



## CM slams Opp for disrupting Assembly

**Calls allegations 'politically motivated'**  
**NALINI SAHU** ■ Bhubaneswar



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the Opposition accusing them of deliberately obstructing State Assembly proceedings and evading substantive discussions. He dismissed claims of worsening law and order as "politically motivated" and lacking factual accuracy. During the demand discussion of the Home and General Administration Department, Majhi condemned the Congress MLAs for persistently disrupting the House over alleged crimes against women

and girls in residential schools. He insisted that crime statistics under his administration's nine-month tenure showed a marked improvement compared to the corresponding period under the previous BJD government. Majhi said, "We prioritise

key cases, ensuring swift investigations and an increased conviction rate." He cited the assassination of former Minister Naba Kishore Das as an example of the previous government's alleged inefficiency. He criticised the handling of the case, asserting that assigning "probationary" officers to such a high-profile investigation signified a lack of seriousness.

Highlighting his administration's "zero tolerance" policy, Majhi emphasised the expedited pace of crime investigations and legal proceedings, leading to increased convictions.

He also took aim at his predecessor Naveen Patnaik for his continued absence from the Assembly, stating, "Even

when he was Chief Minister, he was seldom present in the House. This pattern continues. At one time, we had to symbolically search for him with lanterns in hand."

Majhi said, "Unlike my predecessor, who ignored grievance centres for 16 years, we have resolved over 9,000 cases with an 83% success rate."

He further stated that crimes against women and children have significantly decreased under his administration compared to the corresponding period in the previous government. He also pointed to a decline in Left-Wing Extremism, advancements in police modernisation and the deployment of state-of-the-art crime investigation tools.

## Heat wave in State from Mar 29

**PNS** ■ Bhubaneswar

Heat wave conditions are likely to return to Odisha from March 29 with the weather office predicting a gradual rise in the maximum temperature by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius in the next three days.

As per the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on



Wednesday, heat wave conditions are very likely to prevail in the districts of Subarnapur, Balangir, Boudh, Kalahandi

and Sambalpur for at least two days starting March 29. The maximum temperature or day temperature is likely to rise by 2 to 4 degrees over the districts of Odisha gradually during the next three days. Thereafter, there would be no large change in the maximum temperature, the weather office said. Maximum temperature went up by about 2 to 4 degrees at one or two places in the districts of the State on Wednesday.

## All 14 Cong MLAs suspended from House now



**Irate legislators clash with police outside Assembly**  
**NALINI SAHU** ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha Legislative Assembly witnessed fresh turmoil on Wednesday as Congress MLAs Tara Prasad Bahinipati and Ramesh Jena were suspended for seven days for allegedly disrupting proceedings. Speaker Surama Padhy announced their suspension.

With this latest action, all the 14 Congress legislators have now been suspended, following the expulsion of 12

party MLAs the previous day. The escalating crisis led to heated confrontations between Congress workers and the police outside the Assembly.

Earlier in the day, continuing their protests against the rising atrocities on women and demanding formation of a House Committee on the issue, the suspended MLAs staged a protest march from Master Canteen Square to the Assembly, beating gongs and playing other musical instruments to express their dissent. However, security personnel blocked their entry at the main gate, sparking tense alterca-

tions. Frustrated by the restriction, the suspended legislators, along with other party leaders and supporters, staged a sit-in demonstration outside the Assembly premises.

The Congress has condemned the suspensions, calling them an attempt to stifle Opposition voices.

The political standoff is expected to intensify with Congress leaders vowing to continue their protests against the government.

Congress MLA Mangu Khilla questioned the government's actions, stating, "Why is the government mur-

dering democracy? We are suspended, but we should be allowed to protest inside in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue."

Reacting to the mass suspensions, Congress MP Satpagiri Ulaka called the move unjust, stating, "This is completely unfair. Did the people elect BJP to implement the Gujarat model here? Odisha has never seen such actions before, and its people will not tolerate this."

With political tensions running high, all eyes are now on how the government and Opposition will navigate the ongoing crisis.

## BJD walks out of Assembly, breaks barricade, holds rally

**Protests 'undemocratic' attitude of BJP govt**  
**PNS** ■ Bhubaneswar

A day after Congress MLAs created uproar in the Odisha Legislative Assembly that subsequently led to the suspension of all the 14 MLAs, the opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) also staged a high-voltage drama on Wednesday, demanding a statement from the Speaker.

The situation escalated when BJD legislators walked out of the Assembly after Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Malik insisted on an official clarification regarding the previous day's incidents. Tensions soared as BJD MLAs allegedly forcefully broke through barricades and marched out of the Assembly premises in protest. Meanwhile, outside the



House, Congress MLAs continued their agitation, similarly breaking through barricades, leading to chaotic scenes. The unprecedented situation saw opposition lawmakers engaging in parallel demonstrations, further intensifying the political unrest. The back-to-back disruptions highlight the deepening political rift between the ruling party and the opposition.

With protests showing no signs of easing, the Assembly proceedings remained in turmoil, raising concerns over the effective functioning of the House in the days ahead.

BJD MLA Arun Sahoo said, "In Odisha, SC and ST students have been deprived of reservations. Congress MLAs have been beaten up as if some kind of war is going on just like Russia-Ukraine and Israel and

Palestine. Police have also attacked BJD MLAs. The democracy has been murdered as police has entered the Odisha Assembly."

Another BJD MLA, Ranendra Pratap Swain said, "We are placing our demands in a democratic way. The way one-side step is being taken by the Odisha government is not acceptable. The government needs to change its stand."

DSPL434

### ବୟନିକା

# Wear Your Heritage #

ବିଶେଷ ରିହାତି ପ୍ରମାଣୋତ୍ତର ଶୁଭାରମ୍ଭ

ସ୍ଥାନ : ବୟନ ଭବନ ପ୍ରାଙ୍ଗଣ, ସଚିବାଳୟ ମାର୍ଗ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର  
 ତା : ୨୭.୦୩.୨୦୨୫, ଅପରାହ୍ଣ ୨.୦୦ ଘଟିକା ସମୟରେ

**ପୁଣ୍ୟ ଅତିଥି**

ଶ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରତିପଦ ବଳ ସାମନ୍ତ

ମାନ୍ୟବର ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସମ୍ମାନୟ, ହସ୍ତଚକ୍ର, ବୟନ ଓ ହସ୍ତଶିଳ୍ପ, ଓଡିଶା

**ଭବ୍ୟ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି**

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଗୁଡ଼ା ପୁନମ ତାପସ କୁମାର, ଭା.ପ୍ର.ପ୍ରେ.

କମିଶନର-ତଥା-ଗାମନ ସଚିବ, ହସ୍ତଚକ୍ର, ବୟନ ଓ ହସ୍ତଶିଳ୍ପ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡିଶା ସରକାର

ଶ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରେମ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଚୌଧୁରୀ, ଭା.ପ୍ର.ପ୍ରେ.

ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକ, ବୟନଶିଳ୍ପ ଓ ହସ୍ତଚକ୍ର, ଓଡିଶା ସରକାର

ଶ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରକାଶ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ମେହେର

ସଭାପତି, ବୟନିକା

ଏହି ଉତ୍ସବରେ ଯୋଗଦେବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ଦିନମୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ

### ବିଶେଷ ସରକାରୀ ରିହାତି

**୨୦% + ୧୦% + ୫%**

ବୟନିକାର ସମସ୍ତ ଶାଖା ଏବଂ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ପତିଆ ଓ ଜନତା ମଇଦାନର ବୟନିକା ଷ୍ଟଲରେ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ

୨୭ ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ୦୧ ରୁ ୩୧ ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ

ରାତ୍ରୀ ବଜାର (Night Bazar)

**ବୟନିକା ଅନନ୍ୟ ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିଗ୍ଗଣ Exclusive**

(ବୟନ ଭବନ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର)

ଅତିରିକ୍ତ ୫% ରିହାତି ଯଥା

**୨୦% + ୧୦% + ୫% + ୫%**

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ସମୟ : ରାତ୍ର ୧୧ ରୁ ସକାଳ ୭ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ

**“ବୟନିକା ରେ ଗ୍ରାହକଙ୍କ ପଦାର୍ପଣ ବୁଣାକାରଙ୍କ ଆର୍ଥିକ ସ୍ଥିତିର ଅଭ୍ୟୁତ୍ଥାନ”**

ହସ୍ତଚକ୍ର, ବୟନ ଓ ହସ୍ତଶିଳ୍ପ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡିଶା ସରକାର

OIPR-31004/13/0092/2425

In Odisha in 2024

Rape cases rise by 8%, murders decline by 7.6%

Home Department releases Whitepaper

NALINI SAHU ■ Bhubaneswar

The number of rape cases in Odisha increased while murder cases declined in 2024 compared to the previous year, according to a Whitepaper released by the Home Department.

The report states that Odisha recorded 3,054 rape

cases and 1,258 murder cases in 2024 compared to 2,826 rape cases and 1,362 murder cases in 2023. This marks an 8-per cent rise in rape incidents and a 7.6-per cent drop in murder cases.

Overall, the State reported 2,14,113 cognizable offences in 2024, which included murders (1,258), dacoities (356), robbery (2,582), burglary (6,408), theft (17,805), swindling (6,307), rioting (1,471), rape (3,054), motor vehicle accidents (12,375) and miscellaneous crimes (1,62,497 cases).

Of the 2,14,113 cases reported, investigations confirmed 2,07,204 as true, and charge sheets were filed in 1,39,001 cases.

The Whitepaper highlighted a significant reduction in Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) activities due to strong action by police and the administration. In 2024, only four LWE-related incidents were reported compared to nine in 2023.

During anti-Maoist operations, six CPI (Maoists) were neutralised, eight were arrested and four surrendered.

Police also seized 32 firearms and 91 sophisticated explosives. In 2024, only one civilian lost their life in LWE-related incidents compared to three in 2023.

As per the Whitepaper, cybercrime cases remain a growing concern in Odisha. In 2024, a total 2,501 cybercrime cases were registered involving fraudulent transactions totaling Rs 154.45 crore. As many as 581 individuals were arrested in connection with these crimes.

Justice Tandon sworn in as CJ of Orissa HC

PNS ■ Cuttack

Justice Harish Tandon was sworn in as the 35th Chief Justice of Orissa High Court on Wednesday. Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati administered the oath of office. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi was present.

Justice Tandon will be at the helm of Odisha judiciary for almost 20 months if not elevated or transferred till he retires on November 15, 2026.

Justice Tandon, renowned for his commitment to judicial integrity, has previously



served in various capacities within the judiciary.

CM Majhi expressed confidence in Justice Tandon's ability to enhance the legal system, commending his dedication to public service.

Appointment Details Justice Tandon was officially appointed as Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court following the Supreme Court Collegium's recommendation on March 6. The position had

been vacant since Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh's retirement on January 19, with Justice Arindam Sinha serving as Acting Chief Justice until transfer to the Allahabad High Court.

Matrimonial fraud

Woman, daughter held for duping AP man

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Commissionerate police on Wednesday arrested a woman and her mother in Bhubaneswar for duping a person of Andhra Pradesh in a matrimonial fraud. According to a complaint, the woman duped the Andhra man on the pretext of marriage.

As per her plan, the woman and her mother met the Andhra man in a hotel here a few days ago and both sides agreed to proceed with the marriage proposal. They also finalised the date for the wedding ceremony and the groom-to-be and the bride-to-be exchanged the rings at an engagement

ceremony. Subsequently, the groom-to-be gifted gold ornaments, costly garments and money to the woman.

However, the woman and her mother did not turn up for the wedding ceremony.

The victim, after knowing that he has been cheated, lodged a complaint at the Nayapalli police station, on the basis of which the cops registered a case and launched a probe into the incident.

They arrested the woman and her mother from Nayagarh and produced them in a local court. According to police, the mother-daughter duo was also earlier booked in a fraud case.

Crime Branch busts Rs 6-cr online trading scam

Five arrested from Gujarat

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha Crime Branch's Cyber Crime Unit has cracked a massive online trading fraud amounting to Rs 6.16 crore, arresting five accused from Gujarat. The accused were produced before the 12th Additional Senior Civil Judge & ACJM in Surat and have been brought to Odisha on transit remand on Wednesday.

The case originated from a complaint filed by a Brahmapur resident, who was duped into investing in a fraudulent cryptocurrency trading platform, ZAIIF Japan Customer Service.

The victim, a businessman from Brahmapur, reported that he was approached on Facebook by a woman named Sanjana Srinivasan, who claimed to be a software developer at IBM in Hong Kong. She convinced him to invest in digital currency trading on ZAIIF, promising lucrative returns. From May 23 to June 24, 2024, he transferred Rs 6,16,37,084 to the platform. However, when he attempted to withdraw his funds, ZAIIF demanded an additional Rs 89 lakh, refusing to release his money. Realising the fraud, he lodged a police complaint on July 9, 2024.

A special team led by DSP Ratnaprava Satapathy analysed transaction records and digital evidence, tracking

the fraudulent network to Surat. After a thorough verification, the five accused were arrested.

The accused operated under the guise of ZAIIF, deceiving victims with false investment schemes. They have been booked under the IPC along with the IT Act.

The investigating team has seized several incriminating items, including mobile phones, SIM cards, WhatsApp chat screenshots, Aadhaar and PAN cards, bank passbooks, cheque books and debit cards. Multiple bank accounts linked to the scam have been frozen.

The Odisha Crime Branch has warned citizens to be cautious of unsolicited investment offers on social media and messaging apps.

HC relief for Block Grant teachers State Govt asked to implement GIA policy

PNS ■ Brahmapur

In a significant ruling, the Orissa High Court had asked the Odisha Government to quash the controversial Block Grant policy for teachers in hundreds of schools and colleges and extend the benefits of Grant In Aid (GIA) 1994 for them.

The Government of Odisha had implemented Grant in Aid Act 1994 for teachers and lecturers which it repealed in 2004. According to the GIA 1994, the beneficiaries were getting one third of their respective pay on completion of five years and two thirds of the

payment on completion of seven years and full scale on completion of nine years. However, in 2004 the government abolished this Grants in Aid under financial austerity and introduced Block Grant rule. In this rule, teachers of aided educational institutions were given 40% of their salary without any service conditions. The continuance of the diabolic policy for long years has triggered much discontentment among the teachers who have taken to streets several times in protest of the salary structure, demanding

reimplementation of the GIA 1994 policy. Many teachers individually and their organisations had moved the High Court and Supreme Court against the Block Grant policy seeking its withdrawal.

Recently, the High Court in a historical judgement quashed the Block Grant and insisted ordered for implementation of Grant in Aid policy which has brought immense hope and optimism among lakhs of Block Grant teachers. Senior Advocate Budhadev Bhattacharya was pleading for the petitioners in the High Court.

CEO engages political parties on electoral roll updates

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) R Santhagopalan held a crucial meeting on Tuesday with representatives of major political parties to discuss continuous voter list updates, election expenditure monitoring and the pre-certification of political advertisements.

Senior leaders including BJD's Amar Patnaik, Congress' Sibananda Roy, CPI-M's Dushmanta Kumar Deb, Bahujan Samaj Party's Madhusudan Yadav and Aam Aadmi Party's Sudipta Kumar Das, who participated, offered insights to ensure a transparent electoral process.

The CEO emphasised that voter registration, deletion



and corrections must strictly adhere to Sections 22 and 23 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. Eligible citizens can apply through the Voter Helpline App or submit physical forms (6, 6A, 7, 8) to Booth Level Officers (BLOs). The Election Registration Officer (ERO) cannot suo motu include names in the electoral roll as applications are mandatory.

To enhance accuracy in voter lists, the Election Commission has authorised political parties to appoint Booth Level Agents (BLAs) who will collaborate with BLOs in verifying entries, identifying deceased voters and facilitating corrections. Each party must designate district representatives for BLA appointments, ensuring systematic monitoring.

The CEO also underscored the importance of strict compliance with election expenditure regulations. Candidates and parties must submit financial statements within the stipulated time frame to avoid violations. The Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMCs), functioning at both district and State levels, will scrutinise political advertisements and investigate paid news complaints. Pre-certification remains mandatory for political ads across TV, cinema halls, radio, social media and other platforms to prevent misleading contents.

Additionally, all political parties were urged to update their district-level representatives' contact details for seamless coordination.

Odisha emerges safest for endangered Olive Ridleys

Gahirmatha largest nesting site world over

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Gahirmatha Beach in Kendrapara district hosts the world's largest nesting site for Olive Ridley turtles, with over 500,000 turtles arriving annually. Spanning 1,435 sqkm within the Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary, the UNESCO-noted ecosystem combines mangrove forests, mild ocean currents, and undisturbed sandy shores in what is a perfect recipe for mass nesting.

Olive Ridleys exhibit natal homing, returning to their birthplace to nest. Gahirmatha's unique geography ensures their loyalty:

The advantages of Gahirmatha are (1) Wide, erosion-free beaches with optimal sand texture and temperature (28-32°C) for egg incubation; (2) Minimal human disturbance due to sanctuary protections and seasonal fishing bans (November-May); (3) Bay of Bengal waters teem with jellyfish and crustaceans, fueling turtles pre-nesting; (4) Calm tidal patterns ease shoreline access for nesting and hatchling entry into the sea.

This year much to the excitement of turtle lovers, over 1.7 lakh turtles nested at Ekakulanasi Island in Bhitarkanika after a 33-year hiatus, thanks to natural beach restoration. Infact, Odisha has emerged as a global leader in turtle con-

servation through proactive and innovative measures that has set a benchmark for marine conservation efforts. Since 1991, initiatives by the Indian Coast Guard have actively curbed illegal trawling, while the mandatory use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in fishing nets has significantly reduced bycatch deaths by 80%.

The State also supports over 3,660 fishing families with an annual compensation of Rs 15,000 during fishing bans, fostering community participation in conservation. Additionally, beach safeguards include 62 patrol camps, GPS-tracked vessels, and the annual removal of over two tonnes of plastic waste. Further showcasing Odisha's success, Rushikulya

Beach hosted the nesting of about 7 lakh turtles in 2025, exemplifying the State's adaptive conservation strategies even amidst challenges like coastal erosion.

Gahirmatha is famed for arribada (Spanish for arrival) where thousands of females synchronize nesting over days. Triggered by lunar cycles and magnetic fields, the spectacle sees each turtle lay 120 to 150 eggs. After 45 to 50 days, hatchlings emerge, guided by moonlight to the sea.

Despite climate threats and past poaching, Gahirmatha's success lies in balancing ecology and livelihoods. With 98% of the sanctuary as protected waters, Odisha remains a beacon of hope for these vulnerable marvels.

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

Justice Verma's 'money bags' case be investigated well

The proverb 'Caesar's wife must be above suspicion' means that people in positions of authority or public prominence must avoid even the slightest appearance of wrongdoing or impropriety as any negative perception can damage their reputation and the public's trust. The phrase is attributed to Julius Caesar, who divorced his wife, Pompeia, not because of any concrete evidence of wrongdoing but because he felt it was important for his wife to be above any suspicion, even if unfounded. The proverb emphasises the importance of maintaining a high standard of conduct and avoiding any actions or situations that could lead to accusations or doubts. The phrase is used today to highlight the need for those in power or authority or public esteem to be honest and avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as unethical or inappropriate. For example, in a legal context, a judge, like Caesar's wife, must be above suspicion, meaning they should avoid any actions or decisions that could be perceived as biased or unfair.



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

perceived to be rampant lately, particularly in the superior courts. The latest case of Justice Verma having amassed huge bribe money is making circles all over the country. As the news broke out, he was instantly sent back to his parent Allahabad High Court, where lawyers have begun agitating for garbage-grade judges are unwelcome there.

Incidentally, a large sum of cash was allegedly recovered from Justice Verma's residence after a fire incident took place in his official residence premises. Before him, several judges have

tarnished own images for graft, bribery, misdemeanour, molestation and more. Justice Dinakaran, Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court, was removed for allegations of corruption. But CJI Balakrishnan had escaped unscathed because of several technical flaws in the process of nabbing the culprit. He served full term as the NHRC boss; and the courts found the pending corruption cases infructuous by the time he was out of the post-retirement assignment.

The legal and institutional framework to combat corruption in India has been in place for quite some time:

Supreme Court's in-house procedure is one important way to deal with such sensitive matters. In the 1990s, a series of Supreme Court decisions established an in-house mechanism to investigate judicial misconduct. Under this system, the Chief Justice of India can review a complaint and appoint a three-member judicial committee for a fact-finding inquiry. If the committee finds substance in the allegations, the Chief Justice may impose 'minor corrective measures' such as advising the

judge to resign or retire voluntarily. If the judge refuses, judicial work may be withheld. In Justice Varma's case however, the CJI has already withheld any work allocation to him.

Further, the Constitution allows for a Supreme Court or High Court judge to be impeached through a special majority of Parliament on the ground of 'proved misbehaviour or incapacity'. Impeachment proceedings against sitting High Court or Supreme Court judges have been initiated sparingly.

**Constitutional provisions:** Article 124(4) & 218: Impeachment of SC/HC judges for 'proved misbehaviour or incapacity.

Article 311: Dismissal of corrupt public servants excluding judges, unfortunately.

**Key legislations:** Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 1988: Criminalises bribery, undue influence, and illicit enrichment by public servants.

The 2018 Amendment: Criminalises bribe-giving and mandates speedy trials.

Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act of 2013 establishes 'Lokpal' at the cen-

tre and 'Lokayuktas' at the States to probe corruption charges against prime ministers, ministers, MPs and all senior bureaucrats. But strangely, the SC chose to stay the Lokpal's jurisdiction over HC judges in 2024.

The collegium system of India is one of its kind in the entire world. The super-brain judges found the National Judicial Appointment Commission badly flawed as 'reciprocity' and 'feelings' of payback to the political executive would erode the independence of the judiciary. The NJAC Act and the 99th Constitutional Amendment were struck down mostly due to the pre-dominance of the executive, which is not untrue. The executive turned too smart, as if in vengeance, and put more members of the executive in the body than judges who felt reciprocity and feelings of payback to the political executive would erode the independence of the judiciary. The NJAC Act and the 99th Constitutional Amendment were struck down mostly due to the clear pre-dominance of the executive. They also provided for two critical persons of eminence to be in the NJAC. But the body to

choose the eminent persons would comprise more members from the executive than the judiciary, which was logically not accepted by the judges. The NJAC was to be so constituted as to grant excessive overriding powers to comfortably negate the minority members of the judiciary at all critical junctures. As the independence of the judiciary was integral to the Constitution, it was a part of the basic structure that could not have been violated or ignored. Citing these grave flaws, the judiciary struck down the NJAC. The overenthusiastic members of the executive lost a golden opportunity for having made the NJAC a badly skewed and distorted body. So, the judges took advantage and remained all powerful as always.

All said and done, it is not for sure that the money found at Justice Verma's place by the fire fighters had been stacked by him. Deeper enquiry is needed to establish that fact.

But incidentally, Justice Verma's name had figured in a CBI FIR registered against one Simbhaoli Sugar Mill on February 2018 by the Oriental Bank of Commerce. The

company allegedly took huge loans to distribute among farmers for their agricultural equipment and other needs but later misappropriated the loan money and transferred the same into several of its other accounts. The money was evidently siphoned for purposes other than agreed upon. The bank had declared Simbhaoli Sugars Limited as 'fraud' for embezzling Rs 97.85 crore which was a clear case of misappropriation and criminal breach of trust. All this was reported to the Reserve Bank of India on 13.05.2015. Yashwant Varma's name had figured as the tenth accused as he was then a non-executive director of the company. Five days after the CBI FIR in the predicate offence, the Enforcement Directorate also had filed a complaint under Section 3/4 of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, at Police Station- Enforcement Directorate, District-Lucknow. But later, the top court granted a great deal of relief to the company which consequently cleared Justice Verma's name for good.

Maybe, by some remote chance, justice Verma is the victim of a larger conspiracy.

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In Brahmapur

K'mal man accused of rape in casting couch scam

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Brahmapur
A man from the Balliguda police station area of Kandhamal district has been accused of rape and casting couch exploitation with a complaint lodged at the Nimkhandi police station in Brahmapur.

According to the complaint, the accused introduced himself as a film director with his own media channel and proposed making a movie based on the "biography of Laxmanananda Saraswati".

However, on June 10, 2024, the accused brought the woman to Brahmapur from Balliguda and rented a house in Shakti Nagar under the Nimkhandi police station, introducing her as his wife to the house owner.

repeated assaults, and she had to be treated at the MKCG Medical College Hospital. When she demanded marriage, the accused ignored her pleas.

Man's body donated to MKCG for research

PNS ■ Brahmapur
In accordance with late Jammula Satyanarayana's (66) selfless wish, the family members decided to donate his body to MKCG Medical College Hospital, Brahmapur, for the advancement of medical science and education.

Satyanarayana started from their home at Gauda Street to MKCG Medical College Hospital via Big Bazar Venkateswar Temple - City, Post Office Road, Sano Bazar, Hanuman Bazar, Giri Market, SNT Road, Girija Square, Gandhi Nagar, Khallikote College and Komapalli Squire, where hundreds joined and praised the noble work.



NALCO recruitment overlooks displaced locals

MP Panigrahy seeks PM's intervention

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Brahmapur
The indigenous people displaced by NALCO's expansion in Damanjodi in Koraput are struggling for survival as the company's recruitment process fails to prioritise them.

operates, is home to a significant Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) population. With limited job opportunities in the region, locals view NALCO as their only source of employment.

While Koraput elected a Congress MP in the last general elections, many people in southern Odisha still look towards BJP MP Panigrahy from Brahmapur, hoping he can take up their concerns at the national level.

Rs 64-cr bridge built 3 yrs ago lies in tatters in JSpur

Residents avoid using it

PNS ■ Jagatsinghpur
A newly constructed bridge over the Biluakhai river under Biridi block, connecting Hajipur and Sankhari in Jagatsinghpur district, has developed cracks and gaps in several places, raising concerns among local residents.



and Puri. However, visible cracks and structural defects have made locals hesitant to use the bridge, fearing for their safety, said sources.

"The bridge is a lifeline for us. However, it has developed multiple cracks. It should be maintained properly," demanded Pradyumna Biswal, a local.

Echoing the same, Kedarnath Bhuyan, another

local said, "The bridge was inaugurated a couple of years ago. But within six months, it developed cracks. Though it has been informed to concerned authorities including the contractor, no measure has been taken yet."

Responding to the allegations related to the condition of the bridge, Jagatsinghpur district Collector J Sonal said that a technical team would be sent to inspect the bridge. "The locals have expressed their concerns over the matter. We will inquire the matter by an engineer and necessary repair works will be subsequently carried out," the Collector assured.

PRSI BBSR elects new office-bearers

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar
In its 6th Annual General Meeting (AGM), Public Relations Society of India (PRSI), Bhubaneswar Chapter, unanimously elected its new chairman and other key office-bearers for the next two years.



Dr Sanjay Kumar Sahoo, DGM - Corporate Communication, Jindal Steel and Power Ltd. has been elected as the vice chairman and Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, State Head - Corporate Communi-

Grievance cell by K'pada DM, SP a mere farce!

Youth brings box full of complaints not resolved

RAJESH BEHERA ■ Kendrapada

It seems the joint public grievance cell of the district Collector and SP here at coastal Kendrapada district has become a farce as the directions of the district Collector and SP along with senior officials are yet to be carried out in true letter and spirit by the subordinate officials.



for bringing their sorry plights and problems before the senior officials of the district, became awe struck after seeing him carrying a box on his head to the joint grievance.

Being shocked and surprised, the local officials asked him why he came to the venue carrying a tin box on his head. Out of curiosity,

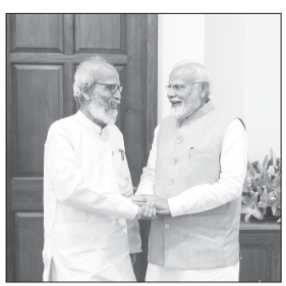
the officials asked Satyabrata to open the box. To their surprise, when Satyabrata opened the box, the officials came across hundreds of grievances, letters, court orders and State government orders. Even, 155 complaints in the box related to Bijaynagar panchayat that were earlier registered were

yet to be resolved. Satyabrata brought the matter before Collector Pradhan, and SP, Kataria, that though the locals of Bijaynagar GP have knocked the doors of joint grievance cell, the CM grievance cell, but their problems are yet to be solved. Only the locals were getting lip services, he charged.

INBRIEF

Baleswar MP holds discussions with PM

Baleswar: Baleswar MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi has appraised Prime Minister Narendra Modi about various issues, particularly developmental projects in his constituency.



Jatni Municipality EO arrested for DA

Cuttack: A day after conducting raids at multiple locations associated with Suryamani Pattajoshi, Executive Officer of the Jatni Municipality, in Khordha district on charges of disproportionate assets (DA), the Vigilance police on Wednesday arrested the government official.

3 IRB jawans held with ganja in Boudh

Boudh: Three Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) jawans were arrested by the Boudh police on Tuesday for their alleged involvement in ganja smuggling. The arrested included one Havildar and two Constables of IRB.

Para Fencing Champ in BBSR from Mar 28 to 31

To witness participation from over 25 States, 20 additional teams.



PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The National Para Fencing Championship 2025 is set to take place in Bhubaneswar from March 28 to 31. The prestigious event will be held at the Biju Patnaik Indoor Stadium, Niladri Vihar, and Kalinga Sports Complex, bringing together top para fencers from across the country.

Organised by the Para Sports Association of Odisha (PSAO) under the aegis of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) and supported by the Sports and Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha, the championship is expected to witness participation from over 25 States and 20 additional teams, with around 200 players competing for the top honours.

Kamala Kanta Rath, president of PSAO, expressed his enthusiasm for the upcoming

event and said, "We are thrilled to host the National Para Fencing Championship in Bhubaneswar. This event will not only highlight the exceptional talents of our para-athletes but also underline Odisha's strong commitment to sports development. We look forward to creating an inspiring atmosphere for these remarkable athletes to compete at the highest level."

Sunil Pradhan, secretary, PSAO and treasurer of Paralympic Committee of India, highlighted the significance of the event: "Para fencing is a sport that requires immense skill, agility, and determination. This championship is an important step in promoting inclusivity in sports, and we are proud to offer a platform for para-athletes to showcase their abilities and inspire others across the country."

VSSUT prof axed for poor attendance, intoxication

PNS ■ Sambalpur

An Associate Professor at VSSUT University, Sambalpur, has been suspended following allegations of poor attendance and taking classes in an intoxicated state.

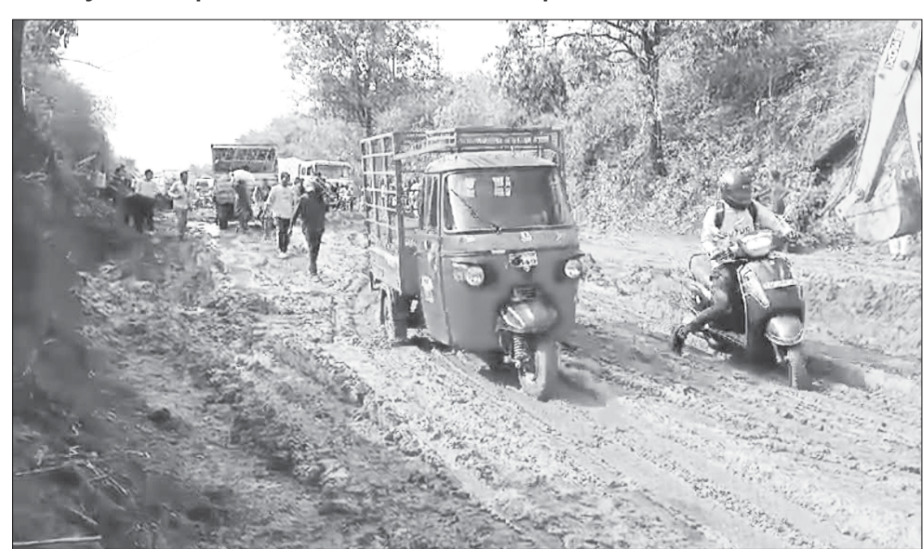
adherence to professional discipline. We are committed to a thorough and fair investigation to ensure the integrity of our academic environment," stated a representative from the VSSUT.

As the investigation progresses, further details are anticipated to emerge, shedding light on the nature of the allegations and the professor's conduct.

A few months back, a lady lecturer also brought serious allegations of misbehaviour against a professor at VSSUT.

As per norms, the matter was first reported to the Internal Complaints Committee and later submitted to the then Vice-Chancellor by the committee. However, later concerns were expressed over the inordinate delay over the slow pace of the probe into the allegations.

Delay in K'put-Sunabeda NH repair stokes discontent



Rains create traffic jam at Mohanapada area

PNS ■ Bhawanipatna:

Hundreds of vehicles have reportedly been stuck at both sides of the road at Mohanapada on NH-26 on the Koraput - Visakhapatnam road. The road has been blocked as construction work is going on here.

Koraput and Visakhapatnam has been witnessing traffic congestion for last few days. While construction work of the road is underway on both side of the road, two-wheelers and four-wheelers are stuck on both the side due to muddy condition of the road.

The area reportedly received heavy rains due to the Norwester on Sunday. Accordingly, the muddy road has turned into a death trap making big problems for the commuters to travel on the road.

10-day Rusikulya Banchao Andolan ends



RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Brahmapur

The Rusikulya Banchao Andolan's 10-day march, launched on March 16 from Pipalpanka to demand the protection of the Rushikulya river, concluded at Ludabandh, the river's mouth on Wednesday.

The march aimed to oppose the proposed dam at Pipalpanka and the rampant illegal sand mining affecting the river's ecosystem. The government has proposed this dam to supply water to industries and the Gopalpur Port of Adani Company.

The movement covered hundreds of villages across Sorada, Dharakote, Aska, Sheragada, Hinjili, Purushottampur, Chhatrapur and Ganjam blocks, conducting public awareness meetings to highlight the environmental threats. Residents expressed deep concern about the deteriorating condition of the river while activists secured widespread support for their cause.

At various stops, including Ganjam NAC, farmers and villagers pledged their commitment to protecting the river. Key speakers, including

NAPM president Narendra Mohanty, Vitamati Banchao Andolan's Arun Jena and Peace River Protection Movement leader Sahikant Pradhan, called for intensifying the struggle against the proposed dam and illegal sand mining. Social activists, intellectuals and farmer leaders such as Professor Usharani Acharya, K Nadeshu, Subash Raut, AIKMS secretary Pratap Naik, fishermen leader Magta Behera and youth leader Lakshmi Narsingh Rath also extended their support.

## Lok Sabha being run in non democratic manner: Rahul

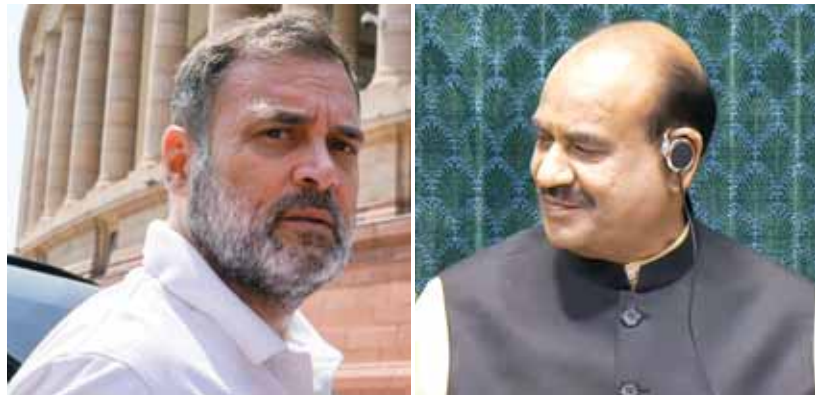
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday claimed that he was not being given a chance to speak in the House which was being run in a "non-democratic style", and said Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had made "unsubstantiated" remarks about him. Gandhi's remarks came after Birla asked him to follow the rules of procedure that members are expected to observe to uphold the dignity of the House. It was not immediately clear what was the reason for the Speaker to make the observation.

Rahul said the Speaker made remarks about him and then adjourned the House without giving him an opportunity to speak. "The Speaker just got up and left. He did not allow me to speak a word."

He was speaking about me, and I do not know what he said about me, all unsubstantiated. I said, "let me speak as you have spoken about me, but he did not say a word and just left. He adjourned the House when there was no need of it," said Rahul.

About 70 Congress Lok Sabha MPs, including deputy leader of Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi, party general secretary KC Venugopal and party's whip in the Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore, met the Lok



Right to left: Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

Sabha speaker and raised the "denial" of opportunity to Gandhi to speak in the House. Speaking with reporters in Parliament House complex, Gandhi said there is a convention that the Leader of Opposition is allowed to speak, but whenever he gets up to speak he is not allowed to speak.

"So, in what manner is this House being run? We are not being allowed to speak. I have not done anything, I was sitting quietly, I did not speak anything. In the last 7 to 8 days, I have not been allowed to

speak," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. In a democracy, the opposition has a place and the government has its own place but here there is no place for the opposition, he alleged.

Rahul said he wanted to speak on Maha Kumbh last week after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made a statement on it but he was not allowed to speak.

"I wanted to state that it is good that Kumbh happened and I wanted to speak about unemployment but I was not allowed to speak."

## VP Jagdeep Dhankhar stresses harmony among institutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday said the executive, legislature and judiciary are not pitted against each other and they have to function in tandem with checks and balances.

He made these comments in Rajya Sabha a day after saying "things would have been different" if the mechanism for judicial appointments referring to the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) had not been struck down by the Supreme Court.

The reference to NJAC on Tuesday in the Upper House came amid a row over the discovery of wads of currency notes at the New Delhi home of Justice Yashwant Varma.

Dhankhar had called a meeting of leaders of various political parties to discuss the fallout of the row and the way forward. "I need to indicate to the House that we yesterday had a very fruitful interaction on the issue that is agitating the minds of the public," he said.

Leaders of various political parties including Leader of the House and Union minister Jagat Prakash Nadda and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge were present at the

meeting. "Without going into the details, the deliberations were consensual, reflecting cooperation, concern and the issue is not between institutions inter se. It is not that the executive, legislature or judiciary are pitted against each other," he said. "All the institutions

**Leaders of various political parties including Leader of the House and Union minister Jagat Prakash Nadda and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge were present at the meeting**

in the country have to function in tandem, in togetherness and also there are checks and balances which are well meant," Dhankhar said.

Without giving details of the deliberations, the chairman said both Leader of the House and Leader of the Opposition said that after having wider consultations within their respective parties, they would come to him for further deliberations. "That was the conclusion after both Leader of the House and Leader of the Opposition had shared their thoughts along with others," he added.

## India slams USCIRF report as biased

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India on Wednesday brushed aside a report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and said its "persistent" attempts to cast aspersions on the country's vibrant multicultural society reflect a "deliberate" agenda rather than a genuine concern for religious freedom.

In its reaction after the report also sought sanctions against Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) described it as "biased and politically motivated" and said the efforts to "undermine" India's standing as a beacon of democracy and tolerance will not succeed, adding the USCIRF should be designated as an "entity of concern."

In its 2025 annual report, the USCIRF alleged that religious freedom conditions in India continued to deteriorate as attacks and discrimination against religious minorities continued to rise.

The USCIRF recommended to the US government to impose "targeted sanctions on individuals and entities, such as Vikash Yadav and RAW, for their culpability in severe violations of religious freedom by freezing their assets and/or barring their entry into the United States."

The US has charged Yadav, a former Indian government official, in the alleged foiled plot to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil in 2023. In its recommendation, the USCIRF also called for designating India as a "country of particular concern" or CPC, for engaging in and "tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)."

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the report once again continued its pattern of issuing "biased and politically motivated assessments." "The USCIRF's persistent attempts to misrepresent isolated incidents and cast aspersions on India's vibrant multicultural society reflect a deliberate agenda rather than a genuine concern for religious freedom," he said.

India is home to 1.4 billion people who are adherents to all religions known to mankind. However, we have no expectation that the USCIRF will engage with the reality of India's pluralistic framework or acknowledge the harmonious coexistence of its diverse communities," he said. Jaiswal was responding to media queries on the USCIRF report. "Such efforts to undermine India's standing as a beacon of democracy and tolerance will not succeed. In fact, it is the USCIRF that should be designated as an entity of concern," he said.

## Country boosts Defence manufacturing with ₹6,900 crore deal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Giving a boost to self-reliance in defence manufacturing, Ministry of Defence (MoD) on Wednesday here signed contracts worth ₹6,900 Crores with Bharat Forge Limited and Tata Advanced System Limited for the procurement of 155mm/52 Calibre Advanced Towed Artillery Gun Systems (ATAGS) and High Mobility Vehicle 6x6 Gun Towing Vehicles respectively.

Giving details, officials said the contracts were signed in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.

They also said with the signing, total contracts worth ₹1.40 Lakh Crore have been signed by MoD for capital procurement till date in the current Financial Year 2024-25.

During the contract signing, the Project Director of ATAGS from DRDO's Armament Research and Development Establishment, Pune who played a pivotal role in the realisation of the project was felicitated by the Defence Secretary as an honour for his immense contribution.

The 155 mm/52 Calibre ATAGS will replace the vintage and smaller calibre guns and enhance the artillery capabilities of the Indian Army.

The procurement of this gun system marks a significant milestone in the modernisation of the Artillery Regiments, enhancing operational readiness. ATAGS, renowned for its exceptional lethality, will play a crucial role in bolstering the Army's firepower by enabling precise and long-range strikes. Being the first major procurement of towed guns from the private sector by the Indian Army, the project will provide a boost to the Indian gun manufacturing industry in particular and the indigenous defence manufacturing ecosystem as a whole.

Senior defence ministry officials have held deliberations with "bigwigs" from over 50 start-ups and MSMEs to understand key challenges affecting these ventures, and support them in accelerating innovation. The brainstorming sessions, under the chairmanship of Secretary (defence production) Sanjeev Kumar, were held here on March 24 and 25, the defence ministry said in a statement.

## GE Aerospace delivers F-404 engine to HAL for Tejas jets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

American defence major GE Aerospace on Wednesday said it delivered the first of 99 F-404 aircraft engines to the public sector aerospace conglomerate Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Tejas light combat jet programme.

The HAL is procuring the engines to power the Mk-1A variant of the Tejas jets.

In February 2021, the defence ministry sealed a ₹48,000 Crore deal with HAL for the procurement of indigenously designed 83 Tejas MK-1A jets for the IAF. The deliveries were to begin in March last year. However, not a single aircraft has been delivered yet.

The start of supply of the F404-IN20 engines by the American aircraft defence major is expected to help the HAL start delivery of the jets to the IAF.

Defence sources indicated that delay in the delivery of the engines by GE Aerospace was one of the reasons for HAL to miss the deadline for supply of the Tejas jets to the IAF.

It is learnt that the engine has been delivered to the HAL by the American company at its manufacturing facility in

Lynn near Massachusetts.

The engine is expected to reach India by early next month.

GE Aerospace's F404 family is known to be one of the most effective aircraft engines and it powers thousands of combat jets worldwide.

"On Tuesday, we were excited to deliver the first of 99 F404-IN20 engines to our valued customer Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft Mk 1A fighter jet," GE Aerospace said in a statement.

"It is an important milestone in our 40-year relationship with HAL and in our efforts to ensure a strong future for India's military by developing next-generation fighters while enhancing the country's defence manufacturing capabilities," it said.

The F404-IN20 engine is a tailored design for India's single-engine fighter programme with the highest thrust within the F404 family and a higher-flow fan, unique single-crystal turbine blades, and numerous special components, the company said.

GE Aerospace and Tejas teams collaborated closely for several years to customise the engine for the needs of the

Indian Air Force. "The F404 demonstrated it was an excellent fit for the Tejas LCA. On its first test flight in 2008, the aircraft climbed to numerous mission altitudes and achieved Mach 1.1 speed," the engine maker said.

GE Aerospace said by 2016, it fulfilled its commitment to HAL and delivered 65 F404-IN20 engines for the Tejas LCA. "With no additional engine orders on the horizon, the production line for F404-IN20 was shut down."

"However, when HAL ordered an additional 99 engines in 2021 for the Tejas Mk1A LCA, our team began the complex task of restarting the F404-IN20 production line, which had been dormant for five years, and re-engaging the engine's global supply chain," it said.

Indigenously developed Tejas jets are expected to be the mainstay of the IAF in coming years. In November last year, the defence ministry accorded an initial approval to procure an additional batch of 97 Tejas jets for the IAF.

The Tejas aircraft is a potent platform for air combat and offensive air support missions while reconnaissance and anti-ship operations are its secondary roles. GE Aerospace said restarting a

jet engine production line is a challenging process.

"Restarting the F404-IN20 engine line during the COVID pandemic was even more challenging."

"With a high focus on safety and quality, and a remarkable commitment from our supply chain teams and our suppliers and partners, we have managed to restart the line," the company said.

"Our proprietary lean operating model, flight deck, helped us alleviate bottlenecks and identify solutions to improve manufacturing processes and turnaround time," it said.

The company said it is working closely with its suppliers to ramp up production on parts and materials for the F404-IN20.

"We will continue to work together with our suppliers to keep the production line efficient, maintain the highest standards of safety and quality, and deliver to our customer," it said.

"This week's first engine delivery is a testament to what we have accomplished with HAL over the past 40 years, and a symbol of our combined potential to ensure a strong future for India's military," it added.

## UNDP launches third edition of Inspiring India magazine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The third edition of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) flagship magazine, Inspiring India highlights stories of inspiring leaders, changemakers, and groundbreaking innovations driving progress across India.

According to a press release, the magazine features a special message from Jagat Prakash Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, and Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers.

The magazine brings together stories showcasing transformative initiatives like immolations in digital health with U-WIN, growing entrepreneurial ecosystem with a feature on Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, and his WTFund, Nigar Shah, the trailblazer scientist behind India's first solar mission and an inspiration for women in STEM and about women farmers in Telangana pioneering an ingenious new seed storage method in response to climate

change disruptions.

The magazine also features UNDP India Youth Champion Sanjana Sanghi reflection on young artists and Bhumi Pednaker, UNDP National Advocate for SDGs thoughts on how small actions and mindful choices can drive sustainable change.

"This edition marks the third in the Inspiring India series, and we at UNDP are excited for you to explore the incredible stories of innovation within."

"With these interviews and features, we invite you into a world where simple solutions spark extraordinary change. It is a way of life in India, where even the smallest actions can create a better future for us all," said Angela Lusigi, Resident Representative, UNDP India.

Magazine includes an exclusive interview with UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Michelle Yeoh, advocate for gender equality globally, it also spotlights a compelling story on the Jaipur Foot and its impact on mobility and dignity for persons with disabilities.

## CAG signs MoU with BISAG-N Gandhinagar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

For leveraging advanced technologies in Geographic information systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India on Wednesday signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Bhaskaracharya National Institute of Space Application and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N), Gandhinagar.

The MoU was signed by T.P. Singh DG-BISAG-N and S Ramann Deputy CAG/CTO, in the presence of K Sanjay Murthy, CAG. Speaking on this occasion, Murthy stated that collaborating with such a technically Atma-Nirbhar organisation such as BISAG-N will not only enhance the audit capabilities but also will showcase the technical capabilities of our public institutions.

"We strive to develop this product as part of the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)," he said.

The partnership with BISAG-N will provide CAG with geo-spatial consultancy services to enhance audit processes by integrating cutting-edge tools and tech-



PIONEER PHOTO

niques. This collaboration aims to strengthen the audit framework while developing customized geo-spatial solutions leveraging AI, Machine Learning, and Big Data Analytics for audit-related projects. It seeks to provide technical guidance for the integration of geo-spatial tools into audit methodologies and conduct joint research in geo-spatial analysis, remote sensing, and satellite image analytics for audit applications.

It will also focus on identifying and developing case studies related to geo-spatial applications in audit, as well as organising training and capacity-building programs for CAG officials.

This partnership reflects CAG's commitment to incorporate state-of-the-art technological solutions and holistic skill development in auditing, further reinforcing its role in ensuring financial accountability and governance in India.

## Parliamentary panel slams Centre over PM SHRI scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Not releasing funds to states which have not agreed to implement the PM SHRI schools scheme is not factual and justified, a parliamentary panel has noted.

The observations by the committee come amid an ongoing war of words between the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government over stoppage of funds worth over ₹2100 Crore after the state refused to implement new National Education Policy (NEP) objecting to the three-language formula.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, headed by Congress' Digvijay Singh, recommended that the Ministry of Education should re-evaluate Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) funding allocations and ensure that none of the states are placed in disadvantageous positions for not accepting NEP 2020 or PM SHRI scheme.

"The Committee has taken serious note of the non-release of SSA funds to certain states which have not signed MoUs for implementation of PM SHRI scheme."

"The total funds pending under this scheme to the states are considerable,

with over ₹1,000 Crore to West Bengal, ₹859.63 Crore to Kerala and ₹2,152 Crore to Tamil Nadu.

"The committee also notes that 33 out of 36 states and Union territories have signed the MoU for PM SHRI and are implementing the scheme and developing NEP exemplar schools, so as, to create an equivalence in assessment and curriculum at the national level," said the report tabled in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

**Committee observed that states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have demonstrated strong educational outcomes with GER, significantly above national average**

The committee recommended the department to resolve the issue amicably with the state governments concerned and release the pending funds on priority basis.

"The department has also informed the committee that PM SHRI is the model school scheme developed under the NEP

and the SSA is the program to achieve the NEP goals."

"This appears to be the reasoning behind the decision to halt SSA grants to states not signing the PM SHRI MoU."

"However, the Committee takes the view that this reasoning is not factual or justified. The SSA predates PM SHRI and is intended to help states to achieve the targets of the Right to Education Act...the RTE is a law duly passed by Parliament and confers education as a fundamental right onto every child. The SSA, as a scheme that enforces the fundamental right-based RTE, cannot be bypassed by the NEP, which was an executive policy statement," the report said.

The committee observed that states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have demonstrated strong educational outcomes with a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), significantly above the national average.

"However, underfunding and delays in transfer of SSA funds have constrained further advancements in their school infrastructure, teacher training, and student support. These states have been compelled to use their own funds to pay salaries to teachers and resource personnel due to delays in release of central allo-

cations," the panel said in its report.

"During FY 2024-25, state like Tamil Nadu was allocated ₹3,586 Crore under SSA, with the Union government's share expected to contribute ₹2,152 Crore, but this amount has not been released despite repeated requests by the state governments."

The withholding of funds is severely impacting teachers' salaries, RTE reimbursements, and transportation for students in remote areas.

"The committee further observes that withholding the funds under SSA to states for not entering into MoU for separate schemes like PM SHRI is not justifiable," it added. The panel has recommended immediate release of pending SSA funds to states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal to prevent disruption in salaries, teachers training programs, and school infrastructure maintenance.

"Department should re-evaluate SSA funding allocations and ensure that none of the states are placed in disadvantageous positions for not accepting NEP 2020 or PM SHRI scheme. The committee also recommends the department to ensure an objective, need-based model to ensure equitable fund distribution across states," the report said.

## GMDA conducts demolition drive on Sheetla Mata road in Gurugram

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

The Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) intensified its action against encroachment and conducted the first-ever enforcement drive on Sheetla Mata Road on Wednesday. Several complaints had been received from citizens regarding illegal developments along this key stretch which were also hampering traffic movement during peak commuting period.

Additionally, Shyamal Misra, Chief Executive Officer, GMDA, had also directed that necessary action must be taken to clear the rampant encroachment on Sheetla Mata Road which is amongst the key roads in the city. The Enforcement Wing of GMDA led by DTP GMDA, RS Bath in coordination with Mohit Sharma, Nodal Officer, Streets for People Gurugram, and other MCG officials launched a large-scale anti-encroachment drive on Wednesday, removing unauthorised structures and reclaiming public land.

Over 50 police personnel were also present during the drive. The complete stretch from CRPF Chowk up to Sheetla Mata Mandir was covered wherein illegal

tin sheds constructed by 70 shopkeepers were demolished. Their material or products which were on display and other encroachments in front of their shops were cleared to free up the road portions. Additionally, advertisement boards and tin sheds which were set-up on the box drains of GMDA were also removed. "Prior announcements were made for two days to intimate all shop owners to clear all encroachments made on the 30-meter wide master sector roads of GMDA. It was found that approximately five-meter area on both sides of the road were illegally taken over by shopkeepers. All unauthorised structures were razed to clear up the public spaces and ensure the Government land is free of any encroachment," said DTP GMDA.

The Authority further plans to develop Sheetla Mata Road as a model road and will also build footpaths and drains to support safe pedestrian movement and enhance drainage network respectively. DC Gurugram in the meeting chaired on Tuesday directed departments to address the issue of waterlogging which occurs on this stretch during monsoon season.

# Maharashtra grants ₹130 crore to revive ND Studio

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

In a major initiative that came four months after its take-over, the Maharashtra government has sanctioned ₹130 Crore to revive the iconic ND Studio—founded by national-award winning Art Director Nitin Chandrakant Desai at Karjat in the Raigad district—and run it on the lines of the Film city in Mumbai.

Located 60 km away from downtown Mumbai, the sprawling 45 acre-ND Art World studio complex at Karjat in Raigad district—which was founded Nitin Desai in 2005—was taken over in November 2024 by the state-run Maharashtra Film, Theatre and Cultural Development Corporation (MFTCDC) after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved the resolution plan.

The debt-trapped Nitin Desai—who

had worked as a creative director for iconic films like “Devdas”, “Lagaan”, “Jodhaa Akbar”, “Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam” and Prem Ratan Dhan Payo”, was found hanging at his studio in Raigad district of Maharashtra on August 2, 2023. After Nitin Desai's suicide, his uncle Shrikant Desai had approached the Maharashtra government for revival of the ND Studio.

In a message posted on “X” about the Maharashtra government's decision to sanction Rs 130 crore for revival of ND Studio, chief minister Devendra Fadnavis wrote: “The Maharashtra Government has entrusted ND Art World, founded by legendary art director Nitin Desai, to Filmcity Mumbai for operation. A ₹130 Crore package—₹120 Crore for development and ₹10 Crore for operations—has been allocated to preserve this cultural landmark.”

Fadnavis, who earlier presided over a



meeting of the State Cultural Affairs department — said, “With these initiatives, Maharashtra continues to strengthen its film industry, cultural heritage, and sustainable infrastructure, fostering growth and innovation in the sector”

Fadnavis and his two deputy chief ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, who were among those present at the meeting — handed over a cheque of ₹130 Crore to MFTCDC's Managing Director Swati Mhase Patil.

The MFTCDC—which runs the Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari known popularly known as the Film City at Goregaon (East) in north Mumbai — will execute the various initiatives relating to the revival of the ND Studio.

Under the proposed take-over deal, the state government will take over the ND Art World studio complex, after paying off all the dues, creditors, lenders and oth-

ers. It plans to revive the studio complex to its original glory. The vicinity has now been classified by the state government as a ‘no-development zone’ for any private projects.

It may be recalled that a week after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) ordered the initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against his company over repayment of accumulated debt totalling to ₹252.48 Crore, Nitin Desai was found hanging at his ND Studios at Karjat in Raigad district.

The NCLT—which subsequently initiated Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against ND Studio due to a debt of ₹252.48 Crore—had on July 25 2023 had appointed Jitender Kothari as the interim resolution professional to carry out the steps mentioned under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

## Suvendu Adhikari slams CM Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari has launched a scathing attack on the Mamata Banerjee Government for playing fraud while preparing Other Backward Castes (OBC) lists by mischievously enlisting the Muslims and eliminating or keeping out the Hindus from the report.

Referring to a survey conducted by the State Government — in the backdrop of its submission before the Supreme Court that by the month of July the State would complete a fresh survey to identify the OBCs — Adhikari said “the Government is preparing a completely phony Muslim specific report. This illegal act is being done at the instance of (Chief Secretary) Manoj Pant who is getting the BDOs and the Imams to include only the Muslims in the list and even in that case new fictitious communities are being created to fill up the survey report where the other communities including the Hindus are being ignored.”

The State in an appeal before the Apex Court taken three months to conduct a fresh survey after a Division Bench of Calcutta High Court had earlier revoked the OBC status of 77 Muslim communities which were included in the OBC category since 2010. This to the prejudice of a vast section of the OBCs in Hindu and other non-Muslim communities who were not included in the

earlier list.

The new survey that will be submitted before the Supreme Court was being conducted by the Mamata Banerjee Government so as to divert the resources from the Hindu OBCs without scientific data, Adhikari said adding “they are creating made-up communities with no social substantiality and existence. This is a clear attempt at appeasement under the guise of welfare, with an eye on the next year's Assembly elections.”

**The Government is preparing a completely phony Muslim specific report. This illegal act is being done at the instance of (Chief Secretary)**

— SUVENDU ADHIKARI, BJP LEADER

He said, “here Mamata Banerjee is bragging about bringing 98 per cent Muslims under reservation and there she is accusing the Opposition of going to the Court to stop her welfare initiatives for minorities. This she is doing to polarise and consolidate the Muslim votes that according to the Trinamool Congress account for 33 per cent of voters.”

On his social media handle, Adhikari posted images of one Sk Lutfor who has been identified as “Muslim Darji” in a prescribed form. “There is no such community and her Government is creating such fictitious and fake

communities,” he said.

“Annexed herewith are the Forms of the fresh survey in my Assembly Constituency Nandigram. Just look at the names being filled in the column specified for the Community Name, on the Benchmark Sample Survey Form. These ‘community names’ were never heard before as existing Communities and are completely make-believe, fictitious and imaginary,” he said.

Incidentally the Chief Minister had last week informed the State Assembly that 2 to 3 lakh vacant posts would be filled up after the legal battle over the quota issue ended.

“She wants to carry this tangle till the elections, if the Government wins then she will claim that she has done a great job for the Muslims — who have however not specifically demanded any reservation from her — and if she loses she will go to the Muslim localities with the message that the Opposition would not allow her to do her bit for them.”

This was a dirty game of appeasement and divisive politics being played by the Chief Minister which was spiced by the Calcutta High Court which wondered as to how a community which constituted only about 30 per cent of the total population could have more than 75 per cent of total number of OBCs, Adhikari said demanding the Central Government and central OBC Commission to be made a party to the case.

## Major crude oil reserve discovered in Ballia

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Ballia

A significant crude oil reserve has been discovered in Ballia on land owned by the family of renowned freedom fighter Chittu Pandey. The find comes after a three-month survey in the Ganga basin, which confirmed the presence of oil reserves at a depth of 3,000 metres.

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has leased six-and-a-half acres from Pandey's family for three years, paying ₹10 Lakh annually. ONGC officials confirmed that drilling must reach 3,001 metres to access the reserves. The excavation process, which requires 25,000 litres of water daily, is progressing rapidly and is expected to be completed by the end of April. If the exploration is successful, ONGC plans to drill additional wells at other identified locations in the Ganga basin. This could significantly impact the region's economy by increasing land value and providing financial benefits to farmers.

Neel Pandey, a descendant of Chittu Pandey, stated that ONGC has agreed to pay ₹10 Lakh annually for three years, with an option to extend the lease for another year. If oil is found in commercial quantities, ONGC will acquire additional land at premium prices, bringing

substantial economic gains to local farmers. The drilling effort is the first of its kind in Ballia and could provide a significant boost to Uttar Pradesh's fuel resources and revenue.

ONGC has obtained environmental clearance to conduct drilling across a 302-square-kilometre block. Its exploration license is valid until April 2026, with the corporation investing ₹85 Crore to drill one well. The drilling site is located between NH-31 and the Ganga River in Sagarpali village, near Vaina Rattu Chak, the ancestral home of Chittu Pandey, who played a key role in the Quit India Movement in Ballia. The drilling process may take 5-6 months. If hydrocarbon indications are found, the well will be tested through perforation in the production casing, a process that usually takes 7-10 days. Should the well prove to be a viable hydrocarbon-bearing structure, it will be sealed for future development.

As of April 2021, India's estimated crude oil reserves stood at approximately 587.335 Million metric tonnes. The western offshore region accounts for the largest share of these reserves, followed by Assam and Gujarat. The Ballia discovery adds to the country's ongoing hydrocarbon exploration efforts, with potential long-term benefits for energy production and economic growth.

## Police raids multiple locations in Kashmir valley

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jammu

A day after two Hurriyat Conference constituents severed their ties with the separatist conglomerate, sleuths of Jammu and Kashmir Police on Wednesday conducted fresh raids at multiple locations in the Kashmir valley, including at the residences of former Hurriyat Chief Abdul Gani Bhat, as part of their investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations.

The searches were conducted over two-days at multiple locations in the Kashmir Valley, including Srinagar, Baramulla, and Anantnag.

The cases, registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), pertain to banned organisations, including Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (Bhat Group), Jammu and Kashmir Muslim League (Masrat Alam Group) and Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (Shabir Shah Group), police said.

The raids were conducted at the two residences of Bhat, one in Baramulla and the other at Wazir Bagh in Srinagar, the officials said.

Bhat heads the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (Bhat Group), a Hurriyat Conference constituent.

## Nine Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sukma

As many as nine Naxalites carrying a collective reward of ₹26 Lakh on their heads surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Wednesday, police said.

The surrendered Naxalites included six women, said Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan.

They turned themselves in before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials here citing disappointment with the “hollow and inhuman” Maoist ideology and growing differences within the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), he said.

Naxalites are on the backfoot with increasing pressure of the security forces and establishment of police camps in interior areas, the SP said.

The surrendered Naxalites were also impressed by the ‘Niyad Nellanar (your good village)’ scheme of the state government aimed at facilitating development in remote villages, Chavan added.

Of the surrendered ultras, Bandu alias Bandi Madkam (22), a member of the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA) company number two of the Maoists, was carrying a reward of ₹ eight Lakh on his head, he said.

## IIT research scholar harassed, beaten up inside police station

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

A research scholar from Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur was heckled, harassed and badly beaten up inside a police station in Murshidabad district where the victim had gone to lodge a general diary about his missing bank passbook.

According a complaint filed by Iman Kalyan a PhD scholar at IIT Kharagpur early this week when he went to Domklal Police Station in Murshidabad district to register a general diary regarding the loss of his bank passbook he was severely beaten up by a Sub Inspector of Police Ujwal Biswas also referred to as Mejo Babu.

“I live at Domklal town and am a research scholar at IIT Kharagpur, when I discovered that my passbook was missing I rushed to the police station in order to get a general diary registered, there the staff told me to get my documents stamped by the bank authorities, when I told that my bank was at Kharagpur IIT where I am a research scholar they refused to receive the GD, subsequently following an argument the Mejo Babu called me to a side room not covered by the CCTV camera, there he not only hurled filthy languages on me but also severely beat me up, later when my parents who rushed to the police station hearing the news were also ill-treated,” Kalyan said

adding he got a first aid done from the nearby government hospital and then registered a complaint with the Sub-Divisional Magistrate and the Sub-Divisional Police Officer.

“If this is done to an IITian then what treatment a common man gets,” the victim wondered while one of his colleagues said a meritorious person that he was he could easily return being an IPS or WBPS officer in a matter of two years and get the SI to salute him in public. Referring to the incident the both the SDM and the Superintendent of Police assured action. “An inquiry has been ordered and action will be taken if the officer is found guilty,” the senior officials said.

This is the second such incident in a matter of a few months when a retired Inspector General of Police Pankaj Dutta was made to sit inside a Kolkata police station for several hours and humiliated by a sub inspector who lifted his legs on the table in front of him and also blew smoke from a cigarette on his face. Humiliated and hurt Dutta — a diehard critic of the Mamata Banerjee Government and its police force — allegedly went into depression and suffered a severe cerebral stroke a couple of days later and died at Varanasi. He had played a frontal role in the movement following the brutal rape and murder of a lady doctor inside the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital last year.

## Why Maharashtra not releasing probe report on hair loss among Buldhana people: Congress

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

The Maharashtra Congress on Wednesday demanded to know as to why there has been a delay in releasing an inquiry report on the incidence of sudden hair loss among thousands of people in three tehsils of Buldhana district in Vidarbha region.

“Thousands of people in three talukas of Buldhana district have been suffering from severe hair loss, with cases of baldness increasing. What is causing this? While an investigation is needed, three months have passed, and the state government has yet to release a report on the reasons behind the hair loss and baldness. The government has been evasive in its approach,” Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee President Harshvardhan Sapkal said.

“What happened to the inquiry report on hair loss in Buldhana district? Why is the state government suppressing the matter,” Sapkal asked.

Talking to media persons here, Sapkal said that in mid-December, cases of severe hair loss and baldness emerged across 19 villages in three talukas of Buldhana district. “Despite this, the state government has not provided any scientific explanation. Instead, the government now claims that people's hair is growing back, raising the question: should we ask the government what oil they used? Instead of answering why hair loss occurred, they are avoiding the issue,” he

said. “The affected region falls under a saline belt, and after complaints, the state government conducted an investigation. However, they claim the ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) report is still pending. Why is the state government not following up with the ICMR on the issue? Or is the government either trying to suppress or manipulate the report?” Sapkal wondered.

**There seems to be a powerful figure behind this, and efforts are being made to protect them. The state government should stop playing with people's lives**

— HARSHVARDHAN SAPKAL, CONGRESS LEADER

Sapkal said that this was not a political issue but a serious public health crisis. “There seems to be a powerful figure behind this, and efforts are being made to protect them. The state government should stop playing with people's lives,” he warned.

Dr Himmatrao Bawaskar, the Managing Director of Bawaskar Hospital and Research Centre in Raigad, who conducted a research on the issue, feels that the incidence of hair loss among the people in three tehsils of Buldhana district because of the selenium content found in wheat procured from Punjab and Haryana and distributed through ration shops under the Public Distribution System (PDS).

“The primary cause of the outbreak was

linked to wheat imported from Punjab and Haryana, which has been found to have a significantly higher selenium content than locally produced wheat. Our analysis of wheat from the affected region revealed that it contained 600 times more selenium than the locally grown variety. This high selenium intake is believed to be the cause of the alopecia cases,” he said.

The blood, urine, hair samples and stool samples taken from people in the affected areas, were examined as part of the research.

“Further examination of the wheat revealed that the selenium content was not a result of external contamination but was inherent in the grain itself...we found the bags of wheat had come from Punjab and Haryana. The state government must check the samples before it is distributed to the people through PDS,” Dr Bawaskar said.

Quoting the findings of Dr Bawaskar's research, Sapkal said: “Dr Bawaskar's findings pointed to contaminated wheat made available to people through PDS. Laboratory tests confirmed that the contaminated wheat was the cause of hair loss. The wheat contained an alarming 14 per cent selenium, far exceeding safe limits. Research shows that selenium levels up to 1.9 per cent are not harmful, but excessive selenium can cause nausea, itching, and even diabetes-related issues. Dr Bawaskar submitted his findings to the state government, but his report was dismissed outright.”

## UP government study finds spiritual music reduces surgical stress

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

Pioneering study by the Uttar Pradesh government has found that spiritual music can significantly alleviate stress and anxiety in patients undergoing surgery. Conducted by researchers at Maharani Laxmi Bai (MLB) Medical College, Jhansi, the study has been recognised internationally and published in the prestigious US-based journal Cureus.

The research, involving 150 surgical patients, explored the effects of music on mental and physiological stress. Patients were divided into two groups - one listened to Hindu spiritual music, while the other was given instrumental music of their choice. The results showed a notable reduction in stress levels among those exposed to spiritual music, along with improved post-operative recovery.

According to the study, patients who listened to spiritual music had better heart rate and blood pressure control during

surgery. Their levels of cortisol, a primary stress hormone, were significantly lower than those in the other group. Additionally, these patients reported fewer post-operative complications such as nausea and vomiting, indicating a holistic impact on their well-being.

The research team, led by Professor Anshul Jain, Head of the Department of Anesthesia at MLB Medical College, included Dr Brijendra Verma, Dr Pankaj Sonkia, Dr Saurabh Agarwal, Dr Pushpendra Agarwal (Jalaun), Dr Paras Gupta (Jalaun) and Dr Charu Thakur. The study followed rigorous scientific protocols and is registered with the Clinical Trials Registry of India, further validating its credibility.

Dr Pankaj Sonkia, Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery, emphasised that spiritual music's impact on surgical stress is not just anecdotal but scientifically measurable. “We have long known that faith plays a crucial role in emotional healing. Now, we have evidence that spiritual



music - particularly mantras, bhajans and aartis - can have a profound physiological effect, helping patients cope better with

surgery,” he stated.

The study's findings align with growing global research into music therapy as an

### THE PLAYLIST FEATURED

- Om Gan Ganapataye Namah
- Twameva Mata Cha Pita Twameva
- Gayatri Mantra
- Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram
- Mahamrityunjaya Mantra
- Om Jai Jagdish Hare
- Hanuman Chalisa (slow recitation)
- Sriramchandra Kripalu Bhajaman
- Achyutan Kesavan Krishna Damodaran
- Hare Ram Hare Krishna Mantra

adjunct to medical treatments. Several international hospitals have begun integrating controlled music exposure into pre- and post-operative care to enhance patient comfort and recovery.

Dr Anshul Jain noted, “Science and spirituality are often seen as two distinct domains, but this study proves otherwise. The vibrations and rhythms in spiritual music can create a calming effect, reduc-

ing stress hormones and stabilising vital signs. This could be a game-changer in pre-operative care.”

With the success of this research, medical experts suggest that hospitals in India and abroad could adopt spiritual music as a non-invasive and cost-effective method to manage surgical stress. The study could also pave the way for further research into music therapy for various medical conditions, including anxiety disorders, chronic pain, and cardiac rehabilitation.

Experts believe that integrating such therapeutic interventions into mainstream medical practices could revolutionise patient care, blending ancient wisdom with modern science.

If implemented widely, this approach could offer an effective, drug-free way to ease surgical stress, setting a new benchmark in holistic healing.

The spiritual compositions used in the study included some of Hinduism's most revered chants and hymns, known for their calming and meditative effects.

**Editor's TAKE**

## Mending ties with China

The ongoing talks with China are a step in the right direction to resolve pending issues

As the saying goes, you can choose your friends, but changing your neighbors is no easy feat. That's why maintaining good relations with them is crucial. However, this is often easier said than done—especially when the neighbor in question is China, making the task even more challenging. But the effort must always be there to achieve this end. India and China recently engaged in discussions aimed at resolving outstanding bilateral issues and enhancing cooperation in areas such as border management, trans-border river sharing, and the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage. Though the talks may not resolve the issues but talking about it does help in reaching a solution.

The Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) meeting in Beijing was a step toward normalising relations between the two nations following their agreement to disengage military forces in the Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The discussions at the WMCC meeting revolved around implementing agreements reached during the Special Representatives' meeting on the boundary question in December. The talks were described as "positive and constructive," with both sides exchanging views on early resumption of cross-border cooperation, including religious pilgrimages and data-sharing on trans-border rivers. Additionally, the two nations explored measures to strengthen diplomatic and military mechanisms to ensure peace and stability along the border. Both sides also agreed to make substantial preparations for the upcoming meeting of the special representatives, which will take place in India later this year.

Resolving border tensions would create a stable environment for trade and investment. Both countries are major economies, and fostering better relations could lead to increased economic exchanges, benefiting businesses and consumers alike. Given their influence in regional geopolitics, improved India-China relations would contribute to broader stability in Asia. A peaceful resolution of disputes would also help mitigate security concerns and reduce military expenditures.

Resuming the Kailash-Mansarovar yatra would promote cultural ties and strengthen people-to-people exchanges. Such initiatives foster goodwill and mutual understanding between the people of both countries. India's push for resuming data-sharing on trans-border rivers is crucial, particularly given China's plans to develop hydropower projects on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra. Cooperative management of water resources would help in flood control, irrigation, and sustainable use of river systems.

An agreement on effective border management mechanisms would ensure peace and prevent potential flare-ups along the LAC. Confidence-building measures would allow both countries to focus on development rather than military posturing. Despite the progress in discussions, several challenges remain, including the final resolution of the border dispute, withdrawal of forces from key friction points, and rebuilding trust after the Galwan Valley clash in 2020. However, continued dialogue, coupled with diplomatic and military coordination, is essential for lasting peace. The latest round of talks between India and China signals a willingness to mend strained ties and find common ground. If both nations successfully resolve their differences, they stand to gain economically, strategically, and diplomatically. A cooperative approach will not only benefit the two countries but also contribute to regional and global stability. Moving forward, sustained engagement and trust-building measures will be crucial in shaping the future of India-China relations.

# India's rise to AI global leadership

India's rise as a leader in AI is all about driving innovation, however, its true success lies in making AI accessible, inclusive, and transformative, write VINAY PATHAK and SANDEEP JOSHI

The journey of Artificial Intelligence (AI) from an unattainable goal to becoming a real-world changer has happened within a short period. For an emerging nation like India, AI is more than just a technological breakthrough, it is a powerful catalyst poised to reshape the country's future.

In recent decades, India has been employing AI step by step, simultaneously starting with school studies and competing with countries that are front-runners in the global AI arena. The path, which is marked by commitment, far-reaching planning, and the promotion of equal economic growth, demonstrates the country's readiness to employ the latest technology for the common good. At present, India is not only one of the key participants in the global AI revolution but is also one of the primary developers.

This became evident with India playing a crucial role at the recent AI Summit in Paris, where India showcased its noteworthy progress in the field of AI.

India's journey to the top of AI is profoundly linked with the wider narrative of development and progress. The first corners of AI research in India were practised at the campuses of top colleges and research laboratories. Undergraduate and graduate students at institutes such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) are the ones who started an AI era in India by exploring the possibilities of machine learning, neural networks, and data analytics. They were just small-scale attempts. Nevertheless, they had laid the basis for a national movement.

India's emergence as a powerful force in the IT revolution not only placed the nation on the global stage but also laid the foundation with robust, flexible infrastructure, transforming emerging technologies into tangible realities. Indian IT professionals, known for their problem-solving skills, started using AI in real-life applications, from healthcare diagnosis to stock market predictions, as early as in the first decade.

As the capabilities of AI become more evident day by day, cities in the different part of nation start adopting technology to address challenges and improve governance. potential of AI became increasingly evident, cities and states across nation start adopting technology for improvement of governance and to address challenges. Today, AI-driven initiatives are transforming urban landscapes, making cities smarter, more efficient, and more liveable. Lucknow, designated as India's first AI city, is fostering technological advancements and economic growth through AI-centric infrastructure. Maharashtra is leveraging AI



in agriculture, healthcare, and education, with predictive analytics for crop management, telemedicine services, and personalised learning platforms. Tamil Nadu Artificial Intelligence Mission (TNAIM) aims to position the state as a leading AI hub, focusing on governance, social welfare, and economic development. Karnataka is at the forefront of AI adoption in education and governance, while Kerala is advancing AI research with its Digital University developing an indigenous AI processor. Gujarat emphasises sustainable AI practices, focusing on energy-efficient technologies, and Andhra Pradesh is building AI-enabled cities like Visakhapatnam. West Bengal is innovating for safer roads with AI-driven traffic management systems in Kolkata, and Telangana has established an Applied AI Research Centre in Hyderabad. Even smaller states like Goa and Sikkim are leveraging AI for traffic management, addressing unique urban mobility challenges. There are numerous stories where India is leveraging AI for its holistic development and social progress.

These city and state-level initiatives are part of a larger national movement driven by visionary policies and initiatives. The "AI for India 2030" initiative provides a structured approach to integrating AI across the socio-economic fabric of the country. By focusing on sectors like agriculture, healthcare, and urban planning, this initiative aims to contribute significantly to the economy and improve the quality of life for millions.

The digital Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj high-

lights India's innovative use of AI capabilities to handle massive gathering of public by AI-powered tools.

On one hand it helped in the security and seamless operation and on the other hand set a global benchmark for event management.

India's role in AI is not surprisingly only a technological one; today it is a socially responsible one too. As a leader in the world, India acknowledges AI's ethical dimensions and, thus, is aiming to build a framework that will ensure transparency, fairness, and responsibility in the development of this innovative technology. The country's increasing focus on making AI a useful tool for social welfare, sustainable development, and inclusive growth has made it a role model for the rest of the world. This dedication was vividly demonstrated at the recent AI Summit in Paris where India was a spearhead in shaping international policies on AI regulation and democratisation. In Paris India co-chaired debates on the proper use of AI, thus contributing to the signing of a joint declaration with other 57 countries. The Summit emphasised the need for the establishment of a governing body that could warrant the ethical and sustainable development of AI innovation. The invitation for India to co-chair the AI Summit is a strong demonstration of the world's realisation of India as a leader in AI and of its commitment to ethical innovation. The world leaders are convinced and have strong faith in leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he is capable to democratise AI regulatory body or

framework to neutralise the biasness of data.

On the domestic front, while the Union Budget allocated ₹500 Crore for AI education, another major accomplishment was made when Meta announced the gigantic underwater cabling project for boosting digital infrastructure. Furthermore, the CEO of OpenAI, Sam Altman, had a meeting with India's IT Minister, where they discussed expanding the ecosystem of AI, a move that showed India's commitment to becoming a global leader in the AI revolution.

Rapid developments in the field of AI in India puts the country at a special vantage point of responsibility. The nation's achievements stand as a model for other developing countries as to how technology can be used for inclusive and sustainable development. Grounded in grassroots innovation and an international vision, India has the potential to be a driving force in the design of the next generation of AI. India's commitment to ethical practices in research and international sharing of knowledge places it in a strong position to handle this complex landscape. As India gains prominence on the global stage, it also shares the responsibility of steering the AI revolution with both vision and strategic foresight. This is a testament to India's indomitable will and commitment to build a better tomorrow for all.

(Vinay Pathak is assistant professor, IIT and Sandeep Joshi is senior tech journalist. Views expressed are personal)

## Leaderspeak

In Uttar Pradesh, Muslims are the safest. If Hindus are safe, then they are also safe. If there were riots in UP before 2017, if Hindu shops were burning, then Muslim shops were also burning. If Hindu houses were burning, then Muslim houses were also burning. And after 2017, the riots stopped. They will have the freedom to practise all religious customs. But can 50 Hindus be safe among 100 Muslim families? If there is smoke or someone is being hit, we should be careful before we get hit.

YOGI ADITYANATH, CHIEF MINISTER OF UTTAR PRADESH



## A small inconvenience for a safer, better world

### SECOND Opinion

The late-night flight from Dubai to Chennai landed smoothly. My mind was full of expectations about a large family gathering at a wedding the next day. As I walked out after immigration clearance, I saw a customs officer flagging someone frantically. I presumed it was for someone behind me, but he accosted me and asked, "Are you carrying any gold?"

"No, no, nothing except what I am wearing," I blurted. "The bangles you are wearing seem to be new."

"No, these are my everyday bangles," I said wrenching a bangle from my wrist and showing him the white film of soap settled in the grooves.

"If you are hiding any gold with you other than this, you must declare it now," the officer said, a tad menacingly.

I yanked my mangalsutra out. "Don't show, just answer me."

The instruction wasn't rude, but it was firm. He called a lady subordinate and asked her to take me for a full-body frisk. Did he think I was smuggling gold? Did I look like a carrier?

The lady did a full pat down. It was a first for me in 27 years of living abroad and multiple times entering the country through various airports. I should have been outraged for being obliquely seen in a shadow of doubt, but I was not.

Startled but not overly perturbed, I let the officials do the search and be convinced that I was not a partner in any crime



ASHA IYER KUMAR

like the one Kannada actress Ranya Rao had been caught for in Bengaluru. I had an obligation as a law-abiding citizen to let the officers perform their duty. I could not blame them. Smugglers came in all sizes, shapes and genders these days and they carried out daring acts that belied stereotypes. A lone woman traveller from Dubai could be anything but innocent, and the keepers of law had every right to make sure no guilty got away even if a few innocents got inconvenienced.

On my return flight to Dubai, I was stopped again at the security checkpoint. I was asked to open my cabin baggage, much to my disappointment.

I had been very diligent in my packing, making sure I did not carry any prohibited articles in the hand baggage, and yet, I was called up to open my bag and spill its contents. What had shown up in the scanner was the jewellery I had carried for the family wedding. They asked me to hold up each piece to see if there was anything dangerous. None, whatsoever. "Are they real?" a junior officer asked.

I laughed good-naturedly. "Who wears original jewellery these days, sir? Especially when we have pretty ones in imitation?" The senior officer did not find my quip amusing and pointed at a plastic bag in which I was carrying my lunch, and asked, "What's in the box?"

"Curd rice," I said. He asked me to open it. I opened it without batting an eyelid. When I was cleared, I was left with two trays full of assorted items waiting to be repacked. I was annoyed, but only slightly.

I felt pity for all those who went through the ordeal, along with my understanding of how the security personnel themselves bore the brunt of public irritation for following the protocol and making sure that nothing went wrong because of their oversight. As I stood there watching the officers work, I realised that the people in uniform were doing exactly what they were trained to do—ensuring that no one got away with jeopardising the safety of others. They were upholding a system designed to protect everyone, even when it meant inconveniencing some innocent travellers in the process.

Why do we feel affronted and targeted when we are asked to follow rules? As much as we may hate the hassle, isn't it a small price to pay for the peace of mind that comes with knowing these checks are in place? It is about understanding that the system is not designed to harass us, but to protect us, or to maintain law and order in society. The obligation to follow rules is incumbent upon us. As I read a small poster on the cockpit door from my second-row seat, I was reminded that everyone had rules to follow. I felt a quiet gratitude for those who dedicated themselves to keeping us safe on the ground and in the sky.

"Flying is a serious profession. Do not carry your worries beyond this point," the signage read. By the same token, let us not carry resentment against those who uphold the rules, for, more often than not, their vigilance is the reason the world still has some order.

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

## Letters to the Editor

### The perils of suppressing democracy

Madam—The turmoil in Turkey (26-3-25) should serve as a warning to all those who attempt to establish a dictatorship under the guise of cleansing democracy. It is perhaps a human weakness to suppress opposition and expect unquestioning praise, even for one's misdeeds and mistakes. The process often begins with subjugating the media, followed by suppressing freedom of expression.

Critics and dissenters are then imprisoned under various pretexts. To maintain public support, a particular group is often vilified as an "evil force," while people's attention is skillfully diverted from the audacious actions of the ruler. When things spiral out of control, religion is invoked to silence dissent. Such tactics are evident in many countries today. However, history provides an unmistakable lesson: authoritarian rule—whether by an individual or a group—is always short-lived.

Recent events in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have demonstrated this inevitable truth. People may tolerate misgovernance for a long time, hoping for correction, but when reforms fail to materialise, they react sharply—often with an unstoppable force. The absence of an effective opposition weakens democracy and leads to regression. Citizens must remain vigilant and act wisely.

### Parliament meet to discuss Waqf

Madam—The Central government has called a meeting of all Members of Parliament to discuss the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 in a conference room within the Parliament complex. The meeting will provide MPs with a briefing on the proposed amendments to Waqf laws. The government is presumably keen on explaining the contents of the Bill before presenting it to Parliament, amidst growing Opposition.

The Waqf Amendment Bill has sparked controversy across the nation, with many groups accusing the Centre of acting against the interests of the Muslim community. Various Muslim organisations, including the prominent Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, have raised objections.

They argue that the amendments could lead to the mismanagement of waqf properties and undermine the autonomy of the Muslim community in managing its charitable endowments by insisting that non-Muslims be made part of waqf boards. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has been vocal in its opposition, declaring that it will organize large-scale protests in different parts of the country. The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 has ignited nationwide controversy, with strong opposition from Muslim organisations. As the government prepares to present the Bill, protests loom, highlighting deep divisions and the potential for significant political and social repercussions.

### Chinese company surges ahead of Tesla

Madam—It is often said that an industrialist or businessman should not abandon their business to become a permanent player in the game of politics. Instead, they should fulfill their political responsibilities solely through donations to their preferred parties. If they fail to do so, their business and trade may suffer the consequences. Take the case of the world's richest man, Elon Musk. For the past year, he has openly aligned himself with Donald Trump ever since Trump became the Republican Party's presidential candidate. Now that Trump has assumed the presidency, it almost seems as if Musk has become the unofficial Vice President of America. He has carried out mass layoffs, resulting in hundreds of thousands of workers losing their jobs.

US foreign aid has been halted, and illegal immigrants have been expelled and subjected to harsh treatment. But interestingly enough, Tesla has fallen behind its Chinese competitor, BYD. Meanwhile, Tesla's sales have been steadily declining, partly due to Musk's open support for right-wing political groups.

In contrast, BYD has aggressively expanded into overseas markets, including Europe, with new compact electric models and advanced charging technology. It seems that China is quietly benefiting from the outspoken and disruptive nature of Musk and Trump.

### JUDICIARY UNDER SCRUTINY: THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

As proposed by the headline "Dhankhar holds meet over cash controversy" (March 26), the controversy surrounding the unaccounted cash found at the residence of Delhi High Court Judge Yashwant Varna is bound to have far-reaching implications. This issue raises serious concerns about the erosion of public faith in the judiciary.

The first political fallout of this controversy is the renewed debate over the implementation of the NJAC Act, 2014, which seeks to replace the Collegium system.

The Supreme Court, as the guardian of the law, has the responsibility to uphold the integrity of the legal system. The Collegium system has once again come under scrutiny following the discovery of substantial unaccounted cash at Justice Varna's official residence—an issue that remains uninvestigated even after two weeks. Speculation suggests that any in-depth

inquiry into this matter could expose deeper systemic issues within the judiciary. The absence of accountability in the institution is fostering public disillusionment. Citizens' trust in the Indian judiciary may wane due to the lack of an alternative mechanism.

There should be no political interference or debate regarding the implementation of the NJAC Act, 2014, especially when the Collegium system is plagued by opacity. Instead, the recruitment of judges could be entrusted to the UPSC through the Civil Services Examination to address the existing vacancies across the country.

Why should the elected government not have a say in the appointment of judges and be credibly entitled to participate in the process? Moreover, it is perplexing why the NJAC Act, passed by Parliament a decade ago, remains unimplemented.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

## The spiritual marvel of Maha Kumbh

Maha Kumbh is a monumental event of immense scale and spiritual significance, marked by seamless organisation, the unwavering faith of pilgrims, and the extraordinary vision that brings this sacred gathering to life.

FIRST  
Column



believed that River Saraswati is also part of this Sangam.



NIRUPAM  
BAJPAI

We carried the sacred water of Maa Ganga back with us to the US. Ganga jal is considered pious and is an integral part of the puja samagri of every Hindu household. Having taken the holy dip in the Triveni Sangam and seeing the incredible enthusiasm among our fellow Hindus, we felt energised, spiritually uplifted, and of course very emotional.

We prayed to Maa Ganga for the good health and happiness of everyone in our family, and a bright future for Bharat (India) and all 1.4 Billion Bharatiyas (Indians). While in the waters of Maa Ganga, I realised how incredibly blessed I was to have been born in Prayagraj and for my father and grand-

father to have lived in Prayagraj for almost two decades.

After our snan in the Triveni Sangam, we also performed a puja of Maa Ganga on one of the boats stationed there with a priest. We recited Sanskrit shlokas, and offered milk, water and some sacred materials to Maa Ganga.

We also went around the various Akharas, including the Kinnar Akhara and the Gau Seva Akhara etc. It was amazing to see how well planned and decorated these Akharas were, and tens of thousands of devotees were thronging them to seek blessings of the leaders of these Akharas.

All through this journey of eight-plus kms, we saw numerous free food distribution centers and hundreds of volunteers serving food to those who stood in long queues to be seated and then served meals.

Our experience at the Maha Kumbh included

wide-ranging discussions with many, among others, over the last two days, besides visiting the Triveni Sangam for the holy dip, we witnessed the Ganga Aarti, prayed at the Hanuman and the Patalpuri temples, saw the digital Maha Kumbh Gallery, visited the Akshay Vat, Parmarth Niketan, the Shivalaya Park, the Kinnar Akhara, and Gau Seva Akhara etc.

The Digital Maha Kumbh Experience Center was a very well-put-together digital centre with vital historical, religious and astronomical information about the Ardh Kumbh, Poorna Kumbh, and Maha Kumbh.

In Uttar Pradesh's journey to become a trillion-dollar economy, tourism, and especially religious tourism, is playing, and will continue to play, a significant role in boosting the size of the State economy.

The Maha Kumbh which lasted for 45 days, is

estimated to infuse approximately \$40 Billion into the State economy!

As of the last count, a staggering number of 660-plus million devotees had taken a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam at Prayagraj. Of this colossal figure, 175 Million devotees (30 per cent of the total so far) took the dip during the five auspicious days: Paush Purnima (17 Million), Makar Sankranti (35 Million), Mauni Amavasya (76 Million), Basant Panchami (27 Million) and Maghi Purnima (20 Million).

I met the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath ji in Lucknow on February 9 and told him that the arrangements made by his government in Prayagraj were very praiseworthy and met all the requirements of hundreds of millions of devotees that were coming for the Maha Kumbh.

I strongly believe that neither any other Indian state nor for that matter, any country in the world can organise such a colossal event. A visionary and bold leadership at the federal and the state level along with years of planning, detailing, inter-departmental coordination, widespread use of technology, including AI, deployment of tens of thousands of volunteers, sanitation staff, security personnel, construction workers, and many others could make this event possible. All in all, I would give them an A+.

At Columbia University, I plan to undertake a detailed case study of the Maha Kumbh with a special focus on the use of ICT tools and platforms (digital Maha Kumbh) in the Maha Kumbh's organisation, monitoring, data driven decision making, safety and security and so much more.

For people in the US, it is unfathomable to even imagine that over 660 Million people could visit, over 45 days, a small stretch of land at the banks of the river Ganga to take a holy dip.

By the final count, the total number of devotees who visited the Maha Kumbh was almost double the population of the United States, which stands at 335 Million.

Maha Kumbh is seen here in the US as nothing short of a miracle, wherein, daily, tens of millions of devotees, from out of town, have been coming to Prayagraj and after seeking the blessings of Maa Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, return on the same day, or at best the next day to their homes. This is seen as a once in a lifetime spiritual journey for the Hindus who have been coming to Prayagraj from all parts of India and the world.

For people in the US, it is rather scary to even imagine being a part of such large gatherings, let alone being there in person.

(The writer is a development economist at the Columbia Climate School at Columbia University and a Padma Shri awardee. Views expressed are personal)

## Geostrategic communication: Need for a new global information order

The way we interact, negotiate, and perceive the world has undergone an astronomical shift. From backroom diplomacy to high-profile summits, from hushed alliances to social media-driven narratives, the landscape of global communication is more intricate, focused and instant. Yet, the structures guiding this flow of information remain relics of a bygone era.

The world has evolved, but the framework governing its communication has not. It is time to reimagine and reframe, a new global information order is not just desirable, but essential.

As the world steps into this new chapter of geopolitical shifts, communication strategies are becoming more sophisticated, dynamic, and multidimensional. The need of the hour is to analyse new institutional structures in the shifting political landscape and the major geopolitical developments. The evolving political climate is challenging traditional paradigms, compelling communication specialists, diplomats, and policymakers to rethink how messages are crafted, delivered, and received on a global stage. The era demands a communication framework that not only transcends borders but also bridges communication gaps with precision authenticity and timeliness. The last real effort to balance global communication came in the 1970s with the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Born from the recommendations of the MacBride Commission, NWICO sought to challenge media hegemony and build a more equitable information ecosystem. But the world has moved light-years ahead since then. Digital revolutions, social media, AI-driven content, and the collapse of traditional media gatekeeping have rewritten the rules. Information today is less about access and more about credibility, control, and interpretation. The question is no longer who gets to speak, but how narratives are crafted, consumed, and manipulated. We now live in a world of instant gratification, where attention spans are shorter than ever. Information is expected to be quick, simplified, and emotionally engaging. This 'instant noodle syndrome' of communication has transformed how global narratives unfold. In the middle of a geopolitical crisis, or sudden diplomatic shifts, the first response is not from policymakers but from trending hashtags and viral videos. Public perception forms in real-time, often before official statements are drafted. This new reality demands a shift in approach. Diplomacy and governance can no longer afford to treat communication as an afterthought. Strategic messaging must be an integral part of decision-making from the start, ensuring that global narratives are shaped with intention rather than left to the chaos of digital virality.

Geopolitical alliances have been positioned on the pillars of economic cooperation, security, socio-economic issues, commitment to equity, inclusiveness, participation and cooperation. In an era where information is power, their role must expand to shape

ing global communication standards. Misinformation, propaganda wars, and AI-generated 'deepfakes' have turned digital spaces into battlegrounds. By pooling their resources, alliances could lead the charge in crafting a framework that promotes transparency, accountability and digital responsibility.

An information-sharing network between alliances and institutions could facilitate counter-coordinated disinformation campaigns. A standardised approach to AI-driven content moderation could set ethical boundaries for algorithmic influence. More importantly, these alliances can ensure that information remains a tool for progress rather than a weapon of manipulation.

As we stand at this technological crossroads, the question is no longer whether AI will transform communications-it already has. The real question is how we shape this transformation to serve humanity's best interests. The challenge lies not just in leveraging AI but in redefining communication itself in an era where technology and human intellect must coexist harmoniously. Ultimately, AI's most profound impact may be its ability to compel us to re-examine what meaningful human connection looks like in a digital world. As we harness AI to amplify our messages, we must ensure we do not lose sight of communication's essence-the human touch that transforms information into understanding and dialogue into trust.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept, it is the present. AI writes news articles, curates social media feeds, and even shapes political narratives. While it enhances efficiency, it also raises critical concerns. Who controls the algorithms? What biases are embedded in machine-generated content? Without a global framework, AI-driven information dissemination is an unchecked force that can either unify or divide societies.

At the same time, Gen Z-the digital-native generation-has become an undeniable force in global discourse. Their ability to mobilise, influence, and disrupt traditional narratives through social media is unmatched. A new information order must account for this shift, incorporating digital literacy, responsible AI governance, and fact-checking mechanisms into the larger conversation.

A new information order cannot be an abstract idea, it needs a tangible structure. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) should spearhead discussions on an international information governance framework, establishing a 'Threshold Agreement for Global Communication'. Such an initiative should include Ethical Standards for AI-generated content to ensure transparency and reduce



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algorithmic biases. It must also introduce a crisis communication protocol to prevent misinformation spirals during global emergencies. Additionally, a global fact-checking consortium should be established to unite journalists, researchers, and policymakers in a collaborative effort to combat digital disinformation. Lastly, balanced digital sovereignty measures are essential to allow countries to maintain narrative control without suppressing free speech.

What we acquire is a renewed collaborative effort to establish a new 'Global Information Order', a platform established institutionally to bridge the gap in the medium and message equation. The 7Rs in communication i.e., relevance, reliability, response, revival, reconnection, reconstruction, and repositioning need to be mainstreamed in the geopolitical setting. The new global order must work towards the framework that calibrates perceptions, builds relationships and drives action based on mutually agreeable communication tools. This mode should integrate rather than disconnect and create gaps and place a narrative that addresses opportunity, experiences and the vision of mutual coexistence. The changing geopolitical reality of 2025 highlights the need for adaptability in communication. Traditional media must evolve to remain relevant, embracing digital innovations and audience-centric approaches. Meanwhile, social media must grapple with issues of misinformation, polarisation, and echo chambers, striving to become a platform that unites rather than divides. In this era, communication is no longer just about delivering a message, it is about shaping perceptions, building relationships, and driving action.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate effectively will be one of the most powerful tools in navigating the complexities of a neo-geopolitical era. For too long, communication has been seen as a mere tool, a final step to package decisions and policies for public consumption. That mindset is outdated and ineffective. In today's world, perception is as powerful as policy, and messaging is as critical as the action itself. Strategic communication must be embedded into policymaking from the outset, ensuring that every decision carries a clear, coherent, and credible message. A new global information order is not about control, it is about coherence. It is about ensuring that in an age of instant narratives, the truth is not lost in the noise. It is about fostering a communication ecosystem that is resilient, transparent, and aligned with the evolving digital landscape. The world has already changed. Now, it is time for our information order to catch up.

What we need is a renewed collaborative effort to establish a new 'Global Information Order', a platform established institutionally to bridge the gap in the medium and message equation.

(The writer is former civil servant. Views expressed are personal)

## Overcoming our addiction to sugar and salt

Oh, I am a sweets person, or "I prefer salty food." But have we pondered what is at the root of these cravings? Can a salty person become a sweet person, or vice versa?

Invariably craving for sugary and salty foods arises from various factors, which include stress, dehydration, sleep deprivation, nutritional deficiencies, emotional upheavals such as tragedies, illness, separation, bulimia, premenstrual syndrome or an individual unable to achieve his/her goals in life.

Such foods trigger the release of dopamine which tends to provide a temporary sense of comfort or rush of energy. It is pyrrhic and provides a temporary high to the mind which has a long-term impact on the gut and our physical and mental wellbeing. Upon quitting alcohol, I developed a strong craving for sweets. Sweets were to replace spirits as I embarked on my journey of sobriety.

Now I am making a serious attempt to kick this habit. The mind yearns for something sweet after every meal. By eating refined sugar not only does an individual add weight at all the wrong places in the body which makes him or her appear ungainly, sugar is also hazardous for the gut.

"How will you do yoga watching me gorging a delicious pastry," my Yoga teacher admonished me.

The problem begins at the level of the abdomen and slowly, but surely spreads to various parts of the body. Sugar addiction is as deleterious as being hooked on cocaine. A close relative, also a doctor by training, talking about her husband, a former alcoholic, mentioned, "So long as he does not drink, sweets are fine."

But excessive consumption of sweets is equally dangerous to the body. Be it white or brown, sugar remains an anathema. The same applies to the excessive intake of salt. Excessive salt causes high blood pressure and cardiac-related ailments. Recently I read a thought-provoking article by a runner. For the last forty years, this gentleman had been running incessantly across the country and was sprightly and fit.

He also advocates running barefoot quite like the celebrity Milind Soman. The runner champions a no-sugar and no-salt diet. "Humans get adequate quota of salt from the vegetables we partake," says the runner.

Excess of sugar causes Diabetes Mellitus or DM. The disease is a chronic condition that is associated with abnormally high levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood. The common symptoms associated with diabetes are reflected in excessive urination, uncontrolled thirst, weight loss, pangs of hunger, fatigue, skin-related problems, tardy healing of wounds and injuries, yeast infection and tingling or numbness in feet and toes.

Diabetes, like high blood pressure, is a silent killer if left untreated.

Therefore, a combination of dietary habits, change in lifestyle patterns and a positive approach to life is paramount to combat the Scylla and Charybdis of diabetes and blood pressure.

Overweight people, obese individuals, those leading a sedentary lifestyle, humans with a family history of diabetes, those suffering from hypertension and hypotension, low levels of HDL (efficacious cholesterol) and elevated triglycerides are all prone to be afflicted by Diabetes Mellitus.

Madhumeha Mukht Bharat is a Nationwide Stop-Diabetes Movement under the aegis of Swami Vivekanand Yoga Anusthana Samsthana (SVYASA), Bengaluru, to spread awareness about diabetes and to aid in its prevention among a wide cross-section of Indians across the country, using the ancient holistic approach of yoga.

The Art of Living is supporting SVYASA in their noble efforts to promote health and harmony. Therefore, on World Diabetes Day that is on November 14, an event was flagged off, the first training programme for Yoga Teachers for Diabetes Management was held at the Bangalore Ashram of the Art of Living.

Several other schools of yoga and other organisations too participated in the workshop. Around 100 teachers of the Art of Living are being identified to tackle the menace of diabetes and provide holistic treatment through yoga. There is a Zen story about a monk named Haku as he learned from his master about the impermanent and temporary nature of life as one feels after drinking a coke, eating a pastry, or consuming a packet of chips.

Through the simple act of tasting salt and sugar, Haku grasped the truth that beneath the changing phenomena of life, there is an enduring essence. Giving up salt and sugar required training of the mind. This is simple Zen story which ignites our minds to reflect on the nature of existence, reality and impermanence of human life.

To begin with we need to train our minds to unflinchingly say no to sugar and salt. Can we? Maybe the mind would resist this change, but certainly, humans can take baby steps by reducing the quantities significantly and will soon see radical changes in their bodies, minds, and souls.

By consciously reducing our intake of sugar and salt, we take the first step toward a healthier body and mind. With discipline and awareness, we can break free from cravings and embrace a more balanced, fulfilling life.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. Views expressed are personal)

## Palestinians protest Hamas in rare public show

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Cairo

Palestinians chanted against Hamas during an anti-war protest in the Gaza Strip, according to videos circulating online in a rare show of public anger against the militant group, which has long repressed dissent and still rules the territory 17 months into the war with Israel.

The videos, which appeared to be authentic, showed hundreds of people taking part in an anti-war protest in the heavily destroyed northern town of Beit Lahiya on Tuesday.

People held signs saying "Stop the war," "We refuse to die," and "The blood of our children is not cheap."

Some could be heard chanting: "Hamas out!" Other videos appeared to show Hamas supporters dispersing the crowds.

"We are sick of the bombing, killing and displacement," Ammar Hassan, a young man from Beit Lahiya who took part in the protest.

He said it started as an anti-war protest with just a few dozen people but then



Palestinians walk amid the destruction caused by the Israeli air and ground offensive at Al-Shati camp, Gaza City

swelled to more than 2,000, with people chanting against Hamas.

"It's the only party we can affect," he said over the phone. "Protests won't stop the (Israeli) occupation, but it can affect Hamas," he said.

"The protest was not about politics. It was about people's lives," said Mohammed Abu Saker, a father of three from the nearby town of Beit Hanoun, who joined the demonstration.

"We want to stop the killing and dis-

placement, no matter the price. We can't stop Israel from killing us, but we can press Hamas to give concessions," he said.

A statement released by family elders from Beit Lahiya expressed support for the protests against Israel's offensive and its tightened blockade. They also said the community fully supports armed resistance against Israel and rejects "any attempt to exploit legitimate popular demands by a fifth column," apparently referring to opponents of Hamas.

The protests erupted a week after Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas by launching a surprise wave of strikes that killed hundreds of people. Earlier this month, Israel halted deliveries of food, fuel, medicine and humanitarian aid to Gaza's roughly 2 million Palestinians.

Israel has vowed to escalate the war until Hamas returns the 59 hostages it still holds 24 of whom are believed to be alive. Israel is also demanding that the group give up power, disarm and send its leaders into exile. Hamas has said it will only release the remaining captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire

and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

The war was triggered by Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack into Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251. Hamas has said only a handful of its top commanders knew about the attack ahead of time.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 50,000 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants. Israel's bombardment and ground operations have caused vast destruction and at their height displaced some 90 per cent of Gaza's population.

Hamas won a landslide victory in the last Palestinian elections, held in 2006. It seized power in Gaza from the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, dominated by the secular Fatah movement, the following year after months of factional unrest and a week of heavy street battles.

Rights groups say both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas violently suppress dissent, quashing protests in the areas they control and jailing and torturing critics.

## US intelligence officials to appear at House hearing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

President Donald Trump's top intelligence officials will brief House lawmakers Wednesday on global threats facing the US - though they'll likely be questioned again over their use of a group text to discuss plans for military strikes in Yemen.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and FBI Director Kash Patel are among those who were asked to testify before the House Intelligence Committee as part of its annual review of threats facing the US.

At a similar hearing on Tuesday before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Gabbard briefed lawmakers on her office's threat assessment, noting that China, Russia, Iran and North Korea continue to pose security challenges to the United States, as do drug cartels and transnational criminal organisations.

The presentations from top Trump appointees reflect Trump's foreign policy priorities, including a focus on combating the flow of fentanyl, illegal immigration and human trafficking, and are taking place as Trump attempts to work out a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine three years after Russia's invasion.

Tuesday's hearing was dominated by questions about Ratcliffe and Gabbard's participation in a group chat on Signal in which they discussed plans to strike Houthi rebels in Yemen. The group included a journalist, The Atlantic editor-in-chief named Jeffrey Goldberg.

Gabbard and Ratcliffe have said no classified information was included in the messages, but Democrats have decried the use of the messaging app, saying that any release of information about timetables, weapons or military activities could have put US service-members at risk.

At Tuesday's hearing they asked Patel, who was not a participant in the text chain, if he would investigate.

## Russia convicts 23 captured Ukrainians on terrorism charges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Moscow

Russia on Wednesday convicted 23 captured Ukrainians on terrorism charges stemming from the fighting in Ukraine in a trial that Kyiv denounced as a sham and a violation of international law.

The defendants included 14 current or former fighters of the elite Azov brigade, which Russia designated a terrorist group, and nine women and one man who worked as cooks or support personnel, according to Russian media reports and rights activists.

Twelve defendants were not in court 11 had returned to Ukraine in two prisoner exchanges and were convicted in absentia. One more died in custody last year.

All had been charged with staging a violent coup d'etat and organising activities of a terrorist organisation. Some faced an additional charge of training to return to terrorist activities.

They were given sentences ranging from 13 to 23 years in prison.

Memorial, a prominent Russian rights group that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022, has designated all the defendants as political prisoners.

According to Memorial, some of them were captured in 2022 during fighting in the port city of Mariupol, where they held out at the Azovstal steel mill, besieged by Russian troops.

Others were detained as they tried to leave the city after it was overrun by Russian forces, the group said.

Ukraine's human rights envoy, Dmytro Lubinets, denounced the proceedings when they began in June 2023 as "another sham trial" held for Russia's "own amusement."

"Russia and fair justice' have nothing in common. The world must respond to such shameful sham trials of Ukrainian defenders," Lubinets said.

"It is obvious to everyone that those who should be in the dock are not those defending themselves but those who initiated the aggression, those who invaded foreign land with weapons and those who arrived with tanks on the territory of an independent state!"

## Ukraine ready to proceed with ceasefire: Zelenskyy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

Ukraine is ready to proceed with a ceasefire prohibiting attacks on energy infrastructure, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, in line with a deal that was brokered by the United States during three days of negotiations with Ukrainian and Russian officials in the Saudi capital.

Speaking in a video address late Tuesday, Zelenskyy said Ukraine had agreed with US negotiators "that a ceasefire for energy infrastructure can start today."

But, he warned, any strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities by Moscow would draw "strong retaliation."

The comments underscored the tenuous agreements that came out of the three days of separate US-Ukrainian and US-Russian talks in Riyadh.

Washington said it had agreed with the warring parties to implement a pause on attacks on energy infrastructure as well as taking steps to ensure safe navigation for ships in the Black Sea. Those talks were

part of a broader effort toward a limited, 30-day ceasefire that Moscow and Kyiv agreed to in principle last week but has thus far failed to materialise as both sides continue to launch drone and rocket attacks against the other.

While Zelenskyy on Tuesday thanked the US for its efforts to strike an agreement, questions remained over some key details and a comprehensive peace deal to end the three-year war still looked distant.

### Russia links the Black Sea deal to sanctions relief

On Tuesday, the White House said in separate statements that the sides had "agreed to ensure safe navigation, eliminate the use of force, and prevent the use of commercial vessels for military purposes in the Black Sea." Details of the prospective deal were not released, but it appeared to mark another attempt to ensure safe Black Sea shipping after a 2022 agreement that was brokered by the UN and Turkey but halted by Russia the next year.

### The comments underscored the tenuous agreements that came out of the three days of separate US-Ukrainian and US-Russian talks in Riyadh

After the White House issued its statement Tuesday, the Kremlin warned that a potential Black Sea deal could only be implemented after sanctions against the Russian Agricultural Bank and other financial organisations involved in food and fertiliser trade are lifted and their access to the SWIFT system of international payments is ensured.

Zelenskyy on Tuesday evening reacted to those demands, casting them as an example of Moscow "manipulating, twisting agreements and lying" about the terms of the agreement.

"There are absolutely clear statements that have been published by the White House, everyone can see what is stated there," Zelenskyy said. "And there is something that the Kremlin is lying

about again: that supposedly the (cease-fire) in the Black Sea depends on the issue of sanctions."

In an apparent reference to Moscow's demands, the White House said Tuesday the US "will help restore Russia's access to the world market for agricultural and fertiliser exports, lower maritime insurance costs and enhance access to ports and payment systems for such transactions."

### Russia launches drone attack on Zelenskyy's hometown

Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's hometown, came under the "most massive kamikaze drone attack since the beginning of the war" on Tuesday night, the city administration head, Oleksandr Vilkul, wrote on Telegram.

Although no people were killed or injured, civilian infrastructure was widely targeted, Vilkul said, including an administration building, warehouses, an industrial enterprise and a fire station. Multiple fires were sparked across the city, he said.

## France, Indonesia vow to boost safety in Indo-Pacific

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jakarta

France and Indonesia's top diplomats inked a new maritime security project on Wednesday aiming "to ensure peace and safety" at sea in the Indo-Pacific region.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot's visit to Jakarta, his second stop in his four-day Asia tour after Singapore, comes amid ongoing trade tensions between the European Union and Beijing.

He told reporters on Wednesday that the Indo-Pacific Port Security Project "is close to my heart," promising France's support. Neither he nor his Indonesian counterpart Sugiono shared what the project will entail. Earlier this month, during a discussion of the project at the Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence, Indonesia's naval chief of staff, Admiral Muhammad Ali, said it would address various maritime security challenges, including piracy, terrorism, and illegal activities at sea, and would likely

involve collaboration among countries in the Indo-Pacific.

Sugiono, who like many Indonesians uses a single name, said the "maritime collaboration is important to realise a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific," he said the project will support Indonesia as the world's largest archipelago nation with more than 17,000 islands, with a focus on two Indonesian ports in Jakarta and Surabaya cities "in their sustainability and security." The two diplomats, who signed the project's agreement at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations headquarters in the Indonesian capital, said they also discussed strengthening their strategic partnerships and enhancing cooperation in various fields. Military cooperation between France and Indonesia has grown in recent years.

French air force planes made a stopover in July in Jakarta as part of a visit to Southeast Asia that was meant to display France's commitment to security in the Indo-Pacific region.

## Sri Lanka slams Britain's 'unilateral action'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Sri Lanka on Wednesday slammed the British government's "unilateral action" to sanction its three former military commanders, who led the campaign that crushed the LTTE in 2009, saying the move will complicate the national reconciliation process.

A UK foreign office statement Monday said Sri Lanka's three military commanders - former Army Commanders Gen Shavendra Silva, Jagath Jayasuriya and former Navy Commander Wasantha Karannagoda - were among those sanctioned and subjected to UK travel bans and asset freezes.

The UK government also sanctioned Vinyagamurthy Muralidaran, the deputy leader of the LTTE, who later turned a rebel of the group and became a deputy minister in the national parliament.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "such unilateral actions by countries do not assist but serve to complicate the national reconciliation process underway in Sri Lanka."

"The government is in the process of

strengthening domestic mechanisms on accountability and reconciliation and any past human rights violations should be dealt with through domestic accountability mechanisms," the ministry said.

Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath conveyed Sri Lanka's position to British High Commissioner Andrew Patrick, it added.

"I categorically reject the UK government's allegations of widespread human rights violations during the military operations," former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is credited for his political leadership to end the LTTE's campaign, said in a statement.

He accused the British politicians of doing vote bank politics on Sri Lanka to win the votes of the Tamil community domiciled in the UK.

He said that the LTTE killed 27,965 Sri Lankan troops and police in their violent campaign, "not to mention the lives of many civilians."

He said in 2021 and 2023, the UK legislated to protect their forces from prosecution by interested parties.

"Hence, I expect the present government to resolutely stand by and defend

former armed forces personnel who face persecution by foreign governments and organizations for doing their duty to safeguard Sri Lanka's national security," Rajapaksa added.

Rights abuses alleged on both government troops and the LTTE during the final battle in 2009 caused four UN rights resolutions, which called for international mechanisms for the prosecution of alleged perpetrators.

Sri Lanka outrightly rejected resolutions and said local mechanisms would be set up. Rights groups charge that only minimal progress has been made despite pledges. The UK government's sanctions on General Silva follow a similar action against him by the US State Department in 2020.

In 2023, Canada sanctioned two former presidents, Mahinda and Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The two Rajapaksa brothers led the military campaign which crushed the LTTE, ending their three decades of armed struggle to create a separate Tamil homeland in the north and east regions.

General Silva and Karannagoda were key commanders in the three-year campaign.

## Syria can return to violence or to peace says UN envoy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ United Nations

Three months following the overthrow of President Bashar Assad, Syria is at a crossroads, the top UN envoy for the country said.

Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council that Syria can return to violence or start an inclusive transition and end decades of conflict. He said the road back to conflict, fragmentation and violations of Syrian sovereignty by external powers "must not come to pass". The other road, which would restore Syria's sovereignty and regional security, is "viable" but "requires the right Syrian decisions" and international support, Pedersen said.

Syria's civil war had gone on for 13 years when a lightning insurgency led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, overthrew Assad in December, ending his family's more than 50-year rule.

Former HTS leader Ahmad al-Sharaa was announced as the country's interim president after a meeting of armed groups that took part in the offensive.

Pedersen spoke weeks after clashes between al-Sharaa's security forces and armed groups loyal to Assad spiralled into sectarian revenge attacks that killed hundreds of civilians, most of them Alawites, a minority sect to which Assad belongs. It was the worst violence since December. Pedersen told the council that while the situation was "comparatively calmed" after several days, the UN continues to receive reports "of harassment and intimidation, including with heavy

sectarian overtones".

He said the interim authorities announced an independent investigation. Pedersen said he stressed that it must be transparent, in line with international standards, and its findings made public.

The UN special envoy, who will return to Damascus shortly, highlighted several priority areas for action and attention.

The latest atrocities, he said, "laid bare the urgent need for credible and efficient accountability for crimes" committed over decades. He said the UN and the international community will be watching whether the soon-to-be-announced transitional government and transition effort to fill the constitutional vacuum, and noted the incorporation of international human rights norms.

### Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council that Syria can return to violence or start an inclusive transition and end decades of conflict

al legislative council reflect Syria's diversity and include both men and women. He said his team was consulted on a temporary constitution and gave advice on international best practices and norms. "Some of this was taken on board, some was not," he said.

In mid-March, al-Sharaa signed a temporary constitution that leaves the country under Islamist rule while promising to protect the rights of all Syrians for five years during a transitional phase.

"Some Syrians have commended the effort to fill the constitutional vacuum, and noted the incorporation of international human rights norms.

## Wildfires ravage southern South Korea, killing 24 people

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

Wind-driven wildfires that were among South Korea's worst ever were ravaging the country's southern regions, killing 24 people, destroying more than 200 structures and forcing 27,000 people to evacuate, officials said Wednesday.

The death toll included a pilot who died after a helicopter crashed during efforts to contain wildfires in the southeastern town of Uiseong, one of the areas hardest-hit. The aircraft had no other crew members.

The National Fire Agency said at least 26 other people sustained varying degrees of injuries.

An ancient Buddhist temple, houses, factories and vehicles were among the structures destroyed in the wildfires that have burned 43,330 acres, the government's emergency response centre said.

In a televised address, South Korea's acting President Han Duck-soo said the wildfires that began last Friday were causing worse damage than many other past wildfires.

"Damages are snowballing," Han said. "There are concerns that we'll have wildfire damages that we've never experienced, so we have to concentrate all our capabilities to put out the wildfires in the rest of this week."

President Han Duck-soo said crews were struggling to extinguish the wildfires because strong winds swept the areas overnight.

Han said about 4,650 firefighters, soldiers and other personnel were



The remains of burnt-out pavilions are seen at the Gounsa temple in Uiseong, South Korea

working Wednesday to extinguish the wildfires with the help of about 130 helicopters.

President Han Duck-soo said that "a small amount" of 5-10 millimetres of rain was expected Thursday.

Observers say the ongoing wildfires are the third biggest in South Korea in terms of land burned.

Officials in several southeastern cities and towns had ordered residents to evacuate Tuesday as firefighters struggled to contain multiple blazes

fuelled by dry winds.

The largest fires were in Andong, the neighbouring counties of Uiseong and Sancheong, and the city of Ulsan, according to South Korea's Interior Ministry.

Earlier on Tuesday, officials had said firefighters had extinguished most of the flames from the largest wildfires in those areas, but wind and dry conditions allowed the blazes to spread again.

But efforts to fight the fires were partially suspended overnight as the

winds strengthened.

The blaze in Uiseong destroyed nearly half of more than 30 structures at Gounsa, a temple which was said to be originally built in the 7th century.

Among the destroyed structures were two state-designated "treasures" a pavilion-shaped structure built on a stream built in 1668 and a Joseon Dynasty structure built in 1904 to mark the longevity of a king.

The temple's another state-designated "treasure", a stone Buddha statue reportedly manufactured in the 8th century, was evacuated to a safe place, according to government and Buddhist officials.

The Justice Ministry said it protectively removed 500 inmates from a detention centre in Cheongsong, another southern town, but no damages were reported to the facility.

The Korea Forest Service said it had raised its wildfire warning to the highest "serious" level nationwide Tuesday, requiring local governments to assign more workers to emergency response, tighten entry restrictions for forests and parks, and recommend that military units withhold live-fire exercises.

The 18 dead include four firefighters and government workers who were killed in Sancheong on Saturday after being trapped by fast-moving flames driven by strong winds, according to officials.

Government officials suspect human error caused several of the fires, possibly due to the use of fire while clearing overgrown grass in family tombs or sparks from welding work.



Jay Bhattacharya confirmed as NIH head

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

Indian-American scientist Jay Bhattacharya has been confirmed by the US Senate as the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)...

of modern biomedical science fails this basic test," the news portal quoted him as saying. "If confirmed, I will carry out President Trump and (Health and Human Service) Secretary Kennedy's agenda of Making America Healthy Again and committing the NIH to address the dire chronic health needs of the country with gold-standard science and innovation," he said.

During his hearing, Bhattacharya said he understands science and public health have become politicised, and many no longer trust health officials or experts, according to The Hill. The NIH should support science which is "replicable, reproducible, and generalisable," Bhattacharya said. "Unfortunately, much

PUBLIC NOTICE: Known to all that my client Sh. Amit Yadav owner of the PROPERTY NO. A-10, KNOWN AS B-1/10, AREA 50 SQ. YDS., KHASRA NO. 68/7, HASTAL, RAVINDER VIHAR, UTTAM NAGAR, 110059 and Sh. Amit Yadav purchase property from Smt. Geeta...

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION: Ch. No. 780 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75 Mobile :- 9899013918

PUBLIC NOTICE: Be it known to all that my client Mrs. Harvinder Kaur W/o Sh. Sunder Singh R/o MD-6, First Floor, Pitampura, North West Delhi, Delhi-110034 have disowned/ debarred her daughter Anveet Kaur @ Anveet Kaur Ahuja and son in law Harpreet Singh @ Harpreet Singh Ahuja from all her movable & immovable properties and severed all relations with both of them due to their misconduct...

COURT NOTICE (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF Sh. Rajinder Pal Singh Mahila Court/Mahila FT/Women and Children Special Court, Panipat

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Baba Farid University of Health Sciences Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236 Advt. No.BFU-25/09 VACANCIES Online applications are invited w.e.f 28-03-2025 to 17-04-2025 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfuh.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of Clinical Psychologist (UR-01, SC (M/B) Female-01) on regular basis under Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot. For Application form, fee, speciality wise detail of posts, Category wise distribution and other terms & conditions, visit University website: www.bfuh.ac.in Sd/- REGISTRAR

INDIAN RAILWAYS भारत सरकार GOVERNMENT OF INDIA रेल मंत्रालय MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (रेलवे बोर्ड) RAILWAY BOARD E-TENDER NO. 2025RS19542TC Principal Executive Director, Railway Stores (S), Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, Government of India invites e-tender for Procurement of 08 Nos Rakes of Flat Multi-Purpose (FMP) Wagons (6 Nos. FMP Car A+ 39 Nos. FMP Car B-one rake consists of 45 wagons) type FMPA and FMPB to RDSO Drg No WD-19066-S-02, Alt.8 or latest (Car-A) & WD-19067-S-02, Alt. 9 or latest (Car-B). 2.0 The interested tenderers are advised to visit the website http://ireps.gov.in for details of the tender and submission of their e-bids. 3.0 No manual offers will be accepted against e-tender. 4.0 Tender will be closed at 15.00 hours on 23.04.2025. 5.0 Any corrigendum to this tender will be published on the website http://ireps.gov.in only and not in print media.

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences Sadiq Road, Faridkot-151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236 E-TENDER NOTICE E-tender are invited for the procurements of following items upto 21-04-2025 1) Repair of AC Plant 2 Nos. 190 Ton Carrier Make at GSGM&H, FDK 2) (CMC) for 1.5 Ton Window & 1.5 Ton & 2 Ton Split Air Conditioners for BFUHS. Approximate 750 No.) 3) Supply & installation of LT Panel, Main Cable & power point in OPD Block at GSGM&H, FDK 4) (CMC) for 218.50 Ton Ductable HVAC unit for Neurology & Neuro Surgery, 2 no. lecture theatres, Blood Bank & ICU Medicine at GSGM&H, Faridkot. (For Three Year) 5) Replacement of car door seat, landing door with panel, header and skill, ARD with batteries for 2no. Lifts make ECE 8 person at BFUHS E-tender are invited for the procurements of following items upto 09-04-2024 1) Providing Fire Fighting & Fire Detection Service for Super Specialty Block in GSGM&H, FDK. 2) Providing & fixing Automatic Sprinkler System of Fire Safety in Mother Block of MCH Building at GSGM&H, FDK. 3) Providing 11KV Substation including DG Set, Transformer and Electrical Work for Super Specialty Block at GSGM&H, FDK. Note:- Tender Document can be downloaded from http://reproc.punjab.gov.in and www.bfuh.ac.in 00124202/2023/42975 Dated CHD :- 3/26/2025

CHANGE OF NAME I, Anita Mishra W/O Late. Ram Roop Mishra, R/O A-5, GALI NO-7, CHANCHAL PARK, BAKKARWALA, Bakkarwala, West Delhi Delhi, 110041, have changed the name of my minor daughter namely Gracy Mishra aged 17 years and she shall hereafter be known as GUNJAN MISHRA. PD(1747)C I, Minkee Pandey, W/o No.17021300N Sep Sandeep Pandey, R/o- VIII- Gogahi, PO- Gogaura, PS- Dhansoi, Dist- Buxar, Bihar- 802117, declare that in my husband's service documents my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 26/12/1990, whereas my correct D.O.B. is 28/12/1990, which may be amended accordingly. PD(1748)C I, No. NTR-16800H Lt Col Amit Kumar, R/o- H.No.-213, Lane No.-12, Sainik Nagar, RBL Road, Lucknow, U.P. have changed my son's name from Kaartikeya Yadav, vide affidavit dated 26/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1750)C I, Lukalapu Urmila, W/o 14880087P Sep Lukalapu Tarakeswararam, R/o- Bereji Center(Hiramandala), Dist- Srikulam, A.P. declare in my husband's service document my name is wrongly written as Siripuram Urmila whereas my correct name is Lukalapu Urmila which may be amended accordingly. PD(1751)C I, Shashi Kiran, W/o JC-805529L Sub/Instr(SPL) Avinash Mishra, R/o- 42, Onkardutt Colony, Maheshwar Road- Dhamond, PO- Dhamond, Dist- Dhar, M.P-454552, have changed my name from Shashi Kiran to Shashikiran Mishra, vide affidavit dated 26/03/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1752)C I, J, C- 542992L rank -Subedar Sunil Kumar presently residing at WARD NO-04, SANTRIYA PO-KHANPUR, DIST- JHUNJHUNUN, RAJASTHAN -333516 have changed my daughter's name from KM RITIKA to RITIKA vide Affidavit No. IN-DL49176661237814X dated 12.03.2025 before Notary Public at New Delhi. PD(1753)C

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कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, ( यांत्रिकी शाखा ), भोपाल क्रमांक 175/यां.वि./25 भोपाल, दिनांक 25.03.2025 निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंचजीत टेक्रेटारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण website https://www.mptenders.gov.in पर है।

Table with 4 columns: क्र. निविदा क्र., कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण, अनुमानित लागत (रू. में), निविदा क्रय करने का अंतिम दिनांक, समय

नोट - संशोधन केवल वेबसाइट पर ही देखे जा सकेंगे, समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे। Superintendenting Engineer Municipal Corporation Bhopal District Bhopal

IMF approves loan for Pakistan to address climate change

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

The International Monetary Fund approved a loan of \$1.3 Billion for Pakistan to address climate change while also reaching a staff-level agreement on the first review of the already agreed \$7 Billion loan.

The new agreement spans over 28 months under the Climate Resilience and Sustainability Facility which aims to help nations address climate challenges while committing to reforms.

Additionally, freeing \$1 Billion for the country under the \$7 Billion bailout programme would bring the total disbursements to \$2 Billion.

"The IMF team has reached a staff-level agreement (SLA) with the Pakistani authorities on the first review of the 37-month extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), and on a new 28-month arrangement under the IMF's (Resilience and Sustainability Trust) with total access over the 28 months of around \$1.3 Billion," Nathan Porter, mission chief to Pakistan, said on Tuesday.

"Upon approval (by the IMF board), Pakistan will have access to about \$1 Billion under the EFF, bringing total disbursements under the programme to about \$2 Billion," he added.

According to Radio Pakistan, the two agreements giving access to about 2 billion dollars is a "testament to Pakistan's significant strides in economic reforms, focusing on tax equity, monetary stability, energy sector transformation, and climate resilience."

The IMF in its statement also appreciated Pakistan for its efforts to bring stability.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Known to all that my client Ms. Iprat purchasing 2nd floor without roof plot No. 33, Area 60sq Yds. Kh. No. 30/32/12 & 30/29 Village Hastal Vikas Nagar Extn. Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059 from Sh. Kamal Sharma, S/o. Kamal Sharma & father Yashpal Sharma from Gagan Sharma through authorized G.P.A. ATS and Will dated 05.07.2017, Yashpal Sharma passed away on 07.04.2022. After his death, the said property was inherited by his wife Mrs. Iprat and one of her sons Sh. Kamal Sharma (Subsequentely, Jyoti Kohli transferred her share in the aforementioned property in favor of her brother Kamal Sharma through the relinquishment deed number 2025/23/11/1839 dated 17.01.2025 and Kamal Sharma haven't original survey certificate of Yashpal Sharma. It is informed that any deal without documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, may be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 15 days of this publication.

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION: Ch. No. 780 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75 Mobile :- 9899013918

PUBLIC NOTICE: This is to inform the general public that my client, Axis Bank Limited, having its branch at Ground Floor, Tower-1, Axis House, Sector-128, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.), is inclined to grant a loan facility to Mr. Devender Kumar against a freehold residential apartment bearing No. A-202, located on the 24th floor, along with three (3) covered car parking spaces No. A/B1-018, A/B1-019 and A/B3-020, each measuring 34.05 sq. ft. - in Tower-A. The said property has a super area of 3,858 sq. ft. (carpet area: 2,409 sq. ft.) and is part of the group housing building known as "Araya", situated in Sector-62, within the revenue estate of Village Ghata, Tehsil Wazirpur, District Gurugram (Haryana) (hereinafter referred to as the "Said Property"). Furthermore, Mr. Devender Kumar, son of Late Mr. Rati Ram, is the recorded owner of the Said Property by virtue of a Sale Deed dated 02.01.2025. However, the original Conveyance Deed dated 09.02.2021, bearing Document No. 8204, in respect of the Said Property, has been lost or misplaced. If any person has found the aforementioned document, they are requested to contact us within 15 days from the date of this notice at the number provided below. Failure to do so shall absolve my client, Axis Bank Limited, of any responsibility in this regard.

IN THE COURT OF Munsiff/Sub-Registrar, Srinagar Next Date, Purpose of Case, Orders and Judgments as well as other case information is available on http://ecourts.gov.in PUBLICATION NOTICE UNDER ORDER 5 RULE 20 CPC File No.: 922/2024 Suresh Sehgal & Ors Vs. Sushel Rattan & Ors (Suit for Permanent, Perpetual, and Mandatory Injunction) NOTICE TO: 1. Sushel Rattan, S/o Col Kanwal Rattan, R/o Vassant Vihar New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar Srinaga 2. Rajiv Rattan, S/o Col Kanwal Rattan, R/o Vassant Vihar, New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar (rajivrattan1948@gmail.com) 3. Kumkum Marathe, D/o Col Kanwal Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 4. Rajesh Rattan, S/o Kevai Rattan, R/o Vassant Vihar, New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar (rattanrk@gmail.com) 5. Renu Rattan, D/o Kevai Rattan, R/o Nizamuddin West, New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar (removoperty1@gmail.com) 6. Iman Rattan, W/o Arun Rattan, R/o Nizamuddin West, New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar 7. Aditya Rattan, S/o Arun Rattan, R/o Nizamuddin West, New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar (rattanaditya@gmail.com) 8. Radhika Sethi, D/o Col Keshav Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 9. Aditya Rattan, S/o Col Keshav Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 10. Mira Rajiv Mishra, D/o Col Anmol Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 11. Sidharath Rattan, S/o Col Anmol Rattan, R/o Pune Maharashtra, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar (sidharathrattan@gmail.com) 12. Sanjay Rattan, S/o Col Anmol Rattan, R/o Bengaluru Karnataka, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar (srrattan46@gmail.com) 13. Shubhi Rattan, S/o Col Prem Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 14. Sai Rattan, S/o Col Prem Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar (sairattan@yahoo.com) 15. Vishal Rattan, S/o Col Prem Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 16. Ranu Rattan, W/o Col Shyam Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 17. Sita Rattan, D/o Col Shyam Rattan, R/o E-9/3 DLF, Phase 1, Gurugram Haryana, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar 18. Nitya Mehra, D/o Col Shyam Rattan, R/o 16-Eastern Avenue, Maharanai Bagh, New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar (nityamehra@hotmail.com) 19. Nandita Narayan, D/o Col Shyam Rattan, R/o Narayan Road, New Delhi, A/P Shivpora, Srinagar 20. Uma Rattan, W/o Col Adresh Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar (adarshmarattan@gmail.com) 21. Ashok Khosla, S/o Kamla Khosla, D/o Wazir Ram Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar (akhosla@gmail.com) 22. Aasha Charanjiva, D/o Vimla Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar (acharanjivi@yahoo.com) 23. Anita Chandradath Singh, D/o Vimla Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 24. Asha Prakash, D/o Vimla Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 25. Chetan Prakash, S/o Vimla Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar 26. Meenakshi Prechhand, D/o Vimla Rattan, R/o Shivpora, Srinagar (minco-15@hotmail.com) 27. Kavita Bogad, D/o Pramulla Pandit (Rattan), R/o Silver Oaks, Estate A/P Shivpora Srinagar Bhul Bhai Road, Mumbai, (kavitaboga@gmail.com) Whereas, it has been proved to the satisfaction of the Court that the defendants, above named, cannot be served in the ordinary way of service. Hence, this proclamation under Order 5 Rule 20 CPC is hereby issued against them and they should appear personally or through their counsel on 02.04.2025 at 10:00 AM. Take notice that, in default of their appearance on the day before mentioned, the above said case will be heard and determined in their absence. Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this 03.02.2025. (Adnan Manzoor Naqashbandi) Munsiff/Sub-Registrar Srinagar

INTERLOCKING OF SEVEN LC GATES E-Tender Notice No. RN-ST-30-2024-25; Date: 24-03-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work. Name of Work: Interlocking of Seven LC gates with TVU more than 20000 in Rangiya Division. Tender Value: ₹4,52,15,824.59; Earnest Money: ₹3,76,100.00. E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 16-04-2025 and Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 16-04-2025 at Sr. DSTE/Rangiya's office. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website www.ireps.gov.in. DRM (S&T)/Rangiya NORTH EAST FRONTIER RAILWAY "Serving Customers with a smile"

Lost and Found I. Harvinder Singh Dogra S/o Sh. Joginder Singh Dogra R/o B - 56, Pandav Nagar, Delhi-110092 do hereby solemnly affirm and inform that I am the owner of property no. - B - 56, Measuring area 52.25 Sq. Mtrs. out of Kh. No. 470/23/9, Situated at the abadi of S-Block, Pandav Nagar, Delhi-110092. I have lost my Original Sale Deed dated 21-05-1971, Vide Registration No. 7953, in Book No. 1, Volume No. 376, on Pages 44 to 46, Dated 21-05-1971 in the office of Sub-Registrar IV Delhi executed by Shri Chetan Lal in favour of S. Joginder Singh in respect of above said Property. All other Previous chain of documents before 1971 related to the above said plot, I have already lodge a Lost Report in the R.G. on dated 24-03-2025. L.R. No. 2697748/2025. I have not mortgage the above said original documents with any Bank or any other financial institution in any manner, and I have not taken any Loan against the above said Property. Harvinder Singh Dogra

PUBLIC NOTICE: It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Usha Sharma W/o Mr. Sunil Sharma and Mr. Shivam Sharma S/o Mr. Sunil Sharma who are the owners of the Residential House No. 99 area measuring 172.33 Sq. Yards i.e. 144.08 Sq. Meters, situated at Rajbagh Colony, in the Village Pasonda, Pargana Loni, Tehsil and Dist. Ghazipur, U.P. vide Gift Deed dated 21.05.2024 (Doc No. 6276) executed by Mr. Sunil Sharma S/o Mr. Om Prakash Sharma and same to finance & mortgage by S.M.F. India Credit Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Co. Ltd.), Noida. So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NFDC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim right/title/interest/ creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, ten etc. Lucern Legal LLP B-83B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector 2, Noida, UP-201301 Contact No. 120-4269379

PUBLIC NOTICE: It is publically notified that Smt. Vasantha Srinivasan wife of late Shri T.T. Srinivasan R/o SFS Flat No. 180-B Pocket-B 1st floor, Mayur-Vihar Phase-2, Delhi, has lost/misplaced the original NOC for water and electricity of the said premises. An FIR in this regard has been lodged at police station, Crime branch Delhi vide FIR/No. 2680511/2025 dated 18/03/2025. Any person(s) found to have the original documents, File No. F116(147) 87/SFS/TP/II please contact the above address/mobile no. 8130456364 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. person(s) claiming any right/interest can personally inform or write to Dy. Director, SFS Housing Vikas Sakan, INA New Delhi 110023

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, (U.P.) Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in E-TENDER NOTICE E-Tender are invited from eligible firms/contractors for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & https://etender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc. Table with 4 columns: S. No., Job No., Name of Work, Amount (Rs.)

Which can be uploaded from 01.04.2025 to 07.04.2025 upto 5:00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 08.04.2025 at 11:00 AM. General Manager (NTC) Noida CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

HARYANA SHEHRI VIKAS PRADHIKARAN PUBLIC NOTICE

As per the decision of the Full Bench of Hon'ble High court of Punjab and Haryana in CWP No. 22252 of 2016 titled as Rajiv Manchanda Vs. State of Haryana and others, reservation policy dated 04.12.2015 upheld by the Hon'ble High Court in CWP No. 22252 of 2016 titled as Rajiv Manchanda Vs. State of Haryana and others and affidavit filed by the Chief Administrator, HSPV, Panchkula in the Hon'ble High Court in CWP No. 22136 of 2015 titled as Adesh Aggarwal & CWP No. 14164 of 2017 Dalip Singh Vs. State of Haryana, Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran hereby invites applications from landowners (Oustees) whose land was acquired for the development of Sectors post 10.09.1987 in Urban Estate, Sonipat/Gohana i.e. Sector 23, 12, 7 Sonipat and Sector-7, Gohana.

In view of the mandate of the Hon'ble High Court in Rajiv Manchanda's case (Supra), a detailed exercise was carried out in all the sectors with respect to the plots available to be offered to oustees in terms of the reservation policy dated 04.12.2015, which had been upheld by the Hon'ble Court in Rajiv Manchanda's case (Supra). The entire details as regards the availability of plots in respective sectors and the plots reserved for the oustees (Subject to their availability in sectors) in terms of policy dated 04.12.2015 was also placed before the Hon'ble Court in the affidavit filed in CWP No. 22136 of 2015 titled as Adesh Aggarwal & CWP No. 14164 of 2017 Dalip Singh Vs. State of Haryana. In view thereof, the last and final advertisement for settling the claims of oustees is being issued in respect of plots available in respective sectors in terms of policy dated 04.12.2015, 11.08.2016 and 08.05.2018. No further advertisement shall be issued.

The oustees are requested to apply along with application money Rs. 50,000/-. The Claims of oustees shall be decided in terms of policy dated 04.12.2015, 11.08.2016 and 08.05.2018 and thus, the oustees shall duly read the terms and conditions therein before applying against the advertisement. For detailed terms and conditions, terms of payment, policy guidelines and Sector wise & category wise detail of the plots are available on the HSPV website i.e. (www.hsvpry.org.in) The scheme will start w.e.f 27.03.2025 and close on 27.05.2025 at 5:00 PM. For any other details may contact Estate Officer, HSPV, Sonipat. Estate Officer, HSPV, Sonapat. Administrator, HSPV, Rohtak. RO 33263-C-27-7

THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD. C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058 Phone: 011-25611042, 25611043, 25611044 Email: legal@kangrabank.com, legal1@kangrabank.com Website: www.kangrabank.com APPENDIX IV [See rule 8(1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (For immovable property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised officer of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", Head office at, C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi-110058, having its registered office at 1916, Chuna Mandi, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110055, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, [54 of 2002] and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule [3] of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Bank had issued a demand notice on dated 03-01-2025, calling upon the borrower Sh. Sushil Mehta S/o. Sh. Ashok Mehta R/o. H.No.1357, Gali No.5A, B-Block, Baba Colony, Burari, Delhi-110084 also at Sh. Sushil Mehta S/o. Sh. Ashok Mehta Co. Mks. Mehta Electricals Kh. No.841, Gali No.6, Upkar Colony, Burari, Delhi-110084 and calling upon the borrower Smt. Asha Mehta W/o. Sh. Ashok Mehta, R/o. H.No.1357, Gali No.5A, B-Block, Baba Colony, Sant Nagar Burari, Delhi-110084, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.18,89,107/- (Rupees Eighteen Lakh Eighty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Six Only), together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of the notice till the date of payment, with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the notice. The above mentioned borrower, mortgagor & Surety having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower, mortgagor, Surety and the public in general that the Bank has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, read with rule [8] of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, on this 21st day of March 2025. The borrower, mortgagor & Surety in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the mortgaged property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", for an amount of Rs.9,87,376/- together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of notice till the date of realization together with all the costs incurred by the Bank in realizing the said amount. The borrower, mortgagor & Surety attention is also invited towards provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, in respect of time available, to redeem the below mentioned mortgaged property/Secured Asset.

# Maharashtra emerging as national EV capital: Fadnavis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said the state is emerging as the “national capital” of electric vehicles (EVs) with major manufacturing plants coming up in Pune and Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar.

Speaking during Question Hour in the legislative council, he said the shift to EVs from conventional vehicles will reduce air pollution.

“Maharashtra is becoming national capital of electric vehicles. This is primarily because significant EV manufacturing plants are being established in Pune and Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar,” he said.

“The contribution of vehicles (running on petrol or diesel) to air pollution is the highest. A shift towards electric vehicles will help reduce this problem,” the chief minister added. Both private and public transport sectors are increasingly adopt-



Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis

PIONEER PHOTO

ing EVs and more than 2,500 electric buses are being added to the public transport sector in the state in a phased manner, Fadnavis said.

“The number of electric vehicles being registered in the state is steadily rising.

Over 50 per cent of newly registered vehicles are now EVs,” he said.

The government was also building supporting infrastructure including a large-scale EV charging network across the state, the CM said.

# NITI Aayog working to improve India’s penetration into global value chains for MSMEs’ growth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

NITI Aayog is working on a programme to improve India’s penetration into global value chains for growth of domestic micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), CEO of the government think-tank B V R Subrahmanyam said on Wednesday.

Observing that MSMEs are more affected by regulations than large companies, he said the prime minister has taken a major step towards deregulation and a task force under the cabinet secretary is working on it.

Subrahmanyam was addressing a gathering after launching ‘the Digital Excellence for Growth and Enterprise’, or

‘Dx-EDGE’, a platform to empower MSMEs with the tools, knowledge and ecosystem needed to become future-ready, competitive and resilient.

Dx-EDGE is a national initiative spearheaded by CII with the support of NITI Frontier Tech Hub (NITI FTH) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to drive digital transformation across India’s MSMEs.

The NITI Aayog CEO further said it is a fact that some of the big manufacturers have moved to India, and cited the example of mobile phones, terming it as a success story of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) initiatives. The other side of the story is, he said, that 95 per cent of what goes into mobile phone manufactur-

ing is being imported.

“We are working on to get the ecosystem to India. NITI is working on a programme to improve India’s penetration of global value chains. To penetrate into global value chains, you need to have the ecosystem here, which means the intermediate routes. They are not final products. They go into some other product. Bulk of global manufacturing is of intermediate products. And who makes these intermediate products, largely MSMEs,” Subrahmanyam said.

He also said the CII and NITI Frontier Tech Hub Dx-EDGE platform marks a transformative leap in India’s digital journey, designed to empower MSMEs with cutting-edge technology and digital

# Mother Dairy launches high protein milk in Delhi NCR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Mother Dairy on Wednesday launched ‘Promilk’, a protein-rich milk product priced at ₹70 per litre, targeting the country’s protein deficit population in the Delhi-NCR region.

The new cow milk product contains 40 grams of protein per litre, four per cent fat, and 11.5 per cent solids-not-fat (SNF) and is fortified with vitamins A and D.

It will be available in 500 ml and one-litre packaging through offline and online retail outlets starting Thursday.

The company’s Managing Director or Manish Bandish said that the product aims to address nutritional challenges, noting that 70-80 per cent of Indians struggle to meet daily protein requirements, with 93 per cent unaware of their nutritional needs.

“Protein is a vital part of a balanced diet,” Bandish said at the launch event.

Promilk offers 30 per cent more protein than standard milk, providing a convenient nutrition solution, while maintaining familiar taste.

The company’s initial target is 50,000 litres daily and plans to expand beyond Delhi-NCR based on initial market response.

**The new cow milk product will be available in 500 ml and one-litre packaging through offline and online retail outlets starting from 28th of March**

Mother Dairy also intends to introduce additional ‘Pro’ range products like curd and paneer within three months.

A subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board, Mother Dairy collects milk from 10 Lakh farmers across 12 states and operates 40 Lakh retail outlets nationwide.

# Bandhan Bank signs MoU with Indian Air Force

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Private lender Bandhan Bank on Wednesday said it has inked an MoU with the Indian Air Force to provide corporate salary accounts to the defence personnel.

“The ‘Bandhan Bank Shaurya Salary Account’ will have features like zero balance savings account, protection for self and family, and attractive interest rates, the lender said in a statement. “Bandhan Bank, with its pan Indian presence, is deeply committed to support the nation through every initiative. We are excited to strengthen our partnership with the IAF to deliver superior banking experience,” Executive Director and Chief Business Officer Rajinder Babbar said.

The Reserve bank of India (RBI) has appointed Bandhan Bank as an agency bank. The lender has been also authorised by the Central Board of Direct Taxes for collection of taxes, and disbursement of central civil and railway pensions.

# SEBI keeps flexible workspace operator WeWork India’s IPO in abeyance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

SEBI has put the initial public offering (IPO) of premium flexible workspace operator WeWork India Management Limited in “abeyance”, an update with the markets regulator showed on Monday. The Embassy Group-promoted firm, which filed its draft IPO papers on January 31, planned to offer 4.37 crore shares through an Offer for Sale (OFS) route.

Under the OFS, promoter Embassy Buildcon LLP and investor 1 Ariel Way Tenant Limited proposed to offload shares, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Without specifying reasons, Sebi stated that the “issuance of observations (has been) kept in abeyance,” according to an update on its website.

In its draft papers, the company stated that the object of the offer is to achieve the benefits of listing the equity shares on the stock exchanges. Launched in 2017,

**WeWork India has played a significant role in the growth of the flexible workspace sector in India and has been a key contributor to the evolution of flexible workspace products and services**

WeWork India Management is a leading premium flexible workspace operator in the country. It provides flexible, high-quality workspaces to customers, which include companies of all sizes — large enterprises, small and mid-size businesses, startups, as well as individuals.

It leases primarily Grade A office space from leading developers across Tier 1 cities and design, build, and operates them as flexible workspaces. WeWork India has played a significant role in the growth of the flexible workspace sector in India and has been a key contributor to the evolution of flexible workspace products and services. JM Financial, ICICI Securities, Jefferies India, Kotak Mahindra Capital Company and 360 ONE WAM are responsible for managing the public issue.



# Sensex falls by 728 points

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Stock markets snapped the seven-day winning run on Wednesday with benchmark Sensex tanking 728 points due to profit-taking in banking and IT shares ahead of monthly expiry of derivatives contracts.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 728.69 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 77,288.50 as 25 of its components closed in the red. During the day, it slumped 822.97 points or 1.05 per cent to 77,194.22. The NSE Nifty dropped 181.80 points or 0.77 per cent to 23,486.85.

In the past seven trading days, the BSE benchmark index jumped 4,188.28 points or 5.67 per cent.

The Nifty surged 1,271.45 points or 5.67 per cent during the same period.

From the Sensex pack, NTPC, Tech Mahindra, Zomato, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, Maruti, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, and HDFC Bank were the losers.

IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, Titan, Mahindra and Mahindra and Power Grid were the gainers.

“The market experienced profit-booking after the recent gains, on the back of next week’s US tariff announcements. The sectors with higher exposure to the US market, like pharma and IT, have witnessed some selling pressure,” Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Among Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo

and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower.

European markets were trading lower. US markets ended higher on Tuesday.

“Markets declined after a brief pause amid mixed cues. Following an initial uptick, Nifty remained range-bound in the first half, but profit-booking in select heavyweights dragged the index lower as the session progressed. Participants are booking profits ahead of the March derivatives contract expiry, while concerns over tariff discussions continue to weigh on sentiment,” Ajit Mishra SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. The BSE smallcap gauge declined 1.45 per cent and midcap dipped 0.67 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, oil and gas dropped the most by 1.52 per cent, followed by realty (1.37 per cent), utilities (1.32 per cent), energy (1.29 per cent), bankex (1.08 per cent), BSE Focused IT (1.12 per cent), IT (1.11 per cent) and teck (0.77 per cent).

Capital Goods emerged as the only gainer. As many as 3,115 stocks declined while 919 advanced and 109 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹5,371.57 Crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.58 per cent to USD 73.44 a barrel. The BSE benchmark gained 32.81 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 78,017.19 on Tuesday. The Nifty eked out gains of 10.30 points or 0.04 per cent to 23,668.65.

# India’s exports bound to grow despite global uncertainties, says DGFT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India’s exports are bound to grow in the coming years despite uncertainties over global trade and tariff, a senior government official said on Wednesday. Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Kumar Sarangi said that exporters should tread the path pragmatically and wisely to navigate the current global trade contours.

He also said that the current scenario presents a “golden” opportunity for India to do a variety of things which will propel exports and increase manufacturing competitiveness.

Despite the “uncertainties relating to trade and tariff, our exports are bound to grow in future years,” he said at the SourceX India 2025 show. It was organised by the Federation of Indian Export

Organisations (FIEO). US President Donald Trump has imposed reciprocal tariffs or import duties on countries like China and has pledged to impose these levies on India also on April 2.

Certain exporters have raised concerns that imposition of duties by the US on sectors like engineering and pharma will hurt shipments to America, which is the largest trading partner of India.

Sarangi said that in the current year, India’s exports in goods and services will cross \$800 Billion. Last year it was \$778 Billion.

“While we see a temporary blip in exports (in the recent) months, in the longer run, our exporting communities have been giving us an impression that the number of order enquiries which they are receiving is fairly positive and that gives me the confidence that our exports will

Viksit Bharat goal.

“With Dx-EDGE, we are building an exciting ecosystem-led approach to empower MSMEs to embrace technology, strengthen resilience and thrive in an increasingly digital world. This initiative is a key pillar of NITI Frontier Tech Hub’s vision to accelerate India’s transformation into a frontier tech nation, ensuring that no enterprise is left behind in the digital revolution,” she said.

T G Sitharam, Chairman, AICTE, noted that more and more youth are entering the workforce and underlined the need to create jobs. Underlining India’s strength in STEM education, he said that India has delivered engineering and management education to the world.

## IN BRIEF

### VC DR KARAMJEET SINGH INAUGURATED WORKSHOP ON SKILL BASED TRAINING OF YOUTH ON VERMICOMPOSTING

Amritsar: Dr Karamjeet Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University inaugurated the five days workshop on skill based training of Youth on Vermicomposting, Apiculture and Fish Farming held at Guru Granth Sahib Bhawan of the University. This workshop is being organised by the Department of Zoology under Environment Education Program of Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change, GOI and implemented by Punjab State Council for Science and Technology, State Nodal Agency.



### DELHI COLLEGES, SHINE AT HSBC’S INDIA BUSINESS CASE PROGRAMME



Teams from these colleges will head to Hong Kong to participate in a programme. A uniquely designed programme focusing on career preparedness of undergraduate students. The programme sees participation from nearly 8,000 students. The 11th edition of HSBC’s career readiness initiative, The India Business Case Programme, concluded in March 2025.

### GRAPHISADS ENTERS LANDMARK AGREEMENT TO MAINTAIN, MONETIZE 100+ PUBLIC UTILITIES IN NDMC ARE

New Delhi: Graphisads Ltd, one of India’s leading outdoor media owners and advertising agencies, has entered into an agreement with the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) to operate, maintain and generate advertising revenue from 100+ public utilities located in the NDMC area.



### ARYANS GROUP ANNOUNCES ₹40 CRORE AID FOR SOCIAL INITIATIVES, CANCER HOSPITAL

New Delhi: Aryans Group of Companies has pledged ₹40 Crore in financial assistance to various organisations, including ₹15 Crore for defense research, ₹20 Crore for the Nirmla Gajanan Foundation, and ₹5 Crore for the Sahyadri Devrai Foundation. The company also announced plans to establish a cancer hospital in Pune.

### GNDU TO ESTABLISH SKILL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE IN COLLABORATION WITH NSDC



Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University set to establish a Skill Development Centre under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India. This follows a visit by Dr Sandeep Singh Kaura, Adviser to the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) for the Skill India International Mission, who met with Vice-Chancellor Dr Karamjeet Singh and other officials.

# Wipro bags 500 million pound deal from UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

IT services company Wipro on Wednesday announced that it has clinched a 500-million pound (\$644.7 Million), 10-year strategic deal from British insurer Phoenix Group.

Announcing the blockbuster deal, Wipro said the project is designed to deliver life and pension business administration for the ReAssure business and accelerate Phoenix Group’s operational transformation.

As per the contours of the deal, Wipro’s existing FCA-regulated entity Wipro Financial Outsourcing Services Limited (WFOSL) will deliver comprehensive life and pension administration services

to Phoenix Group’s ReAssure customers. As part of the “transformational” initiative, a number of Phoenix employees will transition to Wipro, the release said but did not divulge the exact numbers.

“Wipro Limited, a leading technology services and consulting company, today announced that it has won a £500 million, 10-year strategic deal with Phoenix Group, the UK’s largest long-term savings and retirement business,” the release said.

These services will cover policy administration, claim processing, customer service support, data management and reporting, compliance and regulatory support, as well as platform technologies. “Wipro’s expertise in technology and

service makes them ideally placed to help us deliver outstanding service and value for our ReAssure customers on their journey to and through retirement. We are delighted to have them join us as one of our ecosystem of strategic partners for this phase of our transformation journey,” Andy Briggs, Phoenix Group CEO, noted.

Omkar Nisal, CEO — Europe, Wipro Limited, and Non-Executive Chairman of WFOSL, said the “landmark deal” further underscores the company’s commitment to helping financial institutions deliver exceptional client experiences and further cements its position as a key player in the Life and Pension Third Party Administration (TPA) provider sector in the UK.

## Argentina secures World Cup spot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Buenos Aires

Defending champion Argentina celebrated throughout Tuesday as the team secured its place at the 2026 World Cup hours before an historic 4-1 win over archrival Brazil. Bolivia's failure to beat Uruguay meant Argentina had enough cushion in South American qualifying to secure one of the continent's six direct spots for the 48-team World Cup set to be co-hosted next year by the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

After Bolivia's 0-0 draw with Uruguay at El Alto, about 85,000 raucous Argentina fans kicked off the festivities at the Monumental de Nunez Stadium despite the absence of Lionel Messi. They were chanting into the night in Buenos Aires, now more confident their team can defend the World Cup title.

For Brazil, its worst deficit in South American World Cup qualifying history compounded pressure on coach Dorival Júnior. Brazil is in fourth place in South American qualifying with 21 points, 10 behind Argentina but only two behind second-place Ecuador, which was held to a 0-0 draw by Chile.

Third-place Uruguay and fifth-place Paraguay also have 21 points, and Colombia is one point behind them in sixth. Seventh-place Venezuela has 15 points after a 1-0 win over 9th-place Peru.

Brazil was missing three regular starters — goalkeeper Alisson, defender Gabriel Magalhães and midfielder Bruno Guimarães — and wasn't really competitive from start to finish.

It's the first time Argentina has won both



matches against Brazil in a World Cup qualifying tournament. The home victory was also Argentina's first against the Brazilians since qualifying for the 2006 World Cup.

Argentina has led South American qualifying from the start, with few hiccups and major away wins at Brazil and Uruguay. But coach Lionel Scaloni has not fielded 37-year-old Messi in several games, which still raises doubts on whether the star will play at the World Cup next year.

Messi has an injury to his adductor and was not included in Argentina's squad for the two latest matches.

ARGENTINE FLAIR, BRAZILIAN DESPAIR Striker Julián Álvarez said

Argentina's big win "is historic because of the rival, the context, what was said, the great match we played and because we are qualified to the World Cup."

"Very humbly we did our work," he said. Argentina scored its two first goals in only 12 minutes of play, both thanks to accurate passing and some clumsy Brazilian defending.

Alvarez netted the first in the 4th minute after Marquinhos, Murillo and Guilherme Arana failed to reach the ball. The Argentine striker shot between the legs of goalkeeper Bento from close range.

Argentina scored again eight minutes later with Enzo Fernández, once again from close range after a low cross by

Gonzalo Molina. Brazil got one back via Matheus Cunha in the 26th after a mistake by Cristian Romero, who lost the ball to the Brazilian by the edge of the box. Enzo Fernández found Alexis Mac Allister bursting into the penalty box unmarked 11 minutes later to make it 3-1 to Argentina.

During the break, Brazil sought to get some grip by boosting its presence in the midfield with Joao Gomes and the substitution of Murillo and striker Rodrygo. But it was to no avail, with Giuliano Simeone scoring for Argentina in the 71st after four Brazilian defenders failed to block a low cross in front of their goal.

"Everything we planned, from the first minute of play, did not happen," Brazil's coach told a news conference. "Argentina was much better in every way. I apologize to Brazil fans, we expected something very different from what we showed. It was a very difficult night for us."

Brazil captain Marquinhos said all players should have done better in Buenos Aires. "It isn't only about Dorival," Marquinhos said. "This is not only the coach's fault, it is the players too. We need to have our heads in the right place. They (Argentina) also had tough times before and they overcame it. We can do it too."

Ednaldo Rodrigues, the president of Brazil's soccer confederation, said he'd speak to the domestic media Wednesday, but didn't reply whether Dorival Júnior was going to be his main topic.

Argentine players celebrated with their fans, asking for "a minute of silence" for Brazil. Scaloni's team has not lost to their rivals since 2019.

## Olympic venue plans in place for Brisbane 2032

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Brisbane

Ready. Set. Wait. It'll be another year or two before construction begins on the main Olympic stadium for the Brisbane 2032 Olympics.

**And this is racing mode.**

It's taken almost four years since the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2032 Summer Games to Brisbane to finalize a cohesive venue plan, and now the countdown is serious for the 7.1 billion Australian dollars (US\$4.4 billion) construction program. Stephen Conry, chairman of the Brisbane 2032 independent infrastructure coordination authority, on Wednesday said "the likely date or year for shovels in the ground for the (main) stadium would be 2026, '27" after the design and approvals phase.

"There's a lot of work to be done when you start spending billions of dollars on infrastructure and development," added Conry, who led the 100-day review of all venue options and reported back to the state government this month.

"We have over seven years, plenty of time to build a stadium. We'll have it ready in 2031 and for a period longer than is required for preparation for the Games," Conry joined Andrew Liveris, the president of the Brisbane 2032 organizing committee, in pitching the Olympic construction and legacy plan to the Infrastructure Association of Queensland on Wednesday, a day after

state Premier David Crisafulli unveiled the latest concepts. A new 60,000-seat stadium built in inner-city parkland, a sailing venue on the Whitsunday islands near the Great Barrier Reef and a crocodile-inhabited rowing venue in Rockhampton on Queensland's central coast are part of the program that Crisafulli launched with a theme that seemed universal among politicians and citizens: just get on with it. The original bid idea floated by then-Queensland premier Annastacia Palaszczuk to renovate a 130-year-old cricket stadium known as the Gabba to become the centerpiece of the Olympics was scrapped by her successor Steven Miles a year ago. Miles lost government last year to Crisafulli, who broke an election promise of no new stadiums but said it was in the best interests of the public.

Rather than shrink the scale, his government expanded it to cities and sites up and down the Queensland coast, factoring in international tourist destinations and relatively lesser-known regions. Some of them — the rowing for instance — may ultimately be rejected by international sports federations. But it's on the drawing board. The state government also aims to bring in private-sector funding for an indoor arena that will be outside the Olympic scope but could possibly become a venue for events in 2032. There's also the inclusion of a 25,000-seat aquatic center that will become home to a national academy is also in the Victoria Park precinct, and has been positively received by the swimming community.

## Nigeria's World Cup qualifying hopes dealt major late blow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Cairo

Nigeria conceded a last-minute goal in a major blow to its World Cup qualifying hopes, when Egypt and Morocco all but booked their places at next year's tournament.

Zizo's goal was enough for unbeaten Egypt's 1-0 win over Sierra Leone in Cairo on Tuesday, while Morocco looks assured of qualifying with a nine-point lead over its rivals after a 2-0 win over Tanzania.

Real Madrid's Brahim Diaz scored a penalty after Nayef Aguerd broke the deadlock on a rebound for Morocco's fifth win from five games in Group E.

Zizo struck just before the break for Egypt to maintain a five-point lead over Burkina Faso, which had defeated Guinea-Bissau 2-1 on Monday in Group A.

### Nigeria's nightmare

Zimbabwe's Tawanda Chirewa scored in the final minute to silence the home fans in Uyo, Nigeria as the visitors claimed a 1-1 draw.

Nigeria star Victor Osimhen put the Super Eagles on course to claim just their second win in Group C after Friday's 2-0 victory over Rwanda had rekindled Nigeria's qualification hopes.

But the 21-year-old Chirewa, a late substitute, equalized in the 90th to earn Zimbabwe's draw.

Meanwhile, South Africa defeated Benin 2-0 to consolidate the top spot. Bafana Bafana leads with 13 points from six rounds, five clear of Rwanda (which drew with Lesotho 1-1) and Benin. Nigeria stayed fourth in the group with just seven points.

Only the nine group winners secure automatic qualification. The four best-placed runners-up will compete to be the African contender in FIFA's six-country playoff for the last two qualification spots at the World Cup next year in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

### Algeria makes a statement

Wolfsburg forward Mohammed

Amoura scored a hat trick as Algeria defeated Mozambique 5-1 to open a three-point lead over the visitors in Group G. Guinea's qualification hopes are all but over after a 1-0 loss to Uganda, the team's third defeat leaving it eight points behind Algeria in fifth.

Cape Verde remained top of Group D with a 2-1 win in Angola, though Cameroon responded with Vincent Aboubakar scoring twice in a 3-1 win over Libya. Cape Verde stayed a point ahead of Cameroon.

### Sudan's missed chance

Sudan lost control of Group B with David Sebit scoring in stoppage time to earn South Sudan a 1-1 draw.

It allowed both Congo and Senegal to take advantage, which they did with 2-0 wins over Mauritania and Togo, respectively.

Congo moved top of Group B on 13 points, one ahead of unbeaten Senegal and Sudan. Sudan dropped to third on goal difference.

### Black Stars twinkling

Ghana moved atop Group I by scoring a total of eight goals in back-to-back wins over Chad and Madagascar, helping ease the disappointment of failing to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations in November.

Otto Addo's team eased to a 5-0 rout of Chad in Accra on Friday, then enjoyed a 3-0 win over Madagascar on Monday to seize control of the group.

Comoros, the surprise early leader, stayed three points behind Ghana on Tuesday with a 1-0 win over Chad.

### Elephants hold on

Ivory Coast needed goalkeeper Yahia Fofana at his best as it held on for a 1-0 win over Gambia on Monday to stay a point above Gabon atop Group F.

Sébastien Haller's early goal was enough for the Elephants to win in Abidjan, keeping the team top after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had scored twice for Gabon to beat Kenya 2-1.

## Lionel Messi to visit India in October

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Football fans in India will have another glimpse of Lionel Messi and his Argentine team in an exhibition match in Kerala in October, 14 years after the World Cup-winning captain first visited the country.

In November last year, Kerala Sports Minister V Abdurahiman had announced the news of Argentina visiting the southern state and playing two friendly matches in Kochi.

On Wednesday, HSBC India became the official partner of the Argentine team to collaborate and promote football in India, and announced that the match will be held in October.

"Under this partnership, the Argentina

national football team, including legendary player Lionel Messi, will visit India for an international exhibition match in October 2025," a release from HSBC India said.

"The Argentine Football Association (AFA) and HSBC have today announced the signing of a new one-year partnership for India and Singapore, covering the competitive season in 2025 ahead of the 2026 World Cup qualification final matches."

Messi's first visit to India was to play a World Cup qualifying round match against Venezuela in Kolkata in September 2011. Argentina won that match 1-0 at Salt Lake Stadium.

Sandeep Batra, Head International Wealth and Premier Banking HSBC

India, said: "As we join forces with one of the most revered teams in the world of football, we look forward to creating unforgettable experiences for fans and customers alike, and supporting the Argentine team in their journey towards the World Cup 2026."

Argentine Football Association President Claudio Fabian Tapia said: "A new milestone has been achieved for the international expansion of AFA, opening new opportunities with HSBC both in India and in Singapore."

"This agreement looks after our team and we look forward to consolidate our agreement and extend in multiple regions as we progress in the 2025 and 2026. We welcome HSBC as the new partner of the Argentina National Team."

## Iran qualifies for 2026 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tehran

Iran qualified for the 2026 World Cup after Mehdi Taremi scored twice in a 2-2 draw with Uzbekistan.

The Inter Milan striker scored his second goal in the 83rd minute on Tuesday, giving Iran the point it needed to qualify to a fourth straight appearance at the World Cup and a seventh overall.

The 48-team tournament will be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Relations are tense between Iran and the United States.

President Donald Trump has linked the actions of Yemen's Houthi rebels to Iran, warning Tehran it would "suffer the consequences" for further attacks by the group. It's unclear how the strained relations will impact the Iranian team's preparations.

Uzbekistan, three points behind Iran in Group A, would have qualified for the first time with a victory and twice took the lead at the Azadi Stadium.

Khojimat Erkinov struck after 16 minutes but Taremi put Iran back on level terms seven minutes into the sec-

ond half by firing an unstoppable volley into the roof of the net from the edge of the area.

Immediately, Abbosbek Fayzullaev restored Uzbekistan's lead but, Taremi responded, this time from close range, to send Iran to the World Cup where it will attempt to progress past the group stages for the first time.

**The 48-team tournament will be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Relations are tense between Iran and the United States**

The top two from each of the three groups of six in Asia are guaranteed a place, while the teams that finish third and fourth will advance to a further stage to compete for two more places.

Third-placed United Arab Emirates defeated bottom team North Korea 2-1 to move four points behind Uzbekistan while Asian champion Qatar is out of the running for automatic qualification after a 3-1 loss in Kyrgyzstan.

Socceroos move closer to qualification Earlier, Australia took a big step toward securing a spot at tournament with a 2-0 win over China in Hangzhou that also ended the hosts' hopes of automatic qualification.

First-half goals from Jackson Irvine and Nishan Velupillay were enough for the Socceroos. Australia is second, three points clear of third-place Saudi Arabia, which drew 0-0 at already-qualified Japan. China has yet to return to the World Cup since its 2002 debut and remains bottom of the group, level on six points with Bahrain who lost 1-0 in Indonesia.

Saudi Arabia is still in the hunt for a seventh appearance after a battling goalless draw in Japan. The hosts dominated at Saitama Stadium but were unable to get the breakthrough.

### South Korea drops points again

In Group B, South Korea stayed top but dropped two points for the second time inside a week, drawing 1-1 at home to Jordan.

## Naveen Pulligilla, Musa Sherif, win Kenyan NRC RC3

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Nairobi

Hyderabad's Naveen Pulligilla and co-driver Musa Sherif of Kasargod have become the first all-Indian team to participate in the World Rally Championship (WRC) and win the RC3 Kenyan National Rally Championship here. The duo competed in the iconic Safari Rally Kenya 2025, which is a part of WRC. Naveen and Musa, driving a Ford Fiesta Rally3 machine for the Africa Eco Motorsport team, were leading the WRC3 class with just two stages to go and were on the verge of a debut. But they encountered mechanical issues with the lower arm and were forced to pull out.

However, by that stage, they had already clinched the Kenyan Rally Championship title which concluded after 19 stages.

"The terrain isn't just challenging, it's a shock for any first-timer, with boulder-strewn routes and unpredictable conditions. Despite that, we managed to maintain pace and stay within three minutes of the top WRC cars," said Naveen, who is planning to take part in two more WRC rounds in Saudi Arabia and Sardinia.

Musa said, "The terrain was brutal, but we pushed through to make history as the first all-Indian team in WRC."

Naveen, a regular in INRC for the last couple of years, took part in the Asia Pacific Rally Championship in New Zealand in 2024 and is known for his precise and aggressive driving style.

Musa has over 33 years of rallying experience. As India's most decorated co-driver, he has participated in more than 330 rallies, including 91 international events, and has secured 10 national titles. He is the reigning 2024 Indian National Rally Champion co-driver.

The Safari Rally Kenya is known for its demanding terrain, landscape and unpredictable weather. The first Indian duo completed 19 of the 21 challenging stages, with 383.10 km of competitive sections in a total rally distance of 1,381.92 km.

## Winner team of FIFA World Cup to earn \$125 million

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Zurich

The winner of FIFA's first 32-team Club World Cup in the United States could earn \$125 Million as details of a \$1 Billion prize money fund were finally published Wednesday.

FIFA said it allocated \$525 Million in guaranteed fees for teams taking part in the June 14-July 13 tournament, ranging from \$38.19 Million to the top-ranked European team — likely Real Madrid — to \$3.58 million for the Oceania representative Auckland City.

A further \$475 Million is earned by results in the 63 games, with \$2 Million paid for winning group stage games, \$7.5 Million for playing in the round of 16 and \$40 Million to the team that wins the final at MetLife Stadium near New York.

The golden trophy has been sitting in the Oval Office at the White House this month after FIFA President Gianni Infantino delivered it to President Donald Trump. The prize fund was delayed until a global broadcast deal was belatedly agreed in December with streaming service DAZN, which then got a major investment from a state-backed sports agency in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia also was confirmed in December by FIFA as host of the men's

2034 World Cup. Each of the 12 European teams in the Club World Cup lineup will be paid at least \$12.81 Million as an entry fee.

Payments will be decided by "a ranking based on sporting and commercial criteria," FIFA said without providing details. Manchester City, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea also qualified by either winning a Champions League title from 2021 to 2024, or having consistent results in the competition over those four seasons.

Countries were capped at two entries, unless they had three Champions League winners. Salzburg of Austria qualified as the final European team, despite never advancing beyond the round of 16, because higher-ranked clubs like Liverpool and Barcelona were blocked by the country cap.

The six South American teams each will get a \$15.21 Million entry fee.

Teams from Africa, Asia and the CONCACAF region of North America — including Lionel Messi's Inter Miami, despite not winning the MLS Cup title last season — each will get \$9.55 Million for playing.

Leon of Mexico is currently contesting its removal from the competition by FIFA because it is in shared ownership with Pachuca which also qualified.

## Angry, disappointed after 0-0 draw with Bangladesh: Marquez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Shillong

Angry and disappointed" at India playing out a 0-0 draw against Bangladesh in the AFC Asian Cup qualifying round match, head coach Manolo Marquez said his team has gone two-three steps back since the first match under him last year.

At the end of a scrappy contest between the two familiar rivals, Marquez admitted that his team played a "very bad game" in all departments.

"I am really angry and disappointed. If you ask me, maybe today is the most difficult press conference in my career. Because I don't want to say all the things that are in my head at this moment," the Spaniard said after the match on Tuesday night. "When we started in Hyderabad against Mauritius (in Intercontinental Cup in September 2024) with one training session, till now, before the game today, it was every time better. Today we took two or three steps back," he said in a hard-hitting press conference.

"Very, very poor performance of the Indian team, in the first half especially. It was better in the second half but not enough. We got one point, that's the best thing," Marquez mentioned the absence of a few injured players but said it was no excuse for the poor show.

"A lot of very important players, starters, they are not here. All of them injured. But



this is not an excuse," he said, referring to the injuries to Brandon Fernandes, Manvir Singh and Lallianzuala Chhangte.

"First, it's a reality. But second, we need to improve always. Even playing good football, you need to improve always in all the areas, in defence, in attack, in transitions, in set-pieces, everything."

"Today was not our day. The best thing is that all four teams are with one point and we have five games. We start from zero in the second round."

Midfielder Lalengmawia Ralte said his

team was "lucky" to have got a draw.

"I also agree that we are lucky not to concede a goal. And we are lucky to get the draw. We could have done so much better," Marquez, who took charge as India head coach in July 2024, dismissed the notion that his players are lacking in experience. "This is nothing about experience or not experience. This is how you enter in the game. The game started with one pass back. And the goalkeeper passed the ball to the (Bangladesh) striker. And the striker, without the goalkeeper, he sent the

ball out," he said referring to Vishal Kaith's mistake early in the game.

"In this case, it was the goalkeeper. But practically, it was every single player. And I don't want to say this or that. Obviously, some players are better."

He was also asked about very few Indian players playing in striker's position in the Indian Super League teams.

"Nothing to say to the coaches (of ISL teams). They can put the players that they want. Even I played with a foreign striker," said Marquez who is also doubling up as FC Goa head coach. He will leave the FC Goa position and will solely be the India head coach after the play-offs matches of the ISL, with the final happening on April 12. When he was told that some matches of the ISL and Super Cup are left to be played in the domestic circuit, he said, "When you are disappointed, you are disappointed. But if you ask me, I expected this performance."

"You say about ISL and the Super Cup. Maybe it's not the best moment to put the players just after this FIFA window. But this is my opinion." In the March FIFA window, India played two matches, the international friendly against Maldives (3-0 win on March 19) being the other one.

Replying to another question, he said, "The players arrived at the national team with two days. They played two days ago, another seven days ago, another five days ago, another four."

## LSG wary of SRH's ultra-aggressive batting approach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Having lost their opening clash, Rishabh Pant's Lucknow Super Giants will be wary of Sunrisers Hyderabad's ultra-aggressive approach with the bat when the two teams face off in the Indian Premier League here on Thursday.

Last year's runner-up SRH picked up from where they had left off in the opening clash to nearly break the record of the highest total in the IPL, handing the Rajasthan Royals a crushing defeat by 44 runs. The huge win also propelled SRH to the top of the points table for having the best net run rate and given their all-round firepower, the Pat Cummins-led side would want to maintain their dominance in the competition.

SRH went hammer and tongs against RR with their new recruit Ishan Kishan smacking a century and the other big guns firing as usual to make 286/6 in their last outing here at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Uppal.

Such batting approach could be terrifying for the opponents and SRH's remark-

able consistency makes them the most feared batting unit in the IPL circuit.

The addition of Kishan to the mix of SRH's premier weapons in Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head and Heinrich Klaasen is another masterstroke. To top it off, Nitish Kumar Reddy too struck his runs at more than 200 against Rajasthan Royals.

Kishan appeared to be a man on a mission as he struck his maiden century in the IPL after being let go by Mumbai Indians, smashing six sixes and 11 fours in his 47-ball 106 not out.

In such circumstances, LSG will be required to have clear bowling plans as the smallest of error is proving costly in the IPL, which has already witnessed a new record being made — 119 sixes have been struck in the first five matches.

On their part, LSG, who lost to Delhi Capitals by one wicket in a thrilling finish showed a similar approach with the bat but they were guilty of losing their way in the middle overs, which proved to be costly. LSG lost six wickets and added only 76 runs in their last eight overs against Delhi Capitals and despite early wickets, they could not withstand the onslaught by the



lower-order as Ashutosh Sharma's 66 not out handed his side a win.

LSG's new skipper Pant had a forgettable game of sorts in his first outing with the team, falling for a six-ball duck during their batting slide and he also missed a regulation stumping when DC needed six off the final over with one wicket in hand.

Nicholas Pooran was magnificent in his strokeplay but the tone was set by Mitchell Marsh — playing in this IPL only as a specialist batter — with his stunning attack on the DC bowlers.

While LSG would feel they did not do too many things wrong in the clash against DC, they would know a better show with the ball will be paramount against SRH who have been severe on all opponents. Apart from their senior spinner Ravi Bishnoi, LSG will also have high hopes from the unheralded duo of Manimaran Siddharth and Digvesh Rathi, who both bowled with control to snaffle a couple of wickets each against DC.

With Shardul Thakur outrunning DC's Mitchell Starc to find swing with the new ball which resulted in a couple of wickets, it was inexplicable why LSG did not turn

to the senior all-rounder who bowled only two overs upfront when the opposition was running away with the games.

On these counts, LSG would be expected to come up with better plans.

### Teams

**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Pat Cummins (c), Ishan Kishan (wk), Atharva Taide, Abhinav Manohar, Aniket Verma, Sachin Baby, Heinrich Klaasen, Travis Head, Harshal Patel, Kamindu Mendis, Wiaan Mulder, Abhishek Sharma, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Shami, Rahul Chahar, Adam Zampa, Simarjeet Singh, Zeshan Ansari, Jaydev Unadkat, Eshan Malinga.

**Lucknow Super Giants:** Rishabh Pant (c and wk), David Miller, Aiden Markram, Aryan Juyal (wk), Himmat Singh, Matthew Breetzke, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Mitchell Marsh, Abdul Samad, Shahbaz Ahmed, Yuvraj Chaudhary, Rajvardhan Hangargekar, Arshin Kulkarni, Ayush Badoni, Shardul Thakur, Avesh Khan, Akash Deep, Manimaran Siddharth, Digvesh Rathi, Akash Singh, Shamir Joseph, Prince Yadav, Mayank Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi.

## Iyer continues to evolve his game: Williamson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

India middle-order mainstay and Punjab Kings' captain Shreyas Iyer continues to "evolve his game" while "adjusting brilliantly" to challenges such as facing short balls, believes New Zealand stalwart Kane Williamson.

Iyer began his captaincy stint for PBKS with a match-winning 97 not out, studied with nine sixes and five fours off 42 balls, against Gujarat Titans in their IPL clash here on Tuesday.

Williamson, a former Gujarat Titans player, heaped praise on the right-handed Iyer for his adaptability.

"What stands out about Shreyas is how he continues to evolve his game," said JioStar expert Williamson.

"For a period, teams targeted him with short balls, but now, he's adjusting brilliantly — getting deeper in his crease, de-weighting his front leg, and dominating the short-pitched deliveries.

"What is most impressive is his ability to shift his weight forward again, making it difficult for bowlers who try the

'one-two' approach — going short, then full. He's now able to access all areas of the ground, which makes him such a formidable batter," Williamson added.

The New Zealand batting great termed Iyer's knock of 97 not out of "highest standard".

**It was a knock of the highest standard. From the very first ball, it was almost a highlight reel—he played the ball exactly where it was meant to be hit**

— KANE WILLIAMSON, CRICKETER

"It was a knock of the highest standard. From the very first ball, it was almost a highlight reel—he played the ball exactly where it was meant to be hit," he said.

"Anything outside off stump, he looked to access the offside, and he even struck sixes over cover against some of the best seamers in the world. Then, to take on Rashid Khan as well — that's one of the toughest challenges in the game.

"As a leader, to step in at Number 3, set the tone, and take on the opposition's

biggest threats was remarkable. That innings was truly out of this world," Williamson added.

The Kiwi batter also praised Shashank Singh for his whirlwind knock of 44 not out off only 16 balls, which pushed PBKS' total beyond the reach of the Titans.

"Shashank is coming off an outstanding breakout season last year. He's incredibly still at the crease, has beautiful hands, and doesn't move excessively, yet he possesses so many scoring options," he said.

"He has the time to adjust to short-pitched deliveries — whether ramping it over the keeper or pulling off a length — but he can also hold his position and play powerful straight drives.

"The way he comes in during the death overs, with little time to settle, and takes on bowlers with confidence is exceptional. Whether it's Rashid Khan missing his length slightly and Shashank slapping it back over square — that's an incredibly difficult shot against someone of Rashid's calibre. It just speaks to the quality of the player," he added.

## Maradona's ex-bodyguard arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Buenos Aires

A former bodyguard of the late Diego Maradona was arrested for allegedly withholding information and telling lies during his testimony at the trial of the soccer great's medical team.

Seven healthcare professionals are on trial at an Argentine court accused of negligence in Maradona's death in a house outside Buenos Aires on November 25, 2020.

On Tuesday, following a request from the prosecutor's office, the criminal court in the Buenos Aires suburb of San Isidro ordered Julio César Coria to be investigated for false testimony. He was arrested and remained in custody Tuesday afternoon.

Coria was one of the people who attempted to resuscitate Maradona.

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

Coria testified in court on Tuesday that when he entered Maradona's room, he saw

nurse Gisela Madrid and psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, both defendants in the case, performing CPR.

He added that Cosachov gave Maradona "mouth-to-mouth resuscitation" for a while. The trial prosecutor, Patricio Ferrari, warned the witness of contradictions in his statement.

The prosecution warned Coria that he lied when he denied in court having spoken with another of the defendants, neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque.

"There are countless chats between Luque and Coria, which demonstrate a cordial and almost friendly relationship, and the witness denied having had any conversation," Ferrari said.

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

The 28-year-old daughter of Maradona, Jana, testified Tuesday that Luque and Coria suggested "home hospitalisation" when the clinic authorities recommended that Maradona remain hospitalised.

## Rauf returns to Pakistan ODI squad vs NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi

Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf has joined the ODI squad in New Zealand after initially being dropped from the format for a three-match series against the Black Caps.

Haris and Shaheen Shah Afridi were named in the T20I squad but sidelined for the ODI series because of sloppy outing in the Champions Trophy where hosts Pakistan ended without a win.

But Haris emerged as Pakistan's leading wicket-taker — with seven scalps — in the just-concluded T20I series that the Kiwis won 4-1 as the team management had to rethink their decision.

Haris Rauf and Shaheen were dropped from the ODI squad because of poor form in the Champions Trophy in which hosts Pakistan ended without a win.



## Iyer asked me not to worry about his century: Shashank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Punjab Kings batter Shashank Singh's boundary-hitting spree in the final over of the Indian Premier League (IPL) match against Gujarat Titans left his captain Shreyas Iyer stranded on unbeaten 97 but the latter was not worried about his personal landmark.

Iyer missed his maiden IPL ton by a mere three runs but his 42-ball knock, which featured nine sixes and five fours, powered PBKS to a massive 243 for 5 and helped them win their season opener by 11 runs.

Shashank, who hit five of his six fours in the final over off Mohammed Siraj and took a double to collect 23 runs against the India pacer, said PBKS captain Iyer didn't ask him to rotate the strike.

"I didn't see the scoreboard, to be very honest. But after the first ball I hit (for a four), I saw the scoreboard and Shreyas was on 97," Shashank, who scored a 16-ball 44 not out, told the media after the match on Tuesday.

"I didn't say anything, he only came and told me 'Shashank don't worry about my hundred', because obviously I was going to say to him that should I give you a single or something."

"It takes a lot of heart and courage to say because obviously hundreds don't come easily in T20s especially in IPL," he added.

Shashank said Iyer's message was to keep attacking the bowler. "Shreyas told me 'Shashank go and just (try and) hit every ball for a boundary for a four or a six.' That gave me even more confidence, obviously, it's a team game at the end of the day we all know," he said. "But then at those situations it's difficult to

be that selfless. But Shreyas was one. I know him since past 10-15 years. He is the same and he told me just to be calm, to play cricketing shots what I usually play, to maintain my balance and I think we had a good finish," added Shashank.

Meanwhile, Gujarat Titans spinner R Sai Kishore, who returned with figures of 4-0-30-3, said his side thought they were ahead in the game.

Chasing 244, GT remained in the hunt but were eventually overpowered by the mammoth target, finishing at 232 for five in their stipulated 20 overs.

"We were also surprised, to be honest. We thought we were on course. We thought we were ahead of the game, we thought so," Sai Kishore said.

"But in that situation, I think no matter what planning you do, if you are able to be fully zoned in in the present moment, that is the difference and these games happen." Sai Kishore rued that GT failed to hit more boundaries during the course of the innings.

"This is also the first game of the season. We will also learn together. We will come back really stronger. We will work on the areas we need to improve and we will again compete," he said.

"We were on course with Sai (Sudharsan) and (Jos) Buttler going very well. In the end, in the last five overs, to be honest, (Vijaykumar) Vyshak bowled brilliantly. All credit to Vyshak for the way he executed his yorkers.

"To be fair, I think those balls we could have, it's very easy for me to say, but we could have tried to hit more boundaries than just looking for sixes (and) that is the learning going forward and we will do that," he added.

## Brilliant to see fearlessness of young Indian players: Stoinis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis has been left supremely impressed by the quality of youngsters in the Punjab Kings squad as well as the Indian T20 set up on the sidelines of the IPL.

After the retirement of stalwarts Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja, the depth of Indian cricket has ensured that T20 team has built on the success of the 2024 T20 World Cup courtesy the likes of Tilak Varma and Abhishek Sharma.

At Punjab Kings camp, rookies like opener Priyansh Arya have already made a mark even though it is early days in the IPL.

"There's great depth here (in Indian cricket). There always has been. And I think they're getting the chance to show their skills on a world stage," Stoinis said. "They are super confident. They've had almost the advantage of growing up with IPL, being under pressure from early stages in their career. It's brilliant to see how fearless they are with their cricket and especially (while playing for) Indian cricket (team)."

"Some of the youngsters in the Punjab Kings

camp who have never really played the IPL are very impressive," said the 35-year-old. Stoinis returns to the franchise after almost a decade and is excited to work compatriot and head coach Ricky Ponting.

"A lot of Aussie boys here, which is nice for me. So it does feel at home," he said referring to the likes of Glenn Maxwell, Aaron Hardie and Josh Inglis.

"It was my second year in the IPL that I moved to here. So yeah, it's all familiar. I love the IPL.

"It's a mainstay in the calendar. It's something we all look forward to and personally I look forward to.

It's exciting to have the opportunity to bring some success to this franchise," said the Perth based cricketer.

### All phases of Kohli's career has served a purpose

Stoinis' connection with Virat Kohli goes back to their U-19 days when the Indian led his team to the World Cup title in 2008.

Stoinis said he remains in touch with the Indian superstar and has enjoyed tracking his remarkable career.

"We have known each other for a long time. We have got a mutual friend in Perth that has known him for a long time as well. So that's sort of how that relationship started.

"But yeah, what a great career it's been so far. It's definitely not finished. It seems like he's worn a few caps throughout his career in terms of being the young guy coming into an Indian team that forced his way in there at such a young age and showed such confidence in himself to crack into such a good team to then leading the team and almost changing the whole culture of Indian cricket and inspiring a lot of the young cricketers around India and around the world.

"And then a whole new phase of the fitness side of things as well that he inspired in the Indian set-up to now mentoring the new kids on the block. And he's got his family now as well.

"I think all of those phases have served a purpose, not only for himself, but as a mentor for the wider public and the cricket community. So always hats off to him, to be honest," added Stoinis.

Govt. of Odisha  
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"e"-Procurement Notice No. 450 /Agril, Date-24.03.2025  
Bid Identification No. : 04/Agril./NZ/2024-25 dt.24.03.2025

The Superintending Engineer (Agril.), Northern Zone, Sambalpur, Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system from the eligible class of contractors through e-procurement in ONLINE MODE only in the website "[www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)", for the work as detailed below (Composite Tender)

- Nature/Type of the work: As Mentioned in Column - 02
- Estimated Cost put to Tender- Varies from Rs. 8.33 Lakhs to Rs. 32.08 Lakhs
- EMD Amount: Varies from Rs. 8,334.00 to Rs. 32,084.00
- Bid Cost: As Mentioned in Column - 07
- Period of completion: 03 (Three) & 04 (Four) Calendar Months Mentioned in Column - 08
- No. of work (Tender): 04 nos.
- Class of Contractor: 'D' & 'C' & 'B' class with valid License as Mentioned in Column - 06
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: 28.03.2025 at 10. AM. to Dt.09.04.2025 at 5.00 P.M.
- Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal: Dt.09.04.2025 at 5.00 P.M
- Date of submission of original documents in the tender box: Dt. 02.04.2025 at 10.AM. to Dt.10.04.2025 at 5.00 P.M. (Working days) only.
- Date & time of opening of online bids: Dt.11.04.2025 at 11.00 AM & onwards
- Name and address of the officer inviting Bid: Superintending Engineer (Agril.), Northern Zone, Remed Chowk, Sambalpur, Odisha, Pin-768006

OIPR-01495/11/0005/2425 Superintending Engineer (Agril.) Northern Zone, Sambalpur

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Phone : 06852-250281 e-mail-[cerwss\\_kpt@rediffmail.com](mailto:cerwss_kpt@rediffmail.com)

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR SELECTION OF SERVICE PROVIDER  
No. 04/2024-25 Dated:18.03.2025

Request for expression of interest for providing 1 no of Petrol Vehicle /Diesel Driven Vehicles (Tractor with Water Tanker Mounted Trailer) on hire basis to render services from the Reputed Travel Agencies/ Tour operators /Private Individuals/Service providers /registered firm /vehicle owners with valid Pan/GST & GM registration under RWS&S Sub-Division, Jeypore for a period of minimum 15 days per month on daily rental basis maximum Rs. 2435/- per day. The rates should be inclusive of all the incidental cost like Insurance, road tax service charges etc as well as salary paid to driver, except fuel charges. The Bid documents & application forms are to be made available at the RWS&S Division, Koraput on working hours up to 05.00 PM dated 02.04.2025 & received at RWS&S, Division, Koraput in the day i.e on 03.04.2025 up to 1.00 PM.

The Quotation such received shall be opened at 04.00 P.M dated 03.04.2025 in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Rural water supply & Sanitation Division, Koraput in presence of the Bidder or their authorized representatives who wish to present. Quotation received after due date and time shall not be entertained and the authority shall not be held responsible for delay or missing of the Quotation during postal transit. Telegraphic Quotation by E-mail/ Fax shall not be entertained. If the office happens to be closed on last date of receipt and opening of this Bids specified, the Bid will be received on the next working day without any change in time & venue.

Superintending Engineer, RWS&S, Division, Koraput

OIPR-25034/11/0027/2425

ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.,  
C/o Sr. GENERAL MANAGER, HIRAKUD HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT,  
POST BOX NO. 5, BURLA - 76817, DISTRICT: SAMBALPUR (ODISHA),  
PHONE: 0663-256721(O), 256755(R), E-Mail: [srghps\\_burla@yahoo.co.in](mailto:srghps_burla@yahoo.co.in)  
CIN : U40101OR1995SO003983

No. HHEP/Tech-Pur-131/ 1688 Date : 25.03.2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER NO HHEP-14/2025

Sealed Tenders are invited in double sealed cover from the Manufactures/ authorized dealer/ general supplier and fulfilling the eligibility criteria as per the tender specification for the work as mentioned below.

Name of work	Cost of tender paper (Non-Refundable)	EMD in Rs.	Availability of tender	Last date and time of receipt tender	Date & time of opening of tender.
Supply of hardware, PHD & sanitary materials for HHEP, Burla	Rs. 7080/- + GST 18%	14340/-	28.03.25 (11:00AM) to 09.04.25 upto 01.30PM	09.04.25 upto 04.04.25	09.04.25

For details and further correspondence / corrigendum, please visit our website [www.ohcpcltd.com](http://www.ohcpcltd.com)

OIPR-04007/11/0035/2425 Sd/ C&P Head, HHEP, Burla

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER(HORTICULTURE), NORTHERN ZONE, SAMBALPUR FARM ROAD, SAMBALPUR  
Mail ID - [senssburla@gmail.com](mailto:senssburla@gmail.com)

L-206 Notice No:- 291 /Hort Date: 24/03/2025

CORRIGENDUM-01  
TENDER ID/REFERENCE No. : 2025\_DOH\_11756\_8  
Bid Identification No-03/ Hort/NZ/2024-25 Dated 18-03-2025  
Name of the Work:- Construction of Training Hall At- ADH Bona, District- Sundargarh

Tender ID/ Reference No.	Name of the work	Corrigendum made in BOQ Item of Description (as Modified) in response to pre bid queries
2025_DOH_11756_8	Construction of Training Hall At- ADH Bona, District- Sundargarh	<p>29 Provision for supplying and fixing ceiling projector of 1920 x 1080 resolution full HD of reputed make and model with screen size 2400mm width x 1220mm height (eg. Benq/Epson Etc) complete including cost of fitting, testing, transportation with all accessories as required but excluding GST as per the direction of the Engineer in charge.</p> <p>30 Provision for supplying and fixing of professional sound/audio system of reputed make and model (e.g. Ahuja/ JBL etc.) fitted with speaker- 6 nos twitter unit and 1 subwoofer 400 watt, desk standing microphone for conference table- 6 nos wireless microphone -3 nos, Amplifier -1 no Audio interface for microphone and audio output for fitting in the conference hall of size 12 meter x 6 meter all complete including cost of fitting, testing, transportation with all accessories as required but excluding GST as per the direction of the Engineer in charge.</p>

OIPR-01465/11/0009/2425 Executive Engineer (Agril.) Horticulture, Northern Zone Sambalpur