

30 Naxalites neutralised in Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ New Delhi/Bijapur/Kanker (Chhattisgarh)

In a fresh offensive against Naxals, security forces killed at least 30 members of the banned CPI (Maoist) in two separate encounters in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region on Thursday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the security forces have achieved another big success in their march to make the country Naxal-free with the two encounters. "The Modi government is moving forward with a ruthless approach against Naxalites and is adopting a zero tolerance policy against those Naxalites who are not surrendering despite all the facilities being offered to them, ranging from surrender to inclusion. The country is going to be Naxal-free by March 31 next year," Shah said in social media post in Hindi. Giving details about the encounters, offi-

cial said while 26 Naxalites were killed in Bijapur district, four Maoists were gunned down in Kanker by a joint team of the BSF and District Reserve Guard (DRG) personnel of the state police.

An official said a gunfight broke out around seven am in a forest along the border of Bijapur and Dantewada districts when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation in Gangaloor police station area in Bijapur. The bodies of 26 Naxalites besides firearms and explosives were recovered from the spot, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range Sundarraj P said. A jawan of the DRG unit was also killed in the gunfight, he said.

Another encounter took place in the morning in a forest along the border of Kanker and Narayanpur districts when a joint team of the DRG and Border Security Force (BSF) was out on an anti-Naxal oper-



Security personnel during an encounter with Naxalites in Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh

ation, Kanker Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Elesela said. The bodies of four Naxalites and automatic weapons were recovered following the action, he said. Search operations were underway at both the encounter sites, police said.

With the latest action, 113 Naxalites have been killed in encounters in the state so far this year. Of them, 97 were eliminated in the Bastar division comprising seven districts including Bijapur and Kanker. According to a statement issued by the Union Home Ministry in New Delhi, as many as 104 Naxals were arrested in different parts of the country and 164 have surrendered in 2025 so far. In 2024, 290 Naxalites were neutralised, 1,090 were arrested, and 881 surrendered. A total of 15 top Naxal leaders have been neutralised so far.

Between 2004 and 2014, there were a total of 16,463 incidents of Naxal violence.

However, during the tenure of the Narendra Modi government from 2014 to 2024, the number of violent incidents decreased by 53 per cent, dropping to 7,744, the statement said.

Similarly, the number of casualties of security forces decreased by 73 per cent, from 1,851 to 509, and the number of civilian casualties decreased by 70 per cent, dropping from 4,766 to 1,495.

In 2014, there were a total of 66 fortified police stations, but under the Modi government's tenure their number has increased to 612, the statement said. Similarly, in 2014, 126 districts in the country were affected by Naxalism, but by 2024, the number of such districts has drastically reduced to only 12.

In the past five years, a total of 302 new security camps and 68 night landing helipads have been established by the government, the statement said.



Concrete barricades being removed after the eviction of agitating farmers from the Shambhu border in Patilala district

Farmers protest site razed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

A day after Punjab Police detained protesting farmers and demolished their temporary structures, traffic resumed on the Shambhu-Ambala Highway on Thursday after more than a year, and Khanauri border point is also set to open, with Haryana Police removing roadblocks on their side of the road. The road clearance exercise continued even as angry farmers held protests at several places in Punjab including Moga, Tarn Taran, Muktsar and Faridkot against the last evening crackdown on the protesters. A group of farmers, including women, entered into a scuffle with police personnel in Moga while on their way to hold a protest outside the deputy commissioner's office.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party reaffirmed its support to farmers but emphasised the urgent need to reopen key roads to protect Punjab's economy.

The protesting farmers lashed out at the AAP government for detaining their leaders and removing protesters from the Shambhu and Khanauri border points, where they had been camping since February 13 last year after their march to Delhi was thwarted by security personnel.

As the protests got stretched, farmers built temporary structures on the highway to accommodate protesters and sustain their agitation.

Haryana Police had fortified the border points with cement blocks, iron nails and barbed wire to scuttle any attempt by the farmers from Punjab to move towards the

national capital. Thus, the traffic on the Shambhu-Ambala and Sangru-Jind roads remained closed for over a year.

On Thursday, security personnel from Haryana removed the cement barricades on their side of Shambhu-Ambala Highway, opening the road for traffic, while barricading on the road at the Khanauri border point is still being removed.

Earlier in the day, Punjab Police resumed its operation to dismantle the remaining part of the temporary structures on the Punjab side of the Shambhu and the Khanauri points to clear the roads. Police took trolleys to an open ground so farmers could later take them by showing their identity proofs.

Meanwhile, farmers claimed that those detained have started a hunger strike in protest against the police action.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha — the two organisations spearheading the protests — have announced to hold dharnas outside the offices of deputy commissioners in protest against the Punjab Police crackdown.

Both the bodies slammed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab for evicting the protesters and detaining farmer leaders on Wednesday.

Criticising the police action, a group of farmers held a protest in Gidderbaha in Muktsar district while another group, also comprising women, entered into a scuffle with police personnel in Moga while going to protest outside the DCP office.

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SC reprieve for acid attack victims over compensation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a landmark Order, the Supreme Court on Thursday said acid attack survivors could approach their respective State Legal Services Authority in case there was a delay in receiving compensation. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar took note of the submissions of the counsel of Mumbai-based NGO Acid Survivors Sahas Foundation that such survivors were finding it tough to receive compensation from authorities in Maharashtra. "Just get in touch with the State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs)," the CJ said.

The bench added, "The victims will be at liberty to approach the State Legal Services Authorities in case of delay in payment of compensation." The SLSAs were further directed to maintain a chart, including details of the time the survivors or their family members sought the compensation and the day they received it. The

bench said the delay in the disbursement of the compensation to acid attack survivors will be brought to its notice.

Observing the Centre and 11 states hadn't filed their replies to the petition, the top court granted them four weeks and posted the hearing in the May 5 week. The hearing related to a 2023 PIL of the NGO seeking the strict implementation of the court's directions issued in the famous Laxmi v. Union of India in 2014.

The order, among other things, said acid attack survivors should receive free treatment in both public and private hospitals and compensated with a minimum of ₹3 Lakh by the State Government concerned as aftercare and rehabilitation cost.

The plea, filed through advocate Shashank Tripathi, underscored the continuing struggles of acid attack survivors despite the court's efforts to regulate acid sales, punish perpetrators, and provide medical, psychological, and social rehabilitation. Seeking directions for enhancement of the compensation



SC observes the Centre and 11 states hadn't filed their replies to the petition, the top court granted them four weeks and posted the hearing in the May 5 week

amount, the plea also sought that the acid attack survivors should be heard by a fast-track court.

Despite the top court's order mandating an additional ₹1 Lakh compensation along with the ₹3 Lakh minimum compensation under the Victim Compensation Scheme 2016, many survivors hadn't received adequate financial relief, it added. Several survivors, the plea said, were still awaiting the monetary compensation years after their attacks, leaving them financially vulnerable.

The plea said despite amendments and schemes being notified, systemic inefficiencies came in the way of benefits for survivors, who were forced to go through complex bureaucratic processes to claim their rights.

Private hospitals continued to demand advance payments before providing emergency care, despite the court's directions and the high cost of reconstructive surgeries remained a barrier for many survivors, it added.

MLAs face Babugiri, says Delhi Speaker

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Citing instances where senior bureaucrats at the helm of Delhi government departments were not making themselves available for communication with MLAs, Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta has written to Chief Secretary Dharmendra about how heads of government departments under them should deal with newly-elected legislators. Gupta alleged that officers "don't even acknowledge" MLAs' letters and calls. Delhi's bureaucracy was often seen at odds with the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government.

In his letter on Wednesday, Gupta sought the Chief Secretary's attention to the procedure and protocol to be adhered to by the government officers while dealing with the members of the Assembly. Terming it "a serious matter," Gupta said, "This is with reference to the procedure and protocol norms to be adhered by the government officers and officials while dealing with the Hon'ble Members of the Delhi Legislative Assembly. A few instances have been brought to my notice where the communications of the Members in the form of letters, phone calls or messages have not even been acknowledged by the concerned officer."

Gupta said he expected that all administrative secretaries, head of departments, Delhi Police, DDA and other agencies would be asked to follow a strict

compliance to the norms. "...Action taken in this regard may be intimated to me at the earliest," he said. The Speaker also sought to be updated about action taken in the matter.

Reacting to Gupta's letter, AAP leader and former minister Saurabh Bharadwaj took a dig at the BJP, accusing them of enabling bureaucratic defiance for years. "For a decade, BJP taught Delhi officers to ignore ministers and MLAs don't take their calls, don't respond to letters. Now, when the BJP is in power, they are expect-

He expected that all administrative secretaries, head of departments, Delhi Police, DDA and other agencies would be asked to follow a strict compliance to the norms

— VJENDER GUPTA, ASSEMBLY SPEAKER

riencing the same. Earlier, BJP defended these officials, and now they are trying to discipline them," Saurabh Bharadwaj remarked.

It's likely to be a wake-up call for Delhi government officials, who seem to have largely disregarded MLAs and even ministers under the previous AAP government. Since the services weren't under the Union government, officials were said to often disregard AAP leaders with impunity. With the BJP now in power in Delhi, the bureaucracy is

expected to align with the new administration and heed the elected government and lawmakers, and Gupta's letter serves as a reminder of just this.

The Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure lays down instructions for prompt disposal of references from Members of Parliament and State Legislatures.

It instructs that communications received from a Member of Parliament/State Legislature should be attended to promptly. Any Information sought by a Member of Parliament and State Legislature should be supplied, unless it is of such a nature that it would have been denied to him, it instructs further.

The guidelines concerning official dealings between Administration and Members of Parliament and State Legislatures have been issued by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and reiterated from time to time. The provisions of the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure regarding prompt disposal of communications from MPs have also been reiterated from time to time. However, keeping in view the instances of occasional non-observance of the above guidelines, a need was felt by the Committee of Privileges of the Lok Sabha for consolidating and reiterating the existing instructions.

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Elon Musk's X sues Centre over content blocking

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Social media giant 'X' (formerly Twitter), owned by US billionaire Elon Musk, has filed a lawsuit in the Karnataka High Court against Government of India, challenging what it called unlawful content regulation and arbitrary censorship.

It raised concerns over the Centre's interpretation of the Information Technology (IT) Act, particularly its use of Section 79(3)(b), which 'X' argues violates Supreme Court rulings and undermines free expression online.

The lawsuit alleged the government is using the said section to create a parallel content-blocking mechanism, bypassing the structured legal process outlined in Section 69A. 'X' claimed this approach contradicts the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling in the Shreya Singhal case, which established that content can only be blocked through a proper judicial process or the legally defined route under Section 69A. According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B), Section 79(3)(b) mandates online platforms to remove illegal content when directed by either a court order or a government notification.

If a platform fails to comply within 36 hours, it risks losing its safe harbor protection under Section 79(1) and could be held accountable under various laws, including the IPC. However, X has contested this interpretation, arguing that the provision does not grant the government independent authority to block content.

Instead, it accused authorities of misusing the law to impose arbitrary censorship without following due process.

Under Section 69A of the IT Act, the government has the power to block public access to digital content if it is deemed a threat to national security, sovereignty, or public order. However, this process is regulated by the 2009 Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, which require a structured review process before blocking decisions are made. 'X' has argued that instead of following these procedures, the government is using Section 79(3)(b) as a shortcut, allowing content to be removed without the necessary scrutiny. The platform sees this as a direct violation of legal safeguards meant to prevent arbitrary censorship.

However, 'X' has refused to onboard an employee onto the Sahyog portal, claiming it acts as a "censorship tool" that pressures platforms to remove content without proper legal review.

The lawsuit argues that this is yet another attempt by the government to control online discourse without judicial oversight.

Israel pounds Gaza again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Deir-Al-Balah (Gaza Strip)

Israeli strikes killed at least 85 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip overnight and into Thursday, according to local health officials.

The strikes hit multiple homes in the middle of the night, killing men, women and children as they slept. The Israeli military said it struck militant targets.

Later that day, it said that "projectiles" fired from Gaza set off air raids sirens in central Israel.

It appeared to be the first rocket attack out of Gaza since Israel ended the ceasefire with a surprise bombardment of the territory early on Tuesday.

The Israeli military also restored a blockade on northern Gaza, including Gaza City that it had maintained for most of the war.

More than 400 Palestinians were killed on Tuesday alone, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

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Team India to get ₹58 crore cash reward from BCCI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The BCCI on Thursday announced a cash reward of ₹58 Crore for the Indian cricket team that won the ICC Champions Trophy earlier this month in Dubai.

The Rohit Sharma-led India defeated New Zealand by four wickets in the final to grab their third Champions Trophy title. The financial windfall will cover the players, coaching and support staff and members of the men's selection committee headed by Ajit Agarkar. The Board did not give a break-up of the reward in its statement.

"Winning back-to-back ICC titles is special and this reward recognises Team India's dedication and excellence on the global stage," said BCCI president Roger Binny in a release.

Binny said the Champions Trophy triumph is a testament to India's strong cricketing eco-system.

"This was also our second ICC Trophy in 2025, following the ICC U19 Women's World Cup triumph and it highlights the strong cricketing ecosystem in place in our country," he said.



In fact, it was India's third ICC trophy in the last eight months as they had won the last year's T20 World Cup, beating South Africa in the final.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said the victory justified India's top-ranking in white ball formats. "Their dominance in world cricket is a result of years of hard work and strategic execution. This vic-

tor has justified India's top ranking in white-ball cricket, and we are sure the team will continue to excel in the years to come," said Saikia.

India dominated the Champions Trophy from the start, registering four commanding victories en route to the final. India began their campaign with a solid six-wicket win over Bangladesh,

then secured a convincing six-wicket triumph against Pakistan.

They continued their momentum with a 44-run victory over New Zealand before overcoming Australia by four wickets in the semi-final.

"The dedication and commitment shown by the players have set a new benchmark, and we are confident that Indian cricket will keep raising the bar on the global stage," Saikia added.

BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla said Indian players displayed excellent composure under pressure during the ICC marquee event.

"The players exhibited remarkable composure under pressure, and their success is an inspiration to aspiring cricketers across the country."

"The team has once again proved that Indian cricket is built on a strong foundation of skill, mental toughness, and a winning mentality," he said.

Prabtej Bhatia, the BCCI treasurer, and joint secretary Rohan Gauns Desai too lauded the team and said the governing body will continue to work towards strengthening the cricketing infrastructure in the country.

Environment Directorate, iFOREST collaborate for a greener UP

SPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a significant move to promote sustainable development and combat pollution, the Environment Directorate of the Uttar Pradesh government has signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST).

The MoU, signed on Thursday at the Environment Directorate office, aims to address critical environmental challenges, including air pollution, waste management and climate change.

Present at the MoU signing were Minister of State for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (Independent Charge) Dr Arun Kumar Saxena, Minister of State KP Malik, Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh, and other officials.

Under this three-year agreement, iFOREST will conduct research-driven studies and training programmes while assisting the Environment Directorate in implementing government schemes. The partnership will also focus on advancing green energy and ensuring sustainable industrial and urban development in Uttar Pradesh.

A key highlight of this collaboration is the engagement of religious institutions in environmental conservation. This initiative

was launched during Prayagraj Maha Kumbh 2025, with both parties jointly organising the first 'Kumbh Ki Aastha and Climate Change' conference.

Speaking on the occasion, Saxena emphasised, "Uttar Pradesh faces unique and complex environmental challenges. Our government has been at the forefront of efforts to improve air quality, regulate industrial emissions and promote clean energy. Through this partnership, we aim to explore new technologies and solutions to effectively tackle pollution and climate change."

Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh underscored the importance of science and research-driven solutions, stating that cutting-edge research and knowledge development are essential for addressing environmental challenges. He expressed confidence that the MoU between the Environment Directorate and iFOREST will play a crucial role in providing data-driven solutions to issues like air pollution, waste management and river pollution.

Principal Secretary of the department, Anil Kumar, highlighted that this collaboration will contribute significantly to air pollution management, the growth of green industries, and preparing cities for climate challenges such as heatwaves. He added that iFOREST will offer technical

expertise, conduct pilot projects, train stakeholders, and support research to enhance environmental management.

iFOREST Chief Executive Officer Dr Chandra Bhushan outlined the vision and key objectives of this partnership.

The Environment Directorate was established to address critical challenges such as air pollution and climate change while promoting sustainable development practices. Its core objectives include developing pollution control strategies, mitigating climate change impacts, enhancing community resilience and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. The directorate plays a crucial role in integrating environmental protection into Uttar Pradesh's development agenda.

The International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) is an independent, non-profit research and innovation organisation that focuses on pressing environmental and development challenges in India. As one of the country's leading environmental research institutions, iFOREST conducts evidence-based studies, generates new knowledge and develops innovative solutions. It also engages with stakeholders to raise awareness and promote green initiatives.



Shia muslims take part in a procession of 'Gleem Wala Taboo' being taken out from the historic Masjid-e-Kufa to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, in Lucknow on Thursday

CBCID renamed as CID by govt

Lucknow (PNS): In a surprise move, the Uttar Pradesh government, on Thursday, changed the name of Crime Branch, Crime Investigation Department (CBCID) to Crime Investigation Department (CID).

This decision has been taken by the government with the aim of making the crime investigation system more effective and simple. In the

order issued by the Home Department (Police) of the state government, it has been clarified that from now on CBCID will be known as CID. The change of name will come into effect with immediate effect.

The main function of this important department of Uttar Pradesh Police is to conduct in-depth investigation of crimes, forensic analysis, identification of criminals and investigation of organised crimes.

The government communication said that the change of name will bring transparency and clarity in the functioning of the department, which will help the public and police personnel to understand the role of the department.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM AMARJEET SINGH BHATIA TO AMARJEET SINGH. AMARJEET SINGH S/O BALBIR SINGH ADD-111A/155 ASHOK NAGAR KANPUR.

NOTICE

I TIRUNA is Mother of Name, WANKHADE UMESH D, presently residing at Vill- Mata Fail Badnera, Po- Badnera, Teh- Amravati, Dist- Amravati, State- Maharashtra, Pin-444701, have changed my Name from TIRUNA TO TRIVENI DNYANESHWAR WANKHADE, vide affidavit no 93AE 163986, dated 18/03/25, before notary H. O. Jhansi.

NOTICE

I, WANKHADE UMESH D, presently residing at Vill- Mata Fail Badnera, Po- Badnera, Teh- Amravati, Dist- Amravati, State- Maharashtra, Pin-444701, have changed my Daughter's Name from DHANVI TO DHANVI UMESH WANKHADE, vide affidavit no 73AE 780581, dated 18/03/25, before notary H. O. Jhansi.

NOTICE

I WANKHADE UMESH D, presently residing at Vill- Mata Fail Badnera, Po- Badnera, Teh- Amravati, Dist- Amravati, State- Maharashtra, Pin-444701, have changed my Son's Name from RUSIKESH UMESH WANKHADE TO RUSHIKESH UMESH WANKHADE, vide affidavit no 93AE 163985, dated 18/03/25, before notary H. O. Jhansi.

NOTICE

General public is here by informed that original freehold deed dated 22-02-2006 executed by Kanpur development authority in respect of plot no. 1099 block 'RN' scheme-II, Ratan Lal Nagar, Kanpur admeasuring 387.128 sq.Mtr. In favour of Mr. Prithvi Pal Singh S/o Sardar Pushottam Singh, duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar, Kanpur in book No.1 volume no.6870 at pages 391 to 404 at serial No.1720 on 22-02-2006 have been lost, from present owner Mr. Nareesh Arora S/o Late Pyare Lal Arora, while proceeding to Ratanlal Nagar Chauraha for Photocopying the property document, the original freehold deed accidentally fell somewhere on the road near Ratanlal Nagar Chauraha, Kanpur on 01.08.2021 around 01:00 am, as evident from file dated 20/03/2025 in case any person has found the original envelope above sale deeds please inform to undersigned, no mortgage on its basis, has ever not created any encumbrance/mortgage with any bank or financial institutions, has any charge over it, the same be informed to the undersigned within 7 days otherwise their claim will be extinguished. (Sarvesh Chandra Dubey) advocate

411-412 10th floor "Krishna Tower" 15163, Civil Lines, Kanpur Mob.- 09839039320 E-mail: advocatesarveshdubey@gmail.com

STF arrests 3 selling fake mark sheets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Special Task Force arrested three men involved in making fake mark sheets.

The accused used to sell fake mark sheets of high school to post-graduate level. They used to make and sell mark sheets of UP Board, CBSE and any university. They also took contracts from the cheating mafia to get students passed. For this, they had created fake websites. The STF arrested them from Lucknow on Thursday.

As per their modus operandi, these fraudsters used to make people fill board and university forms on their fake websites. They then used to send fake mark sheets by courier after taking money.

The STF caught these fraudsters from the service lane near the boundary wall of Jai Prakash Narayan Sarvodaya School in Para area of Lucknow.

According to UP STF, Altaf Raja, a resident of Para Munnu Kheda, Krishna Kumar Srivastava, a resident of Alambagh Snehnagar and Lakshya Rathore, a resident of Faizullaganj Shyam Vihar Colony were running the gang that made fake mark sheets. As many as 51 mark sheets, certificates, transfer certificates, two laptops, four mobile phones and four seals were recovered from them.

During interrogation, the fraudsters told that te police that they had created many websites and fake results were also uploaded on these websites.

Since their prey saw their exam results displayed online on checking their results online by entering their roll numbers on the website, no one suspected anything as the mark sheets issued to them looked genuine.

The accused told the STF sleuths that people used to get private jobs on the basis of fake mark sheets provided by them. They charged Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 for a fake mark sheet. Till now, they have sent fake mark sheets to about two thousand people through courier.

Along with this, they also took contracts for online and offline verification of people. During interrogation, Altaf disclosed that he used to work with one Dr SP Pandey in Delhi to create fake websites and prepare mark sheets. In 2017, Altaf went to jail along with Dr SP Pandey from Geeta Colony police station area of Delhi.

After being released from jail, he started running his own gang with Lakshya and Krishna Kumar. In 2019, he was again sent to jail by Delhi's Chanakyapuri police along with Lakshya. After being released from jail, he came to Lucknow and started working again.

Krishna Kumar is also an old timer and he went to jail in 2009 in a fake mark sheet case reported in Vikas Nagar. Gangster and fraud cases are registered against Krishna Kumar in Para police station.

Guv inaugurates film fest Three more cases against Ansals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Thursday said that educational films were effective mediums of knowledge.

Inaugurating the three-day 26th CEC-UGC Educational Film Festival organised at Lucknow University under the aegis of Faculty of Educational Communication, New Delhi. Governor Anandiben Patel said educational films were not just a means of entertainment but also an effective medium of knowledge, awareness and social change.

She appreciated the platform of the film festival and said that through this, important issues of society are highlighted, which give rise to new perspectives among the youth.

The UP governor also highlighted the importance of digital technology and educational videos. She said that in the present era, the Internet had become an important resource for students, making their education more interactive, accessible and effective. Along with this, she emphasised that with the right guidance and use of technical tools, the understanding and knowledge of students deepens.

While discussing the vision of 'Developed India' proposed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Patel said that it was very important to adopt digital technology to meet the needs of future generations. She emphasised that an environment

should be created which inspires the youth to achieve success through their efforts to realise their dreams.

The governor discussed the importance of artificial intelligence (AI) and said that provisions had been made in the Budget of the Government of India for AI based education and research. Referring to the 'Gyan Bharatam Mission', she said that through this, efforts were being made to convert more than one crore manuscripts into digital form.

In the context of the new National Education Policy 2020, the governor pointed out that this policy paves the way for imparting education in cultural and mother tongue and recognizes digital education. She also emphasised that the goal of making the country a Vishwa Guru in Amrit Kaal can be achieved only when we use the current techniques and technology in the right manner.

The governor underlined the need for the youth to increase their awareness of technology and incorporate educational content in digital media. She said that the use of multimedia and ICT tools enabled students to choose their own study methods, which could further enhance the level of education.

She said that making educational films was necessary for the enlightenment of our young generation. "Educational films are an excellent medium to learn about our thoughts, ideas, culture and tradition," she said.

Lucknow (PNS): Three more cases have been registered against the director of Ansal API in Sushant Golf City police station of Lucknow. So far, 32 cases have been registered against Ansal API and its owners in various police stations of the city.

Shailendra Singh of Indira Nagar said he had struck a deal for a villa in Ansal for Rs 64 lakh. For this, he paid an advance of Rs 19.79 lakh to the company between February 3, 2014 and October 11, 2014.

When Shailendra went to Ansal for registration of the property and talked about it, the company's chairman Pranav Ansal and president marketing Rajesh Rao threatened to kill him and drove him away. Similarly, Cantonment resident Mukesh Kumar Pathak said that he had paid Rs 32.98 lakh to Ansal company for three plots in his and his wife Neelam Pathak's name. The company people kept making him run around for years in the name of registration of the plots.

Asha Tiwari, a resident of Gonda Mankapur, alleges that she had booked a plot with Ansals in 2011. The company employees promised to give her the registry paper and possession of the plot in 2013, but that did not happen. She had paid Rs 10.71 lakh to the company for the plot.

According to Sushant Golf City Inspector Shailendra Giri, an FIR has been registered against the company's director on the basis of the complaint and action will be taken against the accused on the basis of evidence.

No headway yet in woman's murder; 7 cops suspended

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The police have made no headway in the kidnapping, alleged gang-rape and murder of a woman on Wednesday. However, a day after the shocking incident, seven policemen, including the Alambagh inspector, have been suspended.

The woman was kidnapped in an auto-rickshaw which did not have a registration plate. She was going to her brother's home in Chinhat after returning to the city by a roadways bus from Varanasi. She took the auto-rickshaw at Alambagh bus station around 2:30 in the night.

"Those suspended include Alambagh inspector, Alambagh bus station police outpost in-charge, night officer, PRV commander and a constable," an official communicate said.

Meanwhile, horrifying details of the woman's suffering surfaced during the preliminary investigation.

"Bhabhi, I don't know where the auto-rickshaw driver is taking me. Something seems wrong. Let me talk to bhaiya. The auto driver is saying that metro work is going on. The road is closed, so we are taking a detour. Bhabhi, please save me. And then with a scream, the call was disconnected and she was untraceable after this," the brother of the deceased woman said.

This was the last call of the woman who was raped and murdered in Lucknow on Wednesday. She was coming to her brother's place after giving an interview in a finance company in Varanasi. She took an auto-rickshaw from Alambagh bus station to Chinhat. Her husband's house is in Faizabad.

The auto-rickshaw driver kidnapped the woman and took her 35 kilometres on the wrong route. After crossing the borders of Alambagh, Para, Thakurganj, Dubagga, Kakori police stations, he reached Malihabad where he and his aides allegedly raped the woman and then strangled her to death.

The investigations so far have revealed that the auto-rickshaw driver kidnapped the woman at midnight along with his companions. Then he took her towards Malihabad. There they looted and killed her in a deserted area.

The woman made the first call to her bhab-

hi at around 5 pm saying she was not getting a direct bus from Varanasi to Faizabad and so she had decided to come to Lucknow.

She made the second call at 7 pm and informed her bhabhi that she had caught a bus to Lucknow and would reach you by late night. The third call was at 9:30 pm to inform her bhabhi that she had reached Sultanpur.

She made the fourth call at 12 midnight and told her bhabhi that they were reaching Lucknow but the bus would not go towards Kamta. At 1:30 am she made the fifth call to inform that she had got down at Alambagh bus station. At 2:35 am she asked bhabhi to send her live location to her brother.

The brother of the deceased woman told the police that when his wife called at 2:30 am, she said that she would reach in some time. "I asked her to give the phone to the auto-rickshaw driver. He told me that Metro work was going on, so he had made a detour and would reach Chinhat some time," he said.

He said when he checked his sister's live location, it was found near Naya Kheda village in Malihabad. When I called her, she said something was wrong. After this the call was disconnected with a scream.

He said he called his sister three times but she did not pick up the call and later the phone was switched off.

Suspecting something untoward, the deceased's brother called 112 and informed the cops about the incident after which Alambagh police station and Malihabad police contacted him over phone. The deceased's brother himself reached Alambagh bus station.

"Around 3:30 pm we got information about a body found in Malihabad. There were no clothes on my sister's body. There were injury marks on the neck and face. Her mobile phone, gold earring and jewellery and anklet were also missing," he said.

The body of the woman was found in a mango orchard, 100 metres away from the Sadhan Sahakari Samiti in Mohammad Nagar talukdari Banda Kheda village of Malihabad, at 3:35 am on Wednesday.

According to police sources, the woman was seen leaving the bus stop in the CCTV footage. The auto-rickshaw did not have a number plate. In the footage, the auto driver is seen moving towards Dubagga bypass instead of Chinhat.

LMC executive to meet on March 24

Lucknow (PNS): Mayor Sushma Kharakwal disclosed that the LMC executive committee meeting that had been postponed on March 10 will now be held on March 24.

The meeting remains significant as on March 10 eight Bharatiya Janata Party corporators had boycotted the meeting in an unprecedented move. For the first time in the history of LMC, the executive committee meeting, which had been organized to pass the budget for the financial year 2025-26, had to be postponed owing lack of quorum.

Eight BJP councillors and 2 of Samajwadi Party were absent from the meeting without any prior notice.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. EM/PEP-08/2025
No. EM/PEP/TECH-44/2024/247 Date: 18/03/2025
Name of the work : "Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of Night Navigation System at Paradip Port Authority for a period of 03 years". Estimated Cost: Rs. 1,27,75,800/- Last date & time of submission of bid: dt. 10/04/2025 up to 17:30 hrs.
Refer our Website for details
https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.
Sd/- Executive Engineer (E), (PEP-III)
Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/69/2024-2025 dtd. 20.03.2025

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR
Advertisement
No.3/2025
Online applications are invited for the various Non-Teaching posts in the University. Online registration of application for these posts will start w.e.f. 22-03-2025 and end on 12-04-2025. Last date for submitting Hard copy of the online submitted application is 21-04-2025. For further details visit University website: http://www.gndu.ac.in.
Amritsar REGISTRAR
20-03-2025
NA/12/28848/2023/42785
Dated CHD - 3/20/2025

HDFC BANK
Legal Cell : HDFC BANK LTD.
D-58/52, A-2A, A-5, M.S. Plaza, Rathyara Crossing
Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh - 221010
We understand your world
POSSESSION NOTICE APPENDIX IV (RULE 811)
Whereas, the undersigned being the authorized officer of the HDFC Bank Ltd. under the Secularization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued deemed notice dated 05-12-2024 calling upon the borrower(s) 1. M/s.Pushpa Divedi W/o Mr. Ratnesw Divedi (Co-Borrower & Director) 4. Mr. Padmesh Divedi S/o Mr. Awadesh Kumar Divedi (Co-Borrower & Mortgagee) 5. Mrs. Pragma Divedi W/o Mr. Awadesh Kumar Divedi (Co-Borrower & Director & Mortgagee) 6. Mr. Awadesh Kumar Divedi S/o Mr. Shyam Sunder Sharma (Co-Borrower & Director) 7. Mr. Ratnesw Divedi (Since Deceased) (Co-Borrower & Director & Mortgagee) Through Its Legal Heir(s) to pay the amount mentioned in the notice Rs. 60,95,574.00/- (Rupees Sixty Lacs Ninety-Five Thousand Five Hundred and Seventy-Four only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
The borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s) 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 on the read with rule 8 & 9 of the said Rules, on this 18-03-2025.
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.
The borrower 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 charge of HDFC Bank Ltd. for an amount of notice Rs. 60,95,574.00/- (Rupees Sixty Lacs Ninety-Five Thousand Five Hundred and Seventy-Four only) and interest thereon together with expenses and charges etc. less amount paid, if any.
DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY :-
Property-1: Araz No. 2522, 2525, Admeasuring- 27.66 Dicmet. Situated At- Mauja-wazidpur, Pargana- Aithawa, Tehsil-pindra, Distt- Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (Property Owned By Smt. pragya Divedi, Mr. Padmesh Divedi & Late Ratnesw Divedi Through Its Legal Heirs)
Boundaries As Per Valuation Report:- East : Rest Part Of Araz. 2522 & 2525, West: Rasta 6 Feet Wide North : Rest Part Of Araz. No. 2522/2 & 2525/5 Old No. 252/13 South-Other Property-2: Araz No. 2524, Araz No 252/13 New No. 252/2 & 252/5 Admeasuring- 27 Dicmet, Situated At- Mauja-wazidpur, Pargana- Aithawa, Tehsil-pindra, Tehsil & Distt- Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (Property Owned By Smt. pragya Divedi, Mr. Padmesh Divedi & Late Ratnesw Divedi & Late Ratnesw Divedi Through Its Legal Heirs)
Boundaries As Per Valuation Report:- East: Land Mushtriyaa West: Land Of Nem Chandra & Premchendra North : Land Mushtriyaa South: Part Of Araz. No. 252
Property-3: Araz No. 252/4 In Chack No. 184 Admeasuring- 616 Sq. Ft. Situated At- Mauja-wazidpur, Pargana- Aithawa, Tehsil-pindra, Tehsil Distt- Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (Property Owned By Smt. pragya Divedi, Mr. Padmesh Divedi & Late Ratnesw Divedi Through Its Legal Heirs).
Boundaries As Per Valuation Report:- East: Land Mushtriyaa West: Land Of Nem Chandra & Premchendra North : Land Mushtriyaa South: Road, Jaunpur-Varanasi Road
Property-4: Araz No. 252/4 In Chack No. 184 Admeasuring- 2721.37 Sq. Ft. Situated At- Mauja-wazidpur, Pargana- Aithawa, Tehsil-pindra, Tehsil Distt- Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (Property Owned By Smt. pragya Divedi, Mr. Padmesh Divedi & Late Ratnesw Divedi Through Its Legal Heirs).
Boundaries As Per Valuation Report:- East: Land Mushtriyaa West: Land Mirmuk North: Land Mushtriyaa South: Road
Date - 18.03.2025, Place - Varanasi
Authorised Officer, HDFC Bank Ltd.

UP to become self-reliant through youth power: CM

Distributes loans worth ₹55 cr to 1,423 entrepreneurs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gonda

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, said that if young people get the right opportunities to use their energy in the right direction, nothing can stop them from moving forward. He added that Uttar Pradesh will become self-reliant through the power of youth. The chief minister distributed loans worth ₹55 crore to 1,423 young entrepreneurs of the Devipatan division under the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan (MYUVA).

Addressing the youth, he said, "The double-engine government is supporting young entrepreneurs in becoming financially self-reliant. A nation's strength is measured by its young talent, energy and discipline. When youth get opportunities, no force can harm that country."

During the event, Chief Minister Yogi also distributed toolkits to artisans under the One District One Product (ODOP) programme. He also visited the startup exhibition organised by young entrepreneurs.

The chief minister said that over three lakh young people had registered under the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Abhiyan, and more than 32,700 had already received loan approvals. He mentioned that during the three-day fairs scheduled for March 25, 26 and 27 in every district, more youth will be connected to the scheme. He advised youth to undergo training on managing loans to become successful entrepreneurs. The scheme provides an initial loan of up to Rs 5 lakh, with an increased limit of

Rs 10 lakh for the next phase. The chief minister emphasised that youth, who once struggled for jobs, are now becoming entrepreneurs, contributing to the progress of their districts and the entire state. Congratulating 1,423 beneficiaries, he assured that more young people would benefit from the upcoming fair. "With the self-reliance of our youth, Uttar Pradesh and the nation can reach new heights," he said.

Chief Minister Yogi also encouraged the youth to move forward with patience and determination, stating that they play a crucial role in fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India during the Amrit Mahotsav year. He called upon the youth to move forward with patience and determination, so they can make Uttar Pradesh the growth engine of the country.

Taking a firm stance against corruption, Chief Minister Yogi said that the government was strictly following a zero-tolerance policy. He warned the youth to stay alert and report anyone demanding money for loan approvals. "If someone asks for money in the name of getting a loan, file a complaint," he said, assuring that the government will assist through the Single Window System and Nivesh Sarathi. He also cautioned that strict action will be taken against those involved in corruption, setting an example to ensure they never find a place in government service. He mentioned that corruption weakens the system like a termite, and eliminating it requires collective efforts from both society and the government for the betterment of

future generations. On women empowerment, Chief Minister Yogi highlighted the government's initiatives to increase female representation in the police force. He highlighted that before 2017, Uttar Pradesh had only 10,000 women police personnel, but in the recent recruitment of 60,244 personnel, 12,000 were women. He announced that going forward, at least 20 per cent of positions in every recruitment will be reserved for women. So far, more than 25,000 women have been recruited out of 1.56 lakh new jobs, and 7.5 lakh government employees have already been appointed. He said that "our daughters are excelling in every field, and the government is ensuring all possible opportunities for them."

Praising Uttar Pradesh's economic growth, Chief Minister Yogi expressed pride that the state, once labeled as 'BIMARU', has now become India's second-largest economy. He assured that efforts are underway to make it the top economy in the country.

Uttar Pradesh leads in food grain, sugarcane and ethanol production and has the highest number of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), each covered with Rs 5 lakh security insurance. The chief minister also highlighted initiatives like One District, One Product (ODOP) and the Vishwakarma Shram Saman Yojana, which have uplifted artisans and craftsmen. "A nation that respects its youth and farmers reaches the peak of prosperity," he remarked.

The chief minister further stated that the recently held Maha Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh showcased India's strength to the world. The grand

cultural and spiritual event, held in Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26, brought humanity together in an extraordinary way, he said and emphasised that under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the Maha Kumbh laid the foundation for 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. Speaking about Gonda's transformation, Chief Minister Yogi highlighted that travel time from Gonda to Lucknow, which earlier took 3-5 hours, has now been reduced to just 1:75 hours. Similarly, the journey from Gonda to Devipatan temple, which used to take 2 to 3.5 hours, now takes only 45 minutes. He highlighted connectivity as a top government priority, mentioning that a bypass for Gonda has been approved, along with the establishment of key institutions such as a medical college, an agriculture college, and a government engineering college.

He praised Gonda's progress in cleanliness, stating that the city, once counted among the dirtiest in 2016-17, is now making great strides in sanitation. Appreciating local representatives, he said, "Gonda is now becoming a beautiful city."

Under the state's tourism policy, the government plans to enhance at least one location in every assembly constituency to boost tourism.

The event was attended by cabinet minister Rakesh Sachan, Dara Singh Chauhan, MP Karan Bhushan Singh, MLAs Vinay Kumar Dwivedi, Ramapit Shastri, Bawan Singh, Prem Narayan Pandey, Prabhat Kumar Verma, Prateek Bhushan Singh, Ajay Singh, and MLC Awadhesh Kumar Singh, along with several dignitaries and officials.

Glorifying foreign invaders is treason: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bahraich/Lucknow

Calling those who glorify foreign invaders "traitors", Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that honouring an invader means strengthening the foundation of treason, something independent India cannot accept.

While inaugurating the main and residential buildings of Tehsil Mihipurwa (Motipur) in Bahraich, the Chief Minister stated, "Today, as the world praises India's Sanatan culture and traditions, it becomes the duty of every citizen to show respect and reverence for the great men of India. In such times, no invader should be glorified. To do so is to lay the foundation of treason, which independent India cannot tolerate."

He emphasised that New India will not accept those who insult India's great men, glorify invaders who trampled Sanatan culture, dishonoured daughters, and attacked faith.

The tehsil complex, built over 2,138 square metres, has been constructed at a cost of Rs 845.19 lakh.

Highlighting Bahraich's deep-rooted connection to India's rishi tradition, Chief Minister Yogi remarked, "It is believed that Maharishi Balark's world-famous ashram was located in Bahraich, and the district derives its name from Balark Rishi. This is the same historic land where Maharaja Suheldev hoisted India's victory flag by defeating a foreign invader." He added, "The courage and valor displayed by Maharaja Suheldev ensured that for 150 years, no foreign invader dared to attack India. However, there were attempts to strip this sacred land of Bahraich of its identity."

Criticising past governments, the chief minister remarked that while announcements were made, real work remained undone. "Mihipurwa tehsil did not have a building until now, despite the fact that most of the work for a common citizen is handled by the tehsil. Whether it is land-related records, measurements, inheritance proceedings, transfers or partition matters, the tehsil serves as the central hub for resolving these issues. Without its own building, how could justice be delivered in revenue matters?"

The chief minister stated that when the Bharatiya Janata Party's double-engine government took power in 2017, over 33 lakh revenue cases were pending. He



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during the inauguration program of the main building of tehsil Mihipurwa (Motipur) of Bahraich

explained that such delays often led to fighting, riots and the forceful grabbing of poor people's land by powerful individuals. "Due to the inefficiency of previous governments, these centres had become hotbeds of corruption, rendering justice inaccessible to the common man, and the voice of the poor was systematically suppressed," he said.

He continued, "We set a strict timeline for resolving cases, ensuring accountability at every level. As a result, we have provided justice to the poor by settling all 33 lakh cases. Additionally, through the Anti-Land Mafia Task Force, we have freed 64,000 acres of illegally occupied land, paving the way for increased investment in the state."

The chief minister pointed out that the government has decided to establish a gram sachivalaya in every village, equipped with optical fiber or WiFi facilities. "Villagers will no longer need to travel far for essential services. Birth certificates, death certificates, income certificates, caste certificates and residence certificates will all be available in their own villages. Most gram panchayats have already begun implementing this initiative," he said.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to protecting the rights of the poor, Chief Minister Yogi stated, "We will utilise satellite technology to ensure that not even an inch of land belonging to the poor

is encroached upon. Officers posted at tehsils will be required to reside on-site to address issues promptly. Residential facilities will be provided, ensuring that wherever there is a tehsil, block, police station, or administrative circle, the officers concerned will stay there, including overnight."

Recalling a recent visit to Bahraich, the chief minister noted the terror caused by wolves in the region. "Several children fell victim to these attacks, but the menace was ultimately contained. We had already classified human-wildlife conflict under disaster relief and ensured a Rs 5 lakh compensation for affected families."

Highlighting Bahraich's immense potential, he remarked, "Situated on the banks of the Ghaghra and Sarayu rivers, this district boasts a wildlife sanctuary at Katerniaghat, a newly established medical college, and the completed Vijay Smarak of Maharaja Suheldev. This was once a district plagued by disorder and anarchy, but today, no one can disturb peace in Bahraich."

The chief minister stated that the story of development can only progress when we take forward our heritage with full pride. Our pride is rooted in our heritage, and heritage is directly linked to development. Bahraich stands as a testament to this synergy, a district where a new medical college has been established, and a bypass for Bahraich has been approved. Connectivity with Nepal has been strengthened, and Katerniaghat is being transformed into a major eco-tourism hub."

Highlighting Bahraich's remarkable economic growth, Chief Minister Yogi pointed out, "Before 2017, the district's GDP was merely Rs 6,934 crore, but by 2023-24, it has surged past Rs 25,000 crore – a multifold increase." He added that Bahraich has witnessed significant investment proposals, which means more employment opportunities and a strengthened economy.

On this occasion, BJP state-vice president and MLC and former MP Padam Singh Choudhary, MLAs Saroj Sonkar, Sureshwar Singh, Subhash Tripathi, Ramiwari Verma, President District Panchayat Bahraich Manju Singh, MLC Pragy Tripathi, BJP district president Brajesh Pandey, former minister Mukut Bihari Verma, former MP Akshaywar Lal Gond and other representatives were present.

IAS officer suspended on corruption charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a major move under his policy of zero tolerance towards crime and corruption, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, took action when he placed senior IAS officer Abhishek Prakash under suspension. Prakash, an IAS officer of the 2006 batch, was posted as secretary at Industrial Development Department and CEO of Invest UP.

The action taken against Abhishek Prakash has created a stir in the administrative circle. Sources said that his close aide Nikant Jain was arrested by the sleuths of the Special Task Force (STF) and a case was registered against both Prakash and Jain at the Gomti Nagar police station here on Thursday. The sources said that Abhishek Prakash had held back a file for a five per cent commission from the industrialist. There was a stay on the approval of the industrialist's solar project and he was pressuring for commission. The sources said that Prakash had allegedly sought the money through Jain. The said industrialist had made

a complaint in this regard to the chief minister after which a secret inquiry was conducted by the STF. During investigation, Jain disclosed that he demanded compensation on directives of Prakash after which the STF informed the chief minister of the development and this led to action against the IAS officer. The then Principal Secretary of the Industrial Development Department, Anil Sagar, was also removed on December 14, 2024 on charges of benefiting some industrialists by adopting the policy of pick and choose in the matter of land allotment to investors in Noida. The Allahabad High Court had made a harsh comment against Anil Sagar and ordered the government to remove him. After Anil Sagar, Abhishek Prakash has been suspended on charges of demanding a huge bribe in the name of land allotment and project approval. Two major actions against the officers of the Industrial Development Department in three and a quarter months have exposed the department. Prakash also faces

allegations in the Defence Manufacturing Corridor land scam in Lucknow. Land acquisition for the Defence Manufacturing Corridor was done in 2020-22 near Bhatgaon village of Sarojini Nagar tehsil in Lucknow. Defence related units, including Brahmos unit, were to be set up here. At that time Prakash was the district magistrate of Lucknow. The acquisition process started in 2021. It is alleged that in this acquisition, the names of many fake allottees were added by manipulating the documents in a fraudulent manner and about Rs 20 crore compensation was distributed. The documents of ownership of the land were manipulated. The names of fake allottees were added by overwriting old files (such as the lease of 1985). The land of gram samaj and the non-transferable land (land that cannot be sold or transferred) given to the Scheduled Castes was illegally made transferable and sold. People who did not have actual possession of the land and never sowed crops were shown as owners and given compensation. Compensation was

distributed on the basis of fake registries without checking the ownership. The Revenue Department officials did this distribution in collusion with top to bottom. According to the investigation reports, Rs 45.18 crore was sanctioned for 35,677 hectares of land in Bhatgaon, in which about Rs 20 crore was found to have been misappropriated. The then District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash is accused of not conducting proper investigation in the acquisition process and allowing the misappropriation to happen. Lack of coordination between the UP Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) and the Revenue Department helped hide the scam, the report pointed out.

It may be mentioned that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has made it clear that corruption will not be tolerated in Uttar Pradesh under any circumstances. He has warned the IAS and PCS officers of UP that if any officer is found involved in corruption, then strict action will be taken against him.

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited

(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110T2014PLC097792
Registered Office : KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chelpet, Chennai- 600031.
Tel : +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

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

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 30.04.2024 calling upon the borrower, co-borrowers and guarantors 1. SAMPATRAO SHIVAJI LAVATE, 2. SANDHYA SAMPAT LAVTE, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.8,15,317.06/- (Rupees Eight Lac Fifteen Thousand Three Hundred Seventeen And Six Paise Only) as on 29.04.2024 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Demand Notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 11th day of MAR 2025. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of THE IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) for an amount of Rs.8,15,317.06/- (Rupees Eight Lac Fifteen Thousand Three Hundred Seventeen And Six Paise Only) and interest thereon.

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

DESCRIPTION OF MORTGAGE PROPERTY		
ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF 2 SHOPS ON 1ST FLOOR, AREA 18.66 SQ. YDS OR 15.60 SQ. MTRS, AT PREMISES NO. 99/8, SITUATED AT BECONGANJ, KANPUR NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-208001, AND BOUNDED AS:		
BOUNDARIES OF THE SAID SHOPS:- EAST: COMMON PASSAGE & PREMISES NO. 99/9, WEST: HOUSE NO. 99/7, NORTH: OTHER SHOP & PASSAGE, SOUTH: AHATA OF HAZI AMIR		
BOUNDARIES OF THE HOUSE NO. 99/8:- EAST: PREMISES NO. 99/9 WEST: PREMISES NO. 99/7, NORTH: 15 FT. I.E. 4/7 MTR. WIDE ROAD, SOUTH: AHATA OF HAZI AMIR		
Date:11-03-2025	Authorised Officer	
Place:UTTAR PRADESH	IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited)	
Loan Account No:58502937	and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)	

PIRAMAL CAPITAL & HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED

Registered Office Address: Unit No.601, 6th Floor Piramal Amity Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Off Fire Station, LBS Marg, Kuria (West), Mumbai- 400 070. CIN: L65910MH1984PLC032639. Website: www.piramalfinance.com

Branch Address : Dhraj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Malonisa Building, Agra Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) - 400 602.

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the "said Act"). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In compliance with above, notice is hereby given to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Loan Code	Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Property address
(LC No. M0241588 of Moradabad Branch) Vishesh Singh (Borrower) Anju (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 731905 / (₹ Seven lakh Thirty One Thousand Nine Hundred Five Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Khasra No.268/13/1, Situated at Mohalla Suraj Nagar, Near Shiv Mandir, Dista Moharaj Mustahakam Tehsil & District Moradabad-244001, Uttar Pradesh.
(LC No. BL5A0001F02 of Jhansi Branch) Dushyant Kumar (Borrower) Vati V (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 572984 / (₹ Five lakh Seventy Two Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty Four Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	House No.85/1, Vaake Mauja Bijouli, Near Bijouli Police Chauki, Jhansi-284135, Uttar Pradesh.
(LC No. 0920000108 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch) Rakesh Mohan (Borrower) Shalini Sharma (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 553923 / (₹ Five lakh Fifty Three Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty Three Only) NPA (08-02-2025)	Flat No - 051 - Block - C - Midlow Vista Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh - 201001
(LC No. 2340001951 of Agra Branch) Deepak Kumar Sharma (Borrower) Mihlesh (Co Borrower 1) Harish Baboo (Guarantor 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1163302 / (₹ Eleven lakh Sixty Three Thousand Three Hundred Two Only) NPA (08-02-2025)	House On Part Of Khet No. 1977 Sanjay Gandhi Colony (Kudki Khera Aurangabad) Aligarh Aligarh Uttar Pradesh - 202001
(LC No. 19300044305 of Lucknow - MMM Marg Branch) Munendra Pal Singh Tomer (Borrower) Gayatri Singh (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 163188 / (₹ One lakh Sixty Three Thousand One Hundred Eighty Eight Only) NPA (08-02-2025)	Plot No K 36 Khasra No 1184 Minj Std Painsa Buljurgargana Tehsil Shahjahanpur Shahjahanpur Uttar Pradesh - 242001
(LC No. HL5A0000F13 of Aligarh Branch) Wasim (Borrower) Neelofar (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 2787223 / (₹ Twenty Seven lakh Eighty Seven Thousand Two Hundred Twenty Three Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Khet Khasra No. 32 (Khatra No. 00123) Situated In Mauja Alhadpur Niwari, Pargana & Tehsil Koli, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh 202001.
(LC No. M0210002 of Lucknow - MMM Marg Branch) Sudhakar Maurya (Borrower) Kamalavati Devi (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1085154 / (₹ Ten lakh Eighty Five Thousand One Hundred Fifty Four Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Plot S. No.36, Khasra - 42 Ka Minj, At Vill- Kharagar Dewariya, Near Amity University, Lucknow-226010, Uttar Pradesh.
(LC No. M0220838 of Kashiapur Branch) Hasmuiddin (Borrower) Shahana (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1017671 / (₹ Ten lakh Seventeen Thousand Six Hundred Seventy One Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	H.No.1020, Jayantipur, Moradabad, Khasra No. 289, Miyan Colony, Moja Jayantipur, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh-244001.
(LC No. BL5A0001E8AS of Sitapur Branch) Santosh Saxena (Borrower) Arti Saxena (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 5349688 / (₹ Fifty Three lakh Forty Nine Thousand Six Hundred Eighty Eight Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	House Nagarpalika No.37/470, Constructed On Plot No.05, Near Punjab National Bank, Situated At Mohalla Tarinpur (Hempurua), Pargana And District - Sitapur, Sitapur-261001, Uttar Pradesh
(LC No. M0245838 of Kanpur Branch) Jitendra Pratap Singh (Borrower) Babli (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 909304 / (₹ Nine lakh Nine Thousand Three Hundred Four Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	House Built On Part Of Plot No.03, Gram 271/6 Min, Gram Saniganwar, Behind Of Saniganra Stp, Kanpur Nagar-208021, Uttar Pradesh
(LC No. HL5A000168C of Varanasi Branch) Sayed Ammar Raza (Borrower) Sana Raza (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 3754409 / (₹ Thirty Seven lakh Five Thousand Four Hundred Nine Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Flat: No-01, G Floor, House No. 5/8/110 P-5-F, Arjni No. Min155/3, Near Gautam Uparaj, Varanasi Uttar Pradesh 221101
(LC No. HL5A0000A77 of Moradabad Branch) Mohd Rizwan (Borrower) Shahjahan Begum (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 56760 / (₹ Five lakh Sixty Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Khasra No.-226/496, Situated At Wallejabad-Rasulpur Nalgla Khet, Tehsil & Distt Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, 244001
(LC No. BL5A0001DD33 of Bareilly Branch) Sanjeev Kumar Gangwar (Borrower) Kunti Devi (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 769151 / (₹ Seven lakh Sixty Nine Thousand One Hundred Fifty One Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Part Of Khatra 987 1808, Village Jheel Gautia, Near Lal Fatak Crossing Bareilly Uttar Pradesh - 243001
(LC No. BL5A000993C of Dehradun Branch) Reena Devi (Borrower) Kuldeep Kumar (Co Borrower 1) Sevi (Co Borrower 2) Kapil Devi (Co Borrower 3)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 4928122 / (₹ Forty Nine lakh Twenty Eight Thousand One Hundred Twenty Two Only) NPA (03-01-2025)	Khasra No-50, Village Mubarkpur, Khatauli, Muzaffarnagar Uttar Pradesh 251201
(LC No. BL5A000298C2 of Meerut Branch) Dheraal (Borrower) Kusum (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1187039 / (₹ Eleven lakh Eighty Seven Thousand Thirty Nine Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Property Situated At House No. 313, Situated At Mohalla Aalidarynari, Kasba Kairana, Near Valmiki Mandir, Pargana And Tehsil Kairana Distt-Shamli Uttar Pradesh 247774
(LC No. HL5A00033720 of Gonda Branch) Pami Pandey (Borrower) Dileep Pandey (Co Borrower 1) Neelam Pandey (Co Borrower 2)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1244359 / (₹ Twelve lakh Four Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Nine Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Plot 04, Over Arzi No 365, Ward No 03, Imiliya Chawani Sarkar Near Kali Dham Mandir Gonda Uttar Pradesh 271003
(LC No. HL5A000928B of Mathura Branch) Pankaj Kumar (Borrower) Radha Mohan Sarawat (Co Borrower 1) Vandana Sarawat (Co Borrower 2)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 610100 / (₹ Six lakh Ten Thousand One Hundred Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Plot On Part Of East No 09, Khasra No 75, Mauza Dhorrera Bangar Andrun Bhole Colony Near Bhagel Dharmashala Mathura Uttar Pradesh 281006
(LC No. HL5A000298B2 of Mathura Branch) Pankaj Kumar (Borrower) Radha Mohan Sarawat (Co Borrower 1) Vandana Sarawat (Co Borrower 2)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 651544 / (₹ Six lakh Fifty One Thousand Five Hundred Forty Four Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Plot On Part Of East No 09, Khasra No 75, Mauza Dhorrera Bangar Andrun Bhole Colony Near Bhagel Dharmashala Mathura Uttar Pradesh 281006
(LC No. BL5A0001F353 of Meerut Branch) Itkar Ahmad (Borrower) Sajida (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1200559.29 / (₹ Twelve lakh Five Hundred Fifty Nine Only and Twenty Nine Paise) NPA (03-02-2025)	Mohalla Sheetal Khan Near Sheetal Khan Road Tehsil And District Firozabad Uttar Pradesh 283203
(LC No. HL5A0004A839 of Aligarh Branch) Sahibey Alam (Borrower) Ashraf Mohammad (Co Borrower 1) Farjana Begam (Co Borrower 2)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 2057539 / (₹ Twenty lakh Fifty Seven Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Nine Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Khet Khasra No 341 Mauja Gunnour Hirapur, Asadpur, Near Budh Market Sambhal Uttar Pradesh 202421
(LC No. HL5A0007515A of Kanpur Branch) Deepmala (Borrower) Jai Kishan Gupta (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 2104994 / (₹ Twenty one lakh Four Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Four Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Plot 12, Sanigawa, Araji No 789, Near Shiva Studio Kanpur Nagar Uttar Pradesh 208021
(LC No. HL5A0005BE7F of Prayagraj Branch) Prahalad Chauhan (Borrower) Km Kiran Chauhan (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 847034 / (₹ Eight lakh Forty Seven Thousand Thirty Four Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Plot No 37, Part On Arazi No 598/1 Near Jagat Hospital Allahabad Uttar Pradesh 212107
(LC No. BL5A0001A544 of Delhi 46 Peeragarhi Branch) Shyam Singh (Borrower) Kiran (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1106119 / (₹ Eleven lakh Six Thousand One Hundred Nineteen Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Property No E 345 Ground Floor, Ews (Without Roof Rights) Block E Sector 11, Pratap Vihar Paragana Loni, Near Captain Gas Vehicle Ghatia Nagar Uttar Pradesh 201009
(LC No. BL5A0001ACAD of Aligarh Branch) Mohamad Ilyan (Borrower) Parveen Begam (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 2295836 / (₹ Twenty two lakh Ninety Five Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty Six Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Plot No 147, Itali Moh (Patti Gunnour Chitta) Paragana Asadpur Near Police Station Gunnour Uttar Pradesh 202522
(LC No. BL5A0001E005 of Jaunpur Branch) Poonam Kumari (Borrower) Sunil Kumar Sonkar (Co Borrower 1) Himesh Pratap Sonkar (Co Borrower 2)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 2055907 / (₹ Twenty lakh Fifty Five Thousand Nine Hundred Seven Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Araji No 117 Sa And 117 Mauja Kutupur Pargana Haveli Tehsil And Distt Jaunpur Uttar Pradesh 222001
(LC No. HL5A0001F353 of Meerut Branch) Itkar Ahmad (Borrower) Sajida (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 817514 / (₹ Eight lakh Seventeen Thousand Five Hundred Fourteen Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Khasra No 1225, Situated at Gram Jharkheddi, Pargana & Tehsil Kairana, Distt. Shamli, Muzaffarnagar Uttar Pradesh 247774
(LC No. HL5A00069435TU of Lucknow - MMM Marg Branch) Shiv Ram (Borrower) Geeta Nishad (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1851813 / (₹ Eighteen lakh Fifty One Thousand Eight Hundred Thirteen Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Gata 74, Fatehpur Sangar, Jaisinghpur Sultanpur Near Sc Rashtriya Inter College Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh 228119
(LC No. HL5A00069435 of Lucknow - MMM Marg Branch) Shiv Ram (Borrower) Geeta Nishad (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1129123 / (₹ Eleven lakh Twenty Nine Thousand One Hundred Twenty Three Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Gata 74, Fatehpur Sangar, Jaisinghpur Sultanpur Near Sc Rashtriya Inter College Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh 228119
(LC No. BL5A00021351 of Gonda Branch) Mansuba Devi (Borrower) Ram Chandra Yadav (Co Borrower 1) Rahul Yadav (Co Borrower 2)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 847034 / (₹ Eight lakh Forty Seven Thousand Thirty Four Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Gata No-135, Pargana- Tandna, Gram-Arkhapur (Under Nagar Khetra), Ambekard Nagar Uttar Pradesh 224190
(LC No. HL5A00075416 of Sahjanpur Branch) Mohd Ahmad Beg (Borrower) Faraha Mirza (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1350196 / (₹ Thirteen lakh Fifty Thousand One Hundred Ninety Six Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Part Of Gata No 1570 Shahbaz Bangar Nagar Shahjahanpur Uttar Pradesh 242001
(LC No. HL5A00023180 of Saharanpur Branch) Anil Kumar (Borrower) Mamta Devi (Co Borrower 1) Aniket Kumar (Co Borrower 2)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 835741.73 / (₹ Eight lakh Thirty Five Thousand Seven Hundred Fourty One Only and Seventy Three Paise) NPA (03-02-2025)	H No 00 Teliphon Exchange Road Kankar Kooi Khasra No 74 Mandir Sherpur Gujgaie Saharanpur Uttar Pradesh 247001
(LC No. HL5A000291A5 of Sitapur Branch) Narendra Kumar (Borrower) Sanju Devi (Co Borrower 1)	24-02-2025 / ₹ 1981706 / (₹ Nineteen lakh Eighty One Thousand Seven Hundred Six Only) NPA (03-02-2025)	Khudadad Bhagari Part Of Gata No 703 Me Bakhspura Pargana Pandri Tara Bahraich Uttar Pradesh 271882

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers, as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made thereunder, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Date : 21-03-2025 Place: Uttar Pradesh Sd/- (Authorised Officer) Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited

All parties must appoint booth-level agents: DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

As per the instructions of the Election Commission of India, a meeting with the representatives of all recognised (national and state) political parties was held in the Collectorate auditorium here on Thursday under the chairmanship of District Magistrate/ District Election Officer (DM/DEO) S Rajalingam in which it was told that the Election Commission has invited suggestions from all national and state political parties till April 30.

The DM told the official representatives of political parties that for transparent elections, it is necessary to rectify the voter list and make efforts from now on to correct it. "All political parties must appoint booth-level agents (BLAs) and promote online application forms", he said, adding that the Commission has made a special request to all political parties regarding their appointment. While appointing BLAs related to their respective parties, a copy of the same should be made available to the District Election Office.

As per the instructions of the Commission, Form-6 is prescribed for inclusion of new name, Form-6A for migrant voters, Form-7 for deletion of any entry and Form-8 for change of residence by voters/amendment in electoral roll/replacement of voter photo identity card and marking of handicapped voters.

The Commission has also directed that Form-6 should be used for voters who are completing 18 years of age and in addition, Form-8 should be used for adding the names of other eligible voters and especially voters above 24 years of age. It is estimated that there is a strong possibility of the names of eligible persons above 24 years of age being in the electoral roll of some assembly constituency of the country or state, which should be widely publicised. It was told that at present in the dynamic continuous revision 2025, the persons who have completed 18 years of age on January 1, 2025, and their name is not yet included in the voter list, they can submit their application on Form-6 and get their name registered in it. While submitting the claim, special attention should be paid to the fact that all the entries of the form should be filled and the signature/thumb impression of the claimant should be put on it. It will be necessary to attach evidence regarding age and residence and an updated passport size color photo with Form-6. Applications can be made on Form-6A for inclusion of names of migrant voters in the voter list. To correct any entry in the voter list, the voter can make correction by attaching a colour passport size photograph on Form-8 and attaching evidence related to the entry to be corrected. Application can be made on Form-7 to delete the name of any

voter from the voter list/photograph. Any voter can get his correction done by filling Form-8 for change of residence/correction in electoral roll/replacement of voter photo identity card and marking of disabled voters. Every year, door-to-door verification of voters is done before the revision of electoral roll. Every year, a special summary revision programme of electoral roll is held between October and November. The final publication of the electoral roll is done in the first week of January. The Commission has fixed four eligibility dates in a year. During door-to-door survey, if any voter is becoming eligible on April 1, July 1 and October 1 other than the eligibility date of January 1, then Form-6 will be obtained from all those eligible voters and action is taken to include their names in the voter list on that eligibility date. The PDF data of the final published electoral rolls is available in the public domain on the website of the Chief Electoral Officer (https://ceouttarpradesh.nic.in) and can be viewed by anyone. Voters can confirm their respective details by clicking on the search your name elector roll button on the website www.ceouttarpradesh.nic.in. Voters can also check their name in the voter list on https://electoralsearch.in and https://voters.eci.gov.in. Voters can also avail the above services by downloading the Voter Helpline App on their mobile.

BHU deputy librarian gets award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Dr Rajesh Kumar Singh, Deputy Librarian at the Central Library, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), has been honoured with the prestigious 'ILA-Gidwani-Deshpande Best Academic Librarian Award 2024'. This distinguished award was conferred upon him by the Indian Library Association (ILA) during the 70th Annual Conference held at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, Karnataka, on Thursday.

This award recognises exceptional contributions, outstanding services and research work in the field of Library and Information Science. Dr Singh has played an important role in modernising library services, strengthening digital resources, and enhancing information management systems. With his contribution, BHU's Central Library has embraced technological innovations, significantly improving academic resources for students, researchers and faculty members. His research and contributions have had a far-reaching impact, not just at BHU but across the entire Library and Information Science community. This recognition is a testament to his excellence in education, research, and library administration. BHU administration, faculty members, colleagues and the Library and Information Science fraternity have extended their congratulations to Dr Singh.

'Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Shield' awarded to BLW



BLW officer receiving Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Shield from Chairman/CEO of Railway Board Satish Kumar in New Delhi on Thursday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) has achieved another feat by proving its commitment to the excellent use and promotion of Rajbhasha Hindi. The BLW was awarded the 'Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Shield' by the Ministry of Railways for the highest and excellent work of Hindi.

During the meeting of the Rajbhasha Implementation Committee of the Railway Board in the conference room of Rail Bhavan, New Delhi, on Thursday,

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Railway Board Satish Kumar presented this prestigious award to Senior Rajbhasha Officer of BLW Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh. On this achievement, BLW General Manager (GM) Naresh Pal Singh congratulated all the officers and employees and called for maximum use of Hindi. He said this award is a symbol of BLW's excellent tradition and dedication to work in Hindi. "BLW will continue to work for the promotion of Hindi and will move forward in the direction of strengthening Hindi in future also", the GM added.

CMRS inspects metro section

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety (CMRS) Janak Kumar Garg, along with his seven-member team, inspected the metro section from Motijheel to Kanpur Central on Thursday. The inspection will continue on Friday also. CMRS Janak Kumar Garg who had granted the No Objection Certificate (NOC) after inspecting Kanpur Metro's Priority Corridor (IIT to Motijheel) in December 2021. Garg serves as the CMRS as well as the Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety. Currently, Kanpur Metro operates on the Priority Corridor from IIT to Motijheel. However, soon, city residents will be able to travel by metro beyond Motijheel to Kanpur Central station. Key commercial hubs of the city such as Chunniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, and Nayaganj, along with Kanpur Central Railway Station, will also be connected to the metro network. All five stations between Motijheel and Kanpur Central (Chunniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, Nayaganj, and Kanpur Central) are underground. With this extension, the metro, which has been running on an elevated viaduct so far, will also operate on an underground route. UPMRC Managing Director Sushil Kumar said, "Kanpur



Metro has achieved remarkable milestones while overcoming various challenges during its construction. The pace of construction by the Kanpur Metro team has been commendable. Our underground metro route passes beneath the busiest areas of the city, which will make travel within the city much smoother and more convenient."

Seminar on 'ONOE' from today

A national seminar on 'One Nation One Election' (ONOE) sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research will be organised here on March 21 and 22. The seminar, organised by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee School of Legal Studies, Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur, aims to provide a platform for informed discussion and analysis of the potential benefits, challenges and implications of implementing 'ONOE' in India.

Seminar on higher education ends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Director of Inter University Centre of Teacher Education (IUCTE) Prof Prem Narayan Singh said that by adopting the evaluation strategies emerged from the seminar, effective evaluation of students will be possible. He was addressing the closing session of a two-day national seminar on the topic "Transforming Assessment Approaches in Higher Education for India @ 2047" on Wednesday which concluded in hybrid mode at the IUCTE campus under the joint aegis of IUCTE and Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi.

The closing ceremony was inaugurated with Mangalacharan and floral tribute and lighting of lamps on the statue of Maa Saraswati and Mahamana Pt Madan Mohan Malviya. The seminar focused on in-depth discussions in transformative areas of educational assessment and strategies for their implementation. It provided an opportunity to deliberate on the need to re-evaluate assessment strategies in view of the dynamism in the educational

nario of the 21st century and with the innovative and comprehensive goals set in Vision 2047. On the second day Prof PK Joshi from TIFR, Mumbai, in his lecture, focused on the process of assessment of students and its implications and said that balanced and effective assessment tools can be designed using the concepts of discrimination index and difficulty index, which are among other essential techniques for designing questions for Olympiads and other competitive examinations. Prof Sanjay Kumar Sharma of IIT-BHU discussed the challenges of assessment for better academic performance and underlined its broader context. He said assessment is not limited to academic achievement, but it is also very important for life skills, decision-making ability and systemic improvement. In other technical sessions, participants presented their articles and research papers on modern assessment strategies and implementation methods. Researchers and teachers from 10 states including Assam, Delhi, Bihar, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab participated in this two-day seminar.

CORE CEE honoured



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

Chief Electrical Engineer (CEE) of Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE) Sanjay Singh Negi has been awarded the 'Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Rajat Padak' and citation for his exemplary and outstanding contribution in the wide promotion of the official language. In the meeting of Railway Board Official Language Implementation Committee held on Thursday at Railway Board, New Delhi, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Railway Board, Satish Kumar, honoured Negi with the medal and citation.

All the officers and employees of CORE have extended congratulations to him on

this achievement. Goods gutted in fire

Goods worth lakhs were gutted when a massive fire broke out in a four-storey building under Colonelganj police station on Thursday causing panic in the area. Hostels are run in the building along with Maharishi Bhardwaj Veda Vidyalaya.

A short circuit caused a fire in the hall where the children live on the third floor of the building. The belongings of 15 children were kept in the hall. A total of 30 children and teachers live in the entire hostel. Principal Deepak Awasthi said at the time of the incident all the children were eating downstairs. The fire was noticed on seeing the smoke rising and the children were evacuated. This bungalow belongs to Ashok Singhal, former international president of Vishwa Hindu Parishad. After his demise, a Sanskrit school was opened here. It is run by Ashok Singhal's institute Arundhati Vashishtha Research Centre.

Station House Officer (SHO) Colonelganj, Pradeep Kumar, said no one was hurt in this fire. However, goods worth lakhs were gutted. Prima facie it seems that the fire broke out due to a short circuit, he added.

SSU V-C emphasises on horoscope matching

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Vice-Chancellor (V-C) of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) Prof Bihari Lal Sharma emphasised the necessity of horoscope matching for successful marriages. He was speaking as the chief guest in the inaugural ceremony of the three-day International Jyotish Conference being held at the Department of Jyotish, Faculty of Sanskrit Vidya Dharma Vigyan (SVDV), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Thursday in the presence of esteemed scholars from India and abroad.

Prof Sharma also stressed the importance of precision in almanac preparation based on classical texts. In his keynote address, Prof Madhav Prasad Pandey emphasised the social significance of astrological studies. The international guest and Russian scholar Irina Pozdieva shared her perspective on Varanasi as a land of knowledge and enlightenment, describing BHU as a premier institution for astrological studies.



Former SVDV Faculty Dean and distinguished guest Prof Chandrama Pandey highlighted the importance of astrological calculations in the preparation of horoscopes and almanacs through various scientific approaches. Special guest Prof Arun Kumar Singh reflected on the psychological aspects of 'jyotish' and its role in resolving societal conflicts, calling this event a moment of pride for the Department of Jyotish, BHU. Prof Ramcharan Pandey provided an in-depth

analysis of horoscopic calculations and supported scholarly revisions in the context of almanac formulation, particularly the concepts of sabji-nirbij (seeded and unseeded planetary positions).

The inaugural session began with a Vedic invocation by Dr Krishna Murari Tripathi, followed by the university's kulgeet, melodiously sung by Vasudha Dixit and Mamata Kumari as per tradition.

Thereafter, the faculty members of the Department of Jyotish welcomed the distinguished scholars on the dais with garlands and ceremonial shawls. Prof Shatrughan Tripathi, Head of the Department of Jyotish, delivered the welcome address, elaborating on the theme and objectives of the conference.

Following this, Prof Shatrughan Tripathi released two books: "Horanvanitam" and "Krishvivigyan", which were unveiled by the esteemed guests present on the stage. The inauguration ceremony concluded with an address by Dean Prof Rajaram Shukla.



People drenched in colours celebrate 'Ganga Mela', a unique annual festival marking the end of Holi festival that commemorates the 1942 freedom movement when youths defied restrictions on Holi celebrations by the British and hoisted the tricolour in Kanpur on Thursday. PTI

Trial of cold fogging conducted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

To prevent communicable diseases, a trial of cold fogging was conducted on Thursday in the Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC) office in the presence of Municipal Commissioner Akshat Verma under the joint aegis of VMC and Health department. Speaking on the occasion, Verma said that in this technique, water is used instead of diesel in the machine. "This is the specialty of this technique and in the coming time, this new technique will be used at the first level in some sensitive wards to curb mosquito-borne diseases", he said. CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said in this technique cold fogging pesticide is used with water instead of thermal fogging diesel with pesticide to create smoke. He said in cold fogging, mist is formed instead of smoke and this innovation will help in controlling and preventing mosquito-borne diseases. District Malaria Officer (DMO) Sharat Chand Pandey said that for its use Deltamethrin 2% EW (immersion water) is Gupta by mixing it in water.

Hindi workshop organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

A special Hindi workshop was organised at the National Sugar Institute (NSI) on Wednesday. Shaileendra Nath was the guest speaker on the occasion. The workshop commenced with the lighting of the lamp and floral tributes to Goddess Sharda by Prof Seema Paroha, Director, and the guest speaker. More than 50 officials participated in the workshop.

In his address, Nath said that the efforts initiated by the Government of India from time to time for the development of Hindi have shown positive results. Hindi is now being regarded with respect even abroad, which is evident from multinational companies promoting Hindi in their advertising media.

Expressing satisfaction over the progress of Hindi, Prof Seema Paroha



said that the day is not far when Hindi will be recognised as a language of communication even in foreign countries. She emphasised that the contribution of millions of Indians living abroad in promoting their language and culture deserves appreciation. She encouraged everyone to work in Hindi and strive to promote it. The event was conducted by Assistant Director (Official Language), Mallika Dwivedi, who expressed gratitude to the esteemed guest speaker and the participating officials.

SDCM reviews works under ABSS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

In view of the post-Holi rush of passengers, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (SDCM) Sheikh Rehman inspected Siwan, Thawe and Suremanpur railway stations of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) on Wednesday to review the facilities and crowd control, management of goods traffic and development works under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) going on at these stations. Chief commercial inspectors Vishal Kumar, Deepak Pathak, Vishal Kumar Singh (Sisan) and Rajaram (Ballia), station staff and senior supervisors were present with him. Rehman inspected the passenger facility development works going on at these stations, platforms, entry and exit gates, passenger waiting rooms, crew management system,



guard/loco pilot running rooms, station circulating areas for crowd management and gave guidelines to the concerned personnel for proper management. The SDCM also saw the construction work going on under the ABSS at these stations and directed to complete all the work with full quality within the time limit. At the end the SDCM reached Suremanpur railway station and inspected the works done at the station under ABSS such as air-conditioned lounge, VIP lounge, waiting

room, lifts installed on platform numbers 1 and 2, UTS and PRS counters installed in the new reservation centre building and directed to complete the various development works going on at the station within the time limit with full quality. Earlier, the SDCM, during his inspection, saw the works going on at Siwan station under the ABSS and directed the implementing agency to start the stalled works immediately. He thoroughly inspected the Sahayog counter, enquiry counter, unreserved and reserved ticket counters, reservation centre, passenger waiting room, circulating area, lift, foot over bridge (FOB), platform and goods siding built for the convenience of passengers at the station. He also explored the possibilities of full rake placement in the third running line in goods siding and gave instructions to the concerned.

Award distribution ceremony held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

An award distribution ceremony was organised at Spandan Railway Officers' Club, Subedarganj, on Thursday for those non-gazetted women railway employees working in various posts at the headquarters of North Central Railway (NCR) and making outstanding contributions in various fields. It was organised on behalf of North Central Railway Women Welfare Organisation (NCRWFO), Headquarters, Prayagraj, to mark the International Women's Day.

A total of 23 non-gazetted women employees were selected for excellent work. All these 23 railway women employees were honoured with certificates and gifts by the President of the organisation, Chetna Joshi on the occa-



sion. A game competition was also organised for the awarded women employees, in which they participated with enthusiasm. Organisation's secretary Richa Verma along with office-bearers Supriya Sinha, Madhuri Singh, Neelam Kumar, Rakhi Jain, Charu Gupta, Sangeeta Dwivedi, Barnali Mandal, Renu Ponia, Alka Garg, Sadhana Kumar, Sunita Bharti, Dr Manju Lata Handu, Vasudha Gupta as well as other members were also present.

Parliament adjourned many times amid DMK's protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Both houses of Parliament was adjourned many times on Thursday due to the protests led by DMK, wearing T-shirts with slogans on the issue of delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla objected to the DMK members wearing T-shirts with slogans written on them, and said such actions were against the rules of procedure of the House. Both the Houses failed to transact any business and were adjourned for the day.

Birla adjourned the proceedings till noon. Similar scenes were witnessed when the House reconvened at 12 noon and TDP member Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm. DMK members were wearing white T-shirts with slogans 'fair delimitation Tamil Nadu will fight, Tamil Nadu will win' written on them. "House functions with rules and procedures. Members have to maintain the dignity and honour of the House."

But some MPs are not following the rules and violating the dignity which is not acceptable," Birla said when the House met at 11 am. The Speaker directed those members, who came wearing T-shirts with slogans written on them, to go out of the House and come back with proper dress maintaining dignity.

"However big a leader is, such undignified attire is not acceptable inside the House. Go outside, change your clothes and come back with a proper dress," he told the members citing parliamentary rules and adjourned the House till 12 noon. DMK members have been trying to raise the issue of delimitation in the Lok Sabha, but Speaker had rejected their pleas contending that the issue is nowhere on the Government radar as the census of population was yet to be conducted. Birla said



DMK MPs wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the slogan fair delimitation, Tamil Nadu will fight Tamil Nadu will win protest during the Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi

attending the House proceedings wearing T-shirts with slogans written on them is not acceptable and against parliamentary rules and decorum.

"House functions with rules and procedures. Members have to maintain the dignity and honour of the House. But some MPs are not following the rules and violating the dignity, which is not acceptable," Birla said, citing Rule 349 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the House of the People.

The Speaker directed those members, who came wearing T-shirts with slogans written on them, to go out of the House and come back wearing proper dresses. Rule 349 deals with "Rules to be observed by members in House". Rule 349(xvi) says: "Whilst the House is sitting, a member shall not display flags, emblems or any exhibits in the House."

Another sub-clause bars the members from wearing or displaying badges of any kind in the House, except the national flag

in the form of a lapel pin or a badge. Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day as soon as it reconvened at 2 pm. The proceedings of the Upper House witnessed three adjournments during the pre-lunch period over the issue. "The House stands adjourned to meet at 11 am on Friday, 21st March," Deputy Chairman Harivansh informed members.

Earlier in the day, soon after laying of papers, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar adjourned the proceedings for an hour till 12 noon and called a meeting of floor leaders of various parties. From the beginning, Dhankhar objected DMK wearing T-Shirts with slogans against delimitation.

However, the deadlock over the issue continued and when the House reassembled at 12 noon, deputy Chairman Harivansh announced that the proceedings had been adjourned again for another 15 minutes. At 12.15, he again came and announced that the House stands adjourned till 2 pm, amid the deadlock.

ED conducts fresh searches in case against SDPI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted fresh searches in multiple states on Thursday as part of its ongoing money-laundering probe against the SDPI, the political outfit of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI), official sources said.

A number of premises in Mettupalaiyam, Coimbatore, Arcot and Vellore in Tamil Nadu, Bhilwara and Kota in Rajasthan, Kolkata and Kottayam and Palakkad in Kerala were raided under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The federal probe agency carried out the first round of searches in the case in the first week of March and arrested Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) national president M K Faizy.

The ED had claimed before a court while seeking Faizy's remand that there existed an "organic" relation between the two outfits and that the PFI was carrying out its criminal activities through the political party (SDPI). The PFI was banned by the Centre in September 2022, calling it an unlawful association and for allegedly indulging in terrorist activities. Multi-agency searches by the ED, National Investigation Agency (NIA) and various state police forces preceded the PFI ban. The SDPI was founded in 2009. It is also registered as a political party with the EC. Seeking Faizy's remand earlier this week, the ED told the court that the PFI and the SDPI were "organically" linked and the latter was nothing but the "political front" of the former and was "funded and controlled" by it. The agency claimed that it had evidence to state that there was a "deep-rooted" nexus between the two organisations as there was "overlapping" membership of their cadres, involvement of PFI office-bearers in the founding of the SDPI and utilisation of each other's assets.

EC to fix duplicate voter ID numbers issue in three months

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Facing controversy over allegations of duplicate voter ID cards by Opposition parties, the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday here clarified any inclusion or deletion to the draft elector list is governed by the process of appeals under relevant legal provisions for filing claims and objections, available to all political parties in the Representation of People act, 1950. Amid a debate on the purity of electoral rolls, the EC said the regular updating process of the voter list will be strengthened in close coordination with the birth and death registration authorities.

Technical consultations between the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and experts of the EC will begin soon on voter list-Aadhaar linkage, it said, adding that though an elector can only vote in the assigned polling booth and nowhere else, the poll body has resolved to remove duplicates country-wide and end a decades-long issue with-

The EC recalled that merely 89 first appeals and just a single second appeal were filed after the completion of the Special Summary Revision exercise in January

in three months. "Regular updation of the voter list shall be strengthened in close coordination with the birth and death registration authorities," the EC said in a statement.

In the EC's interactions with political parties, it was clarified that any inclusion or deletion in the draft elector list is governed by the process of appeals under relevant legal provisions for filing claims and objections available to all political parties in the Representation of People act, 1950.

In the absence of such appeals, the list as prepared by the electoral registration

officer (ERO) prevails.

The EC recalled that merely 89 first appeals and just a single second appeal were filed after the completion of the Special Summary Revision exercise in January. The poll authority also said it has charted out "bold steps" towards strengthening election processes. It said nearly 5,000 poll officials, including state chief electoral officers, district electoral officers and electoral registration officers, will hold regular meetings with political parties for resolution of issues at the grassroots levels by March 31.

The poll panel said digital training has also been planned for continuous capacity augmentation of nearly one crore election officials. Within a month of Gyanesh Kumar assuming the charge as the chief election commissioner, the EC has put the entire election machinery, right up to the booth level and officer level, on a "path firmly on course for promoting participation of all electors and ensuring a pleasant experience for them at the polling stations", it said.

Political parties being key stakeholders are also being involved at the grassroots level. Steps will be taken to ensure that no polling station has more than 1,200 voters and that the stations are within a two-km distance from the electors' residences.

Basic facilities will be ensured even at the remotest rural polling stations, the EC said, adding that to tackle urban apathy and encourage more participation, clusters of high-rise buildings and colonies will have polling stations within their premises.

The offer of the commission to train political parties' representatives and their appointed booth-level agents on the due processes in accordance with electoral laws, including claims and objections to the voter list, has been welcomed by political parties, it said.

"These bold and far-reaching initiatives span the entire gamut of elections and encompass all the key stakeholders in a participatory manner," the EC said.

Government not participate in any exercise related to CPI: Centre in RS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The government of India did not participate in any exercise related to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), and took various measures to combat graft in pursuance of its commitment to "zero tolerance against corruption", the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday.

The assertion came in response to a question whether the "government is aware that India's score on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2024 declined to 38 points, ranking 96th out of 180 countries, as per the Transparency International report", and reasons behind it, among others.

In a written reply, Union Minister for Personnel Jitendra Singh said, "No such surveys were conducted by any agency at the behest of the government of India."

Further, the government of India did not participate in any such exercise related to the Corruption Perception Index, Jitendra Singh said.

However, the government of India, in pursuance of its commitment to "zero tolerance against corruption", has taken several measures to combat corruption, which include systemic improvements and reforms to provide transparent citizen-friendly services and reduce corruption, the minister said.

He cited the disbursement of welfare benefits directly to the citizens under various schemes of the government in a transparent manner through the direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode, implementation of e-tendering in public procurements, introduction of e-governance and simplification of procedures and systems besides the introduction of procurement through the government electronic-marketplace (GeM), as measures to check corruption.

India-Germany partnership stronger than ever: Ackermann

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Centre has placed limits to restrict the number of grievances that can be filed by a person on CPGRAMS an online system in a month to check repetitive/habitual complaints, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday.

The Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) allows citizens to raise grievances online.

"The government has placed limits for restricting the number of grievances filed by a person on CPGRAMS in a month to control repetitive/habitual com-

plaints," Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said in a written reply. However, the reply did not mention the number of grievances that can be filed by an individual on CPGRAMS in a month.

Effective redressal of public grievances in a timely, meaningful and accessible manner through the CPGRAMS has been accorded highest priority in the government, Singh said.

"From 2019-2024, about 1.15 Crore grievances were redressed through this platform," Singh said.

The effectiveness of the grievance redressal process is monitored through feedback calls made to the citizens after

their grievances are redressed, Singh said, adding that the feedback call centre has collected over 20 lakh feedback surveys since its inception in 2022.

The government monitors the effectiveness of the grievance redressal mechanism through the Grievance Redressal Assessment Index (GRAI), where the performance of each ministry/department is evaluated on identified parameters and ranked on monthly basis, Singh said.

The qualitative disposal of grievances is emphasised through reviews at the secretary to government of India level, which was introduced in January 2025, he added.

"The CPGRAMS portal has leveraged

AI/ML technology for disaggregated data analytics, development of analytical dashboards of CPGRAMS, and identifying spam/repetitive/habitual grievances, all of which are available only to the authorised logins in ministries/departments," Singh said.

The intelligent grievance monitoring dashboard and the tree dashboard help monitor grievances relating to priority sector programmes, grievance redressal officer wise/department/ministry wise pendency.

And to facilitate a policy decision to address the root causes of people/policy/process related grievances, the minister said.

US, India to sign 10-year defence framework

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Ways to further advance the India-US military ties, including a likely renewal of a 10-year defence framework, figured prominently in talks Admiral Samuel J Paparo, the commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, held with India's top civil and military brass this week.

Paparo met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan, according to an American readout.

The US Indo-Pacific Command is the unified combatant command of the US military responsible for the Indo-Pacific region.

The top American commander visited India from March 16 to 19 to advance the US-India comprehensive global strategic partnership and attend the Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship conference on geopolitics.

Paparo's trip advanced the US-India initiative, COMPACT (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology) for the 21st Century, the readout said.

In February, US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra

Modi launched the COMPACT that seeks to drive transformative change across multiple pillars of cooperation, including defence, trade and investment, energy, technology and innovation, and people-to-people ties.

It is learnt that top defence and security officials of the Quad nations India, the US, Australia and Japan held extensive talks on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue.

"The work throughout the Raisina Dialogue enhances the mutual understanding and alignment of goals as the US and India seek to renew a 10-year framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership that will propel cooperation through the next decade," the US readout said.

"The US-India Major Defence Partnership has become a cornerstone of global peace," it added.

In 2016, the United States designated India as a "Major Defence Partner". Commensurate with this designation, India was accorded the "Strategic Trade Authorisation tier 1" that allowed the country to receive licence-free access to a wide range of military and dual-use technologies regulated by the US Department of Commerce.

The major defence partnership is up for renewal next year.

In New Delhi, Paparo also met with Chief of Staff of the Japan Joint Staff General Yoshihide Yoshida, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines General Romeo Brawner, Australian Chief of Joint Operations Vice Admiral Justin Jones, French Deputy Director General for International Relations and Strategy Lieutenant General Eric Peltier and the United Kingdom's National Security Advisor Jonathan Powell.

At the Raisina Dialogue, Paparo spoke during a panel discussion on "Deepwater Perils: Securing Trade Through Red Zones", alongside top military officials from India, Australia, Japan and the Philippines.

They highlighted maritime threats, risks for global security and trade, the importance of working with allies and partners to ensure freedom of navigation, and integration of artificial intelligence and unmanned systems into military preparedness.

Admiral Samuel J Paparo also participated in a United States India Strategic Partnership Forum event where discussions focused on the future of the strategic and security partnership between the two nations, including integration of artificial intelligence and defence cooperation.

National interest key in India's international oil purchases: Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India's decision on international oil purchases is based on diverse factors, with the country's national interests at the top, the Centre informed Parliament on Thursday. The MEA was asked in Rajya Sabha whether "it is a fact that the USA had asked India to stop unloading Russian oil tankers and has set a deadline for it."

Vardhan Singh in his response said that the ministry was informed by the US about its January 14 sanctions imposed on more than 400 Russian energy sector-related entities.

He said the sanction, pronounced by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, extended to oil majors and their subsidiaries, LNG terminals, insurance companies, oil traders/brokers, oil vessels and providers of oilfield services.

A 60-day "winding down period" was also announced after which the US was supposed to designate all those that continue to deal with sanctioned parties in Russia's energy sector, he said.

Gurugram DM orders residents to vacate another 'unsafe' tower of Chintels Paradiso

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

The Gurugram administration on Thursday directed the residents of Towers A, B and C of the Chintels Paradiso Sector-109 condominium to vacate the tower within 15 days or else the Disaster Management Act would be in force.

District Magistrate and Chairman of District Disaster Management Authority Ajay Kumar has passed orders to implement section 163 of the Indian Civil Defense Code regarding the citizens living in these towers of Chintels Paradiso Group Housing Society to vacate their flats with immediate effect.

10 out of 52 flats in Tower J are occupied, according to the RWA. Gurugram deputy commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav invoked provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005

Section 163 of the Indian Civil Defence Code along with Section 34 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to prevent danger to human life, health and safety, in view of the imminent danger to life and property of the residents living in Tower A, B and C.

The Act would empower authorities to forcibly vacate the buildings.

These towers resident after vacating their flats must handed over to the Chintels builder, the orders said.

In a report, Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) declared Towers A, B, and C are unsafe to live in. Towers D, E, F, G, J and H of the housing society have already been vacated.

DTP (E) Gurugram has been appointed as the nodal officer and duty magistrate to monitor the orders.

It has also been said in the orders that the help of the police force can also be taken to comply with the orders.

The matter of payment of compensation to the residents/flat owners by the developer is being dealt with separately by the SIT constituted in this matter.

The builder has been directed to settle all the claims of all the allottees of the society in a time-bound manner.

"If anyone is found guilty of violating the orders issued, then action will be taken under Section 223 of the Indian Penal Code 2023 and Sections 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and other legal provisions applicable," read the orders. On February 10, 2022 six floors of Tower D collapsed partially, killing two residents. There are nine towers in Chintels; All nine towers of the condominium have been declared unsafe so far. The district administration on the recommendations of IIT Delhi and CBRI declared these towers unsafe.

Lisa Ray Claims Airline Refused Medical Waiver

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Where's the empathy," asked actor-model Lisa Ray after Air India "denied" her a waiver when she had to change her travel plans due to her 92-year-old father's ill health.

In its response, Air India said Ray's claim that the airline didn't display empathy for her unwell father is "unfounded". Ray, known for starring in movies such as "Kasoor", "Water" and "Bollywood/Hollywood", tagged the air carrier in a post on X on Wednesday. Her travel destination was not known. "Here we go again @airindia My father is 92, unwell and I have to cancel travel due to his ailing condition. Submitted doctors letter and the waiver was denied? How is that possible?"

Where is the empathy from an airline that is claiming to care about passengers???" she wrote. On Thursday, an AI spokesperson issued statement: "The claim that Air India did not display empathy for her unwell father is unfounded, as the passenger herself mentioned that she is booked to fly Air India along with two other co-passengers that does not include her father, whose medical documents she has submitted."

According to the airline, Ray had purchased the ticket from "a travel agent and had first reached out to the travel agent, and not to Air India". "After the passenger raised the matter to Air India, the Air India team reached out to her and, as an exception, offered solutions that included a free date change or a one-year period to utilise the tickets for future travel.



President Droupadi Murmu visits the Udayam Utsav at the President's Estate in New Delhi

PIONEER PHOTO

Editor's TAKE

Welcome back to Earth, Sunita

The safe return of Sunita Williams to Earth has brought immense relief to her admirers

The prayers of millions of admirers and fans were finally answered when NASA astronaut Sunita Williams, along with her colleague Butch Wilmore, returned to Earth after an unplanned nine-month mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS). Originally slated for a brief eight-day stay, their mission was extended due to technical issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, underscoring both challenges within NASA's commercial partnerships and the resilience of its astronauts. Launched on June 5, 2024, aboard Boeing's Starliner for its inaugural crewed flight, Williams and Wilmore were expected to return after approximately a week. But that was not to be, as a technical glitch left Sunita stranded on the space station for nine long months, testing her resilience and the acumen of NASA scientists.

However, during the mission, Starliner encountered propulsion problems and helium leaks, rendering it unsafe for the astronauts' return. Consequently, NASA opted to keep the crew aboard the ISS while addressing these issues. Boeing's Starliner has faced multiple setbacks since its development, including delays and technical malfunctions. The propulsion system anomalies and helium leaks experienced during this mission highlighted significant concerns about the spacecraft's reliability. These issues not only delayed the astronauts' return but also raised questions about NASA's strategy of partnering with private contractors for crewed spaceflight missions.

The astronauts finally returned aboard SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule, which landed off the coast of Florida. Throughout the extended mission, Sunita Williams demonstrated exceptional adaptability and commitment. She continued to contribute to various scientific experiments and participated in spacewalks, maintaining her professionalism despite the prolonged stay which can be tough psychologically as well as physically. Her ability to navigate the uncertainties of space travel exemplifies the resilience and mental fortitude required of astronauts. Back home in India, there was great relief, as images of the Space Shuttle Columbia explosion—in which Kalpana Chawla lost her life—flashed on people's minds.

Sunita Williams, the Indian-American astronaut, has become an emblem of perseverance, determination, and excellence for millions of young girls across India and beyond. With her extraordinary achievements in space exploration, she has shattered stereotypes, proving that no dream is too ambitious if one has the will to pursue it. Born in 1965 in Ohio, US, to an Indian father and a Slovenian mother, Sunita Williams' journey to space is a testament to hard work and resilience.

A graduate of the US Naval Academy, she served as a naval officer and test pilot before being selected as a NASA astronaut in 1998. Her achievements include holding records for the longest spacewalk time by a female astronaut and commanding the International Space Station (ISS), making her one of the most influential figures in space exploration. Sunita Williams' success story is a beacon of hope for countless Indian girls who aspire to excel in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Her journey sends a powerful message—that with courage and dedication, any barrier can be overcome. Coming from an Indian heritage, she represents the vast potential that lies within young minds across the country, encouraging them to dream beyond societal expectations.

Though the story has a happy ending, it also serves as a wake-up call for NASA to recalibrate its processes, ensuring that such glitches do not happen again—potentially costing human lives and shattering the dreams of millions.

Respect women's right to choose

As the world experiences an increasing number of climate-related calamities, it is high time to move towards the goal of a 'human rights-based economy' to mitigate vagaries of weather

Some recent photographs of Elon Musk, now, heading President Trump's newly created DOGE, in several of the US government Official meetings, including the one with the Indian Prime Minister, showed him with his children and family. A section of the media considered this overtone, apart from showing his familial love, also 'as the promotion for his pro-natalist position', a view shared by many conservative voters who elected Trump to power. Musk also made it clear that 'demographic decline, is a much bigger risk to civilisation than global warming.'

While on the campaign trail, the Vice-President nominee, JD Vance's comment 'childless cat ladies' referring to the Democratic presidential candidate, Kamala Harris, and Musk's calling her out as an "extinctionist", for citing 'climate anxiety' as a reason for not having kids, amply indicated about the upsurge of an intense wave of pro-natalism in the US, once Trump comes to power. In Trump 2.0, pro-choice activists apprehend that the Mexico City Policy, or the Global Gag Rule, which banned the US global health funding to non-US organisations, providing abortion care, reinstated during his first tenure, is going to be expanded to all US foreign assistance. Many also expect a nationwide abortion ban this time in the aftermath of the overturning of the 1973 Roe vs Wade decision during his earlier tenure. Trump's Project 2025, with its anti-choice agenda, casts a shadow on women's reproductive rights, while, the 'great replacement theory' of white supremacists finds a new life inside the Republican Party.

Many consider Trump's pro-life stand to be more 'about controlling women's bodies, rather than a genuine concern for the earliest stages of human life. As the global average number of births per woman hovers around 2.3, a little above the 'replacement level, and population ageing becoming a significant trend, policymakers and economists across the world expressed concern about 'diminishing labour force, upending consumer culture, increased inflation, and the prospect of overstressed government programs for ageing populations.'

Around three in ten nations are now pursuing pro-nationalistic policies, restricting abortion and clamping down on family planning programs. A 2021 report, titled 'Welcome to Gilead', in a reference to a dystopian novel by Margaret Atwood, which examined the policies that promote childbearing in Iran, China, Turkey, Russia, Hungary, Poland, Germany, and the US, reported that 'there is a rise in toxic mix of



nationalism, xenophobia, and racism to serve nationalistic, economic and patriarchal interests, instrumentalising women's bodies, though, pronatalism, is not, in and of itself, coercive (Researcher, Monica Scigliano).

Many feminists dubbed such pressures for high birth rates from family, religion, politics and economy as the products of millennia of patriarchal disempowerment of women, considering their bodies as vessels for advancing a growth agenda.

On the other hand, climate protagonists debunk the theory of 'perpetual growth', which treats 'babies as cogs in a growth machine', and overlooks their rights to be born into social and ecological conditions that support their well-being (Nandita Bajaj, Antioch University).

Almost half of the world's 2.2 Billion children live in one of the 33 countries classified as 'extremely high-risk' facing a deadly combination of exposure to multiple climate and environmental shocks. However, despite growing evidence, policymakers, journalists, and academics tend to de-link demographic factors from environmental sustainability concerns. As the world is besieged with rhetorics of pro-growth narratives and the racist 'great

replacement theory', author Laura Carroll, an exponent of reproductive rights and ethics, in her book, the 'Baby Matrix' urged people to make 'the most informed decisions about parenthood, as a society can no longer afford to leave pronatalism unquestioned.'

Many climate economists also discard the bogey of 'Ponzi demography', based on the 'more is better' philosophy for sustained economic growth. Several development economists like Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, found the current yardsticks of the GGDP-based economic growth on only material consumption, and not quality-of-life factors, as 'inadequate' in measuring human well-being.

Many espoused for a new economic model which can work on declining populations, and also on the ageing demographics.

Researchers revealed that 'fears about ageing population are often guided by the false idea that older people are homoge-

neously ill, dependent, and unproductive'. The recent economic analyses also disclosed that the costs connected with an ageing society are 'manageable, while the economic, social, and environmental benefits of smaller populations are substantial.'

Moreover, a shrinking labour force is less likely to threaten economic growth as new technologies can take over more tasks. In the book, Decline and Prosper, the demographic expert, Vegard Skirbekk, argued that 'low fertility is on the whole a good thing, and the outcome is good for people, particularly women, and beneficial for the planet.'

In 2021-22, the UN recognised the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a fundamental human right, which has been enshrined into law by 161 countries, barring the UK, US and Russia.

As the world experiences an increasing number of climate-related calamities, it is high time to move towards the goal of a 'human rights-based economy', which proposes to give women the option of 'free choice' about childbirth and work for economic prosperity without compromising ecological concerns.

(The author is former Director General, Doordarshan and All India Radio. Views expressed are personal)



ARCHANA DATTA

Women entrepreneurs plant the seeds of health

SECOND Opinion

The children are getting fidgety. The suspenseful music blaring from the speakers near a small makeshift stage on the playground of their primary school in Samsa Tarahar village, Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh, adds to the excitement as they eagerly await the arrival of Salman, the magician. As parents, the village pradhan, and other residents—men and women, young and old—settle down behind the rows of children, a sudden silence falls. All eyes are riveted on a snazzy dressed man wearing a long, flashy red and gold cape with a matching turban, making a dramatic entrance from behind a curtain. "Do you know there is another magician like me who lives in your village? How many of you know her and want to meet her?" Salman asks. As the audience responds enthusiastically, he waves the wand in his hand, mumbling some magical words. Just as the music reaches a crescendo, a woman, simply dressed in a cotton sari, stands up from the audience and makes her way to the front of the stage. Pointing to her, he announces, "This is Shashi Devi, the didi who makes your illnesses vanish with her magical vegetable plants from her nursery."

Her saplings are chemical-free and full of nutrients. The health of those who have set up poshan vaitikas (nutrition gardens) in their homes with her saplings has vastly improved—



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

just like Shashi Didi's family. For those who haven't yet experienced this magic, all you need to do is get vegetable saplings of your choice from her and reap the health benefits. While the magician's deft weaving of magic tricks with health and nutrition messages has successfully raised awareness and curiosity about Shashi, she is not the only one creating magic. Ever since 24 women from marginalised communities, like Shashi, in 24 villages across four blocks were trained to become vegetable nursery entrepreneurs under the Aga Khan Foundation's Poshan Prerna and Aspirational District Programme, they have been sowing multiple seeds of health and empowerment—both within and beyond their villages—thanks to their nurseries. Initiated to address the health and economic challenges faced by rural families in Bahraich, the programme, implemented with support from IndusInd Bank, has not only created new income opportunities for these women but also improved their health.

In fact, these nursery entrepreneurs are proving to be life-savers for other women as well. When frontline health workers and the AKF team monitoring pregnant women found that Prema Devi, a resident of Balaha village in her third trimester, was anaemic and needed nutritional support, they immediately reached out to the AKF team, as there was no nursery entrepreneur in her village. A direct link was established with the nearest entrepreneur, and high-impact saplings of cauliflower, brinjal, cabbage, chili, tomato, long gourd, bitter melon, spinach, and coriander—rich in essen-

tial nutrients like iron, calcium, and vitamins—were provided to establish a nutrition garden in her backyard. Regular monitoring of her nutritional intake by a proactive panchayat, ASHA workers, ANM, AWW, and the AKF team yielded significant results, including weight gain and an increase in haemoglobin levels. Our data indicates a 17.1 per cent reduction in anaemia prevalence among pregnant women in areas where linkages were established between panchayats actively supervising health and nutrition indicators and vegetable nursery entrepreneurs. Increased consumption of iron-rich foods, combined with IFA supplementation, has also contributed to this positive trend, states Ashok Singh, District Programme Officer, Health. Learning about the nutritional value of saplings and receiving AKF training on organic methods for pest and disease management to ensure chemical-free growth has significantly boosted the entrepreneurs' incomes as well. Each entrepreneur was provided with 130 trays containing 15,000 saplings free of cost. According to Raghvendra Singh, the district coordinator for skill development, each woman earned approximately ₹20,000 over a six-month cycle spanning two seasons, increasing their annual family income by nine per cent—a remarkable achievement for a district ranked as the second most backward in India. Their achievements are not only making them economically independent but also empowering them to take charge of their own health—conjuring magic one sapling at a time.

(The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. Views are expressed are personal)

Leaderspeak



Glorifying invaders means strengthening the very roots of treason. New India will never accept those who insult our great ancestors and praise those who attacked our civilisation, violated our women, and struck at our faith. At a time when the world recognises India's cultural legacy, every citizen has an obligation to maintain respect for our distinguished leaders, rather than praise those who attempted to eliminate our identity.

YOGI ADITYANATH, CHIEF MINISTER OF UTTAR PRADESH



Letters to the Editor

Are farmers' demands justified?

Madam — Refer to news report, 'Farmers MSP talks with centre in deadlock, Punjab police detain key leaders' (March 20). Farmers in Punjab receive free electricity, heavily subsidised seeds, and fertilisers from the government. They do not pay income tax but receive significant financial support from their relatives abroad. Additionally, they easily obtain loans from banks on lenient terms, allowing them to buy expensive tractors fitted with music systems.

Many farmers have leased their lands to contractors or given them on rent for farming, while they hire poor labourers from UP, Bihar and Jharkhand at low wages. With minimal personal involvement in farming, they have ample free time for politicking.

Due to their free time, many farmers actively engage in politics, frequent protests and movements. Earlier, they staged a nearly year-long sit-in at the Delhi border, severely inconveniencing the general public.

Now, for over a year, they have been blocking roads at the Khanauri and Shambhu borders in Punjab, creating hurdles for commuters, traders, and industrialists.

These roadblocks have caused significant economic losses and daily hardships for travelers and business owners alike. While Punjab farmers have the right to fight for their demands, it is unfair to violate the rights of other citizens.

VINAY KUMAR MALHOTRA | AMBALA CANTT

The decline of education system in MP

Madam — The data presented in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly paints a grim picture of the state's education system. The government has left no stone unturned in increasing education expenditure—rising from ₹25,953 Crore in 2021-22 to an estimated ₹36,581 Crore by 2025-26. Yet, the number of students in government schools has seen a drastic decline. Over the past decade, student enrollment has dropped from 7.896 Million to just 5.817 Million. The most alarming fact is that in the 2024-25 academic session, not a single student enrolled in the first grade in 5,501 schools. Meanwhile, private school enrollments have surged, clearly indicating that parents are losing faith in government schools.

The government has attempted to attract students by offering free books, uniforms, mid-day meals, and laptops, but these measures have failed. Experts believe that the 'Child Tracking System' has revealed the true figures, but the core issue remains the lack of quality education, inadequate infrastructure, and the growing preference for private schools. This is a wake-up call for the government. Increasing the budget alone is not enough, appointing more teachers, improving school infrastructure, and enhancing education quality are crucial. Winning back parents' trust is now the biggest challenge. If effective steps are not taken soon, the future of government schools could be in deep crisis.

RK JAIN | BARWANI

The cost of divisive politics

Madam — The quagmire of communalism presents a balanced and logical points to ponder over. Organisations without constructive ideas and ideologies seek to take divisive factors like regional, communal or caste or colour as a fertile ground to flourish for themselves. After incurring heavy loss of men and materials those trapped in the tussle realise their mistakes and return to a peaceful reconciled life. But the damage they cause is immense and the pains are borne for long time. Identify seekers find communal and caste platforms as potential ones for their instant response. Such leaders or organisations seeking identity in communal or caste grounds can be easily identified by the absence of any constructive agenda like removal of poverty, equality, equidistribution of wealth and peaceful co-existence.

But the history makes it clear that any advancements and achievements such elements make will be only ephemeral. Those who find fault with the Muslim rulers for their overactive communal activities against Hindus should remember that more such activities can be counted upon as Sivaites against Vaishnavaites, Vadakalai Vaishnavaites against Thenkai Vaishnavaites and so on. Those who take oath to preserve the Constitution with spirit and essence openly promote communal hatred and the concerned authorities sit muted as number ones.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

HEALTH HAZARDS OF PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN INDIAN FOOD SUPPLY

Pesticide residues in food are small amounts of pesticides that remain on or within foods after they have been used on crops. These residues can potentially pose health risks, depending on the specific pesticide and its concentration. India is one of the top consumers of pesticides globally, using them extensively in agriculture to protect crops from pests and diseases. However, the detection of pesticide residues in food has emerged as a significant health issue. Research shows that most foods in India contain these residues, some of which have levels higher than safe limits.

This situation raises serious health concerns and highlights the need for better food safety regulations and greater public awareness.

The recent appeal by the Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare for a comprehensive national strategy for monitoring pesticide residues in food is important to enhance public health and food safety in India.

Contamination of food with pesticides poses a serious health risk, which is further worsened by modern farming practices and reckless use of chemicals. Although several regulatory measures are in place, there are gaps in monitoring, enforcement and public education, which require stronger government action at both the central and state levels.

Reports from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and various independent studies show that pesticide residues have been found in more than 50 per cent of food samples tested in India. Some foods, such as vegetables, fruits, cereals, pulses and spices, have been found to contain pesticides in excess of the maximum residue limits (MRLs) set by regulatory bodies.

Pesticides are used on crops to control insects, fungi and weeds and can be transported through water, soil and air, affecting nearby crops.

SATYAWAN SAURABH | BHIWANI

Indian Railways: Powering India's growth

With strategic investments, technological advancements and a visionary public policy approach, Indian Railways is redefining connectivity, efficiency, and sustainability

FIRST
Column



The Indian Railways, often regarded as the crouching tiger of India's growth story, is one of the world's most remarkable yet under-discussed examples of how strategic investments in infrastructure and connectivity-focused public policy can yield exponential dividends for national development. The progress made by Indian Railways (IR) over the past decade (2014-2024) could well be considered its golden period of growth and transformation, making it one of the fastest-growing railway networks globally.

What sets India's railway story apart, making it a lesson for countries and regions with similar growth ambitions? The key lies in a public policy approach best summarised as: planning for the railways has been done with Bharat and for Bharat.

This approach recognises that the railway system must remain both world-class and affordable, fulfilling its essential role as the common person's mode of transport while simultaneously supporting India's industry, commerce, and the ambition of a \$5 Trillion economy. Every day, 22.4 Million people rely on Indian Railways as an integral part of their economic lives, and the system must grow in tandem with their aspirations.

This transformation required revolutionising business operations. Historically, Indian Railways faced criticism for slow modernisation and infrastructure constraints. However, many fail to recognise the crucial shift in priorities. While the total network length has gradually increased to 68,000 km since 1950, a more significant achievement is the expansion of track kilometers, which has grown to an impressive 132,000 km today, enhancing capacity and efficiency.

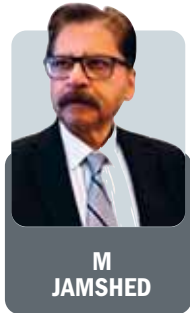
A decade-on-decade comparison highlights the scale of progress. Between 2014 and 2024, Indian Railways laid 31,000 km of new tracks compared to just 14,900 km in the preceding decade (2004-2014). Similarly, cumulative freight loading surged from 8,473 million tons to 12,660 million tons, revenue generation soared from ₹8.64 Lakh Crore to ₹18.56 Lakh Crore, and electrification expanded from 5,188 km to over 44,000 km, significantly reducing carbon footprints. The development of world-class Dedicated Freight Corridors (2,741 km, compared to none in the previous decade) has further bolstered efficiency. Locomotive production nearly doubled from 4,695 to 9,168 units, while coach manufacturing rose from 32,000 to 54,000 units. Across all productivity and performance indices, Indian Railways has set new benchmarks.

A major reform was the merger of the Railway Budget with the General Budget—a decision still lamented by some who hold onto outdated per-

spectives. Historically, inadequate financing led to a thin spread of resources across a vast backlog of pending projects. However, focused investments have changed the landscape, with Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) soaring to ₹8.25 Lakh Crore over the last decade, compared to just ₹1.56 Lakh Crore in the preceding 10 years.

One of the most significant upcoming milestones is the completion of the railway link to Srinagar, featuring some of the world's tallest bridges and longest tunnels, seamlessly connecting the valley to the national network. Additionally, Indian Railways is on track to become the first major railway system to achieve 100 per cent electrification, ensuring seamless connectivity while reducing dependence on fossil fuels and drastically cutting carbon emissions.

The proliferation of the KAVACH anti-collision system across the network is the most extensive implementation in any mixed-traffic railway system globally. Meanwhile, Indian trains are surpassing "world-class" standards, blending advanced global technologies with domestic priorities to create safer, faster, cleaner, and more comfortable travel experiences—all while maintaining affordability to keep rail services



M JAMSHED

POST-2014, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED A PROGRESSIVE AND AMBITIOUS APPROACH TOWARD INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT. A MODERN INDIA DEMANDS A NATIONAL TRANSPORTER FREE FROM OUTDATED CONSTRAINTS, FOSTERING INNOVATION AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

accessible to all. A unique aspect of Indian Railways' business model is its ability to subsidise passenger travel using freight revenues while remaining profitable. In contrast, major railway systems in developed countries are either privatised with the freedom to set high tariffs or reliant on government subsidies to cover losses. Despite stiff competition from other transportation modes and its dependence on derived demand, Indian Railways continues to meet ambitious revenue targets, delivering record-breaking performance year after year. This transformation may come as a surprise to those who remember an era when anything labeled "export quality" was reserved for affluent nations, while Indians settled for substandard goods and services. Generations of citizens were conditioned to lower their expectations, even for crucial services like Indian Railways. However, post-2014, the government has adopted a progressive and ambitious approach toward infrastructure development. A modern India demands a national transporter free from outdated constraints, fostering innovation and global competitiveness. This progress has been achieved while maintaining high levels of localisation for essential railway components and scaling up domestic manufacturing to unprecedented levels. While Vande Bharat trains have captured public attention, Indian Railways' transformation extends

far beyond these high-speed marvels. India is now set to roll out the world's most powerful hydrogen trains in the coming months, a feat comparable to Operation Smiling Buddha, which established India as a nuclear superpower. At 1,200 horsepower, these locomotives far surpass those being developed by "advanced" nations still struggling with half as much power. To ensure safety, Germany's TÜV SÜD has conducted third-party audits of India's hydrogen trains.

With the establishment of the world's longest hyperloop test facility, India is emerging as a global leader in futuristic transportation. Following the completion of a 422-meter test track in December 2024, India is now developing a nearly 50-km test track to assess hyperloop's commercial viability. Agreements with SwissPod (backed by Elon Musk) and France's SYSTRA underscore India's commitment to leading hyperloop innovation. Even China has recognised the strength of the 'Make in India' initiative. CRRC India is actively localising metro coach manufacturing for the Bangalore Metro, achieving over 75 per cent domestic content, with plans to reach 90 per cent. Furthermore, the facility is set to handle export orders for West Asia and Africa.

While bullet train rolling stock supply agreements with Japan are being finalised, India has already embarked on domestic high-speed train manufacturing. Beyond rolling stock, Plasser India, a subsidiary of Austria's Plasser and Theurer, is revolutionising railway maintenance with locally produced track machines, enhancing self-reliance while supporting global exports.

Indian Railways is also spearheading ambitious connectivity projects. The BBIN initiative aims to enhance rail connectivity across South Asia, while the 'Act East Policy' envisions linking India with ASEAN. The 'IMEC initiative' is set to establish a Rail-Sea-Rail corridor connecting India with Europe. Meanwhile, Indian Railways' public sector undertakings (PSUs) are exporting rolling stock, undertaking track infrastructure projects, and providing consultancy services across Asia and Africa. With its new trains, modernised stations, faster speeds, dedicated freight corridors, and high-speed networks, Indian Railways has solidified its place as a world-class transportation system. This success story serves as a model for other nations yet to fully leverage the transformative potential of railways in national growth.

The motto 'Viksit Rail, Viksit Bharat' (Developed Railways, Developed India) is not just a vision for 2047, it is an ongoing journey for Bharat and with Bharat, with new records, milestones, and achievements being set every day.

(The writer is a distinguished fellow at CRF and former member, Traffic Railway Board. Views expressed are personal)

Foreign interference in India's farmer protests: A threat to national sovereignty

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's recent call to ban Sikhs for Justice underscores a growing consensus within the Indian establishment that foreign-backed elements are actively working to destabilise the country's internal social fabric. His statement is not a reaction to isolated incidents but a recognition of a broader, orchestrated effort to exploit India's challenges for geopolitical leverage. At the heart of this manipulation lies the Open Society Foundations (OSF), led by George Soros, which has been systematically influencing India's internal affairs through financial backing, ideological infiltration, and political maneuvering.

The farmer unrest in India over recent years is not merely a reaction to domestic policy, it is closely linked to Soros's global network, which exploits social fault lines to exert influence and undermine sovereign decision-making.

Indian agriculture has undergone a transformation with direct government support and market interventions, yet the farmer protests are increasingly entangled in international financing and hidden political agendas. What started as grassroots struggles for farmers' rights have been infiltrated by foreign forces with interests far beyond agriculture.

Historically, Indian farmers have fought for better prices, market access, and protection from exploitative policies. Their movements have centered on resisting corporate encroachment and demanding fair subsidies. However, recent years have seen a shift where external funding has played a role in redirecting these movements. OSF has strategically injected capital into India's rural protests, not to empower farmers but to destabilise internal governance and promote an agenda aligning with Western geopolitical interests.

The 2020-21 farmers' protests exemplify how Soros's network infiltrates domestic movements. What started as a call for fair pricing quickly evolved into a sophisticated and well-funded political movement, backed by global media campaigns and international endorsements. This escalation was not organic—it was engineered. OSF-linked entities have funneled funds into Indian non-profits and activist groups under the pretext of supporting democracy and human rights, but the real intent was to use these protests as a tool against the Indian state.

Financial backing from international sources raises concerns about whether genuine farmer grievances are being amplified or manipulated. Soros's OSF, known for its involvement in "regime change" operations across Eastern Europe and Latin America, has been accused of funding civil unrest in developing nations. Similar patterns have emerged in India. The well-organised nature of the farmer protests, from logistics to media coordination, suggests significant financial and

strategic backing. The question remains: Why are these protests so well-funded, and what is the ultimate objective?

The consequences of such interference are multifaceted. While real farmer issues persist, external involvement risks overshadowing them with hidden political motives.

The movement, originally meant to empower farmers, risks becoming a tool for destabilisation. What began as a struggle for fair Minimum Support Prices (MSP) has transformed into a political agitation aimed at discrediting the Indian government and fracturing social cohesion.

The farmer protests received significant support from Canadian politicians, particularly in areas with a large Punjabi diaspora. Public endorsements, fundraising campaigns, and rallies abroad highlighted how a local agricultural movement turned into an international diplomatic issue.

Canada's Liberal Party, influenced by OSF-backed think tanks and lobbying groups, played a key role in amplifying the protests. Radical elements with foreign funding further intensified tensions, raising doubts about the protests' true motives.

The Sovereign Guarantee Fund (SGF) is another financial mechanism under scrutiny. Designed to provide security for agricultural projects, it has drawn concerns that foreign governments and financial institutions may be using it to influence farmer movements and shape internal policies. Soros's network has been linked to sovereign funds in various developing countries, often tying them to policy shifts favoring Western financial interests over local farmers. This creates economic dependencies that align with Western strategic goals rather than the welfare of Indian farmers.

Soros's network has been linked to sovereign funds in various developing countries, often tying them to policy shifts favoring Western financial interests over local farmers. This creates economic dependencies that align with Western strategic goals rather than the welfare of Indian farmers.

For Indian farmers, this situation presents both opportunities and risks. While they demand fair prices and financial aid, there is a danger of being drawn into international power struggles.

The growing influence of foreign-backed transnational corporations (TNCs) is particularly alarming. These firms, often supported by sovereign guarantee agreements, introduce patented farming solutions that increase dependency, eroding farmers' autonomy.

ing their control over their own practices.

The fingerprints of OSF are evident across these movements—international media coverage, coordinated social media campaigns, and well-timed statements from Western governments align with Soros's strategy of influencing emerging markets.

The influx of foreign-backed corporations undermines domestic agricultural enterprises, shifting control from Indian farmers to multinational conglomerates. Small farmers, in particular, bear the brunt of rising input costs and decreasing market power.

This is not about democracy or civil rights—it is about strategic geopolitical manipulation. The objective is clear: to weaken India's internal social cohesion, influence policymaking, and create economic dependencies that serve Western interests.

The increasing presence of foreign-backed elements in India's farmer movements is no accident, it is a calculated strategy to erode India's sovereignty and dictate internal policies.

At the core of these complexities is a fundamental truth—Indian farmers require genuine policy support, direct financial aid, and reforms that prioritize their interests over corporate or geopolitical agendas.

Their protests should not be battlegrounds for international diplomacy but platforms for real agricultural change. India's agricultural sector must remain sovereign, with policies driven by national interests rather than foreign capital.

As Rajnath Singh's statement suggests, the time for vigilance is now. The Indian government must safeguard its agricultural sector from external influences and hidden financial agendas. Protecting Indian farmers is not just about agriculture—it is about preserving national sovereignty, dignity, and economic independence. The future of Indian farming must not be dictated by foreign interests but shaped by the resilience and determination of India's farmers.

Their fight is not just for today—it is for the generations that will inherit their land, knowledge, and legacy. Ensuring a self-reliant agricultural sector is essential to achieving the vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047.

India's farmers deserve genuine support, not foreign interference. The influence of external forces threatens national sovereignty, turning rightful protests into geopolitical tools.

As Rajnath Singh warns, vigilance is crucial. India must protect its agricultural sector from hidden agendas, ensuring that policies prioritise farmers' welfare over external manipulation, securing a self-reliant future.

(The writer is secretary general, Confederation of NGOs of Rural India and Member, PM-MSP Committee, Government of India. Views expressed are personal)

Raisina dialogue 2025 convenes amid global uncertainty

The not-so-subtle changes in international diplomacy are quickly becoming the leitmotif within the first 50 days of President Trump's inauguration. While there have been some major embarrassments in the Oval Office—such as an ugly spat between President Zelensky of Ukraine and US Vice President JD Vance, as well as Vance's controversial statements in Europe regarding European politics—the expulsion and deportation of several international students and academics for their ideological leanings, travel bans on multiple countries, and a semi-trade war have all contributed to destabilising the global order.

Amidst this backdrop, the Ministry of External Affairs hosted its prestigious annual foreign policy event, the Raisina Dialogue, this week.

The tone was set by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, and the event's organisers, ORF, who underscored the constant evolution and reshaping of the global order. In his welcome note, EAM Jaishankar wrote: "In a world where relationships are no longer mutually exclusive and every nation seeks to benefit from the best of the international order can offer, there is a constant flow of geopolitical convergences, alignments, turbulence, and transitions.

It is these shifts, with their continuities and discontinuities, that the Raisina Dialogue 2025 will deliberate upon. We are also living through an era of globalisation fatigue, where older partnerships are being remade and new ones forged.

The world is experiencing a wave of intense economic competition, where interdependence and de-risking struggle to find a balance. There are no lasting landing points, underscoring the continuing nature of competition. Since 2020, instability and conflicts around the globe have continued or escalated, whether in Ukraine, the Middle East, South Asia, or Africa. Divergent approaches toward climate action have created deep fissures.

Meanwhile, emerging technologies, particularly AI, have become a driving force in contemporary geopolitics, triggering a new tech race with the potential to shape the destinies of people and nations. The need to strive for peace, progress, prosperity, and security has never been greater.

The reshaping of the old world order was further emphasised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he sat down for a first-of-its-kind podcast with US computer scientist Lex Fridman. During the interview, he stated:

"We must also understand that the world has become one small village today. No country can thrive in isolation. Today, we all depend on one another. No one can make it far alone. That is why

you must learn to synchronise with everyone, and everyone else must learn to synchronise with you. That's the only way to propel this initiative forward.

Organisations like the United Nations came into being after the First World War, but they failed to evolve with the times, and this inability to adapt has sparked a global debate on their relevance."

PM Modi dedicated an entire segment of the conversation to his relationship with President Trump, sending a bold message to global leaders about their close affiliation. He said:

"When he was shot during the recent campaign, I saw the same resilient and determined President Trump—the one who walked hand in hand with me in that stadium.

Even after being shot, he remained unwaveringly dedicated to America. His life was for his nation. His reflection showed his 'America First' spirit, just as I believe in 'India First'. That's why we connect so well.

These are the things that truly resonate. And I believe that, across the world, politicians are covered so much by the media that people mostly perceive each other through its lens. People rarely get the chance to truly meet or personally know one another, and perhaps third-party intervention is the real cause of tensions."

Regarding his negotiating skills in comparison to President Trump, PM Modi added:

"It's his graciousness and humility—it is very kind of him to openly appreciate me on various occasions and in different contexts. But when it comes to negotiation, I always put my country's interests first.

That's why, in every forum, I speak up for India's interests—not to harm anyone, but in a positive manner. And because of that, no one takes offense. People know that if Modi is present, he will strongly advocate for these things. After all, the people of India have given me this responsibility. For me, my nation is my high command, and I will always honor their will."

It was no surprise that a top official from the Trump administration, the US Intelligence Chief, was in New Delhi this week.

She highlighted the personal bond between the two leaders and also spoke about the rise of the Islamic Caliphate while stressing the need to address the continued atrocities against religious minorities in Bangladesh.

New Delhi is pleased this week, but it will proceed with cautious optimism.

(The writer is a political analyst. Views expressed are personal)



BINOD ANAND



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

Omar ready to hike MLA salaries in J and K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Despite facing a resource crunch and enforcing strict austerity measures to check wasteful expenditures, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursday proposed to set up a committee to look into the issue of hiking salaries/pensions of elected and former MLAs.

Winding up the discussion on grants of various departments held by Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah informed the members of the legislative assembly that their pay has remained unchanged since 2015-16.

Omar said that it may look like we are running after money, but the fact is that officers at par with us are getting ₹3 lakh, while we are still at ₹80,000. "I suggest implementing a parliament-style system where salaries are automatically revised every five years based on inflation. I will find the money, and we will do the needful," he added. He requested the Speaker of the Assembly to form a committee of members of the house including the leader of the opposition to look into the issue.

Omar added that pension benefits for former MLAs would also be increased. "We only realised the issue when we



Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah speaks during the Budget session of J&K Assembly in Jammu

became ex-MLAs," he said. Omar also hiked the Constituency Development Fund from the existing 3 crores to 4 crores. Reacting to the suggestions made by a sec-

tion of MLAs to revisit the Roshni scheme Omar advocated reviewing the 'Land Lease policy' at the earliest. Defending the Roshni scheme, Abdullah

proposed its revival, noting that it aimed to provide land rights to leaseholders. He referred to statements by Muzaffar Khan MLA, who had supported the scheme, and mentioned that former Union Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad had altered its timeline. Abdullah pledged to bring the scheme back to support the land rights of the people. He also criticised the LG administration for its handling of the state's aircraft, questioning why a functional state chopper was abandoned while expensive charters were hired.

"We used chartered flights even when our state chopper was available. It cannot be said that we couldn't hire a pilot," Omar said. He further pointed out that the state airplane, instead of being properly maintained in a hangar, was left on open display at Jammu Airport. "It should have been parked in a hangar, but it was kept outside. Now, we don't even know how many crores we'll have to spend to make it flight-ready again," he said.

Omar, who is also holding charge of the Power department, announced an extension of the power amnesty scheme for consumers with pending electricity bills but said that there will be no amnesty beyond this extension in his next five years. "We have decided to extend the amnesty scheme for those with outstanding bills,

but we must revise it. It is unfair to those who pay their bills regularly," Omar stated. Omar also made it clear that this would be the last amnesty for domestic consumers for the next five years. "No amnesty will be granted to domestic consumers after this for the next five years," he declared, signaling a stricter approach toward electricity bill defaulters.

The Chief Minister also announced a significant allocation of Rs 65 crore for the restoration of 33 heritage sites. This initiative is part of a broader effort to preserve the cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir. Abdullah further addressed concerns regarding the Mubarak Mandi project, which has faced delays, and vowed to expedite its completion within the next three years.

In a bid to strengthen Jammu and Kashmir's identity, Abdullah called for the return of the original Kashmir House at Rajaji Marg in New Delhi, which is currently under the control of the Indian Army. He appealed for assistance in vacating the building to establish a new Kashmir House.

Additionally, Abdullah highlighted plans to establish state guest facilities in major cities, including Chandigarh and Delhi, to improve hospitality infrastructure for the state.

Sirsa conducts field visit in Rajouri Garden

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In order to assess various civic issues regarding sanitation, road maintenance and garbage collection, Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Thursday conducted a field visit in Rajouri Garden. During the visit, Sirsa reviewed sanitation conditions, road maintenance, drainage, garbage disposal, and overall public amenities in the Rajouri Garden area. He listened to concerns raised by local residents and mapped out action points for speedy resolution. He inspected the 'Dhalaos'-waste collection points where he observed garbage spilling onto the roads, causing unsanitary conditions. Expressing his concerns, he directed the MCD Commissioner to ensure timely garbage collection, proper waste disposal, and regular pesticide spraying to maintain hygiene.

The minister also instructed officials to take immediate corrective measures to improve road cleanliness and prevent further accumulation of waste on the roads to avoid inconvenience for commuters and local residents.

Messi 'artist with the ball': CM Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Thanking Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi for his contribution to the game of football Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who earlier received a jersey signed by the iconic footballer, has described him as an "artist with the ball."

The jersey symbolises the unbreakable connection between Bengal and football Banerjee said adding "the love for football binds us all, and Messi, an artist with the ball, a maestro of our times, embodies the spirit of brilliance that Bengal admires. This jersey is a symbol of the unbreakable connection between Bengal and the beautiful game."

Describing her love for the game wrote on the X how "football is a passion that runs through my veins, much like every person in Bengal who has ever kicked a ball on the 'para' fields. Today, that passion found a special place as I received

a jersey signed by none other than Lionel Messi."

Incidentally Banerjee had before the 2021 Assembly elections given a call for "Khela Hobo" (there will be a game) by kicking a football at her supporters. She eventually won the elections. This year too she has given a call for Khela Hobo.

Receiving the jersey from football star tends to bring Banerjee on the same line with one of her predecessors and former Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu whom another top footballer Diego Maradona called a "friend." Maradona had come all the way to Kolkata in 2008 to meet Basu.

He then told Basu then a nonagenarian who had retired from active politics, "You have seen Fiedel Castro closely whom I hold in high esteem and in that respect I too consider you close to me."

Meanwhile in a parallel development Banerjee on Thursday attacked the State Opposition for trying to tarnish her reputation and demeaning Bengal and India

by making derisive remarks on her visit to London where she is scheduled to deliver a lecture on Friday.

Saying that the Opposition leaders were jealous of her Banerjee said that minimum courtesy was always expected despite political differences.

Accusing the opposition leaders guilty of jealousy towards her she said, "you can have no medicine for jealousy. The members of the opposition have been trying to malign me over my upcoming visit to London. But by maligning me ahead of my foreign visit, they are damaging the country's image."

The controversy was regarding a misconception over her alleged visit and lecture at Oxford University which eventually came out to be not true as per social media reports. Sources said quoting an RTI activist that the Chief Minister was scheduled to deliver a lecture not at the invitation of the University but a college affiliated to the said university.

CBI arrest sub-inspector for taking bribe

Pioneer News Service n New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a Delhi Police sub-inspector for allegedly taking a bribe of ₹2.5 Lakh through hawala operators for clearing the name of a Navi Mumbai-based tour operator from a case, officials said Thursday.

The agency arrested Rahul Malik, posted at Cyber Police Station in Rohini for allegedly accepting an installment of ₹2.5 Lakh out of total ₹14 Lakh demanded from the businessman through "layers of multiple hawala operators" based in Mumbai, Tamil Nadu's Erode, and Delhi, they said. The businessman had approached the CBI with the complaint against Malik. The person said he had business relations with a private company related to Cash Management System, but he later found that the login creden-

tials for virtual wallets provided to him was created under fake name.

"The matter related to private company was under investigation in FIR lodged at the Cyber police station, Rohini, Delhi," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement. Malik, who was investigating the case, had allegedly issued notice to businessman's brother-in-law who joined investigation and when they appeared before him for investigation, accused threatened to arrest them, the statement said. "It is further alleged that on March 7 2025, accused SI/IO (Malik) of the case visited at residence of complainant at Navi Mumbai and demanded a bribe of ₹50 Lakh to clear his and his brother-in-law's name from the case or else threatened that they would be arrested," the statement said.

Next day, Malik asked the businessman to meet him at a hotel on Ghodbunder

Road, Mumbai, where he allegedly demanded bribe by typing amount of ₹16 Lakh on his mobile and threatened him with consequences if payment was not made. The threats continued when the businessman visited Rohini police station with his lawyer.

Malik agreed to accept a bribe of ₹14 Lakh after negotiations. He allegedly provided a number of a hawala operator in Mumbai and details of hawala token number where the alleged bribe was to be paid. "Accordingly, on March 19, 2025, a successful trap was laid by CBI in which hawala operator accepted bribe of ₹2.5 Lakh at Mumbai on the behalf of public servants as a part bribe payment through layers of multiple hawala operators based in Mumbai, Erode (TN) and New Delhi," the CBI statement said.

Malik will be taken to Mumbai to face the probe.

Another BJP MLA attacked in West Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

After Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari's cavalcade was attacked by a band of Trinamool Congress supporters at Baruipur in South 24 Parganas yet another BJP MLA Nikhil Dey was on Wednesday attacked at Dinhatra in North Bengal.

The incident took place outside the Dinhatra court, sources said. "I had gone to appear before a judge regarding an old case and was sitting with some advocates waiting for my turn to be called in ... suddenly dozens of TMC men ran towards me and raised slogans ... they chased me even attacked me ... I called up the local police station and they sent only three police men for my security ... and even those police men would do nothing as the TMC gobs threw rotten eggs and stones at my car ... the windshield of my car was completely damaged," Dey said adding, "this is a continuation of the recent attacks on the BJP

leadership like the one that was orchestrated against our Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari at Baruipur.

Meanwhile, the BJP workers staged statewide agitation against Wednesday's attack on Adhikari, blocking roads at Asansol, Kulti, Howrah and parts of North Bengal sources said. Saffron workers raised slogans and carried out long processions in Hooghly, and East Midnapore districts too condemning the attack on Adhikari. In Kolkata the BJP MLAs once again staged a walkout from the State Assembly protesting against Wednesday's violent incident. Adhikari had gone to Baruipur the constituency of Speaker Biman Banerjee to protest against his "blatant partiality inside the Assembly." He was scheduled to address a public meeting. When his cavalcade approached hundreds of TMC workers surrounded his convoy and raised slogans and hurled filthy abuses on him, Adhikari complained.

Calling the Wednesday's incident an

"attempt on my life" Adhikari later said, "the Speaker does not allow us to raise our voices regarding the miseries of the Hindu Santanis inside the House ... sometimes we are suspended and on other occasions our microphones are turned off ... so we had decided to hold a meeting at Baruipur and tell the voters about the way he conducts himself inside the House ... but the TMC men attacked us and rained at least 20 lathi blows on my vehicle ... I would have been injured had I not been inside my car." Adhikari has given a call to gherao the SP office on March 27.

The recent incidents take place amid a highly polarized atmosphere with the BJP trying to build up a temp ahead of the Ram Navami with an apparent view on the next year's Assembly elections. "We will see that at least one crore Hindus will descend on the streets on Ram Navami and celebrate the festival showing their religious solidarity," Adhikari while giving a call to impose President's Rule in Bengal said.

₹54,000 crore to strengthen defence strategy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

With the objective of maintaining operational readiness of the armed forces, acquisition proposals worth over ₹54,000 Crores including engines for tanks, torpedoes and Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Aircraft Systems were approved on Thursday. Nod was also given to cut down the procurement process to make it faster and more efficient.

These major decisions were taken by Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The DAC is apex body to give the go ahead for procurement proposals projected by the armed forces. Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) is the final authority to clear DAC decisions.

The CCS headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, meanwhile, has reportedly approved a mega deal to procure advanced towed artillery gun system (ATAGS) for the Indian Army at a cost of ₹7,000 Crore, marking a major step in indigenous manufacturing of such howitzers. The ATAGS is the first indigenous designed, developed, and manufactured 155 mm artillery gun system and its procurement is set to enhance the operational capabilities of the Indian Army. The gun system features a long 52-calibre barrel, allowing for extended strike range of up to 45 km. As regards the DAC approvals, defence ministry said for the Indian Army, Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for procurement of 1350 HP Engine was approved to upgrade the present 1000 HP Engine for the T-90 tanks. This will enhance the battlefield mobility of these

tanks especially in high-altitude area by increasing the power to weight ratio.

For the Indian Navy, nod for procurement of Varunastra Torpedoes (Combat) was accorded by DAC. Varunastra Torpedo is an indigenous-developed ship-launched anti-submarine torpedo developed by Naval Science and Technological Laboratory. Induction of additional quantities of this torpedo would enhance the Navy's capability against adversaries' submarine threats.

For the Indian Air Force, AoN for procurement of Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) Aircraft Systems was accorded. AEW&C systems are capability enhancers which can change the complete spectrum of warfare and exponentially increase the combat potential of every other weapon system.

DAC also approved the guidelines for reducing the timelines at various stages of the Capital Acquisition Process to make it faster, more effective and efficient. Average time taken for defence acquisition are likely to be cut from the present 96 weeks (roughly two years) to only 24 weeks (less than six months).

As regards ATAGS, the CCS cleared the proposal to procure the ATAGS on Wednesday, top sources said. The DAC had accorded the initial approval to the procurement around two years ago.

Under the deal, a total of 307 guns will be procured along with 327 gun-towing vehicles. The deployment of the gun system along India's western (Pakistan) and northern (China) borders will provide the armed forces with a significant strategic edge, ensuring enhanced operational readiness and firepower, the sources said. With its larger calibre, the gun system ensures higher lethality, delivering

sizeable amount of explosive while enabling automated deployment and target engagement. This approval underscores India's growing prowess in indigenous defence manufacturing and technological advancements, they said.

A testament to the 'Make in India' initiative, ATAGS has been developed through collaboration between the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Indian private industry partners.

Over 65 per cent of its components are sourced domestically, including key sub-systems such as the barrel, muzzle brake, breech mechanism, firing and recoil system, and ammunition handling mechanism, the sources said.

The induction of ATAGS is expected to play a crucial role in modernisation of the Indian Army's artillery by replacing outdated 105 mm and 130 mm guns.

The production of ATAGS will create a robust supply chain of spares and seamless life cycle maintenance, the sources said. The domestically developed system ensures long-term product support, strengthening India's self-sufficiency in defence technology, they said. One of the key advantages of ATAGS is its minimal reliance on foreign components, they added. Critical subsystems on board the ATAGS such as the navigation system, muzzle velocity radar, and sensors are designed and sourced indigenously, reducing India's dependence on foreign technology and imports, the sources said.

The indigenous production of the gun system is expected to bolster India's position in the global defence export market, paving the way for future indigenous defence exports, they said.

Israel pounds Gaza again

Continued from >> P1 It also announced an additional ground operation in northern Gaza near the already largely destroyed town of Beit Lahiya, where strikes have killed dozens over the past 24 hours. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians returned to what remains of their homes in the north after a ceasefire took hold in January. Israel resumed heavy strikes across Gaza on Tuesday, shattering the truce that had facilitated the release of more than two dozen hostages. Israel blamed the renewed fighting on Hamas because the militant group rejected a new proposal that departed from their signed agreement.

The Trump administration, which took credit for helping to broker the ceasefire, has voiced full support for Israel.

The Israeli military said it intercepted a missile launched by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis rebels early Thursday before it reached Israeli airspace, as air raid sirens and exploding interceptors were heard in Jerusalem. No injuries were reported.

It was the second such attack since the United States began a new campaign of airstrikes against the rebels earlier this week. One of the strikes on Gaza early Thursday hit the Abu Daqa family's home in Abasan al-Kabira, a village just outside of Khan Younis near the border with Israel. It was inside an area the Israeli military ordered evacuated earlier this week, encompassing most of eastern Gaza.

The strike killed at least 16 people, mostly women and children, according to the nearby European Hospital, which received the dead. Those killed included a father and his seven children, as well as the parents and brother of a month-old baby who survived along with her grandparents.

"Another tough night," said Hani Awad, who was helping rescuers search for more survivors in the rubble. "The house col-

lapsed over the people's heads." The Israeli military said it had struck dozens of militant targets across Gaza, hitting dozens of fighters as well as military structures.

Israeli ground troops advance

On Wednesday, Israeli ground troops advanced in Gaza for the first time since the ceasefire took hold in January, seizing part of a corridor separating the northern third of the territory from the south. The announcement about passage to the south indicated troops will soon retake full control over what is known as the Netzarim corridor, stretching from the border to the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel, which has also cut off the supply of food, fuel and humanitarian aid to Gaza's roughly 2 million Palestinians, has vowed to intensify its operations until Hamas releases the 59 hostages it holds — 35 of whom are believed dead — and gives up control of the territory. The Trump administration, which took credit for brokering the ceasefire, says it fully supports Israel.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, as called for in the ceasefire agreement they reached in January after more than a year of mediation by the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

Hamas, which does not accept Israel's existence, says it is willing to hand over power to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority or a committee of political independents but will not lay down its arms until Israel ends its decades-long occupation of lands the Palestinians want for a future state.

A bloody night' for hard-hit northern town

Gaza's Health Ministry said the overnight strikes killed at least 85 people,

mostly women and children. Zaher al-Waheidi, the official in charge of records for the ministry, said a total of 592 people have been killed in Israeli strikes since Tuesday. The Indonesian Hospital said it had received 19 bodies after strikes in Beit Lahiya, near the border.

"It was a bloody night for the people of Beit Lahiya," said Fares Awad, head of the Health Ministry's emergency service in northern Gaza, adding that rescuers were still searching the rubble from homes that were hit. "The situation is catastrophic."

Beit Lahiya was heavily destroyed and largely depopulated during the first phase of the war before January's ceasefire. On Wednesday, an Israeli strike on a gathering of mourners killed 17 people there, according to health officials.

No end in sight to the 17-month war The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023 killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Most of the hostages have been freed in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Israeli forces have rescued eight living hostages and recovered the bodies of dozens more.

Israel's retaliatory offensive, among the deadliest and most destructive in recent history, has killed nearly 49,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It does not say how many were militants, but says more than half of those killed were women and children. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war at its height displaced around 90 per cent of Gaza's population and has caused vast destruction across the territory. Hundreds of thousands of people returned to their homes during the ceasefire, but many found only fields of rubble and the bombed-out shells of buildings.

Farmers protest site razed

Continued from >> P1 Protests also took place in Faridkot, Tarn Taran, Ferozepur and Bhawanigarh.

Punjab Police detained several farmer leaders, including Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallewal, in Mohali on Wednesday as they were returning after a meeting with a central delegation led by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Chandigarh.

The meeting discussed the various demands of the farmers, especially a law guaranteeing minimum support price (MSP) for crops. As the departing farmers entered Mohali after the meeting, they were met with heavy barricading and some of their leaders were detained.

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Thursday said the AAP government is committed to generate employment by attracting industries. "But because of the closure of the two highways at Shambhu and Khanauri border points for more than a year, Punjab's trade has been hit hard."

"We appeal to farmers that we stand by them. Their demands are concerned

with Centre. You hold any protest against the Centre we are with you. But do not destroy Punjab and do not shut Punjab's highways," said Cheema. He stressed that Punjab is currently waging a battle against drugs, and providing employment opportunities to youths is essential for winning this fight.

"Employment can only be generated if industries come to Punjab. But for more than a year, our Shambhu and Khanauri borders were closed and Punjab was facing losses. In 2003, Punjab had the maximum contribution in the GDP. And today, Punjab has dropped to the 19th place," he said. Earlier, Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) leader Satnam Singh Pannu condemned the police action, and accused the Punjab government of being "hand-in-glove" with the Centre in launching the crackdown on the protesting farmers.

"It was the murder of democratic rights. The farmers wanted to go to Delhi but the Haryana government barricaded the roads at the Centre's behest," Pannu alleged.

MLAs face Babugiri, says Delhi Speaker

Continued from >> P1 According to standard operating procedures, such communication received from a Member of Parliament, a member of public, a recognised association or a public body will be acknowledged within 15 days, followed by a reply within the next 15 days of the acknowledgement sent.

In the recent assembly polls, the BJP won the 48 out of 70 seats, bringing an end to AAP's rule in the capital. With BJP now in power, the tensions between officials and elected representatives appear to be surfacing again this time from within the ruling party.

Trump to order plan to shut down US Education Department

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

President Donald Trump plans to sign an executive order Thursday calling for the shutdown of the US Education Department, according to a White House official, advancing a campaign promise to eliminate an agency that's been a longtime target of conservatives.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity before an announcement.

Trump has derided the Department of Education as wasteful and polluted by liberal ideology. However, finalising its dismantling is likely impossible without an act of Congress, which created the department in 1979.

A White House fact sheet said the order would direct Secretary Linda McMahon "to take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure (of) the Department of Education and return education authority to the States, while continuing to ensure the effective and uninterrupted delivery of services, programs, and benefits on which Americans rely."

The Trump administration has already been gutting the agency. Its workforce is being slashed in half and there have been

deep cuts to the Office for Civil Rights and the Institute of Education Sciences, which gathers data on the nation's academic progress.

Advocates for public schools said eliminating the department would leave children behind in an American education system that is fundamentally unequal.

"This isn't fixing education. It's making sure millions of children never get a fair shot. And we're not about to let that happen without a fight," the National Parents Union said in a statement.

The White House has not spelled out formally which department functions could be handed off to other departments, or eliminated altogether. At her confirmation hearing, McMahon said she would preserve core initiatives, including Title I money for low-income schools and Pell grants for low-income college students. The goal of the administration, she said, would be "a better functioning Department of Education."

The department sends billions of dollars a year to schools and overseas \$1.6 trillion in federal student loans.

Currently, much of the agency's work revolves around managing money —

both its extensive student loan portfolio and a range of aid programs for colleges and school districts, from school meals to support for homeless students. The agency also plays a significant role in overseeing civil rights enforcement.

Federal funding makes up a relatively small portion of public school budgets — roughly 14%. The money often supports supplemental programs for vulnerable students, such as the McKinney-Vento programme for homeless students or Title I for low-income schools.

Colleges and universities are more reliant on money from Washington, through research grants along with federal financial aid that helps students pay their tuition.

Republicans have talked about closing the Education Department for decades, saying it wastes taxpayer money and inserts the federal government into decisions that should fall to states and schools. The idea has gained popularity recently as conservative parents' groups demand more authority over their children's schooling.

In his platform, Trump promised to close the department "and send it back to the states, where it belongs." Trump has

cast the department as a hotbed of "radicals, zealots and Marxists" who overextend their reach through guidance and regulation.

At the same time, Trump has leaned on the Education Department to promote elements of his agenda. He has used investigative powers of the Office for Civil Rights and the threat of withdrawing federal education funding to target schools and colleges that run afoul of his orders on transgender athletes participating in women's sports, pro-Palestinian activism and diversity programs.

Even some of Trump's allies have questioned his power to close the agency without action from Congress, and there are doubts about its political popularity. The House considered an amendment to close the agency in 2023, but 60 Republicans joined Democrats in opposing it.

During Trump's first term, former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos sought to dramatically reduce the agency's budget and asked Congress to bundle all K-12 funding into block grants that give states more flexibility in how they spend federal money. It was rejected, with pushback from some Republicans.

Turkiye detains 37 over 'provocative' social media posts following arrest of Istanbul mayor

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Istanbul

Turkish authorities detained 37 people for sharing "provocative" content on social media, the interior minister said Thursday, pressing ahead with a crackdown on dissenting voices that escalated with the arrest of the mayor of Istanbul, a potential challenger to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Mayor Ekrem Imamoğlu was arrested after a dawn raid on his residence on Wednesday as part of investigations into alleged corruption and terror links. Several other prominent figures, including two district mayors, were also detained.

The detention of a popular opposition leader and key Erdogan rival deepened concerns over democracy and sparked protests in Istanbul and elsewhere, despite a four-day ban on demonstrations in the city and road closures. Several people were detained following a student protest in the capital, Ankara, that continued into the night.

It also caused a shockwave in the financial market, triggering temporary halts in trading to prevent panic selling.

Critics see the crackdown as an effort by Erdogan to extend his more than two-decade rule following significant losses by the ruling party in local elections last year. Government officials reject claims that legal actions against opposition figures are politically motivated and insist that the courts operate independently.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said authorities identified 261 social media accounts that shared provocative posts inciting public hatred or crime, including 62 that are run by people based abroad. At least 37 of the suspected owners were detained in a operation police and cyber crime teams, he wrote on the X social media platform. Efforts to detain other suspects were continuing, he said.

Imamoğlu's arrest came just days before he was expected to be nominated as the opposition Republican People's Party's presidential candidate in a primary scheduled for Sunday. The party's leader has said the primary will go ahead as planned. Prosecutors accused Imamoğlu of exploiting his position for financial gain, including the improper allocation of government contracts.

In a separate investigation, prosecutors also accuse Imamoğlu of aiding the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, by allegedly forming an alliance with a Kurdish umbrella organisation for the Istanbul municipal elections. The PKK, behind a decades-

long insurgency in Türkiye, is designated a terrorist organization by Ankara, Washington and other allies.

It was not clear when authorities would begin questioning the mayor, who can be detained without charges for up to four days. Analysts say Imamoğlu could be removed from office and replaced by a "trustee mayor" if he is formally charged with links to the PKK.

Before his detention, Imamoğlu already faced multiple criminal cases that could result in prison sentences and a political ban. He is also appealing a 2022 conviction for insulting members



Mayor Ekrem Imamoğlu

of Türkiye's Supreme Electoral Council, a case that could result in a political ban.

This week, a university nullified his diploma, citing alleged irregularities in his 1990 transfer from a private university in northern Cyprus to its business faculty, a decision Imamoğlu said he would challenge. The decision effectively bars him from running for president, since the position requires candidates to be university graduates.

Imamoğlu was elected mayor of Türkiye's largest city in March 2019, a historic blow to Erdogan and the president's Justice and Development Party, which had controlled Istanbul for a quarter-century. Erdogan's party pushed to void the municipal election results in the city of 16 million, alleging irregularities.

The challenge resulted in a repeat of the election a few months later, which Imamoğlu also won. The mayor retained his seat following local elections last year, during which his party made significant gains against Erdogan's governing party.

Indian student detained in US for opposing America's foreign policy towards Israel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

An Indian national enrolled as a post-doctoral fellow in the US has been detained by immigration authorities, said a media report, less than a week after a Columbia student from India self-deported following allegations of activities supporting Hamas.

Badar Khan Suri's lawyer claimed that he is being punished "because of the Palestinian heritage of his wife — who is a US citizen — and because the government suspects that he and his wife oppose US foreign policy toward Israel."

He is a former student of Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Suri is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at the Edmund A Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington DC.

A report in Politico said that Suri, who was studying and teaching on a student visa, has been "detained by federal immigration authorities amid the Trump administration's crackdown on student activists whom the government accuses of opposing American foreign policy."

The report said that "masked agents

arrested Suri from outside his home in Virginia Monday night.

A petition filed by his lawyer Hassan Ahmad said that he was taken to a facility in Virginia and is "expected to be transferred soon to a detention centre in Texas."

The Politico report said that Suri's lawyer has filed a lawsuit for his immediate release.

"The agents identified themselves as being with the Department of Homeland Security and told him the government had revoked his visa," the lawsuit says, according to the Politico report.

The report added that according to Suri's petition, he was put in "deportation proceedings under the same rarely used provision of immigration law" that the government has invoked to try to deport Mahmoud Khalil, the Columbia University graduate and legal permanent resident arrested for his role in leading campus protests at Columbia against Israel.

The petition says the couple has "long been doxxed and smeared" on anonymous run, far-right websites due to their support for Palestinian rights. The petition adds that Suri's wife Mapheze Saleh has been alleged to have "ties with Hamas" and

once worked for Al Jazeera.

The petition further notes that Suri has no criminal record and has not been charged with a crime. Ahmad said he had not been able to contact Suri as of Wednesday evening.

"We're trying to speak with him. That hasn't happened yet," Ahmad said. "This is just another example of our government abducting people the same way they abducted Khalil."

According to his profile on the website of Georgetown University, Suri completed his PhD in Peace & Conflict Studies from Nelson Mandela Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi in 2020.

He wrote his thesis on "Transitional Democracy, Divided Societies and Prospects for Peace: A Study of State Building in Afghanistan and Iraq" in which he underlined the complexities involved in introducing democracy in ethnically diverse societies; as well as challenges to project state building.

He has travelled extensively in the conflict zones of India, Pakistan, Balochistan in Iran, Iran, Turkey, Kurdish Areas in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and its southern region, Egypt and Palestine.

No bail for Sri Lankan police chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ COLOMBO

Deshabandu Tennakoon, the suspended Sri Lankan inspector general of police, was on Thursday refused bail in a case related to a shooting incident in 2023 and will now spend time in remand custody till April 3.

Tennakoon surrendered to the court on Wednesday after evading arrest for over two weeks.

The magistrate's court in the southern town of Matara refused bail to Tennakoon, who was remanded till Thursday after his surrender. Officials said that he was kept in a special cell in isolation from the rest of the inmates at the Angunakolapelessa prison further south of Matara last night.

His lawyers pleaded bail yesterday but came up with stiff resistance from the state attorney who charged that Tennakoon had run a criminal ring while holding the position of police chief.



Trump threatens Houthi rebels with 'completely annihilation'

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

US President Donald Trump threatened Yemen's Houthi rebels on Wednesday that they'll be "completely annihilated" as American airstrikes pounded locations under their control, while further pressuring the group's main benefactor Iran.

Strikes hit Sanaa, Yemen's rebel-held capital, as well as their stronghold of Saada in the country's northwest on Wednesday night, the Houthi's al-Masrah satellite news channel reported. It aired footage showing firefighters battling a blaze in Sanaa and damaged at what it described as a sheep farm in al-Jawf.

It also said strikes happened overnight Tuesday, though the US military has not offered a breakdown of places targeted since the airstrikes campaign began. The first strikes this weekend killed at least 53 people, including children, and wounded others.

As the strikes hit, Trump wrote on his Truth Social website that "tremendous damage has been inflicted upon the Houthi barbarians."

"Watch how it will get progressively worse — It's not even a fair fight, and never will be," Trump added. "They will be completely annihilated!"



Locals inspect the site reportedly struck by US airstrikes overnight in Sanaa, Yemen. AP/PTI

Meanwhile, Trump again warned Iran not to arm the Houthis, claiming without offering evidence that Tehran "has lessened its intensity on Military Equipment and General Support to the Houthis."

"Iran must stop the sending of these Supplies IMMEDIATELY," he wrote.

Iran has long armed the Houthis, who are members of Islam's minority Shiite Zaydi sect that ruled Yemen for 1,000 years until 1962. Tehran routinely denies arm-

ing the rebels, despite physical evidence, numerous seizures and experts tying the weapons to Iran. That's likely because Tehran wants to avoid sanctions for violating a United Nations arms embargo on the Houthis.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged Trump's comments and cited remarks previously made by Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeed Iravani, that said Trump made "baseless accusations."

The Houthi rebels attacked over 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two vessels and killing four sailors, from November 2023 until January this year when a ceasefire began in Gaza. The campaign also greatly raised the Houthis' profile in the wider Arab world and tamped down on public criticism against their human rights abuses and crackdowns on dissent and aid workers.

Meanwhile Thursday, the Houthi-controlled SABA news agency acknowledged the rebels had been taking food aid out of a World Food Program warehouse without permission. It said it took about 20 per cent of the aid on hand out.

The UN in February suspended its operations in Saada over security concerns following the detentions of dozens of UN workers and others.

Nawaz Sharif gets new job in Maryam govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore

Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has got a new job in the government of his daughter Maryam Nawaz in Punjab province. From three-time former prime minister to patron-in-chief of the Lahore Authority for Heritage Revival (LAHR), Nawaz will now look after the restoration of scores of colonial-era buildings in Lahore. The Punjab administration has notified the elder Sharif as patron-in-chief of LAHR. He will oversee the restoration of the old city of Lahore.

Jailed former premier Imran Khan's party was quick to mock the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president, congratulating him for getting a government "job".

"Nawaz Sharif was living a retired life after the humiliating defeat of his party in the 2024 elections. Imran Khan's mandate was stolen and given to Nawaz and Zardari parties — PMLN and PPP. Now, Nawaz's daughter Punjab Chief Minister Maryam gave him some work to do. It will be better for Nawaz's health to keep himself busy in some work like restoration of old buildings as a retired politician," opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf senior leader Shaukat Basra told PTI on Thursday. He said Nawaz had returned from London in 2023 to become prime minister for the fourth time, but the military establishment chose his younger brother, Shehbaz Sharif, as a "perfect puppet" for the job, leaving the elder Sharif to lick his wounds.

French citizen freed after 880 days in Iran prison

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

A French citizen imprisoned in Iran for over 880 days has been freed, French officials said Thursday.

The release of Olivier Grondeau comes as France and the rest of Europe try to pursue negotiations with Iran over its rapidly advancing nuclear program.

US President Donald Trump meanwhile has sent his own letter to Iran's 85-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to jumpstart talks. Trump is also pressuring Tehran over its support of Yemen's Houthi rebels as the American military has launched an intense new campaign of airstrikes targeting the group.

In going public with his detention in

January, Grondeau alluded to the politics at play in his imprisonment.

"You become a human who has been stocked away indefinitely because one government is seeking to exert pressure on another," he said. French President Emmanuel Macron wrote online that Grondeau had been freed. He offered no immediate details of what led to Grondeau's release, though it came on Nowruz, the Persian New Year, when Iran has released prisoners in the past.

Jean-Noel Barrot, France's minister for



Europe and foreign affairs, posted a picture online of Grondeau smiling aboard what appeared to be a private jet.

"We will tirelessly continue our efforts to ensure that all our compatriots still held hostage, including

Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, are in turn released," Barrot wrote.

Macron also raised their cases. "Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris must be freed from Iranian jails," he wrote. "All my thoughts are with them and their families on this day."

Iran does not acknowledge release:

The Iranian government did not immediately acknowledge Grondeau's release. Such releases of Westerners in Iran typically come in exchange for something. Earlier this week, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said France had arrested an Iranian woman who supported Palestinians, but said Tehran was still trying to gather more details about her case.

On Grondeau's lap in the image from the private jet was a plastic-wrapped T-shirt bearing a picture of the pop star Britney Spears, something officials did not acknowledge in welcoming Grondeau's release. He put it on before getting off the plane and embracing his family on returning home, in footage aired by French broadcaster TF1.

Military leaders to discuss Ukraine peacekeeping force as partial ceasefire plans are worked out

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kyiv

Senior officers from countries across Europe and beyond will meet Thursday at a military headquarters on the outskirts of London to flesh out plans for an international peacekeeping force for Ukraine as details of a partial ceasefire are worked out.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the "coalition of the willing" plan, led by Britain and France, is moving into an "operational phase." But it's unclear how many countries are willing to send troops, or whether there will be any ceasefire to protect. Ukraine and Russia agreed in principle Wednesday to a limited ceasefire after President Donald Trump spoke with the countries' leaders this week, though it remained to be seen when it might take effect and what possible targets would be off limits to attack. The tentative deal to partially rein in the three-year war came after Russian President Vladimir Putin rebuffed Trump's push for a full 30-day ceasefire. The difficulty in getting the combatants to agree not to target one another's energy infrastructure highlights the challenges Trump will face in trying to fulfill his campaign pledge to quickly end the war. Despite the negotiations, hundreds of drone attacks were launched overnight by both sides, injuring several people and damaging buildings.

Ukraine said Russia had launched 171 long-range drones and it shot down 75 while another 63 decoy drones disappeared from radar after likely being jammed. Russia said it destroyed 132 Ukrainian drones in six Russian regions and the annexed Crimea. Kropyvnytskyi, a city in central Ukraine, faced its biggest attack of the war as about four dozen drones injured 14 people, including a couple with serious burns, and damaged houses and apartments. "In a cruel twist, enemy drones hit Myru Street (Peace Street in English)," Andrii Raikovich, head of the regional administration, said. More than 50 drones were intercepted



In this photo taken from video distributed by the Russian Defense Ministry Press Service on Thursday, a group of Russian soldiers wave as they sit in a bus after being released in a prisoners swap between Russia and Ukraine, at an unspecified location in Russia. AP/PTI

in Russia's Saratov region — the largest attack of its kind in the area — shattering windows in a hospital and damaging two kindergartens, a school and about 30 homes, Gov. Roman Busargin said. The attacks were focused on Engels, an industrial city near Russia's main base for nuclear-capable strategic bombers.

If peace comes to Ukraine, the number of troops that would help enforce it is vague. Officials have cited figures of between 10,000 and 30,000 troops.

Only Britain and France have said they are willing to send troops, though countries including Australia, Canada, France and Finland say they are open to being involved in some way.

Around 30 leaders were involved in a video meeting on Saturday including Macron, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, leaders from Australia, Canada and New Zealand and officials from NATO and the European Union.

Russia has said it will not accept any troops from NATO countries being based on Ukrainian soil. And Trump has given no sign the US will guarantee reserve firepower in case of any breaches of a truce.

No windfall tax on oil companies after new law: Puri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Oil and gas companies will not face any new taxes like the windfall profits tax after the coming into effect of a new law that promises stability of fiscal regime, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. Parliament has passed the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2024 that provides policy stability to investors, decriminalises provisions and promotes ease of doing business.

"After this bill, it will be difficult to levy (new taxes like) windfall tax because somebody will sue us (for failing to keep the promise of fiscal stability)," he said at a reception he hosted to celebrate the passage of the bill.

Investors looking to invest in finding and producing oil and gas want fiscal stability, and new taxes that seek to take away gains made when prices are high, without compensating for low or no margins when rates are low, are often a deterrent.

India imposed a windfall profit tax on July 1, 2022 joining a growing number of nations that tax super normal profits of energy companies. At that time, export

duties of ₹6 per litre (\$12 per barrel) each were levied on petrol and ATF and ₹13 a litre (\$26 a barrel) on diesel. A ₹23.250 per tonne (\$40 per barrel) windfall profit tax on domestic crude production was also levied.

The tax rates were reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks. The levy was scrapped in December last year after 30 months.

Puri said global oil majors have been exploring investing in India.

Brazil's Petrobras is in discussion with state-owned Oil India Ltd for exploring the Andaman basins, while Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is engaged with majors like ExxonMobil and Equinor for collaboration in deepwater exploration. The new legislation "creates conditions for all of them (international oil companies) to come and look at India," he said.

The Bill is part of the government's reforms agenda to make it easier to find and produce crude oil (which is refined into fuels like petrol and diesel) and natural gas (which is used to generate power, make fertiliser or turn into cooking gas and CNG). It decriminalised some of the pro-



Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri

Pioneer Photo

visions of the original 1948 law by introducing penalties in place of imprisonment of up to six months.

The bill introduces 'petroleum lease' and expands the definition of mineral oils to include crude oil, natural gas, petroleum,

condensate, coal bed methane, oil shale, shale gas, shale oil, tight gas, tight oil and gas hydrate. This is with a view to raising domestic output and cutting reliance on imports. India currently imports more than 85 per cent of its crude oil needs and

about half of its natural gas requirement.

"We have 42 Billion tonnes of oil and oil equivalent reserves and a sedimentary basin spanning 3.5 Million square kilometers," Puri said, adding most of it is untapped. The Statement of Objects and Reasons in the Bill states that the original Act of 1948 provided for a very different global energy context and required to be amended to meet the needs and aspirations of the country for energy access, energy security and energy affordability.

"Further, there is an urgent and pressing need to increase domestic production of oil and gas to meet the rising demand for energy and reduce import dependence of the country.

"In order to unlock valuable mineral oil resources, it is necessary to attract investment in the sector to infuse necessary capital and technology for expediting petroleum operations in the country by creating an investor friendly environment that promotes ease of doing business, prospects for exploration, development and production of all types of hydrocarbons, ensures stability, promotes adequate opportunities for risk mitigation, addresses energy transition issues including next-generation

cleaner fuels and provides for a robust enforcement mechanism for ensuring compliance of the provisions of the said Act," it said.

The Amendment delinks petroleum operations from mining operations, broadening the scope of the expression 'mineral oils, introduces the concept of petroleum lease, grants lease on stable terms, provides for efficacious dispute resolution, creates an environment for facilitating energy transition and strengthens petroleum operations through rules framed for governing various functional aspects, such as, grants of leases or licences, their extension or renewal, sharing of production and processing facilities including infrastructure and safety at oilfields.

"It brings Ease of Doing Business by providing a single lease for all hydrocarbons, security of tenure and terms of the lease, decriminalises provisions and empowers independent private operators by enabling sharing of infrastructure and drives India's energy transition by facilitating GHG monitoring and comprehensive energy projects, underlining our commitment towards sustainable development," Puri said.

Investors' wealth surges ₹17.43 lakh Crore in four days of market rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Market investors' kitty swelled by ₹17.43 Lakh Crore in four days of sharp rally in equities where the BSE benchmark Sensex jumped over 3 per cent. On Thursday, the 30-share benchmark Sensex jumped 899.01 points or 1.19 per cent to settle at 76,348.06, regaining the 76,000 level. During the day, it soared 1,007.2 points or 1.33 per cent to 76,456.25.

In four days, the Sensex zoomed 2,519.15 points or 3.41 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged ₹17,43,418.8 Crore to ₹4,08,61,851.73 Crore (\$4.73 Trillion) in four days.

"Benchmark indices got a Fed booster shot on Thursday extending gains for fourth straight session, after the US Fed kept the forecast for two rate cuts in 2025 intact despite inflation risks from Trump's trade war. Broader mid and smallcaps also posted gains for the day. All major sectors also logged gains in broad-based rally with Nifty IT recovering from steep losses in recent weeks," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The US Fed is undoubtedly the driving force behind today's market rally as markets took comfort from the strong overnight gains in US indices, after Fed kept the projection for two rate cuts in 2025 unchanged, he added.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, Nestle, Reliance Industries, Mahindra and Mahindra, HDFC Bank and Tata Motors were the biggest gainers.

However, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance and UltraTech Cement were the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.73 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.61 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher where telecommunication jumped 1.94 per cent, teck (1.89 per cent), oil & gas (1.56 per cent), energy (1.42 per cent), auto (1.39 per cent) and BSE Focused IT (1.23 per cent). "The rally was driven by gains in the US market after the Federal Reserve maintained its forecast of two rate cuts this year despite the ongoing tariff concerns," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Safeguard measures to cut India's steel imports by 50 per cent in FY26: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's steel imports could reduce by 50 per cent in FY26 while domestic manufacturers' profitability is expected to improve, if the government levies a safeguard duty on inbound shipments, experts have said.

The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), the investigation arm of the commerce ministry, has recommended imposition of a 12 per cent provisional safeguard duty for 200 days on certain steel products with an aim to protect domestic players from surge in imports. The final decision to impose the duty will be taken by the finance ministry.

The development is credit positive and expected to lead to a 50 per cent reduction in India's steel imports in FY26, said Girish Kadam, Senior Vice President and Group Head - Corporate Sector Ratings at ICRA Ltd. With imports slated to materially decline, and domestic demand poised to grow at a healthy rate of 7-8 per cent in FY26, ICRA expects the industry's capacity utilisation inch up to a more comfortable level of 83 per cent in FY26 from the four-year low of 78 per cent being wit-

nessed in the current fiscal, he said. Dhruv Goel, CEO of markets research firm BigMint, said the anticipation of a safeguard duty had been looming, but with the recommendation of 12 per cent duty, the market now has clarity on the landed price implications for upcoming imports.

"The immediate market reaction could see prices rise by ₹1,000-1,500 per tonne

The immediate market reaction could see prices rise by ₹1,000-1,500 per tonne in the near term

— DHRUV GOEL, CEO BIGMINT

in the near term. The imposition of the safeguard duty is likely to reduce import volumes, creating opportunities for domestic mills to enhance profitability in the upcoming quarter," he said.

Sehul Bhatt, Director — Research, Crisil Intelligence, said the imposition of provisional safeguard duty on some non-alloy and alloy steel flat products will provide pricing support to local manufacturers in the first half of fiscal 2026. The announcement comes amid evolving trade dynamics, where some countries have

imposed restrictions on imports of steel. India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has said that the government has initiated a safeguard duty investigation on certain steel products to protect domestic players from low-cost imports. However, if safeguard duties are implemented, they could provide tailwind to the prices.

Last year in December, the DGTR started the investigation into the sudden surge in imports of 'Non-Alloy and Alloy Steel Flat Products', used in various industries, including fabrication, pipe making, construction, capital goods, auto, tractors, bicycles, and electrical panels.

The investigations were conducted following a complaint from the Indian Steel Association on behalf of its members including ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India, AMNS Khopoli, JSW Steel, JSW Steel Coated Products, Bhushan Power & Steel, Jindal Steel and Power, and state-owned Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL). The directorate in its probe has preliminarily found that there is a recent, sudden, sharp and significant increase in the imports of these products into India, causing and threatening to cause serious injury to the domestic industry/producers.

Adani Group in advance talks to acquire real estate company Emaar India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group is in advanced talks to acquire real estate company Emaar India for an enterprise value of around \$1.4-1.5 Billion as it looks to expand its property business, according to sources.

Dubai-based Emaar Properties entered the Indian real estate market in 2005 in partnership with India's MGF Development and invested ₹8,500 Crore through the joint venture firm Emaar MGF Land. In April 2016, Emaar Properties decided to end the joint venture through a demerger process.

Emaar India has a large portfolio of residential and commercial spaces across Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Mohali, Lucknow, Indore and Jaipur. According to sources, the talks between Dubai-based Emaar Properties and Adani Group are in an advanced stage.

Adani Group and Emaar India declined to comment. In January this year, Emaar Properties said, "The company would like to confirm that it is currently in discussion with a few groups in India, including Adani Group, for a potential sale of a stake in Emaar India. The valuation and the other terms of a potential transaction are not finalised."

Sources said that Emaar Properties is looking to sell stake in the Indian entity but the extent of dilution in shareholding is not decided yet. Adani Group is active in the Indian real estate market through its unlisted entities Adani Realty and Adani Properties. Adani Realty has been developing many projects across major cities in India. The group has also bagged redevelopment projects, including Dharavi which is one of Asia's largest slums in Mumbai.

After the Dharavi slum redevelopment project, Adani group has emerged as the highest bidder for the ₹36,000 Crore redevelopment of Motilal Nagar in Mumbai. Motilal Nagar I, II and III is one of Mumbai's biggest housing redevelopment projects, covering 143 acres in Goregaon (W). Adani Properties Pvt Ltd (APPL) emerged as the highest bidder. Letter of Allotment (LoA) will be issued in due course.

Emaar Properties PJSC, listed on the Dubai Financial Market, is a global property developer and provider of premium lifestyles, with a significant presence in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia.

Sensex jumps 899 points

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Rallying for the fourth straight session, stock market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty surged over 1 per cent on Thursday, powered by across-the-board buying amid a mixed trend in global equities after the US Federal Reserve maintained its rate cut projections for this year.

Hectic buying in market heavyweights Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel and IT stocks also bolstered investor sentiment, traders said. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 899.01 points or 1.19 per cent to settle at 76,348.06, regaining the 76,000 level. During the day, it soared 1,007.2 points or 1.33 per cent to 76,456.25.

The NSE Nifty surged 283.05 points or 1.24 per cent to reclaim the 23,000-mark to finish at 23,190.65.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, Nestle, Reliance Industries, Mahindra and Mahindra, HDFC Bank and Tata Motors were the biggest gainers.

However, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance and UltraTech Cement were the laggards. Meanwhile, the Federal Reserve said the US economy still looks healthy enough to keep interest rates unchanged.

"On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve announced its decision to keep the policy rate in the 4.25-4.50 per cent range. Policymakers anticipate two rate cuts in

2025, with economic growth projected at 1.7 per cent and inflation at 2.7 per cent for the year. "Overall, this decision has mixed implications for currency movements, capital flows and market sentiment in India. Higher US interest rates could lead to foreign capital outflows from Indian markets, whereas lower rates may attract investment," Ravi Singh, SVP - Retail Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul settled in the positive territory while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. Japan's Nikkei was closed for a holiday.

European equity markets were trading lower. US markets ended significantly higher on Wednesday.

"Consistent falls of the US dollar index (DXY) have reduced the intensity of FII selling while DII buying continues to be strong, thus triggering the recent upside," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.32 per cent to \$71.01 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,096.50 Crore on Wednesday after a day's breather, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DII), however, bought equities worth ₹2,140.76 Crore.

"Fed continues to project an additional two rate cuts this year which may create a tailwind for global equities in the near term," Dhawal Ghanashyam Dhanani, Fund Manager at SAMCO Mutual Fund, said.

India's 'AI for All' mantra backed by concrete action: Jitin Prasada

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's 'AI for All' mantra is backed by concrete action with the country leading in AI skill penetration and talent concentration, Union Minister Jitin Prasada said on Thursday as he urged industry leaders to prioritise research and development (R&D) to capitalise on India's position as a global skill capital.

Prasada, Union Minister of State for Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, was delivering a keynote address at the Nasscom Global Confluence 2025 here.

"Our mantra 'AI for All' is backed by concrete action. India is number one in the world in AI skill penetration — the AI skill index even outstrips the US and Germany. "It's just not about numbers, it's about impact. As nations across the globe embrace digitalisation to modernise traditional sectors and fuel economic growth, India stands ready to be a strategic technology partner," the minister asserted.

Stressing that India is open for business and ready to lead, Prasada urged industry leaders to make research a top priority in their future strategies.

"India is the skill capital of the world and we are ready to share, venture across the world, and contribute to various sectors given the enormous edge

that we have on the skill front.

"We are also ensuring that even the future skills programmes reach every nook and corner to the last mile on the ground to our villages, where our workforce should be ready to tackle and engage with the changes in the transformation that's happening across the

India is number one in the world in AI skill penetration the AI skill index even outstrips the US and Germany

— JITIN PRASADA, UNION MINISTER

globe in the tech front," he said.

The country's strength reflects its capacity for innovation and resilience in the dynamic global landscape, Prasada said, adding that the Indian IT industry is a testament to that vision and resilience. "In the fiscal year 2024, this industry recorded a remarkable revenue of \$254 Billion, a figure that underscores its role as a global powerhouse.

"With a presence in over 80 countries and a track record of delivering cutting-edge solutions to fortune 500 companies, Indian IT firms have become synonymous with innovation, reliability, and excellence. Our strength lies in our highly skilled workforce, our deep expertise in emerging technologies, and our ability to partner with the world in its digital transformation journey," he noted.

Rupee rises one paisa against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

The rupee stayed firm and appreciated 1 paisa to close at 86.36 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday supported by positive domestic equities.

Forex traders said the Indian rupee has staged a counterattack against external pressures, gaining support from strong foreign inflows into debt markets.

However, risks remain due to unabated foreign institutional investor sell-off, and uncertainty surrounding Trump's tariff stance could pose challenges to the rupee's upward momentum.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.39 then touched an intraday high of 86.20 and a low of 86.41 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 86.36 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 1 paisa from its previous closing level.

On Wednesday, the rupee appreciated 19 paisa to close at 86.37 against the



US dollar. This is the fifth straight session of gain for the rupee, during which it has added 87 paisa.

Forex traders further said Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has made it clear that the US central bank is prepared to keep rates elevated if inflation remains stubborn and the cautious stance suggests that while rate cuts are on the horizon, the Fed will remain data-

dependent leaving room for surprises. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.46 per cent higher at 103.90.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.10 per cent to \$70.85 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 899.01 points, or 1.19 per cent, to settle at 76,348.06, while the Nifty advanced 283.05 points, or 1.24 per cent, to close at 23,190.65 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,096.50 Crore on a net basis on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, the RBI March Bulletin released on Wednesday said sound fiscal policies, a well-calibrated monetary framework, and digital transformation initiatives are expected to provide a strong foundation for long-term sustainable economic growth.

IN BRIEF

VIT-AP UNIVERSITY HOSTS GOOGLEDEVS SPRINT 2K25 HACKATHON IN COLLABORATION WITH GOOGLE CLOUD

Amaravati: VIT-AP University, in collaboration with Google Cloud, organised a 12-hour Hackathon event, GoogleDevs Sprint 2K25, on March 19, 2025. This event was exclusively designed for VIT-AP students as part of Digital Campus 2.0 on Google Cloud. Approximately 350 teams registered for the hackathon, out of which 160 teams were selected to participate after an elimination round.



VIT-AP UNIVERSITY, BVRSICENT AND CYIENT FOUNDATION TO FOSTER INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Hyderabad: Vellore Institute of Technology - Andhra Pradesh (VIT-AP) University, Amaravati, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Cyient Foundation, the CSR arm of Cyient Limited, in collaboration with the Dr. BVR Mohan Reddy School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (BVR SCIENT) at IIT Hyderabad.

Between Giggles and Goodbyes

A heartfelt collection of vignettes capturing the humour, warmth, and depth of a mother-daughter bond, writes SWATI PAL

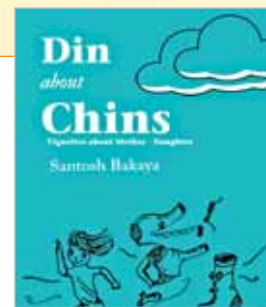
Writing about the parent — child bond or about children growing up, is no easy task. One can descend to complete sentimentality or become a dead bore. Reading 'Din about Chins, Vignettes about Mother-Daughter', penned by the prolific author, Santosh Bakaya was thus an extremely invigorating experience. Not only does she write with great ease but her writing has a remarkable blend of wit and philosophy, making the reader both smile as well as tear up. Santosh Bakaya has to be met with. I did. She is so full of life and empathy. Her laughter and the warmth in her eyes hold the promise of friendship and a deep-rooted generosity of spirit.

The book begins with a poem, 'Hush what is that?' extracted from Learning and Creativity (pub 2016) which will tug at your heartstrings. The too true and sweet narrative of a feisty mom chasing her daughter to put on socks, will fill any parent with nostalgia. The role reversal at the end will bring a sigh and a wistful smile to your face. The poem sets the tone for the vignettes. Words have a certain tempo as they are penned by Santosh Bakaya, they seem to gurgle and splash around and one of the devices that help in doing this is her use of alliteration such as 'Giggling at a gaggle of geese', 'plucky pups, the mischievous monkeys, the grandiose green of the gulmohar'. The words have a rhyme and rhythm as one can see in the initial 'From the Writers Desk' and the overall effect is captivating. She manages to encapsulate the life of her daughter from birth to late teens and the reader will feel as if the child is someone s/he knows. One can picture the child prancing around to the melody of her favourite Bollywood number, one can hear her ribbing her mother (what an amazing variety of names she has for her mother) and admonishing her for being loud or not so aptly dressed. The daughter is special and yet could well be any daughter...so universal is the appeal in the way she has been described by Santosh Bakaya. The elation of being a loved and needed mother, the

desire to understand every mood at every moment of her daughter's life, the mixed feelings of reluctance to let go and yet, the pride at seeing the larger universe to which her daughter belongs - Bakaya may be writing about herself but in many ways, she has written for every mother.

The title vignette is droll, just like Santosh Bakaya's humour. You discover why there is a din about chins in the Bakaya household and you enter the family not as a voyeur but as an invisible member. Iha is mercurial and you will love her as much as Santosh does. And you will be curious to know more about the personal lives of all the members of the family, so subtly does Bakaya draw you within its folds.

Memories jostle with one another and Bakaya moves effortlessly as well as with speed between them. 'Of Teddy bears, calories and clouds' is one such example of Iha as a little girl imagining herself to be a teddy bear in a ditty used by her mother to make her walk and years later, the mother recalling those times. Iha now has complete control of her life and the mother grasps at the memories of her little girl, almost as if she is clutching on to a time when she called the shots for her daughter. There is profundity in the moving simplicity of narration - the philosophy that time and tide wait for nobody and that all we have are memories of time past; the umbilical cord between mother and child remains unseen but strong, understood by both and expressed at times. Another vignette that is touching even as it is written with



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: Din about Chins
Author: Santosh Bakaya
Publisher: Penprints, Kolkata, 2025
Price: ₹450/-

Bakaya's characteristic wry humour is 'Oh the horrel of it!' One never forgets the lisp of children and parents always remain the safest refuge for children, no matter how grown up they are, that's what this beautiful vignette lovingly underlines.

As said earlier, Iha is mercurial and you will fall in love with her. Capricious of temperament, she is generous and will give the shirt off her back if needed as she does in the vignette, 'Red towel' and at the same

time, she is grounded, not forgetting to scold her father for appearing in front of the domestic help, in, of all things, a red towel! The remarkable blend of wicked humour camouflaging a deep thoughtfulness is all too evident in the next vignette, 'I want you to have

LANGUAGE, LOVE, HARMONY

The vignette, 'Why are you teaching her Urdu?' seems a little different at first reading as it foregrounds the perpetuation of hate politics between India and Pakistan and the politicising of language. It is a significant vignette putting into focus the author's views about cross border conflict and harmony. But it is young Iha's questions, 'How can one hate a language, mom?' or again, 'Why attack music, is it not the food of love?' that will haunt the reader. Many of the Vignettes will bring a tear to the eyes of the reader or a lump in the throat as does 'Yummy mummy anything for a hungry tummy' while there is poetic strain all along, most evident in such vignettes as 'The fantastic feat of feisty feet'.

a good time, in which the reader is amused, both by Iha's antics as much as by the author mother who ends the vignette with the lines, 'As she left the room, I furtively bent down to salvage my fallen jaw from the ground. No, she did not turn back to see me stooping so.' Again, in 'The Inside Story' we are enchanted by Iha's glee at her first tattoo and her matter-of-fact attitude at having got a scholarship for her essay.

Iha, like children do, constantly surprises her mother and teaches her more than she knows. We see the author invariably wondering why she hadn't thought of something that Iha did, as we see in 'Is Christmas already around the corner?' Memories of these lessons learnt may make the author lachrymose as she admits readily but for the reader, it is again a sharp reminder that indeed, the child IS father of the man. In the vignette 'Injustice', the author observes about Iha, 'Injustice anywhere was, of course, a threat to justice everywhere, she has realised that, and could not tolerate belligerence in any

form'. Over and over again we see Iha's generosity as she abundantly gives away her newly bought hoodies in the vignette, 'Which brand?'

Many of the Vignettes are quirky and end unexpectedly; the title arouses your curiosity and makes you think along a certain direction, but the ending is like a jack in the box, popping up to tickle your funny bone. You will need to read 'Love never dies' to understand this observation.

There is a lot of bantering between mother and daughter, sharper because of a shared bond over language and literature. While we see that in many Vignettes, it is pronounced in 'The flurry about egg curry'. We see this even in 'I am jiggered', a vignette that shows the camaraderie between the mother and the daughter and the Roald Dahl connect.

There are lessons to be learnt from these Vignettes, Institutions need to be careful about the mental health of their students, else they may scar children forever.

(The author is the Professor and Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi)

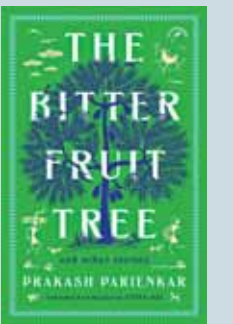
STORIES EVERYWHERE FOUND

Many of the vignettes have Iha saying that her mother should concentrate on food and not listen in on conversations of others, for food for thought. But it is clear that Santosh Bakaya finds a story everywhere and in everything, be it dins about chins or her daughter, Iha. And we all love a good storyteller.

MARCH READS



Book: Goa
Author: Subodh Kerkar, Kunal Ray
Publisher: Aleph Book
Price: ₹595



Book: The Bitter-Fruit Tree
Author: Prakash Parienkar
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹370



Book: Each Little Bird That Sings
Author: Jayantika Davé
Publisher: Rupa
Price: ₹495



Book: Futuresmith
Author: James Allen
Publisher: Rupa
Price: ₹250

NEW LAUNCH

POETRY THAT SETS YOU FREE

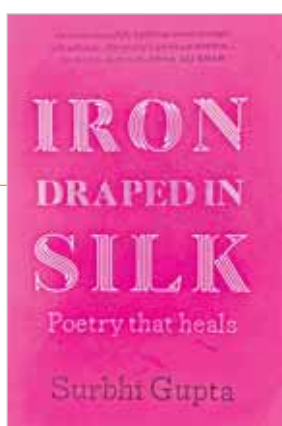
'Mother, why can't I be like them? Because you are meant to be you.'

BY TEAM VIVA

These words, simple yet powerful, set the tone for 'Iron Draped in Silk: Poetry that Heals' by Surbhi Gupta. The collection is a heartfelt exploration of self-acceptance, resilience, and the quiet power of embracing one's own identity. With verses that peel away the layers of doubt and societal expectations, Gupta urges the reader to trust in their own magic, to stand firm in their truth.

One of the most moving sections, 'Trust the Magic' Within You, is beautifully complemented by perfect illustrations of a mother and daughter, capturing the essence of love, reassurance, and the strength passed down through generations. The poetry within this section speaks to every person who has ever questioned their worth, reminding them that their existence is not meant to be measured against others but celebrated for its own unique brilliance.

In pieces like 'You are you, not them!', she challenges the reader to let go of external validation and embrace the freedom of self-acceptance. The emotions are raw, the words unfiltered, carrying the weight of lived experiences. In one particularly striking poem, a woman looks into the mirror, seeing herself as she once was, content, unbothered by others' opinions, only to realise how easily she let external voices shatter her confidence. But through self-love, she rebuilds, proving that healing is possible when one learns to nurture the soul within. For every woman who has ever felt unheard, unseen, or unworthy, this book is a reminder that strength and softness can coexist. With its deeply emotional verses and evocative illustrations, it speaks to the heart, offering comfort, courage, and a quiet revolution, one where women reclaim their voices, their confidence, and their right to be exactly who they are.



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: Iron Draped in Silk
Author: Surbhi Gupta
Publisher: White Falcon Publishing
Price: ₹699/-

Turning Pages into Painting

A definitive tribute, 'Bimal Das Gupta: An Ode to a Legend,' explores his artistic evolution, abstract mastery, and enduring legacy in modernism, says SAKSHI PRIYA

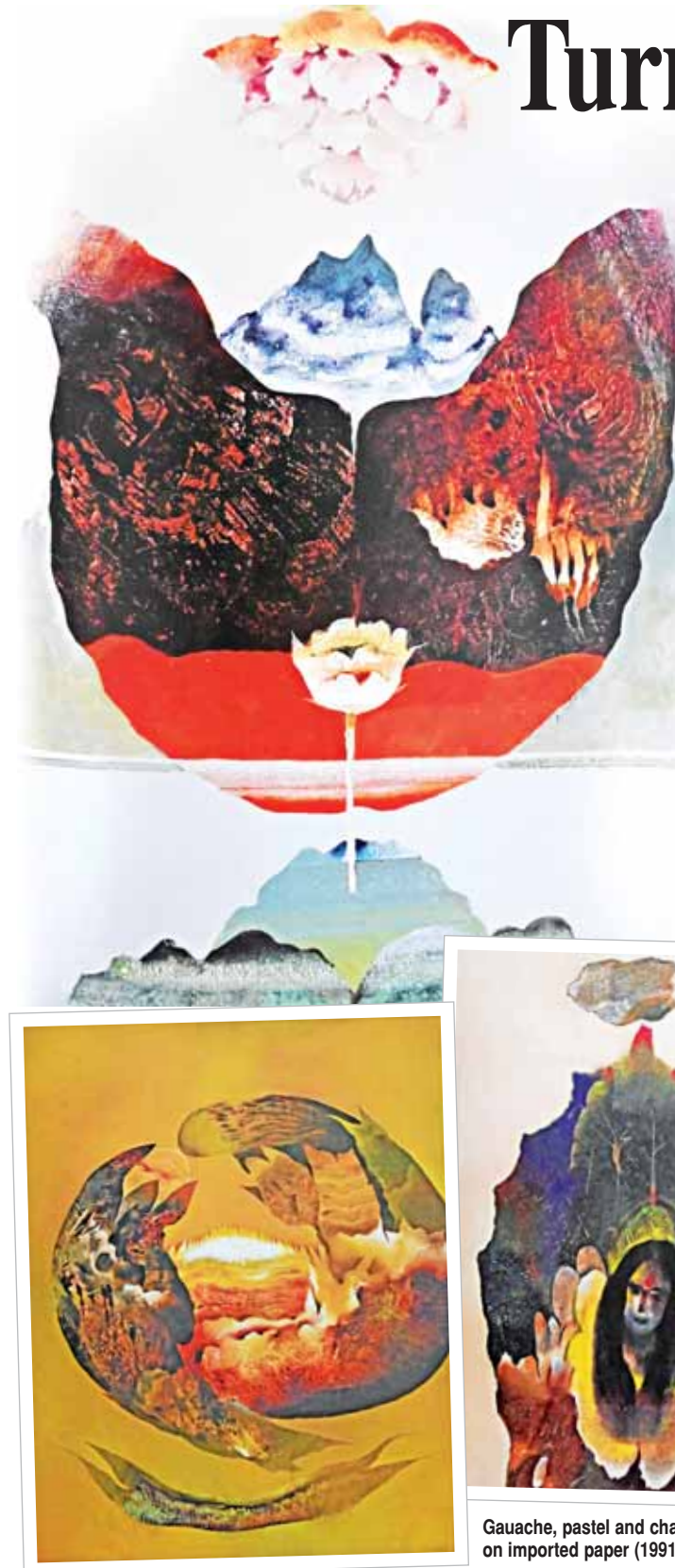
Bimal Das Gupta's legacy is one that deserves far more recognition than it has received over the years. A pioneer of abstraction in Indian modernism, he defied artistic conventions, mastering multiple mediums with an effortless fluidity that set him apart. On the occasion of his 30th death anniversary, *Bimal Das Gupta: An Ode to a Legend* pays tribute to his extraordinary contributions, offering a deep dive into his artistic journey and the sheer brilliance of his work.

Edited and curated by Archana Khare Ghose and curated by Vikram Mayor, Art Curator of Gallery Silver Scapes, and Uday Jain, Art Curator of Dhoomimal Gallery, the book is a comprehensive collection of essays, archival material, and personal anecdotes. It features contributions from notable art critics, historians, and artists, including Ashok Vajpeyi, Ina Puri, Prayag Shukla, and Niren Sengupta, each offering unique perspectives on Gupta's impact on Indian modernism. The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) has also contributed images from its permanent collection, reinforcing his place in India's artistic history.

The book meticulously traces Gupta's artistic evolution, starting with his early watercolours from the 1930s, where his deep connection to nature is evident. His landscapes from this period, such as the Fantasy series, demonstrate his mastery of light and composition. His fascination with marine landscapes, developed from his frequent travels by ship, is reflected in his seascapes from 1970 to 1982, capturing the ever-changing moods of the ocean. The book also highlights his experimentation with Neo-Tantric abstraction in the late 1960s, where symbols, dots, and strokes of red evoke deeper philosophical meanings, as seen in Prakriti.



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: An Ode to a Legend
Publisher: Gallery Silver Scapes & Dhoomimal Gallery
Price: ₹5000/-



Gauache, pastel and charcoal on imported paper (1991)

His shift from figuration to abstraction is explored through essays that detail his influences—from the landscapes of Bengal and Rajasthan to his exposure to European modernism during his travels to Poland, Germany, and France. This period marked a turning point in his career, inspiring semi-abstract and fully abstract compositions such as Houses, a constructivist cityscape that showcases his evolving artistic language.

The book includes rare archival material, such as a 1949 oil painting that demonstrates his early forays into abstraction, blending cubist influences with Indian motifs.

'The Cosmic Dance,' an abstract interpretation of Shiva and Parvati, is another highlight, capturing movement and energy through vibrant colour choices. His later works from the 1980s, particularly his acrylic pieces, reveal a striking interplay of opacity and transparency, imitating the wash-like effect of watercolours.

Through *Bimal Das Gupta: An Ode to a Legend*, his story resurfaces with renewed vigour. The book offers an in-depth understanding of his artistic brilliance, celebrating an artist who saw beyond form and colour, capturing the essence of nature and abstraction in a way that remains unparalleled.

BCCI lifts saliva ban in IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The BCCI on Thursday lifted the ban on use of saliva on the ball in the upcoming Indian Premier League after a majority of captains agreed to its proposal, making it the first major cricket competition to do away with the restriction that was a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision was taken at the captains' meeting in Mumbai ahead of the league starting on Saturday.

"The saliva ban has been lifted. Majority of captains were in favour of the move. Some had reservations about the re-introduction, some sat on the fence but majority of them supported the move," a top BCCI official said.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) had banned the age-old practice of applying saliva to shine the ball as a precautionary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which health practitioners advocated strict hygiene protocols and physical distancing.

In 2022, the world body made the ban permanent. The IPL too included the ICC ban in its playing conditions in the aftermath of the pandemic but its guidelines are outside the purview of the sport's governing body.

With the development on Thursday, the IPL became the first major cricketing event to re-introduce saliva's use after the pandemic. The captains meeting, which was scheduled to begin at 12.30 pm in Mumbai, did not start on time due to a delay in arrival of a few team officials at the BCCI



office. Now that the ban is revoked in the IPL, the ICC too might review its stance on the subject.

On the sidelines of the ICC Champions Trophy, senior India pacer Mohammed Shami had spoken about the need to use saliva on the ball in what has become a predominantly batters' game.

The likes of Vernon Philander and Tim Southee had backed Shami's call.

"We keep appealing that we should be allowed to use saliva so that we can bring reverse swing back into the game and it becomes interesting," Shami had said during the 50-over event in Dubai, where India emerged victorious.

Also on the agenda of captains' meeting was the contentious Impact Player rule which the BCCI had already extended till at least 2027.

The likes of Rohit Sharma and more

recently Hardik Pandya have expressed their reservations on the playing strategy.

"While a few have raised objections on the Impact Player rule, it has benefitted uncapped batters and bowlers who otherwise won't get to play," the official said.

DRS extended to height and off-side widens The BCCI also approved the use of DRS for height widens and widens outside the off-stump.

"Hawk eye and ball tracking will be used to decide on the height widens and widens outside the off-stump," the official added.

It was also decided that one ball will be changed in the second innings of an evening game after the 11th over due to dew.

"This is not a rule change, it's just an understanding for this year between teams and umpires. The changed ball will have wear and tear," an official said.

2028 games to be catalyst for rebuild: LA Olympics head Casey Wasserman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Costa Navarino

After deadly fires devastated much of Los Angeles, organisers of the 2028 Olympics told the IOC on Thursday how the city will rebuild with help from the Games. Count on Kendrick Lamar, too, to be part of "the greatest show on earth" in three years.

"The rebirth, the rebuild, maybe reimagining LA 2.0 and the Olympics as a catalyst for all those things we think is really part of our ethos," organising committee chairman Casey Wasserman said.

"You can't have a natural disaster at that scale in a city as big and as important as Los Angeles and not have it be part of your core philosophy going forward," he said in an interview before giving sports leaders an update at the International Olympic Committee's annual meeting.

Lamar would be a globally popular part of the opening ceremony on July 14, 2028, after his stunning halftime show at the Super Bowl last month.

"Fortunately in my day job I represent Kendrick Lamar," said Wasserman, who heads an international talent and promotions agency. "He is truly an LA icon so I think it would be a pretty fair bet that Kendrick will be involved in the Olympics in Los Angeles in some way."

The wildfires in January have reset the daily life and global perception of the city. "Everyone loves a comeback story,"

Wasserman told IOC members on Thursday. Olympic venues and operational plans escaped serious damage.

"From purely an Olympics perspective we got very lucky. That's not the most important thing," Wasserman told the AP on Wednesday. "What's important is helping people get back into their homes, get back settled, get back with their lives."

You can't have a natural disaster at that scale in a city as big and as important as LA and not have it be part of your core philosophy going forward

— CASEY WASSERMAN, CHAIRMAN

Olympic athlete visas another expected challenge for LA organisers is ensuring athletes, officials and fans from every Olympic team feel welcome and safe going to the United States in what shapes to be a turbulent future for the world.

"Irrespective of politics today, America will be open and accepting to all 209 countries for the Olympics," Wasserman said. "LA is the most diverse city in the history of humanity and we will welcome the people from around the world and give them all a great time."

Updating IOC and sports leaders on Thursday, Wasserman said his team made "significant strides" with President Donald Trump's administration, which has security obligations for the Olympics and subsequent Paralympics.

"I have met with President Trump and his team both prior to his inauguration and again last month," the LA Olympics leader said. "We have a regular cadence across all federal agencies with leadership from the president to make sure that these Games deliver for all our constituents."

The US Visa programme and current restrictions for more than 40 countries who should compete in LA was the subject of a sharp question from IOC member Ingmar de Vos, the equestrian official who leads the collective group of Summer Games sports bodies. De Vos cited a "red list" ban on travel to the US from 11 countries. "I don't anticipate any, any problems from any countries to come and participate," Wasserman replied, noting the US State Department has a "fully staffed desk" to help prepare.

"In my many conversations with President Trump and Secretary (Marco) Rubio they understand the scale and complexity required to deliver these Games, the access required for not just athletes but for delegations, and the incredibly short time frame on which to do those."

Wasserman insisted "with all due respect to FIFA," visa issues for the Olympics are more complicated than for the World Cup in men's soccer which the U.S. is co-hosting next year with Canada and Mexico.

His audience included IOC member Gianni Infantino, the FIFA president who has closely aligned himself with Trump.

Bonus point system to be pondered over for World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is likely to ponder over a new bonus points system during its board meeting in April which could give more weightage to victories against higher-ranked teams during the next World Test Championship cycle.

The 2025-27 WTC cycle will begin with India's five-match away Test series against England in June.

As per the prevailing rules, the team winning by the smallest margin or by an innings gets 12 points, six points for a tie and four points for a draw.

But this could see a change as the global governing body, as per a report in Telegraph, is considering awarding bonus points for innings victories or for a win above a certain margin such as 100 runs.

"In fact, issues such as giving bonus points for innings wins etc has been in

continuous discussion from the beginning of the WTC, as many teams felt that due weight is not getting for wins against big teams," a source close to the development said.

"So, such topics have been a part of discussions, and this could again come up

As per the prevailing rules, the team winning by the smallest margin or by an innings gets 12 points, six points for a tie and four points for a draw

for deliberations," he said.

But this could now change as the ICC might bring in bonus points for landslide wins, and extra points could be given to victories over frontline teams such as India, Australia and England, as per their rankings.

"Yeah, it's a good move if it really happens. The teams will be more motivated to go for results, as we could see some

exciting games," a former India player told PTI on condition of anonymity.

The ICC is also mulling giving extra points for wins away from home. "Yeah, it will be a motivating factor for, you know, those 'smaller' teams, Look, when New Zealand beat India last year, it was a historic win for them as not many teams came here and beat us. But they did not get any extra points for it."

"While winning away from home in itself can act as a motivating factor, now the teams will have that carrot in front of them extra points, if it really happens," he added.

Other than this, the ICC board meeting might also consider the two-tier Test system, which is vocally supported by Cricket Australia.

"It needs a lot of discussion before putting into practice as some teams might feel deprived of regular chances to play against strong teams like India or Australia" the player added.

Chahal, Dhanashree granted divorce

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

A family court here on Thursday allowed the joint plea filed by cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal and his estranged wife seeking divorce by mutual consent.

The estranged couple appeared before the family court in Bandra.

Chahal's advocate Nitin Gupta said the family court has granted decree on the joint petition filed by Chahal and Verma

for divorce by mutual consent.

The court noted that the parties have complied with the consent terms.

"The family court has accepted the joint petition filed by Chahal and Verma seeking divorce by mutual consent," Gupta said. Chahal and Verma got married in December 2020. As per their petition, they separated in June 2022.

On February 5, they filed a joint petition before the family court seeking divorce by mutual consent.

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday

requested the family court to decide the divorce plea by Thursday, considering the fact that Chahal would not be available later as he is participating in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament.

The IPL T20 cricket tournament is scheduled to start from March 22. Chahal is part of the Punjab Kings team. The HC on Wednesday also waived the six-month cooling period stipulated for every couple after filing of the divorce plea under the Hindu Marriage Act.

Ex-F1 team owner Eddie Jordan passes away at 76

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Shanghai

Ex-Formula 1 team owner and media personality Eddie Jordan has died, according to a statement by his family. He was 76.

Often known simply as "EJ," he ran his own Jordan team in the 1990s and 2000s in F1. His humor, strong opinions and often extravagant dress sense made Jordan a popular pundit on TV after selling the team in 2005.

Jordan was undergoing treatment for what he had called "quite aggressive" cancer of the bladder and prostate which spread to his spine and pelvis.

The family statement, published by rugby club London Irish, where Jordan was a patron, said he "passed away peacefully with family by his side in Cape Town" early Thursday. "EJ brought an abundance of charisma, energy and Irish charm everywhere he went. We all have a huge hole missing without his presence. He will be missed by so many people, but he leaves us with tonnes of great memories

to keep us smiling through our sorrow."

F1 president and chief executive Stefano Domenicali, who was a senior Ferrari employee when Jordan owned his team, said Jordan was "a protagonist of an era of F1 and he will be deeply missed."

"With his inexhaustible energy he always knew how to make people smile, remaining genuine and brilliant at all times."

Irish businessman Jordan operated his own racing team in lower-level series before moving up to F1 in 1991, giving future seven-time champion Michael Schumacher his first race that year.

Jordan gave Schumacher his break in F1 because his regular driver Bertrand Gachot was sentenced to prison for assaulting a London taxi driver. The then-22-year-old Schumacher was with the team for only a single race before Benetton signed him in controversial circumstances.

"I am deeply saddened by the loss of Eddie Jordan. Eddie was a great individual, who for decades always brought a

smile to the entire F1 paddock," said Flavio Briatore, who then ran Benetton and became a close friend of Jordan, and is now executive adviser at Alpine.

"I have fond memories of the time spent on and off the track with Eddie, and his presence across the entire F1 world will be greatly missed."

Other Jordan drivers over the years included Damon Hill, who won the 1996 championship with Williams and gave Jordan its first win in torrential rain in 1998, future Ferrari driver Rubens Barrichello, and Heinz-Harald Frentzen, who was third in the championship for Jordan in 1999. Jordan Grand Prix won four races before Jordan sold the team in 2005. Following more sales and name changes since then, the team competes as Aston Martin.

"Eddie Jordan was one of the all-time motorsport greats. He was a one-off, a wonderful human being, and a charismatic leader who founded this team and took it to F1 in 1991," Aston Martin team principal Andy Cowell said in a statement.

Riyan Parag to lead RR in first three IPL games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Rising star Riyan Parag will lead Rajasthan Royals (RR) in their first three IPL games as regular captain Sanju Samson has been told to avoid wicket-keeping duties by the BCCI due to a finger surgery, which means that he will only be available as a batter in these games.

Samson's finger was fractured after a Jofra Archer delivery hit him during the T20 International against England in Mumbai, following which he had to undergo a minor surgery last month.

While he has been cleared to bat, it is understood that medical and sports science teams at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru have told to give his fingers some more rest before he starts keeping wickets. Therefore, the 23-year-old Parag will have the distinction of being one of the youngest captains in IPL.

Virat Kohli holds the top position in that list having captained Royal Challengers Bengaluru as a 22-year-old.

England coach Tichel takes tips from NBA as its World Cup quest begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

There was outcry in the English media: In its bid to end its decades-long wait for a trophy, England's national team turned to a German. The Daily Mail published a back page headline declaring it a "dark day for England" when it emerged Thomas Tuchel, a serial-winning coach with Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich, would lead the national team into the 2026 World Cup. "I'm sorry, I have a German passport," he said when unveiled by the English Football Association last October.

Tuchel has an easy charm and sharp sense of humor. He will likely need both in the role.

Mission impossible?

For England's men, their one and

only major trophy was the 1966 World Cup. Tuchel's predecessor, Gareth Southgate, came closest to ending that drought by leading England to the final of back-to-back European Championships and the semifinals of the 2018 World Cup. Southgate was credited with making fans fall back in love with the national team, yet at last year's Euros he had to contend with fierce criticism from the terraces, with some venting their fury by throwing plastic beer cups in his direction when he went to applaud them after one match. That was despite England advancing to the knockout stage as group winner. It went on to reach the Euros final, where it lost 2-1 to Spain, with the winning goal coming in the 86th minute.

No other England manager reached the final of two major tournaments, yet

Southgate was still considered by some to be a failure. No wonder he's opted against giving advice to Tuchel. "I've already decided, I think the best way I can help the next England manager is to stay out of the way," Southgate said. "I've had my time, I loved it, I'm not missing too much of it at the moment, but I think it's important I stay out of the way and allow Thomas to do his job."

In a hurry

Tuchel is a man in a rush. He is contracted until the World Cup and charged with the responsibility of leading a talented squad to glory. He is not hiding from that fact.

"He said the goal is to put another star on the jersey," said defender Dan Burn, referring to the one star above England's badge that represents its World Cup win in 1966.

In his first meeting with his players this week ahead of World Cup qualifiers against Albania on Friday and Latvia on Monday, Tuchel informed them they only had 24 training days ahead of the tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

NBA style

Southgate was credited with creating a club-like atmosphere within the national team working hard to ensure there were no divisions carried over from club rivalries and improving the relationship with the media, which had been fractious in the past. Tuchel, too, wants to create a "brotherhood."

"He spoke about in the NBA that the best teams historically are normally the teams who are high-fiving, picking each other up and have a lot of those interactions," Burn said.

DETAIL NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

No. E-593357/116

The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam invites bids for the following building works from registered appropriate class of contractor under PWD (Building), Assam having experience of similar nature of work in Assam.

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 19-03-2025 (1100 hours) to 09-04-2025 (1400 hours). The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

Group no.	Name of work	Approximate value of work (in lakh)	Time of completion (in months)	Tender fee	Earnest Money Deposit	
					General category	Reserved category
Group -21	Construction of teachers residential quarter at: 1) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (Type-III), Birshing Jarua (18020332909) in Dhubri district, 2) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (Type-III), Nayer Alga (18020435502) in Dhubri district.	239.5	6	₹ 4,790.00	₹ 4,790,000.00	₹ 2,39,500.00
Group -34	Construction of teachers residential quarter at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Awasiya Vidyalaya, Majuli (18310402414) in Majuli district	119.75	6	₹ 2,395.00	₹ 2,39,500.00	₹ 1,19,750.00

Note:

- Online mode of submission for both technical and financial bid is mandatory.
- A hard copy of the technical bid submitted online is also to be submitted at the office of the undersigned on or before 09-04-2025 up-to 1400 hours for evaluation purpose. For any discrepancy between the online bid and the hard copy of the bid, the online bid will govern and will be considered for evaluation.
- Along-with the hard copy of the technical bid, the following documents must also be submitted on or before 09-04-2025 up-to 1400 hrs :-
 - Original Power of Attorney for signing the bid, if any.
 - Copy of bid security/ EMD submitted online at www.assamtenders.gov.in.
 - Copy of tender fee submitted online at www.assamtenders.gov.in.
- Bidders are advised to scan their original technical papers at a resolution of 100 dpi (in colour mode) in ".pdf" format for multiple pages with maximum file size of 25 MB. If the file size exceeds 25 MB, the bidders are advised to create multiple files and upload the same in "Upload Additional Document" stage.
- In the event of date of bid opening being a holiday, the activities will take place on the next working day.
- All the interested bidders are requested to read the bid document carefully before submission of their bid.


 Sd/- Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/4109/24/21-Mar-25

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