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## Stalin advise more kids to counter delimitation in TN



Stalin has claimed a higher population would ensure more MPs as delimitation will be population-based PTI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHENNAI/NEW DELHI**

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Monday favoured young people having children immediately following marriage and said a higher population appeared to be the criterion to get more MPs. Addressing a wedding in Nagapattinam in the state, Stalin, also the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president said that years ago, newlyweds were advised to not have children immediately following marriage. However, the same thing must not be advised now and also there was no need for that. "It is because a situation has now arisen, according to which only a higher population would ensure more MPs as the delimitation exercise would be on the basis of population," Stalin

said. Tamil Nadu paid attention to population control and succeeded and that was the reason for the state's plight today, he added. "I will not tell you to not have children hastily, have children immediately; but give them beautiful Tamil names," he said, directly appealing to the bride and bridegroom. Further, he said that the question of delimitation is related to Tamil Nadu's rights and protecting its interests and hence, the matter must not be evaluated politically. The union government is planning to implement the three-language policy through compulsion and similarly in the delimitation exercise, it is attempting to cut down the number of seats for Tamil Nadu, Stalin alleged, addressing the function here. Against this background an all party

meeting has been organised on March 5 on the proposed delimitation exercise and most parties out of 40 have confirmed their participation and a few others have said they would not be taking part. Appealing to such parties, the chief minister said they should not evaluate the issue through the prism of politics. BJP and former Union Minister G K Vaasan led TMC (Moopanar) were the key parties that have said they would not take part in the meeting. "I would like to appeal to them, please give a thought to it, this is not an issue between the DMK and your party." The issue is all about Tamil Nadu and its interests and rights and hence parties that have declared that they would not take part should also participate, he appealed. Stalin recently escalated the ongoing language row between Centre and State, responding to Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's call to "rise above politics". Stalin reaffirmed the State's commitment to its two-language policy and cautioned the Centre against "throwing stones at a beehive". The DMK government in TN and BJP led NDA government at Centre have been at loggerheads over the implementation of New Education Policy (NEP) in the state. Stalin blamed Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for doing politics in education. Pradhan advised Stalin after the latter wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi opposing the linking of two centrally sponsored programmes with the NEP. The education minister asked the Tamil Nadu chief minister to rise above political differences and "think about the interests of the young learners". Stalin has refused to implement the NEP and three-language policy, involving the necessity of Hindi, asking the Centre to not "impose" the language.

## SC issues rider to Allahbadia on airing podcast

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia to air his "The Ranveer Show" subject to maintaining "morality and decency" and an undertaking that it was suitable for all ages. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh took note of Allahbadia's submission that the podcast was his only source of livelihood and around 280 people employed by him were dependent on the show. The bench also extended the interim protection from arrest granted to Allahbadia till further orders, while asking him to join investigation in Guwahati. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and states like Maharashtra, Assam and Odisha, said the comments made on the contentious YouTube show "India's Got Latent" was not only vulgar but perverse and urged the court not to modify the condition of not airing any show. "Let him remain silent for sometime," he said. The bench told senior advocate Abhinav Chandrachud, who was representing Allahbadia, that fundamental rights were not (served) on a platter and came with certain restrictions. Justice Surya Kant pointed out one of the accused in the case went to Canada and spoke on the case. "These youngsters may think that we are outdated but we know how to deal with them. Don't take the court lightly," the judge cautioned. The bench subsequently restrained Allahbadia from speaking anything related to the case on his show. The Centre in the meantime was directed to come up with a draft regulatory mechanism on social media content, which should be put in public domain aside from gathering suggestions from all stakeholders. The bench, however, refused to allow him to travel abroad for now and said his prayer would be considered once he joined the investigation in the case.

Continued on page 8

## Wheels of justice arrive after death



Shahzadi Khan (L) pictured here when she was alive; her father Shabbir Khan (R) speaks to press after her execution X/PTI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

An Indian woman on death row in Abu Dhabi for the alleged murder of a four-month-old child has already been executed on February 15, the Delhi High Court hearing her father's plea about her well-being was informed on Monday. On being informed about the development, Justice Sachin Datta termed it "very unfortunate". "It is over. She was executed on February 15. Her last rites will be held on March 5," Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma told the court. The submission was made in a hearing on a petition by the 33-year-old woman's father seeking to know her well-being. Shahzadi Khan was handed over to the Abu Dhabi police on February 10, 2023 and she was sentenced to death on July 31, 2023. She was lodged in the Al Wathba jail. Shabbir Khan, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Banda, said there was "profound uncertainty" regarding his daughter Shahzadi's situation and his repeated applications to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for clarification were fruitless. The plea further alleged that Shahzadi was inadequately represented before the local courts in the case over the alleged murder of her employer's four-month-old child and she was pressured into confessing, leading to the

imposition of the death penalty on her. During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel said his limited prayer was to know whether his daughter was alive or she had been hanged. He said on February 14, Shahzadi had called the family from the prison saying that she would be executed in a day or two and this would be her last call. Since then, they were unaware of her well-being, he said. The Centre's counsel told the court that the Embassy officials and the petitioner were in touch and arrangements were being made so that the family could attend their daughter's last rites in Abu Dhabi. "We did our best. We hired a law firm there to represent her in court. But the laws there deal with the murder of an infant very severely," he submitted. The petitioner said, "On February 14, 2025, the petitioner's daughter telephoned him from detention, informing him that she had been relocated within the facility and that, prior to her potential execution, her final wish was to speak with her parents." "The petitioner, with considerable effort, submitted an application dated February 21, 2025 to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking to ascertain the current legal status of his daughter and confirm whether she remains alive or has been executed," it added.

Continued on page 8



Indian cricket captain Rohit Sharma; Congress spokesperson Shama Mohamed PTI

## Congress in pickle over fat shaming

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Congress was left reeling after its national spokesperson Shama Mohamed stirred controversy with her remarks on Indian cricket captain Rohit Sharma, calling him "fat for a sportsman" and the "most unimpressive" captain in India's history. As the post triggered widespread backlash, the party quickly intervened, asking her to delete it but still then the remarks drew backlash from many, including BJP leaders. Her remarks came amid the Indian cricket team's undefeated run at the ongoing Champions Trophy.

While Congress asserted that Shama Mohamed's remarks about the cricketing legend do not reflect the party's position, BJP leader and Delhi minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said it was shameful that an official spokesperson of the a leading national party gave such a statement. "This is Congress' statement. They feel that only one person is fit for everything and that is former party chief Rahul Gandhi," Sirsa said. "They are so against the country that today they are using abusive language against our country's cricket captain. I don't know what they mean by this. It is really shameful and I condemn this. The entire nation is seeing the mentality of the Congress," he said.

Continued on page 8

## No ban on smartphones in schools: HC

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

In a significant ruling, the Delhi High Court refused to ban children from bringing smartphones to school saying that such an approach is neither practical nor desirable. The court clarified in its decision that the use of smartphones does not negatively impact teaching, discipline, or the overall educational environment in the classroom. The ruling came on a writ petition (W.P.(C) 15191/2023) filed by a minor student through legal representatives, against Kendriya Vidyalaya, Sector-05, Dwarka, New Delhi and other respondents. Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani pointed out that technology has become an essential part of education, making a total ban on smartphones unrealistic. The court also noted that smartphones help students stay connected with their parents, adding to their safety and security. At the same time, the court acknowledged the risks of excessive screen time, social media exposure, and misuse of smartphones. Instead of banning them outright, the focus should be on responsible usage, it said. The petitioner challenged certain actions taken by the school due to alleged misuse of a smartphone on school premises. The petition filed this petition seeking directions to Kendriya Vidyalaya on permitting use of smartphones. During the course of hearing, Kendriya Vidyalaya requested the Court to frame guidelines on use of smartphones in schools. To ensure classroom teaching discipline, the court has recommended that the "use of smartphones in class must be prohibited" and the "use of cameras and recording facility on smartphones should also be barred in the common areas of the school as well as in school vehicles." The court order prescribes that "schools must educate students on responsible online behaviour, digital manners, and the ethical use of smartphones" and that students must be counselled that high levels of screen time and social media engagement can lead to anxiety, diminished attention spans, and cyber-bullying. The policy should permit use of smartphones for connectivity for purposes of safety and coordination but disallow the use of smartphones for entertainment/recreational use;

Continued on page 8

## Omar dismiss BJP alliance



J and K CM Omar Abdullah during the first day of the Budget session of the State Assembly PTI

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**

Dispelling political grapevine centered around fresh political realignment in Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Monday clarified that there are currently no plans for an alliance with the ruling party in the Centre. "We are not talking about any alliance (with the BJP); neither is there any scope nor the need. Our thoughts also do not align," Omar said on day one of the Budget session of J and K Assembly. If we talk about J and K, our thoughts are vastly different... We will hold discussions on everything

(during the session)," he asserted. On the other hand, unsparing Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chief Mehbooba Mufti Monday accused the Omar Abdullah-led National Conference (NC) government of acting as an extension of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state. The former chief minister suggested that the NC was attempting to legitimise the BJP's actions over the past six years, including the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Addressing media persons in Srinagar, Mufti said Omar says how he will get it (Article 370) from the BJP. When BJP could talk on abrogating Article 370 for 70 years, at least you (Omar) can speak on this and say this was done illegally," she said. She said that people voted for Omar Abdullah hoping the government would address issues of disempowerment, as well as concerns over property, minerals, and jobs. "I did not expect miracles from the NC in four months, but at least they should have raised their voice on such issues," she said. Mufti said that besides Article 370 and statehood restoration, several issues were being faced by the public.

Continued on page 8

## Indian dolphins thrive away from humans in Ganga

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The first population estimation of riverine dolphins in India has revealed the presence of 6,324 dolphins in the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Indus River systems, according to a government report published on Monday. The Ganges River dolphin, known for its unique features, is found in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system and its tributaries across India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. A small population of the Indus river dolphin, a close relative of the Ganges river dolphin, is found in the Indus River system in India. As part of "Project Dolphin", a comprehensive survey was conducted for the first time to



estimate the population of river dolphins across eight states — Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam and Punjab. It is one of the world's largest freshwater surveys, covering the entire range of the Ganges river dolphin in the Ganga and Brahmaputra, as well as the Indus river dolphin in the

Beas river, according to the report "Population Status of River Dolphin in India". The survey estimated 6,324 Ganges river dolphins (range: 5,977-6,688) and three Indus river dolphins. The findings suggest that dolphins thrive in areas with adequate water depth and minimal human disturbances, it said. Prime Minister Narendra

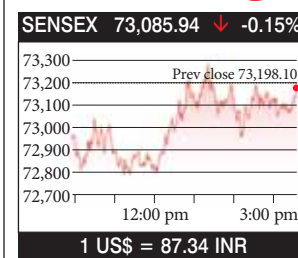
Modi announced Project Dolphin on August 15, 2020, to conserve dolphins and other aquatic ecosystems. Monitoring dolphin populations is crucial for conservation, especially for river dolphins, which have a slow growth rate and live in some of the world's most threatened habitats. The survey covering over 8,000 km was conducted from 2021 to 2023. It included eight states -- along the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers and their tributaries, as well as the Beas river. During the survey, 58 rivers were assessed. Of these, 28 rivers were actively surveyed by boat, while 30 were studied through road surveys, focusing on locations where the Ganges river dolphin had been historically reported.

## A WILD ENCOUNTER



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a lion safari at the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary on the occasion of the World Wildlife Day in Gujarat's Junagadh district PTI

## MARKETS



## WEATHER



## Mayawati expels nephew, after clipping his wings

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW**

In a major political development, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati expelled Akash Anand from the party, days after stripping him of all key responsibilities, including the post of National Coordinator. Announcing her decision, Mayawati stated that during BSP's All-India meeting yesterday, Akash Anand was relieved of his responsibilities due to prioritising personal interests over the party. She alleged that he remained heavily influenced by his father-in-law Ashok Siddharth, which led to his removal from the post of National Coordinator and other key roles. Mayawati emphasised that Akash had the opportunity to demonstrate maturity and remorse over this decision. However, she accused him of reacting in a manner that reflected arrogance, selfishness, and a non-missionary mindset, heavily influenced by his father-in-law. "I have always advised and punished such individuals in the party who allow personal influences to overshadow the BSP's ideology. Therefore, in the interest of Dr BR Ambedkar's self-respect movement and to uphold the discipline established by Kanshi Ram, Akash Anand is being expelled from the party, just like his father-in-law," Mayawati stated.

Continued on page 8



# Yogi orders immediate FIR against Ansal Grp

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Taking strict cognisance of the Ansal Group case in Lucknow, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered immediate registration of an FIR against the company. Emphasising the protection of homebuyers interests, he vowed strict action against those accountable. During a review meeting on Monday of the Housing and Urban Planning Department, the chief minister emphasised that the Ansal Group's fraudulent practices against homebuyers will not be tolerated. He instructed officials to take strong action against all responsible officers of the company. To ensure justice for those affected, Chief Minister Yogi directed that FIRs be lodged in

all districts where similar cases against Ansal Group have surfaced, following the pattern observed in Lucknow. Additionally, he instructed the formation of a committee comprising the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) and aggrieved buyers, ensuring that strong evidence is presented in court. This, he noted, will facilitate strict legal action and make it easier for the court to hold the Ansal Group accountable. During the meeting, officials informed the chief minister that the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal had passed a unilateral order without notifying the LDA and the Housing Department. Expressing strong displeasure, Chief Minister Yogi directed the authorities to file an appeal in

the wider public interest against the decision. While reviewing the Housing and Urban Planning Department's progress, Chief Minister Yogi directed officials to take immediate action on all pending cases and expedite their resolution. During the meeting, the chief minister also assessed the operational status of Kanpur Metro, Lucknow Metro and Agra Metro, along with updates on ongoing corridor construction. He instructed officials to accelerate project execution to ensure timely completion. On this occasion, Chief Minister Yogi reviewed the progress of the one-trillion-dollar economy roadmap and key action points related to its implementation. This includes the establishment of 100 new townships, digitisation of administrative processes, fast-tracking property disposals, and ensuring land availability for the development of 100 hotels and 100 hospitals. He further stressed that construction quality must never be compromised and cautioned against unplanned urbanisation. To tackle urban slum challenges, he directed the development authority and Housing Development Board to develop high-quality residential facilities, parks, and gyms in these areas. He also urged them to contribute to urban development and, if necessary, construct high-rise buildings to optimise space and enhance living standards.

# Man sentenced to one-year RI, ₹10,000 fine for possession of ganja

Lucknow (PNS): A court sentenced one year of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000 to an accused, Annu Jaiswal, who was found guilty of the offence under Section 8/20 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The accused was arrested by Krishna Nagar police for possessing ganja. Special Public Prosecutor Prakash Srivastava stated that in the event of non-payment of the fine, the accused will face an additional three months imprisonment. He mentioned that the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge, Special Judge (NDPS Act), Arun Kumar Rai, delivered the order after hearing the case. Srivastava explained that according to the NDPS Act, a small quantity of ganja is considered 1000 grams, and a commercial quantity is 20 kg. One kg of ganja was recovered from the possession of the accused, which falls under the category of small quantity. "Therefore, considering the facts and circumstances of the case, the accused Annu Jaiswal was sentenced to the aforementioned punishment," he said. The prosecutor added that the period already spent by the accused in jail in relation to this case will be accounted for in the sentence. "The recovered goods will be disposed of in accordance with the rules after the expiry of the appeal period, or in the event of an appeal, as per the order of the court," he added.

# Govt steps up efforts to tackle urban flooding

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has stepped up efforts to address the issue of urban flooding well in advance. The Urban Development Department has been directed to focus on modern drainage technology, flood prevention measures, and strengthening of riverbanks to mitigate waterlogging and flood risks. As part of this initiative, modern drainage systems are being developed in key municipal corporations, including Lucknow, Mathura, Meerut, Ghaziabad and Shahjahanpur. To support this effort, the government has allocated Rs 750 crore, which will be utilised for drainage system upgrades, redevelopment of existing drains, and new construction in these cities. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath recently held a meeting to improve the drainage system and flood control measures in

cities. During the discussion, he directed the Urban Development Department and Jal Nigam to strengthen sewage and drainage systems, ensure regular cleaning of drains, promote rainwater harvesting, and set up new pumping stations to prevent waterlogging. According to officials, under the Smart City Mission, drainage systems are being modernised to reduce flooding. Special projects are also being implemented in Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Varanasi and Gorakhpur to tackle urban flooding. In these cities, drainage channels are being digitised for real-time monitoring and quick response in emergencies. To support these efforts, Chief Minister Yogi has released Rs 733 crore for developing the drainage system in Lucknow, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Mathura and Shahjahanpur. In Lucknow, Rs 193.73 crore has been set aside for redevelopment of the

Qila Mohammadi drain, covering a 10.571 km-long drainage system, benefiting 2.5 lakh people. Additionally, Geetapalli drain will be diverted with a 4.435 km-long RCC drainage line, costing Rs 112.47 crore, which will benefit five lakh people. In Meerut, Rs 156.79 crore has been allocated for the construction of the Oden drain, covering an 18.33 sq km area and benefiting 4.35 lakh people. Ghaziabad will see the construction of the Shahberi drain at a cost of Rs 132.65 crore, solving the waterlogging issue for 3.9 lakh people. In Mathura, Rs 89.71 crore will be spent on the Bhuteshwar to Ambakhar drain project, benefiting 75,000 residents. Meanwhile, in Shahjahanpur, Rs 47.75 crore is being spent to improve drainage from Roza Adda to Damah Puliy, ensuring better water management for the city.

# Highest domestic package ₹75 LPA at IIM-L final placement drive

Lucknow (PNS): The Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow (IIM-L) has concluded its final placements for the 39th batch of its Post-Graduate Programme (PGP) and the 20th batch of the Post-Graduate Programme in Agribusiness Management (PGP-ABM). Over 600 offers were extended to 570 students, with roles across consulting, finance, general management, product management, sales & marketing, operations & retail, and e-commerce. The highest domestic package reached Rs 75 LPA, while the highest international package was Rs 65 LPA. The average salary offered stood at Rs 32.3 LPA. Chairperson of Student Affairs and Placement, IIM-L, Prof. Priyanka Sharma, attributed the success to the unique curriculum, combining theoretical and practical experiences to prepare students to exceed industry expectations. She expressed optimism about the future as the economy recovers. The hybrid format recruitment drive involved over 180 domestic and international recruiters, including renowned companies like Accenture, Amazon, Bain & Company, Deloitte, Goldman Sachs, McKinsey & Company, Microsoft, PwC, Tata Administrative Services, and Zomato. In addition, several first-time recruiters such as Ather Energy, BPL, DBS Bank, GMR Group, and Walmart also participated.

**CLASSIFIED**

**सूचना**  
मेरी पुत्री YUVIKA YADAV का नाम जन्म प्रमाणपत्र में ANVI YADAV दर्ज है, जो गलत है। मेरी पुत्री का सही नाम YUVIKA YADAV है। जिसे जन्म प्रमाणपत्र में दर्ज किया जा। शिविक कुमर पुत्र नाम अपार निवासी मक़आदम, देवगलपुर, प्रयागराज।

**NOTICE**  
I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM SANDEEP TO SANDEEP KAUR. SANDEEP KAUR W/O GURPAL SINGH Add:- 120/900 RANJIT NAGAR KANPUR

**NOTICE**  
I, Rahul Raj Khanna, son of Tilak Raj Khanna, residing at 613P-4kh, 261, 262, Faizullaganj, 2 Gaurabheet, Lucknow - 226020, U.P. have lost my daughter Ishita Khanna's High School Certificate (2023, Unique ID: 7969977). If found, please return it to the above address or send it by post. Contact: 9598290000

**NOTICE**  
It is informed that Shri Mohammad Shaban Khan s/o Abdul Shakur Khan resident of village Haladharaman, Pargana Pahadapur, Tehsil Colonelganj, District Gonda, registered deed document of land number 202/1.0150, Village Gaurava Khurd, Tehsil Coloneganj, Gonda Receipt Deed No. 14176, dated 30/11/2018, jild No. 6021, Page No. 277-294, recorded at serial number 14176 and Bainama number 11716, Gata No. 202/1.0150, village Gaurava Khurd, Tehsil Coloneganj Gonda, dated 15/09/2018, jild No. 5901, page number 33-94, recored at serial number 11716. Both these original documents have been lost anywhere by Shri Shatrohan Goswami s/o Shri Devishankar Goswami resident of village Tikwar Coloneganj, Gonda. Even after much searching, it has not been found. If someone finds it, please inform at mobile number 9517610680.

**NOTICE**  
I have changed my son's name from Yuvaan Verma to Agastya Verma for all future purposes. Arpit Verma R/o- 21, Gandhi Gram, G T Road Kanpur -208007

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
NOTICE is hereby given that, Sri Ajeet Jain S/o Late Suparas Nath Jain has informed that the Original Sale Deed dated 11.2.1899 duly registered at Serial No. 234 on 13.2.1899 of the property i.e. House No. 46/151 Halsey Road, Kanpur Nagar had been totally destroyed by termite and at present there is no residues of the papers had been in the custody of present owners. He along with other co-owners is intended to sell the said property to Sri Shammji Sonker, Sri Anthony Sonker, Sri Sarvesh Kumar Sonker and Sri Ritesh Sonker and they will mortgage the said property in favour of PNB Halsey Road Branch. As the PNB Halsey Road Branch is going to grant finance facility to said Sri Shammji Sonker, Sri Anthony Sonker, Sri Sarvesh Kumar Sonker and Sri Ritesh Sonker collaterally securing this facility by creation of Equitable Mortgage over property. The Punjab National Bank Halsey Road Branch Kanpur Nagar intend to create Equitable Mortgage in respect of the above mentioned properties, details which are given in the notice. Any person claiming any interest or title in the property or otherwise having any objection can make representation to the Bank within Seven days of such notice.

Vinay Awasthi Advocate  
Chamber No. A-1, Gate No. 4  
Near Registrar Office, Civil Court  
Compound, Kanpur Nagar-208001  
Mobile: 9044717199

**NOTICE**  
I am Kamala Kant, resident of Village and post Sarai Raghav, police station Lonar, Tehsil Sawaijpur, district Hardoi, with army number 15148664M. My daughter's name has been recorded as NANSI in the army records, which is wrong. Whereas my daughter's name is NANCY DIXIT in the educational records, which is correct. I have changed this through affidavit number CR 97847.

**NOTICE**  
It is informed to the general public that my name has been erroneously written as Nowshaba Zahid in some forms. Whereas the real name is Nowshaba which is also written in the Aadhar card. My correct name should be written as Nowshaba and I should be known by this name. Nowshaba wife of Irshad Husain resident 386/11, Rustam Nagar Dargah Hazrat Abbas Road, Lucknow.

**NOTICE**  
I, Om Prakash Sharma son of Samay deen Prasad resident of 3/1402, Jankipuram Vistar Lucknow-226021, My Son's name in the Academic Records is Harsh Sharma. I have changed the name of my son from Aryan Sharma to Harsh Sharma. My son's name should be mentioned as HARSH SHARMA in all the records.

**NOTICE**  
I, LEELA, spouse of Ex MWO Jitesh Chandra Sarkar resident of 223-D Block, Shyam Nagar, Kanpur-208013 have changed my name from LEELA to LEELA SARKAR vide Affidavit dated 28.02.2025 at Kanpur

**NOTICE**  
I, KHALAQ and Iqbal Ahmad, S/o Haji Abdul Wahid, 34/12 Jui Lal Colony, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur. Both names belong to me. From now on, I should be recognized by the name Iqbal Ahmad. Iqbal Ahmad, S/O Haji Abdul Wahid, 34/12, Jui Lal Colony, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur.

**NOTICE**  
My son's name Abhay Pratap Singh Sengar has been wrongly recorded in my army service record. Whereas the name in all the records is Abhay Pratap Singh. Which has to be corrected by affidavit number IN-UP25964551509688X, dated 1 March 2025. JC 453919X Naib Subedar Yogendra Singh Sengar

# Foot replantation surgery performed at KGMU

Lucknow (PNS): The plastic surgery department at King George's Medical University (KGMU) has successfully performed a complex foot replantation surgery on a 30-year-old patient who suffered a traumatic amputation, officials said. Dilip Kumar, from Barabanki, was involved in an accident on February 19, while detaching a potato harvester from his tractor. The harvester ran over his left foot, resulting in a complete amputation at the mid-foot level. He received initial treatment at the District Hospital in Barabanki, where his amputated foot was preserved in ice, and was then referred to KGMU Trauma Centre, officials said. Upon arrival, the patient was evaluated by the plastic surgery team. Despite the injury involving crush damage, he arrived within the critical "golden period," making reattachment viable. The patient was admitted under the plastic and reconstructive surgery Team-B at KGMU, led by Prof Brijesh Mishra. The surgery lasted seven hours and involved microvascular repair, bone fixation, and soft tissue reconstruction. The procedure was completed successfully, and the patient is stable and recovering well, officials added.



KGMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Soniya Nityanand congratulated the team for their expertise, emphasising the medical university's commitment to advanced trauma care and reconstructive surgery. Meanwhile, KGMU's anaesthesia and critical care department, in collaboration with the Airway Management Foundation (AMF), organised the AMF Airway Workshop 2025. The workshop focused on life-saving airway management techniques. Over two days, participants were introduced to advanced methods, emphasising that new techniques could significantly improve patient outcomes. A senior doctor explained that fiberoptic bronchoscopy is crucial for patients with jaw

injuries, as it allows for tube insertion through the nose, avoiding the risk of jaw damage. The device, equipped with a camera, offers a clear view of the airway and can be connected to a monitor. The importance of video laryngoscopy was also discussed, highlighting its role in providing a clear view of the airway path, aiding in the removal of blockages like fluid or blood clots, and ensuring quick oxygen delivery to prevent brain injury in critical patients. Challenges in tube insertion and removal were addressed, particularly for patients with obesity, short necks, or those who have undergone mouth or neck surgery. These patients are at risk of complications if materials enter the respiratory tract.

# RPF DG lauds combined efforts for Kumbh journey

Lucknow (PNS): Director General of the Railway Protection Force, Railway Board (New Delhi), Manoj Yadav, on Monday stated that the successful journey of pilgrims to the Maha Kumbh 2025 was made possible by the combined efforts of RPF, GRP, police personnel, frontline karmayogis, and railway staff. "A total of 17,152 trains were operated, including 7,667 special trains and 9,485 regular trains, ensuring smooth and efficient travel for the pilgrims," he said. The DG held a review meeting with senior officers from the Railway Protection Force of North Eastern Railway and Northern Railway Lucknow divisions in the state capital. Yadav chaired the 'Security Conference' with RPF members and discussed in detail issues relating to crimes involving passengers and railway property, their prevention, and the safety of passengers and rail infrastructure. Yadav expressed his gratitude to the railway minister for his guidance and mentioned that Indian Railways had provided services far beyond its initial operational plan during the mega event. He also thanked railway personnel for ensuring uninterrupted round-the-clock service to pilgrims throughout the event.

# Evolving consumer preferences fuel demand for organic products

Lucknow (PNS): After the COVID-19 pandemic, food habits in India and across the world have undergone a significant transformation. According to a recent report by Germany's Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), three out of four people now prefer regional flavours, considering them to be of higher quality. This growing trend has prompted many renowned companies to focus on locality with diversity, catering to consumer demand for authentic, regionally sourced food products. This evolving trend presents a strong opportunity to advance the vision of 'Vocal for Local' and 'Local to Global', particularly in agriculture and food processing. Uttar Pradesh, with its rich agricultural diversity and natural/organic farming practices, stands to benefit immensely. Notably, many products under the state's One District, One Product (ODOP) initiative, launched seven years ago, are linked to agriculture - such as Siddharthnagar's Kala Namak rice, jaggery of Muzaffarnagar and Ayodhya, Kushinagar's bananas, and Pratappgarh's amla. ODOP has been one of the Yogi Adityanath government's most successful initiatives, and the state's strong focus on natural and organic farming further reinforces this momentum.

From seed to market, farmers adopting these practices receive consistent government support. Given the shifting food preferences nationwide and globally, Uttar Pradesh's farmers are well-positioned to capitalise on this transformation, strengthening their presence in both domestic and international markets. According to Innova Marketing Research, a leading firm specialising in food trends and consumer behaviour, health has emerged as the most influential factor in food choices post-COVID-19. Consumers are now more conscious not only of taste but also of the nutritional content - calories, fiber, minerals and vitamins - of what they consume. This heightened awareness has led to a surge in demand for fresh vegetables, seasonal fruits and other nutrient-rich foods. As a result, many companies have been compelled to reduce sugar, fat and sodium content in their products to align with evolving consumer preferences. Dr Tripti Dubey Yadav, senior gynecologist and obstetrician at Apollo Hospital, Navi Mumbai, emphasises that with rising education and economic growth, health awareness will continue to expand. In a predominantly agricultural country like India, this shift naturally fuels the demand for organic products.

# Govt has given representation to all sections in appointment of VCs in universities: Min

Lucknow (PTI): Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Minister Yogendra Upadhyay on Monday said in the Legislative Assembly that despite having no provision of reservation in the appointment of Vice Chancellors of state universities, the state government has given representation to all sections in the appointments. However, alleging discrimination against backward classes, and minorities in the appointments of Vice Chancellors and other posts in the state university, members of Samajwadi Party (SP) walked out of the House. Raising the matter during the Zero Hour, Samajwadi Party's Sangram Yadav alleged that the government is discriminating

against backward classes, Dalits and minorities in the appointments in various state universities. He demanded that all the appointments made in the state universities during the tenure of the present government should be investigated impartially because the UP government is making appointments arbitrarily to benefit certain sections by ignoring deserving candidates and in collusion with the Vice Chancellors. This is a serious issue, therefore a two-hour discussion should be allowed on this in the House, Yadav said. SP's Dr RK Verma alleged irregularities in the appointments in various universities. Upadhyay, while responding to this, said that SP members are

creating confusion in the House. He said, "There is no provision of reservation in the selection of Vice Chancellors, but still the government has made appointments in accordance with the motto of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' and these appointments have been made by the Chancellor i.e. the Governor." Upadhyay also said, "The concerns expressed by both the SP members will be sent to the Chancellor's office and a request will be made to take a decision after proper investigation." He said, "Both the (SP) members in the House alleged that backward, Dalit and minorities are ignored in other appoint-

ments made in the university. It is to be informed that in Lucknow University, a selection committee is formed through advertisement to fill the reserved posts by the government, in which members from all classes including Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Backward Class, Women and Minority class are nominated as per the rules. These members are present in the process of selection of teachers. Thus, this process is transparent." Upadhyay also urged the Presiding Officer of the House Pankaj Singh not to accept the notice of adjournment motion, and Pankaj Singh rejected it, following which some SP members walked out of the House in protest.

# Village head, son booked for assaulting Dalit workers

Bhadohi (PTI): A village head and his son were booked here for allegedly assaulting Dalit labourers and stopping them from laying a pipeline under the government's Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, police said on Monday. Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhimanyu Manglik said that the incident occurred on February 28 in the Dalit settle-

ment of Tulsi Chak village, where several labourers were digging earth to lay a pipeline. Village head Lalji Yadav and his son Pankaj Yadav allegedly confronted the workers, demanding to know who had authorised the work. "When the labourers told them that the excavation was being carried out on an official order,

the village head and his son insisted that the work be stopped. While some workers halted their activities, Ravish Kumar Gautam, Ajay Kumar, and Shiv Chand continued digging," Manglik said. Angered by this, the accused snatched the workers' tools and used them as weapons to assault the three, he said.

Following a complaint from Ravish Kumar Gautam, a case was registered on Sunday at the City Kotwali Police Station against Lalji Yadav and Pankaj Yadav under BNS along with provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, including Sections 3(1)(d) and 3(1)(g).

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Reference: No./CSMC/2025/57 dated: 03/02/2025  
Tender notice for Development of Project for Sports Complex and Commercial Shops under P.G.3 at TV Centre N10 in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar Municipal Corporation on Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) Basis. Situated at Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar. Tender ID 2025\_AMCA\_1145331\_1, Dated 03/02/2025 Published in daily news papers and also on [www.mahatenders.gov.in](http://www.mahatenders.gov.in) As per the above reference Schedule of bid opening process of last date of submission 28/02/2025 is changed and extended to 10/03/2024 upto 16.00 hrs is considered. Schedule of Opening of Technical Bid, and for further details will be published on [www.mahatenders.gov.in](http://www.mahatenders.gov.in) portal. Rest of the conditions remains unchanged.

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# Acted swiftly to prevent panic after Kumbh stampede: Yogi

PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said his government acted swiftly to control the situation after the January 29 stampede at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, ensuring timely medical aid for victims while preventing widespread panic.



Addressing a gathering of Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and Indian Postal Service officials in Lucknow on Monday, Adityanath said, "We did not allow the incident to be excessively highlighted as eight crore devotees and sadhus were present in Prayagraj and the Kumbh Mela area at the time and panic could have worsened the situation."

At least 30 people were killed and 60 others injured in the stampede at the Sangam ghat on Mauni Amavasya, a key bathing day of the Maha Kumbh.

Adityanath noted that apart from millions of devotees, seers and sadhus from 13 Akhadhas were also scheduled to take the ritualistic 'Amrit Snan' (holy dip) that morning. He explained that two major challenges often arise in such events — determining the bathing order among the Akharas, which has historically led to disputes and ensuring the ritual proceeds smoothly at the scheduled time of 4 am.

Despite the tragedy, all Akhadhas were prepared to go ahead with the *snan*, but the administration intervened to postpone the event.

"I personally requested them to delay the ritual to manage the situation," Adityanath said, adding that officials closely monitored the crowd, evacuated the Sangam area by noon, and ensured the *snan* resumed by 2:30 pm. He underscored the importance of effective crisis management, stating, "In difficult situations, many people panic and give up, but we must develop the strength to make firm decisions with patience and control."

The chief minister also emphasised the importance of effective coordination among stakeholders, including devotees, sadhus and administrative officials. "I personally initiated dialogues to maintain order and ensure smooth execution of the event," he said.

"When faced with adversity,

many people give up, assuming that things will take their course. However, true leadership lies in tackling challenges with composure, just as we did during Maha Kumbh to ensure its smooth execution," he said. The Maha Kumbh, held once every 12 years, attracts millions of pilgrims from across the world, making crowd management a critical challenge for authorities. This year, over 66 crore pilgrims attended the religious event, according to the Uttar Pradesh government which has been projecting it as a major success.

Adityanath also stressed the importance of patience and resilience in handling difficult situations, citing the successful execution of the Maha Kumbh as an example.

Speaking at the programme on "Nation-Building through the Successful Organisation of Maha Kumbh," held with officials from IIM and the Indian Postal Service, he highlighted how effective crisis management ensured a smooth and orderly event.

The CM noted that Maha Kumbh teaches patience and adherence to natural laws.

Referring to past reports by international media and UNESCO, the chief minister pointed out that earlier editions of Maha Kumbh were often associated with chaos, mismanagement, and filth.

"In 2019, we aimed to change that perception. When we step away from the beaten path and do something different, it becomes memorable," he said. Recalling an incident from the 2013 Kumbh, Adityanath said, "As a Yogi, I was at my camp in Prayagraj when I read news reports that the Prime Minister of Mauritius had visited but refused to take a dip in the Ganga due to pollution. He merely offered his prayers from a distance and left."

"This incident stayed with me. A foreign dignitary came to our sacred event and left disap-

pointed. It meant there was a flaw in our preparations, and we needed to fix it." Underlining the 2019 Kumbh's emphasis on hygiene, the chief minister explained that the event site, located on sandy riverbanks, previously had unsanitary toilet arrangements. "Sanitation facilities were makeshift, leading to unbearable stench, flies, mosquitoes and potential disease outbreaks. We changed this by installing one lakh properly managed toilets with routine cleaning, ensuring not a single drop of sewage entered the Ganga or Yamuna," he said.

The chief minister credited the police for their role in maintaining security and managing crowds efficiently. "For any large-scale event, crowd management is critical. A sense of safety among attendees is paramount. In 2019, we introduced special four-month training programs for police personnel to enhance their preparedness," he added.

Discussing the 2025 Maha Kumbh, the CM acknowledged that the turnout exceeded expectations.

"We estimated that the crowd would double compared to 2019, but the actual numbers surpassed all records. This required significant expansion in event planning," he said. Preparations for 2025 included expanding the fairgrounds, increasing infrastructure, and designating parking and holding areas across neighbouring districts like Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Kaushambi, Jaunpur, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh, Chitrakoot, and Rae Bareilly.

"In 2013, a stampede at the railway station claimed 42 lives. Learning from that, we expanded not just the main Prayagraj Junction but nine other railway stations and the airport," he said. Adityanath stressed that religious gatherings are inherently disciplined.

"During the 2025 Maha Kumbh, a minor stampede occurred between 1:15 am and 1:30 am on January 28-29, while over four crore people were present at the venue. Yet, within 15 minutes, people voluntarily created a green corridor, allowing medical teams to reach the injured," he noted. The chief minister also highlighted the economic benefits of such large-scale religious events. "Maha Kumbh contributes significantly to the economy. It provides employment opportunities and sup-

ports various businesses. Previously overlooked, its economic impact is now being recognised," he said. Maha Kumbh 2025 was held from January 13 (Paush Purnima) to February 26 (Maha Shivaratri), marking the first time the fair lasted until Maha Shivaratri. "In past editions, the event would wind down after Basant Panchami, leaving only Lakshya. This time, daily attendance after Mauni Amavasya ranged from 1.5 to 1.75 crore people. On Basant Panchami, around three crore people participated, while on Magh Purnima, the count was two crore," he explained.

Highlighting international participation, CM Adityanath said, "The event saw visits of the president, vice-president, prime minister, governors, chief ministers, 74 ambassadors and high commissioners, Bhutan's King, 12 foreign ministers and representatives from over 100 countries. Business leaders, film stars, and cricketers also took part."

The chief minister mentioned UNESCO's interest in studying Mahakumbh's environmental impact. "We ensured that no sewage or industrial waste entered the Ganga." "In Kanpur, four crore litres of sewage used to flow into the river daily. We had it sealed off three years ago. Today, not a single drop enters the Ganga," he said.

Adityanath highlighted Maha Kumbh's role in national unity, infrastructure development, and environmental conservation, aligning with PM Narendra Modi's vision of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat."

He emphasised that the event transcended caste, religion, and language barriers, bringing millions together in devotion. The Uttar Pradesh government invested Rs 7,500 crore, with Rs 6,000 crore allocated for infrastructure in Prayagraj and surrounding areas. "This ensured better connectivity, sanitation, and essential facilities for pilgrims," Adityanath noted. Cultural and religious landmarks were also developed, including 12 corridors linked to Akshayavat, Saraswati Koop, and Maharishi Bhadracharya. "These sites now reflect our heritage and spiritual legacy," Adityanath stated.

He said, "Maha Kumbh teaches patience and discipline. Whether for faith or economy, such events leave a lasting impact and contribute to national development."

# Govt gears up to make UP insect-free

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

On the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, ultra-modern mist blowers and mini fogging machines were successfully used at the Maha Kumbh, providing significant relief from mosquitoes and flies to saints and devotees. Encouraged by this success, the state government now plans to deploy these advanced machines across Uttar Pradesh for the first time, aiming to make the state insect-free.

As part of the plan, the government will hand over 107 ultra-modern mist blowers to municipal corporations, and 110 mini-fogging machines to the Health Department. These machines, which were effective in keeping the akharas insect-free, will be crucial in

controlling diseases like dengue, chikungunya and malaria. These automatic machines can reach affected areas within 30 minutes of a call, ensuring prompt and efficient action.

Nodal Joint Director (Vector Control) for Maha Kumbh, Dr VP Singh, announced that 107 blower mist machines will be handed over to municipal corporations across Uttar Pradesh. These machines will effectively spray pesticides on garbage and unhygienic areas. Additionally, 110 mini-fogging machines will be provided to the Health Department to combat diseases like dengue, malaria and chikungunya effectively.

These machines will also be extensively used in flood-affected regions to support cleanliness and vector control

efforts. Assistant Nodal and DMO of Vector Control, Dr Anand Kumar Singh, highlighted that the automatic blower mist machines used at Maha Kumbh could reach any location within 30 minutes of a call. Inspired by this success, mobile vector control units will now be operational throughout the state to enable immediate fogging and mist spraying in areas facing mosquito infestations or outbreaks.

Acting on special instructions from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a comprehensive service is being launched to protect the public from mosquitoes and flies. Residents will benefit from prompt fogging and pesticide spraying services in affected areas. During the Maha Kumbh,

petrol-powered blower mist machines were used on a large scale for spraying. These machines will now be allocated to municipal corporations to ensure effective pesticide application, particularly in flood-prone areas with a higher risk of mosquito breeding and dirt accumulation.

In cases of dengue or malaria, spraying will be carried out at the patient's residence and in 50 surrounding houses as part of the vector control strategy. Mini fogging machines will play a vital role in this campaign, helping to efficiently control mosquito-borne diseases like dengue and chikungunya. This initiative aims to significantly reduce diseases caused by mosquitoes and flies, marking a major step towards making the state cleaner and healthier.

# Akhilesh questions those advocating long workweeks

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has questioned the suggestions by corporate leaders advocating for excessive work hours, arguing that such advice disregards employees' well-being and ignores the need for work-life balance.

In a post on X, Yadav took a dig at those suggesting young professionals should work up to 90 hours a week. "Are they talking about humans or robots? Because humans live with emotions and families," he wrote.

His remarks come in response to recent statements by industry leaders such as Narayana Murthy, founder of Infosys, who suggested that young Indians should work 70 hours a week to boost national productivity. Similarly, L&T Chairman SN Subrahmanyan argued that 90-hour workweeks can lead to success. These remarks have sparked widespread debate, with many arguing that such expectations ignore the importance of mental well-being and personal life. Yadav further questioned the economic benefits of long work hours, stating that if economic progress only benefits a select few, then whether India becomes a \$30 trillion or \$100 trillion economy would make little difference to the common



people. He said true economic justice ensures prosperity is shared by all; something he claimed is not possible under the current Bharatiya Janata Party government. "Entertainment refreshes and re-energises people, improving work quality," he said, challenging the notion that productivity is purely a function of hours worked.

He also questioned whether those advocating long workweeks had themselves followed such schedules in their youth. "If they really worked 90 hours a week in their time, why has India's economy reached only this level?" he asked. Yadav concluded by stating that work-life balance is essential for fostering creativity and productivity. "A mentally healthy environment allows young people to be truly productive and innovative, which in turn benefits the country and the world."

# Jaunpur maintains top spot in revenue dispute resolution

Lucknow (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's strict monitoring and monthly district-wise reviews have significantly improved the resolution of revenue disputes in Uttar Pradesh. Under his special initiative, a fast-track strategy was adopted, leading to a remarkable increase in case settlements across the state.

According to the latest report by the Board of Revenue in February, Jaunpur has once again secured the top position in case settlements across Uttar Pradesh, while Ballia and Ghazipur rank second and third, respectively.

In the top 10 rankings, Kushinagar, Jhansi and Lakhimpur Kheri have also made their mark. Notably, Jaunpur has maintained its number one position for the past five months, demonstrating the success of the government's focused efforts in streamlining revenue dispute resolutions. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has issued clear directives to ensure that revenue disputes are resolved on a priority basis. His initiative aims not only to deliver swift justice to the public but also to enhance transparency and accountability within the administration. In line with this, the district magistrates and other officials across the state are working with utmost efficiency to expedite case resolutions. Jaunpur's District Magistrate Dinesh Kumar Singh affirmed that revenue disputes are being settled in accordance with the chief minister's vision for prompt and effective govern-

nance.

As per the February report of the Revenue Court's Computerised Management System (RCCMS) issued by the Board of Revenue, five revenue courts in Jaunpur have exceeded the disposal benchmark set by the board. Against a monthly standard of 250 cases, these courts successfully resolved 428 cases, achieving an impressive disposal rate of 171.20 per cent. Dinesh Kumar Singh highlighted that the district magistrate's court achieved 200 per cent efficiency by resolving 60 cases against the standard of 30. Similarly, the additional district magistrate (Finance and Revenue) disposed of 110 cases against a benchmark of 50, attaining 220 per cent efficiency. Meanwhile, the ADM (Land Revenue) court demonstrated remarkable performance, clearing 168 cases against a target of 50, achieving 336 per cent efficiency. With this, Jaunpur has consistently held the top position in revenue case disposals for the past five months. On the other hand, Ballia secured the second position, with three courts settling 146 cases against the standard of 130, recording an efficiency rate of 112.31 per cent. Meanwhile, Ghazipur, ranking third, saw its four courts resolve 209 cases against the standard of 190, achieving 110 per cent efficiency. As per the Board of Revenue's benchmarks, Kushinagar, Jhansi, Lakhimpur Kheri, Ambedkar Nagar, Shravasti, Etah and Mau have also secured positions in the top 10 for revenue case resolution.

# Maha Kumbh paves way for new possibilities in religious tourism

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Maha Kumbh 2025 has paved the way for new possibilities in religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh. The temple corridors developed by the state government are set to play a crucial role in this transformation. With five major spiritual corridors connecting Prayagraj, they have begun scripting a new chapter in the state's religious and cultural landscape.

Maha Kumbh was a confluence of faith and a grand cultural spectacle. Various states showcased their unique traditions and heritage through dedicated pavilions, attracting millions of visitors. Among them, the UP Darshan Mandapam emerged as the most visited pavilion, displaying the diverse cultural and tourism aspects of Uttar Pradesh.

According to Prayagraj Regional Tourism Officer Aparajita Singh, more than one lakh people visited the UP Darshan Mandapam daily during regular days of the Maha Kumbh, while this number surged beyond two lakh during major bathing festivals. Throughout the 45-day event, more than 65 lakh visitors explored the UP Darshan Mandapam, making it the most frequented pavilion of Maha Kumbh 2025. The significance of Maha Kumbh extends beyond the event itself, as it has laid the groundwork for a well-connected religious tourism circuit in Uttar Pradesh. Recognising the immense potential of this sector, the state government has developed five major spiritual corridors that seamlessly link Prayagraj with other prominent religious sites. The Prayag-Vindhyachal-Kashi



Fire brigade vehicles on Monday filled with Ganga water from Sangam for distribution across all 75 districts after Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj

Corridor connects Prayagraj to the revered temples of Vindhyachal Devi Dham and Kashi. At the same time, the Prayagraj-Ayodhya-Gorakhpur Corridor links Prayagraj to the sacred cities of Ayodhya and Gorakhpur. Another key development, the Prayagraj-Lucknow-Naimisharanya Corridor, establishes a direct connection between Prayagraj, state capital Lucknow, and the spiritual hub of Naimisharanya. The Prayagraj-Rajapur-Chitrakoot Corridor extends religious tourism to the legendary site of Chitrakoot, and the Prayagraj-Mathura-Vrindavan-Shukirtha Corridor connects Prayagraj with the Krishna circuit, including

Mathura, Vrindavan, and the holy site of Shukirtha. These corridors are expected to provide devotees with a structured and convenient experience while boosting local economies through increased tourism activity. In addition to developing these corridors, the UP government has focused on rejuvenating key religious sites in Prayagraj. The construction of temple corridors and the revitalisation of historic temples are set to have a lasting impact on religious tourism. Among the significant projects, the Hanuman Temple Corridor near the Sangam has been developed to accommodate the growing number of devotees. The Akshayvat tem-

ple and Saraswati Koop Corridor, as well as the Nagvasuki and Alop Shankari Devi Corridor in Daraganj, have further enhanced the accessibility and spiritual significance of these revered sites. Other notable developments include the Bhardwaj Ashram Corridor and the revitalisation of Shringverpur Dham, both offering devotees an enriched religious experience. Additionally, the creation of Shivalaya Park and Triveni Pushp Parmarth Niketan adds a serene and spiritual dimension to the city's tourism landscape. With Maha Kumbh 2025 serving as a catalyst, Uttar Pradesh's tourism sector is transforming significantly.

# 10 killed in accidents

Lucknow (PNS): Ten people were killed in separate road accidents in the state during the last 24 hours. Four people were killed and seven others were seriously injured when a dumper truck collided head-on with an auto-rickshaw in Rae Bareilly on Monday.

Additional Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Kumar Sinha said that the auto-rickshaw was going towards Rae Bareilly with passengers from Lalganj. As soon as it reached near Baras village, a dumper truck hit the vehicle and shattered it.

Sinha said that on hearing the loud sound, passersby pulled out the people trapped in the auto-rickshaw. Four people died on the spot. Two of the deceased were identified as auto-rickshaw driver Rajneesh Sharma and Nigam (20). The identity of two other deceased was yet to be ascertained.

Meanwhile, a 65-year-old e-rickshaw driver died when his vehicle overturned on Chandakadipur road near Kadipur Khurd village in Sultanpur on Monday afternoon. The driver, Murlu Nishad, was on his way to Kadipur in his e-rickshaw when the vehicle overturned. He suffered serious injuries. The locals rushed him to the community health centre in Kadipur, where doctors pronounced him dead. Two men were killed after their motorcycle rammied into a tree in the Ramnagar area of Barabanki. As per reports, Kundan, 24, and Kaliram, 23, were returning from a wedding ceremony in Sihali village when the incident took place on Sunday night. Both died on the spot. In a separate accident, one person was killed when two motorcycles collided with each other near Nawada crossing under Kakrauli police station of Muzaffarnagar on Sunday evening. The deceased was identified as Sonu (28). In Mainpuri, a wood-laden truck overturned in a ditch, leaving the driver and cleaner dead.

**बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा** Regional Office, Kanpur Metro Region: 118/330, 1st Floor, Gunti No. 5, Kaushalpur, Kanpur - 12

**Bank of Baroda** Possession Notice (Branch : Chunniganj, Kanpur)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower & guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 8 & 9 of the said rules.

The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the first charge of Bank of Baroda for amount & interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property & O/S Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand Notice Date & Possession Notice Date
<b>Borrower :</b> Smt. Aradhana W/o Shri Avaneesh Kumar, R/o : G-1208, Awas Vikas Scheme No. 1, Kalyanpur, Kanpur Nagar.
<b>Demand Notice Date :</b> 11-11-2024 • <b>Date of Constructive Possession:</b> 27-02-2025
<b>Property :</b> Freehold Plot No. E-488, E-Block, EVWS Scheme, Shatabdi Nagar (Ratanpur Vistar Part-1) Kanpur Nagar in the name of Smt. Aradhana W/o Shri Avaneesh Kumar. <b>Area :</b> 30 Sq. Mtr., <b>Bounded :</b> <b>North :</b> Plot No. C-95, <b>South :</b> 6 Mtr. Wide Road, <b>East :</b> Plot No. E-488 D, <b>West :</b> Plot No. E-488 F. <b>Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice :</b> Rs. 15,99,351.14 + Intt. +Others Charges <b>Total Dues Amount as on Dated 22-02-2025 :</b> Rs. 16,57,000.18 + Intt. +Others Charges
<b>Date :</b> 27-02-2025 <b>Place :</b> Kanpur <b>Authorised Officer</b>

**BARODA U.P. BANK** POSSESSION NOTICE

Regional Office: 117/N/26, Kakadeo, Kanpur

Whereas the undersigned being the authorised officer of Baroda U.P. Bank under the SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 And in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with rule 3 of security interest (Enforcement) rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower to repay the amount in 60 days from the date mentioned in the said notice.

The owner of below mentioned property and others having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantors in particular and the public in general that the undersigned has taken constructive possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with the rule 8 of said rule.

The borrowers/guarantors in particular and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property, and any dealings with the property will be subject to the first charge of Baroda U.P. Bank. The borrowers/guarantors will be required to hand over actual vacant possession of the under mentioned properties as and when demanded by the authorised officer in the case the borrowers/guarantors fails to handover actual vacant possession as and when demanded, the authorised officer will proceed for actual and vacant possession with the assistance of District Magistrate/C.M.M. under section 14 and for further action under other provisions of the act.

Sl. No.	Name of Address Borrower & Guarantors	Owner of the Property	Description of the Mortgaged Property	Outstanding Dues Rs. Demand Notice	Date of Symbolic Possession
<b>YASHODA NAGAR BRANCH</b>					
1.	<b>Borrowers:</b> Mrs. Ayasha Khan w/o Late Abrar Ahmad & Ms. Farha (Minor) d/o Late Abrar Ahmad-via her natural guardian, mother, Mrs. Ayasha Khan (Both Legal heirs of borrower, Late Abrar Ahmad s/o Late Hazi Noor Mohammad) R/O H. No. 128/5/90 A-1, Yashoda Nagar, Kanpur Nagar. <b>Guarantor:</b> Mr. Raees Ahmad S/o Rasool Ahmad R/O 5G-268, Awas Vikas, Hanspuram, Naubasta, Kanpur Nagar.	Late Abrar Ahmad S/o Late Hazi Noor Mohammad	All that part and parcel of the property situated at House No.5G-111, Sector-5G Awas Vikas, Yojna No. -2, Hanspuram, Naubasta, Kanpur. <b>Area: 25.01 sq mtr. Bounded:</b> North: 6.00 Mtr wide road then Park South: House No. 5G-134 East: House No. 5G-110 West: House No. 5G-112	Rs. 7,68,291.50 (Outstanding upto 07.08.2024) +Intt. Demand Notice 09.12.2024	27.02.2025
<b>Date: 03.03.2025</b> <b>Authorised Officer, Baroda U.P. Bank</b>					



# NITI Aayog V-C stresses on investment-led growth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 59th annual conference of The Indian Econometric Society (TIES) was inaugurated by Swatantra Bhawan in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) by Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog Suman Bery on Monday. The function started with floral tribute to Bharat Ratna Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya and kulgeet of BHU. In his inaugural address, Bery said Kashi has been the capital of knowledge which has produced human capital. He added that prime task of NITI Aayog is to suggest a policy document to the government which may ensure objectives of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 and for this purpose we need GDP growth between 6.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent per annum. Bery stressed on investment-led growth for 2025-35 and investment in human capital to ensure Viksit Bharat @ 2047. TIES President Prof Sudiptu Mondal in his presidential address, explained various dimensions of growth employment paradox of Indian



NITI Aayog V-C Suman Bery addressing a conference at BHU in Varanasi on Monday.

economy. Prof Mondal said that during economic reforms, substantial growth in the GDP has been observed followed by rise in unemployment. "Economic reforms have produced technical changes in overall production function and have resulted in declining role of the labour in the production", he added. Head Department of Economics, BHU, Prof Mrutunjay Mishra delivered welcome address while the vote of thanks was proposed by Prof S Sundaram.

In the afternoon session, Sukhmay Chakraborty memorial special lecture was delivered by former V-C, University of Delhi, Prof Deepak Nayeer and the session was chaired by former Director, Delhi School of Economics, Prof KL Krishna. Explaining the theme, 'Globalisation through lens of history', Prof Nayeer added that globalisation since mid-1970s has resulted in uneven development across the world and economic inequality has risen exponentially during the last 40 years. Later, Prof KL Krishna delivered a special lecture on 'Auction Theory: Basic Principles and Recent Developments'. Another special lecture was delivered by former Director IEG, New Delhi, Prof Chetan Ghate on 'Monetary policy transition and labour markets in India'. In addition, during the post-lunch session, around 80 technical papers dealing with various aspects of Indian economy were presented by the scholars in 16 parallel technical sessions.

**TWO SUSPENDED:** Managing Director (MD) of

Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PVVNL) Shambhu Kumar has ordered the suspension of Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Dilip Kumar Sahu of Electricity Distribution Sub-Division-Karimuddin under Gazipur Nagar Electricity Distribution Division (EDD) and Junior Engineer (JE) Ashok Kumar of 33/11 KV Electricity Distribution Sub-Centre Karimuddin, under Gazipur Nagar EDD. A fatal electrical accident occurred while an unskilled worker Devendra Rai, was working in Bharauli Kala village under Karimuddin sub-division and SDO and JE were found guilty for negligence prima facie. They have been suspended with immediate effect for further investigation and disciplinary action. During the period of suspension, both the engineers will remain attached to the office of MD, Discom Headquarters, Varanasi, and during the period of suspension, they will be entitled to subsistence allowance as per rules.

# Maha Kumbh could enhance Prayagraj's economy by 200-300 per cent: Experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The divine and grand spectacle of Maha Kumbh 2025 has not only elevated the spiritual prestige of Teerthraj Prayagraj, but also given a significant boost to the city's economy. The 45-day-long event proved especially beneficial for the hospitality sector, including hotels and restaurants industry, as well as tour operators and retail traders. However, the economic impact is expected to extend further, stimulating growth in real estate, automobiles, electronics and luxury goods sectors due to the increased disposable income of city residents. Experts estimate that Maha Kumbh could enhance Prayagraj's economy by an impressive 200 to 300 per cent. In alignment with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision, the surge in spiritual tourism will likely continue, benefiting Prayagraj's economy even beyond the event. During the 45-day Maha Kumbh, over 66 crore devotees visited the

city, resulting in immediate profits of 30 to 40 times for businesses dealing in grains, vegetables, mattresses, furniture, tents, and more. Boatmen, auto-rickshaw drivers, hawkers, and merchants in the Sangam area also reported substantial earnings. Shiv Shankar Singh, General Secretary of Prayagraj Vyapar Mandal, emphasised that the surge in local incomes will further accelerate economic growth. He stated, "This will drive significant expansion in sectors such as real estate, automobiles, electronics and luxury goods in the coming days." He also emphasised that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's focus on promoting spiritual and domestic tourism places Prayagraj at the heart of the state's development plans. He added, "The 12 newly-constructed corridors, paved ghats in the Sangam area and enhanced connectivity with nearby pilgrimage and tourist destinations are set to boost tourism further in the future. This, in turn, will directly ben-

efit the economy of both Prayagraj and Uttar Pradesh, making the Maha Kumbh a true economic and spiritual boon for the region."

## CLEANLINESS DRIVE

The grand Maha Kumbh 2025, held on the banks of Sangam from January 13 to February 26, concluded with a massive influx of devotees. Following the official closure announcement on February 27, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed a 15-day special cleanliness drive in the fair area to ensure the site's restoration. Taking the initiative forward, UP NCC cadets actively participated in the drive on Monday, volunteering to clean the banks of Sangam. In the coming days, Civil Defence personnel and various social organisations will also contribute to the Maha Kumbh cleanliness efforts. Even after the conclusion of Maha Kumbh, the grand festival of faith, the influx of devotees to Prayagraj continues. To ensure that the Sangam banks remain clean and well-maintained for pil-

grims taking a holy dip, a special cleanliness drive is being carried out under the direction of Special Executive Officer Akanksha Rana. As part of this initiative, 30 cadets from UP NCC actively participated in the cleanliness campaign on Monday. Naib Subedar Gurubachan Singh of UP NCC stated that his battalion contributed to the ongoing cleanliness program in Sector-21 of the fair area. He confirmed that NCC cadets will continue to support the campaign in the coming days. The event was also attended by Sector Medical Officer Dr Mahendra Tripathi and Deputy Fair Officer Shubham Srivastava. On behalf of the fair administration, the Deputy Mela Officer expressed gratitude to UP NCC for their commitment to the cleanliness initiative. He also announced that in the coming days, Civil Defence and other social organisations will also join the cleanliness drive, further strengthening efforts to keep the Maha Kumbh fair area clean and welcoming for visitors.

# Security at BLW top priority: GM

Varanasi (PNS): To enhance security measures at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW), General Manager (GM) Naresh Pal Singh handed over three state-of-the-art Bullet motorcycles to the Railway Protection Force (RPF). In a ceremony held at the administrative building premises, the GM flagged off these motorcycles, officially inducting them into the RPF Phantom Squad. This initiative aims to curb criminal activities, strengthen security surveillance and make patrolling more effective across the BLW campus. To further reinforce security, the BLW premises have been divided into three major security zones. Dedicated RPF personnel will conduct continuous patrolling using these Bullet motorcycles, ensuring swift action against any suspicious activity. This will significantly

enhance the responsiveness and efficiency of the security forces. The GM said, "Security at BLW is our top priority. These Bullet motorcycles will enhance the patrolling capabilities of the RPF, ensuring immediate action against any unauthorised activity. This step will elevate security standards to new heights."



The RPF will now enforce strict actions under various sections of the Railway Act, ensuring law and order within the premises, he said. To ensure a proactive and effective security framework, the Phantom Squad at BLW has implemented a new strategic approach. Enhanced mobile patrolling with Bullet motorcycles will boost security vigilance.

# Devotees from 15 countries, over 20 states reunited

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Amidst the massive influx of devotees at Maha Kumbh, the Uttar Pradesh Police, along with PAC, NDRF, SDRF and Fire department personnel, demonstrated exceptional honesty and commitment to duty. Under the special campaign launched on the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, security personnel successfully reunited devotees from 15 countries and over 20 states with their families. On-duty personnel not only returned lost valuables, including cash worth lakhs, iPhones, jewelry, and other precious items, but also ensured immediate medical assistance by rushing the sick to hospitals and providing first aid. Additionally, the Uttar Pradesh Police played a crucial

number of elderly devotees in taking a sacred dip at the Sangam. From administering CPR to offering primary medical care, the forces went beyond their call of duty. As a result, the efficiency and responsiveness of the Yogi government have resonated globally, drawing praise from countries such as Russia, the United States, and Germany. Inspector General of PAC (Eastern Zone) Dr Rajiv Narayan Mishra stated that the police personnel risked their lives to assist devotees at Maha Kumbh. Their honesty and dedication in ensuring the safety and convenience of pilgrims have now gained recognition worldwide. Even international devotees are praising Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his effective management of the grand event.

Lost valuables safely returned :On February 17, Pushpendra Singh Shekhawat from Jaipur, Rajasthan, lost his wallet at the fair. It contained two iPhones, Rs 69,000 in cash, a gold chain, two rings, and ATM cards. During routine checks, Arvind Kumar Singh of the 42nd Battalion PAC, Naini, Prayagraj, found the wallet at Arail Ghat. Using the contact details from the mobile inside, the officer reached out to the devotee and safely returned the wallet. **Rajkumari Yadav from Bhansoach, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, suddenly fell ill at the fair. PAC constables Prashant Kumar and Ravindra Singh from the 15th Battalion, Agra D Unit, promptly arranged an ambulance and admitted her to a**

hospital for treatment. **Lost Russian devotee reunited:** On January 29, Russian devotee Rita got separated from her group while heading for a holy dip at the Sangam. She lost her way and ended up in Pal Basti, Mawaiya. Constable Amardeep of the 33rd Battalion PAC, Jhansi E Unit, found her and reunited her with her companions. **Helping German devotees find their way:** On January 15, a group of German devotees lost their way while trying to reach Nawabganj. Constable Raju Singh of the 28th Battalion PAC, Etawah H Unit, assisted them in reaching their destination safely. **Injured devotee receives immediate care:** On January 15, a woman devotee named Shobha from Bengaluru suffered an

injury at the fair. Constable Surjeet Yadav from the 33rd Battalion PAC, Jhansi F Unit, quickly arranged an ambulance and ensured she received first aid at the hospital. **Seizure victim rescued and sent home safely:** On January 24, Vivek Bharti suffered an epileptic seizure while driving on Sangam Marg. Constables Gurdeep and Kapil Kumar from the 47th Battalion PAC, Ghaziabad G Unit, immediately took him to the hospital, informed his family, and later ensured he safely returned home with his car after recovery. These acts of bravery and service have highlighted the commitment of the Uttar Pradesh Police in ensuring the safety and well-being of pilgrims, earning widespread appreciation.

# Stress on providing more facilities to players



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former director, Department of Sports in Bihar government, Dr Sanjay Sinha, said there is a need to provide more facilities to players coming into sports from different areas and emphasised on talent hunt drive. He was addressing as the chief guest of the opening ceremony of the three-day National Training Programme on Coaching and Officiating Volleyball Game, being organised by Department of Physical Education in the Audio-Visual Seminar Hall of the department in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Monday. This training programme is being organised under the Institute of Eminence (IoE) scheme of the University and funded and sponsored by the SRICC unit of IoE. Secretary General, Uttar Pradesh Volleyball Association and Treasurer, Volleyball Federation of India, Sunil Kumar Tiwari, was present as

guest of honour during the ceremony. He said this type of training programme will help to develop efficient professionals of volleyball game. Dean, Faculty of Arts, Prof Sushma Ghildyal, presided over the function. This training programme has been designed with the objective to develop the pool of efficient coaches and officials of volleyball game at grassroots level and will ultimately help to develop the game. There are 70 participants taking part in this programme and some of them are international players and referees who represented the country in several standard international competitions. There were three theoretical and two practical sessions on fundamental skills of the game. All the theoretical and practical sessions were conducted by Prof Abhimanyu Singh, FIVB Level-III Volleyball coach as the instructor of this training programme. Dr Shailesh Kumar was the anchor

of the programme. Prof T Onima Reddy welcomed the guest while Dr Binayak Dubey proposed the vote of thanks. Prof BC Kapri, Prof Rajiv Vyas, Dr Akhil Mehrotra and others were present. **SYMPOSIUM:** The Faculty of Commerce, BHU, organised a one-day symposium on the topic 'Dharmconomics and Indian Education System: Widening Horizons' on Monday in the Platinum Hall. The first edition of faculty's newsletter containing activities and achievements of students and teachers was released by the distinguished guests. The event started with garlanding the bust of Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya and lighting the lamp followed by Mangalacharan and BHU kuest were Prof P Nag, Prof R Raman, Prof RK Singh, Prof TP Singh, Prof B Ojha and Prof U Tripathi. Dean Prof HK Singh welcomed the guests and highlighted the theme of the symposium. He linked the traditional wisdom of economics with the contemporary Dharma. Dr Vandana Srivastava, the convener of the newsletter, highlighted the inspiration behind it and appreciated the team. Prof Upendra Tripathi explained the wider definition of dharma and tradition. He explained the real meaning of money as described in our traditional knowledge.

# NTPC Auraiya distributes cereals, fruits



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

NTPC Auraiya distributed around 70 elderly inmates of an old age home in Auraiya. Auraiya HOP Subhashish Guha and President of Jagriti Mahila Mandal Manjari Guha distributed the items and spent quality time with them. The inmates of the old age home presented a cultural programme featuring traditional folk songs. To encourage the 'Vocal for Local' initiative, dignitaries purchased handmade items. On the occasion Guha inspected the rooftop solar panels installed by NTPC on February 28 under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The old age home management appreciated NTPC's continued support. The event was attended by AGM (HR) Tanmoy Dutta, Manager (HR) Alok Adhikari and members of the Ladies Club Committee.

# Mohan takes over as ISMA adviser

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Former Director, National Sugar Institute (NSI) Prof Narendra Mohan, took over as Advisor, Indian Sugar & Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA). "My endeavour would be to help the Indian sugar industry to ensure sustainable sugar production through adoption of innovative techniques for production of superior quality sugar through cost-effective and environment friendly processes. Developing diversified product portfolio utilising by-products and waste shall remain high on agenda," said Prof Mohan. Dalmia Bharat Sugar & Industries Ltd immediately joined hands with Prof Mohan to conduct pilot plant trials at their Nigohi (Shahjahanpur unit) for producing sulphur-less superior quality white sugar using carbon dioxide from distillery fermenters and other places as a clarification agent. The conventional process of sulphur-less sugar production uses phosphoric acid, colour precipitant, lime and ion-exchange resins, all adding to cost of production. Whereas, in this innovative process, only lime and carbon dioxide gas is used where the gas will be available almost free and thus the cost of input chemicals shall be much less. Side by side, the process has



Prof Narendra Mohan signs MoU with Dalmia Bharat Sugar & Industries Ltd.

been so developed so as to have minimum unit operations for removal of impurities and hence the input cost is going to be lower, said Prof Mohan. "Trials conducted are very encouraging and we could achieve much higher colour removal. We are confident that such sugar is going to be the first choice for bulk consumers, particularly, beverage and pharmaceutical industry and thus will also earn a premium price," said Kuldeep Kumar, Executive Director, Dalmia Bharat Sugar & Industries Ltd. "We are confident of achieving the target of producing superior quality sugar at lower cost while addressing environmental issue through capturing carbon diox-

ide gas which otherwise goes to atmosphere. We are also going to file patent for the developed process as well," said Pankaj Rastogi, Chief Operating Officer, Dalmia Bharat Sugar & Industries Ltd. **MAN DIES IN MISHAP:** A man died and 12 others were injured when a Marshal collided head on with a car on Mughal Road under Kuwankheda police station area of Ghatampur on Monday morning. The Marshal riders were returning to Mankapur (Kanpur Dehat) from Paprenda (Fatehpur). Police sent the body for autopsy and the injured to CHC. Ramraj (40) of Mankapur, Mangalpur (Kanpur dehat) had gone to

Paprenda for the 'vida' of nephew's wife. He was accompanied by other family members. On return the Marshal collided head on with the car near Kuwankheda on Mughal Road. On information police rushed to the spot and sent the injured to the CHC where Ramraj was declared dead by the doctors. SHO Kamlash Rai said injured were admitted in CHC. The body had been sent for autopsy. The car rider escaped from the spot after the incident. Police have impounded the car. Meanwhile, a motorcyclist was killed while his friend seriously injured when a speeding car hit them near Baraula village under Akbarpur Kotwali police area of Kanpur dehat on Sunday night. Both the injured youths were taken to the medical college where one of them was declared dead by the doctor on emergency duty. Vivek (21) of Reri under Rura police station had gone to drop brother Devesh in Akbarpur on bike on Sunday night. He was accompanied by Vikas of the village. After dropping Devesh, when they were returning to village, the speeding car hit them near Baraula village on Akbarpur-Rura road. The kin took them to the medical college, Akbarpur, where Dr Om Prakash on emergency examined Vivek and declared him dead. Kotwali in charge said the body had been sent for autopsy.

# Need for teachers to guide students in using tech effectively emphasised

Varanasi (PNS): A six-day workshop on the topic 'Training of Trainers: Integration of AI in Teaching-Learning and Research' was inaugurated at the Inter-University Centre of Teacher Education (IUCTE), BHU here on Monday. The programme began with presentation of Mangalacharan and floral tribute to the statue of Maa Saraswati and Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya and lighting of lamps. This workshop focuses on making teaching, evaluation student-centric and research qualitative etc with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, in which the participants will gain experience of using AI tools from experts from different parts of

the country and practice. The chief guest of the inaugural session of the workshop was Director of Inter-University Accelerator Centre, New Delhi, Prof AC Pandey and the guest of honour was Prof K Srinivas of National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. The inaugural session was presided over by Director of IUCTE Prof PN Singh. While addressing the teachers from more than 10 states of the country in the workshop Prof AC Pandey said today the teachers are faced with generational differences and a huge amount of course material for the students. He emphasised that both teachers and students will have to cooperate to shape

the future as AI has been integrated into every aspect of life. "New challenges of constantly recording data through devices like Siri and Alexa are emerging. The question of knowledge creation and consciousness is constantly being raised. Unlike humans, machines lack humanity, making it important to preserve human values in education", said Prof Pandey, emphasising the need for teachers to guide students in using technology effectively. "Although it is challenging, it is not impossible. By leveraging technology wisely, teachers can make learning engaging and enjoyable without any disruption", he added. Prof K Srinivas said technology is an essential component in our lives.

# Knowledge imparted on Rotary leadership

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Rotary Club of New Kanpur and Rotary Club of Surya jointly organised a two-day programme Rotary Leadership Institute Kanpur 2024-25 (District 3110) Part 1 and 2. The programme featured faculties from various states across the country, who imparted knowledge on Rotary leadership to Rotarians from different cities in District 3110. The faculties also addressed queries from the Rotarians. The chief guest of the event was District Governor Rotarian Neerav Nimish, whose inspiration led to the organisation of this graduation course. For any institution to be vibrant, meaningful, and socially relevant, it is essential to have knowledge of its history, needs and progressive aspira-



The members of Rotary District 3110 with certificates at the graduation course.

tions. Moreover, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of the tools, processes, and plans required to bring

to life these aspirations into reality. Thirty members of Rotary District 3110 from Kanpur,

Kanpur North, Kanpur Brhmvarta, Kanpur Gaurav, Kanpur West, Agra Greater and Aligarh participated in the programme. On the second day, certificates were awarded to all trainees. Dr Naveen Mohini Nigam apprised the delegates about the purpose of the institute as the coordinator of the programme. President of Rotary Club of New Kanpur, Sangeeta Gupta, welcomed all the participants and expressed gratitude to all on the second day. Dilip Patnaik, Sandeep Narang, Annu Narang, Binod Khaitan and Ajay Narakesari, addressed and trained the delegates. Neerav Nimesh Agrawal, Rajiv Mittal, Than Singh, Dr GS Nigam, visiting faculty and Rotarians praised the efforts of Programme Coordinator Prof

Naveen Mohini Nigam. **MAN ELECTROCUTED:** An elderly man was electrocuted after coming into contact with the high-tension line while cutting a tree near Nimdapur village under Derapur police station area of Kanpur dehat on Sunday afternoon. He died on the spot. Police sent the body for autopsy after a probe. Reports said that a high tension line passed through the tube-well of Rakesh Katiyar in Nimdapur village. It was touching the babool tree there. On Sunday afternoon when Bechhal Sankhar of Agwasi village was cutting the tree, he came in contact with electric current and fell unconscious on the floor and succumbed to his burns. S-1 Dhirendra Kumar said on receipt of autopsy report, further action will be initiated in the matter.



# PM Modi takes lion safari at Gir wildlife sanctuary on Wildlife Day

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SASAN**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi went on a lion safari at Gir Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat's Junagadh district on Monday morning, on the occasion of the World Wildlife Day.

On World Wildlife Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the commitment to protect and preserve the incredible biodiversity of the planet.

On December 20, 2013, the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly decided to proclaim March 3 as World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness about the world's wild fauna and flora.

"Today, on #WorldWildlifeDay, let's

reiterate our commitment to protect and preserve the incredible biodiversity of our planet," Modi said.

"Every species plays a vital role - let's safeguard their future for generations to come! We also take pride in India's contributions towards preserving and protecting wildlife," the prime minister said.

In a social media, Modi said the population of Asiatic lions has seen a steady rise due to collective efforts, and commended the contribution of tribals and women living in surrounding areas in preserving the Asiatic lion habitat.

"This morning, on #WorldWildlifeDay, I went on a Safari in Gir, which, as we all know, is home to the



PM Narendra Modi during lion safari at Gir Wildlife Sanctuary

PTI

majestic Asiatic Lion. Coming to Gir also brings back many memories of the work we collectively did

when I was serving as Gujarat CM," he said. "In the last many years, collective efforts have

ensured that the population of Asiatic Lions is rising steadily. Equally commendable is the role of

tribal communities and women from surrounding areas in preserving the habitat of the Asiatic Lion," Modi added.

"Over the last decade, the population of tigers, leopards, rhinos has risen too, indicating how deeply we cherish wildlife and are working to build sustainable habitats for animals," he said in another tweet. The prime minister also posted pictures of lions that he came across during the safari.

Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupendra Patel Chaudhary, other ministers and senior forest department officials accompanied Modi during the safari.

The Prime Minister later went to chair the seventh meeting of the National

Board for Wildlife at Sasan Gir, the headquarters of the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary.

The central government has approved more than ₹2,900 Crore for Project Lion, meant for the conservation of Asiatic lions for which Gujarat is the only abode, stated a government release.

Currently, the Asiatic lions inhabit nearly 30,000 square kilometres across 53 talukas in 9 districts of Gujarat, it said.

Additionally, as part of a national project, a National Referral Centre for Wildlife is being established on over 20.24 hectares of land at New Pipalya in Junagadh district, it said.

A high-tech monitoring centre for wildlife tracking and a state-of-the-art hospital have also been set

up in Sasan to strengthen conservation efforts, the release said.

Earlier, Modi had a night halt at Sinh Sadan, a forest guest house managed by the state forest department, in Sasan after his arrival from Somnath where he offered prayers at the Lord Shiv temple, the first among 12 jyotirlingas, on Sunday evening.

On Sunday, Modi also visited Vantara, an animal rescue, conservation and rehabilitation centre located at the Reliance Jamnagar refinery complex. It is a rescue centre dedicated to the welfare of captive elephants and wildlife, providing sanctuary, rehabilitation and medical care to animals rescued from abuse and exploitation.

## HC seeks response on bail of Parliament attack accused

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Delhi Police to file its reply on a bail plea filed by Neelam Azad, the sole woman accused arrested in the December 13, 2023 Parliament security breach case.

A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Rajneesh Kumar Gupta also issued notice to the prosecution on Neelam Azad's application seeking condonation of delay in filing the appeal challenging a trial court's September 11, 2024 order dismissing her bail plea.

The court noted there was a delay of 142 days in filing the appeal while the law stipulates a maximum of 90 days for doing the same.

The high court, which initially said the delay was not condonable under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the appeal could not be entertained, was apprised of a Supreme Court order which stated that such appeals cannot be dismissed.

The High Court was informed that recently the apex court has passed an order directing that appeals preferred by the accused will not be dismissed on account of non-condonation of delay beyond 90 days.

The prosecution contended

that the appeal was not maintainable as it was barred by limitation and that Neelam Azad was allegedly part of a deep-rooted conspiracy with other co-accused and there was sufficient evidence that she was in contact with them over the phone.

The bench orally observed, "What was she (Azad) trying to do? In Parliament, she was throwing smoke canisters? What is this?"

Neelam Azad's counsel said she was not carrying any explosives in the Parliament and was standing outside.

The court listed the matter for further hearing on April 16 and called for the electronic record of the trial court in the case.

During the arguments, the counsel appearing for Neelam Azad submitted before the high court that she was not involved in the breach of Parliament security and she had not entered the House. She was standing outside Parliament, the court was also told.

On the issue of delay in filing the appeal, the counsel said Azad belonged to a poor family and they had no money to come to Delhi. However, the bench said the appeal was filed almost six months after the trial court passed the order.

The trial court had rejected Neelam Azad's bail plea, saying there was sufficient evidence to believe that

allegations against her were "prima facie" true.

It noted that all the accused persons - Neelam Azad, Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Dhanraj Shinde, Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat - already had the knowledge about the threat given by designated terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannu for targeting Parliament on December 13, 2023.

Despite the threat perception, the accused persons being aware of the same carried out the alleged offence in Parliament on the same day, it observed.

In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour, released yellow gas from canisters and shouted slogans before they were overpowered by some MPs.

Around the same time, two other accused - Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad - sprayed coloured gas from canisters while shouting "tanashahi nahi chalegi" outside Parliament premises.

These four were taken into custody from the spot, while Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat were arrested later. The prosecution had opposed the bail application, calling the offence "grave".

## Brij Bhushan sexual harassment case: Delhi court records witness statement

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Delhi court on Monday recorded the statement of the kin of one of the women wrestlers who accused ex-WFI chief Brij Bhushan Singh of sexual harassment.

Additional chief metropolitan magistrate Vaibhav Chaurasiya recorded the statement of the witness, the wrestler's husband, during the in-chamber proceeding.

The examination of the witness remained inconclusive and the court posted the hearing on March 25.

On May 21, 2024, the court framed charges of sexual harassment and using force to outrage women's modesty against Singh in the case. Singh has pleaded not guilty before and claimed trial.

The judge had also framed the charge of criminal intimidation against Singh in the case.

The court further framed criminal intimidation charge against co-accused and former WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar in the case.

Delhi Police filed a chargesheet in the case against Singh on June 15 under Sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment), 354D (stalking) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC.

During the in-chamber proceedings on an earlier occasion, a minor wrestler said she was satisfied with the Delhi Police's investigation in the case and was not opposed to the closure report it had

submitted.

On June 15, 2023, Delhi Police filed a report before the court seeking cancellation of the case involving the girl after her father made a claim midway through the probe that he levelled false allegations of sexual harassment against Singh to get back at him for perceived injustice to his daughter.

Police recommended dropping the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act case against Singh, but charged him with sexual harassment and stalking in a separate case lodged on the basis of a complaint by six women wrestlers.

Police recommended cancellation of the complaint involving the minor wrestler, saying "no corroborative evidence" was found.

## CDS General begins four-day visit to Australia

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Monday embarked on a four-day visit to Australia to hold talks with the top Australian military brass to explore ways to boost bilateral strategic ties, including in the Indo-Pacific.

He is scheduled to visit a number of military installations of the Australian armed forces during his official engagements from March 4 to 7.

"This visit underscores the growing engagement between the two nations which share a commitment towards strengthening diplomatic and military collaboration under comprehensive strategic partnership," the defence ministry said.

It said the trip reflects the deepening ties between India and Australia in the realm of defence cooperation.

The CDS is scheduled to hold wide-ranging discussions with senior Australian defence officials, including Australia's Chief of Defence Force Gen Admiral David Johnston, Secretary of Defence Greg Moriarty and the Chiefs of the three services.

"The CDS will visit the Force Command Headquarters to gain insights into Australia's operational command structure and discuss potential avenues for joint operations," the ministry said in a statement.

It said General Chauhan will also interact with the Australian Fleet Commander and the Joint Operations Commander.

## Jaishankar embarks on six-day UK, Ireland visit

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will embark on a six-day visit to the UK and Ireland beginning Tuesday to explore ways to further boost bilateral cooperation.

Jaishankar will first travel to London to hold talks with his British counterpart David Lammy on a range of bilateral, regional and global issues.

It will be interesting to see

whether Jaishankar and Lammy discuss the Ukraine conflict as their meeting comes against the backdrop of the heated exchanges between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that drew global attention.

Two days after the rare clash between Trump and Zelenskyy, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hosted a summit with European leaders in London and vowed



EAM S Jaishankar during a meeting with Belgium's Deputy PM in New Delhi

with the matter said.

Late last month, India and the UK relaunched talks on the proposed deal during the visit to New Delhi of British Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds.

"India and the UK share a comprehensive strategic partnership, which has strengthened across diverse areas including defence and security, trade and economy, health, education, people-to-people ties," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, announcing Jaishankar's visit.

## Law minister urges safer digital environment for women

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Monday stressed on the need to create a safer digital environment for women, ensuring their dignity and participation in nation-building.

Speaking on the rising threat of cyber crimes during his address at the Final Law Review Consultation on "Cyber Laws Relating to Women" and Cyber Awareness Programme by the National Commission for Women (NCW), Arjun Meghwal urged citizens, especially women, to adopt strong passwords and limit sharing personal information on social media.

"Use strong passwords and share minimal personal details online. Cyber offenses are such that we often get trapped unknowingly. Avoid long conversations with strangers and remain vigilant while interacting with unknown people online. If a cyber crime occurs, report it to the police immediately," he said.

Meghwal also highlighted the government's efforts to address emerging challenges in the digital space, including artificial intelligence (AI)-driven misinformation campaigns, cyberbullying, fake profiling and video manipulation.

"The new laws we have enacted address these issues comprehensively. We have incorporated provisions to deal with AI-based misinformation, digital arrests and other cyber-related offenses," Meghwal said.

The minister stressed the need to create a safer digital environment for women, ensuring their dignity and

participation in nation-building.

"Cyber security is a critical issue and it is essential to understand its relationship with women. Women must continue to contribute to the country's progress without fear. Cyber crimes should not deter them from moving forward," he said.

Meghwal also unveiled a book titled 'Cyber Saheli', aimed at educating families about cyber safety.

"There is no need to fear cyber threats. 'Cyber Saheli' will act as a guide and support system for everyone," he added.

Highlighting the growing role of women in the IT sector, Meghwal noted that women are leading the way in technology.

"If anyone is leading in the IT sector, it is women. With the advent of AI, new challenges have emerged, but women are equipped to tackle them. Whether it is cyberstalking or other forms of online harassment, women will not only overcome these challenges but also guide the nation forward," Meghwal said.

The minister also praised the recent legislative measures, including the 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures, calling it a game-changer for gender equality.

"As Babasaheb Ambedkar said, the progress of a society can be judged by the degree of progress its women have achieved. When women secure their rightful place and representation, no technological challenge, be it cyberstalking or cyber harassment, will be insurmountable. Women will lead the nation and society forward," Meghwal said.

## India, Belgium explore defence cooperation in Indo-Pacific

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

India and Belgium on Monday here discussed the possibility of bilateral maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and looked at ways to enhance defence industrial ties.

Ways to bolster India-Belgium defence engagement figured prominently at a meeting between Belgium's Princess Astrid and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The two sides also agreed to explore the setting up of an institutionalised defence cooperation mechanism between the two nations.

Belgian Defence Minister Theo Francken was also part of the Belgian delegation. Princess Astrid is leading an Economic Mission to India that comprises top ministers and business leaders.

"Both sides discussed the possibility of defence engagements in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in maritime domain," the defence ministry said.

It said there were discussions on ways and means to enhance bilateral defence industrial cooperation and that Rajnath



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a meeting with Princess Astrid of Belgium in New Delhi

PTI

Singh welcomed Belgian investments in the defence sector.

"He suggested that the Belgian companies could play an important role by expanding their footprint in India and integrating the Indian vendors in their supply chains," the ministry said in a statement.

"Further, both countries agreed to explore an institutionalised defence

cooperation mechanism," it said.

The overall trajectory of India-Belgium ties has witnessed steady expansion in the last few years. The focus of the relations has traditionally been on trade and investment.

India is Belgium's 14th largest export destination and the 16th largest importer to Belgium.

India is Belgium's seventh

largest export destination outside the EU and the sixth largest trade partner outside the EU.

Trade in diamonds dominates the bilateral trade. In 2021, the bilateral trade between Belgium and India totalled Euro 12.22 Billion.

Belgium imports from India in 2021 totalled Euro 6.07 Billion, while Belgian exports to India were Euro 6.15 Billion.

## ED raids Bhutani and WTC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Monday said it has identified assets worth thousands of crores of rupees following searches in Delhi-NCR against realty firm WTC Group and Bhutani Group. The raids were conducted on February 27 at a dozen locations in Delhi, Noida (Uttar Pradesh) and Faridabad and Gurugram (both in Haryana) against WTC Group and its promoter Ashish Bhalla, and Bhutani Group and its promoter Ashish Bhutani under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the federal agency said in a statement.

The ED said the case stems from dozens of FIRs filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police against the Faridabad Police against WTC Group and its promoters Ashish Bhalla, Suparna Bhalla, Abhijeet Bhalla, and Bhutani Infra and others for alleged cheating, criminal breach of trust and committing fraud on hundreds of homebuyers.

These police cases were registered on the basis of complaints from "hundreds" of homebuyers and investors.

The Bhutani Infra said in a statement last week that the WTC Group recently and "is now fully cooperating with the ED in its investigation." No comment was immediately available from the WTC Group.

The ED said the police FIRs allege that WTC Faridabad Infrastructure Private Limited and its promoters "lured" the general public to invest in their project at Sector 111-114 of the city for residential plots. The promoters or directors hatched a "criminal conspiracy" and "siphoned off" the plot buyers' hardearned money by not completing the project within the stipulated time and "non-delivery" of the plots for more than 10 years, it said.

It was also alleged in FIRs that the Bhutani Infra group has

acquired the WTC Group and has re-launched the project at Sector 111-114 Faridabad keeping the plot buyers in "disarray" and committing fraud on investors and luring them to "surrender" their units, according to the ED.

During the searches, the agency said, documents related to collection of more than ₹3,500 Crore from various investors were found against 15 projects in Delhi-NCR. It was not stated by the ED where these documents were recovered from.

Out of the 15 major projects being undertaken by the group (WTC), very few deliveries have been given "indicating a well-orchestrated Ponzi scheme" and creation of assets in the name of other entities and siphoning off the funds abroad, it said.

"It was also unearthed during search action that more than ₹200 Crore has been siphoned to Singapore and the US indicating investments overseas for acquiring of overseas assets."

"Additionally, incriminating documents related to the WTC Group and Bhutani Group were seized wherein assets worth thousands of crores in market value have been transferred to the Bhutani Group at a nominal value, thus transferring the proceeds of crime (POC) at a nominal price," the agency alleged.

Documents related to "cash" transactions were also found, it said.

The agency said it seized several "incriminating" documents related to diversion, layering of funds apart from property documents like sale and registration deeds and laptops, hard drives etc were also seized.

"Additionally, assets to the tune of thousands of crores have been identified in the name of WTC group," it said.

Fixed deposits of WTC Group of companies have also been frozen and seized along with jewellery and bullion worth ₹1.5 Crore, the ED said.

## SC seeks Delhi government's response on remission of murder convict

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday asked the Delhi government to decide in two weeks over remission to Sukhdev Yadav alias Pehalwan, serving a 20-year jail term without remission in the 2002 Nitish Katara murder case.

A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan asked the government how the convict, whose 20 years jail term was ending on March 10, 2025, would continue to remain in prison.

"After all, the issue pertains to liberty of a person," the bench

said.

Justice Oka added, "You should have started the process of granting the remission a long time back. How can he be kept in jail after the period of sentence is over?"

The bench observed the submissions of solicitor general Tushar Mehta and said, "The case (for remission) of the petitioner shall be considered in two weeks. We accept the assurance and direct that the case (of Pehalwan) be listed for hearing on March 27."

On February 24, the bench questioned Delhi government's submission that it would not

release Pehalwan even after the completion of his actual 20 years jail term in the case.

The bench perused its judgement, which said, "Life imprisonment which shall be 20 years of actual imprisonment without consideration of remission, and fine of ₹10,000."

The Delhi government had said even after the completion of 20 years of actual imprisonment, it wouldn't be releasing the convict.

The top court then ordered the Delhi government home department secretary to file a statement on oath on whether

after completing 20 years of actual sentence, the petitioner should be released and asked its counsel if the state was reading court verdicts this way.

Yadav's plea challenged a November 2024 order of the Delhi High Court, which dismissed his petition for releasing him on furlough for three weeks.

On October 3, 2016, the Supreme Court awarded a 25-year jail term without the benefit of remission to Vikas Yadav and his cousin Vishal for their role in the sensational kidnapping and killing of Katara.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A fresh start or fleeting relief?

With N Biren Singh's exit and AT's surrender of arms, Manipur shows signs of normalcy—but is the peace lasting?

The conflict in Manipur, marked by ethnic tensions between the Meitei and Kuki-Zomi communities has shown some positive development in the recent weeks. The surrender of arms by Arambai Tenggol (AT), Home Minister Amit Shah's firm stance on opening all roads and the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh have created new possibilities for peace in the violence-stricken state. However, the underlying tensions and the continued presence of weapons in the region mean that true reconciliation remains a complex challenge. One of the most notable recent events was the voluntary surrender of 246 weapons by the AT group on February 27, following the appeal made by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla. This move is being seen as a crucial step towards de-escalation, as it marks the largest voluntary surrender of arms in the state since the ethnic conflict began in May 2023. However, security officials and observers caution that the surrender may not indicate a complete loss of AT's firepower.



Reports suggest that only a fraction of the looted sophisticated weapons has been returned, with country-made firearms making up a large portion of surrendered arms. Furthermore, AT's insistence on conditions such as full security guarantees and amnesty for its members indicates that the group still holds significant leverage.

The Union Home Minister's directive to ensure free movement on Manipur's highways from March 8 represents a decisive move to restore normalcy. Road blockades have been a persistent problem in the state, significantly affecting trade, movement of essential goods and the overall economic stability of the region.

The government's resolve to dismantle illegal bunkers and target drug trafficking further aligns with the broader goal of restoring law and order. However, concerns remain over the implementation of these directives. Ensuring that all roads remain open requires a sustained security presence, as groups with vested interests may attempt to impose fresh blockades. Additionally, the crackdown on drugs—while crucial—must be executed without further alienating communities that already feel marginalised. The resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh and the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur have led to a shifting power dynamic. Singh was widely seen as a key backer of AT and other Meitei groups, which played a role in the ethnic conflict. The major issue has been the divide between the Meitei and Kuki-Zomi communities, which remains unaddressed. Both sides continue to view each other with suspicion, and without a long-term reconciliation plan, tensions may resurface. Despite the surrender of arms, thousands of sophisticated weapons remain unaccounted for, posing a major security risk. The demand for a separate administration by the Kuki-Zomi groups remains a contentious issue. Without addressing the political aspirations of all communities, peace efforts may prove temporary.

## PICTALK



Painted storks at Keoladeo National Park, in Bharatpur

## MIGA: Can India overcome economic challenges

Despite its economic size, India's developing status reveals challenges like inequality, youth unemployment and a vast informal sector

Prime Minister Modi recently visited the US to strengthen bilateral ties and committed to Making India Great Again (MIGA), in consonance with Donald Trump's dream of making America greater again (MAGA).

Although India is the world's fifth-largest economy with a GDP of approximately US\$ 4.27 trillion, it is still classified as a developing nation. A developing country is technically a country where the Gross National Income per capita is \$1,905 or less, with India's per capita being nearly half of it at \$6,951. We rank 134 out of 193 countries in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI), below our neighbouring countries China at 75, Sri Lanka at 78, and even Bhutan and Bangladesh at 125 and 128 respectively (UN Development Report 2022-23).

With an HDI score of 0.644, India is categorised as 'medium human development'. However, there has been improvement across all HDI indicators—life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income (GNI) per



capita from last year. Nevertheless, we cannot conceit the improvement in the HDI alone, as Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2024, places India at the top of the 5 countries with the most people in poverty with 234 million people in the bracket. In sharp contrast to this, it ranks 3rd in the number of billionaires (Forbes, 2023), indicating glaring disparities in income inequalities. Another morbid aspect is high youth unemployment which accounts for almost 83 per cent of the total unemployment in India. Even worrisome is the share of youngsters with secondary or higher education

in the total unemployed, which has almost doubled from 35.2 per cent in 2000 to 65.7 per cent in 2022 (Indian Employment Report, 2024). The unemployment problem is further aggravated as about 90 per cent of the labour force works in the unorganised sector grappling with the issues of irregular work, income, social security benefits and working conditions. The policymakers are profoundly designing policies to boost the economy. Recently the monetary policy was eased, the repo rate dropped to push investment, and the government announced tax concessions to encourage consumption, both expected to accelerate output and income with a multiplier effect. This will probably counter the Blume Venture report, that nearly 100 crore Indians, 90 per cent of the country's population, lack discretionary spending power to purchase goods or services. With a desired GDP growth rate of at least 7 per cent, these measures will likely create a transitional optimistic mood for the econo-

my, but cannot sustain growth forever. The World Development Report, 2024, found the developing economies in the "middle-income trap," and emphasised the 3 I's, Investment, Infusion (of global technologies) and Innovation as three drivers of economic growth and expanding the production frontier. The government thereby needs to adopt a multifaceted approach to overcome challenges in covering potential gaps in production. It needs to work pragmatically towards education reforms, higher investment for skill development, human capital and creating regular employment opportunities. Moreover, efforts to promote medium and small enterprises, labour-intensive industries, start-ups, Make in India mission, need to be further strengthened to ensure an easy path to Make India Better (MIB) before MIGA.

(The writer is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi University. Views are personal)

# Mahakumbh 2025: Vikas bhi, virasat bhi

From the large-scale eco-friendly practices to the timeless wisdom of Bharatiya traditions, Mahakumbh offered a new model for development in harmony with nature



ANURAG SAXENA

The Valeriperis Circle is a fascinating concept. Imagine a circle on the world map. The circle is centered around the Beibu Gulf, off the east coast of Vietnam, has a radius of 4,000 kilometers, and includes Southern China, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. Now this is where it gets stupefying. This circle covers just about 9 per cent of the world's land-mass, but over 50 per cent of the world's population. This simple reality, clubbed with colonial impoverishment, explains why many people in this circle lived in filth and squalor. Most "progressive" thoughts therefore, be it sustainability, development, environment, innovation, or education, came from the "developed west". We, the unwashed and the uncouth plebs, lapped these ideas up.

These imported ideas however, played out terribly. Not just for people, but for the planet. So much so, that escaping this planet seems to be the primary focus of the biggest billionaires from the west. Talk about a fence eating its own crop!

Kumbh on the other hand is a metaphor for the alternate model. A moksha, if you will, from the destruction-premised development models from the west. Prayagraj, a city with a population of 1.4 million saw over 50 million visiting it over a month. To put that in context, imagine a flat typical urban flat that houses a family of four, suddenly visited by 1,400 people. This is indeed Valeriperis Circle on steroids, and any other city would have crumbled a 1,400x overload. Not just did the city manage, but actually offered solutions for how humanity could manage an explosion of demand quite sustainably.

Those of us that experienced the Kumbh personally will tell you the level of cleanliness that has been maintained. We have noticed the extensive use of bamboo instead of plastic, of jute rugs instead of astroturf, of manual boats instead of diesel motors, of e-rickshaws instead of fossil-fuel vehicles, of free refillable RO purified water instead of disposable mineral water bottles. Half a bil-



lion people used donas (cups made of dried leaves) in contrast to small birthday parties in "developed" countries serving single-use plastic.

What you didn't see perhaps was India's largest plastic buy-back program aimed at recycling, or leftover prasad being shared with animals as fodder, or compactor trucks working round the clock, or solar-powered sewage treatment plants.

The invisible sustainability efforts of the Kumbh were perhaps the silent hero that emerged naturally from a culture that values interdependence with nature at its core. The recently concluded Kumbh Global Summit on Sustainability explained the phenomenon and drew lessons from our rich history and culture. Ministers from a dozen Girmitiya nations shared their learnings around sustainability, most of it rooted in ancient Bharatiya wisdom.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat brought in simple, rooted wisdom from something as intrinsic as sustainability inbuilt into language itself. The word "dohan" (to milk a cow) comes from



THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT BROUGHT IN SIMPLE, ROOTED WISDOM FROM SOMETHING AS INTRINSIC AS SUSTAINABILITY INBUILT INTO LANGUAGE ITSELF

"do+han" the norm to milk just two teats of a cow, leaving the rest for the calf. Contrast that to industrial-grade milk production from hormone-ridden cows that has been normalised in the "developed" west. Ram Madhav proposed a sangam (confluence) of ancient Indic wisdom with modern practices, without which the world's sustainability crisis can never be avoided.

He highlighted that environment and sustainability are challenges that cannot be solved at COP summits along, but actually need a convergence of the richest ideas globally. The urgency of the summit was encapsulated most eloquently by Suresh Prabhu who framed an enquiry - with thousands of years of history and knowledge across the world, can we even be sure that we will last another hundred years?

Gas-guzzling economies of the West will continue to posture around sustainability as a virtue-signaling badge. They will postulate, make loud visible pledges, and fly into sustainability summits on their private jets. The minerals-filching economies east of us will ignore calls to action and

give you the silent treatment. They will continue to live the delusion that they are communist nations, while going out their way to display toxic capitalism, much to the peril of their people and our earth.

As Bharat, we have to accept a simple reality - What broke it, can't fix it. Period! Bharat has the unique civilisational advantage of leveraging our ancient wisdom to actually demonstrate that you can actually develop infrastructure at scale (like at the Kumbh) without bludgeoning mother nature with a hammer. As we attain maturity on the world stage, we neither need to twirl our moustache, nor cover up our acne. We would rather focus on the purity of our soul as the thought model we export. We would rather focus on our civilisational value of attaining balance.

As PM Narendra Modi's statement for the summit said, the only way to achieve global sustainability is to follow a simple, yet powerful principle, "Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi".

(The writer is a nominated Member of the National Tourism Advisory Council and the co-founder of India Pride Project; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### UKRAINE-US TENSIONS ESCALATE

Madam — The clash of diplomacy and dignity (March 3) in the case of Ukraine-US is taking an ugly turn. Trump is not losing any opportunity to project himself as the ultimate global authority. Ukraine had political issues with Russia, which gained serious turns after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia. This incident had instilled a sense of apprehension and made Ukraine seek membership in NATO. As Russia was against Ukraine joining NATO due to various crucial concerns, it had to act tough with Ukraine, leading to war. As everyone knows, Ukraine cannot even think of war against Russia but for the lavish help it could receive from the US and European nations in terms of funds, weapons, political and moral support. The change of guard in the US with Trump as its head took the entire issue in a different direction. The mediator Trump dictates and decides the course without offering even scope for the aggrieved Ukraine to spell out its terms. Instead of mediation, Trump is giving dictation to Ukraine. The President of Ukraine feels let down by the US. His open shouting at the US president makes it easy for everyone to understand the seriousness of the situation. In the melee, Russia is allowed to retain the territories it captured, and the US gets a favourable agreement to exploit the precious natural mineral resources of Ukraine. But Ukraine stands repenting for having ventured a big war against a big giant for nothing but a huge loss of men, material, peace and dignity. Who should be blamed?

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

### TAMIL NADU OPPOSES NEP

Madam — I refer to your editorial on "Simmering linguistic tension" (February 28). The Centre insists on implementing the NEP, whereas the state objects to it, fearing the imposition of the Hindi language leading to the destruction of Tamil. The state is committed to a two-language formula, says the incumbent state government. There is a total misconception in this regard. According to the new NEP, the first

## India beats New Zealand



The match against New Zealand is yet another thrilling game by the men in blue, Team India. The back to back success for Team India has made our team stand stronger in the ICC Champions Trophy. Despite New Zealand winning the toss and deciding to bowl first, India successfully managed to give a 250-run target to the opposing team. Although the short innings by Virat Kohli jerked everyone, our bowling order

managed it well. At 45.3, India made New Zealand all out, clinching victory by 44 runs. Varun Chakravarty stole all attention as he took five crucial wickets for India, presenting spectacular bowling prowess, before he was crowned as the Player of the Match.

Our player deserves heartiest congratulations for their exuberant efforts, showcased in the match against New Zealand. Now that India moves ahead to the next round, where it will strike a semifinals clash against Australia in the ICC Champions Trophy, we hope that the enthusiasm of our players for knocking all opponents dead will continue ahead with full positivity. And India will surely bring the ICC Champions Trophy home this season.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

language will be a local language, the second one English, and a third one any language of the student's choice. It is not prescribed that the third language must be Hindi. It is also not compulsory to learn Hindi nor the language forced down the throats of non-Hindi-speaking people. It is left to the discretion of the wards. NEP is aimed at improving knowledge, skill and language learning. There is nothing wrong in learning an additional language.

It is an advantage for the students to seek better prospects. Playing politics for votes sake is highly reprehensible. Politicians should not play with the future of the students. In the name of imposition of Hindi, students are denied quality education. The establishment of Navodaya schools has not been permitted in the state for decades. This is highly a retrograde step. Tamil Nadu should adopt the new NEP in the welfare of the students, for the quality of education has come down heavily. All other states in India had adopted the NEP. The status of their mother language has not declined but rather improved. Also, the schools run by these politicians follow the CBSE syl-

labus. Their wards study Hindi. As such, victimising the poor government school students is unfair and unjust.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

### AVALANCHE WARNING IGNORED

Madam — It is a matter of crying shame that in spite of snowfall and avalanche alerts since February 24, labourers working on a stretch of the road to Badrinath Dham had not been evacuated in time. Four days went by, but no action was taken to bring those labourers to a safer place. They were kept in the danger zone till avalanches hit the area on February 28. As a result, some labourers were killed, and some went missing. This indicates a total apathy towards the safety of labourers. Now, who will be accountable for playing with the lives of so many labourers? India needs stringent labour laws and their strict implementation. Otherwise, such a tragedy will become a routine affair.

Sujit De | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

## DREAM BIG AND STAY HUMBLE

Success isn't a mere stroke of luck—it's the result of daring to dream, backed by discipline and humility



RAVI VALLURI

Success is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. What is the secret of the success of achievers? Dream the impossible, be extremely disciplined, remain dedicated and determined, take appropriate decisions all the time, even in adverse situations, and finally maintain humility while toasting success. To be successful, a human being necessarily dreams of the impossible. Dreams should be audacious. One has to think big and be bold in the actions taken. Ratan Tata emphasised leading from the front and not being a mere follower. Be a leader and not a follower. A quintessential leader takes up responsibility. The 'mind' of the leader needs to be confronted and challenged. The human mind loves challenges. Faced with challenging situations, it delivers the impossible. Mind is not motivated by rote, but is inspired to script something unusual. Maintaining mental and physical discipline are essential ingredients of successful leaders.

Physical fitness increases both our physical and mental stamina. Exercise releases endorphins in the human body which trigger positive thoughts. It helps immensely in smart decision-making. Along with exercise, an individual is also required to maintain a healthy and balanced diet which staves off disease and enhances alacrity and sharpness. Achievers may be from any field — sports, politics, administration or entrepreneurs. However, the cardinal principle is to maintain physical fitness, and punctuality and avoid procrastination by maintaining timely schedules. If a leader is lethargic, the organisation becomes flabby, sluggish and phlegmatic.

The mantra for attaining success is to be extremely disciplined. Such a trait inspires employees to increase their productivity levels too. In the spiritual path, a seeker needs to maintain a spirited tenacity and pursue his Sadhana relentlessly. Regular Sadhana inspires the mind to expand



its vistas and thereby attempt to embrace the ultimate reality. This, in the final analysis, is the underlying objective and the seeker unflinchingly needs to relentlessly practice the tenets laid down by the Guru. Smart, quick and efficient decision-making assists people in achieving success. This provides a person with the cushion and a cutting edge over others. There is no substitute for hard work. Working hard produces quick and efficient results. This is followed by the quality of determination. A Sadhak, a sportsperson, or an entrepreneur has necessarily to be determined. Determined minds are strong and developed minds. These are innovative minds and conjure a variety of ideas and positive thoughts. To achieve excellence in any field, such minds and individuals are determined at all points in time. The minds of such individuals are highly fertile and produce magic with regularity. An unbearable situation gets converted into an unbelievable one. This is their inherent strength.

They do not live in the past or future, they live in the Present Moment to confront all challenges. However, the ultimate hallmark of all successful individuals, teams, companies or organisations is HUMILITY. There is no or very little trace of arrogance. They are insulated by the feeling of doer ship and become hubristic. In a competitive and cutthroat environment, a huge helping of humility is essential for staying ahead of the game. Humility enhances curiosity and thus accelerates learning. Without humility, you can never be a good listener and understand the voices around you — of customers, colleagues and stakeholders. "Humility is the true key to success. Successful people lose their way at times. Humility halts their arrogance and self-indulging trap. Humble people share the credit and wealth, remaining focused and hungry to continue the journey of success," writes Rick Pitino.

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

# Tripura innovates cityscapes for sustainability and tourism



V K BAHUGUNA

Tripura's innovative projects are revitalising city life by enhancing public spaces, managing waste and tackling challenges like air pollution



About 35 per cent of India's population lives in urban areas and is still growing rapidly. As the population of cities is ever increasing with a lot of garbage and waste found all around in most cities, the sustainable management of urban area landscapes is very crucial for better civic amenities, ambience and dealing with adapting to environmental issues like air pollution, heat waves and flooding, while also improving quality of life through green spaces, better public areas for entertainment and relaxation and promoting physical activity and mental wellbeing among residents; all while managing waste disposal and addressing the challenges of a densely populated urban environment; the situation is exacerbated during extreme temperatures in summer. Tourist attractions are essential elements of progress these days and the aesthetics of the urban environment plays a key role in attracting tourists on the one hand and improving the economic activities of the people. During 2023-24 more than 5,45,000 tourists including 75,000 from abroad visited Tripura compared to around 3 lakh tourists in the year 2015. Agartala is the only modern yet densely populated city in Tripura and is full of tourist attractions in and around its 50 to 60-kilometre radius. The flow of tourists has been steadily increasing in the state as the infrastructure of hotels, roads and transport has been picking up very fast thanks to the proactive initiation taken by the government during the last few years. I have recently visited Tripura in the second week of February 2025 to study a few innovative steps taken by the Tripura administration. A three-dimensional approach has been adopted in beautifying the urban architecture of Agartala and other cities.



THE FOREST DEPARTMENT ALONG WITH OTHER STATE DEPARTMENTS HAS CREATED PYRAMIDS OF FLOWERS, CROTONS AND INDIGENOUS TREE SPECIES ALONG WITH FOUNTAINS AND RASHI AND NAKSHATRA FORESTS

Tripura forest department has a rich tradition of embellishment of Tripura's natural beauty through a series of parks, gardens and beautification of pavements in different parts of the state. The state government had created an agency for this purpose to further beautify the state's already beautiful landscape to attract tourists as well as create employment opportunities for the people. For this purpose, the state government had created an entity in the forest department "Tripura Park and Garden Society". In this direction the government of India's 'Nagarvan- city forests' scheme is giving a big impetus to this project not only in Tripura but also in other parts of the country. However, the innovative ways the city's Capital Complex, state secretariat and airport roads have been aesthetically laid out is a rare example of urban landscape management.

Most of the pavements covered by cement and bricks during summer months create heat waves in most of the cities. The forest department along with other state departments has created pyramids of flowers, crotons and indigenous tree species along with fountains and Rashi and Nakshatra forests. Most of the empty side lands along buildings and pavements were cleared of debris and planted in a pyramid shape hierarchy giving the most beautiful look in between fountain gardens were created along with plantations of medicinal plants for ex-situ conservation of these valuable plants. The top level was occupied by the tree species and special tree

grooves were also created for public awareness. For the benefit of people biodiversity and butterfly parks were created on Airport Road giving the inciting look to the tourists visiting the state. Such projects if undertaken in all cities in the country will be an excellent attempt to combat climate change, especially the heat waves engulfing most of the urban cities and landscape in recent years.

Such a project of beautification cannot be completed by a single department therefore, in this scheme public work and urban development departments also fully participated. Such innovation needs the full support of senior government functionaries. The proposal of young officers of the forest department was fully supported by the state Chief Secretary and other senior officers. The scheme is implemented through the Nagarvan scheme outside Tripura and shows cases of the unique vegetation and other cultural trends of the state. The rich floral and other biodiversity of the state is one of the reasons for success as well as the favourable agro-climatic conditions. Similar attempts need to be made in other states of the country and focus should be on local species and with conservation value of other endangered plants. The Rashi and Nakshatra Van were created by planting species like Chandan, Neem, Akanda, Peepal, Haritiki, Ashwagandha, Khair, Palash and Orange for Nakshatra Van. For Rashi van Jackfruit, Peepal, Ber, Bel, Jamun, Amla, Nageswar, Arjun,

Mahogany, Mango, Bakul and Guava are all very useful Trees. For the long-term sustainability of landscape beautification, the constant supervision, maintenance and involvement of people is a must. These types of innovations though started in administration all over the country need to be nurtured beyond the shadow of officers involved in it once they are not in the saddle. For this, standard operating procedures must be developed along with creating a scope for public-private partnerships like in Zoos in many other states where the people adopt certain animals and fund their food and other needs so that such activities can become financially viable in the long term and also involve the public in their management.

The entry fee should be such that these endeavours become sustainable and people are willing to pay if quality service is offered as such things cannot be relied only on government funding. All such creations must be linked to environmental management for climate change as well as it is becoming a critical factor in large landscape management in the country. The need of the hour is the holistic and integrated management of urban areas of the country.

(The author is former director general, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, and former Principal Secretary, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Resources and Forest Department, Government of Tripura; views are personal)

# Beyond social media regulation: The call for a national moral code

Amid debates over social media regulation sparked by Ranveer Allahbadia's remarks, a deeper question arises: should society adopt a clearly defined moral code?

While the nation discusses the desirability of regulating content on social media given the controversy that erupted from the statement made by YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia, there is a larger issue of defining morality and enacting moral patterns of conduct for people that requires prior consideration.

While it remains open whether Allahbadia's statement violated any provision of law, however, it is obvious that his statement hurt the moral sentiments of a majority of the population. Notwithstanding, the undesirability of his statement, how advisable it is to expect people to behave in a way that is morally acceptable to society when no particular pattern of ethically correct



SIDDHARTHA MISHRA

behaviour is prescribed for them by the state. It implies that society expects or presumes everyone to know morally accurate conduct in all situations. As morality is an abstract concept that varies from place to place and from person to person, it is necessary that, like law, morality is clearly defined as well. Usually, an act or statement acquires a righteous or

erroneous character on the personal sense of judgement of individuals, thus, people must know clearly what is permissible moral and what is proscribed immoral.

In such a situation, it requires consideration whether society needs a code that prescribes a pattern of morally upright conduct for its people. Ideally, each society must aim to be free from immoral conduct or behaviour and, for this, the state should establish a pattern or standard of behaviour that is expected of all the citizens and is followed by all alike whether individuals or organisations.

Ironically, in India, the state has made little attempt to establish such a society where people follow a certain advised pattern of behaviour that is

acceptable to all.

The impression that laws would serve this purpose is completely contrary to the practical realities. Laws as they exist in this country are mostly proscriptive which means they largely prohibit particular or specific behaviour(s) rather than laying down in detail the desirable pattern(s) of conduct.

In India, laws are hardly prescriptive and they do not necessarily prescribe a particular pattern of behaviour for people. Generally, laws do not provide in brief or detail what manner, pattern of conduct or behaviour should people observe or practice.

They mainly proscribe or prohibit particular conduct(s) and make doing such conduct culpable or punishable and the



doer of it liable for certain consequences. Given such a situation, does it not sound farcical to expect all the people, all over, to know, in every situation, in minute details, what is legally and morally permissible conduct and behaviour? The lack of efforts on the part of the society or the state to

formulate a code of morally desirable conduct in India may be ascribed to the thought that this work be better left to the educational, religious or cultural institutions.

But if so, have such institutions fulfilled their responsibility in this regard? India, being a

multi-religious and multi-cultural country, a variety of factors seem to hamper this purpose. Diversity of faiths and religions results in a lack of a common behavioural pattern as well as a lack of a mechanism to ensure that the moral instructions being imparted are being uniformly learnt and practised.

Even the educational institutions seem to flounder here, as not all educational institutions seem to insist on teaching moral or ethical values uniformly at all levels. They lay immense emphasis on scientific and technical education but not in the same way on imparting moral education, which is more or equally necessary. Most of the problems in society are caused by a lack of strong values, morals and

integrity of character in people, hence, a civilised state must work sincerely on developing a strong value system in its population. Though the Indian constitution prescribes fundamental duties for citizens that are non-enforceable, they remain, merely, empty slogans. Given the massive onslaught of undesirable content on social media and its penetration among, and influence on, vulnerable youth, it is highly incumbent on the state, simultaneously, to regulate social media as well as draft a moral/ethical code of conduct for building a nation of people with strong morals and character.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Faculty of Law University of Delhi; views are personal)



# Bombay HC stays Buch probe

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday asked the ACB not to act until March 4 on an order directing it to lodge an FIR against former SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five other officials for alleged stock market fraud and regulatory violations.

Buch, Bombay Stock Exchange MD Sundararaman Ramamurthy and the others moved the HC on Monday, seeking to quash the March 1 order passed by a special court here directing the state ACB to register an FIR against them pertaining to certain allegations of fraud committed in 1994 while listing a company on the BSE. The pleas were mentioned before a single bench of Justice S G Dige for urgent hearing.

The bench said it would hear the pleas on Tuesday and added that until then, the state Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), which was directed to probe the case, shall not act upon the special court order. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta appeared for Buch and three current whole time SEBI

directors - Ashwani Bhatia, Ananth Narayan G and Kamlesh Chandra Varshney. Senior counsel Amit Desai appeared for the Bombay Stock Exchange's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Sundararaman Ramamurthy and its former chairman and public interest director Pramod Agarwal. The pleas sought quashing of the special court order, terming it as illegal and arbitrary.

The order was not legally sustainable as the petitioners were not even issued a notice or heard before a decision was taken, the pleas said. Special ACB court judge, S E Bangar, in the order on March 1 said there was prima facie evidence of regulatory lapses and collusion, requiring a fair and impartial probe.

The ACB court also said it will monitor the probe, and sought a status report within 30 days.

The order was passed on a complaint filed by Sapan Shivastava, a media reporter, seeking investigation into the alleged offences committed by the accused, involving largescale financial fraud,

regulatory violations and corruption. The allegations pertain to the fraudulent listing of a company on the stock exchange in the year 1994 with the active connivance of regulatory authorities, particularly the Securities and Exchange Board of India, without compliance under the SEBI Act, 1992 and rules and regulations thereunder. The SEBI in a statement on Monday said it "would be initiating appropriate legal steps to challenge this order and remains committed to ensuring due regulatory compliance in all matters".

The market regulator said the application, which sought directions to the police to register an FIR and investigate alleged irregularities in granting listing permission to a company on the Bombay Stock Exchange in 1994, was allowed by the court "even though these officials were not holding their respective positions at the relevant point of time".

The Bombay Stock Exchange has in a statement termed the application as "frivolous and vexatious in nature".

# Maharashtra SP leader courts controversy

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Samajwadi Party president and MLA Abu Asim Azmi on Monday came in for a severe flak from various political parties for his comment that Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was a 'good administrator', with Shiv Sena president and deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde demanding that Azmi be booked for treason.

Azmi's comment came after Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said that the government would not tolerate insults heaped on India's national icons. Responding to Fadnis' comment, Azmi said: "I don't accept that Aurangzeb was a cruel administrator...on the contrary he was an able administrator" Azmi, who is an MLA from

Shivainagar-Mankhurd in north-central Mumbai, slammed the MahaYuti government in the state and the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre for "distorting" history and trying to create "Hindu-Muslim" divide. "The government wants to destroy the country by creating only Hindu-Muslim divide in the country... What we are getting to read is wrong history. Aurangzeb built many temples...Aurangzeb was not a cruel leader...when he was the Mughal emperor, his empire was extended from Afghanistan to Burma," Azmi said.

"The country was known as 'sone ke chidiya' during his regime...there were several Hindu commanders and soldiers in Aurangzeb's army...the fight between Aurangzeb and Chhatrapati

Shivaji Maharaj was not religion," the four-time MLA added. Reacting to the comments made by Azmi, Shiv Sena chief leader and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that Azmi should be booked for treason. "Those who have seen Chhava would know how cruel Aurangzeb was... Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj was tortured and killed. During his regime, several Hindu temples were brought down...atrocities were committed on mothers and sisters...he was a maha paapi," Shinde said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Aaditya Thackeray said: "Azmi has made such a statement after taking supari (contract)." BJP legislator Ram Kadam said that Azmi needs to be given history books.

# Exam anxiety pushes teenager to daily labour

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 17-year-old boy from Delhi's Rohini, unwilling to take his final exams, left home and travelled over 2,000 kilometres in Tamil Nadu to work as a labourer at a construction site and was living in a slum, an official said on Monday.

According to the police, the missing report of the boy was filed on February 21 in Budh Vihar Police Station. "The boy was studying in class 11 in a reputed school at Connaught Place and has no interest in studies," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Vikram Singh said. The officer further said that the investigation revealed that he did not want to give the final examination. On February 21, he left his house and sent a message to his father saying that he was

leaving the house and no one should search for him. From Delhi, the boy reached Bangalore and started working there. After receiving information about the matter, teams were formed to search for the boy. Various sources were activated to know if there was any kidnapping angle. Later, a missing person report was registered, he said, adding that the boy was recovered from the Krishnagiri area in Tamil Nadu (near the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border). The officer further said that the boy contacted a known person in Bangalore and reached there by train. "He started working as a labourer at a construction site near Tamil Nadu and Karnataka border. When the team found him, he was residing in a slum near the construction site," said the

DCP. Sources in the police said that his father works as a driver and the boy got admission in the school under EWS quota. "So far we got to know that the boy never liked the school and felt like he didn't fit in the culture of the school. He wanted to make money and be independent. For the same reason, he ran away," said the source. Investigation also suggested that he got to know from his classmates about bitcoins and even tried investing in bitcoins to earn quick money. "He first took a train to Bangalore, saw an advertisement there for work available at a construction site in Krishnagiri. Took another train reached there and began working in Krishnagiri before he was tracked by the police teams from his phone's location," he added.

# BJP accuses AAP of avoiding MCD budget discussion

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Sardar Raja Iqbal Singh on Monday accused the AAP of avoiding discussions on the Corporation's budget to "hide its failures."

Singh, who presented suggestions on the revised budget estimates for 2024-25 and the budget estimates for 2025-26, alleged that despite its majority in the House, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was unwilling to engage in constructive debate. "The Aam Aadmi Party neither has a vision of its own nor does it want to listen to the suggestions from the opposition," he said. He claimed that AAP's "negative politics" had led to its defeat in the recent Assembly elections and the party was now hindering the Corporation's functioning. The leader of opposition alleged that AAP's decision to adjourn the House mid-

session shows its "lack of faith in democratic systems" and asserted that for the past three years it has brought the Corporation to a standstill. Slamming the Leader of the House for creating a ruckus during the session, Singh said the leader had lost the moral right to continue in the position due to a lack of numbers. "In April, the BJP will have its Mayor in the Corporation, as the people have rejected the AAP," he further claimed. He said that he had proposed several measures to increase revenue, reduce expenses, curb corruption, and ensure good governance within the Corporation. However, the AAP's unwillingness to address these concerns demonstrated its failure in managing municipal affairs, he added. In a address to the Assembly, Singh accused the AAP of failing to meet its revenue targets, particularly in property tax collections, which contribute significantly

to the MCD's budget. He pointed out that against a house tax revenue target of Rs 4,300 crore, only Rs 1,908 crore was collected by January 2025. The opposition also criticised the AAP's pollution control measures, saying that despite repeated assurances, Delhi's air quality continues to deteriorate. The Aam Aadmi Party's recent decision to ban plastic bags below 50 microns was cited as an inadequate response, given the rising incidents of garbage burning and industrial emissions. Singh also accused the AAP of not providing regular salaries and benefits to sanitation workers despite promises made in previous budgets. The opposition further alleged that the AAP's housing policies had left thousands of urban poor without proper shelter, as resettlement plans "remained on paper", according to the budget speech

# DU student killed in Rohini road accident

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 19-year-old Delhi University student working as a newspaper vendor was killed in a road accident in Rohini, an official said on Monday. According to the police, the victim was pursuing graduation and took up newspaper distribution to fund his education. The incident occurred around 6:30 am on Saturday near the RTO office in Rohini when a PCR call alerted police about a road accident. "Upon arrival, teams found a broken bicycle scattered with newspapers, but the victim had already been moved to BSA Hospital. He was declared him brought dead," a senior police officer said. The office further said that the deceased was identified as Rishal Singh, a resident of Budh Vihar in Delhi. He was a college student who also worked as a newspaper

distributor in the mornings. "Initial investigations suggest that an unidentified vehicle hit him, leading to his fatal injuries," he added. Police have registered an FIR and have launched an investigation into the matter. Teams are scanning CCTV footage from the area to identify the vehicle and the driver responsible. Poonam (25), the elder sister of Rishal, shared that her family is devastated by the death of the 19-year-old, whose birthday was just three months away on June 11. The victim had been working odd jobs, including as a newspaper vendor, since Class 11, earning around Rs 12,000 per month to fund his education and support his family. He is survived by his father (50), who works in a factory in Bawana, and his mother (45), who does stitching. He also leaves behind a younger brother and two married sisters.

# Delhi criminal arrested after encounter

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A criminal wanted in a murder case was arrested after a police encounter near Prem Bari nala in northwest Delhi, officials said on Monday. Two other accused were later arrested based on his input, they said. Sahil (22) fired at a police team when confronted, leading the officers to retaliate in self-defence. Sahil suffered a bullet injury on his right knee and was subsequently apprehended. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bisham Singh said. Sahil and two others were wanted for the February 25 murder of 45-year-old factory cashier Saroj Pathak in the Ashok Vihar area. "After the incident, multiple teams were formed to nab the accused.

# After loss, Kejriwal goes for meditation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal will go for a 10-day Vipassana session in Punjab from Tuesday, nearly a month after his party lost power in Delhi. AAP sources said Kejriwal will leave for Hoshiarpur for the meditation course on Tuesday. He will join the Vipassana session at a centre there from March 5 to

March 15, they said. Kejriwal had attended a 10-day session at Dhamma Dhaja Vipassana Centre in Anandgarh in Hoshiarpur in December 2023. The earlier sojourn came as he faced summons from the Enforcement Directorate for questioning in a money laundering case linked to excise policy. Kejriwal's Punjab visit also assumes significance amid

Congress' claim that several AAP MLAs were ready to defect to its side. The AAP has refuted all such rumours, including replacement of Bhagwant Mann as chief minister of the state. Kejriwal has remained absent from public view since AAP's crushing defeat in the Delhi Assembly elections, sparking intense speculation about his political future.

# Congress in pickle over fat shaming

From page 1

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi also came out in support of Sharma. "Not an avid cricket fan however even with my limited interest in the game, I can say that Rohit Sharma - with extra pounds of weight or without it, has led India team to great heights. It is his work and commitment to it that matters," Chaturvedi, Rajya Sabha member and also part of Congress led INDIA bloc said. Congress reprimanded Shama Mohamed for fat-shaming Sharma and asked her to delete her social media posts in which she made the comments and exercise greater caution in future.

In her now-deleted post, Mohamed said Sharma is "fat for a sportsman". "Need to lose weight! And of course the most unimpressive Captain India has ever had!" she said. Responding to a post praising Sharma, the Congress spokes person asked what was so world class about the current captain when compared to his predecessors like Saurav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, M S Dhoni, Virat Kohli, Kapil Dev, Ravi Shastri and the rest. Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said, "Dr. Shama Mohammed, National Spokesperson of the Indian National Congress, made certain

remarks about a cricketing legend that do not reflect the party's position." "The Indian National Congress holds the contributions of sporting icons in the highest regard and does not endorse any statements that undermine their legacy," Khera said. BJP leader Shehzad Poonawalla hit out at the Congress over Mohamed's remarks. "Those who have lost 90 elections under captaincy of Rahul Gandhi are calling captaincy of Rohit Sharma unimpressive! I guess 6 ducks in Delhi and 90 election losses is impressive but winning T20 World Cup isn't! Rohit has a brilliant track record as captain by the way!" he said in a social media post.

# Omar dismiss BJP alliance

From page 1

She said they have brought several bills and expect that there would be unity among political parties to address these critical issues facing Jammu and Kashmir. Mehbooba Mufti also criticised the Lieutenant Governor's address on the opening day of the Budget Session, expressing disappointment that it did not address the issues of disempowerment faced by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Mufti also took a jibe at Omar Abdullah, stating that no one was asking him to become Delhi former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, but that he should at least stand up for the rights of his people. Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone also lashed out at the National Conference over Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's speech, saying it is indistinguishable from a

possible speech. In a post on X, Lone, said that the LG's address is indistinguishable from a possible BJP speech, had they been in power. "There seems to be total ideological overlap," he said, adding that the speech doesn't even remotely talk about Article 370, Article 35 A. "No mention of 5 August 2019. No mention of reorganisation Act," he said. The LG's speech is drafted by the elected government to outline its policy and achievements "They don't even want to pretend that have anything to do with Article 370. I remember how during election campaign it was all about Article 370, and how all others are BJP. And now the ideological overlap," he said. Earlier, addressing the first Budget session of J and K Assembly in seven years, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said the session is not merely a legislative formality

but a reflection of their commitment to good governance, transparency, and inclusive development. "One of the foremost aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir is the restoration of full statehood. My government remains steadfast in its commitment to addressing this aspiration," he said. Lieutenant Governor also reiterated commitment of the Union Territory government towards strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies by ensuring timely elections at all levels. The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Dedicated Backward Classes Commission, established in June 2023 to conduct empirical studies on Other Backward Classes (OBC) representation, submitted its final recommendations to the government last week, brightening the outlook for polls to local bodies.

From page 1

The decision marks a significant shift within BSP, as Akash Anand was earlier seen as a key youth face and potential successor in the party. His removal signals Mayawati's firm control over the party and her commitment to its core ideological framework. Earlier, after he was relieved of all charges Akash Anand said that the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is not just about politics for him but a mission. He described party chief Mayawati's decision as an

emotional setback but affirmed his commitment to the Bahujan movement as a loyal soldier. Taking to social media, Anand wrote, "I am a cadre of the revered Behen Kumari Mayawati Ji. Under her leadership, I have learned unforgettable lessons in sacrifice, loyalty, and dedication. These are not just ideologies for me; they are my life's purpose. Every decision made by Behen Ji is final for me, and I stand by it with full respect." Acknowledging his removal as an emotional moment, he

termed it a major challenge. "The test is difficult, and the fight is long. In such tough times, patience and resolve are my true companions. As a dedicated worker of the Bahujan mission, I will continue to serve the party and the movement with complete sincerity and fight for my people's rights until my last breath." Responding to speculation about his political career, Anand dismissed notions that his exit from party posts marked his downfall. "Some opposition parties think this decision has ended my

# Dr Nawale elected CPI(M) Maharashtra state secretary

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Ayurvedic doctor Dr Ajit Nawale, who has led several farmers' protests and marches across the state in the past, has been unanimously elected as Maharashtra's State Secretary of Communist Party of India (Marxist). Dr Nawale (47) has emerged as the youngest State Secretary of the CPI(M) in the country. Dr Nawale was instrumental in organising the historic march of peasants and tribals from Nashik to Mumbai in March 2018. At that time, the images of blistered feet of farmers had created traction among the people across the country. Dr Nawale was elected State CPM Secretary at the 24th Maharashtra State Conference of the CPI(M) in the country. Dr Nawale was instrumental in organising the historic march of peasants and tribals from Nashik to Mumbai in March 2018. At that time, the images of blistered feet of farmers had created traction among the people across the country. Dr Nawale was elected State CPM Secretary at the 24th Maharashtra State Conference of the CPI(M) in the country. 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# Israel gets flak after it stops Gaza aid to pressure Hamas

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israel faced sharp criticism as it stopped the entry of all food and other supplies into Gaza on Sunday and warned of "additional consequences" for Hamas if a fragile ceasefire isn't extended. Mediators Egypt and Qatar accused Israel of violating humanitarian law by using starvation as a weapon. The ceasefire's first phase saw a surge in humanitarian aid after months of growing hunger. Hamas accused Israel of trying to derail the next phase Sunday hours after its first phase had ended and called Israel's decision to cut off aid "a war crime and a blatant attack" on a truce that took a year of negotiations

before taking hold in January. In the second phase, Hamas would release dozens of remaining hostages in return for an Israeli pullout from Gaza and a lasting ceasefire. Negotiations on the second phase were meant to start a month ago but haven't begun. **Israel backs a new proposal to speed up the release of hostages:** Israel said on Sunday that a new US proposal calls for extending the ceasefire through Ramadan — the Muslim holy month that began over the weekend — and the Jewish Passover holiday, which ends April 20. Under that proposal, Hamas would release half the hostages on the first day and the rest when an agreement is reached

on a permanent ceasefire, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. The militants currently hold 59 hostages, 35 of them believed to be dead. National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes said the United States would support whatever decision Israel makes, without commenting on the new proposal. Netanyahu said Israel is fully coordinated with the Trump administration and the ceasefire will only continue as long as Hamas keeps releasing hostages. **The UN and others warn against aid cutoff:** Saying the ceasefire has saved countless lives, the International Committee of the Red Cross

said that "any unravelling of the forward momentum created over the last six weeks risks plunging people back into despair." UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher called Israel's decision "alarming," noting that international humanitarian law makes clear that aid access must be allowed. UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged all parties to make every effort to prevent a return to hostilities in Gaza, and called for humanitarian aid to flow back into Gaza immediately and for the release of all hostages, said spokesman Stéphane Dujarric. Five non-governmental groups asked Israel's Supreme Court for an interim order barring the

state from preventing aid from entering Gaza, claiming the move violates Israel's obligations under international law: "These obligations cannot be condition on political considerations." The war has left most of Gaza's population of over 2 million dependent on international aid. About 600 aid trucks had entered daily since the ceasefire began on January 19, easing fears of famine raised by international experts. But residents said prices shot up as word of the closure spread. From the heavily destroyed Jabaliya urban refugee camp, Fayza Nassar said the closure would worsen dire conditions. "There will be famine and chaos," she said. Hamas warned that any

attempt to delay or cancel the ceasefire agreement would have "humanitarian consequences" for the hostages. The only way to free them is through the existing deal, the group said. Families of hostages again pressed Israel's government. "Postponing the negotiation on the deal for everyone's (release) can't happen," Lishay Miran-Lavi, wife of hostage Omri Miran, said in Tel Aviv. "Hostages don't have time to wait for an ideal deal." **Israel was accused of blocking aid throughout the war:** Israel imposed a siege on Gaza in the war's opening days and only eased it under US pressure. UN agencies and aid groups accused Israel of not facilitating enough aid during 15

months of war. The International Criminal Court said there was reason to believe Israel had used "starvation as a method of warfare" when it issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu last year. The allegation is also central to South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide. Israel has denied the accusations. It says it has allowed in enough aid and blamed shortages on what it called the UN's inability to distribute it. It also accused Hamas of siphoning off aid — an allegation that Netanyahu repeated Sunday. Kenneth Roth, former head of Human Rights Watch, said Israel as an occupying power has an "absolute duty" to facil-

itate humanitarian aid under the Geneva Conventions, and called Israel's decision "a resumption of the war-crime starvation strategy" that led to the ICC warrant. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostages. Israel's offensive has killed over 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It says more than half of those killed were women and children. It does not specify how many of the dead were combatants. Israeli bombardment pounded large areas of Gaza to rubble and displaced some 90 per cent of the population.

# Europe at crossroads in history: Starmer

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer rallied his European counterparts Sunday to shore up their borders and throw their full weight behind Ukraine as he announced outlines of a plan to end Russia's war. "Every nation must contribute to that in the best way that it can, bringing different capabilities and support to the table, but all taking responsibility to act, all stepping up their own share of the burden," he said. Starmer's exhortation to 18 fellow leaders that they need to do the heavy lifting for their own security comes two days after US backing of Ukraine appeared in jeopardy when President Donald Trump lashed out at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and said he wasn't grateful enough for America's support. The meeting had been overshadowed by the extraordinary scolding that took place on live television at the White House. Starmer used the

opportunity as part of his broader effort to bridge the gap between Europe and the US and also salvage what had seemed like the start of a peace process before Friday's spat. Starmer said he had worked with France and Ukraine on a plan to end the war and that the group of leaders — mostly from Europe — had agreed on four things. The steps toward peace would: keep aid flowing to Kyiv and maintain economic pressure on Russia to strengthen Ukraine's hand; make sure Ukraine is at the bargaining table and any peace deal must ensure its sovereignty and security; and continue to arm Ukraine to deter future invasion. **A coalition of the willing:** Finally, Starmer said they would develop a "coalition of the willing" to defend Ukraine and guarantee the peace. "Not every nation will feel able to contribute but that can't mean that we sit back," he said. "Instead, those willing will intensify planning now with real urgency. The UK is prepared to back this with boots

on the ground and planes in the air, together with others." It is far from certain whether Russian President Vladimir Putin will accept any such plan, which Starmer said would require strong US backing. He did not specify what that meant, though he told the BBC before the summit that there were "intense discussions" to get a security guarantee from the US. "If there is to be a deal, if there is to be a stopping of the fighting, then that agreement has to be defended, because the worst of all outcomes is that there is a temporary pause and then Putin comes again," Starmer said. Starmer said he will later bring a more formal plan to the US and work with Trump. Before arriving in London, French president Emmanuel Macron suggested in an interview with a French newspaper that he and Starmer are proposing a "truce in the air, on the seas and energy infrastructures" that would last a month. There would be no European troops in the coming weeks and troops would only be

deployed on the ground at a later stage, he said. **Two diplomatic steps forward, one back:** Europe has been anxious since Trump initiated direct peace talks with Putin, who had been isolated by most Western leaders since invading Ukraine three years ago. The scramble to remain relevant and protect European interests as their once stalwart ally appeared to be cozying up to Putin was even more troubling when Trump called Zelenskyy a dictator and falsely said Ukraine started the war. Meetings last week had provided some hope — until Zelenskyy's trip to the White House on Friday. Visits to the Oval Office by Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron, who had declared his visit a "turning point," were seen as steps in the right direction. The meetings were cordial and Trump even took a gentler tone toward Ukraine, though he would not commit to providing US security guarantees and maintained that Europe would need to provide peacekeeping troops.

Within 12 hours of Starmer's return from Washington, the talk of peace seemed to collapse as Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated Zelenskyy for challenging Trump's assertions that Putin could be trusted. During his Sunday press conference, Starmer rejected the suggestion that the US was no longer a reliable ally. "There are no two countries as closely aligned as our two countries and our defence, our security and intelligence is intertwined in a way no two other countries are, so it's an important and reliable ally for us," he said. **Starmer does not trust Putin:** Starmer told the BBC before the summit that he does not trust Russian President Vladimir Putin but does trust Trump. Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said she was sorry for what happened with Zelenskyy in Washington. Meloni is both a strong Ukraine supporter and — as head of a far-right party — she is a natural ally of Trump. She was the only European leader to attend his inauguration.



Britain's King Charles III and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, right, pose for a picture during their meeting at the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk, England, on Sunday. AP/PTI

## Driver rams car into crowd in Germany; one person dead

AP ■ BERLIN

One person was killed and others injured when a car rammed into a crowd Monday in the western German city of Mannheim, police said as they asked the public to stay away from the downtown area and remain in their homes. A suspect is in custody. Police spokesman Stefan Wilhelm said that a driver drove into a group of people in Paradeplatz, a pedestrianized street in Mannheim, killing one person. Several people were injured, he said, but police can't yet specify how many or how badly. "We can confirm that one perpetrator was arrested," he said. "We can't yet give information on whether there were further perpetrators." Images from the scene showed parts of the downtown area were cordoned off, with a heavy police presence and helicopters hovering above. Police gathered round a badly damaged black car as ambulances lined up outside the cordon. Earlier, Wilhelm said the incident had been reported as "a life-threatening deployment situation." Paradeplatz, a major square in the downtown area, lies at the end of a pedestrianized street in Mannheim, which has a population of 326,000 and lies 85 kilometers (52 miles) south of Frankfurt. Mannheim University Hospital says it has prepared everything for a possible mass casualty incident, German news agency dpa reported. The hospital has implemented its disaster and emergency plan to prepare for the care of the injured. Across Germany, lots of people took a long weekend off to celebrate carnival, including Rose Monday, when many cities hold parades. Mannheim's street parade already took place, on Sunday. German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser canceled her participation in the carnival street parade in Cologne due to the events in Mannheim. "The focus is now on saving lives, treating the injured and the initial investigations by the authorities in Mannheim," an interior ministry spokesperson told dpa. While police would not immediately characterize Monday's incident as an attack, cars have been used as deadly weapons in several acts of violence in recent months.

# Trump allies lash out at Zelenskyy

AP ■ PHOENIX (US)

President Donald Trump's senior aides and allies lashed out at Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy from Washington as he attended a European summit Sunday in London to rally international support for his military's fight against the Russian invasion. Following Trump's lead, White House officials and Republicans in Congress used news show appearances to demand that Zelenskyy display more gratitude for US support and an openness to potential war-ending concessions to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Some suggested Zelenskyy should consider resigning even as Ukrainians rally around him. But they offered little clarity as to what Zelenskyy and Ukraine could do after Friday's Oval Office meeting in which Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated him before canceling the signature of an economic agreement between Washington and Kyiv. The dispute leaves the future of that relationship in question, as well as the prospects for ending a conflict that began when the Kremlin invaded in

February 2022. White House national security adviser Mike Waltz, who while in Congress went to Ukraine during the first year of the war to meet Zelenskyy and once compared him to wartime British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, said Zelenskyy's behavior at the White House was "incredibly disrespectful." Asked about that Churchill-Zelenskyy comparison, Waltz noted that Churchill was voted out of office in the final months of World War II. Churchill "was a man for a moment, but he did not then transition England into the next phase," Waltz said. "And it's unclear whether President Zelenskyy, particularly after what we saw Friday, is ready to transition to Ukraine to an end to this war and to negotiate and have to compromise." Waltz said a negotiated end to the war would involve territorial concessions from Ukraine as well as "Russian concessions on security guarantees," but he did not offer any more details about what Moscow would have to do. House Speaker Mike Johnson echoed the suggestion that Zelenskyy may need to step aside. "Either he needs to come to his

senses and come back to the table in gratitude, or someone else needs to lead the country to do that," Johnson said. "I mean, it's up to the Ukrainians to figure that out. But I can tell you that we are re-exerting peace through strength." Trump's director of national intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, said the contentious meeting has led to "a huge rift in the relationship" and she took issue with Zelenskyy telling Fox News afterward that he did not think he did anything wrong. "There's going to have to be a rebuilding of any kind of interest in good faith negotiations, I think, before President Trump is going to be willing to re-engage on this," she said. The coordinated campaign of pressure from Washington played out as Zelenskyy and European leaders came to terms with Trump's overhaul of US foreign policy. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the United Kingdom would use 1.6 billion pounds (\$2 billion) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defense missiles for Ukraine. Support for Zelenskyy among congressional Republicans has been scant after the Oval Office meeting. But Alaska Senator

Lisa Murkowski, one of the few GOP lawmakers willing to break with Trump publicly, criticized the Republican president's stance toward the Ukrainians. "I know foreign policy is not for the faint of heart, but right now, I am sick to my stomach as the administration appears to be walking away from our allies and embracing Putin, a threat to democracy and US values around the world," Murkowski wrote on X on Saturday. Senator James Lankford said it was inappropriate for senators to call for Zelenskyy to leave office and predicted that such a move would "spiral Ukraine into chaos right now." Others were more vocal in support of Zelenskyy. Millions of Americans "are embarrassed, are ashamed," said Senator Bernie Sanders. "Our job is to defend the 250-year tradition that we have of being the democratic leader of the world, not turn our backs on a struggling country that is trying to do the right thing," Sanders said. Waltz appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," Johnson, Sanders and Lankford were on NBC's "Meet the Press," and Gabbard spoke on "Fox News Sunday."

# 'End of war with Russia very, very far away'

AP ■ KYIV

A deal to end the war between Ukraine and Russia "is still very, very far away," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, adding that he expects to keep receiving American support despite his recent fraught relations with US President Donald Trump. "I think our relationship (with the US) will continue, because it's more than an occasional relationship," Zelenskyy said late Sunday, referring to Washington's support for the past three years of war. "I believe that Ukraine has a strong enough partnership with the United States of America" to keep aid flowing, he said at a briefing in Ukrainian before leaving London. Zelenskyy publicly was upbeat

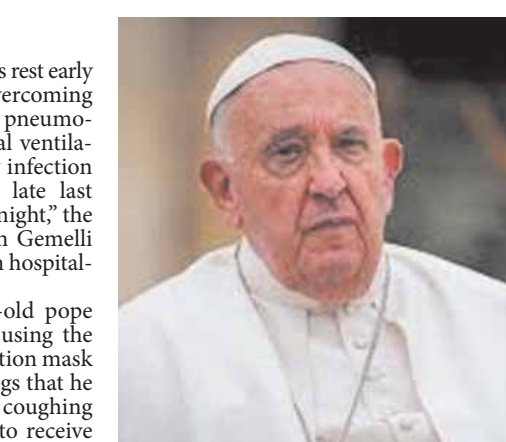
despite recent diplomatic upheaval between Western countries that have been helping Ukraine with military hardware and financial aid. The turn of events is unwelcome for Ukraine, whose understrength army is having a hard time keep bigger Russian forces at bay. The Ukrainian leader was in London to attend UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's effort to rally his European counterparts around continuing — and likely much increased — support for Ukraine from the continent amid political uncertainty in the US, and Trump's overtures toward Russian President Vladimir Putin. Europe is suspicious of Trump's motives and strategy. Friedrich Merz, Germany's likely next leader after the recent election, said Monday that he didn't think last Friday's Oval Office

blow-up was spontaneous. He said that he had watched the scene repeatedly. "My assessment is that it wasn't a spontaneous reaction to interventions by Zelenskyy, but apparently an induced escalation in this meeting in the Oval Office," Merz said. He said that he was "somewhat astonished by the mutual tone," but there has been "a certain continuity to what we are seeing from Washington at the moment" in recent weeks. "I would advocate for us preparing to have to do a great, great deal more for our own security in the coming years and decades," he said. Even so, Merz said that he wanted to keep the trans-Atlantic relationship alive. "I would also advocate doing everything to keep the Americans in Europe," he said.

# Pope has good night's rest after overcoming possible risks from respiratory crisis

AP ■ ROME

Pope Francis had a good night's rest early Monday after apparently overcoming a setback in his recovery from pneumonia: He is stable, off mechanical ventilation and shows no sign of new infection following a respiratory crisis late last week. "The pope rested well all night," the Vatican said in its update from Gemelli hospital, where Francis has been hospitalized since February 14. Doctors reported the 88-year-old pope spent all day Sunday without using the noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask that pumps oxygen into his lungs that he had to use following Friday's coughing episode. Francis did continue to receive high flow supplemental oxygen through a nasal tube. Friday's respiratory crisis sparked fears of a new lung infection because Francis inhaled some vomit. Doctors aspirated it and said they needed 24 to 48 hours to determine if any new infection took hold. On Sunday evening, they said Francis remained stable, with no fever or signs of an infection, indicating he had overcome the crisis. His prognosis remained guarded, however, meaning he wasn't out of danger. Francis on Sunday also received a visit



from the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and his chief of staff, Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra. The content of their talks wasn't known, but even when at the Vatican, Francis meets at least weekly with them. He again skipped his weekly noon blessing to avoid even a brief public appearance from the hospital. Instead, the Vatican distributed a message written by the pope from the 10th floor in which he thanked his doctors for their care and well-wishes for their prayers, and prayed again for peace in Ukraine and elsewhere. "From here, war appears even more absurd," Francis said in the message, which he drafted in recent days. Francis said he was living his hospitalisation as an experience of profound solidarity with people who are sick and suffering everywhere. "I feel in my heart the blessing" that is hidden within frailty, because it is precisely in these moments that we learn even more to trust in the Lord," Francis said in the text. "At the same time, I thank God for giving me the opportunity to share in body and spirit the condition of so many sick and suffering people." The Argentine pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli on February 14 after his bronchitis worsened and turned into a complex pneumonia in both lungs. On Sunday night at the Vatican, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski presided over the evening Rosary prayer in St. Peter's Square. "Let us pray together with the entire church for the health of the Holy Father Francis," said Krajewski, who is the pope's personal Almoner, a centuries-old job of handing out alms. Francis has elevated the job to make it an extension of his own personal charity.

# Japan won't join UN meet on nuclear weapons ban

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan will not attend a UN conference on the treaty banning nuclear weapons, a top government official in Tokyo said Monday, noting US nuclear deterrence is crucial to the country's security and that its participation would send the "wrong message." Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said Japan's national security is the primary reason it will not participate as an observer at the conference, which starts Monday in New York. "Under the severe security environment, nuclear deterrence is indispensable to defend the people's lives and assets, as well as Japan's sovereignty and peace," Hayashi told reporters. Japan's participation as an observer at the conference would "send a wrong message about the Japanese policy (supporting) nuclear deterrence and interfere with our effort in security, peace and safety." The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was approved in 2017 and went into force in 2021 following a decades-long campaign aimed at preventing a repeat of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. Japan, despite being the only victim of the nuclear attacks, has

refused to sign the treaty, saying its goal is not feasible without the participation of any of the nuclear weapons states. Hayashi said participating as an observer would also interfere with Japan's ongoing effort to gain support for strengthening the non-proliferation treaty and hinder nuclear disarmament. He did not give further details about Japan's next steps. Japanese officials have said they share the ultimate goal of achieving a nuclear-free world but that Japan needs to be realistic amid growing global conflicts. Atomic bombing survivors and their supporters have criticized Japan's government for making a hollow promise while clinging to the US nuclear umbrella. The survivors and their supporters have urged the Japanese government to participate in the conference as an observer amid growing global attention after Nihon Hidankyo, the atomic bombing survivors' grassroots organization, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba is a defence expert and vocal supporter of nuclear deterrence who has called for a more open debate about the role of US extended deterrence in the region.

# Myanmar's head of military gov't travels to ally Russia for talks with Putin

AP ■ BANGKOK

The head of Myanmar's military government travelled to Russia on Monday on an official visit to a major ally of the Southeast Asian nation that has been shunned by much of the West for overthrowing a democratically elected government and subsequent brutal repression. Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who departed from the military airport in the capital, Naypyitaw, will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The general is accompanied by fellow members of the ruling military council and Cabinet, as well as military officials, state television MRTV reported. The report said Min Aung Hlaing will also meet with other top Russian officials and discuss bilateral ties, economic affairs and security with the aim to strengthen strategic cooperation. Russia, along with China, is a major supporter and arms supplier of Myanmar's military government. Russian-made fighter jets are used in attacks on territory under the control of ethnic minority groups, many of which are allies with pro-democracy resistance forces.



# ED issues ₹611 Crore notice to Paytm's parent company

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it has issued ₹611 Crore show cause notice to Paytm's parent company and linked entities for "contravention" of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) on various counts. The notice has been issued by a special director of the federal agency before the initiation of adjudication proceedings. The show cause notice has been issued to Paytm's flagship company One 97 Communication limited (OCL), its managing director and other Paytm subsidiary companies like Little Internet Private Limited and Nearbuy India Private Limited for contraventions of the FEMA to the

tune of around ₹611 Crore, the ED said in a statement. Investigation found that OCL made foreign investment in Singapore and "did not" file necessary reporting to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the creation of an overseas step-down subsidiary, it said. The ED said OCL's subsidiary company in India - Little Internet Private Limited - had also received FDI from overseas investors "without following" proper pricing guidelines stipulated by the RBI, it alleged. The ED said OCL's subsidiary company in India - Little Internet Private Limited - had also received FDI from overseas investors "without following" the pricing guidelines stipulated by the RBI. The other subsidiary company - Nearbuy India Private Limited - "did not" report the FDI

received by the company within the time frame prescribed by the RBI, it said. In a regulatory filing made last Saturday, Paytm said it received a notice from the ED for alleged violation of certain FEMA rules by the company and its two subsidiaries - Little Internet and Nearbuy - with respect to certain investment transactions. Later, Paytm clarified that the alleged breach pertains to the period when the two companies were not its subsidiaries. It acquired the two companies in 2017. According to the breakup shared by the company, OCL transactions amounting to over ₹245 Crore, LIPL's about ₹345 Crore, and NIPL's about ₹21 Crore have been listed in the alleged breach.

# Explore all dairy sector avenues: Amit Shah

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Monday said the National Dairy Development Board's (NDDB) three models of cowdung biogas generation need to be scaled up in at least 250 district dairy cooperatives in the next two years, as India works towards achieving a second White Revolution. Addressing a workshop on sustainability and circularity in the dairy sector, Shah said, "Dairy sector is important for farmers to earn additional income apart from agriculture. It is important to focus on sustainability and circularity at the start of the second White Revolution." The minister emphasised that circularity in the dairy sector should not be limited to cowdung biogas generation but should encompass making use of

every aspect of the whole dairy sector economy. "There is no better alternative than the dairy sector to address farm migration and ensure better returns to farmers," Shah said, adding that exploring the full potential of this sector will contribute towards achieving the target of \$5 Trillion economy and Viksit Bharat. Shah released comprehensive guidelines aimed at promoting environmentally responsible practices in dairy farming and new financing initiatives under NDDB and NABARD's large scale biogas or compressed biogas projects and the Sustain Plus Project. On the occasion, dairy cooperative unions from 15 states signed an agreement with NDDB for the establishment of biogas plants. The MoUs have been signed

to scale up cowdung biogas generation based on three models of NDDB. However, we need to successfully implement these models in 250 district cooperative dairy units in next two years," the minister said. Shah identified the three models as: "Zakariyapura Model (the household level biogas-based manure value chain model), the Banaskantha Model (dung-based large capacity biogas plant to produce bio CBG and organic fertilizer) and the Varanasi Model (dung-based large capacity biogas plant to suffice steam and power needs of dairy plant)." The minister urged NDDB to collect cowdung from farmers outside the dairy cooperative network. "Many farmers supply milk to private sector which does not have a facility to process cowdung for biogas. Collecting cowdung from

such farmers will not only address the problem of minimum viability issue but also attract them to cooperative sector," he said. "About 16 Crore tonne cowdung is available in the country. Factor in both farmers from cooperative and non-cooperatives sectors for supply of cowdung while making a plan for setting up of a biogas plant," Shah said, stressing the need to enhance capacity of these plants going forward. On livestock feed and fodder, the minister said, "It should be promoted through cooperatives and a full-fledged network needs to be set up as this will not only enhance milk production but also strengthen cooperatives." To harness the circular economy in dairy sector, Shah emphasised the need to expand marketing of organic manure, increasing dairy

cooperative unions, setting up of dairy processing units and even making dairy machines domestically. "Our target should be not a single machine is imported from abroad," he said, and asked NDDB to rope in a district cooperative in this endeavour. "Circularity means not only making use of cowdung for biogas but also bones and leather. Explore all possibilities in this sector," he added, stating that this concept should be made part of the Constitution of multi-purpose cooperative units that are being set up. Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Ministers of State S P Singh Baghel and George Kurian, Dairy and Animal Husbandry Department Secretary Alka Upadhyaya, and senior officials were present at the event.

# WCOOPEF partners with I-SEED, IIT Hyderabad to transform cooperative agriculture

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
The World Cooperation Economic Forum (WCOOPEF), in collaboration with I-SEED Incubator for Social Enterprises and Entrepreneurs for Development at the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) and IIT Hyderabad's Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation (TIHAN), has announced a strategic partnership to revolutionise cooperative-led agriculture through IoT-enabled digital crop surveys and geospatial intelligence. This initiative aligns with the International Year of Cooperatives, reinforcing cooperative-led economic growth, sustainability, and rural empowerment. With the vision of 'Sahkar Se Samridhi' (Prosperity through Cooperation), the effort aims to equip farmer cooperatives, dairy unions, fisheries collectives, and rural self-help groups (SHGs) with cutting-edge digital technologies to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience. The move will integrate AI-powered geospatial intelligence, real-time IoT data collection, and digital mapping technologies to drive data-driven decision-making in cooperative-led farming and rural enterprises.



Pioneer Photo

Speaking on the occasion, Dileep Shangani, Chairman of WCOOPEF, said the cooperative model has long been the backbone of India's agricultural economy. By integrating geospatial innovation and IoT-enabled digital crop surveys, we are modernizing cooperatives to become data-driven, efficient, and globally competitive. This initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Sahkar Se Samridhi' and Viksit Bharat, ensuring that every farmer, especially small and marginal farmers-benefits from precision agriculture, real-time market access, and financial inclusion." Binod Anand, Member of

PM's High-Power Committee on MSP, founder President of WCOOPEF, and a leading advocate for farmer-centric value chains, emphasised the need for cooperatives to embrace digital transformation. "Cooperatives must evolve into technology-driven enterprises to uplift small farmers and rural communities. This initiative will establish a tech-enabled cooperative economic zone, leveraging IoT-enabled digital crop surveys, AI-powered geospatial intelligence, and real-time market linkages to create a more resilient and self-sustaining cooperative ecosystem," he added.

# Chhattisgarh budget focuses on development in Naxal-affected Bastar

**PTI ■ RAIPUR**  
The Chhattisgarh government on Monday presented a ₹1.65 Lakh Crore budget with special focus on development of Naxal-affected Bastar by giving boost to tourism, security and infrastructure. The 2025-26 budget, presented by Finance Minister OP Choudhary, aims to establish Bastar as a new development model, prioritising the transformation of Naxal-affected areas, an official statement said. The Chhattisgarh government plans to establish a Special Operations Group (SOG), similar to the Centre's National Security Guard (NSG), to play a crucial role in anti-Naxal operations. Additionally, anti-narcotics task forces in 10 districts and cyber police stations in five districts will be set up. To safeguard mineral resources, a State Industrial Security Force (SISF), modelled on Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), will be created. The plan include a mega vision for complete eradication of Naxals, creation of 3,200 additional posts for 'Bastar Fighters', a specialised police unit established by the Chhattisgarh government to combat Maoists, the statement said. Due to the intense operations by the security forces, the

Naxal network has crumbled in Bastar with the killing of 305 extremists, surrender of 1,000 others in just 15 months, since the taking over of charge Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, it said. According to the budget, the government's revenue is projected to grow by 11 per cent without imposing any new taxes. This year, the government has allocated ₹26,341 Crore for capital expenditure, an 18 per cent increase from the previous year. This means more roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals will be built across the state, improving lives and accelerating development. Sai said the budget will further strengthen the foundation of a developed Chhattisgarh. Emphasising that special attention is being given to Bastar with substantial investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment, he said, "This is a crucial step toward ensuring lasting peace and progress in Naxal-affected regions". The Chhattisgarh government said it has achieved remarkable success in dismantling the Naxal network in Bastar and 305 Naxals have been eliminated, and 1,000 have surrendered in just over a year. Recognising the contribution of 'Bastar Fighters' in eliminating Naxalism, the budget includes provisions for 3,200 additional positions.

New police stations will be established in Elmagunda and Dabbakonta, two highly affected villages. ₹5 Crore allocation has been made for the annual Bastar Olympics, celebrating tribal sports and traditions. Additionally, ₹2 Crore has been earmarked for yoga camps and ₹10 Crore for biodiversity tourism zones. Under the 'Niyad Nellanar' (My Beautiful Village) initiative, ₹25 Crore has been allocated to ensure the reach of government schemes to villages. The budget also includes ₹2 Crore for Bastar Madai and Bastar Marathon celebrations. The Chhattisgarh government has also announced a major push for road networks, bridges, schools, and digital infrastructure across Bastar and other regions. ₹221 Crore fund has been allocated for infrastructure development in tribal areas. The PM Janman scheme include ₹30 Crore for school education, ₹12 Crore for tribal welfare, and ₹300 Crore for housing projects. The state government has launched 'Chhattisgarh Anor Vision 2047', an initiative outlining 10 major missions focusing on healthcare, tourism, agriculture, education, IT, and infrastructure. These missions aim to transform Chhattisgarh into a developed state by 2047. "The government anticipates

₹2,804 Crore additional revenue, making Chhattisgarh one of India's financially robust states. The state's total revenue is expected to be ₹1.41 Lakh Crore, mainly sourced from tax collections and central government allocations. Chhattisgarh's GDP growth rate is projected at 7.51 per cent, surpassing the national average of 6.5 per cent," the statement said. Among other highlights of the budget are relief for citizens and businesses, petrol price reduced by Rs 1 per litre by slashing the VAT. A sum of ₹2,000 Crore has been allocated for new road projects in a single financial year under the CM Urban Development Scheme while ₹500 Crore allocated for improving city infrastructure. The UPI payment system will be rolled out in rural panchayats and new pension fund will be created to ensure long-term financial security for employees and a three per cent increase in DA for state employees. The state government has also introduced a Homestay Policy for Bastar and Sarguja. Now, tourists visiting these regions can stay in villages and experience the rich local culture and traditional cuisine. Additionally, adventure tourism and a dedicated tourism circuit will be developed in Jashpur, offering visitors an exciting travel experience, the statement said.

# FDI drops 5.6 per cent in October-December

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India dipped by 5.6 per cent year-on-year to \$10.9 Billion in October-December quarter of this fiscal due to global economic uncertainties, according to the government data. FDI inflows during October-December 2023-24 stood at \$11.55 Billion. According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) data, in the July-September quarter of the current fiscal, the inflows were up by about 43 per cent year-on-year to \$13.6 billion and had increased 47.8 per cent annually to \$16.17 billion in the preceding April-June quarter. Cumulatively, during the April-December 2024-25, the inflows registered a growth of 27 per cent to \$40.67 billion as against \$32 billion in the same period of 2023-24. Total FDI, which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital, grew by 21.3 per cent to \$62.48 billion during the first nine months of this fiscal from \$51.5 billion in April-December 2023-24.

# Sensex falls for ninth day on selling in HDFC Bank

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by 112 points while Nifty fell for the ninth straight session on Monday following selling in blue-chips HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries. In a see-saw trade, the 30-share BSE benchmark declined by 112.16 points or 0.15 per cent to close at 73,085.94 as 18 of its components advanced and 12 declined. The index opened higher but soon fell to the day's low of 72,784.54 due to intense selling in large caps. The barometer staged a rebound in the second half amid positive Asian markets and hit a high of 73,649.72 before paring gains to close down. Extending losses to the ninth session, the NSE Nifty slipped 5.40 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 22,119.30. The index slumped 120 points or 0.54 per cent to a low of 22,004.70 but later recovered most of the losses. From the Sensex pack, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Adani Ports, Maruti Suzuki India, Axis Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharmaceuticals and Asian Paints were among the laggards. Reliance Industries fell the most by 2.38 per cent to close at ₹1,171.10 apiece. During the day, it went down by 3.63 per cent to hit a 52-week low of Rs 1,156 per piece. UltraTech Cement, Bharti Airtel, NTPC, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra and Mahindra, Larsen and Toubro and State Bank of India were the gainers. "The market experienced a

gradual recovery from its intraday low, driven by improving economic growth, a rebound in consumption expenditure, and healthy expansion in the agricultural sector, which influenced investor sentiment. With valuations approaching oversold levels, domestic indicators suggest the potential for a rebound," Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Financial Services. Global uncertainties and sustained foreign fund outflows continue to keep market participants cautious, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. The BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.70 per cent, however, midcap index went up 0.25 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, Energy (1.11 per cent), Financial Services (0.54 per cent), Bankex (0.28 per cent), Oil & Gas (0.50 per cent), and Services (0.49 per cent) were the losers. On the other hand, Capital Goods, Power, Consumer Durables, Realty, Commodities, Teck, Focused IT, Utilities and Metal were among the gainers. As many as 2,852 stocks declined while 1,235 advanced and 147 remained unchanged on the BSE. A monthly survey showed that India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a 14-month low in February amid softer increase in new orders and production. "Although output growth slowed to the weakest level since December 2023, overall momentum in India's manufacturing sector remained broadly positive in February," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

# Bihar government tables ₹3.17 Lakh Crore budget

**PTI ■ PATNA**  
The Nitish Kumar government in Bihar on Monday tabled a ₹3.17 Lakh Crore budget in the assembly, the last before the state goes to polls later this year. Presenting the budget on the floor of the assembly, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, who holds the finance portfolio, told the House that the budget, the total size of which was ₹38,169 Crore more than the last fiscal, is inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'mangdarshan' (guidance) and the CM's 'netritva' (leadership). "The government has received enormous support from the people of the state in its bid to achieve the goal of a 'samridhdh Bihar', which is essential to achieve the prime minister's goal of a 'viksit Bihar'.



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar during Budget session of the Assembly in Patna PTI

"Modi's vision of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas aur sabka prayas' and the CM's motto of 'nyay ke saath vikas' have been the twin guiding principles behind the budget. We are making progress, leaving behind years of anarchy," said the senior BJP leader, in an apparent dig at the opposition RJD-Congress combine.

Speaking about the budgetary allocations for different sectors, Choudhary said ₹60,964 Crore has been set aside for education, which is of crucial importance in the densely populated state that has a relatively young demography. He said ₹20,335 Crore has been allocated for the health sector, while ₹17,831 Crore will be

given to the home department, which is responsible for law and order, improvement in which has been the most talked about achievement of the NDA government. In keeping with the government's push for women's empowerment, the budget has proposed setting up of a 'mahila haat' (women's marketplace) in Patna, besides 'pink toilets' in all districts and 'pink buses' in major cities. "We also propose the establishment of 'Kanya Vivah Mandaps' in all panchayats, which will serve the needs of poor rural families with girls of marriageable age," Choudhary said. He said Bihar will be building "greenfield airports" at Sultanganj and Raxaul, in Bhagalpur and East Champaran districts, respectively, and "the airport at Purnea will become operational in three months from now".

# Gold as asset class to rise in coming years: Nageswaran

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Gold will remain relevant for investors as a portfolio diversification mechanism with a "likely ascending importance" as an asset class in the coming years, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said on Monday. Speaking at the IGPC-IIMA annual gold and gold markets conference 2025, he said that gold will remain relevant not only as a store of value, as an ornament for cultural and religious purposes, but also as an important portfolio diversification mechanism "until such a time the world is able to arrive at an international monetary system from the current international monetary non-system". "That day of reckoning is

very difficult for any one of us to prophesy at this stage," Nageswaran said. The value of gold has increased by over \$200 per ounce or eight per cent in the last three months to \$2,860 per ounce. At the same time, the Indian stock markets have fallen over eight per cent over the last three months. Since 2002, the value of the precious yellow metal is up 10 times when it was about \$250-290/ounce. In the Indian market, the price of gold per 10 gms stood at around ₹85,000. India is a net importer of gold. He said it is very important to remember the relevance and the importance of gold for a portfolio, a store of value etc, more so in the

backdrop of the likely ascending importance of gold in the coming years. Nageswaran also hoped that India will find ways to proactively deploy the gold assets that it has without diluting its role as a symbol of store of value as well as cultural and religious significance. "That is where the policy challenge lies," he said. Nageswaran said India needs to reflect upon its past gold monetisation efforts to pay back the owners who deposited gold in currency form. "But probably people attach different significance to gold and sometimes we tend to forget that in policy deliberation," he added. To win away people from physical gold, the government had announced Gold Monetisation Scheme in

2015, which allowed people to deposit their gold with banks to earn interest. The scheme aimed to reduce India's reliance on gold imports. He said that gold not only symbolises solidity but also policy discipline and, in a way, it also should have symbolised investor discipline. "Today is what is happening is that, not only policymakers think, that they can print their way out of any trouble, investors also think that they are entitled to rising prices of assets of all types and therefore clamour for reliefs, forgetting the fact that the financial markets are a two-way street, the clamour for policy relief increases with every passing day when the market declines," Nageswaran said.

# IN BRIEF

## REC LTS SIGNS MOU WITH MADHYA PRADESH GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT POWER SECTOR



**BHOPAL:** REC Limited, a Maharatna CPSE and a leading NBFC under the Ministry of Power, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Madhya Pradesh at the Global Investors Summit 2025 in Bhopal.

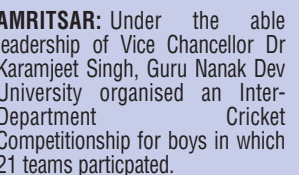
## TECHNOVISTA 2.0 ORGANISED AT GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY

**AMRITSAR:** An inter-departmental event 'TECHNOVISTA 2.0 2025' was organised by Department of Mechanical Engineering of Guru Nanak Dev University under the guidance of Vice Chancellor Prof. (Dr) Karamjeet Singh.



## GNDU HOSTS INTER-DEPARTMENT CRICKET COMPETITIONS UNDER FIT INDIA PROGRAM

**AMRITSAR:** Under the able leadership of Vice Chancellor Dr Karamjeet Singh, Guru Nanak Dev University organised an Inter-Department Cricket Competition for boys in which 21 teams participated.



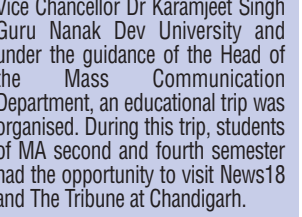
## ALUMNI MEET OF CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT OF GNDU

**AMRITSAR:** The Chemistry Department of Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) host a Alumni Meet, fostering connections between past and present students as well as industry professionals.



## GNDU STUDENTS VISITED MEDIA OFFICES

**AMRITSAR:** With the support of Vice Chancellor Dr Karamjeet Singh Guru Nanak Dev University and under the guidance of the Head of the Mass Communication Department, an educational trip was organised. During this trip, students of MA second and fourth semester had the opportunity to visit News18 and The Tribune at Chandigarh.





# Manchester United crash out of FA Cup

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United crashed out of the FA Cup on Sunday after losing on penalties to Fulham. Rather than bemoan the latest blow in a miserable season, though, United coach Ruben Amorim insisted his sights were set on a bigger trophy. "The goal is to win the Premier League. So I know that we are losing games and losing trophies during this season, but the goal is to win the Premier League again," Amorim said after the 4-3 shootout loss at Old Trafford. "I don't know how long it's going to take. But that is our goal. "If you think like that, we can suffer a little bit in these defeats — a lot sometimes — but we have a goal, so we continue, no matter what, we continue forward." Cup holder United was sent spinning out in the fifth round as Victor Lindelof and Joshua Zirkzee saw spot kicks saved after the game ended 1-1 following extra time. Fulham goalkeeper Bernd Leno was



the hero with the crucial stops that set up a quarterfinal match against Crystal Palace. It took a second-half equalizer from Bruno Fernandes to send the game to extra time after Calvin Bassey headed Fulham in front just before the break. But it proved a temporary reprieve for United, which now has just one trophy to aim for this season

— the Europa League. **Knockout blow** United last won the Premier League in the 2012-13 season and, despite Amorim's ambition, the next league title feels a long way off. His team is languishing in 14th place in the standings and seems unlikely to finish in the top half this season. It has been a torrid start for the

Portuguese coach, who only took charge in November. Knockout competitions had provided a rare source of optimism, and with Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea all eliminated from the FA Cup, the path was opening up for United to successfully defend the trophy it lifted last May. But the 13-time winner posed little threat in a first half that ended with sections of the home support jeering after Bassey headed Fulham in front from close range. United captain Fernandes sparked the home team into life with a low, first time finish from inside the box in the 71st minute. United then had chances to win. Alejandro Garnacho was denied by Leno when through on goal in added time and the keeper blocked another effort from Chido Obi in extra time before his shootout heroics. "I know they had chances but I think we were the best team on the pitch," Fulham coach Marco Silva said. "Our team was on the ball, dominating the ball. We deserve to be in the next stage."

# Assam defeat Bihar 2-1 in National hockey championship

PTI ■ PANCHKULA

Assam defeated Bihar 2-1 in a Division B match of the 15th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship at the Tau Devi Lal stadium here on Monday. After a tightly contested first quarter, Assam broke the deadlock right before half-time with captain Mumuni Das (29th minute) successfully converting a penalty corner and then Khushboo Prajapati (59th) converted another set piece to double their lead. Bihar scored a consolation goal in the 60th minute through Nusrat Khatoon. In a Division C match on Sunday, Andhra Pradesh recorded a 4-2 win against Jammu and Kashmir. Revathi Thalari (3th, 17th)



scored a brace for her side while Harathi Lomada (36th) and Madugula Bhavani (45th) also contributed with the goals for Andhra Pradesh. Rajni (10th) and Anju Kumari (57th) were the scorers for Jammu and Kashmir. In the last Division C match on Sunday, Puducherry

enjoyed a dominant 6-1 win over Arunachal in Pool B. Jayapatha S (13th, 39th, 41st) scored a hat-trick for Puducherry while B Deepika (4th, 22nd) and S Subasri (40th) also found the net for the winners. Hema Navait (5th) was the lone goal getter for Arunachal.

# Barcelona thrash Real Sociedad 4-0

PTI ■ MADRID

Barcelona cruised to a 4-0 rout of 10-man Real Sociedad to regain the lead in Spain. Gerard Martin, Marc Casadó, Ronald Araujo and Robert Lewandowski scored a goal each on Sunday to put Barcelona one point ahead of second-placed Atletico Madrid at the top of the Spanish league. "There is still a long way to go and everything can change very quickly," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said. "We have to keep fighting until the end because we want to win everything we can." Barcelona is three points ahead of third-placed Real Madrid, which lost 2-1 at Real Betis on Saturday, when Atletico beat Athletic Bilbao 1-0 at home. "Very happy with the match we played," Araujo said. "It was important to win and become leaders again. It was a great effort by the team." Sociedad played a man down from the 17th minute after Arizt Elustondo was sent off with a straight red card for grabbing Barcelona forward Dani Olmo to stop a



breakaway. "The early red card for Real Sociedad changed everything, it's true, but we forced them into it. They are a very good team but today we deserved the win," Flick said. It was the sixth win in a row for Barcelona in the league, and the second loss in three matches for Sociedad, which stayed in ninth place. "It was a clear red card," Sociedad coach Imanol Alguacil said. "After that there was no game. It's already hard 11 against 11 against them, you can imagine with a man down." Flick rested some regular starters ahead of the teams Champions League match at

Benfica on Wednesday in the first leg of the round of 16. "I am happy to be back at the top of the table in La Liga but now we have to focus on our next objective which is the game against Benfica," Flick said. Prolific Lewandowski Barcelona was in control from the start at Montjuic stadium, with Martin scoring in the 25th and Casadó in the 29th. Araujo added to the lead in the 56th and Lewandowski closed the scoring in the 60th for his eighth goal in his last nine matches. Lewandowski now has 34 goals this season in all competitions, one more than the 33 he scored in what had been his previous best

season with the Catalan club in 2022-23. He is the league's top scorer with 21 goals, four more than Madrid's Kylian Mbappé, who is second on the list. Sociedad, which along with Barcelona, Madrid and Atletico is playing in the Copa del Rey semifinals, struggled from the start and had no attempts on goal. Barcelona had 33 total attempts. Sociedad defender Hamari Traoré entered the match in the second half to mark his return to action nearly six months after having to undergo knee surgery. Earlier on Sunday, striker Diego Garcia scored two minutes into second-half stoppage time to give 16th-placed Leganes a 1-0 win over 14th-placed Getafe in a match between teams from the Madrid area. Other results: Valencia missed a chance to move out of the relegation zone after a 3-3 draw at midtable Osasuna. Winless in three matches, Valencia earned a point with a neat backheel flick by Umar Sadiq in the 87th. Osasuna hasn't won in five consecutive games in all competitions.

# Lionel Messi leads Argentina against Uruguay, Brazil in World Cup qualifiers

PTI ■ BUENOS AIRES

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni has selected a preliminary list of 33 players led by Lionel Messi for South American qualifying matches against Uruguay and Brazil. One of the bright young talents in a revamped squad is striker Claudio Echeverri, who has just joined Manchester City after having played in the South American Under-20 championships. Other players who are not yet 21 — Nicolás Paz, Benjamín Domínguez and Santiago Castro — were included in the squad announced on Sunday. Argentina leads the standings with 25 points after 12 matches. Uruguay has 20 and will host Messi's team at the Centenario Stadium in Montevideo on March 21. Four days later, the World Cup winners will play Brazil at Buenos Aires' Monumental Stadium. Squad: Goalkeepers: Emiliano Martínez (Aston Villa), Gerónimo Rulli (Olympique



Marseille), Walter Benítez (PSV Eindhoven). Defenders: Nahuel Molina (Atletico Madrid), Gonzalo Montiel (River Plate), Cristian Romero (Tottenham), Germán Pezzella (River Plate), Leonardo Balerdi (Olympique Marseille), Juan Foyth (Villarreal), Nicolás Otamendi (Benfica), Facundo Medina, (Lens), Nicolás Tagliafico (Olympique Lyon), Francisco Ortega (Olympiakos). Midfielders: Leandro Paredes (Roma), Enzo Fernández (Chelsea), Rodrigo de Paul (Atletico Madrid), Exequiel Palacios

(Bayer Leverkusen), Alexis Mac Allister (Liverpool), Giovanni Lo Celso (Real Betis), Máximo Perrone (Como), Giuliano Simeone (Atletico Madrid), Benjamín Domínguez (Bologna), Thiago Almada (Olympique Lyon). Forwards: Alejandro Garnacho (Manchester United), Nicolás González (Juventus), Lionel Messi (Inter Miami), Nicolás Paz (Como), Claudio Echeverri (Manchester City), Paulo Dybala (Roma), Julián Álvarez (Manchester City), Lautaro Martínez (Inter Milan), Santiago Castro (Bologna), Ángel Correa (Atletico Madrid).

# India's Iniyar wins Cannes Open chess

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Grandmaster Pa Iniyar won the Cannes International Open, defeating compatriot V Pranesh in the ninth and final round in Cannes, France. Iniyar ended the tournament on 7.5 points, a half point more than Delhi-based International Master Aradhya Garg, who finished second. Matching Garg on seven points was reigning World junior champion Kazybek Noderbek of Kazakhstan, who had to be content with the third place following a tiebreak. Iniyar remained undefeated through the course of the tournament scoring six wins and three draws. The Indian picked up the necessary steam in the last three rounds winning one game after another and his most crucial victory was over Garg in the penultimate round. The result helped Iniyar gain 12 rating points and is now closing in on the 2600 Elo barrier, taking his rating to 2579.

# Cricket will open up new Olympic markets: Coe

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hailing cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Los Angeles Games, International Olympic Committee (IOC) president's post frontrunner Sebastian Coe says the move will open up new markets, which will be critical for the growth of the Olympic movement. Cricket returned to the Olympics in the T20 format for the first time after the 1900 edition, as it was named among the five additional sports for the 2028 LA Games. The decision was taken in 2023. Coe, who is currently the head of World Athletics, stressed that cricket's support base goes far beyond South Asia, which has a population of more than two billion. "Well, from everything I've said (during November 2024 visit to India), you would recognise that cricket is in for the Olympic movement, particularly with the support that it will have not only in South Asia, but people from



South Asia living in all our big cities," Coe told PTI in an exclusive virtual interview. "We have a very big Indian or South Asian community in London, in New York. This audience, this support goes way beyond just India, Pakistan or South Asia. It's very important for the (Olympic) movement. And it will open up new Olympic markets, which is critical." It is not known whether cricket will be in the roster for the 2032 Olympics in Brisbane, Australia, but the game will certainly make the cut if India bags the hosting

rights for the 2036 edition, for which the country has already submitted a 'Letter of Intent'. The 68-year-old Coe, whose maternal grandfather is an Indian from Punjab, is considered the frontrunner among the seven candidates contesting in the election to succeed Thomas Bach as IOC president. More than 100 members of the IOC will vote on March 20 in the Greek resort of Costa Navarino, where the 144th IOC Session will be held from March 18 to 21. Coe, a double Olympic 1500m gold medalist, does

not see anything wrong with countries like India willing to host big-ticket events such as the Olympics, though some would argue that the huge cost involved could better be used for nurturing talent and building other sports infrastructure. "You have to do both. I've always said that if you have a really well stocked shop window, that will have an impact on the ability to attract people into the shop. Having performing athletes like Neeraj Chopra also has a massive impact. So, you can't have one without the other. "Ideally, you have pathways and programmes that have been created for participation, but that participation is turbo-charged if you have top athletes and you have world-class events." He advocated the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in talent identification. "Talent identification can be really turbo-charged by AI and is a lot cheaper than the traditional ways of identifying that talent. There are lots of

things that AI and cutting edge technology can allow us to almost level up the difference between small member federations and National Olympic committees and the big and the well-healed ones. This (AI) can really equalise opportunities. "Accessibility is also absolutely critical. AI can really help in this area also. AI allows us to optimise, particularly around some smaller National Olympic Committees that may have less economic ability to do some of the things the larger NOCs do, particularly around talent identification." Recently Coe had suggested that Russia could be brought back to the Olympic fold if there is an agreement to end the war with Ukraine. Asked if such a decision could be a smooth one to arrive at if he becomes the IOC president, he said, "It will be entirely dependent on the circumstances on the progress we've made when we were dealing with the doping challenges.

# FC Goa to face Mohammedan SC in ISL

PTI ■ MARGAO

Having confirmed a second-placed finish, FC Goa will take on visiting Mohammedan SC in their Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Tuesday. The Gaurs have been assured of a second-placed finish after the fourth-placed Jamshedpur FC dropped points with a 1-1 draw with Kerala Blasters. With two games in hand, the Red Miners can only get to a maximum of 44 points now, which would still fall short of FC Goa's current tally of 45 points from 22 matches. The third-positioned Bengaluru FC have 38 points from 23 matches. This means that the Gaurs are set to directly play the semi-finals and would not have to engage in the one-legged eliminator in the playoffs. Mohammedan Sporting have lost four times and drawn once in their previous five games, having 12 points from 22 games. The previous fixture between



these two sides ended in a 1-1 draw on September 21, 2024. Another draw here would make Mohammedan Sporting only the third team that FC Goa have drawn against in their first two ISL meetings, after Mumbai City FC (2014) and East Bengal FC (2020-21). FC Goa have won each of their last four home games in the ISL. A victory in this game would make it the third time in their history that they register five or more straight home wins in a single season, after seven triumphs on the bounce in 2019-20 and five in

2023-24. FC Goa have been lethal from distance this season, as Carl McHugh's strike against Punjab FC was their ninth goal from outside the box this season. Another such strike will see them become only the fifth team in the ISL to hammer 10+ goals away from the 18-yard box in a single campaign. Mohammedan Sporting kept a clean sheet in their last away game against Odisha FC (0-0 on February 28). The only time they managed consecutive shutouts this season was in January.

# AC Milan fall into crisis after third straight Serie A loss

PTI ■ MILAN

AC Milan fell further into crisis as a stoppage-time penalty condemned it to a 2-1 defeat at home to Lazio in the Italian league. Despite being reduced to 10 men, Milan managed to level in the 84th minute on Sunday but Pedro converted a penalty in the eighth minute of stoppages. This was Milan's third straight Serie A loss amid a disastrous run that also saw the Rossoneri crash out of the Champions League. Milan dropped to ninth in the standings and was leapfrogged by Roma after Claudio Ranieri's team fought back to beat 10-man Como 2-1. Lazio climbed back into

fourth place — a point above Juventus, which hosts Hellas Verona on Monday. Sixth-placed Bologna rallied to beat relegation-threatened Cagliari 2-1. Late (and even later) drama Lazio was also looking to get back to winning ways following two Serie A draws and being knocked out of the Italian Cup midweek by Inter Milan, also at San Siro. Mattia Zaccagni gave Lazio the lead in the 28th minute. His initial attempt was saved by Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan but Zaccagni tapped in the rebound. Milan's chances of getting something from the match diminished in the 67th when defender Strahinja Pavlovic was shown a straight red card for a dangerous tackle on



Lazio midfielder Mattéo Guendouzi. Milan nevertheless managed to

find an equalizer when Rafael Leão whipped in a cross from the left for an unmarked

Samuel Chukwueze to head in at the far post. But there was even later

drama when Lazio was awarded a penalty on video review after Maignan brought down visiting forward Gustav Isaksen. Pedro struck the spot kick into the bottom right corner. Bologna boosts top 4 hopes Riccardo Orsolini scored twice to help Bologna boost its chances of qualifying for the Champions League again. Cagliari surprisingly reached the break ahead in Bologna after Roberto Piccoli's 22nd-minute header. But Bologna coach Vincenzo Italiano made three changes at halftime and his team leveled almost immediately as Orsolini converted a penalty after Cagliari midfielder Mattia Felici fouled Nicolò Cambiaghi — one of those substitutes.

Cambiaghi also rolled the ball across for Orsolini to tap in and complete the turnaround eight minutes later. Cagliari is three points above the relegation zone. Impact subs Substitute Alexis Saelemaekers took just 120 seconds to help Roma turn its match round. Roma was trailing at home to Como following Lucas Da Cunha's goal on the stroke of halftime. But the match changed in the 61st minute. Saelemaekers, who had only just come off the bench, played a one-two with Zeki Çelik and then a stroke of luck saw his effort deflected by Como defender Edoardo Golaniga, going in off the underside of the crossbar.

It quickly got worse for Como as it almost immediately went down to 10 men when defender Marc-Oliver Kempf was sent off following a second yellow card. Halftime substitute Artem Dovbyk scored the winner in the 76th, volleying in a cross from Devyne Rensch — who had been on the field for less than two minutes. It was Roma's 11th league match unbeaten since a loss at Como on December 15 and sent Ranieri's team up to eighth, six points below Juventus. Empoli, which surprisingly knocked defending champion Juventus out of the Italian Cup midweek, drew 1-1 at Genoa to remain in the bottom three, one point from safety.



# Four spinners a tempting combination after Varun's effort: Rohit

PTI ■ DUBAI

India captain Rohit Sharma did not commit to following the four-spinner template in the Champions Trophy (CT) semifinal against Australia, but said Varun Chakravarty's splendid effort against New Zealand has made that option very tempting.

India played with Chakravarty, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel and the quartet wrecked the Kiwis, sharing nine wickets among them in their team's 44-run win here on Sunday. "We really need to think, even if we want to play four spinners, how we can squeeze four spinners. The reason I say it is because we are very much aware of the conditions here and we know exactly what works and what doesn't work," Rohit said in his pre-match press conference. "So, we will think about it, what is the right combination to go with, but it is tempting," he added. Chakravarty, who came in as a replacement for rested pacer Harshit Rana, was excellent while returning with the figures of 5/42, and Rohit said the spinner is certainly in the team management's thoughts. "He just showed what he is

capable of. Now, it is up to us to think and see how we can get that combination right. He got a game, and he did everything that was asked for.

"He has got something different about him and when he gets it right, he knocks people over and he takes 5-5. So, it is very tempting to think about what to do, which is a good headache to have. We will also assess the Australian batting lineup to see what kind of bowling options will work against them," he detailed.

**Rohit lauds Chakravarty**

During the course of his match-winning effort against the Kiwis, the Tamil Nadu spinner had also rinsed away the memories of his modest outing against Pakistan in the 2021 T20 WC at this stadium. Rohit explained the improvements Chakravarty has made in the interim. "He has become more accurate now from the last time he played for India in 2021. There was a little bit of inexperience in him as well because he hadn't played a lot of cricket.

"But right now in the last two or three years he has played a lot of cricket, IPL and now for India in T20s and now the ODIs as well. So, he understands his bowling



really well," he said.

The Mumbai man said Chakravarty has put in a lot of hard yards into his craft of late, which is now reflecting in his wicket column. "You know, some of our batters also could not figure that (variations) out, which is always

nice. His pace variation now is superb. When you have a little bit of mystery, you do not want to be a one-dimensional bowler and bowl with the same speed.

"You need something different, the pace variation and the accuracy as well. So, he has worked on both and now you see

that he is getting a lot of wickets which is a good sign for us as a team," he added.

Drafting Chakravarty into India's CT squad ahead of players like Yashasvi Jaiswal and Mohammed Siraj had raised some questions. Rohit explained the rationale. "It is just the talent. If there is

something really special about that particular player, you want to fast track him. Certain formats require a certain skill set and whenever we look at these kinds of players, if the talent is there, then you don't want to shy away from blooding them."

Rohit did not read too much into the criticism of stacking the side with spinners. "There will be questions asked, there will be few eyebrows raised but as a team you want to do certain things which can help you win games. So, it's important to understand that talent and I have been here long enough to understand what kind of players are talented.

"With Varun especially, we had to sacrifice a batsman which we thought it's only five games in this tournament and it's very unlikely that batter is going to play at any stage unless there is an injury."

**'Middle-order did well'**

India's top three — Rohit, Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill — had an off-game against New Zealand, leaving the side reeling at 30 for three. But Shreyas Iyer, Axar Patel and Hardik Pandya batted well to take India to a defendable total. Rohit said middle-order batters getting runs was important for the team during the business end of

the tournament. "The middle-order is very experienced but to just get some batting time in the middle and to get those runs and get that fighting total was very important from our standpoint. "Shreyas, KL, Hardik and Axar, they batted brilliantly which is a good sign for us going into the semis because we wanted to have these kind of situations where we are slightly under pressure and then the middle-order takes us through to that target which they did," he said.

**'Axar's improvement is superb'**

Rohit also praised Axar for repaying the think tank's faith in him while promoting to No. 5 ahead of KL Rahul. "The clear message was given to him when we started the ODI series against England. That no matter what, you will bat at No. 5. The kind of improvement he has shown with the bat over the last year or so is superb and that is where we felt that we can utilise him in the middle.

"He likes to take the game on, likes to play his shots. And sometimes when you are in trouble, you want to always take that positive route. He showed it in the T20 World Cup final (2024) which was a very, very crucial knock," he added.



## Champions Trophy: New Zealand to face South Africa in semifinal

PTI ■ DUBAI

Senior batter Tom Latham said New Zealand will take confidence from their recent win over South Africa in the tri-series when they face the same opponents in the semifinal of the Champions Trophy (CT) in Lahore on Wednesday. New Zealand lost to India by 44 runs in their final Group A match here on Sunday but Latham said it would have no bearing on the semifinal.

Recently, New Zealand successfully chased 305 against South Africa in Lahore and then went on to win the tri-series, beating Pakistan in the final, and Latham feels those experiences will hold them in good stead on Wednesday.

"Yeah, the (South Africa) team that we played potentially will be slightly different, they had a lot of guys that that weren't in that side. They were still playing in their SAT20 back in South Africa so will be slightly different.

"But I guess from our point of view, we'll lean back on those experiences of Lahore in playing against South Africa," Latham said after the loss to India.

"So yeah, we'll look to prep as best we can. We'll do everything that we do leading up to a game. It's obviously going to be a

reasonably quick turnaround, but it is what it is. And, we'll be looking forward to the challenge of a semifinal."

Latham said what matters for the Kiwis is their attitude towards the game and preparation. "As we go into every game, we prepare as best we can. Individuals have slightly different preparation. And, yeah, we obviously fielded fantastically well today (Sunday), which was something we like to do.

"Especially from a fielding point of view, it's an attitude thing," he said. "Our attitude is always the same. We turn up trying to play our brand of cricket as best we can. And if we stick to that, then hopefully that will give us a good chance at the back end of the game."

Latham added that they are in no mood to take the Proteas lightly. New Zealand had sealed their semifinal spot ahead of Sunday's loss to India in Dubai. The Kiwis also had prior knowledge that they

would have to return to Pakistan for their last four game.

"That's something that's out of our control. We don't decide the schedule, for us it is about turning up at each game regardless of where it is and trying to play our best brand of cricket as best we can," Latham said.

"So, whether it be here, whether it be in Pakistan, our focus will obviously be on South Africa. We're fortunate enough we had a tri-series in Pakistan and against South Africa.

"So, we've got a chance to look back on those experiences and give it our best in a semifinal, which is pretty cool."

Latham said though the surfaces in Pakistan were on the slower side, they have not spun as much as the pitches in Dubai.

"I think if you look at the surfaces that we've played in Pakistan, they've obviously been on the slower side, potentially haven't spun as much as we've seen here in Dubai, but things or conditions can change a little bit from the daytime to the nighttime," he said.

"...We've seen throughout the games in Pakistan that towards the back end of the game - a little bit of juice settles in and sometimes can be a little bit easier. A little bit nicer to bat on potentially"

## Connolly replaces injured Short in Australian squad

PTI ■ DUBAI

Young spin-bowling all-rounder Cooper Connolly on Monday replaced injured Matthew Short in the Australian squad for the knock-out stage of the ongoing Champions Trophy (CT).

Top order batter Short was ruled out of the ICC event, being held in Pakistan and Dubai, due to a calf injury sustained during the match against Afghanistan on Friday. The 21-year-old Connolly, who made his ODI debut in England last year, was initially named as a travelling reserve for the tournament.

The ICC's Event Technical Committee has approved his inclusion in the Australian squad early on Monday. Connolly has thus far featured in six internationals for Australia, of which three have been ODIs. He's a left-handed



batter, who bowls left-arm spin as well.

Short injured his calf on Friday while fielding and appeared hindered when making a quickfire 20 at the top of the order before the match was abandoned due to rain in Lahore.

"I think he'll be struggling," Australia captain Steve Smith had said of Short's injury status.

"I think we saw tonight he wasn't moving very well and I think it's probably going to be

too quick between games for him to recover."

Australia will face India in the first semifinal of the Champions Trophy here on Tuesday.

**Australia squad:** Steve Smith (c), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Cooper Connolly, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Adam Zampa.



## Praggnanandhaa draws with Aravindh in Prague Masters

PTI ■ PRAGUE

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa played a draw with fellow Indian Aravindh Chithambaram as the two stayed a full point ahead of nearest challengers after the fifth round of Prague Masters chess tournament here.

With 3.5 points in their kitty, Aravindh and Praggnanandhaa are now followed by top seed Wei Yi of China, Anish Giri of Holland, Quang Leim Le of Vietnam and Vincent Keymer of Germany, who all have 2.5 points apiece.

Sharing the sixth spot are the remaining four contestants, Czech duo of David Navara and Nguyen Thai Dai Van, Sam Shankland of United States and Gurel Ediz of Turkey.

There are four more rounds remaining in the 10-players round-robin tournament. The day provided just one decisive game with Wei Yi cashing in on his new-found form to beat Shankland. Anish played out a draw with Dai Van, David Navara came back from a much worse position to hold Keymer, while Le signed the peace with Gurel Ediz.

This was the third Classical game between Praggnanandhaa and Aravindh but the result did not change. Aravindh, playing black, decided not to push Prag in to complexities and his Berlin defense was simply an easy guess to get a level position right through.

The opening that was popularised by Russian

Vladimir Kramnik quarter of a century ago in his match against compatriot Garry Kasparov, held Aravindh in good stead right through the course of the game as Praggnanandhaa exchanged pieces at regular intervals.

The players soon reached a rook and pawns endgame where Aravindh was a pawn less but had enough counterplay. The position petered out to be a theoretically drawn when Aravindh gave up a second pawn leaving no shelter for the white king to hide behind.

Wei Yi capitalized on a tactical oversight by Shankland who played white. After a rather shaky start that cost him two losses out of first three games, the Chinese came back roaring with his second victory in a row after beating Navara in the previous round.

Shankland allowed a dangerous passed pawn on the queen side and it was all over in a mere 27 moves as black crashed through in the base rank with his heavy pieces.

In the challengers section, Divya Deshmukh succumbed to her third loss in the event at the hands of MarcAndria Maurizzi of France and remained on 1.5 points. After attaining a nearly balanced position, Divya was outplayed by the French Grandmaster in the ensuing endgame.

Nnodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan emerged as the sole leader here taking down Jachym Nemeč of Czech Republic. The Uzbek has four points from his five games.

## KKR appoints Rahane as captain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India batter Ajinkya Rahane was on Monday assigned captaincy of defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) after a remarkable run in the domestic T20 competition.

The 36-year-old Rahane, who has played majority of his international cricket in whites, has reinvented himself in the shortest format which was evident in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy wherein he emerged as the leading run getter with 469 runs at a strike rate of 164.56. In the IPL, the right-handed batter had also given a good account of his transformation while playing for Chennai Super Kings.

Rahane replaces Shreyas Iyer as KKR skipper, with the latter set to lead Punjab Kings this season. Iyer and KKR had surprisingly parted ways after a triumphant campaign in the last edition. Venkatesh Iyer, who was also in the reckoning to lead KKR, has been made Rahane's deputy.

Rahane has played for KKR in the past and the franchise bought him for his base price of Rs 1.5 crore at the mega auction.

"It's an honour to be asked to lead KKR, which has been one of the most successful franchises in the IPL. I think we have an excellent and balanced squad. I look forward to working



with everyone and taking up the challenge of defending our title," said Rahane in a statement.

Rahane, who captained India to a historic Test series in Australia in 2020-21, led Mumbai to the semifinals in the recently-concluded Ranji Trophy. In IPL, he has previously captained Rajasthan Royals where he was replaced by Steve Smith in the middle of the 2019 season.

KKR did not have too many captaincy options in the squad. Among the Indian players, they had to choose between Rahane, Venkatesh and Rinku Singh.

KKR will face Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL season-opener at the Eden Gardens on March 22.

# India will rely on spin battery to break knockout jinx against Australia

PTI ■ DUBAI

History weighs heavily against them but India would rely on a potent spin battery and familiarity with the conditions to break the knockout jinx against an undermanned Australia when the two formidable cricket forces clash in the Champions Trophy (CT) semifinal here on Tuesday.

It will not be a straightforward task, though, as the Aussies are a resilient beast in global tournaments even without their lead cast of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell

Starc.

Their stunning chase of 352 against England at Lahore a few days back validates the thought.

The last time India triumphed against Australia in the knockout stage of an ICC event was way back in 2011 World Cup quarterfinal. India lost to Australia in the semifinals of the 2015 ODI World Cup and in the title clash of the 2023 ODI World Cup before succumbing to them in the World Test Championship final in 2023. This Indian side will realistically hope to rewrite

that largely melancholic script over the last 14 years and the primary reason for that optimism is the presence of some top of the line spinners in their ranks.

Their pre-tournament decision to fill the squad with five spinners drew a lot of flak from all corners, but it is now proving to be a masterstroke on the slow pitches in Dubai.

The easiest explanation of their dominance is the knowledge of the conditions having had the luxury of playing all their matches in Dubai. But that is only partially true. They have



made an effort to tweak their craft as per the needs of the surfaces here.

Since there was no fast or

spitting turn on offer here like in a dustbowl, the Indian spinners were made to play the waiting game.

Patience rather than magic is the key in bowling on these decks, as revealed by Varun Chakravarty.

"The pitch here is not a rank turner as such, which people were projecting it to be, but definitely it was holding on a bit, and it was deviating a little bit to create the doubt. So basically, you had to play around it," said Chakravarty.

The Indian spin quartet of Chakravarty, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel walked away with nine New Zealand wickets, but they applied the pressure consistently to earn their

rewards.

They delivered 128 dot balls in the 39 overs bowled between them as the Kiwis struggled to break free, a sequence eventuating in a flurry of wickets.

Even the dismissal of an otherwise stoic Kane Williamson had a touch of desperation as his shimmy against Axar ended in a stumping by KL Rahul.

On the other hand, Australia have only one genuine spinner in Adam Zampa, while hoping for part-timers Glenn Maxwell and Travis Head to deliver the goods. Matthew Short has been

ruled out of the tournament with a calf injury and it has also robbed the already creaking Australian bowling unit of a handy spin option.

The absence of premier names was felt in the previous matches as the Aussie bowlers conceded 352 and 273 against England and Afghanistan respectively, albeit in better batting conditions. Hence, the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer and Shubman Gill will be eager to go full throttle at them here. They have found the perfect rhythm of batting on these sluggish tracks here.

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