

TOP NEWS OF J&K



JAMMU, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2025

Daily Evening Newspaper



ENTERTAINMENT | 6

NATIONAL | 7

INTERNATIONAL | 8

Meenakshi Chaudhary on the need for individuality to survive in the industry



Nothing wrong with interfaith marriages, but alliances through fraud need to be stopped: Fadnavis

Zelenskyy calls for creation of European Army at Munich Security Conference

e-paper: www.topnewsjk.in

RNI No. JKENG/2010/39369

Regd. No. JK-435

Vol.-16 Issue-46 Pages-12 Rs.-2/-

BRIEFLY

Stampede at New Delhi Station: J-K LG, CM condole loss of lives

JAMMU, Feb 16 (Agencies): Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday condoled the death of 18 people in a stampede at New Delhi Railway station.

The stampede on Saturday night was preceded by a swell in crowd of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj — where the Maha Kumbh is underway — on platform number 14 and 15 of the station. "Deeply saddened by the loss of lives in the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. Praying for the early recovery of the injured," the Lt Governor said in a post shared by his office on X.

In a separate post by the office of chief minister, Abdullah said "I am deeply saddened by the tragic stampede that occurred at New Delhi Railway Station today, resulting in the loss of at-least 18 lives and leaving many others injured.

"My deepest condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. Praying for early recovery of the injured," he said.

Man killed as car crashes with truck on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway

JAMMU, Feb 16 (Agencies): A man on Sunday died on the spot when his car crashed with a truck on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway near Chenani in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Police said that a man died after car crashed with truck on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

"The body was taken to the Government Medical College, Udhampur, for post-mortem," said police.

The deceased was identified as Ashkooor, 27, son of Raj Ali, resident of Samroli, Udhampur.

Police said that a case has been registered, and investigation is underway.

18 Dead, Over Dozen injured, in stampede at New Delhi Railway Station



NEW DELHI, Feb 16 (Agencies): The death toll in a stampede overnight at the New Delhi Railway Station rose to 18, officials said on Sunday, as the city police launched an investigation into the incident, saying they will be scanning the CCTV footage from the spot to know what transpired before the chaos erupted.

More than a dozen also injured in the stampede

that broke out late Saturday night at the railway station, officials said.

The stampede was preceded by a swell in crowd of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj — where the Maha Kumbh is underway — on platform number 14 and 15 of the station.

Acting Delhi Chief Minister Atishi earlier told reporters that 15 people had been brought dead at the Lok Nayak Jai

Prakash Hospital of central Delhi.

There were 14 women among the deceased. Five of the total casualties were minors — two of them below 10.

Almost 15 people are injured and they are undergoing treatment, Atishi said.

According to official sources, wrong announcement about change of platforms may have created a confusion that led to the

stampede.

Heavy police deployment has been ordered outside LNJP Hospital.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a post on X grieved the deaths.

"Distressed by the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station. My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured have a speedy recovery. The authorities are assisting all those who have been affected by this stampede," he said.

Eyewitnesses said a huge rush at the station led to the stampede with several fainting because of suffocation.

In an official statement, the deputy commissioner of police (railway) said platform number 14 was already very crowded when the Prayagraj Express train was waiting there for its departure.

The officer

■ Turn to page 9

US Plane lands in Amritsar: One deportee claims they were shackled; Two arrested for murder

CHANDIGARH, Feb 16 (Agencies): A US military aircraft carrying 116 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Amritsar International Airport late Saturday night, with one deportee claiming they were handcuffed with their legs chained during the journey.

The C-17 aircraft, which landed at the airport around 11.35 pm on Saturday, was the second batch of Indians to be deported by the Donald Trump administration as part of its crackdown on illegal immigrants after February 5.

A third plane carrying 157 deportees is expected to land on Sunday, sources said.

After immigration and background check, the deportees hailing from Punjab were taken to their homes in police vehicles at around 4.30 am on Sunday. The Haryana government



also made transportation arrangements for the deportees from the state.

However, two youths from Rajpura in Patiala district, who were among the deportees, were arrested by the police in connection with a murder case upon their landing in Amritsar.

They accused — Sandeep Singh alias Sunny and Pradeep Singh — were wanted in a murder case registered in Rajpura in 2023.

Many from the first batch of illegal immi-

grants who landed here on February 5, most of them from Punjab, had said they wanted to migrate to the US for a better life for their families, but were duped by their agents.

Their dreams were shattered when they were caught on the US border and sent back in shackles.

Among the fresh batch of deportees from Punjab, many shared their ordeal with the media on Sunday after they reached their

■ Turn to page 9

Inauguration of Vande Bharat Train service to Kashmir Valley postponed

JAMMU, Feb 16 (Agencies): The inauguration of Vande Bharat train service to Kashmir Valley has been postponed, officials said on Sunday.

Earlier reports, which the officials said were unconfirmed, had said that the Vande Bharat train service between Udhampur, Srinagar and Baramulla would be inaugurated on February 17 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The authorities have not given any official date for the inauguration of the train service while announcing the postponement.

The ambitious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) is the



most challenging railway project ever built by the Indian railways.

It is also one of the world's most challenging railway projects technologically. It is a gigantic infrastructure project built by the Indian railways.

The project includes the country's first cable-stayed Anji Khad Bridge

with a 331-metre-high pylon.

The world's tallest railway bridge, taller than the Eiffel Tower of Paris, the Chenab Railway Bridge is 359 metres above the river bed. There are over a dozen tunnels on the railway route between Udhampur and Srinagar.

■ Turn to page 9

Gulmarg's iconic Gondola ride: A must-experience attraction for tourists



SRINAGAR, Feb 16 (Agencies): Gulmarg, a picturesque destination in Jammu and Kashmir, has become a hotspot for adventure seekers and nature lovers. Among its many attrac-

tions, the Gondola ride stands out as a unique experience that offers breathtaking views of snow-capped mountains and lush green meadows.

Surrounded by the

scenic beauty of the snow-capped mountains and lush green meadows builds up the anticipation.

The Gondola ride, known for its modern design and efficiency, has become a central attraction for tourists visiting Gulmarg. As visitors arrive at the base station, their excitement is palpable. The ride is a soothing journey providing a closer view of nature's beauty.

Tourists from across the country are

■ Turn to page 9

GupShup

RESTAURANT

Where Hunger Meets Happiness

is now OPEN!

Nestled in the heart of nature, Gupshup restaurant offers a dining experience that's both comforting and refreshing.

Visit us at:
Ban Bantalab, Old Nagrota Highway, Jammu (J&K)
+91-9086207123 | +91-9086072548

ORDER NOW

Dogra Samaj Trust Delhi, JNU students host Duggar Malati Cultural Programme

Top News Report

JAMMU /NEW DELHI, Feb 16: Dogra Samaj Trust Delhi, in association with the students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), organized an exceptional cultural programme- Duggar Malati, showcasing the vibrant heritage of the Dogra community. The event, which brought together people from diverse backgrounds, featured a distinguished chief guest, Dr. Karan Singh, ex-minister and ex-chancellor of JNU who commenced the ceremony with the lighting of a lamp, accompanied by traditional mantras. This programme was organised on 15 February at Convention Centre, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Dr. Karan Singh's speech was a tribute to the heroic Dogra warriors who selflessly fought for the nation and extended the country's boundaries. He also praised Mr. Jitender Singh Jamwal and Mahesh Baru Trustees of the Dogra Samaj Trust, for their relentless



less efforts and outstanding organizational skills.

The trustee of the Dogra Samaj Trust Delhi, Jitendra Singh Jamwal, mentioned that the Chairman of Team Jammu, Zorawar Singh Jamwal, played a crucial role in making the event successful. The trust is deeply grateful to him.

The cultural segment of the event was a vibrant display of Dogra folk music and dance. Renowned Dogri folk singer Shri Subash Brahamanu and group from Ramnagar, Jammu, began the performances with a heartfelt Bhaakh titled "Sadde Hari Singh raja ji," followed by a romantic Geetaddu.

He later presented the lively song "Chalage Jammu Bazar," before finishing with a specially composed Geetaddu in praise of the Dogra Samaj Trust Delhi and Jnu students.

In addition to the soulful music, a breathtaking dance performance was presented by Natya Roots Production, under the dance direction of Akash Dogra, a celebrated artist from Jammu. The troupe performed a series of iconic Dogri dances, starting with "Dogren Di Kuddi," followed by "Taren Tuddan Peiyaan," "Kala Kala Kot," and concluded with the traditional and powerful dance "Jaagarnaa."

Two young artists from Jammu, Mahira Tandon and Amaira Gupta, were given a platform by Jitender Singh Jamwal to showcase their talent. They presented beautiful dances titled "Bolai Dogri Kuddi" and "Choodda Kun Kaddeya," respectively. Mohit Garg also performed a melodious Himachali song, adding to the rich cultural atmosphere.

Jitender Singh Jamwal, the Trustee of the Dogra Samaj Trust and a world-renowned Ghazal and Dogri singer, delighted the audience with a series of Dogri folk songs. He began with "Dogre O Dogri Da Maan Rakheo," followed by the rare traditional Dogri folk song "Binna Lai Jogia." On popular demand, he shifted the mood with an energetic dance number, "Billu," and concluded with the crowd-pleasing "Mithhadi Ai Dogren Di Boli." The program culminated with the felicitation of several distinguished personalities, including Dr. Rajender

Dhar (District Judge, Consumer Court Delhi), Col. Ranveer Jamwal (Celebrity Mountaineer and Record Holder for scaling the world's top peaks), Randhir Kotwal (Senior Manager, Jammu & Kashmir Bank), Dr. S.S. Dogra (Noted Author and Senior Journalist), and others.

All the performers were also honoured with mementos, ang-vastras and flowers, acknowledging their contribution to the event. Jitender Singh Jamwal delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks, recognizing all those involved in making the event a success.

The event was anchored by JNU students Stuti and Abhishek, whose excellent hosting skills added to the program's charm. Guests were treated to traditional Dogra delicacies such as Kaladi-Kulcha, Kachalu, Patisa, Rajma Chole, Meethe Chawal, Ambal, Anardana Chutney, and tea, all of which added to the community spirit and warmth of the celebration.

Sat, Zorawar inaugurate Mahaveer Fitness Jammu's Premier Gym



Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: BJP President, J&K, Sat Sharma, and Chairman, Team Jammu, Zorawar Singh Jamwal, today inaugurated Mahaveer Fitness - Jammu's Premier Gym at Rajpura Mangotrian, Jammu. The newly launched fitness facility aims to provide state-of-the-art equipment and professional training to fitness enthusiasts, fostering a culture of health and wellness among the youth.

Speaking at the event, Sat Sharma emphasized the importance of fitness in daily life, stating, "A healthy body leads to a healthy mind. With increasing lifestyle-related health concerns, it is crucial for our youth to adopt a disciplined fitness routine. Initiatives like Mahaveer Fitness will play a significant role in encouraging young individuals to stay fit, focused, and away from negative influences such as drug abuse." He congratulated the gym's management and expressed confidence that the facility would contribute positively to the community's well-being.

Zorawar Singh Jamwal, in his address, reinforced the need for physical fitness as a tool for social transformation. He stated, "Fitness is not just about building muscles; it is about building character and resilience. I urge the youth to say 'No to Drugs. Yes to Fitness.' A strong and healthy youth is the backbone of a strong nation, and it is our collective responsibility to guide them toward a better future." He reiterated Team

Jammu's commitment to empowering the youth and fighting drug abuse through positive engagements like sports and fitness activities.

Proprietor Krishan Verma expressed his gratitude to the esteemed guests and all those who contributed to the successful launch of Mahaveer Fitness. He stated, "I am truly thankful to Sat Sharma Ji and Zorawar Singh Jamwal Ji for their presence and encouragement. Our vision is to provide the best fitness infrastructure in Jammu, motivating people of all age groups to embrace a healthier lifestyle. We are committed to making Mahaveer Fitness a hub for fitness enthusiasts and a symbol of positivity in our community."

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from fitness enthusiasts, gym trainers, and prominent members of society. The launch of Mahaveer Fitness marks a step forward in providing modern and well-equipped fitness solutions to the people of Jammu, reinforcing the message of health, discipline, and self-improvement.

MLA Yudhvir Sethi, JMC Commissioner inspect ongoing development works in East Constituency

Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: BJP leader and MLA East Constituency, Yudhvir Sethi along with Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Commissioner Devansh Yadav today conducted an extensive tour to inspect the ongoing development works in the Constituency.



During the visit, the BJP leader and the JMC Commissioner inspected key locations, including Dewana Mandir, Parade Khokha Market, and the under-construction multi-storey parking facility with shops at Parade. The tour aimed at assessing the progress of these

development projects and ensuring their timely completion for the benefit of the public.

Sethi emphasized the urgent need for the renovation of the historic Akhara, highlighting its cultural and religious significance. He directed officials to expedite the restoration

work and ensure that it is done with precision and quality.

Laying stress on the vision of making the East Constituency a model constituency, Sethi underscored the importance of incorporating modern amenities to enhance the standard of living for residents. He


reiterated that the BJP-led government is committed to holistic urban development, ensuring better roads, sanitation, drainage, and parking facilities for the people.

"The East Constituency must set an example of planned urban development with improved civic infrastructure. Our focus is on creating a constituency that is not only modern but also retains its historical and cultural essence," he asserted.

The JMC Commissioner, Devansh Yadav, assured full support in executing the required developmental works, including upgrading roads, drainage, sanita-

tion, and the renovation of heritage sites. He stated that the JMC is committed to providing all necessary assistance to make the constituency more livable and well-equipped with essential facilities.

Residents and local shopkeepers expressed their appreciation for the efforts of Yudhvir Sethi and the JMC administration in addressing civic issues and accelerating developmental projects. The tour concluded with an assurance from both leaders that all necessary steps will be taken to transform the East Constituency into a model urban area.



JAMMU MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TOWN HALL, JAMMU
e-NIT No. 05JCA of 2024-25

For and on behalf of Commissioner JMC, the Joint Commissioner, Admin, Jammu Municipal Corporation is inviting on line Technical & Financial Proposals from the Registered firms /Individuals/Bidders for "Providing/ Fixing of Various Tent House Items to Jammu Municipal Corporation on as and when required basis for 12 months on contract basis".

The duration of the contract may be further extendable for another 12 months based on mutually agreed terms and conditions, subject to the satisfactory performance of the agency and at the discretion of the Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation

Tender no.	05JCA of 2024-25
Food items requirements	As mentioned in Bid Document
Last Date of Submission of Bids	05-03-2025 upto 15.00 Hrs
Date & Time of opening of bids	The bids will be opened on 07-03-2025 at 14.00 hrs.
Pre bid meeting	Pre-bid meeting with the prospective bidders shall be held on 27-02-2025 at 14.00 hrs. at the office of Tender Inviting Authority., JMC

DIP/J-3911-P/24

Joint Commissioner (Admin)
Jammu Municipal Corporation

JMC/Estt/9502-9507
Dt - 14-2-2025

Martand Singh hails inclusion of Dogri Language in Parliament

Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: Martand Singh, the great-grandson of Maharaja Hari Singh Ji, has warmly welcomed the decision of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to extend translation services in Parliament to six additional languages, including Dogri.

Hailing this move as a historic step towards linguistic inclusivity, Martand Singh emphasized that the inclusion of Dogri in parliamentary proceedings is a matter

of immense pride for the people of Jammu & Kashmir and Dogras worldwide. He stated, "This recognition of Dogri at the national level strengthens our cultural heritage and ensures that the voice of Dogras is heard in the highest democratic institution of the country."

Notably, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has recently announced the extension of translation services to six more languages—Dogri, Bodo, Maithili, Manipuri, San-

skrit, and Urdu. Until now, translation services were available in ten regional languages—Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Tamil, and Telugu—along with Hindi and English.

Martand Singh further highlighted that Dogri, one of the 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, has a rich literary and cultural legacy. "This decision will encourage greater representation of Dogri-speaking parliamentarians and foster

a deeper connection with our heritage," he added.

He also expressed gratitude to the Central Government for recognizing the linguistic diversity of the country and reaffirmed his commitment to promoting and preserving the legacy of the Dogras. "This decision marks another significant milestone in acknowledging the cultural identity of Jammu & Kashmir and reflects the government's continued efforts to strengthen regional languages in national discourse," he added.

CEPC showcases Indian handmade carpets at Bharat Tex 2025

Top News Report

JAMMU /NEW DELHI, Feb 16: The Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) proudly participated in Bharat Tex 2025, a global textile mega event held from 14-17 February 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. With more than 70 member exporters, CEPC exhibited a diverse range of carpets and floor coverings in Hall 1A, highlighting the exquisite craftsmanship of Indian artisans. Apart from CEPC's participation, several carpet exporters also showcased their products independently in the same hall, reinforcing India's leadership in the global handmade carpet industry.

The event commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Minister of Textiles, Giriraj Singh, and Minister of State for Textiles, Pabitra Margherita, in the esteemed presence of senior officials, includ-

ing Neelima Shah, Secretary (Textiles), Ministry of Textiles; Rohit Kansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Textiles; Shubhra, Trade Advisor, Ministry of Textiles; Amrit Raj, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles; and Chairmen and Executive Directors of various Textiles Export Promotion Councils.

CEPC set up an exclusive Theme Pavilion in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT), Bhadohi, showcasing a live weaving demonstration. This initiative attracted significant attention, allowing visitors to witness firsthand the intricate artistry and skill of Indian carpet weavers.

On the second day of the event, Minister of Textiles, Giriraj Singh, visited the Carpet and Floor Covering Hall, engaging with exhibitors and appreciating their efforts.

The Minister was particularly pleased with the exhibitors' enthu-

siasm and the impressive display of handmade carpets featuring a wide range of innovative designs and new collections.

Exhibitors expressed their satisfaction with the platform provided by Bharat Tex 2025, which facilitated strong networking opportunities and business prospects with international buyers.

The event successfully reinforced India's position as a global hub for handmade carpets and floor coverings.

A moment of pride for the entire industry, Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, formally inaugurated the event on Sunday, further emphasizing the Government's commitment to promoting India's textile and handicraft sectors on the global stage.

CEPC remains committed to supporting its members and promoting Indian handmade carpets worldwide through such prestigious platforms.

siasm and the impressive display of handmade carpets featuring a wide range of innovative designs and new collections.

Exhibitors expressed their satisfaction with the platform provided by Bharat Tex 2025, which facilitated strong networking opportunities and business prospects with international buyers.

The event successfully reinforced India's position as a global hub for handmade carpets and floor coverings.

A moment of pride for the entire industry, Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, formally inaugurated the event on Sunday, further emphasizing the Government's commitment to promoting India's textile and handicraft sectors on the global stage.

CEPC remains committed to supporting its members and promoting Indian handmade carpets worldwide through such prestigious platforms.

Expression of Interest (Eoi) foreengagement of consultant for preparation of Zonal Master Plan of Eco Sensitive Zones of Ramnagar Wildlife Sanctuary

Eoi Notice (short-term)

Eoi 5/WLWJ of 2024-25 dated 14-02-2025

Expression of Interest (Eoi) for engagement of consultant for preparation of Zonal Master Plan of Eco Sensitive Zones of Ramnagar Wildlife Sanctuary

Wildlife Protection Department of Jammu and Kashmir invites proposals in the form of Expression of Interest (Eoi) from the eligible consultant for preparation of Zonal Master Plan of Eco Sensitive Zones of Ramnagar Wildlife Sanctuary of Wildlife Division Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir as per the notification of MoEF & CC, GoI and other latest amendment to Act/rules as applicable. Interested firms should submit their proposal along with other related documents as per RFP at <https://www.jktenders.gov.in> as per the schedule provided below.

Advertised cost:- 10.00 lacs.

S.No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money Deposit	Tender Document Fee
1	Expression of Interest (Eoi) for engagement of consultant for preparation of Zonal Master Plan of Eco Sensitive Zones of Ramnagar Wildlife Sanctuary of Wildlife Division Jammu J&K	Rs. 30,000/- CDR/FDR/DD drawn in favour of Wildlife Warden Jammu (copy of EMD to be uploaded in along with the technical document)	Rs. 600/-

AA No. & Date: RWLWJ/2024-25/2245-46 dated 24-09-2024
Position of funds: Approved under CSS

Schedule of Eoi:

S.No.	Tender Activity	Date
1.	Publishing date	14-02-2025
2.	Download starting date	14-02-2025
3.	Bid Submission Start Date	14-02-2025
4.	Bid Submission End Date	24-02-2025
5.	Date and time of opening of Technical Bid	25-02-2025
6.	Address for Communication	1. Regional Wildlife Warden Jammu, Manda Hills Jammu 180005. Mail: ccfwildlifejammu@gmail.com 2. Wildlife Warden Jammu, Manda Hills Jammu 180005 Mail: wlwjammu@gmail.com Contact No: 8899295351

If due to any exigency the due date for opening of the bids is declared as a closed holiday, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time or any other day/time, as intimated by the Department.

DIP/J-10210/24

No.: WLWJ/

Wildlife Warden
Jammu

Dated: 14-02-2025

Expression of Interest (Eoi) foreengagement of consultant for preparation of Zonal Master Plan of Eco Sensitive Zones of Ramnagar Wildlife Sanctuary

EDITORIAL

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) is a critical factor that determines a country's ability to attract investment, foster innovation, and create a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. It refers to the regulatory environment, administrative efficiency, and infrastructural support that facilitate business operations. Countries with higher EoDB rankings enjoy increased foreign direct investment (FDI), job creation, and economic growth. This article explores the concept of EoDB, its key indicators, the benefits it offers, challenges in implementation, and strategies for improvement.

EoDB is a measure of how conducive a country's regulatory environment is for business operations. The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, which was published until 2021, evaluated economies based on ten key parameters that impact business activities.

A business-friendly environment fosters entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic prosperity. Countries that have improved their EoDB rankings experience several advantages,

When businesses find it easy to operate, foreign investors are more likely to enter the market, leading to increased capital inflows, job creation, and economic expansion.

Simplified business registration, reduced red tape, and access to credit encourage entrepreneurs to launch startups, leading to a more dynamic economy.

A favorable business environment stimulates industries such as manufacturing, services, and technology, leading to job opportunities and economic development.

When businesses thrive, tax compliance increases, boosting government revenues without the need for excessive taxation.

Countries with better EoDB rankings attract global corporations and trade partners, enhancing their competitive edge in the international market.

Despite its significance, many countries struggle to improve their business environment due to several challenges.

Excessive regulations and slow government processes can discourage businesses from setting up or expanding their operations.

Bribery, favoritism, and lack of transparency in business procedures create uncertainty and discourage investors.

Delays in contract enforcement, weak dispute resolution mechanisms, and lengthy court proceedings make it difficult for businesses to operate smoothly. Limited access to reliable electricity, transportation, and communication infrastructure can hinder business growth and efficiency.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) often struggle to obtain loans and financial support, restricting their expansion potential.

Governments worldwide are implementing reforms to create a more business-friendly environment. Some key strategies include:

Digitizing the process of company registration, reducing paperwork, and setting up one-stop service centers can help entrepreneurs establish businesses quickly.

Implementing fast-track courts for commercial disputes, ensuring contract enforcement, and increasing judicial transparency can boost investor confidence.

Encouraging banks to provide loans to startups, reducing interest rates, and offering financial incentives to SMEs can foster business growth.

Investing in roads, electricity, water supply, and internet connectivity can facilitate business operations and attract global investors.

Implementing digital governance, online payment systems, and strict anti-corruption laws can help build trust in the business environment.

Reducing tax complexities, offering tax holidays for new businesses, and ensuring timely tax refunds can encourage compliance and economic activity.

Several countries have successfully improved their EoDB rankings by implementing reforms.

Singapore consistently ranks among the top due to its streamlined business registration process, low taxes, and strong legal framework.

New Zealand is one of the easiest places to start a business, with an online registration process that takes only a few hours.

India has improved its ranking significantly by digitizing business registration, implementing GST (Goods and Services Tax), and simplifying insolvency laws.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) has established free trade zones, minimal taxation policies, and modern infrastructure to attract global businesses.

Ease of Doing Business is a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and prosperity. By simplifying regulations, improving infrastructure, enhancing transparency, and fostering entrepreneurship, countries can create an environment where businesses thrive. Governments must continuously implement reforms, leveraging technology and policy changes to ensure that both domestic and foreign enterprises find it easier to invest, expand, and contribute to national development.

A business-friendly nation is not only attractive to investors but also ensures job creation, higher tax revenues, and long-term economic stability, making it an essential goal for policymakers worldwide.

BJP convinced Delhi voters it was futile to support AAP Columnists

By: Pavan K. Varma

There are five take-aways from the recent Assembly elections in Delhi. The first is that the BJP was determined this time to take control over the state. This ambition had stubbornly eluded it. The last time BJP had its own chief minister (CM) in Delhi was in 1998, 26 years ago. That was Sushma Swaraj, but she was CM only for 52 days. Prior to her, Madan Lal Khurana and Sahib Singh Verma, were in the chair. All in all, the BJP has been in the saddle in Delhi for only five years, from 1993 to 1998.

In 1998, Sheila Dikshit of the Congress Party stormed to power, and remained undefeated for 15 years, until 2013. That year, the BJP with 31 seats, emerged as the single largest party in the 70-seat Assembly, five short of a clear majority. The mandate was clearly in its favour, but its ambitions were thwarted by a wobbly coalition between the AAP with 28 seats and the Congress with eight. Expectedly, the government did not last, and President's Rule was imposed.

Arvind Kejriwal's AAP was the giant killer in the 2015 elections. He won 67 of the 70 seats, while the BJP was crushed to just three. The Congress was wiped out. The BJP could never digest such a humiliating setback in the national capital, especially after Narendra Modi had won an absolute majority in Parliament just the year before. In the next elections in 2020, AAP replicated its stupendous performance, winning 62 of the

70 seats, while the BJP could only marginally improve its tally to eight. This was like rubbing salt in the wounds of a resurgent BJP, which had won all seven parliamentary seats in Delhi, both in 2014 and 2019.

It was clear ever since that AAP's hegemony in Delhi was going to face a severe challenge. Mr Kejriwal even showed the audacity of politically entering Gujarat, the citadel of both Mr Modi and Amit Shah. His party's victory in Punjab in 2022 only reinforced the BJP's resolve to defeat him in Delhi, and it planned this with relentless and meticulous focus. The strength of the party's cadre, especially that of the RSS, was evident. And, the announcement of the Eighth Pay Commission, and the Union Budget's sops to the middle class, just a few days before voting in Delhi, were master-strokes for the city's large middle and salaried classes. Secondly, and far more importantly, the BJP created a situation where even many of those opposed to it recognised the futility of supporting AAP. They realised that an AAP government will face unending hurdles in implementing its promises. This is because Delhi is a Union territory, where significant powers (police, public order, and land) lie with the lieutenant governor (LG) appointed by the Centre. As has been evident, the LG is not well disposed to the AAP dispensation. Most proposals emanating from the elected government need his approval, and these are either negated, or cleared only after inordinate delay. Moreover, the AAP gov-

ernment does not now even have control over bureaucrats, including the chief secretary, serving under it. By an executive order of May 2015, the Union home ministry placed the vital powers of services also under the control of the LG. This meant that the elected chief minister (CM) lost control over the appointment, transfers and postings of officers reporting to him. The AAP government challenged this usurpation in court. After eight years, in May 2023, the matter came up before a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court (SC), which struck down the executive order. But the Central government overruled the SC's judgement by an ordinance. With no powers over its own bureaucrats, an unsympathetic governor, and Central agencies like the CBI, ED and I-T targeting the party leadership, what could an AAP government do for the people of Delhi, even if elected? Mr Kejriwal did not make it any easy for himself by his party's alleged involvement in the liquor scam, and the "sheesh mahal" he built for himself, after public avowals earlier in his political career that he would live the life of an "aam aadmi". But all this notwithstanding, the simple truth is that we are now in a situation, where an Opposition government in the Delhi Assembly will find it close to impossible to function. It is a tribute to the strategy of the BJP, that it could make even supporters of AAP wonder whether it would not be better for the city to have a "double-engine" sarkar. Thirdly, the real miracle is that, in spite

of such odds, AAP managed to get a vote percentage of 43.7 per cent. Of course, this was a steep drop from the 53.57 per cent vote it got in 2020. But a nearly 44 percentage support for a losing party, against the BJP's marginally higher 45.46 per cent (a substantial rise from the 38.51 per cent it got in 2020), shows that the AAP still has sizeable support in the capital, especially among those below the middle class. Our first past the post system ensures that this less than two per cent difference can lead to a huge hiatus in seats: BJP 48 to AAP's 22. Fourthly, the Delhi elections has convincingly shown that far from being the leader of the Opposition alliance, the Congress has become its Achilles heel. In Haryana, it did not join hands with the AAP; and in Delhi, it fought against AAP, although both parties are part of one national alliance! Predictably, the Congress did not win a single seat, with the overwhelming majority of its candidates forfeiting their deposit. But it hived off 6.34 per cent of the vote, which could have gone against the BJP should the two parties have fought together, possibly ensuring an entirely different result. Fifthly, this election, like many before, has shown that the BJP is the luckiest party in our recent democratic history in terms of the abysmal quality of its Opposition. In state after state, its political opponents are at each other's throats, rather than united against their publicly declared common opponent. This is the special varda that Narendra Modi is blessed with.

Building a future for women in science

By: Vijay Garg

Trailblazing women scientists continue to defy the odds, proving that inclusion is not just a matter of fairness but a necessity for scientific and societal progress.

In the 21st century, where scientific breakthroughs continue to shape our world, the persistent underrepresentation of women in science remains a glaring issue. Women have been at the forefront of some of the greatest scientific achievements across the globe in diverse fields from basic science to space science. Despite these inspiring role models, systemic barriers continue to stifle women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It's time we confront these challenges and build a future where women can truly thrive in science. What kind of scientific world are we building if we exclude half of our population?

Without the full participation of women, we lose access to a vast pool of talent, creativity, and innovative solutions that could address some of our biggest challenges. Many girls are discouraged from pursuing science from a young age due to stereotypes that frame these fields as "unsuitable" or "too

difficult." The so-called "leaky pipeline" begins to take its toll as early as high school, with fewer girls opting for science-related studies and careers.

Even for those who break through these initial hurdles, the challenges persist in higher education and professional life. Women in research face a lack of mentorship, unequal access to funding and systemic biases in hiring and promotions.

The numbers speak for themselves: UNESCO reports that only 35 per cent of STEM students globally are women, and their representation in leadership roles remains even lower. In India, the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) confirms that while the number of women pursuing science has grown, their presence in top research positions and leadership roles is still dismal.

Despite these odds, many Indian women scientists have defied the status quo and achieved remarkable success. Dr Indira Hinduja revolutionised reproductive medicine by developing India's first test-tube baby in 1986 and pioneering the gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) technique. Dr Soumya Swaminathan's leadership as Chief

Scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO) played a crucial role in global health policy. Kalpana Kalahasti, a senior scientist at ISRO, was instrumental in India's triumphant Chandrayaan-3 mission and earned a spot in Nature's list of notable figures in 2023. These trailblazers not only pushed the boundaries of scientific knowledge but also broke societal barriers, paving the way for future generations of women in science. Does this make any difference to the society? Society benefits from more inclusive and comprehensive solutions when women are at the forefront of scientific innovation. Areas like maternal health, gender-specific medicine and community health interventions often flourish because of women scientists who understand these challenges firsthand. Inclusion isn't just about fairness—it's about enriching science itself. So, how do we move forward? Building a future for women in science requires collective effort on multiple fronts.

We must dismantle the structural barriers hindering women's advancement, provide mentorship programmes and promote policies that ensure equal hiring, funding, and career progression opportuni-

ties. Educational institutions should actively encourage girls to pursue STEM fields, while workplaces must offer flexible work environments that allow women to balance personal and professional responsibilities.

It is time to tear down these barriers and build a future where every young girl who dreams of becoming a scientist can do so without limitations. When women are given equal opportunities to contribute to science, we all stand to gain—from groundbreaking discoveries to a more inclusive and prosperous world.

*(Vijay Garg Retired
Principal Educational
columnist street kour
Chand MHR Malout
Punjab)*

'Producer contract mein likhega you can't get married, pregnant': Sheeba recalls how female actors were treated in 90s

Actor Sheeba Akash-deep has recalled the time when she was working in the film industry and highlighted how producers' approach has changed over the years. Speaking with agency, Sheeba said earlier producers would make female actors sign contracts which would state that she can't get married or pregnant.

Sheeba recalls how female actors were treated earlier

Sheeba said, "Kitna kuch change hogaya. Abhi A-list actresses shaadi shuda hai phir bhi A-list films with A-list actors kar rahi hain. Humare time mein agar humara boyfriend tak hota tha, humko film nahi milegi toh hum log darr darr ke karte the pyaar. Uss time pe heroines ko single hona chahiye tha (So much has changed. Now,

A-list married actresses do A-list films with A-list actors. Earlier, if we had a boyfriend, we would be scared of a relationship lest we don't get films. At that time, heroines had to be single).

The audience would look up to you as your girlfriend or whatever, I don't know."

Sheeba on 'dangerous' contracts made by producers

"At that point of time, it was a big taboo. Shaadi ho gayi toh 100% packup hai, boyfriend hua toh bahut saare rumours wagera ho jayenge. Aapko producers contract mein likhayega you can't get married, pregnant. Bohut dangerous contract bante the tab (It would be a 100% packup for a married woman and if there was a boyfriend, there would be many rumours. Producers would make you

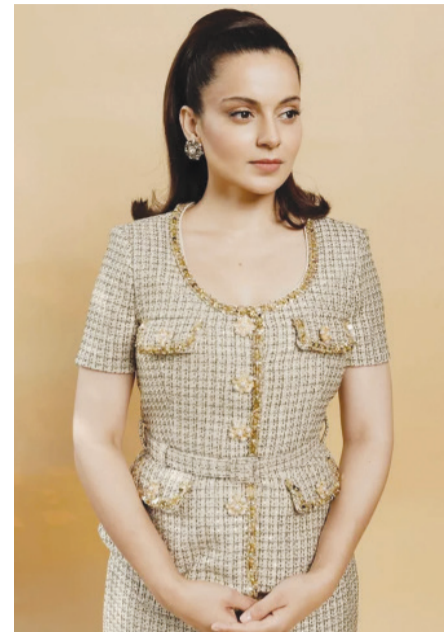


sign contracts stating you can't get married, pregnant. Very dangerous contract would be made then). Films mein if I'm romancing Saif, off-screen it shouldn't be such that I'm romancing somebody else."

Sheeba's career

Sheeba made her Bollywood debut with Yeh Aag Kab Bujhegi (1991), directed by Sunil Dutt. It also stars Sunil and Rekha. She was also part of Nachnewale Gaanewale (1991), Suryavanshi (1992), Hum Hain Kamaal Ke (1993), Pyar Ka Rog (1994), Surakshaa (1995), Kaalia (1997), Miss 420 (1998), Kaala Samrajya (1999), Ghaath (2000), Ek Aur Jung (2001), Meri Paritigya (2002), and Dum (2003). She was last seen as Mona Sen in Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani (2023).

Kangana Ranaut recalls mom telling her she should be able to make achar, ghee



Actor Kangana Ranaut has admitted that there was a time when her mother used to tell her that women should be invested more in homemaking. During an interview with agency, she added that she used to think her mother was silly to say such things.

What did Kangana say Kangana said, "My mom used to say, as a woman, you should be more invested in homemaking, from making achar (pickle) to ghee (clarified butter)

to how to grow vegetables. I used to think that mom is saying such stupid things, what does it matter."

She added, "I used to think that I was one of the youngest and richest women in the country. But today I am saying the same thing...I think that is the evolution of women. I read a quote that 'you are not born as a woman, but you grow to be a woman'... Today, my mother is happy and she thinks I have matured and become wiser."

Kangana's last project

Fans saw Kangana last in Emergency, in which the actor portrays the role of late prime minister Indira Gandhi. It was released in theatres on January 17. Emergency delved into the period during which Indira Gandhi had announced an Emergency for 21 months from 1975 to 1977, and its aftermath. It also starred Anupam Kher, Shreyas Talpade, Vishak Nair, Milind Soman and late actor Satish Kaushik.

Now, Kangana has opened a new restaurant, The Mountain Story, in Manali. She had spoken about wanting to open a cafe in the near future in an old interview. In the 2013 interview, the actor was part of a round table that also had actor Deepika Padukone in attendance. When asked where she would see herself in 10 years, Kangana had said she would like to open a restaurant.

Meenakshi Chaudhary on the need for individuality to survive in the industry

While actor Meenakshi Chaudhary is basking in the success of her recent film with Venkatesh, Sankranthiki Vasthunam, she's also looking forward to her other films in 2025. She tells the Hindustan Times that she has several projects in the pipeline in both Telugu and Tamil.

"In Telugu, there's one project I have with Naveen Polishetty and another one which they should announce soon. There are a few in Tamil, but I can't talk about them right now. The production houses will announce when the time is right. There's some really great lineup for 2025. Some very interesting characters," says Meenakshi. A dentist and former model, the actor has won several beauty pageant titles which paved the way for her acting career.

Meenakshi Chaudhary's advice to aspiring actors

Ask Meenakshi what advice she'd give young women entering into the film industry now and she says, "So much has changed since the time I came into the industry. One thing I can say is that don't lose your originality in the process of trying to get somewhere. Because I feel like even on social media, everybody is just being one kind. It's like a prototype that's happened now. So, don't lose out on your personality in the process of trying to fit in. You have to be your own self because if you're not that, you can be replaced. I think that will help you survive better and last longer. That's what I have always believed in and tried to stay in."

On the Hindi film industry Does she think the Hindi film industry has a lot of prototypes? "I feel every space does. For the longest time, we had a notion that a south heroine should be plump and so on. I was the exact



opposite of all that. In Bollywood, too, I feel like there's a certain prototype, but it has changed. If you take Deepika Padukone, Alia Bhatt and Kiara Advani, they are all so different from each other, and each has something different to offer. Apart from the fact they're all great actors and dancers, they all have their own individuality," she says.

In the same way, here we have Sai Pallavi, Rashmika Mandanna and Samantha, who are all completely different and have their own space. I think Bollywood has now reached a space where they're looking for new talent and debutants are coming in. This is happening with the South as well. I think this is a great time to be entering the industry and the industry is more accepting as well because they all want to work with new people," explained the Matka actor.

'Never thought it was possible': Rashmika Mandanna on her role in Chhaava

Actor Rashmika Mandanna revealed that landing the role of Maharani Yesubai in the historical drama film Chhaava was a 'big surprise' for her. In a post-release post, the actor expressed her gratitude to the makers of the movie by penning a heartwarming note for them and sharing unseen photos from the sets of the film.

The historical drama Chhaava stars Vicky Kaushal as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Akshaye Khanna portrays the role of Aurangzeb. Directed by Laxman Utekar, the film is set against the backdrop of the Maratha Empire and chronicles the life of the valiant king, focusing on his reign and struggles.

Taking it to Instagram, Rashmika shared a series of unseen photos and videos from Chhaava's sets. In a post-release post, the actor also confessed that she never considered playing a historical character like Maharani Yesubai on the big screen after hailing from South India.

"A girl from the south playing Maharani Yesubai. That was something I never had



on my radar.. never thought it was possible, and that's why I love working with people who give us the hope to dream beyond boundaries."

Rashmika continued, "And then the maharani came in all her glory. She is fierce - she is powerful - she is graceful - she is a true queen. Her love

is the love I truly relate to - it's so pure so divine and so respectful and so true that Maharaj and Maharani are always connected beyond just words."

The actor also recalled her meeting with director Laxman Utekar for the role of Maharani Yesubai during the pre-production phase of the

film.

"I had watched the film called Mimi and I loved the film so much that I wanted to invite Laxman sir for the screening of my film goodbye and so I messaged him and that's when the journey began. Cz sir immediately asked me if he could call me and we spoke and he was telling me he wanted to meet me for his next film.. and I thought he was just being nice, but the meeting actually did happen, and it made me so so happy that it did happen.. I truly thank the universe for this."

Rashmika continued, "I didn't know what the story was. I didn't know why they came to me, I didn't know how they even saw me as the maharani. I didn't even know what was happening.. when I actually heard the narration I was confused, shocked but also so grateful, overwhelmed and so so happy that I didn't know how to react because I didn't know how we were going to achieve this."

In the series of unseen photos and videos, Rashmika was seen shooting for a scene in Chhaava while being dressed as Maharani

Yesubai. In another picture, the actor posed with the crew of the team.

One of the photos also featured Vicky and Laxman Utekar discussing a scene in which the former was dressed as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj on the movie sets.

Recently, in a candid conversation with agency, Rashmika also opened up about the challenges she faced in bringing the character of Yesubai, a revered figure in Maratha history, to life.

The actor revealed that portraying a real historical figure was a first for her. "This is the first time I am doing a character that already existed in history," said Rashmika. "For me, it was an incredible opportunity, as I've never done a biopic before. It was something entirely new to me. Every time I did films before, I created a character, but for the first time, I wasn't creating a character—she is Yesubai. There's nothing of Rashmika in her," the Pushpa actor added.

Rashmika admitted that stepping into the shoes of a royal warrior queen was both thrilling and daunting.

Akriti Kakar: Unfair to strangle our dreams due to the fear of not getting views

A couple of months ago, singer Akriti Kakar collaborated with veteran singer Usha Uthup for a single, titled Golemale. And now, she has collaborated with singer Kumar Sanu for a track. Titled Sohbatein, the number has an '80s vibe and it has been composed and sung by Akriti.

Ask if the reason behind such collabs is a way to do something out of the box, and Akriti says, "Collaborating with such veterans isn't a strategy. It's what I think is a perfect fit and justifies not just the song, but also the presence of that legend. When Sohbatein was made, I could hear Sanu da's voice and darte-darte I approached him. He

said yes immediately. The same happened with Usha ji. I hope to continue the same streak."

But such experiments may or may not land well with the audience. Does she think of streaming numbers when making music? "I should, but I don't," responds the composer-singer, adding, "I do everything with my heart. I've learnt that music will get picked up either immediately and give you joy, rewards and money, or may be nose dive and not work at all. In both cases, you learn. There also may be a third scenario where someone someday discovers your song and it might go viral. But it's not fair to strangle our dreams

as artistes with the fear of not getting millions of views."

Why a song with the '80s vibe, we ask, and Akriti says, "I've always been a sucker for melody. The moment I received the lyrics from Geet Sagar, I wanted to make it into a retro colour melody. I just knew I wanted to express it with innocence and nostalgia. I wanted it to be about love from the time of no mobile phones or internet."

The idea was to make the listeners time travel with us. Another major reason to take this route was to simply not do the cliché."

Sharing the experience of being the studio with Kumar Sanu, the singer says, "Despite being a



legend with decades of work behind him, he's a stickler for punctuality. He wrote the song in Bengali script on his letter head and learnt the song properly.

He gave so much respect and was happy to give options for lines too. He was so quick on the mic, cracked jokes and yet made sure the job was properly done. I learnt so much from him."

Akriti adds that her parents and grandparents were the inspiration behind the song. She elaborates: "There was a picture of my daadi-daadu that spoke to me one evening while we went through old albums with papa. My daadu wore a crisp grey suit with a transistor hang-

ing like a handbag from his shoulder. And daadi standing next to him in a silk saree and tidy jooda like a shy bride. In another one my daadi wearing Cat sun-glasses and a pleated silk saree holding a sweater and a transistor hanging on her shoulder like a handbag. It intrigued me so much!! Papa told me that's how they used to go out on so-called dates. I spent days thinking about that time and feeling. I just had to make a song about that."

In the current times when there's so much content out there, is it a constant pressure as a musician to keep trying something new? Her song Golemale that marked her collab with singer Usha Uthup also

had an unusual sound. "It was a totally new sound and an unimaginable, dream-like collaboration with Usha Uthup ji. I love taking risks and doing what is not usual. People say, 'It might not work, why are you doing such large scale videos or collabs when you're spending your own money, you may never recover it'. And I just tell myself, 'I am doing it to build my own repertoire and earn moments for a lifetime and beyond. Working with legends like them is nothing short of a Grammy for me. Could I ever imagine even being in the same room as them as a kid? And here I'm getting to perform and sing with them'. I want to treasure it for life."

PM Modi 'distressed' over Delhi railway station stampede, condoles deaths

At least 18 people, including nine women, five children and four men, died in the incident, sources said.

NEW DELHI, Feb 16 (Agencies): Expressing sorrow over the New Delhi Railway Station stampede, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he was distressed by the incident and his thoughts were with the loved ones of those who lost their lives. He also said authorities were helping those affected.

At least 18 people, including nine women, five children and four men, died in the incident, sources said. The incident occurred around 10 pm on platforms 13 and 14, as thousands of Maha Kumbh devotees gathered to board their trains, leading to panic among passengers. "Distressed by the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station. My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured have a speedy recovery. The authorities are assisting all those who have been affected by this stampede," PM Modi posted on X

Visuals from the scene showed huge crowds gathered at the New Delhi Railway Station, waiting for their trains to Uttar Pradesh's Prayagrah to arrive. A huge rush of devotees flooded the railway station, eventually



resulting in an utter commotion. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also said he was 'pained' at the loss of life in the incident.

"Devastating news from New Delhi Railway Station. I am extremely pained by the loss of lives due to stampede on Railway platform. In this hour of grief, my thoughts are with the bereaved families. Praying for the speedy of the injured," Singh posted on X.

Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, VK Saxena, said he had ordered authorities to assist by all means those in need of help.

"There has been an unfortunate and tragic incident of loss of lives and injuries due to dis-

order & stampede at New Delhi Railway Station. My deepest condolences to the families of victims of this tragedy. Have spoken to Chief Secretary & Police Commissioner and asked them to address and redress the situation," Saxena said in a post on X.

"CS has been asked to invoke DDMA measures & deploy relief personnel. All hospitals are in readiness to address related exigencies. Have instructed CS & CP to be at the site and take control of relief measures," the Lt Governor added, saying that he is constantly monitoring the situation.

Meanwhile, Delhi's caretaker

Chief Minister Atishi questioned the security arrangements at the railway station and appealed the railway department to do the needful for the passengers.

"Such an incident with the devotees going for Maha Kumbh is very sad. Neither the central government nor the UP government is concerned about the safety of the people. There are no arrangements in Prayagraj nor are there any concrete traffic arrangements for the devotees coming from different states of the country. I request the Railway Department to provide help to the people as soon as possible," Atishi wrote on X in Hindi.

Meanwhile, the Congress questioned as to why there was no arrangement for extra trains when the huge crowd due to Maha Kumbh was expected. The party also condoled the deaths and prayed for those injured.

The party demanded from the government that accountability be fixed behind the incident.

Also, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav attacked the Centre, saying that the double-engine government failed to ensure people's safety.

Nothing wrong with interfaith marriages, but alliances through fraud need to be stopped: Fadnavis



NAGPUR, Feb 16 (Agencies): Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said there was nothing wrong with interfaith marriages, but steps need to be taken against matrimonial alliances through fraud and false identity.

Talking to reporters here, Fadnavis said the Supreme Court and Kerala High Court have made observations

about the reality of "love jihad".

Fadnavis was responding to a question about the state government setting up a committee to study the legal aspects for a new law against forced conversions and cases of "love jihad".

"Love jihad" is a term used by right-wing activists and outfits to allege a conspiracy by Muslim men to convert Hindu

women to Islam through marriage.

The chief minister said, "It is a reality, and in Maharashtra, incidents of being duped into marriage and then abandoned once children are born are on the rise." He clarified that there was nothing wrong with interfaith marriages, but instances of using fake identities and fraud are serious and need to be curbed.

The state government has issued a Government Resolution (GR) stating that a committee headed by the state director general of police (DGP) will suggest steps to tackle the complaints of "love jihad" and forced conversions.

It will also look at legal aspects and the laws framed in other states and recommend legislation to prevent such instances.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat emphasises unity of Hindu society, calls it responsible society of country

BARDHAMAN, Feb 16 (Agencies): RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday emphasised the importance of uniting the Hindu society as it is the "responsible" society in the country that believes unity itself embodies diversity.

Addressing an RSS programme at SAI Ground in Bardhaman, he said, "People often ask why we focus only on Hindu society, and my answer is that the responsible society of the country is Hindu society."

"Today is not a special event. Those unaware of the Sangh often wonder what it wants. If I had to answer, I would say the Sangh seeks to organise Hindu society because it is the responsible society of the country," Bhagwat said. He also stressed the importance of accepting the world's diversity.

"Bharat is not just geography; Bharat has a nature. Some could not live by these values and created a separate country. But those who stayed naturally embraced this essence of Bharat. And what is this essence? It is Hindu society, which thrives by accepting the world's diversity. We say 'unity in diversity,' but Hindu society understands that diversity itself is unity," the RSS chief added.

Bhagwat said that in India, no one remembers the emperors and maharajas, but instead remembers a king who went into exile for 14 years to fulfil his father's promise — an apparent reference to Lord Ram, and the person who placed his brother's sandals on the throne, and who handed over the



kingdom upon his return.

"These characteristics define India. Those who follow these values are Hindus and they keep the diversity of the entire country united. We will not engage in actions that hurt others. Rulers, administrators, and great men do their work, but society must come forward to serve the nation," he explained.

Reiterating the need for Hindu unity, Bhagwat said even in good times, challenges will always arise.

"The nature of the problem is irrelevant; what matters is how prepared we are to face them," he added.

The rally was held after the Calcutta High Court approved it after the Bengal Police initially refused to grant permission.

Speaking on historical invasions dating back to Alexander, Bhagwat noted that "a handful of barbarians, who were not superior in virtue, ruled over India, and the cycle of betrayal within society continues."

He also emphasised that India was not created by the British and argued that the notion of India being disunited was instilled in people by the British.

Assam govt planning to move court against Gaurav Gogoi's wife's 'links' with Pakistan: CM Himanta

GUWAHATI, Feb 16 (Agencies): Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday welcomed Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi's planned legal action over the controversy surrounding his British wife, Elizabeth Colburn, and said the state government is also initiating legal proceedings.

Responding to a post by Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, Sarma reminded the opposition of its electoral losses, saying, "I wholeheartedly welcome legal action against me. In fact, the government of Assam is also initiating legal proceedings from today." Gogoi on Friday accused the BJP of attempting to defame him and his family, asserting that he would take appropriate legal steps.

On Saturday, he penned a letter in Assamese addressed to his wife, which he shared on Facebook, assuring her that "truth shall prevail." "...as long as we hold



office, we are bound by our oath to protect the nation's security. Therefore, I also advise the concerned MP to move court at the earliest so that at the very least, this issue can be discussed on a judicial platform," Sarma said.

Ramesh in his post referred to Assam assembly polls in early 2026 and asserted that in about 12 months, the people of the state will make him a former CM and make his party sit in the opposition.

"Who will be the former and present chief minister will be decided by the

people of Assam—not by you. I do not wish to remind you of the humiliating defeat Congress has faced since 2014," Sarma responded.

Stepping up the attack on Gogoi, the BJP leader on Saturday said a police case is likely to be registered and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) be constituted to probe into the allegations of Pakistan links of the opposition leader's British wife Elizabeth Colburn.

He said that a detailed inquiry, involving the "entire ecosystem and sympathisers", will be

carried out as apprehensions were being raised about whether ISI had attempted to infiltrate the CMO when Gogoi's father, the late Tarun Gogoi, was heading the state.

Responding to these allegations, Ramesh on Sunday said, "The Assam CM and the BJP have begun an atrocious smear campaign targeting my colleague @GauravGogoiAsm. This is character assassination of the worst type. Legal action is being initiated right away." The smear campaign is because Gaurav Gogoi won the Jorhat Lok Sabha seat in June 2024 despite Assam CM and other ministers camping in Jorhat and campaigning against him, he added.

"It is also because the Jorhat MP has been at the forefront revealing the blatant corruption and blackdeeds of the Assam CM. The Assam CM — like his supreme leader in New Delhi — is a master of defamation, distortion, and diversion.

He is trying desperately to get the minds of the people of Assam away from his failures and false claims," Ramesh claimed.

Sarma had earlier last week targeted Gogoi over the issue, demanding answers regarding the allegations of ISI links, "leading young individuals to the Pakistan embassy for brainwashing and radicalisation, and the refusal to take Indian citizenship for the past 12 years", referring to Colburn's nationality status.

Sarma had also alleged that Gogoi had raised questions in Parliament on sensitive defence matters after his marriage to the British citizen, a charge termed by the opposition leader as a "false accusation".

The BJP had on Wednesday accused Gogoi's wife of having links with Pakistan and the ISI, a charge rejected by the Congress leader as "laughable and entertaining".

Tamil magazine claims website blocked amid PM cartoon furore, MK Stalin reacts

CHENNAI, Feb 16 (Agencies): Vikatan, a leading Tamil weekly news magazine, claimed the Centre had blocked its website after it published cartoons of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "highlight the issue of Indians being handcuffed and deported from the United States while the PM remained silent".

While Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin condemned the blocking of the website and lashed out at the BJP over its "fascist nature", the party had lodged a formal complaint against the magazine accusing it of deliberately attempting to defame the Prime Minister.

In an official statement, Vikatan said that "sever-

al readers have reported that they are unable to access the Vikatan website. There has been no official confirmation from government sources about the website being blocked".

"For nearly a century, Vikatan has stood firmly in support of freedom of expression. We have always operated with the principle of upholding free speech and will continue to do so. We are still trying to ascertain the reasons behind the blocking of our website, and are in the process of taking up this matter with the Ministry," it added.

In a tweet in Tamil, Stalin said on Sunday, "Blocking media outlets for opinions is not good for democracy. This is



an example of the fascist nature of the BJP."

He also requested the immediate unblocking of the website.

On his part, BJP state chief K Annamalai accused Vikatan of being a mouthpiece of the entire diplomatic trip of our PM to please the ruling government in Tamil Nadu and cast a shadow on the diplomatic progress made by our Prime Minister Modi as

showed PM Narendra Modi in chains, sitting in a chair right next to the US President. The cover picture has been deliberately published to paint a negative image of the entire diplomatic trip of our PM to please the ruling government in Tamil Nadu and cast a shadow on the diplomatic progress made by our Prime Minister Modi as

Fire breaks out in Mumbai high-rise; two dead, two hospitalised due to suffocation



MUMBAI, Feb 16 (Agencies): Two women were killed and two other persons were hospitalised due to suffocation after a fire broke out in an 11-floor building in Mumbai on Sunday morning, a fire official said.

The blaze erupted at 6.11 am at the Panna Ali Mansion building, located in Masjid Bandar area in south Mumbai, he added.

The fire was confined to the electric wiring and installations at a common meter box place and electric wiring in the common passage on the ground floor of the building, the official said.

Two women in the common passage of the first floor sustained injuries to their hands and legs and also suffocated due to smoke after the fire.

Both of them, identified as Sabila Khatun Shaikh (42) and Sajiya Alam Sheikh (30), were taken to hospital where they were declared dead, the official said. A man on the building's sixth floor and a woman on the eighth floor also suffered from suffocation.

The two persons, identified as Karim Shaikh (20) and Shahin Shaikh (22), were rushed to the government-run J J Hospital and their condition was reported to be stable, the official said.

The blaze was doused by 6.31 am, the official said.

The cause of the fire was not yet known.

WUC welcomes Swiss Weber Report exposing China's 'transnational repression' of Uyghurs, Tibetans

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) acknowledged the recently released Weber report, which was released by the Swiss Government (Federal Council) and discusses the impact of transnational repression on Uyghurs and Tibetans residing in Switzerland.

MUNICH, Feb 16 (Agencies): The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) has welcomed the recent Swiss Weber report for exposing the "transnational repression" of Uyghurs and Tibetans by China.

The report released by the Swiss Government (Federal Council) discusses the impact of Chinese actions on these communities.

"This is the right first step towards a solution-oriented action to address China's transnational repression," WUC President, Turgunjan Alawdun said as quoted by the World Uyghur Congress.

"Uyghurs don't feel safe anywhere, even in Switzerland, which is normally one of the safest countries in the world," he added.

According to WUC, the report is based on a study by the University of Basel and outlines the various strategies used by Chinese authorities to monitor, harass, and intimidate diaspora communities, cultural asso-



ciations, and other networks. These strategies include the use of advanced technology and the exploitation of judicial systems, especially extradition treaties and foreign police stations.

The research examines the particular situation of Tibetans and Uyghurs residing in Switzerland. The report concludes that it is very likely that the Chinese government is attempting to use tension and fear to divide

the diaspora by intimidating and pressuring Uyghurs and Tibetans living in the nation.

While economic rewards are more commonly utilized to target Tibetans, family hostage diplomacy is a common tactic to target Uyghurs, the report revealed.

The WUC report further noted citing the Weber report that Uyghurs in Switzerland are frequently asked to spy

on their people, especially to record Uyghurs participating in demonstrations and provide information about their actions, especially those connected to the World Uyghur Congress. Smartphone apps like WeChat, WhatsApp, and TikTok, as well as more conventional forms of communication like cell phones, are frequently used to monitor Uyghurs and Tibetans. Fake social media profiles are another method of gathering data about both communities.

The Weber report also points out that the use of Interpol RED Notices to bar human rights activists from attending global gatherings like the UN has significantly restricted people's freedom of movement, the WUC noted.

The 34-page report concludes with a few specific suggestions, such as increased awareness, improved coordination between government agencies, and discussions with impacted populations.

Turkey says it would reconsider its military presence in Syria if Kurdish militants are eliminated



BEIRUT, Feb 16 (Agencies): Turkey's foreign minister said his country would reconsider its military presence in northeastern Syria if that country's new leaders eliminate a Kurdish militant group designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Hakan Fidan spoke at the Munich Security Conference alongside Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani, who did not comment on the remarks. Fidan has expressed such sentiments before. The Kurdistan Work-

ers' Party, or PKK, has waged an insurgency against Turkey for decades, seeking greater autonomy for Kurds.

"We can't tolerate armed militia in any form," Fidan said. He said such groups should be integrated "under one national army" in Syria and noted that its new leaders have been responsive to that idea.

Al-Shaibani did speak in support of disarming all non-state factions and of including Kurds in Syria's new government.

The presence of Turkish-backed forces in

northeastern Syria has increased substantially since insurgent groups ousted former President Bashar Assad late last year, and the forces have been targeting Kurdish forces more often.

Turkey also views the Syrian Democratic Forces, a U.S.-backed military Kurdish alliance in Syria, as an extension of the PKK. That has led to ongoing military confrontations between Turkish-backed forces and the SDF in northern Syria.

While most insurgent groups have agreed to integrate into the new Syrian army, the SDF has refused.

"Kurds are part of the Syrian nation but they can't have their own army, as this is against our unity," said another speaker on Saturday's conference panel, Hind Kabawat of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution.

Pakistan: Baloch activist laments "targeted killings" of Baloch intellectuals

BALUCHISTAN, Feb 16 (Agencies): Baloch activist Mahrang Baloch strongly criticised the "targeted killings" of Baloch intellectuals, and said it is a telling form of "Baloch genocide".

She said that this is a continuation of the "hit and throw" policy that began with the extrajudicial killing of Ghulam Muhammad Baloch and is aimed at "sterilizing the Baloch nation from an ideological perspective."

"The policy of killing Baloch intellectuals and scholars through targeted killings is a telling form of Baloch genocide. It is a continuation of the "hit and throw" policy that began with the extrajudicial killing of martyr Ghulam Muhammad Baloch and his associates in 2009, and is tantamount to sterilizing the Baloch

nation from an ideological perspective," Mahrang Baloch stated in a post on X.

Baloch human rights group, Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), highlighted multiple cases of enforced disappearances at the hands of 'security forces and state-sponsored death squads' and said the region continues to reel under the crisis.

BYC, in a post on X, listed the recent disappearances and alleged that the families of victims were harassed at the hands of "security forces and state-sponsored death squads" and their family members were threatened and their phones were also taken away.

In another similar episode this week, BYC condemned the firing by 'state-sponsored militias,' which resulted in the injury of an individu-

al who later succumbed to his wounds. The rights group also highlighted the suffering of villagers at the hands of these 'state-sponsored death squads,' who are involved in cases of robbery, kidnapping, and the killing of Baloch people.

Balochistan faces numerous issues, including state repression, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings of activists, scholars, and civilians. The region suffers from economic neglect, with insufficient development, lack of basic infrastructure, and limited political autonomy.

Earlier, highlighting the abduction of Baloch woman Asma Baloch, BYC organizer Mahrang Baloch said that Balochistan remains one of the most dangerous regions in terms of human rights.

Zelenskyy calls for creation of European Army at Munich Security Conference

MUNICH, Feb 16 (Agencies): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called for the creation of a European Army in response to Russia's military build-up, Politico reported.

In his speech at the Munich Security Conference (MSC), Zelenskyy also raised suspicion of a possibility that the US might say "no" to Europe on issues that might pose a threat to it.

"I really believe that the time has come for Europe to create its own armed forces," the Ukrainian President said. He added, "Let's be honest, now we can't rule out that America might say 'no' to Europe on issues that might threaten it."

According to a Politico report, Zelenskyy stressed that Europe needed to unite and have a single foreign and defence policy that would show the US that the bloc is serious about



its own security.

He said, "Europe has everything it takes. It just needs to come together and start acting so that no one can say 'no' to it, boss it around, or treat it like a pushover."

He said that despite facing battlefield losses, Russian President Vladimir Putin is adding 150,000 soldiers to his armed forces, which is said to be larger than the majority of European armies, and is opening army recruitment offices every week.

Zelenskyy said, "Oil prices are still high enough for him to ignore the world." Ukrainian President said his intelligence services "have clear intel that this summer Russia plans to send troops to Belarus under the pretext of training exercises," adding that might be the beginning of operations against neighbouring European nations.

NATO's military committee chair, Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, said the alliance

was unable to confirm Zelenskyy's warning about Belarus. He said, "I believe that Western intelligence agencies are perfectly active in this, so I would expect confirmations."

In his speech, Zelenskyy called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "pathological liar" and added that he cannot offer real security guarantees. He said that Ukraine would "never accept deals made behind our backs without our involvement."

He said, "Putin cannot offer real security guarantees. Not just because he is a pathological liar but because Russia, in its current state, needs war to hold power together. And the world must be protected from that," according to a Politico report.

Zelenskyy insisted Ukraine has a future in the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO). His

remarks came despite statements from US President Donald Trump and US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth that NATO membership for Ukraine is off the table in any final peace deal.

Ukrainian President said, "I also will not take NATO membership for Ukraine off the table." He further said, "But right now, the most influential member of NATO seems to be Putin because his whims have the power to block NATO decisions."

Zelenskyy said that a Russian drone hit the sarcophagus of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor carrying at least 15 kilograms of explosives just hours before the Munich Security Conference (MSC) started. He said, "This is not just madness, this is Russia's stance," Zelenskyy said. "A country that launches such attacks does not want peace."

Pakistan: Imran Khan asks party to launch strong political movement after Ramzan, engage with Opposition

ISLAMABAD, Feb 16 (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has asked his party to launch a strong political movement after Ramzan and directed two senior leaders to contact opposition, The Express Tribune reported.

Khan's lawyer Faisal Chaudhry made the announcement while speaking to reporters outside Adiala Jail after meeting PTI founder. Chaudhry said Imran Khan asked PTI leaders - Asad Qaiser and Omar Ayub to establish communication with opposition parties. He also called on establishment to consider facts that he has mentioned in his open letters.

Imran Khan's lawyer said that PTI leaders having legal cases lodged against them face controlled trials in Adiala Jail while those who quit the party after May 9 protests have been spared legal con-

sequences.

Faisal Chaudhry said that PTI has filed a petition in Islamabad High Court for requesting an open trial. He claimed that lawyers and journalists were selectively permitted inside the courtroom.

"Lawyers and journalists are selectively allowed inside the courtroom. The judiciary is being crushed, and basic rights are being violated," The Express Tribune quoted him as saying.

Imran Khan's lawyer called events that happened on May 9, 2023 a false flag operation and demanded an independent judicial commission to conduct probe into the incidents.

He further said, "We seek justice under the Constitution and law. We disagree with the Supreme Court bench's remarks on military courts." Faisal Chaudhry also quoted Imran Khan to highlight economic crisis and human rights

violations in Pakistan.

"The sanctity of homes was violated in crackdowns against PTI. Basic human rights are being trampled. With media censorship and internet restrictions, who will invest in Pakistan?", Faisal Chaudhry quoted Imran Khan as saying.

He claimed that Pakistan suffered an economic loss of USD 45 million after PTI's removal and PM Shehbaz Sharif-led government was formed "on the shoulders of Form 47," The Express Tribune reported.

Last week, Imran Khan wrote a second open letter to Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, alleging that the country's largest political party is being "targeted," Geo News reported.

"I wrote an open letter to the Army Chief (you) with sincere intentions for the betterment of the country and the nation, aiming to bridge the growing divide between



the military and the public. However, the response was extremely irresponsible and unserious," Geo News quoted the letter penned by Imran Khan.

PTI leader asserted that he had dedicated his entire life to bringing global recognition to Pakistan. "My 55 years of public life since the 1970s and my 30 years of earnings are fully transparent. My life and death are solely tied to Pakistan," the letter read.

Former Pakistan PM Imran Khan expressed his concerns regarding the military's image

and the potential consequences of the widening gap between the public and the army, citing them as the reason for writing this letter.

Referring to his first letter to the Army Chief, Khan claimed that 90 per cent of the public would have supported the six points he had highlighted if they had been consulted. In the letter, he alleged that the government was installed by manipulating election results through pre-poll rigging.

"The authorities passed the 26th Constitutional Amendment through parliament to

control the judiciary and Peca [Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act] to silence dissent," he added.

He noted that political instability and the "might is right" policy plunged the country's economy into chaos. Khan regretted that the country's "largest political party" was being targeted and all state institutions were being used for political engineering and revenge, according to Geo News report.

Referring to his imprisonment, he claimed that he had been placed in solitary confinement and deprived of sunlight for 20 days. "My exercise equipment, television, and even newspapers have been taken away. They restrict my access to books whenever they wish. Besides those 20 days, I was also locked up for another 40 hours. In the last six months, I have been allowed to speak to my sons only three times," he added.

"We are preparing for what comes next, in every sense": Israeli PM Netanyahu



TEL AVIV, Feb 16 (Agencies): In a statement, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the three former hostages "with a big embrace".

The PM assured that Israel has been preparing for their return and "along with their families, will assist in their rehabilitation after a long and excruciating period of captivity".

Noting that "this week, again, Hamas attempted to violate the agreement and create a false crisis under false claims", Benjamin Netanyahu emphasized that the release of the hostages was made possible due to the concentration of IDF forces inside the Strip and around it, and President Trump's clear and unequivocal statement which both forced Hamas to back down.

Israel, said the PM is working in full coordination with the United States in order to free all of its hostages - living and deceased - as soon as possible. He also warned that Israel is "preparing with full intensity for what comes next, in every sense".

Shiv Sena demands to expel illegal Bangladeshis, Rohingyas from country

Expresses grief over Delhi stampede accident



Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: Shiv Sena (UBT) Jammu and Kashmir has strongly criticized the US for repeating its humiliating behavior on the return of illegal immigrants and has also demanded immediate strict action to expel illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas Muslims from our country.

While briefing the media at party centre office state chief Manish Sahni strongly criticized the continuation of the humiliating behavior by the US for removing illegal immigrants. Yesterday, 116 Indians, including residents of Jammu and Kashmir, were once again sent back to the country in military planes and shackles, which is

highly condemnable. Sahni has demanded the Modi government at the Center to take strict cognizance of the insult and summon the US ambassador and register strong protest and stop the humiliating behavior. Although this time the women and children were kept free from shackles.

Sahni has demanded from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take immediate and strict steps to throw out illegal Bangladeshis, Rohingyas Muslims from Jammu & Kashmir and across the country, including former President of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, Pakistani woman Seema Haider, who are camping in the country.

Earlier, on 5 February, 104 Indians were

brought to Amritsar from America in US Air Force plane Globemaster. They had handcuffs on their hands and chains on their feet. Sahni said that today i.e. on 16 February also, third plane is reaching India from America late tonight.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena UBT Jammu-Kashmir unit chief Manish Sahni has expressed deep grief over the stampede incident (in which 18 people died) at Delhi railway station late last night. Sahni said that questions were constantly being raised about the mismanagement at railway stations and trains to deal with the huge crowd of people going to Maha Kumbh, the stampede incident in Delhi is a painful picture that speaks volumes about the continuing chaos.

Eyewitnesses of the accident have also accused the railway and police administration of flaws in the system. Sahni has demanded a thorough investigation and strict action against the accused. Along with this, he has also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

PSAJK District President Srinagar Bilal Ahmad commends Education Minister Itoo's Intervention

Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Feb 16: The Private Schools Association of Jammu and Kashmir (PSAJK), District Srinagar, President Bilal Ahmad, extends its heartfelt appreciation to the Health And Education Minister, Sakeena Itoo, for her decisive and timely intervention in ensuring justice for the Class 10th students of a local private school. This proactive decision showcases the government's dedication to student welfare and its commitment to maintaining the integrity of the education sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

The PSAJK District executive Body, along with Zonal Heads, and general members acknowledges and welcomes this bold move, which has brought much-needed relief to students and parents. The intervention has not only protected the academic rights of the affected students but has also reinforced trust in the government's student-centric approach to governance.

PSAJK District Srinagar President Bilal Ahmad, stated "We hope that all our pending issues, which we have faced from time to time, will be resolved at the earliest. Our demands and expectations from this government, led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, are very high. We trust that his administration will continue to address the challenges faced by private educational institutions and work towards policy reforms that ensure smooth and efficient operations."

PSAJK expresses its sincere gratitude to the J&K Government for prioritizing educational reforms and demonstrating a commitment to fair policies for private schools. We also appreciate the intervention of the Srinagar Court, which has played

a crucial role in ensuring justice in this matter.

Furthermore, the Association congratulates PSAJK State President Dr. G.N Var Sahib for his swift and effective role in resolving the issue in a short period. His efforts exemplify the dedication of PSAJK towards safeguarding the interests of students and ensuring quality education in the region.

"While we acknowledge the government's progressive stance, we urge the administration to address other pressing concerns in the private education sector, including streamlining the school registration and recognition process to prevent further delays; establishing a single-window system for obtaining necessary No Objection Certificates (NOCs); and providing long-term registration for operational schools to ensure stability, among other critical issues."

Private schools in Jammu and Kashmir play a vital role in providing affordable, high-quality education, especially to economically weaker sections of society. Additionally, they generate employment opportunities for thousands of youth across the region. Ensuring a fair and conducive environment for private educational institutions will not only benefit students but also contribute to the overall socio-economic growth of Jammu and Kashmir.

PSAJK District Srinagar remains dedicated to upholding the rights of students, parents and private educational institutions while actively collaborating with the government to drive impactful reforms in the education sector. We are committed to ongoing dialogue with the administration to address outstanding concerns and contribute to the development of a stronger, more equitable

'Illegally Legal' Web Series team meets Vivek Bali



Top News Report

JAMMU / MUMBAI, Feb 16: In a recent gathering, the team of the popular web series 'Illegally Legal' met with prominent political leader Vivek Bali, sparking a lively discussion on the entertainment industry and beyond.

The event was attended by the talented lead actor of the series, Armaan Tahil, who has been receiving rave reviews for his stellar performance. Armaan's charisma and dedication to his craft have made him a fan favorite and his presence at the event was a testament to his growing popularity.

Veteran actor and singer Aroon Bakshi, who has been a part of the entertainment industry for decades, also graced the occasion with his presence. Aroon's wealth of experience and his iconic voice have made him a respected figure in the industry and his interactions with Vivek Bali and the team was truly enlightening.

Ajitesh Gupta, the producer of web series 'Illegally Legal', was also present at the event, sharing his insights on the making of the web series and the challenges faced by the team.

Ajitesh's passion for storytelling and his com

mitment to promoting new talent have been instrumental in the success of the series.

The gathering was a unique opportunity for the team to engage with Vivek Bali and discuss various aspects of the entertainment industry, politics, and social issues.

The event was a resounding success, with all the attendees expressing their gratitude for the opportunity to interact with each other.

The presence of Armaan Tahil, Aroon Bakshi, and Ajitesh Gupta added a touch of glamour and excitement to the event, and their interactions with Vivek Bali will be remembered for a long time.

ARTO Kishtwar constitutes District Road Safety Volunteers team

Top News Report

KISHTWAR, Feb 16: Following the directions of DC Kishtwar Rajesh Kumar Shavan, to take various steps in minimising road accidents in District Kishtwar, ARTO Kishtwar Tasleem Wani launched a unique initiative by constituting a Team of District Road Safety Volunteers.

More than 50 youth from different Blocks of Kishtwar registered themselves in the team.

ARTO Kishtwar while conducting a virtual meeting with all these volunteers sought their support in raising large scale mass awareness across whole District Kishtwar, with regard to road safety measures, Traffic rules & also to inform about traffic violations if any, happening in their locality, so that appropriate timely action may be taken to safeguard the lives of public. Feedback and suggestions were

also taken from each volunteer during the virtual meeting.

ARTO said that the sole purpose of constituting this team is to engage youth in various road safety measures and to collectively contribute in minimising road accidents in District Kishtwar.

He further said that all these volunteers shall also be properly trained through SDRF regarding rescues at accident sites.

Sadguru Madhuparamhans reveals power of 'Naam'

Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: In a soul-stirring discourse, Sadguru Madhuparamhans Ji Maharaj of Sahib Bandagi emphasized the supreme power of Naam (the divine name) as the only path to true salvation. Addressing a gathering of devoted followers in Mishriwala, he proclaimed that Naam alone has the power to liberate the soul from the cycle of birth and death, transforming it from a crow to a swan—an analogy for spiritual purification and elevation.

"With the strength of Naam, the soul does not return to the womb. This is the eternal truth. People have read the scriptures but have forgotten the real



essence," Maharaj Ji declared. He stressed that true wisdom cannot be attained merely through reading the Vedas or performing rituals but only by realizing and chanting the divine name.

Maharaj also challenged conventional spiritual practices, stating that penance, yoga, charity, and pilgrimages, while beneficial, are not enough to cross the ocean of life. "Naam is the only remedy that removes the fear of

death and frees one from the trap of time," he said, emphasizing that even the most disciplined ascetics and yogis fail to attain liberation without it.

Drawing attention to the misconception surrounding Naam, he pointed out that while many religious figures and storytellers claim to grant it, the true Naam remains with the saints. "The world is full of righteous people, generous donors, and hardworking individuals, yet without Naam, liberation is impossible," he stated.

The discourse left devotees deeply moved, reinforcing the message that true spiritual progress lies not in external rituals but in the remembrance of the divine name.

From Page No:1

18 Dead, Over Dozen injured, in stampede at New Delhi Railway Station

said Swatantra Senani Express and Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Express were delayed and the passengers of these trains were also present on platform numbers 12, 13 and 14.

"As per CMI, every hour 1,500 general tickets were sold by railways due to which the station got overcrowded and became uncontrollable. There was a stampede at platform no. 14 and near escalator near platform no. 16," the DCP said.

The stampede broke out around 9.55 pm, prompting an emergency response from authorities.

One of the victims told reporters that his mother had died in the stampede.

He said, "We were travelling to our home in Chhapra, Bihar, in a group, but my mother died in the chaos. People were pushing each other."

He added, "The doctor has confirmed to us that my mother has died."

Another family member of a deceased, a woman, collapsed in grief.

Authorities dispatched rescue teams and four fire tenders to the site, Delhi Fire Services (DFS) chief Atul Garg said.

them. They were taken to hospitals for first aid, he said.

Defence Minister Rajnath in a post on X said he was pained by the deaths.

"Devastating news from New Delhi Railway Station. I am extremely pained by the loss of lives due to stampede on Railway platform. In this hour of grief, my thoughts are with the bereaved families. Praying for the speedy of the injured," he wrote.

Delhi LG VK Saxena expressed his grief at the deaths in a post on X, but later edited it, removing the bits where he mentioned the casualties.

In his original post, Saxena said there was an "unfortunate and tragic" incident of "loss of lives and injuries" due to "disorder and stampede" at the New Delhi Railway Station. "My deepest condolences to the families of victims of this tragedy."

However, after about 15 minutes Saxena edited his post to delete the reference to deaths. No explanation was given.

One of the passengers, Dharmendra Singh, said, "I was going to Prayagraj but many trains were running late or were cancelled. The station was overcrowded. There were far more people than I have ever seen at this station. In front of me, six or seven women were taken away on stretchers."

Another passenger, Pramod Chaurasia, said, "I had a sleeper-class ticket for Purushottam Express but even those with confirmed tickets could not board the train. One of my friends and a female passenger got stuck in the crowd. There was too much push-

ing and jostling. We managed to stay safe by waiting outside with our children."

Before the deaths were confirmed, Railway Board's Information and Publicity, executive Dilip Kumar, told agency that a "stampede-like" situation occurred due to a large footfall and several people collapsed.

"So far, four special trains have been released for passenger convenience, and more are being considered. Arrangements are being made for additional special trains," he said.

US Plane lands in Amritsar: One deportee claims they were shackled; Two arrested for murder

homes, telling how fraudulent travel agents duped them after taking huge sums of money and promising them legal entry to the US.

Among the fresh batch of deportees, 65 are from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, two each from Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Most of them are aged 18 to 30, as per the sources.

Daljit Singh, who was among the deportees who reached Amritsar on Saturday night, claimed they were handcuffed with their legs chained during the journey.

Last time too the deportees had claimed they were in shackles.

"Our legs were chained and hands were also cuffed," Daljit told reporters in Hoshiarpur.

Daljit, a native of Kurala Kalan village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, while replying to a question, said he was taken through the 'donkey route' — an illegal and risky pathway used by migrants to enter the US.

Daljit's wife Kamalpreet Kaur said her husband was deceived by a travel agent who promised him a direct flight to the US but instead took him via the donkey route. Most of the family members of the second batch of deportees looked in a state of shock, with many saying they raised money by pledging farm land and cattle to send them abroad for a bright future.

A relative of Gurjinder Singh (27), a deportee, told reporters the family sold an acre of land and spent nearly Rs 50-55 lakh to send him abroad.

"The travel agent promised to send him legally, but he later took him through a donkey route," Gurjinder's relative said.

Punjab NRI Affairs Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal and Power Minister Harbhajan Singh met some of the deportees at the airport on Saturday night and said the state government stood by them like a rock. One of the deportees told Dhaliwal that he along with his cousin spent Rs 40 lakh each for reaching the US. Both belong to a village near Kalanaur in Punjab's Gurdaspur district.

Dhaliwal said the government will send the travel agents who duped

the youths behind bars and urged the deportees to come forward and lodge their complaints.

Inauguration of Vande Bharat Train service to Kashmir Valley postponed

Specially designed for extreme weather conditions, the Vande Bharat train can operate at minus 20 degrees Celsius temperature.

The train has state-of-the-art facilities including fully air-conditioned coaches equipped with electric outlets, reading lights, CCTV cameras, automatic doors, bio-vacuum toilets, Sensor-based water taps and a Passenger information system.

The coaches have wider windows with roller blinds and overhead racks for luggage.

The windshield of the train's driver has an advanced defrost system that allows clear vision in moist and high-humidity weather conditions.

The 150 km distance between Udhampur and Baramulla would be covered within two and a half hours. The initial swapping of trains at Katra will be dispensed with by August 15 when the Jammu railway station will be upgraded.

The commercial trial of the USBRL has already been completed and this 70-year-old dream of the people of Kashmir is now waiting just for its formal inauguration by Prime Minister Modi.

Gulmarg's iconic

Gondola ride: A must-experience attraction for tourists

flocking to experience the Gondola ride. A group of tourists from Mumbai, led by a tour leader, expressed their excitement about experiencing the ride. "We're thrilled to be here and enjoy the Gondola service in Gulmarg," said the tour leader. Speaking with ANI, he said, "I am from Mumbai, and I am a leader of this tour from Veena World Company. Our guests are very excited to enjoy the Gulmarg's Gondola, so I am excited to enjoy it. You can see them, so very excited." Another tourist, Vikas from Delhi, praised the ride, saying, "The Gondola is very good, and the views of the snow-capped mountains and meadows are breathtaking." He advised visitors to plan their trip during the peak snow season, ideally after January 15th. The Gondola ride consists of two stages. The first stage takes visitors to Kangdoori, an intermediate station that serves as a gateway to various trekking routes and skiing areas. The second stage whisks tourists away to the breathtaking summit of Apharwat, offering panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. With its stunning vistas and efficient design, the Gondola ride has become a blessing for Gulmarg, attracting tourists from far and wide. Even on busy days, the ride remains a must-experience attraction, with visitors eagerly waiting in line to soak in the natural beauty of Gulmarg.

BigBloc Construction Ltd reports Revenue from Operations of Rs. 56.82 crore in Q3FY25, rise of 10% Q-o-Q

SURAT (GUJARAT), Feb 16 (Agencies): BigBloc Construction Limited, one of the largest manufacturers of Aerated Autoclaved Concrete (AAC) Blocks, Bricks and ALC Panels in India has reported Revenue from Operations of Rs. 56.82 crore during Q3FY25 ended December 2024, rise of 10% Q-o-Q as compared to operational revenue of Rs. 51.66 crore in Q2FY25 ended September 2024. EBITDA for Q3FY25 stood at Rs. 6.11 crore (EBITDA Margin 10.8%). Net Profit (Total Comprehensive Income) for Q3FY25 was reported at Rs. 2.05 crore.

The capacity utilization at Starbigbloc Building Material Ltd and BigBloc Building Elements Pvt Ltd for the third quarter was 75% and 68%. The consolidated capacity utilisation was 53%. Promoter Group have further increased their stake to 72.63% as of December 2024, acquiring 2,01,500 shares from the open market in the December quarter.

SIAM Cement BigBloc Construction Technologies Pvt Ltd, a joint venture between BigBloc Construction Ltd and Thailand's SCG International, achieved notable success with its AAC wall product. Company recently received IIT product test certification for "ZMARTBUILD WALL by NXTBLOC," a new product for the Indian market. SCG BigBloc is the only company in India capable of supplying 20-foot walls, which were previously imported.

Highlights:-

- Joint venture company, Siam Cement BigBloc Construction bags Tata Project's order for India's first Semiconductor unit of Micron in Sanand, Gujarat

- The company's entry into construction chemicals--Block Jointing Mortar, Ready Mix Plaster, and Tile Adhesives--marks a strategic expansion into high-demand building materials.

- BigBloc Building Elements Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary, has completed Phase 2 expansion at its Wada facility, doubling its manufacturing capacity from 2.5 lakh to 5 lakh cubic meters per annum.

- With the new solar plant, BigBloc constructions and subsidiaries will achieve 3475 KW of solar output

- Company has reported robust 3 year Revenue CAGR of 33% and EBITDA CAGR of 66%

The promoter group increased holding in the company to 72.63% as of December



2024

The company also secured a Rs. 4.5 crore work order from Tata Projects Ltd for supplying and installing 2 lakh square feet of 100 mm AAC panels at Micron India's semiconductor factory in Sanand, Gujarat. This project, expected to be completed in three months, marks the JV's first major order since commencing operations at India's first AAC wall plant in Kheda, Gujarat, earlier this year. The Joint venture plant at Kheda, built with an investment of Rs. 65 crore, has an annual capacity of 2.5 lakh cubic meters and produces large-format AAC wall products (8-20 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 3-8 inches thick). BigBloc Construction holds a 52% stake in the JV, while SCG International holds 48%, marking SCG Group's first investment in India.

Narayan Saboo, BigBloc Construction Ltd said, "The performance of the quarter was primarily impacted by lower demand due to Diwali festival and Elections in Maharashtra. The Umargaon plant underwent a planned technology upgrade, temporarily halting operations since May 18, 2024. With the upgrade completed on October 16, the plant has resumed operations and will gradually scale up production. The company's expansion into construction chemicals, including Block Jointing Mortar, Ready Mix Plaster, and Tile Adhesives, marks a strategic move

into high-demand segments. With a focus on innovation, efficiency, and growth, company aims to maximize stakeholder value in the near term."

Company has introduced NXTGRIP Tile Adhesives, along with its trusted brands NXTFIX and NXTPLAST, ensuring superior bonding, strength, and performance for diverse construction needs.

At the AGM on August 29, 2024, the company approved a 1:1 bonus equity share issue and an increase in authorized share capital from Rs. 15 crore to Rs. 30 crore, divided into 15 crore equity shares of Rs. 2 each.

For the Nine months ended December 2024, the company reported a revenue from operations of Rs. 160.05 crore, EBITDA of Rs. 23.43 crore (EBITDA Margin 14.64% and Net Profit of Rs. 8.73 crore).

BigBloc Building Elements Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary, has completed the Phase 2 expansion of its AAC block manufacturing plant in Wada, Maharashtra, doubling its capacity from 2.5 lakh to 5 lakh cubic meters per annum. This milestone positions BigBloc Constructions Ltd as one of India's largest AAC block manufacturers.

Additionally, a 625 KW solar rooftop system was commissioned at the Wada plant alongside the expansion.

Company is also strengthening its sustainability efforts by expanding solar capacity. With the additional 1350 KW solar rooftop system at the new JV facility of Siam Cement BigBloc, company's total solar capacity across the Company and its subsidiaries will reach to 3475 KW, reinforcing its commitment to sustainability.

Incorporated in 2015, BigBloc Construction Ltd is one of the largest and only listed AAC block manufacturer in India, with a 1.3 million cbm annual capacity across plants in Gujarat (Kheda, Umargaon, Kapadvanj) and Maharashtra (Wada). The company, which markets its products under the 'NXTBLOC' brand, is one of the few in the AAC industry to generate carbon credits. With over 2,000 completed projects and 1,500+ in the pipeline, The company's clients include Lodha, Adani Realty, IndiaBulls Real Estate, DB Realty, Prestige, Piramal, Oberoi Realty, Tata Projects, Shirke Group, Shapoorji Pallonji Group, Raheja, PSP Projects, L&T, Sunteck, Dosti Group, Purvankara Ltd, DY Patil, Taj Hotels, Godrej Properties, Torrent Pharma, GAIL among others.

PwC India announces major leadership restructuring effective from April 2025

Arnab Basu will be the firm's new Chief Industries Officer, moving on from his previous role as the Advisory leader.



NEW DELHI, Feb 16 (Agencies): Consultancy firm PwC has made key leadership announcements in India that will be effective from 1 April 2025.

These announcements were made by Chairperson Sanjeev Krishan, who was recently re-elected for a second term. Krishan said that PwC achieved its target of USD 1 billion in revenue before the timeline.

Some key appointments include - Vivek Prasad to take over as the firm's Chief Commercial Officer. He will be responsible for overseeing the commercial strategy for the firm and the firm's growth across its lines of service as well as in key growth areas including GCCs.

Arnab Basu will be the firm's new Chief Industries Officer, moving on from his previous role as the Advisory leader. In his role, Basu will focus on demand gen-

eration in priority areas and drive client outreach programmes to capture emerging client segments.

"In the last four years, we have made investments in areas that are strategic to our growth and have been aligned with the larger Aspirational India story. We set out to achieve the USD 1Billion revenue mark and achieved that well before our timeline," said Sanjeev Krishan, Chairperson, PwC in India.

He added, "We have more than doubled our number of people and have significantly enhanced our presence with domestic businesses as well as key Alliance partners. Through these announcements, we have a few portfolio realignments along with a few newly appointed leaders joining our leadership team--each bringing deep expertise, strategic vision and

fresh perspectives."

Manpreet Singh Ahuja moves on from his role as Chief Digital Officer to become the firm's Leader for Clients and Alliances. In this role, Manpreet will work extensively on deepening go-to-market strategies with key alliance partners, with a heightened focus on the firm's domestic clients.

Dinesh Arora takes over as the new leader for the Advisory practice, moving on from his role as the Deals leader of the firm. Dinesh will be supported by Dheeraj Gangrade, as the Deputy Advisory Leader, a role created to bring focus to the next line of leaders for the firm.

Sudipta Ghosh, who has earlier led the firm's Data and Analytics Practice, will move into the newly constituted role of the Chief Delivery Officer.

The firm also announced the formation of a Brand and Public Policy function, which will be headed by Ruchi Mann, who has served as the Chief Marketing Officer of the firm since July 2023. In this mandate, Ruchi will work on building long-term strategic brand alliances for the firm as well as deepen the firm's outreach with public policy institutions.

All these appointments will come into effect from 1 April 2025.

Warmth promotes dengue spread; effects of rainfall on its outbreak can vary: Study

NEW DELHI, Feb 16 (Agencies): While rising temperatures consistently promote the spread of dengue, rainfall could either increase or decrease the spread, depending on how long a region has experienced a dry season, a study has found.

As warmer, humid conditions, driven by climate change, increase dengue outbreaks, including in countries previously unaffected, the study, published in the journal Science, detailed how temperature and rainfall interact, and affect disease spread.

Researchers, led by those from Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology and the Institute for Basic Science, stressed on the role of local climate conditions in spreading dengue, thereby warranting tailored strategies in preventing disease.

Dengue is a viral infection, caused by the bite of an infected mosquito. Climates of tropical and sub-tropical regions are known to favour the disease's spread, mostly in urban and semi-urban areas.

Focussing on 16 regions of the Philippines, known for their diverse climate, the researchers analysed five years' data, record-

ed between January 2015 and December 2019.

While rising temperatures were consistently related with a higher rate of dengue spread across the regions, rainfall was found to increase disease spread in eastern regions and decrease it in western ones.

The team explained that the contrasting effects of how rainfall affected the spread of dengue depended on a "previously overlooked" critical factor--'variation in dry season length', which refers to the differences in how long a dry season (with little to no rainfall) lasts between varied geographic regions.

In regions seeing fewer changes in the duration of dry season, rainfall tended to flush out stagnant water, reducing breeding sites for mosquitoes, thereby suppressing dengue spread, the researchers said.

However, in regions experiencing more changes in dry season length, sporadic rainfall created new breeding sites and weakened the flushing effect, thereby driving an increase in mosquito populations and dengue cases.

"Our findings provide robust evidence for how climatic factors influence dengue

transmission in diverse environments. This represents a significant step toward understanding how climate change may impact mosquito-borne diseases globally," first author Olive R. Cawiding, from Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology and the Institute for Basic Science, said.

To validate their findings, the researchers extended their analysis to Puerto Rico, another region with diverse climate patterns. Data from municipalities, including San Juan, Adjuntas, and Ponce, covering a 20-year period from 1986 to 2005 was analysed.

The findings revealed similar patterns in how rainfall regulated the spread of dengue and "aligned with the results from the Philippine data".

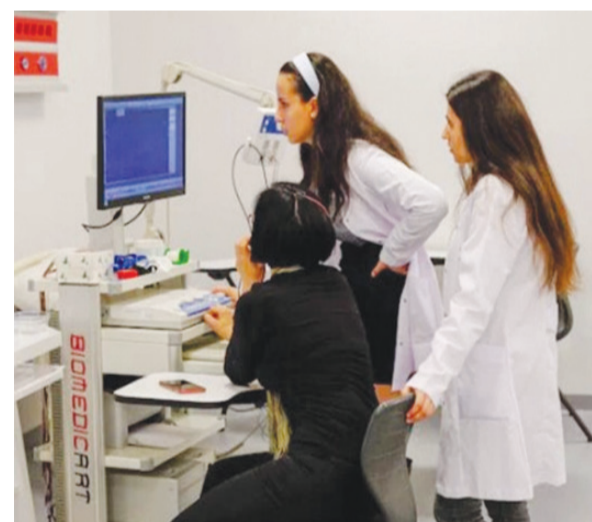
"We found that temperature consistently increased dengue incidence throughout all the regions, while rainfall effects differed depending on the variation in dry season length, a factor previously overlooked," the authors wrote.

"Our findings emphasise the need for tailored prevention strategies based on local climate conditions, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach," they wrote.

How brain trauma triggers Alzheimer's disease: Study

LUND (SWEDEN), Feb 16 (Agencies): A study reveals that traumatic brain injury alters the small vessels in the brain, resulting in an accumulation of amyloid beta -- a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. The findings suggest that vascular dysfunction could be an early driver in neurodegenerative disorders rather than being caused by neuronal damage.

A research team at the strategic research area MultiPark, Lund University, argues that the blood vessels in the brain hold the keys to future therapies. Brain trauma usually impairs cerebral blood flow, possibly through pathological changes in the vascular smooth muscle



cells in the vascular wall. Niklas Marklund, professor at Lund University and neurosurgical consultant at Skane University Hospital, took a deeper look into the molecular details with the experimental scientist Ilknur Ozen.

In collaboration with Uppsala University, they investigated brain tissue from 15 patients, surgically removed due to bleeding and swelling within a week following their traumatic brain injuries.

They found that the

changes in the vascular smooth muscle cells coincided with increased aggregation of amyloid-beta, a protein linked to Alzheimer's disease.

"We were surprised to see that even young patients displayed this accumulation of amyloid beta together with the vascular alterations caused by the brain trauma," says Ilknur Ozen, first author of the study.

She continues: "Our findings suggest that vascular changes may be more important for neurodegeneration than previously thought."

Niklas Marklund adds: "This challenges the existing paradigm in neurodegeneration-related diseases by indicating that vascular

dysfunction could be an early event that triggers the progression of amyloid-related diseases rather than being caused by neuronal damage."

While ageing leads to functional changes in the vasculature, brain trauma may exacerbate and accelerate these processes even in younger patients.

Still, far from everybody affected by brain trauma develops Alzheimer's disease. "We are not there yet, but hopefully, increased knowledge about what happens at a molecular level in the blood vessel cells following brain trauma will open up possibilities for novel treatments," concludes Niklas Marklund.

Depression accelerates onset of chronic health conditions by over 30 percent, study finds

NEW DELHI, Feb 16 (Agencies): Adults with a history of depression may develop chronic physical conditions, such as, osteoarthritis and hypertension, 30 percent faster than those with no history of mental disorder, a study has found.

Researchers from the University of Edinburgh, UK, analyzed health data from over 1.7 lakh participants in the UK Biobank for an average of seven years. The study, published in PLOS Medicine, examined the risk of developing 69 physical conditions among individuals with a history of depression.

Researchers said that treating depression should, therefore, involve methods that help

manage both mental and physical health.

The mental disorder, marked by a persistent low mood, is known to heighten one's chance of developing heart disease or diabetes, with previous studies having looked at a patient's risk of developing a small number of illnesses, according to the authors.

Findings showed that participants with depression had an average of three physical conditions, with hypertension being the most common, compared to two conditions in those without a history of depression. Over the study period, those with depression developed an additional 0.2

physical conditions per year, compared to 0.16 in those without the disorder.

"The most common new conditions were osteoarthritis (15.7 per cent of those with depression at baseline vs 12.5 per cent without), hypertension (12.9 per cent vs 12 per cent) and gastroesophageal reflux disease (13.8 per cent vs 9.6 per cent)," the authors wrote.

The results revealed that a history of depression could be a marker indicating a risk of developing physical conditions in the long-term.

The study highlighted that existing healthcare systems primarily focus on treating con-

ditions individually rather than addressing multiple coexisting health issues. The authors recommended an integrated approach to managing both mental and physical health for better patient outcomes.

Risk factors such as smoking, high body mass index, and low physical activity were also identified as contributors to the faster development of chronic conditions among individuals with depression. The study found that 18 per cent of participants had a history of depression at the start, with widespread pain, sleep disturbances, stressful life events, loneliness, and obesity more common in this group.

Unforgettable moments from ICC Champions Trophy history

With the ICC Champions Trophy set to return in Pakistan and the UAE, we take a look back at five of the most iconic moments from past editions of the tournament, according to the official website of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

DUBAI, Feb 16 (Agencies): With the ICC Champions Trophy set to return in Pakistan and the UAE, we take a look back at five of the most iconic moments from past editions of the tournament, according to the official website of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Star batter Virender Sehwag turned the game with his off-spin as India qualified for the final of the 2002 edition with an exciting triumph over South Africa in Colombo.

Sehwag had already contributed a splendid half-century as India posted a competitive total of 261/9 at R Premadasa Stadium, but the Proteas appeared in control during the run chase as they took the score to 200 with seven wickets still in hand and nine overs still remaining.

Enter Sehwag, who took the key wickets of Mark Boucher, Jacques Kallis and Lance Klusener to seal an enthralling victory for India and book their place in the final against Sri Lanka.

Things looked bleak for the West Indies when key batter Shivnarine Chanderpaul was dismissed and the Caribbean side still required 81 runs for vic-



tory with just two wickets in hand against England in the 2004 title decider at The Oval in London, but an incredible ninth-wicket partnership between Courtney Browne and Ian Bradshaw paved the way for a remarkable run chase.

Browne and Bradshaw put on an unbeaten 71 as the West Indies successfully chased down England's decent total of 217 with seven deliveries remaining as the Caribbean side claimed their inaugural title.

England had a day out in this high-scoring encounter at Centurion in 2009 as they booked

their place in the knockout stages with an eye-catching triumph over the host nation South Africa.

Owais Shah was the hero with the bat as he smashed six sixes in an innings of 98, while pace duo James Anderson and Stuart Broad picked up three wickets apiece in reply as the Proteas fell agonisingly short in reply.

Graeme Smith played a lone hand for South Africa with a brilliant 141, but that wasn't enough as England progressed to the semi-finals with plenty of momentum.

Low-scoring contests can often

lead to climatic finishes and that was certainly the case in Cardiff in 2013 as New Zealand pulled off a remarkable one-wicket triumph over Sri Lanka.

Not many would have expected Sri Lanka's low total of 138 to be competitive, but pacer Lasith Malinga had other ideas as he ripped through the Black Caps' middle-order to reduce New Zealand to 122/8 in reply.

It was left to Tim Southee and Mitchell McClenaghan to guide the Kiwis over the line, but not before Sri Lanka had threatened to produce a massive upset.

It was a memorable day at The Oval in London as Pakistan clinched their first Champions Trophy title with an emphatic victory over arch-rival India.

Opener Fakhar Zaman set the ball rolling with a superb century as Pakistan put 338/4 on the board and an inspired bowling performance from Mohammad Amir ensured that score was more than enough.

Amir tore through the heart of India's top-order by dismissing Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in quick succession and India could never recover as they were bundled out for just 158 in reply.

KKR-RCB clash to kickstart IPL 2025 on March 22, final on May 25



NEW DELHI, Feb 16 (Agencies): The defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) will face Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) in the tournament opener of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 season, ESPNcricinfo reported.

The season opener will be played at Eden Gardens on March 22, with the final scheduled for May 25.

The official schedule has not been unveiled

yet. ESPNcricinfo reported that last year's runners-up Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) will kickstart their campaign against Sanju Samson-led Rajasthan Royals (RR) on March 23 in the afternoon. The 'El-Clasico' of IPL, a clash between five-time champions Mumbai Indians (MI) and Chennai Super Kings (CSK), is set to take place in the evening at Chepauk on the same day.

The 10-team cash-rich league will kickstart 12 days after the ICC Champions Trophy final at March 9 and will be played across 12 venues, which includes 10 home venues of each franchise plus (second venue for RR) and Dharamsala (second venue for Punjab Kings). The opening fixture will involve two teams with new captains. RCB recently appointed Rajat Patidar as their new skipper, while Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) have not announced their successor to Shreyas Iyer so far. RCB finished at fourth last season, staging an inspiring run to play-offs with six successive wins after just one win in the first eight matches. However, scales have favoured KKR against RCB, with the three-time champions having beaten RCB eight out of 12 times at Kolkata.

Punjab Kings (PBKS), who have a new captain and coach duo of Shreyas and Ricky Ponting, will play four matches at Punjab in Mullanpur Stadium, with three of their matches coming in Dharamsala.

Controversial run-out calls spark debate as Delhi Capitals edge Mumbai Indians in last-ball thriller

VADODARA, Feb 16 (Agencies): Three controversial run-out decisions played a pivotal role in Delhi Capitals' (DC) dramatic last-ball victory over Mumbai Indians (MI) in Vadodara. In all three instances, third umpire Gayathri Venugopalan ruled the batters not out, seemingly overlooking the moment the LED stumps first lit up as the point when the wicket was considered broken, as per ESPNcricinfo.

Commentating on the match, former India captain Mithali Raj expressed her view that two of these decisions concerning Shikha Pandey and Radha Yadav should have gone in MI's favour.

"Pandey was given not out while the batter had the bat on the line," Raj said while speaking on JioHotstar after the match, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

"When you dive and your bat first hits the ground [inside the crease] and then it [bounces up] because you have to dive full stretch, then it is not out. [But] with Radha Yadav, we can see the blade of the bat up. It is nowhere touching any part of the ground [inside] the crease [when the LED stumps light up]. That means she is out. The bat was never in the crease. That is pretty much out," she said.

According to Appendix D of the WPL 2025 playing conditions, specific guidelines define when the wicket is deemed broken when LED stumps are in use.

The first contentious decision involved Shikha Pandey, who faced her first delivery in the 18th over of DC's chase. After missing a wild swing, she attempted a quick bye but was sent back by Niki Prasad. A direct hit at the striker's end led to a run-out review. Replays revealed that Pandey's bat was on the crease line when the LED stumps first illuminated. However, the third umpire based the decision on a subsequent frame where

the bails were fully dislodged--by which time Pandey's bat was safely inside the crease--resulting in a not-out verdict.

MI captain Harmanpreet Kaur was visibly displeased and engaged in a discussion with on-field umpires N Janani and Anish Sahasrabudhe. The bye reduced DC's target to 24 off 14 balls, though Pandey was eventually run out midway through the 19th over.

Just two deliveries later, another mix-up left Radha Yadav diving to reach the striker's end while Prasad was stranded mid-pitch. The throw was directed to the striker's end--had it gone to the non-striker's end, Prasad would have been clearly out. Wicketkeeper Yastika Bhatia broke the stumps as Radha dived with her bat raised, seemingly not touching the ground beyond the crease line when the LED stumps first lit up.

Yet again, the third umpire disregarded that moment, focusing on a later frame when the bails were completely removed by which time Radha had made her ground. She was declared not out and responded by hitting a six off the next delivery, reducing the equation to 10 runs needed from the final over.

With two runs required from the last two balls, Prasad was caught at deep midwicket, bringing Arundhati Reddy to the crease. On the final delivery, Reddy lofted the ball over cover, narrowly evading Harmanpreet's outstretched hands. As the batters scrambled back for the winning second run, Harmanpreet fired a sharp throw to Bhatia, who broke the stumps while Reddy dived full-stretch. Once again, the initial frame showed Reddy's bat on the crease line when the LED stumps lit up, but the third umpire relied on a subsequent frame, ruling that "the batter has made her ground before the wicket is completely dislodged."

SWOT Analysis: Australia, South Africa favourites to enter semis from Group B

BENGALURU, Feb 16 (Agencies): Australia will be without their premier pacers but their envious pedigree in ICC tournaments make them favourites to progress to the semifinals of the Champions Trophy from Group B along with South Africa.

But they will face stiff challenges from England and Afghanistan.

Here's the Group B SWOT analysis.

Strength: No other team has a better record in global events — six 50-over World Cups, one T20 World Cup and two Champions Trophies make them the most fearsome white ball unit.

They have a model ODI batting line-up, which can do the shape-shifting with the ebb and flow of the game. Skipper Steve Smith, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Jake Fraser McGurk, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell etc can be a handful in any conditions.

Weakness: They will be without Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, and that means the batters will have to do the heavy

lifting in the tournament to give that extra cushion of runs to the bowlers.

Opportunity: It's a chance to assert their dominance in 50-over format and the Antipodeans would not want to miss it, and that desire should be their driving force against a set of group mates who are not exactly firing.

Threat: They are coming into the CT after a 0-2 defeat against Sri Lanka in the recent ODI series. The middling form of Labuschagne and McGurk will be a concern.

England
Strength: On the paper, the Old Blighty have the most powerful white ball batting. If the likes of Jos Buttler, Phil Salt, Harry Brook, Joe Root and Liam Livingstone fire in unison, it will be a nightmare for bowlers.

Their leg-spinner Adil Rashid is in good form as he has shown in the recent series against India, and he will have an important role to play on pitches that may give appreciable help to tweakers.

Weakness: But that aforementioned batting

line-up came a cropper against Indian spinners, as England crashed to a 0-3 series defeat. Apart from Root and Buttler, none of the other batters looked comfortable against spin.

Opportunity: England have played in Pakistan in the not so distant past, and their first-hand knowledge of conditions might come handy. The overall form of Root and Buttler is encouraging as well.

Threat: Afghanistan, having an array of spinners, will be a huge threat to England. The former world champions also have only one spinner in their line-up — Rashid, and will be hoping that Livingstone will support him with his mixed bag.

South Africa
Strength: After India, South Africa, perhaps, has the most varied line-up in the tournament.

They have anchors like Temba Bavuma and Aiden Markram, and smashers such as Heinrich Klaasen and David Miller. They have a balanced bowling unit led by pacer Kagiso Rabada and spinner Keshav Maharaj. They should

be able to tide over most of the circumstances.

Weakness: Despite all the said strength factors, they failed to enter the recent tri-series final, losing the crunch match to Pakistan, a reminder to that very deep and old wound. They might also feel the absence of pacer Anrich Nortje, who was withdrawn after an injury.

Opportunity: It's a fine chance for them to add an ICC trophy to erase that 'C' tag around their necks, now as heavy as a five-pound millstone.

Threat: Australia and Afghanistan can throw a spanner in the works. To avoid that, SA will require a better outing from their bowlers, who recently failed to defend a 350-plus target against Pakistan.

Afghanistan
Strength: They have a bunch of cricketers who have been playing together for a long time. Rashid Khan, Hashmathullah Shahidi, Gulbadin Naib and Rahmat Shah have seen and tamed many oppositions, including some traditional powerhouses.

They will also be playing in conditions closer

to their home and it gives them a certain edge. Their march to the semifinals of the T20 World Cup 2024, is an underliner to their talent and confidence.

Weakness: They are coming into the CT without proper ODI match practice as their last 50-over appearance was against Zimbabwe in December, 2024. It may reflect in their outings here against superior opponents.

Opportunity: Afghanistan will play all their group matches in Karachi and Lahore, where spin has a vital role. The Afghans have a rich line of slow bowlers in Rashid, Mohammad Nabi and young tyros Noor Ahmad and Nangeyalia Kharote.

Threat: Their middle-order batting of late has been dawdling, putting a lot of pressure on openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran to churn out runs consistently. They have been doing it for the last year or so, but they would certainly prefer some more help from the likes of Shahidi, Naib and Azmatullah Omarzai.

Focus on Rohit and Kohli as Team India departs to Dubai for Champions Trophy

MUMBAI, Feb 16 (Agencies): Dressed nattily in a white T-shirt and black tracks, Rohit Sharma got down from his car, and walked towards his teammates at the departure lounge amid loud calls of 'Rohit bhai' and 'Rohit sir' by fans waiting near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport entrance.

Most of the squad members arrived in the team bus including head coach Gautam Gambhir, vice-captain Shubman Gill, and star batter Virat Kohli. The stars obliged some fans by signing autographs or waving

at a few of them.

Soon, the team boarded an afternoon flight to Dubai for the upcoming Champions Trophy amid heightened optimism of netting another global trophy after winning the T20 World Cup last June.

A Jasprit Bumrah-less India will open their campaign against Bangladesh on February 20 in Dubai before the much-anticipated blockbuster against traditional rivals Pakistan February 23, and then the Men in Blue will take on New Zealand on March 2 to round off their league engagements.

The confidence—of the fans and the team—has been boosted by India's recent 3-0 ODI series whitewash at home over England.

Those supporters assembled at the Mumbai airport will be hoping that the icons led by Rohit and Kohli will pull off another triumph like they did in the West Indies last year.

One last opportunity for greats?

Few months ago, Hardik Pandya had walked out with the T20 World Cup trophy hoisted on his shoulders to join a sea of passionate fans on the streets near



the Wankhede Stadium for an open bus parade.

If those scenes are to be repeated next month, then India will need

some runs from Rohit and Kohli, who have copped heavy criticism after repeated failures in Test cricket.

But they replied in kind, as Rohit made a characteristically fluent hundred — a 90-ball 119 in Cuttack ODI against England — and Kohli his 73rd fifty in Ahmedabad.

This might have brought them a temporary relief but a productive outing in the Champions Trophy is mandatory in the context of the duo's future in top-flight cricket.

With the emphasis firmly on hitting the next World Test Championship cycle from June and building a team for the 2027 50-over World Cup, the Ajit Agarkar-chaired selection panel

will closely observe how the two veterans fare in Dubai.

Kohli needs 37 runs to become the third batter ever in ODI history to make 14,000 runs while Rohit is only 12 runs away from becoming the 10th batter to complete 11,000 runs. But without a trophy, those numbers will lose some heaviness around them.

A chance for young turks

A big promotion came young Gill's way when he was named the ODI vice-captain, and the batter who averages nearly 61 in the format will be keen to stamp his

authority with a fruitful outing in the Champions Trophy.

The injury-enforced absence of Bumrah is an opportunity for the likes of Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana, while Varun Chakravarty would want to prove himself as the surprise strike weapon.

A coming together of all these factors will determine whether India will touch back in Mumbai as a boisterous winning group sometime next month.

Till then fans can immerse themselves in joyous optimism.

CUJ flags off Tamil-Origin students for Kashi Tamil Sangamam

Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: The Central University of Jammu (CUJ) flagged off a group of Tamil-origin students from various departments to participate in the prestigious "Kashi Tamil Sangamam" (KTS-3.0), a flagship cultural initiative of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, under the "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat" program.

The flag-off ceremony was led by Prof. Sanjeev Jain, Vice Chancellor, in the presence of Prof. Ritu Bakshi, Dean Students' Welfare



and University Coordinator for the event, Dr. R. Sudhakar, Associate Professor, Department of National Security Studies. This initiative is part of a broader effort to foster national integration and cross-regional awareness.

The Kashi Tamil San

gagam celebrates the age-old cultural and spiritual bond between Kashi (Varanasi) and Tamil Nadu, promoting their shared heritage in literature, music, and pilgrimage.

Participants will embark on a transformative journey that

includes a sacred bath at Prayagraj—the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers—and visits to key cultural and religious sites such as Ayodhya.

Through rituals, lectures, and discussions, students will gain valuable insights into the historical, religious, and linguistic linkages between Tamil and Kashi cultures.

The event provides a unique opportunity for intercultural engagement, allowing participants to interact with scholars, artists, and peers, fostering a deeper understand-

ing and appreciation of India's rich and diverse heritage.

As part of the preparatory academic engagements, the Office of the Dean, Students' Welfare (DSW) had organized a seminar on "Sage Agastya: The Mantra Drashta (Revisiting the Contribution of Sage Agastya)", aligning with the central theme of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam.

The seminar explored the spiritual and cultural legacy of Sage Agastya, highlighting his contributions to Vedic literature and his significance in both northern and southern Indian traditions.

Development gained momentum, peace established in J&K after 2019: Dr. Pardeep

Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: The development process initiated under Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 has taken Jammu & Kashmir to new heights in all spheres, with people showering praises on the leadership of PM Modi. After, 05 August, 2019, development gained further momentum and peace was established in J&K.

Dr. Pardeep Mahotra Media Incharge, J&K BJP said this while slamming leaders of regional political parties in the UT for making false and misleading statements by linking development, peace and progress with Article 370.

Dr. Pardeep Mahotra said that Jammu & Kashmir has been damaged by the self-centered leaders of regional political parties, the most since 1947. They are trying to hoodwink the people by declaring themselves to be the well-wisher of the region, and by making attempts to seek bless-



ings of the people on issues which have no relevance today and are part of the history.

"For decades, Jammu & Kashmir and its people suffered badly due to the ill-decisions by the then successive Union governments and the state governments of Jammu & Kashmir, which were mostly headed by Congress at the Center and NC, PDP in the Jammu & Kashmir," said Dr. Pardeep Mahotra.

"The decision to abrogate Article 370 on August 05, 2019 and to turn J&K into two Union Territories, resulted in significant development in the fields related to Infrastructure, tourism, industrial development, agriculture, education, skill development, health & medical infrastructure, renewable energy, digital & IT development,

women & youth empowerment, and a marked improvement in security peace and stability," said Dr. Pardeep Mahotra.

Dr. Pardeep Mahotra said that those shedding crocodile tears for the statehood must answer that why these developments remained elusive during their rule over erstwhile J&K state and why the communities like Dogras, Kashmiris, Women, Valmiki, Paharis, Gujjars, Bakerwals, OBCs, PoJK refugees, WPRs, PwDs and others had to bear intensive pain and sorrow under their misgovernance for 70 years.

"While Narendra Modi government has been focusing on extending the most prestigious projects of connectivity, health and education, the leaders of regional parties are finding it difficult to stand in the public by the growing popularity of PM Modi and BJP," Dr. Pardeep said and added that it is, in fact, the 'Will' (Ichha Shakti) to deliver which matters and the local leaders lack it.

SDH Baderwah defeats SDH Gandoh in a friendly cricket match

Top News Report

BHADERWAH, Feb 16: In an exciting friendly one-day cricket exhibition match organized under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, SDH Baderwah defeated SDH Gandoh by 5 wickets at the Government PG College Ground, Baderwah on 16-02-2025.

Batting first after winning the toss, SDH Gandoh set a competitive target of 141 runs for the loss of 7 wickets in the allotted 20 overs. Arif Rather top-scored with

33 runs, while Dr. Farooq Saleem contributed 29 runs. For SDH Baderwah, bowlers Jahangir Mehta, Altaf Hussain, Amresh, and Kalwant Singh picked up one wicket each.

In response, SDH Baderwah successfully chased the target in 19.5 overs, losing 5 wickets along the way. Dr. Touseef Malik was the highest scorer with 32 runs, followed by Dr. Amir Malik, who added 29 runs. From SDH Gandoh, Arif Batt and Owais Malik claimed two wickets each.



For his outstanding all-round performance, Dr. Farooq Saleem of SDH Gandoh was declared Man of the Match. Later, prizes

were distributed among both teams in recognition of their participation.

Speaking on the occasion, BMO Baderwah, Dr. Mohd

Ashraf, highlighted the purpose of the event, stating, "The aim of organizing this exhibition match is to keep the health staff stress-free. Through sports, we want to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage the younger generation to engage in physical activities rather than falling into the trap of drug addiction."

The event was a great success, reinforcing the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan's message of a drug-free and healthy society through sports.

Rise above caste, strengthen Sanatan: Balbir

Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: The need to unite society and rising above caste-based discrimination has always been there in the country. All sections of society should move beyond the narrow confines of caste and strengthen the core values of Sanatan Dharma.

Balbir Ram Rattan, National General Secretary of Guru Ravidas Vishwa Mahapeeth, General Secretary of the Indian branch of the British Ravidasia

Heritage Foundation, and a member of the Begampura Vishwa Mahasabha, shared these views at Guru Ravidas Temple in Gho Manhasan. He was speaking to prominent persons from different sections of society, discussing Guru Ravidas Ji's life and his teachings on social harmony.

He emphasized that these thoughts are particularly inspired by the teachings of Sant Shiromani Guru Ravidas, who, in his time, conveyed a significant

message of social equality and justice. Guru Ravidas taught that there should be no place for caste discrimination in devotion to God and service to humanity. His teachings inspired self-respect and freedom among the oppressed and marginalized sections of society.

Guru Ravidas' life and words teach us that everyone in society should have equal rights and opportunities. He envisioned an ideal city called "Begampura," where there would be

no discrimination or social hierarchy. This ideology remains relevant today and is essential for social harmony.

To eliminate caste-based discrimination and the narrow mindset of superiority and inferiority, we must internalize Guru Ravidas ji's message. It is time to use religion as a means of unity rather than allowing it to become a source of division and discrimination. The roots of Sanatan are based on harmony, compassion, and equality, and to strength-

en it, we must rise above caste and embrace the spirit of unity.

Balbir Ram Ratan stated that he continuously travels to various places to spread Guru Ravidas ji's teachings, inspiring people to move forward in this direction and bring positive change in society.

The effort to rise above caste and strengthen the core values of Sanatan will be a significant step toward social justice and equality.

Rajinder Singh Chib, former president

of the Gho Manhasan Municipal Committee, also emphasized the need to spread message of Guru Ravidas to the masses. He stressed that everyone should contribute to strengthening the core values of Sanatan.

On this occasion, prominent attendees included Banarsi Lal, Yash Pal Angural, Sanjay Bakshi, Saul Singh, Tandav Dutt, Vijay Kumar, Madan Lal, Trilochan Singh, Harnam Singh, Bachan Lal, Rakesh Singh, and Ghar Singh.

Opposition to reservations by Kashmir centric politicians is unconstitutional, opportunistic: GLR

Top News Report

JAMMU, Feb 16: Condemning the anti-SC, anti-ST and anti-reservation stand of Kashmir centric politicians and parties BJP spokesperson and former MLC Girdhari Lal Raina has reacted sharply to orchestrated misinformation campaign against reservation policy. These parties resort to peddling lies and half-truths to appease a sectarian constituency, he added.

GL Raina outrightly rejected claims that 70 percent of the population does not have access to these jobs as baseless, provocative and misleading. This is a political witch hunt as SCs and STs did not vote for these parties including National Conference in recent elections, Raina

asserted. Why are you mixing horizontal and vertical reservations? Are you saying Persons with Disabilities or wards of Police and security personnel must not be given the mere reservation that constitution gives them or are you against reservation to people living on IB and LoC, he asked.

BJP spokesperson stated that there was no change in overall quota provided in Jammu Kashmir prior to 2019. There has been just rationalization of reservation by shifting population to ST 2 category and reducing Backward Area quota from 20 percent to 10 percent in view of this shift, Raina explained.

Similarly, the OBC population that gets

reservation automatically gets reduced from the total population competing for open merit category. If there is anything unjustified in reservation policy of Jammu Kashmir it is continued backwardness of certain areas because of the misrule of these parties for around seven decades.

How do you justify backwardness of areas in the same breath in which you claim Jammu Kashmir was better off prior to the 2019 historic decision, he asked?

GL Raina assured these disadvantaged sections of population about BJP's principled stand on reservations. No one will be allowed to tamper with the constitutional right of SCs and STs or Disabled sections of population.

Army conducts Lecture on Government Welfare Schemes in Bihota




Top News Report

DODA, Feb 16: As part of an ongoing effort to educate the local population about various government welfare initiatives, a lecture on "Government Welfare Schemes" was organized in Bihota on February 15, 2025. During the session, Officer of

Indian Army elaborated on key government schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), financial assistance for skill training, Vidya Kaushal, and skill development programs for minorities. He provided in-depth insights into these schemes, aiming to empower youth with

knowledge and encourage them to pursue productive and progressive careers.

The initiative was well-received by the attendees, with a total of 47 youth and locals participating. Expressing their appreciation, participants remarked that such informative sessions play a crucial role in guiding the younger generation towards making informed decisions and becoming responsible citizens. The event successfully contributed to raising awareness and fostering a sense of empowerment among the local youth.



Government Of India Certified Course

MASTER MATHEMATICS

with the Power of Vedic Maths

Enhance Your Child's Interest in Maths!

20+ years Experienced Trainer

100% LIVE

249 Days Course

Rs. 249/- Only

249 Days of Learning
79 LIVE Classes
3 Sessions Per Week

Speedy Calculations
Mental Maths for class 5th onwards
Creative Problem-Solving
Helpful for all entrance exams (UPSC/PCS/CLAT/Banking/JEE/Army etc.)

Book Your Spot:
7087312888, 7087313888, 7087871871

Link in Description

