

Bar demands Justice Varma's Impeachment

BISWAJEET BANERJEE/PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj/New Delhi

After two meetings, the Supreme Court Collegium on Monday recommended the repatriation of Delhi High Court Justice Yashwant Varma, who is facing a probe into the alleged discovery of huge stash of cash from his official residence in Delhi after a fire incident, to his parent Allahabad High Court.

Hours after the transfer recommendation to the Centre was made public in a resolution uploaded on the website of the top court, the president of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association (AHCBA) Anil Tiwari said the high court lawyers will go on an indefinite strike from Tuesday in protest against this move.

Justice Varma's proposed transfer could come into effect after the Centre accepts the recommendation, which came on a day when the Delhi High Court in a notice withdrew judicial work from Justice Varma "with immediate effect".

"The Supreme Court Collegium in its meetings held on March 20 and 24, 2025 has recommended the repatriation of Justice Yashwant Varma, Judge, High Court of Delhi, to the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad," said the resolution adopted by the Supreme Court.

Lawyers of Allahabad High Court Bar Association will stage an indefinite strike from March 25 onwards. The Allahabad High Court Bar Association has strongly opposed the transfer of Justice Varma back to the Allahabad High Court. In a general house meeting held on Monday, the association passed a resolution demanding impeachment proceedings against Justice Varma and calling for an investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Allahabad Bar Association President Anil Tiwari stated

that Justice Varma is unfit to continue as a judge and that the association opposes his transfer to any court. He also demanded that all judgments delivered by Justice Varma during his tenure at both the Allahabad and Delhi High Courts be reconsidered.

Bar Association President Anil Tiwari further criticized the judicial system's response to the scandal. "If ₹15 Lakh is found at the residence of a common government employee, they are sent to jail. Justice Varma should resign. If he is posted here, we will not allow him to be welcomed. If necessary, we will also halt work."

The AHCBA last week voiced its opposition to any such move, saying the high court is not a "trash bin". In a series of resolutions, it also urged the CJI to allow investigating agencies to take

In another development, the Allahabad High Court Bar Association has strongly opposed the transfer of Justice Varma back to the Allahabad High Court

action against Justice Varma besides calling for impeachment proceedings against the judge. The lawyers also abstained from judicial work after the lunch break. The association further demanded a review of judgements delivered by the judge.

Meanwhile, Legal experts on Monday described as "preposterous", "premature" and "unjustified" the Allahabad High Court Bar Association's demand that all verdicts of Justice Yashwant Varma, embroiled in a cash-discovery controversy, be reviewed and steps taken for his impeachment. Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan said he does not agree with the bar association's demand as "it is

too premature for anything".

Commenting on the issue, senior advocate Shoeb Alam said, "The call by the bar association to review and annul every judgment passed by Justice Varma in his more-than-a-decade-long tenure is preposterous and not envisaged under any law."

Senior advocate Maninder Singh said public opinion or mere allegations cannot be the basis to scrutinise the verdicts delivered by judges and a judge should not be impeached on media reports.

On March 21, the Supreme Court said Delhi High Court Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya had initiated an in-house inquiry against Justice Varma and there was a separate proposal to transfer him. "There is misinformation and rumours are being spread with regard to the incident at the residence of Justice Yashwant Varma," the Supreme Court statement added.

Upon receiving the information, the apex court said Chief Justice Upadhyaya "commenced the in-house enquiry procedure, collecting evidence and information". Justice Upadhyaya was stated to have commenced the enquiry prior to a meeting of the apex court collegium on March 20. Justice Varma's proposed transfer could come into effect after the Centre accepts the recommendation.

The alleged cash discovery happened following a fire at Varma's Lutyens Delhi residence at around 11.35 pm on March 14, prompting the fire officials to rush to the spot and douse it. The Supreme Court collegium headed by CJI Sanjiv Khanna and the Delhi High Court subsequently issued a series of directives, including the withdrawal of judicial work from Justice Varma on Monday.

The CJI constituted an in-house committee to conduct an inquiry and asked Delhi HC Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya not to assign any judicial work to Justice Yashwant Varma.

BJP, Opposition lock horns on minorities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Bengaluru

Protests by the BJP on Monday claiming that Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar suggested changing the Constitution to provide for religion-based reservation rocked both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha with Congress-led Opposition alleging that the ruling party is raising a "fake issue" to stall Parliament. Shivakumar, has, however, said that he never stated that the Constitution will be amended in any manner to give religion based reservation.

Opposition claimed that the ruling BJP wanted to prevent them from raising the issue of a large amount of cash found in a judge's residence with senior Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra claiming that the government seems to have made up its mind to not let the Lok Sabha (LS) function.

While Trinamool Congress floor leader Derek O'Brien claimed it was a "new low" in Parliament as MPs belonging to the ruling BJP and NDA disrupted Rajya Sabha.

In both the Houses, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju raised the issue, claiming that NDA MPs are agitat-



Union Minister Kiren Rijju speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament

ed as a person sitting on a Constitutional post has made a statement on changing the Constitution to facilitate reservation for Muslims, which is "unacceptable". The reference was to provide a four per cent quota to Muslims on contracts in Karnataka.

"How can the House watch in silence? Congress should clarify...the person should be sacked. You claim to give reservations to Muslims and resort to theatrics

of carrying a photograph of Babasaheb Ambedkar and a copy of the Constitution in your pocket," Rijju said.

BJP members were on their feet, apparently raising the issue of reservation for Muslims in government contracts, when the Lok Sabha convened at 11 am. Samajwadi Party members too rushed to the Well waving posters while trying to flag matters of atrocities against women in Uttar Pradesh.

MPs get a salary, perks booster dose

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Centre on Monday notified a 24 per cent hike in the salaries of Members of Parliament (MPs) with effect from April 1, 2025, on the basis of the Cost Inflation Index, taking their monthly salaries to ₹1.24 Lakh besides certain allowances and perks.

A notification issued by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs also increased the daily allowances for sitting members and pension and additional pension for every year of service in excess of five years for former members.

The daily allowance too has been increased from ₹2,000 to ₹2,500, the noti-

fication said. MPs can draw daily allowances while attending Parliamentary sessions and meetings of parliamentary committees. The pension for former members of Parliament has been increased from ₹25,000 per month to ₹31,000 per month.

The additional pension for every year of service in excess of five years has been increased from ₹2,000 per month to ₹2,500 per month. In 2018, the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley increased the salaries of Members of Parliament from ₹50,000 to ₹1 Lakh.

Jaitley had also put a mechanism for automatic revision of salaries and allowances every five years by indexing it to inflation, thus doing away with the

practice of MPs making recommendations for fixing their salaries.

A member of Parliament will now get ₹1.24 Lakh per month as salary, ₹87,000 per month as constituency allowance as against ₹70,000 earlier, ₹75,000 towards office expenses as against ₹60,000 earlier. The office expenses of ₹75,000 include ₹50,000 to hire the services of a computer literate person and ₹25,000 towards stationery items.

The MPs are also entitled to purchase durable furniture worth ₹1 Lakh and non-durable furniture of ₹25,000 once during their tenure. Earlier, these entitlements were capped at ₹80,000 for durable furniture and ₹20,000 for non-durable furniture.

NSG joins anti-terrorist operation in Kathua

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Elite commandos of the National Security Guard (NSG) on Monday joined the massive combing and search operations in the Sanyal village of Hiranagar in Kathua district after the security forces recovered a large quantity of material, including several magazines of M-4 carbine, packed food, energy bars and a bulletproof jacket.

The anti-terrorist operation, which was launched on Sunday evening after an alarm was raised by a couple to neutralise the terrorists, could not achieve any headway in the absence of any fresh engagement with the group of terrorists during the day.

Local reports claimed after the initial contact was made with the terrorists on Sunday evening the operation was halted during the Sunday night.

Meanwhile, the security forces on Monday rushed additional troops to intensify the search operations in the general area of Hiranagar to plug the escape routes. The security grid along the Jammu-Pathankot highway was also tightened and quick reaction teams of the Indian Army and Special Operations group of J and K police maintained area domination to prevent any strike.

Official sources claimed the local police authorities are also maintaining a tight vigil on the activities of the active over-ground

workers in the region to gather vital clues about the presence of the group of terrorists who may have managed to establish contact with their local handler to reach their safe hideout.

According to eyewitnesses, "On Sunday when these terrorists first came face to face with a farmer couple in the forested area of Sanyal village, they were seeking their help instead of targeting them". The brave middle-aged woman managed to escape to safety as one of the terrorists, who followed her, avoided targeting her, to ensure the security forces were not alerted in real-time thereby giving them enough time to flee the area without facing any roadblocks.

According to ground reports, the security forces Monday carried out air surveillance using helicopters and also deployed drones, and sniffer dogs to track down the footprints of terrorists. Senior army and police officers also remained stationed on ground zero to boost the morale of the security forces. DGP J and K Police Nalin Prabhat was also seen participating in the search operations along with the foot soldiers. According to a recent assessment made during the security review meetings, Kathua district has emerged as a major infiltrating route for Pakistan-based terrorists to reach the higher reaches of Udhampur, Doda, and Kishtwar districts and further to Kashmir, over the past year.

Kunal Kamra's remarks on Eknath Shinde trigger row

TN RAGHUNATHAN ■ Mumbai

Hours after the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena workers vandalised a studio over his 'gaddar' jibe against Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra on Monday refused to yield to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' demand for an apology, while the management of studio "the Habitat" tendered an apology and announced its decision to shut down the place over Kamra's comments.

On a day when the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) threw its weight behind the stand-up comedian saying that what he had said was "truth" and "not a satire", Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the "gaddar" jibe against his Deputy Eknath Shinde was in bad taste and demanded an apology from Kamra.

Talking to media persons at Vidhan Bhavan where the Budget session of the State Legislature is currently on, Fadnavis said, "There is freedom to do stand-up comedy, but he cannot speak whatever he wants. The people of Maharashtra have decided who the traitor is. Kunal Kamra should apologise. Legal action will be taken against him. This will not be tolerated. There is the right to comedy, but if it is being done to defame our Shinde purposely, it is not right".

Fadnavis, who is also the state Home Minister, said that Kamra had displayed the same red-coloured Constitution book



Shiv Sena (Shinde) workers vandalise the venue of comedian Kunal Kamra's show after his remarks on Maharashtra Dy CM Eknath Shinde in Khar area in Mumbai

often show by Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. "Both of them have not read the Constitution," the Chief Minister said.

On his part, Kunal — against whom Shiv Sena legislator Murji Patel registered a complaint with the MIDC police station at Andheri police station under Sections 353(1) (b), 353(2) and 356(2) — told the police that he did not regret his "gaddar" (traitor) comments against Shinde.

Kamra, who is away from Mumbai at his home in Pondicherry, told the police over phone that he would tender an apology if directed to do so by the courts.

After the "gaddar" jibe at Shinde using a modified version of a Hindi song from

"Dil To Pagal Hai" — "...meri nazar se tum dekho to gaddar nazar wo aaye...haaye...," the studio "the Habitat" — a venue located at The Unicontinental hotel in Khar suburbs of Mumbai where Kunal had shot his stand-up comedy — was vandalised by the Shiv Sena Shiv Sena workers on Sunday night.

The police detained at least 11 Shiv Sena workers on Sunday night but were released immediately afterwards. Multiple FIRs have been registered against Kunal and also the Shiv Sena workers involved in the vandalism of a studio.

During his show, Kamal shared the video clip on the social networking platform X. Kunal Kamra alluded to Eknath

Shinde's 2022 rebellion, which led to the split of Shiv Sena into the Shinde faction and the Uddhav Thackeray faction.

Video of the vandalism that went viral on social media showed a mob running rampant at the studio, damaging property and throwing chairs around.

The owners of the studio — Habitat Studio, which also hosted the episode of the 'India's Got Latent' show featuring influencer Ranveer Allahabadi — earlier distanced themselves from Kamra's comment, arguing they could not be held accountable for comments by performers.

Earlier today, the management of Mumbai's Habitat Studio said they had decided to shut the premises for now and that they are not responsible for the views of the artists. "We are shocked, worried and extremely broken by the recent acts of vandalism targeting us. Artists are solely responsible for their views and creative choices. We have never been involved in the content performed by any Artist, but the recent events have made us rethink about how we get blamed and targeted every time almost like we are a proxy for the performer." "We are shutting down till we figure out the best way to provide a platform for free expression without putting ourselves and our property in jeopardy. We invite all artists, audience and stakeholders to discuss and share their views freely and request your guidance so that we also respect the performers' rights," the studio said.

White paper to expose AAP's black deeds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP ruled Delhi Government will present a 'white paper' on the tenure of the 10 years rule of the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in the national capital. As the five-day Budget session of the Delhi Assembly began on Monday with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta starting a new tradition of 'Kheer' ceremony for the first time in the Vidhan Sabha ahead of the Budget.

Leader of Opposition (LoP) and former Chief Minister Atishi criticised the BJP-led Delhi government for not presenting the Economic Survey ahead of the Budget. "Delhi's Budget cannot be formed by making 'Kheer', but on the figures of the economy," she said, taking a jibe at the BJP's "Kheer" ceremony that marked the start of the Budget Session.

Replying to the Rule under 280 in Delhi Assembly related to a query of Economic Survey of Delhi, the Chief Minister announced on Monday that her government will present a "white paper" on the tenure of the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) regime in the national capital. She

In Parliament, an Economic Survey is always presented before the Budget. How can a Budget be prepared without an Economic Survey?

— ATISHI, LEADER OF OPPOSITION

also stated that the economic survey would be tabled soon as audits in various departments were still ongoing.

"A comprehensive survey of all sectors is underway and all Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit reports are coming to light. There should be no haste in presenting the Economic Survey without completing this process. This work will be completed soon," she assured during the session. Delhi Minister for Food & Supplies, Industry, Forest & Environment, Manjinder Singh Sirsa said, "They (AAP) have looted everything, and that's why a white paper should be presented over whatever they have done".

Atishi, also the MLA from Kalkaji, questioned the government's ability to prepare a budget without a detailed financial review. "In Parliament, an Economic

Survey is always presented before the Budget, providing key data on a state or country's financial health. This has been the practice in Delhi as well. How can a Budget be prepared without an Economic Survey? I have not seen this happen in the past ten years," she said at a press conference. The AAP leader dismissed the government's justification.

"The Chief Minister said the Economic Survey is delayed due to pending CAG reports, but there is no connection between the two. They are hiding the survey. Has the CM even read it?" she asked. Earlier, taking part in the 'Kheer' ceremony on Delhi Assembly premises, she said for the first time in the Delhi Assembly's history, such a ceremony was held ahead of the Budget presentation.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP is presenting the Delhi budget after 27 years. Just as Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile, we are returning after 27 years. To mark this occasion, we offered 'Kheer' to Lord Ram, symbolising the sweetness of Delhi's development," the CM added.

Nagpur riot accused Fahim house razed

TN RAGHUNATHAN ■ Mumbai

The "Bulldozer politics" made its foray into Maharashtra on Monday, as the civic officials on Monday used JCB machines to pull down the Nagpur-based house of Fahim Shamim Khan, a leader of the Minority Democratic Party (MDP) who has been booked for sedition in connection with the communal violence that rocked the orange city last week.

In a development that came two-days after Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis warned of "bulldozer action" against the accused persons in the Nagpur riots, the NMC officials — accompanied by three JCB machines of the Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) — on Monday morning arrived at Sanjay Bagh Colony in Nagpur's Yashodhara Nagar area where they demolished the house of Fahim Khan, amid heavy security and drone surveillance.

The NMC resorted to "Bulldozer action" — which has over the recent years gained prominence in the Yogi Adityanath-ruled Uttar Pradesh — under the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning) Act (MRTP), as the construc-

tion of the building was "unauthorised". Registered in the name of Khan's mother, the demolished plot was located on a plot of Nagpur Improvement Trust (Lease) and its lease ended in 2020.

"There was no sanction plan for the building. The entire construction was unauthorised. We took the action under the MRTP Act. We had served a notice to the owner of the house 24 hours prior to the action," NMC's Assistant Municipal Commissioner Harish Raut said.

A strong posse of police officers and personnel was present when the Nagpur Municipal Corporation officials carried out the "bulldozer" operation.

In addition to Khan's house, the NMC officials also demolished some illegal portions of a property belonging to another accused Yusuf Shaikh in the

It may be recalled that on March 19, Minority Democratic Party Leader Fahim Khan was arrested for his alleged role in the communal riots that erupted in Nagpur on March 17

Johripur area of Mahal in Nagpur. Two shops linked to the accused too were sealed during the operation.

It may be recalled that on March 19, Minority Democratic Party Leader Fahim Khan was arrested for his alleged role in the communal riots that erupted in Nagpur on the night of March 17.

Fahim Khan — said to be the mastermind behind the Nagpur riots who was later booked for sedition — is currently lodged in jail is among the over 100 persons, mostly Muslims arrested for the communal violence in Nagpur.

Thirty-eight-year-old Fahim Khan has been named as one of the key accused in an 18-page FIR registered in connection with the Nagpur violence. The police said that preliminary investigations and the video that surfaced after Monday's disturbances indicated that Khan's inflammatory speech incited the violence.

Among other things, the FIR stated that Khan led a group of "50 to 60" people that gathered outside the Ganeshpeth police station on Monday and submitted a memorandum against the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's protest to the police.

Cong Stages Two Walks Outs Over Khaira's Denial to Speak

Heated Exchanges Mark second day of Budget Session

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Vidhan Sabha on Monday witnessed high drama as the Congress MLAs staged two walkouts in protest against Speaker Kuldeep Singh Sandhwan for not allowing their colleague, Sukhpal Singh Khaira, to speak. The session, which was meant for a debate on the crucial issue and also the Governor Gulab Chand Kataria's address to the House, soon turned into a battlefield of fiery exchanges, with verbal clashes between opposition leaders and ruling party Ministers dominating the proceedings with the Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann conspicuous by his absence.

The tension first erupted when Bholath MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira sought permission to speak during Zero Hour, but the Speaker Sandhwan ignored his request, and allowed other legislators to raise their issues. When no less than seven MLAs were allowed to speak, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa pointed out to the Speaker that he has been continuously ignoring his fellow MLA Khaira who wanted to raise valid and important issues.

Refusing again, the Speaker said that it was his prerogative to decide who gets to address the House as all the members are entitled to raise their issue.

Bajwa and senior Congress leader Pargat Singh backed Khaira, urging the Speaker to allow him to raise farmer-related issues. However, Sandhwan stood firm, asserting, "You cannot dictate the Chair." In response, Khaira shot back, "You cannot intimidate us... We won't be silenced." He went on to accuse the Speaker of working with the policy of "hatred" towards the opposition.

Asking the Speaker "not to mislead the House", Pargat Singh said: "You are not a dictator". Congress MLAs, alleging unfair treatment, moved to the well of the House, shouting slogans before staging a walkout. Interestingly, Khaira's bete noire and fellow MLA Rana Gurjeet Singh and Hardev Singh Laddi choose not to join the party's walkout initially, but left the House briefly to return to their seats. Suspended Congress MLA Sandeep Jakhar also remain seated. The turmoil only intensified when Khaira attempted to speak again, during discussion on the Governor's address, but was denied permission for the second time, prompting another Congress walkout.

The session turned confrontational when Khaira, angered by the repeated denials, accused the Speaker of bias. "The Speaker is the custodian of the House, not a dictator," he fumed, alleging that the opposition was being systematically silenced. Sandhwan shot back, asserting, "You cannot dictate the chair. It is my prerogative whom to allow to speak." The situation turned more volatile when Congress MLA Pargat Singh, echoing Khaira's concerns, accused the AAP Government of running the Assembly like an autocratic regime.

Congress MLAs continued their protest outside the Assembly, where Khaira lambasted the Speaker for his alleged mistreatment of opposition legislators. "This is not the first time such behaviour has been meted out to us. Pargat Singh was denied a chance to speak last week, and today, it was me. This is a blatant attempt to muzzle dissenting voices," he alleged.

Khaira alleged that he had been denied the opportunity to speak in the

Assembly for over a year.

Bajwa vs Dhaliwal: Sparks Fly Over Farmer Crackdown, Assault on Colonel

The proceedings became even more contentious when Partap Singh Bajwa took on Rural Development Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal over the Punjab Police's actions against farmers and the recent assault on an Army Colonel in Patiala. Bajwa accused the government of deceiving farmers by luring them into meetings and then detaining them. "Over 135 trolleys belonging to farmers have been seized. The AAP government invited them for discussions, only to arrest them later," Bajwa alleged.

He also raised concerns over the Patiala incident, where an Army Colonel was allegedly assaulted, and his turban was removed. "How could such an act take place in a Sikh-majority state? This is an insult to Punjab's honour," he said.

Objecting, Minister Dhaliwal accused Bajwa of misleading the House. "Who invited the farmers to the meeting? Let him clarify. The opposition is only trying to create chaos by distorting facts," Dhaliwal retorted. Responding, Bajwa asked, "Who ordered the farmers' detention? Who ordered removal of their tents?"

The debate further escalated when Bajwa brought up the Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent remark in Parliament about a prisoner reading

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Guru Granth Sahib in jail. Bajwa called for a resolution against the statement, arguing that the Sikh holy scripture is not kept inside prison cells. In response, BJP leaders defended Shah, urging the critics to consider the context of his statement.

Amid the ruckus, Speaker Sandhwan stated that Guru Granth Sahib belongs to all and should be discussed with respect.

Punjab's Core Issues Missing from Gov Address: Congress

The Governor's address to the Punjab Assembly also triggered a storm of reactions, with Congress leaders slamming the AAP Government for ignoring key issues. Former Sports Minister and Congress MLA from Jalandhar Cantonment Pargat Singh questioned why Punjab's core issues, including water-sharing disputes and the economic crisis, were missing from the Governor's address. "They mentioned the Malwa Canal, but what have they actually done? Even after three years, AAP has failed to deliver an agricultural policy," he charged. He also raised concerns over illegal sand mining, claiming, "Even in my constituency, where there is no river, illegal mining is rampant. Where is the action?"

Pargat Singh also questioned the unprecedented security arrangements for AAP national convener and Delhi's former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. "Why does Kejriwal need security from Punjab Police? Under whose orders has this been granted?" he asked.

Participating in the discussion, Bajwa took a dig at the AAP Government accusing it of reducing Punjab to a "Kangla Punjab" (desertic Punjab). "They promised to make Punjab 'Rangla' (prosperous), but

CM Mann Meets Governor Amid Budget Session

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday met Governor Gulab Chand Kataria at Raj Bhavan for a crucial 40-minute meeting, discussing key issues, including the ongoing anti-drug campaign. The meeting, held amid the Budget Session, has fueled speculation, though Mann left without addressing the media.

While social media buzzed with rumours of a Cabinet reshuffle, the CMO dismissed such claims, affirming that no such plan is in place.



instead, they have pushed it towards financial ruin," he said.

BJP MLA from Pathankot Ashwani Sharma criticized the AAP Government's handling of rural development funds (RDF). "Our roads and village link roads are in terrible condition. If the state is so financially stable, why hasn't RDF been released?" he asked. Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh assured that the government was working on securing RDF funds and was ready to engage with the Centre on the matter.

Independent MLA Manvinder Singh Gaspura lauded AAP

state, with Bathinda lakes being a potential new addition to the tourism map. Tourism and Cultural Affairs Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond, while addressing a query, said that if Bathinda district authorities submit a formal proposal, the Government will prioritize the development of Bathinda lakes as a tourism and food hub. Earlier, MLA Jagroop Singh Gill raised concerns about the potential of Bathinda lakes, following which the Minister assured that a detailed proposal from the Deputy Commissioner would be acted upon promptly. Speaker Sandhwan also highlighted Punjab's rich natural beauty, including its mountains, rivers, and historical sites, and suggested that a well-planned initiative be undertaken to position Punjab as a prime tourist destination.

Punjab Accelerates Swamitva Scheme to Grant Ownership Rights in Rural Areas

Punjab's 'Mera Ghar Mere Naam' (Swamitva) scheme, aimed at granting ownership rights to residents of Lal Dora areas in rural villages, is progressing steadily and is expected to be completed by next year, said Revenue and Rehabilitation Minister Hardip Singh Mundian, responding to a query by Amargarh MLA Prof Jaswant Singh Gajjanmajra. The Minister clarified that Swamitva is a Central Government initiative designed to provide property rights to residents in village settlements that traditionally lacked formal ownership documentation. The scheme also aims to digitize land records and create GIS-based maps of rural areas. The Minister assured that the government is committed to resolving land ownership disputes and streamlining property documentation for villagers.

Efforts to Provide Irrigation Water to Nurpur Bedi's Hilly Areas in Full Swing

Punjab government is making concerted efforts to ensure irrigation water reaches 75 villages in Nurpur Bedi block of Ropar district. Water Resources Minister Barinder Kumar Goyal informed the House that the feasibility study for the project is currently under review, and necessary action will be taken soon. Goyal, in response to a question by Ropar MLA Dinesh Kumar Chadha, said that two agencies have submitted Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the project, and their proposals are being examined by a committee of senior engineers. Once the technical feasibility and financial viability are determined, the project will be forwarded to the Central Water Commission (CWC) for approval.

Punjab Assembly Panel Flags Breaches of Legislative Privileges

Recommends disciplinary action; Revised guidelines for Govt officials

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Vidhan Sabha's Special Privileges Committee on Monday submitted its report for the 2024-25 session, recommending stronger adherence to legislative protocols and stricter accountability for government officials dealing with elected representatives. The report, which reviewed multiple complaints from the legislators, highlighted recurring lapses in administrative responses and proposed reforms to prevent future breaches.

The committee's inquiry revealed a consistent pattern of government officials failing to respond to MLAs' calls and queries, delaying official communication, and in some cases, using inappropriate language. These lapses, according to the committee, undermine the authority of the legislature and obstruct public service delivery.

One of the most common issues cited in the report was the reluctance of certain officials to engage with MLAs regarding constituency development matters. In several instances, officials ignored repeated phone calls and messages, forcing legislators to escalate the matter to the committee. While some cases were resolved with apologies, the committee noted that such behaviour reflects poor administrative discipline and needs correction.

Multiple Breaches of Privileges Identified

Among the key cases examined, the committee reviewed a complaint by Aam Aadmi Party MLA from Mehal Kalan Kulwant Singh Pandori against Junior Engineer Gagandeep Singh from the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department in Sangrur. The MLA alleged that despite repeated attempts to contact the official via phone and WhatsApp regarding developmental work in his constituency, no response was received. The committee found that the official had indeed failed to maintain proper communication, leading to an infringement of legislative protocol. However, as he later issued an apology and assured better coordination in the future, the committee recommended dropping the matter without punitive action.

Another high-profile case involved AAP's Jalalabad MLA Jagdeep Kamboj Goldy, who accused IAS officer Amit Kumar, Director of Panchayats, of providing misleading information regarding constituency matters and responding in an inappropriate manner. However, the committee noted that the MLA did not attend hearings regarding his complaint, leading to the case being dismissed due to lack of participation.

In a separate matter, Deputy Speaker Jai Krishan Singh Rouri flagged a breach of protocol when an unauthorized contractor was present during an Estimates Committee meeting at the Circuit House in Shimla. The presence of a non-member in an official legislative meeting was deemed inappropriate. However, since the responsible officials admitted their oversight and issued an apology, the committee chose not to pursue further action.

Firm Action Against Indiscipline

While several cases were closed after officials sought forgiveness, the committee recommended stricter disciplinary measures in select cases. MLA Kulwant Singh Pandori also raised a complaint against Senior Assistant Baljit Kaur from the Rural Development and

Panchayati Raj Department in SAS Nagar. The MLA alleged that despite multiple calls, she refused to respond, and when she did, she used inappropriate language. The committee deemed this a serious breach of conduct and recommended suspending her from service, alongside barring her from any future public-dealing roles.

Similarly, a complaint against Naib Tehsildar Amarpreet Singh accused him of failing to respond to official calls regarding land-related matters in his jurisdiction. The officer later sought an unconditional apology, which the committee accepted, leading to the case being dropped.

Committee's Recommendations to Strengthen Governance

The committee emphasized the importance of ensuring that elected representatives are treated with due respect and cooperation. It rec-

House Panel Recommends Stricter Revenue Oversight, Transparent Land Transfers, Afforestation Drive

Chandigarh: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Deputy Speaker Jai Krishan Singh Rouri, in his capacity as chairman of the Estimates Committee, on Monday tabled a detailed report on the budget estimates of the departments of Forest and Wildlife Protection and Revenue and Rehabilitation. Highlighting the Committee's extensive review process, Rouri emphasized that budget allocations must be utilized with efficiency and accountability.

The report on the Revenue and Rehabilitation Department calls for strict monitoring of revenue officials, surprise inspections to curb delays in property transfers, and an improved online land registration system for public convenience.

For the Forest and Wildlife Protection Department, the committee has recommended regularization of contractual employees, transparent transfer policies, and large-scale afforestation using native tree species such as Kikar, Tahl, Jang Karir, Jamun, Mango, Dek, Neem, Bohar, and Pipal on vacant government lands, riverbanks, canals, drains, and roadsides.

Rouri also noted that 29 departments were scrutinized this year, with officials being examined on financial allocations and performance. "Every rupee allocated is the hard-earned money of the people. It is our duty to ensure that public funds are used judiciously for maximum public welfare," he asserted, reaffirming the Punjab Government's commitment to transparency and good governance.

commended that government departments reissue strict guidelines regarding official conduct when dealing with MLAs and ensure their timely implementation. The committee further stressed that such protocols are necessary for upholding the dignity of the legislative system and maintaining smooth administrative functions. It added that any future breaches of legislative privileges should lead to immediate administrative review, with penalties including suspensions, demotions, or removals from public-dealing roles. The panel also recommended setting up a dedicated cell within the Assembly Secretariat to track instances of non-compliance, and ensuring MLAs' concerns are addressed without unnecessary bureaucratic delays.

Alliance Air Flight Carrying HP Deputy CM Narrowly Avoids Disaster at Shimla Airport

PNS ■ SHIMLA

A major aviation mishap was narrowly averted at Jubbarhatti Airport on Monday morning when an Alliance Air flight (91821) from Delhi to Shimla, carrying 44 passengers including Himachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri and DGP Atul Verma, faced a brake malfunction during landing.

Due to a technical glitch, the aircraft nearly overshot the runway, forcing the pilots to apply emergency brakes at the last moment. The ATR-42 aircraft managed to halt just before the runway's edge, preventing a catastrophic accident, but the abrupt braking burst one of its tyres.

Passengers were reportedly alerted to the issue before the emergency landing, and the aircraft has now been grounded for inspection. "The runway is small, and the plane didn't land where it was supposed to," Agnihotri later stated, acknowledging the incident. Local authorities immediately cancelled the next scheduled flight to Dharamshala as a precaution. Meanwhile, Alliance Air has temporarily halted three flights on the route for further safety checks. Engineers are currently investigating the cause of the malfunction, while officials confirm that the aircraft had passed routine inspections before takeoff. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, during his interaction with media, said that he would take up the matter with the Union Civil Aviation Ministry regarding technical issues at Shimla Airport. "We will soon engage with the concerned authorities to ensure smooth air connectivity to the capital city," he said.

HPWC Meeting: Hry approves contracts worth Rs 109.30-cr

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday approved contracts worth Rs 109.30 crore during the meeting of the High-Powered Works Committee (HPWC) in Chandigarh, including establishing an Ultra-Modern Fire Station in Panipat Municipal Corporation area at a cost of Rs 17.85 crore. Negotiations with various bidders during the meeting resulted in a significant cost saving of Rs 6.92 crore.

The government official spokesperson said that approval was also given for installation of new LEDs and replacement of existing street lights with energy-efficient LED street lights, along with a Centralized Control and Monitoring System (CCMS) panel for a smart lighting system in Yamunanagar, at a cost of Rs 16.50 crore. Additionally, the implementation of a smart street light system within the limits of Ambala Municipal Corporation, which includes replacing conventional street lights and installing new LED luminaires integrated with the Centralized Control and Monitoring System (CCMS), was approved at a cost of Rs 14.70 crore.

In the meeting, Saini directed the concerned officers that all works be completed within the

prescribed time frame, adding that any delays would hold concerned contractor and officers accountable. He also emphasized the need to ensure use of quality materials in construction, making it clear that quality would not be compromised under any circumstances.

Complete all arrangements in time for purchase of Rabi crops: CM to Officers

Saini, in a review meeting regarding preparations for Rabi procurement marketing season 2025-26, directed the officials of all four procurement agencies procuring wheat, mustard, barley, gram, lentil and sunflower for the Rabi marketing season 2025-26 to complete necessary arrangements in time so that farmers do not face any problem in selling crops in mandis. "This time a bumper production of wheat is expected. Robust arrangements should be ensured for the purchase of wheat in the mandis," he said, directing the Marketing Board officials to construct large sheds at vacant places in the mandis keeping in mind the future needs.

The procurement of mustard started from March 15 and lentils from March 20, which will continue till May 1. Similarly, the procurement of wheat, barley and gram will start from April 1, while the procurement of sunflower will start from June 1.

Centre Declines Political Clearance for Punjab Agri Minister's US Visit

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In yet another instance of the Centre denying international travel clearance to Punjab's Ministers, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has refused permission to Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian to visit the US for a crucial dairy development initiative.

Khudian, along with Animal Husbandry Principal Secretary Rahul Bhandari and Director Dr GS Bedi, was scheduled to travel to Wisconsin from March 29 to April 6 to visit the laboratory of ABS Global, a leading firm in cattle genet-

ics. The objective of the visit was to finalize an agreement for obtaining sexed semen for Holstein Friesian (HF) cows, which are widely preferred by Punjab's dairy farmers for their high milk yield — up to 81 litres per day. Sources confirmed that the Punjab Government had sought approval from the MEA earlier this month. However, after a week, the Ministry responded, stating that "clearance cannot be given". The trip's expenses were to be covered by the Punjab Livestock Development Board. A senior government official expressed disappointment, stating that Punjab has been negotiating with ABS Global to secure a steady supply of sexed semen.

PM Modi to inaugurate Hisar Airport on Apr 14

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Haryana on April 14 to inaugurate the Hisar Airport and also lay the foundation stone of a new 800 MW unit thermal power plant in Yamunanagar district.

"Prime Minister Modi will be the chief guest in a state-level function to be organized on the occasion of Dr BR Ambedkar's birth anniversary on April 14. Whenever Prime Minister Modi has visited Haryana, he has given gifts to the State," said Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday while interacting with the reporters in Chandigarh.

Saini, flanked by his Ministers Krishan Kumar Bedi, Krishan Pal Panwar, and Vipul Goel, said that the Prime Minister will inaugurate inaugurate Maharaja Agrasen Airport in Hisar to open commercial operations and lay the foundation stone of a new 800-MW unit at the Deen Bandhu Chhotu Ram Thermal Power Plant (DCRTPP) in Yamunanagar district coming up for Rs 7,272 crore.

State Budget reflects people's priorities and aspirations

Saini said that the State Budget for the financial year 2025-26 is a reflection of the priorities and aspirations of the people of Haryana. To fulfill these aspirations, the budget includes a commitment to com-

plete 90 of the Sankalp Patra's promises within this year. So far, the government has fulfilled 19 of the 217 commitments in the Sankalp Patra, and work is ongoing on 14 others.

The Chief Minister, while making a mention of the 'Sankalps' made in the budget 2025-26, said that to make Haryana 'future-ready', a new department called 'Department of Future' will be created. Additionally, the Haryana AI Mission will be established, and AI hubs will be set up in Gurugram and Panchkula. Women farmers will be provided interest-free loans of up to Rs one lakh to establish dairy farms. Besides, a new Model Sanskriti School will be opened within every 10 km radius, and one government Model Sanskriti School in each district will be developed into a Centre of Excellence in Sports, Saini added.

"A bill to curb the sale of counterfeit seeds and pesticides is introduced in the ongoing Vidhan Sabha session. Moreover, this year's budget includes a commitment to organizing 'Haryana Math Olympiad' every year for students in Classes X to XII. Medal winners in World Skills Olympiad will be awarded cash prizes of up to Rs 10 lakh. Day-care centers for cancer patients will be established in 17 districts. The number of MBBS seats in the state will be increased from 2,185 to 2,485, and 10 new Integrated

Manufacturing Townships (IMTs) will be developed in the state," he added.

He said that under the 'One District One Product' scheme, 10 new industrial clusters will be created. An urban drainage fund of Rs 100 crore will be established in cities. A sports complex will be constructed in each municipal area.

All old landfill sites will be 100 percent cleaned. Every city will witness transformation of an old market into a smart market, and every village will see the revitalization of one street as a smart street, Saini added.

The Chief Minister said that under the 'Mhara Gaon Jagmag Gaon scheme', 5,877 villages are already receiving 24-hour electricity. A new scheme will be launched for the remaining 1,376 villages. Besides, under PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, the target is to install 2.22 lakh solar rooftops by March 31, 2027. So far, 15,000 homes have been fitted with 2 kW solar rooftops.

Accuses Cong of misleading people on State Budget

Saini alleged that Congress leaders were misleading the masses about the state's budget for political interest. Taking a dig at Congress, Saini said that party's leaders were more concerned about securing their own positions than thinking about the country.

Buddha College Indri Road, Ramba, Karnal - 132116 (Haryana) Applications are invited for the following posts on Regular Basis: Budha College of Management: Principal-1, Assistant Professor: BBA-3, MBA-3

NAME CHANGE I, Kalawati W/o Sh. Sher Singh R/o VPO Nasipur (77), Rohtak tehsil & district Rohtak declare that my husband PPO number is 240559203583 at batch 40706 unit 21BN BSF

PUBLIC NOTICE This is for the information of general public at large that Smt. Lado Devi wife of Sh. Subh Singh resident of Deha Basti, Sanjay Colony, Karnal,

PUBLIC NOTICE It is for the information of all members of The Amanjed Cooperative House Building (Ist) Society Ltd., Sector 49-C, Chandigarh that election for the managing committee of the society will be held with the approval by the Joint Registrar, Cooperative Societies, U.T., Chandigarh/Registrar Cooperative Societies, U.T. Chandigarh will be held as under-

नगर निगम सूचना नगर निगम विभाग में प्रोपर्टी ID: 10K64081 को पी.डी.वी-78 के द्वारा प्रमाणित निविदाएं प्राप्त की गई हैं।

जगदर निगम टोटल (सर्वजनिक सूचना) सर्व सार्वजनिक को सूचित किया जाता है कि नगर निगम रोहताक की कर वसूली के सम्बन्ध में नगर निगम प्रोपर्टी आईडी 10K64081 को पी.डी.वी-78 के द्वारा प्रमाणित निविदाएं प्राप्त की गई हैं।

STATE BANK OF INDIA Retail Assets Central Processing Centre, Near Sagar Willa Hotel, Delhi Road, ROHTAK, Email: rasecc.rohtak@sbi.co.in

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) Under SARFAESI Act, 2002 Read with Security Interest Rule-8(1) Whereas the undersigned acting under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Act), 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with 2[rule 3] of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules 2002, issued demand notice u/s 13(2) in the following account/borrower/Guarantor on the dates mentioned here under below calling upon the Borrower/ Guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the respective demand notice within 60 days of the date of the notice.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of Borrower / Guarantor & Loan A/c No., Description of the immovable mortgage, Date of demand notice, Amount as per demand notice, Date of possession notice. Includes details for Kamal Parkash, Subhash Kumari, and Vikas Kumar.

गुरुवरन सिंघ - सार रजिस्ट्रार, बाघा पुलटा। नैटिव बराना अम नरडा। नैटिव बराना अम नरडा। नैटिव बराना अम नरडा। नैटिव बराना अम नरडा।

ELECTION NOTICE It is for the information of all members of The Amanjed Cooperative House Building (Ist) Society Ltd., Sector 49-C, Chandigarh that election for the managing committee of the society will be held with the approval by the Joint Registrar, Cooperative Societies, U.T., Chandigarh/Registrar Cooperative Societies, U.T. Chandigarh will be held as under-

कैआपुटिव बैक Cooperative Bank FULLY COMPUTERIZED BANK AN ISO 9001-2000 BANK THE JALANDHAR CENTRAL COOPERATIVE BANK LTD. [RULE (8-1)] SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

PUBLIC NOTICE Before Shri Navan, DANICS, Assistant Estate Officer, Enacting The Powers of The Estate Officer, U.T., Chandigarh. Subject:- Transfer of ownership rights to the extent of 100% share in respect of House No. 291, Sector 10-A, Chandigarh (RP-5473) on the basis of Regd. Will dated 26.04.2024 executed by Late Sh. Harji Singh Bedi.

PUBLIC NOTICE On behalf of my client namely Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. (AHFL), having its Branch office at Anand Greenwood Plaza, 2nd Floor, Vishakhapatnam, G.P.O. Box No. 1652 and Sale deed dated 02.05.2013 bearing number No. 2366 which is part of chain of title documents in regard to Said Property, has been misplacely to this effect: Sander Kumar have lodged Last Information Report LR No. 581972025 dated 21.03.2025. Further, as per the declaration furnished by the present owner the above sale deed was earlier in her possession and the said property is unencumbered and no mortgage, charge or lien has been created over the said Property in favour of any person.

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

Canara Bank PHOOS MANDI (2125) BRANCH Mob No: 98555-02125, Email Id: cb2125@canarabank.com [Rule-8(1)] Possession Notice (For Immovable Property) Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised officer of the Canara Bank, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002(Act No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to borrower(s) guarantor(s) on the date mentioned hereunder, calling upon the borrower(s)/guarantor(s), to repay the amount mentioned in the respective demand notice, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Public Notice This is to notify all the concerned that, on behalf of my client, HDFC Bank Ltd., I hereby give notice to the general public that customers, M/s. Kureja Star (Kureja & Smt. Tanika Kureja) stated that previous to the date of the said deed, the said share in the said property will be mutated accordingly and no further claim whatsoever shall be entertained at any later stage.

Public Notice On behalf of my client namely Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. (AHFL), having its Branch office at Anand Greenwood Plaza, 2nd Floor, Vishakhapatnam, G.P.O. Box No. 1652 and Sale deed dated 02.05.2013 bearing number No. 2366 which is part of chain of title documents in regard to Said Property, has been misplacely to this effect: Sander Kumar have lodged Last Information Report LR No. 581972025 dated 21.03.2025. Further, as per the declaration furnished by the present owner the above sale deed was earlier in her possession and the said property is unencumbered and no mortgage, charge or lien has been created over the said Property in favour of any person.

OSBI STATE BANK OF INDIA GURUDWARA SHEESH GANJ ROAD BRANCH ANANDPUR SAHIB, DISTRICT RUPNAGAR, Ph. No. 01877-232033, Email: sbi.50080@sbi.co.in PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY ON 24.04.2025, 12.00 NOON TO 2.00 P.M.

SBI State Bank of India Agriculture Commercial Branch, SCO 42-43, Sector-17 Jagadhri, Distt. Yamuna Nagar-135003. POSSESSION NOTICE (Rule-8(1)) (For Immovable property) Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the State Bank of India, Agriculture Commercial Branch, SCO 42-43, Sector-17, Jagadhri, Distt. Yamuna Nagar under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice dated 11.10.2024 calling upon the Borrower: M/s Yuvraj Rana Dairy Farms through its Prop. Smt. Sandhya Rani Village Bhogpur, P.O. Mehrar Majra, Distt. Yamuna Nagar to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being of Rs. 7016455/- (Rs. Seventy lak Sixteen thousand four hundred fifty five only) as on 11.10.2024 with further Interest & Incidental expenses with effect from 11.10.2024 within 60 days of receipt of the said notice. (A/c No. 4227794160)

Public Notice This is to notify all the concerned that, on behalf of my client, HDFC Bank Ltd., I hereby give notice to the general public that customers, M/s. Kureja Star (Kureja & Smt. Tanika Kureja) stated that previous to the date of the said deed, the said share in the said property will be mutated accordingly and no further claim whatsoever shall be entertained at any later stage.

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LOST/FOUND It is notified for the general public that I Chindo Devi w/o Yash Pal Sharma R/O No-D-5, Shalimar Enclave, Village Himmatgarh, Dhakoli, Mohali (Pb.) have lost original Documents (DDR No. 2025/099442 dated, 20/3/2025 in 31 PS Chandigarh) Sale Deed Nos. 1280/1 dated 22/5/2002, Original GPA No. 373/4 dated 18/6/2002, Original Sale Deed No 5532 dated 19/12/2002, and Khatooni No. 26/49, Khaska Nos.: 73(5)-2, 74(2-17), 75(3-1), 76 (2-9), 77 (5-9), 78 (4-0), 80 (4-0), 81 (4-0), 82 (4-0), 83 (4-0), 84 (4-0), 85 (4-0), 86 (4-0), 87 (4-0), 88 (4-0), 89 (4-0), 90 (4-0), 91 (4-0), 92 (4-0), 93 (4-0), 94 (4-0), 95 (4-0), 96 (4-0), 97 (4-0), 98 (4-0), 99 (4-0), 100 (4-0).

Public Notice On behalf of my client namely Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. (AHFL), having its Branch office at Anand Greenwood Plaza, 2nd Floor, Vishakhapatnam, G.P.O. Box No. 1652 and Sale deed dated 02.05.2013 bearing number No. 2366 which is part of chain of title documents in regard to Said Property, has been misplacely to this effect: Sander Kumar have lodged Last Information Report LR No. 581972025 dated 21.03.2025. Further, as per the declaration furnished by the present owner the above sale deed was earlier in her possession and the said property is unencumbered and no mortgage, charge or lien has been created over the said Property in favour of any person.

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DIRECTORATE OF PUNJAB STATE LOTTERIES DRAW TIME: 06:00 PM ONWARDS RESULT OF PUNJAB STATE DEARIE GOLD MONDAY WEEKLY LOTTERY MRP Rs 10/- Per Ticket 1st Prize Amount (10)Rs.10,000/-, Common to all series (On last 4 digits) (Seller Prize Amount Rs.500/-, Total Prize Amount Rs.10,500/- each) 8014

Editor's TAKE

Need for judicial accountability

The erosion of judicial integrity weakens the very foundation of democracy

The judiciary is often regarded as the last bastion of justice, fairness, and accountability. However, recent reports of large sums of unaccounted cash allegedly found in the residence of a judge in the Delhi High Court have once again raised serious concerns about corruption within the judicial system. Despite numerous allegations of corruption, impeachment proceedings against a Supreme Court or High Court judge have been initiated only four times in India's history. This raises pressing questions about the effectiveness of the current mechanisms in place to tackle judicial corruption and the urgent need for reform.

Our judicial system provides two primary mechanisms to deal with allegations of corruption against Supreme Court and High Court judges. The first is an in-house procedure established by the Supreme Court in 1999. Under this mechanism, complaints against judges are examined internally by the Chief Justice of India or the concerned High Court Chief Justice. If the allegations are deemed serious, a three-member committee comprising senior judges conducts an inquiry. However, this process is informal, lacks transparency, and rarely results in significant disciplinary action beyond an advisory to resign or a withdrawal of judicial work.

The second mechanism is impeachment by Parliament, a process enshrined in the Indian Constitution. However, the high threshold required—support from a two-thirds majority in both houses—makes impeachment an impractical tool. It is indeed a tedious process which hardly ever result in impeachment.

It is intriguing why corrupt judges remain unpunished. Several factors contribute to the de facto impunity enjoyed by judges. The in-house procedure lacks transparency, as inquiry reports remain confidential. The public and legal community remain unaware of actions taken against corrupt judges. But the biggest reason why judges go unpunished for their misdeeds is contempt laws. India's strict contempt of court laws make it difficult to openly discuss or investigate corruption allegations against judges. This suppresses public scrutiny and independent journalistic investigations. Besides, unlike other government institutions, the judiciary largely regulates itself, leading to a conflict of interest. An independent body to oversee judicial conduct is absent. Impeachment, the only constitutional method for removal, is highly politicised and seldom pursued, making it an ineffective deterrent.

To restore public trust and ensure accountability within the judiciary, the transparency in the system is the first condition. The in-house procedure must be made more transparent. Inquiry reports should be made public, and disciplinary actions against judges must be disclosed to prevent a culture of secrecy.

Contempt laws must be relaxed to allow greater public discourse and media scrutiny of judicial corruption. Establishing an autonomous commission to investigate judicial corruption, comprising retired judges, legal experts, and public representatives, would ensure impartiality and reduce conflicts of interest. The current impeachment mechanism is ineffective due to its high procedural threshold. Judges should be required to publicly disclose their assets and financial dealings periodically, similar to elected officials. This can serve as a deterrent.

The judiciary serves as the bedrock of democracy, and any erosion of its integrity weakens the very foundation of justice.

A system or institution is only as strong as the individuals who uphold it. If those in positions of power falter, there must be a robust and fool-proof mechanism to safeguard the sanctity of the judiciary and restore public trust.

Leaderspeak



I have been a legislator for 36 years and I am well aware of my responsibilities. I possess basic common sense and would never propose altering the Constitution. My remarks have been taken out of context. They are misquoting me. I merely pointed out that several changes occur over time due to judicial rulings. Nowhere, did I suggest that we intend to modify the Constitution. We are a national party, we know what the Constitution is.

DK SHIVAKUMAR, DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF KARNATAKA



Reviving the Yamuna

The newly elected Delhi government has placed the sustainable revitalisation of the Yamuna River at the forefront of its environmental agenda



The recently elected Delhi government has prioritised the sustainable cleaning and revitalisation of the Yamuna River in its environmentally friendly development plan. In line with this vision, the central government aims to convert the Yamuna into an exemplary river, establishing a standard for analogous restoration initiatives in other urban areas. Although efforts to reduce pollution from industrial effluents, drainage systems, and waste management are essential, the lasting effectiveness of this mission will significantly depend on scientific afforestation along the riverbanks.

The effort to beautify the banks of the Yamuna is an essential move towards revitalising the river's previous splendour. By combining sustainable tree planting with pollution management strategies, Delhi's authorities seek to establish a healthier, more robust river system that can act as an example for urban river restoration throughout the nation.

A crucial part of this strategy involves the organised planting of indigenous tree varieties and herbal plants. Creating herbal gardens in key locations throughout the river basin could greatly improve the ecological well-being of the Yamuna. This type of vegetation acts as a natural filter, capturing pollutants such as chemicals, fertilisers, and sediments before they enter the river, thus enhancing water quality. Furthermore, these plants offer essential habitats for birds, insects, and animals, promoting biodiversity and reinforcing the local ecosystem. Apart from ecological advantages, planting trees along the riverbanks is essential for stabilising soil and averting erosion, thereby lowering the chances of land degradation and flooding. The deeply established vegetation helps in groundwater replenishment by enabling rainwater to seep into the soil instead of being wasted as surface runoff.

Creating herbal gardens cum corridors that include medicinal plants, as well as indigenous trees and flora, close to the Yamuna River presents a unique opportunity with extensive advantages. In addition to improving the river's ecological well-being, this project presents considerable economic opportunities by providing medicinal herbs to the Ayurvedic and pharmaceutical sectors. The growing of these plants supports the Delhi government's larger initiatives to restore the Yamuna, tackle water pollution, and encourage sustainable water resource management.

As the demand for medicinal plants increases, species including Indian Barberrry (Daruhaldi), Licorice (Mulethi), Bael, Isabgol, Atis, Guggul, Amla, Senna, Brahmi, Jatamansi, Madhunashini, Kalmegh, Shatavari, Ashwagandha, Chirayata, Katuki,

Shankhpushpi, Ashoka, Giloy, Kokum, and Safed Musli are especially valued in Ayurvedic medicine. Throughout India, farmers growing these crops-like Shankhpushpi, Atis, Kuth, Kutki, Kapikachhu, and Karanjahave experienced notable rises in their earnings, aiding the growth of the Ayurvedic agricultural industry.

Several riverside plant species can further support this effort, including Latjeera, Moringa (Sahjan), Holy Basil (Tulsi), Khokli (Hulhul), Billy Goat Weed (Gandhi Buti), Garundi, Slender Amaranth (Chaulai), Apple of Sodom (Aak), Coco Grass (Nagarmotha), Egyptian Crowfoot (Murag), and Marvel Grass (Chimni). These plants not only contribute to ecological balance but also offer medicinal properties. For example, Latjeera is traditionally used to treat malaria, dysentery, asthma, hypertension, and diabetes, while Moringa is renowned for its high nutritional value and water purification abilities. Similarly, Tulsi plays a vital role in traditional Indian medicine, recognised for its immunity-boosting properties. Other suitable species for afforestation along the Yamuna include Mangium Babool, which thrives in alluvial soils, Peppermint, known for aiding digestion, Tamarind, which adapts well to various soil types and Senna, valued for its medicinal applications. Additionally, Chamomile is widely used for its calming effects, while Lemongrass, Shatavari, and Chebulic Myrobalan (Harad) offer both ecological and health benefits.

Beyond their medicinal value, these plants serve as natural water purifiers by filtering pollutants and improving water quality. They absorb harmful gases, mitigate noise pollution, reduce heat, and capture dust, making them effective air and water purifiers.

The cultivation of medicinal plants also supports biodiversity by creating habitats for diverse species, strengthening ecological balance.

Importantly, this initiative offers significant economic prospects for local communities. The growing, handling, and selling of medicinal plants can create a reliable source of revenue, encouraging business initiatives and enhancing the local economy.

Additionally, conserving these plants aids in protecting traditional knowledge systems, guaranteeing that indigenous wisdom is transmitted across generations. Promoting herbal medicine can lessen dependence on synthetic drugs, fostering a transition to natural and sustainable healthcare methods. Thus by employing a comprehensive strategy that combines ecological restoration, economic development, and the safeguarding of traditional knowledge, the rejuvenation of the Yamuna River can act as a blueprint for sus-

tainable management of urban rivers throughout India. A thoughtfully designed program aimed at nurturing and maintaining medicinal plants by the Yamuna River can act as an effective means for ecological restoration and economic growth. By encouraging areas rich in biodiversity, this initiative could draw visitors interested in traditional healing methods, thus boosting eco-tourism and strengthening economic sustainability.

For the project to achieve meaningful success, an inclusive strategy that actively involves the local farming community is crucial. Farmers cultivating in the Yamuna floodplain must be recognised as key stakeholders, serving as ecological guardians in the river restoration initiative. Instead of seeing their involvement as a hurdle, these farmers ought to be viewed as essential collaborators in this distinctive urban medicinal planting initiative. Globally, countries like Singapore and South Korea have effectively rejuvenated urban riverbanks while integrating sustainable agricultural practices involving local farmers, already engaged in cultivating vegetables and other crops in the region. India can draw from these examples by adopting a balanced approach that maintains agriculture while enhancing the health of the Yamuna.

(The writer is a former Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management and DG-AYUSH, Health Department, Bihar Government. Views expressed are personal)



SATENDRA SINGH

Keeping up with the Joneses

SECOND Opinion



SHARMILA VAIDYA

Keeping up with the Joneses is an old phrase that refers to the constant pressure of "keeping up" with the social status and wealth of one's friends and neighbours.

Research shows that this phrase originated with the Jones family, a wealthy and prominent New Yorker who began building elegant and grand mansions. In response, other New Yorkers tried to outdo them by constructing even more elaborate homes in the Hudson Valley.

In 1853, Elizabeth S. Jones built Wyndcliffe, a 24-room ornate mansion designed in the style of a Scottish castle. Soon, other wealthy families started building extravagant estates to showcase their wealth. This competition gave rise to the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses."

Interestingly, the sentiment behind this phrase has persisted even to this day. I have observed similar scenarios within my circle of friends. I remember, Anita and Sheila had been best friends for years. When Anita bought a beautiful three-bedroom house in an upscale neighbourhood, she couldn't wait to show her house to Sheila. "This place is amazing!" remarked Sheila as she admired the high ceilings and designer kitchen. It must have cost a fortune!

Anita beamed. "It was a bit pricey, but totally worth it.

The neighborhood is great, and the schools are top notch."

That evening Sheila went home feeling restless and envious of her friend. She and her husband had been considering upgrading their townhouse. Within three weeks, they found a house that was much bigger and grander than their friend's, located in a very upscale neighbourhood. However, they ended up spending more than they had budgeted. While they achieved their goal of finding a more impressive home, the financial strain left them constantly stressed.

It took me by surprise, when I read in the Forbes magazine that the average size of a home has tripled in the past 50 years, even with the family size consistently getting smaller. In addition, one in 10 Americans have to rent a storage unit, because they can't fit all of their stuff inside their giant homes.

Here is another scenario I observed. David, one of our friends, was ecstatic when he bought a luxury car. However, his excitement was short lived, when a friend arrived in a Mercedes - a more expensive car and a true status symbol. Suddenly, the pride David once felt began to fade. The same car he had proudly shown off to his neighbours and friends no longer seemed impressive. Before long, he stopped parking it outside his garage, as what once brought him joy now felt overshadowed.

There are many similar instances that we observe daily.

We take immense pleasure in portraying our best moments in life to the world, be it an expensive vacation, designer clothes, the latest gadgets or our busy social calendar. We are constantly trying to flaunt our perfect lifestyle to the world, especially on social media. Social media is one of the most powerful sources of displaying our choicest moments, which puts us in constant pressure and competition with each other. But why do we behave this way?

One can argue that it's just human behaviour, influenced by peer pressure, consumerism, commercialisation, social media-or all of the above. However, there should be an understanding that this facade can make us feel inadequate, burdened with financial stress with mounting debt and emotional stress in the form of anxiety and depression. It is like two parallel lines endlessly chasing each other, never quite meeting. Does it ever end? Maybe—when we stop measuring our worth against others and start defining fulfillment on our terms.

Instead of chasing status symbols, we should focus on what genuinely brings happiness—strong relationships, meaningful experiences, and financial stability. Breaking free from this cycle requires shifting our perspective, redefining success, and embracing gratitude. After all, wealth is not about what we own but about how fulfilled we feel.

The moment we stop comparing and start living for ourselves, we finally win the race that never truly existed.

(The writer is Houston based educator and author. Views expressed are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Regulating the coaching centres

Madam—It is a appreciable step of Rajasthan government to enact "The Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill" which aims at regulating Coaching Centres to curb the menace of student suicides which we find in the media frequently. Due to the toxic environment of coaching centres and particularly at Rajasthan's Kota which has become the country's education hub and it has been playing havoc with the young minds.

The Speaker Om Parksh Birla is member of Parliament from Kota is also trying to find the ways how the best can be done in this direction. Kota, home to the coaching market worth ₹5000 Crore, has become a killing field where dreams die at the altar of unreasonable expectations fuelled by parental and peer pressure. Here it is worth mentioning that parents expectations play a major part in this unholy happenings and it is expected from the parents that they should be aware about the actual capabilities of their sons or daughters. A sense of numbness has set in with several cases of student suicides being reported every year for over a decade now. At least six students are reported to have died by suicide in the town since the start of this year. The Bill mandates that coaching centres with over 50 students must register and meet specific standards to qualify for registration, in a bid to ensure greater accountability.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

Carnage in Gaza continues

Madam—Refer to, "Israel strikes again, kill 26 Palestinians in Gaza" (March 24). The Gaza crisis is a stark illustration of the global order's failures, revealing Western double standards and the impotence of international institutions. The conflict transcends the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic, exposing a systemic breakdown in upholding international law and human rights. The disproportionate response and the international community's inability to hold Israel accountable highlight a disturbing trend.

Powerful nations, particularly in the West, often prioritise geopolitical interests over universal principles, leading to accusations of hypocrisy and eroding the credibility of international norms. The silence or muted criticism from these actors emboldens perpetrators and deepens the sense of injustice among those affected. International institutions like the UN, designed to prevent such conflicts, appear powerless. Security Council resolutions are vetoed, and humanitarian aid is often insufficient or obstructed. This impotence fosters a sense of disillusionment, particularly in the global South, where Western-led governance models are increasingly viewed with skepticism. The selective application of international law further fuels this perception, creating a breeding ground for resentment and instability.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

Government sets the goal to eradicate TB

Madam—Tuberculosis (TB) is not merely a physical ailment, it is a mirror reflecting societal inequalities, economic hardships, and human insensitivity. This disease primarily spreads among those trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and unsanitary living conditions. Indian society has long perceived it as a curse, yet the reality remains that it can afflict anyone, regardless of their social or economic background.

The Government of India has set an ambitious goal of eradicating TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030. Recent data indicates a 17.7 per cent decline in TB cases between 2015 and 2023, with a 21.4 per cent reduction in mortality rates. While this progress is encouraging, the stark reality remains that over 2.7 Million new cases emerged in 2023 alone, underscoring the deep-rooted nature of the disease. Under the "Nikshay Poshan Yojana," TB patients receive a monthly allowance of ₹500 as nutritional support, but this amount falls short of meeting their dietary needs. Furthermore, the rise in drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases is making treatment increasingly complex and prolonged.

The fight against TB extends beyond the medical domain; it must also be waged in the realm of social awareness. This disease does not merely inflict physical suffering, it also subjects patients to societal exclusion and mental distress.

SACHIN TRIPATHI | SATNA

KUDOS TO THE PIONEER FOR ITS BRAND NEW LOOK

I am a long-time reader of the Pioneer and I just wanted to take a moment to appreciate the incredible transformation the newspaper has undergone. A year ago, there wasn't even a dedicated Vivacity page and now, the entire features section has evolved into something truly special. It's amazing to see a newspaper giving such dedicated space to books, art, culture and fashion, very few do that. The way the Pioneer is showcasing fashion even in today's edition is absolutely refreshing.

I'm writing this email specifically because of Agenda (Sunday, March 23). The interview with Saurabh Shukla, conducted by Sakshi Priya, was one of the best I've ever read. It didn't sound like another promotional piece, it felt raw, personal. The way it was structured, the choice of photographs and the overall presentation, everything was just perfect. As a reader, it feels immersive, like I am



actually part of the interview while reading it. Thank you for delivering such exceptional content. Also, I have to mention how much I appreciate the food section; it's such a great addition! Thank you for making the Pioneer such an engaging and meaningful read. It's a pleasure to pick up the paper every day. AMIT DAS | KOLKATA

Reviving India's Sacred Groves

The historical, ecological, and socio-cultural importance of Sacred Groves cannot be overstated. There is an urgent need for a holistic conservation strategy to protect them, writes BKP SINHA and ARVIND JHA

FIRST Column



In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India has directed that all Sacred Groves across the nation should be officially classified as "forests" and "community reserves" under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. This decision is a major step in legally safeguarding these natural sanctuaries, known for their ecological and cultural significance.

In Indian culture, forests have always been revered not only for their ecological importance but also for their deep societal and spiritual significance. Ancient texts reflect this reverence by classifying forests based on their purposes, revealing the varied roles these ecosystems played. Mahavan, the vast, untouched wilderness, served as a crucial wildlife sanctuary, preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance. Shreevan, on the other hand, provided communities with vital resources like timber, fruits, and medicinal plants, highlighting their economic significance. Upan, green spaces designed for leisure and recreation, connected people with nature, often associated with royal families. Tapovan, sacred forests, were believed to be places of spiritual enlightenment for ascetics.

Among these classifications, Sacred Groves stand out as unique forest patches preserved through community-driven efforts rooted in spiritual beliefs and cultural traditions. Spread across India's diverse landscapes, they are known by different names, such as Devrais in Maharashtra, Devara Kadu in Karnataka, Orans in Rajasthan, Kaavus in Kerala, Devban in Himachal Pradesh, Sarana in Madhya Pradesh, Umanglai in Manipur, Law Lingdoh in Meghalaya, Devbhumi in Uttarakhand, Pavitra Van in Andhra Pradesh, and Gramthan in West Bengal.

These groves act as vital carbon sinks, regulate local microclimates, and serve as havens for medicinal plants and endangered species. What truly distinguishes these ecosystems is their decentralised conservation model, where local communities act as the primary custodians of these ecosystems. This approach, rooted in traditional knowledge, cultural values, and strong community ties, has often proven more effective than state-controlled initiatives, particularly in regions where community engagement and cultural practices remain deeply ingrained.

The significance of Sacred Groves was officially recognised in 1897 by Sir Dietrich Brandis, the first Inspector General of Forests in India. This early acknowledgment laid the groundwork for further research, including the pioneering work of Indian polymath DD Kaushambi (1907-1966). Decades later, in 1975, conservation studies conducted by the Agarkar Research Institute in Pune brought these ancient ecosystems into the national spotlight.

These age-old sanctuaries are shielded by deeply ingrained societal and cultural taboos, a form of traditional environmental stewardship that has effectively protected them from destructive human activities like deforestation, poaching, and resource over-

exploitation. This protection has allowed them to flourish as pristine ecosystems, providing sanctuaries for a rich diversity of plant and animal life. They serve as vital water recharge zones, maintaining groundwater levels and supporting agricultural activities in surrounding areas. Unlike artificial gene banks, which require significant energy, incur high costs and remain vulnerable to both natural and human-made disasters, these ecological havens offer a more sustainable and self-sustaining alternative for conserving genetic diversity.

Beyond their environmental significance, these sacred spaces hold immense cultural and spiritual value for local communities. They often serve as sacred sites for worship, places for social gatherings, and centres for traditional healing practices. They are also closely tied to local stories, myths, and rituals, which help bring people together and strengthen their bond with nature.

In today's hurried lives, we often find ourselves disconnected from the natural world. These sanctuaries provide a much-needed retreat, offering a peaceful setting to pause, reflect, and release the stresses of daily life. Surrounded by greenery and the calming sounds of nature, they help us find inner balance and tranquillity, reminding us of our deep connection to the natural world and the life around us.

Despite their immense value, only around 14,000 Sacred Groves have been officially documented. Experts, however, estimate that the actual number

could be as high as 100,000 to 150,000, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive identification and conservation efforts to protect these invaluable ecological and cultural treasures.

The gradual loss of traditional beliefs and cultural practices that once safeguarded these spaces has left them increasingly vulnerable. Modern development projects, changes in land use, and agricultural expansion are encroaching on their boundaries, leading to deforestation and soil degradation. The spread of invasive species and the decline of village grazing lands (Gairans) further exacerbate the strain on these fragile ecosystems. Unfortunately, current conservation strategies often fail to address the underlying causes of degradation, as they remain disconnected from the lived realities of local communities. The politicisation of conservation, where short-term gains outweigh long-term sustainability, weakens the effectiveness of protection measures. Most importantly, the marginalisation of traditional custodians, the very people who have safeguarded these groves for centuries, deprives these ecosystems of their most effective protectors. Weak enforcement of legal frameworks also exposes these ancient landscapes to unchecked exploitation and degradation.

These treasured landscapes now stand at a critical crossroads, demanding immediate action for their survival. The Supreme Court's decision to classify Sacred Groves as "forests" and "community reserves" is a significant step, but effective

conservation requires a multi-pronged approach. This should begin with thorough demarcation and surveys, both on the ground and through satellite imagery, to clearly define the boundaries of Sacred Groves and prevent further encroachment. Equally important are socio-economic surveys to understand the needs and dependencies of local communities for developing sustainable management plans that balance ecological protection with human welfare.

Biodiversity assessments are essential for identifying endemic or endangered species and prioritising conservation efforts in those areas. Similarly, studying ecosystem services—such as nutrient cycling, pollination, seed dispersal, and natural pest management—is essential for maintaining ecological balance, supporting agriculture, and combating climate change. These services, though often overlooked, are fundamental to both environmental health and human livelihoods.

A comprehensive economic valuation of Sacred Groves, encompassing both direct and indirect benefits, is crucial for illustrating their true worth. This valuation should include the cost of lost ecosystem services, the potential for sustainable economic activities, and the long-term economic implications of environmental degradation. By quantifying these economic factors, policymakers and communities can better understand the tangible benefits of investing in the conservation of these vital ecosystems. This economic lens provides a powerful argument for inte-

grating Sacred Grove protection into broader economic development strategies, demonstrating that environmental conservation and economic prosperity are not mutually exclusive, but rather, interdependent.

To preserve these ancient ecosystems for future generations, fostering a sense of ownership among local communities is essential. This sense of responsibility can be nurtured through active community engagement, particularly by involving women, who play a crucial role in sustainable conservation. Restoring degraded groves by removing invasive species, addressing encroachments, and establishing local monitoring systems can effectively secure their long-term protection.

However, to implement these strategies effectively, it is essential to streamline the roles of village-level committees to eliminate redundancy and enhance coordination. Selecting appropriate legal and institutional frameworks tailored to each grove's specific needs—such as utilising the Wildlife Protection Act for groves near wildlife areas or the Forest Rights Act for forest-dwelling communities—ensures more effective management. In non-forested regions, empowering Gram Sabhas or integrating Joint Forest Management programs can provide sustainable conservation solutions. These tailored approaches align conservation efforts with the unique circumstances of each Sacred Grove.

The Supreme Court has directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to formulate a comprehensive policy for the nationwide governance and management of Sacred Groves. This policy must account for the intricate relationship between various legal frameworks, such as the Village Panchayat Acts, the Wildlife Protection Act, the Forest Rights Act, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, and the Biological Diversity Act, to establish a robust protective framework. Ensuring that all Sacred Groves are officially classified as 'forests' under the Supreme Court's time-bound process (Writ Petition (Civil) No 1164/2023) is also vital for their protection.

Safeguarding these ecological and cultural treasures requires the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders—communities, policymakers, and conservationists alike. The urgency to act cannot be overstated, as their decline threatens not only ecological balance but also the cultural ethos that binds communities together. Empowering local communities and integrating their traditional ecological knowledge into conservation strategies are essential for ensuring the long-term preservation of these invaluable sites. Ultimately, the enduring legacy of Sacred Groves underscores how conservation and culture can coexist harmoniously, fostering a sustainable relationship between humanity and nature.

(The writers are former principal chief conservators of forests, UP and Maharashtra. Views expressed are personal)

Rising crimes against the elderly: A growing concern for senior citizens

The recent murder of an elderly couple in Northwest Delhi on Tuesday morning has, besides shaking the conscience of society, raised serious concerns about ensuring the security of elderly people in this country.

Tuesday's is not a single incident, rather incidents of crime against elderly persons frequently occur throughout the country, especially in bigger towns and metros.

The crimes against senior citizens in India have been continuously rising over the years. The NCRB Data from states is quite disappointing and shows that crimes against elderly people are increasing day by day. This makes it necessary to understand and address the causes that lead to crimes against the elderly and also to find ways to deal with this problem.

Past data reveals that a variety of crimes such as theft, robbery, cheating, forgery, and even murders frequently occur with elderly persons in India. At present, the biggest threat to elderly people is the commission of cybercrimes such as fraud and cheating with them by cyber fraudsters.

In India, particularly, those seniors are more susceptible to crimes who live in isolation from family and society, lack friends, and lack access to communication and transportation facilities etc. A lot of elderly people are gullible, forget things easily, and might feel ashamed to acknowledge they were harmed.

The criminals use data such as a victim's social security number, bank account details, PAN number, and driver's license number to finish a transaction or obtain additional personal information about them.

Security of elderly persons, though, should remain a primary concern, but, is often ignored. Compared to younger people, the vulnerability and susceptibility of elderly people to the commission of crime is obvious due to various reasons.

An increasing lack of physical and mental strength and easily believing people are among a few of the factors that make the elderly vulnerable to crime. Moreover, given the increasing number of nuclear families, with children living away from their parents, elderly people, especially, in urban households, are compelled to live alone which puts them at risk further.

The circumstances making older people live alone make them more vulnerable. The World Population Ageing Report from the United Nations estimates that 90 Million older people live alone globally.

Seniors who live alone in large homes are particularly vulnerable to physical crimes and become a target for financial scammers.

According to data from HelpeIndia, there are approximately at least 112 Million people over the age of 60 in India, and forty per cent

of them live alone. As a result, they are easy targets for criminal activity and are more likely to experience severe effects from abuse.

One of the main causes of elderly people's vulnerability is their lack of involvement in the community. Participating in social activities makes people feel safer than isolating themselves from others. Elders, who are unable to communicate with others and live alone, also remain apprehensive about their security and live under constant fear and anxiety.

In India, the joint and undivided family system played a significant role in the maintenance of traditional culture and also provided various types of security to family members. Older people were given better roles, prestige and privileges in such a family structure that ensured their overall security naturally.

However, the emergence of new forces in the administrative, ideological, and economic domains meant that India's cultural life inevitably underwent a transition. In the last century, the fundamental idea of a joint family has undergone considerable change because of the development of cities and industries leading to

nuclear families causing severe effects on senior citizen's security among other things. The adverse effect of this phenomenon though visible generally all over, seems more pervasive in bigger cities like Delhi and Mumbai, in particular.

As per the available data, Delhi is the most dangerous city in India's metro areas. However, to address this issue, the city has developed a fairly comprehensive and formal action plan for protecting and offering security to its senior citizens.

The Senior Citizen Security Cell was founded in June 2004, at the Police headquarters. Its principal objective is to supervise, advise, and coordinate with the local police in matters about senior citizen security and safety.

The cell has established Senior Citizens Toll-Free Helplines and registered senior citizens who live alone with the police to exercise extra caution.

Verification of domestic help, drivers, servants, and tenants is done through special drives and mobilization of NGO members to offer lonely citizens emotional help. Even the Delhi High Court issued an order requiring schoolchildren to assist in providing support to the elderly in their community.

The task of arranging and supervising the

interactions between the kids and senior citizens fell to the Delhi Police. They made requests to arrange for volunteer groups of students to visit the elderly person who the police had identified as vulnerable.

This initiative provides emotional aid to the elderly and serves as a link between the senior community and law enforcement.

Despite the above measures, Delhi still witnesses the occurrence of crimes against elderly people, but the Delhi model has certainly shown the path in this regard and it is advisable that other states also adopt the Delhi-like model for ensuring senior citizens' security on a priority. Besides, given the consistent rise in crimes against senior citizens, there is a need for people in general to be educated about ageism and ageist attitudes. Moreover, given the challenges elderly people encounter as a result of their infirmities special crime control measures are required for their safety and security. Therefore, the states must establish policies, health, and social services, as well as a distinct criminal justice system to address as well as counteract this threat urgently.

The increasing crimes against senior citizens in India call for immediate and sustained intervention. While efforts like Delhi's Senior Citizen Security Cell have shown promise, much more needs to be done nationwide.

Other states should adopt similar models, ensuring a proactive approach to senior safety, including police registration, background checks for household staff, and community support initiatives.

Beyond law enforcement, society must play a greater role in safeguarding the elderly. Families should maintain stronger connections with their senior members, and communities should foster inclusivity to prevent isolation.

Raising awareness about cyber fraud, financial scams, and physical crimes targeting seniors is crucial, along with encouraging them to report incidents without fear or hesitation.

The government must also enhance social and healthcare policies tailored to senior citizens, ensuring better access to support systems.

A distinct criminal justice framework focused on elderly protection, coupled with stringent legal measures, can help curb such crimes. Ultimately, the safety of senior citizens is not just a law enforcement issue but a societal responsibility.

By strengthening familial bonds, community participation, and governmental initiatives, we can create a safer environment for our elderly, ensuring they live with dignity, security, and peace.

(The writer is associate professor Faculty of Law University of Delhi. Views expressed are personal)

Our innate desire to be controller

We all wish to be. And we fail miserably because control cannot be in our hands.

Lord Krishna explains, "The place of action and the doer and many different kinds of instruments and many different efforts and the fifth in this connection is the providence only." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 18.14)

The Lord further states, "Whatever action is begun by a man by body, speech and mind, these five are the causes of them." (18.15) Are not we always doing something with our bodies, speech and minds? Speech and mind have been separately mentioned because what we say makes a huge difference in our lives. It is not like any other sense. For example, there is an accident, in which both parties are at fault. In case they both apologise, the matter is amicably settled. Otherwise, a fight breaks out, if they become abusive. Similarly, what we do with our minds is subtle, not gross as is the case with other senses. Therefore, our minds occupy a special position in our lives.

What are these five causes? The place of action is determined by the circumstances. For example, are we in a hot place like Delhi in summer or a cold place like Toronto in winter? One is living in a nuclear family with a newly born or in a joint family, when there is a new arrival. In short, circumstances, make a huge difference and we have no control over them. The second cause is: who is doing it. One of us will be. But are we in control of ourselves? The answer sadly is no. Our natures control us and we are helpless about it. Returning to the same example, how will drivers react depends on their natures.

Naturally prone to get angry will fight and peaceful persons will settle the matter.

The third cause is the instruments employed. If someone has a superior cellphone, he will be able to perform better than one who is without one or has an outdated one. The fourth cause is the efforts made. Are we in control of these? No, our health, etc will determine how we will be able to perform. The last one is not in our hands, because what happens depends on our past 'karmaphalas'—acts done in the past. Success or failure will be on our account of them only, not much due to our present acts.

Then, are we in control? Not by a long shot. Only God is, or can be. Let us see the role of God from the angle of five causes. The circumstances, no matter what they are, are in control of God. After all, God is the Creator, which includes all possible types of circumstances. The doer, which is a soul, is in control of God also due to the karmaphalas done earlier by a soul, though a soul has free will. In any case, a soul has no real independence as such; it must be part of the Creation. All the implements, whatever they may be, originate from God only, he is the source of all. The efforts made are also controlled by God because God controls whatever we are

allowed to do. And the providence is part of God's justice system.

Having learnt that God is the controller and we are completely under His control, we should take advantage of this knowledge. We should take God's shelter as instructed by God. "In all respects take shelter of Me only. By My mercy you will achieve supreme peace and the eternal abode." (18.62) Additionally, we will qualify for opulence of six kinds, ie beauty, fame, knowledge, power, renunciation and wealth. From the Bhagavad-Geeta we learn, "Where there is the Yogeshvara Sri Krishna and where there is the archer Arjuna, there will be opulence, victory, wealth and definite principles. (18.78) Let us not deny that we are attracted towards them. We will also achieve victory or success in our endeavours. (18.78) Our acts will be according to the highest principles, which will qualify us for higher and more gains.

Unfortunately, we do not, at least most of us. Why? This is not such a mystery. Our egos don't allow us to think beyond ourselves. I may have failed countless times, but this time I will succeed in my plans, one thinks. What about all those, who failed before me? I am different; I am more intelligent. But the wise pay attention to God's instruction, "You have a right only in action, not ever in predetermining its fruits of action; your attaching to inaction also should not be there." (2.47) "Because compared to the

buddhi-yoga, which is acting without attachment to the fruits of action, material action is much inferior. Therefore, desire to take shelter in the buddhi-yoga. Those who try to predetermine the fruits are pitiable. (2.49) Because they will fail and the consequences will be lots of frustration, depression, etc. All we get is due to our past karma and nothing more. All our attempts to control are doomed to fail. God controls everything. How else can the creation last for billions of years? What is my experience in trying to control situations, results, etc? I will admit that like everyone else I try to control myself instinctively. The result is lots of anxiety and depression because they are in not my control. Yes, I have learnt that I cannot control, but the realisation is still far away. For example, someone is not well in the family. I do everything possible to see that this person recovers soon, including sincerely praying to God. Do I become peaceful then, assured that I am limited in what I can do? No, I don't. I feel bad that God, being omnipotent, does not act sooner. Or why have I been subjected to this misery having taken shelter from God? I do realise that past 'karmaphalas' will manifest. God's role comes subsequently. Then also God will decide when to act and how. I cannot control that. I am learning.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher. Views expressed are personal)

Thailand's PM faces no-confidence vote

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bangkok

Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra on Monday faced a no-confidence motion in Parliament as the Opposition alleged she was being unduly influenced by her father, a former prime minister, and is mismanaging the country. Paetongtarn, who took office last year, is expected to survive her first no-confidence vote on Wednesday with the backing of her ruling coalition that makes up the majority of the House of Representatives. The head of the Opposition in Parliament, Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, said Paetongtarn had failed to address

many of the country's chronic problems including the slumping economy, air pollution, crimes and corruption.

He said her administration was serving the interests of her family and her father, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, a popular but highly controversial political figure.

Paetongtarn heads the Pheu Thai Party, the latest in a string of populist parties affiliated with Thaksin, who was ousted in a 2006 military coup, fled into exile and recently returned to Thailand.

Thaksin has been at the heart of nearly two decades of deep political divisions pitting a mostly poor, rural majority that supported him against royalists, the military and their urban backers, who accuse



(Left)Thailand's Deputy PM Phumtham Wechayachai and (right) PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra greet to lawmakers before a no-confidence debate in Bangkok

him of threatening their status and that of the revered monarchy.

Natthaphong is the leader of the People's Party, a resurrection of the progressive, reformist Move Forward Party, which took the most seats in the general election in 2023 but failed to take power due to strong opposition from the conservative establishment, and was ordered dissolved.

Natthaphong said the formation of the ruling coalition, which saw Pheu Thai partner with its former conservative rivals, was part of the political bargain to bring Thaksin home. Paetongtarn was also accused by Prawit Wongsuwan, head of the Palang Pracharath Party, Pheu Thai's former coalition partner, of falsely declaring her assets, which she denied.

Turkiye detains journalists amid Erdogan rival protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Istanbul

Turkish authorities detained several journalists from their homes, a media workers' union reported on Monday, in what it said was a crackdown amid escalating protests triggered by the imprisonment of the mayor of Istanbul and top rival to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On Sunday, a court formally arrested Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and ordered him jailed pending a trial on corruption charges.

His detention on Wednesday sparked the largest wave of street demonstrations in Turkiye in more than a decade, deepening concerns over democracy and the rule of law.

In an apparent escalation of the government's response to the growing protests, the Disk-Basin-Is union said at least eight reporters and photojournalists were detained in what it said was an "attack on press freedoms and the people's right to learn the truth."

"You cannot hide the truth by silencing journalists!" the union wrote on the social media platform X, calling for their immediate release.

A total of 1,133 people have been detained since March 19, when the mayor was arrested at his home, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said.

As many as 123 police officers were injured in the protests, he said adding that dangerous materials such as acid, firebombs and knives were seized.

"Some circles have been exploiting the right to assemble and demonstrate, attempting to disrupt public order, incite street unrest, and attack our police," Yerlikaya said on his social media account. The minister said some of the detained were identified as having ties to groups listed as terrorist organisations. Others had previous criminal records, Yerlikaya said, urging the public to avoid falling for "provocations."

The mayor's imprisonment is widely regarded as a political move to remove a major challenger to Erdogan from the next presidential race, currently scheduled for 2028. Government officials strongly reject the accusations and insist that Turkiye's courts operate independently. Imamoglu was jailed on suspicion of running a criminal organisation, accepting bribes, extortion, illegally recording personal data and bid-rigging, accusations he has denied. A request for him to be imprisoned on terror-related charges was rejected although he still faces prosecution.

The Interior Ministry later announced that Imamoglu had been suspended from duty as a "temporary measure". The municipality had previously appointed an acting mayor from its governing council.

The politician was taken to Silivri prison, west of Istanbul, as more than 1.7 Million members of his Opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, held a primary election, endorsing him as its presidential candidate. Millions of non-members also cast votes in a "solidarity ballot", the party said.

Alongside Imamoglu, 47 other people were also jailed pending trial, including a key aide and two district mayors from Istanbul, one of whom was replaced with a government appointee.

Concerns about espionage rise as Donald Trump, Elon Musk fire federal workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

As President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk work to overhaul the federal government, they are forcing out thousands of workers with insider knowledge and connections who now need a job.

For Russia, China and other adversaries, the upheaval in Washington as Musk's Department of Government Efficiency guts government agencies presents an unprecedented opportunity to recruit informants, national security and intelligence experts say.

Every former federal worker with knowledge of or access to sensitive information or systems could be a target. When thousands of them leave their jobs at the same time, that creates a lot of targets, as well as a counterespionage challenge for the United States. "This information is highly valuable, and it shouldn't be surprising that Russia and China and other organisations, criminal syndicates for instance would be aggressively recruiting government employees," said Theresa Payton, a former White House chief information officer under President George W Bush, who now runs her own cyber security firm.

Many agencies oversee crucial data

Each year an average of more than 100,000 federal workers leave their jobs. Some retire, others move to the private sector. This year, in three months, the number is already many times higher.

It is not just intelligence officers who present potential security risks. Many departments and agencies oversee vast amounts of data that include personal information on Americans as well as sensitive information about national security and government operations. Exiting employees could also give away helpful security secrets that would allow someone to penetrate government databases or physical offices.

The Office of the US Trade Representative, for instance, maintains information on trade negotiations that could help an adversary undercut the United States. Federal records house data on clandestine intelligence operations and agents. Pentagon databases contain reams of sensitive information on US military capabilities. The Department of Energy oversees many of the nation's most closely guarded nuclear secrets.



US President Donald Trump

"This happens even in good times, someone in the intelligence community who for personal financial or other reasons walks into an embassy to sell America out, but DOGE is taking it to a whole new level," said John Schindler, a former counterintelligence official.

"Someone is going to go rogue," he said. "It's just a question of how bad it will be." Only a tiny fraction of the many millions of Americans who have worked for the federal government have ever been accused of espionage. The overwhelming number is conscientious patriots who would never sell out their country, Payton said.

Background checks, employee training and exit interviews are all designed to prevent informants or moles and to remind departing federal employees of their duty to preserve national secrets even after leaving federal service.

Even one person can do serious damage

It takes only one or two misguided or disgruntled workers to cause a national security crisis. Former FBI agent Robert Hanssen and former CIA officer Aldrich Ames, who both spied for Russia, show just how damaging a single informant can be.

Hanssen divulged sweeping information about American intelligence-gathering, including details that authorities said were partly responsible for the outing of

US informants in Russia who were later executed for working on America's behalf.

The odds that one angry former employee reaches out to a foreign power go up as many federal employees find themselves without a job, experts said. What's not in doubt is that foreign adversaries are looking for any former employees they can flip. They're hunting for that one informant who could deliver a big advantage for their nation. "It's a numbers game," said Schindler. Frank Montoya Junior, a retired senior FBI official and former top US government counterintelligence executive, said he was less concerned about well-trained intelligence community employees betraying their oaths and selling out to American adversaries. But he noted the many workers in other realms of government, who could be targeted by Russia or China. "When it comes to the theft of intellectual property, when it comes to the theft of sensitive technology, when it comes to access to power grids or to financial systems, an IRS guy or a Social Service guy who's really upset about what DOGE is doing, they actually are the bigger risk," Montoya said. Once military and intelligence officials were the primary targets of foreign spies looking to turn an informant. But now, thanks to the massive amount of information held at many agencies, and the competitive edge it could give China or Russia, that's no longer the case.

US exclave grappling with Trump's trade war with Canada

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Point Roberts

In the northwest corner of Washington State lies a quirky United States (US) exclave so dependent on Canada's goodwill that the strain of President Donald Trump's tariff war is inescapable, in the sole grocery store, at any of the three eateries, and for the many residents who never voted for him.

Locals and visitors alike in Point Roberts, Washington, are increasingly worried about how this unusual waterfront border town that has embodied the two countries' interdependency can survive the hostility brewing on both sides.

"This was really devastating," said Tamra Hansen, a longtime Point Roberts resident and business owner whose eyes welled with tears as she described her two restaurants on the brink. "If we don't get the support from the Canadians, this town will die."

Known as a geographic oddity since the boundary with Canada was drawn in 1846, this detached five-square-mile community called an exclave because it's completely separated from mainland America, is surrounded by water on three sides. Its only land connection is to Canada and it takes one border crossing and about 25 miles north by car to get to downtown Vancouver, BC, or two border crossings and about 25 miles through Canada to re-enter the United States along Boundary Bay.

The beaches, marina, golf course and hiking trails have long made Point Roberts a cherished getaway destination, but today locals say business has never been worse. Canadian visitors are staying away and some American residents say they've even been harassed over their nationality.

Point Roberts Fire Chief Christopher Carleton said Point Roberts is one of the last remaining untouched natural gems of the United States, but the tight-knit community with no stop lights is now under threat by politicians who know nothing about their way of life.

"We need to take care of one another and have grace for one another and not allow people who don't even know we exist to disrupt the relationships we currently have," said Carleton, whose fire fighters mostly live across the border.

Tensions between the US and Canada have spiked to a level not seen before in modern times thanks to Trump's on-again, off-again threat over the past two months to place taxes on a long list of goods going across the border. In

response, Canada has promised retaliatory tariffs.

For a country that has famously prided itself on being nice, polite and loyal allies, Canadians aren't hiding their disgust for Trump's polarising rhetoric, especially taking offense with the US president's claim that Canada could be the "51st state."

Mark Nykolaichuk said he refuses to go to the mainland US but describes Point Roberts as a unique exception because the border here has never felt like an actual divide for Canadians like him who grew up visiting.

Most of the property owners here are from Canada, and many of the 1,000 year-round residents have dual citizenship. Once a booming fishing town, the leading industry now, according to US Census data, is retail, primarily driven

Known as a geographic oddity since the boundary with Canada was drawn in 1846, this detached community is called an exclave because it is completely separated from mainland America

from tourism because of the number of vacation properties. The unincorporated Whatcom County community is now mostly home to retirees, though this year there are seven students nicknamed "The Borderites" at the lone public school.

Nykolaichuk, who lives in the Vancouver, BC area, said he hopes he can help keep the Point Roberts International Marketplace open by shopping there, given that management reports business is down 20 per cent to 30 per cent. He depends on Point Roberts' only grocery store to be able to cook at his vacation home because US customs doesn't permit raw meat to enter its borders, for example, so he must buy it in town.

"Nobody wants to see this place shut down," Nykolaichuk said. "If this place goes, where are the US citizens going to eat? Where are they going to get their food from?" Many in Point Roberts do not blame the Canadians for their disdain over Trump's perceived sovereignty threat. Instead, there's a deep sadness for both sides.

"We have always gotten along and it's just nonsensical because now the US is going to suffer too," said Hansen, who is a dual citizen.

Israel struck Gaza's largest hospital: Ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Deir Al-Balah

Israel's military struck the largest hospital in southern Gaza on Sunday night, killing two people, wounding others and causing a large fire, the territory's Health Ministry said.

The strike hit the surgical building of Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis, the ministry said, days after the facility was overwhelmed with dead and wounded when Israel resumed the war in Gaza last week with a surprise wave of airstrikes.

Those killed in Sunday night's strike included a 16-year-old boy who underwent surgery two days ago, according to the Health Ministry. Also killed was Ismail Barhoum, a member of Hamas' political bureau, who was being treated at the hospital, Hamas said in a statement.

Israel's military confirmed the strike on the hospital, saying it hit a Hamas militant operating there. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas because it operates in densely populated areas.

Like other medical facilities around Gaza, Nasser Hospital has been damaged by Israeli raids and strikes throughout the war. More than 50,000 Palestinians have now been killed in the war, the Health Ministry said earlier Sunday.

The military claimed to have "eliminated" dozens of militants since Israel ended a ceasefire Tuesday with strikes that killed hundreds of people on one of the deadliest days in the 17-month war. Israel's unrest over Gaza and political issues grew Sunday, with anger at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as his government voted to express no confidence in the attorney general, seen by many as a check on the power of his coalition.

"I am worried for the future of this country. And I think it has to stop. We have to change direction," said Avital Halperin, one

of hundreds of protesters outside Netanyahu's office. Police said three were arrested.

Displacement under fire

Israel's military ordered thousands of Palestinians to leave the heavily destroyed Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in the southern city of Rafah. They walked to Muwasi, a sprawling area of squalid tent camps. The war has forced most of Gaza's population of over two Million to flee within the territory, often multiple times.

"It's displacement under fire," said Mustafa Gaber, a journalist who left with his family. He said tank and drone fire echoed nearby.

"The shells are falling among us and the bullets are (flying) above us," said Amal Nassar, also displaced. "The elderly have been thrown into the streets. An old woman was telling her son, Go and leave me to die. Where will we go?"

The strike hit the surgical building of Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis, days after the facility was overwhelmed with dead and wounded

"Enough is enough. We are exhausted," said a fleeing Ayda Abu Shaer, as smoke rose in the distance.

The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said it lost contact with a 10-member team responding to the strikes in Rafah. Spokesperson Nebal Farsakh said some were wounded.

Israel's military said it had fired on advancing "suspicious vehicles" and later discovered some were ambulances and fire trucks.

In Gaza City, an explosion hit next to a tent camp where people had been told to evacuate. "My husband is blind and started running barefoot, and my children were running," said witness Nidaa Hassuna.

Strikes kill Hamas leader

Hamas said Salah Bardawil, a well-known member of its political bureau, was killed in a strike in Muwasi that also killed his wife. Israel's military confirmed it.

Hospitals in southern Gaza said they received a further 24 bodies from strikes overnight, including several women and children. Gaza's Health Ministry said 50,021 Palestinians have been killed in the war, including 673 people since Israel's bombardment on Tuesday shattered the ceasefire. Dr Munir al-Boursh, the ministry's general director, said the dead include 15,613 children, with 872 of them under one year old. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up over half the dead. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

Ceasefire in tatters

The ceasefire that took hold in January paused more than a year of fighting ignited by Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack into Israel, in which militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 hostage. Most captives have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

In the latest ceasefire's first phase, 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight others were released in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Israeli forces allowed hundreds of thousands of people to return home.

There was a surge in humanitarian aid until Israel cut off all supplies to Gaza earlier this month to pressure Hamas to change the ceasefire agreement.

HC restores Imran Khan's meetings with visitors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

High Court (HC) here in Pakistan on Monday restored bi-weekly meetings of incarcerated former Prime Minister Imran Khan with his visitors.

The three-member Islamabad High Court bench, which heard at least 26 petitions related to the visitation rights and jail conditions of Khan, 72, ordered authorities to arrange Khan's two meetings on two different days of the week but stopped the visitors from making political statements.

Khan's counsel, Zaheer Abbas, said it was agreed that Khan would be allowed two days of meetings a week, Tuesday with his family and lawyers, and Thursday with friends.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Barrister Salman Akram Raja said Thursday's meeting was not being held.

Advocate Naveed Malik, representing the Adiala Jail authorities, where Khan has been incarcerated since August 2023, said the meetings were held twice a week until December. However, the situation changed after the PTI founder and his wife, Bushra Bibi, were convicted in a corruption case in January. Malik also informed the court the two meetings were held on Tuesday instead of two days for security reasons.

He also pointed out that those who meet Khan make political statements outside the jail in violation of the rules.



Isar aerospace launch vehicle 'Spectrum' rolls out on Andoya island in Norway

European startup to launch rocket on first test flight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Oslo

A private European aerospace company is set to make the first test flight of its orbital launch vehicle from Norway on Monday.

The launch window for its Spectrum rocket from the island of Andoya in northern Norway is 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm local time, said Isar Aerospace, which is headquartered in Munich.

The launch is subject to weather, safety and range infrastructure. The company said it also could conduct the test flight later in the week.

The 28-metre-(91-foot) spectrum is a two-stage launch vehicle designed for small and medium-sized satellites.

The company largely rules out the possibility of the rocket reaching orbit on its first complete flight, saying it would con-

sider a 30-second flight a success.

Isar Aerospace aims to collect as much data and experience as possible on the first integrated test of all the systems on its in-house-developed launch vehicle. The startup, which says it has raised more than 400 Million Euros (\$435 Million) in capital, hopes to build up to 40 launch vehicles per year in the future in a plant outside of Munich.

The launch vehicles are all to be used for putting satellites into orbit.

Isar Aerospace is separate from the European Space Agency (ESA) which is funded by its 23 member states.

The European Space Agency has been launching rockets and satellites into orbit for years, but mainly from French Guiana, an overseas department of France in South America and from Cape Canaveral in Florida.

Acer India announces one day menstrual leave per month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Acer India has introduced a menstrual leave policy that would give female employees one additional day of paid leave per month, as the tech firm joined a growing roster of companies that are looking to foster a more supportive workplace and champion gender-inclusivity.

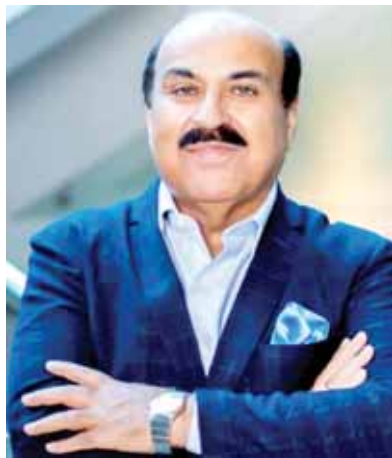
In a statement, the company said its latest move would enable female staff to prioritise their menstrual health without impacting their regular leave entitlements.

"Acer India has introduced 'Matrika', a menstrual leave policy to foster a more inclusive and supportive workplace... Under this policy, female employees will

be entitled to one additional day of paid leave each month..." Acer India said.

According to the company, the move aligns with Acer India's broader vision of creating a workplace that champions gender inclusivity, health, and holistic employee support. "A workplace that truly supports its people goes beyond policies-it fosters understanding, respect, and real change. With the 'Matrika' menstrual leave policy, we are taking a step toward normalising conversations around women's health and well-being," Harish Kohli, President and Managing Director of Acer India said.

The company further said that as more organisations recognise the importance of menstrual leave, 'Matrika' sets Acer India apart as a forward-thinking



Harish Kohli, Acer India president and MD

employer that prioritises gender equality and employee-centric initiatives.

Earlier this month, in a first for a major corporate house, Larsen and Toubro, the engineering, procurement and construction major had announced a one-day paid menstrual leave for women employees, a move set to benefit about 5,000 women employees at the company.

Companies like Swiggy and Zomato have made announcements on menstrual leaves in the past, but Larsen and Toubro's move marked an instance of a major business house announcing such an initiative to ensure better work-life balance for its female employees.

Four states, Bihar, Odisha, Sikkim and Kerala, have made provisions for menstrual leaves for their employees.

India's tech startups clinch \$2.5 billion funding in Q1 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's tech startups raised \$2.5 billion in the first quarter of 2025, marking a 13.64 per cent increase over the previous quarter and an 8.7 per cent rise from the year-ago period, a feat that secured its spot as the third most-funded country globally after the US and UK, according to a report by market intelligence platform Tracxn.

The report highlighted that auto tech, enterprise applications and retail were the top-performing sectors in Q1 2025.

Other notable takeaways from the report were the increase in funding for late-stage startups both sequentially and year-on-year basis, even as seed-stage startups as early-stage ventures saw total funding drop on both counts.

"In Q1 2025, India's tech startups raised \$2.5 billion, marking a 13.64 per cent increase from the previous quarter and an 8.7 per cent rise from the same period last year, making it the third most-funded country globally ahead of Malta and Germany and behind the US and UK," according to the report.

The Geo Quarterly India Tech report offered insights into India's technology ecosystem, trends and developments in the first quarter of 2025.

Late-stage ventures raked in total funding of \$1.8 Billion in Q1 2025, an increase of 38.46 per cent compared to Q4 2024, and an increase of 114.54 per cent when seen in the context of Q1 2024.

Seed Stage startups saw total funding of \$157 million in Q1 2025, a drop of 23.79 per cent compared to Q4 2024, and 55.77 per cent lower as compared to Q1 2024. Early-stage startups, on the other hand, saw a total funding of \$528 million in Q1 2025, a drop of 23.7 per cent compared to Q4 2024, and a drop of 52 per cent compared to Q1 2024.

"While the funding environment remains dynamic, India's startup ecosystem continues to demonstrate adaptability and growth," Neha Singh, Co-Founder of Tracxn said.

Sectors such as Auto Tech, Enterprise Applications, and Retail are attracting investor interest, and the rise in acquisitions signals a maturing market, Singh said.

"Innovation and entrepreneurship remain at the core of this ecosystem, positioning India for long-term success," according to her.

Auto Tech received funding of \$1.1 billion, which was significantly higher than levels seen in Q4 2024 and Q1 2024.

Enterprise Applications received \$650.7 million, a growth of 21.94 per cent over the previous sequential quarter and a drop of 8.12 per cent compared to Q1 2024.

Retail clinched \$481.5 Million in funding, a 21.6 per cent increase from the last quarter and a drop of 2.3 per cent over Q1 2024.

Late-stage ventures raked in total funding of \$1.8 Billion in Q1 2025, an increase of 38.46 per cent compared to Q4 2024, and an increase of 114.54 per cent when seen in the context of Q1 2024

Six companies went for IPO in Q1 2025, the report said adding Nukleus, Maxvolt Energy, Volercars, and Harshil Agrotech were among the companies that went public.

There were no unicorns created in Q1 2025 as against two created in Q1 2024.

A total of 38 acquisitions took place this quarter, marking a 15.15 per cent increase from the previous quarter and a 40.74 per cent rise over Q1 2024.

"The largest deal was Magma General's USD 516 million acquisition by DS Group and Patanjali Ayurved, making it the highest-valued acquisition of Q1 2025, surpassing Minimalist's \$350 million acquisition by HUL," the report said.

Delhi-based tech firms accounted for 40 per cent of all funding seen by tech companies across India, followed by Bengaluru (21.64 per cent).

Accel, Blume Ventures and Peak XV Partners were the overall all-time top investors for Q1 2025. Venture Catalysts, Unicorn India Ventures and YourNest were the top seed-stage investors, while Avataar Ventures and Sofina were the top late-stage.

Tata AutoComp acquires IAC Sweden to enhance global footprint

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Tata AutoComp Systems Ltd on Monday said it will acquire International Automotive Components Group Sweden AB (IAC Sweden), in a bid to strengthen its presence in Europe's automotive sector.

This proposed acquisition reinforces Tata AutoComp's presence in Sweden and enhances the company's relationships with key European Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) in both the passenger vehicle and commercial vehicle segments, further expanding its global footprint, the company said in a statement.

The company, however, did not disclose any financial details.

IAC Sweden has a turnover of approximately \$800 million and is a well established manufacturer of interior systems and components to the automotive industry, it added.

The transaction is subject to European regulatory approvals, the company said.

"This acquisition aligns with our long-term vision of expanding in global markets and strengthening our relationships with European OEMs," Tata AutoComp Systems Vice Chairman Arvind Goel said.

With this acquisition, Tata Autocomp said, it will consolidate its position as one of India's largest automotive component manufacturers and strengthen its presence in Europe's automotive sector.

"IAC Sweden has a strong legacy of delivering high-quality interior solutions, and we look forward to working together to drive innovation and excellence in the automotive industry. This move reinforces our commitment to driving sustainable, high-quality, and customer-centric automotive solutions across geographies," Goel said.

The acquisition of IAC Sweden will present strong synergy opportunities, allowing Tata AutoComp to leverage advanced manufacturing capabilities, cutting-edge technology, and well-established customer relationships in the premium automotive space, the company said.

Amazon to not charge referral fee from sellers on products under ₹300

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

E-commerce major Amazon India on Monday announced zero referral fees on over 1.2 crore products on its platform that are priced below ₹300. The move is aimed at supporting small businesses and boosting the growth of sellers on Amazon, a company statement said.

Referral fees are a commission that sellers pay to Amazon for each product sold. "By eliminating referral fees on crores of products and reducing shipping costs, we're making it more lucrative for sellers to sell on Amazon.in. This initiative supports seller growth on Amazon by enabling them to offer a wider selection and present more competitive offers to customers, particularly on everyday low-value items," Amit Nanda, Director, Selling Partner Services, Amazon India, said.

"As we gain efficiencies in our oper-

ations, we ensure those benefits reach our sellers and customers," Nanda said.

The zero referral fees would be applicable across 135 product categories like apparel, shoes, fashion jewellery, grocery, home décor and furnishings, beauty, toys, kitchen products, automotive, and pet products among others.

Amazon has also introduced a new flat rate for sellers using external fulfilment services like Easy Ship and Seller Flex. The national shipping rates now start at ₹65, reduced from ₹77, according to the statement.

The zero referral fees would be applicable across 135 product categories like apparel, shoes, fashion jewellery, grocery, home décor and furnishings, beauty, toys, kitchen products, automotive

Flat rate shipping is a pricing model where a fixed cost is charged for shipping packages, regardless of their weight, size, or distance within defined limits.

While Easy Ship is a fulfilment channel where Amazon collects packages from a seller's location and delivers them to customers, as part of Seller Flex, Amazon manages a portion of the seller's warehouse as an Amazon fulfilment centre. Additionally, Amazon has lowered handling fees for lightweight items under 1 kg by up to Rs 17, which reduces the fees sellers pay.

"Sellers shipping more than one product unit at a time stand to see up to 90 per cent+ savings in selling fees on the second unit. These changes will enable sellers to offer a wider selection, competitive offers and grow their business. The revised fees come into effect from April 7, 2025," the company said.

Amazon has over 1.6 Million sellers on its marketplace.

Sensex jumps 1,078 points on FII inflows, gains in banks; takes winning run to sixth day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

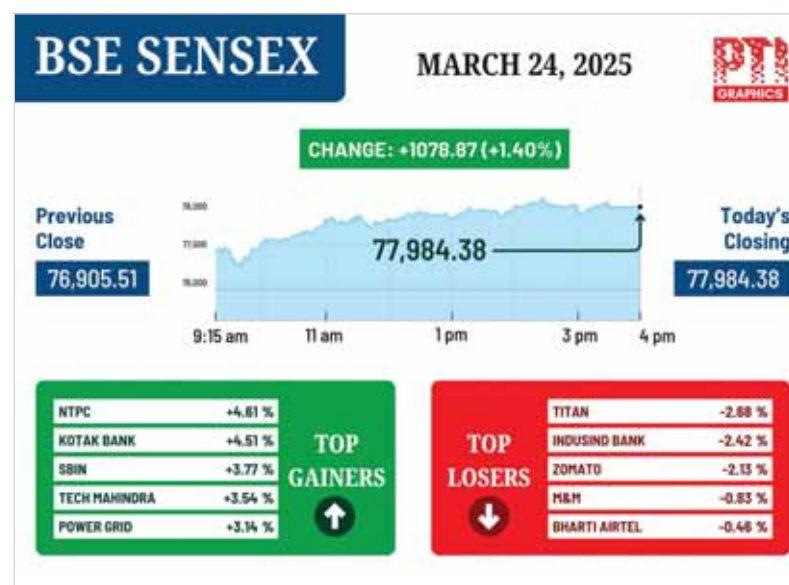
Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty surged more than 1 per cent on Monday amid fresh foreign fund inflows and buying in banking and oil & gas shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,078.87 points or 1.40 per cent to settle at over six-week high of 77,984.38. During the day, it zoomed 1,201.72 points or 1.56 per cent to 78,107.23.

The NSE Nifty surged by 307.95 points or 1.32 per cent to 23,658.35. Intraday, the benchmark zoomed 358.35 points or 1.53 per cent to 23,708.75.

A positive trend in the US and European markets powered the rally in domestic equities, experts said.

From the Sensex pack, NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, State Bank of India, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, HCL Tech, Reliance



Industries and Bajaj Finance were the biggest gainers.

Titan, IndusInd Bank, Zomato, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Nestle and Infosys were the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹7,470.36 Crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

"Short covering ahead of monthly F&O expiry later this week fuelled the rally as the Sensex breached the psychological 78k mark intra-day on across-the-board buying.

"Renewed optimism by foreign investors coupled with strong US and European market cues further bolstered the sentiment," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading in positive territory. US markets ended in green on Friday.

India, US to focus on increasing market access: MoS Finance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India and the US would focus on increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Chaudhary said India continues to engage with the US to achieve enhancement and broadening of bilateral trade ties in a mutually beneficial and fair manner.

"Both countries plan to negotiate a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement. Both countries would focus on increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration," Pankaj Chaudhary said.

India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with an aim to double trade to \$500 Billion by 2030.

Export duty removal on onion to aid farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The government's decision to withdraw 20 per cent customs duty on onion exports effective April 1 will boost farmers' income, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Monday.

"There will be no duty on onion export so that onion grown by our farmers with hard work reaches the global markets, and they can get better price and remunerative price," Chouhan said in a video statement.

The minister said the export duty was earlier fixed at 40 per cent, but was

reduced to 20 per cent when onion prices started falling and farmers began getting lower returns.

"Now, the government has decided that 20 per cent export duty should also be removed completely," he added.

According to a notification issued last week by the Finance Ministry, the export duty withdrawal will come into effect from April 1. Chouhan said the Narendra Modi government is "farmer-friendly" and ensuring remunerative prices for farmers is its "priority and commitment".

The export duty removal aims to protect domestic farmers from steep fall in onion prices.

NHAI, Amrita Hospital launch emergency training programme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Amrita Hospital, Faridabad, have launched the Sar Salamat to Ghar Salamat campaign to enhance highway emergency response. This initiative, launched on World Head Injury Awareness Day, will train thousands of ambulance personnel and Haryana Police Patrol officers in trauma care.

As part of the program, over 50 ambulance workers received hands-on training at Amrita Hospital on March 23 under Dr. Gaurav Kakkar. The initiative aims to reduce road fatalities, nearly 50% of which can be averted with immediate medical attention. Training sessions will be held quarterly.

Ajay Tamta, Minister of State, MoRTH, emphasized the government's commitment to halving road accident deaths. Mohammad Safi, NHAI, highlighted the need for skilled responders. Swami Vijayamritananda Puri reiterated Amrita Hospital's dedication to trauma care. This initiative supports India's goal of reducing road injuries by 50 per cent by 2030.

Amrita Hospital aims to expand this initiative, aligning with India's goal of reducing road fatalities by 50% by 2030 under the Stockholm Declaration.

This campaign is set to be a nationwide model for highway emergency response training.

Rupee recovers its 2025 losses; jumps 31 paise to close at 85.67 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Rising for the seventh straight session, the rupee appreciated 31 paise to close at 85.67 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, wiping off all its losses in 2025, supported by a positive trend in domestic equity markets and fresh foreign capital inflows.

Besides, lower global crude price levels and continuing weakness in the greenback also bolstered sentiments, traders said. However, lurking risks — ranging from liquidity constraints to reciprocal tariff implementations — continue to pose challenges for the local unit, they added.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.93, then touched an intraday high of 85.49 and a low of 86.01 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.67 (provisional), registering a gain of 31 paise from its previous closing level. On Friday, the rupee appreciated 38 paise to close at 85.98 against the US dollar.

This is the seventh straight session of gain for the rupee, during which it has added 154 paise.

The local unit has recovered all its losses for 2025. On December 31, 2024, the rupee closed at 85.64 against the greenback.

"The Indian rupee recouped yearly losses as foreign banks and exporters sold the dollars ahead of the financial year-end

adjustment, while state-level banks remained aside from buying amid the RBI's USD/INR swap," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

Parmar further noted that the sentiments turned positive ahead of the US representative visiting India ahead of April 2, reciprocal tariff implementations. Moreover, the foreign funds buying in

basket of six currencies, was trading 0.09 per cent lower at 103.99.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.54 per cent to \$72.55 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 1078.87 points, or 1.40 per cent, to settle at 77,984.38, while the Nifty advanced 307.95 points, or 1.32 per cent, to close at 23,658.35 points.

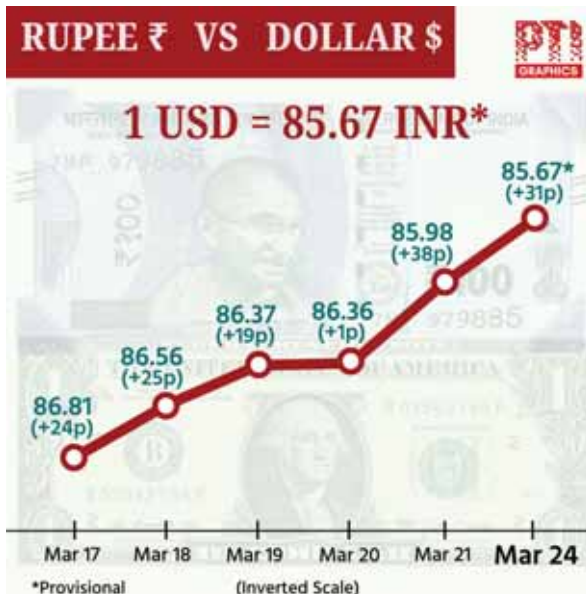
Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) purchased equities worth ₹7,470.36 Crore on a net basis on Friday, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, the country's forex reserves increased by \$305 Million to \$654.271 Billion during the week ended March 14, the RBI said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves rose by \$15.267 Billion to \$653.966 Billion and registered the sharpest weekly rise in two years.

The spike in foreign reserves was partly attributed to the \$10 Billion forex swap done by the Reserve Bank of India.

The Indian equity market has witnessed a moderation in FPIs' selling pressure with the outflows narrowing to ₹1,794 crore (\$194 Million) last week, buoyed by easing global concerns and growing optimism around a potential de-escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.



CRA to scrutinise claims by investment service providers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Markets regulator Sebi has said that risk-return metrics of services offered by investment advisers, research analysts and algo trading providers will be scrutinised by a credit rating agency, a move aimed at checking claims of high returns. Under the new norms, the credit rating agency (CRA) will act as 'Past Risk and Return Verification Agency' with a recognized stock exchange serving as 'Past Risk and Return Verification Agency' data centre.

"The activity of a Past Risk and Return Verification Agency ... May be carried out by a credit rating agency, with the approval of the Board (Sebi), on such

terms and conditions as may be specified by the Board," the regulator said in three separate notifications dated March 20.

The agency will carry out the verification of risk-return metrics for Investment Advisors (IAs), Research Analysts (RAs) and Algorithmic Trading, and those persons permitted by Sebi to offer these services. The markets regulator said that any claim in the form of verified risk or return metrics will be made in the manner specified by it.

In case an intermediary fails to adhere to the verification requirements Sebi may take appropriate action. The move would enhance the transparency and accuracy of financial performance metrics disclosed by intermediaries.

I have to adapt and 'stay relevant': MS Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Rejecting speculation that he is the back-room decision-maker in Chennai Super Kings despite handing over captaincy to Rituraj Gaikwad, the talismanic Mahendra Singh Dhoni said he is instead focussed on reinventing himself and his strokes to "stay relevant" in the IPL.

Speaking to 'JioStar' after CSK's four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in their lung-opener on Sunday night here, Dhoni spoke about the team dynamics under Gaikwad, his own form and also the regional commentary being done in the ongoing league.

"...Batsmen are now willing to take risks. They believe that with proper cricketing shots, they can play big strokes, and at the same time, they are improvising with their shot selection... Whether it's a reverse scoop against a fast bowler, a sweep, or a reverse sweep against a pacer.

"I am no different, I have to adapt as well. This is what is required of me for where I am batting. You have to try and stay relevant," Dhoni said.



"The way we played T20 in 2008 and the way we played IPL last year, it's very different. Earlier, there was a lot of turn in the wickets. Wickets were two-paced. Now, India's wickets have become much better; they are more batter-friendly," he explained.

The 43-year-old, under whom CSK won five IPL titles, handed over the leadership to Gaikwad at the beginning of the 2024 season. He said although he discusses things with Gaikwad, he refrains from persuading him to follow his advice.

"Rituraj has been part of us for quite some time. His temperament is very good, he's very calm, very composed. So those were the reasons we considered him for leadership. "Before the start of the tournament, I also told him, 'If I give you advice, it doesn't mean you have to follow it. I will try to stay away as much as possible.' During the season, a lot of people speculated that I was making the decisions in the background," Dhoni recalled.

"But the fact is, he was making 99 per cent of the decisions. The most important calls — bowling changes, field placements — were all his. I was just helping him out. He did a brilliant job of handling the

players," he added.

Another player with whom Dhoni shares a close bond is Royal Challengers Bengaluru star and national batting mainstay Virat Kohli. The veteran said their relationship has grown into a strong friendship over the years.

"It was always an honest exchange of ideas — whether a certain approach was right or if an adjustment could have been made. Initially, it was more of a relationship between a captain and a young player, but over time, as we kept interacting, we became friends," he said.

"Even today, we share that bond, though there's always a line of respect between a senior and a junior. Now that neither of us is captain, we get more time to talk before matches," he added.

The Jharkhand cricketer was quite pleased with the IPL broadcasters' decision to have regional commentary for the immensely popular league.

"...Listening to commentary gives you an outsider's perspective. It sparks new ideas like 'why don't we try this approach?...'Which can then be evaluated based on intelligence and data to see if it fits within the team's strategy," he said.

Matthew Hayden praises Mahendra Singh Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's lightning-quick reflexes behind the stumps to get rid of Suryakumar Yadav during an IPL match here have left former Australian opener Matthew Hayden gushing about the former Indian captain's abilities, despite not being in his prime. Dhoni, 43, is nearing the end of his career, having hung up his international boots five years ago and playing just as a player for the Chennai Super Kings after leading the team to five IPL titles.

However, Dhoni showcased his brilliance once again on Sunday when he whipped off the balls in an instant off Noor Ahmad's delivery, sending Suryakumar back to the pavilion. "He (Dhoni) was on fire," Hayden, the former Australia batter and Dhoni's team-mate at CSK till 2010, said on ESPNcricinfo's T20 Time Out. "I mean Noor Ahmad was firing down the leg side and it was just a movement across the ball. They're difficult when you're sitting there sort of partially obscured by the batsman.

"Then the stumping was just superb, just such quick timing, great hands, good vision. He's still got it." The stumping of Suryakumar (29) was a crucial moment in the game as CSK broke a 51-run stand and eventually restricted Mumbai Indians to 155/9. CSK chased down the target with four wickets in hand and five balls to spare at Chepauk. "The stumping from MSD (MS Dhoni) was out of the world," said Noor during the post-match presentation. "It feels great to have someone like Mahi Bhai behind the stumps, it is a great support for me." As per Star Sports, the stumping was executed in just 0.12 seconds.

Piyush Chawla, former India and CSK spinner, believes Dhoni must have practiced with Noor during pre-season camp to perfect the stumping.

"It does happen, it is a challenge if you have not kept against somebody," he said.

"But I'm sure in the camp, he must have kept a lot of balls because if he's keeping for somebody new, he especially takes that person to the stumps and says, you bowl a few balls. "(It has) not (happened) with me because I have bowled against him so many times and bowled to him in the nets also. But whenever somebody new comes, especially a wristspinner, he just makes sure he's keeping 10-12 balls so that he gets used to the wrist position."

Rachin Ravindra credits spin depth for win over MI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Chennai Super Kings hero Rachin Ravindra credited the team's spinners, led by the "world-class" Ravichandran Ashwin, for their comprehensive win over Mumbai Indians, saying the depth in spin gives them the right balance, covering any off-days from individual bowlers.

While Ashwin delivered a tidy 1/31, it was Afghanistan's Noor Ahmad who stole the limelight with a brilliant 4 for 18, helping restrict MI to 155-9.

"Ash (Ashwin) is a world-class performer. I played a bit against him, he brings a lot of experience, he brings a lot of his cricket knowledge, the way he speaks about spin bowling, the tips he gives," Ravindra said at the post-match press conference after CSK's four-wicket win.

"He reads the game, he is a great thinker of the game. It's an honour to share the field with lot of these guys, greats of Indian game, guys I have grown up watching," he said.

"We have got a good spin depth, the balance of the team is nice. If someone is not having a great day the sixth bowler comes in."

Chasing 156, Ravindra remained unbeaten on 65 off 45 balls and shared 67 runs for the sec-

G Jaddu's experience speaks for itself. He is a classy all-rounder and the way he finished lot of games in the past, his calmness is great and his clarity

— RACHIN RAVINDRA, CSK PLAYER

ond wicket with skipper Rituraj Gaikwad (53 off 26) to lay the foundation for the win on Sunday night.

"It's always an honour to open for CSK, the history of it and you look back at the heroes like the Hussey's, the Watson's, the McCullum's. These guys have done so well. So it's great to be in this role but I will take game by game. It's a long tournament so..." Ravindra said.

CSK lost a few wickets in the middle to be reduced to 116/5 but Ravindra and Jadeja (17) then steadied the ship to take them to 152 for 6.

Lavishing praise on his skipper Gaikwad and Jadeja, Ravindra said: "Rutu is an amazing player, the way he showed his class out there, scoring and hitting beautiful shots he did. It was fractionally a tricky wicket but I think it was a good wicket in general.

"Mumbai bowled quite well. The dew wasn't

a factor but the way he played showed his skill and class and made my job a bit easier," he said.

"Jaddu's experience speaks for itself. He is a classy all-rounder and the way he finished lot of games in the past, his calmness is great and his clarity. He knows his team well, he knows the conditions well and sharing the crease with him was amazing."

The Chepauk crowd had hoped for the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni to finish the game, but it was Ravindra who sealed the win with a six off Kiwi teammate Mitchell Santner to take CSK home.

"It's difficult to soak in the moment, you are simply focussed on winning the game for the team but it's hard to ignore when Dhoni comes in, the noise and whistles. It was cool to share the crease with him for the first time," he said.

"He is a legend of the game, people love him here and so it was special. All the crowd was hoping I give him one and he finished the game but it was about finishing the job. Dhoni has finished so many games for CSK and I think there is plenty more to come."

Ravindra was also full of praise for young MI left-arm wrist spinner Vignesh Puthur, who had fine figures of 3/32 in his debut IPL match.

Iyer to lean on captaincy credentials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Skipper Shreyas Iyer will lean on his captaincy credentials as he looks to turn around the fortunes of perennial under-performers Punjab Kings in this IPL, opening the season with a clash against Gujarat Titans here on Tuesday.

Iyer enjoyed huge success leading Kolkata Knight Riders to the IPL title last year, four years after guiding Delhi Capitals to the 2020 IPL final, and now faces the challenge of ending Punjab's 18-year-long wait for their maiden IPL title.

The Punjab team reached the semifinals in 2018 and made it to the final once in 2014, but despite numerous squad changes and leadership shifts, they have failed to break into the top 5 in the last four editions, even after rebranding to Punjab Kings from Kings XI Punjab.

However, with Iyer at the helm, Punjab has a captain with proven leadership credentials. He will also reunite with coach Ricky Ponting at Punjab, providing the ideal platform to make a fresh start.

On the other hand, Shubman Gill, who is the vice-captain of India's ODI team, endured a tough season as GT captain, with the team

finishing in 8th spot in 2024 after a title win and runner-up finishes in 2022 and 2023 under Hardik Pandya.

Both Gill and Iyer are in great form, having played crucial roles in India's Champions Trophy-winning campaign in Dubai earlier this month.

Iyer finished as India's top run-scorer in the Champions Trophy with 243 runs in five games, while Gill also struck a century in the opening match against Bangladesh and con-

Iyer finished as India's top run-scorer in the Champions Trophy with 243 runs in five games, while Gill also struck a century in the opening match against Bangladesh

tributed significantly to India's triumph.

As for team dynamics, GT's batting strength will rely on a solid start from Gill and England's wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler, who will be looking to bounce back from recent poor form.

The middle-order will be in the hands of West Indian Sherfane Rutherford, Sai Sudharsan, and Masood Shahruckh Khan, with all-rounders Rashid Khan, Rahul Tewatia,

Glenn Phillips, Washington Sundar, and Mahipal Lomror expected to contribute.

On the bowling front, Mohammed Siraj will look to make a big impact and return to the national reckoning after missing out of the Champions Trophy, while Kagiso Rabada, Prasad Krishna, South African Gerald Coetzee, and veteran Ishant Sharma will provide added firepower to GT's pace attack.

GT's spin department will be led by Rashid Khan with left-arm spinner Sai Kishore providing valuable support.

Punjab Kings, on the other hand, will depend on skipper Iyer, Josh Inglis, Prabhsimran Singh, Marcus Stoinis, and Glenn Maxwell for their batting. The Punjab outfit also boasts a strong line-up of all-rounders in Azmatullah Omarzai, Stoinis, Marco Jansen, Shahank Singh, and Musheer Khan.

The pace bowling department will be led by Arshdeep Singh, who will be itching to get back in action after not getting a game in the Champions trophy.

He will have Lockie Ferguson, Kuldeep Sen, and Yash Thakur in the pace unit, while leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal and left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar will hope for a successful season.



UCO Bank Organizes MSME, Agriculture, and Resources Carnival.

Panipat: As part of the nationwide MSME, Agriculture, and Resources Carnival being held from March 24 to 25, 2025, UCO Bank's zonal office Karnal organized an MSME and Agriculture Meet at Hotel "The Orlov" in Panipat. The meeting was chaired by Sh. Manish Kumar, General Manager of UCO Bank. The event was also attended by Zonal Head Sh. Abhishek Singh, other executives and senior officers of the bank. During the meeting, the General Manager provided detailed information about various schemes offered by UCO Bank, including the Textile Scheme, Rice Seller Scheme, and other financial programs. He also highlighted the bank's digital banking services, such as GST Smart Finance, QR Code, Sound Box and other digital products, loan facilities through the M-Banking app, which offer ease and speed to businesses in availing the loans.



Int'l Conference on 'AI Revolution: Opportunities, Challenges, and Path Forward'

Gurugram: Amity University, Gurugram, hosted a two-day international conference on the AI revolution, focusing on opportunities, challenges, and the path forward. University Pro Vice-Chancellor Dr Vikas Madhukar said that the Conference on AI Revolution successfully brought together academicians, industry experts, and policymakers for two days of insightful discussions, technical sessions, and industry-academia collaborations. The Conference also highlighted AI's transformative impact across industries, addressing key themes such as ethical AI adoption, data privacy, sustainability, and innovation-driven growth." Prof Madhukar added. In his address, Vice-Chancellor, Prof (Dr) PB Sharma highlighted AI's transformative role in education, sustainable development, and societal progress. He emphasized AI as a catalyst for growth, augmenting human intelligence through VR, automation, and knowledge augmentation. Earlier, the Conference began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Dr Aseem Chauhan Chancellor, Amity University.



Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Limited

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Limited is organizing awareness programs across the state these days under the Public Interaction Program directed by the Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Regulatory Commission. In this direction, an awareness workshop was organized today in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Himachal Pradesh University Shimla at Summerhill under the Public Interaction Program. On this occasion, while addressing the teachers and students of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University Summerhill, Board consultant (PR) Anurag Parashar first informed the students of the department about the need for information management and said that they are the information managers of tomorrow and in this business, the flow of information has to be done responsibly. He emphasized the need for effective mass communication and communication skills in transmitting information. He said that the students are the citizens of tomorrow and they should also be aware of the development schemes of the State so that they can get benefits by taking and accordingly giving correct information not only to themselves but also to the people.

Mexico wins CONCACAF Nations League tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Inglewood (US)

Raúl Jiménez scored his second goal on a penalty kick in the second minute of second-half stoppage time, and Mexico beat Panama 2-1 to win the CONCACAF Nations League tournament for the first time.

Jiménez, the 33-year-old Fulham striker, dominated the week at SoFi Stadium with all four of Mexico's goals in El Tri's two matches.

After he scored on a header in the eighth minute against Panama on Sunday night, he used a stutter-step approach before perfectly striking a penalty awarded when defender José Córdoba touched the ball with his inexplicably outstretched arm while chasing after it in the 90th minute. "It's fantastic to come back after what I've been through," Jiménez said.

"I'm really happy. This is just a great example that you never have to lose faith, and continue. You know what you're capable to do." This remarkable tournament is only the latest chapter in the comeback story of Jiménez, who incurred a serious head injury while playing for Wolves in November 2020. After fracturing his skull in a collision with Arsenal's David Luiz, he survived a life-threatening brain bleed and returned to competition nine months later.

The US had won the first three editions of this tournament, which brings together



er the nations of North and Central America and the Caribbean. But with Jiménez in dominant form and veteran coach Javier Aguirre tweaking his formation to emphasize aggression, Mexico stepped up to claim another trophy in the stadium where it won the 2023 CONCACAF Gold Cup, both times in front of vociferously pro-Mexico crowds.

"We are enjoying our game," Jiménez said. "We are really happy. We knew since we arrived, since the (quarterfinals) against Honduras when we won our pass to the final four, we knew this game was going to be difficult, but we knew we had the quality. We know each other. We know

how we can play better than the other teams, and that's the key."

Adalberto Carrasquilla scored on a penalty in first-half injury time for underdog Panama, which staged a dramatic 1-0 upset of the host US on Thursday night to reach the final.

The championship match was briefly suspended with 10 minutes left in regulation after a large portion of the raucous crowd of 68,212 repeatedly shouted the homophobic Spanish slur that is commonly used at Mexican matches both foreign and domestic despite several governing bodies' attempts to eradicate it. The players took a water break while anti-slur

messages appeared on the scoreboard and over the public address system. Misbehavior aside, Mexico feels right at home in the Los Angeles Rams' palatial stadium — or anywhere in Southern California, where El Tri is invariably treated as the home team. Mexico also beat Panama here two years ago in the Gold Cup on Santi Giménez's late goal.

SBI भारतीय स्टेट बैंक STATE BANK OF INDIA

POSSESSION NOTICE

[Under Rule 8(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002] Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the State Bank of India under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rules of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 04-Dec-2024 calling upon the borrower, Sh. Rakesh Garg & Smt. Lata Garg (hereinafter the borrower and guarantors are collectively referred to as the "Borrowers") to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs 10,76,717 (Rupees Ten Lakh Seventy Six Thousand Seven Hundred Seventeen Only) + Accrued Interest & charges to Home Loan And Rs.2,81,209 (Rs. Two Lakh Eighty One Thousand Two Hundred Nine Only) + Accrued Interest & charges to Home Loan Topup, as on date with future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, costs, charges, etc. within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said [Act] read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the State Bank of India for an amount of Rs 10,76,717 (Rupees Ten Lakh Seventy Six Thousand Seven Hundred Seventeen Only) + Accrued Interest & charges to Home Loan And Rs.2,81,209 (Rs. Two Lakh Eighty One Thousand Two Hundred Nine Only) + Accrued Interest & charges to Home Loan Topup as on date with future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, costs, charges, etc. within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

PROPERTY measuring 75 Sq.Yards or 62.71 Sq.Mtr. situated as H.No.20, Hukum Chand Mandli, Gohana, Sonapat within MC limit of Gohana, Distt. Sonapat, Haryana Date: 25-02-2025

Authorised Officer
State Bank of India, Sonapat