cultural

marching

contingents.

1950.

Prime

several

Kartavya Path.

senior

indigenous weapon systems,

and a stunning array of performances, reflecting both

India's rich heritage and its

strides towards a future of

President Droupadi Murmu,

as the supreme commander of

the armed forces, took the

salute from the marching

President Prabowo Subianto,

president to attend India's

Republic Day, was the chief

guest. The first Indonesian

president, Sukarno, had been

the chief guest at India's

inaugural Republic Day in

Modi, Vice President Jagdeep

Dhankhar, Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh, along with

foreign diplomats, and other

top officials, were present as

spectators along both sides of

Minister Narendra

Union ministers,

military officials,

fourth

Indonesian

Indonesian

strength and self-sufficiency.

Established 1865

the meet

NEW DELHI, MONDAY JANUARY 27, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹4

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FROM: DELHI I LUCKNOW I BHOPAL I BHUBANESWAR I RANCHI I RAIPUR I CHANDIGARH I DEHRADUN I HYDERABAD I VIJAYWADA



Uttarakhand govt implements UCC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE DEHRADUN/NEW DELHI

ttarkhand is all set implement Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on Monday, making it the first state to make it a law that will bring uniformity in society while ensuring equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said all preparations to implement UCC, including getting approval of the rules for the implementation of the Act and training of officials concerned, have been The Uniform completed. Civil Code (UCC) Act was notified on March 12, 2024, after presidential assent.

Dhami said the UCC will bring about uniformity in society and ensure equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens. "The Uniform Civil Code is just an offering made by our state in the great 'yagya' being performed by the prime minister to make

the country a developed, organized, harmonious and self-reliant nation," he said in a statement.

"Under the UCC, an attempt has been made to bring uniformity in all laws related to personal civil matters that discriminate on the basis of caste, religion and gender," Dhami said

The UCC has been on the BJP's agenda nationally for many years. But the party's government in Uttarakhand became the first to take a concrete step towards implementing it just before the Lok Sabha elections last year. Now, the UCC Act of . Uttarakhand might serve as a template for other BJP-run states to enact similar legislation.

Implementation of UCC was a major commitment of the BJP in the run-up to the 2022 polls assembly Uttarakhand which saw the party storm to power for a second consecutive term.

Continued on page 2 | Path,



Tableaux of West Bengal is seen among others during the 76th Republic Day parade, in New Delhi, Sunday

boulevard of the national capital.

The tableau displayed a battlefield scenario, demonstrating a synchronised operation in land, water and air with the indigenous Arjun battle tank, Tejas fighter aircraft and Advanced Light Helicopter. The theme of the tableau was Shashakt aur Surakshit Bharat (strong and secure India).

The parade commenced with President Murmu taking the salute shortly after she and Subianto, flanked by the Indian president's bodyguards, arrived at Kartavya Path in a "traditional buggy".

In a display of diversity of the In a first, a tri-services tableau, country, 300 cultural artists, depicting the broader spirit of dressed in colourful attire, "jointness" among the armed heralded the Republic Day forces, rolled down Kartavya parade, marching to the tune centrepiece of 'Saare Jahan Se Acchha'. The

artists were playing musical instruments from different parts of the country.

The first Army contingent leading the mounted column was 61 Cavalry, led by Lieutenant Ahaan Kumar. Raised in 1953, 61 Cavalry is the only serving active horsed cavalry regiment in the world. It was followed by nine mechanised columns and nine marching contingents.

Tank T-90 Bhishma, NAG missile systems, the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, the Pinaka multi-launcher rocket system, the Agnibaan multibarrel rocket launcher, the Akash weapon system, the integrated battlefield surveillance system and allterrain vehicle Chetak were among the key displays by the mechanised columns.

Light specialist vehicle vehicle-mounted

infantry mortar system Airawat, quick reaction force vehicles Nandighosh and Tripurantak and the shortspan bridging system were also on display.

marching The Army's contingents included the Brigade of the Guards, the Jat Regiment, the Garhwal Rifles, the Mahar Regiment, the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles Regiment and the Corps of

The Indian Navy's contingent consisted of 144 personnel led by Lieutenant Commander Sahil Ahluwalia as the contingent commander and Lt Commander Indresh Choudhary, Lt Commander Kajal Anil Bharani and Lt Devender as platoon commanders. It was followed by the Naval

tableau, depicting a strong 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant)

displayed many home-grown critical systems technologies developed by it.

Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

Navy, capable of protecting

newly-commissioned

indigenous frontline state-of-

the-art combatants, including

destroyer INS Surat, frigate

INS Nilgiri and submarine

INS Vaghsheer, highlighting

India's rapid progress in

indigenous warship design

The Indian Air Force's (IAF)

contingent comprised four

officers and 144 personnel, led

Mahender Singh Garati. It was

followed by a fly-past by three

MiG-29 aircraft in 'Baaz

Another highlight of the

parade was the veterans

tableau on the theme 'Viksit

Bharat ki Ore Sadaiv Agrasar',

a heartfelt tribute to the

unwavering spirit of the ex-

servicemen towards the

Squadron

and construction.

formation'.

India's maritime interests. The tableau showcased the

The tableau, with the theme Raksha Kavach — Multi-layer Protection against Multidomain Threats, featured the quick reaction surface-to-air missile, the airborne early warning and control system, the 155 mm/52-calibre advanced towed artillery gun

system and the drone detect,

deter and destroy system.

nation. Several veterans who brought glory to India in sports were also part of the

Representing Nari Shakti;

(women power) at the parade

were veteran women officers

Lieutenant Commander Mani

Agarwal and Flight Lieutenant

In its tableau, the Defence

Research and Development

Colonel

(DRDO)

Randhawa,

parade.

Lieutenant

Ruchi Saha.

Organisation

Ravinderieet

It also showcased the satellitebased surveillance system, medium power advanced Arudhra, lightweight torpedo, electronic warfare system Dharashakti, the laser-based directed energy weapon, the very short range air defence system and the unmanned aerial system. It was for the time that

Pralay missile system was showcased. A 352-member marching and band contingent from Indonesia also participated in the Republic-Day parade. This was the first time that an Indonesian marching and band contingent participated in a national-day parade

abroad.

indigenously-developed

Continued on page 2

India-Indonesia talks focus on **South China Sea**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Tndia and Indonesia have Ipitched for a "full and effective" code of conduct in the South China Sea in international laws China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region. The situation in the South China Sea figured in wideranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on Saturday, according to a joint statement. In their meeting, the two sides agreed to position a liaison officer from Indonesia at India's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR). The Indian Navy established

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, right, is seen during the exchanging of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indonesia at a press meet File photo: PTI

the IFC-IOR in Gurugram in 2018 to keep track of shipping traffic as well as other critical developments in the region collaborative under framework with like-minded countries.

Modi and Subianto, while strongly condemning terrorism in all its forms, vowed to enhance India-Indonesia anti-terror cooperation and called for concerted global efforts to combat the menace without any "double standards".

Both the leaders called upon all countries to take concerted action against UN-proscribed terrorist organisations and their affiliates, the statement released on Sunday said.

The Indonesian president arrived here on Thursday on a four-day visit. Subianto was the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations at the majestic

Kartavya Path on Sunday. Continued on page 2

Irani calls for support to end AAP's failures | India to standardise time using atomic clocks

SAUMYA SHUKLA I NEW DELHI

In her maiden speech ahead of the Delhi assembly elections, Former Union Minister and senior BJP leader Smriti Irani on Sunday warned women of AAP leaders compromising with their security, asking them to not fill forms with their details for 'Mukhyamantri Mahila will be lying with a 'Kabbadi' or 'sharabi' in a public meeting in

Campaigning for the party candidate Manish Chaudhary, who has been pitted against sitting AAP MLA Amantullah Khan, Irani alleged, "I want to tell you that the forms that the AAP leader had made you fill are now in scrap. I am here to warn you that details about your name, phone number, home address and family

members are now lying with scrap the Accusing ruling party of compromising with

the safety and security of women, she said, 'Won't this make a dent in your family's security? I am asking my brothers that if any AAP leaders or workers come to your house asking for details about the women in your family, remember that it will be lying around with a

'Kabbadi' (scrap dealer) or 'sharabi' (alcoholic) She also slammed the AAP for not fulfilling its promise of providing clean drinking water to the people. "People in Madanpur Khadar have to buy

water. The Aam Aadmi Party which promised clean provide drinking water to the public is now known for its 'liquor scam' all around the nation

today," she added. Taking a jibe at AAP for being involved in the alleged money laundering linked excise policy scam, she said, Those who have no time from liquor scams, how will they provide clean water to the She added that this is why

get their clean drinking water from the Modi government. Even though they praise themselves, you only see locks on 'Mohalla Clinics'. Today, Manish has guaranteed that we will bring Ayushman Bharat yojana for you. But you have been kept devoid of this scheme for the last 10 years," the former Lok Sabha MP said "They take their family members to big hospitals to get treatment but when people go to Mohalla Clinic they find locks. We will give you Rs 10 lakhs in the Ayushman Bharat Yojana and this will not be limited to just Delhi, you can go to hospitals across the nation and get yourself treated in 28,000 hospitals for more than 1,300 diseases," she

people will vote for BIP and

Continued on page 2

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

Tn a push to standardise **I**timekeeping practices

the nationwide, Union government is deploying atomic clocks to ensure the time shown on your digital watch, smartphone and laptop is based on Indian Standard Time (IST)-an effort launched more than two decades after the Karoil war. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs comprehensive proposed norms for standardising timekeeping practices including mandating the Indian Standard Time (IST) as the sole temporal reference for administrative, commercial and official documents. This has been proposed through the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2024. The draft, released by the consumer affairs ministry, is open for public feedback until February 14. Currently, most software operating modules in India are rely on US-based Network Time Protocol server.

The draft rules emphasize the mandatory use of IST, defined as 5 hours and 30 minutes ahead of Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). The CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL) is identified as the custodian of responsible for its maintenance and ensuring its traceability to Coordinated



Universal Time (UTC) provided by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) located in Sevres, France. Additionally, the rules define the second, the base unit of time, using the internationally recognised cesium-133 atomic clock standard.

The initiative aims to enhance time precision in critical infrastructure such telecommunications, banking, defence, and emerging technologies like 5G and artificial intelligence.

The proposed rules require IST to be the mandatory time reference for all sectors, including commerce, transport, legal contracts, public administration, and financial operations. Public institutions and government offices will be required to display IST prominently, with time-synchronization systems ensuring accuracy, reliability, and cybersecurity. The Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2024, aims to establish a legal

framework for standardising timekeeping practices, mandating IST as the sole time reference for administrative, commercial, and official documents. "Indian Standard Time shall be the mandatory time reference across all sectors, including commerce, public transport, administration, legal contracts, and financial operations," as per the draft rule.

provisions include, prohibition of time references other than IST for official and commercial mandatory display of IST in government offices and public institutions and requirement time-synchronization systems to ensure reliability, availability, and cybersecurity. "All government offices and

public institutions shall display Îndian Standard Time (ÎST) on all time-keeping devices, ensuring synchronization through reliable sources like Network Time Protocol (NTP) or Precision Time Protocol (PTP) or any other source. Necessary guidelines or advisories implementation shall be issued by the Central Government om time to time" rule said.

Exceptions will be allowed for specialised fields such as astronomy, navigation, and scientific research, subject to

prior government approval. Indian Standard Time (IST) shall be the mandatory time reference across all sectors, including commerce transport, administration, legal contracts, and financial operations. No person or entity shall use display, or record time other than Indian Standard Time (IST) for official or commercial Provided that any law in force or order or government direction or guidelines permits the same. Provided further

display of time of other countries or zones mentioning clearly the name of country or zone with display of IST is permitted which is not used for any legal, administrative and official purposes, the draft

rule said. Continued on page 2

DGCA urges airlines to cut Kumbh fares

An aerial view of devotees at Sangam during the Mahakumbh festival, in Prayagra

demand.

BISWAJEET BANERJEE LUCKNOW

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) urged airlines rationalise airfares Prayagraj, citing concerns over skyrocketing ticket prices as demand surges during the ongoing Maha Airlines such as SpiceJet have

ramped up operations, with the DGCA approving 81 additional flights in January, bringing the total number of flights to Prayagraj to 132. Despite the increase, airfares have soared, with some passengers reporting ticket prices nearly tripling.

'I usually pay around ?4,000 for a round trip from Delhi to Prayagraj, but this time, it's "Fares have gone through the over ?12,000," said Rajeev roof. Even with extra flights,

Mishra, a businessman travelling for the Maha Kumbh. "It feels like airlines are taking advantage of the situation. Travel agents echo this sentiment, pointing to the

"Fares have gone through the

unprecedented

availability is limited, and airlines are charging a premium," said Praveen Singh, a travel consultant in Lucknow The DGCA, in a post on X on

Saturday, emphasised the

need for airlines to address

this issue. "Airlines have been

urged to increase capacity

A meeting with airline representatives was held on January 23 to discuss fare control measures. According to travel portal Ixigo, fares for Delhi-

further and rationalise fares

accessible," the regulator said.

make travel more

Prayagraj flights alone have increased by up to 21%. "The disheartening, especially for devotees who have been planning this pilgrimage for years," said Sneha Gupta, a homemaker who had to alter her travel plans due to high costs.

The Maha Kumbh, which began on January 13 and will conclude on February 26, continues to attract millions of devotees, pushing airlines and regulators to strike a balance between capacity and

affordability.

Driver abused by cop honoured on R-Day the traffic control room but no

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE KANPUR

An autorickshaw driver allegedly harassed by a traffic police personnel last month was invited as a special guest to the Republic Day function in this Uttar Pradesh district on Sunday.

The driver, identified as Rakesh Kumar Soni (49), received an invitation to attend the function from Kanpur District Magistrate Jitendra Pratap Singh following a public hearing in which he had recounted his ordeal.

A resident of Hanumant Vihar, Soni had shared his experience with the district magistrate three days before

the event. Soni's autorickshaw had become stuck in traffic near

Naubasta on December 30,

attempted



Baradevi.

manoeuvre his vehicle, Ishwar Singh — the traffic sector incharge — allegedly hit the autorickshaw with a stick, tore the curtain, and verbally abused him, Soni had alleged. He had claimed that the traffic personnel police attempted to force a plastic baton into his mouth.

Soni had claimed that he

lodged a complaint through

he had appealed to the thendistrict magistrate Rakesh Kumar Singh to allow him to be euthanised at the Gandhi statue on Republic Day. Subsequently, an inquiry was

action was taken. In response,

conducted by Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Archna Singh. However, no action was initiated before the thendistrict magistrate transferred.

When Jitendra Pratap Singh assumed office as district magistrate, Soni decided brought the matter to his attention. Hearing Soni's appeal, Jitendra Pratap Singh had said such treatment of any citizen was unacceptable and invited him to attend the Republic Day function. Soni received a formal invitation for the event on Saturday.

TMC defends Mamata as RG | Odisha minister burgled **Kar Parents criticise CM**

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress including including Minister Firhad Hakim, has launched a merciless diatribe against the parents of the victim, a lady doctor from the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder case, for demanding Chief Minister Banerjee's Mamata resignation, holding her responsible for a botched investigation.

"Everyone has sympathy for the parents of the victim... but now they are talking beyond their limits... They are under the influence of some political forces and have been politicizing the issue... They are behaving as though they are the ones who made Mamata Banerjee the Chief Minister of Bengal... The Chief Minister is there not by their mercy, but by the people of Bengal. It is not the parents of the victim, but the people of Bengal who made her the Chief Minister... so they should remain within their limits, or else they will lose the sympathy of the people,' said Hakim, considered the senior-most man in the State Cabinet.

Another senior TMC leader, Kunal Ghosh, said, "The parents of the deceased doctor are being used by forces who want to defame. malign, and plot a conspiracy against the Mamata Baneriee government and derail the process of justice for narrow causes... I urge them not to be used by any quarter." He also pointed out the inconsistency in the parents' stance, saying, "It's strange that today they are criticizing the Kolkata Police, which arrested Sanjoy Roy, and the next day they are attacking

A postgraduate lady doctor was found brutally raped and murdered in the early hours of August 9 inside the Seminar Hall of the Chest Medicine Department at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital (RGKMCH), a facility

women marching contingent

of the Central Reserve Police

Force (CRPF), led by

The Assam Rifles contingent

was led by Captain Karanveer

Singh Kumbhavat of 29

Assam Rifles. It comprised

soldiers recruited from all

The camel contingent of the

Border Security Force (BSF)

was under the command of

The all-girls marching

contingent of the National

Cadet Corps (NCC) was led

by Senior Under Officer Ekta

and

Directorate. The all-boys

marching contingent was led

by Senior Under Officer

Prasad Prakash Waikul of the

Maharashtra Directorate.

The National Service Scheme

(NSS) marching contingent

of 148 volunteers was led by

The Corps of Signals

Deepak from Punjab.

Kumari of the

Kashmir

Manohar Singh Kheechee.

Commandant

Commandant

Jammu

Ladakh

From page 1

Assistant

Aishwarya Joy M.

over the country.



credited with being the first private medical college in Asia during the late 19th century. The hospital later became a government facility. Frustrated by the poor investigation, the father of the victim had earlier demanded Banerjee's resignation, stating, "It is the Chief Minister who is responsible for the entire RG Kar incident... She has helped in the cover-up... She has done this to save her own people who were involved in this gruesome rape and murder... She has no right to continue

as the Chief Minister." Referring to the judgment passed by the Sealdah District and Sessions Judge, the father of the victim said, "I am not making these remarks out of the blue... It is very clear from the judgment passed by the judge... I call upon the critics to please go through the judgment to understand why I am saying this. The judicial remarks clearly show how evidence has been tampered with, how vital witnesses were not examined, and how the investigating agencies worked to suppress and tamper with the evidence... It also shows how they ignored questioning the people who were with my daughter in her final hours." Sessions Judge Anirban Das had convicted Sanjoy Roy to incarceration until death, disturbing some observations for investigating agencies.

Referring to the "52 questions

that we have placed in our

motorcycle rider display

Republic day parade features

women power and innovation

argument before the Supreme Court," the victim's mother asked why the senior IPS officers who were present at the crime scene and had misled the public and media about the people present at the scene had not been interrogated by the CBI for their conduct.

"The Chief Minister has to explain why the crime scene was not sealed... She has to explain why, from the footage of 68 people, only one person, Sanjoy Roy, was identified as the sole perpetrator of the crime... Why did the police burn the body in a hurry?" she asked. "Why were the other three DNA samples found on the victim's body not examined?" She also wondered why, despite repeated requests, the CBI had not questioned Mamata Banerjee as a witness.

She claimed that while the CBI did not act on the alleged suppression of facts, the state administration had failed to protect a woman medic at her workplace.

While both the State Government and the CBI, as the main prosecutor, had moved the Calcutta High Court seeking a death sentence for Roy, the parents had moved the Supreme Court seeking permission for the High Court to examine the questions raised by them. The Apex Court, which had earlier suo motu called for the case and monitored its investigation, had yet to vacate its order.

India to standardise time using atomic clocks

From page 1

team, famously known as Among the contingents 'The Dare Devils', carried out marching down Kartavya breath-taking stunts during a Consumer The team showcased its bravery and determination through a number of formations, including Bullet Salute, Tank Top, Double Jimmy, Devils Down, Ladder mechanism. Shatrujeet, Shraddhanjali, Mercury

> and Human Pyramid. The celebrations ended with a thrilling fly past by 40 aircraft and helicopters of the The fleet included 22 fighter jets, 11 transport aircraft and helicopters. These included Rafale, Su-30,

Peak, Info Warriors, Lotus

Jaguar, C-130, C-295, C-17, AWACS, Dornier-228 and An-32 aircraft. helicopters were Apache and Mi-17.

The aircraft displayed a variety of formations, including Dhwaj, Ajay, Satluj, Rakshak, Arjan, Netra, Bheem, Amrit, Vajrang, Trishul and Vijay. The concluding Vertical Charlie manoeuvre was performed by a Rafale fighter aircraft.

Department National Physical Laboratory and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to

develop a robust time generation and dissemination The use of alternative timescales (GMT, etc.) is permitted for specific purposes such as astronomy, navigation, scientific research, etc. subject to prior permission and compliance with government directives.

The timescales shall be periodically audited to ensure compliance across sectors. Specific standards for synchronization accuracy, implementation reporting mechanisms shall be outlined in subsequent advisories or guidelines. Violations of the provisions of the Act or Rules shall attract

penalties including fines or other actions as determined by the authorised persons. Public stakeholders have been

invited to submit comments rice, drink water, and stand in and suggestions on the draft the sunlight for hours, it will rules by February 14. not turn into a meal.

of ₹50 Lakh in cash, gold

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

ash, gold ornaments and valuables worth more than Rs 50 lakh were stolen from the residence of former minister and senior Congress leader Niranjan Patnaik in Bhubaneswar's Nayapalli area on Sunday morning, police said.

reporters, Speaking Patnaik said the theft took place on the second floor while he and his wife were asleep on the first. Private security personnel were stationed on the ground floor and there was no one else was in the house at that time, he added.

"The thief entered the second floor, where my elder son and his family reside. However, they were not at home at that time," Patnaik added.

camera footage CCTV showed that the man entered the house around 2:40 am. He made his way to the second floor, entered a bedroom and stole gold ornaments and cash stored in Patnaik said, "It was

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan

Bhagwat on Sunday said

respected and cohesion is the

No one should be suppressed

and everyone should get an

opportunity to grow, he asserted while speaking after

unfurling the national flag at the Republic Day celebration

at a college in Bhiwandi town

of Maharashtra's Thane

district. Along with celebration, Republic Day is

an occasion to "remember our responsibilities towards the

Addressing the issue of diversity, Bhagwat said differences should be

respected and that "cohesion

is the key to living in

"Clashes are happening

outside Bharat due to

natural part of life. You can

you must be good to each

other. If you want to live, it

should be a cohesive living.

You cannot be happy if your family is unhappy. Similarly, a

family cannot be happy if the

town is facing trouble," he

Bhagwat emphasised the

importance of working with

knowledge

enterprising

important, but you must

always do your work with

knowledge. Any work done

without a proper thought does

not bear fruit but brings

trouble. A task done without

knowledge becomes the work

Explaining his point, Bhagwat

likened cooking rice to the

need for knowledge in any

"If you know how to cook rice,

you need water, heat and rice.

But if you do not know how to

cook it and instead eat dry

of a lunatic," he said.

own specialities

nation," he said.

harmony".

both

dedication.

"Being

key to living in harmony.

should

Rashtriya

differences

Swayamsevak

Otherwise, things could have

security measures in place across the city for the Republic Day celebrations. "Many prominent figures live in the Nayapalli area. If such a robbery can happen here, it raises concerns about the safety of ordinary citizens elsewhere in the state," he

Minister Mohan Chief Majhi talked to Charan Patnaik over phone and assured of strong action in the incident.

Based on a complaint, a case has been registered at Nayapalli police station and police have started investigation. According complainant, the thief stole gold ornaments worth Rs 50 lakh and Rs 2.50 lakh cash from the house.

After visiting the spot, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack police commissioner S. Dev Datta Singh said, "We have started

Respect differences, live in

essential," he said.

harmony: RSS chief Bhagwat

The RSS chief also spoke on

"If you drink water at a hotel

and leave, you may get insulted or dirty looks. But if

you ask for water in someone's

home, you are offered a jug full of water along with

something to eat. What's the

difference? There is faith and

dedication at home. Such work bears fruit," Bhagwat

said. The RSS chief also

stressed the importance of

equality, freedom and fraternity for the growth of individuals and the nation

'dhammachakra' (wheel of

dharma) on the national flag.

He said every person should

have the opportunity to grow

with respect for individuality

"We want individuals to grow,

and equality. No one should

should get an opportunity,

and with fraternity, people will grow and spread their

success in society," Bhagwat

Over the last 78 years, society

has made great strides, with

themselves and contributing

to the system that enables

everyone to grow, he said. The RSS chief said the

dhammachakra on the

national flag carries a

powerful message of equality,

"The dhammachakra on the

tricolour is not just a symbol,

but a message we must carry

in our everyday lives. It

embodies the values of mutual

respect and cooperation, as

defined by Dr Babasaheb

Ambedkar, and serves as a

reminder of our shared

responsibility for the nation's

On the significance of the

tricolour, Bhagwat said the

flag's design was a result of

thought

progress," he said.

careful

deliberation.

freedom and fraternity.

improving

freedom

symbolic

suppression.

diversity. We see diversity as a and for that, we need freedom

said.

individuals

highlighting the

significance of

the significance of faith and

dedication in everyday life.

Knowledge and dedication are "Its colours were chosen after

fortunate that no one was on the second floor at the time. $\,$ an investigation and hope to crack the case soon." crack the case soon."

The Congress leader also pointed out that the robbery took place despite heighter. Cuttack DCP Jagmohan conducted investigations. 'We have formed a special

> team to crack the case at the earliest. The thief will be arrested soon," Mishra said. Meanwhile, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) criticised the BJP government for failing to protect the lives and property of people of the state. 'Despite having a double-

> engine government, a theft took place in a senior politician's house on Republic Day. It raises equations on the safety and security of common men," BJD leader and MP Sulata Deo said.

Reacting to the allegation, BJP spokesperson Manoj Mohapatra said the incident is a reflection of what the present government has received from the previous BID government inheritance.

The situation will change

much consideration. The top

saffron represents sacrifice

and dedication, while white

signifies purity and the clean

way of doing things. The

dhammachakra in the centre

stands for mutual respect,

which is the essence of our

Reflecting on the country's

journey since independence,

Bhagwat noted how national

pride and respect were

initially uncertain, especially

after the setbacks faced in the

After independence, doubts

lingered. We had to retreat in

the war against China, and

respect for us was lost. But

after the 1971 war and the

successful Pokhran tests, our

reputation grew, and the

world began to respect us

Drawing a parallel between

personal and societal growth, Bhagwat said, "Those who

work for their family's

progress are respected. A

family that serves the village is

that produces good people is

revered, and if someone helps

the world, we bow before

He also highlighted the

contribution, saying, "Earning

for oneself is less important

than what one gives to others.

Bhagwat appealed to the

younger generation to achieve

greatness and use their success

for the betterment of the

"The RSS supports all the

good work in society. We do

not look at a person's background or colour; we

only support good deeds," he

said. Bhagwat said the

ongoing progress of Bharat in

areas such as economic

growth and national defence

is a result of the efforts of

dedicated individuals, though

much more needs to be done.

'Our country is progressing in

various fields, but we have a

long way to go. It is our

responsibility to make Bharat

a country of our dreams," he

selfless

even more respected

importance of

them."

country

India-Indonesia talks focus on South China Sea

1962 war with China.

again," he said.

culture," he said.



J and K celebrates Republic Day amidst tight security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The 76th Republic Day celebrations passed off peacefully across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday amid tight security arrangements. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha unfurled the National Flag at the UT-level function here at MA Stadium while a series of functions were held across the Kashmir division with great enthusiasm and patriotic fervor to mark the

Meanwhile, impressive Parades and mega-cultural events were organized across district headquarters, subdivision, tehsil and block levels across Jammu Kashmir. Indian army formations, stationed at different locations also unfurled the tricolor to mark the Republic Day celebrations.

Earlier, the Lieutenant Governor laid a wreath at the Police Martyrs Memorial & Balidan Stambh and paid tributes to the valiant martyrs of the Police, Army, and CAPFs who made the supreme sacrifice for the motherland.

In his Republic Day address to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, LG Sinha asserted that the Government of India was implementing a "whole of government approach" to eliminate co-terror networks and drug syndicates, ensuring that future generations were freed from drug addiction.

He said it was a collective responsibility to maintain peace and harmony, ensuring that the dreams of J&K youth were not hindered by divisive

Referring to the successful completion of the Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla Rail Link (USBŘL) project, LG Manoj Sinha said, "In a historic stride towards progress, the Railway

is set to connect the Kashmir Valley with the rest of the nation, heralding a new era of development, growth, and unity."

Giving credit to J&K citizens for the successful conduct of assembly elections, underscoring the positive change for the future of Jammu and Kashmir, the Lieutenant Governor said that the people were looking to the Government with renewed expectations, aspiring for an environment that promoted meaningful employment, sustainable development, social inclusivity, and robust economic growth – paving the way for an enhanced quality of

life for all. For further strengthening and ensuring participation at a broader level, elections for Local Bodies would be conducted for establishing a 3-tier governance structure, he announced.

Pointing out that J&K made significant strides in industrial development, investment, and employment generation in recent years, LG Sinha said that new policies, including the J&K Export Policy, J&K Logistic Policy, and J&K Procurement Preferences Procurement Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), were under preparation to further

boost economic growth. In Srinagar, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Sunday said that the promises made by the government will be fulfilled in

a phased manner.

In his Republic Day speech at Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar Deputy Chief Minister said that the promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders on the floor of the house regarding the restoration of statehood and protection of lands and jobs for the people of J&K, must be fulfilled now.

Nadda unfurls tri-colour, calls for India's progress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

PJP president J P Nadda on BSunday said India, as the "mother of democracy" and a republic, represents the world, as he called for strengthening the country's constitutional values.

Speaking at a Republic-Day event held at the Bharativa

Party Janata headquarters here, Nadda said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the vision of "Viksit Bharat" (developed India) has become a medium to uplift most of the downtrodden people in the society, embodying the spirit of "Antyodaya",

according to a statement

issued by the party.

Uttarakhand CM implements UCC

From page 1

The state cabinet recently approved the rules and regulations for UCC's regulations for implementation authorised the chief minister to decide a date for it. Dhami had ushered in the new year with a promise to implement it in January itself.

"We are celebrating 2025 as the silver jubilee year of statehood to Uttarakhand. It is going to be a year of big achievements. We have kept our promise of bringing a UCC. We will implement it in January," Dhami said on New Year's Day. "The New Year's Day. Gangotri of UCC will spring from Uttarakhand spread to the rest of the country," he had said.

The UCC seeks to establish a uniform and equal set of

rules on marriage, divorce, for citizens and officials, succession, and inheritance featuring for all citizens in the state, verification, except the scheduled tribes, irrespective of religion. It makes registration of all marriages and live-in relationships mandatory. Governor

subsequently the President have given their assent to the bill, making it an Act. As Uttarakhand is set to become the first state in independent India to implement uniform laws for all its citizens, Dhami dismissed Congress's allegations that UCC represents divisive politics, calling them baseless. "This is not any them divisive politics. UCC has a uniform system and uniform

law for all," CM said. According to officials, online portals have been developed the state government read.

Aadhaar-based AI-based translation services in 22 Indian languages, and data integration across more than departments/services birth-death registrations, district/high courts, etc.).

"The government has set separate fees for expedited registration under the Tatkal service. The registration and termination process for livein relationships has also been simplified. Termination applications by one partner will require confirmation from the other partner. In testamentary succession, wills can be uploaded on the portal for online registration, modification, revalidation, or revival," a statement from

From page 1

In their talks, the prime minister and the visiting leader also explored ways to boost India-Indonesia economic ties emphasised importance of expeditious implementation of an MoU inked by the two sides last year for the use of local currencies for bilateral transactions, according to the statement. Modi and Subianto were of the view that the use of local currencies for bilateral transactions would further promote trade and deepen financial integration between the two economies.

The joint statement, referring to the situation in the maritime domain, said the two leaders reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, stability, freedom of

navigation and overflight in the region. They also called for unimpeded lawful maritime commerce and promoting peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the

"In this regard, they supported the full and effective implementation of declaration on the conduct of the parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety and look forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive code of conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS," the statement noted. The ASEAN countries too have been insisting on a

binding code of conduct (COC) on the South China Sea largely in view of China's consistent attempts to assert its expansive claims over the

Beijing has been strongly opposing the COC. China claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons. However, several ASEAN member countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have counterclaims. In a ruling in 2016, the Permanent Court Arbitration at the Hague dismissed Beijing's claim to much of the South China Sea.

verdict. India has been pitching for a rules-based order in the region including through upholding adherence to international law,

China, however, rejected the

In their talks, Modi and Subianto also agreed to an early establishment of bilateral maritime dialogue and cyber security dialogue. The two leaders reaffirmed that India and Indonesia as maritime neighbours and strategic partners must continue to work to further deepen and

the

cooperation to a robust one,

the statement noted.

defence

broaden

especially the UNCLOS.

Both leaders welcomed the ratification of the agreement concerning cooperation in the field of defence (DCA) and expressed confidence that this would lead to further deepening of defence ties," it said. The two leaders also agreed to commence bilateral cooperation in hydrography

and submarine search and

Irani calls for support to end AAP's failures From page 1 Referring to the recent case of

Okhla MLA Amantullah Khan's son threatening police officers, she said, "I am astonished to see that while the MLA is filled with ego, his son is also seen threatening police officers. Was the police officer wrong? Did the son not break the law? He is breaking the law and threatening police officers, will the public just sit and watch? This is why I am asking you to press the button of lotus on election day so you get rid of this hooliganism." Irani, who was speculated to be the Chief Minister face in Delhi for the BJP, also held door to door campaigns in Rohini for the sitting BJP MLA and Leader of Opposition Vijendra Gupta.





DELHI DECIDES

Shah slams AAP, accuses of corruption, misgovernance

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday described AAP as 'Aawaidh Aamdaniwali Party', and alleged that the party did nothing but spread lies to get votes and indulged in corruption under Arvind Kejriwal's leadership during its 10-year rule in Delhi. In a 'Super Sunday' campaign

for the BJP ahead of the polls, party leaders including Lok Sabha MP Anurag Thakur, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Lok Sabha MP Ravi Kishan among other senior leaders addressed 20 public meetings and conducted over 100 organizational meetings. Addressing a public meeting in the Narela Assembly constituency, Shah accused Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of insulting Purvanchalis living in Delhi with their comments, besides alleging misgovernance in the capital under AAP's watch.

"Kejriwal only told lies to get votes. AAP means 'Awaidh Aamdaniwali Party' (party which makes illegal income). They fight elections in Punjab with Delhi's money, go to contest elections in Gujarat and also fight elections in Goa with Delhi's money," Shah said.

"He has not only created chaos but Arvind Kejriwal has also insulted the people from Purvanchal who have gone to every corner of the country and increased the honor of the country with their sweat. Poorvanchalis are called fake voters, so I want to ask that the



brothers and sisters from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand do not have the right to vote in Delhi," he alleged

The senior BJP leader accused Kejriwal of working to drive away the Purvanchal brothers and sisters from Delhi during the Corona period and said that Kejriwal used to say that they come with a ticket of Rs 500 and go after getting free treatment of Rs 5 lakh.

"I want to tell the people of Purvanchal that if BJP forms the government, we will ensure free treatment of Rs 10 lakh. The poor across the country are getting free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh under the Ayushman Yojana, but Kejriwal committed the sin of keeping the people of Delhi away from free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh," the

Union Minister said. Hitting out at the AAP chief for not cleaning Yamuna river, he said, "Kejriwal used to say that we will clean the Yamuna for Chhath Puja, but today it has been 10 years and I want to ask the Purvanchal brothers and sisters that can we take a dip in Yamuna while going for Chhath Puja, have the ghats been improved??'

"Being deceived by Kejriwal's promises, BJP state president took a dip in Yamuna and he fell ill and was admitted to hospital. Kejriwal did not take a dip but we made his cutout take a dip," he added.

Calling Kejriwal a 'liar', Shah added, "He protested with Anna in Anna Hazare's movement and he said that we are not political people and we will not form a political party, but he did. Then he says that we will not take the support of Congress but he did take the support.

Stating that governance in Delhi under Kejriwal's AAP worsened over the past 10 years, the home minister said, 'AAP's misgovernance will come to an end on February 8, when the BJP will come to power. Kejriwal, your government is on its way out soon and

the BJP is coming to the helm." Addressing a rally, BJP MP Anurag Thakur also attacked Kejriwal over the recurring deterioration in the city's air quality, witnessed in the past many years. Taking a dig at him, Thakur said Kejriwal came to Delhi "coughing" from Haryana 11 years ago and has since left the city "gasping for breath.'

"Eleven years ago, someone from Haryana came coughing into Delhi with a muffler wrapped around him. Now that same person wants Zplus security from two states, Thakur said.

"Neither Delhi's air is clean, nor its roads, nor its mountains of garbage, nor the Yamuna. This time, the AAP government will be cleaned out of Delhi too," he added, accusing Kejriwal of launching his political career as a corruption-crusader but indulging in the vice

He also termed Kejriwal "antiwomen" to allege "a man who can take a fake oath on his daughter's name cannot be trusted to work for your wel-

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also addressed public gatherings in Mundka, Krishna Nagar, and Karawal Nagar in support of BJP candidates Gajendra Daral, Dr. Anil Goel, and Kapil Mishra. He stated that Arvind Keiriwal will deceive Delhi women just as he did in Punjab but BJP will serve them like it does in Madhya Pradesh with the "Ladli Behna'



Kejriwal highlights AAP's welfare, BJP's billionaire backing

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Criticising the BJP-led Centre, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor on Sunday asked people to decide which model they choose to go with in Delhi--the 'Kejriwal model' or the 'BJP model' in which he said public money goes into the "pockets of their rich friends"

Emphasising the significance of the upcoming Delhi elections, he framed the contest as a battle between two divergent ideologies: the "Kejriwal Model," which prioritises public welfare and returns taxpayers' money to the people through transformative social schemes, and the "BJP Model," which he favours a select group of billionaires at the expense of the

Kejriwal alleged on Sunday that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government in Centre has waived off debts totaling to Rs 10 Lakh Crore of of about 400-500 industrialists " in the last five years. Kejriwal's remarks come at a time of fierce campaigning. Kejriwal said the Delhi Assembly polls were not just a contest for the national Capital but the entire country. "This election is about deciding how taxpayers' money should be spent. One ideology, represented by the BJP, uses public funds to waive loans worth thousands of crores for its close associates. The other, our AAP

model, focuses on providing free electricity, education, health care and transport to benefit the common man," Kejriwal said in what he said was a press conference on a "very" important issue.

"The BJP model gives people's money to its friends as loans and then writes off those loans in two to three years. In contrast, the AAP model provides direct benefits to the public, including welfare schemes worth nearly Rs 25,000 per month for each household in Delhi," he said.

He continued, "The public pays taxes. Even the poorest individuals contribute to taxes. When a poor person buys matchsticks, food items, or anything else, they pay GST and other taxes. Governments collect this money from the poor, middle-class, and wealthy. This election is about deciding how that money should be spent.'

Kejriwal also accused the saffron party of planning to end all welfare schemes initiated by AAP if it gains power in Delhi. The BJP has already clarified it will stop free electricity, free bus rides (for women), and other benefits provided by the Delhi government. I ask the people, will they be able to bear this cost if the BJP is elected?" he said.

Kejriwal also lashed out at the BJP for labelling welfare measures as "freebies", alleging that the saffron party was trying to create guilt among the middle class while itself offering massive concessions to big businesses."When the BJP waives loans worth thousands of crores for its friends, is that not a freebie?" he asked. Highlighting the Kejriwal

model of governance, AAP chief said, "Public funds are spent on people's welfare, under the 'Kejriwal Model or AAP Model. On the other hand, government money is used for billionaire friends, under the 'BJP model.' What is the BJP model? In the last five years, the BJP government waived loans worth Rs10 lakh crore for approximately 400-500 of their billionaire friends. Recently, it was revealed that a person with a debt of Rs47,000 crore was let off by settling it at Rs450 crore, essentially providing a benefit of Rs46,500 crore to a single individual. Another person with a debt of Rs6,500 crore had Rs5,000 crore waived, and the rest was settled for Rs1,500 crore. It is unclear whether even this amount was fully recov-

The AAP is fighting to secure a third consecutive term, while the BJP and Congress are determined to break the party's hold on power. The election campaign has seen heated exchanges between the top contenders. One of the flashpoints has been the issue of the Yamuna River's pollution.

BJP accuses AAP for fake calls to voters to spread fear, confusion

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday accused AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal of orchestrating hoax calls to mislead voters across constituencies, including the New Delhi constituency, člaiming that there were "cancelled" by the BJP and alleged charges of 'voter intimidation, threats, and vote-buying' by the ruling party and its convenor.

Addressing a press conference, BJP New Delhi candidate Parvesh Verma, who has been pitted against Kejriwal, played an audio recording of one such call, in which a person was heard saying, "Your vote has been cut by the BJP. AAP will ensure you get your vote back," and urged the receiver to support the AAP.

'Arvind Kejriwal is set to lose in New Delhi and across Delhi, where almost all of his candidates face defeat. On February 8, BJP will form the government in Delhi."

He accused AAP of creating confusion and fear among voters out of desperation. "They are misleading citizens with fake phone calls, claiming that existing schemes will be scrapped, despite Prime Minister Modi's clear assurance that all welfare schemes will continue and benefit the poor.'

He added, "New Delhi voters are receiving calls from Kejriwal's office saying their votes have been removed by the BJP and later another call claims that Kejriwal has reinstated their votes. I ask Kejriwal - where did you get this voter data?"

Singh alleged that Kejriwal has done nothing for Delhi in 11 years and is using fear tactics because he is losing the election. He also accused AAP of buying votes in the New Delhi Assembly for Rs 500 and showed a video of an AAP worker distributing Rs 500 notes inside calendars to slum resi-

Singh claimed that multiple vehicles from Punjab have been spotted in Delhi, with people allegedly brought in from Punjab to assist Kejriwal. He said, "Kejriwal received Rs 30 crore in MLA funds in five years but spent only Rs 6 crore, letting Rs 24 crore lapse. Had he utilized these funds properly, he wouldn't need to resort to distributing money now.'

Delhi LG calls election a responsibility

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With Delhi on the brink of an important election, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar saxena marked the 76th Republic Day of India with a powerful message highlighting the upcoming vote as a critical decision-making moment for the city's future, stating that we will not just choose a government but a system that will influence every aspect of our lives for the next five years including the cleaning Yamuna river.

In his address to the people of Delhi, he underscored the importance of this election and a special significance for Delhi. In a few days from now, we will elect our new government. We must remember that we will not just choose a government but a system that will influence every aspect of our lives for the next five years.'

Saxena added, "We will decide what the health system, education system, transport system, roads, sanitation and water, and employment availability of our city will be like in the next five years. Our vote will determine what steps the next government will take to tackle air pollution in Delhi, clean the Yamuna, and ensure the welfare of every citizen of Delhi, including the weaker sections."

The Governor began by extending his heartfelt greetings to the citizens of India and particularly to the people of Delhi. He also expressed his gratitude to the Armed Forces, Paramilitary Forces, and the Police for their service and sacrifices. He reminded the public that Republic Day is an opportunity to reaffirm the core values of democracy enshrined in the

AAP to launch manifesto for polls

STAFF REPORTER

The AAP will launch its manifesto for the upcoming Delhi elections on Monday which is expected to feature all its poll promises with the party vying to secure a full third term even as riding on an anti-incumbency wave.

According to party sources, AAP supremo and former Chief Minister Arvind Keiriwal will launch his party manifesto at 12:00 in the afternoon. In the realm of monetary benefits, the AAP has already introduced the Mahila Samman Yojana, offering Rs 2100 to eligible women. AAP

Yojana' for senior citizens aged 65 and above to ensure treatment in both government and private hospitals. AAP has pledged Rs 1 lakh for

has launched 'Sanjeevani

auto drivers' daughters' marriages and insurance schemes for auto drivers. Additionally, the ruling party has promised free bus travel for women and students. It has also promised to continue its scheme of free electricity up to 200 units and promised to give a 50 per cent subsidy rebate if the total consumption in a month goes above 200 units.

The party has also promised to cover tenants in Delhi under its free electricity and water February 8.

scheme. The AAP chief also announced that if AAP retains power in Delhi, Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) will be given money to hire private security guards.

The BJP has already released its manifesto in three parts with the Union Health Minister and party president J P Nadda, Lok Sabha MP Anurag Thakur and Union Home Minister Amit Shah releasing the first, second and third part of the manifesto respectively. Polling for all the 70 Assembly

seats in Delhi will be held on February 5, with the votes set counted on

Beating Retreat traffic advisory announced

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has issued an advisory regarding elaborated traffic arrangements on Monday and Tuesday for the rehearsals of Beating Retreat ceremony which will be held at Vijay Chowk on January 29. According to the advisory, Vijay Chowk will remain closed for general traffic from 2 pm to 9.30 pm on Monday and Tuesday. The Beating Retreat ceremony marks the formal end of the Republic Day celebrations.

Traffic will be restricted on Rafi Marg (between round about Sunehri Masjid and round about Krishi Bhawan), Raisina Road (from round about Krishi Bhawan towards Vijay Chowk), beyond round about Dara Shikoh Road, round about Krishna Menon Marg, and round about Sunehri Masjid towards Vijay Chowk, and Rehman Road.

Kartavya Path (between Vijay Chowk and 'C'-Hexagon), the

Motorists and the general public are advised to take alternate routes including Ring Road, Ridge Road, Aurobindo Marg, Madarsa T-Point, Safdarjung Road, Kamal Ataturk Marg, Rani Jhansi Road, Minto Road, etc., it said. DTC and other city buses will

be diverted from their normal routes from 2 pm to 9.30 pm on Monday and Tuesday to facilitate the rehearsals and reduce traffic congestion in and around Vijay Chowk and India Gate, it said. Buses bound for Central Secretariat and Connaught Place coming from Shanti path, Vinay Marg-m, Sardar Patel Marg will take Panchsheel Marg, Simon Bolivar Marg, Vande Matram

Marg, round aboutShankar

Road, and Sheikh Mujilbur

Buses bound for Central Secretariat will terminate at Udyan Marg and return via Kali Bari Marg, Mandir Marg, and Shankar Road.

Connaught Place bound buses will take Mandir Marg, Kali Bari Marg, Baba Khadak Singh Marg and reach Connaught Place and return via Bhagat Singh Marg, Peshwa Road, Mandir Marg, Shankar Road and Vande Matram Marg. Buses bound for Old Delhi Railway Station, Red Fort and ISBT Kashmiri Gate coming from South side will take Ring Road from AIIMS towards Dhaula Kuan and then Ridge Road, Rani Jhansi Road, it said.

Buses bound from Old Delhi Railway Station, Red Fort and ISBT Kashmiri Gate coming from Ashram side will take Ashram Chowk- Ring Road towards Sarai Kale Khan and proceed further via Raj Ghat.

BJP threatens free healthcare, schooling in Delhi, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday claimed that voting for BJP will cost families Rs. 26,000 per month and shut schools, Mohalla Clinics, free bus travel, and other welfare schemes in a public meeting ahead of the Delhi assembly elections. In a series of 'Jansabhas', AAP Convenor Kejriwal warned against the BJP's policies, which he said threaten the continuity of flagship initiatives like Mohalla Clinics, free electricity, and quality public schools. He cautioned, "If the BJP comes to power, families will face an additional financial burden of Rs 25,000 every month, making life unaffordable for the common citizen.'

Highlighting the BJP's agenda to dismantle vital welfare schemes, Kejriwal underscored the AAP's commitment to



progress and public service. Addressing a massive gathering of residents, Kejriwal expressed gratitude for the public's unwavering support, attributing AAP's achievements over the past decade to their trust. Cautioning the public, he said,

"If you press the wrong button on the 5th, Delhi will again face power cuts of 6-8 hours. If you press the lotus button (BJP's symbol), as soon as you reach home, you'll find the electricity gone. But if you press the 'jhadu' button, the electricity

will continue 24 hours a day.' The AAP Convenor further said that he built excellent Mohalla Clinics in Delhi. "They are very good, aren't they? But BJP leaders are so shameless. Last week, they announced that if their government comes to power, they will shut down Mohalla Clinics. What problem do they have with this? 5 crore people have been treated there in the last three years. Openly and shamelessly, they are saying they will shut down Mohalla Clinics," he said. Kejriwal asserted that if you

press the wrong button, all Mohalla Clinics will be shut down. "Free healthcare in hospitals will end. If you're forced to go to private doctors, you'll end up shelling out Rs 5,000 or more every month at only this. But when our government comes to power again, I will establish 3 Mohalla Clinics per

Patparganj set for big change as AAP fields Awadh Oja

STAFF REPORTER

Traditionally known as the AAP bastion, the Patparganj Assembly constituency is set to witness a significant transition in the upcoming state elections with the ruling party fielding a teacher-turned-politician Awadh Ojha, in place of the sitting MLA and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, while the BJP placing its bet on Ravinder Singh Negi and Congress on Anil Chaudhary. The seat has a total of 2,26,310 voters consisting of 1,22,194 males, 1,04,1000 females and 16 third gender

voters in 2025, according to the Election Commission. Falling under the East Delhi Lok Sabha constituency, the seat has been held by Sisodia since three consecutive terms. However, in a not so surprising move, he has opted to

contest from Jangpura, which has nearly 1.5 lakh voters. It was expected that Sisodia might change his seat owing to his narrow victory by the margin of 3,207 votes against BJP's Ravinder Singh Negi in the 2020 Assembly polls. In the polls of 2020, Patparganj legislative assembly constituency had total 2,31,461 electors out of which the total number of valid votes was 1,42,246. Sisodia secured

a total 70,163 votes defeating Negi who stood second with a total 66,956 votes.

In 2015, the constituency had total 214368 electors out of which the total number of valid votes was 1,40,267. Sisodia won and became MLA from this seat by securing a total 75,243 votes. BJP candidate Vinod Kumar Binny stood second with a total 46,452 votes, losing by 28,791 votes.

At a time when AAP was just holding its ground in 2013, Sisodia won from here for the first time and secured a total 50,211 votes. BJP candidate Nakul Bhardwaj stood second with a total 38,735 votes and lost by 11,476 votes. The seat



had a total 1,89,183 electors in 2013 out of which valid

The ruling party will be vying to secure the seat with Ojha facing a big challenge as the AAP's novice will be up against veteran nominees fielded by both BJP and Congress. It will also test if Sisodia's legacy can survive in the constituency.

Similar to Sisodia in 2020, Ojha will take on Vinod Nagar corporator Ravinder Singh Negi of the BJP. Negi was shown in recent social media films urging Hindu businesses to exhibit religious symbols and forcing Muslim store owners to publicly identify their religion.

Chaudhary, the Patparganj MLA from 2008 to 2013, has intensified the

triangular struggle. He previously led the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee and was a councillor from 2002 to 2008.

Located along Delhi-Meerut Expressway and Noida Link Road, the Patparganj assembly constituency has a mixed demographic of entrepreneurs, civil servants and working-class people. Its 2.3 lakh inhabitants include sizable sections Poorvanchalis, Dalits, Garhwalis, Brahmins, Sikhs, Gujjars and 70,000 people

from west UP from various

Sikhs, 18 per cent Pandits, 17 per cent Scheduled castes (SC), 4 per cent Vasihyas, 8 per cent Punjabis, 5 per cent Muslims, 11 per cent Gujjars, 17 per cent Other Backward Castes (OBC), 15 per cent voters from Uttarakhand. It also has 7 per cent of middle class voters in the Residents are not content

The seat includes 4 per cent

with the state of the poorly maintained sewers, unhygienic conditions, traffic bottlenecks, and ineffective vendor management, even if they seemed to enjoy the educational advancements neighborhood.

Republic Day celebrated with patriotic fervour across Jammu

The 76th Republic day was cel-L ebrated with patriotic fervour and gaiety across Jammu region with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha unfurling the Tricolour at the main function here.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, senior politicians, including several MLAs, army, CRPF, police personnel and civil officials were also present at the Maulana Azad Stadium, the main venue.

An army helicopter flew overhead and showered flower petals at the start of the function, much to the delight of the large gathering which raised patriotic slo-

Before attending the state-level function, the lieutenant governor laid a wreath on the "eternal flame" at the Balidan Stambh war memorial to pay tributes to the supreme sacrifice of the gallant

"Paid heartfelt tributes to the valiant martyrs of the police, army and CAPFs (Central Armed Police Forces) who made the supreme sacrifice for the motherland. The nation is forever indebted to them for their sacrifices and selfless service," Sinha wrote on X after attending the function organised by the army's Tiger Division as part of the Republic Day celebrations.

Balidan Stambh, the tallest war memorial in India standing at 60 metres, was adorned with vibrant colours to mark the occasion. It showcases 52 memorial pillars with 7,512 names of bravehearts and murals of nine Paramveer Chakra awardees and 27 Ashok Chakra recipients.

LG Sinha later unfurled the Tricolour at the main official function at Maulana Azad stadium, inspected the parade and



took salute at the march past which was commanded by Col Alok Mehta of 13th Battalion Kumaon regiment and secondin-command, Superintendent of Police Nihar Ranjan. Reports from district headquar-

ters said the Republic Day celebrations passed off peacefully with thousands of people joining the functions. Leaders of different political par-

ties, including the BJP, National Conference, Congress and PDP, also unfurled the national flag at their respective party headquarters in Jammu. Highlighting the importance of

the day, J-K Congress chief Tariq Hameed Karra cautioned the people about BJP's alleged attempts to take away the rights of the people enshrined in the Constitution. "We celebrate the adoption of the

Constitution on this day, but it is

us this Constitution are facing derogatory remarks on the floor of Parliament," Karra said, as he urged people to stand up and join the party to safeguard the Constitution for their better

future. Countering the Congress and, J-K BJP chief Sat Sharma said "we are proud participants of the world's largest democracy".

"Enjoying our civil rights with dignity -- owing to the Constitution -- it is our duty to recognise the efforts of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar in drafting the Constitution as its chief architect," Sharma said. He also appealed to the people to uphold the principles of justice, liberty and equality and teach the spirit of patriotism to their ounger generations.

DK Boora, Inspector General of Border Security Force (BSF),

Jammu frontier, unfurled the Tricolour at the force headquarters here, and conveyed his warm wishes to all the personnel serving along the International Border and Line of Control

(LoC) and their families. BSF always stood firm against all the challenges on the border. It is committed for the safety and security of the nation," he said while addressing the function. It has been BSF's endeavour to provide safety and security to the

border population with effective

border management as a first line of defence, he added. A BSF spokesman said all the bat-talions deployed on the International Border and LoC celebrated Republic Day with enthusiasm and pledged to commit themselves for safeguarding and maintaining the sanctity of the border with full dedication and devotion.

Gujarat CM takes part in Republic Day function

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat on Sunday unfurled the tricolour at a Republic Day function in Tapi district, where the police band, stunt shows and cultural programmes filled the atmosphere with patriotism. Earlier, on the eve of Republic

Day, the governor and Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel presented a cheque of Rs 2.5 crore to district collector Bipin Garg and Rs 2.5 crore to district development officer V N Shah of the tribal-dominated Tapi

Speaking at the event in Vyara on Saturday, Devvrat said, "National festivals and cultural programmes are the best medium to highlight the country's unity. India adopted the Constitution, the longest-written one in the world, on January 26, 1950. Today, every citizen in the country is breathing the free air of democracy through con-

PTI BHUBANESWAR

Marg here.

Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati on Sunday

unfurled the national flag at the

state-level Republic Day cele-

bration at the Mahatma Gandhi

Kambhampati took salute from

the participating contingents at

the 76th Republic Day parade

Secretary Manoj Ahuja and other dignitaries. "Celebrate

the spirit of our nation and the

pride of our constitution," the

Governor's office said in a post

A total of 49 contingents,

including Odisha Police, BSF,

OSAP and CRPF, participated

in the parade. The Mahatma



stitutional rights."

Chief Minister Patel said tribal icon Birsa Munda had awakened the consciousness, courage and valour among tribals to free themselves from the

Gandhi Marg here also witnessed a vibrant display of

patriotism, cultural heritage

and progressive initiatives with

10 themed tableaus and cultural

The tableaus reflected themes

like rural development and

women's empowerment to

advancements in education

and technology and others.

show on motorcycles by stu-

dents of Maharishi College of

Natural Law and a skating per-

formance by Odisha Skating

School and college students

also performed cultural per-

formances. A colourful depic-

tion of Kumbh Mela - the

grand spiritual gathering -

performances.

slavery of the British through

Tribals of the entire area from Umargam to Ambaji have contributed greatly to the country's freedom struggle," he said, pay-

CM Majhi highlights development on Republic Day

showing Aghori dance and

Shiv Tandav was the other

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan

Charan Majhi unfurled the tri-

colour at the district-level

Republic Day celebration at

Mini Stadium in Cuttack,

Deputy Chief Ministers - KV

Singhdeo and Pravati Parida -

attended the Republic Day

"Let us all take a pledge on this

auspicious day to build a

Developed India, Developed

Odisha," Majhi said in a post on

Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari

attended the programme in

Sundargarh, Panchayati Raj

and Drinking Water minister

highlight of the show.

respectively.

ing tribute to the freedom fighters of Tapi district.

He expressed confidence that the district will achieve comprehensive development in health, education, drinking and

Rabi Narayan Nayak attended

the function at Sonepur, School

and Mass Education minister

Nityanand Giond in Koraput,

Food Supplies and Consumer

Welfare minister Krushna

Chandra Patra in Jagatsinghpur,

Law Minister Prithvirai

Harichandan in Jajpur, Health

minister Mukesh Mahaling in

Rayagada, Transport minister

Gajapati, Urban Development

minister Krushna Chandra

Mohapatra in Balasore, Forest

and Environment minister

Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia in

Sports and Culture minister

Suryavanshi Suraj unfurled the

tricolour in Nuapada district

while Cooperation minister

irrigation water, sports and fisheries sectors.

During the programme organised at Bajipura in Tapi district on Sunday, the governor unfurled the tricolour in the presence of the chief minister. School and college students presented cultural programmes, Garba and traditional tribal dances, mesmerising the audience with their performance. The audience was also enchanted by the display put up by police jawans and personnel from the Border Security Force, Chetak Commando Force, Gujarat Marine Commando Force, and State Reserve Police Force, among others.

Republic Day was celebrated across all district headquarters, with Bollywood actor Aamir Khan marking his presence at an event at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, Narmada district. A local swimming club in Porbandar marked the occasion by unfurling the tricolour in the sea, and the Marine Task Force

Pradip Bal Samant in

Dhenkanal, Industries minister

Sampad Chandra Swain in

Nayagarh and Fisheries and

Animal Resource Development minister Gokulanand Mallik in

In Kendrapara, Berhampur and

Rourkela, the Revenue Divisional Commissioners of

respective zones unfurled the

The tricolour was unfurled in

all districts, including Maoist-

affected Malkangiri and

Koraput. "There was no report

of any untoward incident from

any part of the state. In Maoist-

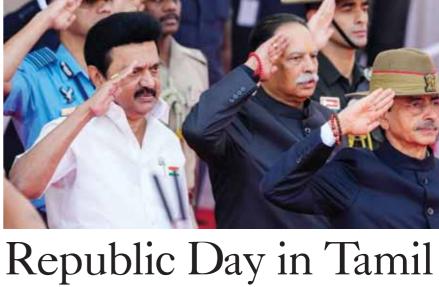
hit areas also the national flag

was hoisted by locals and the

administration," an official of

the Home Department said.

Malkangiri.



Nadu: Tanks, Folk Dances, and Awards

PTI CHENNAI

 Γ amil Nadu Governor R N Ravi unfurled the national flag here on Sunday on the 76th Republic Day and the celebrations were marked by a march past of the contingents of the Armed forces, state police units and vibrant cultural events that extolled the richness of Tamil language.

away awards under various categories, including for communal harmony and gallantry, to recipients.

As Ravi unfurled the tricolour, an IAF chopper showered flowers and petals, and the Governor accepted the ceremonial salute of contingents of the armed forces and the state police units from the venue of the celebrations, near the Marina beachfront and close to the Tamil Nadu Secretariat. On Ravi's arrival, Stalin welcomed him with a bouquet and as per practice, the Chief Minister introduced to Governor top officials of the

PTI NEW DELHI

itarian regime".

n a scathing attack on the

▲BJP-led Centre, Congress

president Mallikarjun Kharge

alleged on Sunday that a hate-

ful agenda, immersed in reli-

gious fundamentalism, has

sought to divide the society

over the last 10 years and

every sacred tenet of the

Constitution is being "shred-ded into pieces by an author-

He claimed that the ruling

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

practises pseudo-nationalism

armed forces and the state În his republic day message,

posted in 'X' Stalin said, In "this 76th Republic Day, let us cherish the foundation of our Constitution that ensures justice, equality, and dignity for all. May this day remind us of our shared duty to create a progressive, inclusive, and compassionate INDIA." He also Republic Day filled with hope

The tableaux included state of the art T-90 tank and the bullet proof Light Specialist Vehicles. Contingents of the Coast Guard, Central Armed Police Forces, units of the Tamil Nadu Police, took part in the ceremonial parade.

Colourful cultural events by school and college students were themed on celebrating the greatness of the Tamil language and culture and 'Tamizhe vazhga, Thaye Vazhga, '(Long live Tamil language, long live mother Tamil) was the key concept song.

Constitution being shredded by

authoritarian regime: Kharge

Tamil Nadu's Jikkattam (folk art of the Kongu region), Karagattam and Kavadiyattam, which are traditional dances by carrying Karagam and Kavadi, were performed.

Cultural performances of Assam (Bordoi Sikala), Telangana (Mathuri folk dance) and Jammu and Kashmir (Rouf, a Kashmiri folk dance) attracted attention.

was conferred on Vetrivel (Fire and Rescue Services) and the Kottai Ameer Communal Harmony Award on Ameer Hamsa (Ramanathapuram). Trophies for the best police stations went to Madurai (first place), Tiruppur (second) and Tiruvallur (third).

Floats of the Tamil Nadu government brilliantly showcased in a creative manner the initiatives and achievements of the respective state departments. Governor Ravi also paid tributes to the war heroes and martyrs at the War Memorial in Ćhennai on the 76th Republic

Arunachal Governor focuses on growth, women, youth

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

runachal Pradesh AGovernor Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd) on Sunday detailed 24 key initiatives of the state government, aimed at modernising governance, enhancing the quality of life, and ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth across the state. Unfurling the national tricolour at IG Park here on the occasion of the 76th Republic Day, the governor underscored the government's commitment to fully digitise financial systems, improve service delivery, and streamline processes to enhance ease of living and ease of doing business.

A "Bottom-up Planning" approach is being implemented to strengthen local administrations and actively involve communities in decision-making, thereby deepening democracy, he said.

"The government is dedicated to cutting down on unnecessary regulations, repealing outdated laws, and building a simpler, more efficient service delivery system. To make services accessible, we are also setting up a central citizen data repository, Parnaik said.

The governor highlighted the government's efforts to fully implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which includes plans to attract top educational institutions to

Additionally, he said, the government is modernising school infrastructure under the ARUN Schools for Rising India (SHRI) Mission, in alignment with the PM SHRI Mission.

"The Dulari Kanya scheme, which incentivises girls' education, is being revamped to ensure more significant participation by girls in higher education," the governor added. He said that women's empow erment remains a priority, with the government aiming to support 21,000 women to earn over Rs 1 lakh annually under the 'Lakhpati Didi' initiative. This programme provides women with resources and guidance to achieve economic indepen-

In the agriculture sector, Parnaik said, the government is encouraging natural farming, expanding support for local crafts, and promoting horticulture to boost rural incomes. Handicrafts and local artisans are also receiving support through new policies aimed at preserving traditional skills, he

Infrastructure development is central to the state's vision, with a focus on achieving cent per cent physical and digital connectivity, the governor said.

Bihar governor talks law, employment, health in Bihar on Republic Day

PTI ■ PATNA

 $B_{\tt Mohammad\ Khan\ on}^{\tt ihar\ Governor\ Arif}$ Sunday said maintaining the rule of law was the top priority of the state government.

Addressing a gathering after unfurling the national flag at the Gandhi Maidan in Patna, he said the state will provide 12 lakh government jobs and create 34 lakh employment opportunities for the youth by the end of this year.

'Rule of law prevails in the state... That is the top priority of the government. To improve law and order, the strength of the (police) force has been significantly increased," he said. Khan said the government is committed to preserving communal harmony in the state. 'Construction of the boundary

wall of temples (which are more than 60 years old) is already going on. The state government started the work of fencing burial grounds in 2006. It identified 1,273 sensitive burial grounds for fencing, and the work for 746 has already been completed. Prior to this, fencing work of 8,000 burial grounds had also been comoleted," he said.

The governor said the state government has so far provided jobs to 9 lakh people and created 24 lakh employment opportunities.
"The Bihar government will

provide 12 lakh government jobs and create 34 lakh employ-ment opportunities for the ing in this direction," he said. Khan also spoke about the difundertaken by the state government.

improved in the state over the

years. At present, the state has

12 medical colleges and hospi-

tals. Fourteen new medical col-

leges and hospitals are being

youths by the end of this year. The state government is workferent welfare measures being "Health facilities and infrastructure have remarkably

opened in the state," he said. Khan said the ecosystem created after 'Bihar Business Connect-2024', the state is set to become a premier destination for industries and The state government has

signed investment commitments of Rs 1.80 lakh crore with different firms, he said. At the function, the governor took salutes from marching contingents in the presence of

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar,

Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary

and several state ministers.

by making disadvantaged youngsters carry the flag of "nationalism" and "religious supremacy", but does nothing to get them employment. In his message to the nation on

equality and fraternity. espoused by our founders. Be

the 76th Republic Day, Kharge said it is high time that people

preserved and protected the ideas and ideals of the Constitution -- justice, liberty, We uphold the values

ready to make every sacrifice

to protect the Constitution.

This will be the true tribute to our ancestors," Kharge said. He said it is also time to reflect upon how the country

on the Constitution. The ruling party has unleashed a continuous degradation of India's institutions, built carefully over decades, the Congress chief alleged.

is witnessing constant attacks

"Political interference in autonomous institutions has become a norm. Exercising control over their independence is being seen as a virtue of power. Federalism is being trampled on a daily basis and the rights of Opposition-governed states are being curtailed," he further claimed.

The functioning of Parliament has seen tremendous backsliding due to the tyrannical tendency of the ruling government," Kharge alleged. The Congress leader also claimed that universities and self-governing institutions are witnessing constant intrusion. A large part of the media has

been converted as a propa-

ganda tool for the ruling party,

"Strangulating dissent by witch-hunting Opposition leaders has become the only policy of those in power. In the past decade, a vicious, hateful agenda immersed in religious fundamentalism has sought to divide our society," Kharge alleged.

He further claimed that minorities are being targeted and those who are secular are being tarnished with the paint of "Goebbelsian propaganda". The weaker sections -Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBC), the poor and minorities -- are being treated as second-class

citizens, he said. 'Atrocities and unheard-of violence against them have become a regular occurrence. Manipur has been burning for 21 months, but there is no accountability at the topmost echelons of power," Kharge

He also said economic inequality has widened to frightening proportions.

Mahakumbh celebrates Republic Day with blend of patriotism and spirituality

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

As the nation immersed itself in the 76th Republic Day celebrations, the grand spiritual congregation at the Prayagraj Mahakumbh showcased a unique blend of devotion and patriotism under the Yogi government's leadership. Along the sacred banks of the Sangam, saints, sages, and various institutions marked the occasion with enthusiasm.

The camps of saints and institutions Mahakumbh area became hubs of national pride as the tricolor was hoisted at various places.

The national anthem echoed across the spiritual gathering, and collective pledges were taken to uphold the unity and integrity of the country. The saints and sages immersed in spirituality at



the Mahakumbh celebrated with saffron flags alongside Republic Day with great the tricolor, creating a enthusiasm and energy. unique blend of devotion enthusiasm and energy.
The sacred grounds of the Mahakumbh were adorned

and patriotism.

the Dandi Swami Nagar, where thousands of saints from the All India Dandi Swami Parishad, led by The celebrations began at President Jagadguru Swami

Maheshashram, hoisted the national flag and sang the national anthem.

This year marked the silver jubilee of the Dandi Swamis' tradition of celebrating Republic Day along the Sangam since

On the occasion, Swami M a h e s h a s h r a m administered an oath to all Dandi Swamis to work for the unity and integrity of the nation. He shared plans to send a Dandi Swami to every village across the country to counter attempts to weaken Hindu society on caste lines, emphasizing that a strong nation depends on a unified and strong Sanatan Dharma.

The Republic Day morning at the Mahakumbh resonated with the national blending anthem, seamlessly with the usual chants of "Har-Har Gange" and "Har-Har Mahadev'

In the Akhada sector, the sight of saffron merging with the tricolor was a highlight of the day. At the Shri Niranjani

along the banks of the Ganga and Yamuna.

Akhada camp, the national flag was hoisted under the leadership of Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad President Mahant Ravindra Puri, with saints and devotees joining together to sing the national anthem. Similarly, the female Naga ascetics of Shri Panch Dashnam Sanyasini Akhada celebrated Republic Day by hoisting the tricolor.

hoisting the tricolor.
On this occasion, Mahant
Ravindra Puri urged
devotees arriving for the
Mauni Amavasya snan at
Triveni to take holy dip in
the nearest accessible Ganga
ghats, emphasizing that the
entire Mahakumbh area
offers equal spiritual merit offers equal spiritual merit



Boat capsizes at Qila ghat, NDRF rescues 10 pilgrims

BISWAJEET BANERJEE

A major mishap was averted during the Maha Kumbh on Saturday when a boat carrying 10 pilgrims capsized in the Yamuna River near Oila Ghat. All the passengers jumped into the river as the boat began sinking. Swift action by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) ensured the safe rescue of everyone aboard.

The incident occurred around 11:30 amidst heavy crowds at Qila Ghat. As a boat arrived at the ghat, eager pilgrims rushed forward to board it. Nine pilgrims climbed aboard one by one, but as the 10th passenger stepped in, the boat tilted uncontrollably to one side and began taking in water. Panic ensued as the pilgrims leapt into the river to save themselves. Observing the commotion, onlookers at the ghat raised an alarm, drawing the attention of nearby NDRF

personnel.
NDRF teams promptly dove

10 pilgrims within five minutes. Inspector Anil Kumar of the NDRF confirmed that the passengers were brought to safety and sent on their way after the incident.

Inspector Kumar revealed that the timely presence of NDRF teams at Kila Ghat was crucial in averting a tragedy. Two additional NDRF teams had been deployed earlier that day, anticipating a surge in crowds. Along with the initial three personnel stationed at the ghat, these reinforcements played a key role in the swift rescue operation.

This incident underscores the importance preparedness during largescale events like the Maha Kumbh, where crowds and river-based activities pose significant safety risks. Authorities are now expected to intensify monitoring and measures at all ghats to prevent similar occurrences.

UP tableau showcases divinity and grandeur of Mahakumbh at Republic Day parade



A tableau of Uttar Pradesh on display during the 76th Republic Day parade.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

On Republic Day, Uttar Pradesh's tableau at Kartavya Path in New Delhi brought the magnificence and uniqueness of Mahakumbh to life. Resonating with Sanskrit chants, the tableau celebrated the spiritual and cultural richness of India, making the entire nation immerse in the essence of Mahakumbh. Based on the theme 'Golden Development, the tableau captured displayed a breathtaking blend of spirituality and

cultural opulence. The historical narrative of Samudra Manthan was vividly portrayed in the tableau. Nag Vasuki was shown coiled around Mount Mandarachal, while Lord Vishnu appeared in his Kurma (tortoise) avatar, supporting the mountain. The scene depicted gods

and demons churning the ocean in their quest for

The front section of the tableau featured saints blowing conch shells and women in traditional attire carrying sacred pots, and singing dancing joyfully

A specially composed song by poet Virendra Vats, blending seamlessly Sanskrit and Hindi, added a poetic charm to the presentation.

spiritual the grandeur of Mahakumbh but also emphasized Uttar Pradesh's cultural roots and its progress as a state. Spectators lauded the tableau as both unique and

inspiring. Having national awards in the past, Uttar Pradesh's tableau, centered on Mahakumbh, once again became a symbol

of pride for the nation.

Sangam: Where wishes are granted, faith renewed

BISWAJEET BANERJE

Prayagraj: The confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the invisible Saraswati at Sangam has become a beacon of faith during the ongoing Maha Kumbh, drawing so far over 11 crore devotees from across the globe. The belief that a holy dip at this sacred site cleanses sins and fulfills heartfelt wishes has made it a spiritual destination like no other.

Pilgrims like Prahlad Pathak from Bahraich have returned to express gratitude. "During the last Kumbh, I prayed for my son to secure a job, and my wish was granted. I've come back to thank Ganga Maiya," he said. Similarly, Pinky Devi from Kanpur shared her joy: "I prayed for a son and family peace. Both prayers were answered, and I am here with my family to offer gratitude."



At Sangam, wishes range from health and prosperity to spiritual salvation. Sunita from Delhi, who walked barefoot with her elderly mother-in-law, explained, "My mother-in-law's vow was fulfilled, and despite her age and difficulty walking, Ganga Maiya listens to prayers."

believing that speaking about them might diminish their effect. Regardless, every dip taken at the Sangam is steeped in hope, gratitude, and For some, the visit is about experiencing faith itself. Nisha Chaudhary from Jharkhand reflected, "I prayed for my family's success and for my

While many openly share their stories of fulfilled wishes, others

keep their vows private,

through their efforts. Being here has shown me the true power of devotion.' This Maha Kumbh, which occurs only once every 144 has transformed Prayagraj into a hub of spirituality, where millions gather to bathe in the sacred waters, renew their faith, and

trust in the divine to fulfill their

deepest desires.

children to honor our family

Sringeri Peetham Shankaracharya's arrival enhances grandeur of Mahakumbh says CM Yogi Adityanath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

hief Minister Yogi Adityanath, dur-Uing his visit to Prayagraj, met and honored Shankaracharya Jagadguru Shri Shri Vidhushekhar Bharti Ji Maharaj of Sringeri Peetham, South India. said, "It is a matter of immense pride that the revered Shankaracharya of Sringeri Peetham has graced Prayagraj with his presence. The Mahakumbh feels complete with your arrival."

In a traditional southern welcome, the Chief Minister was presented with a coconut, symbolizing the Kumbh. In return, CM Yogi draped a shawl over the Shankaracharya and offered him fruits as a gesture of respect. The Chief Minister noted that Sringeri

Peetham's formal participation in Mahakumbh after a long gap has



significantly enhanced its grandeur. The state government and district "Your five-day stay is a blessing for us.

your presence, which adds immense value to making the Mahakumbh Kumbh. However, it was after 150 years that a Shankaracharya from the grand and divine.

CM Yogi also briefed the Shankaracharya about the Shankaracharya about the arrangements for Mahakumbh, the participation of saints, and the global attendance expected at this sacred

The Shankaracharya of Sringeri Peetham expressed his joy upon learning about the Mahakumbh arrangements from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. He commended the meticulous planning and excellent facilities and offered his blessings to everyone dedicated to making the event a success.

The Shankaracharya also shared insights about the tradition of Dakshin Peetha, mentioning that 48 years ago, his Guru's Guru had visited to take a sacred dip during Amavasya in

years that a Shankaracharya from the South was formally participating in Mahakumbh.

He informed the Chief Minister that during his 5-day stay, he would engage in 'Shastrartha' (intellectual debate) and take a holy dip in Triveni Sangam Shankaracharyas. He also provided details of his stay and planned activities.

In response, the Chief Minister invited the Shankaracharya to hold a 'Shastrartha Sabha' and deliver a discourse during his visit to Kashi.

The Shankaracharya graciously agreed to this and also consented to participate in a program at the Annapurna temple. On this occasion, Rakesh Shukla, in-charge of the Shankaracharya's Kumbh visit and other officials were present.

Maha Kumbh: Akhilesh Yadav takes holy dip in Sangam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday took a holy dip in the Sangam at Maha Kumbh

Yadav reached here in the

afternoon and took the holy dip, the party said, sharing his photographs.

Attacking the BJP, he advised it to bathe with patience, saying that people come here for virtue and charity and not for water

Recently Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his Cabinet colleagues were seen splashing water on each other after bathing in the Sangam after Cabinet

"For the BJP people, I have to say that if you come to Kumbh, then bathe with patience. People come here for virtue and charity, not Yadav for water sports,"

"I got the opportunity to take 11 dips in the Sangam as per the tradition. This Maha Kumbh is being witnessed after 144 years. Today, we take a pledge and pray to god that there should be harmony, harmony, goodwill and everyone keep moving forward with tolerance.



We take pledge for people's welfare," Yadav said while talking to reporters after

taking the dip. He said, "This is a big event. I remember that during the SP government's tenure, we had the opportunity to organise the Kumbh Mela. Despite having limited resources, we successfully

held the event. Various studies, including University,

those by the Harvard have acknowledged that while Kumbh is deeply rooted in tradition, its documented history can be traced back to the time of Emperor

faith, without the need for advertisements

confluence of three rivers and its significance. People are drawn to this sacred event purely out of

promotions," he said. Harshavardhan. Reacting on Yadav's dip in "The unique beauty of the Kumbh Mela, BJP

spokesperson Tripathi said, "It is hoped that Akhilesh Yadav's mind will calm down after the Sangam bath.'

Yadav, who was making "negative and baseless" comments on Kumbh, will now perhaps say something positive on its grandeur and divinity, Tripathi said.

On the occasion of Makar Sankranti, Yadav had taken a dip in the Ganga river in Haridwar.

Asked whether he would be visiting Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, Yadav earlier this month said he had always the religious visited congregation.

Some people go to bathe in the Ganga to gain punya' (virtue), some people go to give daan' (donation) and some people go to wash away their 'paap' (sins). We will go for punya' and daan,' he had told reporters.

In 2019, Yadav took a bath in Prayagraj during Ardha Kumbh. According to the latest

official figure provided by the state government, 1.17 crore people took dip in the Sangam till late Sunday afternoon.

Total number of 'snan' (bath) in Maha Kumbh since its start rose to 11.47 crore, it said.

Swedes, America and others embrace Hinduism at Maha Kumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Coming from far away Sweden, Tommu appeared deeply involved in the rather intense discussions among seers at the Panchayati Akhara Shri Niranjani located near the Swastik Dwar.

He explains why he and many other foreigners like him have come to the Maha Kumbh.

'Many people know about main deities of Hinduism -- Ram, Krishn and Shiv or the Holy Trinity. But I don't think many know the deeper meaning of Hinduism. I feel there can be no better place than this to decipher the spiritual core of Sanatan," he told

Wearing two garlands made of Rudraksh beads, Tommu, a resident of Eskilstuna in Sweden, about kilometres from the Swedish capital of Stockholm, said, 'Many foreigners are coming here as they want to understand the deeper meaning and philosophy of Hinduism. For instance many chant 'Hare Rama, Hare Krishna' and seem to

rejoice the chantings.

"There are many who feel they need to know more and that's why the number of such foreign nationals at Maha Kumbh is growing," Tommu said, adding that India is globally known as a country with a high spiritual quotient

Ĥe hoped to revisit India. So far, he said, he has only been able to see a small part of the country and there is much more to explore.

Like Tommu, Leslie and John Chatham from Austin, the capital of Texas in the US, are at the Maha Kumbh for the first time. It is their

first visit to India. Their group has nine people, including those from the UK and Canada.

'The spiritual energy is so high and the people are just wonderful," Leslie and John said and added that they are at the Maha Kumbh to discover and experience the "manifestation

positivity' The Chathams feel that the perception of India globally

is "very good". Leslie who works in the real estate sector, said, "I have many clients who are from India and working with them is satisfying experience.

Some foreigners have not just embraced Hinduism but also adopted a Hindu name and some have even cleared spiritual tests and become Mahamandaleshwars. Someone like Tom, the son

of a former senior US Army Commander, left a decent job in the information and technology (IT) sector to embrace Hinduism. He has a new name and a position in the 'akhara' order.

"We have given Tom a new name -- Swami Vyasanand Giri and a position. He now is a Mahamandaleshwar in the Panchayati Akhara Shri Niranjani," said the chief of the Panchavati Akhara Shri Niranjani Mahant Ravindra

"Driven by the attraction of spiritualism, Tom took 'sanyas' and embraced Hinduism. He did Yoga and meditation, and researched immensely on Hinduism and Sanatani culture. He often visited Rishikesh over the last couple of years and met me," Puri told PTI.

Then there is Michael, a former soldier of the US Army. He hails from New Mexico.

He is popularly known as Baba Mokshpuri and is part of the Juna Akhara.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

75 glorious years

Seventy-five years on, the Indian Republic stands resilient, ready to tread the path toward a brighter tomorrow

India stands at a monumental crossroads as it celebrated 75 glorious years of being a Republic on Sunday. resident Droupadi Murmu and Indonesian President Prabowo ■ Subianto's presence symbolis India's robust diplomatic ties. With 10,000 special guests attending, this year's celebrations highlight the spirit of Jan Bhagidari, emphasising the people as architects of India's progress. The 76th Republic Day, marked by the theme of 'Shashakt aur Surakshit Bharat' (Empowered and Secure India), reflects the nation's aspirations.On this historic occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged countrymen to rededicate themselves to preserving the ideals of the Constitution. As the country marks this milestone, it becomes imperative to reflect on the achievements, challenges, and aspirations that define modern India. The adoption of the Constitution on January 26, 1950, was a bold assertion of India's identity as a sovereign, secular, and democratic republic. Over seven decades, the nation has weathered numerous challenges, from



political upheavals to external threats, while safeguarding its democratic fabric. India's ability to hold free and fair elections consistently remains a testament to the vision of its founding leaders. From the license-raj era to the liberalization reforms of 1991, India has evolved into the world's fifth-largest economy. Significant strides in technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship have positioned India as a global powerhouse in sectors such as information technology, pharmaceutical, and space exploration.

India's rich cultural diversity has continued to thrive amidst rapid modernisation. The promotion of regional arts, languages, and traditions, along with advance-

ments in education and healthcare, has strengthened the social fabric. India's influence on the global stage has grown significantly, with active participation in forums like the United Nations, G20, and BRICS. Its leadership in championing climate action, digital inclusion, and south-south cooperation underscores its emergence as a responsible global leader. However, there are numerous challenges that are yet to be addressed. Despite impressive economic growth, India continues to grapple with stark inequalities. Issues like rural poverty, unemployment, and an uneven distribution of resources hinder holistic progress. Social harmony has often been tested, with caste, religious, and regional divides occasionally flaring into discord. Bridging these divides remains critical to ensuring the unity celebrated on Republic Day. While strides have been made in governance, corruption and inefficiencies in public administration still impede progress. The effective implementation of policies is often undermined by bureaucratic hurdles. As India celebrates its achievements, the path ahead demands renewed focus and commitment. Upholding the values of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity enshrined in the Constitution must remain a collective priority. Ensuring the inclusion of marginalised communities in the democratic process is essential for a more equitable society.



A pair of parakeets are seen near its nest, in Jaipur

Mobile phones in jails: A

growing security nightmare



The continued use of mobile phones by criminals incarcerated in jails remains a critical issue that the government has yet to address effectively

ne pressing issue that the government has yet to effectively address is the continued use of mobile phones by criminals incarcerated in jails-an issue that persists even in high-security prisons. The seizure of mobile phones from inmates has become an all-toocommon occurrence, posing a significant challenge to law enforcement agencies attempting to dismantle the nexus of organised crime operating from behind

A primary reason for the rampant use of mobile phones inside jails lies in the unholy alliance between gang leaders within the prisons and certain jail authorities.

This collaboration, coupled with the ineffective use of modern technology to prevent unauthorised mobile phone usage, has allowed the problem to spiral out of control. The issue has reached such alarming proportions due to the lack of strategic deployment of advanced solutions that are readily available today.

The consequences of mobile phone usage within jails extend far beyond facilitating criminal activities. It poses a direct threat to national security, compromises the safety of prison staff, and jeopardises public safety.

While maintaining a robust telecommunication network within prisons is critical in today's mobile-driven world, the problem arises when authorities fail to leverage the latest technologies to either restrict or control mobile phone usage in designated areas. One technology that has been available for years is the mobile jammer, which disrupts mobile networks within a limited radius. However, this solution has proven ineffective, as it does not guarantee 100 per cent disruption of mobile services and, in some cases, hampers the network's functionality outside the prisonaffecting areas like residential neighbourhoods. Despite its widespread use in jails across India, the jammer's limitations have become apparent.

In 2017, the "Tower-Harmonious Call Blocking System (1-HCBS) was introduced, but it has yielded minimal results.

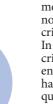
Even after the installation of T-HCBS towers, the use of mobile

PTI

phones in prisons continued unabated. Telecom companies have failed to provide a mechanism for real-time monitoring of the system's effectiveness, leaving authorities without the tools needed to measure its success or identify shortcomings.

A recent investigation by the Delhi police in connection with a shootout at a Tilak Nagar car showroom uncovered a shocking revelation. The two main suspects, who are currently incarcerated in Tihar Jail, were using 5Genabled phones to bypass mobile jammers. Although Tihar Jail, which houses around 20,000 inmates, is equipped with over 15 mobile jammers, these devices are outdated, designed for 4G networks, while the current technology in use is 5G. This discrepancy highlights the urgent need for the installation of updated jammers and infrastructure in Delhi's jails-a process that could take several months.

The scale of the problem is underscored by the discovery of over 500 phones and internet dongles during surprise raids conducted across three Delhi prisons in the past two years. Despite the Delhi government and the Ministry of Home Affairs acknowledging the issue and establishing a high-powered committee two years ago to address the problem, progress has been hin-



TELECOM

COMPANIES HAVE FAILED TO PROVIDE A MECHANISM FOR **REAL-TIME** MONITORING OF THE SYSTEM'S EFFECTIVENESS, **LEAVING AUTHORITIES** WITHOUT THE **TOOLS NEEDED** TO MEASURE ITS SUCCESS OR IDENTIFY

SHORTCOMINGS

dered by red tape and slowmoving bureaucracy. The primary obstacle remains the reluctance of government officials to prioritise and implement the appropriate technologies needed to tackle the

In addition to aiding organised crime syndicates, the presence of mobile phones in jails has had unforeseen consequences for residents living near prison complexes. This interference with the mobile network has caused a decline in property values in the vicinity of the jail, a stark contrast to the property booms seen in other parts of Delhi.

The lack of a reliable mobile network has created serious problems for residents, particularly in emergencies, and has significant economic consequences as businesses and daily services reliant on mobile communication are disrupted. This problem is not unique to Tihar Jail or Delhi; similar issues have been reported from prisons in other metro cities. While mobile communication technologies continue to advance rapidly, there are modern solutions that can effectively address the issue of blocking mobile networks within high-security prisons. These advanced systems do not merely block mobile calls but also enable real-time detection and location tracking of illicit mobile phone usage

For example, digitally managed systems are available that can maintain desired signal levels within a jail, granting authorities full control over the mobile network.

These systems allow jail management to track, locate, and identify radio signals, pinpointing the source of illegal mobile phone use. By using such technologies, jail authorities can quickly identify and neutralise unauthorised mobile devices in the prison, making it a powerful deterrent against criminal activity.

The real question, however, is how long will it take for Indian jails to receive the necessary technological upgrades to combat the proliferation of contraband mobile phones? This problem is widespread across the country, from Tihar Jail in Delhi to Yerawada Jail in Pune, Kot Bhalwal Jail in Jammu, and Naini Jail in Allahabad-homes to some of the nation's most dangerous criminals, gangsters, terrorists,

and mafias. It is clear that timely intervention from government authorities to equip prisons with advanced technology to block unauthorised mobile networks, detect illegal phone use, and track mobile phone locations is urgently needed to restore control and curb the spread of criminal activities within our jails.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

THE EDITOR

A chance encounter in Delhi: A story of hope amidst the chaos



Delhi, a city full of surprises, often unveils its charm in the most unexpected ways. While much has changed over the years, its enduring spirit continues to soar

urprises never cease to crop up in my beloved Delhi, although, when I reminisce, I find this Delhi to be so very different from the place where I was born and grew up-in a few years from now, I will be touching the magical mark of sixty years-Insha-Allah!!! These are surprises that keep the passion to continue living here alive, despite the megapolis tottering on the edge of a bottomless abyss. I encountered one such surprise more than two decades ago, when I chanced upon an opportunity to care, to lovedispassionately. Then, I worked in the vicinity of Delhi's sprawling International Airport. At some distance from my office were robust pockets of greenery. As I strolled on the edge of a stagnant water body, immersed in thoughts, the shrill chirping of two birds circling overhead broke

my reverie. Wary-expectedly so-of duplicitous humans, they maintained a distance from me- trying to scoop down to my level, but then taking off at the last moment. Something in their incessant better view. Lo and behold,

chirping pointed to a high level of desperation, of an impending crisis. Not the one to be blessed with Dr Do Little's prowess, instinctively, I shrugged off the noise to a behaviour anomaly that might be inherent in avians of this species. But the next moment I was proved

The magnitude of the disaster struck me like a sledgehammer-on the muckinfested, rotting, stagnant surface of the pond, I saw a tiny tremor, so minute that one could easily have missed it. It aroused my curiosity, and I leaned over to have a trying to break free from the strangulating grip of the muck were three tiny birds, barely the size of an index finger- in all probability offspring of the panic-stircken pair hovering above. Perhaps they had fallen into the

pond, carried by a dust-storm that had lashed the capital a few hours earlier. As they waged a fast-losing battle to stay afloat in the poisonous pool (symptomatic of most water bodies in the capital), the strings of my heart (already weakened

by a blood pressure problem) felt a strong tug. Somehow, I managed to shrug off my indecisiveness

and moved to the edge of the pond. Tenderly, so as not to cause any harm, I scooped the first bird into my palm; the paranoid birds overhead mistook me for a predator and made some aggressive moves. But, as I delicately placed it on hard ground, they realised that I was not a foe-immediately, the chirping subsided; I finished the balance task in peace. After I had rescued the last bundle of joy and placed it on the welcoming lap of Mother Earth, I felt reassured that the worst was

Contended, I commenced my trudge into civilised environs. Barely had I taken a few steps, when I looked behind and saw the protective parents cuddling their young ones-exemplifying all that is human but is sadly getting diluted.

The unexpected encounter lifted my spirits sky-high, as even in the fast-decaying Delhi, my beloved Delhi, hope continues to flow eternally. And where there is hope, a better future can never be far away.

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

EIGHT WORKERS KILLED IN BLAST

Madam — A massive explosion at the Ordnance factory at Bhandra in Maharashtra, a key defence establishment, killed at least eight workers. The blast was so severe that it completely turned the unit into a huge pile of rubble, burying workers under the debris. Injured persons have been admitted to hospitals. The accident in a key defence factory is quite unfortunate. The Maharashtra government has announced a solatium of 5 lakh rupees each for the families of those killed in the blast. The cause of the explosion is not yet determined.

The accident has occurred at the RDX manufacturing section of the factory. The ordinance factory at Bhandra is an important defence unit engaged in high-energy explosives like RDX and HMX, which go into the filling of a wide range of ammunition-from artillery shells to rockets in the form of propellents. The present accident is not the first one in the ordinance factory. In the past two blasts at the Central Ammunition Depot at Wardha, one in 2016 and another in 2018, at least 25 workers, including two army officers, had been killed. The Indian Ordnance Factories have not only supported India through the wars but also played an important role in building India with the achievement of technology and have ushered in the Industrial Revolution in India. Lack of safety measures in the factory should have been the reason for the huge

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

DOUBTS ON SAIF ALI KHAN'S ATTACK

Madam — Leaders like Nitish Rane, Sanjay Nirupam, and Jitendra Awhad doubt whether actor Saif Ali Khan was really attacked, reflecting their poor mindset. One of the leaders compares Saif's stabbing as "garbage." Another leader finds the Hindu-Muslim angle and says when a Hindu actor like Shushanth Singh Rajput dies, no one comes forward to say anything. It is a matter of shame that the

Chinar trees to be geo-tagged

within the facility.

t is heartening to note that the Jammu and Kashmir government Lhas come up with a unique initiative of a 'Digital Tree Aadhaar' programme, targeting the conservation of the iconic Chinar trees, which are vital

issue. One thing is sure: Saif quickly recovered because our doctors have given an effective treatment. On the other side, it is still being questioned whether the person who is arrested and the CCTV footage person are not the same.

The police were swift enough to confirm that the attacker was Bangladeshi. It is still suspect that the police have caught the real assailant or an innocent person. The BJP leaders are alleging that Bangladeshis are entering our country and creating trouble. If it is so, then it is the total failure of the central government in controlling them. One thing is clear: frequent unusual incidents are happening in Mumbai and it is proved that Mumbai is not a safe place. Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Madam — Distribution of public funds in cash (via DBT) is becoming rampant by the governments (both Union and State) under various names and schemes to various sections of society in the name of social justice. Whereas the very concept BJP leaders find a religious angle in every of such an award of money is unethical and to the region's cultural and ecological heritage. The initiative of the J and K government is laudable, especially at a time when rapid urbanisation poses threats to these trees, necessitating advanced technological interventions for their survival.

Under this drive, Chinar trees are being geo-tagged and embedded with QR codes that capture detailed information, including geographical location, health stats, and growth patterns. This approach allows conservationists to address potential risks effectively while creating a comprehensive Chinar tree database. Approximately 28,000 trees have reportedly been surveyed, with data continuously updated, aiming to preserve these trees.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

unwarranted because people believing in the workaholic system find it difficult to earn enough while those who happen to be in the list of category, class, caste, or section under the beneficiaries of handsome amounts of money from the state get the money without any work.

Be it the cash to SC ST OBC students, to religious and linguistic minorities students, to women, to farmers, to Maulanas of Masjid, or now to Pujari of Mandir, to unemployed youth, or to any other section of society, it is being promised and more or less delivered. Isn't it the corruption of the worst kind? Why should anyone get money in cash, which is not easy to earn? Sadly, some sections of the society getting such benefit turn nonperforming and have a negative contribution to the national growth. This must stop forthwith along with other freebies if we really want our progress and prosperity as a developing

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala Cantt

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FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Meditation and deep breathing can help reduce stress, anxiety and self-doubt



oday at least one out of ten is being the victim of catastrophising (expecting the worst outcome), overgeneralising (believing that a single failure defines overall ability) and filtering (focusing solely on negatives while ignoring positives). Recent studies have proven that over 70,000 thoughts that come into an individual's mind every day consist of negative ones wherein some of them are the fuel for depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. Automatic Negative Thoughts often abbreviated as ANTs are like unwelcome guests in an individual's mind. They are a psychological phenomenon that can significantly impact mental wellbeing and performance in various aspects of life. These thoughts are spontaneous and fleeting, that arise without conscious effort.

Triggered by specific situations, they even involve pessimistic thoughts that arise in response to everyday situations, often leading to increased stress, anxiety and self-doubt. It is very important for an individual to understand and address them for fostering a positive mindset and improving emotional resilience. ANTs are characterised by their automatic nature, as they occur spontaneously without conscious effort. These thoughts are often distorted and irrational, stemming from deep-seated fears or past experiences.

For instance, a student who performs poorly on one test might think, "I'm a complete failure," despite having performed well in other areas or in professional settings, after a presentation that received constructive criticism, an individual might think, "Everyone hated it," even though the feedback was largely positive and aimed at improvement. Similarly, in social situations, a person who notices someone yawning might assume, "I'm boring," disregarding the possibility that the person might simply be tired. These examples highlight how ANTs can distort per-



ceptions and negatively affect confidence and behaviour. The impact of ANTs can be profound. They contribute to a range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. By distorting reality and reinforcing negative beliefs, ANTs can hinder decisionmaking, problem-solving, and interpersonal relationships. In academic and professional settings, these thoughts can undermine confidence, reduce motivation, and impair performance. Fortunately, there are effective strategies to combat ANTs and develop a more positive thought pattern. One of the most widely used approaches is cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), which focuses on identifying, challenging, and replacing negative thoughts with constructive ones.

For instance, when faced with a thought like, "I'll never succeed," individuals can challenge its validity by reflecting on past successes and recognising their capabilities. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep breathing, can also help in managing ANTs. These techniques encourage individuals to observe their thoughts without judgment and creating space to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively. Another useful tool is journaling, which involves writing down thoughts and analysing accuracy can help uncover patterns and triggers. Also, the act of writing helps to crystallise it and get it out of head. Building a strong support system is equally important.

Sharing feelings and concerns with trusted friends, family members, or therapists can provide valuable perspectives and emotional relief. Positive affirmations and self-compassion can further counteract the negative effects of ANTs by fostering a sense of worth and capability. Remember, by recognizing its presence and implementing strategies such as CBT, mindfulness, and support-seeking, individuals can break free from the cycle of negativity and cultivate a healthier and more optimistic outlook. Addressing ANTs not only enhances mental wellbeing but also empowers individuals to navigate life's challenges with confidence and resilience.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Japan's struggle for relevance amid China's rise



As China rises as a dominant force in a multipolar world, Japan must navigate the challenge of balancing its historical baggage with maintaining its relevance



n December 2024, Japan's Ministry of Defence, through its influential think tank, issued a report that presents an unflinching look at China's meteoric rise and its implications for the global balance of power. Titled The Rising Global South and China, the report offers a sobering analysis of how China's strategic outreach to the Global South—its diplomacy, economic investments, and military presence—poses not only a challenge to the existing interna-tional order but also to Japan's place in the world. While the report forms a key element in Japan's evolving worldview regarding its neighbour, it is but one piece of a much larger, more complex puzzle.

The evolving dynamics between China and Japan demand a deeper exploration, not just ALWAYS ALIGNED, of economic rivalry, but of historical tensions, ESPECIALLY WHEN ideological shifts, and global transformations that are redefining power structures across Asia and beyond. Why, one might ask, is it crucial to understand Japan's view on China CHINA. WHILE THE in 2025? The answer lies in the seismic shifts currently reshaping the international order, where China is positioning itself as the hegemon of a new, multipolar world, and Japan must navigate an increasingly treacherous olitical terrain. This is not simply about Beijing's growing economic influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or its dominance in trade and investment in Africa, Latin America, and

The contest runs deeper, revealing an ideological, military and moral confrontation where Japan's historical burdens, particularly its unresolved wartime past, complicate its ability to assert leadership in the face of China's rapid expansion. "Based on field research in Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Angola, and elsewhere, the report points out that the expansion of Chinese aid under the principle of non-interference in internal affairs may reduce the effectiveness of Western 'democratisation pressure' that

uses aid as leverage." Consider, for a moment, China's overwhelming presence in the Global South. While Western powers remain preoccupied with their domestic crises, Beijing has formed vast strategic partnerships, economic dependencies, and infrastructural invest-



THE STRATEGIC **INTERESTS OF** JAPAN AND THE **US ARE NOT** IT COMES TO US FOCUSES ON CONTAINING CHINA'S RISE, JAPAN IS CAUGHT

IN A PRECARIOUS POSITION, **BALANCING ITS NEED FOR SECURITY AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION** WITH CHINA AGAINST THE **DEMANDS OF ITS** AMERICAN ALLY From Africa's mineral-rich lands to West Asia's energy corridors, China has inserted itself as both a benefactor and an enforcer, using its vast financial resources to extend its influence

It has become the world's largest creditor, with loans amounting to over \$1.3 trillion since 2000, a sum that far outstrips Japan's modest foreign assistance initiatives. In the face of this, Japan's model of development aid-praised for its transparency and sustainability—has paled in comparison. Japan's approach, while effective in certain regions, lacks the scale and sheer audacity of China's outreach. Moreover, Japan's preoccupation with economic stability and its often subdued geopolitical ambition has left it on the back foot as China has aggressively pursued its vision for a new international order.

It is not just economics at play here.
There is a deepening ideological divide. The language China uses to frame its influence in the Global South is couched in the rhetoric of anti-imperialism, South-South cooperation, and solidarity with the developing world.

This resonates profoundly with nations that have long been subject to the whims of Western powers. Beijing, adept at using its soft power, positions itself as the champion of the Global South, contrasting its rise with the history of exploitation by colonial and imperial forces. By leveraging its economic might, China is building a coalition of nations willing to challenge the existing global system, one dominated by the US and its allies. This ideological appeal has found a strong foothold in parts of Africa and Asia, where many developing nations view China's rise as an opportunity to break free from the shackles of Western dominance. For Japan, the legacy of its imperial past

democratic values, and economic growth. While China's rise is perceived as a return to national glory, Japan remains burdened by its wartime actions, which continue to fuel tensions, particularly with Beijing. This unresolved history hampers Japan's diplomacy, overshadowing its economic and diplomatic efforts, as issues of reparations, historical memory, and political reconciliation persist. And yet, Japan cannot simply be reduced to a passive recipient of China's strategic moves.

The reality is that Japan, with its robust economy and advanced technological sector, still holds significant sway in certain parts of the Global South, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Japan has long been a key player in the economic development of this region, offering not just financial assistance but a model of governance and sustainable growth.

But the rise of China has shifted the balance, and Japan is now forced to reckon with the reality that its traditional model—built on the principles of mutual benefit and technical expertise—may not suffice in the face of China's far-reaching ambi-

There are many reasons why China is winning over many countries that were once bullied by the West in different ways. China's approach is a wake-up call for those countries still under colonial hangovers. Furthermore, as the report made an interesting observation, Japan's relationship with the United States, while essential for regional stability, is becoming increasingly compli-

The strategic interests of Japan and the US are not always aligned, especially when it comes to China. While the US focuses on containing China's rise, Japan is caught in a precarious position, balancing its complicates its post-war identity, need for security and economic which is grounded in pacifism, cooperation with China against the cooperation with China against the

demands of its American ally. Japan's position in this dynamic is fraught with tension—caught between the pressure to align with the US and the reality of an increasingly powerful China on its doorstep.

The question that now looms over Japan's future is not just one of economic survival but of moral and ideological relevance. As the Global South looks increasingly to China for leadership, Japan must reimagine its role in this shifting world order. Japan's model of development, founded on transparency, democra-cy, and sustainability, is being over-shadowed by China's strategic depth and bold vision.

Japan must not only bolster its own economic and diplomatic presence but must also confront the difficult task of reconciling its historical baggage with its aspirations for a secure and prosperous future. To do this, it may be unwise for Japan to stand as a mouthpiece or paper tiger for NATO, learning from the havoc this double-speak military alliance creates. With Trump's return, the competition for the soul of the international system intensifies—a system where shared values and principles, rather than hegemonic power, increasingly define the rules of engagement.

In these circumstances, Japan's ability to adapt, offer a compelling vision for the future of the Global South, and balance its security needs with its diplomatic and economic outreach will determine whether it remains a relevant player or becomes a relic of a past world order, or merely a puppet of a warmongering alliance intent on destabilising the Asia-Pacific.

The coming years will reveal whether Japan can rise to this challenge, or whether China's inexorable march towards global dominance will leave it in the dust.

(The writer is a journalist and a policy analyst; The views expressed

ISRO's PSLV-C60 Mission and POEM-4: A game-changer for India's space exploration

This mission positions India among a select group of nations capable of space docking and sets the stage for revolutionising space experimentation

ndia's space exploration has reached a significant milestone with the recent launch of the PSLV-C60 mission by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). This mission featured the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) alongside the PSLV-Orbital Experiment Module (POEM-4), propelling India into an electric group of nations capable of space docking. Additionally, ISRO's collaboration with startups, researchers, and academic institutions showcases its commitment to fostering deep-tech advancements while reducing the high costs of space experimentation.

Enhanced Resources Traditionally, the upper stage of a launch vehicle becomes dormant after payload deployment. However, ISRO has cre



ANKIT **ANAND** atively repurposed the PSLV's fourth stage into POEM, an orbital platform equipped with telemetry, command support, and a power supply. This transformation enables technical and scientific research in space while optimising resource use and lowering financial barriers for researchers, academic institutions, and businesses.

POEM-4 reflects ISRO's abil-

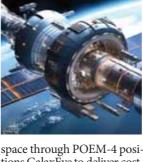
ity to turn constraints into opportunities, providing an affordable avenue for space experimentation. This democratisation of space access marks a turning point for India's space sector, opening the doors to innovations pre-viously hindered by high costs and limited resources. **Empowering Startups**

ISRO's POEM-4 has significantly benefited startups and academic institutions by enabling cost-effective in-orbit technology testing. Mumbai-based Manastu Space Technologies, for instance, is developing the Vyom 2U Green Propulsion System, which replaces toxic satellite fuels with an environmentally friendly hydrogen peroxidebased alternative. This innova-

tion addresses two key chal-

lenges in space exploration safety and sustainability—and incorporates advanced features like a high-temperature catalyst, optimised thruster design, and proprietary green propellant MS-289. With ISRO's support, Manastu is preparing for an upcoming PSLV mission to validate its technology, potentially positioning India as a global leader in sustainable satellite opera-GalaxEye, another innovative

startup, has developed affordable synthetic aperture radar (SAR) modules. Unlike optical imaging, SAR technology penetrates clouds, providing precise and uninterrupted satellite imagery crucial for disaster management, environmental monitoring, and more. Validating its SAR modules in



tions GalaxEye to deliver costeffective global imaging solu-TakeMe2Space, a startup working on space-based data centers and processing power modules, utilised POEM-4 for initial technology validation. This achievement, despite the startup's limited funding, high-lights ISRO's commitment to nurturing deep-tech innova-

tors and breaking down entry barriers for emerging players. Driving Economic Growth and Innovation

ISRO's approach with POEM-4 aligns with its broader vision of fostering public-private col-laboration to stimulate eco-nomic growth. By offering advanced testing infrastructure at reduced costs, ISRO accelerates the commercialisation of innovative solutions.

Manastu Space's collaboration with the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) exemplifies the power of such synergies. With funding from DRDO's Technology Development Fund, Manastu developed the iBooster system through years of intensive research. Its successful delivery partnerships between government institutions and startups to advance national defense and space capabilities. **Push for innovations**

The PSLV-C60 mission and the POEM-4 initiative position ISRO as a leader in frugal yet impactful innovation. By repurposing resources and promoting collaboration, ISRO demonstrates that groundbreaking advancements do not require massive budgets but thrive on ingenuity and

inclusivity. Dr. Pawan Goenka, Chairman of IN-SPACe, aptly summarized the initiative's significance: "POEM is a practical solution deployed by ISRO that allows Indian startups, academic institutions, and research organizations to test underscores the potential of their space technologies with-

out the need to launch entire satellites. By making this platform accessible, we are reducing entry barriers and enabling a wider range of entities to contribute to the space sector." Toward a Multi-Trillion-**Dollar Space Economy**

India's ambitions of becoming a multi-trillion-dollar economy find a strong ally in ISRO's innovations. The space sector, driven by public-private partnerships, support for deep-tech startups, and inclusive access to space, is poised to play a key role in this vision. Initiatives like POEM-4 lay the groundwork for a thriving space ecosystem that fosters innovation, economic growth, and

global leadership.

(The writer is , founding partner at Riceberg Ventures; views are personal)

Diaspora celebrate 76th Republic Day

PTI ■ BEIJING/SINGAPORE

n enthusiastic Indian dias-Apora dressed in vibrant traditional dresses on Sunday celebrated India's 76th Republic Day at the country's missions abroad where the national tri-colour was unfurled with global leaders from Nepal, Australia, Singapore, extending their greetings, highlighting their strong friendship with India. In Beijing, officials and diaspora members attended the flag unfurling ceremony on the premises of the Indian Embassy.

India's Ambassador to China Pradeep Rawat read out the important parts of the President's speech.
"Ambassador unfurled tri-

colour at @EOIBeijing marking the #76thRepublicDay. He also read the Hon'ble President's Republic Day message to Embassy officials and members of the Indian community who attended the ceremony in large numbers. The event also included vibrant cultural performances," the Indian Embassy in China said in a post on X along with some

pictures. In Sri Lanka, the island nations'

tion of the cultural closeness

between the two countries. " C e l e b r a t i n g #RepublicDay2025. Acting HC @DrSatyanjal unfurled the #Tiranga at India House this morning. Members of the Indian diaspora in Sri Lanka ioined the festivities with their patriotic fervour and resolve to realise #ViksitBharat," the High Commission of India in Colombo said in a post on X. '#SriLankaNavy band performed Indian patriotic tunes in a demonstration of our cultural closeness. India's rich diversity was brought to life by music and dance performances by young students of the Indian Cultural Association and @iccr_colombo," it said. Also, Acting High Commissioner Satyanjal Pandey and other officials paid tributes at the IPKF Memorial, honouring Indian soldiers who

Singapore, High Shilpak Commissioner Ambule was joined by an estimated 2,500 Indians living in Singapore to celebrate the 76th Republic Day at the chancery. Ambule read the President's

made the supreme sacrifice for

peace and unity in Sri Lanka.

Navy band performed Indian patriotic tunes in a demonstra- updated the Indian diaspora on the country's progress.

Students from Indian schools in the city-state sang patriotic songs and performed traditional dances. An exhibition showcased products by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd and the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the constitution of India as well as the State Bank of India.

In Israel, Charge de Affaires, Raiiv Bodwade, unfurled the Indian flag in presence of about two hundred Indians who gathered from across the country to celebrate the Republic Day.

He read out the President's address to the nation, and then touched upon regional and bilateral issues in his address to the gathering.

"We welcome the long awaited hostage and ceasefire deal that brings respite to the hostages and their families. This we believe is the harbinger of a year full of hope and beace," Bodwade said.

We do hope of a sustained flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza", he said emphasising "early and peaceful resolution of the conflict, including

release of all hostages, through dialogue and diplomacy". The Indian mission has

worked consistently to "actualise the common vision of our leaders and strengthening relations between two vibrant democracies", he noted. Maintaining the vigour of our

bilateral relationships, the Prime Ministers and other leaders kept in constant touch, he noted.

The Charge de Affaires also mentioned the arrival of more than 13,000 Indians to Israel to join the construction sector, around half of whom came through India-Israel Framework signed November 2023. He also appreciated the role of

the Indian diaspora and the Indian Jewish community in strengthening bilateral ties, calling them a "powerful link". In Japan, Ambassador Sibi George unfurled the Indian national flag at the ceremony. 'The Indian mission also felicitated the winners of Bharat ko

Janiye quiz that witnessed enthusiastic participation. Glimpses of 76th Republic Day of India celebrations at @ I n d i a n E m b T o k y o. Ambassador @AmbSibiGeorge unfurled the tricolor and read

the address by Hon'ble Rashtrapati ji to the Nation." In the Philippines, Ambassador Harsh K Jain unfurled the national flag at the India House and read out the address given by President Droupadi Murmu.

Then there were cultural programmes and the awarding of certificates to the top performers in the Philippines in the Bharat Ko Janiye (BKJ) Quiz. Around 300 people from the Indian diaspora and friends of India attended the function. In Indonesia, Republic Day was celebrated with patriotic fervour by the Indian community & friends of India.

'Cd'A @kgl123 unfurled the Tricolour, followed by the National Anthem, reading of Hon'ble President's Address to the Nation. Vibrant cultural performances added to the patriotic fervour of the day," the Indian Embassy in Jakarta

said in a post on X. Also, Deputy Chief of Mission Indonesia Bijay Selvaraj paid homage to Indian martyrs of World War II at the Commonwealth War Memorial, Menteng Pulo

Meanwhile, many world leaders, including Penny Wong, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, Foreign Minister Arzu Rna Deuba. Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong.

"Wishing my friend @DrSJaishankar, the people of India, and all who celebrate around the world a happy Republic Day. Australia will continue to work with India to pursue a peaceful and stable region, where sovereignty is respected," Penny Wong posted on X.

"On the occasion of 76th #RepublicDay of India, I extend my warmest congratulations to Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi and the people of India. May the ideals of democracy and national unity flourish evermore, fostering deeper ties of friendship between our two nations," Oli posted on X. Warmest congratulations,

Excellency Your @DrSJaishankar, on the 76th Republic Day of India! On this joyous occasion, I extend my best wishes to the people and Government of India for continued progress, prosperity, and advancement," Deuba posted on X.

70 people killed in attack on hospital in Sudan's Darfur

Some 70 people were killed in an attack on the only functional hospital in the besieged city of El Fasher in Sudan, the chief of the World Health Organisation said Sunday, part of a series of attacks coming as the African nation's civil war escalated in recent days.

The attack on the Saudi Teaching Maternal Hospital, which local officials blamed on the rebel Rapid Support Forces, came as the group has seen apparent battlefield losses to the Sudanese military and allied forces under the command of army chief Gen Abdel-Fattah Burhan. That includes Burhan appearing near a burning oil refinery north of Khartoum on Saturday that his forces said they seized from the RSF.

International mediation attempts and pressure tactics, including a US assessment that the RSF and its proxies are committing genocide and sanctions targeting Burhan,

have not halted the fighting. Reported attack follows RSF

In the Saudi hospital attack in El Fasher, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom

Ghebrevesus offered the death toll in a post on the social plat-Officials and others in the capital of North Darfur

province had cited a similar figure Saturday, but Ghebreyesus is the first international source to provide a casualty number. Reporting on Sudan is incredibly difficult given communication challenges and exaggerations by both the RSF and the Sudanese military.

The appalling attack on Saudi Hospital in El Fasher, Sudan, led to 19 injuries and 70 deaths among patients and companions," Ghebreyesus

At the time of the attack, the hospital was packed with patients receiving care." Another health facility in Al

Malha also was attacked Saturday, he added.

International peacekeepers killed as fighting rages around eastern Congo's key city

PTI ■ GOMA (CONGO)

Fighting with M23 rebels in eastern Congo has left at least 13 peacekeepers and foreign soldiers dead, United Nations and army officials said Saturday.

M23 has made significant territorial gains in recent weeks, encircling the eastern city of Goma, which has around two million people and is a regional hub for security and humanitarian

efforts. The UN Security Council moved up an emergency meeting on the escalating violence to Sunday morning (10 am EST). Congo requested the meeting, which had originally been scheduled for

On Saturday, Congo's army said it fended off an M23 offensive towards Goma with the help of its allied forces, including U.N. Troops and soldiers from the Southern Development

Community Mission, also known as SAMIDRC.

The Rwandan-backed M23 is clearly exploiting the presidential transition in the US to advance on Goma - putting thousands more civilians at risk," Kate Hixon, advocacy director for Africa at Amnesty International US, told the Associated Press

Congo, the United States and U.N. Experts accuse Rwanda of backing M23, which is mainly made up of ethnic Tutsis who broke away from the Congolese army more than a decade ago. Rwanda's government denies

the claim, but last year acknowledged that it has troops and missile systems in eastern Congo to safeguard its security, pointing to a buildup of Congolese forces near the border. UN experts estimate there are up to 4,000 Rwandan forces in Congo. The burning wreckage of a white armoured fighting vehicle carrying UN markings

could be seen on a road between Goma and Sake on Saturday, where much of the fighting was concentrated in recent days

Two South African peace-keepers were killed Friday, while a Uruguayan Blue Helmet was killed Saturday, a UN official told The Associated Press. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to speak on the matter publicly.

Additionally, three Malawian peacekeepers were killed in eastern Congo, the United Nations in Malawi said Saturday.

Seven South African soldiers from the SAMIDRC were also killed during clashes with M23 over the last two days, South Africa's department of defense said in a statement. Uruguay's military in a state ment issued Saturday identified its member killed in Congo as Rodolfo Álvarez,

who was part of the Uruguay

IV Battalion. The unit, according to the statement, is working "uninterruptedly to comply with the United Nations mandate, as well as to guarantee the evacuation of non-essential civilian and military personnel from the city of Goma.'

Various measures have been taken to improve the security of our troops, who are operating in adverse conditions," the military said.

ince 2021, Congo's government and allied forces, including SAMIDRC and UN troops, have been keeping M23 away from Goma.

The UN peacekeeping force, also known as MONUSCO, entered Congo more than two decades ago and has around 14,000 peacekeepers on the ground.

South Africa's defense minister, Angie Motshekga, was visiting the country's troops stationed in Congo as part of

Trump met Kim three times

during his first term. The

Trump-Kim diplomacy in

2018-19 fell apart due to

wrangling over US-led eco-

nomic sanctions on North

30 terrorists killed in three separate raids in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Thirty terrorists were killed in three separate counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Saturday, the military said. The counter-terrorism operations were carried out in Lakki Marwat, Karak, and Khyber dis-

While 18 terrorists were "sent to hell" in Lakki Marwat district, eight were killed in Karak, the army said in a statement. The military said six terrorists were also injured in the Lakki Marwat encounter.

In another encounter in Bagh area of Khyber district, security forces gunned down four terrorists, including ring leaders Aziz ur Rehman aka Qari Ismail and Mukhlis, while two terrorists sustained injuries, it said.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered during the counter-terrorism operations, the statement said. President Asif Ali Zardari and

separate statements praised the for Pakistan's civil and military security forces for their successful operations in Lakki Marwat, Karak, and Khyber districts.President Zardari hailed the killing of 30 terrorists as a significant achievement and reaffirmed that the security forces' operations will continue until terrorism is completely eradicated. Prime Minister Shehbaz reiterated the nation's unwavering support for the security forces, emphasising that Pakistan is fully committed to eliminating all forms of terrorism.

In recent months, Pakistan has stepped up intelligence-based operations against Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has become emboldened since the Afghan Taliban seized power

in Afghanistan in 2021. The TTP or Pakistan Taliban is a separate group, but a close ally of the Afghan Taliban.

On January 17, five terrorists were killed in an intelligencebased operation in Khyber district's Tirah area. The year 2024 was the deadliest

security forces in a decade with at least 685 fatalities and 444 terror attacks, according to "CRSS Annual Security Report 2024' issued by Centre for Security and Strategic Studies.

Equally alarming was the cumulative losses of civilians and security personnel -- 1,612 fatalities, accounting for over 63 per cent of the total recorded in 2024, marking 73 per cent more losses compared to 934 outlaws eliminated, The News reported citing CRSS report.

The overall fatalities recorded in 2024 were a record nine-year high and over 66 per cent more than in 2023.

On an average, nearly seven people lost their lives daily in 2024, with November emerging as the deadliest month across all metrics, compared to all other months of the year.

The violence took the heaviest toll on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which topped in human losses with 1,616 fatalities, followed by Balochistan with 782 fatalities.

UN refugee chief calls for more help for Syria

PTI DAMASCUS

The United Nations refugee chief said Saturday that some 200,000 refugees have returned to Syria from neighbouring countries since the government of Bashar Assad was overthrown last The influx comes after an estimat-

ed 300,000 refugees returned from Lebanon late last year while it was under bombardment during the Israel-Hezbollah war. Many more who had fled during

the country's nearly 14-year uprising-turned-civil war are thinking about going back soon. However, UN

Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi cautioned during a visit to Damascus during which he met with Syria's new de facto leader, Ahmad al-Sharaa, that many of the returnees may not stay unless living conditions in the country improve.

"In order to make this return sustainable and to make life better for all Syrians the economy needs to return, services need to be restored and reinstated, security needs to be guaranteed and housing needs to be the subject of a very important reconstruction Grandi said

He called for the lifting of Western sanctions on the country, many of which targeted Assad's government but have not been removed since it fell on December 8 as the result of a lightning rebel offensive. "Sanctions are an important obstacle for the return of

refugees," Grandi said. There are more than 4.7 million refugees registered with the UN refugee agency, or UNHCR in neighbouring countries. The largest number are in Turkey, with nearly 2.9 million, followed by

Lebanon, with more than 755,000. In addition to returning refugees, some 600,000 out of an estimated seven million internally displaced Syrians have gone home,

Grandi said. Some of those returns may be controversial.

of suspected Islamic State group members, allowing

North Korea vows tough response to US after cruise missile test

North Korea said Sunday it tested a cruise missile system, its third known weapons display this year, and vowed "the toughest" response to what it called the escalation of US-South Korean military drills that target the North. The moves suggested North Korea will likely maintain its

run of weapons tests and its confrontational stance against the U.S. For now, even though President Donald Trump said he intends to reach out to North Korean leader Kim Jong

The official Korean Central News Agency said Kim observed the test of sea-to-surface strategic cruise guided weapons on Saturday.
The term "strategic" implies

the missiles are nuclear-capable. KCNA said the missiles hit their targets after travelling long elliptical and figure-eight-shaped flight patterns, but that couldn't be independently verified.

KCNA cited Kim as saying that North Korea's war deterrence capabilities "are being perfected more thoroughly and affirming that his country will make "strenuous efforts" to defend stability "on the basis of more powerfully developed military muscle." In a separate statement carried by KCNA on Sunday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry criticized the US for committing 'serious military provocations aiming at" North Korea with a series of military exercises with South Korea this month. "The reality stresses that the DPRK should counter the U.S. With the toughest counteraction from A to Z as long as it refuses the sovereignty and security interests of the

1,500-kilometer (932-mile)- DPRK and this is the best option for dealing with the U.S," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the abbreviation of its formal name. The Foreign Ministry warning was in line with Kim's vows to implement the "toughest" anti-US policy during a year-end political

meeting. North Korea views US military training with South Korea as invasion rehearsals though Washington and Seoul have repeatedly said their drills are defensive in nature. In recent vears, the US and South Korea have expanded their military exercises in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear program. The start of Trump's second

term raises prospects for the

revival of diplomacy between

the US and North Korea, as

During a Fox News interview broadcast Thursday, Trump called Kim "a smart guy" and "not a religious zealot." Asked whether he will reach out to Kim again, Trump replied, "I will, yeah.

On Monday, Trump called North Korea "a nuclear power" as he spoke of his personal ties with Kim during a news conference at the Oval Office after his inauguration. Washington, Seoul and their partners have long shunned describing North Korea as a nuclear state because that could be seen as accepting its pursuit of nuclear weapons in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

Many experts say Kim likely thinks he has greater bar-gaining power than in his earlier round of diplomacy with Trump because of his country's enlarged nuclear arsenal and deepening military ties with Russia.

In South Korea, many worry that Trump might scale back military drills with the Asian US ally and abandon the goal of the complete denuclearization of North Korea and focus on eliminating its long-range missile program, which poses a direct threat to the US, while leaving its nuclear attack capabilities against South Korea intact.

After his first summit with Kim in 2018, Trump baffled many in South Korea by unilaterally announcing the suspension of major summertime military drills, calling them "very provocative" and "tremendously expensive".

PTI's Imran Khan appoints new party president for KP

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party supremo Imran Khan has appointed Member of National Assembly Junaid Akbar as the party's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president, replacing Ali Amin Gandapur, the incumbent provincial party president, a source said on Saturday.

'The change has been made to lessen the burden on Ali Amin Gandapur who has a great deal of responsibilities as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister and faces several challenges in governance and ensuring law and order," PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja told reporters outside Adiala Jail. "Therefore, at his (Gandapur's) request, (jailed former prime minister) Khan decided that Junaid Akbar Khan will become PTI president in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.'

A day ago, Akbar was elected chairman of the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) unopposed, filling a position left vacant since the general elections in February last year.

After being appointed PTI KP president, Akbar in a statement on X expressed gratitude for his appointment and said that he was a middle-class person who got the opportunity because of his hard work, something that is not seen in other parties.

Speaking to reporters, Akbar said: "Do not confuse our good faith with weakness. We want the rift between the public and institutions to be closed. We will not be scared or pressured, because we are not a party that can be scared or pressured."

Kurdish authorities in the country's northeast are preparing to release some Syrian detainees in the sprawling al Hol camp that houses family members

them to return to their home Bangladesh High Commissioner

18 killed as tanker carrying petrol explodes in southern Nigeria

PTI ■ ABUJA three others who were unharmed. With the absence of an efficient railway system to transport

Enugu-Onitsha expressway in the southeastern state of Enugu after the tanker, laden with gasoline, lost control and rammed into 17 vehicles, and burst into flames, Nigeria's Federal Road Safety Corps said in a statement

10 injured, rescuers extracted from fallen tankers and other death.

> not have to lead to the loss of lives," Lanre Issa-Onilu, director-Orientation Agency, the body tasked with communicating govyear ago in an attempt to channel resources to more develop-

South Korean prosecutors indict impeached President

PTI ■ SEOUL

Couth Korean prosecutors On Sunday indicted the impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his imposition of martial law last month, news reports said.

try into massive political turmoil. Other South Korean media outlets have carried similar reports.

law decree The Constitutional Court is deliberating separately whether to formally dismiss

steadfastly denied any wrong-doing, calling his martial law a legitimate act of governance meant to raise public awareness of the danger of the lib-eral-controlled National top officials.

martial law, Yoon called the assembly "a den of criminals" and vowed to eliminate shameless North Korea followers and anti-state forces.

PTI ISLAMABAD

High Commissioner to Pakistan announced plans to begin direct air services between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

on Saturday. Hussain emphasised the deep

and historic relationship between the two countries and expressed the intention to initiate direct flights to facilitate travel and connectivity. He noted that such a move would enhance cooperation in vari-

ous sectors, including tourism, education, and trade. However, no timeline for the

announces direct flights with Pakistan

direct flights was announced. The High Commissioner also highlighted the growing trade and diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan, stating that these ties would continue to grow stronger. He underscored Bangladesh's

commitment to freedom of expression, noting how social media has empowered the younger generation to voice their rights, contributing to a robust culture of free speech in the country.

out the vast investment oppor-tunities in Khyber

es to explore these avenues. He also mentioned the demand for Bangladeshi products in Pakistan, with trade ongoing between the two nations via shipping routes linking Chittagong and Karachi, although the volume remains modest. The High Commissioner also touched on the upcoming

Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the healthcare and industrial

sectors, encouraging business-

elections in Bangladesh and reiterated his country's focus on economic development as a key priority.

He concluded by commending

Pakistan's Air Force for its exceptional capabilities in the defence sector.

Those who died were "burnt beyond recognition," the spokesperson of the safety corps rescue teams, Olusegun Ogungbemide, said. Besides the

Saturday evening

t least 18 people died and 10 Aothers were injured in southern Nigeria after a gasoline tanker exploded, officials said. The accident happened along the

cargo, fatal truck accidents are common along most major roads in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. Earlier this month, 98 people were killed in a gasoline tanker blast in north-central Nigeria,

near the Suleja area of Niger state, after individuals attempted to transfer gasoline from a crashed oil tanker into another truck using a generator. Some bystanders were at the scene to scoop gasoline. Authorities then began a nationwide campaign against the scooping of gasoline

practices that could lead to "Gasoline tanker accidents do

general of the National ernment policy, said at an event close to the Suleja area on Saturday. The prices of gasoline in Africa's most populous country have soared after President Bola Tinubu's government removed subsidies more than a mental purposes. However, the policy has caused hardship to

Yonhap news agency reported that the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office indicted Yoon over rebellion in connection with his December 3 decree that plunged the coun-

Repeated calls to the prosecutors' office were unanswered. Yoon was earlier impeached and arrested over the martial

Yoon as president or reinstate Yoon, a conservative, has

Assembly which obstructed his agenda and impeached During his announcement of

To further strengthen bilateral ties, Bangladesh's

According to The Express Tribune, Mohammad Iqbal Hussain was speaking at a press conference in Peshawar

Additionally, Hussain pointed

Border emergency declaration by Trump comes after major turmoil

ong stretches of silence on La Border Patrol scanner are punctuated with updates on tracking a single migrant for hours. The radio traffic sounds like a throwback to earlier times, before the United States became the largest destination for asylum-seekers in 2017.

"There's a pair way down there. We'll see if they start moving up," one agent says.

"Yeah, maybe they'll try to move north in a bit," another responds.

Saying that "America's sover-eignty is under attack," President Donald Trump's declaration of a border emergency comes at a time of relative calm after years of deep turmoil. Active-duty military arrived Thursday in San Diego and in El Paso, Texas, as part of an initial deployment of 1,500 troops. Arrests for illegal border crossings plummeted more than 80 per cent to about 47,000 in December from an all-time high of 250,000 the same period a vear earlier.

Arrests fell by about half when

Mexican authorities increased that opened during Biden's enforcement within their own borders a year ago and by about half again when former President Joe Biden introduced severe asylum restrictions in

For Trump, Biden didn't go nearly far enough. The last monthly gauge of border arrests under Biden hovered near 4 1/2-year lows and was below much of 2019, during Trump's first term, but about triple from April 2017, early in Trump's presidency and a low point that he highlighted on giant charts at campaign rallies. The Associated Press joined the Border Patrol for six hours Thursday in San Diego, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings much of the last year, and found no migrants until the last half-hour.

Three Chinese men and one Malaysian turned themselves in to agents minutes after walking through a gap in the border wall. Almost simultaneously, eight from India and one from Nepal crossed and waited for agents. The men were taken for processing to large white tents

presidency. It was unclear what happened to them after that, but one of Trump's biggest challenges is the enormous cost and diplo-matic challenge of deporting people to faraway places. The governments of Venezuela and Nicaragua, both US adversaries, refuse to take their citizens back, for example. Cuba allows only limited flights.

The job of a Border Patrol agent has changed dramatically in recent months, away from quickly processing and releasing asylum-seekers with notices to appear in immigration court. Agents are returning to a more traditional role tracking individuals and small groups trying to elude capture. Many agents chafed under

Biden as arrests topped 2 million for two straight years, though traffic slowed sharply before Trump took office on Monday. The Border Patrol released fewer than 7,000 migrants in the US in December, down 96 per cent from nearly 192,000 a year ear-



El Paso reported 211 were released there in the third week of January, down from more than 10,000 a week in December 2023.

In San Diego on Thursday, agents focused on an area of deceptively treacherous mountain trails with expansive views of Tijuana, Mexico, its urban sprawl and industrial warehouses in San Diego. Migrants who elude capture walk as long as two days in the wilderness before arriving at smugglers' vehicles. Agents parked in staging areas follow their movements and discuss when to move in.

them? You can't miss them, one agent says on the radio. "Potentially two so far," anoth

Less than a year ago, agents were overwhelmed by surrendering asylum-seekers who waited up to several days in the heat or cold, with the exposure "Does anyone have eyes on of children to the dangerous

er chimes in.

temperatures inviting a judge's scrutiny.

On some nights hundreds were gathered along border walls in San Diego, as volunteers passed bandages, aspirin, juice and sandwiches between slats in the barrier.

In remote, boulder-strewn mountains east of San Diego, large groups crossed nightly, many from China and South America. Within a day or two, asylum-seekers were dropped off at a bus stop in San Diego. Karen Parker provides sup-port and medical attention to migrants in the mountains, such as treating broken ankles, cuts and parasite wounds. She said she encountered 600 to 800 people per night a year ago, but by early January there were mostly small groups with an occasional larger one of around 40. Since Trump took office, Parker said, it has been "a dead standstill", perhaps partly a result of freezing temperatures and wildfires. Parker sees more people getting

picked up in sedans, a likely sign of smuggling activity, than last year when border crossers generally waited for the patrol to release them with notices to appear in immigration court. Arrests in the San Diego sector plunged to an average of 236 a day during the last week of Biden's presidency, from more than 1,400 a day in April. Wednesday's arrest tally was

Trump's orders will hinge to a large extent on how he pays for detention and transportation, as well as how he manages countries that won't take back their citizens. During his first term, he used emergency powers to divert billions of dollars from the Defence Department for a border wall.

To protect the security and safety of United States citizens, to protect each of the States against invasion, and to uphold my duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed, it is my responsibility as President to ensure that the illegal entry of aliens into the United States via the southern border be immediately and entirely stopped," Trump said on Monday in his emergency dec-

Trump administration's plans will be 'catastrophic': Haitian leader

The president of Haiti's transitional presidential council said the Trump administration's decisions to freeze aid programs, deport migrants and block refugees will be "catastrophic" for Haiti.

Leslie Voltaire made the comment in an interview with The Associated Press in Rome on Saturday following a meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican. He visited the pope to ask for help for Haiti.

"I'm knocking on the doors of people who love Haiti. The Pope loves Haiti, and he is eager to help," Haiti's interim president said.

The pontiff and Voltaire discussed the dire situation in

Haiti where gangs have killed civilians and operate across the Caribbean nation with impunity. Half of Haiti's 11.4 million people are already hungry, according to Voltaire, and losing humanitarian assistance will make the situation dramatically worse.

Trump said that Haiti is a shithole,' so I don't think he will care about Haiti," Voltaire said, noting that thousands of people are already being repatriated from the Dominican Republic every week and gangs are terrorizing the populace. With the new US policies, "the situation will be catastrophic."

During his first administration, President Donald Trump used bluntly vulgar language

to question why the U.S. Would accept immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa. At the time, the White House did not deny his remark but issued a statement saying Trump supports immigration policies that welcome "those who can contribute to our society." Voltaire said there are roughly 1.5 million Haitians in the United States and roughly 150,000 who were accepted under a program called the Temporary Protection

> "Trump says that he will expel all of them," Voltaire said, adding that Haiti, which is already struggling with hunger and internally displaced people, cannot handle the influx.

System.

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

ustralians celebrated and Australians celebrate Approtested across the country on Sunday as Australia Day drew attention to political differences over Indigenous rights months out from a federal elec-

Australia Day marks a British colony being established at Sydney Cove on Jan 26, 1788, which eventually led to Britain claiming the entire country without a treaty with its Indigenous inhabitants.

Indigenous rights advocates call Jan 26 "Invasion Day" and protest rallies have been held in major cities. Many argue that Australia's national day should not commemorate such a divisive event.

Australia Day is usually a public holiday and because it fell on a Sunday this year, Monday has

been declared a holiday. Acknowledging the hurt that Australia Day causes many Indigenous Australians, the most disadvantaged ethnic group that accounts for 4% of the population, many businesses refer to the "January long weekend" rather than the "Australia Day long weekend." Australia Day has in recent decades been the date on which immigrants became Australian citizens in public ceremonies. But several local government councils have chosen to hold cit-

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's center-left Labor Party government has attempted to accommodate differing views of Australia Day since it won elections in 2022.

izenship ceremonies on differ-

ent dates due to the controver-

The government in 2023 decid-

ed to allow public servants to work on Australia Day and take another day off instead, reversing a previous conservative government order that they must not work on Jan. 26 when it falls on a week day.

Opposition leader Peter Dutton has said that all councils will be required to hold citizenship ceremonies on Jan. 26 if his party wins elections due by May 17. "If the prime minister doesn't have the strength of leadership to stand up to mayors and others who don't want to celebrate Australia Day, then our country's in more trouble than we first realized," Dutton said two weeks

Dutton has accused Albanese of 'equivocating" on his support for Australia Day to appease the minor Greens party.

The Greens party opposes celebrations on Jan. 26. Many observers, including Dutton, expect Labor will lose its parliapolitical advantage. mentary majority at the next election and may need the support of Greens lawmakers to form a minority government.

being divisive by declining an invitation to attend Australia Day events in the national capital Canberra.

Albanese has accused Dutton of

Instead, Dutton attended a citizenship ceremony in his hometown of Brisbane

"The national Australia Day event should be attended by both sides of the Parliament. They should be bipartisan," Albanese told reporters on Sunday.

'Why wouldn't you participate in national events if you want to be a national leader?" Albanese asked.

Australian National University historian Frank Bongiorno said

Australians celebrate and protest anniversary of British colonisation both leaders were using Australia Day for their own

> These figures will insist that they want it to be a day of unity, but they'll invariably behave in ways that promote disunity around the day. That's really how

culture wars work," Bongiorno

Dutton has accused Albanese of dividing Australia along racial lines by holding a referendum in 2023 on Indigenous rights. Australians voted against a pro-

posal that would have enshrined in the constitution an Indigenous body known as the Voice to address Parliament on Indigenous issues.

Dutton has also accused Albanese's government of focusing on Indigenous rights instead of a cost of living crisis facing many Australians due to inflation and high interest rates.

Belarus President Lukashenko set to win seventh term

PTI ■ MINSK

The smiling face of President 1 Alexander Lukashenko gazed out from campaign posters across Belarus on Sunday as the country held an orchestrated election virtually guaranteed to give the 70vear-old autocrat vet another term on top of his three

"Needed!" the posters proclaim beneath a photo of Lukashenko, his hands clasped together. The phrase is what groups of voters responded in campaign videos after supposedly being asked if they wanted him to serve again.

But his opponents, many of whom are imprisoned or exiled abroad by his unrelenting crackdown on dissent and free speech, would disagree. They call the election a sham

much like the last one in 2020 that triggered months of protests that were unprecedented in the history of the country of 9 million people. The crackdown saw more than 65,000 arrests, with thousands beaten, bringing condemnation

and sanctions from the West. His iron-fisted rule since 1994 Lukashenko took office two Soviet Union — earned him the nickname of "Europe's Last Dictator," relying on subsidies and political support from close ally Russia.

He let Moscow use his territory to invade Ukraine in 2022 and even hosts some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons, but he still campaigned with the slogan, "Peace and security," arguing he has saved Belarus from being drawn into war.
"It's better to have a dictatorship like in Belarus than a democracy like Ukraine," Lukashenko said in his characteristic bluntness

Fearing a repeat of election

His reliance on support from Russian President Vladimir Putin — himself in office for a quarter-century — helped him survive the 2020 protests.

feared a repeat of those mass demonstrations amid economic troubles and the fighting in Ukraine, and so scheduled the vote in January, when few would want to fill the streets

again, rather than in August. He faces only token opposition. The trauma of the 2020 protests was so deep that Lukashenko this time decided not to take risks and opted for the most reliable option when balloting looks more like a

special operation to retain power than an election," Belarusian political analyst Valery Karbalevich said.

Lukashenko repeatedly declared that he wasn't clinging to power and would "quietly and calmly hand it over to the new generation?

His 20-year-old son, Nikolai, travelled the country, giving and playing piano at campaign events. His father hasn't mentioned his health, even though he was seen having difficulty walking and occasionally spoke in a hoarse voice.

"Lukashenko campaigned actively despite the apparent health issues, and it means that he still has plenty of energy," Karbalevich said. "The successor issue only becomes relevant when a leader prepares to step down. But Lukashenko

Top political opponents imprisoned or exiled

Leading opponents have fled abroad or were thrown in prison. The country holds nearly 1,300 political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ăles Bialiatski, founder of the Viasna Human Rights Centre.

pardoned more than 250 people described as political prisoners by activists. At the same time, however, authorities have sought to uproot dissent by arresting hundreds in raids targeting relatives and friends of political prisoners and any-one participating in online activities organized by apartment blocks in various cities. Authorities detained 188 people last month alone, Viasna

(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases

(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India &Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: ABHISHEK DUTT S/O LATE KAMAL K DUTT, House No. D-18, Third Floor, South Extension Part 2, New Delhi -110049

Name of political party: INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Case No.

Name of Election: **ELECTION OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NCT 2025** *Name of Constituency: AC-42-KASTRUBA NAGAR CONSTITUENCY

ABHISHEK DUT (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

Status of

No and dated case(s) COURT OF 4995/2021 CASE IN SH KARTIK INVESTI-TAPARIA JMFC-**GATION** 03/SED/SAKET ii

(A) Pending criminal cases

SI. Name of Court

description of offence(s) -IT IS THE CASE OF PROSECUTION THAT ON 15.07.2021, AT AROUND PHASE & |3.00 PMTO 5.00 PM

Actsconcerned and brief

Section(s) of

CHARGES ACCUSED PERSONS TON WERE FOUND FRAMED VIOLATING COVID-19 NORMS BY NOT WEARING MASK AND FOLLOWING SOCIAL **DISTANCING.THEY** WERE ALSO FOUND TO BE GOING IN A LARGE GROUP AND TAKING

OUT A POLITICAL RALLY.

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences **NOT APPLICABLE**

	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE
No.	date(s) of order(s)	& punishment imposed	Punishment Imposed

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of the name of the constituency.

Trump wants Jordan, Egypt to accept more refugees

PTI ■ ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE

President Donald Trump said Saturday he'd like to see Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations increase the number of Palestinian refugees they are accepting from the Gaza Strip - potentially moving out enough of the population to "just clean out" the war-torn area to create a virtual clean

During a 20-minute questionand-answer session with reporters aboard Air Force One on Saturday, Trump also said he's ended his predecessor's hold on sending 2,000-pound bombs to Israel. That lifts a pressure point that had been meant to reduce civilian casualties during Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza that is now halted by a tenuous ceasefire.

"We released them today," Trump said of the bombs. "They ve been waiting for them for a long time." Asked why he lifted the ban on those bombs, Trump responded, "Because they bought them." Trump has built his political

career around being unapologetically pro-Israel. On his larger vision for Gaza, Trump said he had call earlier in the day with King Abdullah II of Jordan and would speak Sunday with President Abdel Fattah él-Sissi

of Egypt.
"I'd like Egypt to take people,"
Trump said. "You're talking
about probably a million and a
half people, and we just clean
out that whole thing and say,
You know it's over." You know, it's over.

Trump said he complimented Jordan for having successfully accepted Palestinian refugees and that he told the king, "I'd love for you to take on more, cause I'm looking at the whole Gaza Strip right now, and it's a mess. It's a real mess." Such a drastic displacement of

people would openly contradict Palestinian identity and deep connection to Gaza. Still, Trump said the part of the world that encompasses Gaza, has "had many, many conflicts" over centuries. He said resettling "could be temporary or long term."

"Something has to happen," Trump said. "But it's literally a demolition site right now. Almost everything's demolished, and people are dying there." He added: "So, I'd rather get involved with some of the Arab nations, and build housing in a different location, where they can maybe live in

peace for a change? There was no immediate comment from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office. Trump has offered non-

traditional views on the future of Gaza in the past. He suggested after he was inaugurated on Monday that Gaza has "really got to be rebuilt in a different The new president added then,

"Gaza is interesting. It's a phenomenal location, on the sea. The best weather, you know, everything is good. It's like, some beautiful things could be done with it, but it's very inter-His resuming delivery of large bombs, meanwhile, is a break

with then-President Joe Biden, who halted their delivery in name from Seema to Seema May as part of an effort to keep Kumari Tomar, vide affidavit Israel from launching an allout assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah. A month later, Israel did take control of the city, but after the vast majority of the 1 million civilians that had been living or sheltering in Rafah had fled. 'Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers," Biden told CNN in May when he held up the service records, my DOB is weapons. "I made it clear that if they go into Rafah ... I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with

the cities, that deal with that

CHANGE OF NAME

Savetri. Mother of-I, Rajbiri Devi, Mother of-

No.10136769P L/Nk Jaibeer, R/o- VPO- Lokri, PS & Teh-Pataudi, Dist- Gurgaon, Haryana-122414, have changed my name from Savetri to Savtri, vide affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1322)C Seema W/o-No.16025224N RFN Jitendra Singh, R/o- Dawar Ka Pura, Nandpura, Morena, M.P.-476219, have changed my

dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1323)C I, Mange Ram, Father of-No.14661957H Nk Rajiv Kumar, R/o- G-12, Varnika Estate, Rohta Road, Meerut, U.P.- 250001, have changed my name from Mange Ram to Mangeram, in my son's

wrongly written 01/07/1956 whereas my correct DOB is 01/01/1951, affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1324)C

No.14661957H Nk Rajiv Kumar, R/o- G-12, Varnika Estate, Rohta Road, Meerut, U.P.- 250001, in my son's service records, my DOB is wrongly written as 01/07/1960 whereas my correct DOB is 03/02/1962, have changed my name from Rajbiri Devi to Rajabeeri, vide affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary

PD(1325)C I, J Sangeetha W/o- JC-779054M Nb/Sub Thiruvengadam Gurusamy Nagar, Chinna Veppam Pattu, Vaniyambadi Kalendira Tirupattur (Dt), Tamilnadu-635751, have changed my name from J Sangeetha to Sangeetha J, vide affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

Public Delhi.

I hitherto known as VIVEK KUMAR alias VIVEK SINGH, S/o VIJAY BAHADUR SINGH, R/o D-218, Phase-4, Street No-8, Aya Nagar, South Delhi, Delhi-110047, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as VIVEK SINGH.

PD(1327)C

IT industry bats for deeptech fund to bolster startup ecosystem

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ndia's apex IT industry body Nasscom has batted for tweaks **⊥**in safe harbour rules and widening the scope for utilisation of SEZ reinvestment reserves in its Budget wishlist, while advocating for creation of a central deeptech fund to bolster startup ecosystem

Creation of a grant framework for the deeptech ecosystem, and making the deferment of the time of payment of tax on Employee Stock Option Plan available to employees of all DPIITrecognized startups also tops the Budget expectations of the

The Union Budget for financial year 2025-26 is scheduled to be presented in Parliament by Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2025. For the \$250 billion export-led Indian IT industry, the Budget comes amid continued global macro headwinds, geopolitical risks, and growing unease about possibility of sudden policy and tariff moves by the US, where President Donald Trum has promised to script a new, glorious chapter for America with his headline-grabbing second-term.

Issues under transfer-pricing regime, expanding the scope for utilisation of SEZ reinvestment reserve for tech companies, as well as measures to promote startup in India figure high on Nasscom's budget expectations.

Among the key asks is also making deferment of the time of payment of tax on Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP) available to the employees of more startups.

"The deferment - even if you look at only DPIIT-registered startups is actually available only to about 2.5 per cent of these startups.

"While the DPIIT has roughly around 1.43 lakh startups registered on its portal, of which 3,600 odd are certified by the inter-ministerial board, and only these startups can get this benefit, Ashish Aggarwal, Vice President and Head of Public Policy at Nasscom told PTI. Given that the employee is

required to pay full tax and there is only a deferment of the time of payment, the benefit should be available to all DPIIT recognised start-ups, not limited to 3,605 start-ups who have obtained IMB certificate under IT Act, according to Aggarwal.

"In fact, there is a merit in going beyond," he said



Along with making the deferment available for all DPIIT recognised startups, safeguards can be added to say that eligible ESOPs will be available only to employees of DPIIT registered start-ups, and that ESOPs will be offered only to

Indian resident taxpayers

schemes should be uniform for all employees so that you don't create some scheme which is uniquely tailored for certain employees," he said. Nasscom is also batting for

measures to strengthen availability of 'patient capital' strengthen

(long-term capital) for deeptech startups in India.

According to the industry body, the government should create a dedicated deeptech fund (in the form of fund-of-funds) structured with flexibility for longer gestation (10 years with extensions). The

fund's structure may incorporate provisions for matching capital to encourage greater investment in the sector. venture

This was also proposed in draft National DeepTech Startup (NDTSP) 2023.

Another ask pertains to creation of a grant framework for the deeptech ecosystem.

"A common grant framework should be established across government ministries, through a two-tiered funding approach - Initial Proof of Concept grant of at least ₹two crore to validate core technologies; tested Prototype grant of minimum ₹3 crore to support market validation and early commercialisation." early commercialisation,"
NASSCOM said as part of its
Budget recommendations.
Further, specific infrastructure
grants - in the form of access to

labs and testing facilities for the high-cost areas like Space, Semiconductors, AI, Clean Semiconductors, Energy, etc. Should be explored, it

says.
The industry asserts that since Global Capability Centres (captive centres) only provide services to own companies/parent companies and

are normally based on a cost-plus model, the safe harbour rules

should be available to all the GCCs and the cap on turnover (up to ₹200 crore) and the criterion of bearing insignificant risk needs to be dispensed with. The safe harbour regime should

be made available for all related party entities. Given the competitive nature of industry, the rate of profit margins are not observed to be higher merely because a company is bigger in terms of annual revenues. Therefore, abolish or significantly increase the eligibility threshold for SHR," according to Nasscom. Further, the Safe Harbour margin rates - though reduced in 2017 are "still very high" and needs to be reduced. The industry is also pinning its hopes on a simpler regime and fewer categories.

So far as issues impacting the tech industry goes, Nasscom has recommended that government should expand the scope for utilisation of SEZ reinvestment reserve to include operating expenses incurred on leasing of computers/ laptops, using cloud infrastructure, buying software; capital investment in building infrastructure and expenses incurred on new employees such as salary cost,

training costs



Equity MF inflows soar to near ₹4 Lakh Crore in 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $E_{\rm witnessed~a~remarkable}^{\rm quity~mutual~funds}$ mutual funds surge in inflows to nearly ₹4 lakh crore in 2024, more than double the amount recorded in the preceding year, reflecting strong investor confidence and a continued shift towards long-term investing particularly through Systematic

Investment Plans (SIPs). Despite the st strong performance in 2024, the outlook for 2025 appears cautious. The mutual fund industry has started to see a slowdown in equity fund flows since early December, a market volatility, Santosh Joseph, Co-founder and CEO Germinate Investor Services, said.

Historically, inflows into equity funds are closely tied to market performance, and periods market uncertainty often result in subdued investor activity.

"As a result, 2025 may witness muted activity in terms of new fund launches and equity fund mobilization especially as market volatility persists," Santosh Joseph, Cofounder and CEO of Germinate Investor Services,

However, long-term investors may continue to stay the course, benefiting from the wealth creation potential of equity markets when conditions stabilise, he

added. In 2024, the total

The growth has been largely attributed to consistent market performance, and the increasing adoption of SIPs, which offer a disciplined approach to

Finsery AMC, noted that retail investors are becoming increasingly aware of equities as a vital tool for wealth creation.

"The market's consistent performance, along with the digitisation of investment processes, has made equity mutual funds more accessible to investors, and the widespread use of SIPs has contributed to the inflow

momentum," he said. He also highlighted how even during

inflow into equity and equity-oriented schemes stood at ₹3.94 lakh crore, compared to ₹1.61 lakh crore in 2023, according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India

The impressive growth in inflows contributed to a 40 per cent increase in the assets under management (AUM) of the mutual fund industry, which reached ₹30.57 lakh crore by December 2024, up from ₹21.8 lakh crore in the previous year.

investing. Ganesh Mohan, CEO of Bajaj

retail investors have become more resilient, with many choosing to stay invested corrections.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's exports rose by 5.57 per cent to \$59.93 During December, the shipments increased by 8.40

shipments increased by 8.49 per cent to \$7 billion, the

data showed.

On the other hand, imports during the first nine months of 2024-25 grew by 1.91 per cent to \$33.4 billion, while in December it was up by 9.88 per cent to \$3.77 billion.

According to experts going According to experts, going by the trend, the total trade

between the two countries will continue to grow in the coming months also. The bilateral trade during April-December 2024-25 April-December 2024-25 stood at \$93.4 billion, as

 $m V^{edanta}$ group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd

(HZL) is likely to turn net

debt-free by the next financial

year despite significant investment in capacity

expansion, according to a

According to brokerage firm

Ventura Securities global demand for base metals – zinc

and lead, is expected to grow

at a CAGR of 6/7 per cent.

Domestically, India is a net

exporter of zinc while having

a deficit in lead supplies. Both

these circumstances are

"HZL is expected to turn net debt-free by FY26," it said.

producer of zinc, lead and

silver had earlier said that it

largest

country's

favourable to HZL.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



against \$94.6 billion between India and China

The experts added that the possible trade war between the US and China will give huge export potential for Indian exporters. The US is the largest trading

partner of India from 2021-22. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports and over 6 per cent in imports and about 11 per cent in bilateral

Hindustan Zinc likely to turn

net debt-free by FY26: Report

Zinc & Silver of India

expects to reduce its debt to

about ₹2,000 crore by March-

end from about ₹6,000 crore at the end of the September

Silver is fast gaining traction

for investment demand and

its use cases in industrial

applications is only rising.

The timely expansion in silver

production capacities augers well given the exploding

HZL has planned capacity expansion of ₹16,000 crore,

demand, the report said.

quarter.

raised concerns that if the US would impose additional duties on certain Indian goods, as threatened by US President Donald Trump, it can impact trade.

can impact trade.

In December last year,
Trump had said India
charges "a lot" of tariffs,
reiterating his intention to
impose reciprocal tariffs in
retaliation for what New
Delhi will impose on the
import of certain American
products products.

India should respond firmly and in equal measure," economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

In 2018, when the US taxed Indian steel and aluminium, India retaliated by raising tariffs on 29 US products, recovering

including sustaining capex, for the period FY 24-27 for

funding the roaster plant in

Rajasthan's Debari, fumer and

fertilizer plant at Chanderiya (sulphuric acid forward

integration), in the desert state and 450 mw renewable

The brokerage firm said that

it is also bullish on HZL's

expansion plans, expecting it to contribute to revenue

HZL is expected to expand

its mined production to 1.2 million tonnes in FY27 from

1 million tonnes with refined

zinc/lead production increasing from 817/216 kt to

931/240 kt. Silver (by product

lead concentrate) is expected to increase from 746 to 800 tonnes," the report

energy addition.



India-Oman to review progress of free trade agreement talks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ndia and Oman will review The progress of talks for the proposed agreement (FTA) between the two countries during the visit of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to Muscat this week, an official statement said on Sunday.

Though the negotiations for the proposed agreement were concluded, Oman has sought revision of its market access offers on some products.

On January 14, India and Oman held the fifth round of talks for the agreement, which is aimed at boosting bilateral economic ties. The negotiations for the

agreement, officially dubbed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), formally began in November 2023.

In such agreements, two partners either trading significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on a maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and attract investments.

The talks on India-Oman CEPA which are at an advanced stage are likely to get further impetus during the visit. Both sides are negotiating and exploring a significant, commercially

balanced, equitable, ambitious and mutually beneficial CEPA." commerce ministry said.

Goyal will also attend the joint

commission meeting with Minister Oman's Commerce, Industry Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa al-Yousef during January 27-28. A business delegation is accompanying the Minister for the Joint Business Council meeting. On the sidelines, Goyal is also

expected to meet Sultan bin Finance and Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee for CEPA; and Sheikh Ali bin Masoud Sunaidy, President, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones

and Free Zones (OPAZ).
Oman is the third largest export destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for India. Ìndia already has a similar agreement with another GCC member UAE which came into effect in May 2022.

The bilateral trade declined to \$8.94 billion (exports \$4.42 billion and imports \$4.5 billion) in 2023-24 from \$12.39 billion (exports \$4.47 billion and imports \$7.91 billion) in 2022-23.

India's key imports are petroleum products and urea. These account for over 70 per cent of imports. Other key products are propylene and ethylene polymers, pet coke, gypsum, chemicals, and iron

and steel. According to the think tank GTRI (Global Trade Research Institute), Indian goods worth \$3.7 billion like gasoline, iron and steel, electronics, and machinery may get a significant boost in Oman, once both sides reach a comprehensive free trade

agreement. These goods at

present face a 5 per cent Oman's import duty ranges from 0 to 100 per cent along with the existence of specific duties. A duty of 100 per cent is applicable on specific meats, wines and tobacco products. Reduction in import duties under the CEPA will allow Indian products to enter the

prices.
With a population of 1.4 billion compared to Oman's 5 million, India represents a

Omani market at competitive

vast consumer market for Oman. However, Oman's higher per capita income (\$25,060) compared to India's (\$2,370)

could mean a demand for more diversified and possibly higher-value goods and services in Oman, which India could aim to supply, the GTRI has said.

Automobile exports grew 19 per cent in 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile exports from India rose 19 per cent year-on-year in 2024 led by a robust dispatch of twowheelers, passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles, according to SIAM data.

Overall shipments rose to 50,98,810 units last year, up 19 per cent from 42,85,809 units exported in 2023.

"Last year saw revival in demand for the Indian automobiles from emerging markets like Latin America and Africa," Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) Director General Rajesh Menon told PTI when asked about reasons for

exports growth last year. In 2024, passenger vehicle exports grew 10 per cent to 7,43,976 units as compared to 6,77,956 units in January-December period of 2023. Utility vehicle shipments rose



3,23,621 units while van shipments also jumped 14 per cent annually to 8,207 units. Passenger car dispatches, however, declined 4 per cent last year to 4,12,148 units as compared to 4,27,876 units in

Two-wheeler exports rose 23 per cent to 39,77,162 units as shipped in 2023, led by motorcycles which grew by 24 per cent to 33,97,586 units. 5,73,230 units last year from

compared to 32,43,673 units Scooter shipments rose to 4,91,329 units in 2023.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

the country's 76th Republic securities market, known for its diverse products, participants, and institutions, has a longhistory standing organised trading over the past 150 years, Sebi said.

Dharohar has designed to document and showcase this rich heritage and evolution of the Indian securities market," regulator said in a statement. The repository features a website that also includes an interactive timeline of significant events and 3D galleries, offering an engaging experience to visitors, it added. It is designed to cater to a



SEBI launches digital knowledge repository, Dharohar

wide audience, students, investors, researchers, journalists, market participants and the general public offering insights into the market's diverse products, participants,

Dharohar documents the market's journey through articles, regulations, interviews with prominent personalities, historic newspaper clippings, share certificates, infographics, can videos, and committee www.Mism.Org.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said the repository will continue to grow with new additions, enhancing its value for

Sebi also expressed gratitude to those who contributed to this initiative, including individuals, institutions, members of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee of Project Dharohar, former chairpersons and wholetime members, employees, scripophilists, experts, industry leaders, market infrastructure institutions, industry associations, and others.

The initiative reflects SEBI's commitment to preserving and promoting the securities market's rich legacy while fostering greater awareness and understanding of the securities markets among diverse stakeholders, it said The repository, Dharohar, be accessed

INBRIEF

GLOBAL MINING SECTOR REQUIRES AN INVESTMENT OF \$1.7 TRILLION: PRIYA AGARWAL HEBBAR

UDAIPUR: At the recently held World Economic Forum in Davos, Priya Agarwal Hebbar, Chairperson Hindustan Zinc Limited addressed the critical topics surrounding the global energy transition on multiple occasions. She spoke about the importance of critical minerals, future of climate action strategies, embedding sustainability across the value chain, prioritising women's health and driving India's workforce revolution. She was amongst the few Indian women entrepreneurs representing Vedanta and Hindustan Zinc at the esteemed forum where industry stalwarts, political leaders, academicians and scholars create dialogues with the mission to improve the state of the world. Speaking at the World Economic Forum, she said, "For the energy transition to happen successfully, the World Bank has said we need \$1.7 trillion in mining investment. We see an opportunity in India. India is in a sweet spot where it can thrive in this sector.

VIT-AP UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES 76TH REPUBLIC DAY WITH TRIBUTES TO UNSUNG HEROES

AMARAVATI: The 76th Republic Day Celebrations at VIT-AP University were held with grandeur. The event was marked by the presence of the Chief Guest, Rajasekhar Rao Sakhamuri (Vice President and Head of Asset Life Cycle Intelligence
Division, Hexagon Capability Centre
India, Hyderabad, Telangana), who hoisted the national flag.



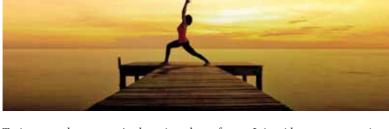


before, means the union with the self. What often strikes when someone asks you how to be calm, naturally the answer is yoga, meditation, and sleep. Shavasana is also a yogic posture which is the most adorable yogic posture for many people, certainly because it gives you relaxation. When a kid is tired he finds solace and rest in his mother's arms, the same way yoga is connecting to the divine mother or father and taking refuge and rest.

There are 5 different vayus (air) in the body and with certain yogic practices there is a serene harmony in all these air inside the body which allows all the To increase the pran urja there is only functioning to the most optimum level. A one and one solution known to mankind simple exercise like Surya Namaskara from the time it has existed and till helps in relieving physical tension in the eternity and that is yoga, there was and muscles and is very effective for sinus never will ever be a substitute for yoga. allergies. Yoga does not mean only asanas, it includes yama, niyama, dharna, promotes balance in your overall aspects dhyan, Samadhi, etc.

the most ancient text referred to as yoga, the Patanjali yoga sutras. If there is any myth, definitely no myth can stay or live nature as it is nature that is keeping us for ages, it is the truth. Human alive. civilisation is based on yoga and its Practice gratification, communication practices. Whenever there is chaos, the (effective) and active listening is also part significantly better movement of first thing people ask you to do is stay calm which never helps but with regular practice of yoga, it will be a natural habit of staying calm or being Mr cool in the midst of the most heated scenarios. It is said the more you have pran urja (vital force) the better quality of life and more stable the mind.

oga, as already mentioned Yoga is a union with the self that promotes calm and harmony, says **YASH GUPTA**



Yoga is not an extreme side, but rather it of life. Astrologically as well, the person There are 8 limbs of yoga mentioned in on the path of yoga has very few effects of planetary positions on him/her. Yoga also means gratification, thankfulness to

of yoga. It is said a great person is not only the one who just listens but who hears and is being heard. Such is the magnanimity of the yoga principles. It starts with listening to the body. Does not matter your age, caste, religion, gender or wealth, the path of yoga is for everyone especially for those who want to stay happy and live longer. Head stand (Shirshasana) is known to be the queen of all asanas, because all the blood flow goes down but after doing Shirshasana for half a minute,

the blood goes to brain and there is a

YOGA MEANS THE UNION WITH THE SELF. WHAT OFTEN STRIKES WHEN SOMEONE ASKS YOU HOW TO BE CALM, **NATURALLY THE ANSWER IS** YOGA, MEDITATION, AND SLEEP

blood in the entire system (not recommended for those suffering with High blood pressure and women on their monthly cycles). Standing on both the feet and distributing all your body weight equally in both legs is also yoga, try it and your spine will be healthier. Yoga also removes the blockages from the energy centres thus resulting in an upward flow of the spiritual

Once you start listening to the body, the body will start radiating and responding to you, helping you achieve the goals and dreams which in turn makes you calm and it will turn into a vicious cycle of growth, happiness, health, prosperity and peace.

- The author is an Art of Living faculty, meditation and mind coach and professional yoga trainer

Spiritual Health and Architecture



By ANURAAG BHARDWAJ

piritual health is a vital aspect of our overall well-being, influencing our sense of purpose, values, and connection to something greater than ourselves. Architecture plays a significant role in shaping our spiritual experiences, from the design of sacred spaces to the creation of environments that foster mindfulness and connection to nature.

SACRED SPACES

Sacred spaces, such as churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples, are designed to evoke feelings of awe, reverence, and spiritual connection. These spaces often incorporate elements like:

SYMBOLISM: Architectural features and artwork that convey spiritual themes and symbolism.

LIGHT: Natural and artificial light used to create an atmosphere of reverence and contemplation.

MATERIALS: Traditional materials like stone, wood, and stained glass that add to the

spiritual ambiance. These design elements can profoundly impact our spiritual experiences, creating a sense of connection to the divine, community, and tradition.



MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION SPACES

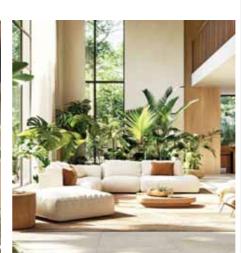
Mindfulness and meditation spaces are designed to promote reflection, contemplation, and inner peace. These spaces

often feature: **ENVIRONMENTS:** Minimalist CALMING designs, soothing colors, and natural materials that promote relaxation.

ACOUSTIC DESIGN: Sound-absorbing materials and clever acoustic design to minimise distractions.

NATURAL LIGHT: Abundant natural light to create a sense of calm and connection to nature.

By incorporating these design elements, mindfulness and meditation spaces can help individuals cultivate a deeper sense of inner peace, clarity, and spiritual connection.



CONNECTION TO NATURE

Architecture can facilitate a deeper connection to the natural world, fostering a sense of spirituality and awe. This can be achieved through:

BIOPHILIC DESIGN: Incorporating natural elements, like plants, water features, and natural materials, into building design.

OUTDOOR SPACES: Creating outdoor spaces that encourage interaction with nature, such as gardens, courtyards, or rooftop green spaces. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN: Designing buildings that minimise environmental impact, promoting a sense of stewardship and connection to the natural world.

By reconnecting us with nature, architecture can inspire a sense of wonder, gratitude, and spiritual connection to the world around us. Architecture has the power to profoundly impact our spiritual experiences, from the design of sacred spaces to the creation of environments that foster mindfulness, meditation, and connection to nature. By incorporating elements that promote spiritual growth, architects and designers can create spaces that nurture our souls, inspire our spirits, and connect us to something greater than ourselves.

— The author is an architect and is the founder of Anjaney Vastu & AB Architects



Signature Global Foundation Launches AarogyaRise

By TEAM VIVA

ignature Global Foundation launched "AarogyaRise," a mobile health clinic initiative, aiming to improve access to Quality healthcare for underserved communities in Gurugram. Two fully equipped mobile clinics, flagged off in collaboration with Artemis Hospital, began their journey by providing free health check-ups to labourers at Signature Global construction sites.

"AarogyaRise" offers a wide range of services, including OPD consultations, gynaecological care, dental and eye care, and even a mobile ICU for emergencies. By bringing healthcare directly to remote villages, the initiative focuses on early disease detection and prevention, empowering communities to prioritise their well-being.

This exemplifies the foundation's dedication to fostering a healthier and more inclusive society by bridging the healthcare gap and promoting holistic wellness for all.



Australian Open: Townsend, Siniakova win the women's doubles

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

¬aylor Townsend of the United States returned to the court on which her career first took flight, teaming with Katerina teaming with Siniakova to beat Hsieh Su-Wei and Jelena Ostapenko 6-2, 6-7 (4), 6-3 in the women's doubles final Sunday at the Australian Open.

"This is super-special to me," Townsend said. "The last time I played on this court I was 15 and in 2012 I won the juniors here and that was the kick-start.

"Honestly, being here is so special to me because this tournament was the beginning of me being able to live out my dream."

Top-seeded Townsend and Siniakova of the Czech Republic led 6-2, 5-3 and served for the match for the first time at 5-4 in the second set. But third-seeded Hsieh

and Ostapenko rallied to take the second set in a tie-break and to hold an early break in the third

the pioneer

Taylor and Siniakova were able to fall back on proven teamwork on crucial points. This was their third Grand Slam together: they won Wimbledon last year and reached the semifinals of the US Open.

They were also able to exploit a hint of weakness on Hsieh's serve with Ostapenko at the net, breaking her four times in the match including in the ninth game of the final set. Siniakova then served out the match, with Townsend providing the finishing touch at the net.

The match was played in warm conditions on the Australia Day national holiday. The temperature was around 22C (71.6F) midafternoon and the court was warm, causing the ball to



skip through quicker, particularly from the lefthanded Townsend.

Siniakova and Townsend raced to a 5-1 lead inside 30 minutes and while Hsieh managed to hold at 5-2 in the best game of the set, Siniakova held to love to close out the first set in 37 minutes. Win or lose Siniakova was

going to extend her stay atop the WTA doubles rankings to 136 weeks, the fifth-best run of all-time. She has reached the semifinals or better at the

last five grand slams. The second set, much the same as the first, began with Ostapenko and Townsend holding serve, then Hsieh

was broken at 2-1.
Ostakpenko held at 2-3 and there was noticeable lift in intensity from the third seeds, a recognition of the importance of the moment and they managed to break

Townsend to level at 3-3. But another Hsieh service break gave Townsend the opportunity to serve for the match at 5-4 but again, Ostapenko and Hsieh rallied to level at 5-all. Hsieh then managed a crucial hold with Ostapenko occasionally starting at the back of the court, rather than at the net. Siniakova's hold sent the set into a tie-break in which Ostapenko and Hseih picked up two points off Townsend at 5-4 and 6-4 to level the match.

The complexion of the game had changed and the third seeds were able to break Siniakova for the first time in the opening game of the third set, though Siniakova and Townsend immediately broke Ostapenko to level at

Hsieh was broken again in the ninth game and this time Siniakova didn't miss.



Chappell calls ICC an event management company

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Describing the ICC as an management management company", former Australia captain Ian Chappell has observed that the financially stronger boards are getting their way in producing selfserving schedule while harming the interest of Test

Chappell also felt that a viable two-tier system for Test cricket should have been in place by now but added that there are other pressing matters that need urgent attention to keep the game's traditional format

"On the subject of a two-tier Test system, former West Indies pace-bowling champion Michael Holding noted: 'For all its faults, at least FIFA actually runs soccer. The ICC must run cricket," Chappell wrote in his column for 'ESPNcricinfo'.

"Therein lies a perplexing cricket, and unless there's a major change of heart, the financially desirable nations will continue to have a huge say in producing a self-serving schedule."

Chappell though agreed that the game's financial engine influence proportional contribution.

"Then there's the major issue of the financial split. The big three - India, Australia and England – despite being the wealthiest cricket nations claim a large slice of the money divided among cricket bodies, and yet they agitate for an even

larger share. "India's powerful presence in the ICC is in direct proportion

to their contribution of around 70 per cent of cricket's income. It's a complex issue to which cricket hasn't found a

workable solution." A proposal to split Test cricket into two divisions, which will ensure more high-stakes matches featuring bigger teams such as India, Australia and England, is under discussion.

Such a system could, however, also harm smaller teams, resulting in fewer Tests for them and also threatening

inclusivity in the sport. Chappell, one of Australia's finest captains, believed a system of promotion and relegation should be there with

certain criteria.
"There should have been a two-tier Test system in place

years ago.
"In reality only a limited number of teams are capable of competing long-term in the five-day game. West Indies e right to financia assistance with their capacity to draw crowds, and it's criminal they've been allowed

to languish," he said. Chappell further Afghanistan and Ireland should not be laying Test cricket as they don't fulfil all

requirements. system that includes promotion and relegation is feasible but there need to be certain criteria attached before a team attains Test status. Those should include: Do they have a viable first-class competition? Do they have legitimate grounds for holding five-day games? Do the grounds have adequate facilities? Are they financially

U19 WC: India crush Bangladesh PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR breaking a crucial 31-run partnership between skipper Sumaiya Akter and Jannatul

Reigning champions India Roontinued their dominant run in the ICC Women's U19 World Cup with a resounding eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in their Super Six encounter here on Sunday. With this comprehensive win,

India have now registered their fourth consecutive victory in the tournament, maintaining their unbeaten streak and further establishing themselves as strong title contenders. A disciplined Indian bowling

attack, spearheaded by left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma's impressive spell of 3/15, restricted Bangladesh to a paltry 64 runs in their 20 overs -- their lowest total of the tournament.

Despite their struggles, Bangladesh's total was the highest conceded by India in the tournament so far, having previously bowled out West Indies (44) and Malaysia (31) for under 50.

In response, India's chase was off to a blazing start, led by the in-form Trisha Gongadi, who once again proved her class with a fluent 40 off just



31 balls.

She peppered the boundary ropes with eight fours, showcasing an aggressive and intent putting Bangladesh's bowling attack under immense pressure. By the time she was dismissed

after the powerplay, India needed just five more runs to seal the win. Sanika Chalke (11 not out) and skipper Niki Prasad (5 not out) ensured there were

no further hiccups, guiding India to victory in just 7.1 Their bowlers have been the of cornerstone consistently campaign,

delivering under pressure and

keeping the opposition under

100 in all matches played so

Put in to bat, Bangladesh started with aggression but their approach backfired as they lost three quick wickets within the first four overs, reeling at 9/3 before limping to 16/3 at the end of the powerplay.

Indian seamers VJ Joshitha (3-1-6-1) and Shabnam Shakil (2-0-7-1) made full use of the conditions, conditions, extracting movement and bounce to stifle Bangladesh's batters.

With the early breakthroughs, the Indian spinners took charge and tightened their grip on the game. Vaishnavi was instrumental in dismantling the middle order,

stability to the innings alongside Jannatul Maoua,

They were the only two batters to reach double figures as India's bowlers maintained relentless pressure. Bangladesh's innings was marred by poor running between the wickets and frequent dismissals, making it difficult for them to accelerate

at any stage.
Despite their struggles, they managed to play out the full 20 overs, which will be a small takeaway for them going forward. PTI

Maoua for the sixth wicket,

which saw Bangladesh crumble from 53/4 to 64/9. Gongadi (2-0-6-1) also chipped in with her leg-spin,

ensuring no respite for the Bangladeshi batters.

Bangladesh skipper Sumaiya fought a lone battle with 21 from 29 balls, providing some

who scored 14 off 20

deliveries.

India will look to carry this momentum forward when they face Scotland in their concluding Super Six fixture

Jyothi Yarraji clinches gold in 60m hurdles

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $R_{\text{Jyothi Yarraji clinched gold}}^{\text{eigning Asian champion}}$ in her first race of the season, that too with a national record, winning the 60m hurdles event by clocking 8.04 seconds at the Elite Indoor Meeting in Nantes, France.

The 25-year-old Yarraji, in fact, broke her own earlier national record of 8.12 seconds twice in a matter of few hours on Saturday.

She first clocked 8.07 seconds in the heats and then bettered her time in the final at the Stadium Pierre-Quinon in the World Athletics Indoor Tour

bronze level meet. Her timing is, however, still short of the qualifying mark of 7.94 seconds for the World Indoor Championships to be held in Nanjing, China in

March. Yarraji, who was recently conferred with the Arjuna Award, had won 60m gold in Indoor Asian Championships in 2024 with a time of 8.12 seconds in

She also holds the national

Tehran, Iran.

7.68 seconds. This was Shirse's second race of the season. On January 19, he had set a national record time of 7.65 seconds at the CMCM Indoor Meeting in Luxembourg. The previous national record in the event was 7.70 seconds, which was set by Siddhanth Thingalaya in

outdoor 100m hurdles record

of 12.78 seconds. She is the

reigning 100m hurdles Asian

champion and won a silver

medal in the Hangzhou Asian

Games in 2023 with a time of

Meanwhile, in the men's 60m

hurdles event, Tejas Shirse

won a bronze with a time of

12.91 seconds.

The 22-year-old Shirse is also the national record holder in 110m hurdles with a time of

Mohun Bagan eye another home win

 $\begin{array}{cccc} R^{\text{eigning}} & \text{Shield champions} \\ \text{Mohun} & \text{Bagan Super will} \\ \text{look} & \text{to} & \text{extend} & \text{their} \end{array}$ remarkable home form when they take on Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super League here on Monday.

The Mariners currently lead the ISL table with 37 points from 17 matches, boasting an impressive record of 11 wins and four draws.

been in have scintillating form, winning each of their last seven home games and remaining unbeaten in their previous games five fixtures with three wins and two draws. In contrast, Bengaluru FC are

experiencing a rough patch,

winless in their last four outings (draw-1, loss-3). Sitting third in the table with

28 points from 17 games, the Blues will be desperate to break their poor run and narrow the nine-point deficit to Mohun Bagan. If they manage to do so the

Sunil Chhetri side will complete a historic league double over the Mariners after its commanding 3-0 win earlier this season

Mohun Bagan have scored in each of their last 16 home matches, underlining their attacking prowess. Bengaluru FC have conceded

in each of their last 12 matches, marking their longest streak without a clean sheet in ISL history.

Mbappé scores first hat trick for Real Madrid

Kylian Mbappé tucked the ball under return the applause to the Real Madrid fans who savored his first hat trick for his new club.

The France star had just led a 3-0 victory at struggling Valladolid that extended Madrid's lead of La Liga on Saturday, keeping it in position to retain the title just after the midway point of the campaign.

Gone was the inconsistent play and missed penalties from Mbappé during his first months with Madrid following his move from Paris Saint-Germain. The France captain has started pouring in goals with back-to-back multi-goal games and has Madrid in pole position with Atletico Madrid and Barcelona

"I'm very happy for the hat trick but even happier for the win," Mbappé said in fluent Spanish. "It was very important to win after Atletico's result because that



gave us a bit more pressure to take advantage of it.'

Madrid's fourth straight triumph in the league combined with Atletico Madrid's 1-1 draw with Villarreal let Carlo

Ancelotti's side open a four-point gap over its city rival. Barcelona was in third place at 10 points back before hosting leader Barcelona at one point, but since getting blown away in a 4-0 clasico debacle, it has found its stride and is in championship mode.

"My adaptation to the team is over. I feel comfortable on the field and you can see that from the way I am playing with my teammates," Mbappé said. "This gives us confidence, but you know that until the 38th round this is not over. We have to keep winning because there is a long way to go." No contest in Valladolid

The game between the front-runner and the bottom side fit its billing as a mismatch.

Valladolid could draw only one save from Thibaut Courtois in the opening moments. It was all Madrid the rest of the way even though Vinícius Júnior didn't play as he completed a two-game suspension.

Sinner beats Zverev, wins second Australian Open title

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

There's all sorts of ways beyond merely the score to measure just how dominant Jannik Śinner was while outplaying and frustrating Alexander Zverev during the 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-3 victory Sunday that earned the 23-year-old Italian a second consecutive Australian championship

The zero break points Sinner faced. Or the 10 he accumulated. The 27-13 advantage in points that lasted at least nine strokes. Or the way Sinner accumulated more winners, 32 to 25, and fewer unforced errors, 27 to 45. The way Sinner won 10 of 13 points that ended with him at the net. Or the way he only let Zverev go 14 of 27 in that category, frequently zipping passing shots out of reach.

And here is one more bit of evidence: Listen to what Zverev told Sinner during the on-court trophy ceremony: "You're the best player in the world, by far. I was hoping that could be more of a competitor today, but you're just too good. It's as simple as

That's coming from the guy who is ranked No. 2 behind Sinner, who has held the No. 1 spot since last June and is not showing any signs of relinquishing it. This was the signs of first Australian Open final between the men at No. 1 and No. 2 since 2019, when No. 1 Novak Djokovic defeated No. 2 Rafael Nadal — also in straight

"It's amazing," Sinner said, "to achieve these things."

That includes being the youngest man to leave trophy two years in a row since Jim Courier in 1992-93 and the first man since Nadal at the French Open in 2005 and 2006 to follow up his first Grand Slam title by repeating as the champion at the same tournament a year later. Since the start of 2024, Sinner

has won three of the five major tournaments, including the U.S. Open in September, and his record in that span is 80-6 with a total of nine tournament titles. His current unbeaten run covers 21 matches.

The only thing that's clouded the past 12 months for Sinner, it seems, is a doping case in which he was cleared by a ruling that was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency. He tested positive for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid twice last March but blamed it on an accidental exposure Melbourne Park with the involving two members of his

Bangalore & Chennai. Central: Khajuraho. Lucknow Office: 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226 016. Telephones: 0522-2346443, 2346444, 2346445.



team who have since been fired. Sinner initially was exonerated in August; a hearing in the WADA appeal is scheduled for April. While Sinner became the

eighth man in the Open era (which began in 1968) to start his career 3-0 in Grand Slam finals, Zverev is the seventh to be 0-3, adding this loss to those at the 2020 U.S. Open and the 2024 French Open. Those earlier setbacks both came in five sets. This contest was not that close. Not at all. "We're trying to do all the right work," Zverev said. "I'm just not good enough."

Just before Zverev began speaking into a microphone during the trophy ceremony, a voice cried out from the stands, making reference to two of the player's ex-girlfriends who accused him of physical abuse. During the match, there truly was only one moment that felt as if it contained a hint of tension. It came when Zverev was two points from owning the second set, leading it 5-4 and at love-30 on Sinner's serve. But a break point — and a set point — never arrived. Zverev dropped the next four points, making it 5-all, and Sinner emerged with the

ensuing tiebreaker. No surprise

there: He went 4-0 in those setdeciders over the past two weeks and has grabbed 16 of his past 18. A year ago, Sinner went

through a lot more trouble to

earn his first Slam, needing to

get past Novak Djokovic who quit one set into his semifinal against Zverev on Friday because of a torn hamstring - first, before erasing a two-set deficit in the final against 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev. This time, the 6-foot-3 (1.91meter) Sinner applied pressure with an all-around style that does not really appear to have any holes as his sneakers squeak from a sprint to a slide that often nearly ends in the

limbs to deliver deep groundstrokes.
On this night, he proved superior in just about every

splits and he uses his long

meaningful way, other than aces. Returning serves from Zverev that reached 138 mph (223 kph), Sinner got the lone break of the opening set with a passing shot for a 5-4 lead. Zverev walked back behind the baseline, shaking his head while talking to his father and brother, who were seated in the front row of their courtside coaches' box. There was more negative body

language after Sinner served out that set at love to continue his crescendo, the final note an ace at 120 mph (194 kph). Zverev trudged to his bench, shoulders sagging, and dropped his racket on an equipment bag, a gesture that conveyed annoyance more than anger. Later, it became the latter: Zverev cracked one racket on the court and used a racket to hit another on the sideline.

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