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BHUBANESWAR PUBLISHED FROM: LUCKNOW BHOPAL CHANDIGARH HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Quetta quakes under terror | Foreigners Act merged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



the speed of the train is often slow. The Balochistan government directed local authorities to take "emergency mea-

A provincial government statement said an emergency was imposed at Sibi hospital and ambulances and security

forces were on their way to the site. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the incident, saying: "The beasts who fire on innocent passengers do not

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

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

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

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

US deports senior Pakistan diplomat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

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

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

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

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

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

It said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was looking into the matter and an investigation was underway.

The Foreign Office also advised avoiding any speculation in the matter.

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

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

with Immigration Bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

Transport carriers like Airlines carrying foreigners without valid documents will be held liable and can be fined up

FEATURES OF NEW BILL

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

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

As per the bill, violations will attract heavy penalties. Arriving in India without a valid passport or visa may attract imprisonment of up to five years and a

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

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

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

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

According to existing laws, all foreigners on long-term (more than 180 days) student, medical, research, employment, missionary and project visas are required to register with the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) or the Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO) concerned, having jurisdiction over the place where the foreigner intends to stay, within 14 days of arrival.

Ukraine-US talk in Saudi Arabia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA | Jeddah

igh-stakes talks between senior delegations from Ukraine and the United States on how to end Kyiv's three-year war with Moscow opened in Arabia on Tuesday h Russian air defences shot down 337 Ukrainian drones over Russia.

Two people were killed and 18 were injured, including three children, in the massive drone attack that spanned 10 Russian regions, officials said. No largescale damage was reported.

In the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, journalists briefly entered a room where senior Ukrainian delegation met with America's top diplomat for talks on ending Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio smiled for the cameras, while Ukrainian officials sat without expression at a table across from them as the meeting got underway at a luxury hotel.

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

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister was on hand for the talks as American, Saudi and Ukrainian flags stood in the background. Officials did not answer any of the shouted questions.

The talks offer an opportunity for Kyiv officials to repair Ukraine's relationship with Trump's administration after an unprecedented argument erupted during President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's February 28 visit to the White House.

Critically, Ukraine needs to persuade Washington to end the subsequent US suspension of military aid and some intelligence sharing. US officials have said that positive talks in Jeddah could mean it may be only a short suspension.

Ukrainian officials told The Associated Press on Monday that they will propose a ceasefire covering the Black Sea, which would bring safer shipping, as well long-range missile strikes that have hit civilians in Ukraine, and the release of prisoners.

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

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

"I'm not going to set any conditions on what they have to or need to do," Rubio told reporters accompanying him. "I think we want to listen to see how far they're willing to go and then compare that to what the Russians want and see how far apart we truly are."

Delhi's dubious distinction as most polluted

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

elhi continues to rank among India's most polluted cities for the seventh consecutive year. With an average PM 2.5 concentration of 91.8 micrograms per cubic metre, the World lar emissions, paddy-straw burning, quality technology firm IQAir identified Delhi's status as the most polluted capital city globally, while India ranked fifth in 2024, down from third in 2023.

The report released on Tuesday has painted a grim picture for India as 13 of the world's top 20 most-polluted cities are within the country. The report has picked Byrnihat in Assam as the most polluted city in the world.

The 13 Indian cities in the world's top 20 most polluted cities are Byrnihat in Meghalava, Delhi, Mullanpur (Punjah). Faridabad, Loni, New Delhi, Gurugram, Ganganagar, Greater Noida, Bhiwadi, Muzaffarnagar, Hanumangarh and Noida. Another four are in neighboring Pakistan, with one in China and Kazakhstan, respectively.

Delhi's air pollution is a result of varemissions, industrial discharges, construction dust, and seasonal stubble

These sources, combined with geographical factors and rapid urbanization, create severe air quality problems that affect health and the environment. Delhi recorded consistently high pollution levels, with an annual average PM2.5 Health Organisation's (WHO) stringent

cubic metre, nearly unchanged from 92.7 micrograms per cubic metre in 2023. Delhi grapples with high air pollution year-round and the problem worsens in winter when unfavourable meteorological conditions, combined with vehicusources, make the air quality hazardous.

According to the report, the country saw a 7 per cent decline in PM2.5 concentrations in 2024, averaging 50.6 micrograms per cubic metre, compared to 54.4 micrograms per cubic metre in

With all those improvements, six of the world's 10 most polluted cities are still in India. Overall, 35 per cent of the Indian cities reported annual PM2.5 levels exceeding 10 times the WHO limit of 5 micrograms per cubic metre. Air pollution remains a serious health risk in India, reducing life expectancy by an estimated 5.2 years.

The only city outside of Asia featured on the list is N'Djamena, the capital of Chad in central Africa - which was named the country with the worst air ious factors, including high vehicular pollution. Meanwhile the cities with the worst pollution in North America were all in California.

The report has relied on data from over 40,000 air quality monitoring stations at 8,954 locations in 138 countries, territories and regions. It was analysed by IQAir's air quality scientists. Only seven countries have achieved the World concentration of 91.6 micrograms per air quality standards for 2024, and India

is not one of them. These countries include Australia, New Zealand, the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Estonia, and Iceland, according to data compiled by IQAir, a Swiss air quality monitoring

Former WHO chief scientist and Swaminathan said India has made progress in air quality data collection but acks sufficient action. "We have the data; we need action

now. Some solutions are easy like replacing biomass with LPG. India already has a scheme for this, but we must further subsidise additional cylinders. The first cylinder is free, but the poorest families, especially women, should receive higher subsidies. This will improve their health and reduce outdoor air pollution,"

In its monthly report, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) highlighted the severity of winter air pollution in India, revealing that 173 out of 238 cities recorded PM2.5 levels exceeding the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) of 40

Aizawl, Mizoram recorded the lowest winter-average PM2.5 level at 7 μg/m³, making it the cleanest city in the analysis. Moreover, none of the 238 cities analysed met the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guideline of 5 μg/m³, emphasising the scale of air quality challenges. 'Winter' refers to the period from October 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025 (winter 2024-25).



Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MPs come out after meeting Election Commissioners at Nirvachan Sadan, in

Election Commission goes beyond polls to engage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

ferences between the political parties and country's poll watch dog Nirvachan Sadan, the Election Commission of India (EC) has taken the initiative to reach out to the prime stakeholders to work together for a better streamline and allegations free election process. The ECI has invited suggestions from all heads of national and state polit-

aking an effort to iron out the dif-

ical parties by April 30 to address any unresolved issues and further strengthen electoral processes.

This move comes after the EC assured to resolve the decades-long issue of duplicity in voter ID cards. It has also invited presidents and senior members of all political parties for an interaction at a mutually convenient time, "to further strengthen electoral processes in accordance with the established law".

Airtel partners Musk for high-speed internet services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

¬unil Mittal headed Bharti Airtel on Tuesday said it has partnered with Elon Musk's SpaceX for providing Starlink's high-speed internet services to its customers in India. This agreement is subject to SpaceX receiving authorisations to sell Starlink's satellite communicationsbased services in India, Airtel said in a statement.

This is a distribution agreement allowing Airtel to sell SpaceX's Starlink services in India, a major breakthrough for the Musk-owned satellite Internet firm. The agreement does not mean that services will be offered immediately and Starlink still needs to get necessary authorisations from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the Ministry of Home Affairs before it can commence operations in India.

The agreement will enable Airtel and SpaceX to further explore how Starlink could complement and expand Airtel's

Starlink will complement and enhance Airtel's suite of products to ensure reliable and affordable broadband for our **Indian customers** - GOPAL VITTAL, MD, VD, BHARTI AIRTEL

offerings, and how Airtel's expertise in the Indian market could complement SpaceX's direct offerings to consumers and businesses. Bharti Airtel Managing Director and Vice Chairman Gopal Vittal said that working with SpaceX to offer Starlink services to Airtel customers in India is a significant milestone and further demonstrates company's commitment to next-generation satellite connectivity. "This collaboration enhances our ability to bring world-class high-speed broadband to even the most remote parts of India ensuring that every individual, business, and community has reliable internet,"Vittal said.

After Ganga, Yamuna to host cruises among otherw were present at the occa-

RAJESH KUMAR New Delhi

n a bid to boost tourism, the Yamuna is set to witness a transformation. A L four-kilometre stretch between Sonia Vihar and Jagatpur will soon host ecofriendly river cruises- a plan that was on the back burner since 2016. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) on Tuesday signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with multiple agencies of Delhi government including Irrigation and Flood Control department, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC). Under the plan, the ferry services will operate on about a five-km stretch between Sonia Vihar and Jagatpur (Shani

The MoU signing ceremony was held at Asita Park. Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal, the Union Minister of State (MoPSW), Shantanu Thakur, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta

Speaking on the occasion, Sonowal said that the introduction of eco-friendly cruise tourism on the Yamuna is yet another milestone in this journey, paving the way for cleaner, greener, and more efficient waterways that will boost both connectivity and tourism in the heart of

"For years, the people of Delhi were saddened to see dirt and neglect floating on the Yamuna, but this initiative marks the beginning of a long-overdue correction. With the launch of these cruises, Delhiites along with scores of tourists, who flock to the capital, will once again fall in love with their river, experiencing its beauty in a way they never imagined," he said.

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena accused the previous AAP government for delaying the pro-

The project will see the introduction of hybrid boats designed to carry 20-30 passengers at a time. These vessels will be equipped with bio-toilets, public announcement systems, and life jackets to ensure both safety and convenience. Additionally, two high-density polyethylene (HDPE) jetties will be installed to facilitate smooth ferry operations.

The initiative is expected to encourage short-distance water travel and recreational activities, making the river more accessible for both tourists and locals. The solar powered hybrid boats designed to carry 20 to 30 passengers at a time - are planned to be run between Sonia Vihar and Jagatpur, upstream of Wazirabad.

The stretch of Yamuna from Jagatpur Delhi to Sangam in Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh) has been declared as NW-110 with the enactment of Inland Waterways Act in March, 2016. A draft of the MoU was sent to the departments concerned, including Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and Delhi Jal Board (DJB) in September 2024. However, the Delhi government demanded some changes in the MoU conditions.

Prof RK Mittal takes charge as BBAU VC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

rof Raj Kumar Mittal took charge as the sixth Vice-Chancellor of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University on Tuesday. An expert in financial and agricultural business management, Prof Mittal has a distinguished career in research

Upon taking charge, Prof Mittal paid floral tributes at the statue of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar and expressed his gratitude to President Droupadi Murmu, the Ministry of Education, and the Government of India for entrusting him with this responsibili-

ty. He pledged to work diligently for the betterment of the university, in line with the vision of promoting equality, harmony, and education that Babasaheb Ambedkar envisioned.

He acknowledged the contributions of past vicechancellors and assured that the university would prioritise students' interests while striving to achieve new

heights. He outlined three key areas of focus for the university's growth: speed, scale, and scope.

He also addressed plans to align the university's development with the National Education Policy 2020, focusing on improving rankings such as NAAC, NIRF, and QS, and contributing to the broader goals of sustainable development.

Prof Mittal has previously held leadership roles, including as the Founder Vice-Chancellor of Tirthankara Mahavira University and Vice-Chancellor of Chaudhary Bansi Lal University.



NOTICE

I have changed my name AZAZ AHMAD to AZAZ ANSARI S/O MAHMOOD ANSARI for future

purpose. Add- 178/A/B RAM RAI

KISARAY JAJMAU KANPUR

NOTICE

Original Sale Deed of my 630 sqft plot

Lucknow Registered vide Bahi No-1,

Jild No-3888, Page-356 to 385 dated

31/01/2008 have been actually lost. Mohd. Akhlak, S/o Garib Ullah, R/o- 165/127, Kachcha Hata Bagiya,

NOTICE

To be Informed that in my son's

Aadhaar card,name is written as

'Aarav Gautam" which is correct.

While in the birth certificate and

passport "Aray Gautam" is inscribed

which is wrong. So his name "Aarav

Gautam"should be entered everywhere. Upasana Bharti wife of

Avanindra Gautam, resident of

D-452, Sector-119, Gaur Grandeur,

Inform that, I Have changed my

Name Saheen Emtyaj Ahmad R/o

House No. 219 Bahuva Vard No. 05

Ajhuha, Sirathu Distt. Kaushambi

(U.P.). I Declares My Name shaheen imtiyaz hussain in Passport is wrong.

Correct Name is saheen emtyaj

ahmad, All concerned, Please Note &

Change this. For all Future purposes.

NOTICE

have changed my name from

Anupam Saroj Singh to Anupama Saroi Bhadauriva. In future I will be

known by this new name only.

Anupama Saroj Bhadauriya W/o

Anurag Singh Bhadauriya, R/o-A

NOTICE

Please be informed that my wife's

name is wrongly recorded as

Kamlesh in my service record no.

823631-F whereas her correct name

s Kamlesh Yadav in her Aadhar card.

My wife's correct name should be

recorded in my service record as well.

Shiv Shankar Yadav S/o Late Jethu

Ram Yadav resident: Plot no. 62

K-539 Chetna Sai Mandir,

Kanchanpur, Matiyari, Nand City,

NOTICE

It is hereby informed that due to an

error, my name is recorded as

"AFASANA RAHAMAN" in English

on my Passport, whereas my correct

as mentioned in

educational records, is "AFSANA

RAHMAN." I request that my correct

name be updated in my Passport as

Motiur Rahman Resident of Kota

NOTICE

I Sunil Kumar Shukla wife Gudiya

Shukla who had taken license of joint

pistol, pistol no. RP170018 was

stolen from our house, information of

which has been registered by the

police and I am informing through

anywhere, please hand it over to Sunil

Lucknow.

your paper, whoever finds

Shakti

Basti,

Sonbhadra

Afsana Rahman

Nagar,

Indira Nagar, Lucknow

Block, Indira Nagar, Lucknow.

Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar.

Maulviganj, Lucknow

Asiyamau,

NOTICE

Sunil Kumar w/o Late Preeti Verma residing in Kishunpur Ramchandar, Raebareli, informing that his wife, Preeti Verma, had a home loan with Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Limited. She passed away on December 4, 2024, and the loan has been fully repaid. The company has requested the return of the loan closure documents, and anyone with objections can contact Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Limited.

NOTICE

I. Kushum Tiwari W/o Nirai Tiwari R/o 646 Civil Lines, Darogabagh, Unnao, I have lost my original Chain deed of House at Civil Lines, Unnao Executed by Virendra Prasad Srivastava in favour of Suman W/o Brij Kishore Dixit Regd. at SRO, Unnao in V-1187 S1-7223 dt. 28.12.96. I, have not used the said chain deed in any financial institution.

NOTICE

The last page of the original copy of the sale deed of my house, whose volume number is 8658, ledger number 1, page number 225 to 248, serial number 20851 and the map of the house on the other side, has actually been lost somewhere, Ramendrari Devi, wife of Shri Suresh Kumar, resident of village Behta Aira, district Kheri.

NOTICE

Original possession Letter of my Nagar has been lost somewhere. Used by others will be illegal. Ritika Shukla W/o Kuldeep Shukla Bansthi Kanpur Nagar

NOTICE

I Have Changed My Name From Sanjeev Kumar Maheshwari To Sanieev Maheshwari For All Future Purpose.Sanjeev Maheshwari S/O Vijay Kumar Maheshwari R/O 7/17/9-10 D-1 Tilak Nagar Kanpur

NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform that My name in the previous records is mentioned as Pavaki Jaiswal. But now and in the future I should be known as Paavaki Jaiswal D/o of Mr. Sourabh Jaiswal.

आवश्यकता है

आवश्यकता है

ठा० जयनारायण सिंह मेमोरियल डिग्री कालेज, हथगाम, फतेहपुर (कालेज कोड-02039)

सम्बद्ध- प्रो० राजेन्द्र सिंह (रज्जू भइया) विश्वविद

वनस्पति विज्ञान सहा॰ आचार्य पद- 02 विषय-हिन्दी सहा० आचार्य-पद 02 सम्बन्धित विषय में परास्त्रातक 55 प्रतिशत

नेट/पी०एच०डी 25000/- प्रतिमाह **नोट:**- इच्छुक अभ्यर्थी आवेदन पत्र के साथ 4 फोटो, आधार कार्ड, पैन कार्ड तथा शैक्षणिक योग्यता से म्बन्धित समस्त संलग्नकों सहित, विज्ञापन की तिथि से

15 दिनों के अन्दर कार्यालय में जमा करें, ई-मेल य ई-मेल:- jncllg@gmail.com

Kumar Shukla father late Mata हथगाम, फतेहपुर, उ०प्र० - 212652 Prasad Shukla resident Patel Nagar Neelmatha

मो॰ 8810759518, 8810759504

Security beefed up for Holi, Friday prayers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

n preparation for the Holi festival and Friday prayers during Ramzan, security measures have been ramped up across the region. Holika Dahan will take place at approximately 3,600 locations on March 13.

A police spokesperson confirmed that 5,000 non-gazetted officers and 75 gazetted officers have been assigned to oversee the safe conduct of cultural programmes, processions, and the Friday prayers on March 14.

The operations will be supervised by senior officials, and additional security will be provided by 15 companies of the PAC. To ensure peace during the festivals, the police are working on mutual harmony by convening peace committee meetings and engaging with religious leaders. These measures aim to foster a peaceful and safe environment for the celebrations.

The routes of the processions, as well as important intersections and areas, will be monitored using advanced technology such as drones and CCTV cameras. Six drones will be continuously monitoring the procession routes.

In response to safety concerns, particularly regarding the harassment of girls and women in crowded public spaces, women police officers in civvies, along with teams from the Anti-Romeo Squad, Pink Patrol, and 112 services, will patrol the area to ensure safety.

Furthermore, the police will monitor social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, and WhatsApp, 24/7. Any misleading or objectionable posts will be promptly blocked, and legal action will be taken against those responsible for spreading rumours or misinformation.

METRO TO RUN FROM 2.30 PM

Lucknow Metro's train services will be available from 2.30 pm to 10:30 pm on the occasion of Holi

Students apply 'gulal' during celebrations ahead of Holi, in Lucknow on Tuesday

on March 14, the public transporter said on Tuesday. Metro train service will thus start at 2.30 pm from both the terminals — CCS Airport Metro station and Munshipulia Metro station — and will run normally thereafter till 10:30 pm, it said in a

The Lucknow Metro, which covers 21 stations

over a distance of 22.8 km, otherwise usually begins services from 6 am which continues till 10.30 pm. The runtime between the two terminus stations is 40 minutes with a headway of five minutes and 30 seconds during peak hours, according to the Uttar Pradesh Metro

'Both communities should celebrate peacefully'

Sambhal (PTI): As Holi coincides with Jumma during the holy month of Ramzan, a social worker in Sambhal on Tuesday gifted 'pichkaris', 'gulaal' and roses to people in markets and said both the communities should celebrate the day peacefully.

Hoil this year falls on March 14 (Friday). Social worker Saeed Akhtar Issraeli also took blessings of the elderly. On Diwali last year, he had distributed lamps and candles to people belonging to the Hindu community. "We should live together peacefully. Whether it is Holi or Diwali, Eid or Bakrid, everyone should celebrate festivals together... Holi will be celebrated and so will Jumma during Ramzan," he told reporters.

Juma namaaz will be held peacefully and Holi will also be celebrated, he said.

"There are a handful of people who spread hatred, our work is to spread love. There should be Hindu-Muslim brotherhood in the country. The country should develop and the state should also progress," Issraeli said.

He said that for several years, he has been distributing 'diyas' and candles during Diwali. "This time, I wished happy Holi to my brothers and presented pichkaris, gulaal and roses to them. I also took blessings of the elderly," the social worker said.

Uzbek woman found dead in hotel room

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

the body of an Uzbek woman was found in a hotel room in Vibhuti Khand here on Tuesday. She had checked into the hotel with a man named Satnam on March 2.

Satnam left the hotel after three days of their stay, and the woman had been staying alone since March 5, according to the police.

Hotel staff told the police that on Monday (March 10), they had delivered water and other items to the woman. However, when they rang the doorbell on Tuesday, there was no response. After a prolonged wait with no answer, the door was opened with a master key, and the woman was found unconscious.

The hotel staff immediately informed the police, who arrived at the scene. Higher authorities were notified to contact the deceased's family.

According to the hotel's check-in records, the woman had been staying with Satnam Singh (26) from South Delhi. Police identified the woman as Gamberdieva Jebo

(43) from Uzbekistan, and her body was found in room number 109 of the hotel.

Meanwhile, a widower and a woman were found dead in a suspected suicide case in Itaunja police station area on Tuesday. The bodies were discovered hanging from a tree in a mango orchard in Atesua ne families of both the deceased informed, but no allegations have been made by either side. A jacket found at the scene had a message written in chalk: "We both should be buried together. We are married."

Local residents spotted the bodies in the orchard on Tuesday evening and alerted the police. The man was identified as Sandeep alias Deepu (35) of Atesua village, while the woman was said to be a resident of from Chakouli village in the Kakori police

According to police, Sandeep was a widower with two sons—12-year-old Arun and 8-year-old Aman. He worked as a labourer and met the woman at work, leading to a relationship. Three days before the incident, Sandeep had brought the woman to his home. Police sent the bodies for postmortem, while further investigation is ongoing.

YOUTH ARRESTED FOR RAPING **WOMAN ON MARRIAGE PRETEXT**

A youth was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly raping a woman. Identified as Anshu Singh alias Havaldar (26), the accused was arrested from

Police said the victim had alleged that Anshu raped her on the pretext of marriage and when she became pregnant, he forced her to abort the foetus by giving her some medicine. She also alleged that the accused took her money

and jewellery Anshu's brother was also accused of abusing the vic-

tim and issuing death threats to her. Police have registered a case against both of them. Meanwhile, another youth, accused of attempting

to sodomise a 12-year-old boy living in the Madehganj area here, was arrested by police. into accompanying him by giving him a toffee. When the boy cried, he threatened him and ran away. The victim's parents are daily wage labourers.

As per reports, on the night of February 27, the accused, identified as Chandan, reached the victim's house and lured him with a

According to Inspector Rajesh Tiwari, Chandan was arrested on Monday and sent to jail.

Gujiyas in various shapes, sizes sweeten Holi flavours

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

ujiyas are synonymous with the festival of Holi, and it's hard to imagine the celebration without them. With Holi just round the corner, sweet shops in the city are seeing brisk sales of gujiyas. Shopkeepers note that over the years, the choice of gujiyas has evolved, with a wide variety now available beyond the traditional ones.

A shop in Gomti Nagar is showcasing gujiyas in an impressive range of shapes and flavours. Kesariya gujiyas and dry fruit gujiyas are available in shapes like potlis, samosas, and even mini versions known as baby gujiyas, priced between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,200 per kg. For those with more adventurous palates, exotic varieties like rose syrupy and chocolate gujiyas are also A salesman at the shop shared that the

most popular gujiyas this season are the baby gujiyas. "These bite-sized treats are perfect for a quick indulgence, making also opting for syrupy gujiyas soaked in sugar solutions because these are difficult to prepare at home," he said.

Other varieties on offer include baked chocolate gujiyas, sugar-free gujiyas, anjeer

gujiyas, badam gujiyas, and pista gujiyas. "The pista gujiyas, priced at Rs 4,200 per kg, are the most expensive, while the oth-

ers are priced around Rs 2,000 per kg.

These colourful gujiyas are often bought as gifts," the salesman explained. However, the showstopper is the gold-

en warq gujiyas, priced at Rs 2,100 for four pieces. "These are typically purchased as gifts for seniors and bosses," he added. Another salesman from a sweet shop in Indiranagar mentioned that gujiyas are also

available in gift sets. "Customers can choose between loose

gujiyas or pre-packaged gift sets," he said. He also noted that with more women working, there is a high demand for ready-"Making gujiyas at home is a tedious

process, and many working women don't have the time for it. This is why these ready-made gujiyas see such brisk sales; they're an essential part of the celebration," he added. He also pointed out that despite the availability of exotic flavours, the traditional gujiyas are still the most popular.

"For all the fancy flavours, the traditional guijva remains the most delicious, and that is why they sell the fastest," he said.

make gujiyas at home. Nandita Singh, a housewife from Alambagh, shared that it takes her two days to prepare over a hundred gujiyas.

"Homemade gujiyas always stand out compared to those from sweet shops because they have a thinner cover. My family loves homemade gujiyas, so I put in the effort," she said.

Row over 'tarpaulin hijabs on Holi' remark

Aligarh (PTI): In controversial comments, BJP leader Raghuraj Singh has suggested that Muslim men wear hijabs made of tarpaulin to avoid any inconvenience during Holi celebrations on Friday.

The festival of Holi this year coincides with the second Friday of the month of Ramzan. Singh, who is chairman of the high-power advisory committee of the labour and employment ministry in Uttar Pradesh, and enjoys minister of state equivalent rank, said, "The administration is on alert in view of Holi celebrations and for the 'Juma namaz' (Friday prayers) but some people have their objections".

"To those people, I would request that like the women there (apparently referring to Muslim women) wear hijab, and mosques are covered using tarpaulin, they can make a hijab of tarpaulin for themselves, and can move (from one place to another). They will not face any inconvenience, and will be able to offer namaz easily," he said.

He said Holi is a matter of faith for 'Sanatan Dharma' and revellers cannot be asked to throw colours within a specific range. "It (Holi) has been celebrated since 'Satya Yug'. Holi comes once in a year. And, hence, I would say that like the mosques are covered with tarpaulin, and their (Muslim) women wear hijab, they should make a hijab using a tarpaulin. Their (skull) caps will not get wet. The men can also wear the hijab of tarpaulin. The Hindus should not be inconvenienced," he stated. The controversial remarks comes days after a circle officer in

Sambhal kicked up a row by commenting that those who feel uncomfortable with Holi colours should stay indoors, as the festival comes only once a year, whereas Juma namaz takes place 52 times in a year.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had supported the remarks of the Sambhal police officer, saying the official may have spoken as a "pehelwan", but what the Arjun awardee said was correct. Ahead of the festival, many mosques in Uttar Pradesh have shifted the Friday prayer timings on Holi. The imam of Lucknow Eidgah has asked the mosques to hold the Juma namaz at 2 pm that day. He also advised Muslims to offer prayers at a nearby mosque, instead of going to a

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Pre-Bid Meeting Date	18.03.2025
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35 lakh deaths in India every year due to tobacco-related diseases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

n the eve of No Smoking Day, head of the respiratory medicine department at King George's Medical University (KGMU), Dr Surya Kant, highlighted that the day, first observed in 1984 in Ireland, has since spread to the UK and other countries. It serves as an important event to promote smoking cessation and healthier lifestyles.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that tobacco use causes over 80 lakh deaths annually, with 70 lakh attributed to direct smoking and 12 lakh due to secondhand smoke. In India, around 35 lakh deaths each year are linked to tobacco-related diseases. No Smoking Day is observed annually on the second Wednesday of March to raise awareness about the health risks of smoking and encourage people to quit. This year, the theme is, 'Take back your life this No Smoking Day'. On this day, campaigns emphasise that quitting smoking can protect against 40 types of cancer and 25 other severe diseases. Secondhand smoke is particularly harmful to chil-

show that approximately 1.2 million deaths occur globally due to secondhand smoke.

Dr Surva Kant noted that smoking leads to numerous fatal diseases, including lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Nicotine addiction makes it difficult for individuals to quit, and smoking also affects non-smokers through passive smoke. Passive smoking significantly increases the risk of health issues, particularly in newborns, pregnant women, and the elderly. While quitting smoking can be challenging, Dr Surya Kant stressed that it is possible with the right support.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle is vital in supporting smoking cessation. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, staying hydrated, and proper sleep can all aid the process. Avoiding triggers, like coffee breaks or social gatherings, and replacing them with healthier habits is also recommended. Governments and social organisations are also taking measures to curb smoking. Many countries have banned tobacco advertisements, and smoking in public places is prohibited in India and other nations to protect non-smokers.

इंडियन बेंक (भारत सरकार का उपक्रम) 🕰 इलाहाबाद

Name & Address of the Borrower (s)/

Date: 12.03.2025

Indian Bank ALLAHABAD

POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property) [Under Rule-8 (1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, (Act 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3, 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice as detailed here in below calling upon the borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrowers/Guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/ Guarantors and he public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of he powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 and 9 of the said Rules.

The Borrower's in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charges of the Indian Bank.

The Borrower's / Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

This Possession Notice is being served to the Borrower (s), Guarantor (s) & Mortgagor (s) to deposit the said dues.

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Borrower: 1. M/s Suresh Oil Mill, Add Gauri Bazar Near Heera Lal Inter College Sarojini Nagar Lucknow 2. Gyan Mishra, SS-1380 Sec H LDA Colony Kanpur Road Lucknow Guarantor: Ajit Singh Chauhan, Add: L 1575 Sector I LDA colony Kanpur Road Lucknow Guarantor/Mortgagor: Santosh Kunan	, consisting of Flat No/Plot No.15 is Survey No/City or Town Surve No/Kasara No.69, Aurangaba Jagheer, Ward Raja Bijli Pasi within the Registration sub-district Sarojini Nagar And District Lucknow, Bounded by: North

Road Lucknow

Place: Lucknow

Description of the

Authorised Officer Indian Bank

10.03.2025

10,11,294.61

and interest

UP was left underdeveloped by previous govts: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/PRESS TRUST OF

hief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday slammed previous governments for allegedly failing to ensure Uttar Pradesh's development, claiming the state was once considered unsafe and vouths and traders were forced to migrate. In his address at a credit camp under the CM Yuva scheme for Jhansi and Chitrakoot divisions, Adityanath said, 'There was a time when Uttar Pradesh was not considered a safe place. Women faced security issues, and youths and traders were forced to leave the state."

"But today, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has become the world's fifth-largest economy, and Uttar Pradesh is marching forward with full potential."

Lambasting previous governments, he said their "incompetence" left Uttar Pradesh backward, plagued by mafia rule

But the state has transformed today under PM Modi's leadership and "what was once a lagging state is now India's second-largest economy and a key driver of national growth", he said.

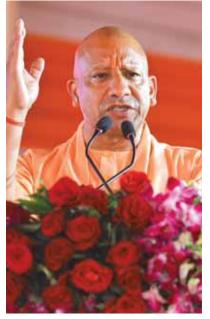
"Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of MSME units in the country, creating jobs for millions," said the chief minister.

He also reiterated the BJP's commitment to Bundelkhand's development. "When I first visited Bundelkhand in 2017, there was despair. The region was under the grip of the mining mafia, struggling for its identity. I promised to rid Bundelkhand of dacoits and mafia rule. Today, we are fulfilling that promise," he said.

The chief minister highlighted the success of the recent Maha Kumbh, stating, 'The state has a population of 25 crore, yet over 66 crore devotees attended the Maha Kumbh. This speaks volumes about Uttar Pradesh's growing prominence."

Adityanath also inaugurated a 200-bed smart hospital in Jhansi, built under the public-private partnership (PPP) model. This hospital will have a 50-bed ICU and top-notch diagnostic facilities. The huband-spoke model will allow consultants to provide services across multiple locaons," he said.

During his visit, the chief minister toured the Sky Museum in Jhansi, which offers insights into space and the universe. "I had inaugurated this museum virtually, and it has already generated over Rs 20



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addresses during the inauguration programme of joint credit camp of Jhansi and Chitrakoot division under the Chief Minister Youth Entrepreneur Development Campaign (CM-Yuva) in Jhansi. PTI lakh in revenue," he noted, stressing that Yuva scheme to help them start their own projects should be self-sustainable, educational, while also serving as entertainment

Discussing the CM Yuva Udyami Yojana, Adityanath encouraged young entrepreneurs to create jobs instead of seeking them. "Every youth should aim to provide employment to 8-10 others. Innovation and technology are key to business success," he said.

Referring to the Maha Kumbh, he mentioned that students preparing for competitive exams took advantage of the event by transporting devotees to the Sangam area on motorcycles, earning a livelihood. "Business needs innovation and adaptation," he added.

Adityanath said that while the government had expected one lakh applications for the CM Yuva scheme between January and March, over 1.5 lakh were received, and loans had already been disbursed to nearly 30,000 young entrepreneurs.

He said that on March 25, the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh would complete eight years in power, and exhibitions showcasing its schemes would be held in every district. "Each district should connect at least 1,000 youths with the CM

ventures," he stated.

He urged young entrepreneurs to register their businesses with the MSME department, highlighting the government's support. "Once you register, even in the unfortunate event of a disaster, the government provides ₹5 lakh in insurance coverage," he assured.

Adityanath announced the establishment of the Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA), covering 56,000 acres between Jhansi and Kanpur. This will be India's largest industrial township, making Bundelkhand a global economic hub.

He said that investors had already started showing interest, with 2,000 acres in Lalitpur allocated for a pharmaceutical park. "Lalitpur also has a medical college, and soon, Jhansi will have a world-class convention center for public events, exhibitions, and investor meets," he added.

The chief minister said Bundelkhand, once plagued by water shortages, is now undergoing rapid progress. "Every household will soon have piped drinking water under the 'Har Ghar Nal' scheme, and irrigation projects are ensuring water reaches every farm," he said.

The chief minister urged people to resist any attempt to revive mafia rule in the

Do not allow those who oppressed the poor, harassed traders, and endangered women's safety to return. The government stands with you in ensuring justice and security," he asserted.

Adityanath announced an increase of ₹150 per quintal in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for wheat and the launch of affordable food canteens named after Mata Shabari in every mandi. "These canteens will provide tea and meals at low prices for farmers," he said.

He also highlighted plans to build hostels for working women under the Mata Ahilyabai scheme and ensure that backward communities, previously deprived of government benefits, are now included. We have allocated funds in the state budget to connect every poor household with government welfare schemes," he added. The chief minister concluded by paying tribute to Rani Lakshmibai, stating her spirit continues to inspire us to build a strong and self-reliant Bundelkhand."

During the event, loans were distributed to 1,070 young entrepreneurs under the CM Yuva Udvami scheme.

Linking of faith, economy through Maha Kumbh transformed Prayagraj: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

ttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said the Maha Kumbh has had a transformative impact on Prayagraj, saying the city was once dominated by mafia and criminals but has now evolved into a new form.

Speaking at a private channel's conclave at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan in Lucknow, the chief minister said Prayagraj has undergone a complete transformation with major development projects, giving the historic city a modern identity.

He also attributed this change to the linking of faith and economy through the Maha Kumbh.

In a statement, the UP government said the chief minister honoured sanitation workers, showering them with flower petals at the event. "They have successfully brought the message of a Swachh Kumbh to life," he said, calling them the foundation of cleanliness.

Adityanath also emphasised the crucial role of sanitation workers in making the Maha Kumbh a grand success.

"After any work concludes, people often move on, thinking about the next task. While everyone lives in a building, its foun-

dation stones are forgotten. The sanitation workers who strengthened the foundation of the Maha Kumbh deserve recognition. Their efforts made this event possible, and this programme to honour them is truly heartwarming," he said.

Highlighting the power of collective effort, he said, "Any event reaches great heights only when people come together with a shared vision. When we view collective efforts positively, they become an inspiration for society. This is exactly what happened in Prayagraj."

Adityanath also shared how people from countries like the US, Australia, Canada, and the UK expressed their desire to bring their elderly parents to the

Kumbh for a holy dip.
"The Maha Kumbh has taken forward the campaign to link faith and economy. The Maĥa Kumbh successfully pushed forward the development of a city like Prayagraj. It was once in the grip of dreaded mafias and criminals. They were trampling the entire Prayagraj over. Today, it has been transformed due to the Maha Kumbh. Several big development projects were executed here. Due to the Maha Kumbh, this ancient city evolved into a

The CM further emphasised the importance of cleanliness and security, stating that everyone who attended the Maha Kumbh appreciated sanitation and security personnel.

The chief minister mentioned that more than 66.30 crore pilgrims visited the Maha Kumbh in just 45 days and shared statistics of the crowd turnout on each day of the holy bath.

He also addressed "misinformation and negative narratives" on the Kumbh, stating, "The more people spread rumours and negativity, the more devotees flocked to ayagraj with even greater determination."

Narrating an incident, he said, "A YouTuber asked a devotee from Karnataka how far he had walked, and he replied, 'five kilometres'. The YouTuber then informed him that he had another five kilometers to go. The devotee responded, 'even if I have to walk 50 kilometers, I will," the chief minister said. "When the YouTuber suggested that the government should have arranged better facilities, the devotee replied 'I am walking, so why is it bothering you? Reaching God's abode on foot is a form of devotion for me," Adityanath said. He said Sanatan Dharma is rooted in gratitude, and every visitor considered

the Maha Kumbh their own event, rather than just a government-organised festival.

This was the largest human gathering in history, sending a powerful message to the world. It demonstrated that such massive events can be successfully managed, that faith can be linked to livelihoods, and that millions of lives can be transformed," he added.

The chief minister recalled his visit to Prayagraj on February 27, a day after the event concluded.

"Along with both the deputy chief ministers and other ministers, I led a cleanliness drive as a gesture of gratitude to Maa Ganga. We performed a ritual in her honour, acknowledging that her blessings made this grand event possible. Sanitation workers were honoured. They shared a meal with us, and we pledged to improve their wages. Their revised minimum salary will take effect in April and a bonus has also been announced," he said.

Adityanath urged the sanitation and contract workers to ensure their children receive proper education. "Send your children to school. If you have any bad habits, don't let them pass on to your kids. Educate them well and work with dedication," he advised.

Mayawati: BJP using official machinery for political purposes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

eacting to the ongoing controversy with regards to Holi and Friday prayers during Ramzan, Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati accused the ruling party of misusing the official machinery for political purposes.

Taking to X on Tuesday, Mayawati took a strong exception to the statement of Sambhal Circle Officer Anuj Chaudhary.

"As it is known that Ramzan is going on at this time and the Holi is also round the corner, keeping this in mind, all the state governments in the whole country, including UP, should turn it into mutual brotherhood, then it will be in the interest of all," she wrote. The BSP chief further remarked, "It is not right to do politics under the guise of any issue. It is very important to take equal care of the honour and respect of the followers of all religions. It is not right to misuse officers like Sambhal and they should pay special attention to law and order." Recently, Sambhal CO Anui Chaudhary had said that "Friday comes 52 times a year and Holi comes only one day. If someone has a problem with colours,



then do not come out of the house?

There was a lot of political uproar over his statement. Apart from this, controversy had also arisen over not allowing Holi to be celebrated at Aligarh Muslim University. After this, the university administration had to change its decision. There was a lot of politics and verbal attacks on both these issues. On one hand, while SP strongly criticised the Sambhal CO's statement, on the other hand, BJP and the Yogi government, including the chief minister, supported the police officer's

Railways to adopt Maha **Kumbh model for** crowd mgmt during Holi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

uoyed by the effective crowd man-Bagement during the Maha Kumbh at key stations, Indian Railways will now implement these strategies at 60 major stations during Holi and other festivals, a statement issued on Tuesday said.

In a high-level meeting on crowd management for Holi, officials decided to implement measures such as holding areas, controlled entry, CCTV surveillance, and digital communication tools to ensure smooth passenger movement.

Key decisions from the high-level meeting included expanding holding areas and creating additional waiting zones at crowded stations like Anand Vihar, Surat, Udhna, Patna, and New Delhi.

Controlled platform access, similar to the Maha Kumbh model, allows passengers to enter platforms in a phased manner to prevent overcrowding.

CCTV cameras will track crowd pressure the statement said.

while railway staff and police will coordinate via walkie-talkies, live announcements, and digital communication systems.

Enhanced security measures with station entry will be restricted—only reserved category passengers will be allowed direct access.At the same time, unreserved passengers will wait in holding areas until their trains arrive. The station master will regulate ticket issuance based on crowd den-

Infrastructure upgrades, including 20foot and 40-foot-wide footbridges at key stations, will improve passenger movement. Railway employees will receive special ID cards, and distinctive uniforms may be introduced to enhance visibility and coordination during high-traffic

With these proactive measures, Indian Railways aims to ensure passenger safety and prevent any incidents of overcrowding at major railway hubs during festivals, Advanced monitoring systems with making travel more efficient and secure,

BJP leader's autopsy report fails to confirm poison

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

he post-mortem report of Gulfam Singh Yadav, a BJP leader who was ■ allegedly given a poisonous injection in Sambhal district, remained inconclusive, further deepening the mystery behind his murder. The local police on Tuesday said that the autopsy could not confirm the presence of poison in his body.

The viscera of the 66-year-old leader have been preserved and will be sent to a forensic lab for a detailed report, the police

Gulfam was at his farm in Debthara Himachal village on Monday afternoon when three men approached him and touched his feet. According to the police, the BJP leader asked his domestic help to serve water to them. While one of the men stepped out, two others sat with Gulfam. One of them allegedly injected a liquid into Gulfam's stomach and fled on a bike, the police said. Gulfam was rushed to a local hospital and later to Aligarh, but he died on the way, the police added.

On Tuesday, Gulfam's son Vinay Prakash filed a complaint against the three unidentified men at Junawai police station.

"An FIR has been registered on the basis of the complaint under Section 101 (mur-

der) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Eight police teams have been formed to trace the absconding accused," Station House Officer (SHO) of Junawai police station, Sunil Kumar Singh, disclosed to the

"We are yet to get the post-mortem report in writing, but we were informed that the report has not confirmed the presence of poison in the body. The viscera will be sent to the forensic lab in Agra for a detailed visceral report," Singh added.

The police have seized a wrapper of the syringe and a helmet left behind by the accused. "We got the information at around 1.30 pm on Monday. We have collected important leads about the accused and are hopeful of arresting them soon," Superintendent of Police, Sambhal, Krishna Kumar Bishnoi, said.

"We are exploring all possible angles in this case and are treating it as a blind murder for now because there are no eyewitnesses in this case," Additional Superintendent of Police, Sambhal, Anukriti Sharma, said, adding that there was no injury mark on his body except for the needle injected in his abdomen.

A veteran BJP leader, Gulfam shot to fame after he contested and lost against the late Samajwadi Party head and former UP



People take part in the funeral procession of BJP leader Gulfam Singh Yadav who died after being allegedly injected a poisonous substance in Sambhal on Tuesday

chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav from UP's Gunnaur Assembly constituen-

Gulfam had resigned from his government job as a Lekhpal (accountant) and joined the RSS in 1976. He had been associated with the Sangh Parivar since then and later became the vice-president of the BJP's West UP unit.

He was also made in charge of the Sambhal Lok Sabha and Assembly seats in the 2022 parliamentary polls and 2024 Assembly elections, respectively. Gulfam had also served as a member of the UP

Sambhal committee denies discussion with

He is survived by his wife Javitri, who is serving her third successive term as the pradhan of Debthara Himachal village, two sons, and six daughters. Meanwhile, hundreds of people gathered

State Commission for Backward Classes.

here on Tuesday for the funeral of Gulfam Singh Yadav. The funeral, held in Davdhara Himachal village, was thronged by local BJP leaders and workers, who demanded the killers be brought to book fast. A local party leader and in-charge of

Shakti Kendra' in Chandausi, Amit Varshney, remembered Yadav as a humble man and a true party worker, adding, the huge turnout was a testimony to his popularity. "His last rites were performed at Rajghat on the bank of the Ganga," he said. Speaking to reporters at Yadav's residence, BIP district president Harendra Singh said the killers cannot escape the law.

They may believe that with their method, they will dodge the law. But they are mistaken. Action against them will be so severe that their future generations will remember it," he said. Party MLAs from Budaun and Moradabad, Mahesh Chandra Gupta and Ritesh Gupta, former minister Ajit Singh (Raju), and BJP's western region vice-president Rajesh Singhal attended Yadav's funeral.

Government scheme alleviates water crisis in Sonbhadra's Dala Bazaar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Sonbhadra

everal initiatives are being implemented to ensure basic amenities for the citizens of Uttar Pradesh. As part of this effort, the Piped Water Scheme has successfully alleviated the water crisis in Dala Bazaar Nagar Panchayat, Sonbhadra,

Through this initiative, a 46,953-metrelong pipeline has been laid at a cost of Rs 42.57 crore, providing piped water connections to 3,437 households. For years, the residents of Dala Bazaar Nagar Panchayat in the Sonbhadra district struggled with unsafe drinking water contaminated with fluoride, arsenic, and other toxins, leading to severe health issues such as bone disorders, gastrointestinal diseases, and other waterborne illnesses. Acknowledging the crisis, the Yogi government introduced a modern water purification system and an extensive pipeline network under the Piped Water Scheme, ensuring safe and lect water. Moreover, this initiative by the

tiative now ensures a safer and healthier future, officials said. Under this scheme, intake wells, water treatment plants, and clear water reservoirs were established. The supply of clean drinking water was ensured by removing contaminants using advanced techniques. By laying a pipeline of about 46,953 metres, 3,437 houses were given direct piped water connections. This made it possible to deliver pure water to every family. To make water storage and distribution effective, a reservoir of 350 kilolitre capacity for clear water was constructed, ensuring supply in any emergency. This scheme has not only ensured access to clean drinking water for the residents of Nagar Panchayat but has also eliminated the time and effort previously required to fetch water, officials said.

Women and children, in particular, have experienced significant relief, as they no longer have to travel long distances to colpublic health, with a projected decline in waterborne diseases, officials added.

Additionally, the Piped Water Scheme is expected to enhance awareness among citizens regarding hygiene and health. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the state government

remains committed to providing essential amenities to every citizen, officials said. To address the water crisis and curb the spread of waterborne diseases, the govern-

ment has implemented this scheme in Dala Bazaar as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission. This initiative will benefit the present generation and serve as a long-term solu-

tion for future generations, officials said. The residents of Nagar Panchayat Dala Bazaar expressed gratitude to the Yogi government for successfully executing this scheme. They recalled their hardships in accessing clean water and now appreciate the convenience of having safe drinking water directly from household taps.

police over timing of Friday prayers has taken place regarding the timing of on March 14 while Muslims would offer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sambhal

♦he Shahi Jama Masjid Committee in Sambhal on Tuesday denied any discussion with the police administration regarding the timing of Friday prayers which coincide with Holi celebrations on

The committee clarified that they will announce the prayer timing independently in the coming days.

Sambhal has been on alert after riots broke out on November 24 last year following a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid. Four people were killed and several including police personnel were injured

Talking to reporters, Shahi Jama Masjid Committee president Zafar Ali said neither he nor any representative from the committee was present at the peace committee meeting convened by the administration.

'We have not been in touch with the police administration and no discussion

the Friday prayers. We are consulting with our religious scholars and will make an announcement within a day or two," he

Ali emphasised that only the Shahi Jama Masjid Committee has the authority to decide and announce the timing of

We are committed to ensuring peace and harmony in the city so that the fes-

tivals of Holi and Ramzan are observed peacefully," he added. Holi and Jumma namaz have coincid-

ed in the past without any issues, he said. 'We are still considering whether to adjust the timing. The police administration's statement about prayers being held after 2 pm or 2:30 pm is speculative, as no formal discussion has taken place with

"Religious scholars can only provide suggestions but the final decision rests with the mosque committee," he assert-

Jumma namaz after 2.30 pm in Sambhal, the communally sensitive city of Uttar Pradesh, a senior police official on Friday said, adding seven companies of Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) have been deployed ahead of the festi-

The new directive came after a circle officer (CO) kicked up a row by saying that Holi is a festival that occurs once a year whereas Jumma namaz takes place 52 times a year.

He said anyone who feels uncomfortable with the colours of Holi should stay

indoors on that day. Sambhal Superintendent of Police (SP) Krishan Kumar on March 7 told reporters that in view of Holi and the second Friday of Ramzan falling on the same day, seven companies of Provincial Armed Constabulary have been deployed in the city. Complete peace prevails in the district and peace committee meetings are being ed. Hindus would play Holi till 2.30 pm organised at the mohalla level, he said.

NER Varanasi div to monitor operations during Holi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

n view of heavy rush of passengers during the 'Festival of Colours' Holi (March 14), Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava has deputed officers and employees at important stations of the Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) for convenience of passengers and crowd management. During Holi from March 15 to 18, divisional officers will monitor crowd management and movement of special trains in three shifts in the Divisional Control Room at DRM office here.

Among these officers, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (SDCM) Sheikh Rehman, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecommunication Engineer Rajat Priya, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (SDME/Carriage and Wagon) Anubhav Pathak, Senior Divisional Operations Manager Ajay Pratap Singh, Divisional Operations Manager (DOM) Ratandeep Gupta, Divisional Engineer (General) AK Pandey, Assistant Commercial Manager (ACM) Pushkar Singh Rawat, assistant operations managers and assistant mechanical engineers etc will do intensive monitoring of all activities going on in Varanasi division. During the period along with complete monitoring from the control rooms established in the offices of station superintendents at Chhapra, Siwan, Ballia, Mau and Deoria Sadar intensive monitoring of commercial activities will be done. Traffic inspectors, loco inspectors, signal and telecom inspectors, electrical inspectors, mechanical inspectors, P Way inspectors, Railway Protection Force (RPF) inspectors and all departmental senior supervisors will keep an eye on the activities related to their

Health dept fully alert

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

he Health department is fully alert in view of the festival of Holi.
Along with doctors and health
workers, all government hospitals have
been instructed to remain alert 24 hours a day for emergency services. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said in view of the possibility of increase in incidents and road accidents during the festival all emergency services should be kept well organised and

The CMO directed that some beds should be kept additionally reserved in the emergency of the medical units concerned and leave applications of doctors and paramedical staff should not be approved without unavoidable reasons. The availability of functional ambulances should be ensured on time at all medical units. He said as Holi is a festival of colours in which eye and skin related problems are caused due to use of chemical colours, hence adequate availability of medicines related to eye and skin diseases and round the clock availability of skin and eye specialists should be ensured at all units. In coordination with the district administration, all necessary steps should be taken to cele-

respective departments and take appropriate decisions and resolve the issues. Along with this, helpdesks will be operated by the Commercial department at all major stations like Chhapra, Siwan, Deoria Sadar, Ballia, Mau, Banaras etc

Dr Chaudhary informed as the possibility of accidents on is high doctors, staff nurses and health workers have been assigned duty with their prescribed dress code and time for emergency service. All staff should remain present in hospital and do medical work. Ambulance workers have also been instructed to remain active and receive calls on time. Beds have been reserved in divisional hospitals, district hospitals and community health centres

brate the festival of Holi in a safe manner.

Due to use of chemical colours in Holi, there is an increased risk of skin burns as well as cases of skin and eye diseases. In view of this, all health units have been instructed to have adequate medicines related to eye diseases and skin diseases as well as doctors to remain alert.

The CMO has appealed to people of the district to avoid using chemical colours on Holi. He said the best way to avoid chemical colours is to apply oil on the body before leaving the house on Holi. One should wear such clothes which cover most of the body. However, in case someone applies chemical colours and one experiences burning sensation or any other problem in any part of body, then one should immediately consult a doctor.

which will work 24 hours. Information

about special trains will be available at

these helpdesks. Besides, information

will be broadcast continuously at all sta-

tions through the public address system,

especially information about special trains

will be broadcast continuously. As per requirement, the list of special trains will be displayed at the Sahyog counters.

The trains will arrive at their designated platforms and they will not be changed. If changes have to be made due to unavoidable circumstances, then the trains will be operated by giving sufficient halt time and prior information (minimum 15 minutes in advance) will be ensured to the enquiry office by the onduty staff. Maximum number of unreserved ticket/ reservation counters will work continuously at major stations and arrangement will be made for ticket distribution from additional counters as per the requirement.

Apart from this, all Railway, BSNL phones and department related equipment installed at all major stations such as CCTV camera, train display systems, coach indication/guidance boards, talkback systems installed at booking windows, clocks and PA systems will be kept in working condition continuously. Continuous supply of electricity and water and cleanliness will be ensured at the stations. Sufficient RPF personnel will be deputed for crowd control at arrival and departure gates and platforms and to make queues at unreserved ticket/ reservation windows. Besides, sufficient water supply, electricity and cleanliness in the coaches of trains will be ensured by the departments concerned. Cleanliness and medical facilities will be ensured at the stations. Tickets of passengers should be checked while entering the station premises. Proper matching of trains will be ensured by ticket checking staff. Special trains and additional coaches will be manned during the festival. Ticket collectors will also be deployed for train manning as per need.

'Bhasm Ki Holi' played



Devotees celebrate 'Masane Holi' at the Manikarnika ghat in Varanasi on Tuesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

typical Mahashashan Holi was played on the second day of Rangbhari Ekadashi.

midst the singing of the famous A tune of 'Holi Digambar Khele Masane me Holi...' the unique 'Bhasm Ki Holi' (a part of 'Festival of Colours') was played with ashes left after the cremation of bodies at mythological Manikarnika ghat on Tuesday. The festival is a part of an old tradition when this 'Bhasm Ki Holi' is played a day after Rangbhari Ekadashi. Heavy rush of tourists was seen to see this unique festival. In view of popularity in recent years it is also attracting a large number of foreigners.

According to mythology, there is an interesting story about the genesis of this 'Cheeta Bhasm Ki Holi'. On the occasion of Ekadashi, the Banarasis played Rangbhari Holi when after his 'Gauna', Lord Vishwanath (Shiv) came to the city along with Goddess Parvati (Maa Gaura) it was attended by all deities and others but demons, both visible and invisible souls etc could not attend it. To please them, this

IQ test organised

An IQ test for Divyang trainees was organised at the special training centre of Chetna Vidyalaya, run by the Women's Welfare Organisation (WWO), Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Monday. Senior psychiatrist of Varanasi Dr Ajay Tiwari and his associate doctors conducted IQ test of nine trainees of Chetna Vidyalaya. On the occasion, WWO BLW member and Chetna Vidyalaya in charge Anju Gupta honoured Dr Ajay Tiwari and his supporting team. This school, established in 1996, is continuously working with the aim of making Divyang children selfreliant and connecting them with the mainstream of society. Chetna Vidyalaya not only provides education to Divyang children, but also various employment-oriented training to make them self-reliant.

Solvers' gang busted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

¬he Prayagraj Police on Tuesday claimed to have busted a gang involved in solving the RPF constable recruitment exam paper after the arrest of two members. The Special Operations Group (SOG) and Surveillance Cell team recovered mobiles, Bluetooth, certificates, cheque books, laptops etc. from

During interrogation it came to light that the arrested solvers had taken a contract of Rs 5 lakh per candidate in the recruitment exam. These people took Rs 1 lakh each in advance from about 24 candidates and were getting the paper solved. The Railway Recruitment Board RRB is conducting the RPF constable recruitment exam of the railForce (RPF).

Kite flyers warned

District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Mandar while a chairing meeting on Tuesday in Sangam Auditoriuam said use of Chinese Manjha is dangerous. He warned the kite flyers not to fly kites with it. If someone gets injured or dies due to it then the kite flyer concerned will be sent to jail. If caught with it a case will be registered and action will be taken. The DM said manufacture, storage, sale and use of Chinese Manjha used in kite flying is completely banned. He said under the Environment Protection Act-1986, Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act-1960, there is a provision of punishment and financial penalty against those who ways. Computer-based examination is manufacture, store, buy-sell and use this mangoing on from March 2 to 18 at vari- jha. The DM and the police commissioner ous examination centres across the warned everyone that Chinese Manjha is made of constable in the Railway Protection dangerous thanmixture of glass and metal. | potential for enhancing food and nutrition-

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

he eighth meeting of the ISARC Coordination Committee (ICC) was held at the International Rice Research Institute – South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC) here on Monday, in which the work of one year of ISARC was reviewed and the action plan for the next

year was discussed in detail.

Addressing the meeting, Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, Ajit Kumar Sahu highlighted the important role of South-South cooperation in strengthening India's seed sector and invited ISARC to participate in shaping the amendments in the National Seed Policy. The main focus of the meeting was on bionutritional and high value rice varieties such as 'Kala Namak' and 'Low-Glycemic



Need to strengthen innovation emphasised

al security. Sahu emphasised the need for strong policy support and promotion of these varieties to reap maximum benefits. He also emphasised the need to disseminate information about these rice varieties among farmers through demonstration programmes of the government and urged active efforts of ISARC in ensuring their effective acceptance among farmers.

Islam (Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh) and Dr Ram Krishna Shrestha (Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Development, Government of Nepal) emphasised the need to strengthen innovation, research and capacity development to address challenges posed by climate change, food security and agricultural sustainability. They requested for knowledge sharing in advanced technologies such as genome editing, bioinformatics, agricultural mechanisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance crop sustainability and stability. Both countries urged for sending postgraduate and PhD scholars for research at ISARC and organising regional workshops to strengthen South-South cooperation.

Senior ISARC scientists presented the major achievements of research, capacity development and progress of the cenand Nepal, including Mohammad Zahirul areas such as value addition in rice, sus- (NSRTC) Dr MP Yadav.

tainable agriculture, seed systems, mechanisation, residue management, digital innovation and education were also reported. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by Director of ISARC Dr Sudhanshu Singh, highlighting collective efforts to promote agricultural innovation and impact in South Asia.

The meeting was also attended by Regional Director (Asia) of IRRI Dr Jongsu Shin, Deputy Director General (Crops), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Dr Devendra Kumar Yadav, Special Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Government of Uttar Pradesh TK Shibu, Research Director, Shriram Bioseed Genetics India Ltd, Hyderabad, Dr Paresh Verma, Deputy Commissioner, Seed Quality Control, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, Dr Dilip Srivastava and Seed Technologist, National

Third rail system installation starts on elevated section of Knp Metro

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

he Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (UPMRC) has commenced the installation of the third rail system on the approximately 5km-long Baradevi-Naubasta elevated section, part of Corridor-1 (IIT - Naubasta) of Kanpur Metro. To facilitate this, the process of transporting the third rail system equipment to the metro viaduct using cranes had been ongoing for the past few days near Baradevi station.

The installation of brackets, a crucial step in the process, has already begun. It is noteworthy that the track construction work in this section is also progressing rapidly. Recently, the welding of the rail (track) from Baradevi to Naubasta has also been completed. Unlike the conventional Overhead Equipment (OHE) system, the third rail system supplies power through a rail laid parallel to the tracks. Kanpur



Metro trains operate on 750 volts DC, utilising this third rail for power supply. The third rail system provides a direct current (DC) power supply through a rail installed parallel to the track, eliminating the need for overhead wires. It requires less mainsupply interruptions caused by external factors such as kite flying. By eliminating overhead electrical infrastructure, the third rail system enhances the city's aesthetic appeal. Congratulating the metro team on the commencement of third rail installation, Sushil Kumar, Managing Director of Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd., said, "Track construction on the Baradevi-Naubasta elevated section of Kanpur Metro is progressing at a rapid pace. Now, alongside this, the installation of the third rail has also begun, marking a significant milestone. Simultaneously, the Kanpur Metro team is fully committed to extending passenger services from Motijheel to Kanpur Central. Services from IIT to Kanpur Central will commence following the completion of inspections and approval from the Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS)."

Importance of following digital etiquette stressed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

¬he Department of English of Christ Church College, Kanpur organised a special lecture on the topic 'Foundation of all Professions: Professional Communication" on Monday. The aim of the programme was to train students on the fundamental principles of professional communication in today's highly competitive world. The event commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Prof Joseph Daniel, Principal and Secretary of Christ Church College and chairperson for the session, Prof Suman Singh, Resource Person, Prof Shweta Chand, college Vice-Principal and Dr Shubhi Tiwari, in charge of the English Department. Thereafter, Dr Shubhi Tiwari welcomed all the guests and gave a outline of the programme while also conveying the necessity and significance of the topic. The resource person was introduced by Dr Shalika Parikh.

Prof Suman Singh from the Department of English, PPN College delivered her insightful lecture. Effective



Special lecture on professional communication being organised at Christ Church College.

professional communication is the backbone of every profession. With her expertise in the field of career counselling, she focused on different aspects, including verbal, non-verbal and written communication. She also explained how digital communication has been revolutionary and stressed on the importance of following digital etiquette. Her talk was deeply appreciated by the students and faculty present. This was followed by an interactive session in which students actively participated and asked their questions to the speaker. Pragya Bhatia and Sujata Yadav successfully conducted the session. Chairperson, Prof Joseph Daniel, shared his thoughts on the relevance and utility of developing communication skills for the professional environment. Prof Sujata Chaturvedi, Prof Satya P Singh, Prof Anindita Bhattacharya, Joshua Lawrence and other faculty members were present.

Shikshak Samman Samaroh organised

The National Independent Teachers' Association (NITA) organised a Shikshak Samman Samaroh at the Maharana Pratap Engineering College, Mandhana, to recognise the contribution of teachers. Over 200 teachers were felicitated with citation and memento. CBSE City Coordinator & Zonal Coordinator, NTA, Dr Balvinder Singh was the chief guest. Special Guest Gaurav Bhadauria (Joint Secretary, MPGI), Sudhir Mishra (Professor, IIT) and Daya Shanker Mishra (PS to Director, NSI) were also present.

2 DCM drivers killed in road accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

¬wo DCM drivers died on the spot in the Utraon police station area in the wee hours on Tuesday. The two DCMs collided from behind with a truck parked in front of Balipur Sabzi Mandi The deceased drivers were identified as Suraj Mishra (25) of Kanpur and Jagdish Prasad (32) of Sultanpur. Suraj Mishra was going from Kanpur to Varanasi with tyres loaded in his DCM and Jagdish Prasad was carrying cold

At the time of the accident, Suraj Mishra's DCM was moving ahead. His DCM collided with the parked truck near Balipur Sabzi Mandi and Jagdish Prasad's DCM coming behind also collided with Suraj's DCM.

Station House Officer (SHO) Utraon Pankai Kumar Tripathi said the police took out the bodies of both the drivers after several hours of effort with the help of gas cutter and JCB. Their bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination. Taking advantage of the darkness, the driver of the parked truck fled from the spot. Police is estigating the matter.

In another incident a 78-year-old man was killed after he was hit by a speeding bus in Meja police station area. The deceased identified as Lallu Keshri was a chaat businessman in Meja Road market. Lallu was running 'Lallu Chaat Bhandar' for the last 50 years. The incident happened on Monday night, when he was returning to sleep at the shop after eating food at home. After the accident, the bus driver fled from the

The deceased, an active office-bearer of Vyapar Mandal, is survived by four sons, who used to help him run the shop. On getting information ACP Meja Ravi Gupta, Inspector Rajesh Upadhyay and Meja Road Chowki in charge Ankush Kumar reached the spot. The police have sent the body for post-mortem.

Vyapar Mandal president Pappu Upadhyay and others have expressed grief over this incident.

Call for greater awareness to deal with HIV/AIDS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

two-day state level GIPA convention was inaugurated on Monday at the Centre for Vedic Science of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) by Director of Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS-BHU) Prof SN Sankhwar. It is being organised under the joint aegis of Uttar Pradesh State AIDS Control Society and National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO).

In his inaugural address, Prof Sankhwar said that continuous work is being done in the direction of HIV/AIDS awareness and we have also achieved significant success in this direction. "Today awareness has increased among people at the rural level too but more awareness is needed in this area", he said, giving the detailed information about the HIV

AIDS awareness being run by the IMS-BHU. Addressing the programme as the chief guest, the Deputy Commissioner of Varanasi said underlined the important role of voluntary organisations and youth in the control of HIV/ AIDS. Dr Ramesh Chandra Srivastava, Joint Director, Uttar Pradesh State AIDS Control Society, Lucknow, presented a detailed outline of the HIV /AIDS awareness programme by the state government.

As a special speaker, president of Apne Aap Plus Ajita Yadav discussed in detail the facilities provided by NACO for HIV positive people in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Dr Ashutosh Singh of Sir Sundarlal Hospital Blood Bank, said that by donating blood regularly, we can prevent the spread of HIV and can save the lives of children suffering from thalassemia through

Importance of safety highlighted



The Goldiee Group organised National Safety Week celebrations at its plants and offices

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

◄he Goldiee Group observed National Safety Week from March 4 to 10 at its different plants and offices. The objective was to promote importance of safety and inculcating safe work culture. Managing Director Akash Goenka said, "Safety is our utmost priority. We are committed to ensuring safety of our employees and stakeholders". During the week,

Goldiee Group organised different safety activities, including safety training, safety awareness campaign and safety competitions. The Group encouraged its employees and stakeholders to promote safe work culture and highlighted the importance of safety.

On the occasion officers and employees of Goldiee Group reiterated their commitment towards safety and pledged to main-

Northeast's contribution is important: Shah

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The home minister said that between

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

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

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

insurgent groups.

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

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

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

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

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

Dharmendra Pradhan slams Opposition over language row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Centre bans two Kashmir-groups for anti-national activities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Uproar in Rajya Sabha over unparliamentary remark by Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

Pradhan on Monday slammed the Tamil Nadu government for its stand on the three-language policy under the National Education Policy (NEP), accusing it of "ruining the future of the students" in the state for politics. On Tuesday, as Deputy Chairman Harivansh called Congress leader Digvijay Singh to initiate a discussion on the working of the education ministry, DMK MPs, who came dressed in black to oppose Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge speaks in the House delimitation and NEP, were on their feet demanding during the Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi an apology from Pradhan.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

In his zero hour submission, Girirajan said states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab that had implemented family planning would stand to lose parliamentary seat representation.

And states with poor family planning programmes and higher fertility rates like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan would gain many of the seats transferred from better performing states.

Southern states have seen their share in the overall population of the country drop over the past decades while the share of those in the north has risen.

If population is made the sole basis of delimitation or redrawing of Lok Sabha constituencies, the proportion of MPs that south sends in Parliament will fall as

compared to the present.

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

PARLIAMENTARY PANEL TO LAUNCH WEBSITE FOR ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

 $T^{\text{he Parliamentary panel examining `one nation},} \\ \text{one election' bills will soon launch a website to}$ invite suggestions from across the country on the issue. BJP leader P P Chaudhary, the chairman of the Joint Committee on the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, said the panel was working with full transparency and wanted to ensure that everyone got an opportunity to share their views on the issue of simultaneous polls.

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

cial support to states. "As per the recent Lancet report, the Ayushman Bharat has made a big contribution and cancer treatment has started within 30 days of screening under this programme," the health minister said, amid

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



Union Minister JP Nadda speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I would like to enlighten the House that a week ago, there was a meeting of the mission steering group of the NHM where we have seen to it that the ASHA workers, due to their activities There has to be enhancement of their financial part, which the mission steering group has given the permission, and we will be going forward with it," Nadda said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

a "direct attack" on Muslims. He said the AIMPLB had facilitated over 3.6 crore responses via emails to suggestions sought by the parliamentary panel.

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

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

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

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





Beyond the rhetoric

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leaderspeak

I am on a multi-nation trip to the

Indo-Pacific, a region I know very

well having grown up as a child of the

First stop: Honolulu where I'll visit IC

troops engaging in training.

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

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

communication are vital to achieving President Trump's

TULSI GABBARD, US INTEL CHIEF

relationships, understanding, and open lines of

objectives of peace, freedom and prosperity.

partners and INDOPACOM leaders, and our

The Unfinished Fight for Gender Equality

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

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

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

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



leave remains low at nine to 15 days

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

Further, the UN Women's Report on Women's Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing" (2025) is worth a reflection, which assesses global progress on gender equality since the 1995 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action'. While 1,531 legal reforms have been enacted, disparities persist - women earn 20 per cent less than men, perform three times more unpaid care work, and only 63 per cent of working-age women are in the labour force compared to 92 per cent of men. Gender-based violence remains widespread, affecting 736 Million women globally, with 53 per cent of women in Europe and Central Asia facing online abuse. Maternal mortality rates have stagnated, and 236 Million additional women and girls are projected to face food insecurity by 2050 due to climate change. Further, Women remain underrepresented in politics (27 per

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

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

Achieving gender equality requires bold, immediate action, ensuring all women and girls have equal rights, opportunities, and safety in every sphere of life. Amidst all the celebrations - and resolutions - that marked IWD 2025, it is equally critical to reflect on the 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2025' that reveals a global regression in women's rights, marked by intensified

oppression in numerous regions. Afghanistan witnessed the Taliban's extreme gender-based restrictions, effectively eliminating women from public life through bans on education and employment, alongside reports of severe abuses. In Sudan, conflictdriven sexual violence became a weapon of war, with widespread rape and forced mar-

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

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

Navigating coercion and gaslighting

SECOND **Opinion**

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

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

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



The first step is awareness. Recognising the power play for what it is allows us to protect ourselves emotionally. Often, bullies thrive by distorting reality — by twisting words, fabricating narratives, and making us feel inadequate, indebted, or small. The psychological manipulation is insidious. But when we step back and see the game being played, we can detach ourselves from the emotional quagmire they attempt to drag us into. It's not about denying the truth

of our emotions, but about observing them, questioning their source, and not letting them define us.

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

and what kind of armour can protect us from the tles them because it signals that we are not easily provoked. gle word. In situations where we are pushed into a corner, we can reframe the narrative by presenting the facts. For instance, if we are pressured to express forced gratitude, we might say, "We have both benefited from this collaboration." By putting the truth back at the centre, we dilute their leverage and reinforce our agency. Ultimately, the key is knowing our boundaries and refusing to make concessions that compromise our dignity. The moment we yield to unfair demands, we allow the cycle of manipulation to continue. So, we must know when to say "No" and stand firm in that decision. But all of this requires confidence, and confidence, like any armour, is built over time.

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

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

Letters to the Editor

India's Golden Shift

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

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

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

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

ANUSHKA BOHRA, UJJAIN

America First, World Last

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

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

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

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

HARIDASAN RAJAN, KOZHIKODE

Mark Carney replaces Trudeau

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

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

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

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

KIRTI WADHAWAN, KANPUR

WOMEN'S AWARDS UNDER FIRE

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRIYANKA SAURABH, HISAR



Europe: The Unraveling of a Continent in Denial

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

Europe, shackled by its servitude to American interests, blindly followed Washington into every geopolitical quagmire-be it in Iraq, Libya, Syria, or now Ukraine-without considering the longterm consequences. The current conflict in Ukraine is not an aberration; it is the logical culmination of decades of strategic miscalculations. The EU, by choosing to weaponise Ukraine as a battering ram against Russia rather than seeking diplomatic equilibrium, has sealed its fate. Instead of charting an independent course towards true strategic autonomy, Europe doubled down on its vassal status to the United States, believing that this alignment would ensure perpetual dominance. But as the tides shift-with Washington's attention pivoting towards Asia and Trump poised to prioritise 'America First' over NATO's European commitments-the continent is waking up to a grim reality: it has no viable future without a fundamental realignment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The lesson of the USSR should not be lost on

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

(The (The writer is a journalist and a policy analyst.

How Three New Societies Are Shielding Agriculture from Global Trade Shocks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

nomic strength. Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

Jai Kisan! Jai Cooperative Movement!

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

The Qualities That **Shape Our Destiny**

RAJYOGI BRAHMKUMAR

NIKUNJ JI

ccording to scriptures, there are about 36 divine qualities (36 Gunas), and if one does **1** not have any one of these divine qualities, then it means he/she has the opposite-the demoniacal qualities-which, as everyone knows, result in peacelessness, disease, sorrow, and suffering. Most people do not yet know that the absence of one or the other divine quality is the cause of one or the other kind of

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

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

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

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

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

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

Complete peace, it should be remembered,

comes from complete purity or full-fledged divine nature. Even a fraction of one demoniacal quality leads to a lessening of peace in that proportion, if not more.

It should also be noted that demoniacal qualities have linkages among themselves, even as divine qualities are connected among themselves

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

> and strengthen and sustain each other. So,

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

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

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

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

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

Nitesh Rane sparks row over Malhar certification for jhatka mutton

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

n unusual political controversy has erupted in Maharashtra over 'Halal-mutton' and 'Jhatka-mutton', with BJP leader and Maharashtra's Ports and Fisheries Minister Nitesh Rane exhorting the people to go in for Malhar certification, an agency run by Hindu Khatik community.

The Malhar certification is akin to the existing halal certification in India, where the animals are slaughtered according to

So much so that the promoters of Malhar certification have come out with a website to push goat and sheep meat at certified outlets run by the Hindu Khatik community vendors.

The message put out on https://malharcertification.com reads thus: "Malhar is a certified platform for Jhatka mutton and chicken vendors.

It ensures that goat and sheep meet, sacrificed according to Hindu religious traditions, is fresh, clean, free from saliva contamination and not mixed with any other animal meat. This meat is available exclusively through Hindu Khatik com-

Launching the Malhar certification, Nitesh who is the son of former chief minister and BJP Narayan Rane said, "We have taken a very important step for the Hindu community in Maharashtra. Malhar certification has been launched. Through Malhar certification, we will have access to our rightful mutton shops and there will be a 100 percent Hindu community and the person selling will also be a Hindu. No adulteration will be found in the mutton anywhere. These efforts will definitely make the youth of the Hindu community financially empowered".

Asking the people not to buy mutton from shops without Malhar certification, Nitesh said, "This Malhar certification should be used more and more and Hindus should not buy mutton from shops without Malhar certification. This is what I appeal to people. Jai Shri Ram".

Over the past few years, Right-wing groups in several BJP-ruled states have

peen campaigning against Halal meat.
As per the Halal method of slaughter, the blood must be drained out of the carcass as thoroughly as possible after the animal's throat is cut.

missible" in Islamic law, and the halal method of animal slaughter is a specific ritual based on Islamic principles. A Muslim must perform the slaughter. The animal slaughtered must be alive and

Debunking the promotion of Malhar certification for Jhatka mutton and chicken vendors, NCP (SP) leader and former minister Dr Jitendra Awhad slammed Nitesh Rane for his appeal to Hindus not to buy mutton from shops without Malhar

"By launching this kind of a campaign, Nitesh Rane is indulging in divisive politics. There is no need for creating over Jhatka mutton. People buy mutton as parts. Nitesh is pushing for Malhar certification for Jhatka mutton and chicken vendors. Tell me how fish is to be cut?," Awhad wondered.

The sale of Halal meat is as per law. The slaughter is done as per the scientific basis. Under the system, the blood is drained out of the carcass as thoroughly as possible after the animal's throat is cut. The controversy raked up by Rane is unwarranted". Hitting out indirectly at

Rane, Samajwadi Party MLA Rais Shaikh said: "While I support Nitesh Rane's statement that people can choose what they want to eat. He is creating an option. Whoever wants to get Jhatka mutton's certificate should go to Nitesh Rane. What is wrong with it?". I don't know why there should be a controversy over this. No one takes Nitesh seriously. That being the case, there is no point in any controversy".

Shaikh wanted from the BJP-led MahaYuti government as to what is its stand on the Malhar certification for Jhatka mutton and chicken vendors.

It may be recalled that last year, Swatantryaveer Savarkar Rashtriya Smarak's Chairperson Ranjit Savarkar, the grandson of revolutionary freedom fighter Vinayak Damodar Savarkar had introduced "Om Certificatiobn" for Hindu

At that time, Ranjit Savarkar had said: 'Today, efforts are being made to expand religious influence through the 'Halal certification.' In response, the Swatantryaveer Savarkar Rashtriya Smarak has introduced the 'Om certification.' This certification is essential for Hindu traders operating in or around temples".

J and K police launch search operations after civilian deaths



PIONEER PHOTO

MOHIT KANDHARI Jammu

ven after performing the last rites of all three deceased civilians, whose dead bodies were recovered near a waterfall in the upper reaches of Lohai Malhar area of Billawar in Kathua district on Saturday, no major headway has been achieved in identifying the perpetrators behind their 'targeted killing'.

On their part the security forces are conducting relentless search operations to trackdown the footprints of terrorists who may have targeted them as per their sinister gameplan to spread fresh wave of terror in the 'Jammu hills'.

Meanwhile, high alert has been sounded along the border belt of Jammu frontier after Border Security Force (BSF) troops spotted suspected movement along the International Border in the Samba district and opened fire to prevent an infiltration bid late Monday night. The incident took place in the Ghagwal area, where multiple rounds were fired by BSF

According to official sources, at approximately 1 AM, a sentry of BSF, under the jurisdiction of Ghagwal Police Station, observed suspicious movement near the border. In response, the sentry fired multiple rounds towards the suspected direction.

Following the incident, a search operation has been launched in the area to ensure there is no security breach. Senior BSF officials, including DIG BSF, visited the area to assess the situation.

In Rajbagh area of Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir police have lalso launched a special drive to trace two youngsters missing since February 27, 2025.

According to a police spokesman, two boys Deen alias Dinu (15) and his relative Rehmat Ali (12) had gone missing on February 27 after they stepped out to graze their cattle at Bhamberwan. Police have constituted teams to trace the boys and their photos are being circulated to gather clues.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Shiv Kumar Sharma has directed police officers to liaise with other districts, deras, and the relatives of the two boys in Punjab, Jammu, and Udhampur to trace the missing boys.

The DIG met with the families of the missing boys and assured them that all possible measures would be taken to

Three Bangladeshis detained for in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

elhi Police have detained three unauthorised Bangladeshi immigrants residing in the outskirts of the national capital, an official said on

"As part of the special drive, three Bangladeshi nationals were recently apprehended by the Foreigner Cell for reentering India illegally after deportation," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Sachin Sharma said.

The officer further said that the initiative follows instructions from the Delhi Commissioner of Police to bolster security and curb unlawful activities linked to unauthorised immigration.

On March 10, a tip-off led police teams to conduct raids in multiple areas, including PVC Market Mundka, Baba Haridas Colony, Sultan Puri, Beniwal Loha Mandi, Indra Jheel, and Hanuman Mandir Kamruddin Nagar, said the

Over 833 individuals were checked, and 267 were marked as suspicious. Among them, 174 claimed to be from West Bengal and 93 from Assam, with verification efforts still underway. "Police received a tip-off about a covert group of illegal immigrants seeking shelter in Peeragarhi camp.

A team from the Foreigner Cell intercepted three people moving discreetly

BJP defends President's rule in Manipur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

he BJP on Tuesday defended the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur, saying the decision was not forced on the state but was taken out of compulsion.

Initiating a combined debate in the supplemen demands for grants, excess grants and the Manipur budget for the BJP, party leader Biplab Deb also said Manipur and other northeastern states have seen infrastructure push in the last 10 vears after the Narendra Modi government came to power at the Centre.

He said Manipur has seen creation of

rail and road infrastructure which did not happen in the last several decades.

Deb asserted that now people from rest of India can identify each northeastern state which was not the case in

He said central rule in Manipur was not forced but was imposed out of combe convened within the prescribed time and constitutional provisions

The former Tripura chief minister said 75 per cent of the areas in the Northeast are now not covered under the provisions of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA).

Delhi Health Minister conducts surprise inspection



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

n an effort to streamline functioning of the healthcare system Delhi Health Minister, Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh conducted a surprise inspection of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, Rohini on Tuesday. During the visit, the Health Minister interacted with doctors, nursing staff, ground workers, and patients to assess the healthcare facility and underlined key areas for improvement.

Grievance Helpline number. Singh also ured all stakeholders that sig changes would be implemented within the next 15 days to enhance patient care, increase the availability of doctors, and improve the hospital's sanitation and cleanliness. The minister also reviewed various concerns such as staff shortages, inadequate sanitation, and delays in medical services. Addressing the shortage of doctors in hospitals, he assured hospital authorities of filling the vacant posts on a priority basis. He also visited the emergency services in the hospital wherein he interacted with the attendants and doctors. Taking cognizance of the matter, the minister instructed to expeditiously address shortcomings such as medicine shortages, and overcrowding in wards.

He assured improvements in laboratory and healthcare facilities across various departments of the hospital. "Negligence He assured the setting up of a Patient in patient care will not be tolerated. Hygiene and cleanliness remain our top urged hospital staff to maintain a sympathetic and cordial approach in their interactions with patients.

The Minister concluded his visit by reiterating the government's commitment to strengthening Delhi's healthcare infrastructure and ensuring quality medical care for all citizens.

Lok Sabha breaks for Holi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

he Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will not have their sitting on March 13, the eve of Holi, following a decision taken by the business advisory committees of both Houses on the matter.

The two houses have already declared a holiday on March 14.

According to a bulletin issued by the Rajya Sabha secretariat, members have been informed that as unanimously decid-

ed in the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee and announced in the House, the sitting of the Rajya Sabha fixed for Thursday, March 13 has been cancelled. "Accordingly, there will be no sitting of the House on that day," the bulletin further

The Business Advisory Committee of the Lok Sabha has also decided to cancel the House's sitting on March 13. It recommended that the Lok Sabha sit on Saturday, March 29, to compensate for the loss.

JU violence: Police record Education minister's statement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Police have recorded the statement of West Bengal Education minister Bratva Bassuin connection Bratya Basu in connection with the FIR lodged against him in the recent incident of violence at Jadavpur University, a senior officer said on Tuesday.

"The minister was asked about the entire

incident. How he was attacked, and other details. The minister's statement has been recorded," the officer said.

Police have lodged an FIR against Basu, JU professor and TMC leader Om Prakash Mishra and others in connection with the violence at the JU on the basis of a complaint by a student of Jadavpur University Indranuj Roy who had suffered injuries during the incident on

The police officers had earlier spoken to Basu's driver, Rehan Molla and Mishra.

Election commission goes beyond polls to engage

from >> P1 The EC said that all concerns including EPIC number, duplicate, shifted and dead voters, and illegal migrants will be resolved by each level officer and concerned election registration officer.

In a statement, the EC said it has invited suggestions from all national and state political parties by April 30 for "any unresolved issues" at the level of electoral registration officers, district election officers and chief electoral officers.

In individual letters issued to political parties Tuesday, the Commission also suggested an interaction with party presidents and senior members "at a mutually convenient time, to further strengthen electoral processes in accordance with the established law".

Earlier, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar instructed CEOs, DEOs, and EROs of all states and union territo-

ries to hold regular interactions with political parties. They are required to resolve suggestions received in these meetings within the existing legal framework and submit an action-taken report to the Commission by March 31.

As key stakeholders, political parties are among the 28 stakeholders identified by the Commission, as per the Constitution and statutory framework covering all aspects of electoral processes, the statement read.

The EC said that political parties are one of the key stakeholders amongst 28 stakeholders identified by the Commission as per the Constitution and statutory framework covering all aspects of electoral processes.

During an EC conference last week, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar had instructed CEOs, DEOs and EROs of all states to hold regular interactions with political parties, resolve any suggestions received in such meetings strictly within the legal framework already in place and submit an action taken report by March 31.

The Commission had also urged political parties to pro-actively use this mechanism of decentralised engagement. Political parties are one of the key stakeholders among 28 identified by it.

The issue of duplicate numbers has also found echo in Parliament with Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanding a discussion in the House on the issue of voter lists on which several political parties have raised certain questions. Meanwhile, a delegation of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) met the EC on Tuesday and suggested an independent audit of the poll process and monitoring by citizens in the wake of allegations of irregularities levelled by the opposition parties.

Airtel partners Musk for highspeed internet services

plement and enhance Airtel's suite of products to ensure reliable and affordable broadband for our Indian customers -

explore offering Starlink equipment at Airtel's retail stores, Starlink services via Airtel to business customers, opportunities to connect communities, schools, and health centres, among many others, in even the most distant rural parts of India. Airtel and SpaceX will also explore how Starlink could help expand and enhance the Airtel network, as well as SpaceX's ability to utilise and benefit from Airtel's

ground network infrastructure and other capabilities in India, the statement said. Gwynne Shotwell, President and Chief Operating Officer of SpaceX, said the

team at Airtel played a pivotal role in India's telecom story, so SpaceX working with them to complement its direct offering makes great sense for the business. We are excited to work with Airtel and unlock the transformative impact Starlink

US deports senior Pakistan diplomat

ed from >> P1 Given the seriousness of the situation, Wagan is likely to be called back to Islamabad to explain his position,

The incident has already been communicated to Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Foreign Secretary Aamna Baloch who were reportedly briefed on the matter. The Foreign Ministry has, meanwhile, directed its Consulate in Los Angeles to investigate the case, sources said.

Ukraine-US talk in Saudi Arabia

ed from >> P1 Rubio said the rare earths and critical minerals deal could be signed during the meeting but stressed it was not a precondition for the United States to move ahead with discussions with either Ukraine or the Russians.

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

The Kremlin has not publicly offered any concessions. Russia has said it's ready to cease hostilities on condition that Ukraine drops its bid to join NATO and recognises regions that Moscow occupies as Russian. Russia has captured nearly a fifth of Ukraine's territory since the war

Russian forces have held the battlefield momentum for more than a year, though at a high cost in infantry and armour, and are pushing at selected points along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, especially in the eastern Donetsk region, against Ukraine's understrength and weary army. Ukraine has invested heavily in developing its arms industry, especially high-tech drones that have reached deep into Russia.

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

Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said over 70 drones targeted the Russian capital and were shot down as they were flying toward it - the biggest single attack on Moscow so far in the war.

The governor of the Moscow region surrounding the capital, Andrei Vorobyov, said the attack damaged several residential buildings and a number of cars.

Another person was wounded on a highway in the Lipetsk region, Gov. Igor Artamonov said.

Sobyanin said the roof of a building in

Moscow also sustained damage, which he

described as "insignificant". Footage of the building, published by RIA Novosti, showed a charred spot on the facade of a multi-story residential building near the roof, with bits of the

building's lining stripped off. Flights were temporarily restricted in and out of six airports, including Domodedovo, Vnukovo, Sheremetyevo and Zhukovsky just outside Moscow, and airports in the Yaroslavl and Nizhny Novgorod regions.

ed from >> P1 "Starlink will comwherever they live and work," he added.

Under the pact, Airtel and SpaceX will

can bring to the people of India. We are constantly amazed by the incredible and inspiring things that people, businesses and organizations do when they are connected via Starlink," Gwynne Shotwell

After Ganga, Yamuna to host cruises

Continued from >> P1 The same month, the IWAI also issued an expression of interest (EOI) for the operation of a ferry service between Sonia Vihar and Wazirabad barrage (eight km). The project involves developing high-density polyethylene jetties with shore facility for embarking and disembarking of passengers and tourists. The plan is to use non-polluting solar or electric hybrid cruise boats with provisions of seating capacity of 20-30 people and maximum draft requirement of 1.2m with a speed of 5-7 knots. It also involved navigation aids for safe vessel movements and shore-charging stations for cruise

The idea to operate the service on a section of the Yamuna was first floated in 2016 when the IWAI moved the National Green Tribunal for its nod. The Centre's plan was to launch and operate a water taxi from Delhi's Wazirabad barrage to Fatehpur Jat in Uttar Pradesh. The 16-km distance is expected to be covered by the water taxi in about 45 minutes.

under the Yamuna Water Taxi project (YWTP) for boat services between Sonia Vihar, Jagatpur and Tronica city (Ghaziabad). A letter was written by the IWAI to the Delhi government seeking permission to use land on lease for terminal facilities in Sonia Vihar.

In 2019, the Delhi government's irrigation and flood control (I&FC) department gave its nod to the IWAI to use a shank at Sonia Vihar for the project. However, last year, the department informed NGT that it is yet to receive an affidavit and an indemnity bond from the IWAI, even as it sent two reminders post its NOC in 2019 - one in 2021 and another in 2024.

According to the MoU, IWAI will provide infrastructure facilities consisting of floating jetties and available design details for onshore side development; Passenger safety, fire-fighting requirement, and services of emergency responses etc'; Developing shore side facility including setting up of charging station for solar/ Paper work started in December 2018 electric hybrid boats and undertaking any

study/ reports, hydrographic survey and installation of navigational aids. The DDA will provide land for shore side facility in consultation with IWAI and last mile connectivity for passengers/ tourists. DJB will provide guidelines for permissible activities / water quality restrictions and monitoring water quality in view of the intake point for their plant being in vicinity, etc and management of Barrage for availability of navigable depth in the project stretch. The Irrigation and Flood will undertake maintenance of the embankments and provide permission to use the spur approach road to access the berthing Expanding its reach across India-from

Arunachal to Gujarat and J&K to Kerala-IWAI is enhancing NW 1, NW 2, NW 3, and NW 16 with new IWT terminals, fairways, night navigation aids, and locks. Emphasising sustainability under the "Harit Nauka Guidelines," the Authority has introduced electric catamarans in Varanasi and Ayodhya, with six more set

WORLD 09

Ukrainian launches biggest drone attack on Russia in three years

Russian air defences shoot down 337 drones over 10 regions

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Moscow

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

AP/PT

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

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

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

Flights have been temporarily restrict-

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

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

Novgorod regions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UK fears environmental damage as ships burn after North Sea collision

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Londo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The company said it was unclear how much fuel had leaked into the sea.

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

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

Énvironmentalists said oil and chemicals posed a risk to sea life including whales and dolphins and to birds, including puffins, gannets and guillemots that live on coastal cliffs.

Tom Webb, senior lecturer in marine ecology and conservation at the University of Sheffield, said wildlife along that stretch of coast "is of immense biological, cultural and economic importance".

"In addition to the wealth of marine life that is present all year round, this time of the year is crucial for many migratory species," he said.

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Brussels

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

At a summit last week, the EU's 27

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

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

Pope Francis woke up Tuesday to good news from his doctors: They

upgraded his prognosis and say he is no

longer in imminent danger of death as a

result of the double pneumonia that has

kept him hospitalized for nearly a month

in the longest and gravest threat to his

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

woods yet, however. Doctors are still

cautious and have decided to keep him

hospitalised for several more days to

receive treatment, not to mention a

period of rehabilitation he will likely

But the doctors said he remains stable

and has consolidated improvements in

recent days, according to blood tests and

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Rome

12-year papacy.

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

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

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

Pope no longer in immediate danger, says doctors

help him breathe.

day and a ventilation mask at night to

said Francis woke up around 8 am after a

quiet night. The Argentine Jesuit has

regularly been sleeping in while at

Gemelli hospital, given his usual wakeup

Late Monday, doctors lifted their

"guarded" prognosis for the pope,

meaning they determined he was no

longer in imminent danger as a result of

the original respiratory infection he

arrived with on Feb. 14. But their caution

remained, given Francis' fragility and

clinical picture and the important

infectious picture presented on

"In view of the complexity of the

risks of other complications.

time at the Vatican is around 4:30 am.

In an early update Tuesday, the Vatican

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

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

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

In a sign of his improved health,

Francis followed the Vatican's weeklong

spiritual retreat via videoconference on

Monday in both the morning and

afternoon sessions, something he was

likely to continue to do through the

kicks off the Catholic Church's solemn

Lenten season leading to Easter,

continues through Friday. The Vatican

has said Francis would participate "in

spiritual communion" with the rest of the

Roberto Pasolini, preacher of the papal

household, but the priests, bishops,

cardinals and nuns gathered for the

retreat in the Vatican auditorium could

Francis could see and hear the Rev.

The retreat, an annual gathering that

Vatican statement said.

hierarchy, from afar.

using supplemental oxygen during the hospital setting for additional days," the

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

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

Curtains came down on the week-long annual session of the National People's

annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC) on Tuesday as about 3,000 lawmakers much on the expected lines endorsed the government work report, the budget, besides the 2025 plan for national economic and social development.

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

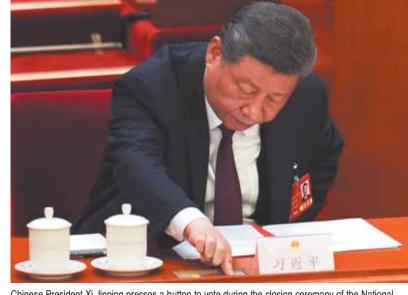
However, it was officially clarified Zhao, 68, was absent because of "respiratory tract infection".

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

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

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

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



Chinese President Xi Jinping presses a button to vote during the closing ceremony of the National People's Congress held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday.

AP/I

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

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

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

eport. The annual event also serves as a platorm for party and government bosses to

form for party and government bosses to hear the views of Chinese elites outside the party regarding China's most pressing issues. The parliamentary session also ended on

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

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

Indian student goes missing in Dominican Republic

his good response to treatment. Francis, admission, it will be necessary to

who has chronic lung disease, is still continue medical drug therapy in a

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

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

Sudiksha Konanki is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States. A student at the University of Pittsburgh, Konanki was vacationing with five female college friends at a resort in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, when she went miss-

Sheriff's Office said in a statement Monday.

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

ing on March 6, the Loudoun County

Konanki was on a spring break trip in Punta Cana and was last seen in the early morning of March 6

morning of March 6.

"The ongoing investigation includes wideranging search efforts, along with a review of surveillance video and telephone records. Interviews are also continuing with anyone

who may have seen or been with Konanki before she went missing," the LCSO statement said. The statement said the LCSO has filed for a Yellow Notice (worldwide police alert for a missing person) to be issued by INTERPOL.

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

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

The LCSO said it is hopeful for Konanki's safe return and "we are committed to supporting this investigation and her family in every way possible".

The LCSO is working closely with federal partners at the US Department of State, FBI, DEA, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and the University of Pittsburgh Police concerning the ongoing investigation by the Dominican National Police.

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

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

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

"Ambassador KK Wagan was deported

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

The officials forced him to return to

his last port of departure, raising concerns about diplomatic protocol and the nature of the decision.

Foreign Office confirmed the envoy

had gone to the US on a private visit. It said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was looking into the matter and an investigation was underway. The Foreign Office also advised

avoiding any speculation in the matter. Earlier, sources said the US immigration system flagged Wagan over "controversial visa references", leading to his immediate deportation.

Former Philippine leader Duterte held on International Criminal Court warrant

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Manila

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

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

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

Duterte withdrew the Philippines in 2019 from the Rome Statute in a move human rights activists say was aimed at escaping accountability over the killings.

The Duterte administration moved to suspend the global court's investigation in late 2021 by arguing that Philippine authorities were already looking into the countries are unwilling or unable to proceed the global court's investigation in national crimes, including genocide, crimes and crimes against humanity.



same allegations, arguing the ICC - a court of last resort - didn't have jurisdiction.

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

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

But the Marcos administration has said

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

IndusInd Bank stock tanks 23 per cent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

- SUMANT KATHPALIA

of about 2.35 per cent of the bank's net worth as of December 2024 as per its internal review. Analysts peg the discrepancy at ₹2,100 crore in absolute terms. The bank has, in parallel, appointed an external agency to independently review and validate the internal findings. "The bank's profitability and capital adequacy remain healthy to absorb this one-time impact. The issue was identified by the bank. The bank has enough reserves and capital to manage this," Kathpalia said. Shares of IndusInd Bank nosedived 27.17 per cent to close at ₹655.95 on the BSE. During the day's trade,

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sensex settles almost flat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Mumbai

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

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

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

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

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

laggards in the Sensex pack. On the other hand, Sun Pharmaceuticals, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, HCL Technologies, Maruti Suzuki India, Larsen and Toubro, Reliance Industries, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Titan were the gainers. "Despite significant sell-offs in the US and other Asian markets driven by concerns

ongoing trade war, the domestic market is showing signs of a gradual recovery. "Its relatively lower volatility can be attributed to a moderation in valuations, following recent corrections, along with supportive factors like falling crude oil prices, an easing Dollar Index, and expectations of a rebound in domestic earnings," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

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

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

Analysts said that US President Donald Trump's flip-flop tariff policy and the high has started markets with benchmark indices tanking up to 4 per cent on Monday.

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

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

Total telephone subscribers stood at 1,187.15 million in November, according to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai).

Reliance Iio Infocomm was the frontrunner with 476.58 million broadband subscribers, followed by Bharti Airtel (289.31 million), and Vodafone Idea (126.38 million).

While urban telephone subscriptions rose from 659.87 million in November to 663.37 million in December, rural subscriptions fell from 527.27 million to 526.56 million during the same period.

1,150.66 million in December 2024, at Teleservices, who added 1,62,945 and a monthly growth rate of 0.17 per cent.

Wireless teledensity increased to 81.67 per cent at the end of December, against 81.59 per cent at the end of November.

Reliance Iio added 3.906.123 wireless subscribers, while Bharti Airtel saw a net addition of 1,033,009 subscribers during the period. Vodafone Idea lost 1,715,975 wireless subscribers, according to the data. BSNL and MTNL lost 316,599 and 896,988 wireless subscribers.

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

9,278 wireline subscribers, respectively. BSNL emerged as the biggest loser in the segment. The company lost 33,306 subscribers. BSNL's sister-concerned

MTNL lost 14,054 subscribers. Total broadband subscribers rose marginally from 944.76 million in November to 944.96 million in December, according to the data.

As of December 31, 2024, the top five broadband service providers who held over 98 per cent market share were Reliance Jio Infocomm (476.58 million subscribers), Bharti Airtel (289.31 million subscribers), Vodafone Idea (126.38 million subscribers), Bharat Sanchar Nigam (35.33 million subscribers), and Atria Convergence Technologies (2.27 million subscribers).

While Reliance Jio grabbed a 50.43 per cent market share, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea held 30.62 per cent and 13.37 per cent share of broadband ser-

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

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

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

The moves would facilitate ease of doing business and enable faster rights

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reliance Jio topped the charts, adding Wireless subscribers grew from 6,56,823 wireline subscribers. It was fol-1,148.65 million in November 2024 to lowed by Bharti Airtel and Tata vices at the end of December 2024.

Rupee recovers 10 paise against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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

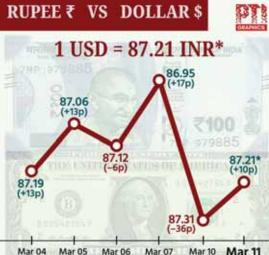
A volatile trend in domestic equity markets and foreign recession in the US and traderelated uncertainties restricted the recovery in the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign

exchange, the rupee opened lower at 87.37 and touched the day's low of 87.39 against the greenback in early trade. The unit later rebounded up to against the dollar, 10 paise higher com-

pared to its previous closing level. On Monday, the rupee crashed 36 paise to close at 87.31 against the

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, attributed the rupee's recovery to weak tone in the US dollar index and a decline in the US 10year treasury yields.

He said that weak crude oil prices and mixed-to-positive domestic markets



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

(Inverted Scale)

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

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

November 5. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 0.71 per cent higher at US 69.77 per barrel in futures trade, struggling to reclaim the crucial \$70-a-barrel

to the level seen on

Domestic equity markets settled almost flat with the 30share BSE Sensex falling marginally by 12.85 points, or 0.02 Nifty gaining slightly by 37.60 points, or 0.17 per cent, to close at 22,497.90.

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

On the global macroeconomic front, US President Donald Trump sought to downplay

business concerns over the uncertainty caused by his tariff moves and has not ruled out the possibility of a recession triggered by higher prices in the coun-Meanwhile, China has retaliated

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

over an economic slowdown caused by the **INDIAWOOD 2025 Concludes** at India Expo **Mart and Centre**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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



YELO hosts women achievers awards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

India's legendary artists, Arpana Caur, Madhavi Parekh, and Anjoli Ela Menon, honoring their immense contributions

Hindustan Zinc signs PDA with Serentica Renewables

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

This landmark agreement marks a fun-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maradona medics face homicide trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Buenos Aires

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who is on trial?

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

he absence of star para athletes like

came as a dampener as India began its

campaign in the three-day World Para

Athletics Grand Prix on a sedate note here

With the Para Athletics World

Grand Prix because "they are training as

on Tuesday.

javelin thrower Sumit Antil and dis-

cus exponent Yogesh Kathuniya



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

Psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov had prescribed Maradona's medications. There was no alcohol or illegal drugs detected in the toxicology test performed after Maradona's death. But the report said Maradona had psychotropic drugs for anxiety and depression in his system when he died. The five other defendants this week include: Carlos Diaz, an addiction specialist who had overseen Maradona's treatment for alcohol dependency; Nancy Forlini, a doctor who had helped manage Maradona's home care; Mariano Perroni, a nursing coordinator; Ricardo Almirón, another nurse who tended to the former athlete and Pedro Pablo Di Spagna, a clinical physician.

A third nurse, Gisela Dahiana Madrid, has asked to be tried separately by jury at

a later date. The prosecutor's office assembled a medical board made up of a dozen experts — including forensic doctors, cardiologists, psychiatrists and toxicologists — to see if there was evidence of Maradona's medics committing culpa-

ble homicide. In an explosive 2021 report, the board accused the soccer star's medical team of acting in an "inappropriate, deficient and reckless manner." "The home confinement did not comply with norms and protocols," the report said.

The experts also questioned why Maradona had been released so soon from the hospital after his operation when he was unable to care for himself and had limited or no access to critical medical devices, like an oxygen tube and a defibrillator, which administers an electric shock to restore heart rhythm.

The team's failure to properly monitor Maradona contributed to his death, the panel determined, describing his treatment as beset by "deficiencies and irregularities." For instance, the report said,

medics overlooked Maradona's "unusual body swelling," a sign of possible heart failure. Maradona agonised for more than 12 hours before his heart attack, the panel added. Exacerbating concerns, Maradona had not undergone any heart or lab tests in the two weeks leading to his

To make its case, the prosecution will present more than 120,000 messages and audio recordings from private conversations between doctors and others involved in Maradona's care.

All eight medical professionals deny any wrongdoing. They described Maradona as a difficult patient who resisted treatment. "The death occurred unexpectedly, suddenly, during sleeping hours, without offering us any time," said Luque, the neurologist. In response to the damning medical panel report, the defense commissioned its own forensic study to support its claim that Maradona's death "was sudden and without agony."

Luque stressed that it was Maradona himself who insisted on home-hospitalization. Maradona secluded himself during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, as his chronic health problems made him more vulnerable to becoming infected and more likely to become severely ill.

The isolation unleashed depression and anxiety for the superstar in early 2020, according to hundreds of pages of court documents reviewed by The Associated Press. Maradona turned to alcohol, a vice that had long played a role in his troubled

As Maradona's trusted doctor, Luque conducted a series of medical tests and discovered a subdural hematoma, or bleeding around the brain. After receiving emergency surgery, Maradona left the hospital and headed to a rented home near his older daughters. Doctors encouraged him to pursue treatment for his alcoholism at a clinic, but Maradona would accept nothing but outpatient care.



Injured Neymar criticised for missing semifinal with Santos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sao Paulo

eymar's justification for missing a semifinal with Santos was criticised because he was seen at Carnival last week. Santos lost to archrival Corinthians 2-1 on Sunday in the semifinals of the Sao Paulo state championship, and Neymar sat on the bench for all 90 minutes. On Monday, he said he had a minor injury without elaborating.

Days earlier, the striker was pho-

tographed at Rio de Janeiro's Sambadrome, the venue for the glitzy Carnival parade.

Neymar, who rejoined his boyhood club Santos in January, attended the Carnival parade only hours after being substituted in the second half of another Sao Paulo state championship match on March 2 because of an apparent left thigh injury.

He recently recovered from an ACL tear that sidelined him for more than one year. Santos did not reveal Neymar had any injuries before Sunday's semifinal.

"All I wanted was to be on the pitch and help my teammates in some way," Neymar said on Instagram. "But last Thursday I felt a discomfort that prevented me from being on the pitch. We took a test this morning and I ended up feeling it again."

Santos coach Pedro Caixinha said he asked Neymar to stay on the bench despite the injury.

"Ît was just a discomfort, but it meant he couldn't participate. It was my request and he agreed to be with the squad," Caixinha said in a news conference after his team's elimination. "He's a different player, he is enlightened and has fantastic energy. Neymar suffered a lot for not being able to participate in the game."

Still, many pundits accused Neymar of not focusing on his career, which he is trying to revive at the Brazilian club following spells at Barcelona, Paris SaintGermain and Al-Hilal.

"He chose Carnival over the semifinal," popular pundit Walter Casagrande Jr Said on his social media channels. "Neymar's behavior of the last five, six years has come back. He switches the professional side for pleasure and fun."

Santos president Marcelo Texeira told local media that Neymar was examined several times from Friday to Sunday and all of them showed he was unfit to play against Corinthians.

"It is a precaution, we understood we shouldn't (play him)," Teixeira said. "It is not about the national team, it is because he had not conditions (to play). He is in a process of recovery. We need to understand that."

Spanish newspaper Marca described the Brazilian player's week as "Neymar's saddest Carnival after being tossed by Barcelona; on the bench and knocked out."

Later, amid the heavy criticism against its star player, Santos published a video of a tearful Neymar talking to his teammates in the dressing room before the semifinal.

"It is very hard to be out in moments like this. I am trying to control myself in every way, not show the sadness I am feeling," the striker said. "If you can, run for me. I wish I could be with you, running for each of you. You don't know how desperate I am in my heart."

The 33-year-old striker has three goals and three assists in seven matches for Santos since his return. Those stats convinced Brazil coach Dorival Jr. To recall him for World Cup qualifiers this month against Colombia and Argentina.

Neymar's next match for Santos is likely on March 29, after the international window, in the opening round of the Brazilian league against Vasco da Gama. Santos was promoted to the country's top league after its 2023 relegation.

president and two-time gold-medallist **Kush Maini** promoted to reserve driver's role at Alpine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Formula 1

ndia's Kush Maini was on Tuesday promoted to the reserve driver's role at the Alpine Formula 1 team ahead of the season opener in Melbourne on March 16.

Maini competes in the Formula 2, a feeder series to Formula 1. The 24-yearold from Bengaluru joined Alpine's junior driver program in October 2023 and now joins Franco Colapinto, Paul Aron and Ryo Hirakawa in the pool of reserve drivers of the F1 team. "Maini's duties will involve offering valuable support to the team's car development and set-up objectives using the driver-in-loop simulator at Enstone, as well as participating in its TPC (testing of previous cars) Programme aimed at improving skills at the wheel of a contemporary, modern Formula One car," said Alpine in a statement. For the majority of Formula 1's 75-year-old history, teams would have only one reserve driver but that trend has changed of late with multiple drivers performing that role.

For Maini, the development comes as a big boost as he aims to become the third Indian to compete in Formula 1 after Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok.

The Indian racer will represent DAMS in his third Formula 2 season which is run concurrently on select Formula 1 weekends. He finished 11th and 13th in drivers' standing in 2023 and 2024, totalling five podiums including a victory in Hungary.

"Since joining the Alpine Academy ahead of last year, I have been incredibly welcomed in the entire Alpine family and I am thankful to Flavio and Oliver for their continued support.

"I am looking forward to getting more track time in Formula One machinery in this role and to build on what I have already learned with the team in 2024. "I'm very excited to begin the role as soon as possible but for now my focus is on my third season in Formula 2 kicking off this weekend in Australia," said Maini. Alpine Academy director Julian Rouse said Maini's performance during testing of previous cars was impressive.

"Kush has impressed the team across his TPC performances and Formula 2 results whilst we have been working with him and we expect he will continue to do so in 2025.

Devendra Jhajharia. In the absence of several Indian and foreign para athletes, who had initially con-

javelin thrower at the Paralympic Games

firmed their participation but pulled out for various reasons, there were several events where the participation was a bare minimum -- in some disciplines just one athlete participated.

The men's high jump T42 final — for those with single above the knee ampu-Championships scheduled in September, several top Indian athletes are missing the tations or a disability that is comparable saw just one athlete, Ramsingbhai per their international schedule", said Gobindbhai Padhiyar, competing and taking the top spot. Three others — Lokesh Mantra, Shailesh Kumar and Paralympic Committee of India (PCI)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Karachi

n a stunning development, the Pakistan

cost-cutting measures including slash-

ing the match fees of players in domestic

cricket, raising questions about the finan-

cial health of the sport's apex body in the

The PCB has reduced the match fees of

cricketers participating in the upcoming

National T20 Championship from 100,000

rupees per match to 10,000 per match with

reserve players getting 5000 per match.

The reduction in match fees has caused

concern among players and the board is

also considering spending less on devel-

opment of domestic cricket. According to

sources, the head of domestic cricket in

the PCB, Abdullah Khurrum Niazi, has

been "reducing facilities" for domestic

players in the last few months. "The play-

ers who were first being offered accom-

The tournament begins on March 14.

Cricket Board (PCB) has resorted to

Varun Singh Bhati — pulled out.

World Para Athletics Grand Prix off to a sedate start

PCB slashes match fees

in domestic cricket

In men's javelin throw (F33, F34) — for those with a moderately affected movement and coordination across the whole body, or affecting part of the body which affect their movement to a high degree in the legs — only two para athletes took part with Uzbekistan's Oybek Egamnazarov emerging on top with a best throw of 18.05m. India's Devershee Sachan came in second with a best of 11.34m.

In men's 100m (T11, T12) sprint near-total visual impairment — Brazil's Joeferson Marinho de Oliveira won the gold clocking 11.17 seconds, while Vishnu (12.39 sec) and Pragadeeshwara Raja

modation at five-star and four-star hotels

are now being offered cheaper accommo-

dation. Air travel has also been reduced

payments from last season are yet to be

Additionally, the PCB is yet to imple-

ment an annual pension increase for for-

board policy. The irony, according to one

source, is that while match fees for play-

ers are being reduced, officials taking these

decisions are getting monthly salaries

The PCB at the same time is also pay-

ing hefty monthly salaries to national

selectors and even mentors appointed with

five teams for the just-concluded

Champions Cup. Mentors Misbah ul

Haq, Waqar Younis, Shoaib Malik, Sarfaraz

Ahmed and Saqlain Mushtaq, on two-year

contracts, are said to be paid around 5

million per month.

mer Test cricketers, as mandated by

Another source said that outstanding

for them besides fees," a source said.

cleared for players and umpires.

Moorthy (12.94 sec) of India finished second and third in a three-man field. Another Indian, Ramanjee did not start.

"If I look at it from the point of an athlete, this is a very big tournament," said Ihaiharia, one of the legends of Indian para games. "Every athlete has a dream of playing for the country and that has been materialised."

"As a PCI president, I am happy that we have been able to organise such a great event in the country. This will benefit our athletes as we will be hosting the Worlds in September, so we have got the opportunity to conduct a major event before

Newcastle warmed up for **English League Cup final**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

ewcastle warmed up for the English League Cup final by laboring past West Ham 1-0 in the Premier League on Monday.

Saudi-owned Newcastle will return to London to face Liverpool at Wembley on Sunday, seeking its first domestic trophy since the 1955 FA Cup.

However, Eddie Howe's men will doubtlessly need more penetration if they are to beat an in-form Liverpool.

Newcastle rose three places into sixth in the Premier League but it was a lackluster performance in a stuffy encounter that provided few moments of excitement. The only goal came from Bruno Guimaraes in the 63rd minute. Harvey Barnes lofted a ball into the six-yard box and the Newcastle captain got the slightest of touches to take it past the

Guimaraes said all focus will turn to Wembley as Newcastle prepares for a potentially historic occasion. "It is massive for the club's history and

we want to be part of it," the Brazilian said. "We know we're going to play against one of the best teams. "I believe that we can win. In a final

anything can happen. I believe our fans can make the difference for us. We want to make history for this club. It is a long time for the fans without a trophy."

West Ham, meanwhile, lamented a loss that robbed it of its first hat trick of wins since December 2023. It sits 16th in the 20-team Premier League.

'We started both halves very well, it was a tight game, and we're disappointed with the goal," Hammers boss Graham Potter said. "I felt for the players because they gave everything — not enough to win the game but enough to get something from it.

Prannoy bowed out of All England **Championships**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Birmingham

ndia's HS Prannoy bowed out of the All England Championships on ■Tuesday, suffering a straight-game defeat to France's Toma Junior Popov in the men's singles opening round.

On a comeback trail, Prannoy, a bronze medallist at the 2023 World Championships and Asian Games, fought for 53 minutes before going down 19-21, 16-21 to Popov, who is currently ranked 17th in the world.

The 32-year-old, ranked 29th, had his chances in the opening game, leading 6-1 and 15-12, but faltered in the face of the relentless pressure of Popov, who turned the game around from 16-18 to 19-18 before taking the lead. Popov grew in confidence after the change of ends, moving from 5-3 to 13-9. Prannoy fought back to level at 13-13, but Popov surged ahead as the Indian crumbled.

Andrea Kimi Antonelli is Lewis Hamilton's successor at Mercedes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

ndrea Kimi Antonelli once hid in A a stack of tires to get through security and into the Formula 1 paddock. Now the 18-year-old Italian is Lewis Hamilton's successor at Mercedes. Antonelli is among F1's biggest intake of new drivers in years as top teams put some trust in youth. Six of the 20 drivers on the 2025 grid are starting their first full seasons in F1. Some could potentially compete for wins. Others already risk losing a hard-won F1 seat. An unexpectedly talented Formula 2 field last season came at a time when some F1 teams were keen to move on from older drivers like Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas. Switching in 2025 gives teams a chance to let youngsters gain experience before the F1 car design rules change radically for 2026.

Andrea Kimi Antonelli

Stepping into a seven-time champion's shoes at Mercedes puts the spotlight on Antonelli, who is set to become the third-youngest F1 driver ever. The Italian wants to be known as just "the next Mercedes driver" because of Hamilton's legacy. The first time Antonelli visited an F1 paddock was age eight in 2014 when



his father Marco — who ran a team in a support series — hid him in a stack of tires under an umbrella to get past security and into the German Grand Prix. "That was a really cool experience," he said last month. Antonelli had a stellar record in junior series and was sixth in F2 last year but a heavy crash in practice for Mercedes at Monza in August was a tough introduc-

Liam Lawson

The Red Bull driver is the odd man out in this list because he's taken part in 11 F1 races since 2023, though never a full season. He says he'll feel "more like a rookie" at the start of the season on tracks he hasn't raced before. Partnering four-time champion Max Verstappen as the replacement for Perez is a daunting task for Lawson, who knocked Verstappen out of qualifying in only his third F1 race in

needs to justify Red Bull's decision to elevate him over his 2024 teammate and former roommate Yuki Tsunoda, who outperformed Lawson over their six races together last year.

Oliver Bearman

It's less than a year since Bearman burst onto the scene in F1 with a combative seventh-place finish for Ferrari in Saudi Arabia while Carlos Sainz Jr Was sidelined because of surgery. He'd never previously raced in Jeddah and was racing with two days' notice. Bearman beat experienced teammate Nico Hülkenberg in two races for Haas later that year and is now a fulltime Haas driver for 2025. Bearman remains part of Ferrari's junior program but displacing regular Ferrari drivers Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc is unlikely any time soon.

Jack Doohan

The son of legendary motorcycle world champion Mick Doohan enters 2025 with his F1 career under threat as soon as it has begun. Alpine's decision to sign ex-Williams driver Franco Colapinto as reserve means a would-be replacement is available if Doohan doesn't impress team management. "You're always going to have Singapore in 2023. The New Zealander pressure on your shoulders because you're

in such a cut-throat sport," Doohan said. The Australian driver placed third in F2 in 2023 but didn't race at all last year until a surprise entry for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Finishing 15th, he was far off the pace of teammate Pierre Gasly in seventh.

Isack Hadjar

Lawson's promotion to Red Bull left an opening at its second team, now rebranded Racing Bulls, for F2 runner-up Hadjar. The French driver arrives at a team with a history of changing drivers mid-season if they don't perform. Even eight-time Grand Prix winner Daniel Ricciardo didn't last a full year there

Gabriel Bortoleto

Despite winning the F2 title last season, beating Hadjar, Antonelli and Bearman, Bortoleto's arrival in F1 has been overshadowed by his former rivals. That's partly because his new team Sauber struggled last year and is marking time before a full rebrand as the Audi works team in 2026. With a helmet design paying tribute to three-time champion Ayrton Senna, Bortoleto is F1's first full-time Brazilian

Sports ministry revokes suspension imposed on WFI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

he Sports Ministry has revoked the suspension imposed on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), ending the months of uncertainty surrounding the sport and paving the way for resumption of activities, including selection trials for the upcoming Asian Championship in

The ministry had suspended the WFI on December 24, 2023 for lapses in governance and procedural integrity by the new body, which was elected on December 21. It had asked IOA to form an ad-hoc panel to run the affairs of the

The Sanjay Singh-led body had announced the conduct of Under-15 and Under-20 National Championships in Nandini Nagar, Gonda — the stronghold of former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh — and the choice of venue irked the government since the former BJP MP was facing charges of sexual harassment.

The ministry, in its order issued on Monday, said that the WFI has taken compliant measures, so in larger interest of the sport and athletes, the ministry has decided to lift the suspension.

There were complaints that the WFI was still operating from the residence of Brij Bhushan, prompting the ministry to form a verification committee, which performed a spot inspection and found that the Federation had shifted its office to East Vinod Nagar in New Delhi.

The ministry was satisfied with the corrective measures taken and considering that not having a competent body in place will affect Indian wrestlers' medal chances at 2026 Asian Games and 2028 Olympic Games, it ended the suspension.

"I thank the government for taking this step. It will allow us to function smoothly. It was needed for the sake of the sport. The athletes were suffering for lack of ompetitions," Sanjay Singh said.

The ministry, though, has asked the WFI to follow certain directions, such as the Federation has to ensure that there is a balance of power among the elected office bearers, and it keeps itself disassociated from the suspended/terminated

It may be noted that Prem Chand Lochab, the new general secretary, was elected from the rival camp and the ministry's directive could be understood in that context.

I thank the government for taking this step. It will allow us to function smoothly. It was needed for the sake of the sport

undertaking in this regard within 4 weeks. Any violation of the undertaking will invite appropriate legal action, including the action under the Sports Code," the ministry said in its order.

It also said that the WFI must ensure that the selection for all international events should be done in a free, fair and transparent manner as per the extant provisions of the Sports Code and the other latest instructions issued in this regard along with regulations issued from timeto-time by the UWW (United World Wrestling).

The WFI president said there is nothing that can't be followed.

We have already shifted to a new office and soon we will call for an EC meeting and also issue a circular for the selection trials. We have no issues in following these instructions," he said.

The Asian Championship is scheduled to be held in Amman, Jordan from March 25. The Indian wrestlers missed out on "The EC of the WFI must give an competing in Ranking Series tourna-



ments in Zagreb and Albania due to the ministry's suspension and the court cases filed by prominent wrestlers Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Satyawart

The Indian wrestlers could have missed participation in the World Championship

also last year but after they protested outside the residence of Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, they were allowed

to participate. The wrestlers, who had led the protest against Brij Bhushan, had contended that the WFI did not have the authority to pick

national teams since it was suspended.

The court had directed the Indian Olympic Association to restore the ad-hoc panel for managing the WFI but the sports body had refused, saying UWW, the world governing body, recognises only the WFI and won't accept entries from the ad-

The UWW, which lifted its suspension on WFI on January 13, 2024, had threatened IOA to suspend WFI again if there was interference in its governance.

We are so relieved that this suspension has been lifted. There was a compete lull, the young wrestlers were suffering for no fault of theirs. They were missing tournaments, there was no national camp. The suspension should have been lifted long back," said a coach associated with a leading training centre in Haryana.

Vinesh, Bajrang and Sakshi Malik had accused Brij Bhushan of sexual abuse of junior wrestlers and held a long protest at Jantar Mantar. An FIR was lodged and the former BJP MP is facing a trial in the case.

Brij Bhushan has denied the charge. Vinesh later joined the Congress and won the Julana seat during the Haryana state elections last year. Bajrang was appointed chief of All India Kisan Congress (AIKC).

New Zealand rest T20 regulars for series against **Pakistan**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Wellington

ew Zealand have rested a majority of their T20 regulars for the home series against Pakistan with the IPL around the corner.

The series, comprising five T20Is, begins March 16 while the IPL begins March 22.

Michael Bracewell, who was one of the main performers for New Zealand in the Champions Trophy (CT), will lead the side

in the absence of Mitchell Santner. Besides Bracewell, six more players in the T20 squad featured in the 50-over Champions Trophy. New Zealand lost the final to India on Sunday.

Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra and white-ball captain Santner were unavailable for selection due to IPL commitments. Kyle Jamieson and Will O'Rourke have been included only for the first three games of the series, as the selectors seek to manage the workload of the pace bowlers returning from the Champions

Matt Henry, who finished as the leading wicket-taker in the tournament despite missing the final through injury, has been selected for games four and five, subject to further assessment once the ODI arrives home on Wednesda

Bevon Jacobs, who was part of the squad for the recent T20 series against Sri Lanka, was unavailable due to IPL commitments, while Kane Williamson wasn't considered for selection after making himself unavailable.

Selector Sam Wells said the Pakistan series was important for several reasons. "We're certainly starting to narrow our

sights on the ICC T20 World Cup in India next February and March," he said. "We made it clear in our planning and

communication with players that availability for that tournament and the build-up to it was required to be considered for this series against Pakistan.

"Half of this squad is only returning from the Champions Trophy on Wednesday and so we're going to need to manage those players really carefully," he

Focus on playing for country: Pant to budding cricketers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

ndia wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant feels the lure of the IPL is understandable but budding cricketers should always focus on playing for the country as "everything else" follows

Pant, who was part of India's triumphant Champions Trophy squad but did not get a game, made his internation-

"Since childhood, I had only one dream-to play for India. I never even thought about playing in the IPL. I think today, people are more focused on the IPL. Of course, it's a great platform, but I believe that if your goal is to play for your country, everything else-including the IPL-will eventually fall into place," Pant told JioHotstar.

"If you have that bigger mindset, success will follow. I always believed that I would play for India one day, and God has been kind. At 18, I got the opportunity to make my debut, and I am grateful for that," said the 27-year-old.



play and some of his trademark shots include a one-handed six with the bat often slipping out of his hands. He explained why that happens frequently.

mainly try to use my bottom hand for support because, at times, it starts dominating. So, I focus on gripping my top hand tightly," said Pant.

"But when I overreach—especially when the ball is too wide or too short—

it's not always in the ideal hitting zone. Sometimes, the shot I attempt may only have a 30-40 per cent success rate, but depending on the match situation, I'm willing to take that risk. That's my

"When I take that chance and overreach, I need to do something to maintain balance. At times, it may look like I'm throwing the bat, but in reality, I'm just trying to make the most of that delivery. If my bat slips, if it's not in my hand, or even if it hits my head—my only focus at that moment is finding the boundary."

Pant said being a gymnast in his younger days has also helped him as a

"I used to do gymnastics as a kid. My gymnastics coach always told me that it would come in handy in life.

"Basu Sir, our Indian team trainer, once told me in 2018-19, 'Thank you to your gymnastics coach because what he taught you in childhood is still benefiting you today.

I kept practicing hand springs, and it has played a huge role in my fitness for

PCB files formal complaint with ICC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA | Karachi

◄he Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is still waiting for a "formal clarification" from the ICC on the issue of not have their representative on stage for the closing ceremony of the Champions Trophy in Dubai.

India beat New Zealand by four wickets in the title clash on Sunday to win the tournament for the third time. We have filed a formal complaint with

the ICC as what happened is unacceptable to us," a PCB official said on Tuesday. The controversy erupted when Sumair Ahmed, who is the chief operating officer of the PCB and was also the tournament director of the Champions Trophy, was not invited on stage for the final presentation.

BCCI president Roger Binny presented the white jackets to India players and the medals to match officials, while ICC chairman Jay Shah handed the trophy to skipper Rohit Sharma and gave the medals

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia and New Zealand Cricket's CEO Roger Twose were also present on stage.

stage for the final presentation make no sense to us. We are waiting for a formal clarification/apology," the PCB official

'We are appalled by this blatant disreofficials after India's win.

'We want a full public clarification and an assurance that such biased and unjust treatment will not happen again or we will push this matter to the board of governors,"

nl for that," said the 27-year-old. "I think it mostly happens because I Pant is known for flamboyant style of hold my bottom hand very lightly. I Victorious Indian cricketers return home ahead of IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

he Indian cricketers, led by Rohit Sharma, have made a quiet return home following their triumph in the Champions Trophy (CT) in Dubai. After leading India to their second ICC title in nine months, skipper Rohit landed back in Mumbai on Monday night.

The squad members have got a week off before they join their respective IPL teams ahead of the tournament beginning March 22. "All the players with families left

from Dubai on Monday. There are some players who have stayed back for a couple of days," a BCCI source

With players preferring to rest ahead of the two-month-long IPL, the BCCI did not plan a felicitation for the team like it did when the squad returned from Barbados following the

win in the T20 World Cup. The players had also met Prime Minister from Barbados via a special flight back in July. Head coach Gautam Gambhir and pacer Harshit Rana landed in Delhi on Monday night. Superstar Virat Kohli had left the team hotel with wife Anushka Sharma right after the team returned from the Dubai International Stadium late on Sunday night.

Shreyas Iyer, who played a big role in the middle order, will captain Punjab Kings and will join the team on March 16. India beat New Zealand by four wickets to win their third Champions Trophy. They were the only unbeaten side in the eight-team tournament.

Though Pakistan were the tournament hosts, India played all their games in Dubai as per the agreed hybrid model.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Melbourne

under lights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground from March 11-15, 2027. Cricket Australia announced Tuesday that the historic match will be the first day-night men's test at the MCG.

downtown Melbourne hosted the first cricket test in 1877 and the centenary test between Australia and England in 1977. Australia won by a 45-run margin in both of those matches.

"The 150th anniversary test at the MCG England starting in November.

ated many iconic performances, including

Challenging two-year cycle to start for coach Gautam Gambhir with England tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA - New Delhi

eople who know Gautam Gambhir,

He loves wearing his denims for casual gatherings and it has not changed for years. But when it comes to cricket, his brain is always ticking and seeking solu-

took charge of the national team after Rahul Dravid ended his stint with the T20 World Cup triumph in July.

Nagar has witnessed some heartbreaking and baffling defeats as well as success. He has seen both ends of the spectrum with high of Champions Trophy (CT) and low of six Test losses.

The CT win has come like a breath of fresh air and 'Guru Gambhir' will get a chance to analyse the big picture as

sea-change in the next two crucial years. It won't be wrong to say that Gambhir has completed his probation period and will get into a phase where he would have three distinct challenges, starting with the Test tour of England.

That will be, as usual, right after the T20

spectacle known as IPL with no time for preparation. His second big challenge will be the

2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka where Suryakumar Yadav's men will be defending their title. And last but certainly not the least is

2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa, which will be a helluva challenge. If one segregates Gambhir's coaching

across formats, he has already built a fabulous core for the T20 team with Surya at the helm. Even as Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja walked into the sunset in shortest format, their absence was hard-

ly felt as the new brand of cricket that

India has been playing in T20 is earning

them fans globally.

When Varun Chakravarthy and Jasprit Bumrah would bowl during a global meet (World T20) those eight overs would be a nightmare for batters. Sanju Samson has found his mojo although Rishabh Pant will be around and so would be Yashasvi Jaiswal.

taker in Arshdeep Singh and at least three seam all-rounders in Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Shivam Dube.

Surya and Axar along with Hardik are old guards in this team. It is a team which

merge for results. Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have made it clear that they are not retiring from ODIs anytime soon. Retirement is an individual call and both have performed in Champions Trophy.

MCG to host a night match between Australia, England

डंडियन बेंक

Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg said. "It will also help ensure more people are able to attend and watch what will be a fantastic occasion. "The Centenary Test cre-David Hookes' five consecutive boundaries off Tony Greig, Rick McCosker batting with a broken jaw and Derek Randall's defiant century, and I'm sure the 150th test will create its own lifelong memories." Australia is hosting the 2025-26 Ashes series against

describe him as someone "boringly consistent", someone who has not even changed his eating pattern in the last 20 years An experiment is out of question.

tions to various strategic problems. It has been eight months since Gambhir

The man from Delhi's Old Rajinder

Indian cricket is expected to undergo a

He has unearthed a gem in Abhishek

There is a prolific powerplay wicket-

has all its bases covered and is running on auto-pilot with a tweak here and there. But it is the other two formats where

Gambhir, the strategist, the disciplinari-

an and the man-manager would have to

will be one of the great cricket events, and playing under lights will be a fantastic way to celebrate both our game's rich heritage and test cricket's modern evolution," Cricket

The famous stadium on the edge of

The reasons being given for not having our COO and tournament director on

gard for Pakistan's role as the host nation," the official said. He said the PCB had presence in Dubai for the presentation ceremony in advance and he also met and congratulated Jay Shah and some BCCI

"Giving explanations that ICC only invites CEO's, chairmen, vice-chairmen or secretaries for the ceremony is illogical.

Zonal Office Lucknow, New Building, 2nd Floor, Hazratganj, Lucknow-226001, Ph. 0522-2286272, 2287283, Fax: 0522-2288033, E-mail id: zolucknow@indianbank.co.in NOTICE OF SALE E-AUCTION Notice in intended sale under rule 8(6) of The Security Interest (Enforcement Rules) 2002 under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets

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Indian Bank

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