

Manufacturing push in Budget draws strong industry support

From the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Parthiv Neotia, Senior Vice President, called the Budget “very inclusive,” highlighting focus on AI, semiconductors, healthcare and MSMEs. Keshav Bhajanka, Vice President, ICC, termed it a “steady Budget in the right direction.” Dr Rajeev Singh, Director General, ICC, described it as “strategic and balanced,” supporting both immediate economic needs and long-term nation building.

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What's cheaper, what's costlier for consumers, industry in Union Budget 2026



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the 'Union Budget 2026-27' in the Lok Sabha, in New Delhi.

MI News Service, New Delhi : Marking her ninth consecutive Budget, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday presented the Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27, proposing several exemptions on customs duties across sectors, including critical minerals, nuclear energy, batteries, electronics, defence and aviation, among others. Sitharaman said that these exemptions are aimed at simplifying tax rates, supporting domestic manufacturing, boosting exports, and removing old duty exemptions that are no longer needed. The latest exemptions are likely to make several products cheaper for consumers and the industry. Accordingly, Sitharaman announced that duty on goods imported for personal use will be halved from 20 per cent to 10 per cent, while patients will get relief as basic customs duty has been removed on 17 cancer drugs.

To drive manufacturing, duties are being cut on select electronic parts too. Special Economic Zones units will get one-time relief to sell limited output in the domestic market at lower rates, and biogas will be excluded from excise calculations on biogas-blended compressed natural gas (CNG).

Among the items that will cost less are Solar panels, Personal-use items, 17 cancer drugs, seven rare disease drugs, Electric vehicle batteries, Aircraft components, Sports equipment, Smartphones, Leather products, Microwave ovens and Lithium battery components. While numerous essential products will experience a reduction or exemption in customs duties, certain goods, particularly among luxury and imported products, will see higher costs.

Sitharaman also added that exemptions on items that are now made in India or rarely imported will be withdrawn. "To continue weeding out long continuing customs duty exemptions, I propose to remove certain exemptions on items which are being manufactured in India or where the imports are negligible," she said.

According to the Union Budget 2026, the government has withdrawn duty exemptions on coffee roasting, brewing and vending machines. As a result, imported coffee machines will become more expensive, whether used at cafés or at home. Additionally, fertilisers are also likely to become costlier. The government has ended import duty exemptions on chemicals such as ammonium phosphate and ammonium nitrophosphate, which are used to make fertilisers and complex fertilisers. Television equipment, cameras and other filmmaking gear imported from abroad will also attract higher taxes.

Union Budget 2026-27 pushes on creating jobs, easing US tariffs distress and bolstering fund flows

MI News Service, New Delhi : Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, presenting the Union Budget 2026-27 on Sunday, made a slew of announcements focussed on infrastructure and services sector, thrust on capital expenditure, and custom duty cuts to boost exports. In her 87 minute long speech in the Lok Sabha this morning, she said the government has chosen the path of "reforms over rhetoric", delivering growth rate of around 7% for India. Presenting her record 9th straight Union Budget in Parliament, the Finance minister said while there were no changes in income tax slabs, there will be rightful implementation of the New Income Tax Act from April 1, 2026.

She said the 2026-27 Budget focused on three Kartavyas: accelerating and sustaining economic growth, fulfilling aspirations of Indian people, and ensuring that every family, sector and region has access to resources amenities and opportunities for meaningful participation in Sakha Vikas. The Budget proposed tax holiday till 2047 for foreign companies that provide cloud services to customers worldwide by using data centres in the country. This is the first time in the history of India that the Union Budget was presented on a Sunday. Earlier the Economic Survey 2025-26, tabled in Parliament on Thursday, estimated India's GDP growth rate for FY2026-27 at



President of India Draupadi Murmu shows a unique gesture to Finance Minister Dr. Nirmala Sitharaman as the former feeds the latter with curd as a part of ritual at Rashtrapati Bhawan on Sunday.

6.8% - 7.2%. The Finance minister emphasised on multiple themes including its determination to continue to do the heavy lifting on capex to keep growth on track, even as there are concerted measures to encourage capital inflows and disincentivising outflows to shore up the rupee. Pain inflicted by the US tariffs has been addressed, with measures including a one-time easing of access to the domestic tariff area, or the

local Indian market, for Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Then there are duty tweaks on inputs and intermediates used by labour-intensive export sectors, such as textiles and leather.

In her speech Nirmala Sitharaman also continued her focus on job creation and skilling, especially in services sectors such as healthcare and tourism. Amid concern over capital outflows, the Budget proposes hiking the over-

all investment limit for entities under the Persons Resident Outside India scheme (PROIs) to 24% from 10% of their paid-up capital, and the individual investment limit to 10% from 5%. Sitharaman said persons outside India can participate in India's growth story through listed equity under the Portfolio Investment Scheme. The tweaks to the PROI scheme are intended to enhance investment avenues for NRIs and other

residents outside India. There will also be a comprehensive review of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) to create a more contemporary user-friendly framework for foreign investors. In the corporate bond market, a proposal to introduce a market making framework with suitable access to funds and derivatives on corporate bond indices has been proposed. In another move to attract global investors, the FM has proposed to provide a tax holiday until 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to customers globally from data centres in India.

There is clear acknowledgement of the need to create jobs for the large number of youths entering the workforce every year. Focus areas include facilitating programmes to train caregivers, a big growth segment going forward, and setting up a committee to identify services sectors that can increase India's share in global services exports to 10% by 2047. Sitharaman also said skilling programmes for tourist guides would be conceived. The emphasis on tourism, care services, bio-pharma, textiles, emerging technologies, shipbuilding, and new institutions is indicative of India's growth ambitions being powered by the services sector. There appears to be a strong focus on demand-linked training and

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COSTLIER

- Income tax misreporting
- Non-disclosure of movable assets
- Stock options and future trading

CHEAPER

- Overseas tourism packages
- Foreign education
- Alcoholic liquor scrap
- Shoe upper exports
- Solar glass ingredients
- Drugs for rare diseases & cancer
- Microwave oven
- Goods for nuclear power projects
- Energy transition equipment

PM Modi describes Union Budget 'Historic' reflects aspirations of 140 crore Indians

MI News Service, New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday described the Union Budget 2026-27 as "historic", saying it reflected the aspirations of 140 crore Indians and strengthened the reform journey and charts a clear roadmap for Viksit Bharat. In his customary post-budget comments on the Budget, presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha this morning, PM Modi also said the budget was a "highway of opportunities".

"Today's budget is historic. It reflects the aspirations of 140 crore Indians. It strengthens the reform journey and charts a clear roadmap for Viksit Bharat," he said. The Prime minister said the budget reflects the empowered presence of the nation's feminine strength. He said Nirmala Sitharaman



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation as he gives his remarks on the Union Budget 2026-27, in New Delhi on February 1.

has set a new record by presenting the country's budget for the ninth consecutive time. PM Modi further stated that

This budget is the foundation for our journey towards a Viksit Bharat by 2047. This year's budget will give India's reform express new energy and new momentum

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

this year's budget presents an ambitious roadmap to give new momentum to the 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives. "This budget is the foundation for our journey towards a Viksit Bharat by 2047. This year's budget will give India's reform express

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Mamata Banerjee calls Union Budget 'Visionless for Bengal'



CM Mamata Banerjee speaks to media while giving her reaction to Union Budget in Kolkata on Sunday.

This is a visionless, missionless Budget. It is anti-people, anti-women, and anti-tribal. The rail corridor they have declared was in fact planned by me. Look at how the share market has fallen. This is a Humpty Dumpty Budget

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

MI News Service, Kolkata : Joining the opposition parties at the Centre, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has strongly condemned the 2026-27 Union Budget on Sunday, calling it "visionless" and "missionless" and said it offered "nothing substantial for the poll-bound state". Mamata Banerjee claimed that the rail corridor announced by the Centre was originally planned by her. Addressing the media after the Budget speech, she reiterated that "This is a visionless, missionless Budget. It is anti-people, anti-women, and anti-tribal. The rail corridor they have declared was in fact planned by me. Look at how the share market has fallen. This is a Humpty Dumpty Budget." Like Abhishek Banerjee, the Chief minister also

sharply reacted, saying, "In a 5,100-second monologue, the Finance Minister couldn't even bring herself to utter the word Bengal once. Zero allocations. Zero concern. Zero respect. While NIMHANS already exists in Bengaluru and new ones are announced for Jharkhand and Assam, Bengal gets nothing. Analysts, however, said as this is an election year, expectations were particularly high about the announcement of some major allocations and projects in West Bengal by the ruling party in the Budget. But under the Purvodaya initiative, the Finance Minister proposed the development of an integrated East Coast Industrial Corridor, with a well-connected industrial node at Durgapur. A High-

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Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) President Rajiv Memani, CII Steering Group on Health and Healthcare Council Chairman and Medanta CMD Naresh Trehan, and others during a viewing session for the 'Union Budget 2026-27' presentation, in New Delhi.

Budget is blind to India's real crises: Rahul Gandhi

Youth without jobs. Falling manufacturing. Investors pulling out capital. Household savings plummeting. Farmers in distress. Looming global shocks - all ignored

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi

MI News Service, New Delhi : Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday described today's Union Budget for 2026-27 as "blind to India's real crises", and highlighted how the youth are without jobs, manufacturing is falling and

farmers are in distress. "Youth without jobs. Falling manufacturing. Investors pulling out capital. Household savings plummeting. Farmers in distress. Looming global shocks - all ignored," the Congress leader said in a post on X adding "A Budget that re-



fuses course correction, blind to India's real crises," Earlier in her speech, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced that the target for capex will be raised to ₹12.2 lakh crore

for FY27 from ₹11.2 lakh crore earmarked for the current fiscal year. She also announced a slew of measures to boost infrastructure in the country, including in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. This is the third budget of the BJP-led NDA government in its third term in office which came in the backdrop of global uncertainties, trade frictions and US tariffs and slowdown in exports. Apart from Rahul Gandhi, another Congress leader Randeep

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Union Budget displays 'step-motherly attitude towards Bengal': Abhishek Banerjee



MI News Service, New Delhi / Kolkata : Trinamool Congress National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee, MP has described the 2026-27 Union Budget as nothing but a "true reflection of BJP's step-motherly attitude" towards poll-bound Bengal. Asserting that the saffron party would lose the upcoming Assembly elections, the TMC second in command alleged on Sunday that the BJP was in fact trying to "teach the people of West Bengal a lesson."

"In Bengal, they are losing. So the BJP, with its step-motherly attitude, is trying to teach the people a lesson," Abhishek Banerjee told reporters outside Parliament while commenting on today's Union Budget, a statement shared by the TMC media cell here said. "But in a democracy, it works the other way around. In the coming polls, the people will give a befitting reply to the BJP,"

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In a democracy, it works the other way around. In the coming polls, the people will give a befitting reply to the BJP

Abhishek Banerjee
TMC National General Secretary



The tenth and eleventh biennial state conference of the Progressive United Engineers Association was inaugurated at Nazrul Mancha. The lamp was lit by the organization's top leaders, Pratap Nayak, Subrata Ghosh, Ananta Nandi and Anirban Ojha. Also present on the occasion were Biman Banerjee (Speaker of the State Assembly), Debasish Kumar (MLA), Ashok Dey (MLA) and other distinguished guests.

"Punarjanmo" unveils at IKBF
MI News Service, Kolkata: Renowned poet, writer, and lyricist Indrani Dutt launched her book "Punarjanma" a select collection of her upcoming poems, at the 49th International Kolkata Book Fair (IKBF). The launch was graced by Tribid Kumar Chatterjee, Author, Editor, General Secretary of the Publishers & Booksellers Guild & Saikat Mukhopadhyay, and Author along with Indrani Dutt. Renowned poet, writer, and lyricist. Speaking on the occasion, Indrani Dutt said, "Punarjanma is not just a collection of poems; it is a reflection of our collective wounds and our collective courage. It speaks of despair, but more importantly, it speaks of hope, of rising afresh with faith, truth, and justice."

Daspur Authorities Shift Vegetable Market Ahead of Madhyamik Exams to Prevent Traffic Chaos

MI News Service, West Medinipur: With over 9.5 lakh candidates set to appear for the secondary (Madhyamik) examinations on Monday, local authorities in Daspur-1 Panchayat Samiti have taken proactive measures to ensure uninterrupted access to examination centers. The administration has ordered the temporary relocation of the vegetable market and roadside shops at the Daspur Hospital intersection along the Daspur-Sagarpur Rural Road. The market will be shifted to the Lauda Market Complex for the duration of the exams. Public announcements regarding



the move were made through loudspeakers to inform vendors and residents. The road near Sagarpur School, a key examination venue, is narrow and prone to congestion, with traffic

frequently coming to a standstill even with private vehicles. Residents and local authorities expressed concern that candidates could face delays reaching the centers if the market remained in place. "This

decision is in the interest of the students and aims to ensure they reach their exam centers on time without any obstruction," a Daspur-1 Panchayat official said. The move comes amid rising public anxiety as secondary examinations begin statewide, with authorities warning of increased vigilance on major routes and intersections to prevent traffic snarls. Local residents have largely welcomed the step, noting that such measures are necessary to maintain smooth traffic flow and avoid jeopardizing students' punctuality during the crucial Madhyamik examinations.

BENGAL hosts Vyapaar Expo 2.0

MI News Service, Kolkata: Vyapaar Expo 2.0 commenced on a high note with its grand inauguration, marking the beginning of a three-day B2B and B2C business exhibition that brought together brands, manufacturers, distributors, entrepreneurs, and consumers under one roof. Designed as a comprehensive platform for networking and market expansion, the expo showcased a wide range of products and services, enabling businesses to connect directly with potential buyers, partners, and end consumers. The inaugural day also featured insightful and motivational sessions by renowned business leaders and speakers, including Dr. Vivek Bindra, Harsh Vardhan Jain, Sonu Sharma, Brijesh Agarwal, co-founder of India MART. Kewal Kishan, founder of Automate Business, and Ashish Agarwal, CEO and franchise coach. Vyapaar Expo 2.0 opened as a vibrant ecosystem for collaboration, learning, and opportunity, attracting a diverse audience and laying a strong foundation for the days ahead. The event aimed to serve as a catalyst for business growth, innovation, and inspiration across industries.

Anwar Hossain Kasemi, the state president of the Minority Youth Federation, was present as a Muslim religious leader, along with Father Samiran Babu and priest Amiya Kumar Sarkar.

Centre envisages releasing Rs 220 Cr for Bengal farm schemes

MI News Service, Kolkata: Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expressed satisfaction over the progress of work under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and the Krishonnoti Yojana (KY) in West Bengal, and agreed to release Rs 220 crore to sustain the momentum. Chouhan chaired a virtual meeting with agriculture ministers of eight states, including Bengal, to review the status of implementation of various agriculture schemes.

Dumper hits tractor laden with bricks, driver injured, traffic disrupted

Manish Ramtacke (Kharagpur , West Midnapore) : A tractor laden with bricks was hit by a dumper in the area adjacent to Matibhera petrol pump of Chak Ismailpur Gram Panchayat under Dantan police station of West Medinipur district, due to which the tractor overturned, the driver of the tractor was badly injured. Due to the accident, traffic was disrupted in the area for some time. It is known that the tractor laden with bricks was going towards Mohanpur. A dumper passing through the area suddenly went out



of control and hit a tractor laden with bricks. The tractor overturned on the road. The driver got injured. Due to the accident, the state highway was blocked. After getting information about the incident, police reached

the area, normalized the situation and sent the injured driver to the hospital. Police seized the tractor. Police are investigating the incident and are searching for the dumper and its absconding driver.

Five Killed in Three Road Accidents Within 24 Hours; Lorry Driver Trapped in Steering Wheel

MI News Service, Jalpaiguri: A series of deadly road accidents within a span of 24 hours has claimed the lives of five people and left three others seriously injured in the Dhupguri area, raising serious concerns over road safety and night-time visibility on key stretches. The most horrific of the incidents occurred late Saturday night near Jhumur Bridge, where two heavy goods vehicles collided head-on, killing one person on the spot and critically injuring two others. The impact of the collision was so severe that the lorry driver was trapped inside the mangled cabin, wedged against the steering wheel, and remained stuck for nearly an hour.



which had become tightly locked together due to the impact. The door of the lorry had to be forcibly broken open before the trapped driver could be pulled out in a severely injured condition. The trawler driver and its helper (skipper) also sustained serious injuries and were rushed to hospital. Police officials said investigations are underway to ascertain the exact sequence of events leading to the collision. The other two fatal accidents reported in the Dhupguri area within the same 24-hour period further underline the alarming rise in road fatalities. Authorities have urged drivers to exercise extreme caution during night hours, especially amid foggy conditions, as the spate of accidents has cast a pall of fear and concern across the region.

Krishnaganj youth found dead near girlfriend's house; family alleges murder

Dipankar Edbar, Krishnaganj (Nadia) : The mysterious death of a young man has triggered tension and raised serious questions in the border village of Gede Haldarpara under Krishnaganj police station in Nadia district. The deceased has been identified as Sourav Halder, a local youth. According to family members, Sourav had gone out on Saturday night after receiving a phone call from his girlfriend, who allegedly asked him to visit her house. However, he did not return home thereafter, causing concern among his family. After an unsuccessful search through the night, local residents on Sunday morning spotted Sourav's



body lying in a bush near his girlfriend's house, sparking panic and widespread curiosity in the area. Sourav's family has alleged that he was murdered in a pre-planned manner. His father Shyamal Halder, elder brother Prakash Halder, and sister Sangita Halder claimed that Sourav was called to the spot and subsequently

assaulted or strangled to death by members of his girlfriend's family. They further alleged that the body was dumped in the nearby bushes to destroy evidence. Following the incident, police from Krishnaganj police station rushed to the spot and recovered the body. Sourav was taken to Krishnaganj Rural Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. The body has since been sent for post-mortem examination. Police said the exact cause of death will be known after the autopsy report is received. An investigation has been initiated, and questioning of those connected to the case is underway.

Police Raid Hotels in Holy Jayarambati, Rescue Seven Women; Six Arrested

MI News Service, Bakura: A major police operation in Jayarambati, a revered pilgrimage centre in Bankura district, has exposed what investigators describe as an alleged honey trap racket operating from private hotels, leading to the sealing of three establishments, the rescue of seven women and the arrest of six persons.

According to police sources, teams from Bankura district police, acting on repeated complaints, conducted simultaneous raids on three private hotels in Jayarambati. The operation followed intelligence inputs suggesting that certain hotels and lodges were being misused for organised illegal activities under the guise of tourism. During the raids, police rescued seven women from the premises and arrested six individuals, including hotel owners, managers, staff members and a local resident allegedly linked to the operations. The three hotels were subsequently sealed. Police officials said



the accused were involved in running a honey trap operation targeting visitors. "We received multiple complaints regarding suspicious activities at some hotels. Based on preliminary evidence gathered during the raids, arrests were made," a senior police officer said. Jayarambati, known for its religious significance and attracting large numbers of devotees and tourists, has witnessed a rapid rise in hotels and lodges in recent years. Police sources indicated that complaints had been mounting about misuse of certain establishments, prompting intensified surveillance. The arrested persons were

produced before the Bishnupur Sub-Divisional Court on Sunday, where police sought 14 days of custody for further interrogation. Investigators have also moved the court seeking permission to record the confidential statements of the rescued women. Police said further investigation is underway to ascertain the scale of the alleged racket and whether more individuals or establishments are involved. The incident has sent shockwaves through the pilgrimage town, raising serious concerns over regulation of hotels and protection of visitors in one of Bankura's most sacred locations.

Mystery deepens over leopard's death at Bengal Safari

MI News Service, Siliguri: The skeletal remains of a leopard named 'Sweetie', rescued as an orphaned cub and later housed at Bengal Safari Park, were recovered from the Leopard Safari enclosure, triggering shock, concern and questions over wildlife management and monitoring at the state-run facility. Forest department sources confirmed that the remains were found during routine patrolling inside the enclosure on Saturday. The leopard had reportedly been missing for nearly a month, despite regular surveillance by forest staff. Sweetie's story had once drawn national and international attention. In 2023, forest personnel rescued the two-day-old cub from beside its dead mother in a private garden in the Ghoshpukur Range of the Kurseong Forest Division. The critically ill cub was transported nearly 44 kilometres to the Bengal Safari Animal Hospital, where round-the-clock medical intervention brought it back from the brink of death. The case was later documented in the International Journal of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry. According to officials, after recovery and rehabilitation, Sweetie was gradually introduced into



the Leopard Safari. The animal was routinely released from its crawl into the enclosure and had been observed following regular movement patterns. However, sources said that the leopard had not been sighted for over a month, prompting repeated searches within the safari area. The discovery of only skeletal remains has now raised serious concerns about surveillance, enclosure safety and response time. A senior official of Bengal Safari Park said, "The skeletal remains were recovered from within the enclosure during patrolling. The exact cause of death will be known only after the post-mortem examination." The safari park director declined to comment further. The incident has sparked widespread disquiet among wildlife experts and conservationists, with demands for a thorough investigation into how a protected animal could go missing for weeks and be found dead without timely detection inside a secured enclosure.

Ex-KLO militants seek state govt jobs

MI News Service, Cooch Behar: Former militants and linkmen of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) demand their recruitment as special home guards. They alleged that the identity verification of 155 surrendered KLO militants and linkmen had been completed nearly five years ago by district police, but none of them had been appointed as home guards so far. "Despite repeated memoranda submitted to the administration as well as multiple demonstrations held in front of the district magistrate's office, we remain unemployed till date. That's why we have launched this relay hunger strike today (Sunday)," said Bihari Karjee, secretary of the welfare committee of the surrendered KLO militants and linkmen, said. "We will not withdraw the hunger strike until our demands are met," Karjee added. The KLO is a banned militant and separatist organisation operating in parts of the Northeast and north Bengal, which seeks to create a separate Kamtapur state for the Koch-Rajbanshi community. However, over the years, the movement has faced crackdowns. Many KLO activists have also willingly surrendered to the government.

Gandhi's Death Anniversary Commemorated



Nurul Islam Khan : Recently, the death anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, was observed. He was shot dead by Nathuram Godse on January 30, 1948. On this day, a prayer meeting was organized to commemorate Gandhi's death anniversary, under the auspices of the Canning Sub-Divisional Information and Culture Department and in collaboration with the Canning Swastika Sangh. People of all faiths were present.

Also present were Sandeep Babu from the Canning Sub-Divisional Information and Culture Department and officials of the Swastika Sangh. All the speakers highlighted Gandhi's ideals and life, and also discussed the current situation in the country. A leader like Gandhi is very much needed in the country today. Everyone spoke about harmony, rising above caste and creed. Finally, the program concluded with a prayer for world peace.

Malda police seizes pistols, ammo from youth

MI News Service, Malda: A team of Malda police, disguised as boatmen, intercepted a youth on a boat on the Ganga and seized a cache of illegal firearms and ammunition from him. This undercover operation took place near Char-Babupur village, Kaliachak police station limits. The arrested youth, Sabir Alam, 21, is from Piyarpur village of neighbouring Jharkhand's Sahebganj district. He was transporting the illegal firearms and ammunition to Malda by boat with the help of two aides, who, however, managed to swim away. Avijit Banerjee, the superintendent of police of Malda, said they had received a confidential tip-off. "Based on the information, a police team disguised as boatmen waited in another boat on the river. As the suspects' boat approached, the police chased it. While two of the accused managed to escape by jumping into the river, the key accused was nabbed," he said. The police recovered five 7mm pistols, five magazines, and 21 rounds of live cartridges from Alam. "We have got details of both the accomplices who absconded from the spot. Our officers are also examining the seized firearms to determine their place of manufacture," the SP said. He said that in the past one month, the police seized 36 illegal firearms and rounds of live cartridges in Malda. Alam will be produced at a local court in Malda on Thursday, police sources said. "We need to interrogate him on the source and the intended destination of the arms and ammunition," said a police officer.

Records of wks at tea gardens, cinchona plantation valid for SIR: EC

MI News Service, Alipurdwar: The Election Commission (EC) of India has stated that official records of workers at tea gardens and cinchona plantations in north Bengal would be counted as a valid document to prove the identity and the place of residence of a worker, prompting the saffron camp to take credit for the poll panel's decision. A letter from EC reached the chief electoral

officer (CEO) of Bengal, saying the EC had no objection to the proposal to consider tea garden and cinchona plantation records in seven districts of north Bengal as an identity document for the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls. "On December 31, the CEO had sent a letter to the EC with the proposal. The EC has assented to it," said a source.

Medinipur Medical College: Doctor accused in sline scandal retired during suspension

Manish Ramtacke (Kharagpur, West Midnapore): Dr. Mohammad Alauddin, former head of the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of Medinipur Medical College and Hospital, retired under suspension on Saturday. Dr. Mohammad Alauddin is associated with the famous saline scandal of the state. However, with his retirement, the administrative and legal uncertainty regarding pension and other retirement benefits seems to be deepening. It is known that during the cesarean operation in Medinipur Medical College in the month of January last year, Ringer's Lactate. After being given saline, the health of five pregnant women suddenly deteriorated. A woman had died in this incident. Initial investigation raised the possibility of spread of infection, after which the matter came into limelight at the state level. Seeing the seriousness of the incident, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had adopted a tough stance. A total of 13 doctors including the then hospital superintendent Jayant Kumar Raut and Dr. Mohammad Alauddin were ordered to be suspended. Besides, an FIR was also registered under relevant sections. Dr. Alauddin handed over his retirement documents to Medical College Principal Moushumi Nandi. Despite this, there is still doubt over his pension and other retirement benefits. The hospital administration is adopting a cautious approach on this entire matter and is avoiding making any direct comment. A special source in the hospital said that as per the rules, all the documents will be sent to the State Health Building and the final decision will be taken from there. At the same time, Chief Health Officer of the district Soumyashankar Shadangi also clarified that this matter is completely under the control of Swasthya Bhavan and it would not be appropriate to comment on it at this time. Let us tell you that the suspension of seven junior doctors suspended in this case was lifted after some time, but the suspension of other senior doctors including Dr. Alauddin is still intact.

Police Health Camp



Nurul Islam Khan : On Sunday, a large health camp was organized at the Sukhabrishti Police Housing Complex under the initiative of the Kolkata Police Central Welfare Committee and managed by its Bhangar branch. Present were Shri Shantanu Sinha Biswas, Coordinator of the West Bengal Police and Kolkata Police Welfare Committee, Shri Ruhul

Amin Ali Shah, Convener of the Kolkata Police Welfare Committee, and Shri Bijitashwa Raut, Convener of the West Bengal Police Welfare Committee. Also present were the central leaders of the Kolkata Police and West Bengal Police Welfare Committees. Above all, the police personnel residing in the complex and their family members were present.

Centre mulls 3 AI data centres in Bengal

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Union government plans to set up artificial intelligence (AI) data centres in collaboration with state governments and has already decided to establish three such centres in West Bengal, S. Krishnan, Secretary, Union Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, said.

Krishnan said the project would require an investment of Rs 20 crore, of which the Centre would contribute Rs 8 crore. He added that the Union government has appealed to state governments and the private sector to partner in the initiative. Speaking at a special session titled Unleashing the Power of AI in Business, organised by the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Krishnan highlighted India's strong AI ecosystem, noting that around 6,000 existing datasets are already driving AI-based models in the country. He pointed out that nearly 60 per cent of AI adoption in India is focused on business development, a figure higher than in many other countries. Emphasising the potential of AI for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), Krishnan said chambers of commerce have a critical role to play in ensuring AI adoption among smaller businesses. Krishnan also announced that the India AI Impact Summit 2026 would be held later this year.

Sports goods sector gets Rs 500 cr boost in Budget

From PG 1
3346.54 crore. The allocation for Sports Authority of India (SAI), the nodal body for the conduct of national camps and logistical arrangements for athletes' training, was enhanced from Rs 880 crore to Rs 917.38 crore.

Mamata Banerjee calls Union Budget 'Visionless for Bengal'

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Speed Rail Corridor between Varanasi and Siliguri was also announced. In addition, the government proposed new Dedicated Freight Corridors, including one connecting Dankuni in the East to Surat in the West, aimed at promoting environmentally sustainable cargo movement. Other announcements included the upgradation of seven NIPERs (National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research), one of which is NIPER Kolkata located at Panihati in North24 Parganas. A new scheme for the Jute sector was also announced, which is expected to benefit West Bengal significantly. The revival of 200 legacy industrial clusters in which West Bengal is likely to be one of the biggest beneficiaries.

Union Budget displays 'step-motherly attitude towards Bengal': Abhishek Banerjee

From PG 1
the three-time Lok Sabha MP from Diamond Harbour, said. Banerjee also alleged that the Centre had deprived West Bengal of its due shares under various welfare schemes.

"We have been saying this for the last five years: if this government can show, by releasing a White Paper, that after the BJP's debacle in the 2021 West Bengal polls even one job-card holder from Bengal under MGNREGA received money through Direct Benefit Transfer, I will quit politics," he said. The senior TMC leader, who is the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, challenged the BJP to "show that in the last four years under the Awas Yojana, in which the Centre provides 60 per cent of the funds, even one person from Bengal received money," he said. "They have not given even 10 paise to Bengal under the Gramin Sadak Yojana after the 2021 poll debacle," he said.



Parthiv Neotia, Sr. Vice President, ICC & Executive Director, Ambuja Neotia Holdings; Keshav Bhajanka, Vice President, ICC & Executive Director, Century Plyboards (I) Ltd; and Dr. Rajeev Singh, Director General, ICC, share industry perspectives on the Union Budget tabled by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, welcoming it as inclusive, growth-oriented, and strategically balanced.

Manufacturing push in Budget draws strong industry support

MI News Service, Kolkata: India's leading industry chambers and business leaders have broadly welcomed the Union Budget 2026-27, terming it inclusive, growth-oriented and fiscally balanced, with a clear focus on infrastructure-led growth, manufacturing scale-up and MSME strengthening amid global geopolitical uncertainty. Reacting to the Budget, Naresh Pachisia, President of a leading industry chamber, said it lays down a clear sector-wise growth agenda while reaffirming the importance of fiscal discipline. He noted that the three "Kartavyas" outlined in the Budget holistically address challenges flagged in the Economic Survey. Naresh Pachisia identified the enhanced public capital expenditure outlay of ₹12.2 lakh crore for FY 2026-27 as the Budget's centrepiece, calling it a record in nominal terms. "Infrastructure spending remains the primary growth engine for EPC, capital goods, cement, steel and logistics, with financial-sector readiness through a banking and NBFC roadmap complementing the capex

push," he said. Industry has welcomed the government's industrial strategy centred on scaling manufacturing across seven strategic and frontier sectors, alongside the rejuvenation of legacy industries. Targeted initiatives such as Biopharma SHAKTI (₹10,000 crore) and structured textile cluster programmes covering technology upgradation and skilling were highlighted as key ecosystem builders. On MSMEs, Naresh Pachisia said the Budget sends a "strong and reassuring message," with emphasis on access to finance, liquidity support and simplified compliance, enabling a shift from "survival finance" to "champion building." The renewed focus on Mission Purvodaya, the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor linking Dankuni to Ludhiana, and a major industrial node at Durgapur was seen as a strategic move to unlock eastern India's economic potential, though industry stressed the need for faster execution and clearer land and logistics frameworks. Welcoming the Budget, CS (Dr.) Adv. Mamta Binnani, President, MSME Development

Forum – West Bengal, described the ₹10,000 crore MSME Growth Fund as a "monumental stride," saying it would enhance competitiveness, global market access and resilience of MSMEs.

From the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Parthiv Neotia, Senior Vice President, called the Budget "very inclusive," highlighting focus on AI, semiconductors, healthcare and MSMEs. Keshav Bhajanka, Vice President, ICC, termed it a "steady Budget in the right direction." Dr Rajeev Singh, Director General, ICC, described it as "strategic and balanced," supporting both immediate economic needs and long-term nation building.

Budget reaction from Keshav Bhajanka, Executive director, Centurly – "This is a very balanced and well – thought –through Budget. The Finance Minister has focused on creating long –term investment momentum of India, which is never an easy task, and has approached it in a very effective manner. This risk –adjusted target, which was set at 4.3%, has been maintained at the same level, and this is very positive and reassuring step.



A glimpse of over crowded Mela Prangan at the 49th International Kolkata Book Fair in Kolkata on Sunday.

Promoter tries to capture Pujo land at Jadavpur; goons threaten locals, mass agitation starts TMC MLA stands by PEOPLE against promoter Raj

MI News Service, Kolkata: Jadavpur central road area at Adi Jadavpur Pujo ground experienced an extremely tensioned situation on Sunday when unidentified people representing a promoter came to capture the Adi Pujo ground which is also otherwise known as Jadavpur High School ground. This ground has been the place where for last 90 years Durga Pujo is being celebrated with full zest. Adi Jadavpur Pujo is also known one of the oldest Durga Pujo in South Kolkata. This 'Holy' ground is being also used by the renowned Jadavpur High School for sports and other activities for ages now. Even the ground is also a favourite destination for the most revered 'Paschim Banga Bigyan

Mancha' programmees. On January 31 night Promoter's men came to the Pujo ground and put sand and bricks. On the morning of February 1, Sunday they started building a boundary wall at the very spot. That provoked the ruckus as the local people, both men and women of all ages thronged to the spot to stop the construction. The teachers from the Jadavpur High School also came to the spot to save the ground. The goons hired by the promoter threaten the local people including the teachers of the Jadavpur High School of dire consequences. Police from Jadavpur Police Station also reached the spot. At this delicate moment the local TMC MLA Moloy Majumder

came to the rescue of the local people. He stridently said, "This ground is a 'Holy' ground where Ma Durga is being worshipped for almost a century now. How can someone take this land? Prominent School like Jadavpur High School which carries a legacy of its own also has been using the ground for school sports and other development and social work. The local residents have taken the trouble to turn this ground to a serene green area via tree plantation drive. How can someone ignore that? It is my noble duty to protect this land from the land sharks. I vow to protect our 'MA' as this land is also my 'MATT' and I am always with the 'MANUSH'.

Presidency Univ likely to reclaim UG admissions from WBJEEB

MI News Service, Kolkata: Presidency University is likely to reclaim control of its undergraduate (UG) admission process from the West Bengal Joint Entrance Examination Board (WBJEEB), with a majority of academic departments opting to conduct admissions independently.

Out of the university's 19 departments, 14 have formally conveyed their decision to conduct admissions on their own after discussions at the departmental level and in the admission committee. The development strengthens the likelihood of a shift from the arrangement in place since 2015, under which WBJEEB has been conducting entrance examinations for the university's undergraduate and post-graduate admissions. If the proposal is cleared by the university's highest decision-making body, then the WB-JEEB will be formally informed that the university will conduct UG admissions from this year. According to university sources, the move is driven by concerns over academic standards and the need for subject-specific evaluation. Teachers have for several years expressed dissatisfaction with the WB-JEEB-conducted entrance system, arguing that centrally set question papers do not adequately assess subject aptitude or align with the academic requirements of Presidency University's courses. Of the 14 departments opting out, nine – including chemistry, political science and life sciences – have indicated that they will conduct their own multiple-choice-based entrance examinations.

Air Mshl Devendra P Hirani assumes appointment of Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO), HQ Eastern Air Command

MI News Service, Kolkata: Air Marshal Devendra P Hirani assumed the appointment of Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO) at Eastern Air Command of Indian Air Force on 01 February 2026. Air Marshal Hirani was commissioned in IAF on 15 December 1990. He is a Qualified Flying Instructor with approximately 5000 hours of flying experience



on various types of helicopters and trainer aircraft. The officer is an alumnus of NDA, Defence Services Staff College, College of Defence Management and National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Besides commanding a training Unit, prime frontline Bases in Northern Sector, the Air Marshal has also held Staff appointments in HQ IDS, Air HQ, Command HQs and HQ AOC (JK&L). He has also been a DASI inspector. The officer was on deputation to Democratic Republic of Congo as part of UN Peace Keeping Mission. Air Marshal Hirani was Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Personnel, Airmen & Civilians) prior to assuming the present assignment. In recognition of his distinguished service, Air Marshal Hirani was awarded with Vishisht Seva Medal in 2015 and Yudh Seva Medal in 2022.

KMC launches digital system to manage heritage, water bodies

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has introduced an Environment and Heritage module under its upgraded eKMC 2.0 digital governance platform, aimed at improving the management of heritage properties and water bodies across the city. The initiative, implemented by the Information Technology Department, brings key functions of the Environment and Heritage Department onto a single digital system. The primary responsibility of the department is the conservation and preservation of heritage buildings, statues, structures, monuments, parks, squares and water bodies within the municipal area. Under the new module, records relating to heritage premises and ponds will be maintained in a centralised database. Processes related to observations, no-objection certificates and departmental clearances have been digitised, allowing applications to be registered online, documents to be uploaded and approvals to be processed simultaneously at different levels. The system also covers pond and water body management, including new entries, relocation, delisting and area correction. Site inspection reports, committee recommendations and final resolutions are built into the workflow. Heritage building management has similarly been structured to include new listings, grade changes, delisting, demolition proposals, restoration work and development plans, supported by inspection reports and approvals by the competent authorities. The module provides for digital issuance and tracking of notices related to ponds and enables recording and monitoring of FIR-related actions in cases of violations.



Books are being distributed free to children at the 49th International Kolkata Book Fair in Kolkata on Sunday.

Air Marshal Inderpal Singh Walia takes over as Air Officer Commanding-In-Chief Eastern Air Command

MI News Service, Kolkata: Air Marshal Inderpal Singh Walia assumed the appointment of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Air Command, IAF on 01 February 2026. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and was commissioned in the Fighter stream of the Indian Air Force on 11 June 1988. The Air Officer is qualified on all variants of the MiG-21, MiG-23, MiG-27, Jaguar and Su-30 MKI. He has over 3200 hrs of accident/incident-free flying. In a career spanning over three decades, the Air Officer has tenanted various Command and Staff appointments. He has commanded a MiG-27 Squadron, the Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment (TACDE) and was Air Officer Commanding of A frontline base. He is a Fighter Strike Leader, an Instrument Rating In-



structor & Examiner (RIE), has undergone the Advance Command & Staff Course in the UK and the National Defence College in Bangladesh. He has served as the Defence Attache at the Embassy of Japan and South Korea. He tenanted the appointment of Air Commodore, Directorate of Air Staff Inspection (DASI), Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Training) at Air HQ and Air Defence Commander, HQ WAC. Prior to taking over as AOC-in-C, EAC, he was Senior Air Staff Officer at HQ EAC.

PM Modi describes Union Budget 'Historic' reflects aspirations of 140 crore Indians

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new energy and new momentum," he said. The Prime minister also said India is not content with simply being the fastest-growing economy and the Budget strengthens the foundation of India's bright future on becoming the third largest economy of the

world. "This budget further strengthens India's global role. The 1.4 billion citizens of India are not satisfied with being just the fastest-growing economy. We want to become the world's third-largest economy as soon as possible. This is the resolve of millions of countrymen," he said.

Budget is blind to India's real crises: Rahul Gandhi

From PG 1
Singh Surjewala also severely criticised the Budget and called it 'politically directionless and 'policy-wise bankrupt.' "Technical Mumbo Jumbo, Zero Substance. Lots of Committees, Zero Deliverables. Not a WORD for FARMERS. Not a WORD for Unemployed Youth Not a WORD for LABOUR. Not a WORD for SC, ST, OBCs! Not a WORD for Opp. Ruled States!", he said adding "Reform express derailed even before leaving the station". Among others, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge also criticised the Modi government over the Union Budget 2026-27, and

said "it lacks policy vision and political will to address the country's pressing economic, social, and political challenges". In a post on X, he questioned the government's priorities, asking, "Where is 'Make in India'?" and claiming that manufacturing growth is stuck at 13%. Kharge also expressed disappointment over the lack of support for farmers, stating that they still await meaningful welfare support or an income security plan. He alleged that the inequality has surpassed levels seen under the British Raj, but the Budget does not mention it or provide any support to SC, ST, OBC, EWS, and minority communities.

Union Budget 2026-27 pushes on creating jobs, easing US tariffs distress and bolstering fund flows

From PG 1
sector-specific skilling. The capital expenditure target for the next fiscal is up to Rs 12.22 lakh crore from the revised estimate of Rs 10.96 lakh crore for the current fiscal, marking a continuation of the Centre's public investment ramp-up post the pandemic. This represents an 11.5% increase in capex. To put this in perspective, the Centre spent just Rs 3.08 lakh crore in 2018-19. Seven more high-speed rail corridors have been proposed, to be developed as "growth connectors" in all four sides of the country including one between Varanasi and Siliguri. Alongside the road transport and highways sector, the Railways continues to be a primary driver of India's infrastructure spending. The two sectors accounted for more than half of the Centre's total capital expenditure last fiscal. The Budget also seeks to accelerate economic growth by enhancing productivity and competitiveness and building resilience

amid volatile global dynamics in manufacturing sectors. This comes amid a general reluctance by the private sector to step up investments. Measures include a scheme to revive 200 legacy industrial clusters through infrastructure and technology upgradation. A three-pronged approach to help MSMEs grow as "champions" has been proposed. Under this, there will be a Rs 10,000-crore SME growth fund for equity support, and the Self-Reliant India fund will be topped up by Rs 2,000 crore. There is a push for nuclear power generation, from the setting up of rare earth corridors in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu to exemption of basic custom duty on critical minerals processing capital equipment. Dedicated freight corridors and greater port connectivity for coal, iron ore, aluminum, and steel hubs like Talcher, Angur, and Kalinganagar have been proposed. There is also a push for AI-fused data centres.

Record CapEx of 2.93 Lakh Crore for Indian Railways; High Speed Connectivity, Strengthening Freight & Safety Prime Focus of Spend

Seven New High-Speed Corridors Across India Will Bring Top Indian Cities Closer; South High-Speed Diamond to Benefit Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala & Puducherry

- High-Speed Rail Corridors Spanning about 4,000 Kilometres Expected To Attract Around 16 Lakh Crore Investment: Ashwini Vaishnaw
- 2052 Km Long New Dedicated Freight Corridor Announced Between Dankuni (WB) and Surat to Strengthen East-West Trade
- With Nearly 1.20 Lakh Crore Earmarked, Safety Remains the Top Priority: Ashwini Vaishnaw
- Designed & Developed in India Propulsion Systems being Delivered to Top Countries Including USA, Germany, France, Switzerland and Spain: Ashwini Vaishnaw

MI News Service, New Delhi, 1 Feb.26 : Indian Railways is set to expand at a rapid pace. Backed by the substantial allocation of Rs. 2,78,000 crore in the Union Budget this year, Railways is focusing its spending on high-speed connectivity, freight and safety. A record capital expenditure of 2,93,030 crore has been planned for Indian Railways in Union Budget 2026-27. This is the highest-ever capex as well as allocation for Indian Railways.

The allocation underscores the Government's continued focus on strengthening railway infrastructure, expanding capacity and enhancing passenger safety. It reflects the emphasis on leveraging rail infrastructure as a key driver of economic growth and logistics efficiency. The sustained investment push aims to improve freight movement, reduce logistics costs, decongest high-density corridors and enhance passenger experience through modern trains and redeveloped stations.

As part of its long-term vision, the Government has announced the development of seven high-speed rail corridors between cities



as 'growth connectors' to promote environmentally sustainable passenger transport systems. These corridors include Mumbai-Pune, Pune-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Bengaluru, Hyderabad-Chennai, Chennai-Bengaluru, Delhi-Varanasi and Varanasi-Siliguri. The proposed corridors are expected to significantly reduce inter-city travel time and facilitate seamless, multimodal movement of passengers.

With the announcement of the new corridors, the rail-based transportation ecosystem is expected to undergo a paradigm shift. In South India, the Chennai-Bengaluru-Hyderabad high-speed network will form a South High-Speed Triangle (or Diamond), connecting major economic and IT hubs. Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting, and Electronics & Information Technology, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, addressing the press conference at Rail Bhawan today, said that travel times will be significantly reduced.

Shri Vaishnaw said that Chen-

nai-Bengaluru will take about 1 hour 13 minutes, Bengaluru-Hyderabad around 2 hours, and Chennai-Hyderabad around 2 hours 55 minutes. This network is expected to serve as a powerful growth multiplier for Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, significantly boosting regional development.

In western and central India, the upcoming Mumbai-Pune high-speed corridor will reduce travel time to around 48 minutes, effectively integrating the two major urban centres. Further connectivity from Pune to Hyderabad in around 1 hour 55 minutes, and onward links to southern hubs, will create a continuous high-speed spine across regions, benefiting passengers and regional economies alike.

In northern and eastern India, the Delhi-Varanasi high-speed corridor will enable travel in around 3 hours 50 minutes. Further, the high-speed rail corridor from Varanasi via Patna to Siliguri in West Bengal will enable travel

between Varanasi and Siliguri in about 2 hours and 55 minutes. This connectivity is expected to create a new economic corridor across the belt spanning Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, significantly boosting regional development and economic activity.

Shri Vaishnaw said that, together, the seven high-speed corridors span nearly 4,000 kilometres and are expected to attract investments of approximately 16 lakh crore, positioning railways as a central pillar of future mobility.

In a major boost to freight movement and logistics efficiency, the Union Budget also proposes a new Dedicated Freight Corridor connecting Dankuni in West Bengal with Surat in Gujarat, passing through Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. This 2,052-km corridor will integrate with the existing Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, enabling seamless movement of goods to ports along the west coast. The Union Minister noted that the existing Eastern and Western DFCs are already operating at near-saturation levels, handling around 400 freight trains daily, necessitating additional corridors to meet future demand.

This East-West corridor will strengthen seamless trade flows across regions, decongest existing rail networks and enhance the efficiency of goods transportation, thereby supporting industrial growth and supply chains. The Union Minister has highlighted that safety remains the top priority, with nearly 1.20 lakh crore earmarked exclusively for safety-related works. The Union Minister noted that sustained investments over the years have already yielded results, with railway accidents reduced by nearly 95 per cent. He stated that the Government is now intensifying efforts to further strengthen safety out-

comes. The focus areas include enhanced track, locomotive, wagon and coach maintenance, rapid deployment of the Kavach automatic train protection system, installation of CCTV cameras, upgradation of overhead electrical (OHE) systems, station redevelopment, and improved customer care and passenger facilities.

The Union Minister said that propulsion systems are the most critical component of railway technology, and that propulsion systems designed and manufactured in India are now being exported to the top countries including USA, Switzerland, Germany, France and Spain.

The Union Minister also highlighted record achievements in infrastructure creation, including construction of 35,000 km of new tracks, 47,000 km of electrification, and electrification coverage exceeding 99.5 per cent of the broad-gauge network. He said manufacturing of Vande Bharat sleeper and chair car trains, Amrit Bharat and Namo Bharat trains, along with record induction of wagons, is progressing at an unprecedented pace.

Emphasising sustainability, Shri Vaishnaw stated that rail transport is nearly 95 per cent less polluting than road transport, aligning closely with the Government's environmental and climate commitments and reflecting the Prime Minister's vision of railways as a green mode of mass transport.

The record allocation reinforces the role of Indian Railways as a backbone of national development, economic growth and inclusive connectivity. With the initiatives outlined in Union Budget 2026-27, Indian Railways is poised to play a decisive role in nation-building by delivering faster connectivity, efficient logistics and resilient infrastructure in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat.



The 12th Annual Paralympic Sports Carnival at Gitanjali Stadium, organized by the Kolkata District Lions Club On Sunday.

Journey Of Appreciation By Howrah-Kamakhya Vande Bharat Sleeper Express



MI News Service, New Delhi, 1 Feb.26 : The reason for growing popularity of the newly introduced 27575/27576 Howrah-Kamakhya Vande Bharat Sleeper train is its unique combination of speed, efficiency and comfort. Vande Bharat Sleeper has been designed to meet the needs of premium overnight travellers. The train has been developed with elegance for a luxurious travel experience. Since its first run, the Vande Bharat Sleeper is highly appreciated and therefore, running with the optimum occupancy. Due to huge response from the passengers specially tourists and pilgrims, the tickets are being booked very fast. There is also great enthusiasm amongst the students and Rail-fans for boarding the first Vande Bharat Sleeper Express of India, running between Howrah and Kamakhya.

The Vande Bharat Sleeper features well-designed ergonomic berths, ample luggage space, ultra-modern and spacious toilets, Divyangjan-friendly facilities, modular pantries and advanced disinfectant technology, ensuring a clean, hygienic and fatigue-free journey. Passengers also enjoy region-specific onboard cuisine, included in the fare, enhancing the

overall travel experience. Safety is powered by indigenous technologies such as the Kavach Automatic Train Protection System, advanced fire safety mechanisms, CCTV surveillance and emergency talk-back systems. Enhanced facilities for train staff and loco pilots further ensure seamless operations and service quality.

Praising the service of Vande Bharat Sleeper Express, a passenger, Shri Saurav Chaudhary said "I see a lot of facilities in Vande Bharat sleeper and I am completely satisfied with them. Therefore, I am thankful to the Central Government and Modi Ji."

Ms. Kakali Barman, during her comfortable journey by Howrah-Kamakhya Vande Bharat sleeper express, happily expressed "I am going from Howrah to Guwahati. There are a number of upgraded amenities in the train and it is really neat and clean. Hence, I convey my thanks to Indian Railways and Modi Ji."

27575/27576 Howrah-Kamakhya Vande Bharat Sleeper Express is effectively connecting the North-East Gateway city of Guwahati with the Eastern Metropolitan hub of Kolkata as a radical game changer in terms of overnight rail connectivity in India.

Name Change
I, Abdul Rahim Mullick (Old Name) S/o Ebadulla Mullick Residing at C-355, Ramdashati Kazir Danga, P. - Garden Reach, District - Kolkata, Pin - 700024, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Abdul Rahim Mullick (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 29-01-2026. Abdul Rahim Mullick (Old Name) and Abdul Rahim Mullick (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Abul Housen Mallick (Old Name) S/o Abu Siddik Mallick Residing at Vill - Rajarambati, P.o - Basubathi, Ps - Singur, District - Hooghly, Pin - 712409, West Bengal, India, have Changed my name and shall henceforth be Known as Abul Hosen Mallick (New Name) as declared before the Ld. Judicial Magistrate (1st Class) at Hooghly vide affidavit no 1573 Dated 24-12-2025. Abul Housen Mallick (Old Name) and Abul Hosen Mallick (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Md.Hamad (Old Name), Son Of Ifkhar Anwar, Residing At Prime Residency 61 B Gulam Jilani Khan Road F Block 3rd Floor, 700039, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Mohd Hamad (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 29/01/2026. Md.Hamad And Mohd Hamad Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Regulation Of Trains Due To Developmental Works In Adra Division

MI News Service, Kolkata, 1 Feb.26 : The following trains will be regulated due to developmental works in Adra division:

Name Change
I, Sabnam Khalid (old name), residing at 5 West Row, Circus Avenue, Kolkata- 700017, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Shabnam Khalid (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 30/01/2026. Shabnam Khalid (new name) and Sabnam Khalid (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Sushanta Malakar (Old Name) DI No Wb-2020110356002, Son Of Samir Malakar, Residing At Block-C/4, Room-201, Near China Mandir, Nonadanga, Kolkata, South 24 Parganas-700105, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Shabnam Khalid (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 29/01/2026. Sushanta Malakar (new name) and Debojyoti Talukdar (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Babur Ali Mondal (old name) S/O I.L. Ajeed Mandal, residing at Vill.- Padmapukur, Po.-Andharmanik, P.S.- Baduria, Dist-North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Amir Ali Mondal (new name), as declared Before The Ld. Judicial Magistrate 1st Class at Basirhat, Dist-North 24 Parganas, vide an affidavit SL No. 27808, dated 24/11/2025. Amir Ali Mondal (new name) and Babur Ali Mondal (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Shanti Lunia (old name) S/O Mohan Lal Lunia, residing at Mayur Apartment, 3rd Floor, Flat No-3B, 2, Mayur Bhawan Road, Opposite C.M.R.I Hospital, Khidderpore, Sub District- Circus Avenue, Kolkata- 700023, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Shanti Lal Lunia (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 30/01/2026. Shanti Lal Lunia and Shanti Lunia both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Siraj Sk (Old Name), Son Of Sk Sakhalam, Residing At Dakhshin Sanrakar, Ps- Sanrakar, Howrah-711313, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Siraj Sekh (New Name) Vide An Affidavit No 12 Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 28/01/2026. Siraj Sk And Siraj Sekh Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change
I, Mahammad Din Mahammad (Old Name), Son Of Md Hajer Ali, Residing At Vill- Shason, Po-Shason, Shasan, North 24 Parganas-743423, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Anuradha Soni (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 28/01/2026. Anuradha Mishra Soni And Anuradha Soni Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Cancellation of Trains
68046/68045 Asansol-Adra-Asansol MEMU will remain cancelled on 03.02.2026, 05.02.2026 & 07.02.2026
68077/68078 Adra-Bhaga- Adra MEMU will remain cancelled on 03.02.2026, 05.02.2026 & 08.02.2026
68053/68054 Adra-Barabhum-Adra MEMU will remain cancelled on 08.02.2026

Short Termination/ Short Origination of Trains
18019/18020 Jhargram-Dhanbad-Jhargram Express, journey commencing from 02.02.2026 to 05.02.2026 will be short terminated at/short-originated from Bokaro Steel City.
13503/13504 Bardhaman-Hatia-Bardhaman MEMU Express, journey commencing on 02.02.2026 will be short-terminated at/ short originated from NCSB Gomoh.

Growing water contamination raising public health concerns: Reports

MI News Service, New Delhi/Kolkata: Concern over safety of drinking water is increasing across urban India, with areas such as Indore, Gandhinagar and Greater Noida facing maximum impact. National groundwater assessments reveal the presence of chemical contaminants such as nitrates, fluoride, arsenic and heavy metals across several regions.

According to the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), nearly 20% of groundwater samples in India exceed safe chemical limits. As these contaminants do not affect the taste, colour or clarity of water, households may unknowingly consume unsafe water over time. In cities like Indore, fluctuations in water sourcing and untreated discharge have impacted water quality in certain zones. Gandhinagar and Greater Noida, on the other hand, are witnessing increased groundwater stress due to construction activity, over-extraction and inconsistent treatment processes. These challenges are further compounded by seasonal changes and uneven water management practices across urban localities.

While municipal bodies continue to work towards improving treatment facilities

and distribution networks, water quality can vary significantly between neighbourhoods and even within the same building. Infrastructure limitations, maintenance gaps and inconsistent purification at the source often make it difficult for households to rely solely on centralised systems for safe drinking water. Household water filtration systems act as a critical safeguard against contaminants entering water during storage or distribution. Independent scientific testing, including an IIT Madras study, indicates that ordinary or unbranded filters may lose effectiveness within the first 10 litres of use, while certified filtration solutions maintain high contaminant removal efficiency for extended periods, in some cases up to 12,000 litres.

Student employability: MoU inked at IKBF-2026

MI News Service, Kolkata: Student employability got prime importance at the International Kolkata Book Fair (IKBF). JIS Group signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Board of Practical Training (Eastern Region), Kolkata (BOPTER) at the International Kolkata Book Fair 2026, aimed at strengthening apprenticeship training, internships, and job-oriented exposure for final-year students and pass-out graduates. The collaboration seeks

to establish a structured framework to enhance student employability through awareness programmes, orientation sessions, and enrolment support under the National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) and other government-led initiatives. This partnership is expected to bridge the gap between academia and industry by developing skilled, industry-ready human resources through systematic apprenticeship exposure for students.

Tiger calendar unveiled for awareness campaign

MI News Service, Kolkata: Kolkata experienced a different evening as "Tiger Calendar" was unveiled recently to enhance awareness about Tiger conservation and protection. The "Tiger Calendar" consists of various photographs of the big cat taken by eminent wildlife photographer, nature conservationist and entrepreneur Shiladitya Chaudhury. Renowned fashion designer Abhishek Roy and Dr. Dhriti Banerjee (Director-Zoological Survey of India) were there at the propitious occasion along with Shiladitya Chaudhury.

KULPI DEVELOPMENT BLOCK
KULPI, SOUTH-24 PARGANAS
e-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are hereby invited by the B.D.O, Kulpi vide NIT No- 152/KLP/ICDS Fund/2025-2026 & 2026 ZPHD_997242_ (1-13). Bid Submission Last Date: 09.02.2026 up to 05.00 PM. For details visit Website: <https://wbttenders.gov.in> Sd/-
Block Development Officer
Kulpi Development Block

KULPI DEVELOPMENT BLOCK
KULPI, SOUTH-24 PARGANAS
e-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are hereby invited by the B.D.O, Kulpi vide NIT No- 153/KLP/ICDS Fund/2025-2026 & 2026 ZPHD_997324_ (1-12). Bid Submission Last Date: 09.02.2026 up to 05.00 PM. For details visit Website: <https://wbttenders.gov.in> Sd/-
Block Development Officer
Kulpi Development Block

TARAKESWAR MUNICIPALITY				
E-TENDER NOTICE				
The Chairman, Tarakeswar Municipality invites of e-tender for following Development workwithTarakeswar Municipality:				
Sl. No.	Tender for	e-Bid submission start date	e-Bid submission end date	Technical Bid Opening date
1	2026_MAD_997002_1	02.02.2026	11.03.2026	13.03.2026
2	2026_MAD_997002_2	02.02.2026	11.03.2026	13.03.2026
Details information will be available from the website- http://wbttenders.gov.in Sd/- Chairman, Tarakeswar Municipality				

Name Change
I, Abid Anjum Mohammed (Old Name) S/o Md Sagir Uddin Residing at Ekta Oleander BL-1, Flat-6C, 16, Radhanath Chowdhury Road, Entally, District- Kolkata, Pin-700015, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Md. Abid Anjum (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 29-01-2026. Abid Anjum Mohammed (Old Name) and Md. Abid Anjum (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE
I, Bimala Soni D/o Mahabir Prasad Soni W/o Pawan Soni Residing at P-173, Block-A, Lake Town, South Dum Dum (M) North 24 Parganas, West Bengal-700089 do hereby declare that I have changed my name from **Bimala Soni** to **Bimala Soni** and henceforth I shall be known as **Bimala Soni** in all purpose, vide affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Calcutta on 20-01-2026. That **Bimala Soni** and **Bimala Soni** both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Binod Gupta, S/o Late Indramani Gupta, residing at 58, Nando Ghosh Road, P.S. Golabari, Howrah - 711101, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Binod Kr Gupta, as declared before the First Class Judicial Magistrate, Howrah Court, (Howrah/ West Bengal) vide affidavit no 799/26 dated 19-01-2026 that Binod Gupta and Binod Kr Gupta refer to the same and identical person.

Name Change
I, Ayush Kr Gupta, Ayush Kumar Gupta & Kumar Ayush Gupta S/o Binod Kr Gupta, residing at 58, Nando Ghosh Road, P.S. Golabari, Howrah - 711101, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Ayush Gupta, as declared before the First Class Judicial Magistrate, Howrah Court (Howrah/ West Bengal), vide affidavit no. 14592 dated 01-12-2025 that both Ayush Kr Gupta, Ayush Kumar Gupta, Kumar Ayush Gupta and Ayush Gupta are refer to the same and identical person.

Name Change
I, Smrita Rani Maity (Old Name) W/o Surjendu Bikas Patra Residing at Flat 2D, Ashirbad Apartment, D D 40/1, D.B. Nagar, P.o - Baguiati, Ps - Baguiati, District - North 24 Parganas, Pin - 700059, West Bengal, India, have Changed my name and shall henceforth be Known as Smrita Patra (New Name) as declared before the Notary public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 30-01-2026. Smrita Rani Maity (Old Name) and Smrita Patra (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Sikha Rani Ghosh (Old Name) W/o Paresh Chandra Ghosh Residing at 22/1, Khetra Mitra Lane, P.o - Salkhila, Ps - Colabari, District - Howrah, Pin - 711106, West Bengal, India, have Changed my name and shall henceforth be Known as Shikha Ghosh (New Name) as declared before the Notary public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 30-01-2026. Sikha Rani Ghosh (Old Name) and Shikha Ghosh (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Arun Kumar Bhattacharya (Old Name) S/o Sudhir Bhattacharya Residing at 22, School Road, P.o - Purbia Putiary, Ps - Regent Park, District - Kolkata, Pin - 700093, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Arun Sankar Bhattacharya (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 30-01-2026. Arun Kumar Bhattacharya (Old Name) and Arun Sankar Bhattacharya (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Neha Arora (Old Name) D/o Raj Kumar Arora Residing at Univor City, Flat-703, Downtown Tower-3, Action Area-3, New Town, Kolkata - 700160, District - North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Nehaa Arora (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 30-01-2026. Neha Arora (Old Name) and Nehaa Arora (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Swapan Guhathakurata (Old Name) S/o Gopal Chandra Guhathakurata Residing at Bijay Abasan, Flat- 1G, Block-B, Rokeyga, ani, District - North 24 Parganas, Pin - 700135, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Swapan Kumar Guhathakurata (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 29-01-2026. Swapan Guhathakurata (Old Name) and Swapan Kumar Guhathakurata (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Debajyoti Talukdar (old name) S/O Debahish talukdar, residing at 319/55, Jessore Road, South Dum Dum Motijheel, Dist- North 24 Pgs, Pin- 700074, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Debojyoti talukdar (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 29/01/2026. Debojyoti talukdar (new name) and Debojyoti Talukdar (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Babur Ali Mondal (old name) S/O I.L. Ajeed Mandal, residing at Vill.- Padmapukur, Po.-Andharmanik, P.S.- Baduria, Dist-North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Amir Ali Mondal (new name), as declared Before The Ld. Judicial Magistrate 1st Class at Basirhat, Dist-North 24 Parganas, vide an affidavit SL No. 27808, dated 24/11/2025. Amir Ali Mondal (new name) and Babur Ali Mondal (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Shanti Lunia (old name) S/O Mohan Lal Lunia, residing at Mayur Apartment, 3rd Floor, Flat No-3B, 2, Mayur Bhawan Road, Opposite C.M.R.I Hospital, Khidderpore, Sub District- Circus Avenue, Kolkata- 700023, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Shanti Lal Lunia (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 30/01/2026. Shanti Lal Lunia and Shanti Lunia both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Jamila Hatim Masood (Old Name) Wife Of Mufaddal Saifuddin Faizullahoyh, Residing At 27 -29, Jagatipota Main Road, Panchpotia, Ps- Narendrapur, Dist- 24 Parganas South, Pin- 700152, West Bengal, India, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Jamila Mufaddal Faizullahoyh (New Name) As Declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 30/01/2026. Jamila Hatim Masood (Old Name) And Jamila Mufaddal Faizullahoyh (New Name) Both Are Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change
I, Najira Begam (Old Name) W/o Abul Hosen Mallick Residing at Vill- Rajarambati, P.o- Basubathi, Ps - Singur, District- Hooghly, Pin- 712409, West Bengal, India, have Changed my name and shall henceforth be Known as Nazira Begum (New Name) as declared before the Ld. Judicial Magistrate (1st Class) at Hooghly vide affidavit no 1573 Dated 24-12-2025. Najira Begam (Old Name) and Nazira Begum (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Anuradha Mishra Soni (Old Name), Son Of Loknath Soni, Residing At Aponalaya 322 Jessore Road Madhyamgram, North 24 Parganas- 700132, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Anuradha Soni (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 28/01/2026. Anuradha Mishra Soni And Anuradha Soni Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Airtel to provide 360 million Indians with free access to Adobe

MI News Service, Mumbai/ Kolkata: Bharti Airtel is putting the power of Adobe Express, the quick-and-easy, create-anything app, into the hands of its 360 million customers across India. This landmark and first-of-its-kind partnership will provide access to Adobe Express Premium to all Airtel customers for creating high-quality social assets, marketing materials, short videos and anything they wish to design quickly and effortlessly. With the Adobe Express Premium worth ~₹4,000 now available for free for a year, all Airtel customers can express their design experience.

The Adobe Express Premium subscription will be available to all Airtel customers, including mobile, Wi-Fi and DTH customers. Customers can avail themselves of this subscription by logging on to the Airtel Thanks App, with no credit card requirement. Sid-dharth Sharma, CEO – Connected Homes and Director – Marketing, Bharti Airtel, said, "This partnership is about more than technology. It is about empowering millions of Indians with cutting-edge AI tools to create and innovate."

David Wadhvani, President, Creativity & Productivity Business, Adobe said, "We are excited to partner with Airtel to bring Adobe Express Premium to millions of people across India for free, accelerating the growth of India's vibrant creator economy."

SpiceJet enters Imphal with daily flights from Kolkata, Guwahati & Mumbai

MI News Service, Kolkata: Budget carrier SpiceJet announced its entry into Imphal with the launch of its first-ever flight services to the Manipur capital, a move aimed at boosting air connectivity to the Northeast. From February 10, the airline will operate daily services to Imphal from Kolkata, Guwahati and Mumbai using Boeing 737 aircraft, the carrier said in a statement. "The new routes will significantly improve access to the northeastern state, offering passengers seamless and reliable connections to the region while enhancing travel options for both leisure and business travellers," it said.

While passengers travelling from Kolkata and Guwahati will have non-stop flights, those flying from Mumbai will be offered a single-aircraft journey with a brief stopover in Kolkata, removing the need to change planes, the airline said.

"The launch of these services assumes particular significance for Manipur, a state that currently has limited air connectivity options. The new daily flights are expected to greatly improve accessibility for residents, students, medical travellers, government officials and businesses, providing much-needed capacity and choice for travel to and from the state," it added.

The airline said the new routes will not only connect Imphal directly with Kolkata, Guwahati and Mumbai but will also allow passengers to make convenient onward connections to several domestic destinations and select international points through SpiceJet's network. SpiceJet Chief Business Officer Debojo Maharshi said the launch marked a key step in the airline's expansion in the region.

"The launch of our maiden flight to Imphal marks an important milestone for SpiceJet as we expand our footprint in the Northeast. Improved connectivity to the region has long been a priority, and these new services will make travel to Manipur more accessible and convenient for passengers across key metros."



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary and other officials during a press conference after the presentation of the 'Union Budget 2026-27', in New Delhi.

SC directs all states to provide free sanitary pads in schools

MI News Service, New Delhi: The Supreme Court recognized the right to menstrual health as part of the right to life under the Constitution, directing all states and Union Territories to provide free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins to girl students and functional, gender-segregated toilets for all students. In a landmark judgment aimed at promoting gender justice and educational equity, a bench comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan issued a series of directions to ensure these facilities are available in schools, regardless of whether they are government-run, aided, or private.

Authored by Justice Pardiwala, the verdict warned of strict consequences for non-compliance, including the de-recognition of private schools and holding state governments directly accountable for failures in public institutions. "The right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution includes the right to menstrual health; access to safe, effective and affordable menstrual hygiene management measures helps a girl child attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. The right to healthy reproductive life embraces the right to access education and information about sexual health," the bench held.



The court further directed: "As regards the availability of menstrual absorbent, we direct that all states and Union Territories shall ensure that every school where the government-run or privately managed in both urban and rural areas provides oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins manufactured in compliance... free of cost." Sanitary napkins must be made accessible to girl students, preferably within toilet premises through vending machines, or where such installation is not immediately feasible, at a designated place or with a designated authority within schools.

On the matter of school toilets, the court ordered all states and UTs to en-

sure that "every school... is provided with the functional gender segregated toilets with usable water connectivity." It emphasized that all existing and newly constructed toilets must be designed, constructed, and maintained to ensure privacy and accessibility, including for children with disabilities. "All school toilets shall be equipped with functional hand washing facilities with soap and water available at all times," the bench added. Justice Pardiwala highlighted the importance of education, stating that the right to education has been described as a multiplier right enabling the exercise of other human rights. "The Right to Education (RTE) forms part of the broader framework of the right to life and human dignity, which cannot be realised without access to education," the verdict said.

The judgment emphasized equality under Article 14, stating: "The substantive approach to equality under Article 14 demands that treatment be accorded with due regard to the individual, institutional, systemic and contextual barriers that impede the translation of rights in reality," and added, "At the same time, the state, as a benefactor, is under an obligation to remedy such structural disadvantages."

India doesn't need USA as much as Washington thinks: Dr. ABHIJIT BANERJEE



MI News Service, Kolkata: Nobel laureate economist Abhijit Banerjee has described the recently concluded India-EU free trade agreement (FTA) as "a strategic alignment" that sends a signal to Washington amid the high tariffs imposed by the Donald Trump administration that "we don't need the US as much as the US thinks we do". At the same time, Banerjee cautioned that the much-publicised pact, often referred to as the "mother of all deals", would not automatically deliver broad-based gains unless India significantly improves efficiency and logistics. Banerjee said India was yet to fully grasp the nature of American resistance under President Donald Trump's leadership, noting that the US had shown "limited interest" in bargaining with India despite repeated public claims of imminent agreements during periods of heightened trade tensions. "It is certainly a strategic alignment. It sends a signal to the US- from Europe and from India - that we don't need the US as much as the US thinks we do. That can be useful if the idea is to bring the US to the bargaining table," he said, while expressing scepticism about how much leverage the agreement would actually generate. Referring to the just-concluded India-EU FTA — a landmark deal aimed at creating a market of two billion people — Banerjee said trade agreements should be seen only as a first step.



Tourists enjoy winter and adventure sports at snow-laden Solang Valley, in Kullu district, Himachal Pradesh.

Extreme heat exposure may double by 2050: Reports

MI News Service, New Delhi/London: The percentage of the world's population experiencing extreme heat could double by 2050 over the 2010 benchmark because of continued use of fossil fuels, with India becoming one of the biggest sufferers, a research carried out by scientists at Oxford University has found.

The report has been published in the journal Nature Sustainability, a leading global publication in environmental studies, and is described as a "wake-up call" by one of the authors. The report said that if global temperatures rise by 2°C, projected to happen in about 25 years based on continuing use of fossil fuels, around 3.79 billion individuals are likely to face extreme heat. In 2010, that number had been projected to be 1.54 bil-

lion in 2050. Extreme heat is a period of abnormally hot weather, often defined by temperatures above 32°C for several days. "India, Nigeria, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines are projected to have the largest populations living under extreme heat, living under more than 3,000 cooling degree days," said lead author Jesus Lizana. Cooling degree days measure the energy needed to keep indoor environments at safe temperatures. "A threshold of 3,000+ CDD indicates prolonged, intense annual heat," the report said. "Our study shows most of the changes in cooling and heating demand occur before reaching the 1.5°C threshold (and) many homes may need air conditioning to be installed in the next five years, but



temperatures will continue to rise long after that if we hit 2°C of global warming," Lizana said. "Our findings should be a wake-up call," says Radhika Khosla, a professor and another author of the study, adding: "Over-

shooting 1.5°C of warming will have an unprecedented impact on everything from education and health to migration and farming. Net-zero sustainable development remains the only established path to reversing this trend for ever

hotter days. It is imperative that politicians regain the initiative towards it."

Despite the Paris climate agreement in 2015, mandated to keep the global temperature rise within 1.5°C, at most 2°C, compared to the pre-industrial-era benchmark, the global temperature has already risen tantalisingly close to 1.5°C. The report points out that the percentage of the "world's population living in regions defined as extremely cool could halve from 14 per cent to 7 per cent", as fewer places will be "extremely cool". The report highlights that India is among the countries projected to experience the largest population exposure to extreme heat conditions under global warming scenarios. "These findings emphasise the growing

vulnerability of India's population to extreme heat and the need for targeted adaptation and mitigation strategies to address the impacts of rising temperatures," the report said.

Anjal Prakash, a climate expert and professor at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, said: "The Oxford study highlights a critical climate tipping point: if fossil fuel dependence is not reduced swiftly, extreme heat — which is already fatal — could threaten twice the current global population by 2050, particularly in vulnerable nations such as India... . These areas, characterised by high population density and inadequate infrastructure, face elevated threats to health, agriculture, and economies, increasing inequality."

Home ministry moves to create CAPF career for AGNIVEERS

MI News Service, New Delhi: The Union home ministry has asked the brass of the central armed police forces (CAPFs) to coordinate activities for the career progression of the first batch of Agniveers who will exit later this year after completing four years in the defence forces, sources said. Under the Agnipath scheme, launched in 2022, Agniveers are not entitled to gratuity and pension. Seventy-five per cent of them will be demobilised after four years, while the rest will be retained in the regular cadre based on merit and organisational requirements.

According to an official, the ministry has directed the CAPF leadership to set up an internal committee to facilitate the career progression of former Agniveers, determine their responsibilities and identify where they could be absorbed in the paramilitary forces. "The ministry has asked the top brass to examine the modalities of ex-Agniveers' induction into CAPFs and where they could be inducted in the forces to get the maximum capacity utilisation. The ministry will come out with a policy decision soon on this," the official said. The first batch of 46,000 Agniveers — the controversial short-term military recruitment scheme in the country's armed forces — is set to exit the armed forces after completing their four-

year tenure. These personnel were recruited into the army, navy and air force for a four-year term.

Earlier this month, CISF director-general Praveer Ranjan had said the home ministry would bring out a comprehensive policy for the integration of former Agniveers with the central armed police forces following consultation with the CAPFs. Agniveers coming from the navy, he said, can be utilised for port security in the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). Last month, the home ministry released a gazette notification mandating a 50 per cent quota for Agniveers in the CAPF, a significant jump from the earlier mandate of 10 per cent by the ministry of home affairs. Following a nationwide protest by armed forces job aspirants over serious concerns about their future job security, the government had announced a reservation of 10 per cent of jobs in the defence and home ministries to absorb Agniveers. The home ministry had also announced a five-year age relaxation beyond the upper age limit for Agniveers to join the CAPFs and the Assam Rifles for the first batch of such soldiers. The existing CAPF recruitment rules mandate a quota of 27 per cent for the Other Backwards Classes, 15 per cent for Scheduled Castes and 7.5 per cent for the Scheduled Tribes, along with a quota of 10 per cent for ex-servicemen.

Kashmir centric display: R-Day tableau creates controversy

MI News Service, Srinagar: The display of traditional Kashmiri samavars (kettles), houseboats and handicrafts in Jammu and Kashmir's tableau at the Republic Day parade has antagonised the Jammu-centric, Right-wing ecosystem that perceives it as the imposition of an exotic culture on the region. The Jammu region has recently been roiled by communal tensions, with calls for separation from Kashmir gaining momentum in the Dogra heartland. It began with protests against the domination of Muslims in the maiden selection list of Mata Vaishno Devi Medical College and spread to various other areas.

A fresh controversy has now erupted over the Union Territory's Republic Day tableau, with pro-Jammu activists taking umbrage at the alleged exclusion of Dogra culture. The tableau, themed "Handicrafts and Folk Dances of J&K", showcased an intricately designed houseboat, exquisitely engraved samavars, Kani shawls, carpets and walnut wood artefacts from Kashmir. Jammu was represented by Basholi miniatures and folk dancers who performed to the musical fusion of rubab, santoor and flute. "Where is Jammu in this tableau? It looks completely Kashmir-themed," X user Atiriya posted, setting off a debate. Jammu-based activist Neeraj Singh Dogra wrote: "Jammu is watching from the audience that a Kashmiri Tableau is going in front of me." Shivani Vaid, a Jammu-based education-

ist, claimed Jammu's rich handicrafts, folk art, history and traditions had been systematically neglected for decades. BJP leader and Kashmiri Pandit Ashwani Kumar Chrungeo objected to the display of samavars and houseboats, claiming they were not indigenous to Kashmir.

"Samavar is not indigenous to Kashmir and has been imported from Central Asia (Samarkand) and was brought to Jammu and Kashmir by foreign invaders, looters and perpetrators of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Houseboats represent European intervention in Kashmir, especially during the British Raj," he said in a statement. Chrungeo said the rubab was a foreign musical instrument, which did not fully represent Jammu and Kashmir's classical music and folk traditions.

The BJP leader argued that such displays were attractive to tourists, but failed to convey the true civilisational message and risked imposing "one region's pseudo culture" over others, including Dogras and Kashmiri Pandits. Autar Krishan Peshen, a Kashmiri Pandit, said the region's ancient temples, sacred tirthas and Sanatan heritage remained under-represented.

Activist Manu Khajuria said the "token representation of a couple of dancers from Jammu" was insulting. The display was conceptualised and designed by Jammu-based artist and Padma Shri awardee Balwant Thakur and his Natrang group.

New antibody could be promising cancer treatment: Study

UPPSALA [SWEDEN] : Researchers at Uppsala University and KTH Royal Institute of Technology have created an antibody that has the potential to treat a variety of cancers. Researchers were able to integrate three different functionalities in the antibody, which combined significantly increased the action of T cells on the cancer tumour.

Researchers have developed a unique type of antibody that both targets and delivers a drug package via the antibody itself, while simultaneously activating the immune system ("3-in-1 design") for personalised immunotherapy treatments.

"We have been researching precision medicine for close to 15 years now, as well as how we can use antibodies to influence an important key protein (CD40) in the immune system. We can now show that our new antibody method works as precision medicine for cancer," explains Sara Mangsbo, professor at the Department of Pharmacy at Uppsala University, who together with Johan Rockberg, professor at KTH Royal Institute of Technology, is the study's lead



author. The drug redirects the immune system to find and target specific mutations and gene changes that are only found in cancer cells, known as neoantigens. This is achieved by the new antibody both delivering the unique tumour-specific material directly to a particular type of immune cell and by stimulating this cell simultaneously, which then has the capacity to greatly enhance the T-cell response to the tumour. The results show that the method works in several

ways. Not only does it activate the right type of immune cells in human blood samples, but animal models show that mice receiving the treatment had prolonged survival and, at higher doses, also save the mice from cancer, and that the method is safer than previous cancer treatments the researchers have studied. Customised precision medicines can be both costly and time-consuming to develop.

"The advantage of our drug is that it is easy to produce on a

larger scale, yet can be easily tailored to the patient's disease or specific tumour. The medicine consists of two parts that are combined, a targeting bispecific antibody - which can be produced in large quantities in advance - and a custom peptide part, which is produced rapidly synthetically on a small scale for a desired type of cancer. Both in terms of production cost and the short time it takes to tailor a peptide to a new tumour, this increases availability and should make it quicker for patients to go from diagnosis to treatment," explains Johan Rockberg, Professor at KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

The aim of the study was to establish a more flexible, faster and safer treatment for cancer than those currently available. The study has already shown that the method has the potential to be customised for each patient, thereby strengthening the immune system against cancer. The next step is to use the fully optimised production process to manufacture the drug candidate for further safety studies and then start clinical trials in humans.

Patients with obesity and renal dysfunction may now be eligible for kidney transplants

ILLINOIS [US] : A collaborative research between a bariatric and transplant surgery team has provided fresh hope for individuals with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) and obesity. The study's authors investigated the results of metabolic and bariatric surgery in ESRD patients, as well as whether such surgery might enhance their eligibility for kidney transplantation. The findings are reported in the Journal of the American College of Surgeons.

"Obesity is a worsening problem in the United States, significantly impacting transplant eligibility. We established the CORT initiative - a collaborative for obesity research in transplantation - recognizing the urgent need to address this issue, especially in underserved populations who suffer the most from obesity-related diseases," said corresponding study author Anil Paramesh, MD, MBA, FACS, professor of surgery, urology, and paediatrics and director of the kidney and pancreas transplant programs at Tulane University School of Medicine. Patients with ESRD face many difficulties without a transplant; their only alternative is to prolong life through dialysis, a process that is not only costly and time-intensive but also significantly diminishes the quality of life, Dr Paramesh noted. The study, conducted between January 2019 and June 2023, followed 183 ESRD patients referred for bariatric surgery, with 36 undergoing weight loss surgery and 10



subsequently receiving kidney transplants. Results showed a 27% reduction in average BMI at the time of transplant, alongside improvements in hypertension and diabetes management. This improvement in the management of comorbid conditions enhanced patients' overall health and transplant viability. With obesity being a major cause of transplant exclusion, this collaborative program represents a path forward for patients who previously would be ineligible, Dr Paramesh said and may help pave the way for increased patient education and access. "We've seen that bariatric surgery is not just about weight loss; it significantly improves other serious conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and sleep

apnea. This approach not only helps in reducing the patients' weight to a level where they can safely receive a transplant but also addresses the broader issue of health care disparities, particularly affecting Black and lower-income individuals," said Dr Paramesh.

However, the study also faced challenges, including a high drop-off rate of patients unwilling or unable to undergo surgery, and unique postoperative complications such as hypotension.

"Our findings indicate a pressing need to enhance patient education and support, making sure that potential candidates understand the benefits of weight loss surgery and its role in improving their eligibility for transplant," said Dr Paramesh.

Research shows how oestrogen protects against fatty liver

WASHINGTON DC [US] : New research from Sweden's Karolinska Institutet demonstrates how oestrogen protects against MASLD, a fatty liver disease that has developed rapidly during the obesity epidemic. The study, published in the journal Molecular Systems Biology, demonstrates how a new medicine under development could become a future treatment for fatty liver disease and liver cancer.

The global obesity epidemic has resulted in a dramatic increase in fatty liver, a disease in which fat that does not fit into fat cells is stored in liver cells instead.

Since last year, fatty liver due to obesity (and not excessive alcohol consumption) is known as MASLD (metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease). According to previous research, as many as one in three adults are affected by some degree of MASLD, which in the worst cases can develop into cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Women are protected until menopause

However, the disease is very unevenly distributed between the sexes, with a large majority of affected individuals being men.

"Women have a natural protection until menopause due to the female sex hormone oestrogen," explains Claudia Kutter,



senior researcher at the Department of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology, Karolinska Institutet who led the study.

Although women's protection has been known for some time, the mechanism behind the protective effect has been less clear. Now Claudia Kutter's research team may have found the answer.

Through genetic analyses of mice of both sexes fed a high-fat diet, with some of the male mice

also receiving oestrogen, the researchers were able to identify a key protein in the development of fatty liver. The protein, called TEAD1, was found to play an overall role in regulating how liver cells absorb fat. Blocking TEAD1 protected liver cells from the harmful accumulation of fat. Mice receiving oestrogen treatment had lower TEAD1 activity and less fat accumulation in the liver. New drug under development In the next step, the

researchers tested blocking TEAD1 in human liver cells with the same result. The fact that this was possible at all, however, was a bit of luck.

"It turned out that a pharmaceutical company is developing an anti-cancer drug that blocks TEAD1, which allowed us to test our hypothesis," says Claudia Kutter.

The fact that TEAD1 is also involved in cancer does not worry her, quite the contrary.

"Since the activity of TEAD proteins is elevated in cancer, blocking TEAD at an early stage can also be positive from a cancer point of view," she says. "Patients suffering from liver cancer are currently diagnosed very late. If the patient is given this drug early in the process to protect against fatty liver, it can hopefully also prevent the development of liver cancer."

Will be tested on humans

The pharmaceutical company will now start clinical trials of the drug as a protection against fatty liver disease, while Claudia Kutter's research team will continue researching further ways to tackle the disease.

"We want to focus on how to find the disease earlier and identifying new treatment targets," she says. "Different approaches may be needed for different patients depending on their gender and hormonal status."

Researchers develop simple blood test to quickly recognize sarcoidosis

LOS ANGELES [US] : Researchers have developed a technique for quickly and cheaply identifying sarcoidosis, a chronic inflammatory illness characterized by the growth of microscopic lumps called granulomas in the lungs and other organs.

The technique, which uses a simple blood test, may allow for the selective use of more intrusive diagnostic tests that are commonly employed to identify the disease. The results were reported in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

"Currently, diagnosing sarcoidosis isn't a straightforward process and requires tissue removal and testing with additional screenings to rule out other diseases, such as tuberculosis or lung cancer," said James Kiley, Ph.D., director of the NIH's Division of Lung Diseases at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

"Using a blood test will help diagnose faster, particularly in those organs that are more challenging to biopsy and with less harm to the patient."

Though the exact cause of sarcoidosis is unknown, researchers suspect it is an immune disorder triggered by a group of specific antigens, which are generally foreign substances that incite an immune response in the body. In the United States, an estimated 8-11 people per 100,000 are affected by sarcoidosis each year, according to previous research.

To identify antigens and determine which might be linked to sarcoidosis, scientists collected lung fluid samples and blood cells from patients with pulmonary sarcoidosis and then extracted the genetic material. Using a combination of molecular tech-



niques, the researchers homed in on two newly described disease-specific antigen biomarkers that only bind to the antibodies of sarcoidosis-positive patients.

They next designed a highly specific blood test, which only requires a small amount of blood, to determine if they could accurately detect sarcoidosis. To verify the test, researchers compared blood samples from 386 people, which included patients with sarcoidosis, patients with tuberculosis, patients with lung cancer and healthy individuals. The researchers confirmed that their test was able to differentiate patients who had sarcoidosis from those with other respiratory diseases.

"More testing needs to be completed before this screening method is ready for clinical use, but it's possible that could be a reality within a few years," said Samavati.

People with essential tremor may be at higher risk of dementia, finds study

MINNEAPOLIS [US] : People suffering from essential tremor, a movement disorder marked by involuntary shaking, are three times more likely to have dementia than the general population, according to studies.

The findings will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 76th Annual Meeting, which will take place in Denver and online from April 13 to 18, 2024.

Essential tremor is the most common tremor disorder, even more prevalent than Parkinson's disease. In addition to arm and hand tremors, people may have uncontrollable shaking of the head, jaw, and voice.

"While many people living with essential tremor experience mild tremor, in some individuals, the tremor can be quite severe," said study author Elan D. Louis, MD, MSc, at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas and a Fellow of the American Academy of Neurology. "Not only do tremors affect a person's ability to complete daily tasks such as writing and eating, our study suggests that people with essential tremor also have an increased risk of developing dementia."

The study involved 222 people with essential tremor who had an average age of 79 at the start of the study. They took thinking and

memory tests to determine whether they had normal cognitive skills, mild cognitive impairment or dementia at the start of the study.

Participants then had follow-up exams every 1.5 years for an average of five years.

Of this group, 168 people had normal cognitive skills, 35 had mild cognitive impairment and 19 had dementia at the start of the study.

During the study, 59 developed mild cognitive impairment and 41 developed dementia. Researchers then compared the rate at which people developed mild cognitive impairment and dementia, as well as the prevalence of these conditions, to the rates and prevalence for the general population. They also compared participants to the rates and prevalence for people with Parkinson's disease.

Researchers found 19% of participants had or developed dementia during the study, and each year an average of 12% of people diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment went on to develop dementia. These rates were three times higher than the rates in the general population. However, the rates were lower than those seen in people with Parkinson's disease, a population for which dementia is more prevalent.

Many individuals with type 2 diabetes lack potentially life-saving information regarding their illness

LAUSANNE [SWITZERLAND] : Type 2 diabetes (T2D), a chronic condition affecting hundreds of millions of people worldwide, is commonly caused by the body's inability to make enough insulin or use it correctly.

To avoid negative outcomes and long-term complications such as limb amputation or heart problems, patients must understand how to manage the condition on a daily basis. A team of researchers in Portugal has now assessed how many patients - both insulin-treated and not insulin-treated - have this crucial knowledge about T2D. They published their findings in Frontiers in Public Health.

Scientists found that many people with type 2 diabetes know little about their condition, indicating a need to improve communication about the disease

"Our main motivation was to contribute to the reduction of the existing disparity in the knowledge that diabetic patients have regarding their disease," said first author Prof Pedro Lopes Ferreira, director of the Center for Health Studies and Research of the University of Coimbra. "With this study we evidenced the need to improve the disease knowledge of type 2 diabetic patients."

Knowledge levels vary widely. To measure diabetes knowledge, the researchers employed a



test designed for persons with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. The test, among other things, asks about diet, signs and symptoms, and medication control. The research included 1,200 diabetics, over 40 per cent of whom were treated with insulin. The remainder of the sample followed particular diets, with some also using non-insulin oral antidiabetics, while others depended only on food.

The results showed that many participants (71.3 per cent) could answer food-related questions

correctly, and that more than four out of five respondents demonstrated good knowledge of the positive impact of physical activity. More than 75 per cent of respondents also knew about the best method for testing blood sugar levels.

In other areas, however, the researchers found that knowledge was severely lacking. For example, when asked which food item should not be used to treat low blood sugar levels, only 12.8 per cent of participants answered cor-

rectly. The lowest percentage (4.4 per cent) of correct answers was on a question concerning the symptoms of ketoacidosis, a potentially life-threatening, late-stage T2D complication.

"One of the main reasons for this disparity in knowledge is probably the behavior of health professionals and the areas that are prioritized when informing patients," Lopes Ferreira explained.

Equipping patients with knowledge The researchers found

that the use of medication was one factor that impacted T2D knowledge. The percentage of correct answers was 51.8 per cent for non-insulin treated patients, and 58.7 per cent for patients using insulin. Looking at socioeconomic and demographic factors, being younger than 65 years, having a higher education, not living alone, and following a specific diet had a positive impact on disease knowledge.

The researchers said that their results highlight the need to improve T2D knowledge about certain aspects of the disease, for example, blood sugar monitoring, which can help to avoid spikes in blood sugar levels that are associated with acute and chronic complications. Knowledge gaps within individual sections of the test are also something that needs to be addressed urgently, the team pointed out.

They also stated that studies with even more participants could help to better understand the role of the socioeconomic and clinical determinants of the disease. "We focused on patients' own knowledge of their disease, rather than disease management being based solely on biological indicators. We hope that the results obtained will allow professionals to change the way they inform patients," Lopes Ferreira concluded.

UN chief warns against escalation in Ethiopia's Tigray region



MI News Service, United Nations: UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Saturday warned against escalation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, calling on all parties to exercise restraint and resolve differences through peaceful dialogue and measures aimed at rebuilding trust.

The secretary-general is closely following developments in Tigray, where renewed tensions and reported clashes have contributed to a worsening security environment, his deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said in a statement.

Guterres is "deeply concerned about the potential impact on civilians and the risk of a return to a wider conflict in a region still working to rebuild and recover," said Haq. The UN chief urged the full implementation of the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and underscored the importance of safeguarding the gains made since 2022.

He reiterated the UN's readiness to work with the African Union(AU) and regional partners to help consolidate peace.

Ithale Sawab Ceremony for Pir Habib-ur Rahman Siddiqui at Furfura

Nurul Islam Khan : An annual prayer meeting was held on Sunday at the Furfura Darbar Sharif. This meeting is held every year in memory of Pir Janab Habib-ur Rahman Siddiqui, the worthy son of Pirmaza Hazrat Chhoto Huzur. The organizers were Pirmaza Tahbib Siddiqui and Pirmaza Saferi Siddiqui. The Zikr (remembrance of God) session was conducted by Pir Maulana Yunus Siddiqui. Many Pirs were present at the meeting, including Pir Omar Siddiqui, Pirmaza Taher Siddiqui, Pirmaza Hafez Mustafa Siddiqui, Pirmaza Ehia Siddiqui, Pirmaza Nurullah Siddiqui, Pirmaza Ehia Siddiqui, and Pirmaza Syed Imad Uddin Hossain. On this day, the overall life and work of the deceased Pir Sahib were discussed. The speakers said that Pir Sahib was honest, just, and idealistic. He never hesitated to speak for truth and righteousness. He was vocal against injustice and led protest movements. He fought on the streets for justice. When the Holy



Quran was banned, Pir Sahib's protest movement left a lasting impression on people's minds. His contributions to various social activities were undeniable. As the grandson of Mujaddid-e-Zaman Hazrat Pir Dada Huzur, he possessed immense spiritual power. He spread the light of education in society through various educational institutions. Pir Sahib's worthy sons, Pirmaza Tahbib Siddiqui and Pirmaza Saferi Siddiqui, are continuing his work. The final prayer was offered by Pir Ibrahim Siddiqui. He prayed for the welfare of all humanity and said that it is essential to form a strong public opinion against the way the current Election Commission is harassing ordinary people.

The gathering at the court of Syed Dewan Muhammad Zafar Huzur in Pratapgah has concluded



Nurul Islam Khan: The two-day traditional Islā-e-Sawāb ceremony at the Pratapgah Darbar Sharif in Medinipur concluded on Sunday morning. This Darbar is a continuous bearer of Sufism in the evolution of the subcontinent's society and civilization, not only in spiritual practice but also in humanity, tolerance, and social reform. This is not a "religious ceremony"—rather, it is a continuous call to bring back people's inner anxieties, loneliness, spiritual deficiencies, and a lost society to its roots. The late Allama Syed Khaled Huzur (RA)—an absent presence. This was the first gathering after the passing of the former Gaddi-nashin of the Darbar, the late Allama Syed Khaled Huzur (RA). His absence was palpable—but his spiritual presence was felt even more deeply in people's hearts. Their emptiness, however, guides society. Under the guidance of Pir Allama Syed Ruhul Amin Huzur Qibla, the gentle remembrance of God in a tranquil silence reminds people and leads them towards repentance, purification, and self-reflection. People from many states and countries had arrived. A message of harmony was conveyed. It is worth mentioning that such gatherings reduce distances and lessen ethnic divisions. It was announced at the Darbar: "The unity of the Ummah survives more under the shadow of the shrine than on a platform." Abutalib Rahmani, a member of the Muslim Personal Law Board, said that the service of the Pratapgah Darbar Sharif is a blessing for society. It is engaged in various social activities including soup kitchens, assistance to the poor, and scholarships. The presence of Buland Shah Zafarullah and the scholars of Furfura has ennobled the Darbar. Buland Shah Zafarullah said: "The blessings never cease. People change, but the light continues." The final prayer was a scene of surrender by the entire sea of people. The final prayer on the last day was led by Pirmaza Syed Ruhul Amin Sahib. He conveyed the message, Here, people learn religion not through shouting, but in silence; not through debate, but through remorse; not through hatred, but through love. Numerous Pirs (spiritual leaders) from Furfura Sharif were present.

Violent law enforcement tears U.S. society wider apart

MI News Service, Washington: As the Trump administration presses ahead with hardline immigration policies, it has repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of minority identities, while Democratic politicians, seeking minority support, have labeled law enforcement agencies as instruments of racial oppression. This "two-way demonization" has intensified emotional polarization in U.S. society and further aggravated tensions between law enforcers and the public.

BEIJING, Jan. 31 (Xinhua) -- Within less than 2 kilometers and just 17 days apart, the deaths of two Americans at the hands of U.S. federal law enforcement have once again shed the spotlight on persistent problems of violent policing in the United States.

Occurring near the site where George Floyd was killed nearly six years ago, the latest incidents underscore how excessive law enforcement force -- entangled with racial discrimination, social inequality, widespread gun violence and systemic bias -- continues to weigh on U.S. society, while deepening partisan divisions further complicate efforts at reform.

Residents of Minneapolis, Minnesota, braved freezing winds on Jan. 25 to mourn Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care unit nurse who was fatally shot by law enforcement officers a day earlier.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said federal officers fired



"defensive shots" after a man (Pretti) with a handgun approached them and "violently resisted" when officers tried to disarm him. However, video footage filmed by witnesses soon contradicted the account, showing Pretti holding a mobile phone, with no evidence indicating that he was armed.

The killing marked the second fatal immigration enforcement incident in Minneapolis this month. On Jan. 7, officers from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shot dead Renee Good, a 37-year-old mother of three. The shooting occurred about 1.6 kilometers from the site where George Floyd, an African American man, died in May 2020 after a police officer knelt on his neck. The shootings have ignited

public outcry in Minneapolis. Local residents described the incidents as "street killings" and "cold-blooded executions," calling for an immediate end to federal law enforcement violence. The New York Times columnist Lydia Polgreen wrote that "in Minneapolis, I glimpsed a civil war."

On Friday, protesters gathered in hundreds of cities across the United States as part of a nationwide strike calling for "no work, no school, no shopping" to oppose federal immigration enforcement operations and the recent ICE-related fatal shootings.

The demonstrations, organized under the banner "National Shutdown," took place across the United States with actions ranging from business closures to student walkouts and street marches.

Formation of negotiations structure with U.S. is "progressing," says top Iranian official

MI News Service, Cairo : A senior Iranian security official said Saturday that a structure for talks with the United States is being set up.

"The formation of a structure for negotiations is progressing," Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani wrote on social media platform X, without elaborating. Larijani's remarks followed his meeting on Friday with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, which focused on economic cooperation and significant regional and international issues.

The remarks also came amid rising tensions between Iran and the United States, with the latter bolstering its military presence in the Middle East. U.S. President Donald Trump said a "massive armada," led by the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and larger than the fleet sent to Venezuela, is heading toward Iran. The deployment reflects the heightened risk of confrontation, even as Washington publicly holds out the possibility of diplomacy.

On Friday, the Israel Defense Forces reported that the U.S. guided-missile destroyer USS Delbert D. Black made a routine stop in Eilat on the Red Sea, underscoring ongoing U.S.-Israeli military cooperation. Later in the day, Trump said he had given a deadline directly to Tehran,



while refusing to disclose its specifics.

On Saturday, Fox News correspondent Jacqui Heinrich wrote on X that she had an interview with Trump earlier in the day, during which the U.S. president indicated that Washington hopes to continue talks with Iran and achieve results. According to Heinrich, Trump also told her that Washington did not tell its Mideast allies about its plans for Iran.

On Friday, Tehran had already signaled its willingness to return to the negotiating table to ease the escalating confrontation, but only if such talks with Washington are fair and not conducted under threat. Earlier on Saturday, Iran's Army Chief Amir Hatami warned that if the United States makes any mistake, it will definitely jeopardize its own security and that of Israel and the entire West Asia region.

US envoys to Israel barred early Gaza 'apocalyptic wasteland' warnings

MI News Service, Washington:

About three months after the October 7, 2023, attack, which intensified Israeli military action in the Gaza Strip, employees of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) had warned officials in the then US president Joe Biden's administration that northern Gaza has turned into an "apocalyptic wasteland," with extreme food and aid shortages, with the written memo being blocked from being widely circulated in the government.

According to a Reuters report, the internal draft of

2024 detailed the harrowing condition observed by the United Nations staff who went there on a two-part humanitarian fact-finding mission in January and February.

The UN staff said they saw human bones on the roads, bodies in abandoned cars, and "catastrophic human needs, particularly for food and safe drinking water." However, the then US ambassador to Jerusalem, Israel, Jack Lew, and his deputy Stephanie Hallet, stopped the message from being distributed widely within the US government,

Reuters said.

According to them, the cable had no balance. One of the five such messages sent in the first half of the year, it documented the quick deterioration of health, food and sanitary conditions and the collapse of social order for people living in Gaza.

Three former US officials who Reuters spoke to said that descriptions from Gaza were "unusually graphic" and would have drawn the attention of senior US officials if the message had been spread more broadly within the administration.

Russia rejects NATO troops deployment in Ukraine as security guarantees

MI News Service, Moscow: Russia does not accept the deployment of EU or NATO military forces on Ukrainian territory as part of security guarantees, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said on Sunday.

"We have stated that this is unacceptable, no NATO membership and no foreign forces," Grushko told RIA Novosti. "There is no difference whether a French corporal is wearing a cap with 'NATO' or 'EU' written on it. That does not change the situation. We have not deviated from our position."

Grushko's comments came after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said earlier that current security guarantee proposals include plans to deploy military contingents from



several European countries, mainly France and Britain, to Ukraine, with support from Washington. Rubio did not provide details on the nature of U.S. support.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has repeatedly warned that any scenario involving the deployment of troops from NATO member states to Ukraine is

categorically unacceptable for Russia and could lead to a sharp escalation of tensions.

Moscow has also criticized statements from Britain and other European countries about the possible deployment of such contingents, describing them as provocations that encourage the continuation of hostilities.

Iran's Parliament brands EU armies as terror groups

MI News Service, Tehran:

In a defiant response to the European Union's recent designation of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf announced on Sunday that the Islamic Republic now considers all European Union militaries to be terrorist groups.

The move, described as largely symbolic, invokes a 2019 Iranian law allowing reciprocal designations against nations that label the IRGC a terror entity—originally enacted after the United States took similar action that year. Qalibaf, a former IRGC commander, made the statement during a parliamentary session where he and other lawmakers wore IRGC uniforms in solidarity with the elite force.

The IRGC, which answers directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, controls Iran's ballistic missile program and holds significant economic influence. Qalibaf

accused Europe of "shooting themselves in the foot" by targeting the IRGC, which he claimed serves as a major barrier to terrorism spreading into Europe. He blamed the EU's decision on "blind obedience to the Americans," arguing it harms European interests.

The announcement coincides with heightened Middle East tensions, including U.S. President Donald Trump's consideration of military strikes against Iran. Iran also scheduled live-fire military drills in the strategic Strait of Hormuz for Sunday and Monday—a vital chokepoint for global oil trade, through which about one-fifth of the world's oil passes.

Lawmakers responded to the session with chants of "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!" The EU's designation of the IRGC followed its role in the violent suppression of nationwide protests in Iran, marking a symbolic escalation in Western pressure on Tehran.

Courage over hate: Deepak Kumar stands up for Muslim shopkeeper in Kotdwar

MI News Service, Pauri Garhwal : In Kotdwar town of Uttarakhand's Pauri Garhwal district, an elderly Muslim shopkeeper, Shoaib Salmani, faced harassment from a group of Hindutva activists, reportedly linked to Bajrang Dal.

The mob demanded he remove "Baba" from his 30-year-old shop name, "Baba Shop" (or "Baba School Dress and Matching Centre"), claiming it was misleading and inappropriate.

The incident occurred in Patel Marg, a mixed Hindu-Muslim commercial area behind the Jama Masjid. A mob member was heard saying, "Remove the Baba name, or become a Baba yourself." Salmani explained that "Baba Shop" was a longstanding brand, and he had even added the owner's name to the board after a similar confrontation four months earlier. Despite his pleas, the group persisted.

A local resident, Deepak Kumar, intervened decisively. He challenged their authority to dictate a private business name and stood firm against the intimidation. When the group asked his identity, he replied, "My name is Mohammed Deepak. What do you have to do with my name?" His bold response unsettled them, and with support from other locals, the mob was driven away.

A viral video captured the moment,



earning Deepak widespread praise online for his act of solidarity and courage against mob mentality. Salmani lauded Deepak, saying his intervention showed humanity prevails when confronted with bravery. He noted the matter was resolved without further police action after the initial complaint.

Deepak later clarified in a statement that he is "neither Hindu nor Muslim nor Sikh," but a human being first. He condemned targeting anyone based on religion and urged spreading love over hate for India's sake.

The next day, right-wing workers from Rishikesh and Dehradun reportedly returned in large numbers to confront Deepak, chanting "Jai Shri Ram" amid tensions. Police intervened to control the crowd and restore order.

This episode highlights acts of interfaith solidarity amid rising communal pressures, reminding us that courage and humanity can counter division.

37 Palestinians killed, many injured in Israeli airstrikes across Gaza despite ceasefire in past 24 hours

MI News Service, Gaza: At least 37 Palestinians were killed and several injured in a series of Israeli airstrikes targeting various areas across the Gaza Strip in the last 24 hours, multiple sources said Saturday.

The Civil Defense in Gaza confirmed in its latest statement that Israeli attacks on the Strip since dawn on Saturday have killed 32 Palestinians, including children and women.

Five Palestinians, three children and two women, were killed, and others injured in an Israeli airstrike that hit a residential apartment in the Rimal neighborhood of western Gaza City, medical sources told Anadolu.

Seven more Palestinians, a man, his three sons, and three of his young grandchildren, were killed in another Israeli airstrike that targeted a tent sheltering displaced people in the Asdaa area northwest of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, according to paramedics at Nasser Hospital in the city.

Several Palestinians were



also injured in an Israeli strike that targeted a residential apartment in the al-Tuffah neighborhood east of Gaza City, eyewitnesses said.

Israeli fighter jets also carried out an airstrike on al-Jalaa Street northwest of Gaza City, as well as two strikes east of the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, with no casualties reported.

An Israeli fighter jet carried out an airstrike on the adminis-

tration building of the "Ghaith" camp, which shelters hundreds of displaced people, near Al-Ribat College on Street 2 in the Al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis, an Anadolu correspondent reported.

The correspondent said the strike came after an evacuation warning issued by the Israeli army and was preceded by an earlier strike from an Israeli drone.

In a statement, the Palestin-

ian Civil Defense in Khan Younis said its crews "brought under control a fire that broke out in the tents of displaced people at Ghaith camp" following the attack by warplanes.

According to eyewitnesses cited by Anadolu, the strike caused extensive material damage to the tents, destroying some of them.

In a separate attack, Gaza's Interior Ministry said in a brief statement that Israeli warplanes targeted the Sheikh Radwan police station west of Gaza City, resulting in the killing and injury of a number of police officers and personnel.

A medical source also told Anadolu that 13 Palestinians were killed in an Israeli strike that targeted the Sheikh Radwan police station west of Gaza City.

According to the Palestinian Civil Defense, four female police officers were among the victims.

Eyewitnesses told Anadolu that search operations are still ongoing for a number of missing people believed to be trapped under the rubble of the targeted

building.

A medical source also said that three Palestinians were killed in an Israeli strike that targeted a house in the al-Nasr neighborhood west of Gaza City.

A Palestinian man was killed by Israeli gunfire east of Jabalia in northern Gaza, another medical source told Anadolu.

However, the Israeli army claimed in a statement that it targeted four members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, along with infrastructure belonging to the two groups in the Gaza Strip.

In a related development, the media office said the army has arrested 50 Palestinians since the agreement came into effect, detaining them from areas far from the "yellow line" and from within residential neighborhoods.

Regarding the humanitarian protocol, the office said Israel has allowed the entry of 28,927 aid, commercial, and fuel trucks out of a total of 66,600 trucks stipulated under the agreement, reflecting a compliance rate of 43%.

Aus Open: Alcaraz ends Djokovic’s perfect finals record to win first Australian Open title in Melbourne

MELBOURNE : Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz made tennis history on Sunday, winning his maiden Australian Open men’s singles title and in the process, becoming the youngest professional tennis player to achieve a career Grand Slam.

Carlos Alcaraz achieved a Melbourne milestone, overcoming a shaky start to defeat Novak Djokovic 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 and claim his first title at the season’s first Grand Slam tournament. By inflicting a first defeat on Djokovic in 11 Australian Open finals, the 22-year-old Alcaraz became the youngest man to complete the career Grand Slam, which is achieved by lifting the trophy at all four majors, in the open era.

The World No.1 roared back into action after an uncharacteristically flat opening set in which Djokovic came out firing. Alcaraz locked in from the baseline to take control of his first Australian Open final. The Spaniard broke his rival’s serve twice to win the second set and appeared back to his free-flowing best in a third set featuring several stunning all-court exchanges in one of the best final encounters in Melbourne in recent



Djokovic dug deep in the fourth set and fended off six break points to hold in the second game. However, the 38-year-old was unable to counter and maintain his perfect championship-match record at the Rod Laver Arena and went down fighting.

times. Djokovic dug deep in the fourth set and fended off six break points to hold in the second game. However, the 38-year-old was unable to counter and maintain his perfect championship-match record at the Rod Laver Arena and went down fighting.

Alcaraz broke decisively in the 12th game of the fourth set to seal a three-hour, two-minute triumph and ensured Djokovic’s wait for a record 25th Grand Slam title continues.

Alcaraz is now a seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, making him level with his fellow ATP No. 1 club member John McEnroe and Mats Wilander on the all-time list. The Spaniard’s Melbourne victory continued the stranglehold that he and his great rival Jannik Sinner have had on the majors in recent years: the pair have won the past nine Grand

Slam titles between them, dating back to Djokovic’s triumph at the 2023 US Open. Sinner lost to Djokovic in the 2026 Australian Open semifinals.

Djokovic came out fresh and strong despite playing a marathon five-set semifinal against 2024 and 2025 champion Jannik Sinner on Friday night and pummeled the ball aggressively from the first game. The 38-year-old Serbian, who was bidding to lift an all-time record 25th Grand Slam trophy and also become the oldest winner of the men’s singles title at a major in the Open Era, barely put a foot wrong in a statement opening-set display.

Just as he had against Sinner, Djokovic came out determined to dictate play with his forehand, and the Serbian carved out the opening three break points of the set in the fourth game. Although Alcaraz held his nerve to fend off

the first two, Djokovic prevailed in an extended baseline rally on the third to gain an early advantage.

Alcaraz himself contested the longest semifinal in tournament history on Friday against Alexander Zverev, and he delivered a low-energy opening set. Djokovic expertly capitalised on his momentum by breaking his opponent’s serve again in the eighth game to clinch a set in which he dropped just two points behind serve, according to Infosys Stats.

The Spaniard became the eighth player to complete a career Grand Slam, joining Fred Perry (1935), Don Budge (1938), Rod Laver (1962), Roy Emerson (1964), Andre Agassi (1999), Roger Federer (2009), Rafael Nadal (2010), and Djokovic (2015). Of these, Budge and Lever bagged the Grand Slam in a calendar year.

Jharkhand Defeat Odisha by Four Wickets to Seal Ranji Trophy Quarter-Final Berth



PC JHA
RANCHI : Jharkhand produced a spirited all-round performance to defeat Odisha by four wickets in their Ranji Trophy encounter at the Keenan Stadium, Jamshedpur, on Sunday, securing a place in the quarter-finals after overcoming a first-innings deficit.

Resuming the final day, Odisha were bowled out for 226 in their second innings.

Captain Shubhanshu Senapati top-scored with a composed 73, while Govind Poddar contributed 31. Jharkhand’s bowlers delivered a disciplined and incisive spell, with left-arm spinner Anukul Roy leading the attack by claiming five wickets. He received excellent support from pacer Aditya Singh, who picked up four wickets to dismantle the Odisha batting line-up.

Chasing a target of 246 runs for victory, Jharkhand’s batters showed maturity and resolve under pressure. Shardandeep

Singh anchored the chase with a solid 64, while wicketkeeper-batter Robin Minz played an aggressive yet controlled knock of 63 to keep the momentum in Jharkhand’s favour. Anukul Roy once again proved his all-round credentials, contributing a valuable 45 runs in the middle order.

Aditya Singh added the finishing touches with an unbeaten 22, guiding Jharkhand to 249 for six and sealing a memorable win. For Odisha, Syed Toufiq Ahmed emerged as the most successful bowler with four wickets, while Govind Poddar chipped in with two.

The victory marked a remarkable comeback for Jharkhand after trailing in the first innings and underlined the team’s fighting spirit and depth in both batting and bowling. With this crucial win, Jharkhand confirmed their berth in the Ranji Trophy quarter-finals, boosting confidence ahead of the knockout stage.

T20 World Cup 2026 trophy tour reaches Rinku Singh’s former school in Aligarh

ALIGARH : The ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 trophy tour made an exciting stop at Delhi Public School, Aligarh, the former school of India batter Rinku Singh. The event, which drew an enthusiastic response from students and faculty, was attended by Rinku Singh’s parents, his close friend Waseem, the school principal, MD of Pavna Jain, representatives from DPS sister schools, and college cricket team students.

Students took part in cricket-themed trivia sessions, tap the ball challenges, and hit-the-wicket activities, creating a lively and interactive atmosphere around the trophy. Adding a special highlight to the visit, students also connected with Rinku Singh through a live virtual interaction, making the experience personal, memorable, and inspiring.

The ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 trophy tour continues its journey across the country under the ‘Class of 26’ initiative, visiting the former educational institutions of the Indian team. The initiative celebrates the formative years of players and honours the educational institutions where their ambitions were first nurtured, while inspiring students by connecting them with the trophy and the stories behind India’s journey on the global stage.

The trophy also travelled to St. Bede’s Anglo Indian Higher Secondary School, Chennai, the alma mater of India’s all-rounder Washington Sundar. In the presence of the school Principal and faculty members, students also engaged in interactive games and



challenges, creating an energetic and engaging atmosphere on campus.

Another stop on the tour was Dharmasinh Desai University, the former college of India all-rounder Axar Patel. The visit was attended by the Dean, Treasurer, and Associate Secretary, along with college cricket team students. The engagement featured a fun and interactive session, along with a two-over cricket match for girls and boys, adding a strong sporting dimension to the celebration.

The tour will continue to visit more educational institutions,

extending the initiative’s reach and inspiring the next generation of cricketers.

The ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 is scheduled to take place from February 7 to March 8 across venues in India and Sri Lanka, including Narendra Modi Stadium (Ahmedabad), MA Chidambaram Stadium (Chennai), Arun Jaitley Stadium (New Delhi), Wankhede Stadium (Mumbai), Eden Gardens (Kolkata), R. Premadasa Stadium (Colombo), Sinhalese Sports Club Cricket Ground (Colombo) and Pallekele International Cricket Stadium (Kandy).

Jharkhand Cyclists Shine at International Track Asia Cup



PC JHA

RANCHI: Jharkhand’s cyclists delivered an outstanding performance at the International Cycling Track Asia Cup 2026, winning a total of six medals - three gold and three bronze - and bringing pride to both the nation and the state.

The prestigious international event was organised under the aegis of the Cycling Federation of India (CFI) and held from January 29 to 31, 2026, at the SDAT Velodrome in Vandalur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Representing India on the international stage, athletes from Jharkhand showcased remarkable skill, speed, and determination against strong continental competition. Sarita Kumari emerged as one of the standout performers, clinching a gold medal in the Team Sprint event. She further added to her medal tally by securing a bronze medal in the Individual Sprint, underlining her consistency and competitive edge. Ameer Riaz also put up a commendable show, contributing to India’s medal haul with a bronze medal in the Team Sprint event. He followed it up with another bronze in the Individual Sprint, reflecting his strong performance across sprint disciplines. The star of the championship for Jharkhand was Vikas Uraon, who delivered a stellar display by winning two gold medals. He topped the podium in the Team Sprint event and went on to claim gold in the Individual Sprint as well, establishing himself as a dominant force in the competition. The exceptional achievements of Sarita Kumari, Ameer Riaz, and Vikas Uraon at the Asia Cup highlight the growing strength of cycling in Jharkhand and the state’s rising presence in international sports. Their success not only brought laurels to India but also reinforced Jharkhand’s reputation as an emerging hub of sporting talent. Sports officials and enthusiasts have hailed the performance as historic, expressing confidence that such achievements will inspire young cyclists across the state to pursue excellence at the national and international levels.



Mumbai Open WTA 125K: Thailand’s Peangtarn Plipuech knocks out Ankita Raina

MUMBAI : Ankita Raina crashed out in the Qualifiers of the Mumbai Open WTA 125K Series at the Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) on Sunday. Peangtarn Plipuech, Matsuda Misaki, Zuzzana Pawlikowska, and Kristiana Sidorova registered notable wins to book their place in the main draw. In a hard-fought encounter, Indian Olympian Ankita Raina stumbled against Peangtarn Plipuech. The Thailand international managed to get over the line with the score of 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 in a match that lasted 2 hours and 39 minutes at the centre court. Earlier in the day, Japan’s Matsuda Misaki pulled off a sensational result to defeat Argentina’s Nicole Fossa Huergo, the number one seed in the qualifiers. Despite a sluggish start, the Japanese tennis star secured a 7-5, 6-4 victory in an hour and 33 minutes, confirming her place in the main draw. Poland’s Zuzzana Pawlikowska had to dig deep against Finland’s Anastasia Kulikova in a three-set marathon that lasted a little over three hours. The Polish player prevailed 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7-4), clinching the third set tiebreaker to progress to the next round.

In the last game of the day, Kristiana Sidorova cruised past Yasmine Kabbaj, the number two seed in the qualifiers. The former registered a dominant 6-4, 6-2 win to round up the day’s action.

Aditya-Virender win Highlands Rally; Dean-Gagan clinch maiden INRC title

INDORE (MP) : Karnataka’s Dean Mascarenhas and experienced co-driver Gagan Karumbaiah sealed their maiden Indian National Rally Championship (INRC) title with a round to spare, even as their TSI Racing teammates from Himachal Pradesh, Aditya Thakur and Virender Kashyap, clinched overall honours at the Rally of the Highlands, the fifth and penultimate round of the 2025 season, held at the National Automotive Testing Tracks (NATRAX), Pithampur, on Sunday.

Dean and Gagan finished fifth overall on the final day, earning a crucial championship point that gave them an unassailable provisional lead and confirmed their first National title. Dean, who made his rally debut at K1000 in 2010, had narrowly missed out on the championship in 2019 by just one point. "Incredible. It is an amazing feeling to finally win the Overall National Championship," said Mascarenhas. "I have waited over 15 years for this moment. A huge thanks to TSI Racing and PH Sport, without whom this would not have been possible. I am especially grateful to my co-driver, Gagan, who has been phenomenal. This is a truly memorable milestone in my career."

The duo has partnered with each other since the Coimbatore Rally in 2019. Despite minor mechanical issues, Aditya Thakur and Virender Kashyap produced a composed drive to secure the rally



win. "We broke the gear mounting in the first stage today, but managed to finish the stage. There was no point pushing after that, so we focused on protecting our position and bringing the car home safely," said Thakur. "It is a joy to drive this car, and we are delighted to get our first win for the team. Congratulations to Dean on winning the championship."

Defending champion Karna Kadur, partnered by Musa Sherif, delivered a blistering perform-

ance on the final day to finish second overall. However, it was not enough to take the title battle into the final round, as Mascarenhas’ fifth-place finish proved decisive.

In INRC2, Jason Saldanha (Mangaluru), guided by veteran co-driver PV Srinivasa Murthy, claimed victory. Kerala’s Fabid Ahmer (Palakkad)/ Milen George (Kottayam), Pvt. (01:41:28.8); 3. Harkrishan Wadia (Delhi)/ Kunal Kashyap (Shimla) Arka Motorsports (01: 42:39.0).

Chettinad Sporting’s Vishakh Balachandran, with Chiranth Jain, won the INRC3 category ahead of teammates Sheshank Jamwal and Raghuram Saminathan. Anushriya Gulati, partnered by Karan Aukta, finished third, secured the Ladies Class title, and also placed an impressive ninth overall. Phoebe Dale of Meghalaya and Athira Murali completed the podium in that order. In other categories, Bhopal’s Mohammed Kaif Khan, with Jibran Ahmed, won the Gypsy Challenge, while Bengaluru’s Asool Albert John and Kodagu’s Aiyappa Bopanna clinched the Classic Challenge Cup.

Provisional results final:

Overall: 1. Aditya Thakur/ Virender Kashyap (both Himachal) TSI Racing, (01 hour, 39 minutes, 49.2seconds); 2. Karna Kadur (Bengaluru)/ Musa Sherif (Kasargod), Arka Motorsports (01:40:40.0); 3. Dean Mascarenhas (Mangaluru)/ Gagan Karumbaiah (Kodagu) (TSI Racing) (01:41:02.9).
INRC2: 1. Jason Saldanha (Mangaluru)/ PV Srinivasa Murthy (Bengaluru) Arka Motorsports (01:41:21.0); 2. Fabid Ahmer (Palakkad)/ Milen George (Kottayam), Pvt. (01:41:28.8); 3. Harkrishan Wadia (Delhi)/ Kunal Kashyap (Shimla) Arka Motorsports (01: 42:39.0).
INRC3: 1. Vishakh B a l a c h a n d r a n

(Thiruvananthapuram)/ Chiranth Jain (Karkala) Chettinad Sporting (01:43:00.4); 2. Sheshank Jamwal (Hamirpur, HP)/ Raghuram Saminathan (Coimbatore) Chettinad Sporting (01:43:04.3); 3. Anushriya Gulati (Dehradun)/ Karan Aukta (Jubbil, HP) Arka Motorsports (01:45:15.2).

INRC 3T: 1. Baljinder Singh Dhillion (Delhi)/ Goutham CP (Chikkamagalur) R-Tech Motorsports (01:50:47.5); 2. Thejas Reddy/ Ravindra Kumar (Both Bengaluru) Snap Racing (01:54:17.3).

Junior INRC: 1. Abhimanyu Sajeevan (Kozhikode) Snap Racing (01:41:36.6); 2. Arjun Y Mavaji (Bengaluru) pvt (01:48:04.8); 3. R-Tech Motorsports (01:50:44.7).

Ladies Class: 1. Anushriya Gulati (Dehradun), Arka Motorsports; 2. Phoebe Dale Nongrum (Shillong) (01:11:58.3); 3. Athira Murali (Kottayam) Chettinad Sporting.

Fmsci Gypsy Challenge: 1. Mohammed Kaif Khan (Bhopal)/ Jibran Ahmed (Bengaluru) Pvt. (01: 54:00.2); 2. Aneesh Sangma (Tura)/ Dinky Varghese (Coimbatore) Pvt. (01: 54:15.2); 3. Vinod Singh/ Adithya Garg (Both Indore) (02:00:24.8).

Classic Challenge: 1. Asool Albert John (Bengaluru)/ Aiyappa Bopanna (Kodagu) pvt (02:09:07.3); 2. Siddhartha Santosh (B e n g a l u r u) / S a w a n Sathyanarayan (Chennapatnam) Snap Racing (02:16:47.0).