

Balochis take on Pak army

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi/ Islamabad

Security forces rescued 190 passengers from a hijacked train, killing 30 Baloch militants in Pakistan's restive Balochistan, as they continued to battle heavily-armed insurgents for a second day on Wednesday.

The Jaffar Express, carrying some 400 passengers in nine coaches, was going from Quetta to Peshawar when militants derailed it using explosives and hijacked it.

The Baloch Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack on Tuesday when they said they killed six soldiers. However, there has been no confirmation from the Pakistani authorities on casualties.

The security forces, including the military and frontier corps, are battling the militants who took control of the train near the mountainous terrain of Gudular and Piru Kunri in a tunnel 160 kilometres from Quetta.

The Balochistan government spokesman, Shahid Rind, said the operation would continue until all passengers were rescued. Rind said extra care was being taken by the security forces because of the hostage situation.

Officials said that some of the militants wearing vests loaded with explosives had formed groups of women and children and forced them to sit near them. Due to the presence of women and children with the suicide bombers, the operation was being conducted with utmost caution, they added.

A security source said that 30 militants had been killed so far in the clean-up and rescue operation, while 190 passengers have been rescued. Around 30 people who sustained injuries had been sent to hospitals. He said two drivers in the main engine and eight security personnel were killed during the operation.

This is the first time the BLA or any insurgent group in the Balochistan province have resorted to hijacking a passenger train, although in the last year, they have stepped up their attacks on securi-



A paramilitary soldier takes position at a railway station near the attack site of a passenger train by insurgents in Mushkaf in Bolan district of Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province. PTI

ty forces, installations and foreigners in different parts of the province.

The security source said it was not yet clear how many militants were involved in the attack, but some of them were using satellite phones to remain in touch with their handlers.

The Pakistan Railways have set up an emergency desk at the Peshawar and Quetta Railway stations as frantic relatives and friends try to get some information about their loved ones on the train. Pakistan Railways had resumed train services to Peshawar from Quetta after a suspension of more than a month and a half.

The Pakistan media earlier reported intense firing and explosion near the tunnel, where the militants hijacked the train.

The insurgents claimed that they freed women and children. However, their claim was contested by officials, with Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry saying the hostages were rescued by the security forces.

Rana Muhammad Dilwar, a district police officer in the area where the train was stopped, said the security forces had surrounded the area, but there were reports that the militants had taken some women and children as hostages.

There were around four to five government officials on the train, he added.

Tariq Mahmood, a senior official of Peshawar Railway Station, said that people should not pay heed to rumours on social media.

Balochistan has witnessed an uptick in terrorist attacks over the past year. 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 a half. A month later, 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-rich province.

BJP sweeps Haryana local polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chandigarh

TRIPLE ENGINED SARKAR

MUNICIPALITY	MAYOR
● Sonapat	Rajiv Jain (BJP)
● Gurugram	Raj Rani (BJP)
● Faridabad	Praveen Joshi (BJP)
● Hisar	Praveen Popli (BJP)
● Rohtak	Ram Avtar (BJP)
● Karnal	Renu Bala (BJP)
● Yamunanagar	Suman (BJP)
● Ambala	Shailja Sachdeva (BJP)
● Panipat	Komal Saini (BJP)
● Manesar	Inderjeet Yadav (Independ)

Less than six months after scoring a hat-trick of wins in Haryana Assembly elections, the ruling BJP swept the civic polls in the state on Wednesday, bagging nine of the 10 mayoral seats. In the outgoing municipal corporations, BJP had its mayors in seven civic bodies. Congress, which was looking to turn around its electoral fortunes after suffering a defeat in the 2024 Assembly polls, failed to open its account. The party lost in Sonapat, where it had its mayor, and Rohtak, considered a stronghold of its stalwart and former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Independent candidate Inderjeet Yadav was the only non-BJP nominee to win a mayoral seat. She was elected from Manesar, where municipal elections were held for the first time. Celebrations erupted in the BJP camp after the results, with party leaders in Chandigarh and many districts distributing sweets. There were early Holi festivities as jubilant BJP members applied 'gulaal' (colour) to each other.

After the results, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said people have put their stamp of approval on the works and policies of the BJP government and formed a "triple-

engine government" which will work at a fast pace to realise the resolve of "developed Haryana-developed India".

Polys to elect mayors and ward members in seven municipal corporations — Gurugram, Manesar, Faridabad, Hisar, Rohtak, Karnal and Yamunanagar — were held on March 2. The bypolls for the mayoral posts in Ambala and Sonapat and the elections for presidents and ward members in 21 municipal committees were also held that day.

The results have dealt another blow to the

Congress which saw workers and leaders in districts switching over to the BJP ahead of the elections. The party state unit has been, in the past, plagued with infighting and factionalism unlike the BJP, which has a well-organised and strong organisational structure at the grassroots level.

Saini said people have put their stamp of approval on the works and policies of the BJP government. The "triple engine government", a reference to the saffron party being in power at the Centre, in the state as well as in the civic bodies, will undertake development at three times fast pace to realise the resolve of a "Viksit Haryana-Viksit Bharat", he told reporters on the sidelines of the ongoing State Assembly session. "The results prove that people of Haryana want development and they have given their vote for good governance," Saini said.

In Manesar, Independent candidate Inderjeet Yadav defeated her nearest BJP rival Sunder Lal by a margin of 2,293 votes to become the corporation's first-ever mayor. Nikhil Madaan was the outgoing Sonapat mayor and a Congress leader. Ahead of the 2024 Assembly polls, he joined the BJP and won the Sonapat Assembly seat. Senior BJP leader Rajiv Jain won from Sonapat this time.

Delhi under reporting pollution: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Fine particulate matter could be absorbing moisture from Delhi's humid air during winters, which could result in an underestimation of the city's PM1 pollution by up to 20 per cent, according to a new study.

Researchers, including those from the University of Birmingham, UK, explained that the swelling of fine particulate matter by absorbing water from the humid air — hygroscopic growth — reduces the efficiency of sampling devices, possibly leading to underestimation.

The study, published in the journal NPJ Clean Air, "fills in the gap in the understanding of PM1 pollution in the most polluted megacity in the world."

New Delhi remained the world's most polluted capital city, according to the 2024 World Air Quality report by IQAir, a Swiss organisation.

PM1 particles, sized under a micron in diameter, are especially dangerous as they can penetrate lung tissue and enter the bloodstream, IQAir explains.

Study author Ying Chen, from the University of Birmingham, said, "When carrying out air quality assessments, it is crucial to consider hygroscopic growth and the potential for significant underestimation of pollution levels in humid conditions."

The greatest underestimates in pollution levels occur during the rush hours of winter mornings in December-January, when humidity is at its peak and pollution is

most severe, the researchers said. "The underestimate can be up to 20 per cent (or 50 micrograms per cubic meter) of PM1 concentration on average during humid winter morning rush hours," they wrote.

In contrast, pollution estimates during the monsoon season show negligible bias, as the swollen pollutant particles are washed out by heavy rainfall, the team added.

Controlling emissions from biomass burning and residential sources — which contain highly hygroscopic chlorine particles — could effectively improve air quality and reduce this bias, thereby helping improve how air quality is understood, the study suggested.

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Nitish Kumar gets a taste of Rabri from Tejashwi Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Patna

Bihar legislative Assembly on Wednesday witnessed an unprecedented spat between Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his predecessor Rabri Devi as the two septuagenarians engaged in a no-holds-barred attack against each other to be joined by an aggressive Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav. While Rabri accused the chief minister of having come to the House after consuming "bhang" (cannabis), Tejashwi, a former deputy CM under Nitish, demanded the resignation of the JDU leader whom he charged with "gesticulating at female legislators". Trouble began when Shashi

Nitish Kumar comes to the Assembly under the influence of bhang and misbehaves with women. Today, he has insulted me for the second time.

— RABRI DEVI, FORMER CM OF BIHAR

Yadav, an MLC of the CPI(ML), an RJD ally, rose in her chair to submit before the House that she was not satisfied with the government's reply to her question. Nitish Kumar, who is also a MLC, reacted and remarked the NDA government led by him is doing so much as compared to earlier governments which did nothing.

Rabri, the leader of the opposition in legislative council, intervened saying "You claim no work was done before you took over. Please summon the records of that period. You will understand better."

Nitish, who had demonstrated his quick temper before the House earlier this week, sprang to his feet and vehement-

ly began to reiterate his point. Rabri Devi reacted with the taunt, "According to you, women did not even wear clothes before 2005, when you became the chief minister." The allusion was to a faux pas made by the JD(U) president more than once in recent past, while trying to underscore his push for empowering women.

Bihar CM, however, dug in his heels, dismissed the charge by the opposition that he was disrespectful towards women. "Never before have women got so much of respect as they are getting now and pointed towards Rabri Devi with the remark, 'What did they do for women? Her husband made her the chief minister when he ran into trouble.'"

Notably, Rabri Devi first became the chief minister in 1997 when her husband Lalu Prasad, the RJD president, had to resign, following a CBI charge-sheet in the fodder scam. The heated exchange caused Chairman Awadhesh Narain Singh to rise and appeal to the opposition to let the House run.

However, the opposition led by Rabri Devi staged a walkout, even as Nitish continued with a brief monologue, accusing the RJD of having been soft on perpetrators of Hindu-Muslim riots because of caste affinity.

He also regretted having tied up with RJD twice and said, "I am back with my old partners (BJP). Now we shall remain together and continue with our good work." Speaking to reporters outside the House, Rabri Devi alleged, "Nitish Kumar comes to the assembly under the influence of 'bhang'. He misbehaves with women. Today, he has insulted me for the second time."

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Ukraine says it is open to 30 day ceasefire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jeddah

The Trump administration lifted its suspension of military aid and intelligence sharing for Ukraine, and Kyiv signaled that it was open to a 30-day ceasefire in the war with Russia, pending Moscow's agreement, American and Ukrainian officials said Tuesday following talks in Saudi Arabia.

The administration imposed the measures a week ago to push Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to enter talks to end the war with invading Russian forces.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US would present the ceasefire offer to the Kremlin.

"We're going to tell them this is what's on the table. Ukraine is ready to stop shooting and start talking. And now it'll be up to them to say yes or no," Rubio said. "If they say no, then we'll unfortunately know what the impediment is to peace here."

atational security adviser Mike Waltz added: "The Ukrainian delegation today made something very clear, that they share President Trump's vision for peace." Waltz said negotiators "got into substantive details on how this war is going to permanently end," including long-term security guarantees.

The announcements emerged as senior officials from Ukraine and the United States opened talks in Saudi Arabia focused on ending Moscow's three-year war against Kyiv. The discussions started only hours after Russia shot down over 300 Ukrainian drones. It was Ukraine's biggest attack since the Kremlin ordered the full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, is expected to travel later this week to Moscow, where he could meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Across the table, Ukrainian officials, including the country's top diplomat and defence chief, showed no facial expressions as the meeting got underway at a luxury hotel. However, Ukrainian presidential aide Andriy Yermak told reporters that the most important thing was "how to achieve a just and lasting

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CM seeks margdarshan



CM meets former Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani. PTI

HAPPY HOLI

The Pioneer wishes its Readers a Happy Holi.

The Offices of The Pioneer will remain closed on Thursday, March 13, 2025 and Friday, March 14, 2025 on account of Holi. The next edition of the *The Pioneer* will appear on Sunday.

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Woman gunrunner arrested in city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Lucknow unit of the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force nabbed a woman gunrunner, Muskan Tiwari, who was an active member of an interstate arms smuggling gang.

Muskan Tiwari of Jaunpur district was arrested from Lucknow on Wednesday following a tip-off from an informer. She was arrested from near Kaiserbagh bus station under Wazirganj police station. Police said four pistols, each of .32 bore, and seven magazines were recovered from her.

A police spokesman said information was being received about an interstate gang involved in smuggling of illegal arms and ammunition being active in Purvanchal. Various units/teams of UP STF were directed to collect intelligence and take action.

A team was tipped-off that the kingpin of this interstate gang was Shubham Singh resident of Jaunpur. The police were also told that the network of this gang was spread in states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi and others.

On November 20, 2024, Ankit Kumar Pandey, a resident of Ghazipur, and on December 15, 2024, Muskan Tiwari and her partner Satyam Yadav were arrested from Sultanpur district with two pistols and sent to jail. It was found that Muskan Tiwari,

who was arrested earlier and sent to jail, had again joined Shubham Singh's gang and had become active in smuggling of arms after being released on bail. It was learnt through a reliable source that Muskan Tiwari, an active member of Shubham Singh gang, was coming to Lucknow from Meerut with arms. On this information, a team of STF Varanasi, which was touring Lucknow for intelligence collection, reached near Kaiserbagh bus station in Lucknow along with local police and arrested Muskan Tiwari and recovered arms and ammunition from her. During interrogation and intelligence gathering, it came to light that Muskan Tiwari and her partner Satyam Yadav were arrested by STF Varanasi on December 15, 2024 in Sultanpur district and two pistols were recovered from them. Both were sent to jail. After being released from jail, Muskan Tiwari again came in contact with the kingpin, Shubham Singh, and started smuggling arms. She told the police that there was a lot of money in arms smuggling and this attracted her to gun-running. Muskan Tiwari told the police that Shubham Singh had realised that the gang members were caught by police when two members went together to bring or supply arms so he decided to send one gang member on each assignment.

Woman found dead in BKT was looted and murdered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The woman whose body was found from a grove near a school in Bakshi Ka Talab on March 9 was killed during loot.

The police made this revelation after a joint team of the Crime Branch, Crime Surveillance Team (DCP North) and Bakshi Ka Talab police station worked out the case. A police spokesman said the murder was committed by the accused after robbing jewellery from the deceased woman.

"The anklet purchased by the deceased, which was looted by the accused on March 6, 2025 after killing her, was recovered from him," a police spokesman said. On March 9, the Bakshi Ka Talab police station had received information that a woman's body was lying in a garden near a school and a police team reached the spot and investigated the crime scene, condition of the deceased and the cir-

cumstantial conditions, and confirmed the identity of the deceased. Later, one Mewal, a resident of village Raitha, under Bakshi Ka Talab police station, lodged an FIR regarding the murder of his aunt Rajana, of Mampur Bana in BKT. A police team was constituted by the DCP (North) to investigate the case. Later, a joint police team worked out the case and on March 12, 2025, arrested the accused, Tej Bahadur alias Teja, a resident of village Mampur, under Bakshi Ka Talab police station. He was arrested from near the ring road service lane at Mampur trisection. During interrogation, the accused confessed his crime and disclosed that he killed the woman during the loot of her ornaments. Teja told police that he saw the deceased shopping in the jewellery shop in Bakshi Ka Talab Sarafa Market on March 6 and made up his mind to rob her.

He further told police that when he started snatching the jewellery from her near the garden on the way to her house, she started protesting, and he threw her on the ground and killed her by choking her throat and snatched the jewellery.

Police said Teja works as a labourer at a brick kiln and this was his first crime. The police recovered a pair of white metal anklets purchased by the woman and weighing about 162 grams from the accused. Meanwhile, a man was arrested in Muzaffarnagar on Wednesday for allegedly raping a woman and forcing her to convert her religion by concealing his religious identity. Circle Officer Ramashish Yadav said Majid was arrested and charged under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021.

Muskan Tiwari went alone to Meerut to get arms. She was to receive four pistols near Sohrab Gate bus station in Meerut. The

man delivering the arms had received Rs 50,000 for this. Muskan Tiwari had come to Lucknow by a bus from Meerut

with the pistols and from Kaiserbagh bus station here, she had to catch a bus for Shahganj when she was arrested.

City all set for festival of colours

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The city is all set for celebrating Holi, the vibrant festival of colours.

Markets remained abuzz on Wednesday with the people shopping for garments, sweets and attractive gift hampers. Gujiyas were much sought after for their immense varieties available in the sweet shops though some women preferred to cook them at home. People also visited friends and colleagues to give them gifts on the occasion of Holi.

Makeshift vendor shops had customers vying for a range of water guns. A shopkeeper said that they were witnessing brisk sales of the electric water guns which squirt water with no effort. "We have sold almost all of them. These can be electrically charged and are attracting the customers for their sheer power and novelty. They range between Rs 450 and Rs 2,250," he said. Children were especially attracted to water guns which had a bag attached to them to carry colours.

Sellers stated that amongst other attractive items was an umbrella water gun costing Rs 450 which was suitable for shooting videos. "For children we have magic ice, magic colours which evaporate after half an hour and magic glass which throws colours if water is added to it. There are multicoloured anars which burst with colours when lighted with a match," he said.

Shops also displayed a wide range of masks, caps, glasses and T-shirts to act as protective gear during the festival.

Both synthetic and herbal colours in dry, wet and foam forms were for sales but sellers said that the herbal guls were much more in demand owing to increasing awareness in the health conscious society. Doctors, while offering their advice for the festival, said that one should opt for herbal colours instead of the synthetic ones because the latter could harm skin and eyes.

"Such colours cause irritation to both the skin and the eye hence one ought to be careful. If necessary, one should consult the doctor if the injury to the eye is grievous," said a senior doctor.

He said that it was also necessary to keep a watch on the high calories that one consumes. "Keep a watch on the calorie count because one tends to eat more on festive occasions," he said.

Doctors also advised to keep away from alcohol and play Holi carefully to avoid slipping and hurting oneself. "Loose cotton clothes should be worn while playing colours," they added.

Meanwhile, the Lucknow Zoo authorities informed that the zoo will remain closed on Thursday and Friday on the occasion of Holi.

Yogi distributes subsidies to 1.86 cr Ujjwala beneficiaries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath distributed Rs 1,890 crore subsidy for gas cylinder refills to 1.86 crore eligible families in Uttar Pradesh under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana on Wednesday.

The chief minister formally launched the scheme at the Lok Bhavan auditorium here with the press of a button. Ministers in-charge of all districts also joined the programme via video conferencing. Highlighting the transformation brought by the scheme, Chief Minister Yogi remarked, "While people once had to pay bribes for gas connections, today, 10 crore families across the country have received this facility free of cost. Additionally, free gas cylinders are being provided on Holi and Diwali." He highlighted that Holi and Ramzan coincide this year, ensuring everyone benefits from this initiative.

In his address, the chief minister recalled that the Ujjwala Yojana was launched in 2016, benefiting 10 crore families nationwide, including nearly two



crore beneficiaries in Uttar Pradesh. He reiterated the government's commitment to its 2021 election promise - ensuring free gas cylinders on Holi and Diwali if re-elected in 2022.

He said, "Since then, the initiative has been implemented annually to help people celebrate their festivals easily. With Holi and Ramzan falling together this year, the scheme will bring joy to even more households."

The chief minister recalled the past and said, "Earlier, people had to pay a bribe of Rs 25,000-

for a gas connection, and even during festivals, cooking gas cylinders were often unavailable."

He mentioned that the Ujjwala Yojana was launched to protect underprivileged females from smoke-related health hazards, ensuring that the benefits reach everyone without discrimination.

He highlighted his government's commitment to food security and said, "Eighty thousand ration dealers in Uttar Pradesh are distributing free rations to 15 crore people through 3.6 crore ration cards. Since 2017, e-POS machines have brought transparency to the ration distribution system, effectively curbing black marketing. For the past five years, including the COVID-19 crisis, free rations have been provided every month to 80 crore people nationwide, including 15 crore beneficiaries in Uttar Pradesh."

Reiterating his government's commitment to the welfare of the underprivileged, farmers, and daughters, Chief Minister Yogi said that 22 lakh daughters in the state had received financial assistance of Rs 25,000 each for education, while four lakh daughters had been married under the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana.

Disguised as woman, man sets married lover afire after she refuses to elope with him

Mathura (PTI): A 28-year-old man disguised as a woman set his married lover afire inside her house here after she refused to elope with him, police said.

As the woman's neighbours rushed to her house after hearing her screams on Tuesday afternoon, Umesh, who was wearing a lehenga, tried to escape by jumping from the terrace and sustained severe injuries in the process, police said.

Both Rekha (30), who suffered over 70 per cent burns, and Umesh are undergoing treatment at SN Medical College in Agra, they said. Rekha, a resident of Koh village, was alone at home watching TV when the incident occurred. Her children, aged seven and five, were at school and her husband Sanju, a farm labourer, was away at work, Farah police station in-charge Sanjay Kumar Pandey said.

Around noon, Umesh, a resident of Hasanpur village in Haryana and the brother of Rekha's elder sister-in-law reached her house with a bottle of petrol,

the police official said. "Umesh was wearing a lehenga to disguise himself as a woman and was dropped off near the village by a friend on a motor-cycle. He entered Rekha's house from the terrace, walked into her room and pressured her to leave with him. When she refused, he poured petrol on her and set her on fire," Pandey said.

Alerted by Rekha's screams, her neighbours rushed to help while Umesh tried to escape by jumping from the terrace. However, he was seriously injured, the official said. After reaching the spot, police took Rekha and Umesh to the Farah community health centre. Due to their critical condition, they were later referred to SN Medical College in Agra, police said. "Umesh was a regular visitor to Rekha's house and their relationship developed over time. On August 31 last year, Rekha left home with him. Her family filed a police complaint and she was brought back from Kinnaur district in Himachal Pradesh on February 10," Pandey said.

Slum areas set for transformation; 49 projects approved by govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, urban development in Uttar Pradesh is progressing at a rapid pace. While cities and nagar panchayats are witnessing extensive rejuvenation, significant efforts are also being made to improve the infrastructure in slum areas.

As part of the Mukhyamantri Nagariya Alpviksit va Malin Basti Vikas Yojana, the state government has given a financial approval of Rs 1,035.43 lakh for infrastructure development in slums across Hamirpur, Mathura, Hathras and Saharanpur districts.

A total of 49 projects have been approved under this initiative, ensuring the construction of better roads, drainage systems and water disposal facilities in these areas. Through this, works like CC road, interlocking road and drain construction will be done in municipal bodies, so that better basic facilities can be made available to the citizens of these areas.

Under the projects approved by the government, road and drainage construction will take place in sever-

al municipal areas, including Mathura-Vrindavan Municipal Corporation, Goderdhan Nagar Panchayat, Rath Municipal Council, Sarila Nagar Panchayat (Hamirpur) and Rampur Maniheran Nagar Panchayat (Saharanpur). The focus is on areas that lack proper infrastructure.

In Mathura-Vrindavan, roads and drainage systems will be improved in places like Gulabnagar, Bakalpur, Idgahpura and Gopalpur. Similarly, in Hathras and Hamirpur, interlocking and CC roads will be built in different localities and wards.

These projects will prevent waterlogging before the monsoon and make movement easier for people. They will also help reduce flooding problems during the rainy season.

The government has instructed that all construction work must be of high quality so that people can benefit from it for a long time. The Urban Development Department has given local authorities and project officials the responsibility of ensuring quality work. This initiative of the Yogi government is a big step towards improving the living conditions of thousands of slum dwellers. Once completed, these projects will provide cleaner, safer and more comfortable living spaces.

32 students of LU get jobs in Chetu

Lucknow (PNS): Thirty-two students from the Faculty of Engineering and Technology at Lucknow University have been selected by the American software company Chetu. The students were congratulated by the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Professor Alok Kumar Rai, and the Dean, Professor AK Singh. Dr Himanshu Pandey, the Placement Cell in-charge, shared that the selected students successfully cleared Chetu's recruitment process, which included an online technical test, group discussion, and technical interview. These 32 B.Tech students have been offered positions as Software Engineers. The group includes thirteen students from B.Tech in Computer Science and Engineering: Aditya Chaudhary, Aditya Gupta, Akshat Giri, Ashankur Upadhyay, Anshuman Verma, Himanshu Mall, Jyoti Singh, Tushar Saxena, Mayank Gupta, Rahul Verma, Ranjit Singh, Vijaya Agarwal, and Ayush Singh. One student from B.Tech Electrical Engineering, Abha Kumari, has also been selected. Four from Computer Science and Engineering with Artificial Intelligence: Daima Mukhtar, NIDA Parveen, Shivam Singh, and Jagriti Upadhyay, 10 from BCA: Garima Singh, Garv Verma, Jaynidhi, Kartikeya Pal, Khushi Dhiman, Rahul Kumar Nishad, Richika Verma, Sachin Kushwaha, Simran Singh, and Yuvraj Singh, have got placements

CISH introduces 2 new mango varieties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) in Rehman Khera, Lucknow, is set to introduce two new varieties of mangoes, Awadh Samridhhi and Awadh Abhaya, further enriching India's diverse mango portfolio. Both varieties were recommended for release by the State Variety Release Committee, Uttar Pradesh, in January 2025 and are expected to be approved by the Central Variety Release Committee, New Delhi, soon. Dr T Damodaran, Director of CISH, explained that Awadh Samridhhi is a climate-resilient hybrid that bears fruit regularly. The fruit, weighing about 300 grams, is vibrant in colour, making it visually appealing. The tree is medium-sized, reaching 15 to 20 feet in height after 15 years, making it suitable for intensive cultivation. It ripens in July.

Awadh Abhaya, another climate-resilient hybrid, is known for its regular fruiting without the need for paclobutrazol. The fruit is light yellow with a red blush on the peel, weighing 300-400 grams. It has a firm texture, excellent quality, and a long shelf life. This variety is a late-maturing hybrid, with ripening occurring between late July and August, making it ideal for late mango markets. Both varieties are also suitable for export. Dr Damodaran highlighted the significant benefits for Uttar Pradesh, India's leading mango producer, noting that these varieties have strong export potential, especially to markets in Europe and the United States, where colourful mangoes are highly valued. Their attractive colour, size, and extended shelf life are likely to make them popular in local and international markets. Previously, CISH developed two other notable mango varieties, Ambika and Arunika, both of which are also distinguished by their vibrant colours. Ambika is known for its consistent fruiting, high yield, and late maturation. Its fruit has a deep red blush and is firm, less fibrous, and of excellent quality. Arunika has smooth orange-yellow skin with a red blush and is prized for its excellent taste and storage capacity. Each fruit weighs between 190 and 210 grams, and the tree's dwarf size makes

it ideal for intensive gardening. Dr Damodaran stated that all four varieties are well-suited for subtropical and tropical climates across mango-producing regions. Dr Ashish Yadav, Principal Scientist at CISH, explained that the development of mango varieties is a long-term programme, taking nearly two decades.

BEEKEEPING TRAINING

The National Botanical Research Institute, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Port Blair, and ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair, organised a "Beekeeping Training" and distributed bee boxes with hives in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The five-day training programme, held at ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Sippighat, South Andaman, from March 6 to 10 to introduce honey bee cultivation to the region. NBRI Director Ajit Kumar Shasany, emphasised the importance of honey bees in increasing crop yield, noting that their decline is negatively impacting food production.

CLASSIFIEDS logo

NOTICE

It is notified to the general public that my client Mahipal Sharma, son of the late Guljari Lal, resident of village Barara, Pargana Pali, Tehsil and Police Station Savayajpur, District Hardoi, has lost the registered document (original sale deed) of land number 271/0,2340 hectares in volume number 12 section number 732, page 39/50, serial number 1146, dated 15-01-2025, while going from home to Tehsil Savayajpur. It could not be found even after much searching. Anyone who finds the above original document is requested to kindly inform, and anyone who has any objection/claim regarding the above property document should inform the undersigned within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. No claim will be accepted/considered after the above period. Contact for objection: Vijay Kumar Parashar Advocate 3/54 Kirana Bazar Farrukhabad-209625 Mobile No.-7355153619

आवश्यकता है

आवश्यकता है

ठा0 जयनारायण सिंह मेमोरियल डिग्री कालेज, हथगाम, फतेहपुर (कालेज कोड-02039)

सम्बद्ध- प्रो0 जयेंद्र सिंह (रत्न प्रयाग) विश्वविद्यालय, प्रयागराज, उ0प्र0।

प्रश्न-सं0- विषय- नृत्य विभाग सह0 आवारं- पर 02 नवम्बर विभाग सह0 आवारं- पर- 02

प्रश्न-सं0- विषय- हिन्दी सह0 आवारं- पर 02

योचना- सर्वनिष्ठ विभाग में परास्नातक 55 प्रश्नक व टिप्पणी-सं0

वेतनमान- 25000/- प्रतिमाह

नोट- एच्छक अभ्यर्थी आवेदन पत्र के साथ 4 फोटो, आधार कार्ड, पैन कार्ड तथा शैक्षणिक योग्यता से सम्बन्धित समस्त सैलनको सहित, विभाग की तिथि से 15 दिनों के अन्दर कार्यालय में जमा करें. ई-मेल या फोनिकल डाक से भेजें।

ई-मेल- jncdgc@gmail.com

फोन- 080759518, 8810759504

पता- 080759518, 8810759504

सचिव

मो0 8810759518, 8810759504

NOTICE

THE U.P. REAL ESTATE APPELLATE TRIBUNAL, LUCKNOW

4th Floor, Indira Bhawan, Ashok Marg, Lucknow - 226001

Letter No. 139 Dated: 10.03.2025

Appeal no. 409/2024/UPREAT/2025 Lucknow

Notice for Publication

Appeal No. 409/2024

M/s Singh Brothers.....Appellant

Vs

UTTAR PRADESH REAL ESTATE REGULATORY AUTHORITYRespondent-1

M/s COLLAGE GROUP INFRASTRUCTURE PVT LTDRespondent-2

RAKESH KUMAR DIWEDIRespondent-3

To, RAKESH KUMAR DIWEDI

H.No. 961/23 RAJEEV VIHAR, KANPUR-208021

Subject- Regarding Appeal U/s 44 of the RERA Act, 2016

You are hereby informed that said appeal, was taken up for hearing on 13.02.2025. You are therefore directed to be present before the Tribunal either in person or through legal representative as provided U/s 56 of the Act to oppose/reply the Appeal otherwise the said appeal will be heard ex parte in your absence. Note the case is fixed for hearing on 20.03.2025.

Registrar UPREAT, Lucknow

NOTICE

NOTICE

This is to inform the General Public that Mr. Vishal Kumar S/o Sri Prem Babu residing at 76/502 Coolie Bazar, Kanpur, owes Rs. 11,62,000/- towards repair and service of his commercial Vehicle No. UP-78 N9069 for repair to M/s TV Sundram Iyengar & Sons Ltd. Panki, Kanpur now known as TVS Vehicle Mobility Solution Private Limited ("Company"). As the owner Mr. Vishal Kumar has not come forward to pay the outstanding and has not taken the vehicle, the Company has decided to sell the vehicle as a scrap. Any person having any interest or objection in the said Vehicle and for its sale as scrap may submit written objection with proof to undersigned within 15days hereof. The Company reserves the right to sell the same as scrap after the expiry of the period in case no objections are received

TVS Vehicle Mobility Solution Pvt. Ltd., 123/45 Gadarianpurwa, Fazal Ganj, Kanpur (Dhirendra Kumar) Mobile No. 9838072264

NOTICE

NOTICE

I Army No-14445615F HAV Babu Lal yadav. In My Service Records wife's Date of Birth 20-08-1983 is Entry, but correct Date of Birth is 22-10-1982

NOTICE

I Army No 14445615F HAV Babu Lal yadav. In my service records son Name ANSHUMAAN Entered but correct Name of my son is ANSHU MAAN YADAV

NOTICE

I.Mohammad Firdous S/o Ejaz Husain R/o L 12/14 Block -F, KDA Colony Jajmau Kanpur Nagar have changed my name to Mohd Firdous for all future purposes

NOTICE

I have changed my name from NOOR SABA TO NOOR SHABNA W/o Mohd Tanveer R/o 131/3 G Begum Purwa Chandmiri T.P.Nagar Kanpur for all future purposes

NOTICE

NOTICE

In my service record No. 13800252 sepahi, spelling of my wife's name and date of birth have wrongly been mentioned as Long Shiri and 01.07.1948. Her name's correct spelling and date of birth are Laung Shridevi and 01.01.1950 respectively as mentioned in her Aadhaar and PAN cards. Ramprakash R/o 148 C-1, Nanarki L.I.T. Kanpur

NOTICE

I, ASHOK SINGH SENDHAV, presently residing at Vill- Mundalana, P.O - Choubura Jagri, Teh - Sonkatch, Dist- Devas, State- MP, Pin - 455118, have changed my Son's Name from MASTER DIPANSHU TO DIPANSHU SENDHAV, vide affidavit no. IN-UP41931864219774X, dated 11/03/25, before notary H. O. Jhansi.

NOTICE

NOTICE

I, SMITA BHATI, is wife of Name ASHOK SINGH SENDHAV, presently residing at Vill- Mundalana, Po- Choubura Jagri, Teh - Sonkatch, Dist- Devas, State- MP, Pin - 455118, have changed my name from SMITA BHATI to SMITA SENDHAV, vide affidavit no. IN-UP41927443004738X, dated 11/03/25, before notary H. O. Jhansi.

NOTICE

NOTICE

I, ASHOK SINGH SENDHAV, presently residing at Vill- Mundalana, Po- Choubura Jagri, Teh - Sonkatch, Dist- Devas, State- MP, Pin - 455118, have changed my name from SMITA BHATI to SMITA SENDHAV, vide affidavit no. IN-UP41927443004738X, dated 11/03/25, before notary H. O. Jhansi.

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Mafia grabbed Prayagraj's historic sites during past govts: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that during previous governments, land mafia illegally took over historic sites in Prayagraj, such as Akshay Vat, Mata Saraswati Koop, Patalpuri, Shringverpur, Dwadash Madhav and Bhagwan Beni Madhav. "This severely affected the heritage and significance of these sacred places," the chief minister added while responding to journalists' questions on Wednesday at the 'Manthan: Kumbh and Beyond' Vichar Sangam programme organised by Panchjanya and Organiser at Taj Hotel here.

He said, "During Maha Kumbh, these sites were freed from land mafias, paving the way for their revitalisation. As a result, devotees can now visit them throughout the year."

The chief minister emphasised that Prayagraj, the land of Maharishi Bharadwaj and home to the world's first gurukul, was once in the grip of land mafias under previous governments. He pointed out that Akshay Vat was locked away during colonial rule, depriving devotees of darshan for

500 years, while sacred sites like Mata Saraswati Koop and Patalpuri remained neglected.

He also highlighted how Shringverpur, the site of friendship between Lord Ram and Nishadraj, was encroached upon under land jihad, and how Dwadash Madhav and Nagvasuki temples also fell victim to illegal occupation. "During the Maha Kumbh, our government built new corridors and freed these sites, which is a symbol of gratitude towards India's ancient traditions," he added.

Chief Minister Yogi highlighted that the Maha Kumbh not only displayed India's strength and the true essence of Sanatan dharma but also changed the negative perception of Uttar Pradesh. He said, "Through Maha Kumbh, we successfully achieved both objectives."

The event, he said, presented Sanatan dharma's inclusive and vast nature to the world, as crores of devotees, regardless of caste, sect, or region, took a holy dip together at the Triveni Sangam, reflecting the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'.

The chief minister launched a sharp attack on the opposition, stating, "Expecting positivity from those with a

negative mindset is pointless." He criticised previous governments, citing the disorder and mismanagement of Kumbh under Congress and Samajwadi Party rule from 1954 to 2013.

He recalled the 1954 Kumbh tragedy, where over 1,000 people lost their lives, the 2007 natural disaster that caused significant loss of life and property, and the 2013 incident where the then prime minister of Mauritius shed tears after witnessing the filth at Sangam. "Past governments turned Kumbh into a hub of chaos and dirt, and today, the same people are questioning our 'swachh' Maha Kumbh," he remarked.

Chief Minister Yogi said that the opposition's negativity had distanced them from the people, who taught them a lesson by attending Kumbh in massive numbers. He then described the 2025 Maha Kumbh as a shining example of cleanliness, security, and technology. He stated that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance in 2019, efforts began to change the negative perception of Kumbh, which have now been further strengthened.

He strongly criticised those who admire Aurangzeb, calling it a "mental distortion".

Citing a book by Shah Jahan, he reminded people that Aurangzeb imprisoned his own father, denied him water, and killed his brother. Taking a dig, he said, "Those who like Aurangzeb should name their children after him and be ready to suffer his kind of cruelty." He mentioned that glorifying Aurangzeb insults India's true heroes.

Discussing Sambhal, Chief Minister Yogi mentioned that the Puranas, written 5,000 years ago, mention it as the place where Lord Vishnu's tenth incarnation will appear. He recalled that in 1526, Mughal commander Mir Baqi demolished a temple there, but today, 18 pilgrimage sites have been excavated in the area. He urged those who try to hide history to read the Puranas.

Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that by connecting faith with the economy, thousands of taxi drivers, bus operators and traders have found employment. Highlighting the government's commitment to standing with the people during crises like COVID-19, he declared that New India will lead in both faith and economic growth.

Highlighting the success of the

Namami Gange project, the chief minister stated that 14 crore litres of sewage has been stopped from flowing into the Ganga in Kanpur, making the river cleaner than ever. Taking a dig at the pollution in the Yamuna in Delhi, he remarked that the people of Delhi have already given their response.

He emphasised that when politics is driven by self-interest, it benefits neither the leaders nor the people. He said that if politics is guided by public welfare, it will not only uplift society but also benefit those in power in the long run. He further stated that India's democracy is deeply ingrained in its culture, even though it was formally adopted in 1952. "Democracy is embedded in every aspect of our nation, and the people are well aware of the truth. Those who mislead the public have been exposed and rejected," he said.

Addressing criticism about Prayagraj's water quality, Chief Minister Yogi said, "Do not point fingers at Prayagraj. The massive crowds at Kumbh are proof that the sacred waters of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati remain pure."

He highlighted the importance of

flowing water in maintaining purity, saying, "Moving water and wandering saints never become impure. Flowing rivers cleanse themselves naturally."

He further suggested that if Delhi had purified the Yamuna at its source, the people of Mathura, Vrindavan and Agra would have received clean water. "We are doing our part, but if Delhi had done the same, millions would have benefited," he remarked.

The chief minister praised India's global rise under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, citing the participation of leaders from Mauritius and Bhutan, as well as a statement from the president of Indonesia, affirming that "this century belongs to India". Taking a dig at those who glorify foreign invaders, he remarked, "They should get their DNA checked."

Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that Sanatan Dharma respects all faiths and expressed pride in his saffron attire, saying, "This is my identity. One day, the whole world will wear it. Calling India's democracy mature, he said, "The people know everything and will always decide what is right and wrong."

CM: Employment zones to be set up in every dist in Patel's honour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jaunpur/Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that an employment zone would be established in every district in honour of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He said continuous efforts would be made to provide skill development, employment and dignified work for everyone.

Spread over 100 acres, these zones will offer training, job placements and career counseling programmes. The chief minister urged Jaunpur to start preparing for this programme now so that local youth do not have to migrate for jobs.

The chief minister attended the wedding ceremony of 1,001 couples under the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana at Shahi Qila on Wednesday. Speaking at the event, he said, "The mass wedding initiative upholds Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', taking it to new heights."

He further mentioned that development has no limits and should cater to people's needs while bringing joy and enthusiasm into their lives, adding that the double-engine government is working with this very approach. He also showered flowers on the newlyweds and honoured artists participating in the Jaunpur Mahotsav.

The chief minister emphasised that the double-engine government ensures that welfare schemes reach every section of society without discrimination, benefiting the poor, farmers, youth, women and villagers. He highlighted initiatives like Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana, Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana and Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana, stating that these programmes aim to uplift society and improve living standards.

"We operate with the spirit that where no one is there to help, the government will stand with you," he added.

He then shared the success story of the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana, recalling how people initially mocked the initiative. "When we launched this scheme, many laughed, calling it an insult to the poor. However, the first year saw one lakh weddings with an initial grant of Rs 35,000 per couple. By March 2025, over four lakh weddings will have taken place under this scheme," he said.

Chief Minister Yogi said that this showed that this was the need of society and added, "No daughter should remain unmarried due to dowry issues."

The government, he assured, will take responsibility for daughters' weddings and support their families, enabling them to move towards financial stability.

He also praised the exhibition at the



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath honours the participating artists of the 'Jaunpur Mahotsav' in Jaunpur district of UP. PTI

...presents gifts to newlyweds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jaunpur/Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath personally handed over certificates and silver anklets as gifts to five newlywed couples on stage, including Sneha-Ankush, Amina Nisha-Shaukat Sheikh, Ranjana-Shubham, Seesam-Vikas, and Sushma Pal-Vikas.

He also visited the exhibition at

event venue, particularly highlighting Jaunpur's famous imarti, which has now received a GI tag. "Soon, it will be recognised in the international market and exported worldwide," he remarked.

Similarly, he promoted Jaunpur's perfumes, stating, "Its fragrance will connect people to Jaunpur and give the district a unique identity." The chief minister mentioned plans to transform Jaunpur into a Smart City, ensuring a swift resolution to road, drainage, and electricity issues. He praised the renovated ghats and roads along the Gomti river, stating, "Jaunpur will no longer lag in development."

Highlighting major infrastructure projects, he mentioned the Jafarabad-Jaunpur

flyover, a flyover on the Jaunpur-Sultanpur-Lucknow rail section, and the four-lane expansion of the Jaunpur-Akbarpur National Highway, which is progressing at a rapid pace. The government has already approved Rs 216 crore for the highway and Rs 169 crore and Rs 92 crore for two flyovers. Additionally, the Jaunpur-Mirzapur (Vindhyaasini Dham) road connectivity and the Mungra-Badshahpur bypass construction are being fast-tracked. He also shared that 17 new bridges have been approved to improve connectivity in the region. Emphasising the role of connectivity, Chief Minister Yogi remarked, "Just as bridges connect two places, the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana is

connecting two families in an unbreakable bond."

He expressed gratitude to the citizens of Jaunpur for their support during Maha Kumbh, especially on Mauni Amavasya, when the district facilitated the movement of 40,000 buses and food arrangements for devotees.

The chief minister highlighted Jaunpur's rich heritage in education and talent, mentioning prestigious institutions like Babu Umanath Singh Medical College, TD College, and Veer Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University. He also acknowledged notable personalities from Jaunpur, including Jagadguru Shri Rambhadracharya, scientist Prof Lalji Singh, agricultural expert Dr. Kirti Singh, poet Yadendra Dutt Dwivedi, historian Vasudev Chaturvedi, Islamic scholar Mohammad Jaunpuri, and actor Ravi Kishan, elected as an MP from Gorakhpur for the second time. Chief Minister Yogi announced that in the new financial year, the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana will provide Rs 1 lakh for each daughter's wedding, and meritorious girls will receive scooters.

He also stated that from April 1, efforts to achieve zero poverty will be intensified, ensuring that all underprivileged families receive benefits from government schemes they previously missed.

Chandigarh roadshow to position UP as a leading pharma hub

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow/Chandigarh

A special roadshow on 'Investment Opportunities in the Pharmaceutical Landscape of Uttar Pradesh' was organised in Chandigarh under the joint aegis of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA). The event aimed to familiarise pharmaceutical investors with the state's business-friendly environment and lucrative investment opportunities.

Aligned with the Yogi Adityanath government's vision of transforming Uttar Pradesh into a one-trillion-dollar economy, a Bulk Drug Pharma Park is being developed on 1,472.33 acres in Lalitpur district. This flagship project is a crucial step toward making India self-reliant in the pharmaceutical sector and strengthening its position as the 'Pharmacy of the World'. UPSIDA Chief Executive Officer Mayur Maheshwari, while presenting Uttar Pradesh as a prime industrial destination, stated, "Uttar Pradesh has emerged as an attractive hub for investors, and the government is committed to providing

them with all possible support." He emphasised that the state offers investor-friendly policies, robust industrial infrastructure and excellent logistics facilities, making it an ideal location for pharmaceutical investments. This roadshow serves as a crucial initiative in advancing Uttar Pradesh's position in the pharmaceutical sector. The event saw participation from key investors and policymakers in the pharmaceutical industry. During one-on-one meetings, representatives from leading companies such as Mankind Pharmaceuticals, Morepen Laboratories, Alliance Formulations, Hanuchem Laboratories, Primus Pharmaceuticals and Park Pharmaceuticals engaged in in-depth discussions on investment prospects and industry requirements. Additionally, Dr GN Singh, Advisor to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, attended the meeting, where he highlighted the government's industry-friendly policies and reiterated its commitment to fostering a thriving pharmaceutical ecosystem in Uttar Pradesh. Industry experts and investors shared their insights on the vast potential of the state's pharma sector, reinforcing confidence in its growth trajectory.

UP to develop three heritage hotels on lines of Suryagarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Yogi Adityanath government's ambitious initiative to revive the state's heritage properties, restore their historic grandeur and create new economic opportunities is now taking concrete shape. On Wednesday, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Tourism Department, Golden Triangle Fort and Palace Private Limited to develop Roshan-ud-Daulah and Chhatar Manzil in Lucknow, along with Chunar Fort in Mirzapur. These heritage sites will be developed into luxury heritage hotels, following the successful model of Suryagarh Jaisalmer. Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh stated that the three properties have been given to Golden Triangle, Rajasthan, under the PPP model. He said, "The company's Suryagarh Collection - which operates Suryagarh Jaisalmer, Narendra Bhawan Bikaner and Mary Budden Estate Binsar - will design, develop and manage these heritage hotels. "A key focus will be on preserving the original architectural essence while integrating innovative restoration techniques. The revival process will be guided by

historical research, folklore, traditional construction materials and modern innovations to maintain authenticity," the minister said. He added, "This initiative is expected to significantly enhance heritage tourism and position Uttar Pradesh as a prime destination for luxury heritage stays and destination weddings." Additionally, it will generate employment opportunities for local communities, prioritising hiring locals for property development and operations. The initiative will also promote One District One Product items and curate experiential tourism, highlighting local traditions, cuisine, festivals and craftsmanship. One village near each heritage property will be adopted and revitalised in a step towards holistic development.

Meanwhile, a meeting was held through videoconferencing in Lucknow and Delhi to discuss the development and promotion of Buddhist tourism in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The meeting in Delhi saw the presence of Union Minister of Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Tourism, Suresh Gopi, Secretary Tourism V Vidyavathi and Special Secretary, Eesha Priya, representing UP-Tourism in the meeting.

Govt's new initiative to enhance devotee experience in Ayodhya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ayodhya

The Uttar Pradesh government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has launched a new initiative to enhance the convenience of devotees visiting Ayodhya.

Display kiosks will be installed at key locations to provide real-time information about the opening timings, distances and other details of prominent religious sites, including Ram Mandir and Hanuman Garhi.

Under this initiative, kiosks will be installed at four key locations, including railway stations and airports. These kiosks will not only guide devotees but also provide historical, cultural and tourism-related information, ensuring seamless connectivity and real-time updates.

The Shri Ayodhya Ji Teerth Vikas Parishad has been responsible for implementing this project. If successful, the initiative will be expanded to additional locations, making it even more accessible for visitors. The project is expected to be a valuable facility for

pilgrims and tourists. Each kiosk will cost approximately Rs 2.5 lakh.

Chief Executive Officer of Shri Ayodhya Ji Teerth Vikas Parishad, Santosh Sharma, emphasised the significance of the initiative, stating, "We aim to provide a convenient and informative experience to devotees visiting Ayodhya. These kiosks will help visitors access essential details about temples and other attractions, making their journey smoother. This initiative will also contribute to boosting tourism in Ayodhya." The display kiosks will feature a touch-screen interface, allowing users to access information as per their needs. Additionally, they may include voice command functionality for easier navigation. A QR code scanner will also be available, enabling devotees to access information directly on their mobile phones. To ensure uninterrupted service, the kiosks will be equipped with internet connectivity, power backup systems, and security features to prevent vandalism. Regular updates will be provided to keep the information current and relevant.

AKY accuses BJP govt of protecting land mafia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday alleged that the BJP government was protecting land mafia and criminals in Uttar Pradesh.

Yadav, in a statement, said that under the BJP rule, land-grabbing incidents have surged, with the poor being harassed and forced to transfer their land under duress.

"BJP is the biggest land mafia party. Since coming to power, BJP leaders have been terrorising the poor and forcibly snatching their land," he said.

He alleged that land registrations in districts, including Ayodhya, exposed the reality of the government's land policies.

"Now, even retired Army officers are not being spared. Land mafia are capturing their properties, assaulting them and issuing threats. The law and order situation has hit rock

bottom," he said.

The former UP chief minister cited the instance of a retired brigadier being allegedly attacked when he opposed the illegal occupation of his land.

"The situation is deteriorating daily and land mafia are flourishing under government protection in every district," he alleged.

"The government itself is acquiring land from the poor and farmers at throwaway prices and handing it over to its favourites," he alleged.

The SP leader asserted that under the BJP rule, "anarchy prevails across the state," and the administration is acting under political pressure, ignoring the grievances of the poor and helpless.

"Public anger against the BJP's policies and governance is growing and in the 2027 Assembly elections, the people will completely overthrow the BJP's arrogance of power," he said.

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L6510TN2014PLC097792
Registered Office: - KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031.
Tel : +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

IDFC FIRST Bank

**APPENDIX IV [Rule 8(1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)**

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 30.11.2024 calling upon the borrower, co-borrowers and guarantors **1. DURGESH KUMAR, 2. PINKI DURGESH**, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs. 5,82,559.74/- (Rupees Five Lac Eighty Two Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Nine And Seventy Four Paise Only)** as on 27.11.2024 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Demand notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this **07th day of MAR 2025**.

The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of **THE IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)** for an amount of **Rs. 5,82,559.74/- (Rupees Five Lac Eighty Two Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Nine And Seventy Four Paise Only)** and interest thereon.

The borrower'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.

DESCRIPTION OF MORTGAGE PROPERTY	
ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF GATA NO. 62, ADMEASURING 680.35 SQ. FT. OR 63.23 SQ. MTR, SITUATED AT VILLAGE AMARI, TAPPA RAMGARH, PARGANA AMODHA, NEAR GANNA KANTA, TEHSIL HARRIYA AND DIST. BASTI, UTTAR PRADESH-272122, AND, BOUNDED AS: EAST: PLOT OF RAM SURESH, WEST: ROAD TUTI BHITI TO VIKRAMJOT NORTH: PLOT OF NAUSA DEVI, SOUTH: HOUSE OF RAM SURESH	
Date: 07-03-2025 Place: UTTAR PRADESH Loan Account No: 106607079	Authorised Officer IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)

AXIS BANK LTD.

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION OF PLEDGED ASSETS BEING GOLD ORNAMENTS
 THE BORROWERS, IN SPECIFIC AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT PUBLIC AUCTION OF THE GOLD ORNAMENTS PLEDGE IN THE BELOW ACCOUNTS IS PROPOSED TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE AXIS BANK AT THE BELOW MENTIONED BRANCH. THE BELOW MENTIONED BORROWERS HAS AVAILED THE CREDIT FACILITY FROM THE AXIS BANK LIMITED AGAINST THE PLEDGE OF GOLD ORNAMENTS ("GOLD LOAN FACILITY") IN FAVOUR OF THE BANK TOWARDS THE SECURITY. THE DEMAND NOTICES WERE ISSUED TO THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS CALLING UP THE BORROWERS/ GUARANTORS TO PAY THEIR OUTSTANDING AMOUNT TOWARDS THE GOLD LOAN FACILITY AVAILED. AS THE BORROWERS/ GUARANTORS HAVE FAILED TO REPLY TO THE OUTSTANDING LOAN AMOUNT, THE BANK IS CONSTRAINED TO INVOKE THE PLEDGE AND PROPOSED TO CONDUCT AN E-AUCTION SALE OF PLEDGED GOLD ORNAMENTS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY HEREUNDER ON 24.03.2025 AT 12.30 PM TO 03.30 PM ON "AS IN WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", "WHATSOEVER THERE IS" AND "NO RECOURSE BASIS".
 DETAILS OF BORROWERS AND OUTSTANDING AMOUNT

SR NO.	CUSTOMER NAME	LOAN A/C NO.	AMOUNT OUTSTANDING (IN RS.)	DATE OF RECALL NOTICE	GROSS WEIGHT	NET WEIGHT
B.O.: AASHANA LUC UP						
1	AARTI KUMARI	XXXXXXXXXXXX4911	RS. 19,26,256.00	20-JUL-24	752.800	575.000
2	ADITYA SEN SHAKYA	XXXXXXXXXXXX2472	RS. 9,60,924.00	9-JAN-25	262.900	243.200
3	AQUEEL AHMED KHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX5865	RS. 4,91,898.00	20-NOV-24	115.600	114.700
4	SANTOSH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX1360	RS. 57,727.00	30-JAN-25	15.500	14.800
5	SHUBHAM KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX5737	RS. 50,901.00	4-AUG-24	10.300	9.800
B.O.: AGRA [UP]						
6	ABRESH YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX8287	RS. 11,07,100.00	25-AUG-23	325.000	293.000
7	AMIT .	XXXXXXXXXXXX8831	RS. 6,05,157.00	20-JUL-24	90.100	87.500
8	DIPAK SINGHAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX8154	RS. 2,20,618.00	6-JAN-25	54.500	41.700
9	RAHUL THAKUR	XXXXXXXXXXXX2877	RS. 77,831.00	30-JAN-25	20.500	19.500
10	RUPAM SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX7350	RS. 61,977.00	20-NOV-24	11.140	10.900
11	SHUMAILA AZEEZ	XXXXXXXXXXXX8875	RS. 50,747.00	4-AUG-24	12.500	11.500
B.O.: AKBARPUR KANPUR KANP UP						
12	ARVIND KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4933	RS. 4,49,159.00	8-MAY-24	66.000	64.900
13	ARVIND KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX8879	RS. 4,48,323.00	27-SEP-24	87.400	70.800
B.O.: ALAMBAGH, LUCKNOW [UP]						
14	BALNATH KAUSHAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX7537	RS. 3,64,904.00	8-MAY-24	72.300	71.400
15	CHITRALEKHA AGRAWAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX6177	RS. 2,74,595.00	8-MAY-24	66.000	64.900
16	MANOJ KUMAR AWASTHI	XXXXXXXXXXXX4712	RS. 1,13,664.00	27-SEP-24	20.800	17.400
17	RATNESH PAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX2174	RS. 66,780.00	8-MAY-24	16.700	15.400
18	SAPNA DEVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX9648	RS. 57,111.00	29-SEP-23	12.000	11.370
19	VISHAL KESHARVANI	XXXXXXXXXXXX0767	RS. 33,876.00	7-SEP-24	9.100	8.300
B.O.: ALIGARH [UP]						
20	FIROJ KHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX3982	RS. 2,06,112.00	27-SEP-24	53.000	50.900
21	MOHD ALI	XXXXXXXXXXXX3561	RS. 1,04,891.00	7-SEP-24	24.400	23.500
22	MOHD ISRAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6398	RS. 1,03,450.00	30-JAN-25	28.200	27.500
23	SAMEER ZAREEF	XXXXXXXXXXXX8980	RS. 59,685.00	30-JAN-25	15.400	14.300
B.O.: ALLAHABAD [UP]						
24	AMBUJ SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX9802	RS. 6,54,461.00	8-MAY-24	149.000	148.000
25	AVADHESH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX0097	RS. 4,00,494.00	27-SEP-24	79.700	75.800
26	NAGENDRA KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6936	RS. 97,505.00	28-NOV-24	23.700	23.400
27	PRAVEEN SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX8986	RS. 82,890.00	27-SEP-24	14.500	13.800
28	RAVI SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX2873	RS. 65,388.00	30-JAN-25	16.900	15.400
29	SHAILENDRA KUMAR PANDEY	XXXXXXXXXXXX7632	RS. 54,085.00	7-SEP-24	13.500	13.200
30	SUDHA SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX2608	RS. 47,374.00	20-NOV-23	10.000	9.000
31	SYED AZADAR HUSAIN RIZVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX3268	RS. 41,584.00	20-NOV-24	8.000	7.800
32	YASH RAJ AGARWAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX6427	RS. 32,012.00	30-JAN-25	7.910	7.160
B.O.: AMROHA [UP]						
33	ABDULLAH	XXXXXXXXXXXX2696	RS. 14,06,757.00	24-JAN-25	520.960	498.360
34	SUBHAS SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX8212	RS. 47,786.00	20-JUL-24	6.600	6.500
B.O.: ANPARA UP						
35	ANLU KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6659	RS. 5,08,493.00	8-MAY-24	87.600	69.300
36	KUSUM DEVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1104	RS. 1,26,883.00	20-NOV-24	23.700	22.200
37	PIYUS CHAURSIA	XXXXXXXXXXXX1264	RS. 85,582.00	30-JAN-25	19.000	17.800
B.O.: AZAMGARH [UP]						
38	RAJAT CHAURSIA	XXXXXXXXXXXX1430	RS. 76,760.00	8-MAY-24	17.300	16.200
39	RAJAT CHAURSIA	XXXXXXXXXXXX0127	RS. 76,717.00	8-FEB-23	17.200	16.000
40	RAJVEER SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX7220	RS. 73,119.00	8-MAY-24	12.100	11.700
41	RAM VINAY	XXXXXXXXXXXX7292	RS. 71,803.00	10-OCT-23	19.800	18.500
42	SAYED MOHD BELAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX4927	RS. 54,895.26	8-MAY-24	7.900	7.900
B.O.: BAGPAT [UP]						
43	KRISHAN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4213	RS. 132,461.00	8-MAY-24	21.300	19.000
B.O.: BAHERI [UP]						
44	MOHD HARUN	XXXXXXXXXXXX4727	RS. 104,451.00	30-JAN-25	22.300	21.500
45	MOHD HARUN	XXXXXXXXXXXX4727	RS. 103,891.00	27-SEP-24	15.600	15.500
46	SAKSHAM SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX9487	RS. 60,140.00	30-JAN-25	22.260	18.910
47	VED PRAKASH	XXXXXXXXXXXX1087	RS. 37,875.00	20-JUL-24	9.000	8.800
B.O.: BAIKUNTHI [UP]						
48	ANIL KUMAR TIWARI	XXXXXXXXXXXX7966	RS. 5,55,485.00	8-MAY-24	226.100	141.100
49	ARTI CHAUHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX0767	RS. 4,69,177.00	8-MAY-24	119.900	107.000
50	BHISHM PITAMH	XXXXXXXXXXXX6177	RS. 3,10,302.00	20-JUL-24	50.900	42.500
51	JUBER ALAM	XXXXXXXXXXXX7586	RS. 1,46,885.00	27-SEP-24	23.900	23.700
52	KOUSHIK .	XXXXXXXXXXXX7713	RS. 1,32,802.00	28-AUG-24	23.800	22.000
53	MOHAMMAD SHAFIQ	XXXXXXXXXXXX8113	RS. 1,06,200.00	20-NOV-24	21.400	17.400
54	OM PATHAK	XXXXXXXXXXXX4488	RS. 90,244.00	8-MAY-24	33.400	24.100
55	PARVEEN KATHOON	XXXXXXXXXXXX9288	RS. 86,894.00	6-JAN-25	28.690	18.090
56	RAVI PRAKASH MISHRA	XXXXXXXXXXXX5409	RS. 65,834.00	4-AUG-24	19.900	19.700
57	SHAHEEN .	XXXXXXXXXXXX4381	RS. 54,543.00	5-AUG-24	17.100	15.000
B.O.: BALLIA [UP]						
58	ASHWANI KUMAR YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX2889	RS. 4,04,372.00	22-MAR-24	113.600	112.700
59	EKTA SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX3412	RS. 2,15,934.48	20-JUL-24	53.700	46.000
60	NEELAM DEVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX8217	RS. 93,858.00	28-DEC-23	29.000	21.000
61	POOJA VERMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX7597	RS. 85,509.00	30-JAN-25	20.700	20.300
62	PUSHPA DEVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX5910	RS. 79,689.83	7-JUN-24	12.400	11.900
63	RAKESH YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX5825	RS. 72,463.00	4-AUG-24	19.500	19.000
64	RAMLAKHAN YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX1092	RS. 69,365.00	7-SEP-24	18.900	18.500
65	SARITA YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX9264	RS. 56,588.00	7-JUN-24	14.400	14.200
B.O.: BANDA BNA UP						
66	ANLU PRATAP SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX5367	RS. 5,02,147.00	8-MAY-24	231.800	120.000
67	MANOJ KUMAR MISHRA	XXXXXXXXXXXX5840	RS. 1,13,209.00	7-JUN-24	19.100	18.800
B.O.: BANGARMAU UP						
68	RAMNARESH .	XXXXXXXXXXXX4627	RS. 69,060.56	27-SEP-24	11.400	9.500
69	SALLEEM KHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX2654	RS. 60,109.94	7-JUN-24	17.800	10.000
70	SHYAM SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX9485	RS. 50,537.00	30-JAN-25	15.200	14.700
B.O.: BANSI BNI UP						
71	AZAD	XXXXXXXXXXXX5397	RS. 3,90,161.00	8-MAY-24	97.200	91.500
72	PRADEEP KUMAR MISHRA	XXXXXXXXXXXX4778	RS. 84,285.00	27-SEP-24	26.600	16.000
73	SIDDHESHVAR NATH PANDEY	XXXXXXXXXXXX2309	RS. 49,901.00	25-AUG-23	9.600	9.000
B.O.: BARABANKI [UP]						
74	AASHISH	XXXXXXXXXXXX9202	RS. 17,21,178.00	28-AUG-24	266.200	265.700
75	MAYA DEVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX5990	RS. 1,10,377.00	25-AUG-23	29.400	28.900
76	MITHILA DEVI	XXXXXXXXXXXX0918	RS. 1,07,786.00	20-NOV-24	20.500	19.500
77	MOHD KASHIF AHMAD KIDWAI	XXXXXXXXXXXX4765	RS. 1,03,391.00	20-NOV-24	17.600	17.500
78	VIRENDRA VERMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX6495	RS. 34,207.00	6-JAN-25	10.500	10.000
B.O.: BARAUT BRT UP						
79	VAIBHAV TOMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX2040	RS. 38,300.00	20-NOV-24	7.400	7.200
B.O.: BARGHALLA UP						
80	YOGENDRA NATH	XXXXXXXXXXXX2033	RS. 31,682.00	7-JUN-24	10.000	8.400
B.O.: BASTI [UP]						
81	DURGAWATI VERMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX4647	RS. 2,17,842.00	6-JAN-25	56.300	39.000
82	GANESH SHANKAR VIDYARTHI	XXXXXXXXXXXX5735	RS. 2,01,457.00	8-SEP-24	52.600	50.300
83	RAMESH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4019	RS. 70,811.00	8-MAY-24	24.100	19.200
84	VEER BAHAUDR	XXXXXXXXXXXX3249	RS. 37,565.00	30-JAN-25	9.200	8.800
B.O.: BHADOLI [UP]						
85	ASHU YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX5009	RS. 4,05,451.00	10-OCT-23	85.990	85.690
B.O.: BHAIASANA,MUZAFF NUAZ UP						
86	HUSSAIN	XXXXXXXXXXXX7334	RS. 1,66,060.00	28-DEC-23	38.800	36.600
87	PAVAN KUMARI	XXXXXXXXXXXX6672	RS. 86,609.00	12-NOV-24	21.100	20.300
88	SACHIN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4537	RS. 61,487.00	20-JUL-24	13.280	13.230
89	TUSHAR CHOUDHARY	XXXXXXXXXXXX9400	RS. 39,697.00	5-AUG-24	9.800	9.300
90	VISHU CHAUDHARY	XXXXXXXXXXXX6541	RS. 33,584.00	28-DEC-23	8.500	8.000
B.O.: BILNOR [UP]						
91	IMRAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX9530	RS. 1,65,754.00	27-SEP-24	43.300	26.300
92	MOHD SHUAIB	XXXXXXXXXXXX0619	RS. 1,04,213.00	30-JAN-25	28.400	25.950
93	MUNESH	XXXXXXXXXXXX5926	RS. 98,924.00	20-JUL-24	15.100	14.700
94	MUNESH .	XXXXXXXXXXXX5926	RS. 98,924.00	20-NOV-24	16.900	16.200
95	NARUL KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX7148	RS. 96,815.00	28-NOV-24	26.300	25.800
96	SATYAM SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX9720	RS. 55,533.00	8-MAY-24	62.000	15.000
B.O.: BISALPUR BISA UP						
97	NAZRA BI	XXXXXXXXXXXX9038	RS. 94,023.00	7-SEP-24	24.300	20.100
98	SAHAV JAHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX4082	RS. 60,939.00	15-FEB-24	15.800	13.500
99	SHABUDDIN .	XXXXXXXXXXXX4587	RS. 54,667.00	8-MAY-24	10.400	9.600
B.O.: BISWAN SIT UP						
100	AKIK .	XXXXXXXXXXXX2259	RS. 7,68,301.00	8-MAY-24	119.900	107.000
101	MANJESH YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX5659	RS. 1,16,463.00	30-JAN-25	31.500	29.500
102	MOHD FAHIM	XXXXXXXXXXXX5987	RS. 1,04,600.00	12-NOV-24	30.300	27.500
103	MOHIT TRIVEDI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1795	RS. 1,02,233.00	8-MAY-24	29.100	27.100
104	MOHIT TRIVEDI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1795	RS. 1,02,198.00	27-SEP-24	18.900	18.500
B.O.: BULANDSHAHR [UP]						
105	AJAY SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX4731	RS. 9,18,096.00	27-SEP-24	135.300	135.300
106	GULBAHAR .	XXXXXXXXXXXX9851	RS. 1,93,930.00	30-JAN-25	78.500	52.000
107	NEERAJ SINGH CHAUHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX1455	RS. 93,000.00	7-SEP-24	22.600	22.000
108	RAVI KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6455	RS. 66,477.00	20-NOV-24	13.000	12.500
B.O.: CHANDAUSI [UP]						
109	PRAVEEN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX9021	RS. 83,070.00	30-JAN-25	22.600	21.300
B.O.: CHOWK LUCKNOW LUC UP						
110	ZAMIN ABBAS	XXXXXXXXXXXX0200	RS. 30,074.00	6-SEP-24	9.700	9.600
B.O.: CHOWK, ALLAHABAD [UP]						
111	AMIT KUMAR SONKAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4244	RS. 5,97,783.28	27-SEP-24	139.900	116.600
112	AMIT KUMAR SRIVASTAVA	XXXXXXXXXXXX6618	RS. 5,94,383.00	8-MAY-24	83.800	82.900

113	ARUN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6215	RS. 4,63,216.00	20-NOV-23	106.300	105.000
114	MANISH PANDEY	XXXXXXXXXXXX3774	RS. 1,17,022.00	25-AUG-23	27.050	26.950
115	RAN KRISHNA SHUKLA	XXXXXXXXXXXX7915	RS. 88,242.00	5-AUG-24	17.500	16.800
B.O.: CHOWK, VARANASI VAR UP </						

PM receives Mauritius' highest award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday received Mauritius' highest honour, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. He called it a tribute to the centuries-old cultural and historical bonds of kinship between the two nations.

Modi is the first Indian leader to receive the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean award from Mauritius, which recognises his contributions to strengthening ties between India and Mauritius.

"I express my heartfelt gratitude for being conferred the Highest National Award of Mauritius. This is not just my honour. It is the honour of 1.4 Billion Indians. It is a tribute to the centuries-old cultural and historical bonds of kinship between India and Mauritius," Modi said.

Moreover, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief guest at the National Day of Mauritius on Wednesday, a rare repeat invitation for a leader which, officials said, underscores India's special relationship with the island country rooted in shared history, culture, and diaspora ties. Modi first received the honour in Mauritius in 2015, officials said.

The BJP said Prime Minister Modi has emerged as a "phenomenal leader" in the world with 21 countries bestowing on him their highest civilian award so far and the latest being Mauritius.

The officials cited several instances of Modi being the main guest at signature events of several countries to assert that the prime minister as a "global leader is



PM Modi after being conferred highest civilian award of Mauritius

shaping the rising influence of India" at international level.

An official source said, "The 2023 invitation (to PM Modi) to France's Bastille Day Parade was another defining moment, symbolising India's growing military and strategic partnership with France. The sight of Indian tri-services marching down the Champs-Elysees alongside French troops reinforced India's role in global geopolitics."

In 2022, official sources noted, Modi visited Lumbini in Nepal for Buddha Jayanti celebrations, emphasising India's historical connection to Buddhism and its shared heritage with Nepal. His visit

reinforced India's role in promoting cultural and spiritual ties across the region, they added.

In 2021, Bangladesh had invited him to its National Day celebrations, marking 50 years of its independence, an event closely tied to India's role in its liberation. His visit reaffirmed India's commitment to regional stability and shared prosperity, they added.

In 2017, his visit to Sri Lanka for the International Vesak Day highlighted India's leadership in "civilisational and cultural diplomacy". By reaffirming India's role as a custodian of Buddhist heritage, he strengthened spiritual and diplomatic ties with Buddhist-majority nations, they

added.

Hailing the award, the BJP said "With this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received the highest civilian award of 21 countries so far, emerging as a phenomenal leader in the world. Recently, Barbados also bestowed on him its highest civilian award," party national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi told reporters in the Parliament complex. These 21 countries include Russia, the US and nine Muslim countries, he added.

Trivedi further said, "This shows that under the stewardship of Prime Minister Modi, our relationship with various countries in the world have transcended beyond the utility factor of economic, military or diplomatic aspects. "Now, we have reached a different level in which various countries are feeling a very positive, sentimental attachment and respect towards India," the BJP Rajya Sabha MP said, adding, "It's a matter of pride for 140 Crore people of the country."

Trivedi said Prime Minister Modi has received several other international awards including the UN Champions of the Earth Award and Seoul Peace Prize in 2018. "In our eternal concept of 'vishva bandhutva' (universal brotherhood), Prime Minister Modi has led India in such a way that the entire world is looking at India as 'vishva mitra' (universal friend)," he said. "It is a matter of pride for all Indians that under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, we are not just becoming a ray of hope for the world and the driver of growth engine of the world but also an affectionate point of attraction for the most of the countries," Trivedi added.

Government to ensure fair conduct of examinations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The government is committed to ensure fair conduct of examinations and trying to strengthen the system to prevent any malpractice, Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar said on Wednesday in the Rajya Sabha.

Replying to queries during Question Hour related to irregularities in the NEET (UG) exam held last year, the minister cited a Supreme Court order to assert that there was no systemic failure and the government has already asked CBI to investigate the matter and five charge sheets have been filed against 45 people in the paper theft case.

Majumdar said the government has passed a new law 'Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024' and implemented many recommendations of the K Radhakrishnan committee. "Our government is committed that examinations are held in a clean system. We assure that under the Modi government, we will not allow any malpractice," he said.

Already, he said, the Supreme Court has given a verdict that there is no systemic leakage. "So, if we call it a leakage then, we are disobeying or disrespecting the verdict of the Supreme Court." Steps are being taken and will be taken against those who have availed unfair means, Majumdar said. "In the new Act, we have made some provisions through which we can punish those people who will try to breach the system. We are trying to strengthen our system so that no one can

breach our system of examination," he said, adding that the National Testing Agency (NTA) is using CCTV and also metal detectors for searches.

The minister said that if the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan committee are implemented fully, "then, I think, this type of incident will be curbed". The NEET (UG) 2024 Examination was conducted by the National Testing Agency on May 5, 2024. "After the conduct of NEET(UG) 2024 Examination, certain cases of alleged irregularities/cheating/malpractices were reported," Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had said in a statement earlier.

The ministry had asked the CBI to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the entire gamut of alleged irregularities, including conspiracy, cheating, and breach of trust with respect to the NEET(UG) 2024 Examination.

"As on November 21, 2024, the CBI has filed five charge sheets in the NEET(UG) paper theft case against a total of 45 accused," Pradhan said.

Names of candidates, who are beneficiaries of the paper theft/unfair means and names of the MBBS students who had solved the stolen paper or who had appeared in the exam as impersonators have already been identified and sent to concerned authorities, as the case may be, for necessary action, he had stated. In order to suggest effective measures for transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations by NTA, the ministry constituted a High-Level Committee of Experts (HLCE) on June 22, 2024.

2000 kids awaiting adoption in WB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Over 2,000 children are awaiting adoption, with West Bengal topping the list among states, the Women and Child Development Ministry said on Wednesday. Replying to a question in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Women and Child Development Savitri Thakur said the majority of the Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAPs) prefer to adopt younger children (of normal health and below 6 years of age) in the designated CARINGs portal, Thakur said.

"If there is availability of lesser number of such children in the adoption pool, the waiting period for PAP may be higher," she said in a written response.

According to the data shared by her, 2,321 children are awaiting adoption across the country. The highest number of such children are in West Bengal at 309, followed by Maharashtra at 261, Odisha at 225, Bihar at 205 and Telangana at 197.

Responding to another question, Thakur

said the projected population of all children up to 5 years in India for the year 2021 is 13.75 crores approximately.

"However, only 7.49 crore children up to 5 years were enrolled in anganwadis and registered on Poshan Tracker of the Ministry of Women and Child Development as per the February 2025 data," the minister said.

A total of 7.25 crore of them were measured on growth parameters of height and weight and 39.09 per cent of them have been found to be stunted, 16.60 per cent have been found to be underweight and 5.35 per cent are said to have been wasted (a child too thin for her height), she said. In response to another question, she said the women's helpline has been integrated with Emergency Response Support System and so far, they have handled over 2.10 crore calls and assisted over 84.43 lakh women. She added that as of January 2025, 745 fast track special courts, including 404 exclusive POCSO (e-POCSO) courts, are operational in all states and Union territories.

IIT-G launches meta platform for schools

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Learning concepts of maths and science in local languages using virtual reality will soon be possible for students at PM Shri Adarsh Vidyalayas in Assam with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati developing the country's first VR-enabled metaverse platform for schools. The project called "Gyandhara" in collaboration with Ministry of Science and Technology, and Department of Education, Assam Government will start as a pilot initiative in 56 PM Shri schools in Assam, later this year. The program is designed to enhance their educational experience by providing a more engaging way to learn about various scientific and academic topics.

Concerns against child marriage raised in Rajya Sabha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Issues including child marriage, agents duping people to travel to foreign countries and duplicate voter ID cards figured in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

Raising the issue of child marriages during Zero Hour, Babubhai Jesangbhai Desai (BJP) made a demand for effective implementation of child marriage act across the country. He said child marriage is a social problem which is hampering education and development of children.

Balbir Singh (AAP) raised the issue of exploitation by travel agents who traffic innocent youth from Punjab to foreign countries.

He said a large number of illegally sent youth are languishing in foreign jails. He also spoke about the recent deportations from the US, wherein youths were brought chained and handcuffed.

He urged the central government to tighten noose on such travel agents. Senior RJD leader Manoj Kumar Jha

expressed concern over duplicate voter ID card numbers and demanded that the Election Commission should immediately take a call on the extent of the duplication in the country.

Jha said a large number of duplicate Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers have been found, and due to which fairness of elections is being compromised.

Stressing that it is a matter of concern, the RJD member said the Article 324 of the Constitution enshrines free and fair elections as well as the level-playing field.

He further said that there is a spirit and philosophy behind the concept of free and fair elections.

The RJD MP demanded that the Election Commission should determine the extent of duplicate EPIC numbers, investigate from where the fraud started, and take urgent corrective measures.

He further said the Election Commission should also issue a separate list detailing voter deletions, new additions and modi-

fications. Congress MP Vivek K Tankha asked the government to facilitate pilgrimage to Sharda Peeth, located across the Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, on the lines of Kartarpur corridor. The Congress MP also spoke about the need for rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiri pandits and the facilitation of religious visits to Sharda Peeth through the LoC border.

Abdul Wahab (IUML) made a demand for additional fund for infrastructure development of existing ITIs in Kerala under hub and spoke model.

While expressing thanks to the Union Government for allocating ₹60,000 Crores for ITIs, he said the allocation for Kerala is quite low.

He said the Centre should allocate ₹2,100 Crore for Kerala. Harsh Mahajan (BJP) asked the government to strengthen the civil aviation infrastructure in Himachal Pradesh which is celebrated for its breathtaking nature, natural beauty and serene environment.

BJP loses Manesar Municipal Corporation polls

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

The results of the Manesar Municipal Corporation (MMC) were interestingly shocking for the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) after the party's mayor candidate and 13 Councillor candidates failed to secure their victory in the civic polls.

The party also failed to get the necessary majority number out of 20 wards of MMC. This was the first MC election in the Manesar area after the formation of the Manesar Corporation.

The saffron party mayor candidate, Sunder Lal Yadav, who was very confident of his victory, was defeated by an independent candidate, Dr. Inderjeet Yadav, wife of Rakesh Yadav, who was claimed by the BJP party as a gangster. MMC's newly elected mayor, Dr. Inderjeet Yadav, grabbed 26,393 votes, while BJP's Sunder Lal Yadav received 24,100 total votes.

He was defeated with a margin of 2,293 votes. Congress mayor candidate Neeraj Yadav got 5,134 votes, and independent candidate Vijay Singh got 9,163 votes.

Stalin using three-language formula as eyewash: AIADMK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

AIADMK MP M Thambidurai on Wednesday attacked Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin over the new education policy row, saying if he is sincere about the two-language formula, he should break alliance with the Congress which first introduced teaching three languages.

The Rajya Sabha MP reiterated that his party is also against the three-language formula but accused Stalin of using the issue as an "eyewash" ahead of Assembly elections in the state due next year.

"As far as AIADMK, we are in favour of the two-language formula. This is a long-standing issue... We are not for English but for Tamil to become official language. We won't accept imposition of Hindi and the Congress is the root cause for all the issues because the three-language formula was introduced by the Congress only," he told PTI Videos in the Parliament complex.

"If Stalin is sincere about the two-language formula and the state's interest, he has to come out from the Congress' alliance. Otherwise, he is only bringing these issues because elections are coming.

"His protest against the three-language formula is just an eyewash because people are against him, nobody likes him. Family domination is there, the cadre is not happy, the public is not happy, liquor issue raids are going on... He is going to face the same fate as Arvind Kejriwal, so to hide these issues he is playing up the two-language formula," he added.

The Tamil Nadu government and the Centre have been at loggerheads over the implementation of the new National Education Policy and the three-language formula proposed in the policy.

Tamil Nadu's refusal to implement key aspects of NEP 2020, particularly the three-language formula, has resulted in the Centre withholding Rs 573 crore in central education assistance under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). According to policy rules, states must comply with NEP guidelines to receive SSA funding, of which 60 per cent is provided by the Centre to states like Tamil Nadu. Under the PM SHRI scheme, the state concerned has to sign an MoU with the central government that it would implement the NEP 2020 and in return the Centre provides funds.

No tribal to be displaced: Oram

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

There will be no environmental impact and no tribal will be displaced due to the Great Nicobar project, Tribal Affairs Minister Jai Oram said in the Rajya Sabha while asserting that the project is important for the country owing to its strategic location.

Oram said this while replying to supplementaries during the question hour after several opposition members raised objections to the minister not giving a written reply to the question on tribals who are expected to be relocated as part of the project.

He said China is sitting in Hambantota (Sri Lanka) while noting that "why should India leave our land".

"This project is very important socio-economically and commercially in the interest of the country. We are merely 40 kms away from the sea route. That is why we cannot leave this," the minister said.

TMC member Saket Gokhale and Congress' Jairam Ramesh asked why the minister has not replied to the question. Gokhale had asked on the action taken on concerns raised by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

Due to this project, no one will be harmed or will suffer any harm, I assure you: Tribal Affairs Minister

(NCST) over effect of environmental and forest clearances granted for the Great Nicobar project on local tribal communities. Gokhale also said there are only 229 members of the Shompen tribe living in the world.

Oram said after the Tsunami struck the island, because of low-lying area, several tribals had shifted out.

A high-powered committee has been formed after the NGT decision and work is being carried out as per NGT orders, he informed the House.

Oram said he has personally as a tribal minister met the Shompen, Jarawa, Andamanese and Great Andamanese, and held dialogue with them. "Due to this project, no one will be harmed or will suffer any harm, I assure you," the minister said. "No one is being displaced. Only 7.144 square kms of tribal reserve land will be used and no one is being displaced due to the project. The gram sabha has also passed the project. Hence the objection is misplaced. The issue is pending with the high court," the minister told the House.

VP Dhankhar discharged from AIIMS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar was discharged from AIIMS-Delhi on Wednesday after making a satisfactory recovery, the premier hospital said. He has been advised to take adequate rest for the next few days. Dhankhar was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on March 9 following cardiac-related ailments, it said in a statement.

"After receiving necessary care from the medical team at AIIMS, he made a satisfactory recovery and was discharged on March 12," AIIMS-Delhi said.

In a social media post, Dhankhar thanked the medical team of the AIIMS. "Deeply appreciate the exemplary care and professionalism of the medical team at AIIMS, New Delhi, from my admission on March 9 to discharge on March 12.

Their dedication and meticulous attention ensured a smooth recovery," he said.

Sl. No.	Name	Roll No.	RS.	Exam Date	2024	2025
359	MOHD AZEEM	XXXXXXXXXX2184	RS. 1,04,873.00	27-NOV-24	29,400	28,200
B.O.: RASRA BLL UP						
360	DEEPAK KUMAR VERMA	XXXXXXXXXX9847	RS. 2,47,892.00	12-NOV-24	70,100	67,900
361	SUDHIR VERMA	XXXXXXXXXX7194	RS. 47,306.00	30-JAN-25	35,300	12,000
B.O.: RENUKOOT REN UP						
362	AJAY KUMAR SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXX5251	RS. 9,01,464.00	20-JUL-24	197,180	137,180
363	AJEET KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXX5055	RS. 8,58,979.00	20-JUL-24	123,900	113,000
364	AJEET KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXX8581	RS. 8,48,945.00	30-JAN-25	195,140	187,600
365	AJEET KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXX8581	RS. 8,27,743.00	27-SEP-24	206,100	206,100
366	KIRAN DEVI	XXXXXXXXXX9882	RS. 1,34,196.00	20-JUL-24	22,000	19,300
367	MITHILESH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXX1766	RS. 1,07,758.00	15-FEB-24	28,400	28,100
368	PRASHANT KUMAR BISWAS	XXXXXXXXXX7345	RS. 83,278.00	8-MAY-24	19,500	19,100
369	RAKESH KESHARI	XXXXXXXXXX9566	RS. 72,836.00	20-NOV-24	11,890	11,700
370	RENU DEVI	XXXXXXXXXX3184	RS. 64,305.00	20-NOV-24	10,600	10,000
B.O.: ROBERTSGANJ ROB UP						
371	ASHOK KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXX5883	RS. 4,14,807.00	6-JAN-25	68,800	68,500
372	ASHOK KUMAR PAL	XXXXXXXXXX6574	RS. 4,07,511.00	4-NOV-24	109,100	106,700
373	BABU NANDAN SINGH	XXXXXXXXXX4867	RS. 3,73,032.00	15-FEB-24	110,500	93,200
374	KRISHNA PRATAP SINGH	XXXXXXXXXX0580	RS. 1,31,654.00	30-JAN-25	30,800	30,000
375	MANISH KUMAR PAL	XXXXXXXXXX5692	RS. 1,16,842.00	30-JAN-25	30,550	28,050
376	MANOJ KUMAR YADAV	XXXXXXXXXX0224	RS. 1,12,409.00	30-JAN-25	32,000	29,700
377	SWETA YADAV	XXXXXXXXXX2778	RS. 41,676.00	29-SEP-23	9,000	9,000
378	TALKEER AHMAD KHAN	XXXXXXXXXX0392	RS. 40,374.00	4-AUG-24	9,400	9,300
B.O.: SAMBAL (UP)						
379	MOHD SHAHROOK	XXXXXXXXXX9206	RS. 1,04,330.00	30-JAN-25	25,960	24,460
380	MOHD SHAHROOK	XXXXXXXXXX9206	RS. 1,02,892.00	30-JAN-25	27,100	26,000
381	WAHID HUSAIN	XXXXXXXXXX7690	RS. 32,780.00	8-MAY-24	7,800	7,300
B.O.: SHAHJAHANPUR (UP)						
382	HUMA SADAF	XXXXXXXXXX3096	RS. 1,67,008.00	20-JUL-24	28,500	27,500
383	NASIR AHMAD	XXXXXXXXXX3134	RS. 95,711.00	15-FEB-24	22,600	21,700
384	VIKASH MISHRA	XXXXXXXXXX7068	RS. 35,960.00	30-JAN-25	8,020	7,840

Sl. No.	Name	Roll No.	RS.	Exam Date	2024	2025
B.O.: SHAMLI, UTTAR P SHM UP						
385	DHEERAJ KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXX5232	RS. 2,30,177.00	8-MAY-24	61,900	61,400
386	MOHD ASIF	XXXXXXXXXX5180	RS. 1,03,979.00	30-JAN-25	22,670	21,800
B.O.: SHIKOHABAD, FIROZ FRZ UP						
387	DEEP PRATAP YADAV	XXXXXXXXXX3111	RS. 2,53,845.00	20-NOV-24	56,900	55,300
388	DHARMENDRA	XXXXXXXXXX4074	RS. 2,37,934.00	9-NOV-23	70,500	67,030
389	UMESH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXX5017	RS. 39,261.00	20-NOV-24	6,500	6,400
390	VIPUL PRATAP	XXXXXXXXXX4991	RS. 34,292.00	30-JAN-25	9,400	9,000
B.O.: SIKANDRA, AGRA AGR UP						
391	MEENA DEVI	XXXXXXXXXX8600	RS. 1,09,612.00	12-NOV-24	27,000	25,600
392	RAVI SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXX0464	RS. 66,203.00	7-JUN-24	21,600	18,000
393	SANKALP VERMA	XXXXXXXXXX4291	RS. 58,377.00	27-SEP-24	9,900	9,800
B.O.: SIRSAGANJ, FIROZ SSG UP						
394	ASHISH KUMAR SAGAR	XXXXXXXXXX9421	RS. 4,44,021.00	8-MAY-24	103,530	103,200
B.O.: SITAPUR (UP)						
395	ABDUL RAHMAN	XXXXXXXXXX5437	RS. 14,29,690.21	20-JUL-24	255,700	253,900
396	MAHESH KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXX3722	RS. 1,18,648.00	20-JUL-24	16,400	16,000
397	MOHD RIZWAN	XXXXXXXXXX6750	RS. 1,04,358.00	20-NOV-24	22,700	21,200
398	RAHUL MISHRA	XXXXXXXXXX2048	RS. 78,139.37	8-MAY-24	18,700	17,900
399	SANJAI KUMAR TIWARI	XXXXXXXXXX9690	RS. 58,957.00	30-JAN-25	17,600	13,000
400	SANJAI KUMAR TIWARI	XXXXXXXXXX3288	RS. 58,863.00	9-NOV-23	14,300	13,100
401	SANJEEV KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXX9079	RS. 58,497.00	30-MAY-23	13,500	12,700
B.O.: SULTANPUR (UP)						
402	AM					

Editor's TAKE

Mark Carney to take on Voldemort

A known Trump critic, Mark Carney replaces Justin Trudeau as Canada's Prime Minister

In a historic political shift, Mark Carney has been announced as the next leader of the Liberal Party and the 24th Prime Minister of Canada, succeeding Justin Trudeau. Carney won the leadership race decisively, securing 131,674 votes, approximately 85.9 per cent of the ballots. His transition into office marks a significant turning point for the Liberal Party and Canada's future, particularly in its economic policies and international relations. Carney brings a wealth of economic expertise to the position, having previously served as the Governor of both the Bank of Canada (2008–2013) and the Bank of England (2013–2020). He is widely credited with steering Canada through the 2008 financial crisis, earning him a reputation as a pragmatic and reliable leader. His experience on the global financial stage, positions him as a leader with strong economic acumen. A former Goldman Sachs executive, Carney has long been seen as a steady hand in times of crisis, making him an ideal choice to ensure stability and economic resilience in the face of global uncertainties.

One of Carney's most immediate and critical challenges will be navigating Canada's relationship with the United States, particularly with former President Donald Trump returning to power. Trump's previous tenure was marked by a disdainful approach toward Canada, imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum, challenging trade agreements, and openly criticising the country's economic policies. In his second term, Trump has become even more vitriolic towards Canada. Carney's economic background makes him suited to address Trump's aggressive trade tactics. Having managed financial stability through turbulent times, he is likely to adopt a measured yet firm approach in negotiations. His experience in global financial leadership suggests he will prioritise economic diplomacy, leveraging Canada's trade alliances, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Canada-European Union trade deal, to counterbalance US pressure.

However, Carney's personal history with Trump presents an interesting dynamic. In the past, he has been openly critical of Trump's economic policies and even likened him to Voldemort, the infamous antagonist from Harry Potter. While this past remark may resurface in political discourse, Carney is expected to adopt a professional stance, emphasising economic pragmatism over political rhetoric a stark departure from his predecessor.

Carney's leadership is expected to focus on economic stability, climate change initiatives, and maintaining Canada's social programs. Given his strong advocacy for sustainable finance, his administration may prioritise green investments, aligning Canada's economic policies with global climate commitments. Trade diversification will be another key aspect of his strategy. To mitigate the risk of overreliance on the US market, Carney may seek to strengthen economic ties with Europe, Asia, and emerging markets, reducing Canada's vulnerability to American protectionism.

Mark Carney's rise to Canada's highest office brings a shift from Trudeau's leadership style to one deeply rooted in financial expertise and economic strategy. Under Mark Carney's leadership, Indo-Canada relations are expected to take a pragmatic and economically driven turn. He is likely to prioritise trade, investment, and economic collaboration with India. Canada may seek to expand its role in sectors such as technology, clean energy, and natural resources, aligning with India's rapid economic growth. However, political tensions, particularly surrounding issues like Khalistani separatism, could remain a challenge. Carney's diplomatic approach will likely focus on de-escalation and fostering stronger ties through economic partnerships rather than ideological confrontations. His leadership presents an opportunity for renewed negotiations on a long-pending free trade agreement, which could significantly enhance bilateral trade.

Leaderspeak

Today, Prime Minister Navin Chandra Ramgoolam and I decided to give the India-Mauritius partnership the status of 'Enhanced Strategic Partnership'. We decided that India will cooperate in building the new Parliament building in Mauritius. This will be a gift to Mauritius from the Mother of Democracy. India and Mauritius are connected not just by the Indian Ocean but by shared culture and values. We are each other's partners on the path of economic and social progress.

NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA



Delhi's Bold Step Towards Sustainability

The newly elected Delhi government is setting ambitious goals for environmental sustainability and disaster resilience, with a strong focus on cleaning the Yamuna River, pollution control, and waste management

Cleaning the Yamuna river, pollution control, garbage management, and addressing climate and disaster resilience to ensure sustainable development are among the top priorities of the newly elected Delhi government. However, these ambitious goals can only be achieved with active community participation. Raising awareness and fostering public engagement are crucial to creating a more sustainable and disaster-resilient future. In this context, a Centre for Disaster Risk Management and Environmental Sustainability, known as "Yamuna- Apda evam Jalvayu Parivartan Nyunikaran Adhishthan (YAJNA)" meaning- Yamuna - Institute for Disaster and Climate Change Mitigation, is proposed. This centre will serve as a hub for education, collaboration, and action, setting an example for other states to follow.

Delhi, the national capital of India, faces a complex web of hazards. From earthquakes and floods to human-induced crises such as severe air and water pollution, road accidents, and inefficient waste management, the city's vulnerabilities are escalating. Rapid urbanisation and a dense population further compound these risks, leading to widespread environmental degradation and public health crises. Despite existing efforts by multiple agencies, a significant gap remains in public engagement, coordination, and proactive action. A dedicated awareness centre like Yajna will bridge this gap by equipping citizens with the knowledge and tools to become active participants in resilience-building.

Disaster management museums cum knowledge centres worldwide have demonstrated their potential to drive awareness and preparedness. The Kobe Earthquake Memorial Museum in Japan and the Tsunami Memorial Museum in Thailand have played pivotal roles in educating the public on natural and human-induced hazards and mitigating the risk with better response strategies. In India, the Earthquake Museum in Bhuj, Gujarat, serves as a model for enhancing public understanding of seismic risks. Inspired by these global and national examples, the proposed centre in Delhi will not only focus on disaster risk reduction but also integrate environmental conservation, climate change mitigation, and pollution control efforts, with a special emphasis on cleaning the Yamuna River.

Yamuna, the lifeline of Delhi, has been battling severe pollution for decades. Industrial waste, untreated sewage, and rampant encroachments have turned this once-pris-



time river into a toxic water body. The newly elected government has placed Yamuna's rejuvenation at the forefront of its agenda, recognising that a clean river is fundamental to public health, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable urban development. However, government initiatives alone cannot restore the Yamuna. Without widespread community participation, even the most well-intentioned policies will fall short. The proposed centre will be crucial in mobilising citizens, educating them about the importance of river conservation, and providing actionable solutions for sustainable water management.

Environmental sustainability and disaster resilience are deeply interconnected. Poor waste management contributes to urban flooding, air pollution exacerbates respiratory diseases, and deforestation heightens vulnerability to climate-induced disasters. The centre will function as a convergence point where experts, policymakers, students, and local communities come together to find innovative and practical solutions. Through interactive exhibitions, hands-on training, and community-driven campaigns, the centre will empower people to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives. It will promote waste segregation, composting, and recycling, significantly reducing Delhi's landfill burden. Additionally, it will advocate for green energy solutions, urban afforestation, and pollution control measures, aligning with India's commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for

Disaster Risk Reduction.

Public engagement will be at the heart of this initiative. Schools, colleges, resident welfare associations, and corporate sectors will be actively involved in awareness campaigns, training sessions, and workshops. The younger generation, in particular, will be encouraged to take ownership of environmental stewardship, ensuring long-term impact. By fostering a culture of responsibility and collective action, the centre will create a ripple effect, inspiring similar initiatives in other cities and states.

Beyond its educational role, the centre will also serve as a research and policy hub, providing scientific insights and data-driven recommendations to strengthen urban resilience. It will facilitate collaboration between various government agencies, research institutions, and civil society organisations to develop integrated strategies for disaster preparedness and environmental sustainability. With real-time monitoring of air and water quality, the centre will enable authorities to take proactive measures in pollution control and disaster risk reduction.

This initiative is not just about creating another institution—it is about transforming

Delhi into a model city for resilience and sustainability. By integrating disaster risk reduction with environmental conservation, the centre will facilitate enhancing public safety, improve air and water quality, and promote sustainable urban planning. The direct economic benefits in the form of revenue will be significant as well. Similar to the Bhuj Earthquake Museum, which has become a successful revenue-generating centre, YAJNA is expected to attract students, researchers, policymakers, and industry professionals from across the country and beyond. Educational programs, training courses, and consultancy services will generate revenue, ensuring the centre's long-term viability.

As Delhi embarks on a new chapter under the leadership of the newly elected government, the time to act is now. The commitment to cleaning the Yamuna, controlling pollution, managing waste effectively, and building climate resilience must be translated into concrete actions. This initiative offers a comprehensive and practical roadmap to achieve these goals. By bringing together the government, experts, and citizens, the centre will ensure that resilience and sustainability become embedded in Delhi's development journey. A resilient Delhi is not just a necessity—it is a responsibility we owe to future generations.

(The writer is former executive director, National Institute of Disaster Management. Views expressed are personal)



SATENDRA SINGH

The Delicate Strength of Relationships

SECOND Opinion



SANJAY CHANDRA

Relationships are beautiful. However, I often view them through the lenses of the boundaries deeply ingrained during childhood and over the decades. I fail to grasp that human relationships are pure and unadulterated emotions. They cannot follow any scientific formulae. I also need to curb my tendency to judge the raw emotions and reactions of others solely based on my experiences.

I am the oldest child of my generation in the entire family. A lesson deeply ingrained into my psyche by my elders was that I needed to be mindful of the youngsters and guests came first. I discharged my responsibilities with the utmost care till I had my first setback in my early teens. A much younger cousin was playing with my sister. Like all children, they also started fighting for the same toy. It fell upon me to mediate. My sister did not say anything but burst into tears when I tried to explain that it was our responsibility to take care of the younger guest. Her tears taught me an important lesson. We have tried hard not to burden our daughters with unnecessary baggage.

A few days into my first posting in the railways, I was asked to chair the farewell meeting of a retiring staff. I was the seniormost official in the gathering at the relatively young age of 25. I was taken aback when I was asked

to speak a few words. Eloquence is not my strong suit. I prefer brevity, or even silent brooding, over a long drawn flowery speech. I remember my impromptu words even four decades later. I compared the professional journey of everyone from the time of joining till retirement to the life of a rose and the fragrance that it spreads till the end. I also compared the new life that the staff would embark upon from the next day to the blooming of a new flower. The staff had tears of gratitude in his eyes. The supervisors applauded me for words well said. It was Bengal where words spoken from the heart are also received with utmost sincerity. I had developed an instant connection and lasting relationships with them. They recognised me as a sensitive soul they could unreservedly approach for help. I may not always have been of much assistance, but it was enough for the person to unbuckle.

A young neighbour told me that she finds me unduly sensitive to certain situations. She said that she, and probably many more, look up to me for guidance. She went on to mention that I need to curb my impulsive reactions. My response was that I am an extremely sensitive and emotional person, and I have spent a lifetime worrying about others. It is now time for me to be myself. I rather flippantly concluded, "This is what I am."

This is a lesson I sometimes forget when imparting my words of wisdom to those dear to me. A long time as an

engineer has made me too rational and logical. I often find myself at the receiving end when I abruptly interrupt my wife as she starts talking about something bothering her, a situation that I may feel is beyond her control. I conveniently forget my learnings over a lifetime, till she reminds me that she is aware of the impossibility of the situation. She wants me to let her vent her frustrations. I realise there is a lot I need to work on.

In author Mignon G Eberhart's words, "The complexity of human relationships is never simple to follow; it is like intricate lacework, but lacework made of steel."

To conclude, relationships are intricate, shaped by personal experiences, emotions, and deep-seated values. My journey has been one of constant learning—understanding that relationships cannot be governed by rigid logic but by sensitivity and empathy. From childhood lessons of responsibility to professional experiences that connected me with people on a deeper level, I have realised that emotions must be acknowledged, not judged.

Over the years, I have also recognised my own need to evolve. While my rationality has served me well, it sometimes overshadows the simple act of listening. As my wife often reminds me that not every problem requires a solution—sometimes, people just need to be heard. As I continue to navigate relationships, I strive to embrace emotions without overanalysing them.

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing. Views expressed are personal)

Letters to the Editor

From Goddesses to Subjugation

Madam —The editorial 'Beyond the rhetoric' should sensitise all the concerned. History presents the picture of women placed in high esteem and treated with dignity and honour. Even where men were ruling women were guiding them in the fields of diplomacy, finance and social issues. We have many women rulers who have been envied by others for their value, popularity they enjoyed, ability to rule to the satisfaction of all their subjects. It is even said that before the male God's came in the scene it was Goddesses who were actually worshipped.

However, in due course of time they have yielded to the dominance of men. Even today the society worships goddesses but keeps women in a tamed status. In spite of their fine and valuable contributions they should not learn and recite Vedas.

But women are springing up today proving themselves to be the best in every field. There are scenes of rape and denial their due rights also, which are the fallouts of the impulsive rulers' who still view the women gender as a subjugated section. Some sections justify this by calling them the dictum of the Gods.

If the government is really serious it can implement the deterrent provisions to stop the spate of rapes. Women are paraded nude in public, raped and murder in Manipur.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

India Fights Cancer

Madam—It is with reference to the news "BJP to open 200 day care cancer centres this year: Nadda". Central government's proposal of opening 200 day cancer centres in the country in 2025- 26 to provide basic facilities to cancer patients is a welcome move. It has also been planned to establish such centres in all districts in the next three years to treat cancer patients. In India, the number of cancer patients is rising and the country needs to improve access to cancer care. It is estimated that one in nine persons in India are likely to develop cancer in their lifetime.

Among the new cases breast, cervix and lung cancer are the most frequently reported. Though India has some of the most advanced cancer treatment methods and technology, there are still gaps in access and affordability. There are also shortage of cancer care facilities, manpower and training. Early detection, screening, education, health promotion and tobacco control are important to prevent and control cancer. It is estimated that by 2050, there will be an 85 per cent increase in the number of new cancer cases and deaths in the WHO'S South East Asia region. It is unfortunate.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for continued efforts from clinicians, researchers and policy makers to collaborate and find the most effective strategies to serve cancer patients in the best way possible.

P VICTOR SELVARAJ | TIRUNELVELI

Self-Defence or Self-Reliance?

Madam —The recent report from the Stockholm Peace Research Institute which highlight the Arm Import by the countries has revealed some of the really interesting facts. The report designate India as the second largest arms importing country after Ukraine, followed by Qatar. Although, the fact is not shocking that India is the major arm importing country, because we had a long history of it. There is no such big problem in such imports, but the shocking part of the story is that India fails to implement its so called state of the art plan of Aatm Nirbhar Bharat idea of domestic arm manufacturing.

Whereas, China make a drastic shift of altering its import status. It successfully managed to keep itself out of the top ten importer ranking, paving the way for domestic manufacturing of such critical arms and ammunition in their own country.

Arms are the basic need for self defence for any nation, which no country could ever think to avoid for. It is welcoming that despite India stand at the second position in the arm importing list, the import goes 9.3 per cent down in 2020-2024, compared to the arm trade figures of 2015-19.

In a bid to incline for self defence on our own, it is required that India must start satisfying its arm need on its own. We need to be self reliant for our self defence.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

SUPREME COURT MOOTS FOR DISABLED FRIENDLY PRISONS

Supreme Court had expressed concerns over the plight of disabled prisoners which is against the Disability Act 2016 passed by the Parliament and it is worth mentioning that during that Parliament session there was pandemonium and Disability bill was passed and all parties supported the bill and the Supreme Court said a petition highlighting the trauma and inhumane conditions suffered by Professor G Saibaba and the elderly Stan Swamy raised a "serious" issue about the lack of disabled-friendly accommodation and facilities in prisons across the country. While Stan Swamy had passed away while lodged in jail as an undertrial prisoner, Saibaba had passed away last year a few months after he was acquitted and released from jail. The Supreme Court sought the response of the Central government to a PIL seeking adequate facilities for disabled prisoners in jails.

The PIL cited the instances of treatment meted out to Professor GN Saibaba and Father Stan Swamy to highlight the severe

neglect of disabled prisoners and lack of disabled-friendly accommodation, washrooms and other facilities in jails.

While Stan Swamy passed away in 2021 while lodged in jail as an undertrial prisoner in the Bhima Koregaon violence case, Saibaba passed away last year a few months after he was acquitted and released from prison. The demise of Professor GN Saibaba, a scholar and human rights activist with disabilities, was directly attributable to his deteriorating health, exacerbated by prolonged incarceration and the inhumane conditions of his detention. Stan Swamy also struggled with disability due to Parkinson's syndrome and died while in prison. He was denied medical treatment and basic support," the petition submitted.

The PIL cited the instances of treatment meted out to Professor GN Saibaba and Father Stan Swamy to highlight the severe neglect of disabled prisoners and lack of disabled-friendly accommodation, washrooms and other facilities in jails.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

Logistics is Holding Back North India's Growth

India's industrial landscape is marked by a stark regional imbalance, with western and southern states surging ahead while northern states struggle to keep pace. Without urgent intervention to rationalise freight costs and improve logistics infrastructure, northern states risk falling further behind

FIRST Column



states command an astounding 69 per cent of India's total FDI, while the remaining states are left with a mere 31 per cent. This clearly illustrates how locational advantages significantly dictate industrial investment.

Export statistics serve as further evidence of this imbalance, with Gujarat and Maharashtra accounting for over 50 per cent of India's total exports, thanks to their robust seaport infrastructures. Without immediate and decisive intervention, this disparity will only continue to widen, threatening the future economic landscape of our nation.

Seaport-Led Industrialisation: A Global Perspective

Seaports play a critical role in industrialisation. Some countries, like China, have successfully leveraged their coastal regions to expand manufacturing capabilities. In China, industrial hubs are strategically located near ports, minimising logistical costs. In contrast, India's hinterland dry ports and container depots are, on average, 1,400 km away



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from seaports, leading to significantly higher export and import costs. This distance compounds competition from China, which accounted for nearly 42 per cent of India's textiles and clothing imports, 40 per cent of machinery imports, and 38.4 per cent of electronics imports in 2023-24.

Why Freight Costs Matter
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported in 2022 that India's logistics costs are already 14 per cent higher than the global average, disproportionately affecting manufacturers in landlocked northern states that rely on dry ports as critical trade gateways. Manufacturers in these areas face higher freight costs due to longer transit distances to seaports like Mumbai, Mundra, Kandla, and Chennai.

Dependence on road transport is 30-50 per cent

more expensive than rail. The lack of dedicated freight corridors slows transportation efficiency and increases operational expenses. Industries in northern states not only receive raw materials from coastal regions but also send finished products to markets using the same routes.

While dry ports have been established to bridge this gap, they often function merely as booking centres rather than effective logistics solutions. As a result, northern manufacturers face a double freight burden, forcing many to relocate or shut down operations due to unsustainable costs. In contrast, industrial clusters in coastal states benefit from proximity to ports, enhancing their global trade competitiveness and generating employment.

Railway freight initiatives: The Indian Railways has successfully implemented targeted freight subsidies in select sectors. First, a 40 per cent discount is available for loading fly ash. Second, Traditional Empty Flow Directions (TEFD) rebate up to a 20 per cent reduction in costs for freight that moves along underutilised routes. Third, 157 'Kisan Rail'

services transport perishable goods and vegetables. A 50 per cent subsidy on railway freight, funded by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries under the 'Operation Greens' scheme, has significantly boosted farm exports of agricultural commodities. Fourth, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) offers a 20 per cent Transport Incentive (TI) Scheme for finished goods transported via rail or the Inland Waterways Authority of India, from the port nearest to the location of industrial units in the North-Eastern Region (NER) to the buyers' area.

How freight subsidy could be re-structured

Based on previous initiatives, a targeted Northern States Freight Subsidy Program could be a game changer and might be structured as follows: Subsidised Rail Freight Rates:

1. Offering up to a 30-40 per cent subsidy on goods transported from northern dry ports to major coastal hubs.
2. Expanding Empty Flow Rebates: Extending TEFD rebates to northern states to make backhaul freight more economical.
3. Infrastructure Development: Investing in multimodal logistics parks and dedicated freight corridors in the northern states.

The Way Forward:

The central government must not overlook its landlocked northern states to achieve inclusive industrial growth. Rail freight subsidies will support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), attract new investments, and create jobs.

While global trade regulations often scrutinise subsidies, the pricing autonomy of Indian Railways allows for strategic adjustments in freight costs without breaching World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. By revising freight structures, northern manufacturers can enhance their global competitiveness. If we aspire for a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India), it is essential to ensure balanced industrial progress. To conclude, India's industrial growth is marked by stark regional disparities, with southern states while northern states lag behind. A key driver of this imbalance is logistics, as landlocked states face high freight costs that hinder competitiveness and discourage investment.

Proximity to seaports has enabled coastal states to dominate exports, attract foreign direct investment, and develop thriving industrial sectors. To bridge this gap, India must implement a targeted Northern States Freight Subsidy Program, including subsidised rail freight rates, expanded empty flow rebates, and enhanced logistics infrastructure.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IFL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)

Reliance on Foreign Investments: The Role Of FDI & FII In Economic Stability

India's economic trajectory under Prime Minister Narendra Modi blends rigorous analysis with bold policy moves. The BJP-led government has combined openness to foreign capital — through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Institutional Investment (FII) — with initiatives to boost self-reliance. Economists and policymakers alike recognise foreign investment as a pillar of economic stability, providing critical financing, technology, and market access across sectors. This balanced strategy favours pro-growth reforms while building domestic capacity.

FDI AND FII: Temporary Boost For Long-Term Self-Reliance

Surging FDI inflows have strengthened India's growth and stability. Annual FDI hit a record \$83.6 Billion in FY2021-22, almost double the \$45 Billion in 2014. This reflects investors' confidence in India's reform agenda. Manufacturing FDI alone jumped 76 per cent in FY2021-22 after initiatives like Make in India, and even post-COVID FDI inflows were 23 per cent higher than pre-pandemic levels, underscoring sustained foreign trust during crises.

FII has been crucial in bolstering India's financial markets and boosting its economy. India has managed to extract maximum advantage out of FII inflows to improve market liquidity and reinforce a strong balance of payments position. Moreover, the Modi government's economic policies have inspired considerable confidence in the Indian economy among global investors leading to ever-increasing inflows of capital that have further firmed up the Indian economy. Timely and proactive actions taken by policymakers from targeted liquidity infusions during the 2020 global crisis to automatic stabilisers have mitigated volatility and supported growth momentum.

This bolstered economic momentum, with its cadre of dedicated professionals, startups, and thriving industries, has catapulted India to a challenging, productive, and sustainable global positioning of higher foreign investments.

Transformative Impact Across Key Sectors

Liberalised foreign investment regulations have funnelled significant capital reserves into formative industries including information technology, manufacturing infrastructure, healthcare, agribusiness, and education.

Technology corporations have been top beneficiaries, with the software and hardware sector attracting approximately 25 per cent of all foreign direct investment inflows in fiscal year 2021-2022, underscoring India's emergence as a global technology leader. Manufacturing

industries have gained momentum thanks to both foreign capital and domestic incentives designed to stimulate job creation and output. The innovative Production-Linked Incentive schemes introduced in 2020 have since incentivised ₹1.32 Trillion in new investments while expanding total production value by a staggering ₹10.9 Trillion, generating hundreds of thousands of well-compensated employment opportunities.

Strategic Reforms Boost Self-Reliance

PM Modi has aligned the overarching policy goals of self-reliance with encouraging foreign investment. Prime Minister Modi has shifted policy to turn self-reliance into both a goal and an opportunity for foreign investors. Launched in 2020 with a \$20 Trillion stimulus, the

Atmanirbhar Bharat mission epitomises India's pursuit for self-reliant growth; more efficient, competitive and resilient economies that welcome foreign participation which can strengthen the domestic base.

Defence manufacturing is a case in point. The FDI cap on it was raised from 49 per cent to 74 per cent to attract joint ventures and technology transfer. On a broader scale, substantive liberalisation of FDI across all sectors (from coal mining and aviation to insurance and the internet) along with simplifying investment rules has radically improved India's investor-friendly environment. Together with the Make in India initiative, this ensures that foreign investment enters the country in forms that are consistent with national goals and strengthen the industrial foundation.

Self-Reliant Growth

Continuing reforms and overall multi-sector growth should keep India firmly on the map as a global place for investment. Nearly constant inflows from abroad, gains in sectors besides heavy industry, and a market that has been proof of the strength of this strategy.

Consequently, strategic foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign institutional investors (FII) will continue to play important roles in India's pursuit of balanced development. By keeping up steady government policies and forming international partnerships, India can achieve economic self-reliance. This formula for success will ensure that India is a strong and resilient economic power.



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Conclusion

The challenge of balancing foreign investment with self-reliant economic growth in India has its roots in the socialist Nehruvian policies. Historically, India has oscillated between protectionist policies and open-market reforms. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the government has pursued a dual approach: encouraging Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Institutional Investment (FII) while simultaneously strengthening domestic industries. The core issue being tackled is how India can leverage foreign capital for growth without becoming overly dependent on external funding.

FDI brings in critical capital, technology, and expertise, which boost infrastructure, manufacturing, and technology sectors. Meanwhile, FII helps stabilize financial markets and improve liquidity. However, excessive reliance on foreign investments can lead to economic vulnerabilities, particularly during global downturns.

India has addressed this issue by implementing structural reforms such as Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and Production-Linked Incentives (PLI).

These initiatives ensure that foreign investments align with national priorities, fostering job creation, technological advancements, and industrial self-sufficiency. In essence, the problem being analysed is whether India can sustain high economic growth, attract global investments, and enhance self-reliance without compromising financial stability.

India's economic trajectory under Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflects a strategic blend of foreign investment and self-reliance.

The record-breaking inflows of FDI and FII underscore global confidence in India's reform agenda, strengthening financial markets, industrial growth, and employment generation. Initiatives like Make in India, Production-Linked Incentives, and Atmanirbhar Bharat have ensured that foreign investments align with national priorities, bolstering domestic capabilities while sustaining economic expansion.

The liberalisation of foreign investment regulations across key sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and defense has attracted significant capital and fostered innovation.

The Modi government's pragmatic policies have mitigated global economic volatility, creating a resilient economic environment that can weather crises and sustain long-term growth. India's rise as a technology and industrial powerhouse is a testament to this strategic approach.

(The author is Chairperson - National Unity and Security Council. Views expressed are personal)

The Silent Crisis in Education: Teacher Burnout

Teachers are more than just educators. They are mentors, motivators and role models who profoundly shape their students' lives. Teachers' ability to inspire, adapt, and create lasting impact makes them unique.

However, what saddens is that the fast-paced nature of education has left the teachers physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted.

Today, teacher burnout is real, and it is a growing crisis that affects not only educators but also students and the overall quality of education. Burnout, which is characterised by chronic stress, exhaustion and a loss of motivation, has led many skilled educators to leave the profession.

Several factors such as excessive workload, lack of support resources, wherein teachers work beyond their contracted hours, grading assignments, preparing lesson plans, attending meetings and handling administrative tasks, along with the expectation to constantly perform at high levels with limited time have resulted to overwhelming stress.

Many teachers, especially in underfunded schools, are facing challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials and inadequate support staff, which has forced the teachers to find alternative solutions, often at the cost of their time and money.

Teaching is an emotionally demanding job. Today, a teacher apart from just teaching has to support students academically and personally, often acting as mentors, counsellors and caregivers. They even have to deal with student trauma, behavioural issues and academic struggles, which, as per several studies, has taken a significant emotional toll. Studies also reveal that in many countries, teachers are underpaid when compared to other professionals with similar education levels. This has led to financial stress and has contributed to dissatisfaction and exhaustion.

Due to their demanding schedules, many teachers struggle to find time for themselves and their families. The inability to maintain a work-life balance has contributed to chronic fatigue and decreased job satisfaction, resulting in teacher burnout.

Teacher burnout has serious consequences, not only for teachers but also for the education system as a whole. It is quite certain that once the person develops chronic stress, it will lead to physical health issues such as headaches, high blood pressure and insomnia. Not only this, it will also increase the risk of anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion. Such teachers will at the same time struggle to maintain the same level of enthusiasm, patience and creativity in their teaching, affecting student engagement and learning outcomes.

Today, many dedicated educators are leaving this noble profession due to burnout, resulting in teacher shortages and the loss of experienced professionals.

Consequently, schools are compelled to hire less experienced teachers, which impacts the overall quality of education. When teachers experience burnout, students feel less supported and motivated. A disengaged or emotionally drained teacher can create a negative learning environment, impacting student performance and well-being.

It is high time to address teacher burnout through systemic changes at multiple levels, requiring action from schools, governments and society to create a healthier teaching environment. Reducing workload by implementing manageable schedules, providing administrative support and minimizing unnecessary paperwork can help alleviate stress.

Additionally, offering mental health resources, counselling services and stress management programs can support teachers in coping with emotional challenges. Increasing salaries, providing financial incentives and recognising teachers' efforts, can enhance job satisfaction and reduce financial stress.

Conclusion

Above all, promoting work-life balance by limiting after-hours communication, ensuring adequate breaks and offering flexible schedules is crucial. Furthermore, fostering a supportive work environment through strong leadership, collaboration, mentorship programs and professional development can make teachers feel valued. Lastly, granting teachers more autonomy by reducing excessive standardised testing and allowing them to design engaging, student-centred lessons can boost motivation and fulfilment.

There is no denying that teacher burnout is a serious issue that demands immediate attention. Without proper intervention, the education system risks losing passionate and skilled educators, which will ultimately affect students' success and the future of education.

Investing in teacher well-being is not just about improving their lives, rather it is about ensuring a better future for generations to come. To conclude, teachers are the backbone of education. Yet, the growing demands of the profession have left many educators physically, emotionally, and mentally drained. Teachers have a larger responsibility towards the society. If they are emotionally, mentally and physically fit they can deliver what it takes to build a nation!

(The writer is an educator. Views expressed are personal)

Jio strikes satellite internet deal with Musk's Starlink

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Hardly a day after Sunil Mittal led Airtel announced partnership with Elon Musk's Starlink, rival Mukesh Ambani's Jio Platforms also struck a deal with SpaceX, the aerospace company led by Musk, to bring Starlink's broadband internet services to India. Interestingly few months ago both Mittal and Ambani were objecting on the allotment of Spectrum to Musk, considered the right-hand-man of US President Donald Trump without auction.

Over the past few months, rivals Jio and Airtel had come together to demand an auction for awarding spectrum for satellite services in India as they feared an administrative allocation would give Musk airwaves at a price lower than what they had paid via auctions in the past. This agreement "is subject to SpaceX receiving its own authorisations to sell

Starlink in India", Jio Platforms - the company that holds telecom and digital properties of Reliance Industries Ltd - said in a statement on Wednesday.

Jio will offer Starlink equipment in retail outlets and online stores and also support customer installation and activation on devices. Jio and SpaceX will also explore how they can boost each other's offerings.

"Through this agreement, the parties will leverage Jio's position as the world's largest mobile operator in terms of data traffic and Starlink's position as the world's leading low earth orbit satellite constellation operator to deliver reliable broadband services across the country, including the most rural and remote regions of India," the statement said.

Starlink is the world's largest low-earth-orbit (LEO) constellation operated by SpaceX. On Tuesday, Bharti Airtel announced that it is entering into an

agreement with SpaceX to bring Starlink's high-speed Internet service to India on a non-exclusive basis. Bharti already partners with Eutelsat OneWeb, the second-largest LEO constellation. Similarly, Jio Platforms has a joint venture with SES, a leading global satellite-based content connectivity solutions provider.

Jio Space Technology Limited, where Jio holds 51 per cent and SES 49 per cent, is to use multi-orbit space networks that are a combination of geostationary (GEO) and medium earth orbit (MEO) satellite constellations capable of delivering multi-gigabit links and capacity to enterprises, mobile backhaul and retail customers across the length and breadth of India and neighbouring regions.

The deals by Airtel and Jio come weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Musk in Washington to discuss issues, including space, mobility, technology and innovation. During the trip, the

prime minister also met Trump, whose administration has upped the ratchet on tariffs against various countries, including India. Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd, was one of the select few invitees at the Trump's oath-taking ceremony.

Starlink is awaiting regulatory approvals to launch Starlink services in India. Key to that is meeting the prescribed security norms. Also, such companies are required to secure a Global Mobile Personal Communication by Satellite (GMPCS) licence and space regulator IN-SPACe's approval, along with the allocation of spectrum from the Indian government, to offer satellite-based voice and data services in the country.

In the statement, Jio said its agreement with SpaceX is to offer Starlink's broadband internet services to its customers in India. "This agreement, which is subject to SpaceX receiving its own authorisations

to sell Starlink in India, enables Jio and SpaceX to explore how Starlink can extend Jio's offerings and how Jio can complement SpaceX's direct offerings to consumers and businesses," it said, adding "Jio will make Starlink solutions available through its retail outlets as well as through its online storefronts."

Jio will not only offer Starlink equipment in its retail outlets but also establish a mechanism to support customer service installation and activation, it said. "The agreement with SpaceX is part of Jio's commitment to ensuring that reliable internet is fully accessible to all enterprises, small and medium businesses, and communities across India. Starlink complements JioAirFiber and JioFiber by extending high-speed internet to the most challenging of locations in a quick and affordable manner," the statement said.

Jio and SpaceX are also evaluating other

complementary areas of cooperation to leverage their respective infrastructure to further enhance India's digital ecosystem. "Ensuring that every Indian, no matter where they live, has access to affordable and high-speed broadband remains Jio's top priority," said Mathew Oommen, Group CEO, Reliance Jio.

"Our collaboration with SpaceX to bring Starlink to India strengthens our commitment and marks a transformative step toward seamless broadband connectivity for all. By integrating Starlink into Jio's broadband ecosystem, we are expanding our reach and enhancing the reliability and accessibility of high-speed broadband in this AI-driven era, empowering communities and businesses across the country," he added.

"We applaud Jio's commitment to advancing India's connectivity," said Gwynne Shotwell, President and Chief Operating Officer of SpaceX.

Address public grievances without delay, says Sood

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Minister for Education, Power, Urban Development and Home Ashish Sood, along with department officials, visited his Janakpuri constituency on Wednesday to address long-standing civic issues and ensure their prompt resolution.

The visit commenced at 8:30 am from Vardhaman Jewellers, K-Block, Chanakya Place Part-2, 25 Feet Road. Sood assessed civic concerns, including electricity supply, clean drinking water, road and sewer maintenance, garbage disposal, street lighting, and the presence of hanging electrical wires. He also inspected the condition of Bal-Balika School in Mahavir Enclave Part-2.

During the inspection, Sood directed officials to address public grievances without delay. Residents of Chanakya Place Part-2 raised concerns about outdated transformers, hanging electricity cables, inadequate street lighting, and frequent power outages.

He issued strict instructions to BSES officials to install new poles and street lights where necessary and ensure an uninterrupted power supply, especially with the summer season approaching.

Addressing sanitation issues, he observed that many streets were not being cleaned properly, with garbage piling up. He immediately instructed MCD officials to ensure daily cleaning and deploy additional automatic garbage collection vehicles to clear waste every morning. Sood also directed to address security concerns raised by residents regarding increasing thefts, illegal liquor sales, gambling, and encroachments. He asked Delhi Police officials to intensify patrolling, take strict action against offenders, and reinforce public trust in law enforcement.



Additionally, he instructed officials to install grills or gates at the entrances of streets for enhanced security.

During the public interaction, several women informed the minister about difficulties in availing old-age and widow pensions and a lack of awareness regarding the Delhi Government's Mahila Samridhi Yojana. Sood instructed officials to expedite pension-related issues and ensure that all eligible beneficiaries receive proper assistance. Water supply concerns were also highlighted, with some areas receiving contaminated water.

The minister instructed officials to either activate borewells immediately or replace outdated pipelines to ensure a steady supply of clean drinking water, prioritising areas with severe contamination

issues. Sood emphasised that Janakpuri had been neglected for the past 11 years, with previous administrations failing to provide even basic amenities. However, under the leadership of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, the double-engine BJP government is ensuring rapid development across Delhi. He reiterated that officials must remain sensitive and accessible to the public. "I don't want to dwell on what has not been done in the past 11 years. My focus is on what my government can do now. As an MLA, it is my responsibility to ensure that the problems of my constituency are resolved. The people have answered through their votes, and now it is our time to deliver," said Sood.

He assured residents that their grievances would be resolved at the earliest and

expressed gratitude for their trust and support. At the end of his visit, Sood inspected the Delhi Municipal Corporation Primary Pratibha Bal-Balika School in Mahavir Enclave Part-2.

He observed that, along with damaged roads, the school lacked proper drinking water facilities for children. Sood instructed the school principal to immediately contact the concerned department to ensure the provision of clean drinking water for the students.

"Delhi is progressing with a spirit of public service. Our government is working tirelessly to make it a clean, beautiful, and developed capital," Sood remarked, assuring that all necessary steps will be taken to transform Janakpuri's civic infrastructure.

Delhi Police cracks pan India cyber fraud syndicate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police has dismantled an organised cyber fraud syndicate operating across India and arrested three key members of the gang for creating fake banking websites and phishing links to deceive unsuspecting victims.

The accused used advanced digital techniques to steal sensitive banking information, leading to widespread financial fraud, he said.

"The gang targeted people by impersonating representatives of a renowned bank, offering lucrative credit card deals. Victims were sent phishing links that directed them to counterfeit banking websites designed to collect their personal and financial information," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Nidhin Valsan said.

The officer further said that the fraudsters utilised Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) to hide their digital footprints and operated through fraudulent hosting platforms to run their scam.

Police have linked over 500 complaints to this scam through a portal of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The gang is believed to have created more than 10 phishing websites for their fraudulent operations. "One of the accused sourced hundreds of SIM cards by paying low-income people between Rs 300 and Rs 500 per card, later destroying them to erase digital traces," said the DCP. The crackdown was initiated after a complaint was received on February 11 via the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP).

The complainant, Harikesh Kumar Yadav from Siraspur, Delhi, reported a fraudulent transaction of Rs 21,400 after receiving a phishing link disguised as a private bank's credit card offer. His other cred-

it card was subsequently misused for unauthorised transactions, he said.

Following the complaint, an inquiry was ordered, and an FIR was registered. Raids were conducted at multiple locations in Delhi, including Rama Vihar, Shiv Vihar and Tatesar village.

The police arrested three accused, identified as Jaideep Kumar (31), a tech-savvy fraudster with expertise in Java, HTML, CSS, and ReactJS. He had prior cyber fraud charges and was previously arrested by the Special Cell/IFSO; Ajay (27), a school dropout but well-versed in credit card fraud and other financial scams; and Rakesh Rajaram Jaiswal (33), known for his persuasive communication skills, previously arrested in a cyber fraud case in Faridabad. "During interrogation, the suspects initially refused to cooperate. However, sufficient digital and financial evidence led to their arrests. The fraudsters contacted victims, offering them new credit cards. They sent phishing links via SMS or email, which redirected users to fake banking websites where their credentials were stolen. To bypass security measures, the accused tricked victims into downloading malicious applications that intercepted OTPs, enabling unauthorised transactions," said the DCP.

The officer said that Jaideep used DuckDNS to set up fraudulent domains and built PHP-based fake websites. Rakesh operated the call centre, while Ajay sourced SIM cards for illicit use. Teams recovered 11 mobile phones and a laptop containing critical evidence related to phishing operations and fraudulent transactions. "We are actively pursuing the mastermind, a known criminal from Delhi with prior involvement in murder and violent crimes. The investigation is ongoing," he added.

Delhi under reporting pollution: Study

Continued from >> P1 Chen said, "This study highlights the true extent of air pollution in New Delhi and offers a framework for more accurate future assessments that better inform public health strategies and mitigation efforts."

The team also found that the second-highest underestimate of over 8.5 percent occurs during the rush hour of spring mornings (February to March), when an average relative humidity of 80 percent prevails.

However, negligible bias, and therefore underestimation, was found during the wettest months of the monsoon (July to September) and the driest months of summer (April to June).

While frequent rains during the monsoon wash out hygroscopic particles, low levels of humidity during the summer limit the swelling of pollutant particles — both resulting in negligible bias, the researchers explained.

Chen also called for more on-site observations of PM2.5 and PM10 to gain a more rounded understanding of air pollution in New Delhi.

Delhi Police busts 'Dollar Gang'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police has dismantled a cheating syndicate known as the 'Dollar Gang' with the arrest of four illegal immigrants from Bangladesh involved in multiple fraud cases, an official said on Wednesday.

The gang operated in structured teams, with members assigned specific roles: "Tez Baaz" lured victims, "Mistri" negotiated deals, "Pagal" swapped fake currency for real money, "Thekedar" financed operations, and "Pahredaar" ensured the gang's safety.

The case came to light when a complainant was duped of ₹2 lakh in a fake dollar exchange scheme. The victim was approached at Dhaula Kuan by an unidentified man offering to exchange a large number of US dollar notes at a discounted rate, the officer said.

"Tempted by the offer, the complainant agreed to the deal and met the accused at Samrat Cinema in Shakurpur on February 16. Instead of genuine currency, the victim was handed a bag filled with newspapers, handkerchiefs, and soap bars disguised as money," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bhisham Singh said.

Following the complaint, an FIR was

lodged at Subhash Place Police Station, and a special team was formed to investigate the matter. After analyzing CCTV footage and conducting technical surveillance, investigators traced the accused to Dhundhahera village in Gurugram, Haryana.

A well-planned operation led to the arrest of four key members of the gang, identified as Salim Khan (41) from West Bengal, Ali Hasan (36), previously involved in a cheating case, Kalam (28), a resident of West Bengal, and Dholu Sheikh (38), also previously involved in a cheating case, the DCP said.

"All four accused were found to be illegal Bangladeshi migrants using fake Aadhaar cards for identification. The Delhi Police have informed the UIDAI for Aadhaar cancellation and the FRRO for deportation proceedings," DCP Singh said.

Police said they recovered eight US dollar notes, two Bangladeshi Taka notes, Rs 40,300 in cash, two rolls of newspaper used for deception, and 11 mobile phones from their possession.

Police added that the crackdown has helped solve at least four cheating cases. Further investigation is underway to identify other members and ensure the deportation of the illegal migrants.

Journalist held for social media trolling against Telangana government, CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

The Managing Director of an online news channel and its reporter were on Wednesday arrested here for allegedly circulating a video on social media platforms with "derogatory and abusive" contents against the Congress government in Telangana and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, police said.

The video with defamatory content was allegedly shot in the office of BRS, Additional Commissioner of Police (Crimes & SIT) P Viswasprasad told PTI Videos.

Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police apprehended P Revathi and B Sandhya in connection with a case registered against them under relevant sections of IT Act and BNS for allegedly being involved in social media trolling against the Telangana government and the CM, police said.

During the investigation, it was revealed that the online channel was found responsible for shooting of the video and its circulation widely on social media, Viswasprasad said.

"The video was shot in February and it started circulating on social media from

March 10. It clearly shows an orchestrated plan to circulate this video keeping in view the Budget session of the Telangana Legislative Assembly," the senior police official said.

The Budget session of the Telangana Assembly began on March 12.

The investigation established that the media house and the media representative used to identify some persons, including senior citizens and illiterate persons and were provoking them to speak against the chief minister by using abusive and disrespectful references, the Additional CP said. Their office was searched and incriminating material, including laptops, hard disks and CPUs were seized, he said.

BRS working president K T Rama Rao attacked the Congress government over the arrests. Rao in a post on 'X' said: "Kya Yahi Hain Aap Ki 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' ? @RahulGandhi Ji? Arresting two women journalists in the wee hours of the morning!! What is their crime? Giving voice to the public opinion on incompetent & corrupt Congress Govt Last I checked, the Constitution of India that you hold regularly, upholds Freedom of Speech Mr.

Gandhi."

According to a release from Hyderabad Police, the complainant, serving as the State Secretary of the Congress Social Media Cell in Hyderabad, came across an "abusive" video while browsing internet on March 10.

The video, circulated on a micro-blogging site, featured a representative of the online news channel interviewing an unidentified person in a "provocative" manner, it said.

During the interview, the unidentified person made "derogatory and abusive" remarks against the Telangana chief minister, clearly indicating a deliberate attempt by the channel to defame and spread false propaganda, police said.

Furthermore, the user of the micro-blogging site, was actively circulating and amplifying the video, making it viral, the complainant said.

Such posts are highly provocative, and their content has the potential to incite divisions within society, which are likely to lead to disturbances in law and order in both Hyderabad city and the state, the complainant said and sought legal action against the offenders.

Ukraine says it is open to 30 day ceasefire

Continued from >> P1 He said security guarantees were important to prevent Russia from invading again in the future.

It was the first meeting between the two sides since the Oval Office blowup between Trump and Zelenskyy last month.

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister was also on hand as American, Saudi and Ukrainian flags could be seen in the background. Officials did not answer any of the journalists' shouted questions.

The delegations met for about three hours in the morning before taking a break, and officials said the talks continued in the afternoon.

There was also no immediate comment from Ukrainian or US officials on the massive attack in which 343 drones targeted 10 Russian regions, leaving three people dead and 18 wounded, including three children, officials said.

Meanwhile, Russia launched 126 drones and a ballistic missile at Ukraine, the

Ukrainian air force said, as part of Moscow's relentless pounding of civilian areas during the war.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the United States will inform Russia about the results of the Jeddah talks, which he described as "normal practice."

On the streets of Kyiv, Ukrainians kept an eye on the Saudi talks. Lena Herasymenko, a psychologist, said she accepts that compromises will be necessary to end the war, but she said they must be "reasonable."

"We had massive losses during this war, and we don't know yet how much more we'll have," she told The Associated Press. "We are suffering every day. Our kids are suffering, and we don't know how the future generation will be affected."

Oleksandr, a Ukrainian soldier who could give only his first name because of security restrictions, warned that Ukraine cannot let down its guard now.

"If there is a ceasefire, it would only give

Russia time to increase its firepower, manpower, missiles and other arms. Then they would attack Ukraine again," he said.

The meeting in Jeddah offered an opportunity for Kyiv officials to repair Ukraine's relationship with the Trump administration after an unprecedented argument erupted during Zelenskyy's Feb 28 visit to the White House. 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 recognizes regions that Moscow occupies as Russian. Russia has captured nearly a fifth of Ukraine's territory.

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-km front line, especially in the eastern Donetsk region, against Ukraine's under-strength and weary army.

Ukraine has invested heavily in develop-

ing 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, and 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 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.

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.

Nitish gets a taste of Rabri...

Continued from >> P1 "He speaks as if he himself was born in 2005, just like his ally Prime Minister Narendra Modi pretends as if he came into this world in 2014. The two leaders should tell us what is meant by women did not wear clothes in the past?" asked the ex-CM, visibly beside herself. "The CM is sitting on the lap of the BJP which has its moles acting as his confidants. We have staged a walkout and we will boycott the House till Nitish Kumar does not give up insulting women," Rabri said.

She was joined by Tejashwi Yadav, the leader of the opposition in the assembly, who came to express solidarity with his mother and others who were feeling wronged. Yadav claimed he felt "pity" for his ex-boss, who was "clearly not normal" in terms of his behaviour in public.

"Nitish ji gesticulates at the 'bindi' my mother wears on her forehead. I have seen him gesticulating in a similar fashion at his own female ministers and leg-

islators. He loses control in the presence of women. He should resign and, maybe, set up an ashram and spend his time giving discourses," Yadav said.

The young leader also recounted incidents of Kumar "falling at the feet" of leaders like the PM and local BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad and "making ministers in his cabinet literally bump their heads together".

Yadav also claimed the JD(U) supreme could not hold a candle to Lalu Prasad who was "elected to Parliament in 1977 when Nitish ji, despite the wave in favour of Janata Party, lost his assembly election". "Nitish ji has no courage. He cannot speak against BJP MLA Hari Bhushan Thakur Bachaul who is asking Muslims to stay indoors on Holi. He switches alliances often but he does so not by sacking those from the party he severs ties with, but by resigning himself and then begging for support," Yadav alleged.

Trump says it is up to Russia to accept ceasefire deal in war with Ukraine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York / Washington

President Donald Trump said he is hopeful that Russia will agree to a 30-day ceasefire with Ukraine even as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday termed it as a positive step and said it is up to the US to convince Russia to accept it.

Senior officials from the US and Ukraine held talks in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday focussing on ending the over three year war between Moscow and Kyiv, which gave an indication to accept a 30-day ceasefire.

"A while ago, Ukraine has agreed to the ceasefire. Now we go to Russia and hopefully President Putin will agree to it also," Trump said here soon after the Jeddah announcement.

"If we get Russia to do it, that will be great. If we can't, we keep going on and on and people are going to get killed," he said in another video posted on his TruthSocial account.

He also spoke about meetings with Russia soon, in an apparent reference to Steve Witkoff, his special envoy, who is likely to visit Moscow to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin.

President Zelenskyy said the American side understands his country's arguments and considers their proposals and added that he is "grateful to President Trump for the constructive conversation between our teams."

"Ukraine is ready to accept this proposal—we see it as a positive step and are ready to take it. Now, it is up to the United States to convince Russia to do the same. If Russia agrees, the ceasefire will take effect immediately," Zelenskyy said hours after the announcement came from Jeddah.

"During today's talks, the US side pro-



President Donald Trump and Tesla CEO Elon Musk speak to reporters near a red Model S Tesla vehicle on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington. AP/PTI

posed taking an even bigger first step—a 30-day full interim ceasefire, not only stopping missile, drone, and bomb attacks, not only in the Black Sea, but also along the entire front line," the Ukrainian president said in a video, text for which was posted on his official X handle too.

Asserting that Ukraine's position remains absolutely clear, he said, "Ukraine has been seeking peace from the very first second of this war, and we want to do everything to achieve it as soon as possi-

ble and in a reliable way—so that war does not return."

Zelenskyy also talked about the three key points that his team proposed during the meeting with the Americans in Jeddah: silence in the skies—stopping missile strikes, bombs, and long-range drone attacks; silence at sea; real confidence-building measures in this whole situation, "in which diplomacy is ongoing, which primarily means the release of prisoners of war and detainees—both military and

civilian—and the return of Ukrainian children who were forcibly transferred to Russia."

There has been no official reaction from Russia as yet.

Meanwhile, soon after the announcement coming in from Jeddah, the Trump government lifted its suspension of military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine, measures that were imposed a week ago in an apparent effort to push Zelenskyy for talks about ending the war.

Centre-right party wins most votes in Greenland's parliamentary election

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Nuuk (Greenland)

The centre-right Demokraatit Party won the most votes in Greenland's parliamentary elections, a surprise result as the territory went to the polls in the shadow of US President Donald Trump's stated goal of taking control of the island one way or another.

Both Demokraatit — the Democrats — and the second place party, Naleraq — "Point of Orientation" — favour independence from Denmark but differ on the pace of change.

Demokraatit's upset victory on Wednesday over parties that have governed the territory for years indicates that many in Greenland care just as much about health care, education, cultural heritage and other social policies.

"I think this is a historic result in Greenland's political history," Demokraatit party leader Jens-Frederik Nielsen said at the election party after the results.

Greenlandic newspaper Sermitsiaq wrote that Nielsen, 33, appeared to be surprised by his party's gains, with photos showing him sporting a huge grin and applauding at the election party.

The Danish Broadcasting Corporation DR reported that Nielsen said his party would reach out to all other parties to negotiate the future political course for Greenland.

"We had not expected that the election would have this outcome," Nielsen told Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation KNR TV. "We are very happy."

Nielsen also said that Greenland needs to stand together "in a time of great interest from outside," KNR TV reported.

Prime Minister Mute Bourup Egede had called the early vote in February, saying the country needed to be united during a "serious time" unlike anything Greenland has ever experienced.

On Wednesday, after the results were known, Egede thanked voters in a Facebook post for turning out and said the parties were ready to turn to negotiations to form a government.

Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen congratulated the Demokraatit party and said the future Greenlandic government would likely have to "deal with massive pressure from US President Donald Trump," according to DR.

He added that "it's not the case that you can just take part of the Danish Realm — the future of Greenland is based on what the Greenlandic people and government want," DR reported.

Trump has been outspoken about his desire to control Greenland, telling a joint session of Congress last week that he thought the US was going to get it "one way or the other."

Greenland, a self-governing region of Denmark, straddles strategic air and sea routes in the North Atlantic and has rich deposits of the rare earth minerals needed to make everything from mobile



Electoral workers prepare to count votes during parliamentary elections in Nuuk, Greenland. AP/PTI

phones to renewable energy technology.

Egede's Inuit Ataqatigiit (United Inuit) had been widely expected to win, followed by Siumut — two parties which had dominated Greenland's politics in recent years. A break from Denmark wasn't on the ballot, but it was on everyone's mind. The island of 56,000 people has been on a path toward independence since at least 2009, and the 31 lawmakers elected will shape the island's future as it debates whether the time has come to declare independence.

Four of the five main parties in the race sought independence, but disagreed on when and how.

Naleraq is the most aggressively pro-independence, while Demokraatit favours a more moderate pace of change.

"What approach to independence will win the day will ultimately depend on if Demokraatit decides to form a coalition government, and if so, with which party," said Dwayne Menezes, managing director of the Polar Research and Policy Initiative.

White House pressures Columbia University as it seeks to deport pro-Palestinian activists

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ New York

The White House complained Tuesday that Columbia University is refusing to help federal agents find people being sought as part of the government's effort to deport participants in pro-Palestinian demonstrations, as the administration continued to punish the school by yanking federal research dollars.

Immigration enforcement agents on Saturday arrested and detained Mahmoud Khalil, a legal U.S. resident and Palestinian activist who played a prominent part in protests at Columbia last year. He is now facing possible deportation.

President Donald Trump has vowed additional arrests. In a briefing with reporters in Washington, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said federal authorities have been "using intelligence" to identify other people involved in campus demonstrations critical of Israel

that the administration considered to be antisemitic and "pro-Hamas."

She said Columbia had been given names and was refusing to help the Department of Homeland Security "to identify those individuals on campus."

"As the president said very strongly in his statement yesterday, he is not going to tolerate that," Leavitt said.

A Columbia spokesperson didn't immediately return a message seeking comment.

Last week, the Trump administration announced it was pulling \$400 million in grants and contracts from Columbia, accusing the school of failing to stop antisemitism on campus. As part of those cuts, the National Institutes of Health late Monday it was cutting more than \$250 million in funding, which included more than 400 grants.

X. Edward Guo, director of Columbia's Bone Bioengineering Laboratory, posted a screenshot on X of an email he received

notifying him that one of his NIH awards had been canceled. "We understand this may be shocking news," the email reads.

The university was wracked last spring by large demonstrations by students calling for an end to Israeli military action in Gaza and a recognition of Palestinians' human rights and territorial claims. The university ultimately called in police to dismantle a protest encampment and end a student takeover of an administration building.

Khalil, 30, had been a spokesperson for the protesters. He hasn't been charged with any crimes, but Leavitt said the administration had moved to deport him under a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that gives the secretary of state the power to deport a non-citizen if the government "has reasonable ground to believe" the person's presence could have "serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States."

US tariffs on steel, aluminum unjustified: Australia

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Melbourne

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Wednesday that US tariffs on Australian steel and aluminum were unjustified, but his government would not retaliate with its own tariffs. US President Donald Trump said last month he was considering a tariff exemption for Australia, a free trade treaty partner that has traded with the United States at a deficit for decades.

A former Australian government secured an exemption with the previous Trump administration in 2018 based on arguments including that Australian steelmaker BlueScope employs thousands of workers in the US.

Albanese said he would continue to pursue an Australian exemption. The 2018 exemption took several months to

secure. "It has been foreshadowed that no country regardless of its relationship with the United States has been granted an exemption. Such a decision by the Trump administration is entirely unjustified," Albanese said.

"Tariffs and escalating trade tensions are a form of economic self-harm and a recipe for slower growth and higher inflation. They are paid by the consumers. This is why Australia will not be imposing reciprocal tariffs on the United States," Albanese added.

The US officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25 percent on Wednesday. The US decision not to exempt Australia was announced days after a spat became public between Trump and the former Australian prime minister who secured the 2018 exemption, Malcolm Turnbull.

Trump tariffs disappointing but no retaliation: UK

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

The British government on Wednesday called the Trump administration's tariffs on global steel and aluminium imports "disappointing," but said that it won't impose retaliatory measures.

Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, however, did not rule out future tariffs on US imports and said he would "continue to engage closely and productively with the US to press the case for UK business interests."

"We will keep all options on the table and won't hesitate to respond in the national interest," Reynolds said.

Treasury Minister James Murray echoed that, telling Times Radio: "We reserve our right to retaliate."

Britain is not part of the European Union, which Wednesday announced import taxes on American goods, ranging from steel and

aluminium to bourbon, peanut butter and jeans in response to Trump's move.

Center-left UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has worked to build strong ties with President Donald Trump, in hope of avoiding the tariffs levied on many other US trading partners.

After a meeting last month at the White House, Trump and Starmer said their governments would work on sealing a long-elusive US-UK trade deal.

Reynolds said the government remains "focused on a pragmatic approach and are rapidly negotiating a wider economic agreement with the US to eliminate additional tariffs and to benefit UK businesses and our economy."

The tariffs are a new blow for Britain's once-mighty steel industry, which has shrunk dramatically from its 1970s peak and now accounts for 0.1% of the economy.

Captain of cargo vessel involved in North Sea collision is Russian

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

The captain of a cargo ship that collided with a US tanker is a Russian national who remains in UK police custody, the vessel's owner said Wednesday, as it emerged that the ship failed several safety checks last year.

The 59-year-old man, who hasn't been named by authorities, was arrested by police in northeast England Tuesday on suspicion of manslaughter by gross negligence over the collision. He hasn't been charged.

Shipping company Ernst Russ, which owns the Portugal-flagged cargo vessel Solong, said that the ship's 14 crew were a mix of Russian and Filipino nationals.

UK authorities say they have so far found no evidence of foul play in the crash. Humberside Police said that detectives were conducting inquiries alongside partner agencies.

The UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch is also involved in investigating what caused the Solong, bound from Grangemouth, Scotland, to Rotterdam, Netherlands, to hit the stationary tanker, which was anchored about 16 kilometres off the English coast.

The investigation is being led by the US and Portugal, the countries where the

vessels are flagged.

Port inspection documents show the Solong failed steering-related safety checks in Dublin, Ireland, in July, with the vessel's "emergency steering position communications / compass reading" unreadable. Inspectors found a total of 10 deficiencies, including "inadequate" alarms, survival craft "not properly maintained" and fire doors "not as required."

An inspection in Scotland in October found two other deficiencies. The ship wasn't detained after either inspection.

The cargo ship collided Monday with MV Stena Immaculate, a tanker transporting jet fuel for the US military in the North Sea off eastern England on Monday, setting both vessels ablaze.

One sailor from the Solong is missing and presumed dead. The other 36 crew members from the two vessels were brought safely ashore, with no major injuries. The Solong was drifting and still on fire Wednesday, but is likely to remain afloat rather than sinking, officials said.

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

Trump halts programme that keeps aging affordable housing livable

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

The Trump administration is halting a USD 1 billion programme that helps preserve affordable housing, threatening projects that keep tens of thousands of units livable for low-income Americans, according to a document obtained by The Associated Press.

The action is part of a slew of cuts and funding freezes at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, largely at the direction of President Donald Trump and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, that have rattled the affordable-housing industry.

Preserving these units gets less attention than ribbon-cuttings, but it's a centre-piece of efforts to address the nation's housing crisis. Hundreds of thousands of low-rent apartments, many of them aging and in need of urgent repair, are at risk of being yanked out from under poor Americans.

The programme has already awarded the money to projects that would upgrade

at least 25,000 affordable units across the country, and details of how it will be wound down remain unclear.

A spokesperson for HUD did not respond to repeated requests for comment. But an internal document reviewed by the AP said that the programme is being "terminated" at the direction of DOGE. Two HUD workers, who have knowledge of the programme and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, confirmed the directive to shutter it.

On its face, the over USD 1 billion Green and Resilient Retrofit Programme, passed by Congress in 2022, is intended for energy-efficiency improvements. It is distributed in grants and loans to owners of affordable housing in need of updating, including replacing or repairing heating and cooling systems, leaky roofs, aging insulation or windows, or undertaking flood-proofing.

But the money plays a much larger role in preserving affordable units. Projects that use the funds are required



to keep their buildings affordable for up to 25 years. The money is also leveraged to pull in other investments for major repairs and renovations needed to keep the buildings livable.

It's like building a Jenga tower, where one of the programme's grants or loans — which range from hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars — is a bottom block and each new block is another investment, experts said.

This money "was essential in order for the project to come together," said Mike Essian, vice president at American Community Developers, Inc., which received funding for several affordable

housing projects. "Projects will fail and these are projects that are already difficult to finance."

The news has been a jolt to Al Hase and Joan Starr, tenants in an apartment building in Vancouver, Washington, full of other low-income seniors with few or no other options — most of whom live on less than USD \$3,000 a year.

The 170-unit Smith Tower Apartments, built in the 1960s, is in need of updates, including its first building-wide sprinkler system. The USD 10 million award was a financial kickstart for its nearly USD 100 million project, and is cited in applications for other investments.

The potential loss "seriously jeopardises our ability to be able to provide an upgrade to the current systems," said Greg Franks, president of the property's management company, adding that the work is "needed to sustain the livability of this building based on its age, and to keep it viable for another 60 years."

lion," he said.

So, too, are Hase and Starr, a retired couple in their 70s who have lived there for 16 years.

They fill their balcony with geraniums and petunias, count the eagles at a nearby park and live off of meagre Social Security incomes. They learned about the potential funding loss in a letter from the apartment's management company.

"It's kinda terrifying, it's almost like getting news from a doctor that something's going to take your life in six months or a year," Hase told the AP in a phone call.

"We're from an era where the wages weren't there, so our Social Security..." he said, pausing, "Sucks," pitched in Starr.

"If I'd been born a rich man," he said. Starr added: "We're just regular people."

But being lucky ones still doesn't count for much in today's rental market. "Prices

keep going up, I've looked, and there's no way," she said.

"It's the difference between living and not being able to live," he said. HUD's lack of communication about the programme's future sent organisations in search of contingency plans, though roughly two dozen projects will still get funding, one HUD employee told the AP. The rest are in limbo.

"If these funds aren't reinstated, we will certainly seek other funding to fill that gap. The reality is that will take time and will inevitably make the project more expensive," Travis Phillips of the Housing Development Centre said of funding for Smith Tower.

It's the position several hundred other affordable-housing projects now find themselves in across 42 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

"In all honesty," said Michelle Arealvalos, Smith Tower's administrator, "if this building were not here, a lot of our folks actually probably would be homeless."

Industrial production grows

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's industrial production growth accelerated to 5 per cent in January 2025, driven by a rebound in manufacturing activity, according to official data released on Wednesday.

The government has also revised the December 2024 industrial output figure to 3.5 per cent from the provisional estimate of 3.2 per cent released in the previous month, an official statement said.

The IIP growth in November 2024 was 5 per cent.

The pace of factory output growth stood at 5 per cent in January 2025.

The country's factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial

Production (IIP), witnessed 4.2 per cent growth in January 2024.

The data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the manufacturing sector's output grew by 5.5 per cent in January 2025, up from 3.6 per cent in the year-ago month.

Mining production growth declined to 4.4 per cent from 6 per cent year-on-year.

Power output growth slowed to 2.4 per cent in January 2025 from 5.6 per cent a year ago. In the April-January 2024-25 period, the IIP grew 4.2 per cent, slower than 6 per cent recorded in the year-ago period.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth accelerated to 7.8 per cent in January 2024 against 3.2 per

cent in the year-ago period. Consumer durables (or white goods production) grew by 7.2 per cent during the reporting month against a growth of 11.6 per cent in January 2024.

In January 2025, consumer non-durables output contracted 0.2 per cent compared to a growth of 0.3 per cent a year ago. According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 7 per cent in January 2025, up from a 5.5 per cent expansion in the year-ago period. The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged a 5.5 per cent growth in January 2025 against 2.9 per cent a year earlier. The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 5.2 per cent in the month under review, slightly down from 5.3 per cent a year ago.

Madhya Pradesh increases Budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday presented a ₹4.21 Lakh Crore Budget for 2025-26 with no new taxes while announcing new schemes for development of religious sites.

Finance Minister Jagdish Devda presented the ₹4,21,032 Crore budget, a 15 per cent increase over the last fiscal, in the legislative assembly here.

He estimated the fiscal deficit at 4.66 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product.

The budget was for 'Viksit (developed) Madhya Pradesh', he said. Among other things, 'Omkareshwar Lok' will be developed on the lines of Ujjain's Mahakal Lok corridor, he said.

He allotted ₹47,296 Crore for schemes for Scheduled Tribes and ₹32,633 Crore for those for the Scheduled Castes.

A provision of ₹18,669 Crore was made for the Mukhya Mantri Laadi Behna Yojana under which monthly financial assistance is provided to eligible women.

Devda, who is the state's deputy Chief Minister, also announced a provision of ₹10 Crore for Shrikrishna Pathy Yojana.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav had earlier said religious sites associated with Lord Sri Krishna's life will be developed under the scheme.

Similarly, ₹30 Crore were allocated for development of 'Ram Path Gaman' and the town of Chitrakoot.

Sensex, Nifty end moderately lower on selling in IT, telecom stocks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed moderately lower on Wednesday due to heavy selling pressure in IT, telecom, and realty stocks amid growing concerns over a possible global economic slowdown.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 72.56 points or 0.10 per cent to close at 74,029.76. During the session, it tumbled 504.16 points or 0.68 per cent to touch a low of 73,598.16.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty slipped 27.40 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 22,470.50. In the session, it fell 168.35 points or 0.74 per cent to hit an intraday low of 22,329.55.

From the Sensex pack, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Nestle India, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Asian Paints, Axis Bank, Zomato, Hindustan Unilever, and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, ITC, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv and UltraTech Cement were the gainers.

The BSE Smallcap gauge fell 0.48 per cent, while the midcap index slipped 0.57 per cent.

Among the BSE sectoral indices, Focused IT, IT, Teck, Realty, Telecommunication, Metal, Capital Goods, Services, and Industrial were among the major laggards.

In contrast, Energy, FMCG, financial services, Healthcare, Utilities, Auto, Bankex, Consumer Durables, Oil & Gas, and Power were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended on a mixed note.

European markets were trading higher in the mid-session deals on Wednesday. Wall Street ended in the negative zone on Tuesday.

Global benchmark Brent crude oil went up 0.34 per cent to \$69.80 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) sold equities worth ₹2,823.76 Crore, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) purchased equities worth ₹2,001.79 Crore on Tuesday, according to the exchange data.

The 30-share BSE Sensex on Tuesday settled down by 12.85 points at 74,102.32. The broader Nifty of NSE advanced 37.60 points to close at 22,497.90.

Inflation falls below 4 per cent in February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Retail inflation slipped to seven-month low of 3.61 per cent in February mainly due to easing prices of vegetables, eggs, and other protein-rich items, creating space for the RBI to go for another cut in interest rate next month.

The consumer price index-based retail inflation was at 4.26 per cent in January and 5.09 per cent in February 2024. The previous low was witnessed in July.

The consumer price index (CPI) has been in the comfort zone of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) since November 2024.

"There is a decline of 65 basis points in headline inflation of February 2025 in comparison to January 2025. It is the lowest year-on-year inflation after July 2024," the National Statistics Office (NSO) said while releasing the CPI.

Year-on-year food inflation for February was 3.75 per cent.

"A sharp decline of 222 basis points is observed in food inflation in February 2025 in comparison to January 2025. The food inflation in February 2025 is the lowest after May 2023," NSO said.

A significant decline in headline infla-

tion and food inflation during February has been mainly attributed to decline in inflation of vegetables, egg, meat and fish, pulses and products, and milk and products.

Key items having lowest year-on-year inflation in February were ginger (-35.81 per cent), jeera (-28.77 per cent), tomato (-28.51 per cent), cauliflower (-21.19 per cent), garlic (-20.32 per cent).

On the other hand, top items with highest inflation were coconut oil (54.48 per cent), coconut (41.61 per cent), gold (35.56 per cent), silver (30.89 per cent), and onion (30.42 per cent).

Data on urban inflation showed a significant decline from 3.87 per cent in January 2025 to 3.32 per cent in February. A similar decline was observed in food inflation, which decreased from 5.53 per cent to 3.20 per cent in February.

A sharp decline in headline and food inflation in the rural sector was also observed in February to 3.79 per cent from 4.59 per cent a month earlier.

The lowest inflation was in Telangana (1.31 per cent) and highest in Kerala (7.31 per cent).

The RBI, which has been mandated to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent), has reduced the

short-term lending rate (repo) by 25 basis points last month on easing concerns on the inflation front.

The central bank is scheduled to announce the next set of bi-monthly monetary policy on April 9.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said the CPI inflation declined sharper than expected to a seven-month low, appreciably below the mid-point of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee's medium-term target range, led by a welcome cooling in food inflation.

"However, we believe that the sequential uptick in vegetables inflation in March 2025 is likely to prevent a further softening in the food and beverages inflation print in the month, after the substantial cooling seen over the past four months," she said.

Nayar further said the February inflation print falling well below 4 per cent has cemented the expectation of a back-to-back 25 basis points rate cut in the April 2025 MPC meeting.

This may be followed by another 25 bps repo rate cut either in the June 2025 or the August 2025 meetings, she added.

NSO collects the price data from selected 1,114 urban markets and 1,181 villages covering all states/UTs on a weekly roster.

Rupee trades almost flat



NEW DELHI: RUPEE VS DOLLAR: PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

The rupee turned almost flat and traded with a marginal loss of 1 paise at 87.22 against the US dollar in early trade on Wednesday amid volatile sentiment due to uncertainties over trade tariff. According to forex analysts, a strengthening American currency index and a recovery in crude oil prices also added pressure on the local unit, which was already weighed down due to selling in domestic equity and the continuous outflow of foreign capital.

They said, market participants were also trading cautiously awaiting cues from macroeconomic data to be released in India and the US later in the day.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 87.24, tumbled to 87.32 and then gained to 87.22 against the greenback in early deals, trading 1 paise lower from its previous closing level.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.07 per cent at 103.55. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 0.66 per cent higher at US 70.02 per barrel in futures trade. Domestic equity market traded on a flat note with the 30-share BSE Sensex falling marginally by 0.28 points to 74,102.04 points and the broader Nifty sliding 10.70 points, or 0.05 per cent, to 22,487.20 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,823.76 crore on a net basis on Tuesday, according to exchange data. According to experts, the uncertainties over tariff moves intensified after President Donald Trump said the US would double the

forthcoming levy on steel and aluminium to 50 per cent if they come from Canada but later hinted that he might reconsider the additional hike.

MRF Vice Chairman takes over as ATMA Chairman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association on Wednesday said Arun Mammen, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of MRF Ltd has been elected as its new Chairman.

Mammen takes over with immediate effect from Arnab Banerjee, MD and CEO of CEAT Ltd, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA) said in a statement.

The national industry body for the automotive tyre sector in India further said Hiroshi Yoshizane, Managing Director Bridgestone India is its new Vice Chairman.

Mammen takes over as Chairman of ATMA at a crucial juncture as the organisation is celebrating 2025 as Golden Jubilee year, it added.

On his new role, Mammen said the Indian tyre industry should have plans in place to be a major global supplier during

the decade and he would work towards policy enablers so as to make industry more competitive and technologically superior to meet the needs of developed countries.

Mammen was appointed Managing Director of MRF Ltd in 2004 and Vice Chairman and Managing Director in 2017. He is a graduate from the Madras Christian College, and also holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the Ashland University, US.

Retail inflation eases to 3.61 per cent: Government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Retail inflation slipped to 3.61 per cent in February mainly due to the decline in the rate of price rise in vegetables and protein-rich items, creating space for the Reserve Bank of India for second reduction in interest rate next month. The consumer price index-based retail inflation was at 4.26 per cent in January and 5.09 per cent in February 2024.

The year-on-year inflation rate for February 2025 was 3.75 per cent, showed the data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO). "A sharp decline of 222 basis points is observed in food inflation in February 2025 in comparison to January 2025," it said.

The NSO said the significant decline in headline inflation and food inflation during February is mainly attributed to the decline in inflation of vegetables, egg, meat, and fish, pulses and products, and milk and products. The RBI, which has been mandated to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent), has reduced the short-term lending rate (repo) by 25 basis points last month on easing concerns on the inflation front.

Onus on states to curb illegal coal mining: Union Coal Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Acknowledging the incidence of illegal coal mining, including rat-hole extraction, the Centre on Wednesday said it is the responsibility of state governments to stop such activities and action against mining mafia cannot be successful without their cooperation.

Replying to questions, including by Gowaal Kagada Padavi of the Congress and Nishikant Dubey of the BJP, Union Coal Minister G Kishan Reddy said in the Lok Sabha that the Centre is working in close coordination with states to lower the number of accidents in coal fields.

Asked about the recent accident and loss of lives at a coal mine in Assam where rat-hole mining was allegedly being carried out, Reddy said that he has spoken to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on the matter.

"It is the responsibility of the state government to check rat-hole mining," he said. "We need the cooperation of the state government too. I had a meeting with (Jharkhand) Chief Minister Hemant Soren and I am hopeful that we will be successful in our plans," he said.

Reddy said the Assam chief minister has conveyed to him that around 250 rat-hole mining sites have been closed down in the state and 12 people were arrested in this connection.

Replying to another supplementary question raised by Dubey on alleged illegal mining in Jharkhand, which has large coal reserves, he said the state police and government have to act against such activities as it is their responsibility.

Reddy said the central government has a zero-tolerance approach towards coal mafia and violence in coal mining activities. Dubey said an NCTP official was killed in Jharkhand and illegal mining has heightened safety concerns for public sector coal firms like BCCL, ECL and CCL working in the region.

He said his Lok Sabha constituency Godda is home to Asia's largest coal block and accused the JMM-led state government of not cooperating to curb illegal mining. Reddy said illegal mining has been going on in the state for many years and he had recently met Jharkhand Chief Minister Soren over the issue.

Safety in coal mines is a top priority for the central government and it is working to reduce accidents in coal mines.

"We have taken a number of steps to reduce accidents in coal mines and results have started coming in," he said.

Asked about the unabated underground blaze in coal mines in Jharkhand's Jharia, Reddy said the fire has been going on for over a century and the central government is working to douse it completely.

Parliament amends law on oilfields development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Parliament on Wednesday passed a bill that seeks to amend the existing law governing exploration and production of oil and gas as well as delink petroleum operations from mining operations to boost investment in the sector.

The Lok Sabha cleared the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024, on Wednesday. The bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on December 3, 2024.

Replying to the discussion on the bill, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said India is the only country in the world where in the reference period of last three years, the prices of petrol and diesel have actually come down.

"We have brought down the prices of petrol and diesel because the prime minister reduced the central excise (duty) on two occasions," Puri asserted and took a swipe at the Opposition, saying that Congress-ruled states have increased VAT (Value Added Tax) on petrol and diesel. Prices in neighbouring countries are 15 to 25 per cent higher than in India. Equally, prices in Western Europe and US are much higher than in India, he said.

While moving the bill for consideration and passage in the Lok Sabha, Puri said it does not alter the existing level-

We have brought down the prices of petrol and diesel because the prime minister reduced the central excise (duty) on two occasions
— HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS MINISTER

playing field for both public and private sectors. "The oil bill aims to resolve one of the biggest grievances of global oil companies interested in investing in India by providing stability in operation, both in terms of tenure of the lease and the condition. The bill also does not alter the rights of the states, which will continue to give petroleum leases and receive royalties as before."

"The bill also does not alter the existing level-playing field and offers no preference to either the private or the public sector," the minister said.

Among others, the bill aims to decriminalise some of the provisions of the original Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948, by introducing "penalties, adjudication by an adjudicating authority and appeal as against the order of adjudicating authority".

Besides, it seeks to introduce 'petroleum lease' and expands the definition of mineral oils to include crude oil, natural gas, petroleum, condensate, coal bed methane, oil shale, shale gas, shale oil, tight gas, tight oil and gas hydrate,

with a view to raising domestic output and cutting reliance on imports, he said.

In his reply, Puri stressed that the government is taking a holistic approach, and that the overall strategy is to increase domestic exploration and production as also to increase clean energy.

Elaborating further, Puri said the long-term strategy for energy security revolves around the trilemma of availability, affordability and sustainability. "So far, we have navigated all three very successfully," he noted. Currently, India is importing oil from 39 countries and in fact, also buying from a 40th country. "We will buy from wherever we have to... We do not distinguish between the sources of our supply," the minister said.

Congress leader Manish Tewari, while initiating the discussion, said the draft law "lacks vision and roadmap".

Referring to oil imports, Tewari claimed that India was not "future ready". "What is required is a roadmap to make India energy sufficient, which unfortunately is completely missing. What is the government planning to do to encourage independent oil explorers? Is there anything in the bill that incentivises them," Tewari asked.

As far as the bill is concerned, he said it makes minor changes here and there but a vision is missing. "You're not a government that was sworn in yesterday, but 11 years ago".

IT industry to see 4 per cent to 6 per cent revenue growth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian IT companies are expected to see moderate revenue growth of 4 to 6 per cent in FY26, with hiring likely to remain subdued until growth accelerates towards the end of the fiscal year, according to credit rating agency Ica.

The agency projected attrition level to average 12 to 13 per cent over the near term.

Ica projects its sample set of Indian IT services companies (which account for 60 per cent of the industry in revenue terms) to witness a moderate 4 to 6 per cent revenue expansion in USD terms in FY2026.

"Moreover, hiring is likely to remain low until the growth momentum picks up by the end of FY2026," it said.

Ica's sample set recorded a year-on-year revenue growth of 3.6 per cent in USD terms during the first nine months of FY2025.

This growth was part of a gradual recovery over the past three quarters, aided by a lower base from FY2024. Additionally, there was a slight increase in discretionary spending by customers in the BFSI and retail sectors in certain markets, along with investments in Generative AI initiatives that led to new orders, Ica said.

The sample set includes Birlasoft, Coforge, Cyient, HCL Technologies, Infosys, LTIMindtree, L&T Technology Services, Mastek, Mphasis, Oracle Financial Services Software, Persistent Systems, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, and Zensar Technologies.

Ica Vice President & Sector Head

Deepak Jotwani said the growth momentum for Ica's sample set of IT services companies is likely to remain muted over the near term, owing to the looming uncertainty related to the imposition of the US trade tariffs and macroeconomic headwinds across the key markets of the US and Europe.

Policy changes by the US government for key sectors catered to by Indian IT services companies as well as future interest rate trajectory will remain the key monitorables, he said.

The IT industry experienced relief due to reduced attrition rates and wage cost inflation, which were significant concerns during FY2023 and the first half of FY2024.

"Ica expects hiring to remain low in the near term until the growth momentum picks up by the end of FY2026. Lower hir-

ing activity can also be correlated with higher investments by the industry in GenAI and the expected benefits in terms of increased productivity and cost savings," the agency said.

Major Indian IT services companies have trained a significant number of their employees in Generative AI skills and are now expanding their capabilities and service offerings to provide GenAI-based solutions to their clients, it added.

"This has started to show results as the inflow of GenAI-related deals for major industry players has risen in recent quarters and is expected to pick up materially over the medium term, as overall technology adoption is more pervasive."

The healthcare and BFSI sectors remain the early adopters of AI/GenAI capabilities and continue to invest in the same," Jotwani said.

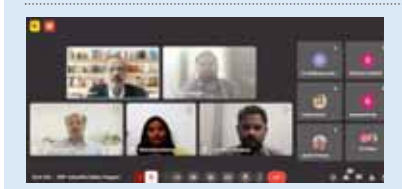
INBRIEF

GIRNAR FOUNDATION SPREADS LOVE AND JOY WITH MISSION (DDLJ) CAMPAIGN

Gramam: Girnar Foundation, the CSR arm of CarDekho Group, launched 'Mission DDLJ' (Donate and Deliver Love & Joy) to spread kindness and strengthen community bonds in Jaipur and Gramam. The initiative impacted over 1,000 children and senior citizens through thoughtfully curated programs designed to create meaningful change.



VIT-AP UNIVERSITY HOSTS ONLINE EDP ON SCIENTIFIC SAFETY DURING NATIONAL SAFETY WEEK



Amaravati: As part of National Safety Week, the Department of Chemistry, VIT-AP University, in collaboration with Deccan Fine Chemicals and the American Chemical Society (ACS), is organising an Employee Development Program (EDP) on Scientific Safety from March 10 to 15, 2025.

Manchester United to build 'world's greatest' soccer stadium

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Manchester United unveiled plans on Tuesday to build the "world's greatest" soccer stadium. A proposed 100,000-seater arena, costing around 2 billion pounds (\$2.6 billion), would be built next to United's current Old Trafford home and surpass Wembley Stadium as the biggest in the United Kingdom.

"Manchester United is the world's most favorite football club and, in my view, is the biggest and deserves a stadium fitting of its stature," part owner Jim Ratcliffe said.

Work could begin as early as this year, with completion by the 2030-31 season, the club said.

Ratcliffe, who is one of Britain's richest people, said the new venue could be a tourist attraction in the manner of the Eiffel Tower.

"We have 1 billion people around the world who follow Manchester United. They will all want to visit this stadium," he said. Designed by British architect Norman Foster, the first released images of the stadium include three giant tentpoles that would be seen from 40 kilometers (25 miles) away. They support a surrounding covered area, which he describes as "arguably the largest public space in the world."

Wembley is currently the biggest stadium in the UK, with a capacity of 90,000, and is home to England's national soccer teams. Twickenham, the national rugby stadium, holds 82,500.



Old Trafford is the country's biggest dedicated soccer stadium with a capacity of just over 74,000, but is dated in comparison to the likes of the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, which regularly hosts NFL games.

Old Trafford, which was bombed during World War II, has been home to United since 1910.

Under the plans, the 20-time English champion said it would not need to relocate during the construction process. It is estimated it would take around 12 months to disassemble Old Trafford once the new stadium is completed.

Ratcliffe paid \$1.3 billion for an initial 25% stake in United last year and made a new stadium one of his priorities.

"Today marks the start of an incredibly exciting journey to the delivery of what will be the world's greatest football stadium," Ratcliffe said. "Our current stadium has served us brilliantly for the past 115 years, but it has fallen behind the best arenas in world sport."

United has not set a start date yet but Foster said building work, which could include pre-fabricated parts and a "Meccano" type construction, could mean it is completed in five years.

The timing would likely rely on government involvement in what United wants to be part of a wider project to regenerate the surrounding Old Trafford area. It said it would be worth 7.3 Billion pounds (\$9.4 Billion) to the UK Economy, and the UK Government has already voiced its support for the project.

"Our long-term objective as a club is to have the world's best football team playing in the world's best stadium," United chief executive Omar Berrada said.

Managerial great Alex Ferguson said the club "must be brave and seize this opportunity to build a new home, fit for the future, where new history can be made."

The announcement came days after thousands of United fans marched in protest against the club's ownership in the face of cost cuts, ticket price increases and ongoing failure on the field.

United is majority owned by the American Glazer family, which also owns the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Upon investing, Ratcliffe vowed to return the once-dominant club back to the summit of European soccer after more than a decade since it last won the Premier League.

But his first year in charge of soccer operations has been turbulent. United endured its worst-ever Premier League season last year and is on course to set a new low this term, with the team currently languishing in 14th position.

United has not won the league title since Ferguson's final season in 2013.

Berrada said the club was still focused on returning to the summit of European soccer. "We don't want to inhibit our ability to invest in the team, for us to continue being competitive while we are building a new stadium," he said.

Our number one goal is to get our teams winning and to get the men's team competing for all the titles consistently.

Argentina puts Maradona's healthcare professionals on trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Buenos Aires

An Argentine court on Tuesday started its trial of seven healthcare professionals accused of negligence in the death of soccer great Diego Maradona, at age 60.

Maradona was under the care of those professionals when he had a cardiac arrest in a house outside Buenos Aires on Nov. 25, 2020.

Three judges will decide whether those charged, including a neurosurgeon, a psychiatrist and several medical staffers, are guilty of manslaughter. The maximum jail time for those sentenced is 25 years.

According to the prosecution, the accused professionals didn't provide adequate medical care.

Prosecutor Patricio Ferrari said he will provide evidence that, between Nov. 11-25 2020, Maradona was taken to a house in a private neighborhood in the town of Tigre, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, without being in "full use of his mental faculties" to decide on home hospitalisation. Ferrari said it was a reckless hospitalisation in which there was no control.

"After condemning him to oblivion in that house... They deliberately and cruelly decided that he should die," he said.

The prosecutor showed an image of the former soccer star lying in the bed where he was found dead with his abdomen visibly swollen.

The tearful family of the 1986 World Cup winner were present at the courtroom. Maradona's oldest daughters, Dalma and Giannina, sat in the front row near Verónica Ojeda, former partner of the footballer, and Jana, another of his daughters. Minutes before the start of the trial, Ojeda shared a video on social media of Maradona's son Diego Fernando wearing a T-shirt with the face of the football star, and the word "justice."

The trial could last up to four months and there will be three hearings per week.

The spotlight is on neurosurgeon Leonardo Luque, Maradona's personal physician for the last four years of his life. He performed surgery to remove a blood clot from the former footballer's brain just weeks before his death.

We are doing everything to bring two sides together, says Jay Monahan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ponte Vedra Beach

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan wants to get a deal done with the Saudi backers of LIV Golf provided it doesn't compromise what he considers the essence of the tour.

Monahan said on Tuesday that President Donald Trump's involvement makes the prospect of reunification "very real." Missing were details on how to get there, only a suggestion that the PGA Tour and the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia were at a standstill.

"We're doing everything that we can to bring the two sides together," Monahan said ahead of The Players Championship. "That said, we will not do so in a way that diminishes the strength of our platform or the very real momentum we have with our fans and our partners. So while we've removed some hurdles, others remain."

"But like our fans, we still share the same sense of urgency to get to a resolution," Monahan and Adam Scott met with Trump at the White House on February 4. The next meeting included Tiger Woods and Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the PIF governor behind LIV and its concept of

He wants to see the game reunified. We want to see the game reunified. His involvement has made the prospect of reunification very real

— JAY MONAHAN, PGA TOUR COMMISSIONER

team golf. It was the second meeting where progress slowed. Monahan said no other meetings currently are scheduled.

"President Trump is a lifelong golf fan. He believes strongly in the game's power and potential and he has been exceedingly generous with his time and influence to help bring a deal together," Monahan said. "He wants to see the game reunified. We want to see the game reunified. His involvement has made the prospect of reunification very real."

"When you're in the midst of complex negotiations, particularly when you may be near a breakthrough, there are ebbs and flows in the discussion."

That began a year ago when several players accompanied Monahan to the Bahamas to start the conversation with PIF. The PGA Tour last year brought on the private equity Strategic Sports Group and its \$1.5 Billion investment in a com-

mercial venture. That raised questions whether the tour even needed a deal with the Saudis. Driving the current discussion is how to repair the divide in golf, with players like Jon Rahm, Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka part of LIV Golf and banned from playing on the PGA Tour. The best players are together only four times a year at the majors.

Monahan invited more questions without providing answers when he said: "We believe there's room to integrate important aspects of LIV Golf into the PGA Tour platform."

"We're doing everything that we can to bring the two sides together." That would not appear likely for the rest of the year. LIV Golf, which began in 2022 with a schedule that avoided some of the biggest events in golf, is playing this week in Singapore opposite The Players Championship, the tour's premier event with a \$25 million purse. Monahan has said over the past month that the priority of the meetings with PIF was about reuniting all the best players more often. He declined to say what "more often" meant or even if that required a financial investment from the PIF.

Thuram emerges as one of Serie A's leading players

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Milan

Marcus Thuram has emerged as one of Serie A's leading players this season. The Inter Milan forward is now doing it on the international stage.

Thuram scored a stunning early goal to set Inter on its way to a 2-1 victory over Feyenoord in the second leg of the Champions League round of 16 on Tuesday.

Inter advanced 4-1 on aggregate with Thuram also having scored in the first leg and will face Bayern Munich in the quarterfinals.

Thuram, the son of former Juventus defender and World Cup winner Lilian Thuram, could have added to his tally with more fancy footwork as he showed few ill effects from an ankle injury that has restricted his playing time of late.

"I've had a problem with my ankle for a month, sometimes it hurts more sometimes less," the 27-year-old Thuram said. "I'm not at 100 per cent yet."

However, he certainly seemed back to his best right from the start at San Siro.

There was less than eight minutes on the clock when Thuram received the ball midway inside the Feyenoord half and the France forward then twisted and weaved his way to the edge of the area before unleashing a powerful effort into the top right corner.

That made Thuram only the second Inter player to score in both legs of a Champions League round-of-16 tie, and the first since Dejan Stankovic did so against Ajax in 2006.

Thuram almost repeated his exploits at the start of the second half, turning deftly on the edge of the area before his strike went narrowly over the bar.

He also rattled the crossbar in the 70th minute after again dribbling his way through a maze of Feyenoord shirts.

Thuram received a standing ovation from the San Siro crowd when he was substituted shortly afterward.

Thuram, in his second season at Inter, has become one of the league's top

players. He helped the team to the Serie A title last year. Known for his assists last season, the forward has developed into a top scorer in this campaign with 13 goals plus four assists in Serie A.

However, he had only scored once in the league phase of Europe's elite club competition, against Young Boys back in October.

Inter last won the Champions League in 2010 as part of a trio of trophies under Jose Mourinho along with the Serie A title and the Italian Cup.

The Nerazzurri are again on the treble hunt as they lead Serie A and are in the Italian Cup semifinal, where they will play city rival AC Milan. They face a crucial match at Atalanta on Sunday, with just three points separating the two teams at the top of the table.

"It's not that I believe it or I don't believe it," Thuram said when asked about Inter's treble chances. "It's that at Inter we play all the games to win it. And if you do that, then at the end of the season beautiful things arrive."



Bayern Munich victory over Bayer Leverkusen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Leverkusen

Harry Kane is one step closer to being a Champions League winner, and he wants to enjoy Bayern Munich's statement victory over German rival Bayer Leverkusen.

"To beat this team 5-0 over two legs shows the type of team that we are," Kane told broadcaster Prime Video after scoring his 10th Champions League goal of the season in Tuesday's 2-0 second-leg win. "We're in the quarterfinal now where Bayern Munich should be and we want to keep pushing," Kane said. "We just want to enjoy this because it's not easy. Especially when you play your domestic rivals, there's a lot of pressure, there's a lot of intensity that goes into it."

Kane added that Bayern hadn't wanted to protect its three-goal lead from the first leg, but instead wanted to put Leverkusen under more pressure by creating chances early on. "In the second half we knew they had to come out and try something and we punished them."

Kane and Kompany

Kane's career has been defined by an abundance of individual awards and a lack of team trophies. With Bayern leading the Bundesliga by eight points from Leverkusen and into the Champions

League quarterfinals, that wait could soon come to an end.

The coach who has got the best out of Kane and the players around him wasn't Bayern's first choice last year. Vincent Kompany isn't getting carried away with success. "I won't surf on a hype wave, no chance," Kompany said after beating Leverkusen on Tuesday.

He praised Kane's contribution

"It obviously helps when you have a top player who only wants to run and fight for the team like a youth player," Kompany said. "That energy just helps."

Leverkusen under strain
Xabi Alonso's team is no stranger to a busy schedule — Leverkusen played 53 games last season, losing only the Europa League final — but the extra strain of the Champions League has seemed to take its toll on his relatively small squad.

Both Leverkusen and Bayern lost their Bundesliga games last week after their Champions League first-leg game. That defeat in itself was a blow to Leverkusen's fading German title defense ambitions, but far worse was an injury to attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz, who is set to be out for several weeks.

Against Bayern on Tuesday, Alonso tried to shake up his tactics with more long balls and a starting spot for tall striker Patrik Schick, but the Czech international's main contribution ended up being an involuntary assist for Kane's goal as Leverkusen didn't have a shot on target until the 65th minute.

Paris Saint-Germain defeats Liverpool in quarterfinals of Champions League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Gianluigi Donnarumma came through and Paris Saint-Germain defeated Liverpool in a penalty shootout to join Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Inter Milan in the quarterfinals of the Champions League on Tuesday.

PSG beat Liverpool 1-0 on the night to level the aggregate score at 1-1. Ousmane Dembélé scored 12 minutes into the second-leg match after a blunder by the Liverpool defense.

After extra time, Donnarumma stopped the penalty shots by Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones to secure his team a 4-1 shootout win. Desire Doue scored the winning spot kick for PSG, which will face either Aston Villa or Club Brugge.

"It does not matter if we deserve the win. Both teams deserved to go through," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. "We were better in Paris and they were better here. My team showed great personality and character at Anfield." The French league leader seeking its first Champions League title had lost at this stage in five of the past eight editions. It lost to Borussia Dortmund in last

season's semifinals. "It was the best game of football I have ever been involved in," Liverpool manager Arne Slot said. "It was an incredible performance, especially if you compare it with last week. We were creating chances and then we were 1-0 down. We ran out of luck after last week."

Barcelona cruised past Benfica with Raphinha scoring twice and Lamine Yamal once in a 3-1 win at home.

The Catalan club advanced 4-1 on aggregate score after last week's 1-0 victory and will play either Borussia Dortmund or Lille in the quarterfinals.

After a 3-0 first-leg win, Bayern Munich had no trouble advancing past German rival Bayer Leverkusen. Bayern made it to the last eight a record 23 times in the Champions League era after a 2-0 win at Leverkusen to advance 5-0 on aggregate.

Inter moved on past Feyenoord with a 2-1 victory at San Siro to advance 4-1 on aggregate. Bayern and Inter will meet in the last eight.

PSG outlasts Liverpool

A thrilling clash at Anfield saw chances come and go at both ends, with Liverpool



goalkeeper Alisson pulling off a string of saves to deny PSG, and with Liverpool substitute Jarell Quansah hitting the post in the second half.

Dembélé took advantage of mix up between Ibrahima Konate and Alisson to roll the ball into the empty net for the only goal of the game.

Premier League leader Liverpool, which did not make it to the Champions League last season, won the first leg 1-0 through Harvey Elliott's late goal in Paris last week.

Barcelona powers into quarterfinals
Raphinha's double made him the leading scorer in the Champions League this season with 11 goals. He had scored the

lone goal last week in Lisbon.

The Brazil forward put Barcelona ahead in the 11th, then Yamal added to the lead in the 27th before assisting in Raphinha's second goal in the 42nd to become the youngest player to score and assist in a Champions League match at 17 years, 241 days. "My teammates make things much easier for me," Yamal said. "It was a good goal but sometimes these things come off and sometimes they don't. For the assist, I tried to shoot and Raphinha turned it into a goal."

Nicolás Otamendi scored for Benfica in the 13th to become the third-oldest scorer in a Champions League knockout game at the age of 37 years, 27 days, according to UEFA. Yamal's goal meant he became the second-youngest.

Kane leads Bayern

Harry Kane scored his 10th Champions League goal of the season and set up another as Bayern Munich cruised into the quarterfinals. Leverkusen never looked likely to overturn the three-goal deficit from the first leg, even before Kane bundled in the ball at a free kick in the 52nd

after Leverkusen's Patrik Schick misjudged an attempted clearance.

Kane set up Alphonso Davies for Bayern's second goal with a flicked cross in the 71st as the all-German rivalry became a one-sided contest. Bayern could have scored more as Jamal Musiala hit the crossbar with one shot and the post with another.

Inter comfortably advances

A goal at the start of each half saw Inter easily advance, with Marcus Thuram scoring a stunning eighth-minute opener. The Inter forward received the ball midway inside the Feyenoord half and then weaved his way into the area before unleashing a powerful effort into the top right corner.

Jakub Moder leveled from the penalty spot shortly before halftime after being tripped by Hakan Calhanoglu.

Inter restored its advantage on the night six minutes into the second half with a penalty of its own, which Calhanoglu converted after Mehdi Taremi was fouled by Thomas Beelen right in the corner of the area.

Rohit is clear about his goals: Ponting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

Australia legend Ricky Ponting believes Rohit Sharma is still going strong and a sense of unfinished business was behind his decision to continue playing and leading India in the 50-over format until the 2027 ODI World Cup to be jointly hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Barring the ODI World Cup, Rohit has won all ICC titles while captaining India. He came agonisingly close to laying his hands on the 50-over world title at home in 2023, only to lose to Australia in the final.

Speaking on The ICC Review, the former Australia skipper said Rohit is pretty clear about his future goals.

"When you start getting to that point of your career, everyone's waiting for you to retire. And I do not know why, when you can still play as well as he's played (in the Champions Trophy final), I think he was just trying to put those questions to bed once and for all and say, 'no, I'm still playing well enough. I love playing in this team. I love leading this team.'"

"And I think, the fact that he said that,



to me, it means that he must have that goal in mind of playing in the next (50-over) World Cup (in 2027)," Ponting stated.

Handed the responsibility of captaincy in 2021 at the age of 34, Rohit on Sunday

clinched his second ICC title following the T20 World Cup win last year as India defeated New Zealand by four wickets to win the Champions Trophy here.

Chasing 252, Rohit, 38, led from the

front with an 83-ball 76 at the top to set the platform for a comfortable win.

In the run-up to the tournament, there were talks around Rohit's retirement from the ODI format after the Champions Trophy, as he had retired from T20s after winning the T20 World Cup.

But Rohit simply rejected the theories at the post-match press conference following the final.

"One more thing, I'm not going to retire from this format, just to make sure no more rumours are spread," Rohit told reporters after winning the player-of-the-match award.

Ponting said the urge to win the only missing ICC trophy in his cabinet, the ODI World Cup, might be behind Rohit's mind to prolong his career.

"I think probably the fact that they (India) lost the last one and he was captain, that might be the thing that's playing on the back of his mind," the Australian said. "Just have one more crack at trying to win the T20 World Cup, the Champions Trophy, and the ODI World Cup."

"I mean when you see him play like he played in the Champions Trophy final, you wouldn't say that his time is up just yet," Ponting added.



Masters League: West Indies defeat South Africa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Raipur

West Indies Masters rode on the brilliance of centurion Lendl Simmons and Ravi Rampaul's five-wicket haul to beat South Africa Masters by 29 runs and enter the semi-finals of the International Masters League (IML) here.

Put in to bat by South Africa Masters on Tuesday night, the Caribbeans rode on Simmons' 108, skipper Lara's 29 off 34 balls and Chadwick Walton's 38 not out to put up 200 for 5.

After a shaky start that saw Dwayne Smith (5) and William Perkins (5) depart early off Garnett Kruger, Simmons and Lara took the centre stage and forced a spectacular recovery with a 125-run partnership for the third wicket.

Simmons blazed to a 31-ball fifty, setting the tone with fearless hitting, while Lara elegantly painted his masterpiece. Lara, content on playing second fiddle early on, then launched Alviro Petersen for a towering six and a crisp boundary in consecutive deliveries.

Simmons continued to dazzle, racing to his century in just 54 balls, dispatching Thandi Tshabalala to all parts with a six and a four before calmly taking a single to bring up a well-deserved hundred.

But just as the duo threatened to take the game away from the grasp of South Africa Masters, Ntini infused life back into the contest by ending Simmons' 59-

ball knock, laced with 13 fours and five massive sixes.

Ryan McLaren then picked up the prized scalp of Lara after the southpaw steered West Indies Masters' recovery.

Despite the setbacks, Walton was in his elements, providing the much-needed impetus to the innings with six gigantic sixes to help West Indies Masters reach the 200-run mark.

South Africa Masters' chase began in explosive fashion, with wicketkeeper Richard Levi's breezy 44 setting the tone. However, the early momentum was short-lived as the loss of three quick wickets derailed their progress, putting the Proteas on the back-foot.

Jacques Kallis and Jacques Rudolph then steadied the innings with a crucial 78-run stand, reigniting South Africa's hopes. With both batters matching each other shot for shot, the game seemed to be slipping away from West Indies Masters. But just when the Proteas looked in control, Simmons produced a game-changing moment, breaking the partnership by dismissing Rudolph for a well-compiled 39 off 34 balls, studded with four boundaries. Sensing an opportunity, Rampaul returned for a second spell, and what followed was nothing short of dramatic.

In the space of just five deliveries, Rampaul ripped through South Africa Masters' middle order, claiming the wickets of Kallis (45), Farhaan Behardien, and Dane Vilas, adding to his earlier scalp of Hashim Amla (3).

WFI to conduct selection trials for Asian Championship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

In status as a National Sports Federation (NSF) restored, the WFI swung to action, announcing that the selection trials for the upcoming Asian Championship will be held at Delhi's Indira Gandhi Sports Complex on March 15.

It will be first proper trial under the supervision of the new WFI administration as it was suspended three days after it conducted election on December 21, 2023 to pick new office bearers.

The trials will be conducted to identify the top wrestlers who will represent the country in Amman, Jordan from March 25-30.

Mumbai Indians takes on Gujarat Giants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Harmanpreet Kaur's ability to unflinchingly guide Mumbai Indians in difficult situations could be the clinching factor for the former champions when they take on Gujarat Giants, a team they have vanquished twice this season, in the Women's Premier League (WPL) Eliminator here on Thursday.

With Delhi Capitals already sitting snugly in the final after topping the WPL table with 10 points, the focus is now on India skipper Harmanpreet and Gujarat Giants' captain Ashleigh Gardner to guide their sides into the title round.

Mumbai Indians would certainly enjoy the home advantage as the match will be played at the Brabourne Stadium and the fact that they overwhelmed Gujarat Giants in their penultimate league game here on Monday, with Harmanpreet blazing to a 33-ball 54 in the nine-run victory.

Mumbai Indians' playing XI has largely remained unchanged with Hayley Matthews giving them flourishing starts while also tormenting the opponents with her off spin.

The West Indian all-rounder could once again prove to be the match-winner for her team following her sterling performances against the Gujarat side in their previous two meetings this season.

She broke the back of Gujarat Giants, returning with figures of 3/16 in Vododara last month and again tormented them in the return match at Brabourne, snaring three wickets. With Nat Sciver-Brunt doing the bulk of the scoring for MI, smashing four half-centuries and emerging as the top run-getter this season with 416 runs from eight matches, the onus would be on Gujarat Giants bowlers to tie down the England stalwart.

Sciver-Brunt's wicket-taking ability too cannot be underestimated, given that she along with Matthews have played a piv-

otal role in MI's successful run this season. While Harmanpreet's form has been patchy this season, she did manage a half-century against Gujarat on Monday, which would have given her enough confidence going into the Eliminator.

Gujarat Giants skipper Gardner, who took over the captaincy from country-mate Beth Mooney this season, would know that beating the inaugural edition champions in their own den wouldn't be easy.

Her form has fluctuated all season, though she still continues to be among the top-five scorers with 235 runs. She scored a duck against Mumbai Indians on Monday, one of the reasons they lost the match, which dashed their hopes of automatically qualifying for the final ahead of Delhi Capitals.

The Australian would bank on talented batter Harleen Deol to come good in the do-or-die contest and also hope that opener Mooney gives them a flying start.

Mumbai to host PSA event from March 24 to March 28

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Mumbai will host a PSA event from March 24 to 28, pitting India's top squash players like Ramit Tandon and Anahat Singh against their overseas rivals.

The \$40,000 prize money Indian Open, to be held at the indoor courts of Bombay Gymkhana, will see participation of players from countries like Egypt, Canada, Malaysia and Japan.

Besides Tandon and Anahat, other Indian players set to take part are Velavan Senthilkumar, Veer Chotrani, and Akanksha Salunkhe. The event will mark the return of a top squash tournament in the country after 2018, when Mumbai hosted the CCI International a PSA World Tour Silver tournament, a release from title sponsors JSW Sports said.

Starting in August 2024, PSA (Professional Squash Association) replaced World Tour tournaments with new PSA World Events, comprising new tournament-tiers Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze and Copper. The

The level of competition is right up there, and it is a great opportunity for Indian players to test themselves against the best

— RAMIT TANDON, SQUASH PLAYER

Indian Open will be a copper event.

A full-glass outdoor court has been set up for the quarterfinal, semifinal and final, creating a thrilling spectator experience, the JSW said.

India Number one Ramit Tandon said, "It's always special to compete at home, and having a PSA event like the Indian Open in India is a huge boost for the sport."

"The level of competition is right up there, and it's a great opportunity for Indian players to test themselves against the best. With squash making its Olympic debut at LA28, events like these are crucial in building momentum and inspiring the next generation."

PSA CEO Alex Gough welcomed the return of a PSA tournament to India.

Buttler one of my closest friends: Samson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Rajasthan Royals captain Sanju Samson is still not over Jos Buttler no longer being part of the team, and if he had his way, he would do away with the rule of releasing players in the IPL. Samson and Buttler opened batting for Royals for seven years but they did not retain the Englishman ahead of the mega auction last year.

Buttler will play for Gujarat Titans in the upcoming IPL.

"The IPL gives you the opportunity to lead a team and play at the highest level, and it also allows you to build close friendships," Samson told Jostar.

"Jos Buttler is one of my closest friends. We played together for seven years. During this time, our batting partnership time itself is so long that we got to know each other so well."

"He has been like an elder brother to me. Whenever I had a doubt, I would talk to him. When I became captain [in 2021], he was my vice-captain and helped me become a good captain."

Samson said letting go of Buttler was one of the hardest decision he has had to make. Royals had retained six players, including Samson, Yashavi Jaiswal, Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, Shimron Hetmyer and

The IPL gives you the opportunity to lead a team and play at the highest level and it also allows you to build close friendships

— SANJU SAMSON, CRICKETER

Sandeep Sharma.

"Letting him go has been one of the most challenging decisions for me. During the England series, I told him over dinner that I was still not over it. If I could change one thing in the IPL, I would change the rule of releasing players every three years," he said.

"While it has its positives, on a personal level, you lose that connect, that relation you built over years. He was a part of the family. What more can I say?"

While Buttler will not be around in Royals dugout, Samson is happy about reuniting with head coach Rahul Dravid.

"Rahul sir was the one who spotted me from the trials. He came up to me and said, 'Can you play for my team?' From there to now, with me being the captain of the franchise and he coming back - I'm very grateful, as we all are in the franchise, to have Rahul sir back," he said.

"I have played under him [at RR] as a player when he was the captain and I have

played under him in the Indian team when he was the coach. But a captain-coach relationship is very special and I'm very much looking forward to learning a lot from him.

"He is a top-notch professional and makes sure everything is done properly. I was with him last month in Nagpur at RR's sports academy. From morning ten o'clock till evening five o'clock, he was standing in the heat, watching the batsmen bat and the bowlers bowl, interacting with them, discussing with the coaches. He is absolutely involved in each and everything."

Royals signed 13-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi at the auction and that attracted a lot of attention.

Samson said the teenager is ready for the big leap.

"He looks very confident. He was sitting sixes out of the ground in the academy. So what else can I do? I think it's all about understanding his strength, backing it and being around as an elder brother."

"He looks ready. I think it's all about keeping him in the best shape and in a relaxed environment, which RR is known for, and then back him. You never know, in a couple of years he might end up playing for India as well."

Gill wins ICC Player of the Month award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

Star India opener Shubman Gill was on Wednesday named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for February following his stellar performances, which includes his exploits in his team's title-winning Champions Trophy campaign.

Gill took home the award, beating competition from Australia's Steve Smith and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips.

In his five ODIs over the course of the month, Gill compiled 406 runs, averaging 101.50 at a strike rate of 94.19.

This included a stellar outing in the 3-0 series win over England, wherein Gill registered three consecutive scores of over fifty. Gill began with a confident 87 in Nagpur and followed it up with a 60 in Cuttack. He finished in a grand style, smashing a hundred in Ahmedabad. His 112 came from merely 102 balls and included 14 fours and three sixes.

Gill was awarded player-of-the-match for this innings, and also took home the player-of-the-series award.

Continuing his golden run into the Champions Trophy, Gill hit an unbeaten 101 to lead India's chase in their tournament opener against Bangladesh.

I do not look back, I care about wins and finishing on top, says Collin Morikawa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ponte Vedra Beach

It's hard to win on the PGA Tour, a sentiment usually heard from players when they are sitting next to the trophy and realise what it took to get there.

Collin Morikawa keeps getting reminded after some painful losses.

The player who won five times on the PGA Tour in just over two years as a pro has only one title in his last 75 starts. Morikawa is Number four in the world ranking, and that's not an accident. He is playing good golf and giving himself plenty of chances.

Small consolation

"I don't look back and be like, Man, I had a great week' because I do care about the wins and I do care about finishing on top," Morikawa said Tuesday. "So there's a little bit of yes, I feel great because I know I can keep putting myself in contention, and if I just keep doing that, it's going to happen. "But for me, it does suck because I do look back at the wins and I do care about winning," he said. "So that's where it kind of hurts."

He can look back to being in the final

group of two majors last year. Morikawa was done in at the Masters when it took him two shots to get out of bunker on No. 9 for double bogey. He shared the 54-hole lead at the PGA Championship with Xander Schauffele at Valhalla. That requires good golf.

But remember, Morikawa won two majors, the PGA Championship in 2020, the British Open a year later, before his 40th career start on tour.

Golf felt easy back then, not so much at Morikawa has better scoring statistics now than when he was winning, but he speaks more about the freedom he felt on Sunday when he was winning with a little more regularity.

There wasn't much freedom when he took his place in the PGA Tour record book for losing a six-shot lead in the final round at Kapalua to start 2023. He played 67 consecutive holes without a bogey that week until one shot after another went wrong. Even more frustrating is losing without really doing much wrong.

Such was the case last week at Bay Hill, when Morikawa lost the lead without really losing control of his game. He was three shots ahead with five holes to play on a course with really one one birdie oppor-



tunity left. The other four holes were ranked among the top six in difficulty that day.

Morikawa had made only three bogeys in the previous 58 holes at that point. It wasn't a matter of what went wrong as

much as it what went right, a lot, for Russell Henley. There was a two-shot swing on the par-3 14th, the toughest hole Sunday at Bay Hill, which at that point had yielded only one birdie. Morikawa missed the green and made bogey. Henley made his best swing

of the tournament with a 5-iron to 10 feet for birdie. And then came the breaks that win tournaments. Morikawa found a bunker off the tee at the par-5 16th (the easiest hole of the final round) and had to lay up and hit wedge to a front pin, no easy task. Henley went just over the green in rough so thick he could only see his golf ball by standing over it.

And then he chipped in for eagle, a good shot because it was on line, a massive break because it hit the middle of the pin. An inch to the right or to the left, and Henley isn't sure the ball would have even stayed on the green.

Instead, he had an eagle and the lead for the first time when Morikawa made par. And that's the way it stayed for the last two holes until Henley held his nerve to make a pair of par putts (the combined length of those putts was 10 feet) for the biggest of his career.

Henley's words were telling when he turned his attention to Morikawa.

"Sometimes golf is just mean like that," he said. Morikawa clearly is trending with his game. The world ranking might not include LIV Golf players, but it's generally accurate at the top. The trick now is moving on, just like he had to do after

Kapalua in 2023, after the Masters and the PGA Championship last year.

He was in no mood to talk Sunday and offered no apologies given how he felt in the moment.

"I don't owe anyone anything," he said to a roomful of media at the TPC Sawgrass. "No offense to you guys, but for me in the moment of that time, I didn't want to be around anyone. Like, I didn't want to talk to anyone."

He was headed up the highway that evening for The Players Championship, another chance to get in the mix, another reminder that it is coming up on 18 months since his last win, and it was two years before that since he won in Dubai to capture the European tour season title.

The game is there while the frustration mounts. Winning is hard. He needs no reminders and is getting plenty of them, anyway.

"I love being in that position. I don't take it for granted because you just never know," he said. "But it was frustrating Sunday night. I have to get over it. ... I'm going to think about it. I know what happened. I fully am aware of how it played out. But I just have to move on and I have to learn from it. I have to keep getting better."