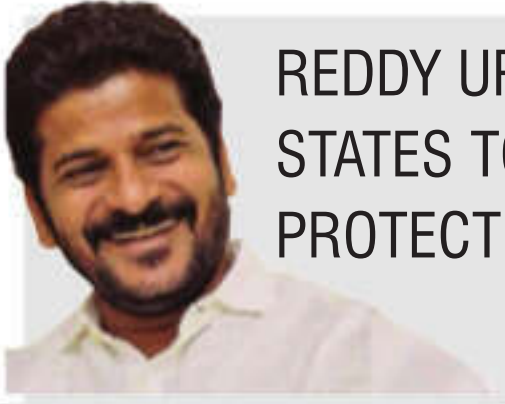




'DEFEAT PAVES THE WAY
FOR THE FUTURE; INDIA
BLOC TO GROW STRONGER'

P4



REDDY URGES SOUTHERN
STATES TO UNITE TO
PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS

P8



WHAT WAS IN IT FOR
THE CORPORATE
SECTOR?

P7



ROHIT'S TON HELPS
INDIA BEAT ENGLAND
BY FOUR WICKETS

P12

New CM of Delhi may take oath after PM returns from USA

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

A crucial meeting was held here on Sunday at the residence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, where discussions were held regarding the government formation in Delhi.

Union Minister and BJP President JP Nadda also attended the meeting which was held a day after the party's historic win in the Delhi assembly polls, where it wrested power from the Aam Aadmi Party by winning 48 out of 70 seats in the elections.

The BJP is yet to announce the Chief Ministerial face for Delhi. The high-level meeting at Shah's residence also discussed who will be the next Chief Minister of Delhi, sources said.

On Saturday, speaking on the Chief Ministerial candidate, BJP candidate from the New Delhi assembly seat Parvesh Verma said the party's decision on the CM's face will be acceptable to everyone. "In our party, the legislative party decides (CM's face) and then the party leadership approves it. So the party's decision will be acceptable to everyone," he said.

Meanwhile, according to sources, the swearing-in ceremony of the new Delhi Chief Minister is likely to be held after 13 February after Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns from the United States.

Earlier, following the resignation of Delhi Chief Minister Atishi after the AAP



ceded defeat in the assembly elections, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena dissolved the seventh legislative assembly, paving the way for a new government.

An official communication from Raj Niwas said the incumbent chief minister has been asked by the LG to continue on the post till the new government is formed.

"In exercise of the power conferred upon me by subsection (2)(b) of section 6 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, I, Vinai Kumar Saxena, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, hereby dissolve the Seventh Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi with effect from February 8, 2025," the LG's order said.

Atishi, who resigned as chief minister, has been serving in the capacity since September last year following the resignation of then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal from the post.

The BJP has won the just-concluded Delhi assembly polls, the results of which were declared on Saturday, with a historic mandate, is returning to power in the national capital after 27 years ousting the AAP.

Manipur chief minister Biren Singh resigns

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
IMPHAL, 9 FEBRUARY

The Manipur Chief Minister, Nongthombam Biren Singh, on Sunday tendered his resignation to Governor Ajay Bhalla, 21 months after the state was first plunged into prolonged conflict during which more than 250 people have lost their lives and 60,000 have been rendered homeless, with the state itself left emotionally and physically divided.

Biren Singh, accompanied by BJP MP Samit Patra, the party in-charge of Manipur submitted his resignation shortly after 5 p.m. to Governor Bhalla at the Imphal Raj Bhawan today. Both he and the Governor had returned to Imphal today afternoon from New Delhi where they had been summoned yesterday by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Biren Singh had been in the eye of the storm beginning from 3 May 2023 when the ethnic conflict broke out between the tribal Kukis and the Meiteis which had led to the present state of affairs. The clamour for Biren Singh's resignation had been mounting since mid-May 2023 and he had at one point staged a resignation drama where he was waylaid en route to the Raj Bhawan and his resignation letter torn by a crowd of women folks.

The latest drama began unfolding since 3 February after Union Home Minister Amit Shah summoned Speaker Th Satyabrata Singh and dissenting minister Y. Khemchand and MLA Th Radheshyam and CM Biren Singh to Delhi. None of them could meet Amit Shah and Mr Singh and his entourage had returned home after taking a dip at Prayagraj in the Kumbh Mela that is currently on.

Then out of the blue Mr Singh was summoned yesterday and he caught a char-



tered flight to the capital.

Prior to this the threat of a no-confidence motion had been looming large over Biren Singh in the Assembly Session scheduled to start from tomorrow. The motion was on the cards of the Opposition Congress Party which has only five MLAs in the House. But then the six MLAs of the National Peoples Party had withdrawn from the coalition government led by Biren Singh and were to be seated in the opposition benches in the House tomorrow.

The Congress was so confident of garnering support from dissenting BJP MLAs that they had even stated that they were going to launch a 'Brahmastra' which will destroy one of the 'double engines' of the BJP.

According to informed sources, upon arrival in Imphal, Sambit Patra is said to have instructed the BJP State President to summon a meeting of the BJP legislators at the BJP's Imphal headquarters but apparently none turned up. Hence the decision by Biren Singh to put in his papers post haste.

It is not known as to who will succeed him but in all likelihood Manipur will be put under President's Rule, keeping the Legislative Assembly under animated suspension. Reliable sources indicate that along with his resignation, Biren Singh has recommended placing the Assembly under animated suspension, though details regarding this proposal remain unclear.

Decisive blow: 31 Maoists and two security personnel killed in Chhattisgarh gunbattle

SHISHIR ROY CHOWDHURY
RAIPUR, 9 FEBRUARY

In a decisive blow to Left Wing Extremist insurgency, security forces in Chhattisgarh killed as many as 31 Maoists on Sunday morning in a major operation conducted along the Chhattisgarh-Maharashtra border, official sources said. Two security personnel lost their lives, while two others were injured in the encounter.

Over 1,000 security personnel were deployed in the large-



scale operation in the Indravati district. All 31 bodies of the Naxals

have been recovered and are currently undergoing identification as search operations continue across the region.

According to official sources, acting on credible intelligence regarding a significant Maoist presence, the forces from the Bastar Fighters, District Reserve Guard (DRG), and Special Task Force (STF) launched an expansive operation that quickly encircled the enemy. In the ensuing clash, the security forces eliminated 31 insurgents and recovered a substantial

quantity of arms and explosive materials. Among the recovered items were automatic rifles, grenade launchers, and other lethal weaponry.

Two personnel, one each from DRG and STF, died during the encounter, and two more personnel sustained injuries. The injured have been airlifted to Raipur for advanced medical treatment and are reported to be in stable condition.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah lauded the operation, stating: "In the pursuit of a

Naxal-free India, our security forces have achieved a major success in Bijapur. In this operation, we have neutralised 31 Naxal insurgents and recovered a large quantity of weapons and explosive material. Today, while we celebrate this victory, we also mourn the loss of two brave soldiers. The nation will always be indebted to these heroes. I extend my heartfelt condolences to their families and reaffirm our commitment to eradicating Naxalism from our country by March 31, 2026."

New Edition

8th Edition

Pariksha Pe Charcha 2025

New Format

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10TH FEB | 11:00 AM

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THUMBNAILS



Book lovers throng New Delhi World Book Fair-2025 on Sunday.

Subrata Dutta

BJP leaders pay courtesy visit to LG after Atishi resigns: After the defeat of AAP in the Delhi assembly elections and moments after Atishi tendered her resignation as Chief Minister, a group of BJP leaders paid a courtesy visit to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena. Parvesh Verma, who won from the New Delhi Assembly seat; Arvinder Singh Lovely, elected from the Gandhi Nagar Constituency and Kailash Cahlot, the winner from Bijwasan seat, were among the leaders who met Saxena at Raj Niwas, the official residence of the Delhi Lieutenant Governor. Speaking to reporters, Kailash Cahlot said, "I am here just for a courtesy meeting with the LG." Arvinder Singh Lovely, while leaving the Raj Niwas, also said, "It was just a courtesy meeting." BJP candidate Parvesh Verma defeated AAP's Arvind Kejriwal by a margin of 4,089 votes, while Arvinder Singh Lovely defeated AAP's Naveen Chaudhary by 12,748 votes. Kailash Cahlot won against AAP's Surenדר Bhardwaj with a margin of 11,276 votes.

Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini slams AAP for "depriving" people of Centre's scheme: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday lauded the BJP's victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, calling it a historic mandate by the people and said that people (AAP government) who had come in to power by resorting to lies were deprived of their power. "The people of Delhi have given a historic mandate in these elections. They were deprived of the policies that PM Narendra Modi had implemented across India. Now, they will also benefit from them," Saini said. He further said, "The people who had come to power by resorting to lies were shown the way out by the people of Delhi." Saini also took a swipe at AAP convener and former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal over the issue of pollution in the Yamuna River, which had been a focal point during the election campaign.

Bisht vows development in Mustafabad, says will rename constituency: BJP's winning candidate from Mustafabad, Mohan Singh Bisht on Sunday, reaffirmed his pledge to work for the development of his constituency and rename it after securing victory in the assembly elections. "I work for the development of my constituency based on my experience of 25 years. I had said that if I win I'll change the name of Mustafabad to Shiv Puri or Shiv Vihar. I'll do it," Bisht said.

NIFTEM-K transfers technology for rapid pesticide detection kit: New Delhi, Kundali, India – NIFTEM-K has successfully transferred its pioneering technology on "Rapid Pesticide Detection Kit for Tea to ARF Lifesciences LLP, Faridabad. This Nano-Biosensor-based kit enables on-site pesticide detection within minutes, strengthening self-compliance and self-belief among farmers and processors. This revolutionary technology provides instant safety assurance, making pesticide monitoring more accessible and efficient. Dr Harinder Singh Oberoi, Director, NIFTEM-K, stated that with a projected production of over 1,00,000 kits per season, this innovation is set to transform pesticide monitoring across the tea industry.

Atishi resigns as CM; LG dissolves Delhi assembly

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Following the resignation of Delhi Chief Minister Atishi after the AAP ceded defeat in the assembly elections, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena dissolved the seventh legislative assembly, paving the way for a new government.

In an official communication from the Raj Niwas, the incumbent chief minister has been asked by the LG to continue on the post till the new government is formed.

"In exercise of the power conferred upon me by sub-section (2)(b) of section 6 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, I, Vinai Kumar Saxena, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, hereby dissolve the Seventh Legislative Assembly of Delhi with effect from February 8, 2025," the LG order said.

Atishi, who resigned as chief minister, has been serving in the capacity since September last year following the resignation



of then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal from the post. Atishi became the third woman chief minister of Delhi after Sushma Swaraj and Sheila Dikshit.

The BJP has won the just-concluded Delhi assembly polls, the results of which were declared on Saturday, with a historic mandate, returning to power in the national capital after 27 years ousting the AAP.

Despite AAP's overall poor performance at the hustings, Atishi managed to retain her Kalkaji seat defeating her nearest BJP rival Ramesh

Bidhuri by a narrow margin of 3,521 votes. However, her victory was one of the few positives for AAP in an otherwise devastating election where senior leaders such as Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, and party chief

The BJP has won the just-concluded Delhi assembly polls, the results of which were declared on Saturday, with a historic mandate, returning to power in the national capital after 27 years by ousting the AAP

Arvind Kejriwal faced unexpected defeats. BJP's landslide victory in the elections marks a decisive shift in Delhi's political landscape, indicating that the party's election promises resonated more with voters than AAP's welfare-driven model.

The results also indicate that the populist schemes and subsidies may no longer be enough to ensure electoral success. With this victory, the BJP has further strengthened its dominance in North India as the party is in power in all neighbouring states, including Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan.

Discussions on government formation in Delhi take place at Shah's residence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

A crucial meeting was held here on Sunday at the residence of the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, where discussions were held regarding the government formation in Delhi. The Union Minister of Chemicals & Fertilisers and BJP President JP Nadda also attended the meeting, which was held a day after the party's historic win in the Delhi assembly polls, where it wrested power from the Aam Aadmi Party by winning 48 out of 70 seats in the elections. The high-level meeting at Shah's residence also discussed who will be the next Chief Minister of Delhi, sources said. The BJP is yet to announce the Chief Ministerial candidate for Delhi.

On Saturday, speaking on

the Chief Ministerial candidate, the winner from the New Delhi assembly seat, Parvesh Verma said the party's decision on the CM's face will be acceptable across the party. "In our party, the legislative party decides (CM's face) and then the party leadership approves it. So the party's decision will be acceptable to everyone," he said. Meanwhile, according to the sources, the swearing-in ceremony of the new Delhi Chief Minister is likely to be held after 13 February, after the return of Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the United States. The Prime Minister will embark on a crucial five-day-long two-nation visit to France and the United States from February 10 to attend the AI Summit in Paris. PM Modi will visit the US on February 12-13 at the invitation of the US President Donald Trump.

Delhi's vote signals a shift towards progress, no more allegations, only governance: Kiran Bedi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Former Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi, commenting on Delhi's recent electoral outcome, stated that the capital city's vote represents a clear demand for an "overhaul," emphasising the need to shift focus from accusations to governance and development.

Speaking to the media a day after the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, Bedi called for addressing key issues such as public health, safety, and cleanliness, noting that the era of political blame games must end.

In a post on X, Bedi offered a vision for a cleaner, more sustainable Delhi, suggesting the Yamuna River could be developed into a waterfront area similar to the Sabarnati, while also emphasising the need for improved sewage treatment plants (STPs) to prevent contamination of the river. She also proposed that



private contractors be held accountable for delivering results or risk losing their contracts.

Bedi further stressed, "Now we will make Delhi healthy, safe, and clean. The public wants improvement, better civic amenities, and a trustworthy government. No more downfall, Delhi must become a model for the world."

She echoed the sentiment that Delhi was in a state of decline, and with the new mandate, it was time for the city to change its trajectory. As a long-time resident of Old Delhi, Bedi expressed a personal

Delhi poll process concludes with ECI submitting list of winning candidates to LG

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Sunday officially concluded the process of Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections 2025 with the submission of a list of newly-elected candidates to Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

An official communication from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) stated, "ECI has officially concluded the process of Delhi Legislative Assembly Election 2025, with the submission of the 'Due Constitution Notification' containing the list of newly elected candidates to the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Vinai Kumar Saxena."

The elections witnessed a voter turnout of 60.42 per cent reflecting the active participation of Delhi's electorate.

In a significant political shift, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has regained power in Delhi after 27 years, securing 48 out of the 70 assembly



seats. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had been in power for the past decade, won 22 seats. Notably, several prominent AAP leaders, including former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Saurabh Bharadwaj, lost their respective constituencies.

With the submission of the "Due Constitution Notification", the path is now clear for the formation of a new government. The BJP is expected to announce its chief ministerial candidate in the coming days.

Top leadership to decide CM's face of Delhi, says Sirsa

NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Sunday said that the Chief Minister face in Delhi will be decided by the top leadership of the party, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party's national president JP Nadda.

He said that the Chief Minister of Delhi will be the one who implements the vision laid down by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The Chief Minister (face) will be decided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, (BJP) National President and Union Home Minister. Delhi is a very important state and whoever is capable of implementing the vision laid down by PM Modi will be the Chief Minister," Sirsa, who won the 2025 Delhi assembly elections from Rajouri Garden seat, told ANI.

Hitting out at caretaker Chief Minister Atishi and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal, the BJP leader said that AAP government in Punjab must fulfil their promise to provide Rs 1,000 to women.

"I want to request Atishi to visit Kejriwal and remind about what they said in Punjab. Remind him about your accountability (over promises made in Punjab). Mothers and sisters are waiting since three years now for 1,000 rupees. Our party is capable, we don't need anybody (to remind us) ... Prime Minister does what he says," Sirsa said. His reaction came after Atishi on Sunday said that they will ensure accountability from BJP and reminded them of their promises of depositing Rs 2,500 to women beneficiaries by March of this year.

agencies

Kejriwal meets newly elected AAP MLAs and discusses future strategy, BJP's accountability

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Aam Aadmi Party's supremo Arvind Kejriwal met 22 newly elected members of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, along with caretaker Chief Minister Atishi, at his Ferrozshah Road residence today to discuss the party's future course of action following its recent defeat in the Delhi Assembly elections. The meeting aimed to reflect on the loss and strategise on how AAP will continue its political journey as a strong and constructive opposition. Atishi, who successfully defended her Kalkaji constituency seat against BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri, addressed the media after the meeting, stating that AAP's primary goal would be to ensure that the



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) fulfills its promises to the people of Delhi. "The AAP will play the role of a constructive opposition and ensure that the BJP pays ₹2,500 per month to women by March 8, as promised, provides 300 units of free electricity, and continues other public welfare initiatives," she said.

Atishi also raised concerns about the alleged malpractices and irregularities during the elections, describing the process as

unprecedented. "Such an election would have never happened in the history of Delhi. Money and liquor were being distributed openly, police were involved, and anyone complaining about it was jailed," she claimed.

After the meeting, AAP leaders Sahiram Pahalwan and Sanjeev Jha emphasised that Kejriwal had directed them to ensure the fulfillment of BJP's promises. "We are committed to ensuring that the work carried out in the last 10 years in Delhi continues," said Jha. "Our job as MLAs is to serve the people and hold the ruling party accountable," he added further. Anil Jha, the AAP candidate who won from the Kirari constituency, also commented, noting the BJP's pledge to clean the Yamuna river in 5-7 months.

Delhi BJP holds meetings of newly elected MLAs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Delhi BJP Chief Virendra Sachdeva, along with party's National General Secretary (Organization) B L Santosh, and other functionaries, held a brief interactions with all 48 newly-elected MLAs of the saffron party at the party office on Sunday.

In the meetings, the senior leaders provided the MLAs with guidance on working within proper organisational and administrative frameworks. They emphasised that they should maintain complete transparency in their working style.

The leaders drew attention to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's victory message given



last evening and stated that without wasting time, efforts should begin to build a developed Delhi, in line with the prime minister's vision.

Meanwhile, Praveesh Verma, who defeated former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, met with party's National President JP Nadda at the latter's official residence.

BJP MLAs will introduce Modi's schemes in Delhi: Parvesh Verma

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

A day after the results of the Delhi assembly polls, Parvesh Verma asserted on Sunday that all the BJP MLAs would work day and night with the blessings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and would bring all his schemes to Delhi.

The BJP leader, who earned the tag of 'giant killer' after defeating AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal from the New Delhi constituency, said "We have to do a lot of developments but we have lots of challenges too... Nobody looked for development of Delhi Dehaat... A lot of things will be done in Delhi. Our 20-22 hours will be dedicated to Delhi. Your (people) role was only till the elections, from here onwards, we - all the BJP MLAs will work day and night with the blessings of PM Modi and will take all his schemes to Delhi."

Hailing the BJP's huge win in the polls, Verma assured that the government to be formed by his party in the city would work with honesty



and utmost determination. "This is Delhi's victory, not just mine. The whole of Delhi was waiting for a good government to come."

The BJP government under the leadership of PM Modi in the country is working for the country. In Delhi, on the same note, we will do all the work with honesty and utmost determination," Verma said while address-

ing the public in his native village Mundka. "Yesterday, the entire Delhi, especially the areas of outer Delhi, made the BJP win."

This reminds us of 1993. February 8 will be written in golden letters in the history of Delhi," he added.

BJP stormed to power in the Delhi polls, winning a two-thirds majority, with the ruling AAP suffering major

blows and a drastic reduction in its numbers in the 70-member assembly. The Congress continued its dismal run as it failed to open its account for the third time in a row.

Paying floral tributes to his father at Dr Sahib Singh Verma Samadhi Sthal in his native village in Mundka, Parvesh Verma expressed his resolve to complete his "unfinished works".

Late Sahib Singh Verma served Delhi as chief minister.

Talking to media persons, the BJP leader said, "My father's life is an inspiration for me. The way the people of Delhi have blessed us, all the MLAs of Delhi will work to beautify Delhi as per the vision of PM Modi."

During his visit to Mundaka on Sunday morning, he visited the Dada Bhairav Temple to offer prayers.

The BJP won 48 seats in a historic mandate, returning to power in the national capital after 27 years. Several AAP leaders, including former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, lost in their strongholds, with Chief Minister Atishi managing to retain her seat. The verdict came months after the BJP-led coalition swept the Maharashtra polls and the party won Haryana, consolidating its domination of national politics. The Congress, which was hoping for a revival in the national capital, again failed to win any seat. The party, which ruled Delhi for 15 years from 1998, registered a hat-trick zero tally in the assembly polls.

18-year-old held for knife attack on girlfriend's friend over suspicion of infidelity

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

An 18-year-old boy was arrested in a case of attempted to murder for assaulting his girlfriend's male friend with a knife on the suspicion of her fidelity in the Jahangirpuri area of North West Delhi, the police said on Sunday.

According to the cops, the information about a youth admitted to the hospital with serious stab wounds on several parts of the body including chest, abdomen, hand, shoulder, and head at the Jahangirpuri police station. An investigation into the matter has been taken up.

On the basis of the information collected, a manhunt for the culprits was launched with raids at several possible hideouts.

The accused was eventually apprehended from K-Block, Jahangirpuri. During interrogation, he confessed to his involvement in the case.

and the victim was her friend. Seeing her with her friend, her boyfriend grew suspicious about their relationship and started beating and stabbing him in a fit of rage.

Based on the statement of the witness, an FIR, under sections of BNS, including attempt to murder, was registered at the Jahangirpuri police station and an investigation into the matter has been taken up.

On the basis of the information collected, a manhunt for the culprits was launched with raids at several possible hideouts.

The accused was eventually apprehended from K-Block, Jahangirpuri. During interrogation, he confessed to his involvement in the case.





A BUDGET FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



EMPOWERING MIDDLE-CLASS LIKE NEVER BEFORE

- No income tax: Income up to ₹12 lakh per annum and up to ₹12.75 lakh per annum for Salaried Class (including Standard Deduction of ₹75,000)
- The taxpayers can now claim NIL annual value for two self-occupied properties.
- The period for filing the updated return has been extended from 24 to 48 months.
- National Savings Scheme (NSS) withdrawals are tax-free for deposits made on or after the 29th Aug, 2024.
- NPS Vatsalya contributions to get tax benefits like the NPS account.



RELIEF IN TDS/TCS RULES

- Limit for tax deductions on interest for senior citizens to be doubled from ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh.
- The annual limit of ₹2.40 lakh for TDS on rent will now be ₹6 lakh, benefiting small taxpayers.
- The threshold to collect Tax at Source (TCS) on remittances under RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), is increased from ₹7 lakh to ₹10 lakh.
- Removal of TCS on remittances for educational purposes.
- No prosecution for delayed TCS if paid at any time on or before the time prescribed for filing the quarterly TCS statement.
- Higher TDS deduction will apply only in non-PAN cases.



TAX REFORMS TO FUEL UP BUSINESSES

- Determination of arms length price of international transaction for a block period of three years is proposed to streamline transfer pricing process.
- Expanded Safe Harbour Rules to reduce litigation and provide certainty in international taxation.
- New Presumptive taxation regime for non-residents engaged in providing services or technology to a resident company engaged in electronic manufacturing.
- New Safe Harbour Rule for non-residents who store components for supply to specified electronics manufacturing units.



REDUCING COMPLIANCE BURDEN

To reduce the compliance burden for small charitable trusts/institutions, the period of registration is increased from 5 years to 10 years.



BOOSTING EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT

- Tonnage tax Scheme extended to Inland Vessels registered under the Inland Vessels Act 2021.
- The benefit under section 80 IAC is extended for five years and the eligible start-ups incorporated before April 1, 2030 can claim the benefit.
- As a measure to boost infrastructure funding, the deadline for investment in Sovereign Wealth Funds and Pension Funds has been extended to 31.03.2030.
- Specific benefits for ship-leasing units, insurance offices, and treasury centers of global companies set up in the IFSC.
- To claim benefits, the cut-off date for commencement in IFSC has also been extended by 5 years to 31.3.2030.
- Certainty of taxation to Cat I and Cat II AIFs for investments in infrastructure and other such sectors on the gains from securities.

For Website



Income Tax Department
Central Board of Direct Taxes



For FAQs

Hindu temples must be freed from govt control, says VHP

A resolution to this effect was adopted on Sunday following a 3-day Kendriya meeting at the Mahakumbh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR,
9 FEBRUARY

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) has firmly resolved to free Hindu temples from government control under all circumstances.

A resolution to this effect was adopted following a three-day Kendriya meeting that ended at the Mahakumbh here on Sunday. Around 950 delegates from India and abroad attended the meeting and also formulated a comprehensive action plan to achieve this objective.

VHP's international president Alok Kumar stated on Sunday that in the first phase of the Mandir Mukti Movement, VHP activists, along with other Hindu organisations, will submit representations to the chief ministers of each state, demanding the handover of Hindu temples

to the Hindu society.

He further stated that large public gatherings would be organised in North and South Bharat to reinforce these demands.

In the second phase of the movement, influential individuals will hold meetings in state capitals and major cities to generate widespread public support for the cause, he said.

In states where this issue is gaining traction, VHP activists will meet with members of legislative assemblies and councils during upcoming sessions and urge them to influence political parties to push for temple liberation.

Addressing a media conference at the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela camp, the VHP international president also said that the meeting unanimously agreed that temple management should have complete independence and that any external control over



temple administration would be unacceptable.

He clarified that under the Mandir Mukti Movement, the VHP is focusing solely on temples currently under government control and not on other temples.

The VHP firmly believes that temple funds should be utilised exclusively for Hindu religious purposes. For this, a transparent system of accounts and auditing must be implemented, he said,

adding that the entire Hindu society should be involved in temple management and that temple trusts must also have representation for women and SC/ST communities.

The VHP president emphasised that there would be no reduction in the salaries of priests, purohits, and other temple staff and that their wages should not be lower than the minimum wage set by the government.

He also mentioned that when meeting state chief ministers, a draft of a specially designed Temple Liberation Law for each respective state would be presented.

Representatives from all states of the country, as well as from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Mauritius, South Africa, France, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Guyana, and other countries, attended this meeting.

During the meeting, the delegates expressed their commitments to Panch Parivartan (five key aspects)—environmental conservation, social harmony, family values, civic responsibilities, the spirit of Swadeshi, and self-respect—integrating these into moral values, conduct, and culture of society. Various major issues impacting the global Hindu community were also discussed.

Beneficiaries of reservation should never forget society's support:VP



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Sunday that those who have benefited from reservations should never forget the efforts and support of society.

The vice-president was speaking at the Akhil Mewar Region Jat Mahasabha in Chittorgarh.

Remembering the Jat reservation movement 25 years ago, Dhankhar said: "I am here 25 years later, and 25 years ago, a great work was done here. The struggle for social justice began, and Jats and some other castes received reservations."

"This initiative started in 1999, with prominent members of society present. I was one of them. We laid the foundation here in this sacred land, Devnagari, Mewar's Haridwar, and achieved success, and today the results of that effort are visible in the administrative services of the country and the state," the vice-president said.

Those who benefitted from reservation on the basis of social justice are now in key positions in the government, he said. "My request to them is — look back and never forget that the support and efforts of this society gave us social justice... Whenever there is a movement, especially

related to reservations, people become terrified, become violent, and fall victim to accidents," the vice-president said.

"But on this sacred land, my head is held high, and my chest is broad with pride because our movement for social justice is the world's greatest example. There was no disorder, no violence," Dhankhar said.

The Vice-President said farmers are the providers and should not depend on anyone's help. "When the economic situation of farmers improves, the country's situation improves. After all, farmers are the providers, and they should not look to anyone or depend on anyone for help because farmers, with their strong hands, possess political strength and economic capability," he said.

"No matter what happens, no matter how many obstacles arise, no one can undermine the role of farmers in India's journey towards development. Today's governance system bows to the farmers," the Vice-President emphasised.

Budget session of UP legislature to begin on 18 February



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, 9 FEBRUARY

The budget session of the Uttar Pradesh legislature will commence on 18 February.

On the opening day, Governor Anandiben Patel will address the joint session of the legislature at 11 a.m. The Vidhan Sabha secretariat issued a notification to this effect here on Sunday.

The budgetary proposals of 2025-26 for the second term of the Yogi Adityanath

government are expected to be tabled on 20 February.

Sources said that the tenure of the budget session would be around a fortnight. The size of the state budget is expected to be over Rs 8 lakh crore. In the previous budget, the UP govt tabled a budget of over Rs 7.66 lakh crore.

The session is likely to be stormy with the opposition all set to raise the Kumbh stampede incident and other burning issues

Noida International Airport partners with Uttarakhand Transport Corporation for seamless religious tour

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Noida International Airport (NIA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Uttarakhand Transport Corporation (UTC) today to provide seamless bus services to key destinations in Uttarakhand, including religious spots. This strategic partnership will ensure direct connectivity between NIA and major Uttarakhand cities, including Dehradun, Rishikesh, Haridwar, and Haldwani, once the airport begins commercial operations.

The airport's strategic location along the Yamuna Expressway ensures smooth road access to Delhi-NCR, Noida, and Western Uttar Pradesh, making it a key gateway for North India.



Speaking on the collaboration, a senior official of the Uttarakhand Transport Corporation said, "By integrating road and air transport, we aim to provide travellers with efficient, reliable transport options while promoting tourism and economic growth in

Uttarakhand."

Christoph Schnellmann, CEO of Noida International Airport, highlighted the initiative's broader impact: "This partnership will not only enhance passenger convenience but also drive tourism and economic growth by improving acces-

The airport's strategic location along the Yamuna Expressway ensures smooth road access to Delhi-NCR, Noida, and Western Uttar Pradesh, making it a key gateway for North India.

sibility to key destinations."

Swami Paramatmananda, Mahamandaleswar of Panchayati Mahanirbani Akhada, said monks of several Akhadas have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi for hassle-free journeys for pilgrims and travellers to reach religious sites. "These initiatives will really help holy pilgrimages. This kind of initiative should be implemented for other airports also," he said.

Defeat paves the way for future, INDIA bloc to grow stronger: Akhilesh Yadav

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, 9 FEBRUARY

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav has asserted that the INDIA bloc is strong and will become even stronger in the future.

"Every defeat is a lesson, and learning from it paves the way for the future," Yadav said while addressing the media in Agra on Sunday.

Yadav was reacting to the INDIA alliance's defeat in the Delhi Assembly polls.

Commenting on the SP's loss in the Milkipur assembly bypoll, he remarked: "Those who are celebrating by manipulating votes should understand that the false victory in Milkipur cannot compensate for the BJP's historic defeat in Ayodhya during the Lok Sabha elections. The

BJP's loss in Ayodhya is recorded in history and cannot be erased by Milkipur."

Yadav further alleged that the BJP had resorted to unfair means to win the by-election but insisted they would not secure 400 seats in the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

Criticising the BJP government over the recent stampede incident, Yadav accused the administration of concealing the actual death toll in the Kumbh tragedy.

"They are suppressing the number of casualties to avoid paying compensation. A large number of pilgrims lost their lives during this Kumbh, including those who perished in accidents while traveling for the Mahakumbh. The government must extend support to all the affected families," he demanded.

President to take holy dip at Sangam today

PRAYAGRAJ, 9 FEBRUARY: President Droupadi Murmu is set



IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI
Notice under Order V Rule 20 Code of Civil Procedure
CM No. 68418/2024 in CM(M) 933/2023
Petition against the order Dt. 13/01/2023 passed by Mr. Arun Kumar Garg, Additional District Judge-05, Central District, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi in RCA DJ No. 37/2020.
ASHWANI GUPTA

-Petitioner
Vs
TALA RAM KAMBOJ & ORS.
-Respondents

Notice to the Respondents :
1. Tala Ram Kamboj
S/o Sh. Khaira Ram Kamboj
2. Raj Kumar Kamboj
S/o Shri Goma Ram Kamboj
Both R/o Village Gidranwala, P.O. Maundint Road, Teh. & District Sirsa, Haryana-125055.
3. Tasty Bite Eatables Limited
Having Registered Office At : Kary House, 46, Avenue 4, Street No.1, Banjara Hills, Maharashtra-500034.

Whereas the above noted petitioner has presented a petition Under Article 227 of Constitution of India which was listed before the Court on 30/05/2023 and the Court ordered issuance of notice to you. And whereas it has been proved to the satisfaction of the Court that you cannot be served in the ordinary manner. Notice is hereby issued that if you wish to defend the above mentioned petition you may cause an application to be entered on your behalf either in person or through an advocate duly appointed by you for the purpose before the Court of Joint Registrar on 12/02/2025 at 11:00 am.

If no appearance is made on your behalf, by yourself, your pleader or someone by law authorised to act for you in the said petition on the aforementioned date, no further notice of the subsequent date of hearing of the said petition will be given and the same will be heard and determined ex-parte in your absence.

Given under my hand and the seal of this Court on 21st Jan 2025.
Assistant Registrar for Registrar General
Pk

Seal of the Court

Liquor to become costlier in Jharkhand: Govt to exit retail business, hand over sales to private players

SHASHI SINGH
RANCHI, 9 FEBRUARY

The Jharkhand government has decided to exit the liquor retail business. Under the new Excise Policy 2025, liquor retail sales will be entirely handed over to private traders from 1 March.

The state-owned Jharkhand Beverage Corporation Limited (JSBCL) will now be restricted to wholesale operations only. Along with this, the government has announced an increase in liquor prices. An additional excise tax has been imposed under the new policy, leading to a price hike ranging from Rs 5 to Rs 100.

Jharkhand's Minister for Excise and Prohibition, Yogenendra Prasad, told The Statesman



that this decision was taken after a departmental review. He expressed confidence that this shift would result in a positive increase in government revenue and bring more transparency to the system.

Once this policy comes into effect, the government will completely withdraw from retail liquor sales, leaving the business in the hands of private traders. Liquor shops

in the state will be allocated through a lottery system, where applications will be invited, and shops will be allotted to selected traders.

In addition to traditional liquor shops, sales will now be permitted in malls, departmental stores, and model shops. Departmental stores with an area of over 2,000 square feet will be allowed to allocate 10 per cent of their space for liquor sales, while malls larger than 50,000 square feet will be able to set up dedicated liquor stores of 200 square feet. Air-conditioned model shops will also be introduced, where customers can consume liquor on the premises.

Under the government's new policy, liquor prices will

see an inevitable hike. The price of liquor costing up to Rs 90 will increase by Rs 5, liquor priced between Rs 91 and Rs 950 will rise by Rs 10, those between Rs 951 and Rs 1950 will see a Rs 50 hike, and liquor priced above Rs 1951 will become costlier by Rs 100.

The decision has received mixed reactions from experts. Some believe this move will make the market more competitive and convenient for consumers, while others fear that privatisation could lead to uncontrolled price hikes. The state government has invited public suggestions and objections regarding the new policy until 16 February, after which it will be officially notified.

Huge rush of pilgrims for Mahakumbh leads to traffic jams in Prayagraj

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR,
9 FEBRUARY

The Mahakumbh drew a huge crowd of devotees on Sunday, leading to massive jam in all the entry points to Prayagraj. According to Mela authorities, 1.09 crore pilgrims have bathed in Sangam till 2 p.m. even as there was a huge rush on all the ghats (riverbanks). All the routes to Sangam remained jammed and vehicles were stranded on a stretch of 10 to 15 km for a long time.

Vehicles were stuck everywhere on the road due to the jam throughout the city prompting the authorities to implement an Emergency Crowd Management Plan to clear the traffic at Prayagraj Junction. Sources said there was a 10-15 km long line of vehicles from Varanasi, Lucknow, Kanpur and Rewa to Prayagraj.

In the morning, a fire broke



out in Sector-19 of the Mahakumbh in which a Kalp-wasi tent was burnt. Fire personnel extinguished the fire.

Meanwhile, even after the completion of the Amrit Snan festivals, the influx of devotees to Prayagraj for a holy dip in

the sacred Sangam continues unabated. In the 26 days since the commencement of Mahakumbh 2025, over 42 crore pilgrims have bathed in the Triveni Sangam. With the number of visitors from across the country and abroad

steadily rising, the Prayagraj Railway decided to extend the single-direction movement plan until further notice to ensure smooth and safe rail travel. Under this plan, entry to Prayagraj Junction will be allowed only from the City

Side via Platform No. 1, while exits will be routed through the Civil Lines side, using Platforms 6 and 10.

According to Railway Division PRO Amit Singh, this measure aims to prevent congestion and streamline passenger movement. To further facilitate the travel experience, colour-coded tickets and designated shelter slots have been introduced. These shelters, categorised based on passengers' destinations, are equipped with temporary ticket counters, toilets, and waiting areas. Additionally, reserved ticket holders will be granted entry through Gate No. 5. Passengers are advised to arrive well in advance of their scheduled train departures.

In collaboration with civil police, local taxi, auto, and e-rickshaw drivers have been urged to adhere to the single-direction plan to prevent traffic congestion and

HDB FINANCIAL SERVICES LIMITED		Ground Floor, Zenith House, Keshavnagar Khadye Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai - 400034 Tel No. : +91 22 49116300		
FINAL AUCTION CUM SALE NOTICE FOR GOLD ORNAMENTS				
The borrower(s) (whose details are provided in the table herein below), in particular, and the public, in general, are hereby informed that the below mentioned accounts are overdue, and the borrowers/account holders have not responded /complied with the communication, and notice sent by HDB Financial Services Limited (the "Company") requesting the borrower to clear his/her/their dues as per the documents in respect of the below mentioned loan signed/ accepted by the borrower(s) (such documents, collectively "loan agreement") and therefore defaulted in terms thereof. The Company has in exercise of its rights as a pledgee, decided to enforce the pledge and therefore hold a public auction of the gold ornaments pledged to the company as security for the loan for the purpose of selling the same and realizing/recovering the dues owned by the borrower(s) to the company. The auction will be conducted on/after 14-02-2025 at the below mentioned local branch of HDB Financial Services Limited from 11:00 am onwards on the date and branches mentioned in the below table:-				
Loan No	Customer Name	Date of Loan	Overdue Amount ₹	Branch Name
27770781	Sunil Kumar	29-09-22	23189	Delhi Ncr-Burari
28408417	Shekhar Babu	21-10-22	19295	Delhi Ncr-Burari
42926221	Chaman Lal	14-12-23	7289	Delhi-Adarsh Nagar
51720028	Ashwani So Shrivdev	12-07-24	14702	Delhi-Adarsh Nagar
47557240	Raj Kumar	09-04-24	8468	Delhi-Badapur
49701464	Pankaj Kumar	22-05-24	17820	Delhi-Badapur
42132381	Deepak Kumar	24-11-23	24782	Delhi-Bhajanpura
42773217	Sonpal So Munshisingh	04-04-24	42354	Delhi-Bhajanpura
20312838	Dipanshu Singh	15-12-21	30797	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
25429241	Mahender Ram Dhan	01-07-22	16098	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
26016053	Radhia Devi	22-07-22	13133	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
43985991	Sheela Shukla	12-01-24	26696	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
51573602	Urmila Wo Moolchand	10-07-24	14612	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
53559871	Amir Abbasi	17-08-24	22176	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
24494261	Vijay Kumar	29-05-22	20671	Delhi-Jagatpuri
18836028	Rishpal Yadav	26-10-21	6343	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
41112566	Alfar Mohamad	07-11-23	12844	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
44444710	Jitendra Jain	02-02-24	25042	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
45101041	Lajpat Rai Jain	28-02-24	15832	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
48502193	Sachin Jain	26-04-24	52268	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
49335593	Anil Kumar	13-05-24	9093	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
21414783	Ghan Shyam	25-01-22	10659	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
29438491	Soni Virendrasingh	24-11-22	11931	Delhi-Mahliya Nagar
50177220	Sunil Singh	04-06-24	16196	Delhi-Nai Sadak
52277819	Priya Singhal	24-07-24	14439	Delhi-Nangloi
54137821	Rohit So Satish	30-08-24	40950	Delhi-Narela
31131932	Dhananjay Kumar Barnwal	28-01-23	72260	Delhi-Patel Nagar
51330343	Shivani Do Karamveer	04-07-24	39176	Delhi-Ramesh Nagar
39246252	Ashok Kumar	20-09-23	11733	Delhi-Rohini
42540913	Deepak So Hari	05-12-23	26466	Delhi-Rohini
52066351	Bhupender So Chhote	19-07-24	7182	Delhi-Rohini
54539540	Darshna Devi	16-09-24	7479	Delhi-Rohini
43756623	Mid Anwar Alam	12-04-24	18788	Delhi-Sadar
47716190	Sunil Kumar	05-01-24	7293	Delhi-Tilak Nagar
53852657	Onkar Singh	23-08-24	58898	Delhi-Uttam Nagar
40045799	Indal Kumar Singh	12-10-23	9949	Delhi-Uttam Nagar
52704277	Bibi Rumi	31-07-24	13097	Delhi-Uttam Nagar
The auction shall be conducted on an "AS IS WHERE" and "AS IS WHAT IT" basis and the Company is not making and shall not make any representation or warranties regarding the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments. It shall be the sole and absolute responsibility of the potential purchaser to verify, examine and satisfy themselves about the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments prior to placing their bid and for such purpose it shall be open to potential purchasers to examine, at their sole cost and expense, and at the address set out herein above, the gold ornaments whether with or without expert advice 45 minutes prior to the time stipulated for the conduct of the auction. All the bid shall be subjected to such minimum reserve price as the company may deem fit to fix in this regards. The auction process and sale (if any) pursuant to such auction shall be subjected to such further terms and condition as the company may at sole discretion deem fit to impose.				
If the borrower(s) mentioned above pays the amount due to the Company in terms of the loan agreement in his individual loan account in full before the auction as mentioned above, the pledged ornaments securing the said loan may be withdrawn from the said auction without further notice. Please note that it is the absolute discretionary power of the undersigned authorized officer of the company, either to postpone or to cancel the auction proceeding without prior notice and without assigning any reason therefor and to reject any or all the bids or offer without assigning any reason for the same.				
Place : DELHI Date : 10-02-2025		Authorised Officer HDB Financial Services Ltd		

Modi to embark on 5-day 2-nation visit to France, USA starting today

PM will visit the USA on 12-13 February at the invitation of US President Donald Trump

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a crucial five-day two-nation visit to France and the United States from Monday to attend the AI Summit in Paris and meet President Donald Trump in Washington.

Mr Modi will be on a three-day France visit from 10 February at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron. He will co-chair the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit with Macron on 11 February.

PM Modi will attend a dinner hosted by President Macron at the Elysee Palace in honour of visiting heads of government and heads of State on 10 February, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced in a special press briefing on 7 February.

After the AI summit on 11 February, there will be a bilateral component to the visit and PM Modi and Pres-

ident Macron will address the India-France CEOs forum. PM Modi and President Macron will hold discussions in both the restricted and delegation level talks format. On 12 February, the two leaders will visit the war cemetery and will pay tribute to the sacrifices made by Indian Soldiers in World War 1.

The two leaders will jointly inaugurate the Consulate General of India in Marseille and will pay a visit to Kadash which is the site of the international thermal nuclear experimental reactor.

India and France have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations and share a deep and enduring Strategic Partnership (SP) covering all aspects of bilateral cooperation which involves a strategic component.

After wrapping up France visit, PM Modi will travel to the USA.

Mr Modi's visit to the USA will provide an opportunity to build on the strong India-US Global Comprehensive



Strategic Partnership and set an ambitious agenda for a mutually beneficial and trusted relationship across all sectors, an official statement said.

Mr Modi will visit the US on 12-13 February at the invitation of US President Donald Trump. This will be the Indian leader's first visit to the US after the inaugu-

ration of Mr Donald Trump as the 47th President of the country on 20 January.

"The fact that the PM has been invited to visit the US within barely three weeks

of the new administration taking office shows the importance of the India-US partnership and is also reflective of the bipartisan support that this partnership enjoys in the US," Mr Misri said.

The PM will be amongst the first few world leaders to visit the US following President's Trump inauguration during his second term.

President Trump spoke with Mr Modi on 27 January when he discussed immigration and stressed on the importance of India buying more American-made security equipment and fair bilateral trading ties. This is the first meeting between the two leaders after President Trump assumed office for his second term.

Previously, PM Modi visited the USA in June 2017 and hosted President Trump for a state visit to India in February 2020.

The two leaders have also spoken on the phone twice since November 2024 (on 6 November 2024 and 27 January 2025).

CM Nitish visits Maner Dargah as his silence over Waqf Bill baffles Muslims

IMRAN MOJIB
PATNA, 9 FEBRUARY



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar visited the historic Maner Sharif Dargah in Patna on Sunday to participate in the 756th Urs celebrations of Sufi Saint Makhdoom Shah Kamaluddin Ahmed Yahya Maneri.

Maner Sharif Khanqah in-charge Syed Shah Tariq Suharwardi Ainayatullah Firdausi and other devotees welcomed the Chief Minister and felicitated him by presenting a cap and a handkerchief. He spent some time in the spiritual atmosphere, offered a 'chadar' with reverence and prayed for the peace, development and prosperity of Bihar.

Kumar has been a frequent visitor to Maner Sharif Dargah, a symbol of Bihar's Ganga-Jamuni culture and mutual brotherhood, on the occasion of Urs. It reflects his resolve to strengthen religious harmony in the state and for the development of Bihar.

However, this visit bears special significance in the current political atmosphere. Muslims across Bihar are upset by the JDU's stand on the proposed Waqf Amendment Bill, which has been termed as the central government's attempt to take control of mosques and dargahs.

Muslim community leaders have described it as an attempt to dismantle the Waqf system and further marginalise Muslims. Nitish Kumar's close aide and Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh

was the most vociferous among the BJP allies in backing the contentious Waqf Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha.

While the party's Muslim faces openly criticised the Bill, a few other JDU leaders said that Muslim apprehensions must be addressed before it is finalised. Kumar's continued silence has baffled Muslims, who have been supporting the JDU despite its alliance with the BJP. Recently, an RJD leader had erected huge hoardings across Patna accusing the chief minister of backstabbing Muslims over the Waqf Amendment Bill.

The sentiment is growing among common Muslims.

Navendu, veteran journalist and a keen political observer, said that former chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav used to be the most popular political leader among Muslims.

Today, Nitish Kumar is the first choice of Muslim voters in Bihar. He has made genuine efforts to uplift the Muslim community in the state and it has won him immense admiration. But his continued silence over the Waqf bill might alter his reputation, he said.

Mounting public pressure forced Biren Singh to resign: Rahul Gandhi

AGENCIES
IMPHAL, 9 FEBRUARY

Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi reacting to the Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's resignation, said that he quit the post following "mounting public pressure".

The LoP, who visited Manipur three times after the ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023, in a post on the X said: "For nearly two years, BJP's CM Biren Singh instigated division in Manipur. PM Modi allowed him to continue despite the violence, loss of life, and the destruction of the idea of India in Manipur."

He added that the resignation of Biren Singh shows that mounting public pressure, the SC investigation and the no-confidence motion by the Congress have forced a reckoning.

"But the most urgent priority is to restore peace in the state and work to heal the wounds of the people of Manipur. PM Modi must visit Manipur at once, listen to the people and finally explain his plan to bring back normalcy," he said.

The LoP's third visit came during the second leg of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which started from Manipur on Jan-

uary 14 last year. The 67-day-long Yatra ended in Mumbai covering 85 districts of 14 states.

The Congress kicked off the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra from Manipur with a promise to "bring peace and harmony" to the ethnic violence-hit state.

LoP Rahul Gandhi in his speech in the parliament and outside the parliament urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Manipur and restore peace and normalcy.

Meanwhile, Congress General Secretary and parliament member Jairam Ramesh said that the Congress was all set to move a no-confidence motion against the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers in the Manipur Assembly on Monday and sensing the climate, the Manipur CM has resigned.

"This was a demand that the Congress has been making since early May 2023, when Manipur erupted. The Chief Minister's resignation was belated. The people of Manipur now await a visit by our Frequent Flier PM who is off to France and the USA now - and who has found neither the time nor the inclination to go to Manipur these past twenty months," Ramesh,

who also visited Manipur several times during the past two years after the ethnic violence started, said in a post on the X.

Over 250 people including women and children were killed, over 1,500 injured and over 70,000 people displaced after the ethnic violence broke out on May 3 last year after a 'Tribal Solidarity March', organised in the hill districts to protest the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

The rioting also left thousands of houses, government and non-government properties, and religious installations destroyed or damaged.

Over 60,000 Central security forces, including the Army and Assam Rifles, have been deployed in Manipur following the outbreak of violence.

In view of the ethnic strife in Manipur, approximately 50,650 men, women and children belonging to different communities have been displaced and are now sheltered in 350 camps set up in schools, government buildings and auditoriums in Manipur.

Thousands of displaced people, mostly belonging to Kuki-Zo tribals, also sheltered in Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya.

6.39 cr villagers gained digital literacy under DISHA scheme in 2017-24: Jitin Prasada

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

As many as 6.39 crore people were imparted digital literacy between 2017 and 2024 under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA), enabling them to send messages and attach files on mobile phones, according to Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Jitin Prasada.

The beneficiaries under the DISHA scheme also included field level government functionaries namely Anganwadi and ASHA workers and authorised ration dealers, said Prasada in a recent reply in Rajya Sabha.

Highlighting the outcomes of the scheme, he said that the maximum number of 1.45 crore people in Uttar Pradesh were imparted digital literacy. It was followed by 74.12 lakh beneficiaries in Bihar.

Maharashtra with 53.23 lakh beneficiaries, Madhya Pradesh with 50.69 lakh and Rajasthan with 39.70 lakh beneficiaries were the other major participating states under the scheme, he said.

He said a survey conducted by the National Sam-

ple Survey Office (NSSO) between July 2022 and June 2023 had shown that among persons aged 15-24 years, around 78.4 per cent reported execution skill of sending messages - e-mail and SMS - with attached files like documents, pictures and video.

The Minister said the Survey also showed that about 94.2 per cent of rural households and about 97.1 per cent of urban households possess telephone and/or mobile phone.

He said the PMGDISHA scheme was officially concluded on 31 March, 2024, after the Survey indicated the successful achievement of its objectives ranging from rise in smart-phone usage, internet penetration, and digital engagement in rural areas.

The Minister said as many as 1.74 lakh Anganwadi workers, 54,329 ASHA workers and 12,154 ration dealers were trained under the DISHA scheme.

Presenting state-wide data, Prasada said a maximum of 30,642 Anganwadi workers benefitted in West Bengal, followed by 27,125 in Tamil Nadu and 18,630 in Uttar Pradesh.

'Stop worrying about threat to RJD from Congress'

AGENCIES
PATNA, 9 FEBRUARY

Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to focus on the sinking economy before flagging the threat to his Rashtriya Janata Dal from ally Congress.

"He should be more worried about the economy or the entire state rather than expressing fears over our party's future," Tejashwi Yadav told IANS in response to PM Modi's warning that the "predatory politics" of the Congress will spell doom for its allies.

During his speech on Saturday after the BJP's victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, the PM said that in Bihar, the Congress was trying to use caste issues to eat into the RJD's vote bank.

PM Modi accused the Congress of a habit of shortening others' lives. He said the Congress is prone to steal the agenda and slogans of its own allies in states and try to edge past them in their own strongholds.

INS Tushil strengthens India-Seychelles ties during historic West Africa voyage

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

In a significant step towards reinforcing India's ties with Seychelles, the Indian Navy's *INS Tushil* made a successful port call at Port Victoria, marking a milestone in its maiden passage around the West Coast of Africa. The ship was welcomed by officials from the High Commission of India (HCI) and representatives from the Indian Navy detachment stationed in the island nation.



During the port call, Captain Peter Varghese, Commanding Officer of *INS Tushil*, hosted prominent dignitaries, including Kartik Pande, the High Commissioner of India to Seychelles, and Major General Michael Rosette, Chief of Defence Forces of the Seychelles Defence Forces. The visit also included a demonstration of the NISHAR—MITRA Terminal, highlighting the evolving cooperation between the two nations.

India and Seychelles share a long history of close diplomatic and defence relations, dating back to Seychelles' independence in 1976. A contingent from *INS Nilgiri* had participated in the country's first Independence Day

PDP leader Iltija Mufti claims being detained in Jammu before her press conference

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 9 FEBRUARY

PDP leader Iltija Mufti was on Sunday detained after returning from Billawar, where she had gone to offer condolences to the family of Makhan Din, who had recently committed suicide after allegedly being tortured by police during questioning over a terrorist attack in which four soldiers were killed.

The police denied that Makhan Din, a 25-year youth, was tortured during questioning. Kathua District Magistrate and the police have ordered separate inquiries into his death.

In a video post on X, Iltija claimed that she was detained in the circuit house. In the video, she is seen asking a police officer why she was not being allowed to leave the circuit house complex.

Iltija, the daughter of former CM Mehbooba Mufti, was not allowed to address a press conference. The gates of the circuit house were closed by policemen, as seen in the video.

Iltija wrote on X: "Detained at Circuit House Jammu now. All this because @JmuKmrPolice wanted me to cancel my press conference scheduled for 4 pm. This is Naya Kashmir and the true



face of it. The elected government is too busy hosting a lunch in Delhi to care about victims of human rights violations".

Mehbooba Mufti also took to social media and wrote on X: "Visiting and offering solace to the families of victims has now been criminalised. This is evident from the latest actions of the police, who have detained Iltija at the Circuit House in Jammu, preventing her from addressing a press conference. This blatant disregard for our democratic rights as free citizens highlights a disturbing trend.

It appears that the ruling party's understanding of democracy extends only as far as holding elections and forming a government, with little regard for the fundamental freedoms that under-

pin a true democracy. Very unfortunate and ironical that one NC minister's visit to Bilawar was facilitated by police and Iltija is being punished for the same."

Earlier in the morning, Mehbooba wrote on X: "Finally Iltija managed to reach Bilawar in Kathua to meet the bereaved family of Makhan Din, who was driven to suicide by police torture. It's deeply saddening that she had to endure so many obstacles and travel like a fugitive just to offer comfort to the victim's family. The ruling party has shirked responsibility conveniently attributing all issues to the Lieutenant Governor. However, as a responsible opposition PDP will always strive to reach out to the people to offer solace".

PM Modi to lead the 8th edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha with insights from leading experts

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Examinations often bring stress to students and their families, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Pariksha Pe Charcha" (PPC) initiative has been reshaping the narrative around exams, stated the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Scheduled for 11 a.m. on 10 February, the 8th edition of PPC will continue to provide a unique, interactive platform where the Prime Minister directly engages with students, teachers, and parents," stated a release from the MoE. The initiative has evolved into a nationwide movement, emphasizing innovative ways to manage exam-related anxiety while promoting a celebratory attitude toward learning and life.

This year's PPC has already set a new benchmark, with over 5 crore participants, showcasing its impact as a Jan Andolan. With 36 students selected from various educational institutions, including State and UT Board Government schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas, Sainik Schools, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, CBSE, and Navodaya Vidyalayas, PPC 2025 highlights the diversity and wide-reaching influence of the pro-



gram, it added.

The event will feature seven insightful episodes, each addressing key aspects of life and learning, with contributions from renowned personalities. In the "Sports & Discipline" episode, sports icons M.C. Mary Kom, Avani Lekhara, and Suhass Yathiraj will discuss goal setting, resilience, and stress management. Actress and mental health advocate Deepika Padukone will focus on emotional well-being and self-expression in the "Mental Health" segment. In the "Nutrition" episode, experts like Shonali Sabherwal, Rujuta Diwekar, and Revant Himatsingka will provide tips on healthy eating and maintaining overall well-being.

Further episodes will cover essential topics such as "Technology & Finance," featuring Gaurav Chaudhary (Technical Guruji) and Radhika Gupta, who will explore tech-based learning tools and financial literacy. "Creativity & Positivity" will see Vikrant Massey and Bhumi Pednekar inspiring students to cultivate a positive mindset, while "Mindfulness & Mental Peace" will feature Sadhguru, offering practical techniques for mental clarity. The final episode, "Stories of Success," will feature toppers from prestigious exams like UPSC, IIT-JEE, CLAT, and CBSE, along with past PPC participants, sharing how the initiative shaped their preparation and mindset.



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Dalí's India

The arrival of Salvador Dalí's artworks in India for the first time is not just an artistic milestone ~ it is a moment of cultural introspection. While Dalí never visited the country, his fascination with India's mysticism, coupled with his surrealist imagination, created a unique artistic connection. This exhibition in Delhi, bringing over 200 of his original works, allows Indian audiences to experience the world through the eyes of one of the most eccentric and thought-provoking artists of the 20th century. Dalí was not just a painter; he was an enigma. His art, heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud's theories on the subconscious, invited viewers into dreamlike worlds where reality melted into bizarre yet compelling forms. Elephants with impossibly long legs, disjointed human figures, and floating eyeballs were not just artistic quirks but reflections of a deeper psychological exploration. His works force the viewer to abandon rationality and embrace the unexpected. That a man so deeply fascinated by dreams and the subconscious was drawn to India is unsurprising. The Western world's romanticised vision of India as a land of mysticism, gurus, and spiritual transcendence reached its peak in the 1960s and 70s ~ an era when Dalí was still producing and engaging with new ideas. Though he never walked Indian streets or witnessed its chaotic yet harmonious contrasts first-hand, the country still found its way into his art. Some of his sketches were inspired by photographs taken by his friend and publisher, Pierre Argillet, on an Indian sojourn during this period. Dalí's India, therefore, exists not as a literal representation but as an imagined landscape shaped by second-hand experiences and his own surrealist lens. This exhibition is a reminder that art is not bound by geography. While Dalí's name has long been revered in European and American art circles, his work has never before been given a dedicated platform in India. This delay raises an important question: Why has a country with a thriving artistic tradition and deep engagement with surrealist themes taken so long to host such a collection? Indian art, from its mythological paintings to its modernist expressions, often embraces the surreal. Yet, global conversations around surrealism have historically been dominated by Western artists, despite the presence of equally thought-provoking Indian counterparts. Bringing Dalí's art to India is more than just an exhibition; it is an invitation to explore the intersections of cultural imagination. Indian audiences will not only see Dalí's perspective on surrealism but will also find echoes of their own artistic traditions ~ where the mythical and the real constantly intertwine. Whether in temple carvings that depict gods with multiple arms or in folk paintings that blur the lines between dream and reality, surrealism has long existed in India's visual culture. This long-overdue exhibition is an opportunity to reclaim surrealism not as a foreign import but as part of a larger, global artistic conversation ~ one that India has always belonged to, whether acknowledged or not.

Short-term gains

The recent 30-day suspension of American tariffs on Mexican and Canadian goods underscores the unpredictability of trade policy under US President Donald Trump. His high-stakes approach to economic negotiations ~ leveraging American economic might to extract concessions ~ has once again yielded short-term gains. However, the broader consequences of this approach, both politically and economically, remain uncertain. President Trump can claim a victory by securing commitments from Mexico and Canada on border security and fentanyl trafficking, key issues for his administration. By positioning himself as a tough negotiator, he reinforces his image as a leader willing to use economic pressure to achieve domestic policy goals. However, his threats of sweeping tariffs have introduced a level of instability that could have lasting repercussions. For Canada, the tariff delay provides temporary relief, especially as its leadership faces political transitions. Border security measures and anti-fentanyl initiatives were already in motion, but the latest agreement adds further commitments. Canadian businesses, however, remain on edge, knowing that Mr Trump's approach to trade remains fluid. The economic relationship between the two neighbours, traditionally built on stability and mutual benefit, has become increasingly fragile due to these recurring threats. Mexico, under President Claudia Sheinbaum, managed to secure a short-term victory by negotiating a 30-day pause on tariffs, effectively averting a potentially devastating economic blow. This reprieve was a result of a tense negotiation in which Ms Sheinbaum agreed to deploy 10,000 National Guard troops along Mexico's northern border. Their primary mission would be to curb illegal immigration and address the smuggling of fentanyl into the US, critical issues for the Trump administration. In addition to this border security agreement, President Sheinbaum also committed to address the trafficking of high-powered firearms into Mexico to curb cartel violence. While this agreement buys Ms Sheinbaum time and temporarily shields Mexico from trade hostilities, it remains conditional. The real challenge now lies in converting this fragile, temporary truce into a permanent solution. With Mr Trump's unpredictable approach to trade, the looming threat of renewed tariffs remains. The broader concern is the uncertainty this strategy creates for businesses and investors. A stable trade environment is essential for long-term economic planning. The mere threat of tariffs can cause companies to reconsider supply chains, delay investments, and explore alternative markets. Moreover, this approach to trade policy risks alienating key allies. While Mr Trump prioritises domestic political gains, his aggressive tactics could push Canada and Mexico to deepen trade ties with other global partners. If US trade relationships become unreliable, businesses may seek more predictable alternatives, weakening North America's economic integration. In the short term, Mr Trump's brinkmanship has given him leverage, but it has also sowed doubt about the reliability of US trade policy. If this strategy continues, the long-term consequences ~ economic uncertainty, damaged alliances, and shifting global trade patterns ~ may outweigh the short-term wins.

Relations reset ~ I

Critics have noticed Prabowo's recent moves, including a recent expansion of the military command structure. This is a worrying lurch towards remilitarization in the world's largest Muslim-majority country. Critics who question that Prabowo is not abiding by civil supremacy believe he wants to restore the glory of the military, where various kinds of civic works can be done by the military as he feels those would be faster and more effective. Prabowo's reliance on the military is raising concerns about the undoing of democratic reforms that sprang up after Suharto was ousted



At this year's 76th Republic Day celebration on 26 January, India invited the President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto to be the Chief Guest. Indeed it was a strategic move on the part of the Narendra Modi government to engage with the Southeast Asian nation with the largest Muslim population in the world, and thereby deepen cooperation with the members of the Asean bloc. It transpired that energy, food security, defence and security ties emerged as the centrepieces of discussion.

Both sides are aware that their engagements ~ both bilaterally on issues of trade and maritime security and on the global stage through forums such as the G-20 and minilateralals such as the India-Australia-Indonesia group - have brought the two countries into a closer, complementary and mutually beneficial partnership.

This two-part article shall address two separate issues in order to posit the India-Indonesia partnership in perspective. The first part dwells on Prabowo's handling of the domestic situation as the success or failure of his measures shall impact his foreign policy and relations with Indonesia's partner countries. The second part examines the outcome of Prabowo's India visit and what it brought to the table for providing dividends to both sides.

The initial evaluation of Prabowo's policy choices raises questions on his over-reliance on the military to sustain his democratic structure. By making his choice of officials in critical positions, the President has given people reason to worry if the political culture of past authoritarian leader Gen Suharto who lost power three decades ago is making a re-run. There are enough signs in peoples' unease that see a flashback of Suharto in Prabowo turning to the once-all powerful military to carry out a governing vision.

Prabowo was Indonesia's former defence minister. People now suspect that as President he would be replacing civilian functions with the military, thereby

raising comparison to the Suharto-era doctrine called dwifungsi (dual function) that allowed the armed forces to crush dissent and dominate public life.

The fears of the people are not without reasons. After Probowo stormed into the high-est office of Presidency three months ago with a landslide election victory, he quickly expanded the armed forces' roles in several public areas, including running much of his flagship project to serve free school meals. For now Prabowo has the support of allies. The allies in parliament are also preparing legislation that would allow Prabowo to appoint active military officers into senior government positions, dismantling some of the safeguards put in place after Suharto was overthrown in 1998 following an economic crisis and popular uprising.

Since Prabowo's resounding victory in last year's election was largely driven by younger voters, a generation with little or no memory of Suharto's military-backed 'New Order' regime, he feels emboldened to face the opposition.

As the son-in-law of Suharto, Prabowo was a special forces commander under the former's repressive 32-year reign and was later dismissed from the military amid unproven allegations of human rights abuses. Supporters of Prabowo, who denied past rights abuses, say tapping the military for important projects offers efficiencies.

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Critics who question that Prabowo is not abiding by civil supremacy believe he wants to restore the glory of the military, where various kinds of civic

works can be done by the military as he feels those would be faster and more effective. Although not replicating the "dual function" of the past, Prabowo's early reliance on the military is raising concerns among Indonesian observers about the undoing of democratic reforms that sprang up after Suharto was ousted. Analysts suspect many of Prabowo's actions replicate what existed under his late father-in-law Suharto.

Under Suharto, there were no checks and balances. The military was also involved in business. The same pattern, if chosen by Prabowo now, could erode democratic oversight of government institutions, affecting policy making. During his first 100 days in office, Prabowo enjoyed 91 per cent approval ratings. That is being dissipated after the armed forces started taking charge of large projects.

In the past three months that Prabowo has been in office, he has handed over large projects to the armed forces, the most visible example being the \$28 billion signature project to provide free meals.

Air Force Col. Satrya Dharma Wijaya is a case in point. His usual job is aircraft maintenance, but since November he has been busy ordering stoves, refrigerators and frying pans to cook meals for thousands of children at a base in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta.

The military is now running 100 of the 190 kitchens operated by the project's launch in collaboration with the newly formed National Nutrition Agency, cooking and delivering food for 570,000 children.

A plan is underway for the military to form 100 special "territorial development" units assigned to farming, fisheries and animal husbandry. Prabowo has also moved swiftly to vastly expand other military-run

projects established when he was defense minister.

Prabowo has also developed a programme whereby soldiers are required to clear land for cultivation. This has increased fifty-fold, boosting Indonesia's food security from an initial 60,000 hectares to a projected 3 million hectares ~ an area about the size of Belgium.

He has also ordered the expansion of another of his projects, directing the Air Force to convert its idle land into rice and corn fields to be managed by soldiers and villagers to supply food for the free-meals project. Other projects include nationwide extension of a small military civil-works initiative involving laying water pipes for irrigation in remote areas.

With a military background, Prabowo justifies that turning to soldiers to help run large programmes is effective, as according to him the army follows a strong chain of command and that rules are in place to prevent military repression. The people are assured that there is no question of a return to the New Order of the Suharto era.

Be that as it may, the key area of concern remains when legislation as planned is passed allowing Prabowo to appoint active duty military officers to top government jobs for the first time in decades.

Since the President's coalition controls 74 per cent of seats in parliament, passing of the law would not be difficult. The president has already tapped former military officers for top roles ~ such as Foreign Minister Sugiono, who served in the army's special force before retiring.

Prabowo's Gerindra party would be free to appoint active officers anywhere in the government. If such strategic programmes that are normally run by persons who are disciplined and experienced are to be passed on to the military, this would indicate a return to the Suharto era and a murder of democracy. The fear of militarisation under Prabowo with centralisation of power would mean democratic backsliding.

(To be concluded)

A MEMBER OF THE ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Stormy outlook for exports

South Korea's exports tumbled in January, ending a 15-month growth streak that led to its first trade deficit in 20 months. The turnaround has come at a time when the export-dependent country is likely to confront a global tariff war signaled by the imposition of new tariffs by US President Donald Trump.

On an on-year basis, Korea's out-bound shipments dropped 10.3 percent to \$49.1 billion and imports fell 6.4 percent to \$51 billion last month, according to data released by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy on Saturday. The figures resulted in a trade deficit of \$1.89 billion.

Semiconductors, the country's flagship export item, fared well in January, logging \$10.1 billion in exports, or an 8.1 percent increase on-year. It is notable that chip exports have continued to top \$10 billion for nine months in a row.

The solid record of chip exports is largely attributed to the strong demand for chips produced in Korea, especially the high-end lineups including high-bandwidth memory and double data rate-based memory chips needed to power data centers and artificial intelligence development.

Despite chips' strong showing, Korea's export pace slowed in January. The long Lunar New Year holiday last week reduced the number of business days. Some business operators in retail and other sectors complained that the government's decision to designate Jan. 27 as a temporary holiday to ext-

The Korea Herald

end the Lunar New Year holiday cut into their revenues.

Further, there is major concern about the potential impact of China's DeepSeek breakthrough AI solution on Korea's chip industry. Shares of chip-makers listed on the Korean stock market retreated Friday when investors reacted negatively to the news that the demand for high-end AI chips could weaken since DeepSeek demonstrated it can build an advanced AI system with fewer chips and less money.

Some experts, including those from the trade sector, said that skeptical views about the need for HBM chips might prevail in the short term, but the possibility of developing AI systems in a cost-effective way will benefit Korean chipmakers in the long run.

But it is far from encouraging that Korea's exports to major trading partners all declined last month. Exports to China dropped 14.1 percent on-year to \$9.2 billion.

Exports to the United States also fell 9.4 percent to \$9.3 billion. Even though the January figures declined, Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun stressed on Saturday that export momentum continues, citing a 7.7 percent on-year increase in daily average exports. Ahn also noted that the ministry will monitor changes in US trade policies under the Donald Trump administration.

Later in the same day, Trump announced the United States would place 25 percent tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports, while slapping 10 percent on goods from China, beginning from Tuesday.

Trump's order on tariffs is widely feared to trigger a global trade war beyond Canada, Mexico and China. Korea is not immune from the massive trade battle in consideration of its close trade ties with its two biggest trading partners ~ the United States and China. Trump's announcement itself is not a surprise because he has made these threats since before he won the US presidential election last year.

But it still worries many policy-makers and business leaders around the world, considering the broad impact of a trade war involving multiple retaliatory tariffs.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

SC's rap

SIR, The Supreme Court's censure on Tuesday of the politicisation of sports administration in the country strikes at the heart of a festering problem. By directing the Centre to ensure the participation of the women's kabaddi team at the Senior Asian Championship in Iran, the court laid bare the tangled web of political and bureaucratic interference

strangling Indian sports bodies. The Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India's disaffiliation from the International Kabaddi Federation is emblematic of this rot, leaving athletes in limbo despite their potential to bring home glory.

This isn't an isolated incident. The Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) quiet return to the residence of former president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh ~ facing sexual harassment charges ~ exposes how entrenched political figures maintain a vice-like grip over

sports federations.

Athletes deserve administrators who understand the demands of the field, not bureaucrats and politicians exploiting sports

for clout. It's time for meaningful reform, ensuring that sports bodies are led by those with a genuine passion for athletics. The apex court's intervention must

serve as a clarion call: let sports be for the sportspersons, not a political playground.

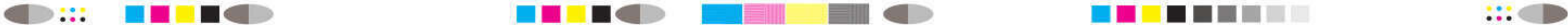
Yours, etc., Khokan Das, Kolkata, 6 February.

MIGRATION CAUSES

SIR, This refers to the editorial, "Deportation Drive" (6 February). The deportation of dozens of Indians, believed to be illegal immigrants in the United States, is neither surprising nor unprecedented. Over the past few years, the U.S. government has intensified its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations to identify, detain, and deport individuals without proper documentation. Between June and October 2024, the Department of Homeland Security reported that 1, 60,000 individuals had been deported on 495 international repatriation flights to more than 145 countries, including India. However, the manner and timing should be cause for concern for New Delhi.

To begin with, these deportations coincide with a major crackdown by ICE, spurred by Donald Trump's swearing-in as the U.S. President in January. He has made illegal immigration his "number one priority". India, which has one of the largest populations of illegal immigrants in the U.S., estimated at 725,000 undocumented individuals, will need to prepare for a significant increase in the number of returning migrants. The 'bromance' that India's leader has tried to portray with the American President and his use of terms of familiarity such as 'Trump, my dear friend' have made no difference. India needs to ponder over why so many Indians are taking enormous risks to migrate to the U.S.; it is an issue of mounting unemployment. Our economy has been portrayed as experiencing sustained and fast growth, but employment generation has not been commensurate with this 'economic growth'.

Yours, etc., S S Paul, Nadia, 6 February.



What was in it for the corporate sector?

ARUPA DEY BANIK

A country is not just its soil, a country is its people’ With the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman quoting great Telugu poet and playwright Gurajada Appa Rao, the flavour of this year’s budget with focus on Viksit Bharat had a slew of measures aimed at fostering economic growth, enhancing global competitiveness, and promoting inclusive development in India.

With the major share of the pie being reserved for agriculture and the common mass, the corporate sector felt a slight pang of being slighted. This was perhaps resonated through the stock market being overall indifferent to the consumption boost that the Budget tried to inject.

Having said so, what cannot be ignored is the emphasis on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) for Viksit Bharat. The budget definitely had a subtle focus on transforming the corporate sector, with significant enhancements in credit availability, tax reforms, and initiatives to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

One of the key highlights of the budget is the doubling of the credit guarantee cover for MSMEs, which is expected to facilitate an additional credit of Rs 1.5 lakh crore over the next five years.

Additionally, the introduction of customized credit cards for micro enterprises and a new Fund of Funds for start-ups is expected to further support entrepreneurial ventures. Keeping in view the theme of promoting entrepreneurship, the budget also

extended the benefit of a three-year tax holiday to all eligible start-ups incorporated before 1 April 2030.

It is also not an unknown fact that the companies are grappling with huge compliance burdens and tax litigations. The budget promised significant relief by introducing substantial tax reforms, including a new income-tax bill aimed at simplifying the tax structure and reducing litigation. This move is expected to foster a more business-friendly environment and reduce compliance costs for corporates.

The budget while emphasizing investment in people and innovation, also brought initiatives such as the establishment of National Centres of Excellence for skilling, expansion of medical education, and the launch of a Deep Tech Fund of Funds, which may involve investment and involvement of both the public and private sector enterprises to yield desired results. These efforts are complemented by sector-specific measures, including support for clean tech manufacturing and the promotion of exports through the Export Promotion Mission.

If one looks closely, what emerges is that the objective was not to reduce the tax burden, but to focus on the Make-in-India concept, wherein the Government aims to promote domestic manufacturing and value addition by increasing the Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on the import of goods and reducing or exempting BCD on components, parts, and capital goods. These sectors are prime ones, often depending on the other tiers or sectors for their sources of production. By targeting these sectors, an overall boost



has been very subtly trickled down to even the lower tiers.

Overall, the Union Budget 2025-2026 has furnished the right ingredients to the corporate to promote economic growth, enhance global com-

petitiveness, and foster a more business-friendly environment. However, what is important is a close Public-Private Partnership to achieve the goals set out in the Budget. It is a time of transformation to achieve that

much-coveted financial stability, followed by growth for the nation. And how that is achieved is something that we all need to wait and watch!

(The writer is a Chartered Accountant.)

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

What we lose and keep

In quick succession, I have lost two persons who occupied irreplaceable places in my life. I, who put so much value on words, suddenly find I have no words to describe my loss.

I am sitting in my study, at my favorite desk, cluttered as usual with pens and papers, glasses and watches, an iPhone and a Bose speaker. Facing me is the window that shows a lawn, two dogs and three trees, a few scattered wispy clouds. All in place, untroubled by a perturbing wind and the untimely snow that changed the scene overnight. All is peaceful except my mind.

Clearly, a price of living long is that the people we care for leave us. The inevitability of life’s end, relative brevity of some lives and seeming randomness of longevity are not thoughts that bring me any relief. What I feel is my sense of loss, unembroidered by the sense of injustice that some feel if the loss is occasioned by an accident or happenstance.

The most perceptive of my friends say little, perhaps edified by the experience that words provide scant solace. Those who offer the well-meaning assurance of a reunion in the hereafter or an afterlife seem also to be offering words that ring hollow to my skeptical ears. What my heart longs for is the continuity of the love that the presence of the living meant for me.

My daughter, whom I associate with sparkling eyes, joyous laughter and high spirits rather than serene sagacity, showed an unexpected measure of empathy. She came

unannounced, sat down close wordlessly and held my hand. She lowered her head onto my unaccountably aching shoulder as a strand of her long hair floated to my lips. It was a miraculous balm.

A thoughtful neighbour, just as wise, made a cup of tea and placed it simply, silently next to me. Its warmth and aroma were an abundant supportive message. I knew she had lost two close siblings in the space of weeks and the tea seemed a fragrant code for the analogy of pain that we shared. Hers was at a distance of months while mine was far too close.

Incongruous as it seems so close to their last breath, what I remember most are the happy memories. It was rare to walk with my brother without him playing a prank on me. “Let’s go for a walk,” he would say and promptly mislead me into a side street where his favorite street vendor was purveying what he wasn’t supposed to eat or fling me into a fancy coffee shop and order the super-calorie cake his doctor had forbidden.

“You haven’t seen this spectacular mall,” he forced me out of his car and marched into some chosen stores. If I showed the slightest interest in a new cologne or a pair of jeans, he would start whispering to the store clerk and I would later find the jeans and the cologne in my room.

He insisted his wife should cook only what he fancied I would love – “You won’t get this in your damned Washington” – and urged his daughter to get me another scotch, though he remained an unmoved teetotaler.

My friend was the ultimate host. In his home, I would have a whole floor when I visited. Breakfast at dawn on the terrace, lunch with friends, coffee at a café where more friends congregated, and evenings where we talked, listened to music together, went to parties and never seemed to stop sharing our cherished thoughts and experiences.

“You must take a look at this,” he would say and pass me a dozen magazines and the latest crop of books he had acquired for his large library. Occasionally, I would wake up early and wander into his library, only to find a cup of tea has been promptly sent there.

We spoke late into the night: I talking about my diplomatic mishaps and travel joys, he sharing his early Kolkata experiences and his consultancy adventures. Our conversations never ended. When he visited me in Washington, he categorically ruled out all tourist trips, even visits to restaurants, and preferred that we should just sit at home or walk in the woods nearby, talking and sharing and doing little else.

I wonder why I remember those vibrant moments above all as I mourn that they will not recur. Then I remember that Aeschylus, who knew about pain and wrote great Greek tragedies, remarked that there was no pain so great as the memory of joy in current grief.

As the years go by, there will be rain and snow, hurricanes and tornadoes, and my life will alternate between sad and glad days, chaotic activity and



Illustration by : Debabrata Chakrabarty

listless quiet. Most of it will seem normal and much of it will remain prosaic. But not all. There will still be an unrevoked void. I will miss the ones who are gone, my brother and my friend.

Perhaps they are not quite gone. Irreligious as I am, I love that Norwegian religious song, made unforgettable by my beloved soprano, Sissel Kyrkjebø: mitt hjerte alltid vanker (my heart always wanders). Yes, my heart

wanders all the time and the world changes every day every way, but, as Sissel sings,

“You will stay with me faithfully swathed in my soul... You took life here in the depth of my heart.”

(The writer is a US-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com)



100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

SCOTLAND, which for reasons of its own, declined a fixture against the All Blacks, has asserted the competence of its Rugby by defeating Wales, and that on the famous ground at Swansea, which is supposed to give a great advantage to the home team. Two Scottish tries in the first five minutes must have been a severe blow to the large crowd, which faithfully holds on to its expectation of a revival of Welsh foot-ball. Pace in the back division seems to have given the Scots the victory. While the Scottish team was at Swansea the London Scottish were going down badly before Cambridge. Oxford on the other hand was defeated by Richmond. University games in the Lent term, however, are not taken over seriously. The ‘Varsity match is over, control is relaxed, and men are more free to do other things.

NEWS ITEMS

MANDALAY RIOT TRIAL

ELEVEN CONVICTIONS

MANDALAY, FEB. 7.

JUDGMENT was delivered to-day by Mr. Moseley in the Mandalay riot case.

Four accused were acquitted, and eleven convicted; three to seven years, one to nine, and others to terms ranging from one to four years’ rigorous imprisonment. One of those sentenced to seven years is U. Tun Aung Gyaw, the honorary treasurer of the Council Boycott Section. The other two were pongyis.

The riot took place on August 7 over disobedience to a police order regarding the change of route of a procession in which U. Uttama was being taken, and resulted in the death of two policemen; and one pongyi, and injuries to several people including the District Superintendant of Police, Mr. Stewart, and some other police officers. Thirty-three persons were arrested, of whom 29 were tried by a special magistrate who committed 15 to the Sessions on charges of grievous hurt and unlawful assembly.

AMAZON EXPLORERS

FIRST NEWS RECEIVED BY WIRELESS

(BRITISH OFFICIAL WIRELESS). LEAFIELD (OXFORD), FEB. 7.

MR. Marcuse, the well-known amateur wireless operator of Caterham Hill, Surrey, yesterday got into communication with the operator of Dr. Hamilton Rice’s expedition which is proceeding up the Amazon in Brazil, a distance of about seven thousand miles from England. The transmission was very good, but was interfered with by atmosphere at times. This was the first time that details of the expedition’s progress had been received in Europe. The operator with the expedition gave Mr. Marcuse the following message:—

“The main party arrived at the junction of the Urari and Urtara rivers on January 19. Progress is slow owing to the extremely difficult physical conditions of the country. The personnel of the expedition numbers over fifty. We have good food and the relay transport is working efficiently. We are unable to use the hydroplane at present. The objects of the expedition have been attained. All well.”

Mr. Marcuse delivered the message to the Royal Geographical Society and received a reply which he will endeavour to transmit this morning to Dr. Hamilton Rice, congratulating the explorer on the great progress recorded.

MAJ-GEN. ISACKE

TO COMMAND INDEPENDENT BRIGADE AT DELHI

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

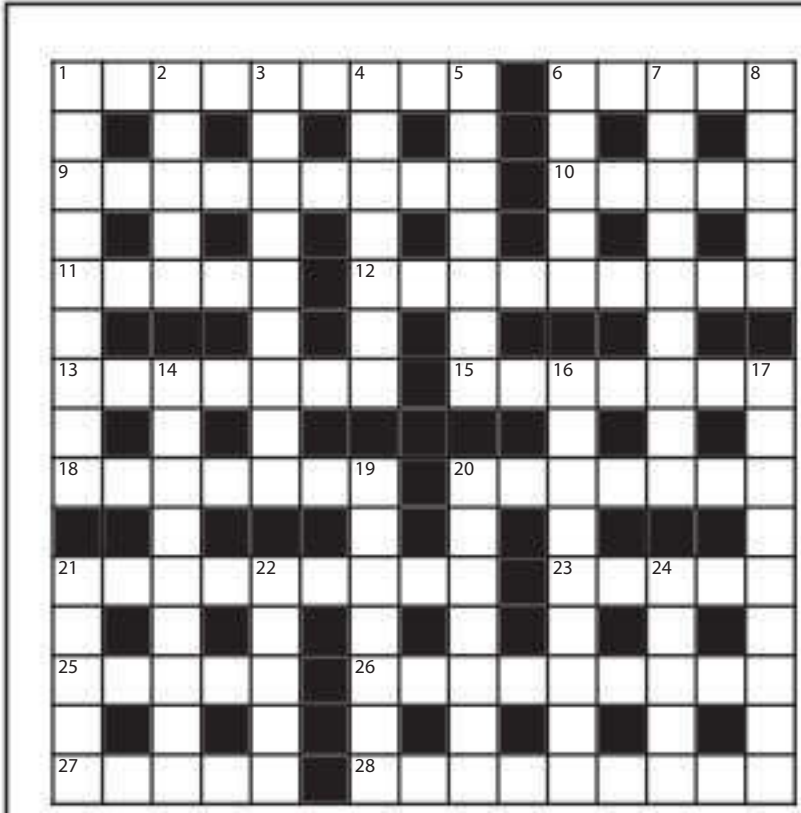
MAJOR-GENERAL Hubert Isacke, who has been selected to succeed Major-General J. H. K. Stewart, D.S.O., in command of the Delhi Independent Brigade Area, was born in 1872 and joined the Royal West Kent Regiment in 1892. He came to India and saw service with the Malakand Field force in 1897-8, being severely wounded in the expedition into the Mohmand country.

His next active service was in South Africa 1899-1902, where his distinguished services were rewarded with two mentions and a brevet majority. He held the appointment, previous to the Great War, of instructor at the Staff College, Quetta. This brought him a brevet Lieutenant-Colonelcy in November, 1913.

After the great War he returned from France to India to take up the duties of Director of Military Training. Thereafter he was appointed to the command of the Dehra Dun Brigade, which he vacated in April, 1923 on promotion to Major-General.

CROSSWORD

NO-293044



SATURDAY’S SOLUTION

B P B D O S M E
E T H E L G U M M C H E A P
R O O R N A A I
G O B B O E N I G M A T I C
I D S V B
F R A N C E S O R C H A R D
R O O L R
A C I T U M P T E E N L O O
U U N L T
D O R O T H Y G A R L A N D
N M A A S
J A C K F R O S T B E I N G
U O L U E A M A
D R A K E T O A D S T O O L
Y T W H U S V E

ACROSS

- Love tucking into awfully tall beer, ok? (9)
- Wee guy’s indignant reply to charge of greed in hearing? (5)
- Member a Green brought into party is a beast (9)
- I harshly criticise one of the big religions (5)
- You must follow Scottish girl in slow part of dance (5)
- Superhero spotted a dude in need of picking up (6-3)

- Tart will have sex covered in cream (7)
- Give up a prohibition mafia boss (7)
- Promise to keep a hold of extremely tense jumper (7)
- Bootlicker? Bend over with hands around heel of shoe! (7)
- Flexible secretary lawyer’s taken over desk (9)
- I love to chase old man close to nudist courtyard (5)
- Popular to tuck into tea here? (5)

- Plain green ties needing to be done up (9)
- I butt flipping soprano to get foreign capital (5)
- One nursing tot got a drunk to be an animal (5,4)
- Dance and drink? That could be a mistake! (5-2)
- I raced about with half-cut cads to see stimulating art (7)
- Hoskins must be hugged by model? Cool! (5)
- New model glad to get top award (4,5)
- Desire to grab yours truly in a really hot place (5)
- Work with Eurocentric leader helping campaign (9)
- Any bedpan having been upset is an objectionable thing (1,3,5)
- Junkie knight painter possibly keeps company (9)
- Old US singer wearing graduation clothes? (7)
- Revolutionary against Republican performing V-sign? (7)
- Some grandpas cottaging in a racy English town? (5)
- Lacerations and things they can create? (5)
- Those heading to army encampment: brigade on exercise? (3,2)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

Israeli forces begin to withdraw from a key Gaza corridor

Israel agreed as part of the truce to remove its forces from the 6-kilometre Netzarim corridor

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MUCHRAQA, 9 FEBRUARY

Israeli forces began withdrawing from a key Gaza corridor on Sunday, Israeli officials said, part of Israel's commitments under a tenuous ceasefire deal with Hamas that is moving ahead but faces a major test over whether the sides can negotiate its planned extension.

Israel agreed as part of the truce to remove its forces from the 4-mile (6-kilometre) Netzarim corridor, a strip of land that bisects northern Gaza from the south that Israel used as a military zone during the war.

At the start of the ceasefire last month, Israel began allowing Palestinians to cross Netzarim to head to their homes in the war-battered north, sending hundreds of thousands streaming across Gaza on foot

and by car. The withdrawal of forces from the area will fulfill another commitment to the deal, which paused the 15-month war.

However, the sides appear to have made little progress on negotiating the deal's second phase, which is meant to extend the truce and lead to the release of more Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was sending a delegation to Qatar, a key mediator in talks between the sides, but the mission included low-level officials, sparking speculation that it won't lead to a breakthrough in extending the truce. Netanyahu is also expected to convene a meeting of key Cabinet ministers this week on the second phase of the deal.

Separately on Sunday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said that a 23-year-old Pales-



tinian woman who was eight months pregnant was fatally shot by Israeli gunfire in the northern occupied West Bank, where Israeli troops have been carrying out a broad operation.

Since it began on 19 Jan, the ceasefire deal has faced repeated obstacles and disagreements between the sides, underscoring its fragility. But it has held, raising hopes that

the devastating war that led to seismic shifts in the Middle East may be headed toward an end.

On Sunday, cars heaped with belongings, including water tanks and suitcases, were seen heading north through a road that crosses Netzarim. Under the deal, Israel is supposed to allow the cars to cross through uninspected and there did not

appear to be troops in the vicinity of the road.

The Israeli officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss troop movement with the media, did not disclose how many soldiers were withdrawing. Troops currently remain along Gaza's borders with Israel and Egypt and a full withdrawal is expected to be negotiated in a later stage of the truce.

During the first 42-day phase of the ceasefire, Hamas is gradually releasing 33 Israeli hostages captured during its 7 Oct, 2023, attack in exchange for a pause in fighting, freedom for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and a flood of humanitarian aid to war-battered Gaza. The deal also stipulates that Israeli troops will pull back from populated areas of Gaza as well as the Netzarim corridor.

Released Thai hostages return to Bangkok after being held for over a year in Gaza

AGENCIES
BANGKOK, 9 FEBRUARY

Five Thai workers released after being held hostage for over a year in Gaza arrived in Bangkok on Sunday.

Sarusak Rumnao, 32, Watchara Sriano, 33, Sathian Suwannakham, 35, Pongsak Thaenna, 36, and Bannawat Saethao, 27, were freed on 30 January as part of an exchange arrangement.

They were embraced by family members, some of whom cried, in the arrivals hall at Suvarnabhumi airport. Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sagniampong and the Israeli Ambassador to Thailand Orna Sagiv were both at the airport to welcome home the freed hostages.

"We are all very grateful and very happy that we get to return to our homeland. We all would really like to thank you. I don't know what else to say," Pongsak told a news conference at the airport.

Maris said the Thai government "never gave up hope



and here is the result today. The tears of joy are our encouragement." He added that Bangkok would continue working to secure the release of the remaining Thai hostage.

The group quickly left the news conference to return to their hometowns in Thailand's northern and northeastern regions.

They were the second batch of Thai hostages released since the war broke out. During an earlier ceasefire in November 2023, 23 Thai nationals were released in a deal negotiated between Thailand and Hamas, with assistance from Qatar and Iran.

All five men were assessed at a hospital outside Tel Aviv prior to their return. Four of them were joined by one relative each earlier this week. The trip was sponsored by the Israeli government, according to the Thai Embassy in Tel Aviv.

Hamas militants kidnapped 31 Thai nationals during the Oct. 7, 2023, assault on southern Israel, making them the largest group of foreigners held captive. Many of the Thai agricultural workers lived in compounds on the outskirts of southern Israeli kibbutzim and towns, and Hamas militants overran those places first.

Kurds in new Syria want to preserve the cultural rights they gained in years of war

AGENCIES
QAMISHLI, 9 FEBRUARY

Kurds in Syria were marginalized during five decades of Assad family rule, with many denied citizenship and wrongly described as Arabs. Now they are seizing the chance during the post-Assad transition to keep the cultural gains they made in the northeast enclave they carved out during the country's civil war.

Mothers can now give children Kurdish names. The Kurdish language is taught in schools. The new year, Nowruz, can be celebrated openly. The Kurds, one of the world's largest populations without a state of their own,

have been feeling some control over their lives and want to make that permanent with a new government in power.

But that depends on Syria's new leaders, and the outcome of an ongoing conflict between the Kurds and Turkish-backed rebels that's been overshadowed by the dramatic shift from Assad rule. Two months of fighting have left scores dead on both sides. "We have made all these gains. There is no way we will abandon them, even over our bodies and the bodies of our children," said Amira Ali, a Kurdish woman from the northeastern city of Hassakeh whose husband is a member of the local police force known as,

"Asayish," the Kurdish term for security.

Shortly after the uprising against the Assad government began in 2011, the Kurds filled the vacuum created by the withdrawal of government forces from wide areas of Syria's northeast. The main Kurdish-led force now controls about 25 per cent of Syria. An autonomous authority runs day-to-day affairs of the region that many Kurds call "Rojava Kurdistan," or "western Kurdistan."

Now Kurdish leaders are negotiating with the new authorities in Damascus on the future of their people, who made up 10 per cent of the country's prewar population.

North Korea's Kim slams US-South Korea-Japan partnership & vows to boost his nuclear programme

AGENCIES
SEOUL, 9 FEBRUARY

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said an elevated U.S. security partnership with South Korea and Japan poses a grave threat to his country and vowed to further bolster his nuclear weapons program, state media reported Sunday.

Kim has previously made similar warnings, but his latest statement implies again that the North Korean leader won't likely embrace President Donald Trump's overture to meet him and revive diplomacy anytime soon.

In a speech marking the 77th founding anniversary of

the Korean People's Army on Saturday, Kim said the U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral security partnership established under a U.S. plot to form a NATO-like regional military bloc is inviting military imbalance on the Korean Peninsula and "raising a grave challenge to the security environment of our state," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

"Referring to a series of new plans for rapidly bolstering all deterrence including nuclear forces, he clarified once again the unshakable policy of more highly developing the nuclear forces," KCNA said.

Amid stalled diplomacy



with the U.S. and South Korea in recent years, Kim has focused on enlarging and modernising his arsenal of nuclear weapons. In response, the United States and South Korea have expanded their

bilateral military exercises and trilateral training involving Japan. North Korea has lashed out at those drills, calling them rehearsals to invade the country.

Since his 20 Jan inaugu-

ration, Trump has said he would reach out to Kim again as he boasted of his high-stakes summit with him during his first term.

During a joint news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Friday, Trump said that "We will have relations with North Korea, with Kim Jong Un. I got along with him very well, as you know. I think I stopped the war."

During a Fox News interview broadcast on 23 Jan, 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."

Trump says some white South Africans are oppressed and could be resettled in the USA; they say no thanks

AGENCIES
CAPE TOWN, 9 FEBRUARY

Groups representing some of South Africa's white minority responded Saturday to a plan by President Donald Trump to offer them refugee status and resettlement in the United States by saying: thanks, but no thanks.

The plan was detailed in an executive order Trump signed Friday that stopped all aid and financial assistance to South Africa as punishment for what the Trump administration said were "rights violations" by the government against some of its white citizens.

The Trump administration accused the South African government of allowing violent attacks on white Afrikaner farmers and introducing a land expropriation law that enables it to "seize ethnic minority Afrikaners' agricultural property without compensation."

The South African government has denied there are any concerted attacks on white farmers and has said that Trump's description of the new land law is full of misinformation and distortions.

Afrikaners are descended from mainly Dutch, but also French and German colonial



settlers who first arrived in South Africa more than 300 years ago. They speak Afrikaans, a language derived from Dutch that developed in South Africa, and are distinct from other white South Africans who come

from British or other backgrounds.

Together, whites make up around 7 per cent of South Africa's population of 62 million.

On Saturday, two of the

most prominent groups representing Afrikaners said they would not be taking up Trump's offer of resettlement in the U.S.

"Our members work here, and want to stay here, and they are going to stay here," said Dirk Hermann, chief executive of the Afrikaner trade union Solidarity, which says it represents around 2 million people. "We are committed to build a future here. We are not going anywhere."

At the same press conference, Kallie Kriel, the CEO of the Afrikaner lobby group AfriForum, said: "We have to state categorically: We don't want to move elsewhere."

Trump's AI ambition and China's DeepSeek overshadow an AI summit in Paris

AGENCIES
PARIS, 9 FEBRUARY

The geopolitics of artificial intelligence will be in focus at a major summit in France where world leaders, executives and experts will hammer out pledges on guiding the development of the rapidly advancing technology. It's the latest in a series of global dialogues around AI governance, but one that comes at a fresh inflection point as China's buzzy and budget-friendly DeepSeek chatbot shakes up the industry.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance — making his first



trip abroad since taking office — will attend the Paris AI Action Summit starting 10 Feb, while China's President Xi Jinping will be sending his special envoy, signaling high stakes for the meeting.

Heads of state and top government officials, tech bosses and researchers are gathering in Paris for the

two-day summit cohosted by French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The event aims to address how to harness artificial intelligence's potential so that it benefits everyone, while containing the technology's myriad risks.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is attending, along with officials and CEOs from 80 countries, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Microsoft President Brad Smith and Google CEO Sundar Pichai.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Is aware of (5)
4 Forbidden (6)
7 Items left behind (4,8)
8 Cheerful (5)
9 Compel compliance with (7)
11 Deep ditch (6)
13 Attractiveness (6)
16 Instance (7)
18 Fruit (5)
19 Seasonal weather (5,7)
20 Cure (6)
21 Female relatives (5)

DOWN
1 Unit of distance (9)
2 Watch (7)
3 Sentimental (Informal) (5)
4 Pub (Slang) (6)
5 Necessary (7)
6 Go into (5)
10 Mid-morning snack (9)
12 Whim (7)
14 Very many (Informal) (7)
15 Channel Island (6)
17 More than enough (5)
18 Hawaiian greeting (5)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD
ACROSS 12 Grave, 13 Stash, 16 Caraccio, 18 Behind, 19 Utopia, 8 Paella, 9 Grouse, 10 Getting by, 20 Cure, 21 Female relatives (5)
DOWN 1 Unit of distance (9), 2 Watch (7), 3 Sentimental (Informal) (5), 4 Pub (Slang) (6), 5 Necessary (7), 6 Go into (5), 10 Mid-morning snack (9), 12 Whim (7), 14 Very many (Informal) (7), 15 Channel Island (6), 17 More than enough (5), 18 Hawaiian greeting (5)

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEEBLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovalleski



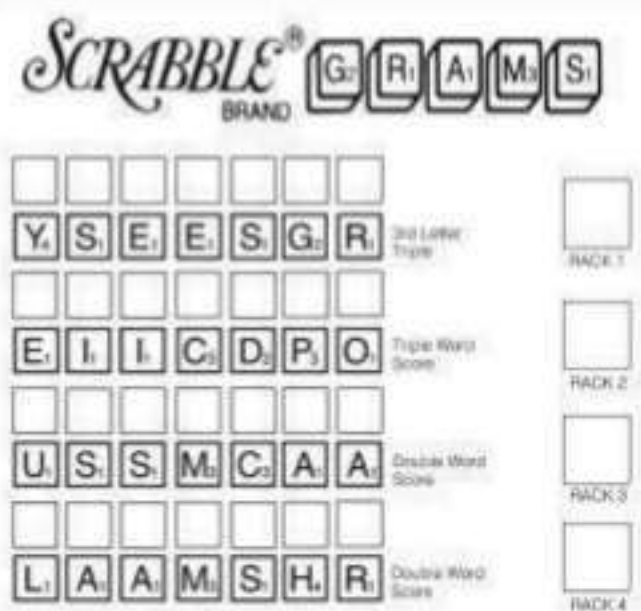
NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS
=AIMS 26588500, 26588900
=Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 420000447
=VidyaSagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
=Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
=Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
=Guru Tegh Bahadur 22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY
General Inquiry 139
=Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
=SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY
=ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
=Haryana Roadways 23861262
=Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

FLIGHT INQUIRY
=AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
=INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airport 011-25671580; Terminal 1-8 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
=JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 38841111
=EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377
=Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
=Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
=Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373



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SUDOKU



YAMBEM LABA

The cat is finally getting out of the bag. The clamour for the ouster of Manipur CM is no longer confined to the ranks of the 10 revolting Kuki MLAs and the Congress. It is now coming out in the open with BJP Legislators including Cabinet Ministers openly voicing their demand for it. It had been a hectic week in February. Firstly, the Union Home Minister summoned the Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly Thokchom Satyabrata Singh for a one-to-one talk. Normally it is unusual for the Union Home Minister wishing to speak to the speaker as he is in no way concerned with the question of Law and Order, which has been almost totally absent in the State for the past 21 months now. But Manipur is an unusual state where the Constitution has been shelved for nearly two years now and the Chief Minister had openly declared that the question of Law and Order in the hills areas of his State “now lies in the hands of Amit Shah ji” and that he is occupied with that question only in the valley or 10 per cent of the total area of the State.

What prompted the Shah-Satyabrata summit must have been the forthcoming Assembly session of the State scheduled from 10 February. Already sounding the war drums, in the form of a no-confidence motion to be tabled seeking the removal of CM Biren Singh, this was first announced by the Congress which then had only five MLAs, five short of the requisite number to set the motion rolling. Then came the announcement by Meghalaya Chief Minister and President of the National People’s Party (NPP) which had six MLAs and was supporting the Biren Singh led BJP Government that they were withdrawing support. Even though the formal split was announced, at least four NPP legislators continued to hobnob with CM Biren attending his conclaves and meetings. Then the Congress petitioned the Speaker to the effect that these four should be booked under the Anti-Defection Law under the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, resulting in the speaker announcing that the six NPP legislators would be seated in the opposition bench. This ensures the requisite number for the no-confidence motion. Prior to the NPP the Kuki Peoples’

Alliance with its two legislators withdrew support from the Biren Singh government. The other seven BJP legislators, including two Cabinet ministers, have fled Imphal since trouble erupted on 3 May 2023 and although Biren Singh has not dropped the two Kuki ministers from his Cabinet and they continue to hold office, enjoying the perks, they have led the chorus for Biren Singh’s ouster. They had also failed at attending the last Assembly sessions at Imphal citing personal safety and security concerns. This will mean that they may not be present physically as and when the vote of no confidence comes up on the floor of the House and by that account bypass the whip of the Party if and when issued. Amit Shah’s attempt was not to rub the Speaker on the wrong side when the crucial motion set into motion. Satyabrata returned home and hinted at a Ministerial reshuffle in Biren Singh’s Cabinet, something which the Chief Minister ought to have said himself.

Earlier in the beginning of the month a delegation of five Congress MLAs led by former Chief Minister Okram Ibobi had called on newly inducted Governor Ajay Bhalla and asked him to rein in CM Biren Singh who had earlier in a statement passed at the BJP HQs in Imphal had warned of dire consequences to anyone supporting the no-confidence motion against him. He had used his usual rhetoric this time to the extent that the legislators who stood against him would not be able to live in the houses as the people/stormtroopers would hound them out. Earlier Lourenbam Rameshwar, a BJP MLA and a known critic of Biren Singh had also issued a statement to the effect that “he too is an elected legislator representing a constituency like him and that mere physical threats will not be able to solve the present political crisis and administer the State”.

Biren Singh is known to have utilised the services of non-state actors to intimidate his adversaries and critics. One MLA had her house raked with gunfire to keep her quiet. This writer also had his house fired upon thrice for having first pointed out the role of his mistress being elected with the help of armed Kuki militants during the 2022 elections. The second was for having said that “Biren is not Manipur and Manipur is not Biren” and the choice before the people of the State was to either save Biren or

Manipur. The third was when about 30 militants belonging to the UNLFP (Pambei) faction which is under a ceasefire agreement with the Governments of India and Manipur, armed with machine guns stormed into the house and at gunpoint asked me to delete a post on social media in which I had asked as to whether two Meitei boys earlier abducted by the Kukis will be exchanged for 11 Kuki militants then lodged in the Imphal Jail. The exchange did take place two days hence but pointing it out in public was embarrassing for him though.

Also, the Speaker’s tribunal has begun hearing on the disqualification notice served on five legislators belonging to the Janata Dal (United) who jumped ship and joined the BJP/Biren bandwagon earlier in 2022. They were six MLAs elected on JD(U) ticket but unfortunately, one was left behind so it could not be deemed as a merger and hence came under the purview of the 10th Schedule of the Constitution. The Speaker is said to have concluded his hearing and is said to have kept the judgement in reserve to be announced on the eve of the Assembly session on 10 February and informed sources have indicated that they have been disqualified. The lone JD(U) MLA left was also seated in the opposition bench but after the JD(U) high command had issued a statement stating that the JD(U) is still a part of the Biren Singh coalition, it is still not known where he will be seated when the House meets on 10 February.

The drama took a high voltage turn when known Biren detractor and Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Yumnam Khemchand was asked to report in Delhi by HM Amit Shah on 4 February. The very next day CM Biren Singh also flew to Delhi in the afternoon. Then at around 7.30 pm, three more ministers and four MLAs followed him in a chartered flight all seeking an audience with Shah. There, in the capital, Amit Shah refused to meet any of them and instead deputed Sambit Patri MP and BJP’s Manipur in charge, Patra first met Biren Singh and then Khemchand and MLA Thokchom Radheshyam. Patra had apparently tried to convince the latter two to remain calm until the end of the February session stating that the “Centre has taken a decision to change the leadership after “. Both Khemchand and Radheshyam however listened and demanded immediate

change in the leadership leaving the meeting inconclusive.

The aim of the urgent summons was to prevent a collapse of the Government on the floor of the Assembly when the vote of no-confidence gets placed as there are apparently a large number of BJP MLAs apart from the seven Kuki BJP legislators who are hounding Biren’s blood. The grapevine has it that out of the total number of 32 BJP MLAs elected in the 2022 elections two-thirds of them are against Biren Singh and they are also ready to place a no-confidence motion against him in which case it would lead to an embarrassment of the BJP across the country.

Biren Singh has been a national embarrassment all through his second tenure as Chief Minister of Manipur. His shifting reasons behind the ongoing turmoil which has left more than 250 people dead, over 60,000 people rendered homeless and thousands of houses burnt to the ground. He had first blamed it on the Manipur High Courts’ directive to his government to send the report to the Centre on the question of granting scheduled tribe status to the Meiteis pending for the last 13 years to be the cause behind. Then he said it was the result of his war on drugs in which the poppy growers responded as narco-terrorists. Then he said that they were armed illegal immigrants backed by foreign powers out to protect the 900 illegal and unauthorised villages set up by them in the state. Then he said it was a result of the ethnic conflict between the Kukis and the Meiteis, in sync with the statement passed by HM Amit Shah to that effect.

Stripped of his position as the Chairman of the Unified Command the body, comprising the army, the paramilitary forces, and the state police overseeing the Law and Order situation in the State and replaced by a retired IPS officer, he pleaded his helplessness openly. He had publicly stated that even as the Chief Minister, the State and Central intelligence agencies in the State have not been providing any inputs to him for the last 15 months. He then nudged some of his pet civil society organisations to put pressure on the Governor to have the Chairmanship of the Unified Command restored to him. Then he made a public apology to the public seeking forgiveness for his inability to

save the situation.

On the war front, the action has shifted from the foothills of the Manipur valley to the Indo-Myanmar border front. There in the Kabaw valley of the Sagaing Division of Myanmar bordering Kamjong District of Manipur, a six-day-long battle had raged from 25 January last month. Pitted on one side was a combined force of the various Manipuri insurgent groups and against them was the Kuki National Army (Burma) or KNA(B) backed by the People’s Defence Force (PDF) fighting against the Myanmar Military Junta. The Myanmar government had apparently used air strikes against the PDF-KNA(B) combined force but the ground battle was carried out by the Manipuri forces. Some 30 KN(B) cadres were killed and the Manipuri side lost four cadres. One Captain and a private of the UNLFP (Koireng) group, one cadre belonging to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and one belonging to the Kanglei Yaowol Kanna Lup (KYKL) were killed in action and publicly mourned in the State with proxy funerals using ‘Pangon’ wood to substitute the body. Many of the slain Kukis were left strewn around and the stench became unbearable in the vicinity; the Manipuri insurgents cremated them in a mass funeral pyre. But what takes the cake is the fact that following their failure to meet HM Amit Shah, CM Biren Singh, accompanied by the rest of the Ministers and MLAs returned to Imphal but not before taking a dip at Prayagraj in the Maha Kumbh Mela there in Allahabad. It is not known whether they took the dip at the Triveni asking for forgiveness from the Gods for atonement of their sins committed or were seeking a divine intervention to save their positions or not. However a dip in the Holy Ganga or not, time is running out fast for CM Biren Singh, the man who will go on record for having administered the Indian State of Manipur under the Constitution of India with the help of Non-State actors. A Banana Republic almost.



Rider through the world

NAVA THAKURIA

She is brave, tough, and energetic—one can describe Meenakshi Das, an Assamese bike rider, like this when one listens to her stories of solo adventurous journey across 64 countries. The 41-year-old mother of a high school-going daughter went with the mission to create a world record, and Meenakshi has done it. She now becomes the first solo two-wheeler rider to travel through all these countries almost within a year. Carrying the national flag and Asomiya Gamocha with her, the fitness trainer by profession roamed around various Asian, Arabian and European localities, canvassing her mission to empower women through adventure sports and tourism.

Addressing a small gathering in Guwahati recently, the passionate biker revealed a number of emotional stories involving unknown individuals who supported her during the expedition, revealing the everlasting humanity. Meenakshi observed that many people on the globe, while chasing their materialistic dreams, were left in loneliness.



She could encounter many personalities and sense a feeling of deep pain among them. Naively, she emerged as somebody’s daughter, sister, friend and a ray of hope for the women; aspiring freedom from diktats imposed by the society and authorities. She strongly believes that humanity is still alive.

Meenakshi fondly remembers the support extended by Indian diplomats, non-resident Indians (Assamese), and many foreign nationals irrespective of their nationalities and religious faiths. In reality, she completed her mission with no official sponsorship from the government, but the patronage extended by kindhearted individuals during her 371 days of rigorous venture helped her. Some countries she could not enter due to visa problems and internal conflicts that surfaced there, but Meenakshi wants to make it happen. She even nurtures the dream of riding the entire American continent, adding she wants to travel wherever there is a landmass.

Her landmark journey started from her home city of Guwahati on 17 December 2023. Riding a 400 cc motorcycle with no modification to her bike, she covered Nepal before arriving in Mumbai, from where she flew to Dubai to march forward with the mission. Till her solo return journey culminated on 22 December 2024, Meenakshi covered around 68,000 kilometres. It was a poignant moment when she arrived back to her tiny family with a supportive husband taking care of their 14-year-old daughter and an ailing mother.

As a precaution, I avoided riding in night hours and usually travelled 10 hours a day, covering nearly 500 km. She took a proper diet and started the day with a warm-up in the morning hours to keep her fit. Even faced with physical problems because of her age, Meenakshi did not bow down, and hence she could overcome many other problems like extreme weather (rain, snow, sandstorms), mechanical problems in her bike, and even a road accident in Armenia on the way to Georgia. Her cell phone was not augmented

with any translation app, and sometimes she had to manage body language with admirers (who could not understand English or Hindi/Assamese).

Meenakshi faced visa problems due to political turmoil and restricted guidelines in Ukraine, Belarus, Syria, Lebanon, Oman, Iraq, Tibet and Myanmar. But she managed to enter and explore the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Italy, the Netherlands, France, England, Norway, Portugal, Kazakhstan, Russia, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, etc.

Recently Meenakshi was felicitated by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha’s Kharghuli Shakha of Guwahati Mahanagar at a small function, where she divulged about her meeting with Hindu Swayamsevak in London, who extended help during her stay in the UK. She was also supported by the RSS volunteers in Maharashtra. Meenakshi visited Nagpur and stayed in a hostel, specially run for the girls of northeast India, where she came to know about various welfare activities of the RSS. Admitting that she had little idea about the socio-cultural organisation promoting Hindu nationalism in India and influencing millions of Indians living inside and outside the country, she now possesses a high regard for RSS Karyakartas.

Meenakshi used to document her adventurous journey through video blogs, which are appreciated by hundreds of thousands of viewers around the world. She opined that a biking culture had grown in India lately, which should be welcomed. But at the same time, she warned that the making of stunts and racing by the youngsters on the busy roads cannot be appreciated, as their actions may distract as well as annoy others. She proposed specially designed tracks for that kind of biking activity. Soon to be included in the Limca Book of Records – an annual reference book aged had grown in India lately, which should be welcomed. But at the same time, she warned that the making of stunts and racing by the youngsters on the busy roads cannot be appreciated, as their actions may distract as well as annoy others. She proposed specially designed tracks for that kind of biking activity. 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‘IT WAS A GREAT FEELING’
Former West Indies opener and T20 World Cup winner Lendl Simmons expressed his excitement about opening the innings alongside Shikhar Dhawan for Delhi Royals in the Legend 90 League. "It was a great feeling opening with Shikhar Dhawan. He's a top-quality player, and we complemented each other well at the crease. This Legend 90 League is a fantastic platform to relive competitive cricket, and it's even better to have secured a win for Delhi Royals," Simmons was quoted in a release from Legend 90 League.

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THUMBNAILS

Wolves brush past Blackburn Rovers with 2-0 victory: Wolverhampton Wanderers delivered a commanding performance to progress to the fifth round of the Emirates FA Cup, defeating Blackburn Rovers 2-0 at Ewood Park on Sunday. Two quick-fire goals just before halftime sealed the win, with Joao Gomes and Matheus Cunha both finding the net in under two minutes. The visitors began the match brightly, with Cunha having the best chances in the opening stages. He forced Blackburn keeper Balazs Toth into two good saves within the first five minutes. However, it was Blackburn who started to assert themselves, with Augustus Kargbo firing just over the bar and Dominic Hyam having a goal ruled out for offside.

Kolkata beat Chennai by 9 wickets in ISPL Season 2: Tigers of Kolkata dominated with both bat and ball to overpower Chennai Singams by a massive margin of nine wickets in an Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) clash at the Dadoji Kondadev Stadium here on Saturday. Chasing a target of 66 runs, the Tigers broke little sweat as they recovered from the early dismissal of opener Sarfraz Khan to chase down the required runs with four overs to spare. Opener and skipper Thomas Dias led from the front, by top-scoring with a hurricane innings of 30 runs off 16 balls while Fardeen Kazi scored an undefeated 23 off 15.

2nd ODI: Rohit's ton helps India beat England by four wickets

Rohit's 32nd ODI century and Gill's 60 help India chase down 305 with 33 balls remaining and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series

AGENCIES
CUTTACK, 9 FEBRUARY

Captain Rohit Sharma broke a long lean run with the bat by hitting a sparkling 119 and guided India to a four-wicket win over England in the second ODI at the Barabati Stadium on Sunday.

Rohit's masterly 32nd ODI century, laced with 12 fours and seven sixes, along with Shubman Gill's 60 and handy knocks from Shreyas Iyer (44) and Axar Patel (41 not out) helped India chase down 305 with 33 balls remaining and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.



But seeing a rampaging Rohit getting back to his best self with the bat must have brought in tons of relief to him and many important personnel in Indian cricket. It was a knock where Rohit was in his usual flow with the bat – the free-flowing shots, good use of wrists and impeccable timing – all combining to give the fans' their money's worth.

Chasing 305, Rohit got going by getting a thick edge flying over backward point for four off Gus Atkinson in the second over. From there, Rohit's innings took a sublime turn – flicking Atkinson off

his wrists for six and carving Saqib Mahmood for a maximum.

From the other end, Shubman Gill was pristine – playing his trademark short-arm jab and flick over the in-field to collect two boundaries. Rohit used his hands well to hoist Mahmood over long-off for six, before Gill got one to fly over outside edge for a boundary.

to get his fifty in just 30 balls.

After the power-play ended, Gill slog-swept Rashid for six, before short-arm jabbing and pulling Mark Wood four boundaries. When Rashid was back, Gill kept finding extra cover fence twice for boundaries before getting a splendid 15th ODI fifty. With Rohit dispatching Gus Atkinson for four and six respectively, followed by Gill pulling and glancing Jamie Overton for boundaries, the chase was already looking like a one-way traffic for India. But Overton bounced back by getting rid of Gill by executing an off-stump yorker to perfection, thus ending the 136-run opening partnership. Rashid joined the wicket-taker's party by getting a ball to turn away at the last moment and caught the feather edge of Virat Kohli's bat, which was detected by UltraEdge on review, leading to the batter being dismissed for five. After Shreyas Iyer got off the mark against Overton, Rohit swept Rashid for four and dispatched Overton for six, before getting his century by dancing down the pitch to hit the leg-spinner over mid-off for a six and bring up his 32nd ODI century in a nonchalant style. Rohit didn't slow down after reaching his

WPL 2025: Deepti to lead UP Warriorz



AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

India's off-spin all-rounder Deepti Sharma has been named as new captain of the UP Warriorz ahead of the 2025 season of the Women's Premier League (WPL), starting from February 14.

Deepti, 27, will be taking over the captaincy duties from Australia skipper Alyssa Healy, who was ruled out of WPL 2025 due to a recurring foot injury. Under Alyssa's captaincy, UP Warriorz finished third in WPL 2023, before making a league stage exit in the 2024 edition.

The Warriorz signed Deepti for Rs 2.6 crore during the inaugural auction. In the 2023 season, she went on to take nine wickets while scoring 90 runs with the bat. In WPL 2024, she amassed 295 runs, making her the fifth-highest

run-getter in the competition, while taking 10 wickets, including a hat-trick against Delhi Capitals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

It also made Deepti the first Indian bowler to take a hat-trick in WPL history. Deepti was recently named in ICC's 2024 Women's T20I Team of the Year, alongside India teammates Smriti Mandhana and Richa Ghosh, who will be turning out for defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru in WPL 2025.

Deepti has been India's vice-captain in the past and has taken up the leadership mantle at the domestic level. She also captained Velocity to a runners-up finish in the fourth and final season of the Women's T20 Challenge in 2022. But captaining UP Warriorz in WPL 2025 is arguably her biggest challenge as a captain.

ICC Chairman Jay Shah congratulates Karunaratne for outstanding career



AGENCIES
DUBAI, 9 FEBRUARY

International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman Jay Shah congratulated Dimuth Karunaratne for an outstanding international career and wished him all success in the years to come.

The 36-year-old, who came to be known as a Test specialist in an era of proliferating limited-overs games, retired from international cricket after the second match of their ICC World Test Championship series against Australia in Galle, the same ground on which he made his Test debut in 2012. He went on to play 100 Test matches for the island nation.

"Dimuth has had a very fine career during which he excelled as a batter in the most traditional format of the game, becoming only the seventh from his country to feature in 100 Tests," Jay Shah said in a statement.

"His commitment has been second to none and he has been a great ambassador of the game. I am sure fans of Test cricket the world over will miss him. On behalf of

Karunaratne, a solid left-hander, made his international debut against England in an ODI at Manchester in 2011. He aggregated 7,222 runs with 16 centuries in Test cricket and 1,316 runs in 50 ODIs with one century.

the ICC, I would like to congratulate him for an outstanding career and wish him all the best for the future. I hope he continues to contribute to the game in the years to come, using his experience of playing in different countries."

Karunaratne, a solid left-hander, made his international debut against England in an ODI at Manchester in 2011. He aggregated 7,222 runs with 16 centuries in Test cricket and 1,316 runs in 50 ODIs with one century.

All his 16 centuries came as opener, a record for most centuries by a Sri Lankan opener that he holds jointly with former captain Marvan Atapattu.

Sindhu to miss Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships due to hamstring injury

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 9 FEBRUARY

Two-time Olympic medallist shuttler PV Sindhu will not be part of India's squad for the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships (BAMTC) to be played in Qingdao, China, from February 11-16. Sindhu revealed that she sustained a hamstring injury that will take longer to recover than expected.

"It is with a heavy heart that I share I won't be traveling with the team for BAMTC 2025. While training on the 4th in Guwahati, I felt a twinge in my hamstring. Despite my efforts to push through with heavy taping for our country, an MRI has revealed that my recovery will take slightly longer than I initially expected," Sindhu wrote on X.

"Wishing the team all the very best. I will be cheering from the sidelines," she added.

India secured a bronze medal in the previous edition of the BAMTC, with Sindhu playing a key role in the squad. She was expected to lead the



women's singles charge once again this year.

However, ahead of the India Open, Sindhu had emphasised that one of her main goals for the year was to remain injury-free.

With Sindhu unavailable, the responsibility for women's singles is likely to fall on Malvika Bansod, currently India's No. 2 in the world rankings. It remains uncertain whether a replacement will be named for Sindhu.

India have been placed in Group D of BAMTC, alongside 2023 runners-up South Korea

and Macau. The team will begin their campaign against Macau on February 12, followed by a crucial encounter against South Korea on February 13 at the Conson Gymnasium in Qingdao, China.

India squad
Men: Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Dhruv Kapila, MR Arjun, Satish Kumar K.
Women: PV Sindhu (ruled out due to injury), Malvika Bansod, Gayatri Gopichand, Treasa Jolly, Ashwini Ponnappa, Tanisha Crasto, Adya Varriyath.

Mbappe scores equaliser for Real Madrid in Atletico draw

AGENCIES
MADRID, 9 FEBRUARY

Real Madrid drew against Atletico Madrid in the derby played at the Santiago Bernabeu and remain top of La Liga table. The visitors took the lead in the first half after a penalty reviewed by the VAR and converted by Julian Alvarez, but Mbappe made it 1-1 at the start of the second half. Real had numerous chances to win but was thwarted by an inspired Oblak in the Atletico goal and the scoreboard didn't change.

Real started building patient passages of play, reaching the opponent's area. However, it was Atletico who fired the first warning with Lino's 14th-minute deflected shot from outside the area. Hosts responded immediately with a long-range shot from Rodrygo that went over. In the 18th minute, it was the turn of Vini Jr. from the edge of the area, but his strong left-footed shot

did not find the target. After the half-hour mark, De Burgos Bengoetxea alerted Soto Grado via the VAR to review an action in the area by Tchouameni on Lino. After seeing it on the monitor, the referee signaled for a penalty and Julian Alvarez made it 0-1 (34').

After the break, Real started very strongly and in the 50th minute made it 1-1. Rodrygo made a strong run to the byline, cutting back for Bellingham to shoot. Gimenez blocked the shot but it dropped to Mbappe, who controlled the ball right-footed inside the left post for his 23rd goal this season.

Two minutes later he nearly added a second following a great move by Vini Jr. down the left flank. The Brazilian's cross was headed by Bellingham, who crashed the ball against the crossbar. Ancelotti's team were enjoying their best spell, again coming close to making it 2-1 with a carbon copy of the previous move.

FIH Hockey Pro League: Netherlands come back from 3 goals down to snatch shootout victory

AGENCIES
LAUSANNE, 9 FEBRUARY

The curtain came down on the Sydney leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League with two high-quality matches, but there was disappointment for the passionate home fans. In the men's tournament, it was reigning Olympic gold medalists the Netherlands who got the better of current champions Australia, coming from three goals down to draw 4-4 before clinching a bonus point with a 3-1 shootout. The opening quarter felt like a full 60 minutes of hockey with high-paced play ranging from end to end. There were a couple of early chances for both sides before Derck de Vilder put the Dutch ahead in the 7th minute.

The second quarter started much like the first, but things tightened in the middle of the period. Jeremy Hayward equalised for the Kookaburras with a 27th-minute drag flick, and Benjamin White scored



his first international goal for Australia from a recycled penalty corner to take the hosts into half time with a 2-1 lead.

Both Australian goal scorers repeated their success in the third quarter. Hayward adding a 32nd-minute drag and White grabbing a field goal in the 36th. That saw the Kookaburras carrying a 4-1 lead and tremendous momentum through to the final period.

The Netherlands were in

deep trouble, but they stepped up to deliver a thrilling finish. Pepijn van der Heijden started the fightback with a 47th-minute drag flick. The Dutch then put the Aussie goal under siege, shaving the post before Miles Bukkens scored from a recycled penalty corner in the 50th. A great save from Jed Snowden kept the Kookaburras ahead with just six minutes remaining, but the Dutch were at full steam and equalised with a 57th-minute Van der

Heijden drag. Snowden made another excellent save in the final minute to take the match to a shootout, but Australia fell short for the second consecutive day. The Dutchmen leave Sydney with a slender lead at the top of a congested men's table.

The player of the match was awarded to Pepijn van der Heijden who said, "It was a tough game. I mean, we started good. Then when it went a little bit south we didn't

do our own thing, we started to doubt a little bit. I think after the third quarter, in the fourth quarter we played really good."

In the final women's match Olympic silver medallists China got the better of Australia with a convincing 3-1 win to extend their clear lead at the top of the table. Australia held the ascendancy throughout the opening quarter, creating some really good chances without success. It was then China who snatched the lead in the dying seconds as Yu Anhui knocked a floating ball out of the air on the right post.

The Chinese doubled their lead in the 17th minute with a penalty corner deflection by Hao Quoting from outside the right post. Li Hong added a third with a clever penalty corner variation to the second castle, working the ball back across the top of the circle to the injector for an easy finish. Penny Squibb pulled one back

for the Hockeyroos with a drag flick a minute later and China led 3-1 at the break.

The Chinese earned a couple of penalty corners in a dominant third quarter, but Aleisha Power did great work in the Hockeyroos' goal to keep her team in contention. Australia threatened more towards the end of the quarter, but the famous Chinese defensive structure was rock solid.

There was some possession for the Australians in the early stages of the final period, but they struggled to create genuine attacking chances against a tight Chinese unit. China assumed more and more control as the clock ran down, and they leave Sydney well clear at the top of the log.

Liu Chencheng was named China's player of the match and said, "We did thorough analysis of the game, we prepared very well, so in the end we stayed calm, so we held the ball and took care of the ball until the end."

