

GREAT OFFERS!



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Jammu and Kashmir enter maiden Ranji Trophy final



PIONEER IN SHORT

J&K STORM INTO RANJI FINALS

Head coach Ajay Sharma likened Jammu and Kashmir's maiden Ranji Trophy final to the film Sholay - a cast without superstars but perfect in every role. After defeating Bengal cricket team by six wickets, Sharma said collective belief, not individual brilliance, powered the run. "Everybody knows his role. That's why we are here." For Sharma, who joined in 2022, the achievement marks a personal "rebirth". Once a prolific batter with over 10,000 first-class runs, his career was derailed by a life ban over match-fixing charges before he returned to coaching. "It's karma," he said, calling the final "special". Adapting from Delhi's star-studded dressing room to J&K's young squad required patience. Gradual gains - including key wins over heavyweights - built belief. "Nobody can take us lightly now." A fierce pace attack, led by Aujib Nabi's 55 wickets at under 13, has been central. Sharma also cited speedster Umran Malik as proof of the region's talent. With an average age of 23-24, Sharma believes this fearless squad is ready to seize its moment.

PM Modi calls India-EU FTA golden era for trade, tech

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday declared that the India-European Union (EU) Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signals not just progress, but the dawn of a "golden era" in India-Europe relations, as he held high-stakes meetings with President of Spain Pedro Sanchez and Prime Minister of Finland Petteri Orpo, in the national Capital.

In talks with Sanchez, the PM reviewed the full spectrum of India-Spain engagement, spanning defence, security, infrastructure, renewable energy, space cooperation and emerging technologies. But the central theme remained economic transformation powered by the India-EU FTA.

Calling the agreement "historic," Modi said it would unlock sweeping new opportunities for businesses, workers and innovators across both nations. He underscored that the pact is not symbolic diplomacy but



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Prime Minister of Finland Petteri Orpo, at Hyderabad House, in New Delhi

a structural reset in economic ties between India and Europe.

The leaders welcomed progress in the Tata-Airbus C-295 transport aircraft programme in Vadodara, describing it as a tangible example of defence co-operation. The project, they noted, reflects India's push for deeper industrial partnerships rather than transactional procurement.

Modi also highlighted the decision to mark 2026 as the India-Spain Year of Culture, Tourism and Artificial Intelligence, stressing that

cooperation in AI must be grounded in accountability and human-centric governance. Sanchez echoed the call for responsible AI frameworks even as he praised India's convening of global leaders in the technology domain.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Prime Minister to inaugurate India AI Impact Summit 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Thursday inaugurate the India AI Impact Summit 2026, which aims to position the country as a leader in the field of Artificial Intelligence. The summit will be closed on February 19 for the general public. Additionally, the summit has been extended by a day to February 21.

Along with Modi, the opening ceremony will be addressed by President of France Emmanuel Macron, Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres and various top industry leaders from across the world, it added. This will be followed by a visit to the India AI Impact Expo 2026 along with other leaders, where they will visit various country pavilions. On Wednesday, PM Modi welcomed the leaders of the various participating countries at the summit venue.



Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar with Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi before addressing a press conference regarding the Assam Assembly Elections, in Guwahati

NDA set to cross halfway mark in RS

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

The NDA led by the BJP is set to cross the half mark in the 245-member Rajya Sabha this year as 37 seats from 10 States got to polls next month. The alliance is expected to take its tally to at least 135-137 seats, including the nominated members. The party, which has 102 seats in the Upper House, is in power or part of the ruling alliance in six of the 10 States where seats are falling vacant.

The BJP is likely to win at least half of the seats going

polls on March 16. The seats will fall vacant on April 2 and 9 following the retirement of several members, including Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh (JDU), NCP-SP MP Sharad Pawar, former Lok Sabha deputy Speaker M Thambidurai and Union ministers Ram Nath Thakur and Ramdas Athawale. Amongst the other prominent MPs retiring are Abhishek Singhvi (Congress), Saket Gokhale (TMC), Tiruchi Siva (DMK), Bhubaneswar Kalita, Ram Chander Jangra and Kiran Choudhary (all BJP).

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander



PUNJAB: AAP LEADER SHOT DEAD

An Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) sarpanch was shot dead by unidentified assailants during a wedding function in Tam Taran district on Wednesday, police said. Harpinder Singh, sarpanch of Thathian Mehta village, was attending a ceremony at a marriage palace when three armed men opened fire at close range. He died on the spot. His cousin, who tried to chase the attackers, was seriously injured and admitted to hospital. Police sources said an AK-47 rifle was used and two empty cartridges were recovered from the scene. Teams have been formed to trace and arrest the assailants. Villagers described Singh as an active AAP member and a close associate of Punjab cabinet minister Laljit Singh Bhullar.

POLICE BOOK BLINKIT OVER KNIVES

Delhi Police has registered a case against instant delivery platform Blinkit for allegedly selling knives that violate Government-prescribed specifications, officials said on Wednesday. The action follows investigations in criminal cases where suspects were found to have purchased knives through online platforms. During a verification drive, police found certain knives listed for sale on Blinkit. Under existing rules, knives with blades longer than 7.62 cm and wider than 1.72 cm are prohibited. Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Darade Sharad Bhaskar said a case was registered on February 14 under relevant provisions of the Arms Act after products sold online were found to breach notified size limits. Police ordered a "Stanley knife" through the platform and found it foldable, with a blade measuring around 8 cm in length and 2.5 cm in width - exceeding permissible limits.

J&K security tightened ahead of tourist rush

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Ahead of the peak tourist season in the Kashmir Valley, bravehearts of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are gearing up to protect tourists by launching multiple anti-terrorist operations to neutralise terrorists hiding inside thickly forested areas. In the aftermath of the terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam last year, the CRPF has created 43 temporary operating bases in higher reaches to carry out Operation All-Out.

These bases, established above the height of 6,000 feet, house troops for a few days, who launch search and assault operations in the heights where terrorists are holed up in temporary shelters. Each temporary operating base houses about two dozen troops, apart from some personnel of the local police, they said.

The first such base was created in July 2025. So far, 26 such bases have been established in the Kashmir region while the remaining 17 are in the Jammu area, sources said.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other security forces used one such temporary operating base to eliminate in July the three terrorists who were responsible for the Pahalgam attack. This operation was called 'Operation Mahadev'.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Visitors at the Galgotias University stall during the AI Impact Summit, at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi

Robot dog claim at AI summit triggers storm

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

Organisers of the India AI Impact Summit on Wednesday asked Galgotias University to vacate its stall at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi after a controversy broke out over the display of a Chinese-made robot dog that was presented as an in-house innovation.

"We do not want such exhibits to continue," said IT Secretary S Krishnan. He emphasised that the Government would not tolerate exhibits misrepresented as original creations.

Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary in Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, said the intention is not to stifle innovation but it

should not be misleading. The controversy "should not overshadow the kind of effort that the others have put in," he said.

The row began after a video clip from the summit went viral. In the clip, Professor Neha Singh of Galgotias University is seen introducing a robotic dog and claiming that was developed by the university's centre of excellence.

Soon after the video surfaced, several social media users claimed that the robotic dog was not developed by the university but was in fact a commercial model manufactured by a Chinese robotics firm, which is widely used in research and educational institutions around the world.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

RSS chief alleges US, China spreading fundamentalism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday took a swipe at the US and China, alleging that they tend to "finish those who come in their way" and asserting that India has the solutions to many of the challenges confronting the world.

Addressing a Shodharthi Samvad programme at the Malaviya Auditorium of Lucknow University, the RSS chief said, "Western countries spread fundamentalism. Their thinking is to become powerful, live on their own, and abandon the rest, eliminating those who become obstacles. This is what America and China are doing today."

He asserted that solutions to global problems lie in India. "Today, India has the answers to the problems facing the world. If we want to become a world leader, we must become powerful in all areas. The world only believes it when truth is backed by power," he said.

Stressing the role of research in nation-building, Bhagwat said, "Research plays a major role in changing India's direction and condition.



FILE PHOTO

Truthful information should be brought to light. We will not be able to understand India through ignorance."

He urged researchers to work selflessly for the country. "Whatever research you do, do it with excellence, authenticity, with body, mind, and money, and selflessly for the country. There is a lot of negative propaganda about the Sangh Parivar. Researchers should bring out the truth," he said.

On education and health, the RSS chief said, "These are basic necessities. They cannot be businesses. Education and health should be accessible to all."

He alleged that western nations distorted India's education system. "Westerners have messed

with education. They replaced our education system and imposed their own, so they could find black Englishmen to do the work. What the British did wrong must be rectified," he said.

"Today globalisation means marketisation, which is dangerous. We talk about Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. That means we consider the entire world as our family. Unless everyone is happy, no one can be happy," he said, adding, "Therefore, our lives should be restrained, not consumerist. A life of restraint and sacrifice is in our cultural self-realisation."

On the RSS's objective, Bhagwat said, "The RSS's mission is to make the country prosperous."

CONTINUED ON >> P4

LG Sinha lays stone for Adi Shankaracharya temple, museum to boost Katra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant (LG) Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday laid the foundation stone of Adi Shankaracharya Temple in Katra, more than five decades after the temple project was first conceived in 1967.

LG Sinha, who revived the project, said that it will give a boost to pilgrim footfall in the region.

Earlier, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board approved another ambitious project of constructing an International Museum dedicated to Maa Shakti's spiritu-

al heritage in Katra. The project will be executed by the Asian Heritage Foundation at Natali, Katra.

The proposed Shakti Museum will be the first of its kind and would serve as a religious, educational and cultural centre.

Additionally, a state-of-the-art light and sound shows will bring mythology to life through a fusion of tradition and innovation."

During the ceremony, Manoj Sinha said that Adi Shankaracharya undertook a cross-country visit and established four mathas. "He also visited Jammu and Kashmir. A temple of Shankaracharya sit-



J&K LG Manoj Sinha at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of Adi Shankaracharya Temple, in Katra

uated in Srinagar in Kashmir is being visited by hundreds of pilgrims."

"Now, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, the district administration and residents have collectively decided to construct a grand temple dedicated to Adi Shankaracharya. A temple for the local deity will also be built," he added.

Sinha said that road infrastructure will be strengthened, and "There is also a proposal to renovate the Bhoomika temple and provide improved facilities for devotees."

According to a statement issued by the office of the LG in 2025, a Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) between the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) and the concerned landowners was executed to fast-track the temple construction project.

The temple will come up on 41 kanals of land donated by the landowners for the construction of a motorable access track and creation of essential pilgrim amenities, including toilets and water points, at the proposed site. The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board has proposed the construction of the Shri Shankaracharya Ji temple at an estimated cost of ₹31.51 crore.

Govt likely to give approval to replace 40,000 old streetlights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Government is likely to give financial approval to replace 40,000 old streetlights on roads under the public works department. In September last year, the department announced a plan to replace conventional sodium (HPSV) streetlights with modern smart LED fittings.

Sources said the expenditure for the project is likely to be placed in the next expenditure and finance meeting. "A proposal is being made by the department, which will be put up in the next E and FC meeting for financial nod. After that, further work on inviting tenders and selecting an agency will be done," they said.

Currently, around 96,000 streetlights are managed by the public works department



(PWD), of which 45,000 still run on conventional HPSV fittings. "These will now be systematically replaced with energy-efficient smart LED lights, ensuring better illumination, reduced electricity consumption and longer lifespan," sources said.

The expenditure and finance meeting is usually headed by the Chief Minister

along with the cabinet and senior Government officials. "The Government is also exploring innovative revenue models. One such proposal under active consideration is the use of poles for advertisement purposes," another source added.

According to initial estimates, by switching from HPSV fittings to smart LEDs

alone, the Delhi Government expects to save around ₹31.53 crore annually in electricity and maintenance costs. Currently, the PWD spends roughly around ₹90 crore per annum on power bills and maintenance of streetlights.

Each smart light will be connected to a mobile application, which will further be monitored from a centralised dashboard and control room at PWD headquarters, allowing officials to monitor performance in real time, detect faults instantly, and ensure immediate repair, the source said.

Under the project, PWD will also be repairing existing LED streetlights and adding features to the existing lights, including monitoring and an automatic fault detection mechanism. The mobile app is likely to be made accessible to the public as well.

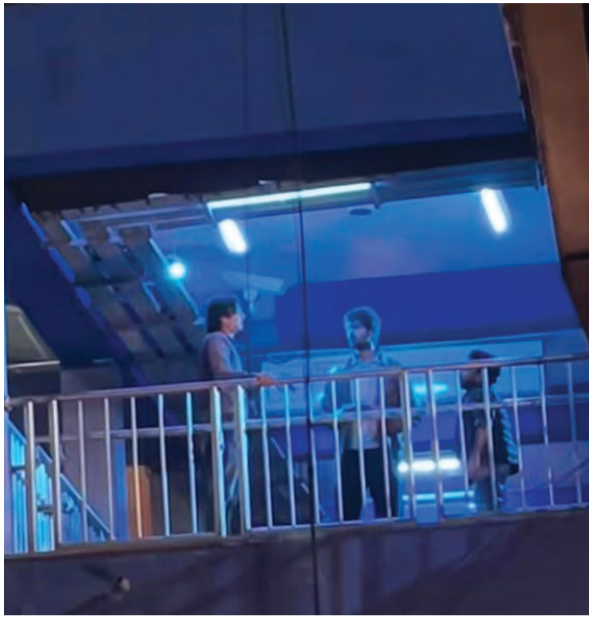
Film shoots return to city as air quality improves

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Film shoots return to the national capital as pollution levels ease with the receding winter. Authorities have received five applications for film shoots in January and February after getting none in December when air quality was "severe."

The applications were received under the Delhi Film Policy by the city's tourism department, with one project already beginning its shoot in the capital.

Kartik Aaryan and Shreelika starrer Naagzilla received approval to shoot in key locations that include Connaught Place, parts of the Delhi Metro Blue Line, Paharganj and stretches near Laxmi Nagar, according to officials. Other applications also list similar locations, such as Connaught Place, Chandni Chowk, and metro stations, the official added. He also said Delhi is set to host its own film festival on March 25.



According to officials, no applications were received in December, while three proposals came in between October and November. Prior to that, around 15 applications have been filed in total. To attract more productions and promote the

Delhi Film Policy offers a single-window clearance system that promises approvals for film shoots within 15 days, with DTDC acting as its nodal agency.

The Delhi Government had allocated ₹3.01 crore last year for implementing the policy. An official said over 20 applications are expected to be received through the e-film clearance portal this year. DTDC also said efforts are underway to develop the animation, visual effects, gaming and comics (AVGC) segment, including plans to collaborate with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to set up a regional centre of the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies in Delhi.

Steps are also being planned to link Delhi's e-film clearance system with the ministry's India Cine Hub, alongside upgrading manpower and maintenance systems. Publicity material will be rolled out to raise awareness about the film policy, he added.

Delhi to get Common Bio-Medical Waste Treatment Facilities: Sirsa

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi will soon get new Common Bio-Medical Waste Treatment Facilities (CBWTFs). Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said on Wednesday. The facility aims to strengthen the Capital's capacity to handle rising biomedical waste.

Chairing a high-level meeting with officials of the National Productivity Council (NPC), the Environment Department, and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPC), Sirsa reviewed a detailed framework for expanding biomedical waste management infrastructure in the city. The proposed

plants will be set up on sites measuring at least 0.5 acres and will use advanced treatment technology. A tender for the project will be floated soon, officials said.

The move comes as Delhi currently generates around 40 tonnes of biomedical waste per day across its east, north, west, south, and central regions. According to projections presented at the meeting, this figure is expected to rise significantly by 2031.

To address the growing load, the new CBWTFs are being planned with a capacity to handle 46 tonnes of waste per day. Each facility will be capable of processing approximately 2,300 kilograms per hour and will



operate for 20 hours daily.

Officials informed the Minister that earlier, two facilities catered to all districts of Delhi. Under the new plan, each proposed facility will cover three districts to ensure better and more focused management of biomedical waste.

The proposed plants will be developed in regions covering the east, northeast,

and Shahdara districts, as well as the west, southwest, and central districts.

These facilities will process segregated biomedical waste using methods such as autoclaving, shredding, and secure landfilling. The aim is to reduce health hazards and minimise environmental impact.

Sirsa said the Government is committed to inviting players equipped with cutting-edge technology that complies with all statutory environmental norms. "We are inviting new partners with the highest standards of technology. The tender will be floated soon," he said.

He stressed that proper disposal of biomedical waste is essential for public health.

"Unmanaged biomedical waste poses serious risks to citizens. We are taking decisive steps to counter these threats," he said.

The Minister added that the initiative aligns with the Delhi Government's zero-tolerance approach to pollution. He said waste management forms a central pillar of the broader environmental action plan.

To ensure transparency and accountability, daily monitoring dashboards will be set up once the facilities become operational, officials said. The expansion of CBWTF infrastructure is expected to significantly boost Delhi's capacity to manage biomedical waste safely and efficiently in the coming years.

DUTA urges DU to withdraw month-long ban on protests

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) urged the university administration to revisit its order imposing a month-long ban on public meetings, processions and protests on campus, calling the move undesirable.

Delhi University (DU) announced the ban, citing concerns over obstruction of traffic, threats to safety and disturbance of public peace on Tuesday. DUTA, in a letter to the registrar, said such a comprehensive restriction had "never been imposed in the history of Delhi University".



The teachers' association also flagged the impact on scheduled programmes in the coming month, including the DU Flower Show, annual cultural festivals, awareness programmes and Holi Milan events.

"To put a ban on such cultural events is unacceptable. The university should exempt

this category of socio-cultural events from the purview of this order," the letter dated February 17 said.

While acknowledging that maintaining peace and harmony during public gatherings is desirable, the teachers' body said, "A total ban on open public activities is totally undesirable," and asked the university to reconsider the decision.

Meanwhile, few DU colleges have postponed their programmes without giving any concrete reasons. Senior officials of Ramanujam College in the south campus confirmed that their annual programme has been postponed.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Open Tenders are invited for REPAIR, RENOVATION AND WATERPROOFING OF SWIMMING POOL at Amrapali Empire. Crossing republic. Tender documents can be obtained from Maintenance Office, Amrapali Empire or <https://amrapalitempire.com/> For more details you can email at amrapali.aoa@gmail.com or call 8826383702

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that Rajesh Dhir S/o Lalpat Rai Dhir R/o Plot No. 53, Block B-1, Paschim Puri, New Delhi-110063. The original documents i.e. Allotment Letter, Possession Letter, Site Possession Letter & NOC for electricity & Water supply by way of Reticulation Deed DDA of the above flat have been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in Police Station Crime Branch Delhi & LP No. 112496/2026. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents may write contact 9811043712 with above named person at above of address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property can personally inform the Director (Residential) C-Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform general public that Mr. Parveen Sharma has acquired Property Bearing Municipal No. 207-B, ward No. 37, area measuring 85 sq. yds., situated in Than Singh Nagar, Anand Parbat, area of village Sadhaura Khurd, Delhi by way of Reticulation Deed dated 01.10.2014 as Doc No. 8805. Now, Mr. Parveen Sharma intends to sell above said property to Mr. Rakesh Gupta and availing a loan on above said property from Truhome Finance Limited (earlier known as Shriram Housing Finance Ltd) in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 7 days of this publication to Mr. Ajit Sharma (Advocate), Partner of Acculaw Source LLP, Unit No. S-2-U, 2nd Floor, built on Plot no. 4 and 5, Ansal Utility Commercial Center, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110063 or contact +91 9560309099 (M).

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (ROADS), PUBLIC WORKS ROADS DEPARTMENT. ASSAM, GUWAHATI-03

No. CE/DEV/TB/120/2025-26/50
PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 invites Bids on behalf of Governor of Assam for 1 (One) no. of Package for Construction of Road and Bridge projects under SOPD-G for the year 2025-26 in Kamrup District amounting to Rs. 312.33 Lakhs (approx.) including GST etc. from approved & eligible Contractors registered with PWRD, Assam.

Details may be seen from 18-02-2026 at website www.assamtenders.gov.in. Amendment /Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website.

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

Note: - N.I.T Value is inclusive of GST and Labour cess etc.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD,
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

DIPRC/PIO/891/19-Feb-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PWD: HEALTH AND EDUCATION: ASSAM: CHANDMARI: GUWAHATI- 03.

No. Tech-1(H&E)/10/2026/2
PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, Health & Education, PW(H&E)D, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-03 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids through Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode-I of contract (Single stage two-part bidding system) from eligible contractors having experience in similar nature of work for the following work :

Sl. No	Name of work	Bid Value (With Add. GST)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1	Construction of Administrative Building and Boys' & Girls' Hostel at DIET, Kamrup (Metro)	Rs. 6,16,70,046.00	18 (Eighteen) months	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs. 12,334.00

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in during the office hours from 20/02/2026.

The bidders must be enrolled with e-tendering web-portal www.assamtenders.gov.in. The Bid price may vary at the time of detail tendering for which no claim will be admissible. All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, Health and Education,
PW(H & E)D,
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati- 03

DIPRC/PIO/890/19-Feb-26

Municipal Corporation Gurugram NOTIFICATION

Applications have been invited from the eligible candidates for filling up the vacant posts of Medical, Paramedical and Supportive Staff in the Metropolitan Surveillance Unit, Gurugram, approved under the IDSP, NCDCC program of the PM-ABHM scheme on full-time basis.

Sr. No.	Name of Post	No. of	Age limit	Essential Qualification and Experience	Salary/Month
1.	Senior Public Health Specialist (Based on IDSP Epidemiologist's ToRs)	1	Not exceeding 50years*	Essential Qualifications: (1) MBBS recognized by Medical Council of India (MCI) with MD/PG (Community Medicine) /MD/CH/MD (Tropical Medicine) recognized by MCI or DNB (Social and Preventive Medicine /Community Medicine), OR (2) MBBS recognized by MCI with EIS Training Course Certificate, OR (3) B.Sc. in Life Sciences (Nursing/Biology/Microbiology/Developmental Biology & Physiology) /ICDS/SC/WH (a) Masters of Public Health (MPH) -Epidemiology / Diploma in Public Health (DPH) -Epidemiology OR (b) Master in Applied Epidemiology (MAE) from recognized University of India along with two years of experience in Public Health after acquiring mentioned post Graduate qualifications; OR (c) PhD in Clinical Science/Medical Science/Preventive Medicine/Human Physiology/Pathophysiology/Epidemiology. Experience required: ->10 years of field experience after obtaining essential qualification in implementing Public Health Programmes/interventions with a focus on communicable diseases.	1.Rs. 1,75,000/- For MBBS with MD/DNB) 2.Rs. 1,50,000/- NBSBS With EIS training Course Certificate) 3.Rs. 1,25,000/- (For B.Sc. in Life Sciences)
2.	Entomologist (Based on NCHP-PCZS ToRs)	1	Not exceeding 50years*	Essential Qualifications: M.Sc. in Entomology/Zoology preferably Doctorate (PhD) in Medical Entomology. Experience required: ->5 years in the field of entomological investigations pertaining to Zoonotic diseases of public health importance during outbreaks, zoonotic disease surveillance in including plague surveillance in India.	
3.	Veterinary officer (Based on IDSP Veterinary officer's ToRs)	1	Not exceeding 50years*	Essential Qualifications: A Post graduate Veterinary degree from a recognized university or Veterinary Public Health or Veterinary Epidemiology or Veterinary Microbiology or Veterinary preventive medicine or Veterinary Pathology WITH • Registration in the Veterinary Council of India or Veterinary Council of States • Experience required: (1)-5 years post qualification experience in Veterinary Public health or Veterinary Epidemiology or Animal Health • (2) Relevant experience in public health, preferably in disease surveillance and outbreak investigations.	
4.	Food safety expert (Based on Food microbiologist - PM ABHM's AMR ToRs)	1	Not exceeding 40years*	Essential Qualifications: Either 1 or 2 (1) Bachelor's science degree with microbiology as one of the subjects from a recognized university (2) Masters in Applied Nutrition or Microbiology or Medical Microbiology from a recognized university Experience required: Essential: -5 years experience in Microbial hygiene, preferably in food safety after acquiring Bachelor's degree in Microbial hygiene, preferably in food safety, after acquiring Master's degree. Desirable: Prior experience of working in lab for isolation and identification of food pathogens.	Rs. 50,000/-

Interested candidates can download the Application form from the MCG website i.e. www.mcg.gov.in and applicants are advised to attend the interview on dated 06 March 2026 (from 10:00 Am to 4:00 Pm) at MCG Office C1 Infolab, 3rd Floor, Sector-34, along With the filled Application Form and Relevant Original Documents. Application along with copy of relevant documents must reach the office by email i.e. admc@mcg.gov.in and cmo@mcg.gov.in within 1 days i.e. from 19.02.2026 to 01 March 2026 by 5:00 Pm from the date of publication of this advertisement. For more details, please visit the MCG Office C1 Infolab, 3rd Floor, Sector-34 or MCG website i.e. www.mcg.gov.in

Sd/-
Commissioner Municipal Corporation, Gurugram.
RO 43142-C-27-7

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS), BHAWANIPUR-SORBHOG AND PAKABETBARI TERRITORIAL ROAD DIVISION, BARPETA ROAD

No BSPTRD/TECH/PD/NA/168/2025-26/11
PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer, PWD (Roads), Bhawanipur-Sorbhog & Pakabetbari Territorial Road Division, Barpeta Road, on behalf of Governor of Assam, invites bids from eligible contractors registered with Assam PWD (Roads) for 1 (One) no. of Works amounting to Rs. 24.48 Lakh (approx.) for Re-Construction & Recovery Window (Assam Flood and Landslides 2022) NDRF (PDNA-2022) for the year 2025-26 in Barpeta District, Assam.

Details along with schemes for the works may be seen from 23-02-2026 at website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. Amendment Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Schemes are not yet sanctioned by the competent authority. In the event of non-sanctioned of the schemes, the bid may be cancelled and no claim what so ever on this account shall be entertained from the bidders.

Note - N.I.T Value is inclusive of GST (18%), Labour cess (1%) etc.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer, PWD,
Bhawanipur-Sorbhog and Pakabetbari
Territorial Road Division, Barpeta Road.

DIPRC/PIO/892/19-Feb-26

Aro granite industries Ltd.
(CIN: L74899DL1988PLC031510)
Registered Office: 1001, 10th Floor, DLF Tower A, Jasola, New Delhi 110025, Phone : 011-41686169; Fax: 011-26941984
Email Id: investorgovernance@arotile.com; Website: www.arotile.com

NOTICE OF POSTAL BALLOT/ E-VOTING TO THE MEMBERS

Members are hereby informed that pursuant to Section 108 and 110 and other applicable provisions, if any, of the Companies Act, 2013 ("Companies Act"), read with Rule 20 and Rule 22 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, (the "Rules") as amended from time to time, Aro granite industries limited ("the Company") is seeking approval from its Members by passing the resolution as set out in the Postal Ballot Notice dated February 04, 2026 ("Notice") by way of remote electronic voting.

In terms of Section 110 of the Act, read with Rule 20 and Rule 22 of the Rules and General Circular No. 03/2025 dated September 22, 2025 read with General Circular No. 09/2024 dated September 19, 2024 and other connected circulars issued in this regard ("MCA Circulars") issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Regulation 44 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations, 2015, as amended ("SEBI Listing Regulations"), and other applicable provisions of the Act, rules, circulars and notifications issued thereunder, the Postal Ballot Notice has been sent by e-mail addresses with the Company/Registrar and Share Transfer Agent (in respect of shares held in physical form) or with their Depository Participants (in respect of shares held in Dematerialized form) and made available to the Company by the respective Depository Participants. The communication of the assent or dissent of the members would take place through the remote e-voting system only for the following matter:

Item No.	Description of the Resolution
1.	To Consider and Approve the Appointment of Mr. Varathan Anil (DIN: 11480624) as an Independent Director (Non-Executive) of the Company not liable to retire by rotation for the period of 5 years.

The Company has engaged the services of Central Depository Services (India) Limited ("CDSL") for providing E-voting facility to all its Members. Members are requested to note that the e-voting shall commence from Monday, February 23, 2026 (09:00 A.M. IST) and shall end on Tuesday, March 24, 2026 (05:00 P.M. IST). E-Voting will not be allowed beyond the aforesaid date and time and the e-voting module shall be forthwith disabled by CDSL upon expiry of the aforesaid period.

The Board of Directors of the Company has appointed M/s. S Panigrahi & Associates, Practising Company Secretaries (FRN: S2024UP991300) as the Scrutinizer for conducting the Postal Ballot through a voting process in a fair and transparent manner.

The Notice has been sent/published/dispalyed for all the Members, whose names appear in the Registrar of Members/List of Beneficial Owners as received from Depositories i.e. ("NSDL") Central Depository Services (India) Limited ("CDSL") as on February 13, 2026 being the cut-off date. A person who is not a Member as on the cut-off date should treat this notice for information purpose only.

Members whose email IDs are not registered with the Company/Depository Participant(s), and consequently notice of Postal Ballot and e-voting instructions cannot be serviced are requested to register/update the same by submitting the requisite form ISR-1.

The Notice is available on the Company's website viz., www.arotile.com and on the website of the Stock Exchanges i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.nseindia.com and the website of CDSL at <https://evotingindia.com>

The results of the Postal Ballot shall be declared by the Chairman or any other person authorized by the Chairman or by before March 26, 2026 and communicated to the Stock Exchanges and shall also be displayed on the Company's website viz., www.arotile.com and the website of the e-voting agency <https://evotingindia.com>

In case of any queries, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Shareholders and e voting user manual for Shareholders available at the download section of www.evotingindia.com or call at 022-23058542/43 and All grievances connected with the facility for voting by electronic means may be addressed to Mr. Rakesh Dalvi, Sr. Manager, (CDSL), Central Depository Services (India) Limited, A Wing, 25th Floor, Marathon Futrelex, Mafatal Mill Compounds, N M Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (East), Mumbai - 400013 or send an e-mail to helpdesk.evoting@cdsindia.com or call on 022-23058542/43.

By order of the Board
For Aro granite industries Ltd.
Sd/-
Ayush Goel
Company Secretary and Compliance Officer

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, रुहेलखण्ड वृत्त, 30प्र0 आवास एवं विकास परिषद, मुरादाबाद

पत्रांक : 279 /एम-15ए/22 दिनांक : 18.02.2026
ई-निविदा आमन्त्रण सूचना विज्ञापित
30प्र0 आवास एवं विकास परिषद की ओर से इस कार्यालय के ई-निविदा आमन्त्रण सूचना सं-0278/एम-15ए/21 दिनांक 18.02.2026 द्वारा परिषद में पंजीकृत एवं अनुभवी ठेकेदारों/फर्मों से अधिशासी अभियन्ता, नि०ख०, रुहेलखण्ड-01, 02 एवं 03, मुरादाबाद के अधीन परिषद एवं अवस्थापना निधि के अन्तर्गत जनपद-मुरादाबाद, सम्भल एवं बिजनौर में विभिन्न 04 नग कार्यों हेतु क्रमशः दिनांक 10.03.2026, 17.03.2026 एवं 24.03.2026 अपराह्न 05:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडर के अन्तर्गत निविदायें वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> के माध्यम से कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, निर्माण खण्ड, रुहेलखण्ड-01, 02 एवं 03, 30प्र0 आवास एवं विकास परिषद, मुरादाबाद में आमंत्रित की जाती है :-
अन्य नियम व शर्तें किसी भी कार्यदिवस में अधिशासी अभियन्ता, निर्माण खण्ड, रुहेलखण्ड-01, 02 एवं 03, मुरादाबाद एवं अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, रुहेलखण्ड वृत्त, मुरादाबाद कार्यालय अथवा परिषद की वेबसाइट www.upavp.in से देखी जा सकती हैं।

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता

CM lays foundation stones for ₹2,100 cr water, sewer project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday laid the foundation stones for water and sewer projects worth over ₹2,100 crore. The Chief Minister announced a major expansion in sewage treatment capacity and upgrades to the city's ageing supply network.

The projects, executed by the Delhi Jal Board, were inaugurated at Ramlila Maidan in Todapur, West Delhi. The Chief Minister said the works would provide long-term solutions to water shortage and sewer problems that have persisted for decades in several parts of the city.

She said the new projects

would significantly increase sewage treatment capacity and help stop the discharge of untreated wastewater into the Yamuna.

"We do not just make announcements. We ensure projects are completed on time," she said, directing officials to meet deadlines and maintain quality standards.

Among the key projects inaugurated was the expansion of the Nilothi - 1 Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) from 40 MGD to 60 MGD at a cost of ₹373.21 crore. The capacity of the Pappankalan Phase - 1 STP was increased from 20 MGD to 30 MGD at a cost of ₹225.28 crore.

Two major pipeline replacement projects in North-West Delhi were also inaugurated. The old pipeline

at Haiderpur (WW-II) has been replaced at a cost of ₹50.72 crore. Another pipeline at Haiderpur (WW-I), covering Pitampura and nearby areas, was replaced at a cost of ₹19.44 crore.

In addition, foundation stones were laid for several new projects. These include water supply improvement works in the Chandrawal Water Treatment Plant area. Package 3 will cost ₹990 crore, while Package 4 will cost ₹268.41 crore.

New household sewer connections will be provided in Begumpur, Wazirabad, Ranholia and Sant Nagar. These projects are linked to Rohini STP, Coronation Pillar STP and Nilothi STP. The costs range from ₹25.15 crore to ₹58 crore. The capacity of the



Molarband STP will also be enhanced by 0.67 MGD at a cost of ₹14.71 crore.

The Chief Minister said clean drinking water and a modern sewer network are top priorities for her Government. She said the projects would strengthen water supply for lakhs of residents and improve sanitation across Delhi. "A strong water and sewer system is essential for a world-class capital," she said.

She added that the government is working in mission mode to ensure that every household receives clean water and every locality has a modern sewer network.

Delhi Water Minister Pravesh Sahib Singh said the city is entering a new phase of development. He said the projects are aimed at making water and sewer services more efficient and aligned with public needs. "Our goal is to make water and sewer services fully modern and efficient," he said.

The Chief Minister also announced relief for consumers under the Amnesty Scheme. The scheme, which waives penalties, interest and surcharges on pending water bills, has been extended till August. Commercial consumers have now been included.

According to officials, more than 3.52 lakh consumers have benefited so far. Relief of about ₹1,400 crore has been provided, while the Delhi Jal Board collected ₹484 crore in revenue.

The Government also announced a 100 per cent waiver of late payment surcharges for commercial and non-domestic consumers. Penalties of around ₹74,293 crore accumulated over the years will be fully waived. This is expected to help the Delhi Jal Board generate nearly ₹285.2 crore in revenue.

MP Bansuri Swaraj, MLA Umang Bajaj, senior officials and local residents were present at the event.

Case registered against Blinkit for selling prohibited knives online

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Police have registered a case against the quick-commerce platform Blinkit for allegedly selling prohibited knives online. The action was taken following a crackdown triggered by two recent murder cases in West Delhi, where the accused confessed to purchasing the weapons through the app.

Police said an FIR has been lodged under Sections 25, 54, and 59 of the Arms Act at Khyala police station. So far, 50 illegal knives have been seized from Blinkit warehouses and stores in Delhi and Gurugram.

The action came after investigators probing two separate murder cases in West Delhi found that the knives used in both crimes had been bought via e-commerce platforms. During questioning, the accused in



the cases admitted that they had ordered the knives through Blinkit. To verify the claims, police officers placed a test order on February 13 for a 'Stanley' knife through the Blinkit app. The product was delivered within 15 minutes. After examining the knife, police found that it was a manually operated folding knife with a blade measuring 8 cm in length and 2.5 cm in width.

Under the Arms Act, any knife exceeding the prescribed commercial dimensions of 7.62 cm in length and 1.72 cm in width cannot be sold without a licence. The knife ordered by the police exceeded both limits and

was classified as a prohibited arm. "When we questioned the delivery person, it was revealed that these knives were stocked at Blinkit's warehouse in Khayla," a police officer said.

Following this, police teams conducted multiple raids. On February 15, officers searched several Blinkit stores across Delhi and recovered 16 illegal knives. The next day, another 32 knives were seized from a Blinkit warehouse in Farrukhnagar, Gurugram.

In total, 50 illegal knives have been recovered so far. Police said further investigation is underway to trace the supply chain and identify individuals responsible for stocking and distributing the prohibited items.

Senior officers said the easy online availability of sharp weapons has become a serious concern, especially in cases involving juveniles.

LG directs penalty for DFS official over false fire safety certificate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has directed the Vigilance Department to initiate major penalty proceedings against Chhuttan Lal Meena, Assistant Divisional Officer (ADO) of the Delhi Fire Service (DFS). The proceedings are initiated in connection with the issuance of a Fire Safety Certificate to Aakash Cinema-cum-Commercial Complex in Azadpur based on allegedly false inspection reports.

The direction came while the LG was hearing an appeal filed by Meena against a minor penalty imposed on him earlier under Rule 16 of the CCS (CCA) Rules, 1965. Rejecting the appeal, Saxena ordered that disciplinary proceedings be initiated under Rule 14 for a major penalty instead.

According to officials, Meena had prepared two inspection reports dated August 3, 2022, and October

25, 2022, of the Aakash Cinema-cum-Commercial Complex. In both reports, he stated that four passenger lifts were installed at the site. Based on the October 25 report, a Fire Safety Certificate was issued on November 1, 2022, by the then Director of the Delhi Fire Service.

However, following multiple complaints received by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Central Vigilance Commission, and the Anti-Corruption Branch, the matter was examined. It was alleged that a fake and forged Fire Safety Certificate or No Objection Certificate had been issued to the complex.

An inspection conducted by the Assistant Electrical Inspector of the Labour Department on January 24, 2023, found that no passenger lifts were installed at the site. The inspection report clearly stated that no lifts existed in the building. Following an inquiry, a minor penalty was imposed on



Meena under Rule 16 of the CCS (CCA) Rules. He subsequently filed an appeal before the LG challenging the penalty.

During the hearing, the LG observed that the minor penalty had been imposed primarily on the basis of the August 3, 2022, report. He noted that the October 25, 2022, report had not been brought to notice earlier in the full context. Considering that the matter related directly to public safety, Saxena directed that proceedings for a major penalty under Rule 14 be initiated in place of the minor penalty.

Officials said the LG took a serious view of the fact that a Fire Safety Certificate had been issued despite apparent discrepancies. He also noted that even after the Labour Department's inspection in January 2023 confirmed the absence of lifts, the certificate was neither reviewed nor withdrawn. The LG observed that this failure conferred

undue advantage to the Aakash Cinema-cum-Commercial Complex and raised concerns about procedural lapses.

Saxena further directed the Vigilance Department to examine the role and possible misconduct of the then Director of Delhi Fire Service, Atul Garg, who has since retired. He asked the department to consider initiation of major penalty proceedings under relevant provisions of the CCS (CCA) Rules, 1965, and the CCS (Pension) Rules, 2021, if warranted.

The Vigilance Department has also been directed to examine the involvement of all other DFS officers connected with the inspection, certification, and related processes. Disciplinary action is to be initiated against any officer found responsible for lapses or misconduct. Officials said the directions underscore the administration's focus on accountability in matters involving public safety and fire compliance.

EMPOWERING SEVA BASTIS

PM Modi's vision, Rekha Sarkar in action

One Year. Real Transformation : Safety, Services and Self-Respect Restored for Every Family

For decades, the slum settlements of Delhi heard promises and saw announcements, but real change rarely reached their homes. That situation began to change when Chief Minister Rekha Sarkar implemented the Antyodaya approach in mission mode. In the last one year, slum settlements have been placed at the center of governance. The focus is not only on providing services but on ensuring the right to live with dignity. This has brought visible improvement in everyday life for thousands of families.

Mega ₹700 Crore budget for Slum's development

The Rekha government allocated a budget of ₹700 crore for the overall development of slum areas. This shows that development now means reaching the last person in the queue with basic services. Families who were earlier neglected are now seeing roads, drains, and civic facilities being built in their neighborhoods.

Notably, concrete roads, modern drainage systems, and Basti Vikas Kendras are being constructed at a rapid pace. Projects have already been awarded in 65 Assembly constituencies, and additional works worth ₹145.37 crore are under approval. This ensures that infrastructure gaps are being closed systematically.

Through these development centers, slum areas are getting a lease of life with new toilet cubicles, sewer connections, roof repairs, and portable toilets in an organized manner. Women, elderly residents, and children benefit the most because they now have safer and cleaner surroundings. This directly improves health and personal safety.

The Rekha Government's model



treats slums as areas of opportunity, not as a problem. Every family living there is seen as a contributor to Delhi's growth. This shift in thinking is helping integrate these communities into mainstream development.

Key Initiatives in Slum Areas

- **ATAL CANTEENS ARE OPENING:** Affordable and hygienic meals at ₹5 are helping daily wage workers and low-income families reduce their food expenses and ensure that no one sleeps hungry.
- **AYUSHMAN MANDIRS ARE BEING ESTABLISHED:** Primary healthcare services are being brought closer to communities, making medical consultation and basic treatment

easily accessible for families.

- **SEWER LINES ARE BEING LAID:** Proper sewer connections are reducing open drains and improving sanitation, which directly lowers the risk of disease.
- **WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CLEANLINESS ARE BEING ENSURED:** Regular garbage collection and better waste systems are creating cleaner surroundings and healthier living conditions.
- **PERMANENT DRAINS ARE BEING BUILT:** Strong drainage infrastructure is preventing waterlogging during rains and protecting homes and streets from damage.

Each of these measures improves daily living conditions. Residents get better hygiene, safer streets, and improved access to basic services.

In phases. This reduces the financial burden on low-income families and ensures that more people have access to hygienic and nutritious meals every day.

Rebuilt with Respect: Safe and Dignified Homes for Every Family

In Bhālaswa and Jahangirpuri, 7,400 EWS flats are being renovated. These flats were earlier in poor condition and are now being upgraded with modern facilities. This gives families safer and more stable housing.

Facilities in these flats include:

- Electricity connection
- Water connection
- PNG connection
- Parking
- Parks
- Schools
- Waste management
- Playgrounds
- Anganwadi centers
- Health facilities

In Savda Ghevra, ₹27.50 crore has been released to repair 2,416 dilapidated flats. This ensures better living standards and long-term security for residents.

- ₹700 crore fund for slum development
- Atal Canteens providing hot and nutritious meals for ₹5
- Fully equipped EWS flats with essential facilities
- Expanded sewer network ensuring cleanliness and better health

Where Cleanliness Builds Community Strength

574 slum clusters have been connected to sewer lines across Delhi. In 65 clusters, single-point sewage systems have been introduced. Where regular sewer systems are not possible, alternative technology is being used. There is also a target to connect 1,799 unauthorized colonies to the sewer network by 2028.

These steps reduce open drains and stagnant wastewater. As a result, the risk of disease comes down, and public health improves.

ELECTRICITY CONNECTIONS IN BOOKED PROPERTIES

Under a new decision, around 1.25 lakh plus families in Delhi will benefit from electricity connections in booked properties. This provides a legal and reliable power supply and improves safety in households.

NO ONE LEFT IN THE COLD

During winter, shelters with 2,500 additional beds have been built. These night shelters provide food, bedding, and medical care so that no one has to sleep in the open. This ensured protection and dignity during extreme weather.

In Ashok Vihar, at Swabhiman Apartments, 1,675 families have received permanent homes. This shows that when planning and execution work together, change becomes visible on the ground.

ANTYODAYA IN ACTION: MAINSTREAMING DELHI'S SLUMS WITH DIGNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Slum areas usually come into the news only during accidents or elections. Otherwise they remain ignored. Over the past year, this approach has changed with the Rekha Sarkar-led Delhi government working round-the-clock for slum development.

Slums are now seen as an integral part of the urban framework. Inspired by the Antyodaya vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, work has moved forward in housing, sanitation, affordable food, healthcare and skill development at the same time. This makes it clear that uplifting the poor is not only a social duty but also the foundation of balanced urban growth. By bringing slum communities into the mainstream, the government has strengthened trust and improved living conditions for thousands of families.

DIP/Shabdarth/Advertiser/0143/25-26

IN FOCUS



Shopkeeper arranges figs while waiting for customers amid Ramadan festivities in Srinagar PTI

3.26 crore voters issued SIR notices in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa on Wednesday said 3.26 crore voters have been issued notices under the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and assured that no voter's name would be deleted merely due to non-receipt of a notice.

Addressing a press conference here, Rinwa detailed the progress of the revision exercise and clarified issues relating to notices issued over "no mapping" cases, logical discrepancies, and Forms 6 and 7 used for inclusion and deletion of names. He said notices were issued to voters whose



Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa

names appeared in the draft roll. Among them, 1.04 crore voters had left the relevant field blank during the previous Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and did not complete voter-list

mapping, while 2.22 crore had logical discrepancies in their records. "In total, 3.26 crore voters were issued notices seeking supporting documents. Around 3.25 crore notices

have been generated and printed," he said.

"Of these, 1.85 crore notices have been delivered and hearings in 1.15 crore cases completed," he added.

Rinwa said only 30 lakh hearings had been conducted as of February 5, but the number rose to 1.15 crore by the morning of February 18, with around 37 lakh hearings completed in the last three days. He expressed confidence that all hearings would be completed within the stipulated timeline of March 27.

Replying to a question, he said voters would not be removed from the rolls merely because a notice was not delivered. "If a notice has

not reached someone, it will reach them. There is sufficient time," he assured. The number of officials conducting hearings has increased from 4,003 Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) across 403 Assembly segments to 13,161 officials, including Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), Rinwa said.

Clarifying on Form 7, used for deletion of names, he said 1,40,425 applications were received during the same period, including 55,752 from women. He said the figures refer to entries recorded in the ERO-Net system. Giving a breakdown of 1,35,412 Form 7 applications received up to February 16, he said 70,865

were self-deletion requests, 18,863 were auto-deletions, and 47,684 were filed by others. A total of 23,935 names were deleted, 14,388 through auto-deletion, 5,211 through self-deletion and 4,336 based on requests by others.

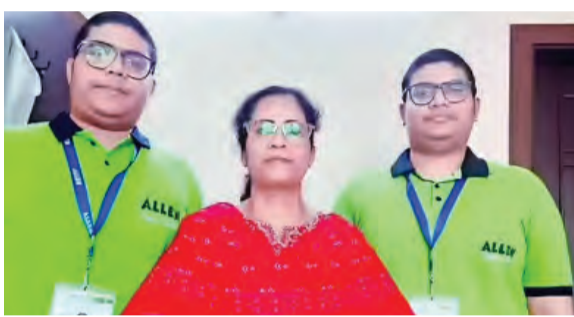
He said auto-deletion forms are generated when a voter migrates and is enrolled at a new location, as well as in cases such as death. Referring to a meeting earlier in the day with a delegation of the S P, Rinwa said discussions indicated the need for greater clarity on notices related to logical discrepancies and required documents. "The process has been simplified to make compliance easier," he said.

Kota twins shock with identical JEE Main score

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kota

Competitiveness ended at home for identical twins Mahroof Ahmed Khan and Masroor Ahmed Khan, as they both scored an identical 285 in their JEE Main, hitting the 99.998th percentile. The twins from Bhubneswar, students of Allen Career Institute, appeared for the JEE Main 2026 in the same shift at the same centre.

The exam result was declared on Monday. Born on May 7, 2008, the brothers studied together throughout, from school to coaching classes. According to their coaching institute, their mother, Dr Zeenat Begum,



had been a gynaecologist working with the Odisha Government since the 1990s, before she resigned to move to Kota with them in 2023.

"We shifted to Kota in 2023, initially for Olympiad preparation after both brothers qualified for the International Science Olympiad. They later

decided to pursue JEE coaching," Begum said. She said the brothers have been high achievers all along, with Mahroof scoring 95.2 per cent and Masroor 97.2 per cent in Class 10.

They have also won nearly 40 medals (each) in national and international Olympiads, she said. The

twins followed similar study strategies and timetables, often competing against each other in tests. If one scored lower, they motivated and helped each other analyse mistakes to improve in subsequent exams. "They had an interest in maths from the beginning, so they chose to go for engineering rather than medicine.

They aspire to pursue BTech in Computer Science at IIT Bombay. Their priority is computer science," she said. Beyond academics, karate held both brothers' interest in their childhood, Begum said.

The twins are now preparing for JEE Advanced. Their father is also a doctor, and is currently working in Odisha.

Chirag Paswan opens Amity's INBUSH 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Minister for Food Processing Industries of India, Chirag Paswan inaugurated the 26th Edition of the International Business Summit & Research Conference - INBUSH ERA 2026 at Amity University Uttar Pradesh.

Summit to be held between February 17-20, has been announced as Asia's biggest international business summit and research conference centred on the theme, "Forging Futures, Fuelling Frontiers: Powering Progress through Purpose, People, and Partnerships".

The 4-day event has drawn senior leadership and



researchers from leading global institutions including the University of Alberta, Monash University, University of Melbourne, University of Birmingham, Queen Mary University of London, University of York, Yorkville University, Nottingham Trent University, Northumbria University, Cardiff University, University

of Northampton and University of Sussex, among others. Addressing the inaugural session, Paswan spoke about the decisive role of India's youth in shaping the nation's destiny. "We have crossed the first quarter of the 21st century. The period from 2025 to 2050 will be extremely crucial," he said, asserting that under the

visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, India is firmly on course to become a developed nation by 2047.

Dr Ashok K Chauhan, Founder President of Amity Education Group, expressed confidence that India would become the most developed country by 2047, with youth as the driving force.

Dr Atul Chauhan, Chancellor, reaffirmed the institution's commitment to nurturing not only capable professionals but responsible citizens imbued with strong values. Professor Charlie Jeffery, VC of the University of York, stressed the need for a research-and innovation-oriented mindset among India's vast youth population.

DGCA tightens norms for unruly passengers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Aviation watchdog DGCA has proposed stricter norms to deal with unruly passengers, including allowing airlines to directly impose a flying ban on such passengers for up to 30 days.

"A 'No/ Zero Tolerance Policy' has been adopted to ensure the safety of the aircraft/persons/property and to maintain good order & discipline on board an aircraft," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in its draft revised rules.

Among other proposals, the regulator has mentioned that an airline shall formulate and implement a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the handling of unruly passengers and for reporting the incidents to the DGCA, and shall circulate the same among all concerned stakeholders.

An independent committee set up by the airline that will include a representative from another carrier, among others, will take a decision on the flying ban. "... an airline may directly impose a flying ban for a disruptive passenger for a period not exceeding thirty days (30 days without referring the matter to the Independent Committee,

where the passenger is found to have committed any of the following disruptive acts on board an aircraft," the regulator said. Such an action can be taken by an airline for



various violations, including smoking on board the aircraft, consumption of alcohol onboard a domestic flight and misuse of an emergency exit or unauthorised use of life-saving equipment, including life jackets. Under the existing Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR), pending decision of the independent committee, the concerned airline may ban such unruly passenger from flying for up to 45 days.

This provision also remains in the proposed revised CAR for handling unruly passengers. Unruly passengers can face varying periods of flying ban depending on the level of offences. For Level 1, the ban can be up to three months and for Level 2, the same can be up to six months.

In the case of Level 3 and 4 cases, the minimum ban can be for two years or more without a limit. While Level 1 refers to unruly behaviour such as physical gestures, verbal harassment or unruly inebriation.

Mayawati rejects alliance buzz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lucknow

BSP president Mayawati on Wednesday trashed as "fake news" reports that her party would contest the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections in alliance with other parties, asserting that it will fight the polls on its own strength.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister in a press briefing alleged that such reports were being spread with the help of artificial intelligence (AI) to mislead people.

"It is absolutely wrong, false, baseless and fabricated news. These discussions are being deliberately circulated to misguide the public," she said, adding that political leaders as well as sections of the media should avoid indulging in such speculation.

Mayawati also took an indirect swipe at the AI Summit being held in Delhi.

"Instead of awakening the country and the world to the bitter realities concerning larger national and public interest and thereby strengthening democracy and the Constitution, there are self-serving discussions these days projecting artificial intelligence as the key to success.

"Amid such discourse, sections of the media are also, on one pretext or another, spreading talk that the BSP



will contest the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections in alliance. This is absolutely false."

Mayawati said she has repeatedly announced that the BSP will contest elections independently and recalled that she had made a public declaration in this regard at a mega rally held in Lucknow on October 9, 2025, on the death anniversary of party founder Kanshi Ram.

"After nationwide discussions on that announcement, there remains no scope for any confusion. Yet some people and certain media sections are engaged in a malicious campaign to spread false news. This is an anti-BSP tactic and people need not pay attention to it," she said.

The BSP chief alleged that the Congress, Samajwadi Party and Bharatiya Janata Party have a "narrow mindset" and are opposed to the ideology of BR Ambedkar.

Narayana Murthy urges young people to focus on reskilling

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy on Wednesday said that nothing is superior to the human mind and described artificial intelligence as a "blessing" rather than a threat.

He urged young people to focus on reskilling and lifelong learning. He was speaking at a leadership interaction titled "Leaders Talk" organised by the University of Delhi in collaboration with the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) at the Viceregal Lodge Convention



Hall. The session was anchored by senior journalist Sudhir Chaudhary.

Responding to a question on AI and its growing role in India's technology sector, Murthy said AI may automate low-level tasks but it will push humans towards

higher-order thinking and creativity. He stressed that "learnability", or the ability to acquire and apply knowledge across contexts, is essential in an AI-driven world. Speaking about his early life, Murthy described the youth as the country's most valuable asset.

He recalled growing up in a modest family with strong values. He shared an incident where a teacher used common salt carefully during a school experiment, saying it belonged to the community. Murthy said this lesson shaped his business ethics.

Maharashtra Govt cancels 5% Muslim quota in jobs, education

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Maharashtra Government has cancelled the five per cent reservation to members of the Muslim community in jobs and education.

A Government Resolution (GR) was issued to this effect on Tuesday, as the previous ordinance about the five per cent reservation has lapsed and there is an interim court stay on that decision.

The previous Congress-NCP Government had issued an ordinance to grant a 16 per cent quota to Marathas and five per cent to Muslims.

As per the new GR, all previous decisions and the ordinance related to the five per cent reservation



in Government, semi-Government jobs and educational institutions for the socially and educationally backward Muslim group included under the Special Backward Category (A) have

been cancelled. The Government has cancelled the earlier decisions and circulars from 2014 and stopped issuing caste and non-creamy layer certificates to Muslims in the Special Backward

Category, the new order said. Former state Congress working committee member Naseem Khan alleged that the ruling Mahayuti coalition had committed an injustice by taking such a step, while NCP (SP) spokesperson Clyde Crasto said the BJP doesn't value Muslim leaders of the party and its allies. Mahayuti comprises the BJP, NCP and Shiv Sena.

Speaking to reporters at the Tilak Bhavan here, Khan said the decision to scrap the quota for socially and educationally backward sections within the Muslim community was "extremely wrong" and would deprive minorities of opportunities to join the mainstream of development. He said the previous

Congress-NCP Government in 2014 had issued an ordinance granting the Muslim quota. "The subsequent Devendra Fadnavis Government did not take the process forward, and even after the Bombay High Court granted interim relief for 5 per cent educational reservation, its implementation was not ensured," Khan alleged.

He added that the quota was implemented for the 2014-15 academic year, but was not continued later despite repeated assurances by the BJP Government. Khan further alleged that several welfare schemes for minorities launched by the earlier Congress-led Government had been discontinued.

FROM PAGE - 1

ty, saying, "We should live our lives with a friendly attitude towards the environment. Actions like planting trees, saving water, and avoiding single-use plastics can all help protect the environment. We should also use modern technology for environmental protection."

Robot dog claim at AI summit triggers storm

As the controversy grew, visuals on Wednesday showed staff and students from Galgotias University vacating their stall at the summit venue in New Delhi. Video footage from the venue indicated that power supply to the stall cut off. The university issued a public apology for the "confusion" caused at the summit, later in the day. The university claimed one of its representatives at the pavilion was "ill-informed". "She was not aware of the technical origins of the product and, in her enthusiasm for being on camera, gave factually incorrect information even though she was not authorised to speak to the press. There was no institutional intent to misrepresent the innovation," the spokesperson said.

NDA set to cross halfway mark in RS

According to the Election Commission of India, polls on March 16 are distributed across 10 states: Maharashtra (7), Odisha (4), Telangana (2), Tamil Nadu (6), Chhattisgarh (2), West Bengal (5), Assam (3), Haryana (2), Himachal Pradesh (1), and Bihar (5). Notifications for these polls will be issued on February 26.

A total of 72 MPs will conclude their Rajya Sabha terms between March and November this year. The ruling NDA currently holds 42 of these seats. After the upcoming elections for these 71 seats (excluding one nominated seat), the NDA's total is anticipated to rise to 45 or 46 seats, marking a gain of 3-4 seats.

Congress-led Opposition, which currently has 23 of these 71 seats, will get reduced by at least one seat. BJD, YSRCP and BRS, along with an independent MP from Assam, hold seven seats and post polls they would be reduced to three seats as YSRCP and BRS will lose four berths.

One more seat is to be vacant as NCP MP Sunetra Pawar has taken over as Maharashtra deputy chief minister after the sudden demise

of her husband, Ajit Pawar, in a plane crash.

As CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharjee's term will end in April 2026, one interesting fact to emerge is that the Upper House will have no representative from West Bengal for the first time since the 1970s.

Based on its state legislative strength, the BJP is expected to win around 15 to 18 seats as BJP has Governments or is an alliance partner in Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Assam.

J&K security tightened ahead of tourist rush

According to the latest assessment of various intelligence agencies in the region, there are about 100 foreign terrorists who are active and have set up safe hideouts deep inside the forested areas. The local police and other security personnel are keeping a tight vigil on the activities of the local overground workers to choke their supply lines and prevent them from supplying ration supplies to help them sustain bad weather conditions in the upper reaches of the valley.

PM Modi calls India-EU FTA golden era for trade...

Both sides reiterated uncompromising condemnation of terrorism in all forms and agreed to intensify coordination on security challenges.

In a separate meeting, Modi and Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo described the India-EU FTA as a decisive turning point. Modi credited Orpo for his personal support in pushing the agreement forward, asserting that it ushers in a transformative phase in India-Europe engagement. The leaders focused sharply on future-facing sectors—quantum technologies, 6G telecommunications, renewable energy, circular economy systems and defence innovation. They stressed that digitalisation and sustainability are not optional ambitions but central pillars of long-term growth.

With technology firms from both countries expanding operations and partnerships in each other's markets, the two sides called for doubling bilateral trade and accelerating co-development initiatives. Amid the broader AI discussions, industry voices stressed the need to embed artificial intelligence deeply into critical infrastructure. With the India-EU FTA in place and AI cooperation

high on the agenda, India's engagements with Spain and Finland signal a sharpened focus on trade expansion, strategic technology partnerships and infrastructure modernisation.

RSS chief alleges US, China spreading...

Instead of thinking that my family and I are everything, we must think for the entire nation. The RSS cares about the unity and quality of society. If you want to understand the RSS, come inside and see for yourself. The RSS cannot be understood by reading about it. The RSS has only one task: to unite the entire Hindu society. The RSS is not against anyone. The RSS does not seek popularity, influence, or power."

Speaking on religion, he said, "The eternal nature of religion is always relevant. Religion is the laws by which the universe operates. Not a single speck of dust can be secular. Religion brings happiness to everyone. Religion is applicable in everything we do. Our behaviour changes according to religion, country, and time. Religion tells us that we should live with everyone, not alone." The RSS chief called for environmental responsibility,

AI serves humanity without overdependence: Macron

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday underscored the need for India and France to build sovereign AI capacity and talent, ensuring that AI development serves humanity without overdependence on a few global powers.

In a move to strengthen Indo-French cooperation in healthcare and emerging technologies, Union Health Minister JP Nadda and Macron on Wednesday inaugurated an Indo-French Centre for AI in Health (IF-CAIH) at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi.

"India and France are committed to developing the computing capacity and talent necessary to build our own trusted AI systems, as we cannot rely solely on

technologies created and managed elsewhere," Macron said on the occasion.

Emphasising responsible governance, Macron said, "Artificial intelligence must serve humanity — with strong protection for children, transparency in algorithms to address bias, and a firm commitment to preserving linguistic and cultural diversity — areas where India and France share a common vision."

He also highlighted the transformative potential of ethical AI adoption across sectors, particularly in healthcare, to enhance productivity and accelerate scientific discovery. Macron also interacted with students and encouraged young researchers to pursue innovation-driven solutions in healthcare.

The IF-CAIH is a pioneering initiative aimed at advancing



Union Health Minister JP Nadda with France President Emmanuel Macron at AIIMS on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi

AI-driven research, medical education and clinical innovation to address complex healthcare challenges.

It marks a significant

milestone in India-France collaboration in digital health and reinforces Bharat's vision of becoming a global leader in equitable

and technology-enabled healthcare solutions, an official statement said. The launch coincided with the 'Rencontres Universitaires

Et Scientifiques De Haut Niveau' (RUSH), a series of academic and scientific meetings being held at AIIMS Delhi on February 18-19, coordinated by the French Embassy.

A dedicated session titled 'Indo-French Forum: AI in Brain Health and Global Healthcare' brought together leading scientists, clinicians, policymakers and academic leaders from both countries. The IF-CAIH has been established pursuant to an MoU signed between AIIMS Delhi, Sorbonne University in Paris and the Paris Brain Institute.

The initiative draws academic collaboration from the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi and leading French institutions, promoting interdisciplinary research in AI, brain health and global healthcare systems.

ISKCON playing key role in serving mankind: Shah



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressing the gathering during the 152nd birth anniversary celebrations of Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Ji in Nadia, West Bengal on Wednesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mayapur (WB)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said ISKCON was playing a significant role in carrying the flag of Sanatan Dharma across the world while serving mankind through relief operations during natural calamities, and social welfare initiatives.

Addressing devotees at the ISKCON temple in Mayapur in West Bengal's Nadia district during celebrations marking the 152nd birth anniversary of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, Shah said he had come to the spiritual centre not in his official capacity but as a devotee of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

"Brothers and sisters, you respectfully referred to me as India's home minister, but I have not come here in that capacity. I have come here as a devoted follower of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu," Shah said, adding that he had long wished to visit Mayapur but circumstances had delayed the trip.

The Union minister said the global spread of the ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) movement was the result of the life work of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur and A C Bhaktivedanta Swami

Prabhupada, and credited the organisation with taking spiritual teachings to people across countries and cultures.

Shah said he had witnessed ISKCON's influence across India during his travels as the BJP president and Union minister, noting that copies of the Bhagavad Gita published by the organisation were accessible to people across age groups and professions.

Shah lauded ISKCON's contribution in spreading the message of the Bhagavad Gita across the world.

"Whether schoolchildren, college youth, homemakers or young professionals, ISKCON has inspired people to follow the teachings of the Gita," he said, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi often gifts the Gita to visiting world leaders as its message promotes universal welfare.

"I firmly believe that by 2047, we will build a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) and successfully carry the message of Sanatan Dharma to the world," Shah added.

Highlighting ISKCON's humanitarian outreach, Shah said the organisation's role extended far beyond devotional activities, with its food distribution camps often among the first in disaster-hit areas.

Women at frontlines of climate change in South Asia, says Hillary Clinton

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Mumbai

Women are at the frontlines of climate change in South Asia and there is a focus on getting good solutions on both mitigation and adaptation in this regard, former United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Wednesday.

Speaking at the Mumbai Climate Week, she said that while the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) has a long portfolio of work in renewable energy, the focus has increasingly shifted to adaptation at the local level.

"We are focused on climate, health, and women. Women are at the frontlines of climate change. Most climate refugees are women," she added.

Clinton said that women,



especially here in India, are working outdoors in extreme heat.

"We have been focused on how to get good solutions on both mitigation and adaptation for several years now. We have a long portfolio of work — not just in renewable energy but also on adaptation at the local level," she said at

India's inaugural climate week. "Hopefully, several developments will come out of this inaugural gathering," she added.

According to the Clinton Foundation, the initiative prioritises frontline communities experiencing the worst and most immediate effects of climate change. The Clinton Group Initiative is a program under the foundation that brings together global leaders from business, Government, and non-profit sectors to create "Commitments to Action" — specific, measurable solutions to pressing world challenges.

Mumbai Climate Week, a three-day programme (Feb 17-19), is aimed at finding out climate solutions centred around the Global South region and its economies.

Chouhan directs officials to achieve target of 6 crore Lakhpati Didis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday directed officials to work on a "war footing" to achieve a revised target of creating six crore 'Lakhpati Didis' under the rural livelihoods mission. He also instructed them to prepare a time-bound plan to link 10 crore women with financial inclusion initiatives.

Chairing a review meeting of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana — National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Chouhan expressed satisfaction over the mission's progress but stressed that a focused strategy is required to meet the expanded goals.

He said achieving the target would require expanding bank linkages,



Development," the Minister said, directing officials to work in close coordination with State Governments to ensure the successful attainment of these target.

Chouhan further instructed officials to ensure optimal utilisation of funds. He said that states where performance or spending remains below expectations must be provided with necessary guidance, handholding and encouragement to meet objectives within the stipulated timeframe.

According to the ministry data, the mission has so far facilitated about ₹1.5 lakh crore in bank-linked financial assistance. It has also connected nearly five crore people with financial literacy initiatives and extended insurance coverage to around seven crore beneficiaries.





सत्यमेव जयते
दिल्ली सरकार




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मुख्य अतिथि

श्री विनय कुमार सक्सेना

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श्रीमती रेखा गुप्ता

माननीया मुख्यमंत्री, दिल्ली सरकार

विशिष्ट अतिथि

श्री आशीष सूद

माननीय शहरी विकास मंत्री, दिल्ली सरकार

19 फरवरी 2026 | दोपहर 12:00 बजे

दिल्ली शहरी आश्रय सुधार बोर्ड, दिल्ली सरकार



States Focus

Navy vigilant in protecting India's interests: President

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Visakhapatnam

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday stated that the Indian Navy is vigilant in safeguarding the country's maritime interests and contributes to stability across the wider maritime commerce.

Presiding over the International Fleet Review (IFR) off Visakhapatnam coast aboard an Indian Naval warship in the Bay of Bengal, the President said the Indian Navy is deployed in the region to serve as a credible instrument of deterrence and defence against threats and challenges arising in the sea.

"Indian Navy is vigilant in safeguarding India's maritime interests and is contributing to stability across wider maritime commerce," Murmu said.

Further, she noted that the Indian Navy plays a vital role in promoting goodwill, building bridges of trust, confidence and friendship with navies around the globe.

According to the President, Visakhapatnam, which houses the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) of the Indian Navy, has a glorious maritime past. Today's event



President Droupadi Murmu, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi during the International Fleet Review at Visakhapatnam

underlines the enduring Naval significance of Visakhapatnam, she said.

Expressing happiness over witnessing the impressive fleet of warships and the display by naval personnel from India and friendly navies, Murmu conveyed her compliments to them.

IFR reflects unity, trust and respect among nations for maritime traditions, she said, adding that ships with different flags and sailors from different countries exhibit the spirit of togetherness.

Reflecting on India's relationship with the seas, the President noted that it is deep and enduring, stretching over centuries and called the oceans as pathways of commerce, connection and cultural exchange for India.

People enthusiastically celebrate the festival of 'Bali Jatra' in Cuttack during the week starting on 'Karthik Purnima', she said, underscoring that this festival is an expression of respect to the ancient sailors from what is now Odisha. It celebrates a

tradition of regular sea travel to Southeast Asia for various purposes since the ancient Kalinga empire.

"These travels contributed to the spirit and exchange of trade and goods, ideas and values shaping a shared cultural consciousness across the region," she said.

Further, the President observed that the fleet review takes forward India's fusion of 'Mahasagar', which stands for mutual and historic advancement of security and growth across regions.

GUJARAT PRESENTS ₹4.08 LAKH CORE BUDGET

Gujarat Finance Minister Kanubhai Desai on Wednesday presented a ₹4.08 lakh core Budget for 2026-27 in the Assembly with a focus on tourism promotion, digital governance, regional growth, and creation of sports infrastructure ahead of the 2030 Commonwealth Games.

The Budget, with an estimated surplus of ₹974 crore and no new taxes, continued the 5 per cent tax rebate for electric vehicles. The total outlay increased by ₹37,803 crore or 10.2 per cent to ₹4,08,053 crore over the previous financial year, Desai said. A major highlight of the Budget was the State Government's roadmap to develop Ahmedabad as an "Olympic Ready City" ahead of the 2030 Commonwealth Games, which Gujarat will host. The minister proposed an allocation of ₹1,278 crore for infrastructure related to the upcoming Games. This includes the development of international level sports complexes and stadiums, and strengthening urban transport connectivity around key venues. A total provision of ₹1,331 crore has been made for the sports department. Of this, ₹500 crore has been earmarked for developing Ahmedabad as an "Olympic Ready City" and for the SVP (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) Sports Enclave.

Another ₹165 crore has been allocated for developing sports complexes in various districts. An amount of ₹100 crore each has been proposed for creating Olympic-level infrastructure at Karai and setting up a Para High Performance Centre in Gandhinagar. A further ₹90 crore has been set aside for constructing a world-class hockey stadium.

Odisha sets master plan for Rath Yatra crowd safety

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha Government has prepared a master plan with a focus on crowd management and safety for the annual Rath Yatra in Puri, officials said on Wednesday.

Chief Secretary Anu Garg presided over the second meeting of the Rath Yatra Coordination Committee on Tuesday evening at Lok Seva

Bhawan, they said.

Puri District Collector Dibyajyoti Parida and Puri Superintendent of Police Prateek Singh presented the Rath Yatra Master Plan 2026 at the meeting and sought cooperation of various departments for the mega festival, an official said. "The master plan has been prepared in view of the past experience, particularly the mismanagement in 2025," he said.

Only motive of conducting Special Revision in Assam is to include eligible and exclude ineligible voters: CEC

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar on Wednesday said that the Special Revision (SR) was conducted in Assam with the sole motive of including all eligible and excluding ineligible voters from the electoral rolls. He said that the SR exercise was successful in Assam, with only 500 people from across all districts in the state have submitted appeals for inclusion of their names or exclusion of others.

Addressing a press conference at the end of the 3-day



Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi addressing media on Wednesday

visit to review poll preparedness in Assam, Kumar said the SR was conducted in Assam as it is the only state where the NRC is almost complete.

"According to the law, it is mandatory that electoral rolls revisions are held

before elections, and as such, SIR (special intensive revision) was conducted in 12 states while SR was held in Assam," he said.

Asked about the possibility of holding polls in the State before the Bihu festival from April 13, Kumar said

that it is a very important festival of Assam, and all proposals received during the review meetings with stakeholders will be considered while deciding the poll dates. The full bench of the Commission - the CEC and ECs Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi - were here on a three-day visit to review poll preparedness for the forthcoming Assembly elections. The Commission held meeting with Chief Secretary, DGP, top police officials, nodal officers of the enforcement agencies including Income Tax, Narcotics, Excise, and the Central Armed Police forces.

BJP chief sets target for Assam party workers to secure 50 per cent of votes in every booth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dibrugarh (Assam)

BJP national president Nitin Nabin on Wednesday set a target for party workers in Assam to secure at least 50 per cent of the votes in every booth in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Accusing the Congress of using Assam as a land for "vote bank politics", he said the



Assam CM Himanta Biswa, BJP National President Nitin Nabin, State party President Dilip Saikia and others during a public meeting in Dibrugarh on Wednesday

Opposition party is "restless" as the BJP Government is "throwing Bangladeshi infiltrators out of the country".

Commencing his two-day Assam visit by addressing party workers at a

'Panna Pramukh Sammelan', Nabin set a target for the cadre to pocket at least 50 per cent of the votes in every booth in the upcoming Assembly elections.

"We are here to score a hat-trick victory. But I am not satisfied with just a simple victory. I give you a target — bring 50 per cent votes from all booths. This will sink the Congress boat forever," he added.

The Assam Assembly elections for 126 constituencies are likely to take place in March-April this year.

Presently, the ruling BJP's strength in the Assam Assembly is 64, while its allies AGP has nine MLAs, UPPL has seven and BPF has three members.

In the opposition camp, the Congress has 26 MLAs, AIUDF has 15 members and CPI(M) has one MLA.

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DEMAND NOTICE
Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from Axis Bank Ltd. We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non Performing Asset on the respective dates mentioned hereunder in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued thereunder. Notices on respective dates herein below under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002, calling upon the following borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses and they are also hereby informed by way of public notice about the same.

Name of the Borrower/Address/Co-borrower and Guarantor Name: 1. Baidya Nath Thakur H No.8 Gali No.5, Shakti Vihar, Mihapur Ext, Jaipur, New Delhi- 110044. 2. Mukesh Kumar Thakur H No.8 Gali No.5, Shakti Vihar Mihapur Ext, Jaipur, New Delhi- 110044. **Property Address/Secured Assets:** Residential Flat/Dwelling Unit No-841 On 8th Floor in Tower No.-1 In The '9c-01/1st Avenue' Situated In The Township 'gaur City' At Plot No. Gh-01, Sector-04, Greater Noida, Distt. District Gautam Budh Nagar, (up) And Bounded As Under - East : As Per Title Deed, West: As Per Title Deed, North: As Per Title Deed, South: As Per Title Deed.

NPA Date: 28/10/2024 **Date of Demand Notice:** 03/02/2026 **Loan Amount:** Rs. 42,81,992/-

Outstanding Amt (Rs.) as on Date of Notice: Rs. 32,46,519/- (Rupees Thirty Two Lakh Forty Six Thousand Five Hundred Ninety Nine Only)

Name of the Borrower/Address/Co-borrower and Guarantor Name: 1. Mr. Pankaj Gulati S/o Mr. Yas Gulati AE-33, Ground Floor, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi 110088 Also At- Mr. Pankaj Gulati S/o Mr. Yas Gulati Pali Radia Shop 451-452 Old Laganat Rai Market Delhi 110006 (Applicant) 2. Mrs. Priyanka W/o Late Mr. Pankaj Gulati AE-33, Ground Floor, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi 110088. **Co-Applcants:** 3. Mrs. Veena Gulati W/o Mr. Yas Gulati AE-33, Ground Floor, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi 110088. **Co-Applcants:** **Property Address of Secured Assets:** Residential Builtup Plot Bearing No. 33 in Block-AE, Situated in The Layout Plan, Shalimar Bagh Residential Scheme Presently Known As Shalimar Bagh, Delhi And Bounded As Under - East : As Per Title Deed, West : As Per Title Deed North : As Per Title Deed, South : As Per Title Deed.

NPA Date: 08/02/2026 **Date of Demand Notice:** 09/02/2026 **Loan Amount:** Rs. 4,50,00,000/- (Rs. 1,00,00,00,000/-)

Outstanding Amt (Rs.) as on Date of Notice: Rs. 5,10,68,460.02/- (Rupees Five Crore Ten Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand Four Hundred Sixty and Two Paise Only)

Name of the Borrower/Address/Co-borrower and Guarantor Name: Late Mr. Pramod Bhatnagar Through Its All Legal Heirs 1. Mrs. Priya Bhatnagar (Wife of the Deceased Borrower) W/o Late Mr. Pramod Bhatnagar R/o. House No. 698, Sector-31/32A, Urban Estate, Gurgaon, Haryana- 1220012. Mr. Pranav Bhatnagar (Son of the Deceased Borrower) S/o. Late Mr. Pramod Bhatnagar R/o. House No. 698, Sector-31/32A, Urban Estate, Gurgaon, Haryana- 1220012. **Property Address of Secured Assets:** House No. 698, Sector-31/32A, Urban Estate, Gurgaon, Haryana- 1220012. **East-As Per Title Deed West -As Per Title Deed North -As Per Title Deed South-As Per Title Deed.**

NPA Date: 05/05/2025 **Date of Demand Notice:** 03/02/2026 **Loan Amount:** Rs. 71,00,000/-

Outstanding Amt (Rs.) as on Date of Notice: Rs. 96,77,263.95/- (Rupees Sixty Six Lakh Seventy Seven Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Three and Ninety Five Paise Only)

Name of the Borrower/Address/Co-borrower and Guarantor Name: 1. M/s. Jindal Sales Corporation Through Its Prop. Mr. Anil Jindal S/o Mr. Rajendra Jindal Running At- Old Rohatk Road, Near Gokul Nagar, Mission Chowk, Gur Mandi, Distt- Sonapat-131001 Haryana. 2. Mr. Anil Jindal S/o Mr. Rajendra Jindal R/o H.No- 5/30, Ward No-23, Gur Mandi, Post Office Wali Gali, Aggarshah Nagar, Distt- Sonapat-131001 Haryana. 3. Mrs. Shikha Jindal W/o Mr. Anil Jindal R/o H.No- 5/30, Ward No-23, Gur Mandi, Post Office Wali Gali, Aggarshah Nagar, Distt- Sonapat-131001 Haryana. **Property Address of Secured Assets:** All the piece and parcel Non-Agri Property Measuring 320 Sq. Yds., 439/27258 Share Out of 19 Bigha 16 Biswa Comprised in Khevat No- 13/1/1 MIN, Khata No- 15, total 6 Killa Situated At - Waka - Rajiv Colony, Behind Roshak Sonapat Road, Distt- Sonapat Haryana Owned by Mrs. Shikha vide Sale deed No- 8076 Dated- 30-NOV-2015. Boundaries- North: Property of Others; South: Colony of Sanjay East: Property Dpts. West: Road 2. All the piece and parcel of Non-Agri Property Measuring 526.5 Sq. Yds., 21/286 Share Out of 7 Bigha 3 Biswa Comprised in Khevat No- 623, Khata No- 705, Khazra No- 2605-7-3 Situated at- Waka Rakha Mouja Sonapat Patti Musalman, Within M.C limits Vikas Nagar, Atal Narsan, Behind Murthal Road, Distt- Sonapat Haryana Owned by Mrs. Shikha vide sale deed No- 5718 Dated- 31-AUG-2018. Boundaries- North: As Per Deed South: As Per Deed East: As Per Deed West: All the piece and parcel of Commercial Shop 32 Sq. Yds., Situated at- Waka Aggarshah Nagar, Within M.C Limits, Behind Roshak Sonapat Road, Distt- Sonapat Haryana Owned by Mrs. Shikha vide Sale deed No- 7548 Dated- 16-OCT-2015 and as bounded as under: North: Shop of Krishna South: Shop of Ram Singh East: Road West: Road

NPA Date: 01/12/2025 **Date of Demand Notice:** 05/02/2026 **Loan Amount:** Rs. 3,00,00,000/-

Outstanding Amt (Rs.) as on Date of Notice: Rs. 3,06,17,181.88/- (Rupees Three Crore Six Lakh Seventeen Thousand One Hundred Eighty One and Eighty Eight Paise Only)

Name of the Borrower/Address/Co-borrower and Guarantor Name: 1. Mr. Anand K. Vatsal, 2/2nd Floor, Gujarat Vihar Near Preet Vihar Metro Stations, New Delhi-110092 Also At: Mr. Anand K. Vatsal B-101, Sector-63 Noida, UP-201301 Also At: Mr. Anand K. Vatsal H No 139, Chola Akhara Brahmapur Jaipur-302002 Also At: Apt. No-22-Europa-Associate Ltd Celeste Tower-Plot No-D-003, Sec-44 Noida, UP-201301 (Applicant) 2. M/s. Oriflex Pvt Ltd. B-101, Sector-63 Noida, UP-201301 (Co-Applicant) **Property Address of Secured Assets:** All that of Apt. No-22, Europa-Associate Ltd., Celeste Tower, Plot No-D-003, Sec-44, Noida, UP-201301 and bounded as under- East: As per Site Plan, West: As per Site Plan, North: As per Site Plan, South: As per Site Plan.

NPA Date: 17/09/2014 **Date of Demand Notice:** 06/02/2026 **Loan Amount:** Rs. 3,83,25,874/-

Outstanding Amt (Rs.) as on Date of Notice: Rs. 9,23,06,032/- (Rupees Nine Crore Twenty Three Lakh Six Thousand Thirty Two Nine Only)

In the circumstances as aforesaid, the notice is hereby given to the above borrowers, co-borrowers and/or their guarantors (where ever applicable) to pay the outstanding dues as mentioned above along with future interest and applicable charges within 60 days from the date of the publication of this notice failing which further steps will be taken after the expiry of 60 days of the date of this notice against the secured assets including taking possession of the secured assets of the borrowers and the mortgagors under Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and the applicable rules thereunder. Kind attention is invited to provisions of sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act where under you can tender the entire amount of outstanding dues together with all costs, charges and expenses incurred by the Bank only till the date of publication of the notice for sale of the secured asset(s) by public auction, by inviting quotations, tender from public or by private treaty. Please also note that if the entire amount of outstanding dues together with the costs, charges and expenses incurred by the Bank is not tendered before publication of notice for sale of the secured assets by public auction, by inviting quotations, tender from public or by private treaty, you may not be entitled to redeem the secured asset(s) Please note that under Section 13 (13) of the said Act, No Borrower shall, transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of his secured assets referred to in the notice, without prior written consent of the secured creditor.

Place: Noida U.P. Date: 19.02.2026 -SD/- Authorized Officer, Axis Bank Ltd.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mr. Naresh Kumar Bhatia to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Babli W/o Mr. Naresh Bhatia is purchasing the Flat No. E-01, 04th Floor, Alans Apartment, built on Plot area measuring 48 sq. yds, Khazra No.80 & 81, Village Sarfabad, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh from Mohd. Hisban Khan who became owner vide Sale Deed dated 07-04-2015 (Doc. No.1870) and same will be financed & mortgaged by Muthoot Housing Finance Co. Ltd., Noida. That Original Sale Deed executed by Mr. Kamal Kumar Agarwal and Mr. Deepak Kumar in favour of Mohd. Hisban Khan, vide Document No.170, Book No.1, Volume No.4596, pages 287 to 310, dated 07-04-2015 SRO/ Noida has lost. So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, liens etc. Legal U/P- 8-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector 2 Noida, UP-201301>Contact:0120-4269373

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mr. Vijender to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Raj Kumari W/o Mr. Vijender is the owner of Plot measuring 100 Sq. Yds., Khazra No.12/2Min, Village Daudhara, Loni, Ghaziabad and same will be financed & mortgaged by Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd., Noida. That Mr. Laxman was the owner of the said property through Sale Deed dated 07.12.2015 (Doc. No.7714), thereafter Mr. Laxman died on 27.02.2023. Further, (1) Mrs. Vimala W/o Late Mr. Laxman, (2) Mr. Prabal Pratap S/o Late Mr. Laxman, (3) Mrs. Gayatri W/o Late Mr. Laxman, (4) Deepa (Age 12 Years) (D/o Late Mr. Pawan Singh), (5) Shyam Singh (Age 11 Years) S/o Late Mr. Pawan Singh, (6) Shiva (Age 09 Years) S/o Late Mr. Pawan Singh through their natural guardian mother Mrs. Gayatri sold out the said property to Mrs. Raj Kumari vide Sale Deed dated 30.09.2024 (Doc. No.12136). So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, liens etc. Legal U/P- 8-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector 2 Noida, UP-201301>Contact:0120-4269373

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, J.C-775492X Sub Gajananand Gupta R/o-Vill- Jojobera, PO-Rahargora, Dist- East Singhbhum, Jharkhand-831016, have changed my name from Gajananand Gupta to Gaja Nand Gupta, vide affidavit dated 18/02/2026 before SDM Delhi Cantt. PD(531)C

I, Rani N, Mother of No.14852974L Sep Karthikeyan N, R/o- Street-Munceepariyannan, PO/Teh/Dist- Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu- 635001, have changed my daughter's name from K Kaviya to Kaviya K, vide affidavit dated 18/02/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(535)C

I, Rani N, Mother of No.14852974L Sep Karthikeyan N, R/o- Street-Munceepariyannan, PO/Teh/Dist- Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu- 635001, have changed my son's name from K Vishal to Vishal K, vide affidavit dated 18/02/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(536)C

I, Radhakanta Das, Father of No.14642968A CHM Badal Kumar Das, R/o- Vill- Sitibinda, PO- Saharda, PS- Pingla, Dist- Paschim Medinipur, W.B.-721131, have changed my name from Radhakanta Das to Lakshmikanta Das, vide affidavit dated 18/02/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(537)C

I, Surbhi Malhotra D/o- Rakesh Malhotra W/o- Karan Kapoor, R/o- D-1/C 84 A, Janak Puri, West Delhi, Delhi- 110058, have changed my name from Surbhi Malhotra to Surbhi Kapoor for all purposes. PD(538)C

I, Km Jyoti Devi W/o Vishal, R/o S-4/48 Old Mahavir Nagar, Tilak Nagar, Delhi-110018 have changed my name to Jyoti. PD(539)C

PUBLIC NOTICE
Tarun Kapoor s/o Late P.L. Kapoor and Mrs. Ramni Kapoor wife Sh. Tarun Kapoor declare themselves as joint co-owners & in possession of Flat No. 5D-22, SFS, Tower Apts., Patimpura, Delhi-110024 with Sector Garage vide Sale Deed No. 11367 dated 31.08.2001 SRO V/Delhi. They lost their Original Allotment Cum Demand Letter dated 06.1985 favoring Rita Mahajan regarding above said property and if any person/ entity in written within 15 days to Sh. Manohar Lal Advocate, B-61 Upper G.F., Rishi Nagar, Delhi-110024, No. 9415/80702. Thereafter any kind of claims or objections shall be Null and Void.

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Mr. Manu Narang & Ms. Mona Narang are the owners of the Basement & Ground Floor 'said floors' of property, No-1315 land area measuring 63.63 sq. mtrs., Lalpat Nagar-I, New Delhi-110024 through Sale deed dated 14-12-2023 doc. No. 2023/91/7656 executed by Shri Sunil Tandon & Shri Rakesh Tandon favour of Mr. Manu Narang & Ms. Mona Narang. Mr. Manu Narang & Ms. Mona Narang are in the process of mortgaging the said floors with HDFC Bank Ltd. Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 7-days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 7-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client.

Public Notice
This is to inform to all concern that Smt. Naseem Taj W/o Late Mr. Babu Ahmed R/o B-30, Sector-14, Noida (U.P) who is the original owner of Residential Plot No. 30, Block-B, Sector-14, Noida(U.P) Smt. Naseem Taj expired on 19.12.2020. The Will was executed in favour of his Grandson Mr. Faraan Ahmed S/o Late Faraan Ahmed R/o B-30, Sector-14, Noida (U.P), which is registered in Sub Registrar Sadar-I Gautam Budh Nagar, Gali No. 3, Jit No.1913, Page 175-188 & Serial No. 2231, dated 10.12.2019. So it is informed to all concern that the said Property Plot No.30, Block-B, Sector-14, Noida (U.P) is going to be transferred in favour of Mr. Faraan Ahmed S/o Late Faraan Ahmed R/o B-30, Sector-14, Noida (U.P). If anyone has/ have any objection he/she may file his/her objection alongwith the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Mr. Faraan Ahmed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Hitting out at the Election Commission, senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday alleged that poll officials were continuing to flout Supreme Court directives by issuing directions to their subordinates through WhatsApp during the SIR exercise in West Bengal.

Sharing purported screenshots of a WhatsApp group chat on X, Banerjee said SC has repeatedly emphasised transparency, due process, and adherence to official channels of communication.

"Yet we are witnessing instructions being circulated over WhatsApp rather than through formal, traceable, and accountable mechanisms," he said.

He also questioned instructions sent by Special

Roll Observer C Murugan directly to micro observers. "Even more disturbing are credible reports of Special Roll Observer, C Murugan, issuing instructions regarding the acceptability of birth certificates directly to Micro Observers in a WhatsApp group, to inflate deletion numbers.

Need I remind the ECI of the Supreme Court's categorical directive that the role of micro-observers must

remain strictly assistive?" he asked. Banerjee, the national general secretary of the party, questioned why the statutory procedure was being "bypassed" and under whose instructions it was being done.

He also alleged that login credentials of roll observers linked to specific districts were being accessed centrally from Kolkata and "misused".

"Login Data is being misused to generate queries and specifically target a certain community at the direction of ECI's political masters in Delhi. Should this matter be independently examined, it will be established that the tower location and IP address of the login device differ from the actual location of the concerned roll observer," he claimed.



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Order Order

ITAT grants relief to Mukul Rohatgi in ₹133 crore income assessment matter



The Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) at Delhi has set aside a revision order passed against Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi, holding that the tax authorities had no material to reopen his income assessment of ₹133.46 crore for Assessment Year 2020-21. The Tribunal allowed Rohatgi's appeal and quashed the Principal Commissioner of Income Tax's (PCIT) revision order, ruling that the power to revise an assessment cannot be used merely to conduct fresh enquiries or take a different view. "...there is no material available with the learned PCIT for revision of assessment order under Section 263 of the Act, which enabled him to form a prima-facie opinion that the assessment order passed by the Assessing Officer is erroneous insofar as it is prejudicial to the interest of the Revenue," the Tribunal held. Rohatgi was assessed under scrutiny for Assessment Year 2020-21 and his income was determined at ₹133,46,92,080 after disallowances of ₹44.77 lakh under Section 24(b) (home loan interest deduction) and ₹40.10 lakh under Section 14A (expenses linked to exempt income).

In March 2025, the Income Tax issued a notice proposing revision of the completed assessment. The revision was based on three broad issues: the tax treatment of capital gains from mutual fund investments, the annual letting value (ALV) declared for multiple properties in India and abroad, and the non-initiation of penalty proceedings for alleged failure to deduct tax at source. Rohatgi was represented by Senior Advocate Sachit Jolly with Advocate Mansha Anand.

SC seeks Mohammad Shami's reply on transfer pleas filed by estranged wife



The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from cricketer Mohammad Shami on pleas filed by his estranged wife seeking transfer of cases, including the one alleging domestic violence, from West Bengal to Delhi. A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Manmohan agreed to hear the two separate transfer petitions filed by Shami's wife.

The top court issued notice to the respondents, including Shami, seeking their responses on the pleas and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

The transfer petitions have been filed in the apex court through advocate Deepak Prakash.

The top court issued notice to Shami on November 7 last year on a separate plea filed by his estranged wife seeking enhancement of the interim maintenance granted to her and their minor daughter.

In that petition, his wife has challenged the two orders passed on July 1 and August 25 last year by the Calcutta High Court. The High Court had enhanced the interim maintenance payable by Shami to ₹1.5 lakh per month for his spouse and ₹2.5 lakh per month for their daughter, while allowing the cricketer to clear the arrears in eight monthly instalments.

In 2018, Shami's wife got an FIR lodged at the Jadavpur police station in Kolkata, alleging domestic violence, which subsequently led to a chargesheet against the cricketer. She later moved a court under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, seeking interim maintenance.

HC asks State why Delhi Commission for Women hasn't been functioning for 2 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Delhi Government to explain why the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has been lying defunct for the last two years.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia observed that DCW performs crucial functions related to safety and legal rights of women, and "there cannot be any reason whatsoever for not filling up the vacancies of members and chairperson" in the Commission.

Court directed the Delhi Government's Standing Counsel,



Sameer Vashisht, to obtain instructions on the matter.

"Let instructions be sought by the counsel appearing for GNCTD Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi as to what steps have been taken by the authorities concerned to fill up the vacancies and what steps are being taken to ensure that the commission does not close down," the Court ordered.

The matter will be heard next after two weeks.

The High Court was dealing with a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) Member of Parliament (MP) Sudhakar Singh.



SC to list final hearing on pleas challenging Places of Worship Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to list for final hearing the pleas challenging the validity of certain provisions of a 1991 law which prohibit filing of a lawsuit to reclaim a place of worship or seek a change in its character from what prevailed on August 15, 1947. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was urged by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for PIL petitioner Ashwini Upadhyay, that the final hearing be accorded as the questions were framed way back on October 12, 2022.

The senior lawyer said the Centre, which was asked to file its response to the plea by October 31, 2022, is yet to submit its response. "We will fix a date for the final hearing," the CJ said, adding that there are two nine-judge bench matters already fixed in March and April. "Let us see. We will finalise the hearing dates after the 9-judges bench case," the CJ said.

The top court, meanwhile, refused to consider a submission that a civil court at Rajasthan be restrained from passing effective orders in the Ajmer dargah case. "If they pass such orders we will see what's to be done. We have passed an order and



that is binding on all and one. If someone passes an order in defiance of that then we have to examine that and see... Consequences will follow," the CJ said.

The bench, however, said that if notices are issued and replies are sought then there was no need to interfere with procedural orders. On December 12, 2024, the top court restrained till further directions the courts in the country from entertaining fresh lawsuits and passing any effective interim or final orders in pending ones seeking to reclaim religious places, especially mosques and dargahs.

On October 12, 2022, the top court asked the Centre to furnish by October 31 its affidavit in response to petitions challenging the validity of certain provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

It was hearing the pleas, including the one filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay who has said sections 2, 3, 4 of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 be set aside on grounds including that these provisions take away the right of judicial remedy to reclaim a place of worship of any person or a religious group.

While former Rajya Sabha member Subramanian Swamy wanted the apex court to "read down" certain provisions to enable Hindus to stake claim over mosques at Gyanvapi in Varanasi and Mathura respectively, Upadhyay claimed the entire statute was unconstitutional and hence no question of reading down arises.

The doctrine of reading down a law is generally used to save a statute from being struck down on account of its unconstitutionality. On the

other hand, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, represented by advocate Ejaz Maqbool, had referred to the five-judge Constitution bench judgement in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title case and said the 1991 law has been referred to there and it cannot be set aside now.

The top court had on March 12, 2021 sought the Centre's response to the plea filed by Upadhyay challenging the validity of certain provisions of the law which provide for maintaining the status quo concerning the ownership and the character of religious places as prevailing on August 15, 1947.

The petition alleged that the 1991 law creates an "arbitrary and irrational retrospective cut-off date" of August 15, 1947 for maintaining the character of the places of worship or pilgrimage against encroachment done by "fundamentalist-barbaric invaders and law-breakers".

The 1991 provision is an Act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947 for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The law had made only one exception — on the dispute pertaining to the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri masjid in Ayodhya.

SC asks Uttarakhand HC to decide plea of aviation firm on helipad issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Uttarakhand High Court to expeditiously decide two separate pleas by aviation firm Deccan Charters Pvt Ltd against repeated temporary acquisition of its private helipad at the Govind Ghat by the State Government.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi asked the Registrar General of the state High Court at Nainital to take instruction from the chief justice and list the two pending pleas of the aviation firm before a bench there in the week commencing March 9, 2026.

The bench asked the High Court bench, which will be dealing with the pleas, to decide the petitions within two months. Taking note of the upcoming 'chardham yatra' in the state, it said if the pleas are not decided within



the stipulated time period then the aviation firm can approach the top court seeking revival of the plea here. Deccan Charters Pvt Ltd, in its plea filed through lawyer Smarhar Singh, described the repeated taking over of its private helipad by the state Government as "illegal, unabated, and unconstitutional".

The petition accused the state Government of bypassing due process to hand over the functional helipad to a competitor, Pawan Hans Limited,

while the High Court allegedly failed to adjudicate on the matter despite multiple urgent pleas. Deccan Charters has operated helicopter shuttle services for the Shri Hemkund Sahibji Yatra since 2011.

The company holds a valid lease for the Govind Ghat helipad in Chamoli District until March 2027. However, the company alleges that since May 2024, the State administration has engaged in a pattern of "forceful takeovers" under the guise of temporary acquisition for the Yatra season.

Bombay HC chides Navy for 'sleeping' over construction of high-rise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday rebuked naval authorities for not taking timely action over the construction of a high-rise building near INS Shikra, the Navy's premier air station in south Mumbai, and asked them to be more alert.

A bench of Justices Ravindra Ghuge and Abhay Mantri was hearing a petition filed by the Commanding Officer of INS Shikra against the construction of the building which is proposed to be 23-storey high.

"Were you sleeping all this time," the court said, asking why the construction — which according to the Navy began in 2021 — was allowed in the first place.

On Monday, the court had temporarily halted the construction activity citing urgent security concerns ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the



city. On Wednesday, advocate RV Govilkar, representing the petitioner, said construction up to 53.07 metres was permitted in the area. The bench said while it was aware of the security concerns, it could pass an interim order allowing construction up to this height, and posted the matter for further hearing on Friday. The HC, however, noted that the naval authorities should have been more alert. "Were you sleeping all

this time.... Navy should have been more diligent. You should have regularly scouted the area near the air station to ensure that such constructions do not come up," Justice Ghuge said.

Installations such as naval air stations are of paramount importance for the country's security, the HC said, adding, "These are defence forces. Because of them we are alive. We will not take security issues lightly."

Fill vacant posts in DCPCR by mid-April: HC tells Delhi Government

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday reprimanded the Delhi Government for "attempting to justify" the delay of over two and a half years in appointing the chairperson and members in the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) and said the matter would be "viewed seriously" if the vacant posts are not filled by the second week of April.

"Since July 2023 till February 2026, you are taking time and then you are justifying that it is essential for maintaining

transparency in the process of selection... More than one year time has elapsed, and you are trying to justify it," remarked a bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia.

Asking the Delhi Government to "re-think", the bench observed that it was at a "complete loss of words" on the authorities' failure to ensure that the commission remained functional after 2023.

The Delhi Government filed an affidavit to state that the process of appointment of the chairperson and members was likely to be concluded by the second week of April, and



the delay was essential to ensure transparency and selection of the most suitable candidate.

The Government counsel assured the court that the matter was "progressing" and

April second week was the "outer limit". "This simply shows your attitude... Keep on progressing at snail's pace. Scrap the (DCPCR) Act," the court remarked. Mulling taking "harsher action" in the

matter, the court asked how the authorities were taking around three years for finalizing a "simple appointment".

"An attempt has been made to justify the delay in filling up the vacancies. The vacancies occurred way back in July 2023 and even after the expiry of two years and seven months, vacancies have not been filled yet. If such a long period of time is essential to maintain transparency and fairness and to ensure that most suitable candidates are appointed, in our opinion, the state Government will have to re-think," said the court. "We caution that in case the process is not com-

pleted, as stated by the GNCTD, the matter will be viewed seriously. We hope and expect that the statement made in the affidavit shall be honoured and the process shall be completed by the second week of April 2026. List on the third Wednesday of April," the court stated.

The court said the delay in appointment belied the legislative mandate.

The counsel appearing for one of the petitioners highlighted that DCPCR was also entrusted with the task of monitoring the implementation of the POCSSO Act and the Juvenile Justice Act.

MP HC denies bail to doctor accused of prescribing Coldrif cough syrup despite warning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh High Court recently denied bail to Dr. Pravin Soni arrested last year for prescribing Coldrif cough syrup that led to the death of several children in Chhindwara district.

In an order passed on Tuesday, Justice Pramod Kumar Agrawal took note of a statement that a senior doctor from Nagpur had warned Dr Soni about similar deaths that had taken place in 1998 due to an adulterated cough syrup. Despite the same, Dr Soni



kept prescribing the cough syrup which led to the loss of 26 lives, the Court said.

"Despite the conversation which took place between the present applicant and

senior doctor Shri Praveen Khapekar wherein Dr Praveen Khapekar informed him that in 1998 at Delhi, due to DEG-contaminated cough syrup, 33 children were died and maybe this time also, there is possibility of same reaction, even then the applicant continued to prescribe the cough syrup, due to which, more than 26 innocent children below the age of 4-5 years have died," the Court said, adding that the cough syrup caused harm to the public health and that Soni had received commission for prescribing it.



Editor's TAKE

Minor drivers, major damage

Underage driving is among the gravest scourges of the digital age, now compounded by an ever-growing obsession with feeding social media

Incidents in the past few days, one in Delhi and another in Mumbai, have cost two lives thanks to rash and negligent driving by minors. The incident in Delhi is even more shocking as it appears that the driver of the vehicle in question was posting content onto social media of his rash driving that killed Sahil Dhanesha.

All over social media platforms, especially Meta's Instagram, short-form videos of youth indulging in rash driving are rampant. Tragically, not only have shooting these videos cost the lives of other road users, in multiple cases across India those shooting the videos inside the cars have paid with their own lives.

Underage and drunken driving are bad enough; however, those are unlikely to go away anytime soon. However, rash driving for the sake of social media is a problem that can be fixed very quickly.

Just as the Government has issued instructions to social media platforms to remove fake content generated by Artificial Intelligence, they can issue directions to remove content that displays bad driving and stunt biking.

In fact, social media platforms can easily use Artificial Intelligence to remove such content quickly.

The unwillingness of social media platforms to address this issue has led to riskier and riskier content being produced on Indian roads, often by people who should know better, such as bureaucrats, journalists, and politicians. Several automotive content producers regularly showcase content where 0-100 speed tests are conducted on public city roads.

Bureaucrats and politicians, as well as their children, flaunt their connections and are a menace on the roads.

This leads to cases where innocent victims like Sahil Dhanesha, as well as Aneesh Awadhiya and Ashwini Koshta, who were mowed down in Pune before him, will never get justice.

If you are old enough to take the wheel of a vehicle and that vehicle is involved in an accident, you should be old enough to suffer the consequences of that accident. It could well be that the accident is not the fault of the driver of the vehicle, but this has to be decided through an investigation; one should not be allowed to get away on the basis of being a 'minor'.

Additionally, if social media platforms are reluctant to remove content that showcases rash and dangerous driving that endangers the poster and other road users as well, the Government has to intervene. Some police forces have cracked down on so-called influencers by seizing the vehicles involved in such videos, but that is just a drop in the ocean. There needs to be an urgent strategy to deal with this.

Pak Indus playbook at UN, India's moment to respond

The IWT, signed in 1960 after years of negotiation, was a practical arrangement meant to keep hostility away from river management so both countries could use water for development



UTTAM KUMAR SINHA

At a Pakistan-hosted Arria-Formula meeting of the United Nations Security Council on 31 January, Pakistan's Permanent Representative Asim Iftikhar Ahmad argued that India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) is "not merely a bilateral concern" but a "test case for the international system". If a binding treaty governing shared natural resources can be set aside unilaterally, he warned, then no agreement anywhere is safe from politics.

It was a carefully timed intervention ahead of the UK and US presidencies of the Security Council, intended to pull the IWT out of its bilateral and technical setting and recast it as a question of global treaty sanctity and moral indictment. By this logic, India appears to be weakening the rules-based international order.

The strategy has deep historical roots. In 1952, Pakistan's first foreign minister, Zafullah Khan, stood before the Security Council and accused India of repeatedly "turning off" the waters flowing into Pakistan. His words were emotive by design. In a land where every drop revived "parched earth" and sustained human life, he said, India's conduct was "most callous". A question of river regulation was reframed as a humanitarian outrage caused by an upper riparian.

Five years later, in October 1957, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then a young minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet and part of Pakistan's UN delegation, advanced the argument during debates in the General Assembly on defining aggression. Any definition, Bhutto insisted, must include "economic or indirect aggression" if a lower riparian was deprived of its natural river rights. Interference with irrigation waters, he warned, could bring Pakistan to "total annihilation".

Across decades, the vocabulary evolves but the design holds. Zafullah framed water as humanitarian injury. Bhutto framed it as economic aggression. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad now frames it as a threat to the global treaty system. The objective never changes, to brand India as an upper riparian that can turn water into a weapon. The flaw in this narrative, then and now, is that it treats treaties as sacred texts detached from the conduct of the parties bound by them.

The IWT, signed in 1960 after years of negotiation, was a practical arrangement meant to keep hostility away from river management so both countries could use water for development. Peace did not follow between India and Pakistan, yet the treaty survived the wars of 1965, 1971 and 1999, prolonged tension, and cross-border terrorism



because it relied on restraint and good-faith implementation.

That foundation has eroded.

Over the years, Pakistan has used the treaty's dispute resolution provisions less for clarification than for delay. Every Indian hydroelectric project permitted under the treaty has been contested. Neutral experts, courts of arbitration, and procedural appeals have been activated in parallel and sequence, turning what was meant to be a technical process into a rolling legal contest. This is the context Pakistan will obscure at the UN, and India must ensure it is brought squarely into the discussion.

Treaties do not exist in isolation.

They operate within a broader environment of political conduct. For decades, India upheld the treaty despite provocation and cross-border terrorism. The expectation that one side must show permanent restraint cannot endure indefinitely. Treaty sanctity cannot mean that one party can freeze the rights of another through constant legal activation and then claim moral high ground in global forums.

This is where Pakistan's historical messaging and present tactics converge. By raising water at the UN across generations, Pakistan has cultivated a diplomatic memory in which India appears as a potential water aggressor. That memory is now being activated at a moment when India has questioned the misuse of treaty mechanisms after the Pulwama terror attack by suspending routine cooperation such as hydrological data sharing and participation in arbitral processes. Pakistan portrays this as treaty abandonment. India must insist that this is a dispute about how the treaty is being used, not whether it should exist. The distinction matters. If

Pakistan's framing prevails, it creates a troubling precedent. Any state could immobilise another's treaty rights by constantly triggering legal procedures and then appealing to international opinion when resistance follows.

Pakistan is also attempting to bring the World Bank back into the conversation. As the original broker of the Indus negotiations, the Bank occupies a unique place in the treaty's history. With Ajay Banga now heading the institution and simultaneously part of President Donald Trump's advisory "Board of Peace", new diplomatic channels open up that Pakistan will seek to leverage.

The aim is the same as in 1952 and 1957, to widen the discussion beyond the bilateral framework. India cannot afford to treat these moves as isolated episodes. They form part of a long, consistent strategy accompanied by a record of cross-border terrorism that has steadily eroded the trust on which the treaty functioned. India's response at the UN and other international platforms must be firm, factual, and historically aware. It must remind the world that the treaty survived wars because India honoured it. It must underline that the present strain arises from the gradual breakdown of cooperative conduct, not from any sudden departure by India.

River treaties can anchor peace, but their stability is not the responsibility of the upper riparian alone. It rests equally on the conduct of the lower riparian. Nearly three quarters of a century after Zafullah first raised water in the Security Council, and after Bhutto cast it as aggression, Pakistan is repeating the same script in updated language. India now needs a diplomatic script of its own, one that recognises this continuity and answers it with clarity, context, and confidence.

IN 1952, PAKISTAN'S FIRST FOREIGN MINISTER, ZAFULLAH KHAN, STOOD BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND ACCUSED INDIA OF REPEATEDLY "TURNING OFF" THE WATERS FLOWING INTO PAKISTAN

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PICTALK



Tourists walk through a snow-covered area with hanging icicles in Doodhpathri, a tourist destination in Budgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

PHOTO: PTI

The vanishing 'We' in today's modern workplace



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

2ND OPINION

"Team spirit." "Unity." "Together we rise."

We grew up hearing these words in school assemblies and playgrounds. We were taught that victories are sweeter when shared and that strength multiplies when people stand together. Then we stepped into the workplace — and somewhere along the way, the meaning shifted.

Today, collaboration often feels like quiet competition. Every individual is guarding their visibility. Every success is framed as a personal achievement. The idea of "we" is slowly dissolving into "me." And caught in the middle of this shift is the millennial generation.

We were raised in a world that valued hierarchy, loyalty, and patience. We were told to stay committed, earn credibility slowly, and grow within organisations.

But we now work in an ecosystem that rewards speed, disruption, and rapid adaptability. On one side stand seasoned leaders who built their careers through endurance. On the other, Gen Z professionals — confident, digitally native, and unafraid to question structures. Neither side is wrong. Yet, the friction is undeniable.

Increasingly, professionals in their late 30s and early 40s find themselves quietly displaced. Younger hires are faster with new tools, more flexible with change, and often more cost-efficient. Experience is being measured against agility. Depth against digital fluency. The real question is not why companies hire younger talent. That is strategic. The question is why we are replacing instead of integrating.

When experience is dismissed as outdated and enthusiasm is seen as impulsive, team spirit erodes. Knowledge becomes guarded. Mentorship feels threatening. And collaboration weakens. The greatest casualty is institutional wisdom.

A strong workplace does not choose between generations — it blends them. The experienced professional brings perspective shaped by market cycles and crises survived. The younger employee brings innovation, energy, and technological ease. Stability and momentum are not opposites; they are complements.

Yet many organisations unknowingly create silos. Millennials often carry the burden of accountability without authority — expected to mentor, execute, adapt, and prove their relevance simultaneously. They become the bridge that no one notices until it begins to crack.

So how do we rebuild team spirit? First, move from replacement thinking to integration thinking. Structured mentorship — including reverse mentoring — allows wisdom and innovation to coexist. Second, redefine recognition. Reward collaborative milestones, not just individual heroics. Culture

follows what leadership celebrates. Third, build psychological safety. True unity cannot grow in environments driven by silent competition or fear. It grows where dialogue is open and credit is shared.

Team spirit is not a slogan printed on office walls. It is visible in everyday behaviour - in shared victories, in constructive disagreements, and in leaders who value contribution over age. The millennial generation does not seek sympathy. It seeks inclusion.

Because if the bridge collapses, the two shores may stand strong — but they will never truly connect.

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

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CRICKET CAPTAINS APPEAL FOR IMRAN KHAN'S MEDICAL CARE

This refers to your news report published today regarding the appeal by former international cricket captains expressing concern over the deteriorating health of jailed former Pakistan Prime Minister and cricket legend Imran Khan.

The joint letter, signed by fourteen former captains including India's Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev, represents a rare display of cross-border sporting solidarity. Notably, the appeal also bears the signatures of eminent former captains such as Michael Atherton, Allan Border, Greg Chappell, Ian Chappell, Clive Lloyd, Steve Waugh, and Nasser Hussain, underscoring global concern within the cricketing fraternity.

Recent reports indicate that Khan has allegedly lost nearly 85 per cent of vision in his right

eye while in custody at Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, raising serious humanitarian and medical concerns. The letter urges the Pakistan Government to ensure immediate specialist medical care, humane detention conditions in line with international standards, regular family access, and transparent legal procedures.

Beyond politics, the appeal highlights Khan's enduring stature as the captain who led Pakistan to its historic 1992 World Cup victory and as a democratically elected Prime Minister between 2018 and 2022.

In an era of strained regional relations, this appeal shows how cricket continues to serve as a bridge for dignity and justice.

V REDDY KETHIRI | TELANGANA

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AI summit signals innovation and Leadership

The ongoing AI Impact Summit 2026 held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi showcases India's ability to confront the challenges posed by emerging technologies. Despite traffic disruptions near the venue on Tuesday, the gathering of more than 20 Heads of State, over 60 Ministers, leading technology CEOs, researchers, and innovators reflects the world's growing trust in India's leadership in shaping AI governance. With the theme "People, Planet, Progress", the summit emphasises inclusive technological development. More than 600 start-ups are presenting innovations across healthcare, agriculture, education, and public services. Microsoft has announced a \$50 billion investment in expanding. The Government has also committed to adding 20,000 GPUs to strengthen national AI infrastructure.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance that AI will create jobs rather than eliminate them offers optimism. However, entry-level roles in sectors such as IT, education, healthcare, and manufacturing may decline. Hence, reskilling initiatives remain crucial.

Indian workers must adapt to this evolving technological landscape. Complacency is the greatest barrier to progress.

V JAYARAMAN | CHENNAI

Sustainable urban expansion needed

After decades of neglect in urban planning, experts now recommend developing greenfield satellite cities alongside existing metros. This approach can reduce congestion, manage population pressure, and promote sustainable growth. Cities such as Navi Mumbai, Greater Noida, and Devanahalli demonstrate how integrated planning and infrastructure can create self-sustaining urban centres.

Supported by initiatives like the Urban Challenge Fund, these cities incorporate Metro connectivity, modern utilities, and digital infrastructure. Greenfield planning in Gujarat and Telangana promotes accessible neighbourhoods where workplaces, schools, and healthcare facilities are within a 15-minute commute. Modern infrastructure such as GIS-based utilities, smart waste systems, and fibre-optic networks can be integrated during initial development stages. For instance, Dholera in Gujarat represents a global manufacturing hub designed with high-speed connectivity.

Similarly, proposals to extend Namma Metro to Bidadi and Hoskote highlight the need to balance core city development with expansion. Strategic planning today will determine urban sustainability tomorrow.

CK SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

Bangladesh's changing political landscape

The July Revolution in Bangladesh began as a reservation reform movement but escalated into a mass uprising after the Sheikh Hasina government used force against protesters. Reports suggested secret burials and unidentified victims. Amnesty International described the state response as excessive, resulting in deaths of students, journalists, and civilians. Hasina subsequently fled Dhaka.

In recent parliamentary elections, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party secured 208 seats in the Jatiya Sangsad, while Jamaat-e-Islami won 68. Significantly, three Hindu candidates from the BNP were elected, and Nitai Roy Chowdhury now serves as a Cabinet Minister. Meanwhile, in India, representation of minorities in top leadership remains a subject of debate. BNP leader Humaiun Kobir remarked that Bangladeshis perceive rising intolerance in India. While this claim may be contested, it must be viewed alongside UN Human Rights data documenting 3,679 attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh between 2013 and 2021. Prime Minister Rahman's assurance that attacks against minorities will not be tolerated is encouraging and offers an important reminder of shared regional responsibilities.

HARIDASAN RAJAN | KERALA



India's rise and the echoes of colonial mindset

Trump-Rahul parallel isn't just about personalities. One represents the waning arrogance of a unipolar world, while the other embodies a dynasty still battling to define its place in a post-dynastic India. Standing between them is a nation ever more self-assured, vibrant, and eager to shape its own destiny

FIRST Column



BALBIR PUNJ



recognise the structural shift underway. Those unable to process this transformation fall back on two responses: external moralising or internal delegitimisation. Trump's comments belong to the former; Rahul Gandhi's interventions increasingly to the latter. Both reflect difficulty in accepting that India's choices need not mirror Western expectations, the old Nehruvian template, or dynastic validation.

The contrast in political culture is instructive. Recall June 2022. When the Enforcement Directorate summoned Rahul Gandhi for questioning in the National Herald case, what ought to have been treated as a routine legal process was converted into a spectacle of political victimhood. Senior Congress leaders, accompanied by hundreds of party workers, poured onto the streets in an orchestrated protest. The message was unmistakable: institutions are legitimate only when they conform to the expectations of a political dynasty.

This episode invites comparison with March 27, 2010, when the Supreme Court-mandated Special Investigation Team interrogated the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, in connection with the 2002 riots. There were no street demonstrations, no mobilisation of crowds, and no claims of institutional vendetta. Modi appeared before investigators as a citizen subject to the rule of law. After hours of questioning and a prolonged judicial process, the SIT granted him a clean chit in 2012—a conclusion that withstood repeated legal challenges until the Supreme Court finally affirmed closure on June 24, 2022.

India's rise is not merely economic; it is psychological. A civilisation once told to doubt itself has begun to rediscover continuity between its past and its future. That shift unsettles global hierarchies and domestic elites alike. The reflex to caricature this resurrection as majoritarianism or authoritarianism reveals more about the anxiety of critics than the reality of India.

Ultimately, the Trump-Rahul parallel isn't just about personalities. One represents the waning arrogance of a unipolar world, while the other embodies a dynasty still battling to define its place in a post-dynastic India. Standing between them is a nation ever more self-assured, vibrant, and eager to shape its own destiny.

History often surprises us with impossible parallels. In today's turbulent geopolitical landscape, two seemingly unrelated figures — US President Donald J Trump and India's Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi — are, in their own ways, responding to a shared seismic shift: the rise of a confident, nationalist India that no longer seeks validation from old power centres, whether at home or abroad.

One individual, rooted in transactional values, speaks from the vantage point of a superpower accustomed to commanding global deference. The other, bearing the entitlement of a political dynasty that once ruled India as its fiefdom, mistook Western approval for diplomacy. Their personalities differ, their vocabularies diverge, yet beneath their words lies a shared unease — with an India that now speaks to itself and the rest of the world with confidence, free of doubts and complexes.

Last year, Trump's remark-dismissing India as a "dead economy" — was not merely an undiplomatic misstep. It betrayed an outdated worldview that measures nations by compliance rather than capability. His advisers sharpened the attack. Peter Navarro's charge that India was acting as a "laundromat for the Kremlin", the insinuation that "Brahmins in India were profiteering from Russian oil purchases", and Howard Lutnick also took a jibe, "India will say sorry in two months", weren't casual observations; they reflected colonial prejudices.

Yet what raises eyebrows is not criticism from abroad. Democracies absorb that. What is troubling is the eagerness with which Rahul Gandhi chose to echo the same dismissive line-calling India a "dead economy" and endorsing Trump's assertion as "facts". On Trump's false claim of brokering an India-Pakistan ceasefire after the gruesome Pahalgam terror attack, Rahul mocked the PM as "Narender-Surrender", despite India's official denial of third-party mediation.

This pattern is not episodic; it is cultural. Rahul Gandhi's politics has increasing-

A CIVILISATION ONCE TOLD TO DOUBT ITSELF HAS BEGUN TO REDISCOVER CONTINUITY BETWEEN ITS PAST AND ITS FUTURE. THAT SHIFT UNSETTLES GLOBAL HIERARCHIES AND DOMESTIC ELITES ALIKE

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ly gravitated towards spectacle over substance. Parliament has often been reduced to a theatre of optics. The recent attempt to quote from General M.M. Naravane's unpublished memoir material, neither in the public domain nor cleared by the Ministry of Defence, was blocked under established House rules. Instead of respecting procedure, the episode became a pretext for disruption.

The symbolism of Rahul's politics is familiar. The 2018 "hug" of the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha followed by a wink to party colleagues-remains emblematic. Civility is welcome; contrived theatrics erode institutional gravitas. The recent episode of publicly grabbing a Union minister's hand to stage a joint media moment follows the same script. Serious politics have been reduced to a theatrical performance.

More troubling than style, however, is substance. During his Sep. 2024 US visit, Rahul Gandhi suggested that Sikhs in India faced existential threats to their religious freedoms. The statement was promptly weaponised by Khalistani separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, who hailed it as validation of his secessionist campaign. Words spoken abroad, especially by a senior Indian leader, do not remain domestic soundbites; they travel into hostile propaganda ecosystems.

This performative impulse was visible

again in the confrontation on Parliament's steps when Rahul Gandhi publicly addressed Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu—a former Congressman — as a "traitor", theatrically extending a handshake while taunting him to "come back". Bittu's sharp retort, calling Rahul a "desh ke dushman", turned the exchange into a viral spectacle.

This rhetorical trajectory stretches back years. Rahul's pattern of impulsive interventions is long-standing. On September 27, 2013, he publicly trashed his own government's ordinance: "It's complete nonsense. It should be torn up and thrown away."

On February 5, 2020, he said unemployed youth would beat the Prime Minister with sticks. On October 6, 2016, he accused Modi of hiding behind soldiers' blood after surgical strikes. At Ramlila Maidan, March 31, 2024, he warned, "If the BJP wins... the whole country will be on fire."

Rahul Gandhi's caste-centric pitch has been overt and repeated. In May 2024, he told youth that a caste census would reveal "where India's wealth lies" and trigger a "new politics". Later in the Lok Sabha, he said, "Those who call themselves Hindu only talk about violence..." He even questioned a journalist's caste-and that of the channel owner-

reducing public discourse to identity labels.

His 2016 visits to JNU and support for Kanhaiya Kumar-arrested on sedition charges-were accompanied by remarks: "The most anti-national people are the people who are suppressing the voice of this institution." Each remark, taken individually, may be dismissed as rhetorical excess. Taken together, they reflect a consistent attempt to delegitimise national institutions to score political points.

The deeper issue is ideological. For decades, the Congress system drew intellectual sustenance from a toxic blend of Communism and colonial narratives that treated Indian identity as something to be diluted, not celebrated, and sovereignty as something to be balanced, not asserted. That era is over. The electorate has, three times since 2014, endorsed leadership that speaks the language of civilisational confidence, welfare delivery, and strategic clarity.

India today is not seeking permission to grow. It is building infrastructure at unprecedented scale, digitising welfare delivery, modernising defence, asserting its voice in multilateral forums, and reviving cultural self-awareness long suppressed under alien narratives. One need not agree with every policy to

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

Reweaving the water fabric via ancient wisdom and modern science



ARVIND KUMAR

Water has never been just a developmental input in India; it has been the civilisational artery around which societies, economies, and cultures have grown for millennia. From the hydraulic brilliance of the Harappan cities to the community-governed tanks of peninsular India and the intricate stepwells of the West, water shaped settlement patterns, food systems, architecture, and social organisation. Yet in contemporary policy discourse, this profound historical relationship has been flattened into a technocratic assessment of scarcity, groundwater stress, and monsoon unpredictability. India is not inherently water-poor. It is becoming water-stressed because of ecological negligence, unsustainable extraction, fragmented governance, and a loss of traditional systems that once ensured resilience.

Climate change has compounded these vulnerabilities, creating a landscape where extreme rainfall, prolonged droughts, and sudden floods coexist within the same season. Rapid urbanisation, industrial discharge, deforestation, and contamination of rivers and aquifers have further weakened natural buffers. Interstate river disputes and the growing geopolitical complexity of shared transboundary rivers reveal that water today is inseparable from national security, economic stability, and human wellbeing. In this context, India must confront a fundamental question: is progress achievable only through modern engineering and technology, or must the country reconnect with its deep reservoir of traditional ecological intelligence? More importantly, how can ancient systems of stewardship be integrated with contemporary scientific and technological capabilities to create a genuinely resilient and sustainable water future?

Ancient India understood water in ways that were spiritually reverent yet technically sophisticated. The Rig Veda described rivers as sources of abundance and life, celebrating them not as commodities but as nurturing forces. The Atharvaveda categorised nine types of water, demonstrating an early understanding that different sources required different methods of conservation. Ritual practices also had embedded scientific logic. The instruction to remove handfuls of soil when entering

a pond ensured continuous desiltation and preserved its storage capacity—a principle modern hydrology now quantifies as essential. Agriculture followed similar ecological intelligence. The Krishna Panchang was a repository of climatic understanding that aligned crop cycles with monsoon rhythms and soil conditions. Rather than rigid prescriptions, these practices formed adaptive frameworks refined over generations.

The Mauryan period institutionalised water governance further. Kautilya's Arthashastra documented irrigation systems and introduced water taxation based on extraction methods and scarcity, making it one of the earliest known uses of economic principles to regulate water use. Medieval India expanded upon this heritage with remarkable decentralised water-harvesting systems. Farmers dug johads and tanks, built khadins to trap rainwater, and developed canal networks that transformed arid regions such as Rajasthan and Haryana into productive agricultural zones.

This sophisticated interplay of ecology, agriculture, and water management began to unravel under colonial rule. The British introduced an extractive approach focused on revenue and engineering rather than community governance. Traditional water bodies declined, wetlands vanished, and decentralised systems were neglected. After independence, large dams became symbols of national progress, delivering irrigation and power but reinforcing a centralised, sectoral approach that further disconnected water management from its ecological and community roots. The Green Revolution secured national food production but undermined biodiversity, encouraged monocultures, and accelerated groundwater depletion. Thousands of indigenous crop varieties disappeared, soil fertility declined, and chemical dependency increased. Today, invasive species occupy vast landscapes and threaten millions of livelihoods, underscoring the ecological consequences of abandoning traditional systems.

Yet traditional knowledge has not disappeared; it remains embedded in communities and landscapes. In recent decades, many regions have revived ancient water systems, demonstrating that nature-based solutions and local stewardship can restore resilience. Ecosystem-based Adaptation has emerged as a framework that integrates biodiversity, ecosystems, and climate resilience with scientific approaches. My research on ecosystem-based watershed development shows that when natural processes and human ingenuity converge, measurable improvements in recharge, soil health, and livelihoods follow. This approach informed my work in the National Wetlands Committee under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management)

Rules, 2017, where linking wetlands to revenue records through GIS mapping strengthened their protection and prevented encroachment.

Modern science and traditional wisdom are not oppositional; they strengthen each other. Combining traditional rainwater harvesting with contemporary drip irrigation ensures efficient capture, storage, and precise application of water. Pairing indigenous crop varieties with scientific agronomy enhances resilience while improving nutrition and reducing farmers' vulnerability. Precision agriculture technologies, including remote sensing and data analytics, can further optimise water and nutrient use, reducing inputs and increasing productivity without sacrificing ecological integrity. Integrated Water Resource Management builds on this by acknowledging that water crosses sectoral and administrative boundaries and requires cooperation across basins, institutions, and communities. This idea aligns closely with the emerging concept of water transversality, which recognises that water interlinks agriculture, energy, environment, public health, and economic growth. Effective governance must therefore integrate ecological health, community participation, hydrological realities, and technological solutions.

India's path forward requires a reorientation of water governance that is ecologically grounded, technologically enabled, and culturally rooted. Water security cannot be separated from ecosystem health, agricultural resilience, or community stewardship. Rather than romanticising the past or relying solely on modern engineering, India must create hybrid systems where traditional practices such as aquifer recharge, tank irrigation, and decentralised governance work alongside remote sensing, data modelling, and advanced infrastructure. The goal is to build adaptive, inclusive, and climate-resilient systems that respond to variability and uncertainty. India stands at a moment where it can reclaim its civilisational water wisdom and align it with scientific innovation. The convergence of ancient insight and modern capability offers a coherent framework for long-term water security, ecosystem stability, and societal wellbeing. In recognising water's transversality across all sectors of development, India can build a future where water becomes not a source of conflict or scarcity but a foundation for resilience, equity, and shared prosperity.

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Peer-to-peer power trading in India: The road ahead



RAJIB MISHRA

The Ministry of Power's proposal to pilot peer-to-peer (P2P) electricity trading under the India Energy Stack (IES) has generated considerable excitement. Often compared to UPI's transformation of digital payments, P2P electricity trading is being projected as a democratising reform that empowers consumers, accelerates rooftop solar adoption, and modernises power markets through digital infrastructure. Yet beneath this optimism lies a more grounded policy reality. Within India's current electricity framework, P2P trading is not a market revolution but a carefully controlled experiment. Unlike liberalised retail electricity markets in parts of Europe or the United States, India operates under a regulated distribution structure. State distribution companies (DISCOMs) hold monopoly responsibility for retail supply, universal service obligations, and recovery of network costs. Retail tariffs are determined by State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs), not discovered through bilateral competition.

Accordingly, the P2P initiative is being positioned as a policy sandbox rather than structural reform. Its immediate objective is not retail competition, but digital validation-testing identity management, smart meter data exchange, interoperable APIs, price discovery tools, billing integration, and settlement systems within a controlled environment.

The pilot focuses primarily on rooftop solar prosumers-residential, commercial, and institutional consumers equipped with smart meters at distribution voltage levels. Participation is limited to small-scale injections within defined geographic boundaries. This design ensures retail tariffs remain unaffected, cross-subsidy mechanisms are preserved, DISCOM revenues are protected, and grid stability risks are minimised during experimentation.

Large generators connected to interstate transmission systems-thermal, hydro, and utility-scale renewables-are excluded. Operating under long-term power purchase agreements or exchange-based mechanisms regulated by CERC, their participation could distort price discovery and complicate balancing frameworks.

Similarly, large industrial consumers using open access are outside the current scope, as their inclusion would introduce complex questions around surcharge applicability, settlement integration, and tariff arbitrage.

The caution here is structural, not technological. India's electricity market depends heavily on cross-subsidy, where industrial and commercial consumers pay higher tariffs to subsidise agricul-

tural and low-income users. If high-paying consumers migrate towards negotiated P2P transactions without robust network usage and surcharge mechanisms, this architecture could weaken. Even limited participation raises a fundamental issue: who bears network costs when selective consumers transact outside traditional tariffs?

DISCOM finances heighten this sensitivity. Many utilities remain financially stressed and reliant on cross-subsidy revenues. Since P2P transactions would still use existing grid infrastructure, fixed costs must be transparently recovered. Otherwise, benefits may accrue to prosumers while network costs remain socialised.

Technical readiness is another constraint. Smart metering-essential for time-stamped settlement-remains uneven despite progress under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme. Reliable communication networks, high-frequency data exchange, and billing integration are prerequisites for scale.

Regulatory clarity is equally critical. India's dual structure-CERC overseeing interstate markets and SERCs handling retail matters-creates potential overlaps. Expanded P2P trading could blur these boundaries, necessitating harmonisation of wheeling charges, surcharges, and accounting norms.

Even rooftop solar economics impose limits. Most residential systems generate modest surpluses during daytime hours, creating thin local markets. After accounting for network and transaction costs, gains over existing net-metering may remain marginal.

However, this does not diminish the initiative's strategic value. P2P trading serves as a proving ground for the India Energy Stack-testing digital public infrastructure for electricity markets, building institutional familiarity with decentralised transactions, and strengthening regulatory capacity. The initiative signals innovation and digital readiness. But expectations must remain calibrated. Without deeper reforms-cost-reflective tariffs, rationalised cross-subsidies, DISCOM financial restructuring, and regulatory harmonisation-P2P trading cannot become a transformative retail model.

Electricity markets are shaped as much by policy and financial realities as by technology. Digital platforms may enable secure transactions, but they cannot substitute structural reform. For now, peer-to-peer electricity trading should be viewed as an experimental overlay on a regulated system-valuable for learning rather than disruption. Its future impact will depend not on software alone, but on regulatory clarity, institutional confidence, and fiscal sustainability.

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Yesterday, the shares prices of oil upstream firms like the state-owned ONGC and Oil India slipped by four per cent. The immediate trigger was a slight slide in global crude oil prices, which dipped by a meagre three cents a barrel, or a mere 0.04 per cent. Now, a 0.04 per cent cannot be equated with a four per cent fall, can it? Yet, there is a logic to the market madness. If crude oil prices go down further, it will impact the upstream segment due to lower revenues per barrel, tighter margins, lower profits, and reduced expense on future and ongoing exploration projects. The first three will affect the quarterly financials, and the last one will impact earnings in the future. In comparison, lower global oil prices benefit the downstream segment, both the refiners and marketers, as their margins and profits get a boost. Hence, there is a business explanation for the fall in share prices.

Yet, as experts admit and explain, the future of global prices is uncertain. There are both positive and negative factors that have emerged, and will influence them. For example, the India-US bilateral trade treaty, which may be signed in March 2026, will depress the prices due to less disruptions, more clarity on India's oil imports, even if the sources need to be changed from Russia to others. Higher quantities of Venezuelan will be available, possibly at huge discounts since it is more difficult to refine, and be comparable to the Russian prices. The US will be more than willing to sell more, as this was one of the prime objectives behind the 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods. Although oil will be more expensive, the global trade will be streamlined. Like any other sector, energy demands predictability. If one is certain who will sell what to whom, prices remain stable despite hiccups.

At the other extreme, the US and Iran, aggressive and bitter rivals, seem to be ready to come to the negotiating table. The Iranian foreign minister said that the two sides have converged on crucial "guiding principles" to resolve the long-standing disputes related to nuclear issues. Although he warned that a final deal is not imminent, the progress signifies a forward movement. This may allow Iran to officially and openly sell oil in the markets, and not surreptitiously via smuggling due to the existing American and western sanctions. The excess supply will depress global oil prices, and impact up-streamers. Some analysts agree that crude oil prices appear to be ready for a 'technical rebound,' but feel that the real action will depend on the Iran-US agreement, which remains distant, with the markets wary about the durability of the diplomatic progress. When it comes to Donald Trump, the US president, things can go northwards and southwards in a jiffy.

Russia seems to be on the wrong side of the oil prices equation, and may suffer if India, one of the main importers, buys more from the US, Venezuela, and other sources. But it still has China in the bag. In addition, the US-Ukraine-Russia talks are on and off, either bilaterally or tri-laterally. But Trump desires to end the war, which will enable Russia to openly enter the market, like Iran, and give up 'shadow trading.' In addition, there is news that crude output from a field in Kazakhstan, which is among the world's largest, rose after a production suspension in January 2026. It may reach full capacity in a few days, and pump more oil in the global market. This will further aid lower prices. In any case, if Russia loses the Indian purchases, until the Ukraine issue is settled, it may release more oil in the black market to make up for the revenues, which will indirectly bring down prices.

Now, let us turn to the bad news. As mentioned earlier, the Iran-US nuclear deal is still work-in-progress, and can take months, even a year or more. In fact, according to some analysts, there are better odds of an American attack and military strikes on Iran. One of the analysts gives this a 65 per cent possibility by the end of April 2026. The odds are high, and may derail any diplomatic progress achieved till now. The Russia-Ukraine war will not end soon. The demands from the Russian side are huge in terms of territories, and Ukraine is unlikely to give in because it will mean political hara-kiri. Moreover, Russia's aims may become more dominant if the western powers get tired, and reduce their support to Ukraine. Indeed, America may take the lead, which will encourage Russia to keep on fighting, and grab more territory. If the war escalates, oil will shoot up, which will benefit Russia.

A recent report by IEA states that the global oil demand is likely to go up in 2026, compared to 2025, with non-OECD nations accounting for the entire increase, and China taking a lead on the country level. However, as a short-term trend, world oil supply "plunged... in January (2026) ... as severe winter weather disrupted North American operations, while outages and export constraints curtailed Kazakh, Russian, and Venezuelan flows." Supply will rebound soon.

More jobs with more headaches

Experts question data; Americans opt for two full time jobs

Whatever one may say, despite the dire and extreme negative predictions, America seems to be on an economic roll. President Donald Trump's radical, wayward, chaotic, confusing, aggressive, tantrum-like, child-like, and up-in-the-sky policies seem to work, at least for the present. The January 2026 jobs report an addition of 1,30,000 jobs, nearly double the estimates, and unemployment down by 0.1 per cent. However, despite the good news, experts continue to question the figures. One is unable to figure whether this is due to deep-rooted resentment against Trump, and his policies, they are unsure about the truth behind the facts, or they cannot digest the president's success.

However, to be fair to the critics, there are a few legitimate reasons to question the January report. First, most of the jobs last month came from one sector, healthcare. According to some experts, this may indicate that this is neither sustainable nor broad-based. One sector skews the overall figures, which can be a temporary trend. The fact remains that Trump came back to power, essentially because voters believe that he can make America great again, not in services and tech, where it is already on a high, but in manufacturing. Adding jobs in healthcare is good, but not what the president promises.

Second, in the recent past, official data and figures have lost credibility, even relevance, as per some analysts. In the case of new jobs, figures are routinely and regularly revised downwards. For example, the labour bureau drastically reduced its earlier data for 2024-25, from an estimated 5,84,000 to a mere and more realistic 1,81,000. This is a decline of more than two-thirds. It is substantial, and it seems unbelievable that the numbers can be so wonky and unstable. It will be neither surprising nor shocking if the January 2026 numbers are scaled down similar-

ly. There is no sanctity to the numbers.

"I would not exhale with today's (January's) job numbers. The job market remains fragile, and highly vulnerable," Moody's chief economist responded on X in a social post. He added if one discounts healthcare, the employment growth is weak. "Yes, payroll employment increased by 1,30,000, but given the big downward revisions in history, there has been no job growth since last April (Liberation Day). Moreover, nearly all the job growth in January, and over the past year, has been in healthcare.... And this is before artificial intelligence has meaningfully impacted productivity growth, and thus jobs...."

Other economists point to technical and statistical anomalies. For example, one of them calls the job figures "implausible" because of a sharp jump in modeled job creation within healthcare businesses opening and closing. In simple words, the official figures use statistical assumptions that tend to overstate the hiring momentum. Thus, they argue that the market can tighten over the next few months. It is too early to celebrate and rejoice over the policies and, as a media report contends, "it may be premature to declare (January) a turning point." One needs to still wait-and-watch how the economy performs.

Such uncertainty lurks beneath the figures and data, and a new story seems to unfold at the ground level. Americans, feel experts, are grappling with multiple job-related issues such as longer work-weeks, shrinking disposable incomes, and a growing number that are engaged in two full-time jobs (not just side hustles to earn a bit more). According to one data, nearly half-a-million Americans hold two jobs, which is the "second-highest figure on record, trailing on December 2025's peak of 4,88,000.

More strikingly, the number has doubled since 2020, and now exceeds the dot-com era high of 4,18,000 recorded in July 2000. This is not a statistical blip. It is a shift. It is gaining momentum.

To put this in perspective, the two-job impetus may have started during the pandemic, as people lost jobs, and those employed saw huge slashes in salaries, increments, and bonuses. Households with lost jobs forced a member to work harder. The same was true for members in homes where the overall incoming salaries dropped by 20-50 per cent. In 1999-2000 during the dot-com boom, people wanted to earn more, and multiply wealth. Hence, they were willing to do two jobs, or do a fulltime job, and work on their start-ups to

seek valuations. Now, consider the broader two-job picture. Mounting pressures push households to seek multiple paychecks, as a single one is not enough to pay for rents, healthcare, utilities, groceries, and education loans for children. By 2024, Americans hiked their shifts, second roles, and crossed the 60-hour work-week threshold. Now, it is time to do two jobs. "What makes the trend more sobering is that it unfolded even as unemployment ticked higher in certain months. Employment exists, but for many it is insufficient. The old benchmark of stability, a single full time job, is quietly eroding," states a recent media report.

According to surveys, the impact on the younger generation is higher. "Income stacking," or a combination of a full-time job with freelance work, contractual job, digital gigs, and part-time shifts, is common among Gen Z. While in an earlier generation, this may indicate ambition, greed, or the desire to join the corporate race, Gen Z is worried about insulation from economic and income shocks. The "younger employees (today) are building parallel income tracks by default. Stability now requires diversification," states a report. What was optional and voluntary earlier is mandatory these days.

Ironic as it may seem, having two full-time and well-paying jobs may seem like economic security. But it may be the opposite if the trigger for it is to somehow maintain a lifestyle, and pay the existing and crucial monthly bills. In such a scenario, the fear of losing one of the jobs, or losing a part of the salary, which is highly possible as workers get sacked across sectors within no time, is high. So are the stress levels, which force the younger cohort to work harder, and longer. It may be a non-stoppable cycle; walk faster to stay where one is.

As a media report states, the new trend of working more "represents a shift in economic survival mechanism, one that is seeing productivity increase, hours increase, and the recovery experience as uneven." Experts agree that one is not sure if these are temporary trends due to instability, disruptions, shocks, and tensions, or mark a genuine shift in the corporate work culture in America. But the work calendar is crowded, with little time for family, comfort, or pleasure. Sadly, AI, which makes us more productive, and lose jobs, may aid this shift.

OUR TAKE



The Tech Wrecker

Big, loud, searching for a point

India still has a huge gap between the phrase, AI, and what it does

India's First AI summit in the Capital opened to a packed audience, as expected, where walking was an obstacle course, as usual, and "where is the right gate?" kinds of questions were as common as "Which AI model are you building?" ones. The chaos, queues, confusion, and overcrowding are, in an ironic manner, a part of the overall AI story in the country, which spills onto social media, and draws criticism. The atmosphere matters because the summit mirrors India's broader AI conversation. There is genuine energy, especially among the youngsters. Yet, there is a widening gap between the phrase, AI, and everyday uses in a sector that can work, scale up quickly, and pay for itself.

The official numbers underline why the event felt like a magnet. There were 2,50,000 registrations, over 600 startups, 70,000 sq m expo spread across 10 arenas, 13 country pavilions, and more than 500 sessions featuring over 3,250 people over a week. It is not a niche tech summit, but a mass gathering around a single magical phrase. A key detail was the simplest: Entry is free. This changed the tenor in the area, as if there were two parallel summits. One is for the techies, policy-makers, start-ups, and sector-specific ecosystem. The other is for the masses.

Of course, there is the "Summit" that uses words such as responsible, and intelligence, and phrases like "People, Planet, Progress." It is the place where India is positioned as a voice for the Global South, and pushes for democratising datasets, compute, models, and non-binding rules. The other one happens in the hallways, open spaces, in restaurants and meeting places, where the chatter is blunt. "Everyone is here because they can be, and need to be," says one of the hundreds of founders, and gestures at a row of booths with the familiar "AI-powered" labels. "But no one is explaining."

AI is everywhere, but mostly the messages, slogans, and phrases sound like a concept pitch rather than a business strategy. A large part of the crowd had no clue about AI, and what it does or solves. Luckily, the social media influencers were not here for the hype; they were mostly middle-aged, and curious to know more, and see fantastical things that look as if they jumped out of Sci-Fi movies. The policy-makers seem to say anything that is politically positive, with a plethora of large figures like "investments worth \$200 billion in two years."

If India's AI story is moving from vision to execution, it is doing so under constraints. Compute is an issue. The IT minister, Ashwini Vaishnav, said that India plans to deploy over 50,000 GPUs in the next six months, and that



the installed base could cross 1,00,000 by the end of the year. He put a number to the current baseline, 38,000 GPUs under the official IndiaAI Mission. The numbers explain the urgency. For startups, "AI" is not a product problem. It is a compute access one. If the numbers do not turn right, we drown deep in the AI sea.

Capital is another problem. The story here is nuanced rather than what the hype suggests. GenAI startup count has expanded rapidly, but the funding depth has not kept pace. According to the latest Economic Survey, they grew from 66 in the first half of 2023, to over 890 in 2025. But cumulative funding rose from \$606 million to \$990 million. In other words, the ecosystem is broadening faster than it is consolidating. That

is why so many demos look polished but a bit early in the day, as if they need to go a long way before hitting the markets.

Even the Government acknowledges the stakes. An official explainer late last year stated that the IndiaAI Mission has an outlay of over ₹10,300 crore over five years, and repeated a widely-cited estimate that AI could add \$1.7 trillion to the economy by 2035. The promise is huge. But the path is still being constructed. An interesting pattern is how quickly the conversation sharpens when healthcare, industrial systems, and enterprise workflows come up. In sessions and conversations, healthcare seems prominent, as it is one of the few domains where the returns logic is easy to articulate, and understand.



Swiss President Parmelin endorses India's drive to democratise AI

MANASH PRATIM BHUYAN
New Delhi

Switzerland fully supports India's efforts to democratise artificial intelligence and welcomes the AI Impact summit's focus to ensure that the potential of critical technologies must benefit every nation, Swiss President Guy Parmelin said on Wednesday.

In an interview to PTI, Parmelin backed cross-border flow of data saying it is crucial to exploit the potential benefits from digital technologies like artificial intelligence but at the same time pitched for a set of principles and rules to protect data sovereignty of nations.

Switzerland is likely to host the next edition of the AI summit. "Switzerland very much welcomes the focus of the AI Impact summit, which is to work towards making sure that everyone in the world can benefit from the

potential of AI, and that no one is left behind," Parmelin said.

"The principles established by the summit in India in this regard provide useful guidance, and the structures for voluntary cooperation established in New Delhi provide structure that can help us achieve this goal," he said.

The Swiss president is among around 20 global leaders attending the ongoing AI Impact summit in New Delhi that is largely being seen as an evolving international goal to strengthen cooperation on the governance, safety, and societal impact of artificial intelligence.

He also addressed concerns over possible impact of AI on developing countries especially on challenges to protect their labour markets from 'AI-driven dumping'.

"When AI significantly reduces production costs in high-wage countries, exports can become so



Swiss President Guy Parmelin

cheap that they put pressure on labour markets in developing countries, even without classic dumping," Parmelin said.

"Such shocks can be mitigated through trade policy. Clear investigation procedures and sunset clauses are important in order to avoid the implementation of

harmful, permanent protection measures," he noted.

The Swiss president, delving into the debate on 'data sovereignty' laws versus the concept of 'free flow of data', pitched for rules that can create fair conditions for all stakeholders in the global AI landscape.

"Switzerland is convinced that international cooperation and the cross-border flow of data are crucial for us all if we want to benefit from the potential that digital technologies like AI offer," he said.

"In order for this to work, we need a set of principles and rules that help us to respect each others' sovereignty and that create the necessary trust and fair conditions for all to participate."

Parmelin said Switzerland is willing to work constructively to build a trustworthy framework for AI.

At the same time, he said AI cannot be "regulated" by one single instrument, but there is a need to develop a governance framework consisting of many instruments covering different aspects of the development and use of AI. "Switzerland is therefore actively contributing to the development of technical standards for

AI, of binding and nonbinding legal instruments, like the recommendations of UNESCO or the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) and the Council of Europe framework convention on AI, which has been elaborated among 55 countries from all around the world and is the first binding international treaty on AI," he said.

"But we also need societal and cultural norms that guide us when using AI in our specific contexts."

The Swiss president said Switzerland "fully share and support India's and other countries' efforts to democratise AI".

"Switzerland has created an initiative to share and pool computing resources across countries and stakeholders that have limited resources in the 'International Computation and AI Network' (ICAIN)."

Just a few months ago, the Swiss AI research community presented the 'apertus' language

model which has been trained in over a thousand languages and will help many cultures with fewer resources and data to develop their own language models, appropriate for their own needs, he said.

Parmelin, on broader India-Switzerland ties, said relations between the two countries are "excellent".

"There is potential for growth in various areas, and my visit also serves to explore these opportunities. Our economic relations are based on complementary industrial strengths, which allow Switzerland and India to cooperate very effectively," he said.

"Switzerland mainly exports machinery, pharmaceutical and chemical products, precision instruments, medical technology, and watches, while importing chemicals, textiles, electronics, and other industrial goods from India," he added. (PTI)

Microsoft to invest \$50 bn to bridge global AI divide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Microsoft on Wednesday said it is on pace to invest \$50 billion by the end of the decade to expand artificial intelligence access across the Global South, as it warned that AI adoption in the Global North is roughly twice that of the Global South and the gap is widening.

Announcing the plan at the India AI Impact Summit, the tech giant's vice chair and president Brad Smith and vice president and chief responsible AI officer Natasha Crampton said urgent action is needed to prevent a growing AI divide from deepening global economic disparities.

"The India AI Impact Summit rightly has placed this challenge at the center of its agenda. For more than a century, unequal access to electricity exacerbated a growing economic gap between the Global North and South. Unless we act

with urgency, a growing AI divide will perpetuate this disparity in the century ahead," they wrote in a blog.

According to Microsoft's latest AI Diffusion Report, uneven adoption of AI risks limiting economic growth and opportunity in developing regions.

"This week in Delhi, we're



sharing that Microsoft is on pace to invest \$50 billion by the end of the decade to help bring AI to countries across the Global South," they wrote.

The \$50 billion commitment will be deployed through a five-part programme focused on infra-

structure, skilling, multilingual AI development, local innovation and measurement of AI adoption.

Microsoft said it invested more than \$8 billion in data-centre infrastructure serving the Global South in its last fiscal year, including in India, Mexico and countries across Africa, South America,

nerships, and it is nearing its global target. The company said it is balancing digital sovereignty needs with commitments to cybersecurity, privacy and resilience, while supporting cross-border investment flows.

Microsoft said it invested more than \$2 billion last fiscal year in cloud, AI and digital skilling programmes across the Global South, including grants, technology donations and discounted products.

Under its Microsoft Elevate initiative, the company has committed to helping 20 million people earn AI credentials by 2028. After training 5.6 million people in India in 2025, it set a goal to equip 20 million people in India with AI skills by 2030.

At the summit, Microsoft announced the launch of Elevate for Educators in India, aimed at strengthening the AI capacity of two million teachers across more than 200,000 institutions and expanding access to eight million students.

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Machine voice to be next frontier in evolving AI landscape, says report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Artificial Intelligence landscape is rapidly evolving with Agentic AI as the latest frontier and machine voice will be the next, according to a report released.

Since 2024, Agentic AI has been a leading force in artificial intelligence. Agentic AI leverages GenAI through which systems respond to environments, including prompts, to then plan and auto-execute tasks.

However, the next stop in the ever-evolving landscape will be machine voice. According to the report brought out by Prosus and BCG, in the current year and the next, audio input/output models — using audio input and output speech to text and back — "reduces latency and enhances emotional maturity".

The report was released at the ongoing AI Impact Summit.

Over the past three decades, the tech world has seen a transformation from machine learning in the 1990s to deep learning in 2015, followed by Generative AI in 2022. The year 2024



saw the advent of Agentic AI, the report, released on Tuesday, pointed out.

Taking part in a discussion after unveiling the report, R Chandrasekhar, former secretary, electronics, IT and telecom, said, "In healthcare today we have startups providing a service that captures direct conversation between a health professional and a patient in a local language and is converting into a medical case sheet ready for use by a doctor. This crunches the time a doctor needs with a patient."

Despite the penetration of AI in recent years, key sectors such as agriculture, education, and public health continue to be under-integrated, while financial services and advanced manufacturing have made faster progress in integrating AI into decision-making, risk assessment, quality control, and operations, as per the report.

Calling for precision agriculture and use of AI, Ashok Gulati, former Chairman of CACP, GoI, and professor at ICRIER, said, "With the same amount of water, land and less fertilisers, you can produce much more. China has a smaller arable area of 129 million hectares against 159 million hectares in India, but its agricultural production is double ours."

Highlighting nutritional security as the biggest challenge for the country, he said, "There is 30 per cent lack of zinc in our wheat and rice because of overuse of soil.

Here's where AI can help. Genome mapping has been done and gene editing will be the future, and with that you can bring in varieties with higher biofortification of higher zinc in wheat and rice."

AI-driven technologies can help in manage the grid stability: Joshi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Integration of AI-driven technologies can be useful in managing the stability of the grid in India, where capacities are being added on a large scale, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the ongoing AI Impact Summit here, the New and Renewable Energy Minister said projects are being added in gigawatts. Sometimes during the solar hour, the generation will be more and sometimes because of the weather, it comes down also.

At that time, grid stability will become an issue, Joshi



Union Minister Pralhad Joshi

said when asked about the scope for AI in the clean energy space. "Wind does not blow always and sun does not shine the entire 24 hours. Keeping that in mind, so when more generation is happening, when less generation is happening, and how

we should manage our grid. For this technology, this AI-driven technology, a digital twin can be of help," he noted.

Joshi also said that the sector is facing issues of curtailment. Curtailment means the reduction of energy output from wind or solar sources, preventing the clean energy from being fed into the grid.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has also stated that with solar and wind, the share of variable renewables is expected to be sizeable by the end of this decade, and AI can help manage complexities in the power sector.

AI KNOWLEDGE CONSORTIUM

DIFFUSING AI: HUMAN CAPITAL, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TRUST

19 FEBRUARY, 2026 | 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

India International Centre, New Delhi

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Make AI easy to use: Zoom COO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

People in India are willing to adopt new technologies, and companies here should focus on making their products easy to use, Zoom's Chief Operating Officer Aparna Bawa said on Wednesday.

This will help make AI accessible to more people and reduce the technology gap, she said.

"In India people are willing to embrace new technologies and new things... Cell phones are there in the remote corners... So why should India not embrace AI, and there are billions of people, if you can make things easy to use... If you can do that and you guys are capable of doing that... I



Zoom Chief Operating Officer Aparna Bawa

would not think of it as the race has been taken over by two big countries, the world is for you," she said.

The US and China are making huge investments on AI (artificial intelligence). Bawa was speaking at a

session — Scaling Trusted AI for 8 billion+ — in the AI Impact Summit. She said that several companies across the globe are using the Zoom platform. "And how do we do that? We do that because we're easy to use," she added.

Citing an example of ChatGPT, the COO said it uses natural language to actually democratise AI, so that anybody could pick it up and use it. "And that is going to be the critical thing," she said adding usage of AI will help promote economic growth.

Speaking at the session, Microsoft vice chair and president Brad Smith said there is a need to bring AI skills to the global South and India is a focal point for this activity.

Innovating vehicle finance via energy!

KUSHAN MITRA
New Delhi

Something I learned recently is that almost 60 per cent of light commercial vehicle (3W/4W) loans in India go into some form of default. While many are resolved, they often lead to the vehicle owners-operator going into a debt spiral - if you have ever been in credit card hell you know what this can mean.

So how does someone resolve this issue? It is not something a traditional NBFC giving a loan to a traditional internal combustion engine 3W can easily do. Because they don't really monitor the vehicle and usage. So if things are going wrong for the owner-operator they only find out when they default on a payment. Then it is the same call-centre and collection agency process. A high rate of missed payments, unintentional defaults and the need for large support operations — those all drive up interest rates.

But I also learned that there is a solution and well, that solution is also electric. So I have been following Exponent Energy for a while, and I have spent a lot of time with founder Arun Vinayak at his Bengaluru office where he patiently sat me down and explained the physics and chemistry of rapid charging. Exponent Energy has pioneered 'Rapid Charging' and commercial vehicles fitted with their solution, mainly three-wheelers



can charge in just 15 minutes using their proprietary charger (although the ability to use regular charging remains).

But Arun doesn't see his company as a charging-tech company, he sees them as an energy company. "Over 98 percent of vehicles with our technology use our chargers. And because our chargers are fast, they see very high throughput, in fact one charger in Bengaluru saw 67 charging sessions in a single day. This better utilisation means that we can charge a lower rate per unit of electricity, just ₹16."

But there is more, because Exponent controls their chargers and their batteries are unique they have a wealth of data about the

vehicles — and thus their owners as well. Arun told me that they could see internal migration trends such as Chhat Puja or harvest seasons where vehicles wouldn't charge for days on end.

"So that month the owner isn't making money, but a traditional Bank or NBFC loan wouldn't understand that. The owner would have to still make his monthly payment. And there was a chance of default," Arun told me.

So with Sandeep D, the concept for Exponent ONE was born and this was a very unique concept for commercial vehicles. Since Exponent knows about their owners and their usage, they incentivised regular payments whenever an

owner reached a charging station. "We know if the owner is having a good day or a bad day, if he is having a good day because he is charging a second or third time we will incentive him to pay. Also, many owner-operators only remember the EMI payment a week before it is due, and then go trying to work extra hours or discounting to raise cash, regular reminders because they're using our app and we know how much they're driving. At the same time we also know when they drop out of the system for an extended period and it could be that he has gone back to his village or that he has a family event or emergency. So we reach out and we also offer the option of skipping one monthly payment every year but we also incentivise them to not skip," Sandeep tells me.

"It is about the collateral that we have which is the battery and the vehicle, but the need to make our owner-operators more viable and successful. According to the data we have only two percent of all defaults in the commercial three-wheeler space are intentional. Most defaults have just happened because of circumstances and we believe we have a solution to work around that," Arun adds.

And the benefit for the parent company? Clearly not only will this interesting finance offering only work on Exponent Energy battery equipped vehicles, the company is rolling out the service initially only

to those who get a retrofit kit from them. The retrofit kit converts a gas or petrol three-wheeler to one with an Exponent Energy 10.7 kilowatt hour battery that Arun says offers in excess of 100 kilometres of range in 24 hours. The cost? Just ₹1.7 lakh.

"There is another objective here. I believe that the commercial light commercial vehicle space can easily go fully electric in India, it makes economic sense for operators. But if the current rate of conversion continues it could take as much as three decades. This finance scheme and an easy retrofit will help speed up the process," Arun remarked.

One of Exponent Energy's long-time investors and supporters is the AdvantEDGE venture capital fund run by Kunal Khattar. This fund specialises in investing in green energy and green mobility companies.

"This is proper fintech innovation" he says. "A lower default rate will not only drive more owner-operators to electric vehicles it will also offer them lower-priced loans because of the risk mitigation in the long-run and make them more financially responsible members of society."

Will this Innovation work? That remains to be seen and the data in a couple of years time will show it. But if it does it can transform both electric mobility and personal finance. The latter for a section of society that has traditionally been forced to deal with high-cost finance.

India, Canada may finalise terms of reference for FTA talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

India and Canada are expected to finalise terms of reference for initiating talks for a free trade agreement (FTA) during the visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India next month, an official said.

The terms of reference (ToR) outline the scope and modalities of a proposed trade pact.

The two countries were earlier negotiating a trade pact but it was paused by Canada in 2023. Now they have decided to resume talks from the beginning as a lot has changed on the global trade front during these two years.

The official said that the two sides are engaged in finalising the ToR for a mutually beneficial trade agreement.

"It is likely to be finalised during the visit of the Canada's prime minister," the official added.

Both sides have appointed their chief negotiators for the trade pact negotia-

tions. Joint Secretary in Department of Commerce Brij Mohan Mishra is the chief negotiator from the Indian side. Bruce Christie is Canada's chief negotiator.

India's exports to Canada rose 9.8 per cent to \$4.22 billion in 2024-25 from \$3.84 billion in 2023-24. Imports, however, declined 2.33 per cent to \$4.44 billion in the last fiscal year from \$4.55 billion in 2023-24.

Bilateral trade in goods and services stood at \$18.38 billion in 2023.

There are about 2.9 million Indian diaspora and over 4.27,000 Indian students in Canada.





India as Global South's voice in Artificial Intelligence at the India AI Impact Summit 2026



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

As artificial intelligence transitions from technological novelty to economic necessity, a fundamental question confronts the international community: whose values will shape its development, and who will benefit from its transformative power? The ongoing India AI Impact Summit 2026, at New Delhi, has emerged as a deliberate answer positioning emerging economies not as passive recipients of technology, but as active architects of an AI-driven future. The AI mantra narrative is everywhere.

This gathering represents far more than another conference on emerging technologies. It signals India's strategic ambition to reframe artificial intelligence through the lens of developing nations. At its heart lies a philosophy rooted in the Indian philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"—the world as one family reimagined for the digital age as JanAI, or AI for the people. It marks the next major milestone for India following its G20 presidency in 2023.

The timing of this summit carries particular significance. With AI markets expanding rapidly across developing regions and India's own sector projected to exceed seventeen billion dollars by 2027, New Delhi seeks to establish itself as more than a technology consumer. The country aims to become the conceptual bridge between cutting-edge innovation and meaningful societal transformation, particularly for nations often marginalised in technology governance discussions.

India's approach rests on three foundational principles which organisers term "Sutras"—that prioritise people, environmental sustainability, and comprehensive progress. These pillars reflect a conscious departure from AI development models focused primarily on commercial velocity or geopolitical advantage. Instead, they acknowledge the complex realities facing developing nations: limited infrastructure,



diverse linguistic landscapes, vast rural populations, and pressing developmental challenges that technology must address rather than exacerbate. Translating broad philosophy into tangible outcomes, summit organisers have identified seven interconnected domains of cooperation, termed "Chakras" in reference to centers of energy and focus. These areas-spanning human capacity building, social inclusion, trustworthy AI systems, institutional resilience, scientific advancement, resource democratisation, and economic development, provide a structured framework for international collaboration.

This architecture matters because it moves beyond abstract commitments to AI ethics, outlining specific areas where developing nations face common obstacles and could benefit from coordinated action. Whether addressing the computational resource gap that constrains AI research in smaller economies or establishing safety protocols appropriate for diverse regulatory environments, these domains acknowledge that

emerging markets require tailored solutions rather than technology transfer alone.

The emphasis on human capital development recognises that technological advancement without skilled workforces creates dependency rather than empowerment. Similarly, the focus on democratising AI resources tackles head-on the concentration of computational power that threatens to entrench existing global inequalities in the AI era.

India brings particular credibility to this conversation through its demonstrated capacity for large-scale digital implementation. The country's experience deploying digital public infrastructure, from biometric identification systems reaching over a billion citizens to unified payment interfaces processing millions of transactions daily, offers practical insights into equitable technology distribution.

This track record becomes especially relevant as developing nations confront a growing computational divide. Access to high-performance computing resources, essential for training

sophisticated AI models, remains concentrated in wealthy nations and major technology corporations. New Delhi's proposal to address this asymmetry through shared infrastructure and collaborative research facilities represents a potentially significant shift in how AI capabilities might be distributed globally.

The infrastructure question extends beyond raw computing power to include datasets, algorithmic frameworks, and technical expertise, resources that determine whether nations can develop AI solutions tailored to their specific contexts or must rely on imported systems designed for different realities. The summit's value proposition extends across different constituencies. For developing nations, it provides a platform to collectively articulate technology governance priorities before international standards become entrenched. For multinational enterprises, it offers entry points into rapidly expanding markets characterised by unique challenges and opportunities, from multilingual natural language processing to AI applications in resource-constrained environments.

Development institutions and bilateral partners gain exposure to policy frameworks attempting to balance innovation encouragement with social protection, particularly relevant as AI's economic impacts intensify. For India itself, the gathering serves as a statement of technological maturity and policy leadership, positioning the nation as a convener capable of shaping rather than merely responding to global technology trajectories.

The convergence of these interests creates potential for substantive outcomes beyond ceremonial declarations, whether through joint research initiatives, shared computing facilities, or coordinated approaches to AI regulation that respect national sovereignty while enabling cross-border collaboration.

Perhaps most significantly, the summit represents an attempt to shift AI discourse beyond zero-sum competition toward collaborative problem-solving. While geopolitical tensions increasingly frame technology development as strategic rivalry, India's emphasis on inclusive growth and shared challenges offers an alternative framework—one particularly appealing to nations seeking to benefit from AI without

becoming dependent on any single technology ecosystem. The focus on trustworthy, secure systems alongside economic growth reflects hard-learned lessons about technology adoption in diverse societies. Questions of algorithmic bias, data sovereignty, energy consumption, and workforce displacement carry different implications across contexts, requiring governance approaches that accommodate varied developmental stages and priorities.

By centering discussions around concrete challenges improving agricultural yields, expanding healthcare access, enhancing educational outcomes the summit grounds AI conversations in developmental imperatives rather than abstract technological capabilities. This reorientation may prove crucial in ensuring AI serves genuine societal needs rather than creating solutions in search of problems.

As the summit unfolds, its success will ultimately be measured not by diplomatic attendance or declaration language, but by whether it catalyzes genuine cooperation on AI development reflecting Global South priorities. Can shared infrastructure initiatives materialise? Will collaborative research networks emerge? Can alternative governance models gain international traction?

For India, the stakes extend beyond immediate outcomes. The nation seeks recognition as a pivotal force in technology's trajectory not through market size alone, but through intellectual leadership on questions of equity, sustainability, and human-centered design. Whether this vision resonates beyond New Delhi will shape both AI's evolution and the developing world's place within it.

The summit takes place at a moment when technological trajectories remain fluid enough for intervention, yet momentum toward concentration of AI capabilities accelerates daily. India's gambit is that collective action among emerging economies can still influence outcomes that the Global South can move from being shaped by artificial intelligence to actively shaping it.

Writer is a former civil servant, who writes on cinema and strategic communication. With inputs from Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan

'AI can improve quality, reliability of power supply in country'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Artificial Intelligence can improve quality as well reliability of power supply in the country by optimising resources but there is a need to speed up adoption, Central Electricity Authority Chairman Ghanshyam Prasad said on Wednesday. He was speaking at a session of AI Impact Summit here.

"Power sector is opening up and huge amount of opportunities, use cases are waiting for these kind of innovative solutions and I think we need to catch up and we need to speed up so that at least we don't fall behind anybody else," he added.

Prasad said a number of things need to be optimised using AI in the power sector, including in planning — resource adequacy, transmission, distribution network distribution power purchase.

He said a huge churning is required in the resource adequacy planning which started around three to four years back. "We have reached a certain level but huge amount of



other improvements are required to be done." About the grid operation, he said India is still not doing it the right way and "we need huge amount of optimisation that can save cost and also the time of restoration".

He pointed out that there are problems in rural areas with regards to reliability and quality of power supply which are needed to be addressed. He also called for use of AI in the entire process of tariff determination to avoid delays and address other issues.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai highlights India's AI potential, announces US-India connectivity initiative

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Wednesday said India is poised for an "extraordinary trajectory" in artificial intelligence and emphasised the company's commitment to partnering in the country's AI transformation.

"AI is the biggest platform shift of our lifetime," Pichai said, highlighting its potential to address challenges at scale, from improving healthcare diagnostics to supporting farmers with real-time alerts. He noted that India's diversity, language ecosystem, and robust digital public infrastructure make it a "powerful foundation for innovation" and a blueprint for democratising AI globally.

Pichai underscored that AI adoption must prioritise trust, safety, and inclusivity. "AI must work across languages and local contexts. It must deliver



Google CEO Sundar Pichai speaks during the Google AI event in New Delhi

real-world benefits people can rely on. Trust grows when technology is transparent, responsible, and grounded in outcomes," he said.

The Google CEO also announced the India-America Connect Initiative, a project to deploy new subsea cable routes to enhance AI connectivity between the United States, India, and

several locations across the Southern Hemisphere. "Google has full-stack connectivity in India, and I have never been more excited about the future we are building together," he added.

Pichai highlighted Google's previous announcement of a \$15 billion AI hub in India, which will house gigawatt-scale compute and an international subsea cable gateway, bringing jobs and advanced AI infrastructure to the country. He also unveiled ambitious skilling programmes, including a Google AI Professional Certificate Program in English and Hindi, targeting students and early-career professionals.

Other initiatives include partnerships with Karma Yogi Bharat to support over 20 million public servants, Atal Tinkering Labs to introduce Gen AI tools to 10,000 schools, and a \$30 million AI for Science Impact Challenge to advance global research.

PM Modi meets Google CEO, discusses AI collaborations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday had a meeting with Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and its parent company Alphabet Inc, and discussed the work India is doing in artificial intelligence and how the technology giant can work with Indian students and professionals in this field.

Pichai is here to attend the ongoing India AI Impact Summit, which is being held



at Bharat Mandapam here alongside an expo.

"It was a delight to meet Sundar Pichai on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit in Delhi. Talked about the work India is doing in AI and how Google can work with our talented students and professionals in this field," Modi wrote on X.

The prime minister on Monday visited the India AI Impact Expo here, featuring more than 600 high-potential startups and 13 country pavilions showcasing international collaboration in the AI ecosystem.

'EU, India can forge strong AI partnership'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Europe and India can build a strong partnership in Artificial Intelligence (AI) by focusing on real-world deployment rather than engaging in a technological arms race, Brando Benifei, Member of the European Parliament, said on Wednesday.

"The EU and India can have a strong partnership on AI. Why? Because we both concentrate on use cases of AI, on deployment of AI," Benifei said at the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

He said both sides share a similar perspective that prioritises practical applications over competing to build the most powerful models. Benifei emphasised the need for a cooperative, experience-based approach to AI development. "We have probably together a different approach, which is to build a more cooperative and experience-based devel-

opment of AI," he said, adding that such collaboration could help move the debate beyond geopolitical competition.

He called on "middle powers" like Europe and India to create a network of cooperation aimed at ensuring trustworthy AI deployment that boosts productivity, expands opportunities and reduces dependence on dominant global players.

"How can the so-called middle powers build a network of cooperation for a trustworthy deployment of AI that will boost productivity, increase opportunity and build more autonomy from the risk of pressure coming from other actors? This will be a challenge, but I think it's a space of strong cooperation for Europe and India," he said. Addressing the debate around innovation versus regulation, Benifei cautioned against delaying safeguards for emerging technologies.

OpenAI partners with IIT, IIM to build AI-ready talent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

OpenAI on Wednesday announced partnerships with leading Indian universities to embed artificial intelligence across management, health, engineering, creative and multidisciplinary education, aiming to build AI-ready talent for a tech-driven economy.

The first cohort includes Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, All India Institute of Medical Sciences New Delhi, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES), and Pearl Academy, OpenAI said in a statement.



The initiative will support over 1 lakh students, faculty and staff over the next year, moving beyond basic access to AI tools toward campus-wide integration anchored in responsible use and academic integrity.

Raghav Gupta, Head of Education, OpenAI India, said, "AI literacy is essential to building a future-ready generation. Studies project that by

2030, nearly 40 per cent of the core skills workers rely on today will change, driven largely by AI."

"Yet, a gap remains between what AI tools can do and how people are using them. Education institutions are a critical route to bridge this gap. By embedding AI tools, training, and research into the core infrastructure of schools and universities, they can equip students with the skills needed to thrive in a world with AI," he said. The collaboration will include enterprise-grade ChatGPT Edu access, structured onboarding, discipline-specific implementation guidance and responsible-use frameworks aligned with institutional policies.

AI fluency will be integrated into core academic workflows such as

advanced prompting, analytics, coding, simulations, case analysis and AI-assisted research. OpenAI will also support hackathons, build days and Industry Days connecting campus innovation with startups and enterprises.

Additionally, IIM Ahmedabad and Manipal Academy of Higher Education will deploy OpenAI certifications to formalise structured AI capability pathways within business and multidisciplinary programmes.

Beyond campuses, OpenAI is collaborating with ed-tech platforms PhysicsWallah, upGrad and HCL GUVI to launch structured AI courses focused on fundamentals and practical ChatGPT applications for students and early-career professionals.

L&T ties up with NVIDIA to build sovereign AI factory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Engineering major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Wednesday announced a proposed joint venture with NVIDIA to build sovereign, gigawatt-scale AI factory infrastructure, aiming to position India as a global AI powerhouse.

The partnership targets India's enterprises, policymakers, industry leaders, global offshores and analysts seeking production-grade AI capacity amid the country's digital and industrial transformation.

It combines L&T's expertise in engineering, infrastructure development and execution with NVIDIA's AI infrastructure, including GPUs, CPUs, networking, accelerat-



ed storage platforms, the NVIDIA AI Enterprise software stack and reference architectures for rapid, secure AI adoption.

In a filing to the BSE, L&T said the venture will deploy AI-ready datacentre infrastructure, advanced computing platforms and ecosystem enablement to support large-scale AI workloads across

priority sectors. Aligned with the India AI Mission, it will create sovereign AI infrastructure to build, train and deploy critical data, models and workloads within India, while ensuring interoperability with global ecosystems. This 'sovereign by-design' fabric will cater to domestic needs, global hyperscalers, cloud providers and enterprises

eyeing large-scale AI deployment from India as a strategic hub.

The initiative plans a gigawatt-scale AI data centre factory for high-density, next-generation workloads, enabling efficient and sustainable expansion.

It will scale NVIDIA GPU cluster deployment at L&T's Chennai data centre to 30 MW capacity on a 300-acre gigawatt-scalable campus, and at the new 40 MW data centre under execution in Mumbai.

"With NVIDIA's platforms and L&T's execution strength, we are building infrastructure that will enable AI to deliver measurable economic impact," L&T Chairman & Managing Director SN Subrahmanyam said.

AI KNOWLEDGE CONSORTIUM

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FROM THE WORLD

POLAND Army bans Chinese cars

The Polish army has banned Chinese cars from entering military facilities hoping to prevent the collection of sensitive data by technologically advanced automobiles. Modern vehicles equipped with cutting edge sensors and communication systems are capable of "uncontrolled acquisition and use of data," the Polish army wrote in a statement justifying the ban. Vehicles are now able to collect video, sound and location and there is a fear that Chinese producers might share some of this potentially sensitive data with their authorities. All cars capable of recording location, video and sound will be banned from secure military areas unless those functions are switched off, the Polish army said, meaning that the new restrictions do not apply to Chinese products alone.

RUSSIA Cuba FM visits Moscow

The Cuban foreign minister visited Moscow on Wednesday as the island faces blackouts and severe fuel shortages caused by a US oil embargo. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez held talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and was set to meet later in the day with President Vladimir Putin. Lavrov urged the US to refrain from blockading Cuba, which has struggled to import oil for its power plants and refineries. "Together with most members of the global community, we are calling on the US to show common sense, take a responsible approach and refrain from its plans of sea blockade," Lavrov said during the talks with Rodríguez. He promised that Moscow will "continue supporting Cuba and its people in protecting the country's sovereignty and security." Cuba's fuel shortages already have forced Russian tourist companies to halt the sales of package tours to the island.

Russia-Ukraine talks ends without breakthrough

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Geneva

The latest US-brokered talks between Russian and Ukrainian envoys over Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine ended on Wednesday with no sign of a breakthrough and with both sides saying the talks were "difficult" as the war's fourth anniversary approaches next week. The negotiations in Switzerland were the third round of direct talks organised by the US, after meetings earlier this year in Abu Dhabi that officials described as constructive but which also yielded no major progress. The head of the Russian delegation, Russian President



Vladimir Putin's adviser Vladimir Medinsky, told reporters that the two days of talks in Geneva "were difficult but businesslike." He said another round of talks will be held "in the near future." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also described the discussions as "difficult," and accused Russia of "trying to drag out negotiations that could already have reached the final stage."

US President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, said on social media that Washington's push for peace in Ukraine over the past year has "brought about meaningful progress," without elaborating. The two armies remain locked in battle on the roughly 1,250-kilometre front line, while Russia bombards civilian areas of Ukraine daily. Hours after the first day of talks ended on Tuesday, Russian drones killed a woman and injured a 6-year-old girl and 18-month-old toddler in the southern Ukraine city of Zaporizhzhia, officials said. Overnight, Russia launched one ballistic missile and 126

long-range drones at Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian air force. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that it's "too early" to speak about the outcome. Putin has been receiving reports about the talks' progress, he said. The head of the Ukrainian delegation in Switzerland, Rustem Umerov, said that officials are trying to bridge their political and military differences. "Consultations are taking place in working groups by areas within the political and military tracks," the head of the Ukrainian delegation, Rustem Umerov, wrote in English on X. "We are working on clarifying the parameters and mechanisms

of the decisions discussed yesterday." Zelenskyy said the delegations also were to discuss further exchanges of prisoners of war and the release of civilian prisoners. He revealed that the Ukrainian and American envoys in Geneva met with representatives from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. Europe's participation in the process is "indispensable," Zelenskyy said. European leaders, mindful of Putin's wider ambitions, say their own security is at stake in Ukraine and have insisted on being consulted in peace efforts. Russia and Ukraine appear

to still be far apart on their demands for a settlement. Zelenskyy has offered a ceasefire and a face-to-face meeting with Putin. But Moscow wants a comprehensive agreement before committing to a truce. Putin's key goals remain what he declared when Russia invaded its neighbour on February 24, 2022: Ukraine must renounce joining NATO, sharply reduce the size of its army and protect Russian language and culture to keep the country in Moscow's orbit. Additionally, Putin wants Kyiv to withdraw its forces from the four regions Moscow has occupied but doesn't fully control.

France opens two Epstein-linked probes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Paris

Paris prosecutors opened on Wednesday two new investigations into potential sex abuse crimes and financial wrongdoings linked to Jeffrey Epstein following the release of millions of files of the millionaire financier and convicted sex offender, and called on possible victims to come forward. Paris prosecutor Laurence Beccuau said the investigations are seeking to use the files released by the US administration, media reports and new complaints that are being filed. "All that data ... some will shed light on others to be able to get a well-informed, very broad,



panoramic view," Beccuau said on France Info news broadcaster. One investigation will focus on sex abuse crimes, the other on financial wrongdoing, each involving specialised magistrates, she added. The move comes after the release by the US Justice Department of more than 3 million pages of documents,

as well as thousands of videos and photos related to Epstein, who died behind bars in 2019. "These publications will inevitably reactivate the trauma of certain victims," she said. "We are convinced that some (victims) are not necessarily known to us, and that perhaps these publications will lead them to come forward." She called on victims who may have never spoken up before to file formal complaints or make witness accounts to feed French and foreign investigations. Beccuau also said some material from old investigations is to be revisited in the light of new revelations. She was referring to the investigation into a

French modelling agent, Jean-Luc Brunel, accused of rape and sex trafficking of minors. The probe was closed in 2022 after he was found dead in his jail cell in Paris. Brunel, a frequent companion of Epstein, was considered central to the French investigation into alleged sexual exploitation of women and girls by Epstein and his circle. Epstein travelled often to France and had apartments in Paris. The highest-profile figure impacted by the recent release of the Epstein files in France is former Culture Minister Jack Lang, who stepped down earlier this month as head of the Arab World Institute in Paris over suspicions of tax fraud.

Turkish lawmakers panel backs peace reforms

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ankara

A Turkish parliamentary committee on Wednesday recommended a series of reforms to advance a new peace initiative with the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, while stressing that legal steps should be tied to state security institutions verifying that the group has surrendered its weapons. The commission also calls for measures to expand freedom, release elderly or sick prisoners.

India reaffirms strong support for development of Maldives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Male

India assisted the Maldives in building a high-speed ferry, the first among 12, required to begin transport link services between two of the atolls, according to a local media report. India has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Maldives in establishing essential public services and projects that directly benefit communities, Indian High Commissioner to the Maldives G Balasubramanian was quoted as saying by the state-run PSM News. India will provide 12 high-speed ferries to the Maldives as part of an existing agreement, Balasubramanian said during a ceremony held to launch Raajiv Transport Link (RTL) services in Faafu and Dhaalu Atolls on Tuesday. The Indian Government has assisted the Maldives in building the ferries required to begin RTL services in the two atolls, the PSM News said. "The commencement of RTL ferry services in Faafu & Dhaalu Atolls marks a vital step in strengthening nationwide connectivity. Two ferries, among 12 to be delivered under the HICDP Phase III MoU signed in January 2025, were built with the generous assistance of the GoI. @HCIMaldives," the Maldives Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a post on X after the event. On May 18 last year, India signed 13 MoUs with the Maldives for enhancing ferry services in the island nation with an MVR 100 million grant, expanding maritime connectivity and uplifting communi-



ty livelihoods. The MoUs were for projects to be implemented under the Indian grant assistance scheme — High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP) Phase III. The 13 projects launched under this phase amount to a total grant of MVR 100 million, primarily aimed at enhancing ferry services in the Maldives, expanding connectivity, and uplifting community livelihoods. On Tuesday, Balasubramanian expressed satisfaction that work progressed quickly since the agreement was signed in May 2025. Emphasising the importance of the Neighbourhood First policy, the Indian envoy noted that PM Modi and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu are shaping their work such that the strong bond between both countries is maintained, and will further strengthen the cooperation between both countries, the PSM News said. Highlighting that India has provided ₹29.5 million to the Maldives over four phases, he said this support to transport projects, sports infrastructure, coastal protection and health and education facilities.

Fireworks shop explosion in China kills 12 people

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Beijing

An explosion at a fireworks shop in China's Hubei province on Wednesday killed 12 people, state media reported, the second such explosion as the country celebrates the Lunar New Year. Emergency responders put out the blaze at the fireworks shop in the town of Xiangyang, in central Hubei province, on Wednesday afternoon, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. Investigators are now looking into the cause of the explosion, the report said without giving further details. Fireworks are a large part of the Lunar New Year celebra-



tion in China, but their use has also been the cause of multiple accidents. On Sunday, another accident at a fireworks shop in eastern Jiangsu province killed eight people and injured two. Authorities had said a resident had set off fire-

Bangladesh PM Tarique holds first cabinet meeting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dhaka

Bangladesh's newly-elected Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Wednesday vowed to strengthen the rule of law and said his Government will turn the country into a safe land for people of all faiths, regardless of party, opinion, religion, or ethnicity. In his maiden televised address to the nation after assuming office, 60-year-old Rahman outlined his government's priorities and said that improving the law and order situation and strictly controlling corruption to restore peace and security are his top priorities. "We want to



turn this country into a safe land for every citizen. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians — regardless of party, opinion, religion, or ethnicity — whether living in the hills or the plains, this country belongs to all of us," said the prime minister, who is also the chief of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM

Ref: (i) Tender Notice No.75/2025-26 dated 01.01.2026 (S.No.2)
(ii) Tender No. 08255739 due on 19.02.2026
In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 19.02.2026 to 12.03.2026. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged. The corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services Limited (MMFSL) hereby informs the public that 1,583 vehicles (complete list accessible at Website link: Customer Disclosures Mahindra Finance) were auctioned by MMFSL through the portal (eDIIG) and offline mode and are presently parked at various yards of Mahindra First Choice Wheels Ltd. (MFCWL) ("Vehicles"). Accordingly, Parking Charges payable to MFCWL have been accruing from the date of parking of the re-possessed/auctioned Vehicle(s) respectively. Despite the auction, the purchasers have failed to take possession of the Vehicles from MMFSL due to reasons including but not limited to:
• Non-payment of full consideration pursuant to the auction
• Non-payment of Parking Charges
• Failure to take delivery even after payment
• Death of purchaser or other contingencies
Accordingly, all concerned purchasers claiming title (ownership) in respect of the Vehicle(s) or any part thereof are hereby called upon to take possession of their respective vehicle(s) within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of this notice by paying the full consideration (if applicable) towards the auction of the Vehicle(s) and the Parking Charges and any other dues payable to MFCWL in respect thereof by submitting the following documents:
• Proof of payment and relevant documents
• Self-identification KYC (Aadhaar, PAN, etc.)
• Documents pertaining to title in respect of the vehicle(s) as requested by MMFSL.
• Payment receipt in respect of Parking Charge to MFCWL
All claims and documents as stated above shall be submitted to MMFSL within the timeline stated herein.
Failure to comply with the instructions contained hereinabove within the stipulated time will result in MMFSL exercising its right to re-auction the said Vehicles or any part thereof without further notice and the said persons will thereafter have no right and/or title in respect of any Vehicle(s).
The proceeds of such re-auction shall be first appropriated towards accrued yard Parking Charges and other dues payable to MFCWL or any third party and thereafter towards any unpaid consideration payable to MMFSL in respect of the Vehicle(s). Any surplus shall be refunded to the rightful owner upon receipt of documentary proof and after due diligence by MMFSL or its representatives. In case of any shortfall, the same shall be recovered from the concerned person/s.
No claims shall be entertained after the stipulated time as mentioned above, under any circumstances. All correspondence to be done at Prafulla.Ruke1@mahindrafinance.com with subject: Long parked vehicle For and on behalf of Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that we, Sh. Anil Kumar Mishra (Aadhaar No. 7500 1756 XXXX) and Smt. Poonam Mishra (Aadhaar No. 3769 6359 XXXX), residents of House No. B-63, Block-B, Satya Vihar, Burari, North Delhi - 110084, have debarred and disowned our son Mr. Raja Ritesh (Aadhaar No. 2237 5979 XXXX) from our life and from all our movable and immovable properties. We have no concern or relation with him henceforth. Any person dealing with him shall do so at his or her own risk and consequences.

Date: 15.02.2026
Place: Delhi
Sd/-
Anil Kumar Mishra (Father)
Poonam Mishra (Mother)

COURT NOTICE

BEFORE LD. SOLE ARBITRATOR SH. VAIBHAV NITI ADVOCATE, DELHI INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION, DELHI HIGH COURT, NEW DELHI
IN
ARBITRATION CASE REFERENCE NO. DIAC/9541/11/24
IN
(CASE/REFERENCE ID: NDL010MSWC01708) IN THE MATTER OF: SIMPLY LOGISTICS PVT. LTD. ... CLAIMANT
VERSUS
FEET MITRA INFOTECH PRIVATE LIMITED & ANR. ... RESPONDENTS
D.O.H-23.02.2026
NOTICE
Whereas a Statement of Claim Simply Logistics Pvt. Ltd for recovery of Rupees 678210.21/- (Nine Lakh, Seventy Eight Thousand Two Hundred Ten Rupees Twenty One Paise) alongwith up to date interests @ 6.75 X 3 as Per MSME Act has been filed against Feet Mitra Infotech Private Ltd, through its directors Abhishek Kumar Din no.09845315 and Mrs. Shivani Singh Din no.1044201 before the Delhi International Arbitration And Conciliation, Delhi High Court, New Delhi and next date of hearing is fixed for 23.02.2026.
Whereas the next date of hearing has been fixed on 23.02.2026 at 4.30 p.m. evening for hearing of the case, notice is hereby given to the persons having any interest in the aforesaid case, can appear before the Ld. Sole Arbitrator Sh. Vaibhav Niti on 23.02.2026 at 4.30 p.m. evening Delhi International Arbitration And Conciliation, Delhi High Court, New Delhi.
Ld. Sole Arbitrator
Sh. Vaibhav Niti (Advocate),
DIAC, New Delhi

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE						
SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / END (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	HSIIDC	DEVELOPMENT OF PARK IN VILLAGE BARONA UNDER VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME AT IMT KHARKHODA	19.02.2026 26.02.2026	51.05 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0172-2567482 ja.kharkhoda@hsidc.org.in
2	HSIIDC	CONSTRUCTION OF TWO NEW ROOMS AT INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, AMBALA CANTT.	16.02.2026 23.02.2026	12.34 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416782243 ja.saha@hsidc.org.in
3	HSIIDC	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CETP OF 0.5 MLD CAPACITY FOR TWO YEARS INCLUDING OTHER ALLIED SERVICES AT HSIIDC, INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, AMBALA CANTT, DISTT. AMBALA.	17.02.2026 25.02.2026	47.93 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416782243 ja.saha@hsidc.org.in
4	HSIIDC	CLEANING AND SWEEPING OF METALLED ROAD AND THEREAFTER DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTE MATERIAL FROM THE ROAD BERM IN OLD AREA PANIPAT	17.02.2026 24.02.2026	31.19 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	7988707558 ja.paniapat@hsidc.org.in

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	PWD B&R, HISAR	PROVIDING 7.5 KW ROOFTOP HYBRID SOLAR POWER PLANT IN KANYA GURUKUL DOBHI, ADAMPUR IN DISTT. HISAR + 1 WORKS	17.02.2026 27.02.2026	24.02 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01662225651 pwd-eeed-hissar@hry.nic.in
2	PWD B&R, HISAR	PROVIDING FIRE ALARM SYSTEM IN JUDICIAL COURT COMPLEX SIRSA.	17.02.2026 26.02.2026	21.63 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01662225651 pwd-eeed-hissar@hry.nic.in
3	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, KARNAL	PROVIDING PROTECTION TO MODIPUR COMPLEX BY CONSTRUCTING 7 NOS. NEW STONE STUDS AND STONE REVETMENT TO PROTECT THE ABADI AREA AFTER FLOOD 2025 RIVER YAMUNA. + 8 WORKS	16.02.2026 25.02.2026	2003.29 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0184-2258008 xenindivn@yahoo.in
4	PANCHAYATI RAJ, REWARI	SUPPLY OF 3 NO. PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT UNITS (SHREDDER, BAILING, DUST REMOVING MACHINE)	18.02.2026 27.02.2026	48 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9466112077 xenpr.rwr@gmail.com
5	PANCHAYATI RAJ, CHARKHI DADRI	CONSTRUCTION OF PHIRNI WITH IPB AT VILLAGE LADAWAS HRDF	12.02.2026 20.02.2026	157.79 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9582622008 xenprcharkhidadri@gmail.com
6	PANCHAYATI RAJ, CHARKHI DADRI	CONST. OF PHIRNI (PWD ROAD TO OM DHARA KHET 2. H/O RAJPAL JANGRA TO S/GHAT/POND) AT VILL KAKROLI HUKMI BLOCK BADHRA HRDF + 1 WORKS	12.02.2026 20.02.2026	72.95 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9582622008 xenprcharkhidadri@gmail.com
7	PANCHAYATI RAJ, SONIPAT	CONSTRUCTION OF E-LIBRARY AT VILLAGE CHIRSHMI BLOCK GANAUR + 9 WORKS	CLOSING DATE 25.02.2026	432.84 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416391006 prexeeng.snp@gmail.com
8	PANCHAYATI RAJ, CHARKHI DADRI	CONSTRUCTION OF BLOCK PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT (BPHU) AT VILLAGE GOPI + 4 WORKS	12.02.2026 20.02.2026	228.37 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9582622008 xenprcharkhidadri@gmail.com
9	DIRECTOR GENERAL, SUPPLIES & DISPOSALS PANCHKULA, HARYANA	TWO YEARS RATE CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF PERFORATED CORRUGATED PVC PIPES & FITTINGS AS IS-9271:2004, SIZES 80MM O.D., 160MM O.D., 200MM O.D., 294MM O.D.	19.02.2026 05.03.2026		https://etenders.hry.nic.in dsndharyana.gov.in	0172-2570122 Supplies@hry.nic.in
10	DIRECTOR GENERAL, SUPPLIES & DISPOSALS PANCHKULA, HARYANA	OPTICAL EMISSION SPECTROMETER (DETERMINATION OF ALLOW COMPOSITION OF FERROUS AND NON-FERROUS MATERIALS)	18.02.2026 05.03.2026		https://etenders.hry.nic.in dsndharyana.gov.in	0172-2570122 Supplies@hry.nic.in
11	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, JAGADHRI	CONSTRUCTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY SPILLWAY AND STILLING BASIN AT KAUSHALYA DAM, PANCHKULA	17.02.2026 12.03.2026	EMD 39.55 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9813608585 xenhkbone@gmail.com
12	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, JAGADHRI	CHEME FOR CONSTRUCTION OF 1216 FT. 03 TIER STONE STEINING FOR THE PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND OF VILLAGE NAGLA RANGRAN AND SANDHALA FROM RIVER YAMUNA	16.02.2026 02.03.2026	EMD 5.73 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9729441426 xenhkbone@gmail.com
13	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	ACCESSORIES FITTING FOR NEW MOVABLE 20 NO. OF EP SETS 3CS. CAPACITY AND 10 NO EP SETS OF 5CS. CAPACITY IN WS DIVISION KURUKSHETRA OF IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT HARYANA	18.02.2026 05.03.2026	14.50 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0172-2580542 xenproc@gmail.com
14	HARYANA POLICE	PURCHASE OF 180 NOS. DESKTOP COMPUTER FOR HARYANA POLICE	17.02.2026 26.02.2026	EMD 1.98 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416433191 Suptd.provhpq@gmail.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT www.etenders.hry.nic.in RO 43143-I-27-7

PROSPECT



Assam minister Pijush Hazarika receiving a commemorative memento, felicitation and message of good will from assembly speaker Biswajit Daimary during the final session of the 15th Assam Legislative Assembly

Mustang deepens its presence in India

Indian wearables and audio brand GOBOULT has announced a major expansion of its strategic partnership with the iconic Mustang brand, as it sharpens its focus on premiumization and targets ₹3,000 crore in revenue by FY27-28. The company closed FY25 with revenues of around ₹800 crore and now aims to more than triple its topline over the next two to three years.

As part of the next phase of this multi-year collaboration, GOBOULT has unveiled four new Mustang-branded products—three smartwatches named Stallion, Racer, and Muscle, and a true wireless stereo (TWS) earbud, Mustang Sprint. The move marks the brand's expansion of the Mustang portfolio beyond audio into wearables, strengthening its positioning in the mid-premium and premium segments.

The partnership goes beyond logo licensing and influences product design, materials, and user experience, drawing inspiration from Mustang's performance and engineering DNA. Mustang-led products are projected to grow from around ₹2 crore in revenue to ₹12 crore in the next phase. With a stronger offline presence planned and international expansion on the horizon, GOBOULT believes its Mustang-led premium portfolio will be a key driver of sustainable growth.

India keen to diversify crude oil sources: Goyal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India wants to diversify its sources of crude oil and coking coal and would "love" to source high-quality coking coal from the US, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.

He also said that the US can provide certain goods that India needs desperately for its economic growth. These goods can include Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) for Artificial Intelligence applications, equipment for data centres and high performance computing.

India, he said, can manu-

facture products that the US cannot compete in, while America can be a strong source of technology and capital.

There is already \$100 billion in aircraft demand from the US in the next five years and the country needs more to increase local capacity and bring down fares, Goyal said.

"We want to diversify our oil sources. I want to diversify the source of coking coal for example. I am dependent on 2 or 3 geographies (for that) and prices keep fluctuating.

I would love to have American coking coal which is high quality coming to



Piyush Goyal

India," he said at an event in Mumbai. Under an interim trade agreement with the US, India has expressed its

intention to buy goods worth \$500 billion in the next five years from America. The Indian team is visiting the US next week to finalise the legal text of the agreement, which is likely to be signed in March. "Doing a (trade) deal with America is good for India," he said, adding it opens huge opportunities for Indian firms, particularly in labour-oriented goods and technology services.

Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump has removed the 25 per cent tariffs imposed on India for purchasing Russian oil, citing that the country has undertaken "significant steps" and New Delhi has committed to stop directly or indirectly importing oil from Moscow. The minister also termed

as ridiculous the stock market response to the likely impact of AI on Indian IT services companies. "I find it quite ridiculous because these are the companies who will be required for AI to flourish," the minister said. Further talking about India's free trade pacts, Goyal said in the last four years, nine agreements have been finalised.

"These nine agreements have been negotiated from the position of strength. Today India does not engage as a meek country, we are not apologetic about some of the problems that we have, we are negotiating for the future," he added.

Indian Army clears IEDs on Indo-Myanmar border

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Imphal

Red Shield Division of the Indian Army's Spear Corps carried out a major area sanitisation and de-mining operation along the Indo-Myanmar Border at Yangoubung, Manipur between Border Pillars 72 & 73 from 16 January to 17 February 2026. The task was undertaken following a requisition from Government agencies to facilitate the resumption of stalled border fencing work amid intelli-



ence of erstwhile insurgent camps. Operating in dense jungle terrain under challenging security conditions, the team cleared and sanitised a corridor measuring 2.6 km x 13 m. During the operation, nine IEDs and two unexploded ordnance were destroyed thereby removing a serious threat to innocent lives.

The operation also enabled Survey of India teams and construction agencies to proceed with critical border infrastructure work.

gence inputs regarding Improvised Explosive Devices and unexploded ordnances owing to the pres-

ED issues its biggest attachment order worth over ₹10,000 cr in PACL case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday said it has issued its biggest-ever single attachment order clamping down on 247 immovable assets worth more than ₹10,000 crore as part of its money launder-

ing investigation against Chandigarh-based PACL (Pearls Group). The group is accused of orchestrating a ₹48,000-crore Ponzi scheme. The properties that have been attached provisionally under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) are located in SAS Nagar (Mohali), Rupnagar and Zirakpur in Punjab, the ED said in a statement.

The attached 247 properties have been identified as having been acquired from investor funds, constituting proceeds of crime. They



are linked instances and not a single case, they said. The ED probe stems from a February 2014 CBI case against PACL Ltd, its late promoter Nirmal Singh Bhargoo and some others. Bhargoo died in August 2024. The accused entities and individuals of PACL operated an "illegal" collective investment scheme, fraudulently mobilising more than ₹48,000 crore from lakhs of investors across India under the guise of sale and development of agricultural land, according to the ED.

Gadkari Hails 'Shatak' Film on RSS's Century of Nation-Building

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Mumbai

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, has emphasised the significance of 'Shatak: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ke 100 Varsh', a film offering insight into the RSS's role in India's nation-building.

He pointed out the existing gap between public perception and reality regarding the Sangh's contributions and urged people to watch the film for a deeper understanding.

Scheduled for release on February 20, 2026, the film traces the RSS's ideological evolution, its social initiatives, and the contributions made to national service over a century.

Urging people to watch

the film to better understand the Sangh and its role in shaping the nation, Gadkari said. "As a volunteer, I sometimes feel there has been a gap between image and reality, or between perception and the ground truth. Unfortunately, this has happened with the Sangh.

I invite you to come closer, explore its ideology, and understand the spirit of sacrifice, dedication, and patriotism. See the scale of individual development work, from service to tribal regions, from cooperatives to education. In the progress and development of our nation, the credit for these achievements belongs to the Sangh."

He added, "I have worked on roads, bridges, expressways, and tunnels. I am not an engineer, nor did I have



prior experience. Many ask how I managed, and I say: I am a volunteer of the Sangh and a worker of the Student Council. The values I received from these institutions guided my work, and that is why I continued."

Inviting people to step

forward, he said, "I believe we should all come together to celebrate this centenary, understand the Sangh, and embrace its ideology in our lives. I sincerely request you to watch this film and make an effort to understand the Sangh."

Talking about the Sangh, Gadkari said, "Over these 100 years, the RSS has inspired millions of young people with patriotism and the spirit of nation-building.

I am proud to say that I, too, am one of the many small volunteers who have

received this inspiration." Gadkari further stated that Indian identity is Hindutva. It is a timeless cultural heritage passed down from our ancestors. Hindutva is neither casteist nor communal, nor is it tied to any single religion. It is a way of life. People of all faiths can be Indian, and Indian identity is rooted in our history, culture, and heritage. This is the inspiration that the RSS has given us."

Shatak: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ke 100 Varsh traces the Sangh's ideological evolution, social initiatives, and national service across generations. The trailer, released recently, has generated wide discussion and interest. The film is scheduled for release in cinemas across India on 20 February 2026.

Festival of Arunachal to bring the Northeast's living heritage to Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Arunachal Pradesh situated on the Indo Chinese border may be far from New Delhi, but the Delhiites would be able to experience the state in its full bloom as the Festival of Arunachal Pradesh kicks off in Saturday in New Delhi's Delhi Haat. Organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, with support from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the two-day event aims to show the culture and a glimpse of Arunachal life in the capital. The exhibition and cultural showcases will be open to visitors from 10.30 am on both days.

Artisans and exhibitors travelling from different districts of Arunachal Pradesh will present a wide range of indigenous products, including handwoven textiles, bamboo and cane crafts, tribal jewellery, organic produce and locally made



items. Visitors will also be able to sample authentic Arunachali cuisine, prepared with region-specific herbs and traditional recipes, offering a rare culinary window into the state's diverse communities.

A major attraction of the festival will be the traditional Yak Dance, which symbolises the high-altitude Himalayan culture of Arunachal Pradesh and reflects the deep bond between mountain communities and their natural environment.

In addition, a grand cultur-

al showcase featuring folk music, dance performances and an ethnic fashion show will highlight the rich traditions of the state's many tribes.

Often called the "Land of the Rising Sun," Arunachal Pradesh is home to more than 26 major tribes and over 100 sub-tribes, making it one of India's most culturally diverse regions. With vast forest cover, extraordinary biodiversity and expanding adventure and eco-tourism offerings, the state is increasingly drawing the attention of travellers

seeking authentic, experience-based tourism.

The Delhi showcase is part of Arunachal Pradesh's renewed tourism push under its new campaign, "Take a New Turn in Arunachal," built around the theme "Beyond Myths and Mountains." The initiative seeks to reposition the state not just as a scenic destination, but as a living cultural landscape rooted in indigenous knowledge, community-led tourism and sustainable lifestyles.

By bringing the Festival of Arunachal to the national capital, organisers hope to strengthen awareness among policymakers, tourism stakeholders and urban audiences, while creating new opportunities for local artisans and cultural practitioners.

The event is open to the public, inviting residents of Delhi-NCR and visitors to experience the spirit, craftsmanship and traditions of Arunachal Pradesh in the heart of the city.

Himanta launches portal for school provincialisation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Guwahati

In a significant stride towards reforming the State's education sector, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday ceremonially launched the Provincialisation Management System (PMS) portal at a programme held at Lok Sewa Bhawan. This dedicated digital platform is designed to streamline, monitor, and process applications for the provincialisation of venture institutions and their associated teaching and non-teachable staff. The initiative, which serves as a centralised database for the education department, can be accessed through the official websites of Elementary, Madhyamik, and Higher Education.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma expressed his satisfaction with the launch, noting that the PMS portal was developed exclusively to facilitate applications under the Assam Education (Provincialisation of Services of Teachers and Re-Organisation of Educational Institutions) Act, 2017, as amended in 2025.

The Chief Minister recalled the State's provincialisation journey, highlighting that during his tenure as Education Minister in 2011, the services of over 39,000 teachers were provincialised, followed by another 16,000-plus staff members in 2017.

This third stage of provincialisation focuses on all non-provincial academic institutions, including venture LP, UP/ME, high, and senior secondary schools, as well as degree colleges. The Chief Minister clarified that



the base year for the establishment of these institutions has been set as prior to January 1, 2006.

To apply, institutions must submit comprehensive documentation, including permission or recognition certificates, land documents, a declaration of pass percentages from the last four years, and detailed information regarding every teaching and non-teaching staff member.

Furthermore, the Chief Minister announced that the Government has made a spe-

cific provision in this year's Vote-on-Account Budget for the 'Gurudakshina' scheme. Under this initiative, teaching and non-teaching staff whose services cannot be provincialised will be provided with a financial package. The Government also intends to introduce a 'preferential marking system' to assist these individuals when applying for other Government jobs, ensuring a secured future for those who have dedicated years to venture academic institutions.

The Chief Minister concluded by calling upon all stakeholders to extend their support to resolve issues pertaining to venture institutions and urged everyone concerned to make full use of the new digital facility. The event was attended by Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, who delivered the welcome address, alongside Assam State School Education Board Chairman RC Jain, Secretary of School Education Department SN Chowdhury, and Director of Secondary Education Mamata Hojai.

8th Indian Oil Flower Show begins in Noida

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Noida

Arvind Kumar, Director (Refineries) with Additional Charge of Director (Pipelines), Indian Oil inaugurated the 8th Flower Show at Indian Oil Nagar, Site-I, Noida on February 14, 2026. The two-day event showcased over 15,000 flowerpots featuring nearly 60 varieties of flowers, plants and shrubs, including new additions such as peony, hyacinth, hybrid hibiscus, lupin, obconica and cockscomb.

Flower Shows are traditionally organised across all Indian Oil refineries during this season every year,

reflecting the Corporation's continued commitment towards sustainability, green living, and nurturing local flora and fauna.

In his address, Arvind Kumar appreciated the efforts of participants and noted that the vibrant floral displays reflected their strong bond with nature. He shared that spending time amidst greenery brings peace, reduces stress and infuses positivity which is an essential need in today's busy professional lives. He also highlighted that the enthusiastic participation of families, especially children, strengthens township bonds and inspires confidence that the

future of the environment is in sensitive hands.

Competitions were conducted under 21 categories with more than 150 exhibits, including potted plants, balcony gardens, cut flower arrangements, buttonholes, "Best from Waste" (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). Children's drawing competition was also held.

The Chief Guest Arvind Kumar presented prizes across categories including the "Best Show" and "Queen of the Show" titles. The event also featured cultural programmes, where children performed beautifully on flower-inspired themes.



Arvind Kumar taking a tour of the Flower Show

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BRIEFLY

DLTA felicitates Indian Davis Cup team



The Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) has felicitated the Indian Davis Cup team for its outstanding win over the Netherlands in the Davis Cup on the sidelines of the ongoing Delhi Open. India, ranked 33rd at the time, upset the sixth-ranked Dutch team 3-2 in a thrilling tie in Bengaluru earlier this month to advance to the second round of the Qualifiers in September. During the felicitation on Tuesday night, DLTA President Rohit Rajpal said, "At DLTA, we remain committed to supporting and strengthening Indian tennis at every level. Celebrating our Davis Cup team is part of that larger vision." Sumit Nagal, who is through to the second round of the Delhi Open, reflected on the win while speaking to the media during the ceremony. "Everyone did a fantastic job. You go out there, you win your match and it gets easier and easier. In Switzerland, I got two points and this Bangalore tie, Yuki Bhambri and Dhakshinewar Suresh got all the points."

Dembele injured in PSG's 3-2 win against Monaco



Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) forward Ousmane Dembele's frustrating season continued when he came off with an apparent injury during the first half of the Champions League playoff against Monaco. Desire Doue came on for Dembele, scored twice and played a part in the other goal as PSG took a 3-2 lead into the return leg next Wednesday in Paris. Dembele was doubtful for the game because of a leg problem and came off in the 26th minute at Stade Louis II. The Ballon d'Or winner has been hampered by injuries this season. Shortly before coming off, television images showed him twice rubbing the back of his left calf and then pulling his sock down. Coach Luis Enrique said he did not take any risks by starting Dembele, who was PSG's top scorer last season with 35 goals. "We know what shape each player is in. No risk, he trained normally," Luis Enrique said. "We'll have to see if there's an injury. He took a knock in the first 15 minutes, then he couldn't run." PSG was trailing 2-0 when Dembele came off but rallied to be level 2-2 by half-time. Dembele was injured early in the season when playing for France and then came off in the first half in similar circumstances against Bayern Munich in November. Dembele also struggled with injuries at his former club Barcelona. Doue pulled a goal back for PSG two minutes later with a low shot into the bottom right corner. Doue cupped his hands over his ears when he celebrated as if to say he was blocking out recent criticism of his performances.

Jammu and Kashmir enter maiden Ranji Trophy final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kalyani (West Bengal)

Sixty-seven years after their maiden appearance, Jammu and Kashmir stormed into the Ranji Trophy finals for the first time on Wednesday, upstaging two-time former champions Bengal by six wickets in the semifinals here to add another historic chapter to a fairytale season so far.

Auqib Nabi's stunning nine-wicket match haul and their IPL star Abdul Samad's fearless strokeplay ensured that the side once labelled "perennial underachievers" now stands one step away from the title.

Chasing a modest 126 at the Bengal Cricket Academy ground, J&K rode on Samad's unbeaten 30 off 27 balls (3x6, 1x4) and rookie Vanshaj Sharma's composed 43 not out off 83 balls (4x4) as the pair stitched an unbroken 55-run stand for the fourth wicket to seal history on the fourth and penultimate day of the semifinal.

In a heartwarming gesture, Samad, who had done the bulk of the damage, allowed the 22-year-old Vanshaj to finish it in style, and the youngster launched Mukesh Kumar over long-on for six to spark wild celebrations in the visiting camp.

From strugglers to history-makers: Jammu and Kashmir had played 334 Ranji matches before this season, winning only 45. It took them 44 years to register their first victory, against



Services in 1982-83. Knockout appearances were rare. A breakthrough came in 2013-14 when they edged Goa on net run rate to reach the quarterfinals, and in 2015-16 they stunned Mumbai at the Wankhede Stadium under state icon Parveez Rasool.

But consistency eluded them for decades, as this season, under coach Ajay Sharma and captain Paras Dogra, they transformed belief into results.

After an opening loss to Mumbai, they bounced back with innings wins over Rajasthan and key victories against Delhi and Hyderabad to enter the knockouts. A dramatic 56-run win over Madhya Pradesh in the quarterfinal, powered by Nabi's 12/110, brought them to the semifinals for the first time.

Bengal's big names, bigger letdown: With four India internationals in Mohammed Shami, Akash Deep, Mukesh Kumar and Shahbaz Ahmed, and India A star batter Abhimanyu

Easwaran along with home advantage to boot, this was Bengal's game to lose.

They did exactly that after folding for 99 in 25.1 overs on day three, which set Jammu and Kashmir a paltry 126 to win. Resuming at 43/2 on the penultimate day, J&K lost an early wicket, but Bengal failed to sustain pressure despite Akash Deep's relentless 15-over morning spell (3/46) and Shami's probing 1/24 from 24 overs.

There were anxious moments when Shubham Pundir was cleaned up and Dogra edged behind — a low diving catch by Abishek Porel off Akash Deep was eventually upheld after review.

But Bengal looked fatigued and short of ideas once Samad counterattacked. The IPL batter, retained by Lucknow Super Giants, turned the tide in a single over against Akash Deep that fetched 18 runs.

He did not spare Shahbaz either, dancing down the

track to deposit him over mid-wicket and then through covers as J&K crossed the 100-run mark.

From there, shoulders dropped in the Bengal camp. The introduction of part-time options and a visible dip in intensity underlined a campaign that promised much but fizzled when it mattered most.

Nabi's season for the ages: The foundations of Jammu and Kashmir's win, however, were laid by Nabi.

"Last time we missed it in the quarters, but we did all the hard work, and we deserved it," said Nabi after winning the man-of-the-match. The 29-year-old pacer followed his 12-wicket match haul in the quarterfinal against Madhya Pradesh with another devastating effort, finishing with nine wickets in the match, including a five-for in the first innings, to take his season's tally to 55 wickets at an average of under 13.

Cricket tests you far more than it rewards you: Paras Dogra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kalyani (West Bengal)

With nine emotive words, Jammu and Kashmir's inspirational captain Paras Dogra encapsulated his 24-year grind, which also mirrored the team's incredible underdog story. Under his leadership, J&K defied odds to enter their maiden Ranji Trophy final with a six-wicket win over two-time champions Bengal here on Wednesday. "Cricket tests you far more than it rewards you," he said after helping the team to its first Ranji final after sixty-seven years of wait. "We just have to be stubborn. He added.

The 41-year-old skipper's words were a reflection of not just the match but a career built on resilience in a season in which he has helped transform a side considered "underdogs" for the longest time.

"We have to keep going. So, God has written that we will play in the final," he said after Jammu and Kashmir made the final, ending a 67-year wait since making their debut in 1959-60.

During the semifinal, Dogra also became only the second batter after Wasim Jaffer to cross 10,000 Ranji Trophy runs.

"*Kabhi socha nahin tha* (never thought I will get to this milestone). *Khelna pasand hai, baaki uparwala ne 10,000 run bana diya* (I just love playing and by the grace of God I could make 10,000), so I'm really very happy," he said.

Calling the landmark special but secondary to the team goal, he credited his colleagues and support staff for keeping him motivated at the fag end of his career. "Thank you very much for that. It felt good. I never thought I would do



It's a dream come true today: Manhas

KUSHAN SARKAR
■ New Delhi

Back in 2021, when current BCCI president Mithun Manhas became one of the administrators of a crisis-ridden Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA), he had to set things right in a body that was dealing with mismanagement and allegations of corruption.

On Wednesday, when the Jammu and Kashmir team created history by reaching its first-ever Ranji Trophy final, Manhas could afford to be a bit emotional. "It wasn't very easy at that time when I took over as the administrator. The then BCCI secretary Jay Shah gave me a free hand and told me to do whatever is needed to get Jammu and Kashmir cricket back on track," Manhas told PTI in an exclusive interaction after J&K's six-wicket win over two-time former champions Bengal in the Ranji



semifinal in Kalyani. "I was watching the match on TV and beating a side like Bengal that had players like Mohammed Shami and Akash Deep is a huge achievement. The cricketer in me is emotional as I ended my first-class career and also worked with the state unit there."

Talking about the team, Manhas said he always knew that talent was not an issue, but a proper setup was

needed to make things happen.

"I would give a lot of credit to Brigadier Anil Gupta, who has done a commendable job. When I took over, we conducted a talent hunt competition," he said, referring to his colleague in the BCCI sub-committee that oversaw J&K cricket administration back in the day. "You see left-arm seamer Sunil Kumar, who played a big role, is a product of that talent hunt. Having played nearly two decades in Delhi, I had an idea of what is required to succeed at this level.

We had a Cricket Committee that did a fine job, with honesty and transparency," Manhas, the Delhi legend with 9714 runs in 157 first-class games, said. Jammu and Kashmir still lacks good cricketing infrastructure but what Manhas and his committee were keen on was creation of playing conditions that would help the team compete with the best in the business. (PTI)

India eye win against Australia in second T20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Canberra

Aiming to establish an unassailable lead over Australia, Harmanpreet Kaur's India would draw confidence from a strong bowling performance in the rain-hit opening win when the two sides square off in the second and penultimate T20 International on Thursday.

It was a commanding display from seamer Arundhati Reddy, whose four-wicket haul rattled the hosts and spearheaded a superb bowling effort as Australia were unable to bat out their 20 overs and were bundled out for a below-par 133.

The bowlers enjoyed a solid workout as the long



series, also featuring three ODIs and a one-off Test, unfolded. On the batting front, only openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma managed meaningful time in the middle as rain played spoilsport and the match was decided by the Duckworth-Lewis System,

leaving the rest of the batting unit potentially a touch under-prepared.

But given India's formidable batting line-up and the fact that most of the players featured in the recently-concluded Women's Premier League, there is little concern about a failure as they carry

ample game time into the contest despite the rain-affected opener in Sydney.

India will once again bank on a blazing start from Shafali, the standout performer in last year's World Cup final against South Africa, and Mandhana's charismatic batting, followed by Jemimah Rodrigues. Rodrigues single-handedly knocked Australia out of the World Cup with a match-winning century under testing conditions in the semifinals.

With the Women's T20 World Cup in England later this year, the gruelling series here serves as a dress rehearsal for the global tournament, and clinching the three-match T20I rubber will give India a crucial head-start against the world's

most successful team. The performance of pace-bowling stalwart Renuka Singh, who bowled four miserly overs and claimed two wickets, was encouraging. Together with Arundhati, the duo accounted for six wickets — a huge boost for India, which has traditionally relied on the spin duo of Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani for success.

Australia, led by new skipper Sophie Molineux, will be eager for revenge and to level the series.

However, there would be immense pressure on their star-studded top order featuring some of the biggest names in world cricket, including Beth Mooney, Phoebe Litchfield, Ellyse Perry, and Ashleigh Gardner.

We had to wash dishes before going to play due to PHF, says Shakeel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Karachi

Pakistan hockey captain Shakeel Ahammad Butt has lashed out at the national federation after returning from a tumultuous tour of Australia during which his side didn't just have to roam the streets for lack of accommodation but also "wash dishes before going to play a match".

Butt told the media at the Lahore Airport early this morning that the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) had been telling them lies and "enough was enough". "We can't work with this current



management of the federation. When players have to clean the kitchen and wash dishes before going to play a match what result do you expect from us?" a livid Butt asked angrily.

The PHF has drawn severe criticism after the state-run Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) confirmed it had given them more than 10 million rupees to arrange hotel accommodation for the national team in Australia.

The Pakistan hockey team had to wait for 13-14 hours at Sydney airport before their onward flight to Canberra. More disturbing reports came in when the team checked into its hotel ahead of the FIH Pro League matches. The players were told that they had no bookings since no advance payment was made to the hotel management.

Court orders fresh elections in EFI

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered fresh elections in the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) and also called for the constitution of an independent ad-hoc administrative committee to oversee its functioning.

The matter was listed at item number 4 before Court 14 presided over by Justice Kaurav, who was hearing an application filed by the Union of India seeking the appointment of an ad hoc administrative committee to administer the affairs of the EFI.

The court was informed that the existing Executive Committee had been reinstated in view of the Paris



Olympics 2024 and that its tenure had since expired. The Rajasthan Equestrian Association submitted that elections to the EFI were long overdue.

The court was also apprised through a brief note that the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, has

come into force, providing a statutory framework for the governance of National Sports Federations (NSFs) in the country.

It was further informed that the National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026, have also been notified.

Vinicius Junior says he was racially insulted in Real Madrid win

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Madrid

The Champions League play-offs were overshadowed by claims of racism towards Real Madrid player Vinicius Junior in angry scenes after the Brazilian scored a brilliant winning goal against Benfica.

Play was halted when Vinicius claimed he had been racially insulted by an opponent during Madrid's 1-0 win. "He's been subjected to this a few times throughout his career, and he's handled it excellently. But for it to carry on and for it to happen tonight, it's a disgrace to football," Madrid defender Trent Alexander-Arnold told Amazon. Paris Saint-



Germain's title defence looked to be unravelling when 2-0 down in Monaco until Desire Doue came off the bench to inspire a 3-2 win. Galatasaray beat Juventus 5-2, and Borussia Dortmund won 2-0 against Atalanta.

Claims of racism in Benfica-Madrid clash: Vinicius had

ugly scenes that led to Vinicius informing referee Francois Letexier that a racist comment had been made. He appeared to point at Argentine player Gianluca Prestianni when complaining to the official, who crossed his arms to signal soccer's anti-racism protocol.

Prestianni had earlier approached Vinicius while covering his mouth with his jersey. Benfica coach Jose Mourinho, who also spoke to Vinicius, said his player denied the accusation of racism. "They told me different things," he said, adding that he wanted to be independent. But in reference to previous occasions when Vinicius has been subjected to racist taunts, Mourinho

said, "But there is something wrong because it happens in every stadium. The stadium where Vinicius played something happened. Always." Vinicius sat alone in the dugout before play resumed without any players being sent off as a result of his claims.

PSG survives scare: The defending champion is making hard work of its title defense. Failure to advance directly to the round of 16 after the league phase of the competition left Luis Enrique's team having to negotiate an all-French playoff against Monaco. And despite PSG's dominance of the French league, it found itself 2-0 down after 18 minutes at Stade Louis-II.

India end league stage with win over Netherlands

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ahmedabad

Shivam Dube played a momentum changing knock before Varun Chakravarthy produced another incisive spell to set up India's convincing 17-run victory over the Netherlands in their final league fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

Despite the top-order struggles against off-spinner Aryan Dutt, India managed to make a challenging 193 for six courtesy the fireworks from Shivam Dube (66 off 31) in the second half of the innings.

The Netherlands were always behind in the chase and doors on them were shut by Chakravarthy (3/14 in

3 overs), who did the damage in the powerplay as well as in the middle overs.

Staying true to his strength, the mystery spinner relentlessly attacked the stumps, removing Colin Ackermann and Aryan Dutt in successive balls in the 13th over to leave the Netherlands at 94 for four.

Soon after, a well set Bas de Leede and captain Scott Edwards were dismissed, snuffing out all hopes for the associate nation who ended their campaign with three losses and a solitary win.

Zach Lion-Cachet (26 not out off 16) and Noah Croes (25 not out off 12) made things more interesting in the death overs but were left with too



India's players celebrate after winning the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 cricket match between India and Netherlands

much to do despite collecting 18 runs from Hardik Pandya in the 19th over.

Expecting tougher battles ahead, Suryakumar Yadav chose to give the final over to Shivam Dube over Jasprit Bumrah. Despite two dropped catches, Dube was able to defend 28 off the last six balls as the Netherlands ended at 176/7 in 20 overs.

Overwhelming title favourites India now head into their opening Super 8 game against South Africa here as the only unbeaten team from Group A. However, they still have work to do against the spinners.

Opting to bat, India were hoping for Abhishek Sharma's return to form ahead of the Super 8, but the

left-hander had to endure his third consecutive duck in the tournament. In the form of his life not so long ago, he is yet to score a run in his maiden ICC event.

It was the off-spin of Namibia captain Gerhard Erasmus, Usman Qadir and Saim Ayub that had troubled the Indians in the previous league games. On Wednesday, it was the turn of Indian-origin offie Dutt to shine against a star studded home team at the world's largest cricket stadium.

On the eve of the match day, the Indian batters were focussed on their game against the spinners in the nets but going forward, they still have work to do.

While Dutt was the stand-

out bowler, the variations used by the Netherlands pacers also tested the Indians.

Dutt, who is used to opening the bowling, was employed for three overs in the powerplay to counter the left-handed trio of Abhishek, Ishan Kishan (18 off 7) and Tilak Varma (31 off 27).

Having played two dot balls in the opening over, Abhishek went for the pull off a faster ball from Dutt only to see his stumps disturbed.

The in-form Kishan was quick to get off the blocks before falling to Dutt in a bizarre fashion. Trying to dispatch Dutt on the leg-side, Kishan played on to his stumps with the ball ricocheting from his thigh and elbow.

Ricky Ponting rues lack of aura as Australia crash out of T20 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Former captain Ricky Ponting says the current Australian side lacked the aura that defined its past teams at global events and termed the country's early exit from the men's T20 World Cup as a "really poor campaign".

Speaking on the latest episode of the ICC Review, Ponting said the team on paper did not carry the same presence as previous Australian outfits that dominated ICC tournaments.

"You look at that Australian team on paper, it just doesn't look to have



that sort of aura around it that a lot of other Australian teams have going into ICC events and World Cups," Ponting said.

"You need to have your best players and your most

experienced players standing up and winning big moments for you in these tournaments if you want to go ahead and win and Australia haven't had that."

The former skipper pointed to underwhelming returns from the top order, including Cameron Green at No.3 and Tim David at No.4 in the latter matches, as well as a collapse against Sri Lanka where Australia lost six wickets for 20 runs in the closing overs.

Australia failed to qualify for the Super 8s after suffering a shock 23-run defeat to the Zimbabwe, a result Ponting felt effectively ended their campaign.

Sahibzada ton, bowlers lift Pakistan into Super Eights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Colombo

Pakistan rode on Sahibzada Farhan's scintillating, maiden hundred and their spinners' excellent display to beat Namibia by a handsome margin of 102 runs and enter the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup on Wednesday.

Batting first, Pakistan posted a formidable 199 for three in their must-win game.

Farhan, who needed just 20 deliveries to move from 50 to 100, ended on 100 not out off 58 balls, becoming only the second player from Pakistan to score a century in the tournament after Ahmed Shehzad's ton against Bangladesh in 2014 at Mirpur. In all, Farhan hit 11 bound-



Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan, right, celebrates his century during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Namibia and Pakistan in Sri Lanka

aries and four sixes while adding 67 runs with skipper Salman Agha (38 off 23 balls) and 81 runs with Shadab Khan (36 not out off 22 balls).

In reply, Namibia were all out for 97 in 17.3 overs with mystery spinner Usman Tariq (4/16 in 3.3 overs) and leg-spinner Shadab Khan (3/19 in

4 overs) leading Pakistan's charge with the ball, picking up four and three wickets respectively.

Salman Mirza and Mohammad Nawaz chipped in with a wicket each as Namibia fared miserably in the chase to finish their campaign winless after four outings.

With this win, Pakistan have also ensured their qualification to the next edition of the T20 World Cup, scheduled to be co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand in 2028.

This is also Pakistan's biggest margin of victory in the T20 showpiece.

Earlier, Pakistan managed 47 runs in the powerplay for the loss of Saim Ayub's (14 off 12 balls) wicket.

Seeking to recover from the heavy defeat to traditional rivals India, Pakistan strengthened their batting with the inclusion of Khawaja Nafay in the middle order while leaving out the woefully out-of-form pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi. While the team did get the occasional boundaries, their approach was far from ideal as they resorted to defensive batting, which pretty much explained why they were 55 for one after overs at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

However, skipper Salman Agha broke the shackles at the start of the ninth overs with a six off Willem Myburgh, the batter coming down the track to smack one over long-on.

Clinical West Indies eye final tune-up before Super Eights

TAPAN MOHANTA
Kolkata

Two-time champions West Indies will look to fine-tune their combination and deliver yet another clinical performance when they take on spirited debutants Italy in their final Group C match of the T20 World Cup, here on Thursday.

Though the Caribbean side has slumped since its second and last T20 World Cup triumph at this very venue a decade ago, it is beginning to peak at the right time in this edition of the global showpiece. As the business end approaches, the Darren Sammy-coached outfit appears to be finding rhythm for a demanding Super Eights schedule.

West Indies will face



Zimbabwe in Mumbai on February 23, South Africa in Ahmedabad on February 26, before returning here for a marquee clash against co-

hosts and title favourites India on March 1.

With that decisive fixture also at Eden Gardens, the Caribbean side would be keen to stamp authority and build momentum at a venue that has historically been kind to it. Skipper Shai Hope has rediscovered touch at

the top just in time.

After modest returns of 0 against England, and 19 versus Scotland, the opener responded with a fluent 44-ball 61 not out to steer a nine-wicket chase against Nepal in their previous outing.

Shimron Hetmyer has provided solidity and power in the middle-order and struck a 64 in their tournament-opener against Scotland at this venue. He followed it up with an unbeaten 46 against Nepal, scoring at brisk strike rates and lending stability to the innings.

Sherfane Rutherford has flourished in the finisher's role as the explosive left-hander struck at a strike rate of 200 in his last appearance here and produced a stunning 42-ball 76 not out to



Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe to battle for top spot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Colombo

Surprise package Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka will battle for bragging rights when they clash in a compelling T20 World Cup fixture here on Thursday, with both teams having already secured their spots in the Super 8s.

The outcome of this match will determine the group topper.

Sri Lanka have emerged as strong contenders, leveraging their knowledge of local conditions to defeat Oman and Ireland, while crushing Australia by eight wickets to establish themselves as a well-rounded side with the potential to go all the way.

Zimbabwe, on the other hand, claimed their spot in the Super 8s thanks to their giant-killing win over Australia and the weather, as their match against Ireland was abandoned. By virtue of the shared points, they ended Australia's hopes of advancing, becoming the unlikely qualifiers. Sri Lanka, led by Dasun Shanaka, are unlikely to relax despite already qualifying for the Super 8s, and will aim to maintain their winning momentum and top the group, which could give them a favourable match-

up in the next stage.

The return to form of opener Pathum Nissanka, who struck a timely century to help Sri Lanka chase down a steep target set by Australia in the previous Group B match, would have thrilled the Islanders, while the half-century of keeper-batter Kusal Mendis, who has been in sublime form with fifties in all three of Sri Lanka's games so far, added momentum to their campaign.

Opener Kusal Perera, however, has emerged as a weak link, scoring just a single in his first match of the tournament, continuing a run of poor form that has persisted since the T20 Tri-series in Pakistan last year.

Sri Lanka will rely on their veteran right-arm pacer Dushmantha Chameera, who has been able to extract pace from the sluggish pitches, while Matheesha Pathirana, though not in the best of wicket-taking form, can still unsettle any batter with his unique bowling action.

Traditionally strong in spin, the islanders boast a fully fit leg-spinner in Dushan Hemantha, alongside Maheesh Theekshana, who will provide ample support to the pacers.

Munsey reprimanded for breaching ICC rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

Scotland opener George Munsey has been reprimanded and handed one demerit point for hurling his helmet onto the advertising boards during their Group C T20 World Cup match against Nepal.

Munsey was found to have breached Article 2.2 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during an International Match." In addition to this, one demerit point has also been added to Munsey's disciplinary record, and it was the first offence in a 24-month period for him.

The episode occurred at



the conclusion of the 10th over of Scotland's innings, when Munsey threw his helmet onto the advertising boards as he made his way back to the dressing room following his dismissal.

Munsey admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by David Gilbert of the ICC International Panel of Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

Brevis, bowlers make short work of UAE

KUSHAN SARKAR
New Delhi

Dewald Brevis warmed up nicely with some monstrous sixes as South Africa hardly broke sweat during a walk-in-the-park six-wicket victory over United Arab Emirates in their final group league fixture of the T20 World Cup on Wednesday.

Chasing a target of 123, the Proteas romped home in 13.1 overs with Aiden Markram smashing 28 off 11 balls to set the stage for young Brevis who also helped himself to a 36 off 25 balls.

Ryan Rickleton hit some lusty sixes to get 30 off 16 balls in an all-round effort. With the big Super Eights match against India coming up on Sunday, South Africa needed Brevis to fire, and he did have a good session out there in the middle. The pull off a bouncer sent down by wrong-footed left-arm seamer Muhammad Jawadullah was a treat for the eyes.

Brevis quickly went onto the backfoot and pulled it from above eyeline into the top tier of the square leg stand. When left-arm spinner Haider Ali tossed one outside the off-stump, Brevis thumped



it over extra cover into the Hill B of the Feroz Shah Kotla stands. The two shots were indicators that Brevis was in prime form. He then picked up a slower one from Mohammed Arfan to dispatch it into the cow corner as South Africa finished proceedings in a jiffy.

Earlier, young Alishan Sharafu led a charmed life with double reprieves but Anrich Nortje, playing his first match of the tournament, bowled quick and straight to restrict UAE to 122 for 6 in stipulated 20 overs.

With Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen rested before the India game in Ahmedabad on Sunday, Nortje (2/28 in 4 overs) and Corbin Bosch (3/12 in 4 overs) bowled short and quick consistently as the UAE batting unit never really looked in control of the situation.

While Sharafu managed a 38-ball 45 with five fours and a six, he was lucky due to the 'butter-fingered' Proteas fielders, who dropped two catches. With conditions overcast and floodlights being put on, Aiden Markram was spot on in opting to bowl and unleash his pace battery on the minnows by making use of the underlying moisture.

Although skipper Muhammad Waseem (22 off 12 balls) and Aryanah Sharma moved a bit from the line of quick deliveries and got a few boundaries in the process using the pace, it was left-arm spinner George Linde, who got the first breakthrough. (PTI)

Really tough for Associates to get more exposure, need to work together: Cricket Scotland CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

A crowded cricket calendar makes it "really tough" for Associate nations to get more exposure against established teams, Cricket Scotland CEO Trudy Lindblade has conceded.

Scotland were initially not a part of the 20-team roster for the T20 World Cup but

Bangladesh's refusal to play in India led to their inclusion. Placed in Group C, Scotland ended their four-match campaign placed third, with one win and three defeats.

"It is really tough because that crowded schedule is making it tougher for those of us to get more content," Lindblade told reporters after Scotland's loss to Nepal in

their final match here on Tuesday.

"We need to work collectively. We have all the Associate members that are playing here in this tournament. We talk regularly, we meet, and one of the things that we used to have was someone within the ICC that could help bring us together. "We all have our own indi-



vidual targets and metrics of what we want to play, but other ways that we can also do it is together... A consolidated front, a united front," she stressed.

Lindblade said Associate nations can improve with more top-flight cricket on regular basis, not just by playing against top teams.

"We've all been consistent

in terms of what we want - more cricket on a more regular basis, playing against the top teams. You don't always have to play the England and Australias of the world. We want to play a mix of teams because that will help improve our cricket," she said.

Lindblade said Scotland, like other Associates, have to come up with solutions to the

problem while underlining cricket's global growth. Cricket Scotland is one of the founding members of the European T20 Premier League along with boards of Ireland and Netherlands.

"We've got a new franchise league coming into Europe with the European T20 Premier League later this year and that is so exciting for us, because