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**PIONEER IN SHORT**

**EX-RAILWAY MINISTER MUKUL ROY DIES**

Former railway minister and senior West Bengal politician Mukul Roy passed away due to cardiac arrest early Monday at a private hospital in Salt Lake. He was 71 and is survived by his son, Subhranshu Roy. Roy had been battling multiple ailments, including dementia, and had recently slipped into a coma. A founding member of the Trinamool Congress, Roy began his political journey in the Youth Congress before joining Mamata Banerjee in 1998. He rose to become the party's general secretary and served as its leader in the Rajya Sabha, later holding the posts of Minister of State for Shipping and Railway Minister in the UPA-2 Government. Renowned as a master strategist and backroom operator, Roy played a key role in consolidating TMC's district-level strength and orchestrating defections from rival parties. In 2017, he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party but returned to TMC shortly after, leading to disqualification under anti-defection rules. Often called the "Chanakya of West Bengal politics," he gradually withdrew from public life as health declined.

## Prahaar: India's new national counter-terror policy unveiled



Representative image ISTOCK

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 New Delhi

The Union Government on Monday unveiled the country's first National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy-Prahaar — outlining a framework to tackle existing and emerging security threats. The document highlights dangers ranging from cross-border terrorism and cyber

intrusions to the misuse of drones and advanced technologies. The strategy is based on zero tolerance, intelligence-led prevention and disruption of extremist violence that aims to deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, weapons and safe havens.

The policy announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is based on seven key

PRAHAAR	
India's first comprehensive national counter-terrorism framework by the MHA	
THE SEVEN KEY PILLARS OF STRATEGY	
<b>Prevention:</b> Intelligence-led disruption of violence.	<b>Response:</b> coordination between Central, State, District authorities.
<b>Aggregating Internal Capacities:</b> Filling resource gaps in CT agencies.	<b>Human Rights &amp; Rule of Law:</b> Just laws and multiple levels of legal redressal.
<b>Attenuating Enabling Conditions:</b> Addressing radicalisation, poverty, and unemployment.	<b>International Alignment:</b> Shaping global counter-terror efforts and treaties.
<b>Recovery &amp; Resilience:</b> Reintegration through a whole-of-society approach.	

pillars to counter the terror threats emanating from India or abroad — prevention, responses, aggregating internal capacities, human rights and Rule of Law-based processes, attenuating the conditions enabling terrorism including radicalisation, aligning and shaping the international efforts to counter terrorism and recovery and resilience through a whole-of-

society approach. "There has been a history of sporadic instability in the immediate neighbourhood of India, which has often given rise to ungoverned spaces. Besides, a few countries in the region have sometimes used terrorism as an instrument of State policy," the document notes, without naming Pakistan.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## PM writes to West Bengal, says change is inevitable

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 New Delhi/Kolkata

In a first before a State Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday wrote an open letter in Bangla saying he was "heartbroken by the deceit and anguish" faced by a cross-section of citizens under the current Trinamool Congress led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The letter comes months after PM had asserted that Ganga will now flow to West Bengal after massive electoral win in the Bihar Assembly polls, where the RJD-Congress combine was routed in November last year.

It coincides with the State BJP's ongoing house-to-house *Griha Sampark Abhiyan* during which party leaders will distribute the PM's communication to households during their grassroots outreach programme. "Bengal used to be the nation's vanguard in both financial and industrial sectors in post-Independence India. It pains me to witness the brittle and sick State it has turned



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the ceremonial reception of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi, PTI

into. It is impossible to describe the irreversible damage which six decades of misgovernance and appeasement politics have caused," the PM wrote in his letter.

Naming West Bengal's political and cultural icons such as Swami Vivekananda, Rishi Aurobindo, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee at multiple points in his letter, PM Modi wrote that he regretted the "darkness of chaos that grips West

Bengal" in current times. PM Modi further wrote that while a political change was "inevitable", a "judicious choice" by voters could align the State with the accelerated development seen in the rest of the country. Beginning his letter with *Jai Maa Kali*, the PM targeted the TMC Government on issues ranging from lack of governance and appeasement politics to fake voters, employment deficiency and women's safety.

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**The ByStander**



**FOUR DEAD IN AP MILK TRAGEDY**

AP CM N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday announced ₹ 10 lakh compensation for the families of four people who died after allegedly consuming adulterated milk in East Godavari district. The State will also bear the medical expenses of 12 people hospitalised. Addressing the Assembly, Naidu said a "360-degree inquiry" was underway and warned of stringent action if adulteration was found to be intentional. "Adulteration in any form will not be spared," he said. Two victims died on Sunday and two more on Monday after consuming milk supplied by an unauthorised vendor in Rajamahendravaram. Preliminary findings suggest the contaminated milk triggered renal failure, causing sudden urinary blockage. District Collector Kirithi Chekuri said door-to-door surveys were underway, with blood samples collected from 73 of 106 affected households.

**LOPS MISSING IN MAHARASHTRA**

The Budget Session of the Maharashtra Legislature beginning Monday will be the first without a Leader of Opposition (LoP) in either House. The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has called the vacancy a "threat to democratic norms", arguing that the absence of LoPs weakens institutional checks as the BJP-led Mahayuti holds a commanding majority. Sanjay Raut termed the denial a "blot on democracy". The posts have remained vacant since the 2024 Assembly elections, with no opposition party crossing the 10 per cent threshold required for LoP recognition. Bhaskar Jadhav said there was no clear statutory provision governing the appointment and noted that parties with fewer MLAs had earlier secured the post. Shiv Sena (UBT), with 20 MLAs in the 288-member



President Droupadi Murmu unveiling the sculpture of the first and only Indian Governor-General of Independent India, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi PTI

## INDIA ISSUES ADVISORIES FOR IRAN AND MEXICO

**ASHOKE RAJ** New Delhi

India on Monday issued advisories for Indian nationals in Iran and Mexico, urging heightened caution and, in the case of Iran, immediate evacuation amid escalating security concerns. The Embassy of India, Tehran has asked Indian nationals currently residing in Iran to leave the country using all available means of transport, including commercial flights, as regional tensions



A charred vehicle sits at a damaged supermarket in Guadalajara, Jalisco State, Mexico AP

intensify and fears of potential military escalation grow. Reiterating its 14 January 2026 advisory, the embassy urged all Indian citizens and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) to exercise utmost caution and avoid areas witnessing protests or demonstrations, stay connected with embassy officials and closely follow local media updates.

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## Air ambulance crashes with seven on board



Wreckage of an air ambulance after it crashed near Simaria, in Chhattrapal district, Jharkhand, AP

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 Ranchi

An air ambulance with seven people onboard of Delhi from Ranchi crashed in a forest near Simaria in Jharkhand's Chhattrapal district on Monday. Search and rescue teams have been dispatched, but there was no immediate confirmation about casualties, officials said. An Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) team is also being dispatched for investigation.

The ambulance lost contact with air traffic control around 20 minutes after takeoff at about 7.10 pm. People on board, included a 41-year-old patient and two crew members.

"The aircraft was airborne from Ranchi at 19:11 IST. After establishing contact with Kolkata at 19:34 IST, aircraft lost communication and RADAR contact with Kolkata at approximately 100 NM South-East of Varanasi," read a statement from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Chhattrapal SP Sumit Kumar Agarwal said that the crash site is deep in a forest. "The police team is yet to reach the spot, so we are not in a position to confirm the number of casualties."

Delhi-based non-scheduled operator Redbird has six planes in the fleet, including the one which crashed on Monday evening.

## TN SIR: 74 lakh names deleted

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 Chennai

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday released the final electoral roll for Tamil Nadu, in which 74.07 lakh names of voters were deleted under various categories, leaving the number of electors in the southern State at 5.67 crore.

Addressing the press, Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik said that before the SIR exercise, the State's electorate stood at 6.41 crore. While 97.37 lakh names of voters were deleted during the SIR exercise, 74,07,207 names have been deleted from the State's voters' list during the revision, leaving the number of electors in the southern State at 5.67 crore as on today. She said 7.40 lakh people in the 18-19 age bracket have been included in the electoral roll. Continuous updation will be taken up with immediate effect, she added.

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, with reference to January 1, 2026 as the qualifying date, was conducted in the State from October 27, 2025, and the final electoral roll was published today.

## SC seeks Union Govt reply on shifting coal units from Capital

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday sought responses from the Union ministries of environment (MoEFCC), power and petroleum on the proposal for shifting all coal-based industries out of Delhi-NCR to ensure better air quality.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi Vipul M Pancholi also decided to consider the suggestion that no new coal-based thermal power plant may be established within 300 kilometres of Delhi.

The bench said it will also examine the issue of vehicular air pollution on March 12 based on the suggestions made by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM).

It asked Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan to issue public notices inviting "suggestions, proposal, recommendations" from all stakeholders, including coal-based industries.

"Notices to be deemed



A truck spraying water over Delhi streets amid pollution in an attempt to clear the toxic smog cloud ISTOCK

as served by this court. The action taken plan by all States shall give a full description of the notices given in this regard. Notices to mention they have been issued per the directions of this court. Objections to the proposed replacement may be submitted," it said.

The bench, which has listed the case for hearing on March 12, sought status reports of different stakeholders on or before the date fixed on the suggestions made by the CAQM to deal with the air pollution issue.

On the issue of long-term measures to deal with

vehicular traffic, it said, "We deem it appropriate to highlight that the other long term solutions are recommended by CAQM and which are to be introduced in a phased manner."

The bench clarified that these notices, to be issued to coal-based industries, are to be deemed as officially served by the judiciary, and the States must subsequently submit "Action Taken Plans" detailing the feedback received from the public and industry players.

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## Killing of 3 ultras major blow to JeM: Army

**MOHIT KANDHARI** Jammu

A seven-member terror module dubbed as the 'Israel group' led by commander of the proscribed Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror outfit, Saifullah, has been killed by the joint team of security forces along with two other terrorists in Kishtwar district on Sunday.

Addressing a joint press conference in Kishtwar on Monday, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Counter-Insurgency Force Delta, Major General APS Bal, along with Inspector General of Police (Jammu Zone) Bhim Sen Tuti, said the killing of three JeM terrorists had dealt a "blow to the terror network" in the region.

The anti-terrorist Operation Trashi-1 also marks the culmination of a relentless, high-altitude joint



Army personnel address a press briefing on the counter-insurgency operation, in Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir, Monday PTI

operation conducted over 326 days in extremely challenging terrain.

The module was under pursuit since April-May last year. Three of its members were eliminated in April 2025, while the remaining

members — including Saifullah, Adil and two others — were on the run.

Based on intelligence inputs from police, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and other sources, a joint counter-terrorist operation, code-

named Operation Trashi-1, was launched on January 14 in the Chhatroo area. Contact with the terrorists was established on January 18 and their well-stocked hideout was busted, the GOC added.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Bomb threats to Assembly, Red Fort; security sweeps launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Bomb threat emails sent to the Delhi Legislative Assembly and the Red Fort on Monday triggered a high alert across the national Capital, with security agencies launching extensive search operations at both locations.

According to officials, the Delhi Secretariat received a bomb threat via email around noon. The Delhi Fire Service said it received a call at 12 pm and immediately dispatched teams to the spot. "Nothing suspicious has been found yet," an official said.

An official communication from the Office of the Speaker, Delhi Legislative

Assembly, dated February 23, 2026, confirmed that threatening emails were received on both the personal email ID of the Speaker and the official email ID of the Assembly Secretariat.

The letter, addressed to the Delhi Police Commissioner, stated that the emails contained serious warnings about a possible bomb blast at the Vidhan Sabha Secretariat and threats directed at the Speaker in person.

The emails were reportedly received on Monday morning. One email was sent at 8.57 am to the Speaker's personal email ID from kristalburnette93@gmail.com. Another was received at 9.08 am on the official email



Tight security arrangements have been put in place at the Red Fort following a threat of a suspected IED attack in New Delhi

ID of the Delhi Legislative Assembly from webbyon76@gmail.com. The emails were allegedly sent in the name of the "Khalistan National Army" and mentioned several individuals.

The Speaker has sought immediate and appropriate action in the matter and asked for an investigation to trace the source of the emails, the letter said.

The official X account of the Delhi Legislative Assembly also confirmed the threat. It stated that the Speaker had received a bomb blast threat via personal email, warning that the Delhi Legislative Assembly would be blown up. The post added that the relevant security department

had been informed and that the Speaker had provided details of the email to the Delhi Police Commissioner while demanding urgent action.

Security personnel conducted thorough checks at the Assembly premises. No explosives or suspicious objects were found during the search, officials said.

Earlier in the day, two schools in Delhi also received bomb threat emails. The Army Public School in Dhaula Kuan and the Air Force Bal Bharti School in Lodhi Road were among the institutions targeted. Police teams, bomb disposal squads and fire department officials carried out searches

at both campuses.

Authorities confirmed that nothing suspicious was detected at the schools.

Security was also tightened at the Red Fort following a similar threat. Teams were deployed to conduct checks in and around the monument. Officials said standard security protocols were activated and the situation was closely monitored.

The incidents come amid heightened security concerns in the capital. Police said all such threats are treated with utmost seriousness, regardless of their authenticity.

Investigators are examining the email headers and digital trail to identify the origin of the messages.

## Delhi to implement Rah-Veer scheme: CM Rekha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Delhi Government will implement the Centre's 'Rah-Veer' scheme, under which citizens who help seriously injured road accident victims within the golden hour will receive a cash reward of ₹25,000, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced on Monday.

The scheme aims to encourage people to assist victims without fear of legal complications and to ensure timely medical care that can save lives.

Announcing the decision, the Chief Minister said the financial incentive has been introduced by the Union



Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to promote humanitarian action. She said citizens often hesitate to help accident victims due to fear of police procedures or legal

entanglements. The scheme, she said, will remove such apprehensions by providing legal protection along with a monetary reward.

"The objective is to ensure that seriously injured road accident victims receive medical attention within the golden hour. Timely help can make the difference between life and death," the Chief Minister said.

Under the scheme, any individual who provides immediate assistance to a seriously injured road accident victim and ensures their transport to a hospital or trauma centre within the golden hour will be eligible for the ₹25,000 reward.

Even if a person helps more than one seriously injured victim in the same accident, the maximum reward payable per incident will remain ₹25,000.

## JNU: Left, ABVP trade blame after clashes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Clashes broke out between two student groups at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) late Sunday night, leaving several students injured and prompting the university administration to promise strict disciplinary action.

The violence followed days of tension on campus over the Vice-Chancellor's recent remarks on UGC equity rules and the rustication of four JNUSU office-bearers earlier this month. The administration on Monday said it has taken "very serious cognisance" of the incident and warned



Left-led students union members speak to the media in New Delhi

that action will be taken under university rules and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

According to the administration's statement, several academic buildings were reportedly locked by a group of protesting students on the night of February 22. It is alleged that some students were threatened and pressured into joining the protest, which led to a scuffle between the two groups.

"JNU administration condemns such unruly behaviour on campus aimed at repeated destruction of public property and its inclusive ethos. Strict action under the university's rules & regulations and under BNS is being taken to ensure a proper academic environment on the campus," the registrar said in a statement issued on February 23.

However, the two rival student groups — the Left-backed JNUSU and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) — have offered sharply different versions of what transpired.

## Govt plans auto-appeal system for delayed services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Delhi Government is planning to introduce a system-driven auto-appeal mechanism under the Delhi (Right of Citizens to Time-Bound Delivery of Services) Act, 2011. The system aimed at ensuring automatic accountability in case of delays in public services.

The proposal was reviewed at a high-level meeting chaired by IT Minister Dr Pankaj Kumar Singh at the Delhi Secretariat on Monday. The move is



intended to ensure that citizens receive time-bound services without having to file appeals themselves if deadlines are missed.

"Our priority is to ensure that citizens receive time-bound services without having to pursue appeals

themselves. A system-driven auto-appeal mechanism will make accountability automatic and transparent," Singh said during the meeting.

At present, 537 services are notified under the Delhi RTS Act and are monitored through the e-SLA (Service Level Agreement) portal.

Under the existing framework, applicants must initiate an appeal if a department fails to deliver a service within the prescribed timeline. Accountability is generally triggered after the breach of deadlines and often involves manual processes.

Officials said the proposed mechanism will automatically generate an appeal as soon as the prescribed Service Level Agreement (SLA) timeline expires. The system will then escalate the matter in a structured and time-bound manner to higher authorities. The upgraded framework will also include real-time dashboards and transparent monitoring tools.

The initiative is aligned with the Cabinet Secretariat's Deregulation Exercise—Phase II, which has called upon states to undertake regulatory and procedural reforms.



President of India Droupadi Murmu, Delhi Police Commissioner Salish Golcha and his spouse at the Delhi Police At Home ceremony held in the national Capital on Monday, where the top brass of Delhi Police, former Delhi Police Commissioners, MHA officials and Delhi Chief Secretary Rajeev Verma, amongst others, graced the occasion.



Vice President of India CP Radhakrishnan, Delhi L-G V K Saxena, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta, Minister of State Harsh Malhotra, Delhi Cabinet Ministers Ashish Sood and Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Lok Sabha MPs Manoj Tiwari and Ramvir Singh Bidhuri at Delhi Police At Home celebrations in the national Capital on Monday. Delhi Minister Parvesh Verma was also present on the occasion.

**GURU GOBIND SINGH INDRAPRASTHA UNIVERSITY**  
(A State University established by Govt. of NCT of Delhi)  
SECTOR-16 C, DWARKA, NEW DELHI-110078  
Ph: 011-25302149-150, Email: purchasebranch@ipu.ac.in  
Website : www.ipu.ac.in

**E-Tender(NIT)**  
The University invites e-tender on e-procurement website of GNCTD-  
[www.govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in](http://www.govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in) from authorised suppliers and manufacturers in two-bid system (technical & financial) for **Supply and Installation of Thermogravimetric Analyser(TGA) under buyback basis at USBAS** of Dwarka campus of the University.  
**Estimated cost of the tender is Rs 48.74 lakh (inclusive of GST)**  
**Pre-bid meeting in this regard is scheduled on 25th February at 11 am.**  
**Last date and time of uploading both the bids is 12th March 2026 upto 1 pm.**  
Further details are available on the University website [www.ipu.ac.in](http://www.ipu.ac.in)  
**Registrar**

**पावरग्रिड POWERGRID**

1. Approval under Regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations' 1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations' 2019  
i) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block and ii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2024-29 tariff block for Petition-i: Assets under "Establishment of 220/66 kV, 2x160 MVA GIS Sub-station at UT Chandigarh along with 220 kV D/C line from Chandigarh GIS to 400/220 kV Panchkula (PG) Substation".

2. The beneficiaries of the above-mentioned Transmission systems are: (a) Ajmer Vidyt Vitran Nigam Ltd. (b) Jaipur Vidyt Vitran Nigam Ltd. (c) Jodhpur Vidyt Vitran Nigam Ltd. (d) Punjab State Electricity Corporation limited (e) Haryana Power Purchase Centre (f) Jammu & Kashmir Power Corporation Ltd. (g) Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd. (h) BSES Yamuna Power Ltd. (i) BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd. (j) Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd. (k) Chandigarh Electricity department (l) Uttaranchal Power Corporation Ltd. (m) North Central Railway (n) New Delhi Municipal council. (o) Uttar Pradesh Power Transmission Corp. Ltd (p) Haryana Vidyt Vitran Nigam Ltd.

3. Tariff details:

a) 2019-24 block		Rs. In Lakhs					
Asset detail	DOCO	Completion Cost as on 31.03.2024	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 2023-24	
Asset-1	24.03.2023	29388.93	AFC approved	0.00	0.00	0.00	111.88 5387.25
			Revised AFC based on truing up	0.00	0.00	0.00	112.57 5106.33
Asset-2	24.03.2023	29388.93	AFC approved	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.65 408.08
			Revised AFC based on truing up	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.71 412.27

b) 2024-29 Block

		Rs. In Lakhs				
Asset detail	Completion Cost as on 31.03.2024	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Combined Asset	36445.58	AFC	5389.39	5696.95	5963.39	5827.04 5691.89

4. A copy of this notice and of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at [www.powergrid.in](http://www.powergrid.in).

5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 6th, 7th & 8th floor, Tower B, World Trade Centre, Naoroji Nagar, New Delhi - 110029 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place: Gurgaon Sd/  
Date: 17.02.2026 General Manager (Commercial)

**POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Enterprise)  
Corp. Office: "Saudamini", Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurugram-122001, (Haryana) Tel.: 0124-2822999 & 2823999  
Reg. Office: B-9, Qutub Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110016, Tel: 011-26560112, 26560115 & 26560193  
Website : www.powergrid.in, Email ID: investors@gpowergrid.co.in, CIN: L40101DL1989G0038121

A Maharashtra PSU

**Public Notice / General Information**

The general public is hereby informed that my client has lawfully purchased the below-described land/property/agricultural land from Smt. Shreya Jain, wife of Sh. Nrip Jain R/o 13, Ashok Avenue, West End Greens Farms, Rajokri, South West Delhi-110038 ("Seller").

The details of the said land of the Seller are as under: Khawat/Khata No. 525/567, Rect. No. 54, Killa No. 9(8-0), 12(8-0), 19(8-0), Fields- 3, land measuring 24 Kanal 0 Marla, out of which Salam Share, as per Jamabandi for the year 2024-2025 and mutation no. 3642, situated at Village Bighawali, Tehsil Hathin, Distt. Palwal ("Scheduled Property/Land").

The said purchase has been undertaken by my Client with due care, proper due diligence. The said Public notice is being issued, so as to ascertain and invite disclosure of any hidden claims, rights, or disputes, if any, relating to the said Scheduled Property/Land.

The Seller had further declared that the said Scheduled Property/Land is completely free from all kinds of encumbrances including but not limited to charges, mortgages, loans, claims, disputes, litigations, attachments, stay orders, ceiling proceedings, acquisition, surplus land, government dues, or any third-party rights or claims whatsoever, and that the title of the Scheduled Property/Land is clear, clean, and marketable. The Seller had further represented and warranted that the Seller has clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership and was in actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession of the said Scheduled Property/Land and that no prior, existing, or subsisting agreement, transaction, understanding, or arrangement of any nature whatsoever, whether oral or written, in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land has been entered into with any third party in respect thereof. It was also declared that no case, proceeding, or dispute in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land is pending before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

Therefore, any person, bank, financial institution, government department, or any other party, firm, company, or entity, who has or claims to have any valid, legal, or equitable right, title, interest, claim, demand, charge, or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land—whether by way of sale, gift, lease, tenancy, license, exchange, partition, mortgage, lien, inheritance, succession, agreement, litigation, decree, stay order, possession, or otherwise—shall intimate the undersigned in writing, along with full particulars of such claim/objection and supporting documentary evidence, within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this notice.

In case no information or objection is received within the stipulated period, it shall be conclusively and lawfully presumed that there exists no encumbrances including but not limited to third-party claim, right, or dispute etc. in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land and my client shall be legally deemed to have clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership therein along with actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession thereon, entitling my Client to lawfully proceed, sell and deal with the Scheduled Property/Land.

Thereafter, any such claim, objection, or dispute shall be treated as legally untenable, deemed to have been waived, and my client shall not be held liable for the same in any civil or criminal proceedings before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

The Scheduled Property/Land shall be deemed to include all rights, easements, pathways, appurtenances, standing crops, trees, plants, constructions, fences, boundary walls, etc. attached thereto.

The general public is hereby cautioned not to deal or enter into any transaction concerning the Schedule Property/Land with any person, party, or entity, failing which such transaction shall be at their own cost, risk and consequences.

This public notice is issued on behalf of my Client with complete bona-fide, transparency, and good faith so as to safeguard my client against any future allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, or collusion or any other allegations whatsoever in relation to the Schedule property. This notice is being issued without prejudice to any of the legal rights, contentions and remedies available to my client under applicable law.

**Durga Lal - Advocate**, Law Consultant Office,  
Office No. 57 Nehru Ground Near Main Post Office,  
B.K. Chowk, NIT Faridabad, Haryana. ENROL. No. PH/5563/2022  
Mobile No.7303834091, Email- lawconsultantsoffice@gmail.com

**Public Notice / General Information**

The general public is hereby informed that my client has lawfully purchased the below-described land/property/agricultural land from Sh. Heera Singh, Son of Sh. Arjan R/o House No. 1386, Goga Patti, Mandkola(217), Tehsil Hathin, Dist: Palwal-121103, Haryana, ("Seller").

The details of the said land of the Seller are as under: Khawat/Khata No. 1926/1908 Rect. No. 78 Killa No. 13(8-0) 16(2(8-0)) 18(8-0) 23(1(2-10) 23(2(5-10) 24(1(7-11) 25(1(3-4) 25(3(2-0) Rect. No. 79 Killa No. 21/1(2(6-3) Rect. No. 113 Killa No. 3(1(7-12) 4(1(1(1-16) 4(1(3(0-15) 5(1(2(4-11), total fields- 13, land measuring 65 Kanal 12 Marla, out of which 51/1312 share, admeasuring 2 Kanal 11 Marla, as per Jamabandi for the year 2021-2022, situated at Village Mandkola, Tehsil Hathin, District Palwal, Haryana ("Scheduled Property/Land").

The said purchase has been undertaken by my Client with due care, proper due diligence. The said Public notice is being issued, so as to ascertain and invite disclosure of any hidden claims, rights, or disputes, if any, relating to the said Scheduled Property/Land.

The Seller had further declared that the said Scheduled Property/Land is completely free from all kinds of encumbrances including but not limited to charges, mortgages, loans, claims, disputes, litigations, attachments, stay orders, ceiling proceedings, acquisition, surplus land, government dues, or any third-party rights or claims whatsoever, and that the title of the Scheduled Property/Land is clear, clean, and marketable. The Seller had further represented and warranted that the Seller has clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership and was in actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession of the said Scheduled Property/Land and that no prior, existing, or subsisting agreement, transaction, understanding, or arrangement of any nature whatsoever, whether oral or written, in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land has been entered into with any third party in respect thereof. It was also declared that no case, proceeding, or dispute in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land is pending before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

Therefore, any person, bank, financial institution, government department, or any other party, firm, company, or entity, who has or claims to have any valid, legal, or equitable right, title, interest, claim, demand, charge, or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land—whether by way of sale, gift, lease, tenancy, license, exchange, partition, mortgage, lien, inheritance, succession, agreement, litigation, decree, stay order, possession, or otherwise—shall intimate the undersigned in writing, along with full particulars of such claim/objection and supporting documentary evidence, within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this notice.

In case no information or objection is received within the stipulated period, it shall be conclusively and lawfully presumed that there exists no encumbrances including but not limited to third-party claim, right, or dispute etc. in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land and my client shall be legally deemed to have clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership therein along with actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession thereon, entitling my Client to lawfully proceed, sell and deal with the Scheduled Property/Land.

Thereafter, any such claim, objection, or dispute shall be treated as legally untenable, deemed to have been waived, and my client shall not be held liable for the same in any civil or criminal proceedings before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

The Scheduled Property/Land shall be deemed to include all rights, easements, pathways, appurtenances, standing crops, trees, plants, constructions, fences, boundary walls, etc. attached thereto.

The general public is hereby cautioned not to deal or enter into any transaction concerning the Schedule Property/Land with any person, party, or entity, failing which such transaction shall be at their own cost, risk and consequences.

This public notice is issued on behalf of my Client with complete bona-fide, transparency, and good faith so as to safeguard my client against any future allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, or collusion or any other allegations whatsoever in relation to the Schedule property. This notice is being issued without prejudice to any of the legal rights, contentions and remedies available to my client under applicable law.

**Durga Lal - Advocate**, Law Consultant Office,  
Office No. 57 Nehru Ground Near Main Post Office,  
B.K. Chowk, NIT Faridabad, Haryana. ENROL. No. PH/5563/2022  
Mobile No.7303834091, Email- lawconsultantsoffice@gmail.com

**Public Notice / General Information**

The general public is hereby informed that my client has lawfully purchased the below-described land/property/agricultural land from Sh. Hari Singh, Son of Sh. Bharti, R/o House No. 218, Ward No. 5, Mandkola(217), District Palwal-121103, Haryana, ("Seller").

The details of the said land of the Seller are as under: Khawat/Khata No. 1365/1358 Rect. No. 153 Killa No. 4(8-0) 5(8-0) 6(8-0), 7(8-0), 8(8-0), 13(1(2-10), total fields- 6, land measuring 42 Kanal 10 Marla, out of which 80/850 share, admeasuring 4 Kanal 0 Marla, as per Jamabandi for the year 2021-2022, situated at Village Mandkola, Tehsil Hathin, District Palwal, Haryana ("Scheduled Property/Land").

The said purchase has been undertaken by my Client with due care, proper due diligence. The said Public notice is being issued, so as to ascertain and invite disclosure of any hidden claims, rights, or disputes, if any, relating to the said Scheduled Property/Land.

The Seller had further declared that the said Scheduled Property/Land is completely free from all kinds of encumbrances including but not limited to charges, mortgages, loans, claims, disputes, litigations, attachments, stay orders, ceiling proceedings, acquisition, surplus land, government dues, or any third-party rights or claims whatsoever, and that the title of the Scheduled Property/Land is clear, clean, and marketable. The Seller had further represented and warranted that the Seller has clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership and was in actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession of the said Scheduled Property/Land and that no prior, existing, or subsisting agreement, transaction, understanding, or arrangement of any nature whatsoever, whether oral or written, in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land has been entered into with any third party in respect thereof. It was also declared that no case, proceeding, or dispute in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land is pending before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

Therefore, any person, bank, financial institution, government department, or any other party, firm, company, or entity, who has or claims to have any valid, legal, or equitable right, title, interest, claim, demand, charge, or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land—whether by way of sale, gift, lease, tenancy, license, exchange, partition, mortgage, lien, inheritance, succession, agreement, litigation, decree, stay order, possession, or otherwise—shall intimate the undersigned in writing, along with full particulars of such claim/objection and supporting documentary evidence, within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this notice.

In case no information or objection is received within the stipulated period, it shall be conclusively and lawfully presumed that there exists no encumbrances including but not limited to third-party claim, right, or dispute etc. in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land and my client shall be legally deemed to have clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership therein along with actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession thereon, entitling my Client to lawfully proceed, sell and deal with the Scheduled Property/Land.

Thereafter, any such claim, objection, or dispute shall be treated as legally untenable, deemed to have been waived, and my client shall not be held liable for the same in any civil or criminal proceedings before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

The Scheduled Property/Land shall be deemed to include all rights, easements, pathways, appurtenances, standing crops, trees, plants, constructions, fences, boundary walls, etc. attached thereto.

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This public notice is issued on behalf of my Client with complete bona-fide, transparency, and good faith so as to safeguard my client against any future allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, or collusion or any other allegations whatsoever in relation to the Schedule property. This notice is being issued without prejudice to any of the legal rights, contentions and remedies available to my client under applicable law.

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# "Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi"

## One Year of Cultural Renaissance, Spiritual Resurgence and Celebrating Delhi's Living Heritage

For decades, Delhi has been recognized primarily as the seat of power and administration. In the past year, however, the capital has begun to redefine itself as a vibrant cultural heartbeat of the nation. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Smt. Rekha Gupta, governance in Delhi has moved beyond infrastructure and institutions, embracing a broader vision that nurtures cultural pride, spiritual depth, and emotional connection alongside development.

Driven by a clear and inclusive vision, the Rekha Government has reimagined Delhi as a dynamic meeting point of folk heritage, spiritual awareness, and contemporary progress. This transformation is not the outcome of a single initiative, but the result of a sustained and comprehensive approach that celebrates India's diverse traditions on a common platform. Grounding the ideals of "Sarva Dharma Sambhav" and "Unity in Diversity" in tangible action, the government has ensured that every faith, every festival, and every cultural expression receives equal respect and recognition.

Guided by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's mantra of "Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi," the Rekha Government continues to steer Delhi toward a new era defined by cultural vibrancy and responsive governance where progress and tradition advance hand in hand.

### The Flame of Cultural Awakening from Kartavya Path

"Today Deepotsav is not merely a festival of lamps, but a sign of a new cultural revolution. Delhi is no longer just the capital of governance, but the heartbeat of cultural consciousness." - Rekha Gupta, Chief Minister

For the first time since Independence, the Deepotsav at Kartavya Path was more than a festive celebration—it was a powerful statement of intent. It signaled Delhi's readiness to carry its rich cultural legacy into a new era, seamlessly blending tradition with cutting-edge technology. As thousands of drones illuminated the night sky with scenes from the Ramayana and millions of lamps lit up the capital, an overwhelming wave of public participation transformed the occasion into a landmark moment.

More than an event, it emerged as a symbol of Delhi's renewed cultural confidence, fresh momentum, and evolving identity. Describing it as the "dawn of a new cultural revolution," the Chief Minister underscored a larger vision: a Delhi that stands not only as the nation's administrative capital, but also as its cultural epicenter.

### Chhath on the Yamuna: Where Faith Found Its Grand Return

After years of anticipation, the celebration of ChhathMahaparv on the banks of the Yamuna became a powerful reaffirmation of faith and cultural pride. What unfolded was not merely a ritual observance, but a renewed commitment to honoring tradition with dignity and scale. Across Delhi, more than 1,000 well-equipped Chhath ghats were established, including 17 grand model ghats along the Yamuna from Palla to Kalindi Kunj, with dedicated arrangements in every district and sub-district. Comprehensive facilities—tents, uninterrupted electricity, clean drinking water, mobile toilets, medical support, sanitation drives, and strong security measures—ensured a smooth and respectful experience for devotees.

For the first time, the government partnered in the Mahaparv at such an extensive level, giving it an organized and majestic character. Bhojpuri and Maithili cultural performances added vibrancy to the spiritual atmosphere, celebrating the richness of folk heritage.

The Chief Minister's personal offering of the morning and evening Arghya, in keeping with Purvanchal traditions, reinforced a clear message: Chhath is not limited to one community—it is a celebration that belongs to all of Delhi.

### Sawan in Service: Reimagining the Kanwar Yatra Experience

During the sacred month of Sawan, as thousands of Kanwariyas embarked on



their devotional journey, Delhi set a new standard in service, efficiency, and sensitivity for the Kanwar Yatra.

A streamlined single-window system ensured permissions were granted within 72 hours, while a transparent Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism provided advance financial support. Robust security, dedicated health services, proper lighting, uninterrupted clean drinking water, and extensive sanitation drives were carefully arranged—each initiative aimed at ensuring comfort, safety, and dignity for the devotees. This was more than administrative management; it was a deliberate effort to build trust. It was not just an event; it was a reaffirmation of service.

The Chief Minister personally showered flower petals on the Kanwariyas, emphasizing that "the government is not an organizer, but a servant." Her gesture symbolized a deeper connection between governance and the people. When faith is met with thoughtful service, a pilgrimage becomes not only successful but historic, leaving a lasting mark on the city's collective spirit.

### One Capital, Many Traditions: Delhi's Cultural Mosaic

For the first time, Delhi showcased a remarkable cultural panorama, bringing together traditions from across India—Ramlilas' echoes, Durga Puja's grandeur, Dandiya and Garba's rhythmic energy, Onam's timeless grace, and Telangana's vibrant Bathukamma—blending seamlessly to shape the city's identity.

Students and young professionals from every corner of the country experienced Delhi as more than a place to live or study—it became a home away from home. They celebrated their regional festivals with the same warmth and pride as in their native states, supported by an environment that encouraged cultural expression and community participation. Delhi provided more than spaces and permissions; it offered belonging.

### DELHI: NO LONGER JUST A CITY, BUT A SHARED IDENTITY

Today in Delhi,

- Diwali connects with the traditions of Ayodhya,
- Chhath honors the faith of Bihar and Purvanchal,
- Onam brings the fragrance of South India,
- Bathukamma brings to life Telangana's worship of nature,
- Kanwar Yatra connects the devotion of North India,
- Guru Sahib congregation gives Sikh tradition a global platform.

This is the Delhi where every culture has a place and every citizen has respect.

### ONE YEAR OF CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT

- First grand Deepotsav at Kartavya Path since Independence
- 1,000+ Chhath ghats; 17 model ghats on the Yamuna banks
- Withdrawal of cases registered against Chhath devotees
- Bhojpuri-Maithili cultural programs at 200 ghats
- Single-window system and DBT assistance for Kanwar Yatra
- Historic 72-hour permission system
- Collective celebration of Navratri, Durga Puja, Dandiya, Garba, Onam, Bathukamma
- Unprecedented youth participation
- Historic congregation of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib

ing. "You are a part of Delhi... this city is yours." This message went beyond words, reflecting a genuine commitment to inclusivity and unity.

Today, Delhi stands not just as the nation's capital, but as a vibrant cultural canvas where every tradition is honored, every community respected, and every dream welcomed.

### Red Fort: A Beacon of Spiritual Unity

Delhi revisited a historic legacy of unity, tolerance, and humanity as the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib was commemorated at the iconic Red Fort. The three-day congregation transformed the capital into a global platform of spiritual harmony, drawing lakhs of devotees who gathered to pay homage and reflect on the Guru's timeless teachings.

The event featured a grand Kirtan Darbar, an immersive light and sound show, a curated exhibition on the Guru's life and philosophy, and a specially created temporary museum highlighting his courage, sacrifice, and enduring legacy—bringing history alive for new generations.

On the occasion, the Delhi Government announced the development of a forest in the Guru's name, linking cultural remembrance with education and environmental responsibility. The commemoration underscored a larger message: when faith and responsive leadership come together, they reinforce the unity and strength of the nation.

### New Dimensions of Tourism and Development

Along with cultural upliftment, the Delhi Government has given new wings to tourism: **Eco-Tourism:** By promoting 'White Lime Feather-2025' and 'Wildlife Tourism,' Delhi has been developed as an attraction for nature lovers.

**Badariya-e-Mehfil:** Cultural gatherings at venues such as the NDMC Convention Centre have strengthened Delhi's Ganga-Jamunitehzeeb by promoting art and music. In addition, the Delhi Government has taken



### CAPITAL OF CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

One year of the Rekha Government has proven that Delhi is truly moving toward becoming India's cultural capital -

- Where faith is respected,
- Where tradition is celebrated,
- Where youth are connecting with culture, And
- Where every citizen can proudly say, "This Delhi is mine too."

significant steps to promote live entertainment and conference tourism, positioning Delhi not only as an economic capital but also as a hub of entertainment and tourism.

### Culture as a People's Movement

In today's Delhi, cultural programs have moved beyond passive attendance to active participation. With enthusiastic youth involvement, strong participation by women, and engagement across communities, culture has evolved from a calendar event into a city-wide movement.

Alongside major infrastructure milestones—such as multi-level parking facilities and Asia's largest STP—the capital's vibrant cultural calendar reflects a holistic development model. Guided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" and led by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Delhi is demonstrating how progress and cultural pride can advance together.

### 'Bhajan Clubbing': Devotion Meets the Next Generation

'Bhajan Clubbing' has emerged as a dynamic initiative connecting young people to their cultural roots through a contemporary format. Blending devotion with modern music and youthful energy, the program has transformed college campuses—particularly across Delhi University—into spaces of spiritual celebration under Vasantotsav 2026.

With performances by groups such as Leela Band, Raghav Raja, India Music Collective, and Sadho Band, the initiative presents bhajans and kirtans in a way that resonates with today's generation—fostering cultural pride, positivity, and collective spirit.



From the Banks of the Yamuna to the Ramparts of the Red Fort: Delhi Shines as a Living Symbol of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat'

## IN FOCUS



A yellow-footed green pigeon gathers twigs to build its nest as it perches on a Bougainvillea tree in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

## Rajagopalachari bust replaces Lutyens' at Rashtrapati Bhavan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

British architect Edwin Lutyens statue at the Rashtrapati Bhavan was on Monday replaced with the bust of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the first and only Indian Governor General of independent India, as part of a move aimed at shedding the vestiges of colonial mindset.

President Droupadi Murmu unveiled Rajagopalachari's bust at the Grand Open Staircase near Ashok Mandap opposite the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, during an event attended by Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, among others.

The initiative is part of a series of steps being taken towards shedding the vestiges of the colonial mindset and embracing, with pride, the richness of India's culture, heritage, and timeless traditions, a statement issued by the President's office said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a message sent for the occasion on Monday, said that the close relationship Rajaji shared with Mahatma Gandhi, marked by deep mutual trust and friendship, is well known.

"Therefore, it is fitting that Rajaji's bust is being installed right opposite the statue of Mahatma Gandhi. Further, the fact that Rajaji's bust will be positioned where Edwin Lutyens' bust used to stand is a crucial detail,



President Droupadi Murmu pays floral tribute to the bust of C Rajagopalachari, the first and only Indian Governor General of independent India.

making it an important act of mental decolonisation," Modi said in the message, which was read before the audience by Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

The unveiling of the bust of Rajagopalachari, widely known as Rajaji, at the historic central courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan by the President is a moment of pride for the people of India, Modi said.

"Today, Rashtrapati Bhavan stands not as a seat of power, but as a visible embodiment of democratic self-confidence rooted in Indian civilisation. Initiatives such as the 'Rajaji Utsav' and the unveiling of a bust of C Rajagopalachari Ji rein-

force this direction. They honour leaders who shared the nation and remind us that freedom is sustained by celebrating their memory," he said.

The prime minister, in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address on Sunday, said that the unveiling of the bust of Rajaji is one of the steps towards removing vestiges of the colonial mindset, according to the statement.

After the unveiling event, the President graced Rajaji Utsav at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC), where she took a round of the photo and book exhibition on Rajagopalachari's life and work. Speaking on the occasion, she said that when

Rajaji arrived at the Government House (now known as Rashtrapati Bhavan), he placed portraits of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Mahatma Gandhi in his room. "Rajaji sent a clear message that while India was formally still a Dominion, Swaraj had been fully established in the hearts of Indians.

Thus, Rajaji set an inspiring example of mental decolonisation. His ideals are reflected in the national campaign adopted by the people of India to take pride in India's heritage and eliminate the vestiges of the colonial mindset," she said.

Indian consciousness and connection with all Indians, especially the weaker sections, are reflected in Rajaji's thoughts and actions, President Murmu said. She said that portraits of British imperial officials who exploited India were earlier hung in the corridors of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Now, the gallery called 'Param Vir Dirgha' is adorned with portraits of Param Vir Chakra awardees.

The President said Rajaji was gifted with multifaceted creativity and several dimensions. His contributions to the legal profession, freedom struggle, social and economic reforms, ancient Indian scriptures, Tamil and English writing, poetry and music, politics and governance greatly enriched these fields, she said.

## Paper leak: Private tutor among two held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Nagpur

A private tuition owner and his aide were arrested in connection with the suspected leak of Physics and Chemistry question papers of class 12 exams being conducted by the Maharashtra board in Nagpur, police said on Monday.

With the arrest of Mustafa Khan Munir Khan (42), who runs a teaching academy in the Mominpura area, and his aide Junaid Mohammad Abdul Javed, the number of people held so far has reached four. Khan and Javed were remanded to police custody till February 26. According to police, Khan allegedly shared the



Chemistry paper on a WhatsApp group named 'Tech 1', and Javed posted the answers. One Nishikant Mool had circulated the leaked content among students of his tuition classes.

The incident came to light on February 18 when a supervisor at St Ursula High School examination centre spotted the paper on a student's phone.

## Teacher beats 32 students with bamboo stick

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Latur

A teacher has been arrested for allegedly beating around 32 students of a school, suspecting them of damaging his motorcycle in Latur district of Maharashtra, police said on Monday, adding that some pupils sustained injuries.

The incident occurred at the school hostel for students from classes 5 to 10 near Ahmedpur on the night of February 21. The accused, identified as Ujjwal Prakash

Soni, suspected that students had damaged his motorcycle. Acting on the suspicion, he allegedly lost his temper and assaulted dozens of minor students with a bamboo stick.

He also allegedly threatened the children, claiming that he would soon become the school principal and would deal with them then, police said.

The principal of Christ International School, Zeba Nadar, lodged a complaint at Ahmedpur Police Station.

## Kharge, Rahul to attend Kisan Maha Chaupal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Bhopal

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi will interact with farmers and address them at the party's 'Kisan Maha Chaupal' organised in Bhopal on Tuesday to protest the interim trade agreement between India and the United States.

Extensive preparations have been made for the event to be held at Jawahar Chowk in Bhopal, with functionaries visiting villages to explain how this agreement is against the interests of cultivators and the country, party leaders said on Monday.

MP Congress president Jai Patwari, LoP in the assembly Umang Singh, and former Union Minister Arun Yadav, along with other party leaders, released videos on various social media platforms, appealing to farmers and the general public to attend the 'Maha Chaupal'.

In one such video, Patwari said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has signed a trade agreement with



America by putting a sword to the neck of Indian farmers. Against this, Congress President

Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, will strengthen the farmers' fight at the Kisan Maha Chaupal in Bhopal on Tuesday."

Singhar, while making a similar appeal, alleged that prices of crops like cotton, soybean, maize, and mustard are falling after the India-US trade agreement.

"The promise of doubling income remains unfulfilled; farmers are in debt and distress. When the State is celebrating the 'Farmer Welfare Year,' why is attention being diverted from the real issues of farmers?" he asked while describing the 'Maha Chaupal' as a decisive battle for farmers' dignity and rights.

## 20% posts of male constables in Delhi Police reserved for ex-Agniveers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Monday announced a 20 per cent reservation for ex-Agniveers in Delhi Police male constable recruitment with exemption from the physical efficiency test and three years of relaxation in the prescribed upper age limit.

The Agniveer scheme was launched in 2022 for the recruitment of Indian youths to serve in the Armed Forces. "Delhi LG, VK Saxena, has approved an amendment in Rule 9 of Delhi Police (Appointment & Recruitment) Rules, 1980, to incor-

porate provisions for recruitment of ex-Agniveers as male constable (Executive)," an official statement said.

"Ex-Agniveers will get a 20 per cent reservation in recruitment to the post of constables in Delhi Police. They will also get exemption from the Physical Efficiency Test and three years of relaxation in the prescribed upper age limit," the statement said. "Further, age relaxation of five years beyond the prescribed upper age limit of 25 years will be given to the candidates of the first batch of the Agniveer scheme," the statement added.

According to officials, after this



amendment, a large number of ex-Agniveers will be eligible for appointment as constables in the Delhi Police. At present, there are 42,451 sanctioned posts of male constables (Executive) in the Delhi Police. Constables are appointed through a direct recruitment process, and the age limit for the same is 18 to 25 years.

The new provisions will ensure that ex-Agniveers have a smoother transition into law enforcement roles, recognising their four-year service in the armed forces. They will get a better chance to serve the society due to their prior training and experience, the statement added.

## CM Rekha hails new model of Delhi governance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Marking one year of her government, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday said the past 365 days have laid a "strong foundation for a Viksit Delhi" through transparency, infrastructure push and digital governance reforms.

Addressing a public programme at Namoo Ground in Khajuri Chowk under the North East Delhi Parliamentary Constituency, the Chief Minister described the first year in office as a period defined by "public trust, commitment to service and the outcomes of good governance".

Calling it the "first step of change and one year of development", the Chief Minister said the slogan reflected tangible transformation in the lives of Delhi's citizens. She said the government has focused on transparent administration, a corruption-free system, faster



Delhi CM Rekha Gupta addresses the gathering during an interaction with BJP workers at a 'Pravas' event organised in North East Delhi. PTI

infrastructure development, digital governance and welfare-oriented schemes.

"New momentum, new direction and new confidence have emerged in Delhi," she said, adding that the government has prioritised the interests of all sec-

tions, including the poor, workers, women, youth and the middle class. She claimed that a new model of governance has been established in the capital and expressed confidence that the pace of development will accelerate further in

the coming years.

She thanked party workers and citizens for their support and said their trust remains the government's biggest strength. "Our resolve to build a Viksit Delhi will continue to move forward," she said.

Delhi Cabinet Minister Kapil Mishra, who also addressed the gathering, said more than 365 works have been completed in 365 days under the Chief Minister's leadership.

He described the year as the beginning of a new era of transformation in the Capital. Mishra said Delhi had waited 27 years to see a Chief Minister on stage amid chants of "Jai Shri Ram", calling it a reflection of the people's mandate. He added that the government today remains accessible to the public round the clock.

Listing achievements, he said the government has worked on setting up Ayushman Arogya Mandirs,

running Atal Canteens, inducting electric buses, improving roads and promoting Delhi's art and culture. He also mentioned the organisation of major events such as Kanwar Seva, Chhath Puja and Deepawali celebrations.

He said earlier there were instances when people faced cases for going to the Yamuna banks for Chhath Puja, but today commitments made to the public are being fulfilled.

State BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, MPs Manoj Tiwari and Yogendra Chandolia, Deputy Speaker Mohan Singh Bisht, MLA Ajay Mahawar and several other public representatives were present at the event.

The programme was held to celebrate the completion of one year of the government. The Chief Minister said the enthusiasm at the venue reflected strong public support for the administration's development agenda.

## MCD panel clears key civic proposals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Standing Committee of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Monday cleared several public interest proposals and directed officials to immediately implement all announcements made in the 2026-27 municipal budget.

The meeting was chaired by Satya Sharma, Chairperson of the Standing Committee, who emphasised that schemes announced in the budget must be executed without delay. She warned that any laxity in compliance would not be tolerated.

Key civic issues, including sanitation management, stray animals, maintenance of parks, the condition of public toilets, pollution control and optimal use of community centres, were discussed in detail. Councillors present in the meeting gave several suggestions, following which clear



and time-bound directions were issued to the concerned departments.

Sharma said the 2026-27 budget contains significant schemes aimed at making Delhi clean and beautiful, ensuring quicker grievance redressal, expanding civic amenities and promoting sustainable development. She directed officials to initiate all schemes that do not require a tender process on priority.

Among the projects ordered for immediate action are the "One Road-

One Day" sanitation initiative, the introduction of an annual licensing fee system for weekly markets, the constitution of a departmental group for pollution control, and the establishment of Material Recovery Centers.

Other measures include Triveni plantation drives on vacant municipal lands, development of herbal parks, regular health check-ups for schoolchildren, yoga training programmes, and property tax exemption for rural residential plots up to 200 square metres.

## Prahaar: India's new national counter-terror...

"Notwithstanding this, India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilisation. India has always denounced terrorism and its use by any actor for achieving any stated or unstated ends unambiguously and unequivocally," it added. The policy lists out technological evolution, which offers terrorists a cloak of invisibility, making it difficult to penetrate their nefarious scheming or track their funds.

"Technological advancements like encryption, dark web, crypto wallets, etc. Have allowed these groups to operate anonymously. Disrupting/intercepting terrorist efforts to access and use CBRNED (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive, Digital) material remains a challenge for Counter Terrorism (CT) agencies.

It described India's approach in preventing and countering threats as "proactive" and "intelligence-guided", noting that the country faces risks across air, land and water. Expressing its commitment to continue its efforts with the international commu-

nity and counter the global challenge of misuse of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for terrorist purposes, the document said investments in technology and partnerships with private enterprises have been included to mitigate futuristic terror threats.

## PM writes to West Bengal, says change...

"Change is now inevitable. The standard of living has remarkably improved in other states. Smiles have returned to the lips of the poor. Ayushman Bharat has provided health cover, new employment is guaranteed for the youth and women's safety is ensured. Bengal too should be part of this growth and development," The PM wrote said.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh called the PM's letter "nothing more than theatrics" ahead of the polls due in a few months. "If the PM is so devastated by the condition of 'Sonar Bangla', why has he stopped funds for 100-day work for the people of Bengal, why has the Centre withheld funds for rural housing and village roads, all of

## FROM PAGE - 1

which the Mamata Banerjee Government is currently sponsoring? Bengal's rightful dues from the Union Government currently stand at a whopping Rs 1.96 lakh crore," he said.

Senior Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury questioned the timing of the letter. "I want to ask the PM why he suddenly remembered West Bengal right ahead of the elections? We see him touring the world all year round. We don't see him visiting or talking about Bengal then. By writing letters like this, he is only exposing the brand of politics the BJP follows," Chowdhury said.

## SC seeks Union Govt reply on shifting coal...

The bench also took note of the suggestions of the CAQM on the prevention and control of paddy stubble burning. It directed all the stakeholders to implement the recommendations by the CAQM in a phased manner on the issues of vehicular traffic, abatement of dust pollution from construction and demolition activities, abatement of industry pollution, emissions

from coal-based thermal power plants, prevention and control of paddy stubble burning and greening and plantation in NCR.

## Killing of 3 ultras major blow to JeM: Army

To avoid any collateral damage, a trained Army dog, Tyson, one of the youngest foot soldiers of the Indian Army, led from the front despite receiving a bullet injury and exposed the location of the terrorists. In the ensuing fierce gunfight, three terrorists belonging to the seven-member hardcore terrorist group, including JeM commander Saifullah, were neutralised by the security forces without suffering any collateral damage.

## India issues advisories for Iran and Mexico

The advisory comes amid renewed anti-Government protests across parts of Iran. Demonstrations reportedly followed 40-day memorial gatherings for

individuals killed during unrest in January. Meanwhile, reports indicate increased deployment of US military aircraft and logistical assets to the Middle East, even as diplomatic efforts continue-underscoring the fragile and uncertain environment.

Separately, the Embassy of India, Mexico City has advised Indian nationals in Mexico to exercise caution and remain indoors following the killing of cartel leader Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, also known as El Mencho. The military operation that resulted in his death took place in the state of Jalisco on Sunday. In response, the embassy urged Indian citizens in Jalisco, Tamaulipas, Michoacán, Guerrero, and Nuevo Leon to shelter in place.

Nationals have been advised to avoid areas with heavy law enforcement presence or public gatherings, monitor local news reports, and follow instructions issued by local authorities. The embassy further recommended keeping travel and identification documents accessible, maintaining regular contact with family members, and dialing 911 in case of emergency.

## Helmet Bank initiative launched by Hyderabad Police



To promote helmet usage among two-wheeler riders, a field-level "Helmet Bank" initiative was launched by the Malkajgiri Police Commissionerate in Hyderabad on Monday. As part of the initiative, riders found travelling without a helmet are given an option to borrow a helmet free of cost on the spot by submitting their basic details.

## Omar backs artificial snow in Gulmarg to fight climate change

Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah on Monday advocated for the introduction of artificial snow at Gulmarg to bolster tourism and promote the destination as a winter sports hub. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the inaugural ceremony of the sixth Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) in north Kashmir's Baramulla, Abdullah said Gulmarg remains the pre-eminent venue for winter sports in India, shifting weather patterns require a transition in infrastructure.



## Stalin's real friends are 'bribe, corruption': TVK chief Vijay



Launching yet another scathing attack on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, TVK founder Vijay on Monday alleged that the DMK president's real friends are "bribe, corruption, and eyeing political gains." Addressing a meeting of party functionaries in Vellore, Vijay termed the Assembly polls due in April this year as a "surprising election".

## Centre sanctions `97 crore for Sairang rail station: Mizoram CM

The Central Government has sanctioned `97 crore for the comprehensive upgrade of Sairang railway station, located 21 km from Aizawl, into a world-class facility, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma said in the Assembly on Monday. Sairang, which serves the State Capital, is a terminal station on the Bhaibari-Sairang railway line, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September last year.



# World praises India's tech potential: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the entire world wholeheartedly praised India's potential at the just-concluded AI Impact Summit, demonstrating that the mindset of India's young talents in technology will be of great benefit to humanity. The AI Impact Summit 2026, held in New Delhi last week, concluded with the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact, marking a significant milestone in global cooperation on artificial intelligence (AI). "The entire world wholeheartedly praised India's potential at the historic AI Summit held in Delhi. This demonstrates that the mindset of our young talents in technology is going to be of great benefit to all of humanity," Modi said in a social media post in Hindi.



The New Delhi Declaration has been endorsed by 89 countries and international organisations, reflecting a broad-based global consensus on leveraging AI for economic growth and social good. Global leaders, including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Swiss President Guy Parmelin, and CEOs from leading technology compa-

nies from around the world, were among those present at the summit. Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayaka, Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra

Ramgoolam, Croatia Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, Serbia President Aleksandar Vucic, Seychelles Vice President Sebastien Pillay, Estonia President Alar Karis, and Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo also attended the event. The summit, with the theme 'Sarvajana Hitay, Sarvajana Sukhaya' (Welfare for all, happiness of all), aimed to position India as a leader in AI, envisioning a future in which AI advances humanity, fosters inclusive growth, and safeguards the planet. It brought together more than 500 global AI leaders, including CEOs/CXOs, around 100 CEOs and founders, 150 academicians and researchers, and 400 CTOs, VPs, and philanthropists. It also engaged more than 100 Government representatives and around 60 ministers and vice ministers.

## BJP seek Rahul's apology over shirtless protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The BJP on Monday demanded an apology from Rahul Gandhi over the "shirtless" protest at the India AI Impact Summit last week, saying not just Congress allies, but even leaders of his party have started criticising it. This came after veteran Congress leader and former Union minister Margaret Alva reportedly criticised the Congress' youth wing's protest at the summit, saying that there must be "dignity, discipline and a sense of responsibility" at an international event. Latching on to Alva's remarks, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said the "entire country" is perturbed over the Youth Congress's "nangi (shameless) protest" and now voices against it have started emerging from within the Congress as well.



"Congress allies have already expressed their disapproval (of the youth Congress protest). You must have heard what Akhilesh Yadav said," Trivedi said at a press conference at the BJP headquarters. Trivedi said the Congress should now understand that not just allies and people of the country, but its own party leaders have started "rejecting" it because of the ideas it supports. In a social media post, Trivedi alleged that Alva has

exposed Gandhi's brazen politics and also shown him a mirror with her remarks about the protest at the AI summit. "Rahul Gandhi has completely come into the grip of the foreign toolkit," the BJP leader said in the post. "Everybody is condemning Rahul Gandhi's shameful mindset of lowering the reputation of the country. Will Rahul apologise for the anti-India protest staged at the 2026 India AI Impact Summit?" Trivedi added.

## Top academicians slam youth Congress protest at AI summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

As many as 160 academicians have termed the Congress youth wing's protest at the AI Impact Summit last week "profoundly regrettable and ill-conceived", and said it reflected the opposition party's inability to distinguish between legitimate democratic dissent and the imperative of safeguarding national prestige on a global stage. The protest "associated with Rahul Gandhi" conveyed an "unfortunate impression" at a time when global investors and technology leaders were assessing India's credibility as a long-term partner in artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced technologies, they said in a joint statement on Monday. "As a Member of Parliament, there exists a constitutional responsibility to distinguish between constructive democratic critique and actions that may inadvertently weaken India's international standing,"



Indian Youth Congress workers stage a protest during the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO (PTI)

they added. The signatories to the joint statement included JNU vice-chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, IIT Roorkee director Kamal Kishore Pant, IIT Dharwad director Venkappayya R Desai, IIT Jodhpur Director Avinash Kumar Agarwal, and vice-chancellors and professors of various universities. Last Friday, a group of Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers staged a dramatic shirtless protest at an exhibition hall during the AI Impact Summit at the Bharat Mandapam, walking around holding T-shirts with slogans against the Government and

the India-US trade deal printed on them, before being whisked away by security personnel present at the venue. Delhi Police has arrested five IYC workers in connection with the incident so far. Criticising the Congress for the protest, the academicians said the AI Impact Summit marked a defining national and civilisational moment. It was India's clear declaration to the world that the country has emerged as a serious and sovereign technological power in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, they said.

## Alva calls for dignity at international events amid AI summit row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Amid a row over the Congress's "shirtless" protest at the India AI Impact Summit in Delhi, veteran party leader and former Union minister Margaret Alva said there has to be dignity, discipline and a sense of responsibility at international events. She, however, clarified that her views are personal and do not diminish her unwavering commitment to Congress. On February 20, a group of IYC workers staged a dramati-



Former Union minister Margaret Alva

ic "shirtless" protest at the AI Impact Summit exhibition hall in Delhi's Bharat Mandapam, walking around holding t-shirts with slogans against the Government and the India-US trade deal printed on them. Asked about the protests, Alva told reporters in Anekal, Karnataka, on Sunday, "At international events, there has to be dignity, there has to be discipline, and there has to be a sense of responsibility." With reports of her taking a divergent view from the party, Alva on Monday said on social media, "Unlike

the RSS and BJP, the Congress Party has always allowed and welcomed diverse points of view, dissent and positive criticism." "My views on the protest at the AI conference are personal and do not diminish my unwavering commitment to the Congress party and its ideology. "Beware of political operators masquerading as journalists, who, to earn their livelihood and satisfy their puppeteers, are attempting to spin a personal opinion into complex political drama," Alva said.

## Social equity is NDA Govt's policy, says Andhra CM Naidu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Amaravati

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday said that the NDA Government's policy is social equity and is working towards diminishing financial inequalities. Addressing the Assembly, the chief minister observed that the TDP-led NDA Government is working for political representation on the basis of population proportion and social empowerment. "The NDA Government's policy is social equity. We are working towards diminishing financial inequalities,"

Naidu said. Though the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode of development enabled the creation of good infrastructure and income, he said it led to financial inequalities, prompting him to pitch his P4 or Public Private People Partnership model of "poverty elimination". As India will emerge as the top country in the world by 2047, Naidu said it would not be good to have financial inequalities by then. Asserting that the State Government stands by the weaker sections, the CM promised to rescue them in all ways, including Economically Weaker Sections (EWS),



Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu

and work towards gender equity. Irrigation Minister N Rama Naidu informed the House that Yanamaduru Drain, which passes

through West Godavari district headquarters Bhimavaram, is plagued with 46 dilapidated inlets out of 54 in total. He alleged that the maintenance of projects, canals and drains collapsed during the previous YSRCP Government. "If Rs 200 crore was spent on operations and maintenance in five years under the previous YSRCP regime, the coalition Government has spent Rs 708 crore in its first year itself," Naidu said, referring to irrigation projects. Meanwhile, the Legislative Council was adjourned for most of the day following YSRCP MLCs' sloganeering in the House.

## Former railway minister Mukul Roy dies at 71

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Kolkata

Former railway minister Mukul Roy, once regarded as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's most trusted lieutenant and the TMC's principal strategist, died of cardiac arrest at a private hospital here early on Monday. He was 71, and is survived by his son, Subhanshu Roy. He breathed his last around 1.30 am at the hospital in Salt Lake, Subhanshu Roy said. He had been suffering from multiple ailments and was in and out of the hospital over the past two years. Family members said he had also been diagnosed with dementia and had recent-



Former railway minister Mukul Roy

ly gone into a coma. His body will be taken to his residence before the last rites are performed later in the day, they said. A former Union minister and

two-time Rajya Sabha member from West Bengal, Roy's four-decade-long political journey saw his stints in the Congress, TMC and the BJP. His political career began with the Youth Congress, before he joined hands with Banerjee when she broke away from the grand old party to form the Trinamool Congress in 1998. As a founding member, he quickly emerged as one of the key organisational pillars of the fledgling party and went on to serve as its general secretary. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2006 and became the party's leader in the Upper House in 2009, turning into TMC's principal troubleshooter in Delhi.

## Medical travel builds global ties: Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Union Health Minister JP Nadda on Monday said India views medical travel as a channel of cooperation that builds confidence and strengthens people-to-people ties between nations. Addressing virtually the 8th edition of 'Advantage Health Care India 2026' organised by FICCI, he said India has undertaken comprehensive reforms to build a resilient, high-quality and globally aligned healthcare



Union Health Minister JP Nadda

system. He underscored India's healthcare transformation under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The Government continues to strengthen the ecosystem supporting medical value travel by

strengthening coordination across ministries, regulatory authorities, accreditation agencies and State Governments," Nadda said. He noted that medical travel acts as an instrument of diplomacy and cooperation. "We view medical travel as a channel of cooperation that builds confidence and strengthens people-to-people ties between nations." He further added that medical value travel represents an important dimension of India's healthcare engagement with the world.

## ECI to discuss sharing of tech with State poll panels

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Election Commission of India (ECI) will discuss sharing technology with state poll panels, mandated to hold municipal and panchayat elections in States, at a conference here on Tuesday.

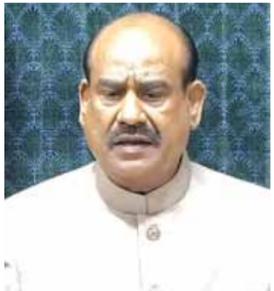
The conference is being held after a gap of 27 years. The last such conference was held in 1999. State Election Commissioners of all States and Union Territories will participate along with their legal and technical experts. At the round table conference the ECI is holding with State election commissions, "discussions will focus on sharing of technology, EVMs and electoral rolls, besides strengthening of electoral processes," the poll authority said. State poll panels take EC's electoral rolls, used for Assembly polls, and employ them as per their requirements for holding local body polls.

## Om Birla constitutes Parliamentary Friendship Groups with 60 countries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Amid strained ties with the Opposition parties, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday constituted Parliamentary Friendship Groups with more than 60 countries, comprising various Opposition members, including those suspended from the Lower House recently for unruly behaviour. The decision of the Lok Sabha speaker comes amid an Opposition plan to remove him

from office, alleging partisan conduct in the House. Prominent Opposition leaders such as Shashi Tharoor, P Chidambaram, Gaurav Gogoi (Congress), K Kanimozhi (DMK), Derek O'Brien, Abhishek Banerjee (Trinamool Congress), Arvind Sawant (SS-UBT), Supriya Sule (NCP-SP), Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM), Akhilesh Yadav and Ram Gopal Yadav (Samajwadi Party) will chair the parliamentary groups, each having 11 members. Senior BJP leaders such as Ravi Shankar Prasad, Baijayant Panda,



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

Nishikant Dubey, and Anurag Thakur have also been appointed as chairpersons of the parliamentary groups. Shiv Sena leader Shrikant Shinde and JD-U member Sanjay Jha, too, have been roped in as chairpersons. Among the suspended Congress Lok Sabha members, Manickam Tagore has been made a member of the Parliamentary Friendship Group with Indonesia, Gurjeet Singh Aujla (Italy), Hibi Eden (Singapore), Amarinder Singh Raj Warring (UK), Prashant Padole (Trinidad and Tobago),

Dean Kuriakose (Saudi Arabia) and C Kiran Kumar Reddy (South Korea). CPI(M) member S Venkatesan has been made a member of the parliamentary group with Cuba. Speaker Birla is likely to constitute more such groups, which are co-terminus with the tenure of the Lok Sabha. "The move reflects a conscious effort by the Indian Parliament to deepen dialogue and exchanges with legislatures across continents and to complement traditional diplomacy with sustained

parliamentary interaction," Birla said. Stepping up global outreach in the aftermath of the deadly terror attack in Pahalgam last April and the Operation Sindoor targeting terror infrastructure deep inside Pakistan that followed, India had dispatched seven parliamentary delegations across 33 world capitals to articulate its "zero tolerance for terror" policy. The seven delegations articulated India's stand on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, rising above ideological differences.

## States Focus

## 532 Maoists killed, 2,700 surrender in Chhattisgarh: Governor Deka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Raipur

Chhattisgarh Governor Ramen Deka on Monday said the State is on the verge of eliminating Left Wing Extremism, citing a massive crackdown against the menace with 532 Maoists neutralised and more than 2,700 surrendering in the last two years.

In his address on the opening day of the Chhattisgarh Assembly's Budget session, the governor said the State's attractive surrender and rehabilitation policy has encouraged misguided youth to return to the mainstream.

He noted that 532 Maoists were neutralised, 2,704 ultras surrendered, and 2,004 were arrested in the State in the last two years.

"When the shadow of terror recedes, the light of development spreads automatically, and people's lives are illuminated," he said, adding that the Government has achieved major success in its campaign to eliminate Maoist extremism.

Deka pointed out that in remote areas freed from Maoist influence, basic amenities are being provided through the 'Niyad Nella Nar Yojana', which involves 17 departments and extends benefits of 25 welfare schemes and 18 community facilities to residents.

Highlighting infrastructure development in Bastar, he said the Government has approved ₹1,109 crore for 146 road and bridge projects, many of which have been completed, while others are in progress. As many as 728 mobile towers have been made operational in Maoist-affected regions, and 449 towers upgraded to 4G services. Villages are now connected through DTH services and illuminated with high-mast lamps, he said.

The governor also noted improvements in education and healthcare in areas that were once worst-affected by Naxalism. As many as 31 new primary



schools and 19 sub-health centres have been sanctioned, while more than 11,000 children and women have been vaccinated under the Niyad Nella Nar Yojana, he said.

Deka said Chhattisgarh will host the country's first Khelo India Tribal Games to showcase its rich tribal culture.

"The world will now see the grand Chitrakote waterfall in Bastar instead of smoke from gunpowder," he remarked, adding that after the successful Bastar Olympics, the Government is organising the Surguja Olympics.

The governor said that Chhattisgarh has embarked on a new journey towards becoming a developed State by 2047, driven by collective resolve and inclusive growth.

Speaking about the agriculture sector, Deka said that 141.04 lakh metric tonnes of paddy were procured from 25.24 lakh farmers at the minimum support price (MSP) this year, with payments of ₹33,431 crore.

Under the 'Krishak Unnati Yojana', an additional ₹10,292 crore will be disbursed to these farmers before the Holi festival against the paddy procurement, he said, adding that 24.72 lakh cul-

tivators have been benefiting from the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme.

The governor further pointed out that a centre of excellence is being set up at Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya in Raipur with assistance from Bhabha Atomic Research Centre at a cost of ₹6 crore to enhance the shelf life of foodgrains.

Under the 'Mahtari Vandan Yojana', about 69 lakh women have been receiving ₹1,000 per month directly in their bank accounts, with ₹15,596 crore disbursed in 24 instalments so far, he said.

The governor pointed out that Chhattisgarh ranks first in the country in issuing forest rights titles, with more than 4.83 lakh individual and 48,251 community forest rights pattas distributed.

He also highlighted the State's new industrial policy, which has attracted investment proposals worth ₹7.83 lakh crore, including in the semiconductor, information technology, pharma and artificial intelligence sectors.

A 300-bed super-specialty hospital will be built in Nava Raipur in collaboration with Bombay Hospital at a cost of ₹680 crore, he said.

## Himachal to launch ₹207 crore nutrition scheme for women, kids

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Shimla

The Himachal Pradesh Government has plans to launch the Indira Gandhi Matri Shishu Sankalp Yojna (IGMSSY) with an outlay of ₹207.11 crore to strengthen women and child health-care services and combat malnutrition in the State.

The scheme aims to provide high-quality protein, essential calories and vital micronutrients to children below six years of age as well as to pregnant women and lactating mothers. It would benefit 2,99,488 eligible beneficiaries across the State, a statement issued here on Monday said.

"Ensuring access to nutritious food for vulnerable groups would significantly reduce the social and economic burden of malnutrition and contribute to building a healthier and more prosperous society," Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said. The initiative will focus on addressing intergenerational malnutrition, particularly during the critical first 1,000 days of life,

through coordinated nutrition, health and care interventions, the statement added. It also seeks to reduce child mortality and morbidity while improving overall nutritional outcomes.

Under the scheme, early identification, continuous monitoring and effective management of high-risk groups, including Severely Acute Malnourished (SAM) and Moderately Acute Malnourished (MAM) children, as well as low birth weight infants, will be ensured through strengthened referral and follow-up mechanisms, the statement added. Capacity-building initiatives will be undertaken for frontline workers to enhance their ability to tackle prevalent health challenges such as anaemia, diarrhoea and pneumonia.

The scheme will provide scientifically designed, nutrient-dense and fortified food premixes aligned with revised Government of India nutrition norms, including the provision of milk and eggs to enhance protein and micronutrient intake.



## SIDDARAMAIAH SLAMS CENTRE FOR DISMANTLING MGNREGA

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah on Monday accused the BJP-led Centre of dismantling the MGNREGA and vowed a sustained agitation until it is restored. Addressing the 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangraam' rally here, he said the Congress would fight across the country against the replacement of the rural jobs scheme with a new law brought by the Union government.

"Today, across the entire country, the 'Save MGNREGA' campaign has been launched. It has begun in Karnataka as well," Siddaramaiah said, alleging that the BJP government at the Centre had scrapped the MGNREGA during the winter session of the Parliament and enacted the Vikas Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar Ajeevika Mission Grameen (VB G-RAMG) Act in its place.



## BOONG'S BAFTA WIN BRINGS PRIDE TO INDIA: MANIPUR CM

Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh on Monday said director Lakshmi Priya Devi's film 'Boong', which won the best children and family film category at the 79th BAFTA awards, is a moment of immense pride not only for Manipur but for the entire nation. Singh extended his heartfelt congratulations to Lakshmi Priya Devi on her remarkable achievement at the British Academy of Film & Television Awards (BAFTA) 2026.

## Congress weakened by shirtless protest: Ramdas Athawale

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Patna

Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Ramdas Athawale, on Monday said the Congress tarnished the nation's image and also weakened itself through the 'shirtless' protest at the recent AI summit in Delhi. Athawale, the Republican Party of India (A) chief, is on a two-day visit to Bihar. He addressed a seminar in Bodh Gaya on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters in Patna, Athawale said, "The condition of the Congress, which had been in power for 60-70 years, has become pitiable. If Rahul Gandhi and the Youth Congress keep doing such things, I think their party will be reduced to nothing."

He claimed that the Congress is being criticised all over the country for the protest it held at the summit venue. "Topmost leaders of around 80-85 countries had come to the summit, and it was certainly not the right thing to do," he said. Since India is known for spreading the message of global peace and democracy across the world, such an act by the Congress workers has put



Ramdas Athawale, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment

a blot on this reputation, he added.

Responding to Congress's allegation that the Government has "compromised" the country's sovereignty and respect through the India-US trade deal, Athawale said that the "45 lakh crore deal will be beneficial for all sections of society."

"The India-US trade deal will benefit the farmers and MSMEs. The tariffs on farmers' agricultural products have been reduced to zero. And since the Congress is opposing such a deal, people are questioning their credibility," he said.

Athawale, who is a Rajya Sabha MP

from Maharashtra, claimed that the Centre is working continuously to develop India through road, rail, metro and other infrastructure projects.

Athawale also demanded that only Buddhists be made the trustees of the Bodhi Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC), established by the Bihar Government under the Bodhi Gaya Temple Act of 1949.

Currently, BTMC comprises four Buddhist and Hindu trustees each.

"We do not oppose anyone, but our assertion is that it is not right to have people of other religions in the trust of Buddhist temples. The responsibility of ensuring this falls squarely on Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, with whom I had a discussion during my last visit to Bihar, and the Supreme Court of India," Athawale said.

He said his party treads on the principles of Babasaheb Ambedkar. The Maharashtra leader also denied the possibility of a merger between NCP and NCP-SP. "Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar had probably talked about the merger, but now, after Ajit Pawar's death, I do not think such a merger is possible," he said.

## 93% Myanmar refugees enrolled in Mizoram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Aizawl

The Mizoram Government has nearly completed the biometric enrolment of refugees from Myanmar who have taken shelter across the State, Home Minister K Sapdanga informed the Assembly on Monday.

The minister said that deputy commissioners are currently supervising the final phase of the process.

"Altogether, 93 per cent of the biometric enrolment for Myanmar refugees was completed as of February 5. We aim to complete the remaining work as quickly as possible," he said.

According to the minister, Mizoram currently hosts 38,059 people, including refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs) from neighbouring Manipur. He said the registration



process, which involves collecting biometric and demographic details of asylum seekers from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), is also underway and expected to be completed soon.

A senior official of the State home department said 13 per cent of over 2,300 Bangladeshi nationals have been enrolled to date.

Among foreign nationals sheltered in the State, Myanmar nationals form the bulk, with over 28,000 people staying across all 11 districts.

Asylum seekers from Bangladesh are lodged mainly in Lawngtlai and Serchhip districts, the official said. Additionally, nearly 7,000 Kuki-Zo people from Manipur displaced by ethnic violence are also sheltered in the state, another official said.

The enrolment drive for refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh began in late July last year through the 'Foreigners Identification Portal and Biometric Enrolment' system following

a directive from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

The senior official said district authorities faced impediments such as technical glitches and weak or unavailable internet connectivity in remote villages, particularly in Lawngtlai district.

While it is easier to collect data from refugees living in relief camps, it is difficult to undertake the task of collection of those people residing with relatives or friends or in rented houses, he said.

"Although the number of Myanmar refugees keeps changing due to frequent in and out migration, we are trying our best to ensure that no refugee is left.

We also hope to complete the process soon," the senior official told media. Mizoram shares a 510-km long international border with Myanmar in the east and a 318-km stretch with Bangladesh in the west.

## Ajitdada was the best CM State never had: Fadnavis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday led leaders cutting across party lines in paying tributes to the late Deputy CM Ajit Pawar on the first day of the Budget session of the State legislature, saying he was "the best CM the State never had."

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde described the late NCP leader as an "elder brother" and said he, Fadnavis, and Pawar were like an "equilateral triangle," being close to each other.

On January 28, Deputy CM Pawar and four others died in a plane crash in Pune's Baramati town.

In a glowing tribute to Pawar in the Assembly on the first day of the legislature's Budget session, Fadnavis said the State has lost a towering leader and administrator.

Pawar's shocking demise has created a political vacuum that will never be filled, the CM said while hailing the NCP leader, whose party is a constituent of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi.

"Ajitdada (as Pawar was fondly called) and I share the same birthdate, but he was 11 years senior to me in age. He was my dada in the real sense," Fadnavis noted.

He said Ajit Pawar became deputy chief minister a



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis

record six times and had the capacity to lead the state.

"Ajitdada was the best CM Maharashtra never had," the senior BJP leader stated.

He said there is political arithmetic to various decisions, adding that destiny would have fulfilled his wish sometime.

"Ajitdada was always punctual, but this time his timing went wrong," Fadnavis said, referring to the plane crash last month.

He said Pawar was never a politically correct person. He always acted on what he said and was a straightforward person, Fadnavis noted.

"Ajitdada was a leader who honoured the word he gave. In 2019, we decided to form a Government together.

But that didn't happen because his party's senior leadership decided to step back. Ajitdada stood by his word, and we took the oath together.

## Jharkhand civic polls: Nearly 51% voter turnout recorded in 48 ULBs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Ranchi

Around 51 per cent of the 43 lakh odd voters exercised their franchise till 3 pm in the civic polls to 48 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Jharkhand on Monday, an election official said. Voting, which commenced at 7 am, is underway amid tight security.

"Voter turnout of 50.61 per cent was recorded till 3 pm. Polling is peaceful," State Election Commission (SEC) secretary Radhe Shyam Prasad said.

Seraikela Nagar Panchayat recorded the highest turnout of 63.20 per cent, while Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) registered the lowest at 34.16 per cent, followed by



Voters wait in queues to cast their votes during the Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) election at a polling station in Ranchi, Jharkhand

Dhanbad Municipal Corporation at 36.60 per cent. Over 43 lakh voters are eligible to decide the fate of 6,000-plus candidates.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren and his Kalpana Soren, an MLA from Gandeypur constituency, exercised their franchise at a booth in

St Paul Kuldeep High School in Ranchi's Harmu area.

"Civic poll is part of our democratic system where we elect our local representatives. We have exercised our franchise and appeal to the people to use their rights to vote," Soren told reporters after casting his vote.

## BJP meets Karnataka Governor over SC internal reservation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bengaluru

A BJP delegation on Monday met Karnataka Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot over the Scheduled Caste (SC) internal reservation issue and sought his intervention.

In a memorandum submitted to the Governor, the party accused the State Government of failing to implement the Supreme Court's August 1, 2024, verdict on internal reservation even after 18 months, while other States had acted within six months.

"Eighteen (18) months have elapsed ever since the Supreme Court gave its verdict on Scheduled Caste Internal Reservation issue," the delegation said in its letter, adding that neighbouring Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, as well as Haryana, had already implemented the judgment.

The BJP contended that the formation of the Justice Nagamohan Das Commission was unnecessary as the Government already possessed data from the Justice Sadashiva Commission and the Madhuswamy Committee. It alleged



that the Congress Government adopted "delay tactics" by setting up a fresh panel that worked for six months at a cost of ₹110 crore.

The memorandum outlined the recommendations of the Nagamohan Das Commission,

including one per cent reservation for 59 small nomadic tribes, six per cent for Madiga-related sub-castes, five per cent for Holey-related sub-castes, four per cent for Bhovi, Banjara, Koracha and Korama sub-castes, and one per cent for other sub-castes.

Questioning the deviation from these recommendations, the BJP asked, "Why did the Congress Government not accept the above formula mooted by the Justice Nagamohan Das Commission? Instead, the Government succumbed to the 'political pressure'

and came out with a new formula — 6:6:5." The party also criticised the manner in which the Bill was passed in the Assembly. It alleged that the legislation was introduced around 7 pm and pushed through without detailed discussion, solely on the strength of the Government's numerical majority.

The memorandum further stated that no all-party meeting was convened and that community leaders, legal experts and intellectuals were not consulted before implementing what it termed a "historic" measure.



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## Order Order

### Actor Ranveer Singh moves Karnataka High Court to quash FIR against him



Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh has moved the Karnataka High Court challenging the FIR and quashing of a criminal case registered against him over alleged insult to a 'deity' while mimicking 'Kantara Chapter-1' film.

The controversy relates to remarks allegedly made by the actor at the Filmfare Awards event in Goa while speaking about the film 'Kantara'. He is accused of imitating a Daiva and calling it 'devil'.

Based on a complaint lodged by advocate Prashanth, an FIR was registered at the High Grounds police station. Police had earlier issued notices to Singh in connection with the case. As there was no response from the actor, the High Grounds police recently initiated steps to proceed with further legal action, police sources said.

### Calcutta HC CJ meets CEO, officials on SIR work



Calcutta High Court Chief Justice Sujoy Paul on Monday held an internal coordination meeting with West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and senior administrative and police officials over the SIR work entrusted to judicial officers, officials said.

Chief secretary, home secretary and DGP were among those present at the meeting. Speaking to reporters after the nearly hour-long meeting, CEO Manoj Agarwal described it as an "internal meeting". He said training of judicial officers on the online portal for the SIR of electoral rolls in the state was completed on Monday morning, and the exercise has already commenced in several places.



# SC to examine cut-off reduction for NEET-PG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday said it would examine whether the sharp reduction in the qualifying marks for NEET-PG 2025-26 affects the standard of post-graduate medical education.

A bench of Justice PS Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe made the remarks while hearing a batch of petitions challenging the reduction in the percentile cut-off for the current academic year.

"Adversely affecting the quality of education is what we are concerned about more than anything. It is about the quality. You will have to satisfy us that the reduction of the cutoff so drastically... will have little impact on the quality of education.

Though you are justified in saying that this is not like entry into MBBS, this is like a post-graduation. It stands on a different footing because those who apply are already doctors. We will have to reflect on this issue," the top

court said. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, referred to the reasoning set out in the government's affidavit and submitted that the decision was taken in view of vacancies.

She submitted that the examination does not certify minimum clinical competence since candidates have already obtained MBBS degrees, and NEET-PG is meant to compare and filter out candidates in view of limited seats.

Justice Narasimha said that although the Union was justified in stating that NEET-PG was not an entry into MBBS and that candidates are already doctors, the court would still like to consider the effect of reducing the cut-off.

It posted the matter for further hearing on March 24. The petitioners have challenged the January 13 notice issued by the National Board of Examination in Medical Sciences (NBEMS), by which the minimum qualifying percentile cut-off for counselling of the third round of NEET PG 2025-2026 was reduced.



The director general of health services of the Union health ministry, in its affidavit filed in the matter, said that the challenge by petitioners pertains to an academic and policy determination taken by competent statutory authorities under the National Medical Commission Act 2019, in public interest and within the domain of expert regulation.

"It is respectfully submitted that the reduction of qualifying percentile NEET-PG is not unprecedented. Since the inception of NEET-PG in 2017 percentile reductions have

been affected in appropriate circumstances to prevent seat wastage. In the academic year 2023 as well, the qualifying percentile was reduced to zero across categories. The present decision is thus consistent with the established policy and administrative practice," it said.

The Centre said scores in NEET-PG examination are a function of relative performance and examination design, which cannot be construed as determinative of clinical incompetence.

"It is pertinent to note that purpose of the NEET-PG is not

to certify minimum competence which stands established by the MBBS qualification itself of the candidates but to generate an inter se merit list for allocation of limited postgraduate seats," it said.

The Centre submitted that the eligibility criterion to appear in NEET-PG requires a candidate to possess a recognised MBBS degree and to have completed the compulsory rotating internship.

It said for the academic session 2025-26, total seats available were approximately 70,000, corresponding to the total number of candidates 2,24,029, while 31,742 seats were under All-India Quota (AIQ) across various specialities.

It pointed out that after Round 2 of NEET-PG counselling, 9,621 seats remained vacant under the AIQ.

"Out of these, 5,213 seats were vacant in Government medical colleges alone (including AIQ and DNB seats). This factual position conclusively demonstrates that the reduction of percentile was not undertaken to benefit

private medical institutions, but to prevent large-scale vacancy of seats, including in Government institutions created through public expenditure," it said.

The government said it is a settled principle that courts ordinarily refrain from interfering in academic and policy decisions taken by expert bodies unless such decisions are shown to be manifestly arbitrary, mala fide, or violative of statutory or constitutional provisions.

Earlier, the NBEMS told the top court that 95,913 additional candidates had become eligible for NEET-PG 2025 counselling after the qualifying cut-off percentile was reduced.

According to the notice published by NBEMS, the NEET PG cut-off for the general category has been reduced to the seventh percentile from 50.

Pleas have been filed in the apex court by social worker Harisharan Devgan, Dr Saurav Kumar, Dr Lakshya Mittal and Dr Akash Soni claiming that the cut-off reduction violates articles 14 and 21.

## Actively considering issues related to surge in airfares during festivals, Centre tells SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Centre on Monday told the Supreme Court that the Ministry of Civil Aviation was actively considering the issues raised in a PIL which sought regulatory guidelines to control the unpredictable fluctuations in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, which termed the issue as "serious", granted four weeks to the Centre for the conclusion of the deliberations on the issue flagged in the public interest litigation (PIL).

"This is a very serious concern. Otherwise, we don't entertain 32 petitions," the bench said.

Appearing for the Centre, Additional Solicitor General Anil Kaushik said that they need at least three weeks to file their response on the PIL as the concerned ministry is actively considering the issues raised in the petition.

The bench, which recorded that the issues have been taken note by the ministry, posted the matter for further hearing on March 23. On January 19, the top court said it would interfere with the "unpredictable fluctuations" in airfares and flagged the exorbitant rise during festivals.

The top court termed the exorbitant rise of airfares by the airlines as



"exploitation" and asked the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to file their replies to a PIL seeking binding regulatory guidelines to control the unpredictable fluctuations in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India.

On November 17, the top court sought responses from the Centre and others on a plea by social activist S Laxminarayana, who has sought to establish a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector. It has issued notices to the Centre, the DGCA and the Airports

Economic Regulatory Authority of India seeking their responses on the plea.

The plea said that all private airlines have, without any credible justification, reduced the free check-in baggage allowance for economy class passengers from 25 kg to 15 kg, "thereby converting what was earlier part of the ticketed service into a new revenue stream".

The petition said that currently, no authority has the power to review or cap airfares or ancillary fees, allowing the airlines to exploit consumers through hidden charges and unpredictable pricing.

## Will comply with NCLAT's directions, WhatsApp to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Global tech giants Meta Platforms Inc and WhatsApp told the Supreme Court on Monday that they will comply with the NCLAT's directions for extending the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) privacy and consent guidelines to advertising-related data. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was hearing appeals filed by the tech giants against the National Tribunal's (NCLAT) directions

have decided to implement the tribunal's directions by March 16, the CJ dismissed the applications seeking a stay. He, however, clarified that the pleas are being dismissed, without prejudice to the issues in the main appeal. The CJ also sought a compliance report from the companies. "Meanwhile, the appellants' affidavits regarding the privacy policy may be examined by the CCI and a response be placed on record," he said.

WhatsApp is owned by Meta Platforms Inc. The apex court is hearing the appeals of the tech giants against a



of December last year.

The court is also seized of a cross-appeal filed by the CCI, assailing the NCLAT ruling to the extent that it allowed WhatsApp and Meta to continue sharing users' data for advertising purposes. "These applications essentially seek a direction for a stay of the impugned judgment of the NCLAT to the extent it approves the direction issued by the CCI directing Meta to comply with the impugned directions contained in the NCLAT order dated December 15, 2025, containing certain directions issued to Meta," the CJ said.

Taking note of the submissions made by senior counsel Kapil Sibal on behalf of WhatsApp that the appellants (the two tech giants)

CCI order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on them over WhatsApp's privacy policy. Mukul Rohatgi also represented WhatsApp. On February 3, in a stinging rebuke, the court told both the firms that they cannot "play with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of data sharing", and accused them of creating a monopoly in the market and committing theft of customers' private information.

Decrying WhatsApp's privacy policy, the court referred to "silent customers", who are unorganised, digitally dependent and unaware of the implications of data-sharing policies, and said, "We will not allow the rights of any citizen of this country to be damaged."

## Bhojshala dispute: MP HC gives parties two weeks to present objections

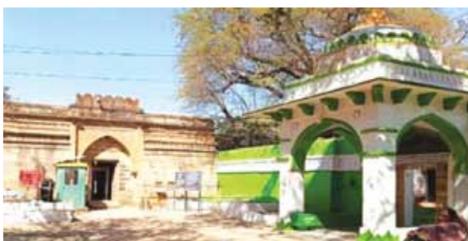
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Indore

The Indore bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Monday granted all parties two weeks to submit their objections and suggestions on the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) report concerning the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Masjid complex.

Hindus consider Bhojshala, in the neighbouring Dhar district, a temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess

Saraswati), while the Muslim community claims the 11th-century monument to be the Kamal Maula Mosque. The complex is protected by the ASI.

A division bench of Justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Alok Awasthi noted that the ASI report, submitted in sealed envelopes, has been opened and copies have been provided to the parties. However, the parties have not yet submitted their objections and suggestions, the court said, setting the next hearing for



Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Masjid complex

March 16.

Speaking to PTI, Hindu Front for Justice lawyer Vinay

Joshi stated that the ASI conducted a 98-day scientific survey of the site and pre-

pared a 10-volume report spanning more than 2,000 pages detailing coins, symbols related to Sanatan Dharma, and statues of deities. "However, the final nature of the complex will be decided by the court," he said. Three individuals who offer Friday prayers at the Kamal Maula Masjid have filed an intervention petition in the High Court and are represented by lawyer Ashhar Warsi.

He claimed that the Hindu Front for Justice case concerned the facts of the complex, which should first be examined in civil court.

"Hence, the case is not maintainable in the high court at this juncture," he contended while talking to reporters.

According to the existing arrangement as per the ASI's order dated April 2023, initiated after the dispute over the Dhar complex, Hindus are allowed to worship at the site every Tuesday, while Muslims are allowed to offer namaz every Friday.

## HC quashes order staying proceedings against Anil Ambani to classify his bank accounts as fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Mumbai

In a setback to industrialist Anil Ambani, the Bombay High Court on Monday quashed a single bench interim order that stayed proceedings initiated against him and Reliance Communications Ltd to classify their bank accounts as fraud. A division bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad allowed the appeals filed by three public sector banks and auditor firm BDO India LLP against the December 2025 interim order passed by a single bench of the HC. The division bench, while quashing the single bench order, termed it "illegal and perverse".

Ambani's counsels sought the HC to stay its order so that they could approach the Supreme Court, but the request was declined. The



banks last month challenged a December 2025 single-bench order granting interim relief to Ambani and his company. The order had cited violations of mandatory RBI rules and a classic case of banks "waking up from deep slumber" after years.

The single bench order stayed all present and future action by Indian Overseas Bank, IDBI Bank and Bank of Baroda, noting that the action was based on a legally flawed forensic audit and

violated the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) mandatory guidelines. The three banks in their appeal said the forensic audit, which led to accounts being classified as "fraud", was legally valid and based on serious findings of fund siphoning and misutilisation. This was recorded in the report submitted by the audit firm BDO LLP, they contended.

The banks, in their plea, also said Ambani had raised a technical challenge to the

forensic audit before the single bench. They sought the division bench to quash the single bench's interim order, claiming it was "perverse".

Ambani had challenged before the single bench show-cause notices issued by the Indian Overseas Bank, IDBI and Bank of Baroda, seeking to declare his and Reliance Communications' accounts as fraud accounts.

As an interim relief, he sought a stay of the notices and an injunction against any coercive action on the ground that BDO LLP was not qualified to conduct the forensic audit as its signatory was not a chartered accountant.

BDO LLP was an accounting consultant firm and not an audit firm, Ambani claimed. The single bench had agreed with Ambani and stayed the action by the banks.

## SC rejects plea against Andhra Pradesh Govt's panel reviewing SIT report on Tirupati laddu row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Supreme Court on Monday declined to restrain a one-member committee appointed by the Andhra Pradesh government from reviewing an independent Special Investigation Team's (SIT) report on the Tirumala laddu controversy.

The top court, on October 4, 2024, had set up the five-member independent SIT to probe the allegations of animal fat used in preparing Tirupati laddus to "assuage the feelings of crores of people", while making clear that the court cannot be used as a "political battleground".

The bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was told by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy that the State Government's decision to appoint the one-member committee amounts to



setting up a parallel inquiry that would affect the SIT's probe. The plea also assailed statements made by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on the row. Rejecting the submissions, the CJ noted that the SIT probe is already over and the matter is sub-judice as two chargesheets, including a supplementary one, have been submitted in the court.

"Such an administrative enquiry cannot be called as overlapping with the criminal proceedings which led to the

chargesheet and the supplementary chargesheet," the CJ said. "There is no conflict of interest/overlapping, and the scope of the investigation/enquiry, having been well demarcated, shows that apprehension of the petitioner does not have a solid foundation. Let both processes continue strictly in accordance with the law," the court said.

Swamy argued that the state government's move undermines the authority of the SIT, constituted earlier by

the Supreme Court itself to probe irregularities surrounding the laddus distributed by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

During the proceedings, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the SIT has completed its investigation and filed its final report. The panel replaced the State Government's SIT, constituted on September 26, 2024, following the politically-sensitive row over the alleged use of animal fat in the laddus.

The controversy erupted after Naidu's claim that animal fat was used in preparing Tirupati laddus during the previous YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led regime in the southern state.

The YSR Congress Party has accused Naidu of levelling "heinous allegations" against it for political gains, while the ruling Telugu Desam Party in the state has circulated a laboratory report to back its claim.



## Editor's TAKE

### Cross-border strikes and a fragile region

In a region already burdened by instability, Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghanistan threaten not only bilateral peace but broader regional security

Pakistan is once again messing up its relations with its western neighbour, Afghanistan. Though the relations between the two countries have never been cordial and border skirmishes are common, the recent airstrikes violating Afghanistan's sovereignty take the conflict to the next level.

The seeds of conflict go back to the time when the Durand Line was drawn way back in 1893 by the British, which Afghanistan refused to recognise. After 9/11, Pakistan sided with the US in its operations against Afghanistan; the later Taliban phase also led to much consternation.

In recent times, following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, militant attacks inside Pakistan increased. Islamabad has since carried out cross-border strikes, claiming self-defence.

At the heart of the dispute lies the unresolved question of the Durand Line. This territorial disagreement is compounded by accusations of militant safe havens and cross-border insurgency, with each side blaming the other for harbouring armed groups that carry out attacks across the frontier. Decades of conflict have also generated massive refugee flows, placing social and economic pressure on Pakistan.

The bigger issue, however, is that escalation in the region is a threat to its peace and stability. The region remains volatile, and any escalation could invite the involvement of bigger powers to exploit the situation. In this context, India's sharp condemnation of Pakistan's recent airstrikes on Afghan territory is rightly placed as it underscores the gravity of a situation that threatens to destabilise an already volatile region.

The strikes, which reportedly targeted militant hideouts but resulted in civilian casualties, including women and children during the holy month of Ramadan, have drawn criticism. India has described the action as yet another attempt by Pakistan to "externalise its internal failures" and has reiterated its support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan. Islamabad claims that the strikes were conducted in retaliation for recent militant attacks within its territory and that dozens of terrorists were eliminated, but this tells only a partial truth. However, the deeper context suggests a more complex motive. Pakistan has been grappling with rising internal insecurity, particularly in its border regions, where militant groups have intensified attacks against security forces.

By striking across the border, Islamabad appears intent on sending a message of resolve to domestic audiences. The airstrikes thus shift the focus from internal governance and intelligence lapses to an external adversary. Second, they pressure the Afghan authorities to take stronger action against groups allegedly operating from their soil.

Yet, such unilateral military actions risk violating Afghan sovereignty and undermining fragile diplomatic channels. The airstrikes are an outright act of violation of the sovereignty of a nation, with a broader humanitarian dimension as they take place in the holy month of Ramadan. Interestingly, Pakistan's denunciation of cross-border terrorism underscores a striking irony: the very strategy it once employed now appears to be rebounding upon it. Karma!

## India at the forefront of AI governance

At a time when artificial intelligence offers transformative possibilities alongside serious ethical, economic, and security risks, the summit highlighted the urgent need for balanced regulation that promotes innovation while safeguarding public interest



KALYANI SHANKAR

India's recent AI summit concluded with the New Delhi Declaration, engaging 88 nations and marking a major milestone in global AI regulatory efforts, highlighting India's growing influence on the international stage.

The declaration presents a global vision for "collaborative, trusted, resilient, and efficient" artificial intelligence, highlighting that its benefits must be shared by all of humanity to realise its full potential.

AI has become very popular in the last decade, especially in the past five years. It has many benefits but also poses risks, making the topic complicated. People around the world are worried about these risks.

The recent summit was the first of its kind in the region and focused on these growing concerns about AI.

India has signed an agreement to join Pax Silica, a US-led group focused on building a strong supply chain for critical minerals and artificial intelligence (AI).

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw highlighted the alliance's significance for the semiconductor industry and stated, "The U.S. delegation head at the AI summit added, "AI adoption cannot lead to a brighter future if hindered by bureaucracies and centralised control."

The summit attracted major investments for India, with the Adani Group and Ambani each committing \$1 billion and Microsoft investing \$50 billion.

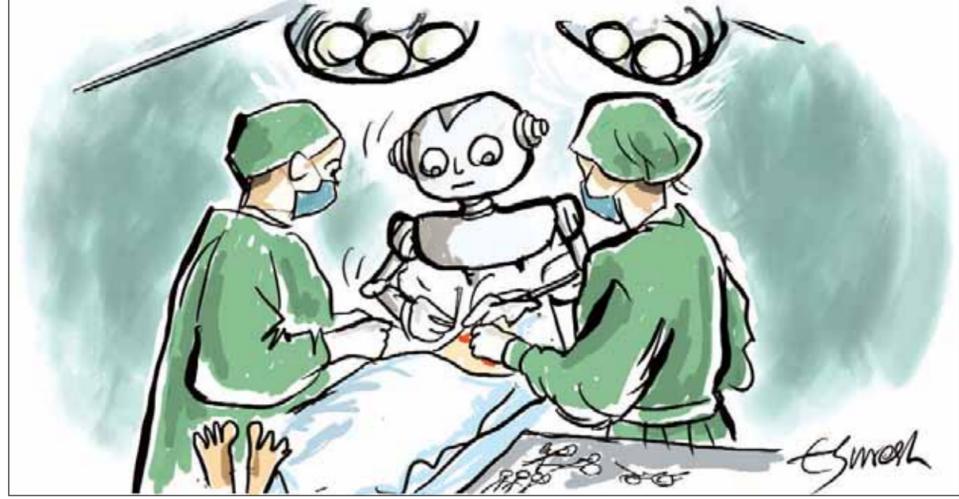
This summit highlights India's commitment to aligning its AI standards with global frameworks, with a focus on inclusion, responsibility, and international leadership in AI regulation.

The summit brought together participants from over 88 countries, including leaders such as Emmanuel Macron and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. A strong US delegation and executives from companies such as Microsoft and IBM highlighted the importance of international collaboration.

According to the official report, around 250,000 attendees, mainly under 30, participated in the exhibition.

Technology Minister Vaishnaw believed that India's AI investments could increase to \$140 billion.

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes more integrated into daily life—from healthcare to entertainment—the need for regulatory oversight is growing. AI is a double-edged weapon. While it can help increase efficiency, there are



THE SUMMIT SHOWCASED INDIA'S EXPANDING DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S PROACTIVE STEPS, INCLUDING A COMPREHENSIVE AI ROADMAP, TO ESTABLISH THE COUNTRY AS A GLOBAL LEADER IN TECHNOLOGY AND AI DEVELOPMENT

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 The Pioneer

also possible risks.

What is AI technology, and why is the world concerned? There is cause for concern, as it is a double-edged weapon. There is fear that AI will take over the world.

AI can help improve patient care and resource management in organisations, but it raises ethical, privacy, and security concerns. There's also anxiety about job displacement and bias in credit systems and the criminal justice system, with predictions that AI could eliminate 85 million jobs globally by 2025.

Additionally, people are increasingly worried about how data is handled and its consequences. Establishing common standards benefits everyone.

AI regulations vary worldwide: the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act imposes strict rules on high-risk systems, while the US adopts a fragmented approach, underscoring the need for a unified global regulatory framework.

These differences highlight the need for a more unified approach, as international collaboration is essential for establishing universally adopted standards and best practices in AI.

The summit showcased India's expanding digital infrastructure and the government's proactive steps, including a comprehensive AI roadmap, to establish the country as a global leader in technology and AI development.

The India AI Mission has allocated ₹10,372 crore to enhance the artificial intelligence ecosystem. Additionally, more than 38,000 GPUs have been integrated into a centralised computing facility, and 12 indigenous foundation models are currently under development. Consequently, India is positioning itself

as both a developer and a facilitator in the emerging era of AI.

AI is now a vital part of India's defence sector, according to Dr Chandrika Kaushik, Director General of DRDO.

Policymakers are worried that the lack of transparency in private markets, such as private credit and private equity, could hinder the identification of early warning signs of trouble.

India's challenges include striking a balance between innovation and government overregulation of AI. It could stifle creativity and hinder the development of groundbreaking technologies. At the same time, a lack of regulation could lead to dangerous results.

Regulatory bodies need to engage with stakeholders across the AI ecosystem, including technologists, ethicists, and civil society organisations. This collaborative approach ensures that regulations are grounded in practical realities and adaptable to the fast-evolving nature of AI technology.

There is growing recognition of the importance of fostering ethical AI practices, including transparency, fair access, and user privacy, to reassure users that responsible development is a priority.

As we acknowledge the potential of artificial intelligence, a balanced regulatory framework can help us maximise the benefits of AI while minimising its risks.

The way we regulate artificial intelligence (AI) in the future will greatly affect society. We must ensure that AI is used to help everyone. Many countries are worried that AI might take control of our world. The conference was a chance to promote transparency, which is important for reassuring people around the globe.



## PIC TALK



A woman views tulips at the Tulip Festival 2026 in New Delhi. PHOTO: PTI

## Can India shape the machine age's moral compass?



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

### 2ND OPINION

In every civilisational turning point, nations are tested not merely by their technological prowess but by the values they embed within that technology. Artificial intelligence is one such moment. As algorithms increasingly influence governance, healthcare, finance, education and warfare, the world is not just asking who builds AI - it is asking who guides it.

India's articulation of "AI for People, Planet & Progress" is not a slogan. It is a philosophical positioning. In a global landscape where AI leadership has largely been framed as a contest between superpowers, India is attempting to redefine the narrative: from dominance to democratisation, from profit to purpose.

But can this vision genuinely shape global AI governance? India's strength lies in its paradox. It is both a techno-

logical powerhouse and a developing nation grappling with scale. With one of the world's largest digital public infrastructures — Aadhaar, UPI, and a thriving start-up ecosystem — India has already demonstrated how technology can leapfrog legacy barriers. Its model of digital public goods has attracted attention across the Global South. If AI is layered onto this foundation with intent and inclusion, India's voice could carry moral authority in global forums.

However, aspiration must confront reality. India's regulatory framework for AI is still evolving. The emphasis so far has leaned towards enabling innovation — encouraging start-ups, fostering research, and attracting investment. This is essential. Overregulation at an early stage could stifle growth. Yet the absence of clear accountability frameworks raises questions about bias, surveillance, data privacy and algorithmic transparency.

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act is a start, but AI governance demands sector-specific safeguards and enforceable ethical standards.

Infrastructure, too, presents a dual narrative. Urban innovation hubs are world-class; rural digital access remains uneven. Compute capacity, semiconductor dependency, and high-quality datasets are areas where India must invest aggressively if it seeks to move from consumer to creator of foundational AI models. Without sovereign AI infrastruc-

ture, rule-making risks becoming rhetorical rather than structural.

So, is India transitioning from AI follower to AI rule-maker?

The shift has begun - diplomatically and ideologically. By convening global dialogues and foregrounding inclusivity, India is positioning itself as a bridge between advanced economies and the developing world. It understands both the anxieties of job displacement and the promise of productivity gains. This dual lens gives it credibility.

But rule-making requires more than convening power. It demands domestic coherence. Policies must balance innovation with protecting citizens without paralysing entrepreneurs. Ethical AI frameworks must be enforceable, not advisory. Public trust must be cultivated deliberately.

If India succeeds, it could offer the world a third path: neither laissez-faire acceleration nor restrictive technocracy, but responsible innovation rooted in human dignity.

The real question is not whether India can shape global AI governance. It is whether it can align its regulatory courage with its technological ambition.

History rarely waits. The machine age is writing itself. The pen, this time, may well be coded.

The writer is a freelance journalist who writes on development and socio-economic issues

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## AI SUMMIT CONTROVERSY HIGHLIGHTS DEEPER EDUCATION SECTOR ISSUES

India's 1991 economic liberalisation ignited a surge of ambition, encouraging families to invest their life savings in their children's education as a pathway to success. However, an unholy alliance between bureaucracy, political influence, and profiteering interests has often exploited this aspiration, turning educational institutions into arenas where student dreams and parental sacrifices are compromised.

To understand this pattern, one must revisit the IIPM saga.

Founded in 1973 by Arindam Chaudhuri, it presented itself as an elite business school for decades while operating without credible academic recognition.

Such cases follow a familiar blueprint. Institutions project themselves as premier academies, attracting students with glossy promises of career success. They

charge exorbitant fees but frequently deliver substandard education and questionable credentials. Many aspirants, driven by post-liberalisation hopes, overlook warning signs such as lack of accreditation and opaque functioning.

This is not an isolated problem but part of a wider systemic challenge. Weak oversight and delayed accountability allow such entities to flourish, often shielded by bureaucratic inertia and political patronage.

While economic reforms transformed India's growth trajectory, safeguarding educational integrity now requires stronger accreditation, transparency, and accountability. Without these, the aspirations of countless families risk being undermined.

ANANT KUMAR | RANCHI

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Spin challenge exposes team weakness

Dominating the world of cricket and performing at the highest level is an entirely different proposition. Even home conditions were tested this time, and spin played a crucial role as we suffered a significant defeat. It was a heavy loss by 76 runs. This will adversely impact our run quotient and may soon turn the situation into a must-win scenario.

Apart from Bumrah, nothing much stood out in the bowling department, which lacked penetration and consistency when it mattered most.

The team appeared unprepared to counter the turning conditions, allowing the opposition to dictate terms throughout the game.

This defeat must serve as a wake-up call. While past successes have built confidence, adapting to challenging match situations remains vital.

The inability to deliver under pressure, particularly in familiar conditions, raises concerns about strategic planning and execution.

If corrective measures are not taken swiftly, this setback could have long-term consequences in the tournament. The team must regroup, reassess its approach, and respond with renewed determination in the upcoming fixtures.

CK SUBRAMANIAM | CHENNAI

### Reality behind national image

A mere "shirtless" protest by a few Congress workers on ideological issues at the venue of an international summit has reportedly "shattered" India's image in the global sphere.

Such, it seems, is the supposed "might" of this "nationally rejected" party that through the non-violent action of a few of its members, the very foundation of the zealously projected mammoth "Vishwaguru" narrative appears shaken.

However, I wonder why the nation's image does not seem tarnished before the international community when common citizens are abused or killed in the name of religion, caste, or ethnicity. Incidents involving allegations of storing beef, smuggling cattle, so-called "love jihad", cross-border infiltration, inter-caste marriages, or attempts at proselytisation — including the burning alive of Graham Staines and his two children — rarely trigger similar outrage.

Likewise, communal riots, caste atrocities, targeted killings of rationalists, and crimes against women — including horrific incidents of gang rape and public humiliation — raise serious moral questions.

Can a truly civilised society ignore such realities while focusing only on symbolic protests?

KAJAL CHATTERJEE | KOLKATA

### India-Brazil strategic momentum

Since 2006, India and Brazil have shared a strategic partnership. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's recent visit to India has further strengthened Indo-Brazil ties through shared democratic values and a mutual commitment to reform global governance.

This partnership represents a significant step towards equitable growth. Both nations continue to collaborate across major multilateral platforms such as BRICS, IBSA, and the G20, reinforcing their shared vision for improved global governance.

The recent visit culminated in several key agreements, particularly in the mining and processing of critical minerals, with Brazil offering access to its enriched reserves to support India's development needs.

Bilateral cooperation has also expanded into pharmaceuticals, aviation, and defence — marking a meaningful advancement in economic and strategic relations.

Furthermore, the digital partnership between the two nations promises collaboration in artificial intelligence and cyber security, both crucial for future progress. With a target of achieving 30 billion dollars in trade by 2030, and a reported growth of 25.5 per cent over the past year, this partnership injects fresh energy into India-Brazil relations.

SUNIL OKHADE | INDORE



## Bangladesh's political reset and the regional ripple effect

As Bangladesh enters a new political chapter, the challenges before the Rahman government-economic fragility, trade recalibration, minority protection, and climate vulnerability — will have profound implications not only for Dhaka but also for New Delhi and the wider South Asian region

FIRST Column



BK SINGH

Gen Z uprising in Bangladesh in July 2024 led to the collapse of Sheikh Hasina's government. The Mohd Yunus-led government took interim charge of the administration. It banned Sheikh Hasina's Awami League party and held national elections on 12th February. The young students and activists, who spearheaded the protest against Hasina, led a political party named National Citizens Party (NCP) and contested the election along with Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Jamaat, the main force behind the uprising, had an electoral alliance with NCP. Tarique Rahman, son of ex-PM Khaleda Zia, who last ruled Bangladesh between 2001 and 2006, returned to the country after 17 years of self-exile. He was appointed as leader of BNP only a month and a half prior to voting, and went on to win the election with a two-thirds majority and has taken over as PM of the country.

Jamaat won 68 seats and its electoral partner NCP six out of the 30 it contested. It will be the main opposition party in the Parliament. While NCP could not turn street momentum into votes, Jamaat has put up the best electoral performance in the history of Bangladesh. Jamaat is a radical outfit which believes in headline ideology and has never been acceptable to democratic parties like the Awami League. During the one-and-a-half-year tenure of the interim administration of Mohd Yunus, Jamaat has spread its organisational set-up in several areas of Bangladesh. Earlier, the best performance of Jamaat was when it won 17 seats in the 2001 general election. Though the recent election has given a stable government to Bangladesh, Jamaat's rising footprint in the west of the country is worrying for India. Massive presence of Jamaat in western areas of Bangladesh bordering Indian states of West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya is a security challenge for India.

In the 2021 West Bengal Assembly election, India's BJP had won more than 16 seats in constituencies bordering Bangladesh. Now Jamaat has made inroads on the other side of the border. It clearly shows that there has been strong radicalisation on both sides of



**BANGLADESH IS ONE OF THE MOST CLIMATE-VULNERABLE NATIONS. IT FACES SEVERE RISKS FROM CYCLONES, FLOODS AND SEA SURGES AND ALSO SEVERE AIR AND WATER POLLUTION**

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the border. South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Nadia, and Murshidabad are among the districts in West Bengal that border Bangladesh. India may have to step up its security in these districts and both central and state governments may have to work in tandem for this. Similarly, the districts in Assam and Meghalaya bordering Bangladesh will also have to remain alert to deal with security challenges.

NCP failed to establish its support base along the length and breadth of the country for votes and had to contest the election in coalition with Jamaat. After the 2024 uprising, people had hopes and dreams from the NCP cadre, but soon these faded once the coalition was announced.

The youth vote was divided, which strengthened the support for BNP, giving them a landslide victory. It now plans to rebuild itself and contest local elections coming up in the next one year. After facing a series of attacks, the minority communities tilted towards BNP, as the Awami League was banned.

The task before PM Tarique Rahman is daunting. He has to bring the already shat-

tered economy on track in a country with 170 million people. He has committed to providing financial aid to poor families, and promoting industries to manufacture toys and leather goods to cut down excessive reliance on garment exports. He has pledged to recalibrate the country's international partnerships to attract investments. Hasina was too closely aligned to India. In contrast to this, Rahman would not have close ties with any single power. As seen in his election manifesto, he is set to focus on issues relating to border killings, water sharing from trans-boundary rivers like Brahmaputra, Teesta etc., and even Hasina's extradition from India.

India, too, will deal with Rahman's government by focusing on the security of Indian territories in West Bengal and northeastern states. Other areas in focus would be to manage and curb the increasing radicalisation and also deal with the threat to minority communities within the geography of Bangladesh. The democratic reforms that have been passed along with the general election with 60% votes,

like the introduction of an upper house in the Bangladesh Parliament, a limit of two terms for PM, and emphasis on Bangladeshi and not Bengali, will also be closely watched by India.

A few days prior to the voting, the interim administration of Bangladesh signed a free trade deal with the US. Let me explain how this deal is not going to

protect the interests of Bangladesh and its farming communities. Last year, Bangladesh became the eighth-largest market for the US. Under

a reciprocal trade agreement signed on February 9, American dairy, meat and poultry producers will get sweeping access to the Bangladesh market. Dhaka has opened its market for US agricultural and industrial goods, chemicals, medical devices, machinery, motor parts, dairy products, poultry, fruits and tree nuts. As a part of the deal, Bangladesh will purchase annually around \$3.5 billion worth of agricultural products namely wheat, soy, cotton and corn. The deal also calls for Bangladesh to import aircraft, cars and

motorcycles and their spare parts.

The United States has committed to reducing the reciprocal tariff rates to 19% on goods originating from Bangladesh. The agreement further indicates that select Bangladeshi textiles and apparel goods made with US-produced cotton and man-made fibres can enter the US market at 0 reciprocal tariff. India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has added recently that a similar concession is available to India too. If we buy cotton or yarn from the US and process and use it for making garments for export to the US, the tariff is zero. In other words, India and Bangladesh both can export textiles, aprons and garments on zero tariff if manufactured using US cotton/yarn.

In my opinion, it is counterproductive to import raw materials like cotton from the US and then manufacture in India or Bangladesh to qualify for zero tariff. It is going to increase the cost of production substantially, making it difficult for exporters to survive in the market. It is better to use indigenously grown cotton to manufacture and export with 18% tariff from India and 19% from Bangladesh. The local farmers will also be benefited.

One of the biggest challenges Bangladeshi PM Rahman would face is that US dairy and agricultural products are going to flood the market, leaving the farmers in distress. The sectors which have not been opened by India have been opened by Bangladesh for US exports. The interim administration has signed a deal with the US detrimental to the interests of the farming communities in Bangladesh. It is going to be a big headache for Rahman.

Besides double-digit inflation and a weakening banking sector, Bangladesh is one of the most climate-vulnerable nations. It faces severe risks from cyclones, floods and sea surges and also severe air and water pollution. If the average rise in global temperature exceeds 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial era, half the land mass of the country would go under water. Salinisation and spells of drought intensify the risk of food insecurity. Nearly 15% of the population is below the poverty line, which is projected to rise to 20% by 2030.

The new government has to walk a tight rope to cope with the challenges. Jamaat will not miss an opportunity to gain an upper hand in any catastrophe the country faces, which will not be in the interests of the people of Bangladesh.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

## Over-regulated compliance triggered corruption perceptions index



AS MITTAL

India's modest rise in the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), released by Transparency International on February 10, offers cautious encouragement but also highlights deeper structural realities. India has moved up five places to rank 91st out of 182 countries, with its score improving marginally to 39 out of 100. Yet this remains below the global average of 42 and far from the standards of clean, transparent governance. The improvement is welcome, but a sub-40 score underscores a persistent truth: corruption in India is not merely episodic misconduct; it is embedded within institutional design, particularly in the architecture of over-regulation and compliance overload.

The CPI measures perceived corruption in the public sector, and perceptions are shaped by institutional experience rather than official intent. In India, excessive regulatory layering has quietly become one of the most powerful enablers of corruption. When compliance frameworks are dense, fragmented and discretion-heavy, they multiply the points of interface between citizens, businesses and authorities. Each interface creates opportunities for delay, interpretation and selective enforcement, conditions under which corruption thrives.

### Compliance raj

India's economic liberalisation in 1991 dismantled much of the overt licensing regime associated with the Inspector Raj. Yet fragments of that control-oriented mindset persist in modern regulatory systems. The form has evolved, but the burden remains. Corruption flourishes not only when rules multiply, but when those rules are complex, overlapping and enforced through administrative discretion rather than objective, transparent standards. When discretion expands without accountability, corruption ceases to be an aberration and instead becomes a rational response to uncertainty. The scale of India's compliance burden shows the depth of this structural challenge. A typical firm must navigate as many as 1,536 Acts and submit over 6,600 filings annually across central and state jurisdictions, spanning environmental clearances, taxation, industry regulations and financial oversight by agencies such as the RBI,

SEBI, and CBIC. Even small enterprises face overwhelming regulatory demands. A small pharmaceutical firm, for instance, spends ₹12-20 lakh annually to comply with nearly 1,000 regulatory requirements, of which 486 carry imprisonment provisions for procedural lapses. An ordinary eatery or tuckshop may require more than 30 licences to operate legally. These numbers reflect not regulatory strength, but regulatory congestion. Each compliance requirement creates another checkpoint and more uncertainty, which often turns governance into negotiation. Instead of focusing on productivity, innovation, and competitiveness, entrepreneurs are forced to navigate regulatory risk.

### Criminalisation of compliance

The persistence of criminal penalties for procedural and technical non-compliance intensifies this pressure. Under Section 132 of the Goods and Services Tax Act, even procedural errors in claiming input tax credit beyond specified thresholds can trigger imprisonment of up to three years. Such provisions, while intended to deter fraud, often blur the distinction between deliberate evasion and technical error, expanding discretionary power at the enforcement level. Recognising this challenge, the Jan Vishwas Act of 2023 marked an important shift in reform philosophy. Out of 26,134 criminal provisions across 1,536 acts, approximately 3,400 were decriminalised and replaced with monetary penalties. This reform acknowledged a fundamental reality: criminal penalties for procedural lapses discourage enterprise, increase compliance anxiety and create conditions conducive to harassment. By shifting the focus from punishment to proportional accountability, the Act reduced some of the systemic pressure that fuels corruption.

Punjab, for example, eliminated 1,498 mandatory compliances to ease regulatory burdens. Yet even after these reductions, over 1,400 compliance requirements and more than 1,200 imprisonment clauses remain in force. These figures demonstrate that while reform has begun, the underlying regulatory overhang persists at a scale that sustains structural corruption risks.

### Deregulation commission: A preventive anti-corruption framework

The government's move to create a Deregulation Commission represents a potentially transformative institutional intervention. If designed with independence, statutory authority and clear time-bound mandates, such a Commission could fundamentally shift India's anti-corruption strategy from reactive enforcement to preventive institutional design. Instead of focusing solely on punishing corruption after it occurs, governance reform must aim to reduce the structural conditions that make

corruption possible in the first place.

A Deregulation Commission could institutionalise Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIA) as a mandatory requirement for all new regulations. These assessments would evaluate the economic, administrative and compliance costs of proposed rules before implementation. Policymakers would be compelled to answer a simple but critical question: Does a proposed regulation address a genuine market failure, or does it merely add another layer of control? Embedding such discipline would prevent the accumulation of redundant and overlapping regulations over time. Harmonising central and state compliance frameworks would further reduce duplication, inconsistency and administrative conflict.

### Reforming compliance

India's ambition to become a \$10-trillion economy depends not only on capital investment and technological innovation, but also on institutional credibility. Investors assess regulatory predictability as carefully as market opportunity. Entrepreneurs need clarity to operate in competitive and time-sensitive environments. Citizens expect fairness, transparency and consistency from governance systems.

Improving India's CPI ranking sustainably will not come from sporadic crackdowns or rhetorical commitments. It will require deep structural reform that reduces the number of corruption entry points within governance systems. Rationalising compliance requirements, reducing excessive criminalisation, embedding impact assessments and institutionalising periodic regulatory review are not merely ease-of-doing-business reforms; they are foundational anti-corruption measures.

### The way forward

India's rise in the Corruption Perceptions Index should be seen as a signal and a call to accelerate structural reform. By cutting red tape, institutionalising regulatory discipline and redesigning compliance frameworks, India can convert incremental progress into lasting governance credibility. Corruption feeds on complexity and weakens in clarity.

By replacing excessive control with intelligent, transparent and proportionate regulation, India can strengthen institutional trust, unlock economic dynamism and reinforce democratic accountability. The path to a truly Viksit Bharat lies not in enforcement alone, but in systemic reform.

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## Towards climate resilience



HIMANSHU VERMA

The increasing frequency and intensity of climate-induced disasters have made disaster risk reduction and climate action two of the most urgent priorities of the twenty-first century. Climate change is no longer a distant possibility but a lived reality, affecting ecosystems, economies, and human lives across the globe. Events such as floods, cyclones, droughts, wildfires, landslides, and heat waves have become more unpredictable and severe, threatening developmental progress and human security. In this context, integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) with climate action has emerged as a powerful approach to building safer communities and ensuring sustainable development for future generations.

Disaster risk is shaped by the interaction of hazards, exposure, and vulnerability. Climate change is intensifying natural hazards by altering weather patterns, escalating extreme events, and increasing uncertainties. As populations expand into hazard-prone regions, exposure grows, and inadequate infrastructure, poverty, and limited resources further heighten vulnerability. Rising sea levels, shifting rainfall patterns, melting glaciers, prolonged dry spells, and frequent storms illustrate how climate systems are evolving. These changes highlight the need for climate-responsive strategies that consider both scientific complexities and socio-economic factors that shape disaster susceptibility. Disaster risk reduction focuses on minimizing the adverse impacts of natural hazards through preparedness, improved planning, and strategic interventions. It represents a shift from reactive approaches that rely on emergency relief toward proactive efforts that strengthen the ability of communities to withstand disasters. Effective DRR involves risk assessment, early warning systems, community preparedness, education, resilient infrastructure, ecosystem restoration, and strong governance. By encouraging safety measures before disasters occur, DRR helps reduce loss of life, safeguard livelihoods, and protect socio-economic development.

Climate action includes both mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, adopting sustainable practices, and preserving natural carbon sinks such as forests and wetlands. Adaptation focuses on adjusting human and environmental systems to climate impacts through climate-resilient agriculture, water conservation, disaster-resistant infrastructure, public health protection, and community preparedness for extreme weather events. Together, mitigation and adaptation support long-term environmental and societal resilience. Disaster risk reduction and

climate action share common objectives centred on reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience. Integrating these two domains allows for a comprehensive approach that addresses both present risks and future uncertainties. Climate-resilient infrastructure, nature-based solutions such as mangrove conservation and watershed restoration, and inclusive planning frameworks contribute simultaneously to reducing disaster risks and addressing climate challenges.

Agriculture is one of the most climate-sensitive sectors, particularly in developing regions where rural livelihoods depend heavily on natural resources. Climate extremes such as erratic rainfall, droughts, and floods threaten crop yields, food security, and rural income. Integrating DRR into agricultural planning is vital for protecting farming communities from climatic uncertainties. Climate-smart practices, crop diversification, soil conservation, improved water management, and climate-informed advisories have become essential tools for strengthening resilience.

Advancements in technology are playing a transformative role in both disaster risk reduction and climate action. Tools such as remote sensing, GIS mapping, artificial intelligence, and climate modelling enable more accurate prediction, monitoring, and planning. Modern communication technologies, including digital early warning systems, ensure timely dissemination of critical information. Drones are increasingly used for post-disaster assessment, while IoT-based sensors support flood forecasting, soil monitoring, and smart agricultural planning. International frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Sustainable

Development Goals emphasize integrated approaches. These frameworks encourage countries to embed disaster resilience and climate considerations into policies and development planning. Governments, academic institutions, NGOs, and international organizations must work together to develop strategies that reduce vulnerability and prepare societies for climate-induced risks.

Despite progress, challenges remain. Limited financial resources, inadequate technological capacity, weak institutional coordination, insufficient community participation, and lack of localized climate data hinder effective integration of DRR and climate action. Vulnerable populations often have limited access to information and resources needed for resilience-building. Disaster risk reduction and climate action are essential for a resilient and sustainable future. As climate-related hazards intensify, the need for proactive and integrated approaches becomes urgent. By uniting DRR and climate action, societies can better withstand shocks, safeguard development gains, and ensure a safer future for generations to come.

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Reading is a private affair. Libraries are memories in the mind. It is a book that decides when to be read, rather than the reader who decides when to read it. Despite this closed-door, and closed-mind trait of reading, the issue exploded publicly in the past few weeks. First, an Indian author in a British newspaper questioned the reading habits of Indians, despite the successes of literary festivals, which now numbered 100 a year, and attracted millions of visitors. India-hands, including foreign writers on Indian issues, reprimanded the column. An Indian magazine took up the cudgels on behalf of the Indian readers to prove that the reading habit was alive and kicking in the country. Some pointed to average print runs of a book, which average 3,000, with 10,000 copies sold labeled as a best-seller. Others countered with books sold across languages, with some titles selling in millions. The beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder; reading in the hands of a buyer.

According to the British newspaper, Indian literary festivals are like carnivals, circus-like events. In India, they are "only partly about books. They are a 'spectacle' offering music, dance, handicraft sales, and food. Even the T-Rex of them (lit fests) all, the Jaipur Literature Festival (which attracted 4,00,000 visitors in January 2026), would almost certainly attract fewer people without these extras," stated the column. Although literacy rates are higher, there is a gap between the ability to read, and the habit of reading for pleasure. According to one maybe-bizarre and weird journalist, "I do not read unless I am paid to do so." Publishers lament about the lack of reading habits, which lead to low print-runs, and some comment about the lack of a transition to a "literate book-reading class." Some talk about a dumbing down, a phrase that was applied to print, TV, and online media some years ago.

As a counter, an Indian magazine presented data and figures. Let us forget about English books. There is a thriving and growing set of readers across languages. If one discounts the western metrics of reading, "India's print world is multilingual, informal, scattered, and under-measured," according to a seemingly-neutral online column. The magazine predicts that by the time the Kolkata Book Fair closes in two weeks, "it will have drawn close to three million visitors, and recorded sales of over ₹26 crore." It adds, "India is today one of the world's largest producers of books. According to data from the Federation of Indian Publishers and UNESCO, the country publishes close to 90,000 new titles annually, placing it among the top ten publishing nations globally. These books appear in more than two dozen languages, many of them with long and fiercely defended literary traditions." In fact, a British newspaper has no right to question how India reads.

Now, like it or not, both the British newspaper and Indian magazine contradict their claims. It is ironic that while a reader can recognise them, the writers and authors do not. Let us take the main issue. Do Indians read for pleasure, asks the British newspaper? Indians read a lot, but not necessarily for pleasure, answers the Indian magazine. The latter quotes figures, which conclusively proves this argument. "The Indian book market itself is estimated at over \$6 billion, making it one of the fastest-growing globally. Educational publishing accounts for nearly 70 per cent of this market. Textbooks, exam guides, and reference works dominate sales. For millions of families, books are not cultural accessories but instruments of aspirations," states the Indian magazine. It proves the British viewpoint. Of course, exam guides are not read for pleasure, and the same is true for textbooks. Most of it is forced reading, thanks to the country's rigid education system.

As for the British newspaper, it harps on the spectacle-like lit fests. But the fact is that when it comes to culture and sports, the western nations, including Britain, have long adopted the need to ride on the commercial aspects to gain popularity, and spur sales. Take Hollywood, for example, which hypes, exaggerates, and converts every event (and non-event) into a jamboree, either in physical or virtual sense. British tourism is like a circus, with various commercial add-ons to woo tourists every year. British newspapers, well, the less said about them the better. After all, we still have not witnessed the most-read newspaper being accused and punished for breach of privacy, hacking phones, and using emotions to sell its products. We do use sensationalism, even extortion and blackmail, but we are still far from hacking. The truth being that using commercial and marketing events to sell an event, especially a cultural one, like a lit fest or concert, is the norm.

Hence, let us not make reading into a public spectacle. Let us retreat behind the privacy of reading, to the bedrooms under table lamps, and dark and quiet corners of libraries, or even the public loudness of places like a lawn. Let us not be drawn out to shout and scream about who reads what, for what purpose, when, and how much. What can be an issue is possibly what kind of books do we publish, and what sells. But then that will be a whimper too. Porn sells, pulp sells, exam guides too.

# Days that dazed the tariff Don

*Supreme Court order was one setback; there were others*

For a President who wants to 'Make America Great Again,' on a path he architects, paves, and constructs, the past week or 10 days were something like a series of nightmares. Perhaps the most disappointing moment for Donald Trump was the Supreme Court ruling that his "reciprocal tariffs" were illegal. The phrase, after all, is among his favourite words in the dictionary, which he has reiterated several times. To rub salt to the legal wounds, the Court is full of pro-Republican judges, many appointed by Trump. In the past, it repeatedly ruled in his favour in a series of emergency rulings on immigration, removal of the bosses of independent agencies, and wider cuts to spending.

On the day of the ruling, the US Department of Commerce released GDP data, and noted that it "increased at an annual rate of 1.4 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025 (October-December). Hence, quarterly growth slowed sharply, with the rate well below the 2.5 per cent predicted by the economists. For the full year (2025), the GDP grew by 2.2 per cent, down from 2.8 per cent in 2024. Trump justified it. A long shutdown of the federal government due to the fractures within the legislature was a major drag, and shaved at least one percentage point. Trump stated that the loss to the GDP was a higher two per cent.

"The contributors to the increase in real GDP in the fourth quarter were increases in consumer spending and investment. These movements were partly offset by decreases in government spending and exports. Imports, which are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, decreased," stated an official note. Compared to the third quarter of 2025, the deceleration in the fourth quarter, the note added, was partly offset by an acceleration in investment, and the decrease in imports was "smaller than in the prior quarter."

The sum of consumer spending, and gross private fixed investment increased 2.4 per cent in the fourth quarter, compared with an increase of 2.9 per cent in the third quarter.

Inflation was on the rise, which diluted the president's attempts to safeguard the interests of the American consumers. The price index for gross domestic purchases increased by 3.7 per cent, higher than 3.4 per cent in the third quarter. The personal consumption expenditures price index rose by 2.9 per cent, compared with the previous quarter's hike of 2.8 per cent. Excluding food and energy prices, this index increased 2.7 per cent compared with an increase of 2.9 per cent. A weaker GDP increases the pressures on the policymakers to lower interest rates, which runs counter to caution due to persistent core inflation.

If this was not enough, the US recorded a large trade deficit in 2025, with December's monthly shortfall hitting \$70.3 billion, and full-year one reaching \$901.5 billion, or one of the largest annual gaps since 1960. The widening reflected a combination of stronger imports and weaker exports, while the tariffs were aimed to curtail imports, and a series of bilateral trade pacts hoped to boost exports. Imports rose 3.6 per cent in December 2025, led by consumer and business purchases such as computer accessories and motor vehicles. Firms accelerated buying early in the year to avoid anticipated tariff increases.

Volatile categories, including gold and medicines, swung sharply as companies adjusted inventories around the policy changes. Worse, exports fell by 1.7 per cent, with declines in several categories that reduced foreign sales, and contributed directly to the larger gap. Trade patterns changed markedly in 2025. Merchandise deficit

with China narrowed to \$202 billion, its lowest level in more than two decades. But the shift coincided with rising deficits with other supplier nations such as Mexico and Vietnam, which reached record highs. America's trade deficit with the European Union was the highest at \$218.8 billion, the figure (\$146.8 billion) was substantial with Taiwan.

Heavy investments in artificial intelligence (AI), and related hardware boosted imports, as American firms imported \$145 billion more in computers and accessories as they expanded AI capacity. In 2025, total exports were \$3.43 trillion against imports of \$4.33 trillion, which show the scale of the trade imbalance.

Economists warn that while a part of the import growth reflects healthy investments (notably in AI), persistent deficits can weigh on manufacturing, employment in trade-exposed sectors, and the current-account position. Policymakers face a tradeoff. Measures to curb imports can disrupt supply chains, and raise costs, even as efforts to boost exports require sustained market access, global demand, and competitive positioning.

Of course, the Supreme Court ruling on tariffs will add further diplomatic and geopolitical twists. The various bilateral deals that American has signed in the recent past are poised delicately, even though they may not have been automatically voided. However, the bargaining powers, and negotiating context may change. Trade partners may pause to seek legal guarantees to renegotiate tariff commitments, or to demand clearer, statutory authority. This has begun to happen in the cases of the EU, the UK, and others. Reports indicate that New Delhi rescheduled the trip of a trade delegation to Washington over the sanctity and clarity related to the trade deals.

However, Trump's cryptic "Nothing changes" comment, when he was questioned on the Indian deal, implied that the bilateral deal will remain as it stands despite the Court ruling triggered wild speculations. "They will be paying tariffs, and we will not be paying tariffs," he said. In effect, while India will pay 18 per cent, most of the US' goods will enjoy zero per cent. There is talk about the US president's upcoming Beijing visit, beginning March 31, where China President Xi Jinping may sit at the negotiating table with a stronger leverage.

Whatever spin different sides may give, and whatever outward contempt Trump shows after the Supreme Court order, the bilateral trade dynamics has shifted. Even allies will feel a bit more powerful, and feel that they can renegotiate a few clauses, if not now, later. China will claim that it has won the global trade wars, even if it needs to ride on the shoulders of an order of the American court. It may not allow Trump to push Xi for larger purchases of American soybeans, Boeing aircraft, and energy. China may go slow on opening the supply valve for a steady flow of rare earth minerals, a crucial component of the American hi-tech and AI-based manufacturing.

**OUR TAKE**



**Legal Eagle**

## You take this one, I use that one

*Surprised how Trump imposed tariffs after court ruling?*



Hours after the US Supreme Court rebuked President Donald Trump for his tariffs, and ruled that the latter exceeded his authority, the president imposed another round of tariffs. The new order used the Section 122 of the Trade Act, 1974, a rarely used law that allows short-term duties, but requires an approval of the Congress in 150 days. How is this possible when the apex court concluded that Trump cannot use executive powers without the approval of the legislature? The short answer: the decision does not dismantle the tariff regime. It reshapes it, closes the huge legal door, but leaves open a few small windows.

In essence, the Supreme Court responded to a narrow debate. It said that the president does not have the powers to impose tariffs, duties, or taxes under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). This law is what Trump used. But the Court kept intact other myriad laws, like the temporary ones under Section 122. In effect, Trump still possesses a few powers. In fact, he can use the IEEPA law too, if he takes the permission of the Congress. The reason: Congress can impose taxes under it, and this is what the lawmakers had in mind.

A close reading of the order (170-pages long, including the majority, and minority rulings) shows that it did not declare tariffs unconstitutional. It did not bar the executive from using tariffs. What it stated was limited to the tariffs under IEEPA. In legal terms, the tariffs failed not because of their intent, but because of their legal foundation. This matters because, in the Court's words, the regime was not the target. The object of interest was an enlarged framework, global in scope, adaptable at an individual's discretion, and justified through the flexible language of an "actual," "imagined", or unrelated emergency.

Of course, there are no doubts that even the latest action under Section 122 will be legally contested. The criticism has begun. For example, Gita Gopinath, former chief economist of IMF, maintains that this is an illegal move. First, as another critic noted, the Supreme Court order lays it bare that an okay from the Congress is mandatory for sweeping tariffs. However, this will apply to Section 122 after 150 days, within which Trump needs this. Second, Trump's legal team had argued before the Supreme Court that the powers under this Section of the relevant trade Act did not apply in the current situation.

Here is how it works. Trump used IEEPA to tackle the twin issues of narcotics (duties on Canada, Mexico, and China for smuggling of fentanyl), and looming trade deficits (low tariffs led to trade imbalances, and surplus-

for other nations). Let us forget fentanyl for the moment, as it is applicable to a few nations. During the IEEPA hearings, the Department of Justice (DoJ) argued that Trump used IEEPA, and not Section 122 because the latter did not apply to trade deficits. Now, the president has imposed new tariffs under it, and to tackle the growing economic menace of trade deficits.

As one critic responded through a social media post, "Seems hard for a President to rely on the... statute (Section 122) when his DoJ... told the Court the opposite." Gopinath the economist makes another distinction. She indirectly hints that the DoJ's claim in the court was correct because Section 122 applies in cases of balance-of-payment (BoP) deficits, and not trade deficits. The two deficits seem to be linked, but they are not the same. Trade deficits can lead to BoP deficits, which may be caused by several factors. The former is a

mere difference between imports and exports. The latter includes outflows of foreign exchange via trade deficits, investments, and capital transfers.

The pivot to Section 122 underscores the differences. IEEPA is activated by a presidential declaration of a national emergency tied to an "unusual and extraordinary threat" with a foreign nexus. Once triggered, its language grants wide discretion over economic transactions such as regulation, importation, and others, but not tariffs and taxes, as the Court ruled. This flexibility made it attractive for Trump. Section 122 is grounded not in emergency

rhethoric, but in BoP logic. It allows temporary surcharges to address the issue with clear caps on rates and duration. Section 122 is limited. One can say metaphorically that it is a bridge, and not a destination.

Of course, there are other laws that the president has used, and can use in the

future. Section 301 of the Trade Act allows tariffs after official investigations into unfair trade practices. Section 232 allows them on the grounds of national security after a stated process by the commerce department. Antidumping and countervailing duties apply at the product or firm level through quasi-judicial proceedings. Each of these tools remains intact after the recent Supreme Court ruling on IEEPA. What changes is the balance between speed and durability. Emergency-based tariffs can be imposed quickly and adjusted easily.

Statute-based tariffs under the relevant sections require investigations, findings, reports and, in some cases, congressional engagement. They are slower, more transparent, and vulnerable to legal challenges. Or at least this is what Trump thought before the Supreme Court order. Clearly, he can now either opt to approach the Congress, or follow the rigid procedures in the other statutes and laws. He cannot eat his tariff cake, and eat it too. For the world at large, including businesses, statute-based measures eradicate or reduce volatility, disruptions, sudden overnight duties, and frequent and unilateral changes.

Instead of one sweeping executive action, nations and businesses may face a sequence of narrower measures, like the temporary Section 122 surcharge. In comparison, an investigation under Section 301 can take months, an action under Section 232 focuses on specific sectors, and parallel litigations can challenge these steps. Although the policy risks do not disappear, they become episodic. Over the past decade, the US assets and trade flows carried an implicit policy volatility premium, which reflected the risk that trade policy can shift abruptly. By narrowing the executive's discretion, the Supreme Court reduces the probability of at least the shock of sudden tariffs.

But, rest assured, the court ruling on IEEPA introduces new uncertainties. Temporary measures create deadlines. Deadlines create negotiations. Negotiations create speculation. A 150-day surcharge under Section 122, for instance, is not a long-term policy. For nations this means more decision points. In addition, there is a message for the US presidents, who may wish to use emergency and national-security statutes, and bypass and sidestep the Congress.

## Banks should concentrate on core business: Sitharaman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday came down heavily on banks for mis-selling of financial products, including insurance and urged them to focus on core business. "Banks should concentrate on their core business... My pet peeve has always been.... You're spending more time on selling insurance when it is not required, and conveniently, it fell between two stools (of RBI and IRDAI)," Sitharaman told reporters after her customary post-Budget address to the Central Board of the RBI.

On February 11, the RBI had issued draft guidelines on

mis-selling, saying banks will have to refund the entire amount paid by the customer for purchase of the product or service and also compensate the customer for any loss arising due to mis-selling as per an approved policy. The public has been given time until March 4 to give feedback. The stricter norms on mis-selling will come into effect from July 1, the RBI had said.

"I am glad that the RBI is coming up with guidance on why mis-selling is not going to be entertained. I think the message should go to the banks that you cannot afford to mis-sell. And this word mis-sell, instead of offending anybody, seems to be one more word in the lexicon," she said. Stating that banks were asking



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra arrive for a meeting of the Reserve Bank of India Central Board, at the RBI headquarters in New Delhi on Monday

customers to buy insurance products even though they already had their required insurance, Sitharaman said RBI did not monitor such mis-selling thinking that it falls under the domain of insurance regulator. IRDAI, on the other hand, felt banks are not regulated by the insurance regulator and customers suffered due to regulatory gap.

"...The individual deposit holder, the citizen of this country who kept saying, why am I being asked to take an insurance when I'm giving my property, my piece of land and taking a home loan, he wants a loan for which the property is already there.

So what is he being asked to do? Why should he come up with another insurance there," the

minister said. Sitharaman said banks should focus on understanding their customers, strengths, weakness, and the business cycle, and in case of personal account holders, their needs and requirements.

She reiterated that banks should concentrate on their core business which is mobilising deposits and giving loans, and instead of selling non-bank products they should focus on improving their low-cost deposit base or CASA (Current Account Savings Account) deposits.

Meanwhile, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said that deposit growth in the banking system is around 12.5 per cent, while advances are growing at the rate of 14.5 per cent.

Malhotra said the monetary policy committee will take a decision on further policy rate cut depending on evolving growth, inflation dynamics. Since February 2025, the RBI has slashed benchmark policy repo rate by 125 basis points to 5.25 per cent in a bid to bolster growth amid benign inflation. However, in the last policy earlier this month MPC decided to maintain status quo with neutral stance amid global uncertainty.

The next bi-monthly policy, which is going to be the first for 2026-27 fiscal, will be announced on April 6.

Assuring market about comfortable liquidity, Governor Malhotra said the RBI will take all measures to provide durable liquidity to all market segments.

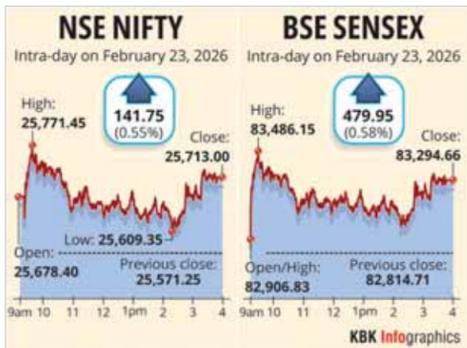
## Markets extend gains as investors cheer US court tariff verdict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Mumbai

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Monday, tracking gains in PSU bank, auto and financial stocks, as investors' sentiments improved after the US Supreme Court struck down the Trump administration's sweeping tariffs.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 479.95 points, or 0.58 per cent, to settle at 83,294.66. During the session, the benchmark jumped 671.44 points, or 0.81 per cent, to hit an intraday high of 83,486.15.

The 50-share NSE Nifty advanced 141.75 points, or 0.55 per cent, to close at 25,713.00.



25,713. In the intraday session, it appreciated 200.2 points, or 0.78 per cent, to hit a high of 25,771.45. Adani Ports was the biggest gainer

from the Sensex pack, rising 2.98 per cent, followed by Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, PowerGrid, Hindustan

Unilever, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro were the major gainers.

On the other hand, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Trent, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Consultancy Services, ITC, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Eternal, Tata Steel, and Indigo ended in losses.

"The US Supreme Court's ruling against Trump's reciprocal tariff policy was welcomed by domestic markets. Investors are awaiting more clarity on Trump's revised strategy and the scope of renegotiations by other nations," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments

Ltd, said. A weaker US dollar and declining 10-year Treasury yields may add near-term caution in the global market, he added.

"Sectorally, the IT index faced pressure from unresolved concerns over AI-driven disruption.

"Nonetheless, investors favoured domestic themes, with banks, power, FMCG, and consumer discretionary stocks gaining traction on expectations of resilient demand and economic recovery," Nair said.

The broader Asian markets closed higher, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng climbing 2.53 per cent while South Korea's Kospi went up nearly 1 per cent.

## Increasing use of AI, data analytics strengthening power sector: CAG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) K Sanjay Murthy on Monday said with the increasing use of artificial intelligence and big data analytics in the power sector, the capacity to tackle inherent complexities in the sector is getting strengthened.

Addressing the National Conference on Power Sector here, the CAG also said it is important for the entire power sector that operational efficiencies and financial sustainability of DISCOMs are enhanced and strengthened through focused and sustained efforts.

Since last decade, Murthy said the power sector has achieved a lot as the generation has gone up from 1,168 BU in 2015-16 to 1,824 BU in 2025-26.

The sources from which this power is being generated have also undergone major change as the shift to green energy has been increasingly gaining focus which is evident from the rise in its share from 6 per cent to 24 per cent, he said.

He also noted that the transmission network has been augmented by more than 70 per cent and it has achieved a milestone of crossing over 5 lakh circuit km (ckm) of transmission lines. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India is organising



Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) K Sanjay Murthy

a day-long national conference to facilitate meaningful discussions on recent developments in the power generation, transmission, and distribution sectors.

The conference is being attended by Secretary, Ministry of Power; Secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy; Chairperson, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), and Chairperson, Central Electricity Authority along with CMDs of NTPC, NHPC, SECI, PFC, Grid-India and PGCIL. Murthy said that on the distribution front, a major improvement is being noticed in village and household electrification.

"It is important for the entire power sector that operational efficiencies and financial sustainability of DISCOMs are enhanced and strengthened through focused and sustained efforts," he said. He also said that there are

early signs of recovery in the sector with DISCOMs recording a PAT of ₹2,701 crore in 2024-25. Murthy further said the advancement in technology has played a pivotal role in the ongoing metamorphosis of the power sector.

"With the increasing use of Artificial Intelligence and big data analytics in the sector, the capacity to tackle inherent complexities in the sector is getting strengthened," he said. Murthy said the conference is being organised to bring together concerned stakeholders including ministries, regulators, PSUs leading the sector across central and states, academia and CAG officers.

At the end of the conference, a comprehensive audit plan would be presented with an aim at achieving the national vision for power sector as well as towards achieving the shared goal of Viksit Bharat.

## Govt asks pharma industry to anchor global supply chain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Mumbai

Union Minister JP Nadda on Monday asked the domestic pharmaceutical industry to anchor the redesigned global supply chain not only with scale, but with quality, reliability and innovation.

Addressing virtually the 11th edition of the Global Pharmaceutical Quality Summit here, the minister for health and family welfare, as well as for chemicals and fertilisers, said that India is embracing emerging technologies responsibly, with artificial intelligence being leveraged for early disease detection, predictive diagnostics and improved outreach.

"As global supply chains are redesigned, India must anchor them, not only with scale, but with quality,

reliability and innovation. Trust will define leadership in the coming decades," he said. Post-covid and amid the changing geopolitical landscapes, the global supply chain is getting restructured with new models reducing single-source dependency and creating new avenues with diverse geographies.

India is also embracing emerging technologies responsibly, he said and added that artificial intelligence is being leveraged for early disease detection, predictive diagnostics and improved outreach.

"For pharmaceuticals, this means smarter research, better pharma co-vigilance and more responsible quality systems, ensuring technology complements human expertise," the minister emphasised. For decades, India has been recognised



Union Minister JP Nadda

as the pharmacy of the world, and today, under the present government, the country is transitioning toward becoming the innovator of the world, with healthcare security,

manufacturing resilience and scientific excellence at the centre of the national development, he said.

The Biopharma Shakti Initiative, with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore, will position India as a global biopharmaceutical manufacturing hub, strengthening domestic production, expanding research capacity, creating over 1,000 accredited clinical trial sites and reinforcing the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization with the scientific review cadre aligned to the global standards, he stated.

The ₹5,000 crore PRIP (Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech Sector) scheme is driving innovation in new medicines, complex generics, vaccines and advanced medical technologies, he added.

## Merchant payments outpace consumer play as Paytm holds profit edge: Bernstein

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Merchant payments are emerging as the more attractive segment in India's digital payments ecosystem, with Paytm retaining an edge in revenue intensity and profitability, according to a February 23 report by Bernstein.

The brokerage said merchant acquiring offers structurally stronger monetisation than consumer payments, driven by higher take-rate instruments such as credit cards and online gateways, device-led revenue streams, and the ability to cross-sell credit.

In contrast, consumer payments, particularly peer-to-peer (P2P) UPI transactions, remain difficult to mone-



tise, with take rates limited to under 0.4 basis points and incentives forming a key revenue source.

In payments, a take rate is the percentage of transaction value a platform earns as revenue, and a basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point. Despite processing significantly lower total payment value, Paytm

reported revenue comparable to its larger rival in the first half of FY26 (H1 FY26). After adjusting for revenue streams for non-recurring payment categories, including rent-related payments, real-money gaming flows and the RBI's PIDF incentive, Paytm's revenue was about 20 per cent higher in the period, the report noted.

The report added that while the consumer scale provides long-term optionality, the path to monetisation remains clearer on the merchant side.

The Noida-headquartered payments giant had reported revenue of ₹3,979 crore in the first half of FY26, marking a 26 per cent year-on-year increase.

On the merchant side, Paytm earns more than twice the revenue of its peer, aided by a larger installed base of payment devices, stronger lending penetration and a greater share of higher-margin products, Bernstein said. This has translated into higher revenue per device and per active merchant, reinforcing its monetisation advantage.

The report added that while the consumer scale provides long-term optionality, the path to monetisation remains clearer on the merchant side.

## India, France amend DTAC; capital gains to be taxed on basis of residency of company

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

India and France have amended the double taxation avoidance agreement which will provide for taxation of capital gains on the basis of residency of the company and deleted the Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) clause bringing in certainty in taxation.

The amending protocol also modifies the taxation of income from dividends by replacing a single rate of 10 per cent of tax with a split rate of 5 per cent for those holding at least 10 per cent of capital and 15 per cent of tax for all other cases.

It also modifies the definition of 'Fees for Technical Services' by aligning it with the definition in India US Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, and expands the scope of 'Permanent Establishment' by adding Service PE.

The protocol amending the India-France Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) was signed during



the recent visit of France President Emmanuel Macron to India. It was signed by Ravi Agrawal, Chairperson, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), and Thierry Mathou, Ambassador of France to India, on behalf of their respective governments. The amending protocol also updates the provisions on exchange

of information and introduces a new Article on assistance in collection of taxes, as per international standards.

"This would enable and facilitate seamless exchange of information and strengthen mutual tax cooperation between India and France," the CBDT said in a statement.

## Indian exports to attract 10% tariff in US for 150 days from February 24; uncertainty persists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Indian exports to the US will attract an additional 10 per cent tariff against 25 per cent currently for 150 days starting Tuesday after the American Supreme Court struck down the Trump administration's sweeping tariffs.

Exporters, however, said there is uncertainty among the trading community as US President Donald Trump has announced a hike in tariffs to 15 per cent, though no official order has been issued in this regard.

Following a Supreme Court verdict against his earlier sweeping tariffs last week, Trump on February 21 imposed a 10 per cent tariff on all countries, including India, from February 24 for 150 days.

order, Trump announced a hike in tariffs to 15 per cent.

"As per the current order, Indian goods will attract 10 per cent tariffs from February 24. But we are keeping our fingers crossed, as a new order for 15 per cent tariffs has not been issued by the US so far. But uncertainty is there," Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said.

There is also confusion over these tariffs, as there is no clarity on what will happen after 150 days.

"We need to bring down the curtains on this tariff drama now," Mumbai-based exporter and founder chairman of Technocraft Industries India Sharad Kumar Saraf said.

Saraf said the US is a key export destination for Indian exporters, and uncertainties over these



import duties impact the sentiments of businesses.

"Clarity and certainty over these tariffs will help us in pushing exports to the US," he added.

The 10 per cent levy will be over and above the existing MFN (most favoured nation) or import duties in the US.

For instance, if a product faces a 5 per cent MFN duty, an addition-

al 10 per cent will be imposed, taking the effective duty to 15 per cent. Earlier, this was 5 plus 25 per cent. If 15 per cent will be notified, then the duty will be 5 plus 15 per cent.

Leading footwear exporter and Florence shoe company Chairman Aqeel Panaruna said that recent clarity provided by the US Supreme Court ruling on tariff

application has improved visibility for global footwear and leather sourcing, with effective duties now expected to fall in the 10-15 per cent range.

He said the ruling applies uniformly across Asian sourcing countries, helping restore predictability for US brands.

"For the footwear and leather industry, one of the most labour-intensive and service-driven global manufacturing sectors, tariff stability is critical. Long product-development cycles, tight margins, and complex supplier coordination require predictable landed costs and reliable execution," Aqeel noted.

Within this framework, he said, India remains a competitive sourcing destination. Its large, skilled workforce, expanding manufacturing capacity, and standards allow suppliers to meet US

buyers' requirements on quality, delivery timelines, and flexibility, even in a changing trade environment, he added.

"Footwear manufacturing is no longer driven by cost alone. Service reliability, workforce continuity, and long-term supplier relationships are increasingly central to sourcing decisions. India's ability to provide consistent labour availability and scalable production helps reduce supply-chain risk for US brands," Aqeel noted.

As US brands reassess global sourcing strategies, India's competitiveness positions it as a strong partner for future growth in footwear and leather manufacturing, he said.

Yogesh Gupta, MD of Kolkata-based Megaa Moda and a major processor and exporter of seafood products, said that the reduction

in the reciprocal tariffs to 10 per cent will help us increase shipments in the American markets.

The removal of the 15 per cent uncertainty will give a clearer picture to exporters, he added.

In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda in his second term, the US Supreme Court last week ruled that the tariffs imposed by Trump on nations around the world were illegal and that the president had exceeded his authority when he imposed the sweeping levies by using the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977.

The US had imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff on India in August 2025. Later, an additional 25 per cent duty was imposed for buying Russian crude oil, taking the total tariffs on India to 50 per cent.

## Summit in Delhi puts human-centric AI on the global agenda



**SURJIT SINGH FLORA**

Why did the AI Impact Summit in Delhi draw so much attention in February 2026? Part of the answer is scale. The room held more than researchers and policy staff. It also brought in AI company leaders, heads of Government, and sector groups that live with AI's side effects.

Compared with earlier global AI conferences, this one felt closer to execution. The summit framed AI as infrastructure, not a lab project.

In his address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushed a clear direction: AI should be accountable, safe, democratic, inclusive, and human-centric, anchored in the MANAV vision.

Earlier global meetings often split the discussion. Tech teams spoke about capability, while Governments argued about risk. Delhi pulled those threads together, and it showed in participation. More top executives attended, more ministers and senior officials joined sessions, and more industry bodies turned up from health, finance, education, and media.

That mix changed the tone. Talks focused less on abstract "AI potential" and more on guardrails for systems already in use. The public stakes also felt higher, because AI now shapes credit checks, classroom tools, hiring screens, and customer support.

### A wider table: Tech, Government, and industry in the same room

Each group brings a different toolset. Companies control product design and release cycles. Governments set liability rules and public procurement standards. Industry groups bring real failure cases, like false fraud flags or unsafe medical triage.

When they act alone, gaps form fast. A fast launch can outrun safety testing. A slow rule can miss new attack methods. Shared sessions help align timelines, and reduce surprises at rollout.

### From talk to pressure for action, because AI is already everywhere

AI is no longer "coming soon." It's in phones, offices, schools, and public

portals. As a result, the risks are visible to ordinary people. Deepfakes can ruin reputations in hours. Scams scale with synthetic voices. Bias can hide inside automated decisions.

That urgency helps explain why Delhi became headline news, not just a specialist event.

### Modi's human-first message, and what MANAV asks the world to build

Modi's message pushed a shift from machine-first metrics to human outcomes. Faster models don't help if people can't challenge a harmful result. Cheap automation doesn't help if it locks out small towns, local languages, or people with disabilities.

MANAV works like a checklist for AI teams: build systems people can trust, contest, and access.

In practical terms, "human-centric AI" means clear responsibility when an AI tool causes harm, safety testing before wide release, and inclusive design that works across India's diversity.

### Breaking down MANAV

**Moral (ethical):** Reduce harm, for example, block non-consensual deepfake tools.

**Accountable:** Name an owner, so a rejected loan can be appealed and reviewed.

**National Sovereignty:** Protect sensitive data, so core systems don't depend on opaque foreign control.

**Accessible (Inclusive):** Support local languages and assistive features, so services work beyond metro users.

**Valid (legitimate):** Test and audit models, so errors are measurable and decisions stay lawful.

### What India needs next, from AI literacy to a strong regulator

The summit highlighted a central gap: India can't only import tools. It needs local talent, local datasets where appropriate, and public-interest systems built for Indian conditions. At the same time, job disruption needs planning, so older roles don't disappear before new AI roles grow.

The 86-country declaration signals intent, yet enforcement remains unclear. India therefore needs a domestic framework with monitoring, audits, and consequences.

### Teach AI basics early, so users can spot misuse and protect themselves

AI literacy can start by grade 8. Students can learn how training data shapes outputs, why models hallucinate,

and how deepfakes spread. Simple habits matter too, like verifying sources and treating "AI answers" as drafts, not facts.

### A TRAI-like AI watchdog, plus constant review as the tech changes

A dedicated AI regulator could set safety standards, require risk reports, run third-party audits, and enforce penalties for repeat abuse. It should also react quickly during election periods or mass-fraud spikes. Without ongoing review, misuse can trigger confusion, and widen social divides.

While PM Modi considers the summit more than merely aesthetics, India's digital public infrastructure-Aadhaar, UPI, and broad data systems-provides a rare foundation for massive AI deployment. Officials say AI in identity, commerce, health, and education might accelerate decades-old development.

India is third in AI competitiveness behind the US and China. Still, major obstacles remain. Low R&D spending and foreign foundation models may restrict long-term leadership.

Even still, domestic initiatives are accelerating. BharatGen will launch Param2, a 17-billion-parameter model for 22 Indian languages. Additionally, Sarvam AI is developing a broader, voice-first solution for India's various languages. India clearly wants affordable, multilingual AI for Government, farmers, hospitals, and classrooms.

Global chip politics are changing supply chains, and firms want alternatives to China. India is striving to be more than an AI buyer due to that trend. It wants a seat at the table to co-create the future.

Indeed! Artificial intelligence (AI) already shapes choices that feel small, like what news appears first, and decisions that matter, like who gets a loan. It also supports systems people rely on each day, including work, schools, hospitals, and Government services. In plain terms, AI is software that learns patterns from data, then makes predictions or suggestions, sometimes even decisions. That power brings clear benefits, but it also raises real risks.

The central challenge now is not speed alone. It's building AI that serves people, respects rights, and stays accountable.

AI's value shows up most when it reduces delays and helps people focus on judgment-heavy work. In healthcare, AI can flag unusual patterns in scans or lab results, which can support earlier follow-up. In business, AI can sort cus-

tom messages, summarise documents, and help teams plan inventory, so routine tasks take less time. Schools use AI tools to offer practice problems at the right level, which can help teachers spot gaps sooner. Cities and agencies also use data tools to predict demand, schedule staff, and detect suspicious claims. These uses matter because they can improve service quality without raising costs as sharply. Still, the best results come from clear goals, careful testing, and staff training, not from installing software and hoping for change.

While in clinics, AI systems can highlight images or results that look risky, so clinicians can review them sooner. That can matter when time affects outcomes, such as stroke care or cancer screening. On farms, AI-backed forecasts and sensor data can help predict irrigation needs and pest pressure, which can cut waste and protect yields. In classrooms, adaptive learning tools can adjust pace and difficulty, giving students extra practice where they struggle. These systems work best as support tools. They don't replace trained professionals, because context, empathy, and responsibility still sit with people.

Also, public agencies can use AI to route cases, spot patterns of fraud, and reduce backlogs in benefits and licensing. Done well, that can shorten wait times and lower error rates.

AI can also support climate action. For example, grid operators can forecast demand and manage supply swings, which helps integrate wind and solar. Yet outcomes depend on data quality and clear rules.

If records are incomplete or biased, models can produce confident but wrong results. Strong governance matters as much as technical skill.

### The risks that can't be treated as side issues

AI can magnify existing problems because it often learns from past behavior. If past decisions treated groups unfairly, models could repeat that pattern at scale.

Privacy risks also grow when systems pull from large datasets, sometimes collected without clear consent or meaningful choice.

Surveillance can expand quietly when AI makes it cheap to track faces, voices, locations, and behavior.

In addition, automation can shift job tasks faster than training systems can respond, leaving some workers behind. Each risk damages trust in a direct way.

People lose confidence when they can't understand a decision, challenge it, or even know data was used. Trust, once lost, is hard to rebuild.

### Job disruption and inequality, plus what reskilling needs to look like

Routine work often changes first, including basic office processing, customer support triage, and some repeatable factory tasks. At the same time, new roles grow, such as data stewardship, model testing, safety review, and AI support in workplaces. The transition still hurts if training costs too much or arrives too late. Reskilling works best when it stays practical. Short programs, paid apprenticeships, and employer-backed credentials can help adults move without pausing life for years. Basic digital skills also matter, because even non-technical jobs now include AI-assisted tools.

### Privacy, surveillance, and biased decisions that people can't contest

AI runs on data, and data often comes from people who never agreed in a clear way. Location history, app activity, and online behavior can feed profiles that shape what people see and how they're treated. Bias also shows up in high-stakes areas.

Hiring tools can rate candidates unfairly, lending models can restrict credit, policing systems can over-target neighborhoods, and health tools can miss symptoms in under-represented groups. When an AI system affects rights or opportunity, people need a clear way to ask, "Why?" and a real path to appeal. Two practical answers point forward: transparency (explanations and audits) and rights (appeals and oversight with teeth).

### What "ethical and inclusive AI" looks like in practice

Ethical and inclusive AI sounds abstract until it becomes a set of habits and checks. First, someone must own outcomes, not just the code. Next, systems need evidence of safety, fairness, and security before wide release. Teams should also include the people most affected, especially in health, education, housing, and criminal justice. Inclusion is not only about users in wealthy cities. It also means addressing the global power imbalance, where a few firms and advanced nations set tools and terms. Cooperation can narrow that gap through shared research, common standards, and support for local capacity. The goal is simple: AI should increase

human capability, not reduce human agency.

### Rules that build trust: audits, clear accountability, and human review

Strong guardrails can stay readable and enforceable. For high-stakes uses, basic expectations should include:

**Privacy-by-design:** collect less data, protect it well, and set clear retention limits.

**Security testing:** reduce model theft, data leaks, and prompt-based attacks.

**Bias testing:** measure performance across groups, then fix gaps before release.

**Third-party audits:** let independent reviewers check claims and risks.

**Documentation:** record training sources, limits, and known failure modes.

**Human review:** keep a person responsible for final decisions in sensitive cases.

A "right to an explanation" should mean plain reasons, not technical fog. It should also include who to contact when something goes wrong.

### Sharing AI benefits across countries, not just across companies

Concentrated AI power can lead to digital monopolies, where a small set of providers controls access, pricing, and standards.

That can also deepen a global divide if developing economies only import tools they can't shape. Several approaches can reduce this risk.

Public-sector investment can fund local data infrastructure and responsible deployments in health and education.

Safe open research can support learning and scrutiny, while still protecting sensitive data. Data governance can set fair rules for access, consent, and cross-border use. Partnerships also matter when they help build local teams that create tools for local languages, local clinics, and local markets.

In the end, the Delhi AI Impact Summit mattered because it matched global attention with a clearer direction and broader participation.

It also framed MANAV as a practical north star for human-centric AI, not a slogan. Next, India and other countries need to turn promises into education, job transition plans, and a regulator that can keep pace. Otherwise, misuse will grow faster than trust.

The writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton Canada

## Villagers lured for aid, killed in South Sudan



**JOSEPH FALZETTA**  
New York

More than a dozen civilians were killed after being lured from their homes by fighters allied to South Sudan's Government under the pretence of being registered for humanitarian food aid, according to two people who survived the attack.

The killings took place on Saturday morning in the village of Pankor, in Ayod County, in the conflict-hit Jonglei State, about 250 miles (400 kilometres) north of the capital, Juba. Women and children were among the victims. Several dozen fighters arrived in pickup trucks and announced over a loud-speaker that they had come to register residents for food assistance, said the two survivors, who both spoke on the condition of anonymity due to fear of retaliation.

"They gathered them in a luak", said one witness, referring to a traditional mud hut used to house cattle. "People were thinking they would get aid or some help."

The fighters then bound the hands of several men and opened fire on the group. The two survivors said that 22 people were killed and several more were injured. The Government-appointed county commissioner said 16 people were killed. The Associated Press was unable to independently verify the

numbers. Photos showed bodies of women and young men, some with their hands bound behind their backs, who appear to have been shot at close range. The images, which were shared with the AP by an opposition representative, are too graphic to publish.

Makuach Muot, 34, travelled to Pankor on Sunday for the funerals of eight relatives. Most of the village's residents had fled fighting months earlier, he said, leaving behind mainly elderly people and young children.

Army spokesman Maj. Gen. Lul Ruai Koang could not be reached for comment.

James Chuol Jiek, the Government-appointed county commissioner of Ayod, confirmed that more than a dozen people, mostly women and children, had been killed in the attack.

He said the gunmen belonged to the Agwelek militia, a force drawn from the Shilluk ethnic group that has not been fully integrated into the national army but that has been deeply involved in recent military operations.

Jiek said that the fighters had left their barracks overnight without the knowledge of their commander. He said they told him the killings were revenge for attacks by a Nuer militia on Shilluk villages in 2022, during which hundreds of civilians were killed or abducted. (AP)

## Armed group in Nigeria kills 38 people, says Police

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
Abuja

Police in Nigeria say 38 people were killed and others were abducted in an attack last week in north-western Zamfara State.

Authorities received intelligence before the attack on Thursday, but a lack of road access prevented police from reaching the area in time, State police spokesperson Yazid Abubakar told *The Associated Press*. "By the



time we have our way, the assailants have invaded the community and killed 38 while also abducting many residents," Abubakar said

on Monday. Investigators in the West African nation are compiling a list of women and children who were abducted, Abubakar

said. The attack in Tungan Duste, a community in the Anka local Government area of Zamfara state, is the latest assault on civilians in Nigeria's northern region, where attacks are frequent. In nearby Kebbi, 33 people were killed in simultaneous attacks last week.

The African Union, which includes 55 member states on the continent, condemned the attack on Sunday and called for the release of abducted women and children. "The African

Union unequivocally rejects all acts of terrorism and violent extremism against civilian populations, particularly women and children, as grave violations of human rights and serious threats to peace, security, and stability," the organisation said in a statement.

Nigeria is battling a complex security crisis from different armed groups. The United States has sent troops to the West African nation to help advise its military on the fight against insecurity.

## Arab countries back Kuwait in dispute with Iraq

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
Baghdad

A dispute between Iraq and Kuwait over their maritime border that reignited over the weekend has prompted Gulf Arab countries to side with Kuwait, putting Baghdad on the defensive on Monday over its demand.

The dispute came after Iraq recently submitted a map and geographic coordinates to the United Nations to delineate what it says are Iraqi areas in the Persian Gulf waters — some of which Kuwait claims infringe on its territory. Although relations have improved between the two countries since the 2003 ouster of former Iraqi



strongman Saddam Hussein - who invaded Kuwait in 1990 — their maritime boundary has been a persistent cause of friction. Kuwait's foreign ministry said Iraq's claim infringes on Kuwait's sovereignty by placing Kuwaiti areas, including the Fasht al-Qaid and Fasht al-Aij shoals, in Iraq territory.

Kuwait's neighbours are now backing its stand, with Qatar, the United Emirates and Oman issuing statements in solidarity. Saudi Arabia said it has "serious concerns" about the Iraqi map, adding that it also encroaches on a joint Saudi-Kuwaiti zone.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said in a statement Monday that Kuwait had "deposited its maps with the United Nations in 2014, without consulting Iraq at the time." He said that Iraq is committed to "the provisions of international law and ... to regulating its maritime rights within the established legal frameworks, thereby contributing to the strengthening of stability and cooperation in the

region." In 2019, Iraq sent a complaint to the UN, accusing Kuwait of pursuing a "policy of fait accompli by creating a new situation that changes the geography of the region" after it built a port facility on the Fasht al-Aij shoal.

Iraq and Kuwait have for years wrangled over Khor Abdullah, a narrow waterway shared by Iraq and Kuwait that empties into the Persian Gulf.

In 2012, they reached an agreement regulating travel in the waterway, but in 2023, two Iraqi lawmakers sued to overturn the agreement, saying that it infringed on Iraq's sovereignty and had been adopted without following proper parliamentary procedures.

## Hong Kong court upholds convictions of 12 activists in national security case

**KANIS LEUNG**  
Hong Kong

A Hong Kong court on Monday dismissed all appeals arising from the city's biggest case brought under a Beijing-imposed national security law.

The pro-democracy advocates were among 47 activists charged in 2021 with conspiracy to commit subversion for their involvement in an unofficial primary election.

The mass prosecution involving some of the best-known activists crushed much of the city's once-thriving pro-democracy movement that reached a height with massive anti-Government protests in 2019.

Forty-five of the defendants were sentenced to between four years and 10 years in 2024, with their punishments drawing criticism



from foreign Governments and rights groups.

Eleven activists who appealed their convictions lost their bids. They included former lawmakers Leung Kwok-hung, Lam Cheuk-ting, Raymond Chan and Helena Wong. All appeals over sentences

were also dismissed by the Court of Appeal. Lawrence Lau, a pro-democracy former district councillor, was one of two activists acquitted in the case. Judges upheld his acquittal following an appeal from the prosecution.

A primary led to convictions

During the trial, prosecutors said the activists aimed to paralyze Hong Kong's Government and force the city's leader to resign. The judges said in their verdict in 2024 that the activists' plans to effect change through the unofficial primary would have undermined the Government's authority and created a constitutional crisis.

Critics said the activists' convic-

tions illustrated how authorities crushed dissent following the 2019 protests. The Beijing and Hong Kong Governments insist the national security law was necessary for the city's stability.

Some finished serving their terms. The case involved democracy advocates across the spectrum, including legal scholar Benny Tai, who got a 10-year prison term, and former student leader Joshua Wong, whose sentence was four years and eight months.

Nearly 20 activists in the case have been released from prison over the past year.

Among them were former district councillors Jimmy Sham and Lester Shum. Sham and Lee Yue-shun, another acquitted activist, chatted with Lau before on Monday's hearing. (AP)

FROM THE WORLD

Mexico fears violence after army kills El Mencho

ZIMBABWE Mugabes son faces charges

The son of Zimbabwe's late former President Robert Mugabe appeared in a South African court on Monday with another man to face charges of attempted murder after a shooting at his home in Johannesburg last week.

ASSOCIATED PRESS Guadaluajara (Mexico)



Schools were cancelled in several Mexican states and local and foreign Governments alike warned their citizens to stay inside, as widespread violence erupted following the army's killing of the powerful leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

20 States. The White House confirmed that the US provided intelligence support to the operation to capture the cartel leader and applauded Mexico's army for taking down a man who was one

of the most wanted criminals in both countries. Mexico hoped the death of the world's biggest fentanyl traffickers would ease Trump administration pressure to do more against the cartels, but many

remained hunkered down and on edge as they waited to see the powerful cartel's reaction. Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco state and Mexico's second-largest city, was almost completely shut

down on Sunday as fearful residents stayed home.

Passengers arriving to the city's international airport Sunday night were told it was operating with limited personnel because of the burst of violence. Jacinta Murcia, a 64-year-old nutrition products vendor, was among those nervously walking late Sunday night through the airport, where earlier in the day travellers sprinted and ducked behind chairs fearing violence.

Most flights into the city were suspended on Sunday. Murcia anxiously scrolled through news stories on social media showing the face of "El Mencho" and sent messages to her children, who were tracking her location as she tried to travel across the city to her house after dark.

Authorities in Jalisco, Michoacan and Guanajuato reported at least 14 other people killed Sunday, including seven National Guard

troops. Videos circulating on social media showed tourists in Puerto Vallarta walking on the beach with smoke rising in the distance.

In another part of the airport a group of elderly Mexicans gathered, discussing how to get home.

"We better all go together," one said. "Go with God." David Mora, Mexico analyst for International Crisis Group, said the capture and outburst of violence marks a point of inflection in Sheinbaum's push to crack down on cartels and relieve US pressures.

US President Donald Trump has demanded Mexico do more to fight the smuggling of the often-deadly drug fentanyl, threatening to impose more tariffs or take unilateral military action if the country does not show results. There were early signs that Mexico's efforts were well received by the United States. US Amb Ron Johnson recognised the success of the Mexican armed forces and their sacrifice in a statement.

He added that "under the leadership of President Trump and President Sheinbaum, bilateral cooperation has reached unprecedented levels".

USA Moon rocket heads for repairs

Grounded until at least April, NASA's giant moon rocket is headed back to the hangar this week for more repairs before astronauts climb aboard. The space agency said it's targeting Tuesday for the slow, four-mile (6.4-kilometre) trek across Kennedy Space Center, weather permitting.

Migrant boat capsizes in Croatia

ASSOCIATED PRESS Zagreb

A boat carrying migrants overturned on the Una River in western Croatia early on Monday, killing at least one person, officials said.

The accident happened near the town of Hrvatska Kostajnica on the border with Bosnia. Migrants were apparently trying to cross the river in cold weather when their boat capsized, rescuers told HRT state television.

Police said a man from Bosnia, who was rescued, was suspected of people smuggling. The index portal said some seven to eight Chinese nationals were believed to be on the boat that capsized. Police did not



specify their nationalities. People fleeing violence or poverty in Asia, the Middle East or Africa often face perils as they try to reach Western Europe with the help of people smugglers, who guide them over the borders illegal-

ly. Migrants enter Croatia, a European Union member state, either from Bosnia or Serbia. The countries lie on the so-called Balkan land route for migrants leading from Turkey or Greece and through North Macedonia.

International Criminal Court opens hearings into ex-Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte

MOLLY QUELL Hague

The International Criminal Court began pre-trial hearings on Monday for former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who is facing three counts of crimes against humanity for deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he oversaw while in office.

Duterte, 80, was not in The Hague courtroom, having waived his right to appear as prosecutors began presenting evidence to support their charges of his alleged involvement in dozens of killings as part of his so-called war on drugs.



The charges date from Duterte's time as mayor of the southern Philippine city of Davao and later as president, and include dozens of killings as part of his so-called war on drugs.

Duterte has described the charges against him an "outrageous lie". The Hague hearing is not a trial, but allows prosecutors to outline their case in court. After weighing the evidence,

judges have 60 days to decide whether or not to confirm the charges.

Last month, judges found the octogenarian was fit to stand trial, after postponing an earlier hearing over concerns about his health.

Rights groups and families of victims hailed Duterte's arrest in March, saying it was a step forward for justice. "We have waited for this for so long, for years we have waited, but we did not relent," Llore Pasco told reporters at a news conference ahead of the hearing. She said both of her sons left for work in May 2017 and never returned. (AP)

PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client i.e. ICICI Bank Ltd. that Mr. Simith Mehra is owner of Property/Plot bearing No.056, area measuring 497.51 sq. mtrs. in Block 'SH, Situated at Sector-141, Noida - U.P., vide Transfer deed dated 05.04.2021, registration No. 1899, and supplementary lease deed dated 22.01.2026, registration No. 820. All Persons are hereby informed that above owner want to take a loan facility from our client against the said property. If anybody has any objections on the ownership of above owner's title/s title/s sale mortgage, and any other kind of objection/litigation, Charge etc. kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

The Pioneer Classified CHANGE OF NAME I, Jagwati, Mother of No.16021564Y Nk Vipin Kumar, R/o- Vill- Dhilwari, Post- Mundia Dhure Ki, Teh- Bisauli, Dist- Badauna, U.P.- 243720, have changed my name from Jagwati Devi to Jagwati, vide affidavit dated 23/02/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(350)C

I, Khushbu, W/o- No.15789890W LHav(OCC) Gopal Thakur, R/o- 55/2 Govind Nagar Kharcha, Teh & Dist - Indore, M.P.- 452015, have changed my name from Khushbu to Khushbu Singh, vide affidavit dated 23/02/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(351)C

I, Sanjeev Kumar Mittal S/o-Shri Chand, R/o- WZ-258/4, Nangal Raya, South West Delhi, 110046, have changed my name from Sanjeev Kumar Mittal to Sanjeev Mittal for all purposes. PD(352)C

I, hitherto known as Heera Dei Alias Heera Dai D/o Manohar Lal W/o Late Khem Chand R/o 686, Sector-72, Nimka (96), Neemka, Faridabad, Haryana-121004 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Hira Dai. PD(346)C

I, Mohar Singh Saharan, Father of- No.14850308F Hav Rakesh Kumar, R/o-Vill & PO-Malsisar, Teh- Bhadra, Dist-Hanumanagarh, Rajasthan-335502, have changed my name from Mohar Singh Saharan to Mohar Singh, vide affidavit dated 23/02/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(348)C

I, Fulli Devi, Mother of- No.14850308F Hav Rakesh Kumar, R/o- Vill & PO-Malsisar, Teh- Bhadra, Dist-Hanumanagarh, Rajasthan-335502, have changed my name from Fulli Devi to Phuli Devi, vide affidavit dated 23/02/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(349)C

I, Rukmani Tiwari, W/o- JC-812489X Sub Anil Kumar Tiwari, R/o- VPO&Teh- Amarpatan, Dist- Satna, M.P.- 485775, declare that in my husband's service record my DOB is wrongly recorded as 05/10/1981 (as per Sheet Roll) and 08/10/1981 (as per IAF 958), whereas my correct D.O.B. is 01/01/1980 which may be amended accordingly. PD(355)C

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (HEALTH AND EDUCATION), ASSAM CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3. No.CE/TB-III(H&E)/28/2025/10 PRESS NOTICE The Chief Engineer, P.W.D., (Health & Education), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bids for the work detailed in the table below, from contractors having experience in similar nature of work. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal we site i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS), CACHAR CIRCLE, SILCHAR No:-T/CC/ETN/SIL/2025-26/1240(T) PRESS NOTICE INVITING RE-TENDER (e-Procurement) The Superintending Engineer, PWD (Roads) Cachar Circle, Silchar on behalf of Governor of Assam, re-invites bids against this office earlier press notice no. T/CC/ETN/SIL/2025-26/1033(T) Dtd. Silchar, the 22nd January/2026 for 5 (Five) No. of packages for Recovery and Re-construction of Roads (Assam Flood and Landslides 2022) under NDRF (PDNA-2022) for the year 2025-26 within Cachar District of Assam (under Sonai and Udharbond LAC) amounting to approximately Rs. 208.90 Lakh (Rupees Two Crore Eight Lakh Ninety Thousand) only including GST etc. within the jurisdiction of P.W.R.D. Dholai and Sonai Territorial Road Division, Dholai and P.W.R.D. Silchar and Udharbond Territorial Road Division, Silchar from approved and eligible contractors registered with Public Works Department (Roads), Assam.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS), CACHAR CIRCLE, SILCHAR No:-T/CC/ETN/SIL/2025-26/1238(T) PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER (e-Procurement) The Superintending Engineer, PWD (Roads) Cachar Circle, Silchar on behalf of Governor of Assam, invites bids for 8 (Eight) No. of packages for Construction of Roads under Mukhya Mantrir Nagariya Pakipith Nirman Achari (MMNPPNA) under SOPD-G for the year 2025-26, within Cachar District of Assam (under Silchar LAC) amounting to approximately Rs. 935.05 Lakhs (Rupees Nine Crore Thirty Six Lakh Five Thousand) only including GST etc. within the jurisdiction of P.W.R.D. Silchar and Udharbond Territorial Road Division, Silchar from approved and eligible contractors registered with Public Works Department (Roads), Assam.

Public Notice / General Information The general public is hereby informed that my client has lawfully purchased the below-described land/property/agricultural land from (1) Sh. Khemchand, Son of Sh. Chhotelal @ Chhote, R/o House No.-39, Gram-Behrampur, Bhrempur(80), Badshahpur, Gurgaon-122101, Haryana. VENDOR NO. 1 (2) Sh. Shriram, Son of Sh. Chhotelal @ Chhote, R/o House No.52, Sector No. 59, Gram - Behrampur, Bhrempur(80), Gurgaon-122101, Haryana. VENDOR NO. 2 (3) Sh. Premraj @ Prem Raj Bhati, Son of Sh. Bhima R/o Sector No. 59, Gram - Behrampur, Bhrempur(80), Gurgaon-122101, Haryana. VENDOR NO. 3 (4) Sh. Dharambir @ Dharamvir, Son of Sh. Bhima @ Bheema Ram R/o Sector No. 59, Gram - Behrampur, Bhrempur(80), Gurgaon-122101, Haryana. VENDOR NO. 4 (5) Sh. Vijay, Son of Sh. Bhima R/o Sector No. 59, Gram - Behrampur, Bhrempur(80), Gurgaon-122101, Haryana. VENDOR NO. 5 (6) Sh. Mahender, Son of Sh. Bhima R/o Vill-Behrampur, Badshahpur Tethar(222), Gurgaon-122101, Haryana. VENDOR NO. 6 (VENDOR NO. 1&2 have equal share in 286/1249 Share and VENDOR NO. 3 to 6 have equal share in 143/1249 Share) ("Seller"). The details of the said land of the Seller are as under: Khewat/Khata No. 1371/1364 Rect. No. 73 Killa No. 21/2(2-5) Rect. No. 75 Killa No. 15/2(1-12) 16/1(4-2) 25/2(6-12) Rect. No. 76 Killa No. 1/2(4-15) 10/1(7-3) 11(8-0), total fields- 7, land measuring 34 Kanal 9 Marla, out of which 429/1249 share, admeasuring 11 Kanal 16.65 Marla, as per Jamabandi for the year 2021-2022, situated at Village Mandkola, Tehsil Hathin, District Palwal, Haryana ("Scheduled Property/Land"). The said purchase has been undertaken by my Client with due care, proper due diligence. The said Public notice is being issued, so as to ascertain and invite disclosure of any hidden claims, rights, or disputes, if any, relating to the said Scheduled Property/Land. The Seller had further declared that the said Scheduled Property/Land is completely free from all kinds of encumbrances including but not limited to charges, mortgages, loans, claims, disputes, litigations, attachments, stay orders, ceiling proceedings, acquisition, surplus land, government dues, or any third-party rights or claims whatsoever, and that the title of the said Scheduled Property/Land is clear, clean, and marketable. The Seller had further represented and warranted that the Seller has clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership and was in actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession of the said Scheduled Property/Land and that no prior, existing, or subsisting agreement, transaction, understanding, or arrangement of any nature whatsoever, whether oral or written, in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land has been entered into with any third party in respect thereof. It was also declared that no case, proceeding, or dispute in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land is pending before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum. Therefore, or any person, bank, financial institution, government department, or any other party, firm, company, or entity, who has or claims to have any valid, legal, or equitable right, title, interest, claim, demand, charge, or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land—whether by way of sale, gift, lease, tenancy, license, exchange, partition, mortgage, lien, inheritance, succession, agreement, litigation, decree, stay order, possession, or otherwise—shall intimate the undersigned in writing, along with full particulars of such claim/objecton and supporting documentary evidence, within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this notice. In case no information or objection is received within the stipulated period, it shall be conclusively and lawfully presumed that there exists no encumbrances including but not limited to third-party claim, right, or dispute etc. in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land and my client shall be legally deemed to have clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership therein along with actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession thereon, entitling my Client to lawfully proceed, sell and deal with the Scheduled Property/Land. Thereafter, any such claim, objection, or dispute shall be treated as legally untenable, deemed to have been waived, and my client shall not be held liable for the same in any civil or criminal proceedings before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum. The Scheduled Property/Land shall be deemed to include all rights, easements, pathways, appurtenances, standing crops, trees, plants, constructions, fences, boundary walls, etc. attached thereto. The general public is hereby cautioned not to deal or enter into any transaction concerning the Schedule Property/Land with any person, party, or entity, falling which such transaction shall be at their own cost, risk and consequences. This public notice is issued on behalf of my Client with complete bona-fide, transparency, and good faith so as to safeguard my client against any future allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, or collusion or any other allegations whatsoever in relation to the Schedule property. This notice is being issued without prejudice to any of the legal rights, contentions and remedies available to my client under applicable law.

## PROSPECT

### IRFC celebrates Annual Sports Day Spandan in New Delhi



The Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) celebrated its Annual Sports Day, themed "Spandan," at the historic Karnail Singh Stadium in Connaught Place on February 20. The event, held amid the vibrant spring season, served as a platform to foster wellness, camaraderie, and sportsmanship among employees and their families. The stadium buzzed with energy as participants competed in a wide array of disciplines, including Cricket, Badminton, Volleyball, Lawn Tennis, Carrom, Chess, and Tug of War. The spirited competitions underscored the organisation's commitment to building a balanced and healthy work culture. In a notable display of leadership by example, Manoj Kumar Dubey, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of IRFC, actively participated in several sporting events. Encouraging the staff, he personally took to the field, reinforcing the importance of physical fitness and togetherness beyond the confines of professional duties. Addressing the gathering, Dubey remarked, "Spandan" is not merely a Sports Day; it is the heartbeat of our collective spirit. Sports teach us discipline, teamwork, and positive energy. When we play together, we strengthen trust and collaboration. He further emphasised that a healthy and united team remains the true backbone of any successful organisation. The event concluded as a grand celebration of unity and vitality, reflecting the sentiment that a team that plays together, grows stronger together.

### Chouhan, Himanta launch agriculture, rural projects in Assam



Opening a new chapter in the State's agriculture and rural development sector, Union Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan, in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, launched several major initiatives here on Monday. At a high-profile event held at the Jyoti Bishnu Antarjati Kalamandir in Khanapara, the Union Minister formally handed over the approval letter for Rs 1,819 crore sanctioned for Assam under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY IV, 2025-26). The Union Minister also inaugurated the newly constructed building of Assam Seeds Corporation Limited and launched two innovative mobile applications — 'Krishi Sarathi' for the Agriculture Department and 'Rural One' for the Panchayat Department. Additionally, a social audit module for the AWAS Plus app was unveiled. Marking a significant milestone in rural housing, one lakh beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin formally performed house-warming ceremonies during the event. To ensure fair returns for the State's potato farmers, the Government signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding with PepsiCo and SBI. Under the Chief Minister's Utkarsh Yojana, cheques were handed over to ten Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister Krishnendu Paul, and Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture Minister UG Brahma, MP Bijuli Kalita Medhi, MLAs Atul Bora and Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Assam Seeds Corporation Chairman Prabin Hazarika, Additional Chief Secretary B Kalyan Chakravarty, and other senior officials, and beneficiaries of various schemes were present on the occasion.

# Bharat Taxi guarantees base rate: Amit Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

than that has to come back to you."

### Amul model

Union Cooperation Amit Shah on Monday said the newly launched cooperative cab service Bharat Taxi will guarantee a minimum base rate per kilometre for all drivers on its platform, asserting that existing ride-hailing aggregators had deliberately avoided setting such a floor to maximise corporate profits at the expense of workers.

Shah drew repeated parallels between Bharat Taxi and the Amul Dairy cooperative, which he described as a template for worker-owned enterprise at scale. "36 lakh mothers and sisters invested just ₹50 each and built Amul, which has a turnover of ₹1,25,000 crore," he said.

Addressing a town hall interaction with cab and auto drivers from Delhi-NCR and Gujarat, Shah said the cooperative ride-hailing platform would return 80 per cent of profits to drivers based on kilometres driven, with the remaining 20 per cent retained as cooperative capital. "I asked all three companies whether they had set a minimum base rate for their drivers. They said no," Shah told the gathering during the 40-minute interaction.

"In a private dairy, the profit goes to the owner. In Amul, 85 per cent goes back to the producer. Bharat Taxi is the same concept for mobility." Drivers on the platform can become co-owners by purchasing a share worth ₹500, Shah said, adding that seats on Bharat Taxi's board of directors would be reserved for driver representatives as membership grows.

"When the board makes a policy against the drivers, your representative will stand up and ask — how can you do this to our company?" he said.

He acknowledged that the profit-sharing model would take up to three years to fully activate, asking drivers to remain patient during the establishment phase. "Like a child who we raise for 30-40 years and who then takes care of us, you have to be patient for the first three years," he said.

Whatever business you do, your minimum should be fixed. And whatever is more

the first three years," he said.

Three-year roadmap



Amit Shah in a group picture with the Sarathis of Bharat Taxi in New Delhi

Shah said Bharat Taxi aimed to enroll 15 crore drivers within two years and expand to every city with a municipal corporation within three years. The platform is currently operational in Delhi-NCR and Rajkot.

### 'SAARATHI DIDI' feature

Shah announced that a dedicated 'Saarathi Didi' feature would be introduced in the Bharat Taxi app, allowing women passengers travelling alone to prioritise female drivers for their rides.

The announcement came in response to Neelam Sharma, a single mother from Bihar who had taken up cab driving after her husband died of cancer and whose account had been suspended without notice by a previous

aggregator. "Women who travel alone will give priority to Saarathi Didi," Shah said. "Even if brothers earn a little less from this, it is our collective responsibility."

Grievance redressal  
Shah said Bharat Taxi would establish a three-channel grievance system for drivers comprising online, physical and call centre modes, addressing longstanding complaints that existing platforms offered support only to passengers. "Even if a driver does not know how to complain online, they can call and register their complaint. It will be automatically recorded," he said.

# Passengers welcome IRCTC's e-Pantry meal booking service

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi



In a significant boost to the 'Digital India' mission, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has witnessed an overwhelming response to its newly launched e-Pantry meal booking service. The digital initiative, designed to streamline catering on Mail and Express trains, has already crossed a milestone of 65,000 meal bookings since its phased rollout in April last year.

The service, which allows passengers to pre-book meals on trains where catering charges are not included in the ticket fare, was initially piloted on the Vivek Express — India's longest-running train service. Following its success, the facility has now been extended to 25 major Mail and Express trains.

lunch services accounted for more than 15,000 orders. Additionally, the service saw a significant uptake in tea services, with morning and evening tea combined recording more than 16,000 orders during this period.

The e-Pantry system is integrated directly into the IRCTC ticketing platform. Passengers holding confirmed, RAC, or partially confirmed tickets can opt for meals during the booking process or later via the "Booked Food History" section. To ensure security and transparency, the system employs a Meal Verification Code (MVC). Upon booking, passengers receive this code via SMS or email, which must be shared with the pantry staff at the time of delivery to their seats. "By leveraging tech-

nology, we are redefining the travel experience. The e-Pantry system ensures greater accountability, transparency, and compliance with tax regulations through digital dashboards," an IRCTC official stated.

The facility promotes a cashless environment by requiring online payments at the time of booking. Furthermore, the IRCTC has assured passengers of a full refund if a pre-booked meal is not delivered, with cancellation details communicated instantly via digital channels.

As the hospitality arm of the Indian Railways, the IRCTC continues to expand this service to more routes, aiming to eliminate the uncertainties of on-board meal availability and over-charging.

# Gangey Fest highlights urgent call for environmental action

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Rishikesh

In-depth discussions on the cleanliness of the Ganga, pressing environmental challenges, and future strategies for sustainable conservation. Speakers emphasized that the need of the hour is not just thoughtful deliberation, but concrete behavioural change to ensure meaningful environmental protection.

Bollywood actor Manoj Joshi at the two-day "Gangey Festival, From Thought to Action" held in Rishikesh. He appealed for a complete ban on the use of plastic and urged that the movement for the conservation of the Ganges should begin at the grassroots level, from village to village.

Gangey Fest 2026 witnessed vibrant participation from environmental experts, policymakers, journalists, academicians, social media influencers, startup founders, local villagers, and students from colleges across India.

Manoj Joshi began his artistic journey in theatre and has demonstrated his versatility in cinema through a wide range of roles — from comic characters like Kachra Seth to intense and serious portrayals such as Chanakya. Joshi attended as the Chief Guest, while Uday Narang, Chairman of Omega Seiki Mobility, was the Guest of Honour. The event featured

Held in the serene surroundings of Jogiyan Village in Rishikesh, the festival evolved into a dynamic platform for dialogue on pressing environmental challenges and sustainable solu-



ing the implementation of a green tax model, to generate sustainable resources for conservation initiatives.

Nine thematic sessions were organized throughout the day, covering diverse topics such as environmental journalism, Prem Ki God, eco-friendly startups, From Words to Greenery, virtual politics, New Flight, Stories of Characters, and Expanding the Idea Towards Zero Waste.

Renowned entrepreneur and electric vehicle pioneer Udayraj Narang, in conversation with Girjansh, emphasised that the coming years will be particularly challenging for environmental conservation.

He called for persistent innovation and a shift toward cleaner and more efficient alternatives to

address the climate crisis. Speakers including Dr Rajni Mudgal, Roshni Gupta, Manish Verma, Shradha Lokhande, Anurag Tripathi, Sushma Gupta, Anjum Sharma, Rishabh Tiwari, Dipansh Yadav, Rashi Sahu, Swapnil Thakur, Ravi Shekhar, Vaibhav Patel, Kajal, and Pankaj Jina contributed to enriching discussions. Across sessions, participants emphasised sustainable innovation, responsible communication, and collective civic participation as key pathways to addressing environmental concerns.

Chairman of Gangey Girjansh Gopalan and his team expressed heartfelt gratitude to all guests, partners, and attendees, seeking continued guidance and collaboration for future editions of Gangey Fest.

### NBCC in discussion to secure 139-acre project in Seychelles



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

State-owned NBCC is exploring to undertake a project in Seychelles for development of infrastructure, including housing, on a 139-acre island.

In a statement on Monday, the company said that Vice-President of Republic of Seychelles, Sebastien Pillay, visited the company's headquarter here, leading a high-level delegation.

The delegation held detailed discussions with NBCC CMD K P Mahadevaswamy and other senior officers of the company regarding projects in Seychelles. "During the meeting, comprehensive presentations were made to the delegation outlining infrastructure development for an area of about 139 acres of an island," NBCC said. The proposed development would include affordable social housing, leisure and hospitality, premium villas, sports arena and social infrastructure among others. In January, the NBCC CMD visited Seychelles. "The delegation were also made aware of the capabilities of NBCC by showcasing the successful execution of 2000 Social Housing Project at Hulhumale, Maldives," the statement said.

NBCC is currently executing the construction of the Indian Chancery Building, along with a Cultural Centre and Residential Units in Seychelles.

# From solidarity to strategy: India-Africa ties enter a new phase

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

2026-Africa has often been called "The Continent of the Future," a phrase that reflects both its demographic dynamism and its expanding economic and strategic relevance in global affairs. For India, engagement with Africa is rooted in shared history of anti-colonial struggle, South-South solidarity and inspired the principles articulated at the 1955 Bandung Conference. These historical affinities today intersect with pressing geopolitical and developmental imperatives, as both sides navigate a rapidly transforming international order.

Intensifying great-power competition across Africa through China's infrastructure outreach along with renewed European and American engagement, has reshaped the continent's external partnerships. Simultaneously, Africa too has strengthened its internal collaboration through continental initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, which seeks to harmonise trade regimes, foster regional value chains, and accelerate industrialisation. As global power structures undergo structural realignment, India-Africa engagement is increasingly positioned not merely as historical solidarity, but as a forward-looking partnership shaping a more equitable and multipolar global order.



Under this backdrop the Chintan Research Foundation (CRF), Delhi in collaboration with the USANAS Foundation, Udaipur convened a conference, "India-Africa Partnership in a Changing Global Order" on February 23, 2026, in New Delhi. The day-long conference brought together ambassadors, senior diplomats, policymakers, scholars, and strategic analysts to deliberate on the evolving contours of India-Africa engagement amid a rapidly transforming global landscape. "The turbulent times we

are living in, accompanied by disruption of supply chains, asks for south-south cooperation in energy transition and climate action," stated Shri Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, while delivering his keynote address.

He further underscored Africa's centrality in India's economic diplomacy and South-South cooperation framework. His address encompassed the increasing Indian diplomatic footprint in Africa, and specified that India-Africa solidarity is characterised by India's principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the world is one family).

Earlier welcoming the delegates, Mr Shishir Priyadarshi, President, CRF, and Dr Abhinav Pandya, Founder & CEO, USANAS Foundation, emphasised that India-Africa must strengthen its relationship especially in the aspect of trade.

The current fragmentation within the global order is marred with trade unpredictability that will hurt the growth in India-Africa part-

nership. They stressed upon the historical aspects of India-Africa partnership and weighed upon the need for a robust global institutions and security structures with an aim of South-South cooperation.

During the discussions, the panelists highlighted the strengthening of India-Africa partnership in trade, technology and transnational connectivity creates various opportunities and challenges. Various delegates highlighted that India needs to articulate a cohesive blueprint while engaging with the continent.

As India and Africa have already surpassed US\$ 100 billion in 2024-25, with both sides targeting US\$ 200 billion by 2030, it was emphasised that India should engage with the regional cooperations in Africa more cohesively in order to further enhance the trade.

three key aspects of technological cooperation: sharing the innovations in agriculture sector towards food security; and assistance in capacity building and skill development, to be considered in the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS). While exploring the transformative potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), he underlined that India needs to have a concrete blueprint in terms of engagement with larger Africa, especially through AfCFTA.

While discussing the evolution of India-Africa industrial cooperation, it was pointed out that India's role in Africa's industrialisation is significant as India offers a combination of finance, know-how, and skills. India-Africa cooperation in technology, ports, and infrastructure is not just about building assets, rather it is about co-architecting futures in a changing global order, flagged Ambassador Anil Wadhawa. With an inference towards the prospects of

India-Africa cooperation with Africa's development at heart it was signified that co-sharing the experience of digitisation by India is key for the continent. The conference also explored ways to strengthen and navigate the India-Africa partnership within the contemporary global landscape. HE Dr Desire Boniface Some, Ambassador of Burkina Faso to India stated that with President Trump coming to power, there is an emergence of a new structure in the world order. Within the emerging global order, it is essential to focus on how India-Africa cooperation can deliver mutually beneficial, win-win outcomes. He also emphasised that the spirit of Bandung conference should be redefined and reinstated. The day long deliberations also ventured into the possibilities of how India-Africa partnership can be strengthened within the great power engagement in Africa. The speakers insisted the inclu-

sion of African Union into G20 was a big success in India-Africa partnership, while addressing the strategic convergence between India and Africa, especially under the dynamic global order.

With climate change being one of the central aspects to contemporary geopolitical scenario, India should engage with Africa on various aspects like renewable energies, critical minerals, climate action, and other similar avenues. Overall, the conference underlined that India-Africa relations have matured into a multidimensional partnership that encompasses various sectors. Although important gaps remain to be addressed, and conducting regular India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) is one of them. Along with it, the partnership needs to expand into newer arenas like; digitisation and climate action, while strengthening the partnership in the aspects like; trade, people-to-people linkages and security challenges.

## BRIEFLY

### Undav rescues Stuttgart with 3-3 draw



Germany forward Deniz Undav scored late to salvage a 3-3 draw for Stuttgart at last-place Heidenheim as the Bundesliga's relegation scrap and race for Champions League qualification converged. Stuttgart stayed fourth in the last qualification spot for Europe's premier club competition, but it missed the chance to move four points above fifth-place Leipzig, held 2-2 by Borussia Dortmund on Saturday. Heidenheim almost scored a late winner in stoppage time that would have narrowed the gap on second-last Werder Bremen to just three points before their clash in Bremen next weekend. Adam Kolle headed just wide in stoppage time for Heidenheim. Chris Fuhrich fired Stuttgart into an early lead before Eren Dinkci replied for Heidenheim. Stuttgart's Eremedin Demirovic thought he had made it 2-1 on a counterattack but the goal was ruled out and a penalty awarded to Heidenheim after a VAR check found Maximilian Mittelstadt had fouled Dinkci in the area at the end. Arijon Ibrahimovic converted Heidenheim's penalty to make it 2-1 to the home team instead.

### AC Milan loses at home, Loftus-Cheek hospitalised



AC Milan lost more ground to city rival Inter Milan after a 1-0 loss to Parma at home in a match which saw Milan midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek hospitalised after a collision with the Parma goalkeeper. Loftus-Cheek was struck on the head after colliding with Edoardo Corvi after a cross into the area about 10 minutes into the match at San Siro. The 30-year-old Loftus-Cheek had a bloodied face while being treated on the field. He was stretchered off with a neck and head brace, and later taken to hospital. Italian media reports said the England international and former Chelsea player sustained broken teeth and was being examined for head trauma. "Our thoughts are with him," Parma coach Carlos Cuesta said. Mariano Troilo scored with a header off a corner in the 80th minute to give Parma the win. The goal was initially disallowed for a foul but the call was reversed after video review. Milan had entered the match looking to cut its gap to Inter to seven points. Inter moved 10 points clear with a 2-0 victory at Lecce for its seventh straight league win on Saturday. Milan had already lost points at home in a 1-1 draw against Como on Wednesday. It was the third win in a row for Parma, which is in 12th place. Other results: Fourth-place Roma opened a four-point gap to fifth-place Juventus.

### Barcelona regains lead of La Liga



TALES AZZONIAP n Madrid

Barcelona took advantage of Real Madrid's stumble and regained the Spanish league lead with a comfortable 3-0 win over relegation-threatened Levante. Marc Bernal, Fermin Lopez scored a goal each as Barcelona ended a two-game losing streak to get back in front of rival Madrid, which lost 2-1 at Osasuna on Saturday. Barcelona moved one point ahead of Madrid, which had won eight in a row in the league before losing to Osasuna. "We know it isn't easy to start winning again after two defeats, but the team gave a very good response" Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said. Barcelona was coming off a 2-1 loss to Girona in the league and a 4-0 loss to Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals.

Barcelona moved one point ahead of Madrid, which had won eight in a row in the league before losing to Osasuna. "We know it isn't easy to start winning again after two defeats, but the team gave a very good response" Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said. Barcelona was coming off a 2-1 loss to Girona in the league and a 4-0 loss to Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

To inform that my/our original buyer agreement, Allotment letter and booking receipt of TDI Tuscan Flat, TDI Infrastructure Ltd. Kundli, has been lost of customer ID KTH-10971 and Unit No.T-2/1301 Duplex vide receipt No.182889 of Rs. 6,00,000/- Dated 29.10.2011. Finder may Contact:- 8860420007

# Rome may bid for 2040 Summer Olympics

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
n Cortina D'Ampezzo

Goodbye Milan Cortina. See you in Rome in 2040?

Now that the just-concluded Winter Olympics have been hailed for setting "a new, very high standard" by IOC President Kirsty Coventry, Italian organisers are contemplating a bid for the 2040 Summer Games.

"I think our country deserves another Summer Olympics," Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) president Luciano Buonfiglio said over the weekend. "But let's take it step by step. A candidacy has to be agreed on and shared with the government."

The idea of the Milan

Cortina Games was born out of the rejection of Rome's bid for the 2024 Olympics by then-Mayor Virginia Raggi a decade ago. That came four years after then-Premier Mario Monti scrapped the city's candidacy for the 2020 Games because of financial concerns; and after a Rome bid was narrowly defeated by Athens in the final round of voting for 2004.

"Scars help you remember" the defeats, said Giovanni Malago, the head of the Milan Cortina organising committee and former CONI president.

But Malago, who is also an IOC member, suggested that Rome has a couple of key advantages in Olympic circles: its "unique" history of failed



bids and the centrepiece venue for any Summer candidacy. "Rome has a 70,000-seat stadium with an athletics track - which is huge in terms of sustainability," Malago said. The existing Stadio Olimpico and surrounding Foro Italico

complex would be a natural setting for athletics and swimming — the two biggest sports at the Summer Games.

Rome Mayor Roberto Gualtieri said during the Milan Cortina Games that he believes his city has "the conditions" for another bid — especially after welcoming more than 33 million people to the capital and Vatican for the 2025 Holy Year.

"If it's considered a realistic goal, I'm open to collaborating with the IOC, government and CONI in order to create the most competitive bid possible," Gualtieri said.

"A capital like Rome should not be afraid of big challenges. The Jubilee showed off our organisation-

al capacity for big events." With the 2028 Games coming up in Los Angeles and 2032 in Brisbane, Australia; and India and Qatar bidding for 2036; the 2040 Summer Games seem destined to return to Europe.

"Now is not the time to discuss this. It's premature, wrong and even counter-productive," Malago said.

"We need to understand the geopolitical landscape for post-2032."

Malago wouldn't elaborate on speculation that he will run for Rome mayor after he finishes off his Milan Cortina duties, saying he would discuss "ideas that I have in mind" after next month's Paralympics.

# Twin Milan, Cortina Olympic cauldrons extinguished

COLLEEN BARRY  
n Verona (Italy)

The Milan Cortina Olympics ended as the twin flames in co-host cities Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo were extinguished during a closing ceremony inside the ancient Verona Arena, roughly mid-distance between the far-flung mountain, valley and city venues that made these the most spread-out Winter Games ever.

In declaring the 2026 Games over, International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry told local organizers that they "delivered a new kind of winter games and you set a new, very high standard



Artists performs during the closing ceremony of the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Verona, Italy

for the future."

The next Winter Games will be held in neighboring France, which received the Olympic flag in the official

handover earlier in the ceremony. Following the same spread-out model, the 2030 Winter Games will stage events in the Alps and Nice,

on the Mediterranean Sea, while speedskating will be held either in Italy or the Netherlands.

A total of 116 medal events were held in eight Olympic sports across 16 disciplines, including the debut of ski mountaineering this year, over the course of 17 days of competition. With the final events wrapping up just hours before the ceremony, the 50-kilometre mass start men's and women's cross country medals were awarded by Coventry inside the Arena.

Host Italy won its highest Winter Olympic tally ever with 30 medals — 10 gold, six silver and 14 bronze, crushing the previous record of 20 set at the

Lillehammer Olympics in 1994.

"Your outstanding performance united Italians everywhere and played a fundamental role in the success of the games," Giovanni Malago, the president of the Milan Cortina Foundation told the Italian athletes sitting behind him wearing headbands emblazoned with 'Italia.'

The closing ceremony paid tribute to Italian dance and

music — from lyric opera to Italian pop of the 20th century to the DJ beat of Gabry Ponte, who got the 1,500 athletes on their feet and dancing while color confetti exploded on stage. Italian Achille Lauro delivered the last word with the song "Incoscienti Giovani," or reckless young people, just before athletes who so aptly harnessed their youthful energy for these Games filed out. (AP)

## U V LANDBASE PRIVATE LIMITED

SECTOR-3, FARUKHNAGAR, GURUGRAM  
License No. 31/2024 Dated 26.02.2024

### 1st E-DRAW OF FLATS

General public is hereby informed that 1st E-Draw of 1124 flats under Haryana Affordable Housing Policy 2013 of Affordable Group Housing Colony named "Diplomats Green Vista" developed under License No. 31 of 2024 situated at Sector-3, Farukhnagar, Gurugram, Haryana being developed by M/s U V Landbase Pvt. Ltd. (Project ID-209) Draw will be held on 25.02.2026 from 04.00 PM onwards at "The Plazio Hotel", Plot No. 292-296 Sector-29, City Centre Gurugram, Haryana-122001 will be organized in the presence of the committee constituted under the Affordable Housing Policy 2013.

As per Haryana Government Notification No. PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 draw will be seen online on YouTube on below mentioned link.

YouTube Link - <https://youtube.com/live/kvj69a0VY?feature=share>

For any queries please contact: 777016077

Corporate Office : COL-O-14-01, 14th Floor, Emaar Colonnade, Sec-65, Golf Course Extn. Road, Gurugram, Haryana  
Sales Office : 1116, 1117, 11th Floor, Tower-1, DLF Corporate green, Sec 74A, Gurugram, haryana-122004  
Email: crm@diplomatsgroup.com, Web: www.diplomatsgroup.com

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

### OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (BUILDING)

#### ASSAM CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3.

No.CE/TB-III(B)/118/2025/5

### PRESS NOTICE FOR TENDER

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D (Building), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bids from Govt, registered eligible Contractors having experience in similar nature of works for the following work.

Details of bid may be seen at e-procurement portal [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in). The bidders must be enrolled in [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in)

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx Value of Work(Bid Value)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid (in Rs)
1.	Development of Statue and Park Dedicated to Swargadeo Chaulung Siu-Ka-Pha at Tipam, Dibrugarhi [Part - II] on EPC mode-1	Rs. 4,66,71,808.00	12 (Twelve) Months	Rs. 9,33,436.00 for General category, and Rs. 4,66,718.00 for Reserved category	Rs. 9334.00

N.B:- 1. Value of work may vary according to the detail NIT.  
2. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Document.

Sd/-  
Chief Engineer, P.W.D. Building, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3

DIPR/C/PIO/911/24-Feb-26

## NORTHERN RAILWAY

### TENDER INVITING NOTICE NO. 150-Elect-CR-416

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/PRS, Northern Railway, Computer Reservation Center, IRCA Building, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India, invites open Tenders on the prescribed forms for the following works.

Mode of Tender	E-Tender (One Packet)
Tender Notice No.	150-Elect-CR-416
Full Name of Work	"Replacement of old chilled water pipe line of main AC plant installed at IRCA Building New Delhi."
Approx. Cost	Rs. 43,93,500/-
Completion Period	06 Months
Bid security(Cash/BG) amount	Rs. 87,870/-
Sale/availability of tender document on Rty. website	Tender documents will be available on IREPS web site i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> from 25.02.2026 to 18.03.2026 upto 15:00 hrs.
Last date/Time of upload of tenders	18.03.2026 upto 15:00 hours. Tender documents will be uploaded by the tenderer on IREPS website 03.03.2026 to 18.03.2026.
Date and Time of Opening of Tender	18.03.2026 at 15:00 hours immediately after close of uploading of tender. Financial bids of the eligible tenderers would be opened subsequently on the date & Times.

E-Tender No.: 150-Elect-CR-416 Dated: 23.02.2026 617/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

## THE SIRSA CENTRAL CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.

Tender ID: 2026\_HBC\_501293\_1

### PUBLIC NOTICE - CANCELLATION OF E-TENDER

It is hereby informed for the general information of all concerned that the E-Tender ID: 2026\_HBC\_501293\_1 floated by The Sirsa Central Cooperative Bank Ltd., Sirsa stands cancelled with immediate effect due to administrative reasons.

The competent authority has taken this decision in the administrative interest of the Bank.

All bidders/agencies are requested to treat the said tender process as cancelled.

Authorized Signatory  
The Sirsa Central Cooperative Bank Ltd. Sirsa

**UPSIDA** कार्यालय उप महाप्रबन्धक (सिविल), निर्माण सच-भवन  
उपरोक्त सच-ऑडिटिंग विभाग प्राधिकरण  
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अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना

स्वच्छता सुनिश्चित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जमानदों में विगत औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में सिविल कार्यों, विकास एवं अनुसंधान सच-सचय के कार्यों हेतु सरकारी / सार्वजनिक उपकरणों/निगमों/प्राधिकरणों/परिचरों/नगर निगमों में पंजीकृत भूमि/क्षेत्रों पर अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र. कार्यों का नाम दर/एकक/अंश

1 PROVIDING AND FIXING LOW HEIGHT BARRIER AT I.A. MASURI GULWATHI ROAD (PHASE-Ist & IIrd) HAPUR. 4.64

सकल कार्यों का निविदा प्रारंभ दिनांक 24.02.2026 को 11:00 बजे से दिनांक 03.03.2026 को सां. 05:00 बजे तक कार्यालय से प्राप्त किया जा सकेगा। निविदाओं को दिनांक 03.03.2026 को अपराह्न 05:00 बजे तक जारी जायेगी। प्रारंभ निविदाओं को दिनांक 05.03.2026 को प्रा. 11:00 बजे तक कार्यालय निर्माण सच-भवन, सुदीर्घा, महिलावाड़ा में खोली जायेगी। नोट: 1. निविदापत्रा अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कार्यों सहित सर्व अधिकतम। जीएसटी अलग से देय होगा।  
(आंतरिक सूचना) उप महाप्रबन्धक (सिविल), निर्माण सच-भवन, मो.- 9205691028

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM,

### OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (HEALTH & EDUCATION)

#### P.W.(H&E) DEPT., (CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3

No. CE/TB-II(H&E)/23/2024/Pt/26

### PRESS NOTICE (Re-Tender)

The Chief Engineer, P.W.I. (Health & Education), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam re-invites bids through Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode-1 of contract (single stage two-part bidding system) from eligible contractors having experience of similar nature of work for the following work:

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal website i.e. [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in). The bidders must be enrolled in [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in)

Sl. no.	Name of Work	Tender Value (RS.In Lakhs)	Bid Security	Time of completion	Tender cost
1.	"Establishment of New Govt. Nursing College attached to Dimri Medical College A Hospital, Dimri, Assam"	Rs,926.62 L	2% of Tender value for General category* 1% of Tender value for reserved category	18 (eighteen) months	Rs. 18550.00

Note:-  
1. NIT Value of work may vary during uploading of DNIT for which no claim would be entertained.  
2. The Press Notice(Re-Tender) will form part of Bidding Document.

Sd/-  
Chief Engineer, P.W. (Health & Education) P.W. (H&E) Deptt., Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-03.

DIPR/C/PIO/909/24-Feb-26

## LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

### Northern Zonal Office

Corporate Communication Department, Jeevan Bharati Tower - II, 124 Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110001. Ph.: 011-28846160, Extn. 278

### NOTICE FOR EMPANELMENT OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES

LIC of India invites applications for empanelment of advertising agencies for undertaking PR & Media work in the states of Delhi, Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. The agency must have their office in Delhi and have a minimum turnover of Rs 2 Crores and above in each of the last three Financial Years. For complete details and documents please log on to our website [www.licindia.com](http://www.licindia.com) and click "Tender" for details and forms. Completed offers should reach the Zonal Office in a sealed cover marked "Application for empanelment of Advertising agencies" on or before 10.03.2026 by 5 P.M. LIC of India reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the offers without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Zonal Manager

## RUNGTA IRRIGATION LIMITED

REGD. OFFICE: 101, Pragati Tower 26, Rajendra Place, New Delhi 110008  
Tel: 011-4045330,31,32  
E-mail: [cs@rungtairrigation.in](mailto:cs@rungtairrigation.in),  
Website: [www.rungtairrigation.in](http://www.rungtairrigation.in)  
CIN: L74899DL1986PLC023934

### Special Window for re-logging of transfer & dematerialisation requests of physical shares.

Pursuant to SEBI's Circular No. HO/38/13/11 (2)2026-MIRSD-P0D/1/3750/2026 dated January, 30, 2026, shareholders are informed that a Special Window for transfer and dematerialisation of Physical Shares has been opened for a period of one year from February 5, 2026 to February 4, 2027 to facilitate transfer and dematerialisation of physical securities which were sold/purchased prior to April 01, 2019. The said special window shall also be available for such transfer requests which were submitted earlier and were rejected/returned/not attended due to deficiency in the documents/process/for otherwise. The request(s) which are accompanied by original certificate(s) along with transfer deeds and relevant supporting documents will only be considered under this special window. The securities so transferred shall be mandatorily credited to the transferee only in demat mode and shall be under lock-in for a period of one year from the date of registration of transfer. Such securities shall not be transferred/lien marked/pledged during the said lock-in period. Eligible shareholders may submit their transfer request along with the requisite documents to the Company's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent, BEETAL Financial & Computer Services Pvt Ltd, our Registrar and Share Transfer Agent at BEETAL HOUSE, 3rd Floor, 99, Madangir, Behind LSC, New Delhi - 110062 or email at [beetalrta@gmail.com](mailto:beetalrta@gmail.com). Ph. 011-42959000-09.

For Rungta Irrigation Limited Sd/-  
Rekha Rathore  
Company Secretary

Date: 23.02.2026  
Place: New Delhi

## GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE

SR NO.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING MANDI DABWALI	PIPLI- DNIT FOR LAYING OF DI PIPE AND RESTORATION OF HOUSE CONNECTION AND ALL OTHER WORK CONTINGENTS THERETO. CH. HEAD:- HASSU;- ESTIMATE FOR AUGMENTATION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME AND STRENGTHENING OF DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AT VILLAGE HASSU DIST. SIRSA (DEMAND DURING JAN SAMVADH BY HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER)	20.02.2026 26.02.2026	4.49 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	8730000001 ee.mandiabwali@gmail.com
2	CIVIL SURGEON, AMBALA	ADVERTISEMENT FOR SHORT E-TENDER NOTICE FOR HIRING OF E-RICKSHAW WITH MIXING FOR URBAN AREA OF DISTRICT AMBALA	21.02.2026 26.02.2026		<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	0171255747 dhs.csamb@hry.nic.in
3	PANCHAYATI RAJ, FARIDABAD	CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY CENTRE AT VILLAGE KURESHIPUR GP MADALPUR BLOCK FARIDABAD DISTRICT FARIDABAD HGVC CM	20.02.2026 27.02.2026	53.70 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	9467905067 prexeeng.fdi@gmail.com
4	PANCHAYATI RAJ, FARIDABAD	CONSTRUCTION OF DRAIN/NALA AT VILLAGE KOT BLOCK FARIDABAD DISTT FARIDABAD (FROM H/O SHYAMI TO SHAMSHAN GHAT WALA RASTA) + 2 WORKS	20.02.2026 27.02.2026	81.75 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	9467905067 prexeeng.fdi@gmail.com
5	PANCHAYATI RAJ, FARIDABAD	CONSTRUCTION OF DRAINS AND TREATMENT PROCEDURE OF WASTE WATER (GWM) AT VILLAGE BDIJOUR BLOCK BALLABGARH DISTRICT FARIDABAD + 4 WORKS	20.02.2026 27.02.2026	211.21 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	9467905067 prexeeng.fdi@gmail.com
6	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,HISAR	RESTORATION OF NEAR FIRNI POND OF VILLAGE SINGHWA RAGHO(01HRSHR51.0023SINGW008)	20.02.2026 26.02.2026	44.57 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	9417284563 xenconstdivn7sr@gmail.com
7	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,ROHTAK	LAYING RCC NP3 PIPE LINE 900 MM DIA FOR DETERIORATION OF FLOOD WATER AND SAVE ABAZI IN VILLAGE MUNDSA CONNECTED WITH 500 MM DIA HDPE PIPE LINE WITH PUMP HOUSE AND OUTFALLING INTO DITCH DRAIN ALONG JLN FEEDER NEAR RD 306000/R.	CLOSING DATE 26.02.2026	129.11 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	9896414044 xenfrrt@gmail.com
8	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,ROHTAK	REPLACING OF DAMAGED PIPE CULVERTS INTO BOX CULVERTS AT VARIOUS RD&C'S OF DIGHAL LINK DRAIN + 2 WORKS	CLOSING DATE 02.03.2026	641.57 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	9464049070 xensampla@gmail.com
9	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,KARNAL	PROVIDING PROTECTION TO KHIRAJPUR COMPLEX BY REPAIRING OLD STONE STUD NO. K-12 TO PROTECT THE ABAZI AREA AFTER FLOOD 2025 RIVER YAMUNA	21.02.2026 27.02.2026	31.39 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	0184-2258008 xenindivn@yahoo.in
10	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,FATEHABAD	CLEARANCE OF SIRSA MAJOR DISTY + 2 WORKS	CLOSING DATE 28.02.2026	9.19 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	01667220105 xenwsdivisionfbd@yahoo.com
11	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY OF HDPE PIPES 200 MM (3000 PIPES) PERTAINING TO WS MECH DIVISION, ROHTAK	24.02.2026 10.03.2026	90 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	0172-2582542 xenproc@gmail.com

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# Shun ego, adapt to conditions: Sunil Gavaskar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Ahmedabad

India needed to take a cue from South Africa's innings, shed their ego and adapt to the conditions instead of walking out with overconfidence and throwing their bats at everything in their T20 World Cup clash, feels batting legend Sunil Gavaskar.

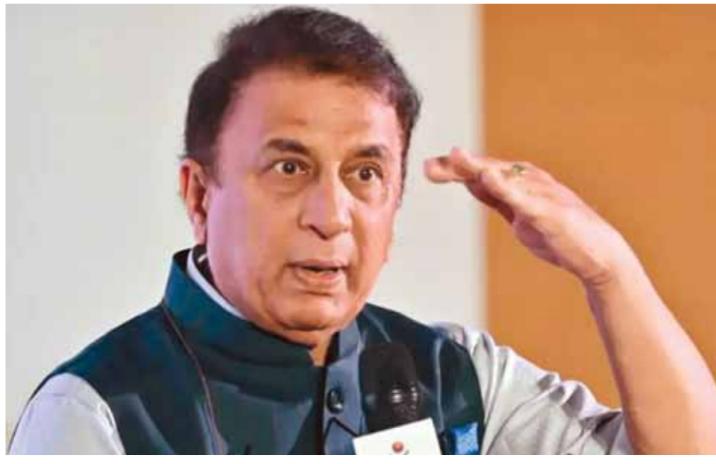
South Africa snapped India's 12-match unbeaten streak at the T20 World Cup, handing the defending champions a heavy 76-run defeat.

"Having seen how Brevis and Miller built their partnership, that was the approach needed from the Indian batters," Gavaskar said on JioStar.

"The Indian batters did not do that. They came out with overconfidence, threw their bat at everything and lost wickets. South Africa clearly outsmarted India, and it was a well-deserved win for them."

After losing early wickets, Miller and Brevis stitched a match-winning 97-run partnership to take the Proteas to 187/7. India then produced a below-par batting effort, repeatedly losing wickets and being bowled out for 111 in 18.5 overs.

"India did not take notes from South Africa's innings. They came out and threw their bat at every delivery, hoping for a boundary. That is not how you play T20



cricket. "You have to learn from the opposition. If they have scored well on a tricky surface like this, you have to get rid of your ego, observe and adjust." India lost their top three-Ishan Kishan (0), Abhishek Sharma (15) and Tilak Varma (1)-inside the power play to slip to 26/3.

"Tilak Varma has been a very street-smart batter. But I was disappointed with his approach in this game. Ishan Kishan lost his wicket in the first over. The required rate was around 9.5 runs per over, not 15. "So, Tilak could have given himself more time. At the other end, Abhishek Sharma had back-to-back ducks. So, the responsibility was on Tilak to stick around,

build a partnership, and get past the first six overs, but he failed to do that.

"You don't always need to score 70 runs in the Powerplay. Even 55-60 runs would have been a good platform. But the reckless approach of the Indian batters led to their downfall in Ahmedabad."

India next take on Zimbabwe, and Gavaskar said he would like to see Axar Patel return to the playing XI after missing the previous two games, with the team management opting for Washington Sundar.

"I would look at bringing Axar Patel back into the playing XI, keeping in mind the lack of too many left-

handed batters in Zimbabwe's line-up. You could possibly bring him in place of Arshdeep Singh.

"But Arshdeep bowled so well against South Africa, and you wouldn't want to change somebody who looked in such good rhythm. So, maybe they might not make a change and go with the same team. "But I feel Washington Sundar will be the one to miss out. He is not being used properly. Against South Africa, he bowled just two overs and did nothing with the bat. "Against the Netherlands, he bowled four overs but took no wickets. I think the time has run out for Washington Sundar. Axar Patel will surely replace him."

## Got to take him down: Miller on Proteas plan that nullified Varun

KUSHAN SARKAR  
Ahmedabad

All it needed was a still mind, limited movement and strong intent, said South African big-hitter David Miller as he opened up about how his team successfully nullified Indian mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy in their T20 World Cup Super Eight clash here.

South Africa defeated the defending champions by 76 runs here on Sunday after posting a formidable 187/7. The in-form Chakravarthy was expected to be India's trump card, but on a wicket that didn't offer much assis-



tance, he went for 47 runs in his four overs with both Miller (63 off 35 balls) and Dewald Brevis (45 off 29 balls) taking him to the cleaners.

"I think it's just about really making sure that we

were on it in terms of if he bowls a bad ball we got to put it away — so a little bit more intent and it wasn't spinning too much tonight, so you can kind of trust the line," Miller told reporters after the match.

"And once we felt that, then we felt, OK, we've got to take him down, because he is a threat to every team that he does play against. So it was definitely something that we did speak about," he explained.

This was the first big knock of the tournament for the 36-year-old and was dotted with seven fours and three maximums. (PTI)

## West Indies pulverise Zimbabwe by 107 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Mumbai

A rampant West Indies pulverised Zimbabwe by 107 runs in a one-sided T20 World Cup Super Eights match after Shimron Hetmyer and Rovman Powell's brutal onslaught propelled them to the second highest total in the tournament's history here Monday.

The West Indies meant business on a flat deck to clatter 19 sixes and 16 fours in all, amassing 254/6 on the back of Hetmyer's 34-ball 85 and Powell's 35-ball 59.

The Caribbean side narrowly missed Sri Lanka's record total of 260/6 set against Ireland in the inaugural edition of the competition in 2007.

In their reply, a battered Zimbabwe crumbled in the face of an imposing target and the contest was sealed as early as in the third over, when Akeal Hosein (3/28) returned with a rare double-wicket maiden.

The slide began when Zimbabwe's best batter in the tournament Brian Bennett (5) was cleaned up by Hosein, and they had lost opener Tadiwanashe Marumani (14) to Matthew Forde, caught by Hetmyer.

Hetmyer had more catching to do when Ryan Burl (0) hit one straight to mid-wicket off Hosein, which left Zimbabwe reeling at 20/3 inside three overs.

Gudakesh Motie (4/28) then struck twice in as many balls



to leave Zimbabwe gasping in the 11th over, and the African side eventually rolled over for 147 in 17.4 overs.

Brad Evans' career-best 43 off 21 balls (2 fours, 5 sixes) and his record 44-run stand for the 10th

began in their title-winning run in 2016.

Hetmyer's first-innings exploits on a batting haven saw the West Indies No. 3 bettering his own record of fastest ever half-century for his side, off only 19 balls as opposed to the 22 deliveries he had consumed earlier in the tournament against Scotland.

Aided by a couple of lifelines, Hetmyer peeled off his second fifty of the tournament by pummeling seven sixes and as many fours.

Like many of his peers, Zimbabwe's Tashinga Musekiwa was playing his first-ever game at the iconic venue but the 26-year-old would remember the game differently: for having dropped Hetmyer twice, on nine and 70.



## Indian team may drop at least one out-of-form batter

KUSHAN SARKAR  
Ahmedabad

The Indian team management may drop at least one among three out-of-form batters and revisit its one-dimensional template of playing too many left-handers in the top order, indicated head coach Gautam Gambhir's understudies Ryan Ten Doeschate and Sitanshu Kotak.

South Africa thrashed India by 76 runs in a Super Eight clash of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday, and with two must-win games left, the team management might have to revisit the performances of Abhishek Sharma (15 runs in four games) and Tilak Varma (107 runs in five games at a strike rate of 118).

Not to forget, the designated finisher Rinku Singh's aggregate of 24 runs in 29 balls at a disastrous strike rate of 82.75 is embarrassing, to say the least.

"If the head coach and team management feel we need to do something different, we will do things differently. Definitely a thought now comes: if we have to change,

what do we change, and how do we change?" batting coach Sitanshu Kotak didn't make bones about the fact that the team is indeed in a spot.

"Now we have reached a point where we need to think if we need to do something different or stick with the same combination," Kotak said as a matter-of-fact.

India lost to South Africa by 76 runs, and a rusty Washington Sundar's complete flop show with both bat and ball and being put on the park at the expense of senior player Axar has raised questions whether only one man in the team management is taking all

conditions perfectly.

Their spinners did the bulk of the work along with pacer Jofra Archer to trigger a dramatic Sri Lanka batting collapse.

The ever-reliable leg spinner Adil Rashid and

## Axar Axing: Ryan Ten Doeschate terms move tactical

KUSHAN SARKAR  
Ahmedabad

India's call to bench vice-captain Axar Patel in a high-stakes Super Eight clash against South Africa inevitably triggered murmurs about hierarchy and messaging within the group but assistant coach Ryan Ten Doeschate and batting coach Sitanshu Kotak asserted that the decision was born purely out of tactical compulsions.

India lost to South Africa by 76 runs, and a rusty Washington Sundar's complete flop show with both bat and ball and being put on the park at the expense of senior player Axar has raised questions whether only one man in the team management is taking all

tactical calls, including the questionable ones.

"Yeah, we spent so much time deliberating about the eleven over the last couple of days. We were kind of looking at match-ups more in the middle. In hindsight it looks like the right decision (to play Axar), but at the time we felt we needed Rinku as an eighth batter. The decision was based around there," the straight-talking Ten Doeschate replied to a query from the PTI during the post-match press conference Sunday night.

He repeatedly stressed that the decision isn't a reflection of how Axar is perceived in the team or whether the vice-captain is dispensable.

"It's certainly not to take



anything away from Axar and his leadership and how important he is to the team," Ten Doeschate said.

Batting coach Kotak informed that Axar was provided proper reasoning by head coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Suryakumar Yadav.

"Look, Surya and Gautam both spoke to Axar about the decision (to drop him). The reason to play Washy was that they had three left-handers in the top five — Quinton de Kock, Ryan Rickleton and David Miller — and hence there was a feeling that an off-spinner

(takes the ball away from left-hander) should play," Kotak said during a chat at the ICC Mixed Zone.

"Now both De Kock and Rickleton were dismissed by Bumrah and hence Washy wasn't required to bowl more than two overs (in the game). The actual plan was to bowl Washy inside the powerplay but that you know can change as per match situation," Kotak said.

Kotak was, however, emphatic in his denial that the axing of a vice-captain in a marquee match isn't a vote of no-confidence by the team management.

"Axar has played so much cricket that his confidence won't be dented because of this move. And as I said, coach and captain must

have clearly told him as to why they took such a call."

Ten Doeschate stressed that managing a 15-member squad in a global tournament invariably throws up tough selection headaches.

"We face it almost every week, trying to squeeze 11 places into 15. We're finding it tricky and we need to make sure we get that spot on for the next two Super Eight games," Ten Doeschate said with a word of caution.

Even Ten Doeschate was slightly on the defensive when he was put forth the same question as to why T20I vice-captains — Shubman Gill before this and now Axar — are being sent messages that they could be dropped anytime. (PTI)

## England, Pakistan eye crucial Super Eights points

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Pallekele

On a surface expected to assist slow bowlers, both England and Pakistan will lean heavily on their spin resources in their Super Eights clash in the T20 World Cup on Tuesday.

England may not have hit top gear yet, but the two-time champions have found ways to win.

They kicked off their Super Eights campaign with a commanding 51-run victory over Sri Lanka, a result that significantly boosted their net run rate and took them to the top of the standings.

Defending a modest total against Sri Lanka, England played according to the



left-arm spinner Liam Dawson have combined well to get the wickets.

Meanwhile, Will Jacks has emerged as an unlikely match-winner. His off-spin has been handy, but it is his contributions with

the bat, 39 against Nepal, 16 against Scotland and 53 versus Italy, that have repeatedly bailed England out of trouble.

Opener Phil Salt returned to form with a match-winning knock against Sri Lanka, as he batted beyond the powerplay for the first time in the tournament.

However, Jos Buttler's form remains a concern. But the veteran batter has got the backing of his captain Harry Brook, who himself is yet to find runs.

England also hold the advantage of familiarity with the venue, having swept a three-match T20I series here 3-0 earlier this month and also winning the Super Eight game against Sri Lanka.

lose points. However, eternal nemesis Mumbai and tricky newcomers Uttarakhand were dealt away with confidence and ease, indicating the growing belief within the side.

Central to that dominance has been the form of their star batters — KL Rahul, Karun Nair, Devdutt Padikkal, and Ravichandran Smaran.

Rahul (3 matches: 457 runs, Avg: 91.40), Karun (8 matches: 699 runs, Avg: 63.54), Devdutt (5 matches: 532 runs, Avg: 66.50), and Smaran (8 matches: 950 runs, Avg: 950) have fired on all cylinders through the season.

It has helped Karnataka overcome a middling season from Mayank Agarwal, who eventually stepped away from captaincy as Devdutt took over the team's reins. (PTI)



## Ranji Trophy: Karnataka hold all aces against J&K

G UNNIKRISHNAN  
Hubballi

Jammu and Kashmir's entry into their maiden Ranji Trophy final is a heartwarming tale of grit and passion, but to grab the title, the underdog side would need to pull off a giant-sized miracle against eight-time former champions Karnataka over the next five days, starting Tuesday.

The tag of favourites is attached to Karnataka not merely because of their rich legacy, but it is a well-earned one after a season in which they consistently rose above opponents, conditions and injuries to key players at various junctures.

Karnataka have dominated teams both at home and away after a stuttering start against Saurashtra at Rajkot, where they conceded a narrow first innings lead to

lose points. However, eternal nemesis Mumbai and tricky newcomers Uttarakhand were dealt away with confidence and ease, indicating the growing belief within the side.

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## IGPL secures \$100 million franchise commitment, unveils team owners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

The Indian Golf Premier League on Monday announced a \$100 million capital commitment from 10 franchise partners across the country, with each investor pledging approximately \$10 million over a 10-year period, signalling a long-term push to professionalise and expand the sport.

The IGPL staged its inaugural pro tour last year, compris-

ing 11 events played in a 54-hole, mixed-gender, no-cut format with a prize purse of ₹1.5 crore per tournament. The tour included events in India, Dubai and Colombo.

The body had in July last year announced plans for a city-based franchise league, initially slated for a January-February window. While the event did not materialise as scheduled, IGPL on Monday confirmed the franchise ownership details for the upcoming edition.



The franchise rights have been awarded to Hyderabad (Phoenix), Mumbai (Atri), Kolkata (Flyingman Academy), Delhi (RVR Infra), Chennai

Homes Consortium).

"This is not a traditional sports investment, it's a strategic platform for business amplification and nation-building through sports," Uttam Singh Mundy, CEO, IGPL said in a release.

"Our franchise partners come from Pharma, Infrastructure, Real Estate, and Venture Capital, and they see IGPL as a multi-decade opportunity to build a sports culture while leveraging the platform for their core busi-

nesses. The \$100 million commitment reflects their conviction in our vision." The IGPL said the league format, tournament schedule, and player auction details will be announced in the coming weeks. Beyond league operations, the franchise partners have collectively committed \$250 million towards infrastructure development, including plans to build compact eight to 10-acre golf facilities in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities and rural areas.