the Indian market, one shouldn't be over-interpreting the near-term numbers.

Benchmark indices Sensex The and Nifty tumbled nearly 2 per cent on Friday, mirroring deep losses in global markets as the latest announcement of an additional 10 per cent tariff on Chinese products

He also said that the Indian economy is on the verge of crossing \$4 Trillion in FY25. Nominal GDP or GDP at current prices is estimated to attain a level of ₹331.03 Lakh Crore in the year 2024-25, against ₹301.23 Lakh Crore in 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 9.9 per cent. About inflation, Nageswaran said, it is trending down.

He further said that the nearterm global economic outlook is influenced by the trade policies of major economies amid a slowing disinflation.

Despite the uncertain global outlook, he said, India's economic momentum is expected to be sustained, driven by strong rural demand and a revival in urban consumption.

The robust kharif production and better rabi sowing, coupled with higher coupled with reservoir levels and seasonal winter correction in vegetable prices, augur well for food inflation going forward, he said.

Union emphasis on agriculture, MSMEs, investment, and exports is likely to enhance India's medium-term economic prospects, he

Union Minister Pivush Goval during a meeting with EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic, in New Delh

India, EU discusses progress of FTA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI,

India and the European Union (EU) on Friday discussed the progress of negotiations on the proposed free trade agreement (FTA), aimed at boosting two-way commerce and investments. The agreement was discussed during a meeting between major economy. It is projected Commerce and industry to grow at 6.4 per cent in Minister Piyush Goyal and European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic here.

C o m m i s s i o n e r @MarosSefcovic breakfast today on the India-EU FTA and the progress of the Trade and Technology Council. Exciting times ahead as we work towards elevating our trade and investment ties to the next level as trusted partners," Goyal said in a post on X.

Sefcovic is accompanying Commission European President Ursula von der Leyen, who is here on an official visit with the EU College of Commissioners or senior political leaders of the bloc.

meeting assumes significance as the senior officials of the two sides are scheduled to hold the tenth round of negotiations for the FTA from March 10-14 in

progress of the talks.

Further strengthening of economic ties between the two is crucial in light of the threat from US President Donald Trump to impose higher tariffs.

In the current uncertain global economic situation, India is the fastest growing 2024-25.

In the ninth round, India and the EU discussed trade issues covering goods, services, "Had a candid and insightful discussion with EU Trade C o m m i s s i o n e r investment and government procurement along with necessary rules such as rules over of origin, SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary), and technical parriers to trade

In June 2022, India and the 27-nation EU bloc resumed the negotiations after a gap of over eight years. It stalled in 2013 due to differences over the level of opening up of the markets.

Besides significant duty cuts in automobiles, the EU wants tax reduction in wines, spirits and a strong intellectual property regime.

Indian goods' exports to the EU, such as ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, steel, petroleum products, and electrical machinery, will become more competitive, if the pact gets concluded successfully.

European Commissioner for has prevented the flow of Trade to take stock of the sensitive information to

India, a big deal for its IT industry.

India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was \$137.41 Billion in 2023-24 (exports \$75.92 Billion, imports \$61.48 billion), making it the largest trading partner of India for goods. The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, while the EU's exports to India make up 9 per cent of its total exports.

In addition, the bilateral trade in services, in 2023, between India and the EU was estimated at \$51.45 Billion. The agreement is aimed at further boosting bilateral trade and investments between the two. The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, investment prot investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs).

A GI is primarily an demanding agricultural, natural or y cuts in manufactured product manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

According to the economic think tank GTRI, In FY24, the EU exported \$416 Million Brussels.

India is also seeking data
In January this year, Goyal
was in Brussels to meet the sector. The lack of this status

Experied 417 Billion
worth of wine to India. Its automobile and auto parts
exports exceeded \$2 Billion, including \$416 Million in fully built-up (CBU) vehicles.

RBI conducts forex swap worth \$10 Billion Reserve Bank side.

The Reserve Bank on Friday Conducted US dollar-rupee swap worth \$10 Billion for injecting long-term liquidity in the system, with the auction eliciting robust demand.

The settlement of auction will take place on March 4 and March 6.

The USD/INR Buy/Sell swap auction for a tenor of 3 years was oversubscribed 1.62

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it received 244 bids during the auction and 161 of them were accepted for amount totalling \$10.06 Billion.

The auction comes in the backdrop of rupee trading at 87.46 against the US dollar amid global uncertainties.

The swap was in the nature of a simple buy/sell foreign exchange swap from the

A bank shall sell US dollars to the Reserve Bank and simultaneously agree to buy the same amount of US dollars at the end of the swap period.

While announcing the swap auction last week, the RBI had said: "In order to meet the durable liquidity needs of the system, the Reserve Bank has decided to inject Rupee decided to inject Rupee liquidity for longer duration through long-term USD/INR Buy/Sell swap. Accordingly, the Reserve Bank will be conducting a USD/INR Buy/Sell swap auction of \$10 Billion for a tenor of 3 years." In January also, the RBI had announced liquidity injection worth over ₹1.5 Lakh Crore through different instruments, including \$5

Billion forex swap.
The rupee declined 28 paise to 87.46 against the US dollar on

Jharkhand Economic Survey estimates mining royalties will fetch ₹19,300 Crore

development, Jharkhand Economic Survey on Friday estimated mining royalties will fetch ₹19,300 Crore in the ongoing fiscal.

The total value of mineral production in Jharkhand as of March 2024 stood at approximately ₹75,358 Crore, underscoring the state's rich reserves of coal, iron ore, and bauxite, it said. As a state endowed with

approximately 40 per cent of India's total mineral resources, Iharkhand holds significant reserves of coal, iron ore, copper, and uranium, making it a pivotal contributor to the nation's mineral production. "In the fiscal year 2024-25, Jharkhand's mining sector has continued to demonstrate robust growth, solidifying its role as a key driver of the state's economic development.

PTI RANCHI

The sector's contribution to the state's non-tax revenue of the state's economic of the state's non-tax revenue o 2024-25, reflecting a 20 per cent increase compared to the revised estimates from the previous fiscal year," the survey tabled in the Assembly by Jharkhand Finance minister Radhakrishna Kishore said.

However, despite Jharkhand's vast mineral wealth, the mining sector directly employs only around 20,000 workers, indicating the need to operationalise inactive mines to expand job opportunities and fully leverage the state's resource

industrial growth and employment. "To further optimise revenue

and improve the efficiency of

potential, it said. The mining sector plays a crucial role not only in revenue generation but also in ensuring the state's

first half of FY 2024-25, reflecting a 20 per cent yearover-year growth.
This significant output has strengthened the energy sector by ensuring fuel security for thermal power plants across the country, reinforcing further Jharkhand's position as a

It said NTPC mining has

reported remarkable coal

production, exceeding 19

million tonne (MT) in the

leading coal-producing state.
The survey said that in line with its commitment to sustainable development, the Department of Mines and Geology has emphasised the importance of value addition, local processing, and promoting downstream

industries to generate employment and boost local economies.

Centre's fiscal deficit touches 74.5 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

innual target at the end of January 2025, according to the data released by Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Friday.

In actual terms, the fiscal deficit - the gap between expenditure and revenue – was ₹11,69,542 Crore during the April-January 2024-25 period. The deficit was 63.6 per cent of

Revised Estimates (RE) of 2023-24 in the year-ago period. The CGA data showed that the central government's tax revenue (net) was ₹19.03 Lakh Crore, or 74.4 per cent of the RE of 2024-25. It was at 80.9 per cent during the corresponding year of the last financial year.

The total expenditure was at ₹35.7 Lakh Crore, or 75.7 per cent of the RE, according to the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government. In the year-ago period it was at 74.7

per cent of that year's RE.

In the Union Budget presented in Parliament, the fiscal deficit

by Chapter Suggest Parliament Suggest Per Cent, which woo well for economic a the ongoing quarter.

for 2024-25 has been pegged at The Centre's fiscal deficit

4.8 per cent of GDP (lower than earlier estimate of 4.9 per L touched 74.5 per cent of the cent) and at 4.4 per cent for

> In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit for the financial year ending March 2025 estimated at ₹15.69 Lakh Crore.

> According to the data, ₹10,74,179 Crore has been transferred to governments as devolution of share of taxes by Government of India up to January, which is ₹2,53,929 Crore higher than the previous year.

> Out of the total revenue expenditure (₹28.12 Lakh Crore), ₹8,75,461 Crore was on account of interest payments and ₹3,37,733 Crore on account of major subsidies. Commenting on the CGA data,

> Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA, said expenditure rose by 5.1 per cent year-on-year in January 2025, whereas expenditure surged by about 51 per cent, which would augur well for economic activity in

KCC as a Financial Identity: The key to transparent a MSP



For years, Indian farmers have struggled with inadequate credit access, inefficient procurement systems, and bureaucratic delays in government support. The Kisan Credit Card (KCC), introduced in 1998 under Union Agriculture Minister Sompal Shastri, was a pioneering initiative, however, in today's fast-evolving financial ecosystem, the KCC must evolve into a multipurpose tool integrating procurement, planning, and financial empowerment.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, India is undergoing a

through cooperative reforms, digitalisation, and advanced technology like blockchain. KCC is no longer just a borrowing mechanism—it is being envisioned as a financial identity for farmers, ensuring transparent MSP payments, streamlined subsidy disbursals, and efficient procurement

planning. blockchain Integrating technology into the KCC system will enable every transaction—from purchase to final sale—to be recorded in a tamper-proof ledger. This will provide realtime production data to agencies like the Food Corporation of India (FCI), allowing them to make advance procurement decisions. As a result, market will prices stabilise. middlemen exploitation will reduce, and farmers will

receive fair prices. Blockchain-enabled traceability will also enhance food safety, boost export potential, and policymakers

transformation in rural finance interventions based regional crop patterns. With better data analytics, the government can plan input subsidies, allocate irrigation resources, and predict future demand more efficiently. Transforming KCC into an

Aadhaar-linked, chip-enabled smart card can turn it into a real-time financial education tool. Farmers will receive SMS mobile alerts. notifications, and updates through local extension centers about loan eligibility, repayment schedules, interest subsidies, and market trends. Enhancing financial literacy will improve credit discipline and open avenues for new financial products such as savings accounts, pension schemes, and insurance policies. A financially aware farmer is better positioned to handle market risks, invest in technology, and reduce dependence on informal credit

Beyond agricultural finance, KĆC can serve as a credit card for farmers' daily consumer needs. Currently, small and

marginal farmers lack access to formal credit for personal consumption, forcing them to rely on high-interest informal loans. Expanding KCC's scope within the financial ecosystem will enable farmers to use it for essential purchases, education, healthcare, and household expenses. A chip-enabled KCC with UPI

integration will allow digital payments at local stores, ATM withdrawals, and online shopping for agricultural inputs. This will bridge ruralurban financial gaps and give farmers the same financial privileges as urban consumers. Moreover, building credit history through KCC transactions will facilitate higher-value loans for farm expansion, mechanization, and allied activities like dairy and fisheries. A key grievance of farmers

regarding MSP is delayed payments, lack of payments, transparency, and middlemen interference. A blockchain-enabled KCC system will directly link MSP procurement with farmers' bank accounts,

ensuring instant payments without deductions.

tracking Real-time procurement will enable farmers to monitor transactions, understand the accepted quantity, and know the payment status, bringing accountability to the system. Additionally, integrating mandi prices with the KCC portal will help farmers make informed selling decisions, choosing between MSP procurement, private buyers, or direct-to-consumer markets

based on prevailing rates. Expanding the role of multipurpose cooperative societies will transform PACS from mere lending institutions into procurement hubs, storage centers, and rural banking service providers.

This will reduce reliance on commercial banks and empower farmers through local financial institutions. Furthermore, the increase in collateral-free loan limits to ₹5 Lakh and interest subvention schemes reducing rates to 4 per cent per annum will make credit more accessible and

affordable for small farmers and tenant cultivators.

KCC is poised to become the financial backbone of Indian agriculture—integrating banking, credit, procurement, and production planning into a single, seamless platform.A chip-enabled, Aadhaar-linked KCC will provide financial security, transparent MSP payments, seamless subsidy transfers, and direct market access. The integration of blockchain, direct benefit transfers (DBT), and smart financial tools will ensure that no farmer is left behind.

The next revolution in Indian agriculture will be driven by technology-powered financial empowerment. India must accelerate this transformation to ensure that all 140 million farmers benefit from this financial revolution. The future of Indian agriculture depends on it—and the time to act is now.

(The writer is a Secretary General CNRI and Member, High Power Committee on MSP and Agriculture Reforms, Government of India)

INBRIEF

NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS AT VIT-AP

AMARAVATI: National Science Day was celebrated grandly at VIT-AP to commemorate the discovery of Raman effect. Chief guest, Mandava Jagadish, Chief Technology Officer of Amara Raja Batteries Ltd graced the event. Hundreds of students from colleges in and



around Vijayawada and Guntur visited the campus enthusiastically to participate in various events aimed at promoting scientific zea and temperament including the expert talks on Li-ion battery industry by Amara Raja Battery scientists.

PFC SIGNS MOU WITH GOVERNMENT OF MADHYA PRADESH AT GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT 2025

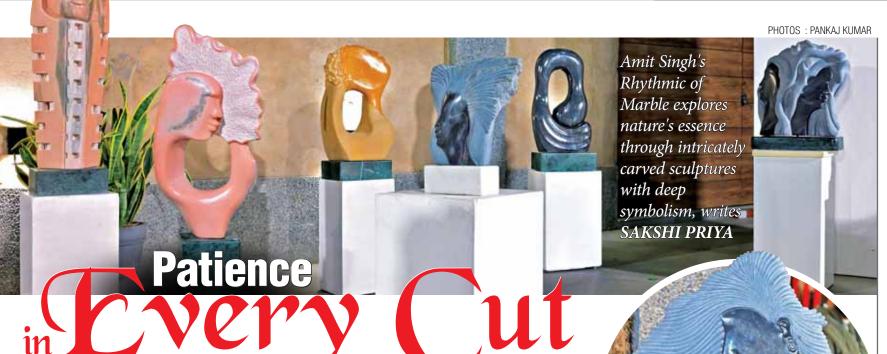
Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC) has signed a Memorandum Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Madhya Pradesh to extend financial

assistance of ₹26,800 Crores



to the State's power utilities. This funding will support capital expenditure projects for entities such as Madhya Pradesh Power Generation Company Limited (MPPGCL), Madhya Pradesh Power Transmission Company Limited (MPPTCL), and MP DISCOMs.

VIVacity 11



THE EXHIBITION **CAPTURES THE** HUMAN EXPERIENCE, **OUR CONNECTION** WITH NATURE, THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND THE PATIENCE **REQUIRED TO SHAPE** BEAUTY FROM RESIS-TANCE, MUCH LIKE

LIFE ITSELF

arble has a way of holding stories within its veins, waiting for the right hands to bring them to life. Rhythmic of Marble, the solo exhibition by Amit Singh at Triveni Kala Sangam, was a breathtaking display of patience, devotion and an artist's relentless pursuit of expression.

Amit Singh's work is about preserving the delicate balance between nature and human intervention. When asked about the concept behind his exhibition, he spoke with a quiet intensity. "Nature has always been my priority," he said. "My work is about our connection with it."

Each sculpture told a different story, some reflecting the tranquillity of nature, others capturing its raw beauty. His intricate carvings on marble ranged from smooth, flowing forms that mimicked water's grace to bold, angular pieces that seemed to

resist time itself. The detailing was mesmerising, delicate veins running through stone, each mark a reminder of the patience and precision it took to create. His Nature Series was particularly striking, with sculptures inspired by the elements, wind, water, and earth, translated into marble with astonishing delicacy. The dedication behind

the exhibition was staggering. Singh revealed that it took him five years to complete the entire body of work. "Some pieces were done in minutes," he admitted. "A simple idea, a quick execution. But others, some marble works

demanded days, even weeks.

smiled at the question. "That's like asking a parent to choose their favourite child," he

The sculptures seemed to hold an unspoke dialogue with their surroundings. Natural light filtered through, casting shifting shadows

> movement to the stillness. The play of light and texture gave each piece a different life depending on the time of day, a quiet reminder of the ever-changing nature of art and

Beyond the aesthetic, Singh's work carried an undeniable emotional weight. Some pieces felt serene, extraordinary.

> dominates, Singh's art stands as a but glance back one last time. The

Patience is the key.' His favourite piece? He

said. "Every sculpture is a

part of me. on the marble, adding depth and

almost meditative. Others had a raw intensity, as though the stone itself resisted the chisel before surrendering to form. His ability to extract such depth from a material as unyielding as marble was nothing short of At a time when mass production

craftsmanship that cannot be rushed. His exhibition was an experience, a moment of stillness in a world that rarely pauses. As I left, I couldn't help sculptures stood there, unmoving yet alive, each a quiet had shaped them, the time they had endured reminder of the hands that

Chromalogue: Art in Every Shade



BY TEAM VIVA

olours hold memories, emotions and unspoken stories. At Chromalogue - Colours & Conversations, they take centre stage, shaping a dialogue beyond words. The group exhibition presented by The Art Exchange Project and curated by Aarti Uppal Singla, brings together 15 artists who use colour as their language, creating an immersive experience where shades and textures communicate in their own quiet yet powerful way.

The gallery becomes a world of shifting moods and narratives. Neelesh's Echoes of Dawn 1 fills the space with deep blues, evoking the quiet beauty of early mornings. . Āarti Uppal Singla's Lotus Pond 1 captures resilience in soft yet striking tones.

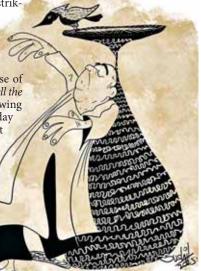
Silence Speaks in Colour by Madhav Bhardwaj invites viewers to listen beyond the visible, while Portal of Peace by Himani Pasricha offers a sense of stillness. Nikita Gambhir's Smell the Coffee warms the senses, drawing on the simple joys of everyday life. These works do not just exist on the wall, they engage, they invite and they stay with those who witness

Beyond paint, mixed media adds depth and dimension. Priya Bery's Poppies: The Intoxicators bursts with life on Waterford paper, while Winnie Singh's Meditative Reveries 9

softens the senses, creating a quiet space within. Babita Varma's Aswan, sculpted in clay on wood, and Kripal Mathur's Spring Dance, work with hand-dyed goat's wool, show that colour is not just seen, it

The exhibition stretches further into digital and graphic precision. Khushroo Kalyanwala's The Blues That Bring Cheer across fine paper, while Sushil Bhasin's Trance Dance moves with an almost hypnotic rhythm. Pragati Gupta's Paws-1, a pen drawing on textured paper, proves that even in black and white, colour is imagined.

Chromalogue is a celebration of this language, a space where colours speak and those who listen will hear.







At India Design 2025 in New Delhi, Masha Art reinterprets artistic heritage through bold experimentation, transforming tradition into a dynamic, sensorial experience, says SAKSHI PRIYA

of time, culture and identity. At ✓ India Design 2025, an exhibition brings this idea to life in a way that feels both rooted in tradition and open to reinvention. Walking through the space, the artworks create a sense of connection between past and present, between intricate craftsmanship and bold contemporary expression. It is a meeting point of heritage and innovation, where stories unfold through colour, form and texture.

The collection, curated with a thoughtful eye, features works by 21 artists including Seema Kohli, Chandrashekhar Morkondo and Sanjay Chakraborty. Every piece feels like a conversation, one that speaks of history, personal narratives and the evolving artistic language of the subcontinent. Some paintings draw from mythology, their golds and deep blue's reminiscent of temple murals, while others

break away from convention with striking abstraction. The sculptures add another dimension, their forms shifting between realism and imagination, inviting the viewer to explore beyond the surface.

There is an undeniable energy in the way these works come together.

its intricate lines almost breathing on canvas, sits beside an abstract piece where colour dominates form, take precedence over prechallenging perception. A sculptural installation nearby, crafted from repurposed materials, transforms discarded objects into something unexpected and powerful. The juxtaposition of mediums and styles creates a dynamic interplay, one that encourages curiosity and dialogue.

Some pieces invite showcase, describes stillness, their subtle art as an investment in shade and delicate strokes evoking a quiet tradition. Others disrupt

strokes of pigment, where movement and emotion cision. The diversity in expression makes the exhibition feels alive, constantly shifting in meaning depending on who is viewing it. Samarth Mathur,

MARBLE, BOTH FRAGILE AND

ENDURING, MIRRORS HUMAN

EXISTENCE, SHAPED BY TIME,

PATIENCE AND THE ARTIST'S

SKILLED HANDS

and the stories they would

continue to tell long after the

exhibition ended.

the mind behind this culture and creativity. His approach moves reverence for nature and beyond traditional curation, treating each

rt has always been a reflection A painting depicting a celestial dance, this calm with bold, unrestrained piece as part of a larger dialogue. This is not art placed on walls to be admired from a distance, it is art meant to be lived with, engaged with and understood. The exhibition respects artistic heritage but does not hesitate to push boundaries. It does not try to define what Indian art should be, instead offering a glimpse into what it can



DESIGN IS NOT ONLY ABOUT AESTHETICS, IT IS ABOUT CREATING MEANING.THIS EXHIBITION **BRINGS ART TO LIFE**

A DYNAMIC INTERPLAY OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION, WHERE 21 ARTISTS REDEFINE ARTISTIC BOUNDARIES THROUGH COLOR, FORM AND TEXTURE

Australia move ito semis as rain interrupts Afghanistan game

Australia Semifinals the entered of the Champions Trophy after their crucial Group B clash against Afghanistan was called off due to rain here on Friday.

The match was halted by a downpour when Australia were 109 for 1 in 12.5

overs, chasing a target of 274. Despite the ground staffs' efforts to clear the field, several pools of water remained on the pitch and the umpires ultimately declared the match abandoned after an inspection.

The interruption came just an hour before the cut-off time for completing the match.

With the game called off, Australia advanced to the semifinals with four points. Their last match against South Africa in Rawalpindi was also abandoned.

At the time of interruption, Travis Head was in superb form, having scored 59 runs off 40 balls, including nine fours and one six.

His knock came after a lucky

reprieve when Rashid Khan dropped him on six, diving at mid-on off Fazalhaq Farooqi. Head capitalised on this opportunity and dominated the Afghanistan bowlers, particularly taking 28 runs off Farooqi's 17 balls.

Skipper Steve Smith was at the other end, playing a more measured knock with 19 not out from 22 balls, including boundaries. two

With no result from match, this Afghanistan's chances are slim and would depend on the result of Saturday's match between South Africa and England. If South Africa win. they will top the group with five

points. If England emerges victorious, South Africa and Afghanistan will both finish on three points. leading to a net run-rate (NRR) calculation.

Afghanistan's current NRR of -0.99 would almost certainly eliminate them unless South Africa loses by a margin of over 200 runs.

Earlier in the day, Afghanistan posted a competitive total of



273, largely due to Sediqullah Atal's gritty 85 and Azmatullah Omarzai's explosive 67.

Atal anchored the innings after a shaky start, but it was Omarzai's late fireworks which propelled Afghanistan past 270 after they were 235 for 8 following Rashid Khan's dismissal.

Omarzai's 63-ball knock under pressure had five sixes and one four. He launched two massive sixes off Nathan Ellis in the penultimate over, including a breathtaking 102m hit over

midwicket, sending the ball over Glenn Maxwell at the boundary. He then struck a towering six

wide of long-off as Afghanistan produced a late flourish for a total that would give their spinheavy bowling lineup a big boost.

But he got out in the final over off Ben Dwarshuis who also dismissed Noor Ahmed in the final delivery of the day to finish with figures of 3/47 from nine

World champions Australia

struggling against Johnson's movement, but settling in with crisp cover drives and flicks.

also leaked 37 runs in extras that included 17 wides.

Opting to bat, Afghanistan suffered early blows as Spencer Johnson (2/49) cleaned up Rahmanullah Gurbaz for a fiveball duck and Ibrahim Zadran (22 off 28) gifted his wicket to Adam Zampa.
Atal then took charge, initially

He found a steady partner in Hashmatullah Shahidi, and together they stitched a 68-run

stand, navigating Australia's spinners on a sluggish pitch. Atal brought up his second ODI fifty in style, launching Maxwell over mid-on for a six.

He later dismantled Zampa with two more sixes but fell 15 short of a maiden hundred. chipping a Johnson delivery to Steve Smith at short cover in the 32nd over.

His dismissal at 159/4 triggered a collapse, with skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi (20 off 49) falling soon after, and Mohammad Nabi getting run out in a bizarre fashion.

From 182/6, Afghanistan struggled to keep the momentum, and at 235/8 after Rashid's departure, they were staring at a modest total.

All-rounder Omarzai, fresh from a match-winning 5/58 haul and 41-run contribution against England, then took charge.

Unfazed by the situation, the No. 6 batter played with calm assurance, reaching his eighth ODI fifty off 54 balls with a single off Dwarshuis in the 48th

In doing so, he became the joint third-fastest Afghan player to reach the 1000-run milestone, achieving it in 31 innings — behind Zadran (24), Gurbaz (27), and Shah (31).



Praggnanandhaa draws against Gurel Ediz

PTI PRAGUE

randmaster ■Praggnanandhaa played out a second straight draw against Turkey's Gurel Ediz while Aravindh Chithambaram crashed

through the defences of Germany's Vincent Keymer in the second round of the Prague Masters here. Chithambaram, who has been

knocking hard on the doors of elite circles, scored his first victory with black pieces after squeezing himself out of danger zone in his first-round game against Czech Grandmaster Nguyen Thai Czech Dai Van.

The Indian was involved in the sole decisive game of the day in the 10-players round-robin format, while the other matches ended in draws.

Dai Van drew his second game on the trot with Sam Shankland of the United States, top seeded Wei Yi from China opened his account after splitting the point with Dutchman Anish Giri, and Quang Leim Le of Vietnam achieved the same result against Navara David from Czech Republic.

With seven rounds to go, Chithambaram joined Shankland in lead on 1.5 points out of two games. They are followed by Giri, Le, Dai Van, David, Keymer and Praggnanandhaa.

Ediz and Wei Yi share the last spot on a half point apiece from their two games.

On a day when world champion Boris Spassky breathed his Chithambaram's victory had traits of the Russian's style of play to go for the kill at the first opportunity and not let it slip. The Queen's gambit accepted may have a solid reputation with black pieces but the young Indian cavalry is all out

to breakout of that stereotype.

How else could one explain

Chithambaram's choice of

luxury of a dynamic centre? It was an inch-by-inch invasion that won invasion Chithambaram a pawn in the middle game and the trade of queens was later forced by the Indian to harp on the better possibilities for his troupe.

Chithambaram was quite unstoppable as he kept increasing the pressure till Keymer walked in to a lost rook and pawns endgame — it took 45 moves in all.

Praggnanandhaa has shown his ability to play all openings with either colour and his choice of French defence turned out to be a good one guaranteeing an equal game. The lone problem was to make something out of an equal

position and the 16-year old Turk proved why he is hailed as one of the brightest among young Europeans, as he gave a little away. The players signed the peace

on move 46 when it was evident the rook endgame did not offer chances for either of them. In the challengers' section

which is being held simultaneously, Divya simultaneously, Divya
Deshmukh broke out of her shackles to score an impressive victory over Richard Stalmach of Czech Republic. The adage about the King

being a strong piece in the endgame came right for Divya, even though her position oscillated between better and winning. In the end, Divya had two

connected passed pawns in the middle of the board, well aided by her marching king. The game lasted 50 moves.

Results (round 2): Vincent Keymer (GER, 1) lost to Aravindh Chithambaram (IND, 1.5); Wei Yi (CHN, 0.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 1); Nguyen Thai Dai Van (CZE, 1) drew with Sam Shankland (USA, 1.5); Gurel Ediz (TUR, 0.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (IND, 1); David Navara (CZE, 1) drew move order that gave white the with Le Quang Leim (VIE, 1).

WPL: RCB looks for victory against DC

PTI ■ BENGALURU

 $D_{\text{Royal Challengers (RCB)}}^{\text{efending}}$ Bengaluru will be determined to give their home fans a parting victory over a fatigued inconsistent, while Australian Delhi Capitals (DC) outfit veteran Ellyse Perry, despite here on Saturday, before the being in sensational touch, Women's Premier League suffered a rare failure with a (WPL) moves to Lucknow for maiden WPL duck against its third leg. RCB had begun the third

season of WPL with two wins been equally underwhelming. in Vadodara, but their Frontline pacers Renuka fortunes have nosedived since tournament caravan shifted to their home ground M Chinnaswamy here. Three consecutive defeats, including a heartbreaking loss in the Super Over to UP Warriorz,

have left them reeling. Placed third on the table and winless at home so far, RCB will be desperate to bounce back against a Delhi Capitals side facing the challenge of playing back-to-back games before the WPL heads to

Lucknow. The Meg Lanning-led Capitals will have little recovery time as they take on Mumbai Indians in a top-of-the-table clash on Friday before locking horns with RĆB the very next

day.

RCB's struggles have been glaring in both batting and bowling. Their batting unit collapsed in the defeat against Gujarat Giants on Thursday, with skipper Smriti Mandhana's form being a major concern Her 81 against major concern. Her 81 against DC remains her only notable their inconsistencies.

knock in five innings, as spin continues to be her Achilles' heel.

Her opening partner, England's Danni Wyatt-Her Hodge too has been Gujarat Giants.

The bowling department has Singh and lacked consistency, often erring in line and length.

Spinners Georgia Wareham, Ekta Bisht, and Kanika Ahuia have struggled to exert control in the crucial middle overs, compounding RCB's woes further.

Delhi Capitals, too, have endured an inconsistent campaign, with two losses sandwiched between three wins. Their batting lineup has finally started firing with Shafali Verma and Jess Jonassen finding form.

However, skipper Lanning continues to struggle at the top. Jemimah Rodrigues and Annabel Sutherland have provided occasional fireworks in the middle order, but DC will seek more consistency

from their batting unit.
In Shikha Pandey, Marizanne
Kapp, young Titas Sadhu,
Sutherland,and Minnu Mani, DC boast a formidable bowling attack, making them a dangerous opponent despite

New Zealand excited to play in different conditions: Bracewell the game against India. "The wickets here have

New Zealand off-spinner Michael Bracewell on Friday brushed aside any talks about India getting an unfair advantage in the ongoing Champions Trophy by playing all their games in Dubai, simply saying that his team was "excited to try and play in different conditions". Rohit Sharma's team is playing all its matches in Dubai, and even the final will be held here if India goes the distance.

New Zealand will be playing their first match of the tournament here - against India on Sunday – after their last two games were held in Pakistan.

Some cricketers, including South African top-order batter Rassie van der Dussen and former Australia skipper Pat Cummins, have said India are in an advantageous

The sixth edition of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT), the sport's premier league in India, will be held from May 29 to June 15 in Ahmedabad, the organisers

announced on Friday.
The state-of-the-art EKA

Arena, a venue that has staged

the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup and 2019 Intercontinental Cup (football), will be the venue for the event that will be

in Ahmedabad for the first

As UTT continues to grow,

eight teams featuring top Indian and international table

tennis stars will battle for the crown, with defending champions Goa Challengers

looking to claim a historic

begin from May 29



position as they have played all their games at one venue while other teams have had to travel to different venues in Pakistan.

India had refused to travel to Pakistan for the tournament citing security reasons. "Look, it is what it is. It's been

decided, and that's the way it is, and there's no point dwelling on that," said Bracewell, when asked if India have unfair advantage

third title. "Ultimate Table

Tennis has been instrumental

in transforming the table

in transforming the table tennis landscape in India, providing our players with an unparalleled platform to compete against top international talent," Table Tennis Federation of India Secretary Kamlesh Mehta

The upcoming season will feature eight teams split into two groups of four for the draw, with each team playing

five ties in the league stage --

facing all three opponents in their group once and two randomly drawn teams from

the other group.

The top four teams at the end will advance to the knockout rounds, leading to the grand

finale on June 15.

"It's part of what makes it exciting. I personally think it's coming to a different ground and trying to figure different those conditions. Yeah, not much more to say on that other than we're excited to try and learn and play in different conditions," added the 34-year-old off-spinner.

The New Zealander opined that the pitches here would aid spin and it would be a good idea to train hard before

Ruud

Nistelrooy's team 2-0.
Leicester failed to score in each of those defeats — and

allowed a total of 12 goals -

to remain 19th in the

standings, five points from safety. The Foxes have lost 11 of their past 12 league

Tomas Soucek scored in the

21st minute for the home

team at London Stadium

and the Hammers doubled

the lead when Jarrod Bowen's strike deflected off

Jannik Vestergaard for an own goal just before halftime. Leicester shook up

its coaching staff after last Friday's 4-0 home loss to

PTI ■ LONDON

beating

games.

looked like they've taken a bit of a spin. So, it'll be good to try and get used to the wickets as quickly as we can. We've obviously enjoyed the pitches in Pakistan. "And I think we've got a pretty well-balanced side to

play in any condition. So hopefully, we can continue to do that and adjust to what's in front of us. I think that's been the strength of our side, adjusting to the surface. So, hopefully, we continue to do that as a side," he added. He said New Zealand doing consistently well against India in ICC tournaments was because of his players not

putting themselves under pressure. New Zealand inflicted recently humiliating 3-0 Test defeat on India, becoming the first touring side to seal a series win in India in 13 years.

UTT sixth season to West Ham beats Leicester in Premier League West Ham handed relegation-threatened Leicester its fourth straight Premier League loss by



Brentford but kept Van Nistelrooy in charge. In 14 Premier League games under the Dutch manager,

Leicester has two wins, one draw and 11 losses. "We were way too passive," Van Nistelrooy told TNT Sports. "Of course we're in a situation where we're not winning games and we're in a situation where we are in the bottom three, and the pressure's on. But I think the way to get out of it is to literally move forward — on the pitch as well. We have to take initiative."

West Ham moved past Everton into 15th place and has recorded back-to-back Premier League wins for the

first time this season.

Graham Potter, who replaced the fired Julen Lopetegui as manager seven weeks ago, said Thursday's victory was a "professional performance," following up from a 1-0 victory at Arsenal last Saturday. "For us, we're just delighted

with two wins, two clean sheets and six points," he said of the mini-run.

Champions Trophy: South Africa eyes semifinal spot against England

As the battle for the semifinals intensifies in Group B, top-ranked South Africa will aim to assert their dominance and secure a spot in the final four when they face a struggling England in a high-stakes Champions Trophy (CT)

Unlike Group A wherein two best sides – India and New Zealand – have sailed through with ease into the knockouts, Australia, Afghanistan and South Africa in Group B are locked in for an intense battle over the two days for the remaining two semifinal

clash here on Saturday.

berths. the contest being affected by rain, a win for Afghanistan will

England out of the contention for the semifinals but also kept the Asian team's hopes alive of making to the final four, which has kept both South Africa and Australia on tenterhooks. Afghanistan will take on Australia on Friday in Lahore

riding on the big wave of confidence from their last outing between the two teams in the 50-over format. The Afghans had pushed Australia to the brink in their last meeting in the 2023 ODI World Cup before Glenn Maxwell's sensational 201 not

out turned the tables. While there are possibilities of

Afghanistan not only sent be enough for them to seal a spot in the semifinal, as Australia's defeat will leave the Steve Smith-led side locked in for a battle with South Africa for the second and final spot from this group. South Africa (3 points, 2.140

NRR) are likely to progress if Australia (3 points, 0.475 NRR) beat Afghanistan (2 points, 0.990 NRR), even if the Proteas lose to England because of their healthy NRR. A favourable result should not

be too difficult for South Africa who have all their bases covered and more importantly, have their key players in-form compared to a misfiring England, who are overly dependent on Joe Root.



In their only completed contest so far — South Africa split points with Australia after a washout in Rawalpindi — the Proteas had crushed hit a half-century each to to find consistency against a Afghanistan by a massive 107 power South Africa to a hurting England who will be

runs. Ryan Rickelton struck a century while skipper Temba Bavuma, Rassie van der Dussen and Aiden Markram formidable 315/6 batting first, following which the bowlers produced a unified show to bundle out Afghanistan for a

While on-paper, South Africa are a formidable unit and have been the team to beat in recent ICC events, their overall form over the last one year or so doesn't inspire confidence as South Africa have lost eight of their last 12 ODIs and won only four since January 2024. South Africa had also failed to

make the tri-seires final in Pakistan also involving New Zealand, prior to the Champions Trophy, and Bavuma's side will be required

determined to sign off on a high. Barring Root, England do not inspire much confidence as they are amid a losing streak which began with a 0-3 hammering by India before this tournament.

Root's 120 was the only bright spot for England against Afghanistan as the venerable batter was the only one to convert his start and show the promise to do the job for his side, which ideally should have been completed but the 2019 World Cup winners lacked the gumption. England, who had begun the

tournament with a defeat to Australia, are likely to go through changes in terms of leadership but before all that

unfolds, Jos Buttler would be keen to rally his troops around for one final laugh. Teams (from): England: Jos Buttler (c), Jofra

Archer, Gus Atkinson, Tom Banton, Harry Brook, Rehan Ahmed, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Jamie Smith, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Saqib Mahmood, Phil Salt, Mark Wood. South Africa: Temba Bavuma

(c), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen, Corbin

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