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PIONEER IN SHORT

JWAR AIRPORT GETS DGCA LICENCE

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has granted an aerodrome licence to Yamuna International Airport Private Limited for the Noida International Airport at Jewar in Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh. The development was confirmed by Rakesh Kumar Singh, CEO of Noida International Airport Limited and the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority. Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu said the airport will strengthen aviation connectivity across the National Capital Region and western Uttar Pradesh while boosting tourism, investment and economic growth. It is also expected to ease congestion at existing regional airports. The airport is being developed by YIAPL, a subsidiary of Zurich Airport International AG, under a public-private partnership with the governments of Uttar Pradesh and India. The 40-year concession began on October 1, 2021. According to Shailendra Bhatia, the licence permits domestic passenger and cargo operations. The all-weather airport features a 3,900-metre runway, Instrument Landing System and 24-hour operations, with parking for 26 aircraft and facilities capable of handling wide-body planes.

US permits import of stranded Russian oil cargoes for 30 days

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The United States (US) has issued a 30-day waiver allowing Indian refiners to buy Russian oil cargoes currently stranded at sea due to disrupted shipping routes.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the decision on Thursday, describing it as a limited and temporary measure designed to address supply disruptions caused by the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing conflict involving US, Israel and Iran, which has expanded across West Asia. He emphasised the measure "will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government."

The exemption was issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control and applies only to cargoes that have already been shipped. It allows them to be redirected to Indian ports until the waiver expires on April 4, 2026. The decision does not permit new Russian oil shipments and does not repre-



A worker carrying an LPG cylinder in Thane. Rumours about a shortage of petroleum products and LPG due to the ongoing West Asia conflict has triggered consumers to brace for the issue

sent a broader relaxation of US secondary sanctions.

Bessent also indicated that Washington expects India to increase purchases of US crude once the immediate crisis subsides, underscoring the strategic energy partnership between the two countries. The disruption of key

Middle Eastern shipping lanes has created a sudden shortage of available crude cargoes, forcing refiners to seek alternatives.

Indian refiners have already secured several million barrels of Russian crude under the temporary measure as they scramble to maintain supply. Among the

companies responding to the waiver is Reliance Industries, India's largest private refiner.

The company plans to process the oil at refineries supplying the domestic Indian market while continuing to operate export-oriented facilities using non-Russian crude grades.

Govt rejects criticism over US waiver on Russian oil

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Government on Friday said that India has never been dependent on permission from any nation to buy Russian oil following Opposition criticism after the US issued a 30-day waiver allowing Indian refiners to buy Russian oil cargoes.

"Russian oil continued to flow into India and New Delhi never completely stopped buying oil from Russia as part of its policy to source energy needs from diversified sources, even after the US objected to it and imposed sanctions," a top official of the petroleum ministry said.

Russia remains India's top crude supplier in February. India's imports of Russia crude rose 6 per cent month-on-month in February. At February end, Russian oil stood at 20 per cent of the total imported crude oil.

The official added, the message from the Centre to every Indian household is clear that the country's fuel supply is fully secure. "No petrol pump has run dry in 12 years. What certain voices are



A petrol pump attendant refilling a vehicle in Thane as consumers brace for a hike in oil prices triggered by the ongoing West Asia conflict

calling a crisis is, in fact, the proof of preparation. India's energy governance has given us the insulation we need," they said. "The US waiver of sanctions removes friction. It does not define India's policy, which is governed by the energy trilemma—affordability, availability and sustainability—for every Indian household."

Dismissing the Opposition's criticism of the US waiver, they said it is "not surprising that they are nitpicking on

selective words". "Clearly shows the Opposition is unaware of how countries frame statements and use bombast keeping their domestic audiences and politics in mind. India will buy oil from wherever it is available. Our oil purchases will not be governed by any hollow slogans. India has never depended on permission from any country to buy Russian oil," another senior government official said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander



Israel pounds Tehran; US hits Iranian drone carrier

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES
 ■ New Delhi/Dubai

Israel said on Friday that it launched a "broad-scale wave of strikes" on Tehran, with witnesses reporting powerful explosions that shook homes across the Iranian capital. Additional blasts were reported around Kermanshah, a region believed to host several Iranian missile bases.

The bombardment comes amid a week of escalating hostilities between US, Israel and Iran that has spread across West Asia. On Friday, Qatar said it intercepted a drone targeting Al Udeid Air Base, which hosts the forward headquarters of US Central

Command. Saudi Arabia reported intercepting three ballistic missiles aimed at Prince Sultan Air Base.

Meanwhile, the US said it struck an Iranian drone carrier identified as the IRIS Shahid Bagheri, setting the vessel ablaze at sea. The strike was confirmed by US Central Command, which released footage showing the burning ship. Iranian officials did not immediately acknowledge the attack.

Meanwhile, US Defence Secretary, Pete Hegseth warned the conflict could intensify further, saying the US campaign against Iranian military capabilities was "about to surge dramatically."

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Smoke rising following an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh Beirut's southern suburbs in Lebanon

Andhra, Karnataka plan social media curbs for kids

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ Bengaluru/Hyderabad

Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on Friday announced their intention to ban the use of social media for children. While Andhra Pradesh plans to prohibit social media for children below 13 years of age, the Government in neighbouring Karnataka intends to extend the ban to children under 16.

"Definitely, we will make sure that within 90 days those below 13 years of age are not able to use social media," said Naidu. The CM said his government will take a call on banning social media for teenagers between 13 and 16 years.

"With the objective of preventing adverse effects of increasing mobile



Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah arriving to present the state Budget for the 2026-27 at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Friday

usage on children, usage of social media will be banned for children under the age of 16," Siddaramaiah said while presenting the state Budget for 2026-27 in the state Assembly in Bengaluru.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Anuj Agnihotri tops civil services exam 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

Anuj Agnihotri, an MBBS graduate and an officer of the Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Service (DANICS), has topped the civil services examination 2025. The results were declared by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Friday.

Rajeshwari Suve M, who holds a Bachelor of Engineering (BE) degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE) from the Anna University, Chennai, achieved the second rank



Anuj Agnihotri, who topped the UPSC civil services examination 2025, with family members in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan

with Sociology as her optional subject, while Akansh Dhull, a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) graduate

from the University of Delhi, stood third in the rank with commerce and accountancy as his optional subject.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Two pilots die in Air Force crash in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 ■ New Delhi

Two pilots of the Indian Air Force (IAF) were killed in a crash of a Su-30 MKI multi-role fighter jet in Assam's Karbi Anglong district.

The IAF confirmed on Friday the deaths of Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Purvesh Duragkar, a day after the aircraft went missing. The jet was on a



training sortie and disappeared from radar shortly after taking off from Jorhat airbase on Thursday.

The IAF headquarters ordered a court of inquiry into the crash.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he is "deeply saddened" by the deaths of Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Duragkar in the "tragic Su-30 crash".

"Their courage and service to the nation will always be remembered with pride and gratitude," he posted on X.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

MAMATA HITS STREETS AGAINST ECI

Mamata Banerjee on Friday staged a dharna in central Kolkata against large-scale deletions in the State's voter rolls, escalating the Trinamool Congress confrontation with the Election Commission of India ahead of the Assembly polls. Launching the protest at Metro Channel in Esplanade, Banerjee accused the Bharatiya Janata Party and the poll panel of conspiring to "disenfranchise Bengali voters". According to official data released on February 28, about 63.66 lakh names—around 8.3% of the electorate—have been deleted since the Special Intensive Revision exercise began in November, reducing the voter base from roughly 7.66 crore to just over 7.04 crore. Another 60.06 lakh voters have been placed under the "under adjudication" category, pending legal scrutiny. The TMC alleges the exercise could affect more than 1.2 crore voters, a charge rejected by the EC.

Rapper-turned politician Balen Shah's party sweeps Nepal polls

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
 ■ Kathmandu

Rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah's newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) was on Friday heading towards a landslide victory in Nepal's first general elections since the violent Gen Z protests toppled the K P Sharma Oli-led government in September.

According to the Election Commission's data available from 144 of the total 165 constituencies, the RSP has won three seats and is ahead in 104 others, local media reported. The Nepali Congress has won two seats and is leading in 12 others, while the CPN-UML is leading in 10

constituencies. The Nepali Communist Party has won one and is leading in six constituencies.

The outcome is expected to provide a strong government in the politically fragile Nepal, which has had 14 governments in the last 18 years.

The election was being closely watched by India, which hopes for a stable government in the politically fragile Himalayan nation to take forward the development partnership between the two sides. "We look forward to working with the new Government of Nepal to further build on the robust multifaceted ties between our two countries and peoples for mutual benefit," Ministry of



Supporters of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) gathered outside the election commission ahead of the announcement of results in the Nepal general elections in Kathmandu

External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in Delhi on Thursday.

He said India has "consistently supported peace,

progress and stability in Nepal and in keeping with our commitment, provided logistical supplies as per request from Government

of Nepal for these elections". Balendra Shah, who was the Mayor of Kathmandu till recently, is leading in Jhapa-5 constituency against four-time prime minister and CPN-UML chair Oli in the latter's stronghold. Shah, popularly known as Balen, received 6,551 votes, while Oli got just 1,428 votes.

Popularly known as 'Balen', the 35-year-old engineer was a popular choice to lead the interim government after Gen Z youths toppled the Oli-led coalition government in September last year, following two-day nationwide violent protests against corruption and a ban on social media.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Sisters found dead in Malviya Nagar

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
 ■ New Delhi

Two sisters, aged 33 and 28, were found dead inside their home in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Thursday evening, while their mother was discovered unconscious in another room. Police suspect that the mother may have killed her daughters before attempting to take her own life.

According to police officials, the incident was reported at 6.10 pm at the Malviya Nagar police station. A relative informed the police that the family members were

not opening the door despite repeated attempts.

A police team rushed to the house and found the main door locked from the inside. Officers forced the door open and entered the premises. During the search of the house, they found the bodies of the two sisters in separate rooms.

One of the women was discovered lying with a pillow placed over her face, while the other had ligature marks on her neck. In another room, the police found their mother lying unconscious. She was immediately taken to the AIIMS Trauma Centre.

Panel to report on Kejriwal's Phansi Ghar lies: Speaker

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Following discussions in the Privileges Committee, Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta on Friday accused Arvind Kejriwal of spreading a "fake narrative" about the presence of a Phansi Ghar in the Assembly complex and stated that the panel will submit a report on his previous failure to appear before it.

examine the entire matter. Gupta noted that when the committee's report was submitted in the previous House, some members were accused of contempt for not appearing before the panel despite being summoned and for repeatedly avoiding it. "One issue has been established — failure to appear before the committee when summoned. The committee will submit its report on this matter," he said.

Phansi Ghar (execution chamber), while the BJP claims it was simply a tiffin room. The Chairperson of the Committee of Privileges, Pradyuman Singh Rajput, said that while the summoned individuals finally appeared, they had previously attempted to evade the committee's proceedings.



Upadhyay, Neeraj Basoya, Ravi Kant, Ram Singh Netaji, and Surender Kumar, according to a statement. The Speaker added that if the historical authenticity of the structure referred to as the 'Phansi Ghar' remains unsubstantiated, it would be appropriate to address the

stream the committee proceedings on Friday. The letter noted the Privileges Committee chairperson's surprise over Kejriwal's "ignorance in this matter", even though he has been a member of the assembly for over 10 years and has attended several sittings of the Privileges Committee. "I am directed by the Chairperson to inform that the proceedings of the Committee of Privileges are confidential and the Rules of Procedure do not permit their live streaming," the Delhi Assembly Secretariat's letter read.

the Delhi Assembly was inaugurated as the British-era Phansi Ghar. The BJP, however, claimed that the section is actually a 'tiffin room'. On August 5, 2025, the BJP and AAP sparred in the Delhi Assembly after Speaker Gupta told the House that the so-called British-era 'Phansi Ghar', inaugurated on the Assembly premises in 2022 following renovation by Kejriwal with much fanfare, was originally a tiffin room.

Delhi Police officer, kin of cops clear UPSC



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

One serving and two family members of personnel from the Delhi Police have cleared the prestigious Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) civil services examination this year, bringing pride to the force. Among the most notable achievers is Apurva Verma, a serving Assistant Commissioner of Police posted in CR Park, who secured an All India Rank (AIR) of 42 in the exam.

Verma, who had earlier joined the police service through the Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Police Service (DANIPS), achieved the top fifty rank in her third attempt and is now set to join the IAS. Her success has drawn attention as she balanced her duties as a police officer while preparing for one of the country's toughest examinations. Verma had joined the civil services earlier after clearing the exam in 2021. However, she continued preparing with the aim of becoming an IAS officer.

Kejriwal accuses BJP of insulting freedom fighters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who on Friday appeared before the Privileges Committee of the Assembly over the Phansi Ghar row, has accused the BJP Government of "insulting freedom fighters" by trying to prove that the disputed structure was actually a 'tiffin room'.



being the AAP Government," Kejriwal claimed. The Phansi Ghar (execution room) row is a dispute between the AAP and the BJP over a renovated section in the Delhi Assembly, which the AAP claims to be a British-era gallows chamber, while the BJP claims it was a tiffin room. After the BJP came to power in Delhi last February, Speaker Vijender Gupta told the House that the British-era structure, which was renovated and inaugurated in 2022 by then chief minister Kejriwal as part of a Phansi Ghar, was actually a tiffin room. Showing a 1912 map of the

said. As the committee proceedings were underway, several AAP workers staged a protest outside the Assembly complex, raising slogans alleging that the entire exercise was meant to defame Kejriwal. Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Atishi, and former speaker Ram Niwas Goel accompanied Kejriwal inside the Assembly. "Delhi Police stopped Arvind Kejriwal's personal security officer outside the Assembly. His personal staff were also stopped, while the security vehicle accompanying him was not allowed," AAP sources claimed.

Eminent journalist HK Dua cremated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Noted journalist and former Rajya Sabha MP HK Dua, who had the distinction of helming several leading newspapers, was cremated at the Lodhi Road crematorium here on Thursday afternoon. The last rites were performed by his son Prashant Dua in the presence of his mother Aditya Dua, eminent personalities and senior journalists.



four decades, Dua had the distinction of helming four newspapers — The Hindustan Times, The Indian Express, The Times of India and The Tribune. He had also served as a media advisor to two prime ministers — Atal Bihari Vajpayee and HD Deve Gowda — and transitioned into the roles of a diplomat and parliamentarian. A Padma Bhushan recipient, Dua was known for his affable persona, sharp political insight and unwavering commitment to editorial independence. He commanded respect across the political spectrum. Born on July 1, 1937, Dua also served as India's ambassador to Denmark

Advertisement for 'The Pioneer Classified' featuring 'CHANGE OF NAME' notices for individuals like Raj Kumari Devi, Shaikhoon, and others.

PUBLIC NOTICE regarding the purchase of a flat No. 207 A, 2nd Floor, Gali No. 13, Krishna Park, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE regarding the purchase of a flat No. 503, 2nd Floor, Gali No. 13, Krishna Park, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi.

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Table titled 'GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE' listing various construction and maintenance projects with details on board names, work descriptions, opening dates, and amounts.

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PM to launch ₹33,500 cr projects on Sunday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch and lay the foundation stones of multiple development projects, including inaugurating two new corridors of the Delhi Metro, in the national Capital on Sunday. The total cost of the projects is around ₹33,500 crore. The prime minister will also address a gathering on the occasion.

Prior to the programme, PM Narendra Modi will visit the General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) Type-5 quarters in Sarojini Nagar and hand over the keys to female allottees, according to an official statement.



The two new Delhi Metro corridors, which will be inaugurated by the prime minister, are the Majlis Park-Maujpur Babarpur (Pink Line) corridor of around 12.3 km and the Deepali Chowk-Majlis Park (Magenta Line) corridor of around 9.9 km.

These corridors will benefit several areas of Delhi, including Burari, Jagatpur-Wazirabad, Khajuri Khas, Bhajanpura, Yamuna Vihar, Madhuban Chowk, Haiderpur Badli Mor, Bhalaswa and Majlis Park.

Modi will also lay the foundation stone for three new corridors under Phase V-A of the Delhi Metro, covering a route length of around 16.1 km. The three new corridors

are RK Ashram Marg to Indraprastha, Aerocity to Indira Gandhi Airport Terminal-1 and Tughlakabad to Kalindi Kunj. These corridors will provide direct connectivity to several important locations in the capital and improve connectivity for those travelling between Noida, south Delhi and the airport. The Prime Minister will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of projects worth ₹15,200 crore under the GPRA redevelopment plan.

Spread across key locations, such as Sarojini Nagar, Netaji Nagar, Kasturba Nagar and Srinivasapuri, these projects are part of the Government's ambitious programme to modernise GPRA colonies and create world-class infrastructure for Government employees and administrative offices, the statement said.

The projects have been redeveloped through an innovative self-sustainable financial model that ensures that the redevelopment is carried out without burdening the public exchequer.

Under this model, the Government is developing and monetising a limited portion of the project area for commercial and residential space to finance the entire project. The revenue generated from it is being used to fund the redevelopment of modern Government housing, support infrastructure and public facilities.

The redevelopment plan will provide more than 9,350 modern flats for Government employees, along with the creation of approximately 48 lakh square feet of office space, which will significantly enhance administrative efficiency, while also generating monetisation potential, the statement said.

₹177 cr approved to fix monsoon waterlogging

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Government has approved major stormwater drainage remodelling projects worth over ₹177 crore to strengthen the Capital's drainage infrastructure and reduce waterlogging during the monsoon. The projects, sanctioned by the Public Works Department (PWD) under the New Master Drainage Plan, will cover several key areas in North and North-West Delhi.

According to officials, the works will focus on remodelling and upgrading existing stormwater drains using modern precast RCC technology. The projects are expected to improve drainage capacity, speed up construction, and minimise disruption to traffic during execution.



Camp Chowk to Azadpur H-Point on Mall Road, one of the key drainage corridors in the area. Another major project worth ₹24.50 crore will upgrade the storm water drainage system along Sultanpuri Nangloi Road, from the railway station to the bus terminal via Jalebi Chowk. The works aim to improve drainage in areas that frequently experience flooding during heavy rains.

The department has also approved a ₹22.66 crore project to remodel drains on both sides of the road from Jain Nagar to Rohini Sector-22 Red Light. In addition, ₹19.59 crore has been sanctioned for stormwater drain remodelling on Maharaja Aggarsen Marg. Other projects include a ₹17.88 crore drain upgrade from Avantika Red Light to Vishram Chowk on Chhotaram Marg and a ₹13.72 crore project along Police Station Road in Sultanpuri, connecting the bus terminal to the flood control drain.

The works will be executed in phases and monitored closely to ensure quality and timely completion. Once completed, the upgraded drainage network is expected to reduce flooding risks and provide long-term relief to residents who regularly face waterlogging during the monsoon season.

The Government has also cleared a ₹12.33 crore project on Gyan Shakti Mandir Marg to remodel stormwater drains using precast RCC structures.

Committed to serve people of Delhi, says LG Sandhu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The newly appointed Delhi Lt Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Friday said he is committed to serving the people of Delhi and the nation with dedication and humility. President Droupadi Murmu appointed the former diplomat as the Delhi LG, replacing VK Saxena who had been in office for nearly four years.



In a post on X, Sandhu said, "Deeply honoured and grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the opportunity to serve the people of Delhi as Lieutenant Governor. Grateful also to Home Minister Amit Shah for his trust and support. "Committed to serving the people of Delhi and the nation with dedication and humility," he added.

Sandhu's appointment was part of a major reshuffle of gubernatorial posts effected in several States and Union territories by President Murmu on Thursday night. Sandhu, a 1988-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, was one of the most experienced Indian diplomats on United States affairs. He served in the Indian Mission in Washington DC multiple times.

He was India's ambassador to the US from February 2020 to January 2024. Previously, he served as the deputy chief of mission at the embassy in Washington from July 2013 to January 2017 and as the first secretary (political) from 1997 to 2000, with the responsibility to liaise with the US Congress.

Sandhu also served as an advisor to the Board of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) and Chairman of its newly established

Geopolitical Institute. The former envoy to the United States has a diplomatic career spanning nearly 40 years.

He guided USISPF's strategic initiatives, particularly focusing on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the Quad (India, Japan, Australia, US), and the I2U2 grouping comprising India, Israel, the US, and the UAE. His diplomatic career also includes three stints in Washington, DC, including serving as Deputy Chief of Mission under then-Ambassador S Jaishankar. He played a key role in organising events such as PM Modi's 2014 Madison Square Garden address, Trump's 2020 India visit, and the 2024 state visit of PM Modi to Washington.

As Chair of the Geopolitical Institute, the former envoy helped shape USISPF's approach to evolving geopolitical dynamics, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. His focus areas will include defence cooperation, vaccine diplomacy, critical and emerging technologies, and energy partnerships. He also offered strategic insights on regional initiatives like IMEC and I2U2, both of which gained significant momentum during his tenure in Washington.

No negligence will be tolerated in works: CM Rekha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday directed officials to speed up development works across the Capital and warned that any laxity in execution would not be tolerated. Reviewing projects worth about ₹3,786 crore, the chief minister said there would be no shortage of funds for development, but departments must ensure the timely completion of projects.



The directions were issued during a high-level review meeting at the Delhi Secretariat, where the chief minister assessed development works being carried out under the Chief Minister Development Fund (CMD), the Delhi Village Development Board (DVDB), and the Trans-Yamuna Area Development Board (TYADB). The Chief Minister asked officials from all departments to complete tender-related procedures

by the end of March and ensure that projects are finished before the onset of the monsoon. She stressed that the pace of development must be clearly visible on the ground.

"There will be no shortage of budget for development work in Delhi, but any laxity in execution will not be tolerated," the chief minister said, urging agencies to begin project processes at the start of the new financial year to avoid delays. According to the chief minister, develop-

ment projects worth around ₹3,786 crore have been approved so far under the three schemes. She said efficient utilisation of public funds for infrastructure and civic works remains a priority for the Government.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister reviewed the progress of thousands of projects aimed at strengthening basic infrastructure across the Capital, particularly in villages and the Trans-Yamuna region. The meeting was attended by DVDB chairman Rajkumar Chauhan, TYADB chairman Arvinder Singh Lovely, and senior officials from several departments.

Under the Chief Minister Development Fund, a total of 3,812 development projects have received administrative approval so far. These projects have an estimated cost of around ₹1,798.85 crore. The works include construction and repair of roads and drains, improvement of water supply, installation of street lighting, and development of parks and other local infrastructure.

Officials said the projects are being executed through multiple Government agencies, including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the Delhi Jal Board, the Public Works Department, the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation, and the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, Delhi. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi is handling the largest number of projects under the scheme.

MCD plans to turn historic town hall into cultural hub for public use

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is working with the Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation on a plan to turn the historic Town Hall into a cultural hub for public use. The original idea, according to officials, was to use part of the 160-year old complex — which served as the municipal body's headquarters in Chandni Chowk in the past — for public functions. The relocation of the City Sadar Paharganj zonal office to the Town Hall was also being mullied.



However, the civic body is now looking at conserving, restoring, and repurposing it in a way that keeps its heritage character while opening it up to the public under a revenue-sharing arrangement, officials said.

Further, they said, the work required in the building is extensive, and the cost to fully restore it is yet to be determined, as the area is substantial.

"We are working on a proposal to fully renovate and restore the building. Initial assessment suggests that the cost is going to be more than ₹100 crore, but the exact cost is yet to be determined," a senior Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation

(DTTDC) official said. Last week, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) wrote to the DTTDC, seeking a proposal on heritage redevelopment and tourism, officials said.

"Previously, we had approached other agencies as well; finally, the DTTDC is working on a proposal to develop the heritage building into a cultural centre showcasing the history of Delhi and the corporation," an MCD official said.

The Town Hall was classified as a Grade-A heritage structure, the highest protection category under Delhi's heritage regulations, which puts it in the same bracket as some of the city's most significant historical buildings, officials said.

Built between 1860 and 1863 in mid-colonial style, the structure sits on a plot with an expanse of more

than 13,000 square metres and has three buildings. The letter, from the City Sadar Paharganj zone, asked the DTTDC to look at the proposal, suggest how it could get involved, identify relevant schemes, and outline a broad plan to move the project ahead. The corporation said such guidance would help it restore the building and bring it into the city's cultural and tourism fold.

"We are considering whether a ticketing system should be put in place so that the heritage building's finances are taken care of in the near future. It may help in making it self-sustaining as the footfall increases," an official said.

MCD owns the Town Hall, which served as its headquarters from 1866 to 2012. The building has been sitting vacant since then. According to officials, the heritage cell of the MCD has restored documents, machines from the old printing press, maps and old artefacts.

"We are in the process of restoring several old documents, pictures and other important cartographic records which will be displayed in the restored Town Hall," an official said, adding that a few maps of Delhi, which are more than a century old, are being restored currently. "A map of Delhi from 1924, a few books, printing press machines from 1926 are being restored, which may be displayed there," the official added.

In 2025, the MCD hired a consultant to prepare a project report for the 163-year-old structure. But after a review, the plan was expanded to revive the entire complex as a public cultural space. Ahead of the G20 Summit, MCD carried out basic repairs, but officials say that since 2012, the building has deteriorated steadily. Ceiling plaster has come down in sections, entry to parts of the structure has been restricted, and years of deferred maintenance have taken a visible toll on the heritage building.

Various proposals to repurpose it — as a heritage hotel, a museum complex, a Government office — have fallen by the wayside.

Tribunal awards ₹1.21 cr in road accident case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A Delhi Motor Accident Claims Tribunal has awarded over ₹1.21 crore as compensation to a woman who suffered amputation of her left leg after a road accident in 2016.

Presiding Officer Richa Manchanda was hearing a claim petition filed by Renuka Bisht, a resident of Delhi's Narela, who lost her leg after a motorcycle

hit her two-wheeler on March 8, 2016.

In an order dated February 25, the tribunal said, "The evidence which has come on record, it is held that the petitioner has been able to prove his case on the basis of preponderance of probabilities, that she sustained injuries in a road accident which took place due to rash and negligent driving of offending vehicle by respondent number 1 (biker)."

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IN FOCUS



Workers sort freshly harvested potatoes in a field, at Garhi Thakurdas village in Agra, Uttar Pradesh

DGCA grants aerodrome license for Noida Airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has granted the Aerodrome License to Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL) for the Noida International Airport (NIA) at Jewar in Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.

The development was confirmed by Rakesh Kumar Singh, the chief executive officer of Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL) and the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority.

The Minister of Civil Aviation, Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu congratulated the Government of Uttar Pradesh, stating that the development of Noida International Airport is a major step toward strengthening aviation connectivity



for the National Capital Region and Western Uttar Pradesh. He highlighted that the world-class airport will boost regional economic growth, tourism, and investment while offering a seamless passenger experience by combining Swiss efficiency with Indian hospitality and will also help ease congestion at existing airports in the region. The airport has

been developed by YIAPL, a wholly owned subsidiary of Zurich Airport International AG, under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model with the Government of Uttar Pradesh and the Government of India. The concession period commenced on 1 October 2021 for a period of 40 years. Nodal officer of NIAL, Shailendra Bhatia, said the aerodrome

licence has been issued in accordance with civil aviation rules for domestic flights and cargo operations.

The airport has been licensed under the Public Use category for all-weather operations. It features a runway with orientation 10/28 and dimensions of 3,900 m x 45 m, supported by an Instrument Landing System (ILS) and Aeronautical Ground Lighting (AGL) system, enabling 24x7 operations. The aerodrome has parking stands for 24 Code C and 02 Code D/F aircraft and is equipped with ARFF Category 9 facilities capable of handling wide-body aircraft such as the Boeing 777-300ER.

Noida International Airport is being developed in four phases along with a multi-modal cargo hub. In the first phase, with one runway and one terminal,

the airport will have the capacity to handle around 12 million passengers annually. Upon completion of all phases, the airport will be capable of handling up to 70 million passengers per year, emerging as a major aviation hub for the National Capital Region and Western Uttar Pradesh.

The development of Noida International Airport is part of the Ministry of Civil Aviation's broader vision of building a robust aviation ecosystem. Over the past decade, India's civil aviation sector has expanded significantly, with the number of operational airports increasing from 74 in 2014 to 164 today, alongside India becoming the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world. India is rapidly expanding its aviation network through a balanced approach of developing new

greenfield airports while upgrading existing brown-field airports and regional airstrips, supported by initiatives such as the UDAN scheme. Looking ahead, the country's long-term roadmap aims to develop over 400 airports by 2047, further strengthening connectivity, economic growth and national integration.

The greenfield airport being developed in a PPP model in Jewar in Gautam Budh Nagar is expected to become one of the largest airports in the country once fully operational.

The first phase of the project, spread over 1,300 hectares with one runway and one terminal building, is slated to handle 1.2 crore passengers annually, officials said. The airport was originally scheduled to commence passenger services in September 2024.

Indian airlines cancel 278 international flight



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Domestic airlines are scheduled to operate 96 flights to and from the Middle East on Friday while the carriers have cancelled 278 international services for the day, the government said amid the conflict in the region.

The civil aviation ministry on Friday said due to the ongoing developments in West Asia and the resulting airspace restrictions, flight operations have been impacted across several sectors. "A total of 96 flight operations were scheduled today by Indian domestic carriers to and from destinations in the Middle East.

As of 6 March, 278 flights scheduled to be operated today by Indian domestic carriers have been cancelled," it said in a statement. Earlier in the day, officials said more than 140 international flights were cancelled in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, and Kolkata airports on Friday due to the Middle East crisis. They said at least

142 flights were cancelled at the four airports, with 39 departures and 34 arrivals cancelled at the Mumbai airport.

Akasa Air said it would operate the Mumbai-Jeddah-Mumbai flight on Friday. The airline, on Saturday, would operate flights from Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Kochi to Jeddah, it said in a post on X. SpiceJet said it will operate 14 special flights from the UAE to bring back stranded passengers. With the airspace over Saudi Arabia and Oman remaining open and assessed as safe for operations, Air India and Air India Express have resumed services to and from Jeddah and Muscat, Air India said in a statement on Thursday.

The Passenger Assistance Control Room (PACR), at the ministry, is coordinating with airlines and other stakeholders to address issues. "So far, 1,881 passenger grievances have been addressed through AirSewa, social media platforms and helpline calls," the ministry said in the statement.

DMRC forms a subsidiary for global projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has set up a new subsidiary, the Delhi Metro International Limited (DMIL), as it looks to bid for metro-rail projects in foreign cities and expand its consultancy and related urban-transport services abroad.

The new company has been created as part of the DMRC's efforts to expand its expertise in metro-rail planning, construction and operations beyond India, and explore business opportunities in international



markets, an official said.

He said the subsidiary will enable the DMRC to directly participate in bidding for metro-rail projects in foreign cities and undertake consultancy work related to urban-transport systems.

"The corporation has already been exploring

opportunities abroad and is currently associated with a metro-related project in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where it is providing technical support and consultancy," the official said.

According to the Delhi Metro, it has qualified in the pre-bid process for the construction of the Tel Aviv Metro Project in Israel. In addition, the DMRC is also in the process of bidding for other international metro projects such as those in Alexandria in Egypt, Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and Mauritius. According to the official, to streamline the overseas projects, the DMIL will mainly

focus on consultancy services, Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS)-related activities and last-mile-connectivity business operations linked to metro and urban-transport projects.

He said the move will help the Delhi Metro utilise its experience in building and operating one of the country's largest metro networks and offer its expertise to cities abroad. To operationalise the subsidiary, the DMRC plans to extend its existing enterprise resource planning system based on "Systems, Applications and Products in Data Processing" (SAP), which is currently used

ED attaches ₹441-cr worth assets in AP liquor scam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Amaravati

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said it has attached assets worth more than ₹441 crore of various accused involved in the Andhra Pradesh liquor 'scam' case, which allegedly took place during the previous YSRC regime in the state.

The attached properties consist of bank balances, fixed deposits, land parcels and other immovable assets belonging to the prime accused Kessireddy

Rajasekhara Reddy, his family members and related entities, other accused like Booneti Chanakya and his related entities and relatives and entities of Donthireddy Vasudeva Reddy apart from some others.

The ED said in a statement that after the 2019 assembly elections, the newly formed state government (led by chief minister and YSRC leader Jagan Mohan Reddy) "monopolised" retail liquor outlets through government retail outlets operated by the Andhra Pradesh State Beverages Corporation Limited.

38 Jamia RCA students clear UPSC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

As many as 38 candidates from Jamia Millia Islamia's Residential Coaching Academy (RCA) have qualified in the UPSC Civil Services Examination-2025, the results of which were declared on Friday. An official said the successful candidates include 15 women, underlining JMI's role in promoting equity and inclusivity. Four candidates secured positions within the top 50, with All India Ranks (AIR) 7, 14, 24, and 29.

JMI Vice Chancellor Mazhar Asif congratulated the successful candidates and appreciated the efforts of the faculty and administrative staff of the RCA's



Centre for Coaching and Career Planning.

"On behalf of the entire JMI fraternity, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all our brilliant candidates who have done us proud. The extraordinary success of our RCA-trained students showcases JMI's culture of hard work, perseverance, and determination that are the key ingredients for success in one of the country's toughest examinations," Asif said.

"JMI is committed to serving the nation by contributing to India's adminis-

trative machinery and nurturing future leaders for the civil services examinations," he added.

JMI's registrar Md Mahtab Alam Rizvi also congratulated the students, calling it a proud moment for the university, and thanked all the teaching and non-teaching staff. "Given that an unprecedented number of students, especially women, have qualified for the coveted examination, it is a proud moment for the university," he said.

"My best wishes and congratulations to all the successful candidates who have turned their dreams into a reality and are a source of inspiration to the future aspirants who are training at JMI's RCA," he added.

After return from Dubai, Cong MP slams Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Jalna

Jalna Congress MP Kalyan Kale on Friday criticised the Union government for its alleged lack of response and support for Indians stuck in the UAE amid the Iran crisis.

Kale, who returned from Dubai on Thursday after being stranded there since February 27, a day before the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran, told reporters that people in the region were in panic following the shutting down of airspace. "I had sent emails to the Aviation Ministry and the External Affairs Ministry, but there was no response. At such a time, the government

should have held a press conference and given assurance to the people who were stranded abroad and their families back home.

Unfortunately, that did not happen," Kale claimed. He appreciated the support extended by the UAE Government during the crisis, saying it provided relief, extended visas and arranged accommodation in hotels. Hotels were also directed not to charge money from those who were stuck, Kale added. "Our hotel was around 10 km away from the US Embassy, which reportedly came under attack. Naturally, people were worried and anxious during that period," he said.

Empowering young cancer survivors for life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

RGCIIRC (Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute & Research Centre) organised a special half-day conference titled "Jeev Shrad: Shatam" - Wishing Young Cancer Warriors: Health, Happiness, and Hope" recently at Indraprastha Hall, Rohini. The event was jointly organ-



ised by the Department of Philanthropic & Patient Welfare Services and the Department of Pediatric Hematology Oncology & BMT.

The programme opened with leadership addresses DS Negi CEO at RGCIIRC; D. S. Gangwar, Interim CEO and Ashok Aggarwal, Chairman at RGCIIRC, all of whom emphasised the institute's long-standing commitment to comprehensive childhood cancer care.

Addressing the gathering, Negi said, "Medical science has significantly improved survival rates in childhood cancers. A key highlight of the event was the release of "Healing Hearts - Stories of Young Cancer Warriors", a publication that captures inspiring narratives of courage, recovery, and hope.

Delhi Police forcibly take away 13-year-old girl; father claims rights violation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A 51-year-old man from North West Delhi has alleged that over 10 Delhi Police personnel on Tuesday "forcibly took away" his 13-year-old daughter, claiming the action was in "blatant violation" of law and "exceeded" directions issued by a family court in a child custody-related dispute.

The man said that he has lodged a formal complaint with the police, demanding action into the matter. "I



called the police helpline 112 and registered my complaint regarding police excesses. They assured me to look into it. I also approached the

child helpline no 1098. But I haven't got any assistance from anywhere yet," he said.

While Bhisam Singh, DCP North-West Delhi, did not

respond to the allegations, a senior officer with the Delhi Police said they are "looking into the matter". The child had been living with her father for the past three years following an order by the Child Welfare Committee (CWC). The father claimed despite existing orders from a POCSO court and the CWC, a Family Court granted custody to the mother last week.

Recounting the Tuesday afternoon incident, the father alleged that around 2:30 PM, while he was with his daughter

at a market, around "10 personnel, some in plain clothes, assaulted" him. He further alleged they "snatched his phone and forced him into a car" to prevent him from seeking help.

"They forcibly took the child to the CWC-West office, where she was kept in a closed room for about an hour. Subsequently, they dragged her into a car and informed me they were sending her to a children's home without providing a copy of the order or the name of the facility," he

alleged. He added that the child was "pleading not to be sent away".

According to the father, the girl had previously filed a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act against a family member residing with the mother. He maintained that she was under his "care with police protection as per POCSO provisions".

The father argued that the Family Court order stipulated that the mother could request the CWC to retrieve

the child safely with a lady police officer and a child counsellor. He noted that while the order allowed CWC to seek help from the local SHO if he created an obstruction, all actions were required to remain "within legal bounds".

He further contended that the CWC must operate under the Juvenile Justice Act and cannot use force or coercion against a child's wishes, nor can it bypass an inquiry into the child's best interests.

FROM PAGE - 1

Anuj Agnihotri tops civil services exam 2025

Agnihotri was selected for the DANICS, in his first attempt and is currently undergoing training.

He is originally from Rahata village in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. When the result of the Civil Services Examination appeared, Anuj could not believe his eyes. Like many aspirants, he did not scream with joy. He said with a smile, recalling the moment, "I took time and went through the results again because only luck could bring such results." His parents were beside him and the three of them sat on the floor, trying to absorb what had happened.

"It takes time to process," he added. The examination process began with the prelims held on May 25, 2025. The main examination was conducted from August 22 to August 31, 2025. The final stage, the personality test or interview, concluded on February 27, 2026. As per past trends, UPSC usually declares the final result within about a week after the interviews end.

The UPSC said the recommended candidates also include 42 Persons with Benchmark Disability - 10 orthopedically handicapped, 14 visually challenged, nine hearing impaired and nine with multiple disabilities.

Rapper-turned politician Balen Shah's party...

But Balen declined then to lead the interim government, saying he would rather head the government by contesting the parliamentary election for a full term. In January, he joined the RSP, led by Ravi Lamichhane, and was soon declared the party's prime ministerial candidate.

The RSP is leading in all 10 constituencies of Kathmandu. Nepal witnessed about 60 per cent voter turnout during the elections to the House of Representatives on Thursday. The counting of votes started late Thursday night and is expected to be completed by Friday night, according to the Election Commission.

The Gen Z youth, through their two-day intensified protests on September 8 and 9, ousted Prime Minister Oli, who was heading a coalition government with the backing of Nepali Congress that enjoyed nearly two-thirds majority support.

After Oli's ouster, President Ramchandra Paudel dissolved the House of Representatives on September 12 and appointed Sushila Karki as the caretaker PM. The major issues raised by Gen Z are anti-corruption, good governance, an end to nepotism, generational change in political leadership, etc.

Govt rejects criticism over US waiver...

Meanwhile, the Government has asked public and private refiners to increase their production of LPG, invoking the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. "Indian government has passed an order to all public and private refiners to produce more LPG and not divert or utilise propane and butane for other petrochemical products," sources said. Sources said Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL), which hadn't purchased Russian oil since December, are back in the market. Reliance Industries Ltd, too, is seeking Russian oil deliveries. Around 90 per cent of India's crude oil is imported, of which 40 per cent to 50 per cent comes from West Asia. This makes any alternatives such as Russian crude important.

Israel pounds Tehran; US hits Iranian drone carrier

The conflict has also reignited fighting in Lebanon between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah. Israel launched at least 11 airstrikes in the southern suburbs of

Beirut late Thursday into Friday, prompting residents to flee and hospitals to evacuate patients. The war has caused widespread disruption across the region, including attacks on oil infrastructure and disruption to global air travel. According to officials, the conflict has killed more than 1,230 people in Iran, over 120 in Lebanon and around a dozen in Israel. Six US soldiers have also been killed.

Volker Turk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has urged all sides to de-escalate, warning that the situation risks spiralling further. "The world urgently needs to see steps to contain and extinguish this blaze," he said.

Two pilots die in Air Force crash in Assam

"My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The nation stands firmly with them in this hour of grief," he added.

The Su-30MKI is a two-seater multirole long-range fighter jet developed by Russian aircraft manufacturer Sukhoi. It is now built under licence by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) for the IAF.

The IAF operates a fleet of over 260 Su-30MKI jets. The multi-role aircraft has been in

service with the IAF for over two decades and nearly 10 Su-30MKIs have been lost so far. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed grief over the deaths of the two pilots and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved families.

Andhra, Karnataka plan social media curbs...

In 2025, Australia became the first country to ban social media for children under 16 by blocking access to platforms including TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. Indonesia has also banned social media for children under the age of 16.

Meta, in a statement, said it will comply with local laws like bans where enforced, but added that with teens using nearly 40 apps weekly, "targeting a handful of companies won't keep them safe". "Bans need to be applied equally," the US headquartered social media giant, asserted.

"Governments considering social media bans should be careful not to push teens toward less safe, unregulated sites, or logged out experiences that lack important protections - like the default safeguards we offer in Instagram's Teen Accounts," Meta added.



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दिल्ली मेट्रो फेज-IV के 2 नए कॉरिडोर का
शुभारंभ

- मजलिस पार्क - मौजपुर बाबरपुर (पिंक लाइन)
- दीपाली चौक - मजलिस पार्क (मैजेंटा लाइन)

मेट्रो फेज-V (A) के 3 नए कॉरिडोर का
शिलान्यास

- आर.के. आश्रम मार्ग - इंद्रप्रस्थ (सेंट्रल विस्टा कॉरिडोर)
- एरोसिटी - IGI टर्मिनल-1
- तुगलकाबाद - कालिंदी कुंज

08 मार्च 2026 | सुबह 10:00 बजे

स्थान: डीडीए ग्राउंड, बुराड़ी रोड, संत निरंकारी मंडल के पास, नई दिल्ली

गरिमामयी उपस्थिति

श्री मनोहर लाल खट्टर

माननीय केंद्रीय आवासन एवं शहरी कार्य और विद्युत मंत्री

श्रीमती रेखा गुप्ता

माननीय मुख्यमंत्री, दिल्ली

श्री हर्ष मल्होत्रा

माननीय केंद्रीय राज्य मंत्री
(सड़क, परिवहन और राजमार्ग तथा कॉरपोरेट कार्य)

श्री तोखन साहू

माननीय केंद्रीय आवासन एवं शहरी कार्य
राज्यमंत्री

डॉ. पंकज कुमार सिंह

माननीय स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण, परिवहन एवं
मूचना प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री, दिल्ली सरकार

States Focus

CEC lauds Kerala model, urges parties to uphold standard

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kochi

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Gyanesh Kumar, on Friday called upon all political parties to ensure that the conduct of the upcoming Assembly elections in Kerala remains a model not only for the country but also for the world, Election Commission of India (ECI) officials said.

Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Dr Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Dr Vivek Joshi, and Chief Electoral Officer Rathan U Kelkar, held a meeting with representatives of national and State political parties.

The CEC is on a three-day visit to Kerala to review preparations for the upcoming Assembly elections.

According to ECI officials, most political parties appreciated the CEC



CEC Gyanesh Kumar visits the Ernakulam Shiva Temple in Kochi on Thursday PTI

for the peaceful and smooth conduct of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Kerala.

Some parties also appreciated

the work done by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) during the SIR process.

Kumar reiterated that the SIR had been conducted in a transparent

manner and said that Forms 6, 7 and 8 could still be filed for inclusions, deletions or corrections in the electoral rolls.

Appeals could also be filed with the District Magistrate or the Chief Electoral Officer as per the Representation of the People Act, 1950, he said.

During the meeting, political parties urged the Commission to take stringent measures to curb the use of money power and the distribution of liquor and freebies during elections, officials said.

Some parties also requested the ECI to keep local festivals in mind while finalising the poll schedule.

Kumar assured the parties that elections are conducted strictly as per the law in an impartial, free, fair and transparent manner.

He encouraged political parties

to use the vVIGIL component of the ECINET platform of the ECI to file complaints regarding violations of the model code of conduct during elections.

Election Commission of India officials also assured that minimum facilities at polling booths, including ramps, wheelchairs and drinking water, would be ensured for the comfort of voters.

The national parties that attended the meeting were the Aam Aadmi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Indian National Congress.

The State parties present included the Communist Party of India, Indian Union Muslim League, Kerala Congress, Kerala Congress (M) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party.



ONLINE REGISTRATIONS FOR CHARDHAM YATRA BEGIN

The online registration for Chardham Yatra will begin on Friday, an official statement said. The yatra to Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri and Yamunotri in Uttarakhand begins next month. According to the statement issued here, online registration for pilgrims will begin at 7 am on March 6. Pilgrims can register through a mobile app, it added. It further said that offline registration will also begin two days before the start of the yatra on April 17, counters for which will be set up in Rishikesh, Haridwar, and Dehradun. The pilgrimage will begin on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya on April 19, with the opening of the doors of Gangotri and Yamunotri. The doors of the Kedarnath temple will open on April 22, followed by Badrinath on April 23.



WEST ASIA CONFLICT HITS AIR CARGO MOVEMENT FROM KOCHI

The ongoing conflict in West Asia has affected the movement of air cargo from Kochi that has more than halved now, Authorities of Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) officials said on Friday. Perishables are the worst hit and a special cargo flight from Abu Dhabi is set to land here to clear the consignment, they said. CIAL said the situation is expected to improve as more flights have resumed operations in recent days, following disruptions caused by the conflict involving US-Israel and Iran and its impact on the West Asia region.

Shah announces CISF deployment at all EXIM Ports

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhubaneswar

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday announced that the Central Industrial Security Force will now oversee the security of various sea ports across the country. In his address at the 57th Raising Day of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) here, Shah said the force already protects 361 critical installations, including 71 airports, the Parliament complex, and the Statue of Unity near Kevadia in Gujarat.

"The CISF undertakes such a variety of tasks. You are securing the grand monument of Sardar Patel, you are protecting our Parliament complex, the largest panchayat of our democracy,



Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi and others during the 57th Raising Day of the CISF in Mundali, Odisha PTI

and elsewhere you are securing dams and critical railway installations," Shah said.

The home minister also detailed the strategic shift toward maritime and aerial defence, saying that, along with these established roles, the Government has worked to include the security of

ports for the CISF.

Shah announced that the CISF has been designated as the nodal agency for drone security and said that the Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to create a new vertical for this purpose.

Highlighting the force's growing footprint over the

past year, Shah listed several new locations approved for CISF protection, including the Kartavya Bhavan, Seva Teerth, Noida International Airport, Navi Mumbai Airport, and various critical energy and mining projects such as the Talapalli coal mine project in Chhattisgarh.

"After the CISF takes over the security of the ports, our maritime safety will improve in tandem with the country's economic growth," Shah said.

The announcement follows a decision by the Centre to designate the CISF as a Recognised Security Organisation (RSO) under the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code, effectively making it the new safety regulator for approximately 250 facilities along India's maritime borders.

AI cleaner G-SPIDER takes on Thiruvananthapuram canals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Taking a cue from western countries and improving the safety of sanitation workers, the Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation (TMC) has deployed an AI-powered robotic system to clean canals in the city under the Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban 2.0. The robotic system, known as G-SPIDER, has been introduced at the Amayizhanchan canal near the railway station in Thampanoor in Thiruvananthapuram.

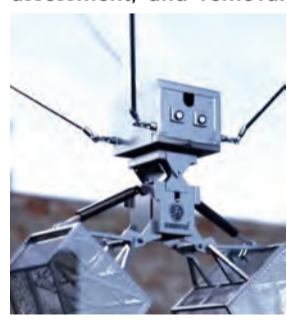
The canal, especially the covered stretch beneath the Thampanoor Railway Station, has long posed challenges for routine cleaning due to limited vertical clearance, continuous water flow and the absence of safe human entry points. As a result, routine cleaning and maintenance of this stretch became extremely difficult through conventional methods.

The AI-powered canal-cleaning system was commissioned by Kerala's Minister for Local Self-Governments, MB Rajesh. The initiative is the result of a collaboration between the municipal corporation and Genrobotic Innovations, a technology firm based in Technopark and known for developing the robotic scavenger Bandicoot. The introduction of this advanced robotic system would effectively remove the need for workers to enter dangerous and unhygienic environments, as mentioned by officials. They termed the initia-

tive a groundbreaking move that enhances operational efficiency while significantly strengthening safety standards in waste management.

The G-SPIDER Automated Canal Cleaning Robot, created by Genrobotic Innovations, is engineered to operate in complex, high-risk canal environments without any human entry.

Built on a Cable-Driven Parallel Robotics (CDPR) architecture and powered by AI-enabled vision and sensor intelligence, it enables precise detection, assessment, and removal



of accumulated waste.

Using advanced machine vision, the system autonomously identifies and adapts to different waste types, flow conditions, and structural challenges in real time. Its five-degrees-of-freedom robotic mechanism, equipped with a biomimetic claw-type grabber, ensures accurate positioning and secure handling of mixed and irregular debris. The extracted waste is directly transferred into designated collection vehicles, enabling a fully hands-free, end-to-end canal cleaning process - from detection to safe disposal.

What Trump did to Maduro, Modi has done to Nitish Kumar: Jairam Ramesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday took a swipe at the BJP over Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's decision to move to the Rajya Sabha, saying what US President Donald Trump did to then Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now done to the JD(U) chief.

He also said that Kumar's decision to step down as chief minister is a betrayal of the mandate the people gave in Assembly polls in November last year. Ramesh said the people of the State voted for Kumar's re-election and not for

a BJP chief minister. Ramesh's remarks came a day after JD(U) chief Kumar filed nomination papers for Rajya Sabha elections, marking a turning point in Bihar politics and virtually bringing the curtain down on his tenure as the State's longest-serving chief minister. The move has paved the way for a new Government in the Hindi heartland State, likely to be headed by the BJP.

Expressing gratitude to the people of the State, Kumar had said on X, "For more than two decades, you have consistently placed your trust and support in me, and it is on the strength of that trust that we have served Bihar and all of you with complete



Jairam Ramesh speaking PTI

dedication. It is the power of your trust and support that has enabled Bihar today to present a new dimension of development and dignity."

Asked about this major development in Bihar politics, Ramesh told PTI, "During the Bihar election campaign,

Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, had said that Nitish Kumar would not remain chief minister for long because the BJP's aim was to remove him. Ultimately, that is what happened."

Kumar hasn't even been chief minister for four months

in the present term and he's being removed, Ramesh said.

Taking a swipe at Prime Minister Modi and the BJP, Ramesh said, "What Trump did to Maduro, Modi ji has done to Nitish Kumar. This is a coup". The US military had seized Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, from their Caracas home on January 3 in a stunning operation that landed them in New York to face federal drug trafficking charges.

On Kumar's move to the Rajya Sabha, Ramesh said, "This was inevitable. This is a betrayal of the people of Bihar and the mandate they gave."

The mandate wasn't to make a BJP chief minister, but

to make Nitish Kumar the chief minister.

"It's possible that tomorrow, (Chandrababu) Naidu is brought here and made a minister, a coup can happen there too. There was a coup in Maharashtra too, the split the NCP and Shiv Sena... This is all the work of the 'G2'," Ramesh said.

He said the Congress just has six MLAs in Bihar but it will continue to raise the issues of the people and Kumar's move to Rajya Sabha is a "betrayal of the mandate".

The Congress on Thursday had said a "leadership coup and regime change orchestrated by G2" has taken place and is a "huge betrayal" of the mandate of the people.

NCW to hold nationwide Jan Sunwai in 500 districts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The National Commission for Women (NCW) will organise nationwide 'Jan Sunwai' in around 500 districts between March 8 and March 14 to hear women's grievances and ensure quicker redressal, its chairperson Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar said here on Friday.

Rahatkar noted that the initiative aims to expand the commission's grievance

selected based on factors such as the number of complaints received and the need to reach remote and hilly areas where access to grievance redressal mechanisms is limited, she said.

Rahatkar informed that she will personally attend the hearings, with the campaign scheduled to begin in Rajasthan's Jaipur on March 9. She will subsequently visit Gujarat's Vadodara on March 10, Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal



redressal mechanism by taking hearings closer to women across the country.

The hearings will be conducted jointly by the NCW and State women's commissions, she said, adding that the move is intended to strengthen outreach and ensure justice, safety and equal opportunities for women.

"As part of the campaign, hearings will be held in nearly 500 districts across most States and UTs, where more than 15,000 cases are expected to be taken up, including walk-in cases," Rahatkar said. Some States may not host the programme due to elections, she added. The districts have been

on March 11, Telangana's Medchal-Malkajigiri on March 12, Jharkhand's Deoghar on March 13 and Dumka on March 14.

The hearings will also be organised in several districts across States, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, she added.

Members of the NCW, as well as chairpersons and members of State women commissions, will also participate in the hearings across districts, she said.

Mamata stages sit-in protest over voter roll deletions ahead of polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will start a sit-in here on Friday to protest against the alleged arbitrary deletions in the post-SIR electoral rolls in the State. The protest comes just two days before the proposed visit of the full bench of the Election Commission to the State.

The sit-in, scheduled from 2 pm at the Esplanade Metro Channel in central Kolkata, was announced by TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday.



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee stages a sit-in protest against the alleged arbitrary deletions from the post-SIR electoral rolls in the State in Kolkata PTI

He had accused the Election Commission of carrying out a "politically motivated" exercise that could disenfranchise lakhs of legitimate voters months ahead of the Assembly elections. The protest marks a dra-

matic political escalation by the ruling party just days after the Election Commission published the post-SIR electoral rolls, which have significantly redrawn the contours of the State's electorate.

Indian airlines cancel 281 flights amid West Asia crisis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian carriers cancelled 281 international flights on Thursday due to the Middle East crisis, and the Government is closely monitoring the evolving situation in the region.

The escalating conflict in the Middle East involving the US, Israel and Iran has resulted in airspace closures that have significantly impacted flight operations.

The civil aviation ministry on Thursday said it continues to closely monitor the evolving situation in West Asia. "As of 5 March, a total of



Indian carrier plane in flight PTI

281 flights scheduled to operate today by Indian domestic carriers have been cancelled. Passengers are advised to regularly monitor their flight status and remain attentive to updates shared through their registered contact details by their respective airlines," the ministry said on X.

Meanwhile, a Passenger Assistance Control Room (PACR) is operational.

"A total of 1,461 grievances have been addressed during this period through AirSewa, social media platforms, and dedicated helpline calls, in coordination with airlines and other concerned stakeholders. For assistance, passengers may reach out to the Ministry's PACR helpline numbers: 011-24604283/011-24632987," the ministry said.

Meanwhile, at least 170 international flights were cancelled at Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru airports on Thursday due to the Middle East crisis, officials said.

Global conflicts continue due to overlooking oneness: Bhagwat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jaisalmer

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said global wars and conflicts continue because people fail to recognise the fundamental oneness among all. He was speaking at the 'Dharma Sabha', marking the inauguration of the Jain community's Chadar Mahotsav in Jaisalmer.

Bhagwat said wars do not stop because humanity overlooks the truth of ekatva (oneness). "People appear different, but all are one," he said, adding that the League of Nations was set up after the First World War to prevent future wars, but it failed. "The United Nations came

into being after World War II for the same reason, yet conflicts persist worldwide," he said.

Drawing from Indian thought, Bhagwat said the absolute truth is one, eternal and universal for everyone. "Diversity exists because the divine chose to appear in many forms. One should recognise unity while moving through this variety," he said.

Bhagwat said India's ability to survive difficulties comes from this understanding of unity in diversity. "Disputes should be settled through goodwill and harmony, not through arguments. Society needs to build this goodwill step by step to remove divisions and selfish-



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat during the inauguration of the 'Chadar Mahotsav' and Dadaguru Ektisa Paath in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan on Friday PTI

ness," he said.

"India has the answer to world problems through its ancient wisdom of unity. Society must stand without discrimination to protect dharma and help create a better world. By doing this,

India will not only become prosperous but will emerge as Vishwaguru, giving rise to a new harmonious world," he said.

Bhagwat urged people to see the whole world as their own, with no one as an out-

sider. He said different paths and traditions exist because no single way suits all.

"All sects lead to the divine and deserve respect, while each person follows their path with faith," he said.

Talking about Acharya Jinadattasuri, a prominent Jain monk who lived during the medieval period in India, Bhagwat said Suri's work and teachings have endured through centuries of challenges, and reflected the strength of Sanatan culture.

He said great figures have appeared at different times in history to rid society of divisions such as caste and selfishness, and to teach oneness and a sense of duty. The RSS chief said that

when foreign invasions and internal divisions took place in his time, Suri brought back unity and helped overcome crises.

A special Chadar Mahotsav is being organised in Jaisalmer from March 6-8, during which events such as the viewing and worship of the "miraculous garments" will take place.

Thousands of devotees are expected to arrive to express their devotion to Acharya Jinadattasuri, who is also called 'Dada Gurudev'.

It is believed that when the body of Jinadattasuri was consigned to the funeral pyre, his physical form was consumed by the fire, but the garments he wore remained completely unburnt.

Order Order

ED raids against people linked to Reliance Power



The Enforcement Directorate on Friday conducted searches at multiple locations in Mumbai and Hyderabad as part of an investigation against entities linked to Reliance Power Ltd., a group company of businessman Anil Ambani, officials said. About 10-12 locations linked to the said company and its executives are being searched in Mumbai and Hyderabad, the officials said. About 15 teams of the agency are undertaking the action, they said.

Reliance Power said in a statement furnished to the stock exchanges that "to the best of its knowledge, no such action has been carried out at any of the offices or premises of the Company."

The ED is investigating multiple companies linked to Anil Ambani as part of an alleged bank fraud linked money laundering case apart from financial irregularities under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

Ambani, 66, has been questioned twice by the ED under the anti-money laundering law as part of this investigation. The ED has formed a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the cases against Ambani's group companies on the directions of the Supreme Court.

According to information furnished by the ED to the apex court, it has filed three money laundering cases against the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG) to investigate charges of bank loan fraud and other financial irregularities.



JKCA scam: Court orders framing charges against Farooq, others

MOHIT KANDHARI
■ Srinagar

A local court here has directed the framing of charges against National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and other accused in the alleged Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) scam case. In a five-page order passed earlier this week, Chief Judicial Magistrate of Srinagar, Tabasum, directed that the matter be listed on March 12 for framing of charges.

"List the main file on March 12, 2026 for framing of charge. After framing of charge statement of approvers, ie, accused no. 3 and 6 shall be recorded as evidence, in case they resile from their stand appropriate orders shall follow," the court said.

However, the court rejected an application by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seeking to be made a party in the case.

"Keeping in view the facts and circumstances of the case, provisions of law and judicial precedents, ED



Farooq Abdullah

cannot be made as a party in a case which is investigated, filed and prosecuted by the CBI and where no schedule offence is disclosed in the charge sheet by the CBI.

"Therefore, the applicant has no locus standi as per the law to seek the addition of charge in the present case. As such, the instant application on behalf of ED is not maintainable," the court said.

The court also ruled that the ED application was vague and sought contradictory reliefs. "In some places of the

application, the applicant is seeking addition of Section 411 & 414 of the IPC by exercise of powers under section 216 of the CrPC but the matter of the fact is that the applicant is seeking to invoke repealed provisions of law because the IPC is not applicable in the instant case and the said IPC was repealed with effect from July 1, 2024," the court added.

The court said the power of the ED to investigate and enquire stands mainly connected to the offence of money laundering as

defined in the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. "The ED cannot assume from the material gathered by it that a predicate offence stands committed. The predicate offence has to be necessarily investigated and tried by the authorities empowered by law.

"In the instant case, the CBI, which is the main investigating and prosecuting agency, did not incorporate any scheduled offence in the charge sheet," the order read. On the question of framing of charges, the court said the essential ingredients of the offence under Sections 120-B, 406 and 409 of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC) were prima facie made out against the accused.

"Therefore, the accused persons shall be charged for the commission of the said offences. However, addition of charges can be done suo moto at any stage during the trial of the case before pronouncement of judgment after recording of statement of the material witnesses," the order read.

Maharashtra Bank scam case: Rohit Pawar moves discharge application

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar on Friday moved a discharge application before a special court here in connection with the Maharashtra State Co-operative Bank (MSCB) 'scam' case. Pawar, who filed the application through his advocate Kushal Mor, claimed no money laundering case is made out as the predicate offence has been closed.

The MSCB money laundering case stemmed from an August 2019 FIR filed by the Mumbai Police Economic Offences Wing (EOW) that alleged fraudulent sale of SSKs (Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana or cooperative sugar mills) by the then officers and directors of MSCB at throwaway prices to their relatives/private persons without following due procedure. Besides Pawar, his close associate and businessman Rajendra Ingwale and five others have sought discharge in the case.



Rohit Pawar

The special judge for MPs/MLAs cases, Mahesh Jadhav asked ED the file its response by March 17.

Pawar, who represents the Karjat-Jamkhed assembly seat in Ahilyanagar district, was named as an accused in the third chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate in July last year.

The probe agency has alleged that MSCB, in order to recover an outstanding loan of ₹80.56 crore of Kannad SSK Limited in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district, took possession of its assets on July 13, 2009 under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act.

HC stays case against Deputy CM DK Shivakumar over FB post against BJP leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court on Thursday stayed a criminal case registered in 2024 against Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar over a Facebook post against BJP leaders, which allegedly contained morphed and provocative content. Justice Sunil Dutt Yadav passed the interim order on a plea by Shivakumar to quash the criminal proceedings against him. The Court also sought the response of the State in the matter.

The case against

Shivakumar is tied to a post published on the Indian National Congress (INC) Karnataka's Facebook page in 2024. The post was uploaded amid protests by BJP leaders against the January 2024 arrest of Srikanth Poojary in a three-decade-old riots case tied to the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya.

Following the arrest, the BJP's Karnataka unit launched a campaign against the ruling Congress Government. Prominent BJP leaders such as its State President Vijayendra Yediyurappa, Eshwarappa, Pratapa Simha and CT Ravi



DK Shivakumar

held placards that said "I'm also a Karsevak, Arrest Me Too" during demonstrations.

While this was happening, a post was allegedly uploaded on the INC Karnataka

Facebook page featuring such BJP leaders holding placards, but with morphed text on the placards. The State convener of BJP's legal cell, advocate Yogendra Hodaghatta, sought

the registration of a criminal case against the social media head of the INC Karnataka, BR Naidu, as well as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee President DK Shivakumar in connection with this post. He contended that the post was aimed at provoking enmity between groups and to tarnish the image of senior BJP leaders. After the police initially declined to register the case, Hodaghatta filed a private complaint before a judicial magistrate in Bengaluru. The court in February 2024 referred the matter back to the police for

investigation and the filing of a First Information Report (FIR).

The FIR subsequently registered by the High Grounds police station alleged commission of offences under Sections 153(A) (promoting enmity), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke a breach of the peace), 505 (2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill will between classes) and 464 (making false document) of the Indian Penal Code. Shivakumar then moved the High Court to quash these criminal proceedings.

Centre notifies transfer of Justice Lisa Gill to Andhra Pradesh HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Central Government has notified the transfer of Justice Lisa Gill from the Punjab and Haryana High Court to the Andhra Pradesh High Court. She will be soon elevated as Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh after the incumbent retires.

"In exercise of the power conferred by the Constitution of India, the President of India, after consultation with Chief Justice of India, has transferred Ms



Justice Lisa Gill

Justice Lisa Gill, Judge, High Court of Punjab and Haryana to be a Judge of High Court of Andhra Pradesh. I convey my best wishes to her," Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said in a post in X. The Supreme Court Collegium

recommended her transfer last week in anticipation of the retirement of the incumbent Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh HC. Her appointment of the CJ of the Andhra Pradesh HC will take effect from the date when the vacancy arises.

The Collegium's decision was as per its newly adopted policy for early transfers of prospective Chief Justices, at least two months ahead of the retirement of the incumbent, so that the new judge can familiarise with the High Court.

Justice SA Dharmadhikari sworn in as Madras HC Chief Justice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari was sworn in as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court on Friday. In a simple ceremony held at the Lok Bhavan, Governor RN Ravi administered the oath of office to Justice Dharmadhikari.

He will be the 55th chief justice of the High Court. He was the Judge of the Kerala HC before his appointment to the Madras HC.

Chief Secretary N Muruganandam read out the Warrant of Appointment, which was handed over to the chief justice-designate before he was administered the oath of office.



Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi felicitating Chief Justice SA Dharmadhikari at the swearing-in ceremony

Justice Dharmadhikari was appointed an additional judge of Madhya Pradesh HC on 07 April

2016 and as a permanent judge on 17 March 2018. Born on 8 July 1966 at Raipur, he obtained his Bachelor's

degree in commerce and law from Nagpur University.

He enrolled as an advocate in the HC of Madhya Pradesh at Jabalpur in 1992, and he was the standing counsel for the Union Government from 2000 to 2015.

Justice Dharmadhikari's predecessor, Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava, demitted office on March 5, 2026, having attained the age of 62. He had been the chief justice since July 21, 2025.

Marking the commencement of the brief event, the national song was sung first, and it was followed by the national and Tamil anthems.

Tamil Nadu Natural Resources Minister S Regupathy and top officials took part in the function.

Rajasthan murder accused nabbed by CBI after 16-yr run

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The CBI has arrested a proclaimed offender wanted for allegedly killing relatives of an additional sessions judge in 2010 in Rajasthan, ending his nearly 16-year run from the law, officials said Friday.

Paras Ram, who was one of the six accused involved in the killing of a father-son duo in Kama, Rajasthan, had been evading agencies since he was booked, they said. He carried a reward of ₹5 lakh for information leading to his arrest.

He was arrested in the national capital on Thursday, living under the assumed identity of "Raju Sharma",



the officials said.

"It was alleged that on July 29, 2010, the accused persons criminal-

ly trespassed into the house of a person at Kama, Rajasthan and opened indiscriminate fire using

country-made firearms. As a result of the firing, two persons, including a father and son who were family members of the then Additional Sessions Judge, lost their lives on the spot, while two other persons sustained grievous injuries," a CBI Spokesperson said in a statement.

Through meticulous collection and analysis of technical inputs and field intelligence, the Central Bureau of Investigation developed credible leads on the fugitive's whereabouts, resulting in his arrest.

"The arrested accused was produced before the competent court and has been granted three days of police custody," the spokesperson said.

ED files prosecution complaint against Anil Nutrients in bank fraud case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ahmedabad

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a prosecution complaint against city-based Anil Nutrients Ltd, its director Amol Shripal Sheth and six others in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged fraud of ₹47.88 crore involving Bank of India, officials said on Friday.

According to a release issued by the ED's Ahmedabad Zonal Office, the prosecution complaint (chargesheet) has been filed as part of an investigation into the alleged diversion and siphoning of bank funds by the company and its directors.

The agency said its money laundering probe was initiated on the basis of a First Information Report registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the company and others for alleged cheating, criminal conspiracy and offences punishable under Prevention of Corruption Act.

Following completion of its investigation, the CBI had earlier filed a chargesheet against Amol Shripal Sheth, the managing director of Anil Nutrients Ltd, and seven others under Sections 120-B and 420 of IPC before the court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (CBI) in Ahmedabad. The ED said its investigation revealed that Anil Nutrients Ltd and its



director Amol Shripal Sheth had defrauded Bank of India to the tune of ₹47.88 crore by diverting and siphoning off funds to sister concern companies without any genuine business transactions.

According to the agency, the alleged diversion of funds was carried out in pursuance of a "well knitted conspiracy" in which sham

transactions were created to transfer large amounts of money to sister companies.

"By routing funds through such transactions, the turnover of the group companies was artificially inflated while bank loans were obtained with the alleged dishonest intention of causing wrongful loss to the bank and wrongful gain to

themselves," the ED said. Investigators found that large loans taken from banks were diverted and siphoned off on the basis of bogus and sham transactions, the release said.

As part of the probe under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the ED carried out search operations at premises linked to Sheth and other persons associated with the Anil Group of companies and found crucial evidence relating to properties that had not been mortgaged with banks. Earlier, during the investigation, the ED had also provisionally attached immovable assets worth ₹5.39 crore in connection with the case.

ED attaches TDI assets worth over ₹200 cr



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said it has attached fresh immovable assets worth more than ₹200 crore of Delhi-based real estate company TDI Infrastructure Limited as part of a money-laundering investigation linked to an alleged fraud against homebuyers.

The provisionally-attached assets include 8.3 acres of land and commercial units located in Kamasapur, Sonapat, Haryana. The federal probe agency said in a statement that these properties are owned by TDI Infrastructure Limited (formerly Intime Promoters Private Limited) and its associated companies.

It said the attached properties have been valued at ₹206.4 crore.

The company could not immediately be reached for comments on the ED action.

The ED filed the case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, taking cognizance of 26 FIRs and chargesheets filed against the company, its promoters and key managerial personnel by the Delhi Police and its Economic Offences Wing (EOW).

They are alleged to have cheated and defrauded numerous homebuyers by "failing" to deliver promised flats and units within stipulated timelines, even after a delay of 16 to 18 years in one of the projects, according to the agency.

TDI Infrastructure Limited launched several commercial, residential and housing projects in Sonapat, collecting Rs 4,619.43 crore in advance booking amounts from 14,105 customers across 23 projects.

These projects were launched between 2005 and 2014.

However, the ED has alleged that "occupation

certificates" for four projects have still not been granted and one project, "Park Street", remains incomplete.

The probe has found that the promoters and directors "diverted" substantial funds collected from homebuyers to subsidiaries, erstwhile subsidiaries and land-owning companies as advances for purchasing land parcels and other purposes, instead of using those to complete the housing projects.

The company had also used customer funds to repay its loans and make investments. The diversion of funds ultimately delayed the construction of the company's projects, thereby preventing customers from receiving timely possession of their units or plots, the ED has said.

The agency had earlier attached assets worth ₹45 crore in the case and with the latest order, the total attachment stands at ₹251.88 crore.



Editor's TAKE

Nitish bows out as CM: End of an era in Bihar

After dominating Bihar's politics for two decades, Kumar's move to join Rajya Sabha leaves JD (U) rudderless and strengthens the BJP's hand

It was expected, but not so soon. The decision of Nitish Kumar to step down as the Bihar chief minister months after he took the oath of office is intriguing. Though he has cited health reasons, and not a retirement from active politics, is not a decision that a political leader of Nitish stature would make without a reason. His decision to move to Rajya Sabha clearly shows that he is not giving up politics but only stepping away from the Bihar politics. Nitish has been a stalwart in Bihar politics as he has been the chief minister of the state ten times.

He joined the JP movement in the 1970s and was influenced by Ram Manohar Lohia, but his political career was more about pragmatism than political ideology. Many times, he sided with parties that he once criticised. He was part of Mahagatbandhan, a group of opposition parties, but left it to join the BJP, the party he had campaigned against for a long time. He had left the BJP in 2013 but returned to it in 2017 and formed a coalition government with him as the chief minister, though his party did not do well.

As a chief minister, he was known for development and restoring law and order in the state, which was known for being an unruly state. His push for infrastructure and social reforms, including a ban on Alcohol in the state, would be remembered for long. For nearly two decades, Kumar has been the central figure in Bihar's governance, steering the state through multiple political alliances. His departure from the state's top executive office now opens a new and uncertain phase in Bihar's politics. In the last Assembly election, Nitish and his allies, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, secured a comfortable majority. It is also possible that Nitish had a pre-poll understanding with the BJP to step down after the coalition won the elections.

His governance model, often emphasising infrastructure development, social welfare and administrative stability, earned him both praise and criticism. While supporters credit him with improving roads, law and order and governance standards, critics argue that Bihar still lags economically and continues to witness large-scale migration for employment.

Whatever the reason for Kumar's departure, now the stage is set for the BJP to become the main party in the state which would have its chief minister and also with Nitish no more in the frame as the only party that would have a chance to consolidate its power in eastern India. But within the JD (U), however, the move has triggered unease. Some party leaders have openly questioned the decision, pointing out that the party sought votes in Kumar's name. Without Kumar at the helm in Patna, the JD (U) may struggle to maintain its independent identity within the alliance. For Nitish Kumar personally, the transition to the Rajya Sabha may represent a gradual withdrawal from active politics. Bihar now stands at a political crossroads. The leadership transition will test whether the governance model built under Kumar can continue without him. It will also determine the evolving power balance between the JD (U) and the BJP within the ruling alliance.

The universalisation of AI

If India is to emerge as a genuine leader in the age of artificial intelligence, technological ambition must be reinforced by academic integrity, high-quality research, and strong institutional standards



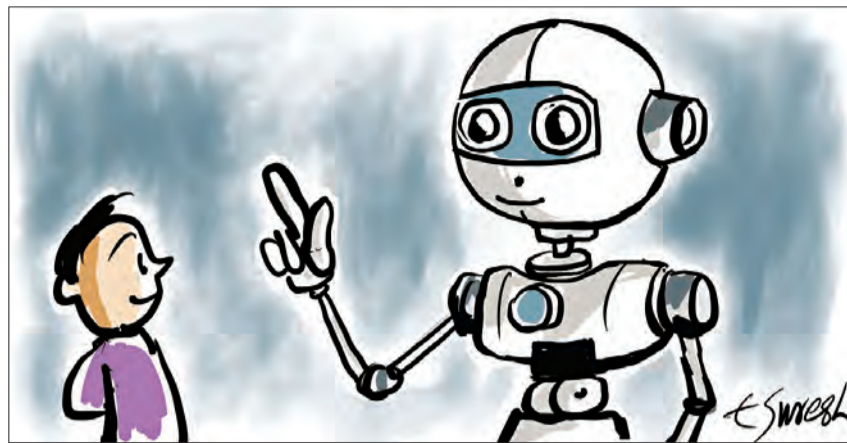
JS RAJPUT

The India AI Impact Summit, held from February 16-21, 2026, attracted considerable attention not only within the nation but also internationally. It has inspired numerous young people, entrepreneurs, multinationals and, expectedly, the doyens of the world of commerce and business. The event enhanced India's global reputation as a lead nation, not only in accepting and utilising new knowledge, but also in its resolve to play a leadership role in creating new knowledge. It has adequate manpower imbued with scientific temper and dedicated to the 'search for Truth'!

Top experts gathered for the event were busy envisioning the implications of rapidly expanding new horizons after the arrival of AI, and these deserve incisive 360° scrutiny. Clearly, AI and its allotropes would have a comprehensive impact on every aspect of human life. The churning so generated has already begun to pose not only encouraging possibilities ahead but also the issues of considerable concern emerging before the learners, parents, societies and the nations. It has serious implications for international collaboration, which would become more demanding in the years ahead.

On the sidelines, the Summit also witnessed how a 'Robot Dog' - purchased from the market, but displayed and claimed as conceptualised, tested and produced by a private deemed university emerged as an embarrassing aspect in an otherwise inspiring environment. For anyone familiar with quality concerns, it would be agonising to wish it away as one of the glitches that creep into such major international gatherings. It would be imprudent on the part of the higher education system not to treat it as an eye-opener, particularly for all those entrusted with preparing the generations ahead in schools, colleges and universities. Unfortunately, this aspect did not receive the attention it deserved in the media, and learned articulations on it. The Robot Dog has educated us on the decline in the moral and ethical fibre, and also the need to scrutinise the scenario in terms of quality and excellence in education, and particularly higher education.

According to a tentative estimate, India has around 1.1-1.2 billion mobile phones, and almost the same number of literate people, estimating roughly at a literacy rate of 80%. The universalisation of education is yet a distant dream, but the rise of the mobiles from around a mere one million only in 2001-02 to their universalisation indicates the pace of change that is the major characteristic of the 21st century. The mobile phone has successfully integrated itself as a necessary component of every individual's life. Consequently, the fascination now is no longer



THE NEP-2020 ASSURES AVAILABILITY OF MOTIVATED, ENERGISED AND CAPABLE FACULTY. AFTER FIVE YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION, THE SCENARIO IS STILL DEFICIENT IN THE AVAILABILITY OF ADEQUATE FACULTY EVEN IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MANAGED INSTITUTIONS

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for the mobile phone, but for AI, chatbots, new gadgets, and much more! Just recall how the mere availability of a mobile phone and Wi-Fi transformed the entire learning scenario, the social scenario, and much more! As the mobile phone made its presence felt, children got glued to it! Serious concerns were expressed on various counts by concerned parents on how damaging its impact would be on their studies - and more than that, on their growing up. COVID-19 changed it all just upside-down! Online teaching became a great support to ensure the continuity of the process of education and studies in tough times. Parental attitudes changed drastically! Scolding and frowning over too much time being spent with the mobile phone was replaced by coaxing children to spend more time on mobile studies! One had personally observed how society took it upon itself to come forward and to assist the children who needed the gadget support.

As AI gets 'universalised', the workstation scenario would again change drastically, and sharing will remain necessary even in the emerging context. Institutional collaboration would become much more prominent in the years ahead. In the changed environment, the quality of education, particularly of innovations and research, must attract serious attention.

During the period 2002-25, the IITs collectively applied for 6,558 patents, and got 2,806 approved. During the same period, the deemed to be university that attracted attention because of the Robot Dog applied for 2,233 patents, got only 2 approved! The comparative success rates are 42.8 and 0.8 per cent! This is an eye-opener for the regulatory bodies in higher education. AI is now knocking at the doors of every learning place - every school and university! The elusive - vehemently assured and repeatedly promised - equality of opportunity is not achieved merely by providing access and enrolment! India's initiatives in AI are being globally appreciated; our higher education institutions are moving ahead in the right direction with reasonably acceptable speed. The nation must ensure that the lack of

resources does not impede the pace of change, and the intent of the NEP-2020 is put into practice, forgetting avoidable differences that creep in for non-academic considerations.

The NEP-2020 assures the availability of motivated, energised and capable faculty. After five years of implementation, the scenario is still deficient in the availability of adequate faculty even in central government-managed institutions. The availability of faculty in state-managed universities is, to say the least, disappointing. In most of the cases, the Vice-Chancellor requires permission from the State government secretariat to make any appointment, even against the posts that are already sanctioned to the university! Most of these universities are starved of resources, both of infrastructure and personnel. Autonomy - exceptions apart - stands reduced to a cypher. About the private 'deemed universities', less said the better. The minority institutions established under the constitutional provisions are practically 'islands in isolation'; they manage things in their own way.

If the universalisation of AI is to be achieved without depriving a sizeable number of young persons in higher education, even the school teachers have to be in a position on a regular basis, and in the right teacher-taught ratio! One of the disturbing aspects that directly and adversely impacts the quality is the decline in the credibility of the regulatory bodies across the board. Universities are the places where morals, ethics, values, national ethos, respect for diver-

sity and much more are learned, apart from the prescribed syllabi! This just cannot be ignored! All these aspects are being mentioned as significant tangible pedagogical changes are already taking place at each stage, and at an unprecedented pace. Whatever is accepted in the policy must be put into practice in full and at the earliest. There are issues of equity and inclusion that just cannot be addressed if the gap in the quality of education imparted in institutions of higher education remains too glaringly disturbing! A nation that has created IISc, IITs, IIMs, just can't afford universities that may not have even a regularly appointed faculty of a couple of academics!

There are several other implications that could impact the employment scenario, social context, and aspects related to socio-cultural implications. The central government, through its various bodies and institutions, launched several varied encouraging programmes for orienting and re-orienting academics, which have created positive impacts, but institutions need an adequate number of academics also to ensure quality, innovations and excellence. Much more activity in the duration sector needs to become visible in the months and years ahead.

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PICTALK



A worker sprays water in a field of onion flowers, in Krishnanagar, Nadia, West Bengal. PHOTO: PTI

Amidst drones and missiles in Dubai



ASHA IYER KUMAR

2ND OPINION

Dubai isn't new to booms. It is a place of celebrations throughout the year. Fireworks light up the skies in different parts for seasonal reasons, which, as residents, we sometimes are not even privy to. The soft rolls of thunder that accompany the pyrotechnics are hemmed into the aerial fabric of the city, and we have adopted them as a grand gesture of invitation to a life of plenitude and pride. It's also a booming city, given how it has grown from being swathes of sand-laden emptiness to a haven of all good things money can buy. Then, one afternoon, all of a sudden, amidst the calm of holy Ramadan, the booms that usually marked gaiety swivelled and took a bizarre turn. It was something that the city or its residents hadn't anticipated in their wildest dreams. The echoes of the new bangs had a sinister implication. It had a different backstory. As

the day wore on and the sun began to set, I heard the noise again - unmistakably menacing. In the sky overhead, I saw the remains of three intercepted missiles or drones falling in a pretty, fiery arc. Against the thickening dusk, the spectacle seemed fantastic, and at the same time, scary. War was at our doorstep, in a place that is synonymous with safety and sanctuary from many evils of the world. Neutrality shouldn't breed enmity, right? Wrong. In a world where politics has no fixed patterns, power has no conscience, the calculus of war and peace can get disfigured. Collateral damage and causality become commonplace. The UAE, along with other Gulf nations, fell victim to the side effects of a greater power game with ambiguous aims. To us, who lived cosy, cocooned lives, it was a sober reminder - nothing can be taken for granted. Especially, peace. Yet, despite all the chaos that the news channels with their stomach-churning exaggerations created and the initial wave of alarm that consumed us, there was an underlying sense of calm when we were repeatedly informed that the nation was on the job of keeping us safe. When enquiries from across the world flooded our phones, we replied with equanimity, "We are safe. Please don't worry."

What was stark was that no expat resident believed that the scenario was as bad as the Gulf War of 1990-91 and contemplated fleeing. They knew this was a clumsy phase, and they had to stay put until it passed. It's hard to explain what

instilled such unflinching trust in the government - which it would keep us out of harm's way. We were just convinced they would. While the recurring booms in the sky kept reminding us that we were being indiscriminately pounded, we were also constantly reassured that we were being protected. It's perhaps the way we have been treated here or the way we found that this place spared us what the rest of the world constantly felt in their gut - fear. Of everyday intrusions, intimidation and criminality. This war was an aberration. As I write this, life goes on, undisturbed. There is palpable caution, but not panic. This is not how a city facing an onslaught might typically look or behave.

There are several takes on what this could do to the morale of Dubai - people voicing concern about its image as an insulated city taking a beating, or the cost of the air defence causing financial strain - but if there is one thing that this semblance of war hasn't and cannot do is steal the confidence of its citizens and residents from its leadership. In the end, it's about how a nation makes its people feel. The bond between the two is like a marriage where not everything is perfect, where small grievances might be routine, but the benefits and comforts outweigh the little annoyances, where the reasons to stay and love overshadow the rest.

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PROTECT INDIANS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

The ongoing war between the United States and Iran has raised grave concerns about the safety and survival of people across the Middle East. As usual, it is ordinary citizens who bear the heaviest burden of such conflicts.

Among those most vulnerable are nearly 10 million Indians living and working across the region in search of better livelihoods.

Today, many of them find themselves in an uncertain and deeply distressing situation. Ensuring their safety and well-being must be a top priority for the Government of India.

The hard-earned income of these expatriate workers sustains countless families back home and significantly contributes to the economic stability of the states they belong to, as well as the national economy through

remittances.

Wars of this nature shatter the lives and aspirations of millions.

The present conflict threatens to cause widespread devastation across the Middle East, affecting not only the people living there but also their dependents in distant homes. Innocent children - children, women, and the elderly - are the worst sufferers, deprived of their right to live in peace and security.

A war that destroys lives, ravages the environment, and drains enormous resources raises serious moral and humanitarian questions. At a time when humanity should be striving for peace and cooperation, the region is instead engulfed in fear and uncertainty, leaving millions searching desperately for hope and stability.

PRABHAKARAN VALLATH | KOZHIKODE

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nagpur blast demands accountability

The recent explosion at an explosives manufacturing unit in Nagpur district that killed 19 workers is both tragic and shocking. The blast occurred at the detonator assembly unit of SBL Energy in Raulgaon, Katol tehsil, leaving 23 others injured. While 18 workers died on the day of the explosion, one more succumbed to injuries later. This devastating incident demands an immediate and thorough investigation. What makes the tragedy even more disturbing is that such accidents are not isolated. Nagpur district has 11 explosives factories, and in the past one-and-a-half years alone, 43 workers - including 25 women - have lost their lives in similar blasts. Most of the victims were daily-wage labourers, many of them women, risking their lives for a meagre wage of around Rs 300 a day. Compensation of Rs 15 lakh or even Rs 50 lakh cannot restore the lives lost or heal the trauma of devastated families. The real issue is the repeated failure to ensure workplace safety. Despite frequent demands for strict safety audits of explosives factories, little meaningful action has been taken. Serious questions must now be asked about the role of the factories inspectorate and the labour department. Why were preventive steps not taken despite repeated accidents? Accountability and stricter enforcement of safety norms are essential to prevent such tragedies.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Policy contradictions demand introspection

It is a matter of serious concern that several policy directions in the country appear increasingly incongruous. At a time when many nations are questioning Israel's military actions in the region and some long-standing supporters are reconsidering their positions on the Palestinian issue, India seems to be drawing closer to Israel. Yet, as Israel intensifies its military operations against Iran and its neighbours, India finds itself unable either to openly condemn such actions on moral grounds or to clearly support them. Similarly, instead of playing a stronger diplomatic role in helping end the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict, India appears to have treated the situation as an economic opportunity by purchasing discounted Russian crude oil. Globally, debates are underway on reducing dependence on the U.S. dollar, yet India appears hesitant to assert an independent economic path. Domestically too, troubling contrasts persist - while a vast number of citizens continue to depend on free rations, policy narratives often celebrate the rapid rise of billionaires, many of whom invest more abroad than at home. At a time when the country urgently needs employment generation, quality education and better healthcare, it is important that national priorities are reassessed to ensure inclusive growth.

A G RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

Iran's uranium stockpile raises concerns

Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to about 60 per cent purity - estimated by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog at roughly 440 kg before the mid-2025 strikes - remains a serious global concern. Though not yet weapons-grade, which is around 90 per cent enrichment, the existing level is technically only a short step away from material that could be used in a nuclear weapon if further processed. It is also important to distinguish between a nuclear bomb and a so-called "dirty bomb." The latter is a radiological device that spreads radioactive material using conventional explosives. Its purpose is not to cause a massive nuclear blast but to contaminate areas and create fear and disruption. While such a device could use radioactive material like enriched uranium, its destructive capacity is far smaller than that of a true nuclear weapon. The June 2025 US-Israeli strikes damaged several of Iran's key enrichment facilities. However, the exact location and status of much of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile remain unclear and may be concealed in fortified underground sites. There is no confirmation that the material was fully destroyed. For India, the prudent response lies in diplomacy, stronger monitoring systems, and preparedness through civil defence, radiological surveillance, and effective disaster-response mechanisms.

RS NARULA | PATIALA



The new age of resource geopolitics

US President Donald Trump has authorised the United States to withdraw from 66 international organisations. The move signals a sharp retreat from global climate cooperation and reflects a broader strategy centred on resource geopolitics, expanded oil ambitions and renewed assertions of American dominance

FIRST Column



BK SINGH



In a sweeping overhaul of America's global footprint, last month, Trump authorized US to withdraw from 66 international organisations. Among the pull-outs are the major climate-linked global bodies including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the global counterterrorism forum, intergovernmental panel on Climate Change, the peacekeeping fund, UN democracy fund, UN energy etc. US officials say that these organisations promote hostile and inefficient policies that no longer serve the country's interests. The officials have also criticized climate related bodies for imposing undue burden on US businesses and industries without reciprocal commitments from major emitters like China and India. These observations of the US are laughable. China and India are not comparable in annual emissions. While China emits 14 Giga tons CO2 annually, India's emission is 3 Giga tons. Per capita emission of China, too, is high. After withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement and not sending a US delegation to the latest climate Cop30 held at Belem, Brazil, his pullout from global climate-related groupings has been devastating. Historically, US is responsible for warming the planet and the climate disruptions we are facing; how can Trump not take these facts into account? As 2026 unfolds Trump's second term is marked by muscular interventions in Venezuela, and now Iran and also there are open threats against Nigeria, Somalia and Cuba and quite remarkably and inexplicably, menacing Denmark, Canada and Mexico. Trump consistently accused Venezuelan President Maduro for running a drug cartel and sending drugs to America, and in an operation 'Absolute Resolve' on 3rd January President and his wife were extracted from the Caracas military base and taken to the US for trial. His focus is on Venezuelan oil. Six days after the operation, major oil giants like ExxonMobil, Chevron and ConocoPhillips were invited to Whitehouse where Trump seek an investment of \$100 billion in the next ten years to expand production, an agreement for immediate oil deliveries to the US to the tune of 50 million barrels per day. Citing past asset seizures and current instability in

THE PRESENT RACE FOR OIL AND RARE EARTH MINERALS CAN ACCELERATE THE DISRUPTION OF POLAR VORTEX EVEN FURTHER. ALL SUCH ACTIVITIES IN ARCTIC REGION MUST BE STOPPED

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the country, the Exxon CEO called it "un-investable". Oil giants needed significant policy changes and guarantees before committing large sums. The peak level of oil production in Venezuela was 4 million barrels per day in the 1990s. The country faced US sanction since 2019 and since then the production has tapered to 1 million barrels per day. Though the country is estimated to have 300 billion barrels, surpassing Saudi Arabia and Iran, but the reserves are in Orinoco belt (eastern Venezuela) which are heavy crude oil and difficult to extract. The extraction and refining costs would be exorbitant, and it has considerable environmental costs. Western Venezuelan oil were comparatively light and less polluting and has been exhausted by now. What remains is the heavy crude oil in the east. The International Energy Agency also estimates that such crude is six times more methane-intensive and 10 times more flaring-intensive than the global average. Ramping up oil production could risk a 'methane bomb'. Methane is one of the potent greenhouse gases that would be emitted during venting, flaring during production and also during transport and storage. If the oil production is increased to 4 million barrels per day, it would add

additional emission of 730 million tons (.73 Giga tons) of CO2 annually. A higher production would proportionately increase the emissions. The US National Security Strategy has laid out that the country will assert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine (western hemisphere hegemony) for its dominance in the region. Trump likes to call it the 'Donroe doctrine'. After gaining control over Venezuela, he doubled down to annex Greenland. He announced that all options to gain semi-autonomous territory from Denmark, including use of military is on the table. He also wrote to the Norwegian PM that Norway did not consider him for the Nobel Peace Prize, and he does not feel obliged to think purely of peace. The 1951 agreement between the US and Denmark allows the US to open bases on Greenland. The US can develop, maintain and operate any number of bases on the island. Today, several bases and installations are closed down, and only Pituffik Space Base is operational. The agreement does not prohibit US to expand military presence on the island to counter China and Russia. The security challenge is only an eyewash; Trump wants to control oil and

critical minerals. Melting of ice in the Arctic region is opening new sea sailing routes, and also making oil and mineral deposits easily accessible. Greenland's formidable environment, underdeveloped infrastructure, and challenging geology have prevented mining of critical minerals, crucial for high-tech products. To counter China's near-monopoly on global rare-earth supply, US has already committed hundreds of millions of dollars and acquired stakes in several rare-earth companies. To find a solution to the strategic dilemma, Trump is wrestling control of Greenland from Denmark. Nowhere is the contradiction between Trump's rhetoric and actions more glaring than in the torching of Iran. After the operation 'Midnight Hammer' last June, Trump announced that Tehran's nuclear capabilities are completely obliterated, yet he launched another operation 'Epic Fury' to obliterate the regime's growing nuclear capability and missiles that can reach US soil. Successive US administrations have wanted to control West Asian oil, and Trump has moved a step forward in this direction. Last month US administration took a key step toward opening new

leases for oil and gas drilling across millions of hectare lands in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - a pristine and biodiverse expanse in Northern Alaska and one of the last wild lands in the US still untouched. It was a project that was always opposed in Biden's administration. The expansion of oil, gas, and rare and critical minerals programs would make the planet warmer. The Arctic is warming four times faster than the global average rise in temperature. More oil and gas production may cut the speed and scale of the transition to green energy. Greenhouse gases at unprecedented levels will continue to be pumped into the atmosphere, intensifying climate disruptions. The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change has highlighted Toronto University researchers' finding that while land and vegetation reflect less than 50% solar radiation, snow reflects 80 per cent. Snow plays an important role in keeping the warming in check. Icebreaker fleets are used for accessing new Arctic shipping lanes and tap oil, gas and minerals hidden beneath the surface of the earth. One of the recent bold proposals of Trump is to significantly expand the US icebreaker fleet. The loss of ice-sheets would reduce solar reflectivity and accelerate the warming of the planet. A storm called the Arctic polar vortex causes the jet stream to bring down frigid air from the stratosphere to the troposphere and then shift northwards if it is orderly and southwards if it is disrupted. The distorted and wavy jet stream causes warm air surge north into the Arctic and frigid air to plunge south, moving quite far up to lower latitude regions of the globe. This year it has brought snowstorms repeatedly in US, Europe, Russia's Far East, Japan and India's Himalayas, causing human deaths and also disrupting lives and livelihoods, including the cancellation of flights. Though Scientists have not correlated the impact of climate change in influencing the polar vortex, there is a clear signal of the Arctic region warming faster than the rest of the planet, a phenomenon known as Arctic amplification. With the retreat of sea ice, the exposed earth absorbs more sunlight, causing faster heating and altering the atmospheric circulation pattern over the polar region. The present race for oil and rare earth minerals can accelerate the disruption of the polar vortex even further. All such activities in the Arctic region must be stopped.

Why do nations go to war?



ACHARYA PRASHANT

There is a question that goes unasked every time the world erupts in war, and its absence is more revealing than anything the analysts say. The question is not about which side is right, or which grievance is legitimate, or which alliance has been betrayed. Those questions get asked at great length, with great sophistication, by very worldly, credentialed people. The question that does not get asked is simpler and more dangerous: who is the one fighting? Not which nation, not which ideology, not which scripture, but who, actually, is doing this, what does this person want, and why does the wanting never stop? In recent weeks, US and Israeli strikes on Iran have killed several top military and political figures; Iran retaliated against Israeli positions and American bases in the Gulf; Pakistan launched strikes into Afghanistan; and all this while the devastating war in Gaza is still quite fresh in the collective memory. Across every editorial room and foreign ministry, the same machinery cranks into motion: geopolitical analysis, balance-of-power calculations, resource competition, historical grievance mapping. These explanations are not wrong, exactly. They describe the furniture of the room quite well. But what they do not explain is who is sitting in it, or why that person keeps setting the room on fire and then expressing surprise at the flames. Consider what a single historical fact does to the entire geopolitical narrative of the current US-Iran crisis. Until 1979, Iran and Israel were functional allies. Two countries that today describe each other in the language of surgical removal and satanic identity, "the cancerous tumour must be excised," "the Little Satan must perish," were, within living memory, strategic partners. What changed was a revolution that placed religious identity at the absolute centre of the Iranian state. The Islamic Republic made opposition to Israel a central ideological position of the new state, not because Israel had done anything new, but because a state founded entirely on theological identity requires its identity to be defined against something. A Jewish state served that purpose with theological precision. This is not geopolitics wearing a religious costume. This is religion being worn by the ego as its most respectable armour, and it tells us everything we need to know about the nature of the conflict. Religion exists to civilise the animal. Every great tradition, at its irreducible

core, was attempting to do one thing: take the creature that emerges from the womb driven entirely by the biological logic of survival: consume, expand, eliminate the threat, secure the territory, and elevate it into something capable of clarity, compassion, and self-knowledge. That is the whole project. The animal, however, is remarkably resourceful. It can colonise the very force meant to tame it; it can drape itself in scripture, recite the holy verses with genuine feeling, and emerge looking not like a beast at all, but like a soldier of God. When that happens, religion does not merely fail at its purpose; it becomes the most potent accelerant the ego has ever discovered, because now the hunger for dominance carries the blessing of the divine, the violence is sanctified, and the enemy is not merely an adversary to be defeated but a heretic whose destruction is itself an act of devotion. Not Resources, But Identity Strip away the theological dressing and the geopolitical framework, and what remains is something both simpler and more intractable: the ego's bottomless hunger to feel complete, a hunger no diplomatic architecture has ever been built to address, because the architects themselves are running the same engine. The resource explanation for the US-Iran confrontation is the most persistent alibi and the most easily dismantled. The United States is among the world's largest energy producers; it has no material need for Iranian oil that could justify the risks of direct military confrontation with a nation of ninety million people in one of the world's most volatile regions. What it fits is the logic of an ego that requires dominance not as a strategy but as a psychological condition; an ego that cannot tolerate the existence of an entity that refuses to subordinate itself to the hierarchy. You cannot give it enough. Feed it every oil field in the Gulf, and it will discover it needs recognition; give it recognition, and it will discover it needs submission; give it submission, and it will discover it needs the annihilation of any future possibility of challenge. The hunger has no floor because the hollowness it is trying to fill has no floor either. Everything else: the sanctions, the strikes, the frameworks, the summits, is rearranging weapons into configurations that feel temporarily safer and calling the rearrangement peace. There is a temptation, particularly for citizens of the nations doing the striking, to watch all of this from a position of apparent safety: to feel either pride at a display of power or simple relief that the devastation is happening at a geographical distance comfortable enough to be consumed as news. This is the ego's most seductive illusion: that the fire it lights in the world stays in the world, that you can sanction the destruction of other people's cities and return to your own life carrying none of that destruction inside you.

The inner condition that produces belligerent foreign policy is the same inner condition that produces the epidemic of depression, anxiety, addiction, and inner purposelessness that has become the defining psychological signature of the most militarily powerful societies on earth. You cannot burn your neighbour's house and rest in peace, not because of some mystical law, but because the act of burning changes the one who burns, and that changed person then returns to the home he imagined was safe and wonders why he cannot sleep. The senses are made to face outward, and therefore, the ego, using only the senses, sees only what is outside, never what is within. This is the structural predicament of the geopolitically entranced ego: it looks outward at the adversary, at the threat, at the historical injustice, and it never pauses to notice that what it keeps finding out there, the hunger, the fear, the need for enemies, the certainty of its own righteousness, is a precise mirror of what has never been examined within. Ask yourself what genuinely disturbs you when you read the news from that region. If you find that a missile strike produces something that feels uncomfortably close to satisfaction, a sense that the right people are being punished, that your side is winning, that the world is being corrected, sit with that feeling for a moment before moving to the next headline. Ask what it is fed by. Ask what it would mean for your sense of identity if the world stopped arranging itself into enemies you could feel righteous about. The ego that requires enemies to sustain its own sense of coherence does not disappear when the missiles stop. It waits until it finds the next available occasion. And the wheel turns again. The wheel will not be stopped from the outside. There is no treaty elegant enough, no balance of power stable enough, no diplomatic architecture sophisticated enough to address what keeps turning it. The wheel is turned from within, by the unexamined centre that has been given every instrument of analysis and statecraft except the one that could actually change something: the willingness to look at itself with the same ruthlessness it has always reserved for its enemies. That is the only disarmament that lasts. Not a new agreement, not a new government, not a new ideology dressed in the vocabulary of the old one, but just a human being, finally willing to ask: what in me is producing this world, and what would remain of my sense of who I am if I could no longer find an enemy to confirm it? That question, honestly pursued, is the beginning of the only peace that has ever been real.

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The forgotten Nandi: Unsung hero of India's dairy sector



PARAG ACHARYA

Milk occupies a unique place in human nutrition, serving as a vital source of high-quality animal protein and a wide array of essential nutrients. India has emerged as the world's largest producer of milk, contributing nearly one-fourth of global output. The dairy sector supports the livelihoods of more than eight crore farmers, most of whom are small and marginal producers who depend on dairy as a stable source of daily income. Women play a particularly crucial role in this sector. From feeding and caring for animals to collecting and marketing milk, women form the backbone of rural dairy operations. One of the key programmes driving this transformation is the 'Rashtriya Gokul Mission', which focuses on breed improvement and genetic upgradation of indigenous cattle. Alongside this, the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme has strengthened veterinary infrastructure, including the deployment of Mobile Veterinary Units that deliver diagnosis, treatment, vaccination and minor surgical services directly at farmers' doorsteps. Such doorstep services are particularly valuable for small farmers who often lack access to veterinary facilities. Innovative approaches are also emerging in livestock healthcare. The integration of Ayurveda and Ethno-Veterinary Medicine offers low-cost, eco-friendly alternatives for managing animal diseases while reducing dependence on antibiotics. Their application in conditions such as bovine mastitis has shown encouraging results, promoting healthier animals and more sustainable dairy practices. A renewed push to strengthen the sector has come with the launch of the Standard Operating Procedure for White Revolution 2.0. Announced in September 2024 and formally rolled out in December 2024, the initiative envisions a five-year mission extending from 2024-25 to 2028-29. Its goal is to expand milk procurement, reinforce cooperative institutions and generate greater employment opportunities in rural areas, particularly for women. Under the programme's roadmap, daily milk procurement through dairy cooperatives is expected to rise significantly. In reality, the genetic potential and productivity of an entire herd depend heavily on the quality of the bull used for breeding. Just as in Indian cultural symbolism the sacred bull Nandi represents strength and fertility, the breeding bull in modern dairying plays a silent but decisive role in determining milk yields and herd improvement. Artificial insemination has emerged as one of the

most powerful scientific tools for enhancing dairy productivity. By enabling the use of superior genetic material, artificial insemination helps improve milk yield, fertility and overall herd quality. Currently, about one-third of India's breedable cattle and buffalo population is covered under artificial insemination services. However, many animals are still bred through unselected local bulls, which limits long-term genetic improvement. The National Artificial Insemination Programme has significantly expanded access to organised breeding services. Free doorstep artificial insemination is being provided in several districts, reducing costs and making scientific breeding accessible to small farmers. Millions of inseminations are now carried out annually, benefiting a vast number of livestock owners across the country. Advanced reproductive technologies are further accelerating progress. In-vitro fertilisation laboratories have been established to multiply elite germplasm, while sex-sorted semen technology allows farmers to increase the probability of female calf births. Since milk production depends on female animals, the ability to produce more female calves directly strengthens the future dairy base. The genetic importance of bulls becomes even clearer through progeny testing, a scientific method that evaluates a bull's worth by analysing the performance of its daughters. Through such programmes, superior bulls are identified and their genetic material is widely disseminated. Over successive generations, a single elite bull can influence a large portion of the herd's genetic makeup, significantly improving productivity. Modern science has also deepened our understanding of male fertility. Sperm is now known to carry not only genetic material but also molecular signals that influence embryo development and offspring health. Advanced techniques such as Computer-Assisted Sperm Analysis and emerging molecular tools are helping scientists assess breeding potential with far greater accuracy. India's dairy success story, therefore, is not written by cows alone. It is shaped equally by bulls—the silent genetic engines that drive productivity and herd improvement. Recognising their importance and investing in scientific breeding, superior germplasm and modern reproductive technologies will be essential for sustaining the next phase of India's dairy growth. The future of the sector will depend not only on better milk production but also on the careful nurturing of the genetic foundations that make that production possible.

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The ways of the stock markets can be weird. On a day when the Sensex, the Bombay Stock Exchange Index, lost more than 1,000 points, and after it slumped by nearly 3,000 points over the past five trading sessions, the railway stocks, both private and public sector, jumped almost unexpectedly. A private sector share rallied by 13 per cent, and another public sector one by 12 per cent. A few others gained by 2-7 per cent each. The ostensible reason was a media report, which was slightly speculative, that the railways ministry had started a "formal proposal" to merge two state-owned heavyweights, Ircn and RVNL. The sudden spurt seems out of sync as both these shares, along with the others, were down in the dumps in the past few days, as were most stocks listed on the Indian exchanges. The earlier falls were backed by the fears that the two railway firms will be impacted by the Middle East war.

While one can assume that a mega-merger between two large state-owned firms can be positive, there may be too many slips between the cup and lips in this case. The first is that the merger idea is just floated by the nodal ministry. It will go through a long-drawn-out review process, and will need several approvals from the finance ministry, department of public enterprises, and cabinet committee on economic affairs. After this, the two relevant firms will need board affirmations, and discussions about valuations since it will involve share swaps. Both the railway entities are listed on the Indian exchanges. Given the current state of the stock markets, there is unlikely to be an urgency. If the Middle East war intensifies, Indian and other global equities may be depressed for months. So, the chances of a merger, despite it being a share swap, is unlikely to be announced soon due to valuations.

At the same time, the logic behind the merger seems a bit vague. According to a media report, the merger will create a larger entity that will combine special expertise, and enhance execution capacity by "leveraging RVNL's project management strengths, and Ircn's expertise in turnkey projects and railway construction, as well as increase international presence, and operational efficiency." If one cuts through the jargon, it will seem as if the latter firm that executes large turnkey projects does not have enough management strengths that RVNL possesses. As if one can complete huge projects with the strategic efficiency, inputs, and efficacy. RVNL is involved in rail infrastructure such as new tracks, gauge conversion, and electrification. Ircn focuses on global projects largely related to complex electrification. Hence, there is convergence in operations, even duplication, rather than synergies that can be leveraged by either side. In effect, it may achieve size but little else if both firms continue to operate separately.

Let us consider the case of another merger in the public sector, which was announced in this year's union budget. The purpose behind the PFC-REC merger was to "streamline operations, reduce duplication, and enhance scale for India's growing energy financing needs." What needs to be remembered is that REC was a subsidiary of PFC since 2019, with the latter holding more than 50 per cent stake. Post-merger, PFC will hold 100 per cent in REC, which will become a 100 per cent subsidiary. One fails to understand the major differences between a majority and wholly-owned subsidiary. One fails to grasp that if the stated synergies were not achieved in the majority-subsidary relation, as it seems they were not, how can the same become true in a wholly-owned one. The fact remains that there are several underlying and unexplained issues behind the official aims. Even more strange is the fact that investors unduly get excited by a merger without trying to figure out the real reasons, or benefits and gains. A merger per se is not beneficial.

Over the past one week, the RVNL stock is down by more than seven per cent, although it shot up by nearly a similar margin yesterday. In this calendar year, it fell by 19 per cent. Although Ircn gained by three per cent in the past one week, thanks to the 12 per cent upside yesterday, it has shed 17 per cent in this calendar year. In both the firms, the existing government stakes are relatively high, 65 per cent in Ircn, and 73 per cent in RVNL. A stock swap will not ensure any money inflows, either for the firms or their shareholders. One needs to figure out the ratio to determine whose investors will gain more than the other. Hence, the valuations will be critical, but the future calculations can be upset by the ongoing global wars. In many cases, there is a tussle between the shareholders to push up individual valuations to get a better deal at the expense of the others.

In the merger mania and madness, one is still not sure about the benefits that may accrue to the other railway firms. For example, one cannot fathom why a wagon-maker, Jupiter Wagons, gained more than 13 per cent yesterday, and why a state-owned container firm, CONCOR, and another finance firm, IRFC, went up by two per cent each.

More legal wall against tariffs

Nearly half of US states, courts oppose Trump's new trade moves

Political, business, and legal opposition intensifies against the US president Donald Trump's tariffs. Nearly 24 of the 50 American states, which are Democratic, or blue, asked a court to stall the move to impose a new set of 10 per cent 'trade' tariff, which may increase to 15 per cent. Another court directed the Customs office to refund the earlier 'emergency' duties that were imposed but deemed illegal by the Supreme Court, and called for a behind-closed-doors meeting with the government lawyers to settle their early refunds.

According to the attorney for New York, "Once again (with a new 10 per cent tariff under a trade act, and not the emergency power one used earlier), President Trump is ignoring the law, and the Constitution to effectively raise taxes on consumers, and small businesses... After the Supreme Court rejected his first attempt... the president is causing more economic chaos, and expecting Americans to foot the bill." The attorney added that the 24 states were 100 per cent sure that the new tariffs will not stand judicial scrutiny, as did the old ones.

After Trump's emergency powers to impose taxes under an old Act, which was never used by a previous president to do so, were deemed unconstitutional, the president used a "never-before-used-law" under a 50-year-old trade act. The latter allows a president to impose a "surcharge" of up to 15 per cent for 150 days, only to address "large and serious" balance of payment deficit. It needs a ratification by the Congress within 150 days, and does not apply to the trade deficit. Trump hopes to use the temporary powers, and buy enough time to impose longer-duration tariffs under other laws that mandate

investigations.

Most critics agree that trade and balance-of-payment deficits are different in economic jargon. One of them claims, "The president either does not know the difference, or does not care. Either way, he is breaking the law." Some attorneys argue that balance-of-payment problems do not occur in modern times. They are the relics of a fixed-rate regime, like was true under the old Gold Standard that was disbanded in the 1970s. During the earlier Supreme Court hearings, the government agreed that the two deficits were different.

According to the clauses of the trade Act used for the 10 per cent tariff, they need to be applied consistently, and not discriminately. Yet, the Trump regime exempted goods from several nations such as Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Honduras. Indeed, the notification includes 84 pages of products that are specifically exempted from the new duties. Such moves indicate that the new tariff will "fail to fit the criteria" under the trade Act. Thus, the president seems to be walking towards another legal trade-tariff trap, either deliberately, or subconsciously.

A few days ago, a judge issued a "sweeping order" to direct the nation's Customs to refund the tariffs under the earlier emergency powers that were deemed illegal by the Supreme Court. Although the petition was filed by a single firm, the order made it clear that it was applicable to every importer, who paid the higher tax. At present, at least 2,000 firms have filed petitions to claim the refunds. The Supreme Court, surprisingly, did not provide

a road map for the refunds, and one of the dissenting judges claimed that the process may turn out to be a "mess."

However, to reduce the chaos, the judge who gave the "sweeping order" asked the Government to attend a meeting to discuss the modalities of how to handle the paperwork related to refunds on 79 million shipments. "I do not believe that any of this has to be chaotic with respect to anybody, because I know that you (Government) are going to come up with a way of doing it. And so, on Friday, we are going to hear at least the initial ideas from the Customs service as to how this will proceed." Trump may seek a stay on the order, and process.

For Trump, there is another twist due to the ongoing US-Israel-Iran war that has spilled into the rest of the Middle East, and Central Asia. Across the globe, both oil producers and consumers are worried. More crucially, the war, if escalated, may last for a month, or more, and adversely impact the US economy, as well as the others. However, there is a mid-term election in the US later this year to elect congresspersons and senators. If the economy goes for a spin, Trump may lose control over both the houses, and become a lame-duck president.

One need not forget that if the new 10 per cent tariff is deemed illegal, it will shift the diplomatic momentum towards the other nations. Powerful and influential ones such as the European Union, Japan, and India may wish to renegotiate the bilateral trade deals with the US. The former may ask for more concessions with the knowledge that Trump is in a legal, political, and economic mess. This may further dent the 'stick' policy of the president, which will further impact the economy. It can lead to a non-virtuous economic cycle.

However, Trump is unlikely to give up easily. He has never done it before. He will fight on politically and legally, using little-known and little-used laws, as he did in the past. He will not care if the acts are deemed illegal in the future. His only purpose will be to show the world, and Americans that he is strong, and can go on without any respite. The fact remains that he needs to keep fighting these legal and diplomatic battles for another three years until his present term ends. If he can maintain the pressures till then, he will emerge triumphant.

This is evident from the White House's latest reaction, "The President is using his authority granted by Congress (via laws) to address fundamental payments problems, and to deal with our country's large and serious balance-of-payment deficits. The Administration will vigorously defend the President's actions in court." A few experts contend that the president is likely to get more legal leeway, or "deference," for the new tariff under the trade Act (new tariff) compared to the earlier ones using the emergency powers related to national security. In the former case, Trump has a clear and legal 150-day window to seek the Congress' okay, but the technicality between trade and balance-of-payment deficits remains a grey area.

OUR TAKE



A Contrarian Investor

Bonded to dollar, gold is on hold

Most asset classes, including gold, are down due to war clouds



For more than a decade, experts noticed a peculiar trend. Contrary to belief, both equities and gold went up, as if in a tango. Now, the opposite is true. In a similar step-by-step fashion, both are down. Normally, gold, as a safe hedge, moves up when stocks are down, and vice versa. This is especially true during the war periods, when investors rush to seek safe-havens for their money. The inverse relation is no longer true. More importantly, apart from the dollar, and a few other currencies, and the US treasury bonds, most asset classes, including housing, silver, metals, and commodities are spiraling down. There are few secure options, and most investors, including institutions and high net-worth individuals, seem clueless. For example, no one knows how high crude oil prices will rise, or how low will the equities tumble. One is not sure if the dollar will remain strong for long.

However, one can think of several reasons for the ongoing trends that seem mysterious and inexplicable. The first is that the money is getting out of equities for obvious reasons such as low growth in global economies, high trade deficits due to more expensive imports and lower exports, currency volatility, and corporate earnings. But instead of flowing into gold or silver, as expected, it is being invested in dollars, and US securities. The dollar is strong because America seems to be the only economy that can withstand the vagaries of war, and emerge as the real victor, not just militarily but economically. According to some estimates, a 0.1 per cent increase in the dollar index depresses gold by \$8-12 an ounce. Silver is more sensitive to dollar swings. Hence, the recent fall in silver is more severe than the yellow metal. Other precious metals like platinum, and even non-precious ones like copper are down.

Investors' shift towards the dollar implies a penchant for the US treasuries, and the yield on 10-year treasury bond rose to more than 4 per cent. For investors, such a return linked to dollar terms is quite lucrative during a period of extreme uncertainties. It takes the attention away from gold and silver, which are the default options. Indeed, money may flow out of the precious metals into treasuries, which causes short-term selling pressures in the former assets. The ongoing trade tensions, with the US imposing a 10 per cent tariff, and threatening to hike it to 15 per cent, inflation risks, and low growth rates may prompt the central banks to hike interest rates. If the US Federal Reserve goes slow on rate cuts, or even hikes them, the dollar and American treasuries become more attractive. Such interest rate expecta-

tions force the investors to hold their moves vis-à-vis gold.

According to some experts, the more cautious institutional investors like the large pension funds may seek to sit on cash rather than invest the money. Hence, they withdraw money from most asset classes such as equities, precious metals, and commodities, and wait for the new opportunities to emerge in an across-the-board fall in most assets. At some stage, when the positive signs appear that the ongoing war tensions may end, and the asset prices are ridiculously low, these funds come back as buyers with a vengeance. They convert cash holdings into investments, as the prices begin to shoot up. Obviously, no one can time the markets perfectly, but the large investors can enter lower-than-expected

ranges, and ride the upward momentum with aplomb. For many, including middle-class investors, cash is king in times of war, and other disruptions. It will remain so till the scenario changes.

Some jewellers, like an Indian tycoon in Dubai, whose 200 stores in the UAE, India, and the US hold an inventory of 16,000 kg of gold, believe that this is a short-term blip in gold, which is bound to rise in the future. Other optimists contend that what is happening now is more of "profit-taking (in gold) rather than panic buying (selling)." Once the war de-escalates, as it eventually will, bullion prices will shoot up. They add that "gold and silver are experiencing short-term volatility rather than a structural decline with macroeconomic forces dominating safe-haven demand." In the

future, as the recent past indicates, gold, silver, and equities will continue their upward march together. This is evident from the technical charts, as gold futures trade above the technical support levels, despite the recent dips. More importantly, gold is neither in an overbought or oversold situation, which indicates stability.

One needs to remember that while we still talk about gold and silver as hedges to economic tensions, this is only true during the tensions. For example, gold was purchased in huge quantities after the Great Recession in 2008. The same was true in the post-pandemic period. In normal scenarios, when there are no tensions, gold is not considered a hedge but a crucial ingredient in investors' portfolios. In effect, bullion is an independent asset class, like equities and real estate, and needs to be a part of any portfolio based on risk appetite. In such situations, gold purchase is not limited to safety and security, but based on possible returns, as is the case with the other assets. So, the buying is continuous rather than in bursts, and during specific periods. This is one of the reasons why gold and equities moved in tandem over the past decade or so, and the same is likely to happen in the future.

Hence, the medium-case rationale for another bull phase in gold, say some experts, remains intact. "Central banks globally are buying gold at near-record rates. The Iran conflict, even if it shortens, leaves structural supply disruptions, and elevated geopolitical uncertainty embedded in energy markets. The Federal Reserve will cut rates eventually. When it does, non-yielding assets like gold and silver will benefit directly, and immediately. Today's (Thursday) decline is noise inside a longer-term signal that still points higher," states a report. If the Middle East war intensifies and continues, there are more reasons that despite the dollar strength, gold will re-emerge as a safe-haven choice. In this respect, it does not matter whether the conflict intensifies, or there is a ceasefire. In either case, there is likely to be buying pressures in gold and silver. "For now, the metals market is a tug-of-war between geopolitics and macroeconomics. Geopolitical risks are supporting gold in the long-term, while a strong dollar and higher (bond) yields are limiting immediate gains," states a report.



India faces inflation risks from West Asia disruption: Moody's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India could face pressure on the rupee, higher inflation and a widening current account deficit if the escalating Middle East conflict spikes energy prices and disrupts supplies, given its heavy dependence on crude and LNG imports from the region, according to Moody's Ratings. "India stands out among the large Asian economies that rely on crude and LNG from the Middle East," the rating agency said.

The country imports about 46 per cent of its oil and natural gas requirements from the Middle East.

Supplies from the region have been disrupted as the widening West Asia conflict has blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a key conduit for crude oil and LNG exports from the region.

"Costly energy imports would weaken the rupee, raise inflation, worsen the

current account balance and complicate monetary policy as well as fiscal management if they lead to expanded subsidies to help offset the economic shock," Moody's said in a note on oil supply shock in prolonged West Asia conflict.

Strait of Hormuz key risk point: Moody's said the Middle East conflict poses substantial risk to the global economy, particularly if it causes prolonged disruption in global energy markets. The Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping route for oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), remains a critical choke point.

Although infrastructure damage so far has been limited and global inventories offer short-term buffers, shipping through the strait has largely stalled and some regional ports have suspended operations, disrupting trade in oil and LNG.

"But a prolonged disruption in navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, beyond



our baseline of a few weeks, would likely trigger sustained supply shortages; prices averaging higher than \$100 per barrel for Brent, the main international benchmark crude; higher inflation; tighter

financial conditions; and slower global growth," it said.

Energy importing regions in Asia and Europe would sustain the most immediate stress from \$100-plus Brent crude.

"Sizable crude inventories and advance shipments by Gulf producers will limit the effects of the Middle East conflict on the energy markets and economies for the next few weeks. But the

conflict remains fluid, raising risks of regional escalation with immediate implications for global energy security and market stability," it said.

While core energy infrastructure has not been significantly damaged, shipping through the Strait of Hormuz has largely stalled and regional ports have suspended operations, disrupting trade for oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

"A prolonged blockage would restrict significant global supply and drive energy prices higher," the rating agency said.

Short disruption manageable: In its baseline scenario, Moody's assumes the conflict will be relatively short-lived and navigation through the Strait of Hormuz will resume soon.

Under this scenario, Brent crude prices would average \$70-80 per barrel in 2026, only moderately higher than the \$69 per barrel average in 2025, limiting the impact on

global growth. "We frame our analysis with two main scenarios, with outcomes ranging from a baseline scenario with short-lived disruption to a much longer and more disruptive adverse scenario.

Our baseline scenario assumes Brent prices moderately higher average levels than in 2025," it said.

If the conflict is relatively short-lived, safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz will pick up again and will lead to swift resolution of supply restrictions.

Prolonged conflict could strain global economy: However, a prolonged disruption that pushes Brent prices above \$100 per barrel would significantly strain energy-importing regions, particularly Asia and Europe.

Higher energy costs would raise consumer prices and production costs globally, erode household purchasing power and weigh on investment, Moody's said.

Persistent inflation risks could also force major central banks to keep interest rates higher, tightening financial conditions and slowing global growth.

"Our adverse scenarios consider a sustained increase in crude prices to \$100 per barrel and higher, exacerbating energy security concerns and economic strain amid prolonged disruptions to energy supply from the region," it said. "Significantly higher oil prices for a sustained period would strain energy importing regions, especially Europe and Asia."

"The resulting tightening in financial conditions and increased uncertainty will crimp global growth," the rating agency added.

Govt to use every tool to help exporters deal with West Asia crisis: Piyush Goyal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Government will use all policy tools and support measures to help domestic exporters deal with the ongoing West Asian crisis, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday. He said that the Government has set up an inter-ministerial group to look into the issues on a daily basis.

"And the Government will use every policy tool and the export promotion mission to support our exporters," Goyal told reporters here on the sidelines of IIFT's vice chancellors' conclave. "We will be formalising some ways to give comfort to our exporters," he said.

Exporters are facing issues with regard to the movement of consignments to West Asia following the joint attack launched by the US and Israel on Iran. "Every day the inter-ministerial group talks to the exporters...



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal

They take feedback, and we will not be found wanting in supporting our exporters in any way," he said. He added that India would continue to meet all the commitments that the country's industries have made to foreign buyers in goods and services.

The commerce ministry is in dialogue with the ministry of shipping and with shipping companies on the issues of exporters. "And I do hope we will find a resolution to this issue also," he said.

When asked about the

Indian refiners turn to Russian oil cargoes at sea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Indian refiners have begun buying some of the over 15 million barrels of Russian crude currently floating on tankers near the country, as they move to offset supply concerns arising from disruptions in the Middle East.

Sources said refiners stepped up purchases after the US Treasury Department issued a 30-day licence allowing India to buy Russian oil cargoes currently stuck at sea.

India, which was among the top buyers of Russian oil, curtailed purchases after US pressured New Delhi to avoid buying Russian barrels in an effort to reduce money flowing to Moscow's war effort in Ukraine.

India's imports of Russian crude in February fell to 1.04 million barrels per day — the lowest since November 2022. The US had made cuts to tariffs on Indian goods contingent on New Delhi reducing its purchases of Russian crude.

This left several ship loads

of Russian oil stranded on high-sea, sources said.

India, which had turned to buying discounted Russian crude following Western sanctions in February 2022, is now adjusting its purchases amid disruptions in Middle East supplies.

The country had previously imported record volumes of Russian oil when cargoes were available at deep discounts, helping refiners offset rising global crude prices. Russian cargoes hit a peak of 2.15 million barrels in May 2023.

However, with the widening West Asia conflict blocking shipments through the Strait of Hormuz and raising concerns over oil and LNG supplies from the Middle East, Indian refiners are now balancing purchases from both Russian cargoes at sea and other sources to ensure an uninterrupted domestic fuel supply.

"President Trump's energy agenda has resulted in oil and gas production reaching the highest levels ever recorded," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said.



"To enable oil to keep flowing into the global market, the Treasury Department is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil."

Calling the move a stopgap measure, he said Washington expects India to eventually buy more US oil. "India is an essential partner of the United States, and we fully anticipate that New Delhi will ramp up purchases of US oil. This stopgap measure will alleviate pressure caused by Iran's attempt to take global energy hostage," Bessent said in a post on X. The short-term measure will not

provide significant financial benefit to the Russian Government as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea, he added.

India, which has inventories to cover for 25 days of demand for crude (raw material for making fuels like petrol and diesel), sources 40-50 per cent of its crude oil needs from the Middle East through the Strait of Hormuz. The escalating conflict in West Asia has effectively shut the strait.

Sources said Indian refiners are now buying the Russian oil to build inventories. There are more than a dozen tankers with Russian

oil in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, sources said, adding that another eight vessels are idling off Singapore and could reach India within days.

Beyond that, ships laden with Russian oil are also in the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez canal which would also reach India in under a month.

"With nearly 50 per cent of India's crude imports transiting the Strait of Hormuz, the country remains highly exposed to potential supply disruptions," said Sumit Ritolia, an analyst at the data intelligence firm Kpler. "The US waiver allowing additional purchases of Russian crude over base load offers short-term relief, though competition from Chinese buyers for the same barrels could limit the extent of India's benefit."

Indian refiners had already been importing around 1 million barrels per day of Russian crude in recent months, meaning the waiver effectively acts as a green signal to lift volumes above this base load, he said.

Electric passenger vehicle registrations rise 44% YoY in February: FADA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Electric passenger vehicle retail sales rose 44 per cent year-on-year in February, dealer's body FADA said on Friday. The overall sales rose to 13,733 units last month as against 9,505 units in the year-ago period.



Tata Motors led the space with registrations of 5,568 units, up 38.5 per cent as compared with 4,020 units in February last year. JSW MG Motor India retailed 3,312 units in February as against 3,490 units in the year-ago period, a dip of 5 per cent.

Mahindra & Mahindra sold 2,913 units last month as against 508 units in February 2025. It was followed by

VinFast Auto and BYD India with registrations of 384 and 306 units, respectively.

In the two wheeler space, total sales rose to 1,11,709 units, up 46 per cent, as compared with 76,722 units in February 2025.

TVS Motor Company led the segment with registrations of 31,614 units as com-

pared with 18,955 units, an increase of 67 per cent. Bajaj Auto sold 25,328 units while Ather Energy chipped in with 20,584 units last month. It was followed by Hero MotoCorp and Greaves Electric Mobility with sales of 12,514 and 4,724 units, respectively. Ola Electric Mobility sold 3,968 units last month, a dip of 54 per cent, as against 8,675 units in February last year.

When asked about the

India's investment climate remains strong on robust fundamentals, reform measures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India's investment climate remains strong supported by the country's robust economic fundamentals, prudent fiscal management and regulatory reforms, said Ajay Sethi, Managing Partner at accounting and consulting firm Baker Tilly ASA India, on Friday.

He said reforms such as simplified labour codes, changes to the Income Tax framework and improved access to policymakers have helped strengthen the business environment.

Responding to a query on the factors behind rising investor confidence in India, Sethi said the country's growth trajectory and the Government's cautious fiscal approach have boosted global confidence.

"From a global reference, India's fundamentals are on the high trajectory of growth and the Government is taking a very sensible approach. We have set a fiscal deficit target of 4.3 per cent, instead of 4.4 per cent, so we haven't taken very exuberant targets, which gives confidence," he said.

He added that regulatory reforms, including the simplification of labour codes and the Income Tax Act, have further improved the investment climate. So "Investments are continuing to boom, and sectors are continuing to attract investments all across". Globally, many organisations now



Managing Partner, Baker Tilly ASA India, Ajay Sethi

consider India a priority market, with expectations that the country could emerge as one of the biggest growth drivers in the Asia-Pacific region.

However, Sethi cautioned that foreign investors must recognise that India is not a single uniform market, as consumer preferences vary significantly across regions. He said detailed feasibility studies are crucial for businesses entering the Indian market, as they need to account for multiple layers of taxation and regulatory requirements beyond federal taxes.

"For the foreign investor looking at India, the first thing is that they should not look at India as a single market, and by that I mean the taste, the way

people look at the markets and the products it can vary from location to location. So a foreign investor should try to understand that what is going to sell in North India may not necessarily sell in south India, and therefore you have to do better research."

Commenting on the recent Supreme Court ruling involving private equity firm Tiger Global, Sethi said the verdict fundamentally differs from the earlier Vodafone tax dispute and has not significantly impacted investor sentiment.

He noted that the ruling focused mainly on the manner in which taxes were structured and how capital gains were routed through a pass-through entity, rather than questioning India's residency or treaty framework.

However, private equity funds may become more cautious in structuring their investments and could consider more tax-efficient jurisdictions such as Singapore.

"The only likely outcome is that private equity funds may be more careful about how they structure their operations and may prefer tax-efficient jurisdictions like Singapore," Sethi said.

In January, the Supreme Court upheld the decision of Indian tax authorities that capital gains arising from US-based investor Tiger Global's exit from Flipkart in 2018 are taxable in India.

Sensex, Nifty dive over 1% on West Asia conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled over 1 per cent on Friday after a day's breather as the conflict in the Middle East entered its seventh day, driving crude oil prices higher.

Weakness in the US equities, subdued trend in European markets and relentless foreign fund outflows also dampened sentiments.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,097 points, or 1.37 per cent, to settle at 78,918.90. During the day, it sank 1,203.72 points, or 1.50 per

cent, to 78,812.18. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 315.45 points, or 1.27 per cent, to end at 24,450.45.

From the Sensex pack, Eternal, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, and Larsen & Toubro were among the major laggards.

Bharat Electronics, Reliance Industries, Sun Pharma, NTPC, Infosys, and HCL Tech were the gainers. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.53 per cent to \$87.57 per barrel.

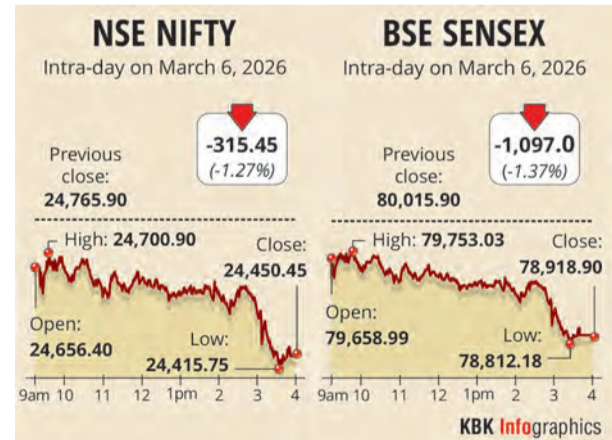
"Indian equity markets extended their decline fol-

lowing the prior session's relief rally, as escalating US-Iran tensions disrupted key Middle Eastern oil and gas supplies, driving crude prices higher.

A sustained rise in oil prices could weigh on investor sentiment and adversely affect India's twin deficits, inflation trajectory, and the RBI's monetary stance," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher.

Markets in Europe were



FMCG growth moderates in December quarter as GST transition impacts pricing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Sales growth of the FMCG industry has moderated to 7.8 per cent in the December quarter of 2025 amid the GST rationalisation and a high base due to increased festival season sales, a report from data analytics firm NielsenIQ said.

Volume growth has also dipped to 2.6 per cent in the December quarter on a year-on-year basis, which was

the lowest in 2025, it said.

"Both price and volume growth softened sequentially, particularly within traditional trade, which experienced temporary supply and pricing recalibrations during the initial phase of (new GST rate) implementation," said NielsenIQ India FMCG Quarterly Snapshot Q4 FY25.

The moderation reflects a combination of a higher festive base in the previous year and transitional adjustments linked to GST 2.0 rate



revisions, it said. However, the report also said that the recent data indicate improv-

ing availability of GST-related launches and pricing alignment across the retail

network, suggesting stabilisation following the transition.

In the December quarter, modern trade (large retail chains) recorded a three-fold acceleration versus the previous quarter, and e-commerce channel shares reached 18 per cent in FMCG sales in the top 8 metros. This was due to the quick adaptation of changes in prices by the organised channels.

"Nearly 60 per cent of the FMCG portfolio underwent

GST rate revisions, requiring coordinated pricing adjustments across manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. While these changes temporarily impacted traditional trade performance, organised channels adapted more quickly," it said.

Moreover, the gap between urban and rural markets has narrowed in the December quarter, though rural still outpaced the urban market in terms of growth.

trading in negative territory. The US market ended lower on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,752.52 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹5,153.37 crore, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the Sensex rebounded 899.71 points, or 1.14 per cent, to settle at 80,015.90, snapping its four-day decline.

The Nifty climbed 285.40 points, or 1.17 per cent, to end at 24,765.90, ending its three-day falling streak.

US-Israel strikes intensify across Iran and Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

Israeli airstrikes pounded the capitals of Iran and Lebanon as the US apparently struck an Iranian drone carrier at sea, intensifying its campaign targeting the Islamic Republic's fleet of warships.

Iran launched new retaliatory attacks early Friday against neighbouring countries that host US forces. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The latest strikes mark a full week of attacks affecting countries across the Middle East. The Israeli military said that the fighting has destroyed most of Iran's air defences and missile launchers, while US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth warned that strikes against Tehran were "about to surge dramatically." Tehran has warned of the destruction of the Middle East's military and economic infrastructure, and the war has rattled financial markets.

Qatar condemns Iranian attack on Bahrain

Qatar has denounced an Iranian attack on Bahrain that targeted buildings housing elements of its forces there. Doha says the attack targeted the



Smoke rising following an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh in Beirut, Lebanon

AP

unified military command of the Gulf Cooperation Council, a six-nation bloc in the region.

It says none of the Qatari sailors were hurt and called the assault "a direct threat to its security and stability and the security of the region."

Lebanon's PM calls for international help

Prime Minister Nawaf Salam is calling on the international community to help Lebanon amid the ongoing Israel-Hezbollah war. "A humanitarian disaster is looming"

because of huge displacements of people, Salam said.

Salam criticised both Israel and Hezbollah over the current crisis saying that the Lebanese state and people "did not choose this war." Speaking to heads of diplomatic mis-

sions in Beirut, Salam appealed to the friends of Lebanon to support "us in this endeavor" and called on the international community to help stop Israel's attacks and spare the country's infrastructure.

Iran launches a new missile attack

Iranian state television announced a new missile attack, including the Islamic Republic firing off its larger Khorramshahr-4 missiles.

Some Chinese airlines resume flights to Mideast

Air China, China Southern and a few other Chinese carriers are resuming direct flights to Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Air China resumed a flight from Beijing to Riyadh on Thursday, state media reported.

China is also helping citizens evacuate from the region, saying it received a plane carrying 300 passengers from Dubai on Wednesday. "We once again remind that the situation in the Middle East remains complex and severe, with considerable uncertainty," Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning said about the evacuations and flights.

UN rights chief pleads for peace

Volker Turk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, says that "the world urgently needs to see steps to contain and extinguish this blaze."

He lamented that "instead we are only seeing more inflammatory, bellicose rhetoric, more bombings, more destruction, killings and escalation, that fuels it further." Turk is urging the countries involved in the war "to take immediate steps to de-escalate, to give peace a chance." And he says that other countries should "call clearly on those involved to pull back."

He's also "extremely concerned" about the situation in Lebanon following Hezbollah's strikes on Israel and Israel's counterstrikes.

Turk said he's particularly worried about what he described as "blanket, massive displacement orders" by Israel to civilians in Lebanon.

"Obviously, this raises serious concern under international humanitarian law and in particular when it comes to issues around forced transfer," he said.

Israel targeting Lebanon's capital again

4 arrested on suspicion of aiding Iran by spying in London

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London



London police said Friday that four men have been arrested on suspicion of aiding Iran by spying on the Jewish community.

In a statement, the Metropolitan Police said the suspects - one Iranian and three dual British-Iranian nationals - were taken into custody on suspicion of assisting a foreign intelligence service.

The men, who were arrested at addresses in and around north London shortly after 1am, are suspected on spying on locations and individuals. Police said the men arrested are aged 22, 40, 52 and 55 and that searches are ongoing at the addresses as well as other properties nearby. Six other men were also arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender and have been taken into custody, the force said.

"We understand the public may be concerned, in particular the Jewish community, and as always, I would ask them to remain

vigilant and if they see or hear anything that concerns them, then to contact us," said Commander Helen Flanagan, who is in charge of counterterrorism policing in London. The arrests come as the US and Israel continue to strike Iran, which has kept up retaliatory strikes on Israel, US bases and across the region. Britain is not involved in offensive operations but is assisting in regional defence.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism said it is grateful to police "for foiling this alleged plot" but accused the British Government of

not taking the threat from Iran seriously.

"The UK may not be acting against Iran but Iran is acting against us," it said in a statement. "The Government's failure to keep its promise to prosecute the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - the main instrument that the Islamic Republic uses to foment antisemitic violence worldwide - has sent the message that support for the brutal Iranian regime and its Jew-hating and West-hating ideology is perfectly acceptable in Britain," it added

Israeli family who buried 3 children after missile attack clings to faith

MELANIE LIDMAN ■ Jerusalem



Tamar Biton was in the kitchen when an explosion rocked her home in the central Israeli city of Beit Shemesh, shattering the windows and collapsing the ceiling with a boom louder than anything she had ever heard.

Making her way to what was left of a window, she saw fire and destruction everywhere, she said.

"I couldn't find my kids, but I was sure they would be able to rescue them from underneath the rubble," she said. That was not to be. It took 24 hours to identify the bodies of three of her four children: Yaakov, about to celebrate his 17th birthday that evening; Avigail, 15; and Sarah, 13.

They were among nine people killed Sunday when an Iranian missile strike demolished a synagogue and homes in Beit Shemesh. Israel's rescue services said 65 people were hospitalized in the attack, including two seriously wounded.

It was the deadliest attack on Israel, where 11 people have died, since the war began Saturday with US and Israeli strikes on Iran. The conflict has escalated each day, affecting an additional 14 countries across the Middle East and beyond. At least 1,230 people have been killed in Iran and more than 100 in Lebanon.

Tamar Biton, her husband Yitzhak and their surviving daughter, 4-year-old Rachel, are observing

the Jewish week of mourning in a Jerusalem hotel where they were placed after their house was destroyed.

For hours on end, as neighbours, friends and strangers gathered around, stories poured from Tamar about her three children.

Yaakov, a natural-born leader and orator, studied at the Jewish seminary her husband ran and was known for bringing friends closer to Jewish observance. Avigail was smart, sensitive and thoughtful, and Sarah was a whirlwind of activity always helping around the house and the community.

As Tamar spoke, she lit up, remembering details of each of the children she had buried Monday in a late-night funeral at Jerusalem's Mount of Olives cemetery, one of the holiest places Jews can be buried. But when Tamar stopped speaking, she seemed to collapse in on herself, remembering what had happened. Yitzhak Biton had taught a class in Jewish texts that deadly morning; his son had attended along with his best friend, 16-year-old Gavriel Ravach. Both were killed in the missile attack. (AP)

Japanese person detained in Iran: officials



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Tokyo

A second Japanese national has been detained in Iran, Japan's Foreign Ministry said Friday and requested the early release of both people.

The ministry confirmed the second person had been detained before the Feb. 28 military strikes on Iran by the United States and Israel.

The ministry said the detainee is safe and in good health but gave no other details such as the timing of the detention or whether it is related to the detention of a Japanese journalist reported last month. Japanese officials had confirmed the first person's detention though they refused to give the detainee's identity.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has named the first detainee as Shinnosuke Kawashima, the Tehran bureau chief of Japanese public broadcaster NHK. Its report quoted an unidentified source who spoke on condition of anonymity due to fear of retribution. CPJ said Kawashima was arrested Janvart 20 by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and was transferred Feb. 23 to Evin Prison.

The organisation demanded the immediate release of Kawashima and other journalists detained for their work.

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 PLEDGED 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 OF 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 REPAY 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 17.03.2026 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						
CUSTOMER NAME	LOAN A/C NO.	AMOUNT OUTSTANDING (IN ₹)	DATE OF RECALL NOTICE	GROSS WEIGHT	NET WEIGHT	
B.O.- ASHOK VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
NRIPENDRA NATH SEN	XXXXXXXXXXXX09647	₹ 109,395.37	10-01-2026	30.500	29.600	
POONAM JAIN	XXXXXXXXXXXX1831	₹ 1,523,417.00	16-11-2025	372.000	246.200	
RAJESH .	XXXXXXXXXXXX08643	₹ 113,814.02	10-12-2025	40.100	37.500	
B.O.- BADARPUR DELHI DL						
SURAJ KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX08860	₹ 57,781.00	27-10-2025	9.320	9.120	
B.O.- BAWANA DEL DL						
BACHU SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX5840	₹ 125,867.70	12-02-2026	29.800	28.600	
B.O.- DARYAGANJ, DELHI [DL]						
MOHAMMAD AMIN	XXXXXXXXXXXX0201	₹ 17,306.00	12-02-2026	22.950	20.450	
NAVNEET .	XXXXXXXXXXXX9982	₹ 977,186.08	23-01-2026	180.520	169.500	
B.O.- DLF GURGAON [HR]						
YUVRAJA SIDDHARTHA SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX6242	₹ 306,055.00	09-02-2026	43.000	39.800	
B.O.- FARIDABAD [HR]						
GEETA BHATHIA	XXXXXXXXXXXX7244	₹ 875,333.22	12-02-2026	148.600	145.100	
HARJEET KAUR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4629	₹ 1,475,513.80	12-02-2026	355.500	342.400	
KARAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX4997	₹ 823,495.50	23-01-2026	119.500	107.300	
KULDEEP	XXXXXXXXXXXX9870	₹ 46,704.00	19-12-2025	10.200	9.300	
NARESH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6925	₹ 156,403.00	09-02-2026	29.100	27.000	
B.O.- GEETA COLONY, NEW DELHI [DL]						
JYAUUR RAHAMAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX8375	₹ 59,805.37	27-10-2025	21.800	20.730	
B.O.- GHAZIABAD [UP]						
BHARTI NAGAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX4358	₹ 509,719.11	23-01-2026	79.400	77.000	
PREETI .	XXXXXXXXXXXX9891	₹ 480,452.00	09-02-2026	65.200	61.700	
SUMIT NAGAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX8773	₹ 61,695.00	09-02-2026	14.800	13.900	
TABASSUM KHATOON	XXXXXXXXXXXX5089	₹ 812,905.00	23-01-2026	134.900	126.400	
B.O.- GREATER NOIDA [UP]						
AASHISH BHATI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1244	₹ 49,200.00	10-01-2026	10.000	9.500	
AMAN SHRIVASTAVA	XXXXXXXXXXXX2919	₹ 291,442.00	10-12-2025	59.400	57.600	
DEEPAK	XXXXXXXXXXXX1145	₹ 169,124.00	27-10-2025	29.800	27.600	
DEV DUTT SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX6625	₹ 829,112.36	16-11-2025	173.700	160.800	
GYANVEER SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX9028	₹ 726,403.00	19-12-2025	135.400	119.300	
JIYA SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX8598	₹ 2,315,244.90	16-11-2025	412.000	357.000	
MANIKA KANSAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX5328	₹ 138,246.29	16-06-2025	26.200	24.900	
B.O.- GREATER NOIDA W NOI UP						
RAJANY NAILWAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX4778	₹ 39,763.00	27-01-2026	6.730	6.380	
B.O.- INDIAPURAM, GHAZIABAD [UP]						
AVINASH .	XXXXXXXXXXXX7652	₹ 66,892.00	09-02-2026	12.000	11.000	
NAVESH KHOBBA	XXXXXXXXXXXX3359	₹ 460,376.00	09-02-2026	71.900	61.700	
B.O.- JYOTI NAGAR DEL DL						
JAIVINDER SINGH RANA	XXXXXXXXXXXX0518	₹ 1,543,556.38	23-01-2026	303.100	296.100	
MOHD FURKAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX4895	₹ 167,748.53	10-12-2025	36.200	35.300	
MOHD RIZWI KHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX2309	₹ 463,907.00	19-12-2025	111.920	106.920	
B.O.- KALKAJI, NEW DELHI [DL]						
MOHIT MAHENDRU	XXXXXXXXXXXX0536	₹ 168,506.25	10-01-2026	40.700	38.700	
B.O.- KAPASHERA OD DL						
DILIP TIWARI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1661	₹ 362,504.85	12-02-2026	63.130	59.800	
B.O.- KISHANGANJ OD DL						
ALBEL SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX6771	₹ 1,345,033.75	09-02-2026	221.870	214.870	
B.O.- LAJPAT NAGAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
MD IRSAAD IDRISSE	XXXXXXXXXXXX3018	₹ 92,175.22	09-02-2026	17.000	16.350	
RAKESH BHADANA	XXXXXXXXXXXX0936	₹ 83,369.00	09-02-2026	63.800	61.000	
RAKESH BHADANA	XXXXXXXXXXXX0904	₹ 135,480.00	09-02-2026	20.300	19.500	
SANTOSH KUMAR GUPTA	XXXXXXXXXXXX4809	₹ 96,424.00	09-02-2026	16.800	16.300	
B.O.- MALVIYA NAGAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
REKHA SAKSAINA	XXXXXXXXXXXX1059	₹ 516,813.00	10-12-2025	88.200	84.400	
SHUBHANKAR DUTTA	XXXXXXXXXXXX4251	₹ 355,013.00	27-10-2025	59.400	57.500	
B.O.- MANESAR [HR]						
AMIT KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX0968	₹ 116,032.30	09-02-2026	31.300	28.500	
ASHOK KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX1049	₹ 50,870.00	12-12-2025	18.500	17.200	
GAURAV CHAUHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX8073	₹ 512,054.00	10-12-2025	101.100	95.600	
MANISHA KUMARI	XXXXXXXXXXXX1483	₹ 83,369.00	09-02-2026	13.100	12.000	
NAVEEN KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX374	₹ 190,753.05	27-01-2026	35.900	35.000	
RACHNA RAWAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX0004	₹ 809,415.00	19-12-2025	138.300	117.100	
SHARMILA	XXXXXXXXXXXX6991	₹ 1,002,541.00	27-01-2026	193.200	146.200	
SHIV KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX8307	₹ 163,372.00	27-10-2025	39.400	28.300	
B.O.- MAYUR VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
SANJAY SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX6858	₹ 52,201.00	27-10-2025	10.000	9.600	
VIPNEET SINGH CHOUDHARY	XXXXXXXXXXXX3124	₹ 82,397.37	16-11-2025	18.500	17.100	
B.O.- MEERA BAGH, NEW DELHI [DL]						
AKHLESH SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX8972	₹ 619,951.86	10-12-2025	125.900	118.500	
PAWAN SAHANI	XXXXXXXXXXXX2065	₹ 129,924.95	10-01-2026	18.800	18.200	
B.O.- NANGLOI DEL DL						
JAI PRAKASH	XXXXXXXXXXXX08007	₹ 166,792.00	09-02-2026	22.200	20.850	
NISHA	XXXXXXXXXXXX6522	₹ 1,121,899.00	09-02-2026	168.900	142.400	
B.O.- NARELA, NEW DELHI [DL]						
GYATRI	XXXXXXXXXXXX09157	₹ 858,811.03	12-02-2026	168.900	163.800	
B.O.- NEW FRIENDS COLONY, NEW DELHI [DL]						
RIFAQAT ALI	XXXXXXXXXXXX5833	₹ 182,988.00	10-12-2025	35.300	32.700	
B.O.- NEW RAILWAY ROAD, GURGAON [HR]						
ANKIT	XXXXXXXXXXXX06985	₹ 504,230.46	10-01-2026	77.600	64.800	
KAPIL SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX2725	₹ 86,815.00	06-11-2025	16.300	15.200	
B.O.- NOIDA [UP]						
DEEPAK BHATI	XXXXXXXXXXXX5541	₹ 112,219.00	09-02-2026	109.680	103.430	
SANTOSH CHANDRA MISHRA	XXXXXXXXXXXX2673	₹ 204,958.00	23-01-2026	42.080	37.380	
VISHNU SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX9548	₹ 3,607,550.24	09-02-2026	497.720	471.820	
B.O.- NOIDA EXTENSION GNO UP						
BHIM NAGAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6525	₹ 206,416.00	09-02-2026	25.300	24.400	
BHIM NAGAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX3443	₹ 184,934.89	09-02-2026	29.800	28.500	
BHIM NAGAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX0416	₹ 87,149.00	09-02-2026	14.900	14.200	
DARSHAN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6939	₹ 268,860.54	10-01-2026	47.300	45.800	

B.O.- PALAM VIHAR, GURGAON [HR]						
MAHBOOB KHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX1934	₹ 264,871.08	09-02-2026	46.500	45.600	
SEEMA YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX1548	₹ 1,800,426.00	12-02-2026	240.400	226.200	
SHAMSHER KHAN	XXXXXXXXXXXX0747	₹ 1,327,105.48	27-10-2025	217.200	209.700	
VIBHA SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX9923	₹ 89,056.00	12-02-2026	17.200	16.700	
B.O.- PALWAL [HR]						
VIKAS KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX5294	₹ 284,645.26	10-01-2026	43.900	39.400	
B.O.- PARADISE MALL S GUR HR						
ANNURADHA .						

Khalistanis claim killing of Indian-origin women in London

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ottawa

A social media account promoting Sikh extremist views has claimed responsibility for stabbing to death an Indian-origin woman in Canada's Ontario province, according to a media report.

Nancy Grewal, 45, of Windsor, was stabbed to death just before 9.30 pm on March 3 in the area of Todd Lane in LaSalle town in Essex County, the LaSalle Police Service said on Wednesday. On social media, an account says in Punjabi that Nancy Grewal of Windsor



was killed over her criticism of the Khalistani movement, CBC News said late on Thursday night.

Asserting that CBC has not independently verified the account or the information, the CBC report quoted a caption shown over a picture of Grewal that said, "This

woman was saying bad things about religion and Khalistan. And she got the result of that."

"We don't have anything against any community or religion, and if anyone say something against our community and Khalistan like this, they will meet the same fate," the CBC report added, quoting the same caption.

In a statement, LaSalle police said investigators are considering all information but cannot comment further to protect the investigation.

However, the police did say they believe the stabbing targeted Grewal and was

not random, the CBC said.

Born in India, Grewal had a prominent social media presence in the local and international Punjabi communities. She often posted on social media platforms with her thoughts on South Asian news and politics, the CBC said, adding, she was known particularly for her anti-Khalistani views.

In Chandigarh on Thursday, Grewal's mother Shinderpal Kaur claimed her daughter used to receive threats to her life and accused some hardliners in Windsor of having enmity with the deceased.

Trump demands Iran's unconditional surrender



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Dubai

US President Donald Trump appeared to rule out negotiations with Iran to end the conflict in the Middle East.

He said in a social media post Friday that there will be no deal absent "unconditional surrender" from

Tehran. "After that, and the selection of a GREAT & ACCEPTABLE Leader(s), we, and many of our wonderful and very brave allies and partners, will work tirelessly to bring Iran back from the brink of destruction, making it economically bigger, better, and stronger than ever before," Trump said.

Afghan mortar shell kills Pakistani civilian

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Peshawar

A person was killed and seven others injured after Afghan forces allegedly carried out mortar shelling on civilian areas near the Afghanistan border in northwestern Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over the past 24 hours, security officials said on Friday. According to officials, Meena Khan Wazir, a local tribesman, was killed when

figure from Mohmand district, urged both the Pakistani and Afghan Governments to avoid targeting civilian populations despite the ongoing tensions. He emphasised that civilians should not bear the consequences of the strained relations and the ongoing conflict along the border. Officials on Thursday said security forces carried out coordinated ground and aerial strikes against militant



mortar shells allegedly fired from the Afghan side struck his house in the border town of Angoor Adda in South Waziristan district. In a separate incident, seven people, including two women and two children, were injured when a mortar shell hit two houses shortly before Iftar on Thursday in Mohmand district. Several houses were also damaged in the attack. Meanwhile, Mohibullah Khan, a social

positions along the border with Afghanistan in southwest Pakistan, targeting dozens of posts used by the Afghan Taliban and Fitna al-Khawarij militants. Fitna al-Khawarij is a term that the state uses for the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). According to security officials, the Pakistan Army conducted effective ground and air operations during the night between Wednesday and Thursday.

Indonesia to ban social media for children U-16

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Jakarta

Indonesia will ban social media for children under 16, Communication and Digital Affairs Minister Meutya Hafid said on Friday.

Hafid in a statement to media said that she just signed a Government regulation that will mean children under the age of 16 can no longer have accounts on high-risk digital platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, Bigo Live and Roblox. The implementation will start gradually from March 28, until all platforms fulfill their compliance obligations. "The basis is clear. Our children face increasingly real threats.

From exposure to pornography, cyberbullying, online fraud, and most importantly addiction. The Government is here so that parents no longer have to fight alone against the giant of algorithms," Hafid said.

She added that the Government is taking this step as the best effort in the midst of a digital emergency to reclaim sovereignty over children's futures. "We realize that the implementation of this regulation may cause some discomfort at first. Children may complain and parents may be confused about how to respond to their children's complaints," Hafid said.

Earlier this week, Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Digital



Affairs conducted a surprise inspection of Meta Platforms' Jakarta office over concerns about the handling of harmful content on its platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

The ministry in a statement said that through this inspection, the Minister of Communication and Information Technology issued a stern warning regarding Meta's low level of compliance with national regulations.

The Associated Press has sent email requests for comment to TikTok and Meta, but has not yet received a response.

Indonesia will be the first country in Southeast Asia to restrict the access of children to social media.

The restriction of social media access for teens began in Australia in December 2025. Social media companies have revoked access to about 4.7 million accounts identified as belonging to children in Australia.

Pakistani Shiites rally to denounce US-Israeli strikes on Iran as US Embassy issues security alert

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Islamabad

Hundreds of minority Shiites rallied on Friday in Pakistan's capital and elsewhere in the country to denounce the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes, as the US Embassy in Islamabad issued a security alert warning Americans of possible violence.

Amid heavy police presence, about 300 protesters staged a sit-in in Islamabad, holding posters of Khamenei and chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel," Islamabad



police had parked shipping containers on roads leading to the US Embassy in Islamabad to prevent any potential escalation.

Pakistani authorities said the protesters had agreed not to march toward the embassy in Islamabad,

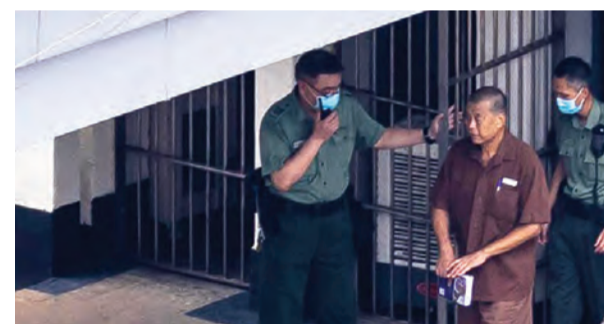
located about 3 kilometres from the sit-in. The protesters planned to end their sit-in later Friday. Khamenei, who ruled Iran since 1989, has long been a central religious and political figure for Shiites worldwide, including in Pakistan. His death in a

joint US-Israeli operation at the start of the war last week sparked outrage among many Shiites.

Security was also beefed up in the port city of Karachi, where hundreds of Shiites stormed the US Consulate on Sunday, smashing windows and attempting to set the building on fire. Police used batons, tear gas, and live fire to disperse the crowd.

The violence left 10 protesters dead in Karachi, and at least 13 were killed in northern cities, including Skardu and Gilgit. In Karachi, Shiite protesters gathered on Friday some 4 kilometres from the consulate.

Lai will not appeal national security conviction



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Hong Kong

Hong Kong pro-democracy publisher Jimmy Lai will not appeal the national security conviction for which he was sentenced to 20 years in prison last month, his legal team said Friday. Lai, an outspoken critic of China's ruling Communist Party who founded the now-defunct Apple Daily, was found guilty in December of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and conspiring with others to publish seditious articles. His Hong Kong legal team told The Associated Press via a text message about the decision,

which ends a yearslong legal battle. The lawyers would not comment on the reason for not appealing. "We can confirm we have clear and definitive instructions not to lodge an appeal against conviction or sentence," they said. Observers say his conviction reflected the decline of press and other freedoms that has changed Hong Kong, a former British colony that returned to China's control in 1997. The Government insists the case has nothing to do with a free press, saying the defendants used news reporting as a pretext for years to commit acts that harmed China and Hong Kong.

China congratulates Nepal for smooth polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Beijing

China on Friday congratulated Nepal for holding the polls smoothly while warily watching the trends of the results, which pointed to the rout of pro-Beijing CPN-UML headed by former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

Results trends show Oli, a four-time Prime Minister, trailing far behind the Rastriya Swatantra Party's rapper-turned-politician Balen Shah in his own parliament seat.



Supporters of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) raise slogans outside the Election Commission ahead of the announcement of results in the Nepal general elections in Kathmandu (PTI)

Mexico, US to start free trade ties review talks on March 16

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Mexico City

Mexico and the US said they will start talks on March 16 ahead of a review of the free trade agreement that has shaped both economies and kept some of their commerce steady despite US President Donald Trump's consistent changing tariff policy.

The bilateral trade talks are ahead of a scheduled review later this year of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, the latest version of free trade agreements among the US, Mexico and Canada, dating back to the early 1990s that have intertwined the economies of the three North American countries. The USMCA has allowed Mexico to avoid much of Trump's protectionist measures because many Mexican goods are covered by the free trade agreement.

However, a number of products are not covered, including medium- and heavy-duty trucks, which face a 25 per cent tariff. A 50 per cent tariff on steel, aluminium and copper remains in effect, as does a



17 per cent tariff on Mexican tomatoes. Mexico's Economy Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said

on X that the first round of upcoming bilateral talks was arranged with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, and that they would address issues related to rules of origin, increasing production, supply chain security and integrating economies to boost competitiveness against other regions.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS)
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3
No. CE/STBR/Estt/168/2024-24/6

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer P.W.D. (Roads), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3, on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites online bids from the approved and eligible registered Contractors of APWRD for **2 (two) nos bridge packages under SOPD-G for the year 2025-26 in New Guwahati LAC of Assam amounting to Rs 189.58 Lakhs** including GST etc.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in>. Addendum/ amendment if any shall appear at the website and also at the office of the undersigned (State Bridge Design Branch) during office hours.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads),
DIPR/C/PIO/939/7-Mar-26 Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati 03

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE No. TSD-GZB-01-2025-26 Dated 06.03.2026

On behalf of the President of India, Chief Engineer/TSP, Northern Railway, Headquarters office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001 invites the following tender through E-Procurement system:

SN	Tender No.	Brief Description	Cost of tender document	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Estimated Tender value (In Rs.)	Date & Time of opening of tender	Period of completion
1.	TSD-01-2025-26	Random testing of track fittings at Northern Railway, Track Supply Depot, Ghaziabad.	NIL	20,000/-	998114.80	01.04.2026 at 15.00	12 months

Note:- The complete information of above E-Procurement tender is available on website "www.ireps.gov.in" 766/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

BSES
BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi
TENDER NOTICE
Date: 07.03.2026

Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invite for the supply of following materials from all bidders:-

NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/26-27/FK/CR/KB/1342	HIRING OF BHARAT BILL PAYMENT OPERATING UNITS (BBPOUS) FOR COLLECTION OF ELECTRICITY BILL PAYMENTS FOR BSES RAJDHANI POWER LIMITED	4.40 Crores	8.80 Lakhs	27.03.2026 15:00 HRS	27.03.2026 15:30 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1180/-
For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submitting of tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com Head (Contracts & Materials)
Regd. Off.: BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 | Corporate Identification No.: U40109DL2001PLC111527
Telephone No.: +91 11 4910 7235 | Website: www.bsesdelhi.com

LOST & FOUND

1. Sumita Monga D/o Amarnath Manocha R/o B-62/B Ground Floor, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 have lost my following original documents which is kept in one folder:

- Allotment Letter from L&DO Substitution Letter No. L&DO/ P.S. III/1699, dated 07.08.1986 Property No: B-62/B Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019
- Conveyance Deed Document No. 7461, in Additional Book No. 1, Volume No. 5006, on pages 176 to 177, on 16.05.2005 in the office of the Sub-Registrar, New Delhi. Property No: B-62/B Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019
- GIFT DEED Registration No. 8,432 in Book No. 1 Vol No. 11,198 on page 91 to 97 on this date 06/06/2011. Property No: B-62/B Basement, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019
- GIFT DEED Registration No. 1,270 in Book No. 1 Vol No. 14,534 on page 118 to 124 on this date 11/04/2017. Property No: B-62/B Ground Floor, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019
- SALE DEED Registration No. 4,349 in Book No. 1 Vol No. 408 on page 22 to 35 on this date 06/09/2017. Property No: HS-20, Kailash Colony, New Delhi-110048 (Shop No. 1 in ground floor, near sidewalk)

To avoid any misuse, an FIR has already been lodged on 08-02-2025 with the Kalkaji Police Station, New Delhi in respect of above-mentioned documents. Please return the same to me if anyone has found or in possession of the same. Any misuse would attract penal consequences. Contact: 9654342225

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OPEN E TENDER

The Director/Admin, Northern Railway Central Hospital, New Delhi-110055, for and on behalf of the President of India invites sealed open electronic-quotation for under noted work:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Approximate cost of work	Earnest money to be deposited	Completion period	Date of opening
1	AMC for Operation and Maintenance of 03 Nos. Commercial PO Plants of 1000 LPH Capacity at NRCH for one year in the section of SSE/W/NRCH under ADEN/NRCH.	Rs. 499850/-	Rs. 10000/-	12 Months	17.03.2026

The e-quotation is to be submit through railway website www.ireps.gov.in. The quotation can be submit on website up to 15:00 hrs. on 17.03.2026 and shall be opened there after.
No: 128-W-269-Quotation-08-NRCH-25-26 Date:-05.03.2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 759/26

GOVT. OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS),
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3
No. CE/STBR/II/30/2025-26/4

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3, invites Bid on behalf of the Governor of Assam from eligible contractors registered with Assam PWD (Roads) or registered in Central Govt./any State Government/ Semi Govt. Organization / Central or State Public Sector Undertakings for "Construction of ROB at LC Gate No. RM-7 (RLY. KM-15/5-6) at Goreswar on Baihata Chariali-Goreswar Road in the District of Tamulpur, Assam under Construction of ROB on 50:50 Cost Sharing Basis" for an amount of **Rs.9240.26 Lakh (Rupees ninety two crore forty lakh twenty six thousand) only (Approx.)**.

The project is not yet sanctioned by the competent authority. In the event of non-sanction of the project, the bids may be cancelled and no claim what so ever on this account shall be entertained from the bidders.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in>. Amendment/Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWD, Assam website <http://assamtenders.gov.in>.

Note: NIT value is inclusive of all taxes.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads)
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.
DIPR/CF/PIO/4368/7-Mar-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD: H&E: ASSAM:
CHANDMARI: GUWAHATI-3.
No. CE/TB-IV(H&E)/24/2026/9

PRESS NOTICE (RE-TENDER)

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Health & Education), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, again invites fresh Bids online e-tenders in two bid system (Eligibility and Financial) from eligible firms / contractors of reputed having experience in similar nature of work, for the following works.

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in. The bidders must be enrolled with e-tendering web-portal www.assamtenders.gov.in. All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

Sl. No	Name of work	Bid Value (Rs in Lakhs)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1.	Recovery and Reconstruction of 32 no. of fully damaged Schools approved under PDNA 2022 of Barpeta District	Rs.480.000	3+5 (Eight) months	2% of Bid value for General, 1% of Bid Value for Reserve category	Rs. 9600.00

The Bid price may vary at the time of detail tendering for which no claim will be admissible.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Health & Education),
PW(H&E) Deptt., Chandmari, Guwahati-3
DIPR/C/PIO/941/7-Mar-26

भारतीय खाद्य निगम
Food Corporation of India

Under the OMSS (D) 2025-26 scheme, the sale of broken rice is currently underway in FCI Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh regions. Previously, only bidders registered in the respective regions were allowed to participate. It has now been decided that bidders from any region can take part in these auctions. Accordingly, bidders registered in the Delhi region are also eligible to participate and purchase broken rice through auctions conducted by FCI Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh regions.

Sd/- General Manager(R)
Regional Office: 2nd Floor, Core-IV, Scope Minar, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092
Phone: +91-11-22101053 E-mail: agmcomdml.fci@nic.in



PROSPECT

BAI terms Karnataka Budget transformative for beverages sector



Brewers Association of India (BAI) on Friday welcomed the Karnataka State Budget 2026-27, presented as a watershed moment for excise policy reforms in India. The Budget announced seminal structural reforms to alcohol taxation and regulation. BAI said that the most consequential announcement for the alcohol industry is the explicit Alcohol-in-Beverage (AIB) based excise duty structure from April 2026, which applies taxation based on the actual amount of alcohol in the product.

The Budget states that AIB-based taxation targets the alcohol content which is the primary source of negative externalities, which is a fundamental change in State philosophy to move away from revenue maximisation obsession to a robust optimisation of revenue maximisation and public health outcomes. The principle of taxing alcohol in the beverage and not the water is the WHO recommended gold standard for alcohol taxation and is widely followed in most progressive and developed countries in the world.

"The Alcohol-in-Beverage based taxation announced in Karnataka budget is a historic milestone and a beacon for excise policy reforms across India. Linking of taxation with the quantity of alcohol in the product is based on the premise that product to be taxed is alcohol and not water.

It is widely followed all over the World now and is encouraged by health bodies such as the WHO. By adopting the need to optimise revenue and public health goals of moderation, the Government has reinforced the State's image as a progressive reformist leader in country," said Vinod Giri, Director General, Brewers Association of India.

The Budget also recognises the social role played by alcohol in the hospitality sector and seeks to allow economic opportunities related to brewery and distillery tourism, something that countries such as Scotland, France, and European nations do so well for spirits, wines and beer.

The Budget also accepts alcohol sector as the integral part of industrial eco system and has several steps to improve Ease of Doing Business such as full deregulation of Government-administered price fixation and simplification of taxation framework.

Welcoming the reform-oriented announcements for the Alcobev sector in the Karnataka Budget for FY26/27, Anant S Iyer, Director General, Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said rationalisation in the excise slabs is a positive step which is going to be beneficial for certain segments of the industry.

The State Government has reduced the number of slabs while giving the freedom to increase basic price within the slab. However the free pricing mechanism has always been existing till two years ago when Karnataka excise introduced the comparison of prices with neighbouring states at the time of price fixation; this is now possibly being done away with, thankfully.

Iyer added that if the duty slab rationalisation is accompanied by increase in duty in slabs 1 to 4 which constitutes 85 per cent to 90 per cent approx of Spirits sales in Karnataka (in the absence of country liquor) and is the primary driver for the excise revenue collection, then such an increase will lead to a further drop in sales in these slabs and adversely impact revenue in the medium term. As it is on account of AED increase last year, these slabs which cater to the masses has degrown by 6 per cent YTD, he added.

Amitabh Bachchan buys 2.67-acre land parcel in Ayodhya for ₹35 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Realty firm House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL) has sold 2.67 acre land in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, to Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan for ₹35 crore. In a statement, HoABL said the transaction was executed on Friday by Rajesh Yadav, Managing Director of AB Corp Ltd.

The land parcel is located near HoABL's 75-acre luxury land development, 'The Sarayu'. In January 2024, Bachchan had bought land parcels in the HoABL's project 'The Sarayu'.

This is Bachchan's third investment in Ayodhya through HoABL and fourth overall. Bachchan had also invested in HoABL's 'Sol de Alibaug' project through the acquisition of a 10,000 square feet plot. Abhinandan Lodha, Chairman of HoABL, said: "Mr Bachchan's investment reflects a shared belief in land as an inter-generational asset that preserves value over the long term. Faith in Ayodhya is a legacy shared by generations."

Supported by sustained infrastructure development and public investment, he said, Ayodhya is emerging as a compelling destination for long-term land ownership and value creation. Founded in 2020, HoABL is one of the largest branded land developers in India, focusing on transforming land ownership through transparency, technology, and trust.

The company has sold over 13 million sq ft of developed land within five years and currently has around 34 million sq ft under active development. HoABL's has presence in Alibaug, Anjarle,



Ayodhya, Vrindavan, Dapoli, Goa, Khopoli, Nagpur, and Neral.

The company has upcoming developments planned in Amritsar, Shimla, and Varanasi. HoABL plans to expand to 48 cities across India, tapping into the growing demand for plotted developments in infrastructure-led destinations and tourist markets.

The company has also recently entered vertical real estate development, with three projects in Mumbai totalling 3.1 million sq ft.

open to the public until March 13. According to Ranjana Chopra, Secretary of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, artworks worth nearly ₹3 million have already been sold within the first four days of the exhibition.

Fifty-year-old Putli Ganju from Hazaribagh in Jharkhand is known for her traditional Sohrai art. Her paintings have been exhibited abroad, and she is gradually gaining recognition among art lovers in Europe.

Similarly, 32-year-old Santoshi Shyam from Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh is a Gond art artist. Earlier, Santoshi used natural colors and painted entirely by hand, but she has now begun using acrylic paints and brushes to present Gond art in a modern style. One of her paintings is priced at around

₹120,000, and her work is in demand in countries such as Australia and France.

The most expensive painting at the exhibition is priced at ₹1.5 million. It has been created by Ravi Kumar Tekam, an artist from

Tribal art goes global: ₹1.5 million painting at Delhi's Tribes Art Fest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Tribal art, which was once confined to villages and forests, is now reaching major art galleries in global cities. Paintings created by tribal artists are now finding admirers in cities such as London and Paris. A recent example of this growing recognition can be seen at the Tribes Art Fest 2026 being held in the national Capital.

The exhibition, which began on March 3 at Travancore Palace in the Capital, has already recorded the sale of artworks worth nearly ₹3 million. Several paintings displayed at the event are also receiving demand from countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland. The exhibition will remain

open to the public until March 13. According to Ranjana Chopra, Secretary of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, artworks worth nearly ₹3 million have already been sold within the first four days of the exhibition.

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The most expensive painting at the exhibition is priced at ₹1.5 million. It has been created by Ravi Kumar Tekam, an artist from

Madhya Pradesh. The Gond art painting, titled Triyaphool, took him nearly two and a half to three months to complete.

Forty-year-old Ravi has been working in Gond art for the past 30 years. He shared that one of his earlier paintings was purchased by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department for ₹2.5 million. That artwork depicted a dramatic scene of a lion and a wild boar fighting in the forest. A total of 73 artists are participating in the event, including more than 45 women. The Government aims to provide a larger platform to these artists and connect their work with international markets.

The exhibition at Travancore Palace in Delhi features artists from 16 States and showcases more than 30 forms of tribal art. These include traditional styles such as Warli, Gond, Bhil, Dhokra, Sohrai, Koya, Kurumba, Saura, Bodo, Oraon, Mandana, and Godna, along with bamboo craft from Northeast India.

The Government believes that events like these are helping tribal art gain national and international recognition. They are also opening new opportunities, larger markets, and sustainable livelihoods for tribal artists.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, such initiatives are being promoted to give India's traditional art forms a global platform.

Art enthusiasts in Delhi can visit the exhibition until March 13 and view more than 1,000 artworks by 73 artists at one venue.



WOMEN ARTISTS GAINING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Laser Tech earns great place to work tag for 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Laser Technologies Private Limited, a leader in advanced laser cutting, metal marking and welding, sheet metal forming, and automation solutions for leading enterprises and MSMEs, has been certified by "Great Place To Work" for 2026.

The honour, derived entirely from employee feedback, underscores high trust in leadership, pride in work, and a robust sense of belonging. An impressive 93 per cent of staff deemed it a great workplace — well above the Top 100 benchmark in India — affirming the firm's people-first, high-performance ethos.

"Receiving this recognition is profoundly meaningful as it stems directly from our employees' voices," said Dr Rakesh Agarwal, Managing Director. "At Laser Technologies, trust, transparency, and respect underpin sustainable growth. This certification validates our enduring pledge to an environment where people feel secure, valued, and motivated."

Sarah Lewis-Kulin, Vice President of



Global Recognition at Great Place to Work, noted: "This certification demands unwavering commitment to employee experience. Earned solely through real-time staff input on culture, it marks Laser Technologies as a top employer worldwide." The global authority on workplace culture, Great Place to Work draws on over three decades of research to honour firms delivering superior employee experiences, based purely on staff reports.

Laser Technologies prioritises trust-driven leadership, meaningful roles, innovation, and an inclusive, safe environment, bolstered by ongoing feedback.

Power sector employees to go on strike on March 10 against new Electricity Bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Power sector engineers' body AIPEF on Friday said that 27 lakh workers associated with it will boycott work on March 10 to protest against a proposed legislation aimed at changing the country's electricity distribution framework.

There is strong resentment among power employees and engineers over the Government's plan to table the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2025 in Parliament. All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) said in a statement.

The draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2025 has provisions for allowing multiple electricity distributors to operate in the same area using shared infrastructure. The bill also provides for cost-reflective tariffs while protecting subsidised consumers and eliminating cross-subsidy for industrial consumers within five years.

According to AIPEF, nearly 2.7 million power employees and engineers across the country will boycott work and come out on

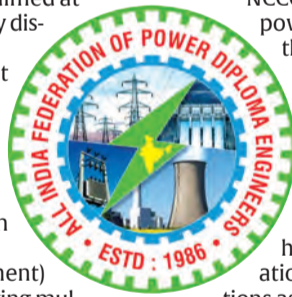
the streets on March 10. The decision was taken in an online meeting of the National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers (NCCOEEE), which was chaired by Shailendra Dubey, Chairman of the AIPEF.

NCCOEEE has also written to the power ministry, demanding that the "anti-farmer, anti-consumer and anti-employee Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2025 should not be introduced in Parliament", AIPEF said. Dubey said in the statement that the power ministry earlier invited comments from stakeholders on the Bill, and all federations, trade unions and organizations associated with the power sector across the country had opposed it.

He said that the comments of stakeholders have neither been made public nor the minutes of the consultations have been released. Instead, on January 30, the power ministry constituted a working group and included All India Discoms Association, an organisation that openly supported the privatisation of the power sector, he said.

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GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR
SHORT TERM E-TENDER NOTICE

Short Term E-Tenders are invited for the purchase of Meteorological Observatory Components, Paddy/Rice Transplanter, Microplate Reader, Microwave Plasma Atomic Emission Spectrometer (MP-AES), High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC), Desktop Computer & Printer, Smart LED TV Panel and RFID and Library Software be submitted online latest by 13/03/2026 upto 4:00 p.m. Detailed information can be obtained from website www.eproc.punjab.gov.in. Any corrigendum/Addendum related to these e tender will be uploaded, if required, on Punjab Govt. website: eproc.punjab.gov.in.

Director of Research
2426/12/2025-26/9134 Dated CHD :- 06/03/2026

JITF INFRALOGISTICS LIMITED
CIN NO. : L60231CT2008PLC016434

Registered Office: A-11 (7), Udaya Society, Sector-3, Tatibandh, Dharisiwa, Raipur- 492099, Chhattisgarh, India,
Website: www.jindalinfralogistics.com, E-mail: contactus@jindalinfralogistics.com

NOTICE OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Extra Ordinary General Meeting ("EGM") of the Company will be held on Monday, 30th March 2026 at 12.00 Noon at A-1, UPSIDC Industrial Area, Nandgaon Road, Kosi Kalan, District Mathura-281403, (U.P.) to transact the business as set out in the Notice of Extra Ordinary General Meeting. The Notice of EGM has been sent to the members who hold shares as on record date, i.e., 27th February 2026, by email, whose email is registered with the Company/Depository(s) and the physical copy to all the other members. The said documents can also be viewed on the company's website at www.jindalinfralogistics.com.

Further, pursuant to the provisions of section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with rule 20 of Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 and regulation 44 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the Company is providing remote e-voting facility to its members to cast their vote electronically on the resolutions to be transacted at EGM of the Company.

The member please note the following:

- The remote e-voting shall commence at 9.00 a.m. on Friday, 27th March 2026 and shall end at 5.00 p.m. on Sunday, 29th March 2026.
- The remote e-voting shall not be available beyond 5.00 p.m. on Sunday, 29th March 2026.
- The cut-off date for determining the eligibility of members for remote e-voting and voting through poll at EGM is 23rd March 2026.
- Any person who becomes member of the Company after dispatch of notice of the meeting and holding shares as on cut-off date i.e. 23rd March 2026, may obtain the user id and password by contacting RCMC Shares Registry (Pvt.) Ltd., R & T Agent of the Company at B-25/1, Okhla Industrial Area Phase II, New Delhi - 110020, phone- 011-26387320-21, Fax- 011-26387322, Email- evoting.services@rcmcdelhi.com.
- The members who cast their vote through remote e-voting may also attend the EGM but shall not be allowed to cast their vote at EGM.
- The facility of voting through poll shall be available at the EGM to those members who have not casted their vote through remote e-voting.
- Members may go through the e-voting instructions provided in the EGM Notice or visit <https://evoting.nsdl.com> and in case of any queries, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for members and e-voting User Manual for members available at the download section of <https://evoting.nsdl.com>

For JITF Infralogistics Limited
Sd/-
Alok Kumar
Company Secretary
ACS-19819
Place: New Delhi
Date: 05.03.2026

Indian Army organises ex-servicemen rally at Senapati in Manipur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Manipur

As part of its continued commitment towards the welfare and well-being of veterans, the Spear Corps of Indian Army organised an Ex-Servicemen (ESM) Rally 2026 at Karong Ground, Senapati, Manipur, on 06 March 2026.

The rally brought together veterans of the Indian Army and Assam Rifles, serving as a comprehensive outreach platform for Ex-Servicemen,

Veer Naris and their families from across the region.

The event was graced by Lieutenant General Abhijit S Pendharkar, AVSM, YSM, General Officer Commanding Spear Corps, as the Chief Guest. Major General Shubhankar Basu, SM, VSM, General Officer Commanding Red Shield Division, also attended the event.

Their presence reaffirmed the Army's enduring bond with its former soldiers and their dependents. A total of

850 attendees participated in the rally, including 325 Army Ex-Servicemen and 230 Assam Rifles Ex-Servicemen.

The gathering also included 153 widows and 142 dependents, among whom were 13 Veer Naris and 2 Veer Mata, reflecting the wide outreach and strong participation from the veteran community.

The rally, themed "Honouring the Past, Inspiring the Future," provided a single-window platform to address grievances, facilitate access to welfare and administrative services, and further strengthen the relationship between the Army and its veterans.

The structured programme included interac-



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Ex-Servicemen and 230 Assam Rifles Ex-Servicemen.

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (D)
VARUNALAYA PHASE-II: KAROL BAGH
NEW DELHI-110005

No. DJB/DD(D)/Consultant/2026-522 Dated: 06.03.2026

Subject: Engagement of retired Govt. employees as Consultant (Ministerial) on contract basis in Delhi Jal Board.

Applications are invited from eligible retired Govt. employees for engagement of Consultant (Ministerial) on contract basis in Delhi Jal Board Initially for a period of 06 (six) months or till the posts are filled up on regular basis or till further orders whichever is earlier. For more information, please visit our website www.delhijalboard.nic.in.

S. No.	Name of the post	No. of posts	Fixed monthly emoluments
1.	Consultant (Ministerial)	20	In accordance to GNCTD (Finance (Accounts) Department) O.M. dated 04.12.2015

Last date for submission of application is on or before 25.03.2026 up to 04.00 PM

ISSUED BY P.R.O. Water
Advt. No. J.S.V. 54/2025-26
Sd/-
(SUVARNA TUSHABA SHINDE OGALE)
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (D)

tion sessions with senior officers, awareness briefings on various welfare schemes, cultural performances by local Manipuri artists, community engagement activities and felicitation of distinguished veterans, Veer Naris and families in recognition of their invaluable contributions.

A wide range of facilities were made available at the venue, including Grievance Redressal Cells, a Medical Camp, SPARSH and ECHS assistance counters, Rajya and Zila Sainik Board desks, PCDA (Guwahati), ARO support, CSD services, and assistance from leading banks such as State Bank of

India, HDFC Bank and IDBI Bank. The convergence of multiple agencies ensured that attendees received prompt guidance and resolution of their concerns under one roof.

Ex-Servicemen, Veer Naris and their families participated enthusiastically and availed themselves of the services and facilities provided.

The successful conduct of the rally underscored the Indian Army's unwavering respect for its veterans and reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to honouring their service, sacrifice and lifelong contribution to the nation.

BRIEFLY

Saudi Pro League tries to maintain its schedule



The Saudi Pro League is trying to carry on with games even as soccer in other Middle East countries is on hold because of the Iran war. The league staged one match on Thursday – Damac beat Al-Riyadh 3-0 – but a second one was rescheduled for Saturday after Al-Qadiah's flight to play Al-Khlood was cancelled. On Friday, Al-Ahli faces Al-Ittihad in the Jeddah derby, one of the biggest games on the domestic calendar, with a crowd of nearly 60,000 expected. Saudi Arabian clubs were unable to play their Asian Champions League knockout matches earlier in the week because of security concerns in the region. At home, the Saudi Ministry of Defense reported a suspected Iranian drone attack on the US Embassy in Riyadh early on Tuesday. Still, the league said it is safe to keep playing, according to a letter it sent to clubs this week. The league will pause from March 14 to April 3 – which incorporates the next international break. Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus told domestic media he was preparing for Friday's game against Al-Najma as usual. "We in Riyadh are safe, stable and secure, and we are following political events cautiously and waiting for necessary instructions," the former Benfica coach said on Tuesday.

Lens survives Lyon to reach French Cup semifinals



Lens continued its impressive season by advancing to the semifinals of the French Cup with a penalty shootout victory over Lyon. Lens is second in Ligue 1 – just four points behind Paris Saint-Germain – and survived a fightback by Lyon, having led 2-0 at halftime at Groupama Stadium to draw 2-2 on Thursday. Lyon forced the game to penalties with an equalizer from Remi Humbert in the fourth minute of added time after Lens had gone down to 10 men following Arthur Masuaku's red card. Florian Thauvin scored the decisive penalty as Lens won the shootout 5-4 after Moussa Niakhate had seen an earlier effort saved. Lens coach Pierre Sage had led Lyon to the French Cup final two years ago and is within one match of repeating that feat. Thauvin fired Lens ahead after 23 minutes and Abdallah Sima doubled the lead in the first minute of first-half added time. But Masuaku's red in the 64th proved a turning point. Lyon scored through Roman Yaremchuk three minutes later to give the home team hope before its late equaliser.

AFC Women's Asian Cup: India to face Japan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Perth

A gritty performance in their previous group game would have certainly boosted their confidence but India's task would be cut out when they face a formidable Japan in their second match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup here on Saturday.

India conceded an injury time goal, just three minutes before the final hooter to suffer 1-2 defeat to Vietnam and lose a valuable point in their opening Group C match on Wednesday.

Vietnam featured in the 2023 FIFA World Cup, and a gutsy fight against them and an equalising goal through debutant Sanfida Nongrum

would instil confidence among Amelia Valverde's wards.

But world number eight and two-time champions Japan will be a totally different side, vastly superior than the Indians. Valverde's task could be more of maintaining compactness and working on defensive resilience, while looking to hit on the counter.

Winners of FIFA World Cup in 2011, Japan made 87 entries into Chinese Taipei's penalty area in their previous match, and the Indian defence, marshalled by captain Sweetie Devi, will be extremely busy on Saturday.

India would also look to limit the number of goals from Japan as goal-difference could play a role in deciding



the third-ranked team in the group. Vietnam and Chinese Taipei face each other in another match on Saturday.

The top two sides from each of the three groups,

along with the two best third-placed teams, will progress to the quarter-finals. The four quarter-final winners will qualify for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil.

IPC hails biggest Winter Paralympics ever, record female participation

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Cortina D'Ampezzo (Italy)

The International Paralympic Committee is celebrating the biggest ever Paralympic Winter Games in history and a record female participation at Milan Cortina.

The Games will officially kick off on Friday with an opening ceremony that is set to be boycotted by some nations because of the return of the Russian flag and national anthem to the global stage.

The IPC said on Thursday that a record number of 56 nations are bringing 616 athletes to compete across



79 medal events in six sports, surpassing the previous record of 564 athletes from 49 nations at Pyeongchang 2018.

Among the nations set to participate at Milan Cortina

is Iran despite the intensifying war with the United States and Israel. Para cross-country skier Aboulfazel Khatibi was announced as the nation's flagbearer.

He will not actually carry the flag on Friday as volunteers will be handed the task for all nations because not all flagbearers will be able to attend the ceremony in Verona for logistics and training issues.

The Milan Cortina Games mark the 50th anniversary of the Winter Paralympics. Less than 200 athletes from 18 countries competed in two sports in Ornskoldsvik in 1976.

Record female participation: A record number of female athletes will compete for the fourth straight Paralympic Winter Games, the IPC said.

Williams' comeback hits another snag as she falls in 1st round to Diane Parry in Indian Wells

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Indian Wells (US)

Venus Williams lost again in her return to the BNP Paribas Open, falling in the first round 6-3 6-7 (4) 6-1 to Diane Parry of France.

The 45-year-old Williams, who has dropped her last eight WTA singles matches, received a wild card into the singles and doubles draws for the tournament in the Southern California desert. It came 30 years after she made her Indian Wells debut in 1996 when she was 15.

After Williams rallied in the second set to tie it on Thursday, the 23-year-old Parry, ranked 111th in the world, took control and cruised in the third.

It was Williams' 10th career appearance in the tournament and first since 2024, when she also lost in the first round as a wild card. The seven-



time major winner was given a wild card last year, but didn't accept it. "Of course losing isn't fun, but it's great to play in front of a home crowd," the Southern California native said. "They were behind me the whole way, and that was really fun for that. "I have amazing fans that believe in

me and it's fun to play for them, or even in practice when they come out. It's very thrilling. Yeah, today was a tough one, but that's sport and that's life, and I'll take what I need from it."

Parry will face 15th-ranked American Madison Keys in the second round on Saturday.

Williams entered the BNP Paribas Open having lost her last seven matches, with the only win in her comeback to the tour coming in her return at Washington last year.

She competed in the Australian Open in January and lost in the first round in both singles and doubles. Williams was the oldest woman to compete in an Australian Open singles main draw, surpassing the mark set by Japan's Kimiko Date, who was 44 when she lost in the first round in 2015.



Chithambaram beats Jordan van Foreest; Gukesh draws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Prague (Czech Republic)

Indian Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram defeated Netherland's Jordan van Foreest but world champion D Gukesh's winless run continued as he played out a draw yet again, this time against Vincent Keymer of Germany in the eighth and penultimate round of the Prague International chess festival here.

Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abusattorov leapfrogged to the pole position following a victory over local favourite David Navara.

With 5.5 points in his kitty, Abusattorov enjoys a half point lead over van Foreest with just one round remaining. After winning the Tata Steel Masters earlier in February, this could well be the second super-event win for the young Uzbek.

Navara is the lone player on 4.5 points occupying the third spot while Aravindh elevated himself to joint fourth spot on four points with Keymer and Parham Maghsoudloo of Iran.

Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan, Hans Moke Niemann of the United States

and David Anton Guijarro of Spain are next in the standings on 3.5 points, a point clear of last placed Gukesh.

It was a lot of drama in the final stages of the day as Abusattorov and Chithambaram both won from positions that looked like headed for easy draws.

Abusattorov benefitted through a Bishop blunder by Navara from a rook and minor piece endgame and Chithambaram got lucky as van Foreest also failed to spot a simple tactic in the endgame.

Gukesh drew with Keymer out of a King pawn game. "It's the typical position, if I had checked it for five minutes I would have made a very easy draw but if I don't, there were so many options. It's kind of difficult for me to figure out what the right move was, and obviously I didn't find the right way," noted Keymer after the game.

As it happened Gukesh was able to complicate matters with a queen sacrifice that saw his pawn move to the seventh rank. However, breaking through black's defences did not prove to be easy as Keymer eventually got the half point.

Messi and Inter Miami feted by President Trump at White House

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

Lionel Messi bestowed President Donald Trump with a bejeweled pink soccer ball during a White House ceremony honouring Inter Miami for winning last year's MLS Cup.

Miami beat the Vancouver Whitecaps in December for the Major League Soccer title, and the Argentinian superstar was named the league's MVP for the second consecutive season.

"Leo, you came in and you won, and that's something very hard to do, very, very unusual and frankly, there's a lot more pressure put on you than anyone would know, because you sort of expected to win, but almost nobody wins," Trump said.

Messi, who entered the ceremony alongside Trump, joined Inter Miami in mid-2023 to great fanfare. He did not speak during the event, which turned political at times with Trump addressing the war with Iran, the situation in Venezuela, a possible future announcement regarding Cuba and even tariffs.

Addressing Messi – who famously avoids speaking out on politics – the president stuck mostly to sports.

"You could have gone anywhere in the world. You could have chosen any team in the world, and you chose to go to Miami. I don't blame you. The weather's extremely good. Do you go to Doral? You go to Doral and play golf?" Trump said, referencing



a golf course he owns.

"I just want to thank you for bringing us all on this ride, because you are hot and talented and a great person." Among the other Inter

Miami stars in attendance were Luis Suarez, Tadeo Allende and Rodrigo De Paul. MLS Commissioner Don Garber sat next to Andrew Giuliani, head of the White

House's World Cup task force. Also attending were retired baseball star Alex Rodriguez and members of Trump's cabinet.

Inter Miami was the first MLS team to be invited to the White House during Trump's two terms in office.

Messi, an eight-time Ballon d'Or winner, led Argentina to the World Cup title in 2022. The 38-year-old is expected to play again for Argentina this summer when the tournament is hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Soccer's global showcase has been clouded by recent events, including the war with Iran and turmoil in Mexico following the death of cartel leader Nemesio Oseguera in a military operation.

Brazilian soccer player suspended after sexist remarks about referee

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Sao Paulo

A Brazilian sports court said it suspended a defender of top-flight club Red Bull Bragantino for 12 matches because of sexist remarks he made about a female referee after a Sao Paulo state league game.

Defender Gustavo Marques was also fined in 30,000 Brazilian reais (\$5,700) on Thursday for his comments about referee Daiane Muniz after Bragantino lost 2-1 to Sao Paulo in a Feb. 21 quarterfinal of a state-level tournament.

The suspension is valid for all competitions organised by the Sao Paulo state



soccer federation but does not stop Marques from playing national-level competitions like the Brazilian league or the Brazilian Cup.

"It was our dream to reach the semifinal or even the final, but she killed our

game. I think the Sao Paulo state's soccer federation has to look at matches of this importance and not give it to a woman," Marques had said in a post-match interview to TNT Brazil.

Tottenham loses to Crystal Palace

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Tottenham's Premier League survival hopes took another blow with a 3-1 loss to Crystal Palace.

Spurs – one of the richest teams in Europe and a founding member of the Premier League – is just one point above the relegation zone and without a domestic win in 2026.

"We know that the position we are in is not where we want to be. We need to figure out how to get out of it as soon as possible," said Tottenham striker Dominic Solanke on Thursday.

"There have been difficulties, but we aren't in the position to make excuses.



We need to do the job on the pitch."

Spurs' latest defeat was the fifth in a row and the third

under new coach Igor Tudor, who was tasked with the responsibility of turning the season around.

Women's Asian Cup: North Koreans beat Bangladesh

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Sydney

Midfielder Myong Yu Jong scored her fourth goal of the Women's Asian Cup on Friday to lead North Korea to a 5-0 win over Bangladesh and its second victory in group play.

The three-time Asian champions have scored eight goals in two matches without allowing one and have all but qualified for the quarterfinals.

After two earlier North Korea goals had been overturned by video replays on Friday, Kim Kyong Yong and Myong scored goals in first-half added time to put the Koreans in charge 2-0. Myong's goal came on a



penalty with a right-footed shot to the bottom right corner after Bangladesh's Afida Khandaker was shown a yellow card for a foul. North Korea scored goals

two minutes apart in the second half, with Kim scoring her second of the game preceded by Chae Un Yong's right-footed shot from close range that found

the center of the net. Kim Hye-Young finished the scoring for North Korea in the 90th minute.

Later on Friday, defending champion China played Uzbekistan, also at Sydney, in another Group B game.

In opening group matches on Tuesday, Myong had a first-half hat trick in North Korea's 3-0 win over Uzbekistan and China beat Bangladesh 2-0.

Group B play concludes Monday in Sydney when North Korea plays China in a match that will likely decide first place in the group, and Bangladesh takes on Uzbekistan. State of play: The top two teams in each of the three groups

advance to the quarterfinals along with the two best third-place teams.

In Group C on Saturday at Perth, Western Australia, Vietnam plays Taiwan and Japan takes on India. Wins by Japan and Vietnam would clinch quarterfinal places. Japan beat Taiwan 2-0 and Vietnam edged India 2-1 with a goal in stoppage time on Wednesday.

In Group A, Australia, which beat war-scarred Iran 4-0 on Thursday, and South Korea have already qualified. Australia and South Korea, which beat the Philippines 3-0, will meet in Sydney on Sunday to determine top spot in the group.

Bumrah best of all time at the minute: English captain Brook

DEVARCHIT VARMA ■ Mumbai

England captain Harry Brook described Jasprit Bumrah as the "best of all time at the minute" after the India pace spearhead squeezed a tight over with a barrage of accurate yorkers towards the fag end of the T20 World Cup semifinal, which the co-hosts won by seven runs here.

Brook said it's tough to beat India as they also have some extremely good batters "coming out of everywhere".

Defending champions India piled up a record 253/7, thanks to a stunning 42-ball 89 from Sanju Samson, before restricting England to 246 for 7 for a seven-run win in the T20 World Cup semifinal here Thursday night. Bumrah

returned with figures of 1/33 from his four overs.

"Yeah, it's tough. They just have batsmen coming out of everywhere. They've got some extremely good players (and) they're clean ball-strikers. If you miss, you go for (a) six or (a) four," Brook told the media after the match.

"Unfortunately, we didn't probably execute as well as we could have done and that's cost us slightly alongside with some drop catches in there as well."

Brook dropped Samson while on 15 in the third over of the Indian innings and the missed opportunity had a big impact on the outcome of the game.

England, nevertheless, staged a spirited response in



perfect batting conditions to remain in the game till the end. They needed 45 runs from 18 balls at one stage with centurion Jacob Bethell (105) going strong.

But Bumrah squeezed a tight 18th over to allow only six runs nailing his yorkers with pin-point accuracy, which left England with the improbable task of 39 runs to score from the final two overs.

"He's a very good bowler, arguably the best of all time at the minute," Brook said of Bumrah. "He's been a very good bowler for a long time. The Indians (also) fielded extremely well, that catch (of Axar Patel to dismiss him) is arguably one of the best catches I've seen as well so yeah, hats off to them."

Brook said England can be proud of their "amazing campaign". "Disappointed, but extremely proud. Couldn't ask for much more as a captain to be honest. I think we've had an amazing campaign," he said.

"As I said the other day, we're never out of games and that's proven again tonight (Thursday). We were in the game all the way until the last over. I'm just extremely proud of the boys and all the boys should be extremely proud of themselves as well."

Brook lavished praise on the 22-year-old Bethell, whose century gave England a lot of hope for the future.

"He's a phenomenal player. As we've seen tonight in a high pressure situation

against India on their home turf as well. The way that he played that innings there was just phenomenal," he said.

"He's going to have a hell of a career with England. I'm looking forward to hopefully spending a lot of time with him in the future," Brook said.

With Varun Chakravarthy conceding 64 runs for one wicket in his four overs for the joint second-highest for any Indian bowler in T20s, England garnered a total of 99/2 in seven overs of spin from India.

Brook said while it was "funny" to be complimented about their achievement against spinners, it also was cricket "smarts". (PTI)

Mentally tougher Samson has come of age, says Shastri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

All praise for Sanju Samson's mental fortitude, former India head coach Ravi Shastri said the seasoned batter seems to have "come of age" in the ongoing T20 World Cup after realising the need for consistency and wiser shot selection.

The opener smacked a 42-ball 89 against England in the semifinals to be the hero of India's seven-run win on Thursday here. Before that, his 50-ball 97 laid the foundation of the defending champions' five-wicket win over the West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal.

"I think (he is) finally real-

ising and coming to terms with the fact that he needs to be more consistent. He's got to be wiser with his shot selection and he's got to back his strengths. The thing with Sanju is he's got every shot in the book, but lapses in concentration," Shastri said on 'The ICC Review'.

"I think he's toughened up mentally and there's never anyone who's doubted his skill or talent ever since he made the side. What people have been disappointed is that the run of consistency that should have been there by now isn't there, but he's come of age now," he added.

India will take on New



Zeland in the summit clash in Ahmedabad on Sunday. Samson was ignored in the early part of the tournament when Ishan Kishan was preferred as opener and Rinku Singh too got the nod ahead of the

Keralite. But he eventually got his place in the playing XI and lit up the tournament with two consecutive match-winning player-of-the-match performances.

Shastri believes Samson's best is yet to come.

"He's still just 31 years of age and a genuine match-winner," the cricketer-turned-commentator noted. "And when you see shots like (Thursday) that is being played, there's class, there's touch there, there's power there, there's brute force. It's just unbelievable."

"Stick with Abhishek: In complete contrast to Samson's run, his opening partner Abhishek Sharma's form is a cause of concern going into Sunday's final.

Abhishek has managed to score just 89 runs from seven innings at the T20 World Cup, but Shastri believes India should persist with the No.1 ranked T20I batter.

"I think they've just got to stick with him now," Shastri noted.

"Don't make any changes as the side's having a good run. Stick with that and just tell him 'believe in your ability, believe in your strengths and back your strengths, don't go into a shell where you're tentative or you're timid'."

"We back you, you back your strengths and go out there and play. The last game might be the best game for you," he added.

Samson nominated for WC Player of the Tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

In-form India opener Sanju Samson figured in the eight-man shortlist for the T20 World Cup Player of the Tournament announced by the ICC on Friday.

The other nominees are England all-rounder Will Jaks, Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan, South Africa's pacer Lungi Ngidi and captain Aiden Markram, New Zealand's all-rounder Rachin Ravindra and batter Tim Seifert, and American bowler Shadley van Schalkwyk.

Samson, who did not play in the early part of the tournament, lit up the T20 World Cup with consecutive player-of-the-match performances.

The opener smacked a 42-ball 89 against England in the semifinals to be the hero of India's seven-run win on Thursday. Before that, his 50-ball 97 laid the foundation of the defending champions' five-wicket win over the West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal.

The wicketkeeper-batter has so far amassed 232 runs at an average of 77.33 and a strike rate of 201.73 in four matches that he had played in the tournament.

Jaks has been instrumental in his team winning six of their eight matches at the T20 World Cup. He won four player-of-the-match honours, and has scored 226 runs and picked up nine wickets from eight matches.

Farhan made 383 runs in six innings to record the most runs scored in a single



edition of a T20 World Cup. He also became the first player to score two centuries at a single edition of the tournament as he scored a hundred each against Sri Lanka and Namibia.

With 12 wickets from seven matches at an economy rate of 7.19, Ngidi proved to be the vital cog in South Africa's pace battery and was their most consistent fast bowler.

South Africa skipper Markram was central to Proteas' performances at this T20 World Cup, with the right-hander compiling three half-centuries across eight matches, amassing 286 runs and also picked up a wicket.

New Zealand all-rounder Ravindra has proved valuable for his side with both bat and ball, scoring 128 runs and scalping 11 wickets from eight matches.

Even though the USA exited after the opening group stage, van Schalkwyk set the benchmark for bowlers at this T20 World Cup.

In just four matches, the American pacer claimed 13 wickets from four matches at a respectable economy rate of 6.80.

Will India drop Abhishek for final? Looks unlikely

KUSHAN SARKAR ■ Ahmedabad

The murmurs of concern have turned into full-blown criticism but despite his prolonged lean patch, India are likely to keep faith in Abhishek Sharma for the T20 World Cup final against New Zealand given their well-documented unwillingness to disturb a winning combination.

In many ways, the tournament has seen a reversal of fortunes when it comes to the Indian opening pair.

When the competition began, Abhishek was expected to be the batting mainstay at the top while questions lingered over Sanju Samson's place with many predicting that the event could well



decide the course of his international career.

But since the must-win Super Eight clash against the West Indies, the narrative has changed significantly.

Samson's assured performances have silenced many doubters while the spotlight has increasingly shifted towards Abhishek's struggles.

If Samson's form dominated discussions at the beginning, the decibel levels have

now risen around Abhishek's wretched run in the business end.

The aggressive left-handed opener has struggled for rhythm through the tournament, managing scores of 0, 0, 0, 15, 10 and 9 in his last six outings. Barring a half-century against Zimbabwe, he has nothing spectacular to show for in an event he was tipped to dominate.

However, the team management is understood to be reluctant to make a change at the top with the summit clash approaching on Sunday in Ahmedabad. "We are taking care of all our players. GG bhai and Surya have a lot of faith and confidence in Abhishek," his opening partner Samson said after the England game. (PTI)



Axar says he is still the 'X-factor' in team India

BHARAT SHARMA ■ Mumbai

The mystery seems to have unravelled and though his teammates still consider Varun Chakravarthy the 'X-factor', the leg-spinner knows that he is racing against time to arrest what has been a stunning slide.

The world's top-ranked bowler would be a weak link for India going into the T20 World Cup final against New Zealand on Sunday if the team management chooses to persist with him.

The steady dip in his form since the Super Eight phase of the tournament can't be brushed aside and Chakravarthy would need to clear the doubts in his mind after being taken to the cleaners in the business end of the tournament.

The hammering he received at the hands of England swashbuckler Jacob Bethell on Thursday night in a narrow seven-run win for India could well prove to be the last straw.

India vice-captain Axar Patel has had conversations with Chakravarthy of late and stressed on the impor-

ance of sticking to plans even when things are not going one's way.

"We have talked about it (about Chakravarthy's ongoing issues), we have played a lot of knockout games at this moment, so it is very important to have a mindset, yes, there is skill and all, but what we talk to them is, when you go for runs, don't change your plan even if the batter is targeting," Axar said on Thursday.

"You have a plan to put it in the stumps first, and then suddenly you change the line. Yes there could be mistakes in the pressure situations, we keep telling him, yes, you are the X Factor, trust yourself, and when it comes to the ball, it is all about confidence."

The mystery spinner put in the hard yards at the nets ahead of the semifinal but wasn't able to find his lengths after being introduced in the powerplay. He ended with forgettable figures of 64 for one in four overs to be the most expensive of the five front-line bowlers on a belter of a track. (PTI)

Sanju Samson eyes one more match-winning innings

DEVARCHIT VARMA ■ Mumbai

Sanju Samson is relieved to have produced two superlative innings to carry India into the final of the T20 World Cup, but he is not done yet and aims to play another match-winning knock to help India win the trophy for a record third time.

Samson, who had lost his spot in the Indian team due to lack of runs not long ago, has come back roaring with scores of 97 not out in a virtual knockout against the West Indies followed by 89 against England in the semifinal, especially when Abhishek Sharma is going through a lean patch.

Samson said while he is grateful, his toil must help

the defending champions India lift yet another title with a win over New Zealand in the summit clash on Sunday in Ahmedabad.

"It feels really great or relieved that I have been actually, from (a) few years, trying to do something like this for my country," Samson told reporters after India beat England by seven runs in the second semifinal here Thursday night.

"(I was) just waiting with lot of patience, lot of inner work, lot of training, lot of practice. Definitely, I should be very grateful, but I feel that we have one more step to go. If we do that, then I think all the work, everything, was worth it."

"That one more innings



should be really good."

Samson bludgeoned seven sixes and eight fours to make 89 off only 42 balls to provide

India the momentum as they notched up the highest-ever score of 253/7 in a T20 World Cup knockout match.

The right-handed batter credited his 97 not out against the West Indies in Kolkata for providing the momentum and said it was important to continue with his form.

"(The) last innings definitely played a good role in this innings. I was timing the ball really well (and) taking good decisions. I thought 'if you are in form, you should definitely contribute for your team in this game as well,'" he said.

"It means really one of the best moments in my life," he said on the prospect of playing the final after sitting out in the summit clash of 2024.

Once again, Samson credited his experience of playing a lot of T20 matches, including in the IPL, for the matu-

rity that he brings to his game.

"I have been playing this format for a very long time. I (must) have played around 300 or 400 T20s (329), so I have played from top (Nos.) one to six. I have (also) captained a franchise. So, I have the experience of knowing what does a team demands at the moment and what is my exact role at this level."

"a! that clarity definitely helps you to score runs the way you want to."

Samson said Jasprit Bumrah was brought in the 18th over for the ace pacer's last six deliveries as India wanted to finish the game early. He described Bumrah as a once-in-a-generation bowler. (PTI)

Thought ball was chasing me, enjoyed Brook's catch more: Axar

BHARAT SHARMA ■ Mumbai

India vice-captain Axar Patel joked that the ball was "chasing" him throughout England's run chase after his individual brilliance on the field made a decisive difference in the defending champions' nervy seven-run win in the high-scoring T20 World Cup semifinal here.

On a belter of a track at the Wankhede, 499 runs were scored with England just falling short in their

mammoth chase of 254.

India, who were guilty of dropping as many as 13 catches heading into the semifinals, upped their game on Thursday with Axar setting a rather high benchmark.

He got rid of the dangerous Harry Brook and Will Jaks in two different yet important phases of the game.

The in-form Brook perished in the powerplay and it was down to a superhuman effort of Axar, who ran



24m backwards from the cover position to pull off a stunning catch off a slow-cutter from Jasprit Bumrah.

Axar's second act of sheer brilliance came in the 14th over when Jacob Bethell and Jaks threatened to take the game away from India.

It was a wide full toss from Arshdeep Singh that Jaks sliced towards deep point and Axar scampered to his left to catch the ball before relaying it to Shivam Dube as he crossed the ropes.

Axar is going to be one of India's greatest players: Sunil Gavaskar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former captain Sunil Gavaskar foresees Axar Patel becoming one of India's greatest players thanks to his all-round skills and "cricketing intelligence", which was on display during two "unbelievable" fielding efforts in the T20 World Cup semifinal win over England.



Axar got rid of the dangerous Harry Brook and Will Jaks in two different yet important phases of the game, which India won by seven runs in Mumbai on Thursday night.

The India vice-captain ran 24m backwards from the cover position to pull off a stunning catch off a slow-cutter from Jasprit Bumrah to dismiss Brook inside powerplay.