

WORLD 5
UKRAINE DENIES HITTING
DEPOT ON RUSSIAN SOIL**MONEY 6**
INDIA, TURKMENISTAN
INK 4 MOUS**SPORT 7**
CHENNAI FACE
PBKS IN IPLPublished From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL
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India to import solar power from Nepal

Modi, Deuba sign many pacts to boost ties, Nepal joins Modi-initiated global Solar Alliance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will import power from Nepal, which, for its part, joined the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-initiated International Solar Alliance.

A decision in this regard was taken on Saturday in the delegation-level talks between Modi and his visiting Nepal counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba. The duo also jointly inaugurated a cross-border passenger train service between Jaynagar (India) and Kurtha (Nepal), built under India's Grant Assistance, the Solu Corridor 132 KV Power Transmission Line and Substation in Nepal, built under India's Line of Credit, and India's RuPay payment card in Nepal, further strengthening the age-old and historical bilateral ties.

While there will be an increased participation of Indian companies in Nepal's hydropower development pro-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Nepal PM Sher Bahadur Deuba during a meeting, at Hyderabad House in Delhi on Saturday

PTI

jects, Modi assured the Himalayan nation that India has been and will continue to remain a firm companion in its journey of development.

"It is a matter of happiness that Nepal is exporting its sur-

plus power to India. This will make positive contributions to the economic development of Nepal. I am delighted to announce that several more proposals for importing power from Nepal are being approved.

I am happy that Nepal has become a member of the International Solar Alliance. This will promote sustainable, affordable and clean energy in our region," Modi said.

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Lanka clamps curfew as food, fuel shortage trigger protests

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Government on Saturday imposed a 36-hour curfew as a nationwide public emergency has been enforced ahead of a planned anti-Government rally over the worst economic crisis in the island nation that has hit the common man badly.

The island wide curfew has been imposed with effect from 6 pm on Saturday to 6 am on Monday (April 4), the information department said.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has given the directive under the Public Security Ordinance regulations, it said.

The move came as the island nation braced for country-wide protests on Sunday against the government's poor handling of the ongoing economic crisis where people currently endure long hours of power outages and scarcity of essentials. The imposition of curfew would prevent citizens from holding protests.

President Rajapaksa issued a special gazette notification late on Friday night, declaring a public emergency in Sri Lanka with immediate effect from April 1.

In the gazette, the President states: "Whereas I am of the opinion that by reason of a public emergency in Sri Lanka it is expedient to do so in the interests of public security, the

protection of public order and the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community."

Commenting on the emergency, independent think-tank Centre for Policy Alternatives said that "regulations may impose restrictions on certain fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution" one of them would be among others: the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association, movement, occupation, religion, culture and language.

Lawyers commented that the regulations gave the police sweeping powers to arrest anyone for unlawful assembly.

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40,000 MT diesel from India reaches Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A consignment of 40,000 Ametric tonnes of diesel from India reached Sri Lanka on Saturday, the fourth such assistance from New Delhi, to mitigate the spike in power cuts in the island nation.

Power cuts lasting over 13 hours were imposed on Thursday, the longest cut since 1996 when a strike by the state power entity employees caused

a 72-hour black out.

Officials of fuel entity Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) said the Indian diesel supplies would ease the ongoing power cuts. The power cuts effective Saturday are over 8.5 hours.

"More fuel supplies delivered by #India to #SriLanka! A consignment of 40,000 MT of diesel under #Indian assistance through Line of Credit of \$500 mn was handed over by (the) High Commissioner to Hon'ble Energy Minister Gamini Lokuge in #Colombo today," the Indian High Commission here tweeted.

India recently announced that it will extend a USD 1 billion line of credit to Sri Lanka as part of its financial assistance to the country to deal with the economic crisis following a previous USD 500 billion line of credit in February to help it purchase petroleum products.

The CEB announced the resumption of power operations at Kerawalapitiya Thermal Plant after the receipt of supplies from LIOC, the Lankan subsidiary of the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). The LIOC is to supply 6,000 MT diesel to the thermal plant.



Sri Lankans gather at a fuel station to buy diesel before the beginning of curfew in Colombo on Saturday

AP

Patkar NGO let off hook for 17 years

NNA received suspicious funds; under ED, DRI, IT scanner now

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Imagine a donation of ₹1.20 crore in your bank account on a single day deposited by 20 different persons with each transaction of equal amount. In all certainty, this would land you in the net of the investigating agencies, but this is not the case with self-styled environmental activist Medha Patkar, whose NGO Narmada Navnirman Abhiyan (NNA), despite receiving such suspicious funds, has evaded law enforcement for 17 years.

However, separate complaints have now been lodged with the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Income Tax Department against the Patkar-led registered trust.

Patkar did not respond to queries related to the questionable transactions sent to her over the email from *The Pioneer*. As a follow-up to the complaints, the Central agen-

TRANSACTION DETAILS OF ₹1.19 CRORE ON 18.06.2005

Sr No.	Date of Deposit	Amount	Name of Depositor
1	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Migration Saving Dep
2	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Kiran Ganesh Mistry
3	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Pramod Kumar Jalota
4	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Steven Anthony Peter
5	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Balchanda Laxman Jadhav
6	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Rajeshkumar S Lakh
7	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Tula Ram Tikaram Khatri
8	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Niwās Sadanand Advirkar
9	18.06.2005	Rs 5,96,294/-	Shoaib Shaikh
10	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Sunil Rammnath Sawant
11	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Santosh Changu Shama
12	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Narayan Babaji Nikam
13	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Rajesh Laxmandas Mankani
14	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Mangesh Sakhanam Tambe
15	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Shaibal Bikash Gupta
16	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Krishnakant Hariprasad Joshi
17	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Pallavi Prabhakar Bhalekar (Minor)
18	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Shalini Gaur
19	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Mansi Shrikant Pednekar
20	18.06.2005	₹5,96,294/-	Vijay Shankar Balsaraf
Total		₹1,19,25,880/-	

cies have already launched investigations into these transactions, sources said. NNA, an NGO registered on March 5, 2004 with the Charity Commissioner, Greater

Mumbai region, of which Patkar is the settlor and the main trustee, on June 18, 2005, received a donation of ₹1,19,25,880 in its bank account bearing number

TRANSACTION DETAILS OF MAZAGAON DOCK SHIPBUILDERS LTD

Sr No.	Name of Depositor	Date of Transaction	Amount
1	Mazagaon Dock Ltd	30.03.2021	₹12,50,000/-
2	Mazagaon Dock Ltd	08.01.2021	₹12,50,000/-
3	Mazagaon Dock Ltd	09.10.2020	₹6,95,470/-
4	Mazagaon Dock Ltd	05.03.2020	₹10,27,173/-
5	Mazagaon Dock Ltd	14.02.2020	₹10,27,173/-
6	Mazagaon Dock Ltd	03.01.2020	₹9,28,879/-
Total			₹61,78,695/-

001010100064503 in the Bank of India.

Interestingly, in just over a year of its formation, NNA received this significant amount in its account by 20 different individuals with each transaction amounting to ₹ 5,96,294 on June 18, 2005. Surprisingly, one of these depositors — Pallavi Prabhakar Bhalekar — was a minor at that time. If this was not enough, the NGO has also received donations of nearly ₹62 lakh from Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) from January 2020 to March 2021 in six tranches of varying

amounts. This is alarming in the light of the fact that the MDL is a Central Government undertaking under the Defence Ministry. MDL, formerly known as Mazagon Dock Limited, is a public sector shipyard located at Mazagaon in Mumbai and manufactures warships and submarines for the Indian Navy. It is also engaged in manufacturing offshore platforms and associated support vessels for offshore oil drilling, tankers, cargo bulk carriers, passenger ships and ferries.

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Pak orders panel probe into foreign conspiracy behind no-trust motion

IANS ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Law Minister Fawad Chaudhry has ordered a commission to probe the foreign conspiracy behind the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan, Samaa TV reported.

Chaudhry, who is the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, was given the additional charge of Law Minister on Friday.

The commission will look into the foreign interference to topple the Government in Pakistan and present its report.

Chaudhry also ordered the transfers of at least a dozen key legal officers in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore.

Earlier, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court to investigate the letter, which the Prime Minister waved at a rally, Samaa TV reported. The plea requested the court to form a commission comprising top supreme court judges.

Shivpal follows PM, Yogi on Twitter, sparks speculation

Move seen as step of PSPL chief in quitting Opp bloc

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Shivpal Singh Yadav, the Samajwadi Party MLA and president of Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia), gave a clear indication of his future course of political action by following Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and former Deputy CM Dinesh Sharma on Twitter.

With the latest additions, Shivpal now follows 12 Twitter handles, which include the Dalai Lama, the President of India, the Prime Minister's Office and the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister's Office.

The latest development is seen as yet another step of the PSPL chief in quitting the Opposition alliance and crossing over to the BJP. Soon after this action on social media, PSPL spokesman Deepak

Mishra defended his leader saying, "There is no contradiction between nationalism and socialism and they complement each other."

Earlier on Wednesday, Shivpal had met Yogi. The meeting was significant as it was against the backdrop of Shivpal criticising SP chief Akhilesh Yadav for not inviting him to the meeting of the SP MLAs in which Akhilesh was elected as the party leader in UP Assembly on March 26.

Sources in the SP said Akhilesh was making no efforts to placate his estranged uncle.

"After taking over as party president in January 2017, he (Akhilesh) has successfully dismantled all power centres within the party and he will never oblige his uncle Shivpal to emerge as a new power centre," said a senior SP leader.

He added, "If Shivpal wants to be a part of the SP-led alliance then he will have to abide by the terms and conditions set by Akhilesh otherwise he is free to go."

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CAPSULE

ARYAN CASE WITNESS DIES OF HEART ATTACK

Mumbai: Prabhakar Sail, an independent witness of the Narcotics Control Bureau in the drugs-on-cruise case involving Aryan Khan, died of a heart attack, police said on Saturday. Maharashtra Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil said the death seemed suspicious and he has ordered Director General of Police Rajnish Seth to conduct a probe.

INDIA SEES WARMEST MARCH IN 122 YEARS

New Delhi: India recorded its warmest March in 122 years with a severe heat wave scorching large swathes of the country in the month, the India Meteorological Department said on Saturday.

UKRAINE RECAPTURES CITY NEAR CAPITAL KYIV

Lviv: Ukrainian officials say their forces have recaptured the city of Brovary, 20 km east of Kyiv. Brovary's mayor said during a televised address on Friday evening that Russians have now left practically all of Brovary.

India-Aus pact watershed event for students, professionals: PM

Agreement to create 10 lakh jobs, double trade to ₹50 billion in 5 years, says Goyal

AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

The economic cooperation and trade agreement signed between India and Australia will enable the two countries to fully leverage the existing opportunities, besides facilitating the exchange of students, professionals and tourists, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday.

The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (IndAus ECTA) was signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and his Australian counterpart Dan Tehan in the presence of Prime

Minister Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in a virtual ceremony.

Goyal said the trade pact is expected to take bilateral trade from the existing ₹27 billion to nearly ₹45-50 billion in the next five years and the Government expects one million jobs to be created in India in the next four to five years.

Modi said signing of the pact in such a short span of time reflects the depth of the mutual confidence between the countries. He also underlined the huge potential that exists in the two economies to fulfil each other's needs, adding that this agreement will enable the countries to fully leverage these opportunities.

"This is a watershed moment for our bilateral relations...On the basis of this agreement, together, we will be able to increase the resilience of supply chains, and also contribute to the stability of the

Indo-Pacific region," he noted.

Terming the signing of the pact as another milestone in the growing relationship between India and Australia, Prime Minister Morrison said the agreement further develops on the promise of the relationship.

Apart from increased trade and economic cooperation, he said, the pact will further deepen the "warm and close ties" between the people of the two countries by expanding work, study and travel opportunities.

The Australian Prime Minister said the agreement would create enormous trade diversification opportunities for domestic producers and service providers bound for India, valued at up to USD 14.8 billion each year.

"This agreement opens a big door into the world's fastest growing major economy for Australian farmers, manufacturers, producers and so many more," Morrison said.

Homebuyers wait for flats bleeds them dry

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

Over 17 years ago, Bhavdeep Singh came to Gurugram from Bhiwani, Haryana, and started working at a legal firm. "I wanted to buy a house in Gurugram, and I invested my hard-earned money and even borrowed from friends and family to book a two-bedroom flat in ROF Ananda," said Singh.

The builder had assured him that he will get possession of the flat in November 2021. Four years on, Singh who is an advocate by profession continues to wait to get the possession of his flat.

Singh is among thousands of buyers who have invested in housing and commercial projects in Gurugram, Noida and Greater Noida but are still waiting for possession of their property. The helplessness in getting possession of their own flats is further weakening their financial status as they have to leave work and stage a sit-in in front of the builder's headquarters.

Singh, who is an advocate



by profession, said, "I purchased a flat in the society after my name surfaced in a draw in 2018. I have made full payment but the flat has not been handed over yet. What pains that the builder is now charging 15 per cent interest on the amount paid as the first installment citing payment delay as a reason."

"The builder is charging the GST of 8 per cent on the full amount of flat; however the charge of the GST everywhere else is just 1 per cent. They are also charging for several other basic amenities such as ₹52,000 for installing the electricity meter, ₹30,000 for the IFUD (Interest for Utility Deposit) and ₹15 per square feet for the labour cess. All these charges

were not informed by the builder at the time of booking the flat," he said.

"The builder assured us free maintenance for five years but now they are demanding ₹3.25 per square feet. The condition of the flat is much deteriorated with damaged walls and the broken grills of the balcony," he said.

Another buyer Neeraj Singh, who is an employee in the private company, said, "We have done the full payment of the flat but still they are charging a high interest on the whole amount of flat which is not written anywhere in the agreement."

"We have tried to contact the agents and the builder who showed us the site and the plan

of the society, but now they are not even picking up our calls. We have mailed several times but without getting any reply from them," Singh said.

Similarly, Bhudev Sharma, who is also an accountant in the private company said he has also done the full payment of the flat, but still they (builder) is charging an amount of ₹1,20,000 as an interest saying that the payment is not made on time.

Buyers who invested in the projects said they have been approaching the builders for the past four years, but to no avail. However, the builder in a written reply to *The Pioneer* said the allegations levelled by the buyers are "baseless". "It is unfortunate that instead of appreciating the hard-work and efforts of the ROF Team during the difficult period of Covid-19 pandemic which has ensured timely delivery of apartments in this project, but we are getting such emails or statements raising baseless, unsubstantiated and immaterial issues," he said.

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RSS leader lashes out at critics of Kashmir Files

Appeals for communal harmony

PTI ■ JAMMU

RSS leader Indresh Kumar on Saturday said that political parties that criticised ‘The Kashmir Files’, a movie based on the exodus of Kashmiri pandits, should have instead condemned Pakistan-sponsored terrorism which brought death and destruction to the Kashmir valley.

He also appealed to the people to maintain age-old communal harmony and brotherhood.

“The National Conference, PDP, Congress and (Delhi Chief Minister Arvind) Kejriwal should have unequivocally condemned the terror which was responsible for death and destruction in the valley and displacement of Kashmiri pandits,” Kumar told

reporters on the sidelines of a function organised by Muslim Rashtriya Manch here.

Responding to a question about the ‘Kashmir Files’ movie, he said the film was not made by any government but by some “non-political people” and is based on reality.

“When nearly 80,000 people have lost their lives, there are a lot of tragic stories...a few Kashmiri Muslims at the behest of Pakistan unleashed the reign of terror and defamed Kashmiriyat and Islam. The Kashmiris should come forward and condemn those involved in the terror instead of maintaining silence,” he said.

The RSS leader said he is personally against the displacement of anyone, whether in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. “There should be no oppression on anyone and everyone should live in peace everywhere.”

Kumar said he had set up the J & K Sahara Samiti for the welfare of the displaced people, irrespective of their religion.

Referring to the conference organised by Muslim Rashtriya Manch, an RSS-linked outfit, he said members of various communities, including Gujjars, Bakerwals, Pahari-speaking people, Dogras and Kashmiris, attended the function.

“It was organised to send a message across the country that we are all Indians, irrespective of our religion, region, caste, creed and language. The specialty of our country is that it connects people of all faiths and everyone lives respectfully,” he said.

Greeting the people on the commencement of the Navratri festival and the fasting month of Ramzan, Kumar said, “We have to join hands and stay away from rioting and hooliganism to make India and Jammu and Kashmir an abode of peace and progress.”

He lauded the Modi government for its successful handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and for helping other nations.

Nawab Malik moves SC against HC order rejecting his interim plea for release

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Minister and MNCP leader Nawab Malik has moved the Supreme Court against an order of the Bombay High Court which had rejected his interim application seeking immediate release in a case of money laundering.

In his plea which has been drafted by advocate Ankur Chawla, Malik has challenged the March 15 order of the division bench of the high court which had rejected the application saying just because the special PMLA court’s order remanding him in custody is not in his favour, it does not make that order illegal or wrong.

The special leave petition (SLP) has been filed by advocate V D Khanna. After the Enforcement Directorate had arrested Malik under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), he had filed a habeas corpus plea in the high court claiming that his arrest by the

ED and the consequent remands were illegal.

The high court had said that Malik’s counsel had argued before the PMLA court and vehemently opposed the ED’s request for the minister’s custody.

“There is also merit in the submissions of the Additional Solicitor General (ASG) that merely because the special court granted the custody of petitioner (Malik) would not make that order illegal ipso facto because the petitioner is aggrieved,” the high court had said.

The high court had said that Malik was arrested by the ED in accordance with the law, and subsequently been remanded to the probe agency’s custody and then to judicial custody following due process.

It had noted that Malik had gone to the ED’s office for questioning on February, 23, the day he was arrested, in response to previous summons issued to him by the central agency.

Maha New Year gift to Mumbaikars

Uddhav flags off 2 Metro lines in Mumbai suburbs

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday evening flagged off two new Mumbai Metro lines 2A and 7, both in the suburbs – on the auspicious occasion of Maharashtra New Year day Gudi Padwa.

Seven years after Prime Minister performed the bhoomi pooja for the twin projects during the previous BJP-Sena regime in 2015, Uddhav showed green signal to the movement of traffic on the first phase of metro 2A and Mumbai Metro lines 2A and 7 – involving a stretch of 20 km, at new Aarey station in north Mumbai.

The Chief Minister and MMRDA Commissioner SVR Srinivas travelled by a metro from Aarey station to Kurar station and returned to Aarey



by the same train.

The trains on these two new lines between Dhanukarwadi and Aarey (Phase 1) will start operations daily 5 am to -11 pm from Sunday. The minimum fare for travelling in new metro lines 2A and 7 is Rs 10 for 3-kilometres. The maximum train fare for air-conditioned rides is Rs 40 per commuter. The trains will operate at a speed of around 70 kilometer per hour. The frequency of trains operating on this stretch is 11 minutes.

“Though the metro trains is with driverless system, the trains will initially be operated by drivers. We have a contingent of 60 male and female drivers to operate the trains on this stretch,” Srinivas said.

The city got the Mumbai Mumbai One its first – and only so far – elevated line on June 8, 2014 linking Versova-Andheri-Ghatkopar in the east-west direction.

Addressing a public gathering after inaugurating the two metro lines, the chief minister said: This metro-lines will provide a seamless travelling experience for commuters. I am a real Mumbaikar and have seen how the city has changed over the years. I had earlier travelled in trams, trains and now we are travelling in AC Metro”.

Aryan Khan drug case: Maha Govt orders probe into ‘sudden death’ of panch witness

SAIL HAD MADE ₹8 CR PAY-OFF CHARGE AGAINST THEN NCB ZONAL CHIEF SAMEER WANKHEDE

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The sudden death of “panch witness” in the mid-sea drug bust case Prabhakar R Sail — who had created a sensational allegation in October last year about the alleged 8 crore ‘extortion’ attempt and other excesses against then NCB Zonal chief Sameer Wankhede — has prompted the Maharashtra government to order a high-level inquiry into the circumstances leading to his death.

Taking serious cognisance

of the passing away of Sail, who reportedly died on Friday afternoon after a cardiac arrest at Mahul residence at Chembur in north-east Mumbai, Maharashtra Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil on Saturday ordered a high-inquiry into the “sudden death” of the “panch witness” who was in his mid-forties.

Talking to media persons, Walse-Patil said that he had asked State Director General of Police to look into the circumstances leading to the death of Sail, who picked holes in the statements made by the officials of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) regarding the circumstances leading to the arrest of Bollywood super star Shah Rukh Khan’s son Aryan Khan and others in the mid-sea drug bust case in October last year.

It may be recalled that the NCB had arrested Aryan Khan, Arbaaz Merchant, Munmun

Dhamecha and five others on October 3 2021, a night after its officials busted a rave party and seized 13 grams of cocaine, 5 grams of MD (Mephedrone), 21 grams of Charas, 22 pills of MDMA (Ecstasy) and Rs 1.33 lakh in cash from Goa-bound Cordelia Cruises’ Empress ship, off the Mumbai coast. Subsequently, the NCB arrested 12 more persons in connection with the mid-sea rave party.

In a sensational affidavit released to the media on October 23 last year Panch witness Sail had spoken about the Rs 8 crore ‘extortion’ attempt and other excesses allegedly made by the then NCB Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede and his colleagues.

In his sensational affidavit, Sail has among other things said that Wankhede’s colleague had taken his signatures on 10 blank papers.

Among other things, Sail has made a serious allegation that he “overheard” Kiran Gosavi, for whom he works as a personal bodyguard” and who is also an “independent” witness in the case, while talking one Sam D’Souza, as saying: “you put a bomb of Rs 25 crore, let’s settle for Rs 18 crore and give 8 crore to Sameer Wankhede”.

Gosavi is one of the nine independent witnesses in the mid-sea drug bust case in which SRK’s eldest son Aryan Khan and seven others were detained on October 2 and formally arrested on October 3.

Gosavi is an accused booked for allegedly duping a Pune-based man on the pretext of offering a job in Malaysia.

Sali also stated in his affidavit that he had seen Pooja Dadlani (Shah Rukh Khan’s manager) talking to Gosavi.

Cave Shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi decked up

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Cave Shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi, decorated with different varieties of exotic flowers and illuminated in colorful lights, is attracting a huge rush of pilgrims from day one of the nine day long Navratri festival.

After the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country in 2020 it is for the first time there will be no restrictions on the movement of pilgrims along the 13-km long zig-zag trek.

The regular donations and secret offerings which had declined during the covid-19 pandemic are also expected to record a new high with increasing rush of pilgrims. The Shrine board had received total donations to the tune of 67.70 crores during 2020-21, which is approximately 100 crores less than the amount received during 2019-2020.

To mark the beginning of the nine day long Navratra fes-

ival, the Shrine board authorities Saturday organised Shat Chandi Maha Yagya at the Holy Cave Shrine. Ramesh Kumar, Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; other officers of the Shrine Board and a large number of pilgrims were present on the occasion.

During the period the shrine board authorities are expecting a daily footfall of around 40,000 pilgrims. In the first three months more than 12.50 lakh pilgrims have already performed darshan.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made to ensure incident free yatra. CRPF personnel along with jawans of the Jammu and Kashmir police have been deployed to man the checking points. Special security checkpoints have been raised along the national highway leading to Katra and the interior road. At the cave shrine additional deployment of CRPF has been made to ensure better crowd

management. Railings have been raised in the middle of the yatra trek in some portions to segregate the incoming and outgoing pilgrims. On January 1, 2022 12 pilgrims were killed during the stampede.

Meanwhile, the local tour operators, hoteliers, businessmen are also happily welcoming pilgrims. When the yatra remained suspended during the pandemic the business community and hoteliers suffered huge losses.

The Katra township has also received a major facelift. Several buildings were lit up and the main markets were witnessing a huge rush of pilgrims.

Ganesh Mahajan, owner of a dry fruit business in Katra said, “for the first time in the last two years we are witnessing a rush of pilgrims on a daily basis”. “During covid 19 pandemic we suffered huge losses as the yatra remained suspended for several months. Afterwards due to restrictions

the footfall of pilgrims could not go up and now more than 25,000 pilgrims are reaching each day. We are looking forward to the peak summer season to recover some of our losses”.

Keeping in mind the safety of pilgrims the Shrine board authorities have issued a general advisory for the pilgrims requesting them to adhere to standard operating procedures including wearing of mask, observing social distancing while standing in the queue.

Adequate medical staff has been deployed at different locations including Katra, Ardh Kunwari, Sanjhi Chat and Cave shrine dispensary to take care of the medical needs of the pilgrims in case of any medical emergency. LED screens have also been installed to broadcast the live aarti along the yatra trek and regular announcements are aired via public address system to guide the pilgrims during the yatra period.

‘Reduction in AFSPA area in N-E revolutionary step’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday asserted that reduction in Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur is a “revolutionary step” and a proof that the peace has returned to the North-East region and the region is soon going to be a “major economic hub”.

Crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for transforming “look-east policy” into “Act-East policy”, senior BJP leader and Union law Minister Kiren Rijiju said the North-East is now going to be “very important economic hub” and “soon” more regions in the NE will be outside the ambit of AFSPA.

Addressing a press conference, Rijiju said it can now be said that the NE has now joined the “national main-

stream”.

Pointing to the shrinking footprints of AFSAPA, the union minister said first it was Tripura, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and this week Nagaland, Assam and Manipur which witnessed the retreat of AFSAPA from more areas.

“IT IS a revolutionary step”, said the Minister who hails from Arunachal Pradesh.

“Peace in the NE augers well for whole of India”, he said and invited people across the country to visit the “beautiful areas of the region”.

Attributing peace efforts to the “visionary leadership” of Prime Minister and effective implementation by union home minister Amit Shah, Rijiju said “NE is no more a side stream but mainstream”.

He pointed to increase of Rs 7500 crore for the NE” and

now it is the responsibility of eight NE states to spend it well.”

BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia who also addressed the press conference said “there has been 70 per cent reduction in extremist activities in NE”.

Besides, Bhatia said “7000 extremists surrendered arms and become part of the mainstream”. He said more peace agreements (with the extremists) are expected to follow in the NE region. In a major step, the government on Thursday announced that areas under AFSPA in northeastern states of Nagaland, Assam and Manipur will be reduced after decades.

The government has clarified that decision will considerably reduce areas under the AFSPA effective April 1, 2022, but the Act has not been completely withdrawn.

Shivpal follows PM....

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SP sources said, “Shivpal knows that time is running out for him and he is no longer in a position to do hard bargaining with the BJP and he will have to settle with the terms offered by the BJP”.

The sources said Shivpal was anxious for the political future of his son, Aditya Yadav, who was denied ticket by Akhilesh in the recent UP Assembly elections.

The rift between Shivpal and Akhilesh has been widening ever since the former was not invited to the meeting of the newly-elected MLAs of SP on March 26.

PSPL chief Shivpal had contested the recent Assembly poll on the “bicycle” symbol of the SP. He had skipped the Opposition alliance’s Monday meeting called by Akhilesh and also “delayed” taking oath as a member of the new Assembly, indicating that all is not well between the uncle and nephew duo.

Besides Shivpal, the alliance’s other key leader Pallavi Patel of Apna Dal (Kamerwadi), who humbled Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya in Sirathu constituency, had also not attended the meeting of the SP-led coalition partners on March 28.

Shivpal took oath on Wednesday in the chamber of Speaker Satish Mahana.

Speculations are rife in political corridors that as part of the plan, the BJP might send Shivpal to the Rajya Sabha and his son, Aditya Yadav, may contest the by-election from Jaswantnagar Assembly seat to be vacated by his father.

Eleven the Rajya Sabha seats from UP would be falling vacant between April and July. Shivpal himself has not been speaking much. On Wednesday, he had told media persons that he would reveal his future course of action at an appropriate time.

BJP sets eyes on Rajasthan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After winning Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, the BJP has set its eyes on Rajasthan with BJP president J P Nadda to visit the state on Saturday to lay-out election strategy with the state leaders against the Ashok Gehlot-led Congress government. Elections to the 200-member-strong Rajasthan assembly is due before December, next year. Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are visiting Rajasthan this month to invigorate the party machinery and bring warring party factions on one platform.

Nadda will arrive in the state on Saturday and hold a meeting with the senior leaders of the party. He is expected to visit Sawai Madhopur. Shah is to follow Nadda

and to land in the state for two days in mid-April. He is expected to be in Banswara bordering Gujarat. Shah and Nadda are to do ‘straight talks’ with state leaders and ask them to present a united face, sources said.

Former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje who was lying low for long has, in last two weeks, held series of meetings with central leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Nadda, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari and finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Raje, despite her run-ins in the past with the central leaders, including Shah, remains a force to reckon with and continues to be the only popular saffron face in Rajasthan.

BJP MP writes to Yogi to rename Farrukhabad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A BJP Member of Parliament has written to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath demanding to rename Farrukhabad in the state as Panchal Nagar.

The Lok Sabha MP from the Farrukhabad constituency Mukesh Rajput said that the move will help in reviving the ancient Indian culture.

In his letter Rajput, the BJP MP has drawn attention to the ancient links to times of epic Mahabharat and its association with Pandavas and Panchal kings. Farrukhabad is named after a Mughal ruler in the medieval period.

The BJP MP has denied that his name-changing demand is on the religious lines. Adityanath government has, in its first term, among many other name changes, had re-named Allahabad as Prayagraj.

Lanka clamps curfew as....

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The regulations must be approved in Parliament every 30 days from their imposition.

The declaration came at the same time as the court ordered bail to a section of the protesters arrested for the demonstration opposite Rajapaksa’s private residence on Thursday. Lawyer Nuwan Bopage, who was among around 500 lawyers gathered at the Colombo suburban Gangodawila magistrate’s court to give free counsel, said that out of the 54 arrested, as many as 21 were given bail. Six were remanded until April 4.

The rest of the 27 are in hospitals with severe assault injuries.

India to import....

From page 1

Nepal became a power surplus country after the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project came into operation in July 2021.

Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla later said the most significant outcome of the visit was in the energy sector. For power trade, PM Modi conveyed to Deuba that their power export proposals have been cleared and will contribute to Nepal’s economic prosperity, Shringla said, adding the two sides reached a consensus on harvesting. This collaboration covers the entire spectrum from generation to transmission to power trade. Terming the ties with the Himalayan nation as “unique,”

Modi said such a relationship is not seen anywhere else in the world. He said India has been and will continue to remain a firm companion in Nepal’s journey for peace, prosperity and development.

He also said the joint vision statement between the two sides on power cooperation will prove to be a blueprint for future cooperation in the sector. The two sides agreed on the greater participation of Indian companies in Nepal’s hydropower development plans, Modi said.

Deuba arrived here on Friday for a three-day visit. He is accompanied by a high-level delegation besides his wife. Deuba will also visit Varanasi. It is his first visit abroad after assuming charge in July last

year for a fifth time following a spell of political turmoil in Kathmandu. He is here at the invitation of the Indian Prime Minister.

In his statement at the summit at the Hyderabad House, Deuba said Nepal’s relations with India are “highly important” and informed that the two leaders discussed the boundary issue between the countries. He urged Modi to resolve it through the establishment of a bilateral mechanism. Giving details of the talks later, Shringla said the dialogue between the two leaders was forward looking and positive. They discussed issues including security, development and trade.

On the boundary issue, he said there was a general understanding that both sides needed to address it in a responsible manner in spirit of close ties.

Patkar NGO....

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The funds were transferred from the HDFC bank account of Mazagon Dock to the same Bank of India account number-001010100064503 of NNA through six NEFT (National Electronic Funds Transfer) transactions.

“These transactions amounting to crores of rupees clearly indicate that Patkar, who dons a humble and frugal persona, is flushed with money coming in from various sources that have so far escaped the Government’s attention. Patkar and her NGOs have a history of opposing every project/policy of national importance, be it Sardar Sarovar project, nuclear projects, coal mine

projects and recently the CAA and the farm laws enacted by the Central Government. Such repeated funding from Mazagon Dock to an organization with such malafide motives is a matter of great concern,” said Sanjeev Kumar Jha, the complainant who is a resident of Ghaziabad.

Incidentally, Jha is the same complainant on whose complaint, the Regional Passport Officer (RPO) Mumbai had confiscated Patkar’s passport on the grounds of concealing vital facts. The complainant has further alleged an “organized syndicate” behind such dubious fundings.

Homebuyers long wait....

From page 1

“All the charges being demanded are as per the application form or allotment letter which was duly informed to each and every customer. Some allottees, who have defaulted in making timely payments for their apartments, are asking for ‘Full Interest Waiver’ by taking a plea of non-levy of interest by the government and alleged delay in completion of construction in the project,” the builder told The Pioneer.

“Therefore, the demand for ‘Full Interest Waiver’ is not justified. However, to maintain long-term relationships with our customers, we are already

considering requests for partial interest waiver on a case-to-case basis taking into account the difficulties and hardship being faced by our customers on account of Covid-19 pandemic,” the builder said in a statement.

“We have incurred huge costs and expenses during this Covid-19 period for upkeep of our projects, safety, survival and migration of labourers to their native places and back to project site, escalation of material price and labour cost, etc. which resulted in substantial revenue loss to us but we never sought any compensation for our revenue loss,” the builder said.

Govt allows pvt shops to offer up to 25% discount on liquor MRP



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Months after the Delhi Government had prohibited discounts and schemes being offered by liquor stores in view of violations of Covid-related guidelines and unhealthy market practices, the Delhi Government's Excise Department has now allowed private shops to offer up to 25 per cent discount on the maximum retail price (MRP) of liquor.

According to the order issued by the Delhi Excise Commissioner on Friday, the Government has recommended that rebate or discount up to 25 per cent of the MRP will be allowed on the sale of liquor in

jurisdiction of NCT of Delhi with strict compliance of Rule 20 of the Delhi Excise Rules, 2010. "The Commissioner, Excise, under Section 4 of the Delhi Excise Act directed that the licensees can offer discounts or concessions up to a maximum of 25 per cent of the MRP of liquor sale in Delhi," as per the order. The licensees will strictly abide by terms and conditions of the license and if any violation is noticed, then strict penal action will be taken against them under the Delhi Excise Act and other rules, it said.

"However, in overall public interest, the government reserves the right to withdraw the discount at any time. The government will not be under any obligation whatsoever and it will be non-binding on the government to allow discount on sale of liquor in Delhi," it added. In view of violations of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority

(DDMA) guidelines related to COVID-19 and "distortion of market" due to "unregulated discounts" offered by some licensees, the excise department had on February 28 discontinued rebate and concessions on the sale of liquor in Delhi, the order stated. In February, with liquor shops giving discounts and offers like 'buy one, get one free', crowds were seen thronging liquor vends in many parts of the city. Some law and order issues were also reported with police being called in to control mobs.

As a result of liquor stores slashing prices of different brands of alcohol by up to 40 per cent, many people had started purchasing and hoarding large quantities fearing the schemes may be withdrawn after the end of the current financial year in March. The excise department had withdrawn the discounts and schemes being offered by the

licensees citing law and order problems and inconvenience to locals. Some licensees had approached the Delhi High Court against this order. The intent of the government behind allowing discounts by retailers was to promote consumer choice and healthy competition and determination of price by market forces, the excise department had said defending the move to withdraw discounts.

The licensees were seen indulging in various promotional activities through social media and banners, hoardings being placed outside stores, which is a non-permissible activity under the Delhi Excise Act, 2009 and the Delhi Excise Rules, 2010," it had said.

The Delhi government had approved the Excise Policy 2021-22 along with the terms and conditions for granting various categories of licences last year. The policy came into effect on November 17, 2021.

Cong: 25% off to hurt religious sentiments during Navratra fest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar said the AAP Government decision to allow 25 discount on liquor bottles is intended to hurt religious sentiments as most of the people in Delhi are observing Navratra festival and observing fast.

Kumar said court intervened when private liquor vendors' "buy one, get one free" scheme had created a law and order problem, and traffic blockades but Kejriwal Government ignored court directive to yet again allow discounted sales of liquor bottles, which will once again create a law and order situation in Delhi.

The Congress leader said that Kejriwal, who had promised to make Punjab "Nasha Mukht" before Assembly elections, now keeps silent about it, but he has certainly made Delhi "Nashe Ki Rajdhani" to expose his double-standard.

Kumar further said while on the one hand the Government was creating easy availability of liquor to ruin unemployed youth, and on other hand the CM tries to impress visiting dignitaries with non-existent "Delhi Model of Education/Health Care" by showing them a specially renovated class room or a Mohalla Clinic, to cover up his failure.

BJP: Promotional schemes will increase liquor intake in society

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal opposing the order of the Government allowing 25 per cent discount on liquor and demanded its withdrawal.

"Such promotional schemes will increase liquor consumption in society especially amongst youth which is not appropriate," BJP Delhi unit spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has written in the letter on Saturday.

Kapoor said that after the order issued by Delhi government allowing schemes offer-

ing 25 per cent discount on liquor bottles.

They (AAP) proved that earlier schemes of buy one get one free offered by the liquor mafia were also silently approved by the AAP government.

"The ban imposed on promotional schemes three weeks ago was just to silence social outcry, especially of women," Kapoor said.

The BJP leader further said that by issuing such an order to allow 25 per cent discount, the AAP government has given approval to liquor mafias' schemes and exposes its anti nasha drugs claims," Kapoor added.

PTM to help parents understand educational needs of children



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to bridge the competency gap caused due to Covid-19, the Delhi Government schools on Saturday conducted the first mega Parents-Teachers Meeting (PTM) to help parents understand the educational and emotional needs of their children.

The PTMs were conducted in over 1,000 Delhi Government schools and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also interacted with students and parents during the mega meeting.

On this initiative, Sisodia said this mega PTM was much-needed. The schools were closed for almost two years due to the pandemic. This not only harmed the education of our children but also

affected their ability to think, understand and be happy. Now, the need of the hour is to fix this together. Joint efforts by parents and teachers will help the children to cope with the post-pandemic situation better.

"I am happy to see that a large number of parents took part in the mega PTM. During COVID lockdown, schools were shut and students were confined to their houses. Even teachers were meeting parents virtually most of the time.

But in-person mega PTM was an opportunity where parents shared their concerns with teachers freely and without any hesitation," Sisodia said. "Our teachers are always available for parents to answer their queries related to their children and are working hard on bridging the competency gap caused due to the pandemic," the Deputy CM said.

"A majority of parents' queries revolved around social and emotional wellbeing of their wards, ways to plug in learning gaps and getting children's studies back on track," the Deputy CM said.

Notably, Mega PTM is part of a two-phase recovery plan of Delhi Government that aims to bridge the competency gap caused due to COVID, prepare students to acquire basic foundational literacy and skills and focus on emotional wellbeing of children.

Under this, Directorate of Education (DoE) has reduced the syllabus and is exclusively focusing on emotional and academic wellbeing of students through various activities in schools such as extended Happiness Classes, Mission Buniyaad Classes, surveys on learning levels, revision of previous worksheets, etc. Schools are engaging with the community deeply to understand the situation of students and to track them back to schools.

Sisodia said that the overall objective of this approach is to ensure that the learning gaps that occurred during the lockdown do not expand further.

This will give an opportunity to students to rebuild their competencies and conceptual knowledge. Also, engagement in activities will help in reducing the anxiety and stress levels among students, he added.

Collected highest property tax revenue ₹1,075 crore during FY 2021-22, claims SDMC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has claimed to have collected the highest property tax revenue during the financial year 2021-22. The civic body has touched a magical figure of Rs 1075 crore in property tax collection during the Financial Year 2021-22, a senior official said.

Commissioner SDMC Gyanesh Bharti said, "This has become possible due to the positive attitude of the department with the taxpayers and extending all possible help and making them understand the need of making payment of the tax before the last date of payment. An amount of Rs 1075 Cr has been collected from 4.60 lakh properties by 31st March 2022."

Bharti further said apart from collecting highest ever tax in the year 2021-22, the SDMC has also been able to raise Rs 917 crore as transfer duty which is also the all-time highest. "If you club both the figures, it comes to about Rs 2000 crore. In the financial year 2018-19, the SDMC had earned Rs 637.99 crore as transfer duty, in the financial year 2019-20, it earned Rs 751.57 crore and in the year 2020-21, total Rs 563.65 crore was received as transfer duty," he said. The Commissioner further stated that this became possible due

to efforts puton by the relevant departments to make it convenient for the assesses to pay taxes. Nearly 900 camps had been organized in the wards this year, he said.

"The department during new financial year will focus on expanding the ambit of tax on the basis of the results of the survey. The department will concentrate on digitization of property tax related work to enable the sphere of tax net. The department will also determine the tax collection for the next financial year to Rs 1200 cr," he added.

The property tax department of the SDMC through constant surveys, has brought more properties into the tax net resulting in the amount has been increased. The department conducted inspection of commercial properties to evaluate exact amount of tax, served notices to big defaulters for payment of outstanding dues of property tax. The department also pursued matters of outstanding dues of government properties/buildings and followed them properly with the officials concerned to get the due amount, he said. The SDMC had collected 823.61 crore against the target of Rs 1100 crore in the financial year 2019-20. Subsequently, it had collected Rs 943.14 crore in the financial year 2020-21.

FIR lodged against unidentified people for defacement of signboard of USA Embassy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An First Information Report (FIR) has been registered by the Delhi Police against unidentified people for alleged defacement of the signboard of the Embassy of the United States of America (USA) by pasting a poster over it warning USA against bullying India.

The Hindu Sena claimed the pasted poster which read "Unreliable Biden Administration... Stop bullying India. We don't need you. USA need India against China. We are proud of all disciplined and brave Indian Armed forces."

According to Amrutha Guguloth, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), New Delhi district, on Friday, an information was received at around 10.15 PM following which a police team rushed to the spot where they found the alleged poster on the said signboard.

"The poster was removed immediately after which we registered a case under the relevant section of the Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act. Technical surveillance is underway to catch the culprit," said the DCP.

In a statement issued by National President of Hindu Sena Vishnu Gupta, he claimed that Hindu Sena members protested on "continuous bullying of India by US President Joseph Biden administration."

Body to mull renaming residential sectors Alpha, Beta, Delta, Omicron

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) has formed a committee to take the decision on renaming residential sectors such as Alpha, Beta, Delta and Omicron to numeric figures like Sectors 1, 2 and 3, after 30 years.

In the first wave of coronavirus in India it was Delta variant while Omicron fuelled the third wave. The World Health Organisation has also been using Greek alphabets like 'Delta' and 'Omicron' to name COVID-19 variants.

The officials of GNIDA, including the CEO Narendra Bhooshan held a meeting on March 31 to discuss the issue and gave an "in-principle approval" to the proposal, after there was a demand from a section of residents for renaming the sectors.

According to a statement issued by the GNIDA, during the meeting, it was decided that the special committee headed by Additional CEO Deep Chandra would take suggestions and feedback from local residents over changing of sectors' names, according to officials. "The names of residential sectors of Greater Noida may be changed soon. Instead of Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta etc., the sectors would be renamed by numbers like one, two, three, four. The Authority has also constituted a committee to implement this propos-

al. The committee will also take suggestions from the residents of Greater Noida. The final decision will be taken after that," it stated.

The officials said after the formation of Greater Noida in 1991, the sectors were named Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Omicron, Mu, Zu, Chai-Fi, Pai etc while 1, 2 and 3 were added to these names.

However, there are some sectors named only with numbers in western part of Greater Noida. The area is known as Greater Noida (West) or Noida Extension, as per the officials.

For example, there are sectors near residential sector 'Swarnanagari' which have been named Sector 36 and Sector 37. Similarly Sector 1, 2, 3, Sector 10, 12 are in Greater Noida (West) although there are no other sectors which have numerical names.

"Because of this, there is a lot of confusion in writing, speaking and understanding the names of sectors. The location of these sectors is not known. Keeping this in mind, the Authority is contemplating to change the names of these sectors," a GNIDA official said. In the meeting on March 31, it was agreed to change these names. It was also decided that all the industrial sectors will be named after 'Ecotech' and the names of the institutional and IT sectors will remain the same as Knowledge Park 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on, according to the official.

EDMC simplifies health trade licence process to facilitate traders to invest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) has simplified the health trade licence process to facilitate the traders to invest and operate health trades in the confirming sites under EDMC jurisdiction.

Under the simplified policy, the period for granting a health license has reduced to 30 working days from 60 days, a senior official said.

Senior officer of EDMC said that under the new policy, for new licenses, The official said that traders will have to fill up an online application for new licenses along with uploading required documents, payment of license fee and provisional license will be auto

generated, which will be valid for 30 working days.

The concerned officials of department will process application within 30 working days and complete inspection and generate a regular health trade license. In case within 30 working days of applying if the new license is not regularized, then deemed license will be automatically generated, he said.

He said that for renewal of health trade license including eating establishments and lodging and boarding houses, traders will have to complete online application and will have to upload mandatory documents, payment of license fee and can generate regular health trade license at trader level.

DU students to get 30 mins more for exams

NEW DELHI: Delhi University students, who will be appearing for exams in the physical mode, after a gap of almost two years will get an additional 30 minutes and more choices in question paper as a special one-time measure.

Due to coronavirus pandemic, DU had started holding online open book exams for students. Recently, students of first, third and fifth semesters appeared for online open book exams. Students of second, fourth and sixth semesters will appear for exams in physical mode that are likely to be held in May and June. In an official notification issued on Friday, the university said that duration of each exam will be extended by 30 minutes as a special one-time measure.

City Govt spent over ₹1,500 cr for repairing roads in Capital: PWD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has spent over Rs 1,500 crore for repairing roads in the national Capital in the last two years. The information was shared by the Public Works Department in response to a question in the Delhi Assembly earlier this week.

"An amount of Rs 873.79 crore was allotted for repairing of roads and sense carpeting in 2020-21 out of which Rs 539.99 crore was spent. Similarly, during 2021-22, an amount of Rs 1041.38 crore was allotted for the purpose out of which Rs 985.96 crore was spent," the response read. Last month, the Delhi government had provided administrative approval and estimated sanctions for

streetscaping of four more sample stretches of Aurobindo Marg, Lodhi Road, Nelsan Mandela Road and Jagatpuri to Karkardooma stretch. Under the streetscaping project, the Delhi government aims to decongest, redesign and beautify 540 km of roads across the city. According to PWD officials, redesigning roads will eliminate bottlenecks and improve the aesthetics of the road stretch. The project entails strengthening of the road, enhancing its aesthetics and introducing user facilities like kiosks, benches, decorative lights and water ATMs on the roadside. The officials added that the stretch will be made pedestrian and cyclist-friendly with dedicated cycle tracks and wide footpaths.

Man held for attempt to murder, creating false story of robbery

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a man for attempt to murder and creating a false story of robbery to mislead police investigation, in order to evade arrest. The accused has been identified as Manoj. The incident took place on Friday in east Delhi's Madhur Vihar.

According to Vinit Kumar, the Kumar, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), East district, police were informed about a case of robbery by a man named Lakshay, resident of Mayur Vihar following which a police team was dispatched for the spot. "Before the police team reached the spot, the injured person named Khushi Ram was referred to LBS Hospital for further treatment he received injuries on his head.

EDMC replaces old model tromel machines

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In order to reduce legacy waste at Ghazipur landfill site, East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) has replaced the old model tromel machines with new model high speed tromel machines.

These machines will be operated in two shifts increasing the total waste disposal capacity of the Corporation to 3 lakh tonnes per month.

A senior EDMC official said that an estimated 140 lakh tonnes of legacy waste are lying at the Ghazipur landfill. "The EDMC is trying to handle this legacy waste in many ways such as power generation from waste, segregation of waste into different categories by using tromel, compost making etc," he said.



The capacity of tromel machines which are working there till now is less and they are occupying more space. Presently the waste is being processed at an estimated rate of 1.20 lakh tonnes per month.

Apart from this, the corporation has also invited tenders to treat 50 lakh tonnes of waste, which are currently being evaluated. The work order is likely to be issued soon. The way the engineering department of corporation is working on a war footing, the garbage dump in Ghazipur will be a thing of the past.

Design of memorial for Covid warriors ready

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The design for a memorial on the Delhi Assembly's premises to pay tribute to doctors and other "corona warriors" is ready and its dimension will be 8 ft long and 6 ft high, officials said. The actual ground work to install the memorial, which will be built in metal, is expected to begin soon, they said.

"The design is ready and the front side of the memorial will symbolically depict in relief artwork, various Covid warriors who have rendered yeoman service during the pandemic, and many of whom have also lost their lives in the

line of duty," a senior official told PTI. The artwork will portray a doctor in the centre, flanked by a nurse (healthcare worker), sanitation worker, teacher and police personnel, sources said. "The memorial's structure will be 8 ft long and 6 ft high. It is planned to be installed near the statue of Vittalbhai Patel in the assembly premises," the official said.

Another official said that the project will take at least five to six months in the making and added that the time-line was stretched due to the third wave of the Covid pandemic.

Delhi has gone through three major waves of the pandemic. The second was in

April-May last year and it had wreaked havoc in the city as people scrambled to get beds for their family members who were infected, and doctors and other healthcare workers tried their best to save lives, inside and outside hospitals. A large number of deaths were recorded during the 2021 wave, including of several doctors, nurses, police personnel, teachers and sanitation workers.

Over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths were recorded on April 20 last year, rising to 306 fatalities on April 22. On May 3, the city had registered a record 448 deaths, according to official data. Covid outbreak in Delhi was reported early March 2020,

during which a nationwide lockdown was also imposed to contain the spread of the infection. The national capital's cumulative tally of cases increased to 18,65,101 as on April 1. The death toll stands at 26,153, according to Friday's health bulletin. There has been a significant decline in the number of daily cases in the last few weeks. Doctors and healthcare workers, globally, since the outbreak of the coronavirus have been in the forefront of the fight against the pandemic of the century, the worst since the Spanish Flu in 1918.

Their courage and selfless service earned them the moniker of 'corona warriors'.

‘Give Bharat Ratna to Dalai Lama’



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A volunteer-based initiative has been launched by students, friends and admirers of Nobel Laureate, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, appealing to the Centre Government to confer upon him the coun-

try's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna.

One of the chief architects of the campaign, Professor Renuka Singh from School of Social Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) said a four-month voting campaign has been launched in March and this initiative calls all citizens of the country to participate in a voting process that supports the appeal for the nomination and conferring of the next Bharat Ratna to Dalai Lama. "People can vote on the website www.bharatratnaforalailama.in and they can even submit their vote offline through the missed call service

+917065506767" said Singh adding that they need a minimum of 20 million votes till the end of campaign on July 6. "Post the voting period, we would be seeking an audience with our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to submit our humble appeal to nominate His Holiness, the Dalai Lama for the next Bharat Ratna and the citizen's support in the initiative," said Singh.

Singh further said that even in the face of aggression, the Dalai Lama has consistently advocated the policies of non-violence and the Gandhian notion of Satyagraha, bringing international repute and recognition to inspirational and aspi-

ration India and its ancient wisdom culture. "His kindness and compassion roar! We the people of India are indebted to His Holiness for his constant guidance, spiritual presence and deep investigation into the workings of the mind, pointing to the fact that material development has to go hand in hand with one's inner development," Singh added.

The 87 year-old Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of Tibet and resident of India since 1959, is known the world over as a man of peace. He has only been arguing for genuine autonomy – not independence from the Chinese Government's rule – for Tibet.

Govt to introduce 7 Bills in RS

Business advisory committee of Upper House has allocated 17 hours for these Bills in coming week

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government will bring seven bills, including "The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill" and "The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill", in the Rajya Sabha as the ongoing second half of the Budget session comes to a close on April 8.

The business advisory committee of the Upper House of Parliament has allocated 17 hours for these Bills in the coming week.

The Rajya Sabha has also reported a productivity of 101% during three weeks of the second part of the Budget ses-

sion that started on March 14, an official statement said.

The Bills that are proposed to be taken up by the Upper House during the last week of the current session include the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2022, relating to Tripura as passed by the Lok Sabha, and the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022, passed by the Lok Sabha earlier this week.

The Chartered Accountants, the Cost and Works Accountants and the Company Secretaries (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which has also been passed by the Lok Sabha, will be taken up in the Rajya Sabha



this week.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2022, pertaining to Uttar Pradesh, the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022, and the Indian Antarctica Bill, 2022, will also be taken after they are passed by the Lok Sabha.

Besides, the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities Amendment) Bill, 2022, will be

introduced for consideration and passage.

This amendment seeks to prohibit financing of such weapons while the original Bill prohibited only the manufacturing of such weapons.

The Rajya Sabha Officials said a total time of 17 hours has been allocated for the above seven Bills by the Business Advisory Committee of the Rajya Sabha.

The total scheduled sitting time available during the next week is 29 hours 30 minutes. Private Members' Business is scheduled on Friday next.

During the three weeks of the second part of the session, the Rajya Sabha has clocked productivity of 101%, the officials said. During the third and last week, they said, while the House lost 54 minutes due to disruptions and forced adjournments, members sat beyond the scheduled time for 1 hour 48 minutes.

Central taskforce formed to ensure 'synergy' between Forest Act, forest & agro-forest regulations, promote sustainability

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A central task force to ensure "synergy" between the National Forest Policy, Forest (Conservation) Act and National Agro-Forest Policy aiming to promote sustainable development has been set up with an aim to develop "synergies" between the three legislations and promote sustainability.

"It has been decided to constitute a Task Force under the chairmanship of Director General Forests and Special Secretary to study and analyse the National Forest Policy, 1988, the proposed National Forest Policy, proposed amendments in the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the current regulatory regimes on agro-forestry/tree outside forests across the country, in order to make recommendations to develop synergies for

promotion of sustainable development and management of forests and trees outside forests in the country," said the Union Environment Ministry in an Office Memorandum issued recently.

The National Forest Policy 1988 is presently in a draft shape, unveiled by the Union Environment Ministry in 2018. The final version is yet to be made public.

Nearly three and a half years ago, in June 2016, the Environment Ministry had unveiled a draft NFP but when following flak from activists for not being enough to protect the then-existing forest regulations, the Ministry had backtracked on it, calling it just a "study". In 2018, the Center officially unveiled the draft of the NFP. The draft was then



revised in 2019 as well but since then there has been no development in the matter.

The task force is expected to give its observation in the draft NFP further.

The Environment Ministry which released a consultation paper October 2, 2021 on the proposed amendments in Forest Conservation Act, 1980 with reference to the amendments made in 1988 in this Act is already drawing flak for the gaps in the proposed legislation.

A report published in the Centre for Science and

Environment termed the proposed amendments "a very conscious larceny (theft of personal property) of village resources."

"The Narendra Modi-led Union government is making every effort towards providing 'ease of doing business' to its cronies. This latest move needs to be seen in the same context. It is effectively reiterating through these proposed amendments that this step is aimed at providing exemptions to businesses in the garb of 'development,'" it said.

The task force, with a tenure of two months, will submit its report in 60 days. If needed, it can co-opt any member, the memorandum noted. Most of the proposed members of the 19-member task force are either directly or indirectly part of the Ministry with only three from outside this circle

Pasmanda Muslims benefit most from 9 lakh Hunar Haats jobs: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Backward Muslims have "benefited in the last six years" as about 9 lakh artisans and craftsmen have been provided employment and employment opportunities through 39 "Hunar Haats", said Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Saturday.

The Minister said this while informing that the record 40th edition of "Hunar Haat" will be organised in Mumbai from April 15.

More than 50 per cent of these beneficiaries are said to be women artisans.

The Union Ministry of Minority Affairs has organised a total of 39 "Hunar Haats" till date in New Delhi, Puducherry, Mumbai, Prayagraj, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Indore, Ranchi, Rampur, Mysuru, Bhopal, Panaji, Dehradun, Vrindavan, Surat, Guwahati and Chandigarh.

The 39th "Hunar Haat" is



being organised in Chandigarh till April 3rd.

Naqvi said, "Hunar Haat" has brought "economic revolution" in the lives of artisans and craftsmen and proved to be a "Perfect Platform for Preservation, Protection and Promotion" of ancestral and traditional legacy of artisans and craftsmen."

Around 9 lakh artisans and craftsmen have been provided employment, most of them belonging to backward 'Pasmanda' Muslims.

The "success" of "Hunar Haat" can be gauged from the fact that more than 50 people are associated with a single artisan and craftsmen in production, transportation, sale and display of their handmade products, Naqvi said.

Several backward sections of the Muslim community such as Mochi, Rangrej, Bunkar, Kumhaar, Sunar, Badhai, Halwai, Manihar, Ansari, Momin, Qureshi, Salmani, Sapera, Kagzi, Mirasi, Attaar, Kalandar, Daffali, Jogi, Mali, Darji, Nut, Bhurji, Bhatiayara, Dhuniya, Lohar, Hajjam, Madari, Rajmistri etc have been included into the "mainstream" economy through "Hunar Haat", he said.

"Hunar Haat" will also be organised in coming days Noida, Pune, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Patna, Mumbai, Jammu, Chennai, Agra, Prayagraj, Goa, Jaipur, Bengaluru, Kota, Sikkim, Srinagar, Leh, Shillong, Ranchi, Agartala and other places in the coming days.

₹409.92 cr assets of Future Gaming & Hotel Services attached under PMLA

ED initiated money laundering investigation against Future Gaming and its Sub Distributors and Area Distributors for West Bengal on the basis of FIRs registered by Kolkata Police

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached movable assets worth Rs 409.92 crore in the case against Future Gaming & Hotel Services Pvt. Ltd. and its various sub-distributors/area-distributors. The attached assets are in the form of balance in bank accounts and mutual fund holdings.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation against Future Gaming and its Sub Distributors and Area Distributors for West Bengal on the basis of FIRs registered by Kolkata Police under various sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC) and various sections of Lotteries Regulation Act, 1998,

by the Kolkata Police, the ED said in a statement here.

The Future Gaming & Hotel Services Pvt. Ltd. is the sole distributor of Paper Lottery organized by the states of Sikkim and Nagaland that runs the popular 'Dear Lottery'.

The ED probe revealed that Future Gaming & Hotel Services Pvt. Ltd. and its various sub-distributors/area-distributors, acting together in criminal conspiracy have illegally retained unsold lottery tickets and claimed top prizes on such unsold tickets in the pre GST period up to 2017.

"Sale proceeds of lottery tickets have been illegally diverted towards gifts and incentives by modifying the prize structure of Lottery Schemes without any approval from the organizing State Governments. In this manner, Future Gaming and its sub distributor companies illegally claimed around Rs 400 crore between 2014 and 2017. Entire Proceeds of Crime have been identified and attached by ED," it added.

ED attaches assets worth ₹4.69 crore in arms licence case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ED has provisionally attached immovable/movable assets worth Rs 4.69 crore in the form of bank balance, plots, flats and residential houses in the arms licence case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Tentative "Proceeds of Crime" is expected to be to the tune of Rs 40 crore in the arms licence racket. The investigation was initiated against several serving as well as retired bureaucrats, government officials and arms and ammunition dealers/brokers of Jammu and Kashmir.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of FIRs registered by the Special Crime Branch of CBI, Chandigarh, against the then Deputy Commissioner Kupwara and other officials.

WHO warns of pandemic in-waiting

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as several pockets of the world continue to reel under the variants of the Coronavirus, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has now warned of another pandemic in-waiting, this time to be caused by the Arboviruses like Zika, yellow fever, Chikungunya and dengue.

These are a group of pathogens which are spread by arthropods such as mosquitoes and ticks. These pathogens are already public health threats in tropical and sub-tropical areas where approximately 3.9 billion people live.

The frequency and magnitude of outbreaks of these arboviruses, particularly those transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes, are increasing globally, fuelled by the convergence of ecologic, economic, and social factors.

Launching their new Global Arbovirus Initiative, the global health agency said that these pathogens top the list

for the next potential outbreak that could escalate into a pandemic, especially as almost four billion people live in tropical and sub-tropical areas where they thrive.

Experts are looking to put strategies in place to prevent a repeat of Covid-19.

There have been dozens of Zika virus outbreaks since 2016, it is an infection spread mainly by mosquitoes and can be harmful to pregnant women.

'We have been through two years of Covid-19 pandemic and we have learned the hard way what [it costs] not to be enough prepared for high impact events,' Dr Sylvie Briand, director of the Global Infectious Hazard Preparedness team at the WHO, said recently.

'We had [a] signal with Sars in 2003 and the experience of the influenza 2009 pandemic - but there were still gaps in our preparedness.

"The next pandemic could, very likely, be due to a new

arbovirus. And we also have some signals that the risk is increasing.'

She was speaking at the launch of the WHO's new Global Arbovirus Initiative, which aims to bring together work to tackle insect-borne threats under one roof.

The WHO warned that there are signs that Arboviruses and the risks they pose are 'increasing'

Since 2016 more than 89 countries have faced Zika outbreaks, while yellow fever risk has been on the rise since the early 2000's.

Every year, dengue fever infects 390 million people in the 130 countries where it is endemic - it can cause haemorrhagic fever and death.

Yellow fever poses a high risk of outbreaks in 40 countries and causes jaundice and severe haemorrhagic fever and death.

Chikungunya is less well-known, but it is present in 115 countries and cause severe and joint-disabling arthritis.

Bharat Biotech to slow down Covaxin's production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech, the Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer, has said that it will temporarily slow down its Covid vaccine Covaxin's production across its manufacturing facilities.

"Bharat Biotech today announces the temporary slowing down of production of Covaxin across its manufacturing facilities, having completed its supply obligations to procurement agencies and foreseeing the decrease in demand," it said in a statement issued recently. The company will focus on pending facility maintenance, process and facility optimisation activities for the coming period, it said.

It said that as all existing facilities were repurposed for the manufacture of Covaxin with continuous production during the past year to meet the

public health emergency of Covid-19, these upgrades were due. Certain highly sophisticated equipment which were required to enhance the process stringency were unavailable during the Covid-19 pandemic, it said.

"During the recent WHO post EUL inspection, Bharat Biotech agreed with the WHO team on the scope of the planned improvement activities and indicated that they will be executed as soon as practical," Bharat Biotech said.

It said it is working on further improvements and upgrades to ensure that the production of Covaxin continues to meet ever increasing global regulatory requirements.

"Since patient safety is the primary consideration for any new vaccine, there can be no compromises in meeting operational excellence objectives," the statement read.



Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi with DMK president & Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin during the inauguration of DMK's office 'Anna-Kalaigarn Arivalayam', in New Delhi on Saturday PTI Photo

Safety, security of country Govt's top priority: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said safety and security of the country is the Government's top priority and all efforts are being made to safeguard its unity and integrity.

He made this remarks while addressing a conclave organised to commemorate 60 years of 'Chetak' helicopter's service to the nation. It was organised by the Indian Air Force at Air Force Station, Hakimpet in Hyderabad.

Rajnath described the conclave as a fitting tribute to those who have served the nation with hard work and dedication. Paying his respects to this invaluable contribution, he said, "Whenever a country fights a war for the safety and security, it is not just the Armed Forces who take part. The whole nation fights that war. The scientists, engineers and

technicians of organisations like the HAL, who develop helicopters like 'Chetak' and other platforms, play an equally important role as our soldiers. Lakhs of employees and workers associated with MSMEs also contribute by supplying parts to these projects. This conclave celebrates the hard work and dedication of all of them".

Comparing 'Chetak' named horse of Rajput king Rana Pratap, Rajnath described 'Chetak' helicopter as not just a machine, but a vibrant and dedicated entity which has been continuously engaged in the service of the nation for the last six decades and has set an example for others.

He noted that nearly 700 Chetaks manufactured so far have served the nation in war and peace with full dedication, describing its multi-service employment as a shining example of jointness.

April jinx for Pakistan premiers strikes again

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The month of April seems to be inauspicious or jinxed for Prime Ministers of Pakistan. Three Prime Ministers including Nawaz Sharif had suffered a bad fate in April. Imran Khan would be the fourth premier to suffer similarly if he loses his majority in the national assembly on April 3.

On April 17, 1953, then Governor-General Malik Ghulam Muhammad had dissolved National Assembly headed by Muslim League leader and Prime Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin following widespread violence in the country in the aftermath of the language movement in the former East Bengal and religious riots in Lahore. Nazimuddin had took charge of the office after Liaquat Khan's assassination in 1951. After

Nazimuddin, Muhammad Ali Bogra became the new Prime Minister of the country on April 17, 1953.

After Nazimuddin, Nawaz Sharif was the second Prime Minister of the country who resigned on April 18, 1993. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan had removed Sharif and dissolved the ninth National Assembly due to his differences. Balkh Sher Mazari was appointed as caretaker prime minister. Mazari, who like Sharif is from central Punjab province, took the oath of office shortly after Khan's news conference.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani had served as 18th prime minister of Pakistan from 25 March 2008 until his retroactive disqualification and ouster by the Supreme Court on 26 April 26, 2012. He was accused of failing to re-open corruption cases

against President Asif Ali Zardari.

The worst April in the history of Pakistan was April 4, 1979 when former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged in Rawalpindi.

President Zia-ul-Haq, the army commander who overthrew Bhutto in 1977, rejected all appeals from Pakistan and abroad seeking mercy for Bhutto.

Prime Minister Imran Khan faces the biggest challenge of his political career, on Sunday. It comes just days after Khan had claimed that the "establishment" had provided him with three options including "resignation, no-confidence [vote] or elections".

If Khan loses his majority in the national assembly on April 3, he would have to resign from Prime Ministership.

March this year India's hottest month in 122 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday released data showing that on average, India recorded its hottest March this year since 1901 with the maximum temperature clocking in at 1.86 degree Celsius above normal. Besides, this is the first time in 132 years, two systems of intensity of depression formed over the north Indian Ocean in March this year. The average rainfall over the country was also found to be 71 per cent less than its Long Period Average (LPA) during the month, the IMD data showed.

The IMD attributed the unusual heat to the lack of rainfall due to the absence of active western disturbances over north India and any major system over south India. The data showed that over the country as a whole, the average

maximum temperature (33.10 degrees Celsius) recorded in March 2022 is the highest ever in the last 122 years. In March 2010, the country had recorded a maximum temperature of 33.09 degrees Celsius.

In Northwest India, the average maximum temperature (30.73 degrees Celsius) is the highest in the last 122 years. March 2004 saw an average maximum temperature of 30.67 degrees Celsius. The average minimum temperature of 15.26 degrees Celsius was the second highest in the region. March 2010 had a mean minimum temperature of 15.4 degrees Celsius, it said.

Northwest India recorded 5.2mm of rainfall against a normal of 47.5 mm, a shortfall of 89 percent. Central India saw 87 percent less rainfall during the month, gauging only 1.1mm of precipitation against a normal of 8.4 mm. The IMD

said the heat wave spell is likely to continue over Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh over the next two to four days.

In Central India, the average maximum temperature is second highest with 35.20 degree Celsius, average minimum temperature is fourth highest with 20.84 degree Celsius and mean temperature is third highest with 28.02 degree Celsius since 1901.

Over South Peninsular India, the mean temperature is fourth highest with value of 28.80 degree Celsius since 1901 (for first highest to third highest).

According to the IMD data, the country averaged monthly mean temperatures of 26.67 degree Celsius is the second warmest since 1901 (The warmest years on record was 2010 (26.671 degree Celsius)).

Ukraine denies hitting depot on Russian soil

AP ■ KYIV

Talks to stop the fighting in Ukraine resumed, as another desperate attempt to rescue civilians from the encircled city of Mariupol failed and the Kremlin accused the Ukrainians of launching a helicopter attack on a fuel depot on Russian soil.

Ukraine denied responsibility for the fiery blast, but if Moscow's claim is confirmed, it would be the war's first known attack in which Ukrainian aircraft penetrated Russian airspace.

"Certainly, this is not something that can be perceived as creating comfortable conditions for the continuation of the talks," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, five weeks after Moscow began sending upwards of 150,000 of its own troops across Ukraine's border.

Meanwhile, Russia continued withdrawing some of its ground forces from areas around Kyiv after saying earlier this week it would reduce military activity near the Ukrainian capital and the northern city of Chernihiv to promote trust at the bargaining table. While the Russians



kept up their bombardment of those two zones, Ukrainian troops exploited the pullback on the ground by mounting counterattacks and retaking a number of towns and villages. Still, Ukraine and its allies warned that the Kremlin is not de-escalating but resupplying and shifting its troops to the country's east for an intensified assault on the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas region in the country's east, which includes Mariupol. The latest negotiations took place by

video. At a round of talks earlier in the week, Ukraine said it would be willing to abandon a bid to join NATO and declare itself neutral - Moscow's chief demand - in return for security guarantees from several other countries.

The invasion has left thousands dead and driven more than 4 million refugees from Ukraine. Mariupol, the shattered and besieged southern port city, has seen some of the worst suffering of the war. Its capture would be a major prize

for Russian President Vladimir Putin, giving his country an unbroken land bridge to Crimea, seized from Ukraine in 2014. Mariupol's fate could determine the course of the negotiations to end the war, said Volodymyr Fesenko, head of the Ukrainian think tank Penta. "Mariupol has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance," Fesenko said, "and without its conquest, Putin cannot sit down at the negotiating table." The fall of Mariupol, he said, "will open the way to a peace agreement."

On Friday, the International Committee for the Red Cross said it was unable to carry out an operation to bring civilians out of Mariupol by bus. It said a team had been on its way but had to turn back. City authorities said the Russians were blocking access to Mariupol.

"We do not see a real desire on the part of the Russians and their satellites to provide an opportunity for Mariupol residents to evacuate to territory controlled by Ukraine," Petro Andriyushchenko, an adviser to the mayor of Mariupol, wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

War in Ukraine due to aggression of Russian leader: White House

Washington: The ongoing war in Ukraine that has displaced millions of people is a result of the aggression of the Russian leadership and its president Vladimir Putin, the White House has said. "This is a war of aggression by the Russian leadership, by President Putin that has left millions of people displaced, homeless; has targeted civilians, hospitals and other innocent people across Ukraine," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference on Friday.

"We know who the aggressor is; that is President Putin and Russia. And beyond that, I do not have any comment on military tactics," she said.

The official, however, refrained from commenting on the Russian statement that an apparent attack by Ukraine on one of its fuel depots is making it harder for Russia to stay engaged in the talks to end the war.

(PTI)

Zelenskyy: Russians create 'complete disaster' with mines

Kyiv: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned his people early on Saturday that retreating Russian forces were creating "a complete disaster" outside capital as they leave mines across "the whole territory," including around homes and corpses. He issued warning as humanitarian crisis in encircled city of Mariupol deepened, with Russian forces blocking evacuation operations for the second day in a row.

Kremlin accused Ukrainians of launching a helicopter attack on a fuel depot on Russian soil. Ukraine denied responsibility for fiery blast, but if Moscow's claim is confirmed, it would be war's first known attack in which Ukrainian aircraft penetrated Russian airspace. "Certainly, this is not something that can be perceived as creating comfortable conditions for continuation of talks," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. (AP)

China rejects restrictions as Ukraine war tops summit agenda

Brussels: China on Friday renewed its criticism of Western sanctions against Russia, as top European Union officials sought assurances from Beijing that it would not help Moscow circumvent the economic measures imposed in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Chinese Foreign Ministry also laid blame for the war in Ukraine at least partially on the United States for pushing to expand the NATO military alliance closer to Russia's borders. Twenty-one of the EU's 27 countries are also NATO member states. At a virtual summit, European Council President Charles Michel, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell sought signs from Chinese President and Communist Party leader Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang that Beijing would help to end the war in Ukraine. (AP)

US giving Ukraine USD 300M more in military gear

Washington: The US Defense Department says it is providing an additional USD 300 million in military equipment to Ukrainian forces defending the country from Russian troops. Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said in a statement on Friday evening that the gear in the new package includes laser-guided rocket systems, unmanned aircraft, armoured vehicles, night vision devices and ammunition. Also included are medical supplies, field equipment and spare parts. Kirby said the new package "represents the beginning of a contracting process to provide new capabilities" to Ukraine, rather than delivering equipment drawn from US military stockpiles. The US has provided more than USD 1.6 billion in security assistance since Russia's invasion, Kirby said. (AP)

Pope attacks Russia's 'infantile' war, EU-Libya deal in Malta

AP ■ VALLETTA (MALTA)

Blasted Russian President Vladimir Putin for launching a "savage" war, Pope Francis on Saturday said he was studying a possible visit to Kyiv. Speaking after his arrival in Malta, the pope delivered his most pointed and personalised denunciation yet of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Francis did not cite Putin by name, but the reference was clear when he said that "some potentate" unleashed threat of nuclear war on world in an "infantile and destructive aggression" under guise of "anachronistic claims of nationalistic interests". "We had thought that invasions of other countries, savage street fighting and atomic threats were grim memories of a distant past," Francis told Maltese officials and diplomats on Mediterranean island nation at start of his weekend visit.

Israeli troops kill 3 Palestinians in West Bank gun battle

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli forces killed three Palestinian militants in a firefight in the occupied West Bank early Saturday, police said, raising fears of further escalation of violence during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Israeli media said four members of a police counter-terrorism unit of the Israeli police were wounded, one of them seriously.

The troops came under fire as they attempted to arrest suspected militants in the northern West Bank. Tensions have soared in recent days after Palestinian assailants killed 11 Israelis in separate attacks across the country. Saturday marks the start of Ramadan, a month of dawn-to-dusk fasting, prayer and religious devotion for hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ramadan has often been a period of increased friction and confrontation.

Macron's reelection push troubled by 'McKinsey Affair'

AP ■ PARIS

As French President Emmanuel Macron prepares to hold his first big rally on Saturday in his race for reelection, his campaign has hit a roadblock. It's been dubbed "the McKinsey Affair," named after an American consulting company hired to advise French government on its COVID-19 vaccination campaign and other policy.

A new French Senate report questions government's use of private consultants, and accuses McKinsey of tax dodging.

The issue is mobilising Macron's rivals and dogging him at campaign stops ahead of the April 10 first-round vote. His supporters hope he can rev up his campaign and drown out his detractors at Saturday's rally in a huge arena west of Paris. Macron, a centrist who has been in forefront of diplomatic efforts to end war in Ukraine.

Death toll from Mykolaiv strike keeps growing

AP ■ LVIV (UKRAINE)

At least 33 people have been killed and 34 injured in a Russian rocket strike on regional government building in the southern Ukrainian port city of Mykolaiv. Ukrainian officials gave latest death toll in a statement Saturday, updating numbers of deadly strike that hit Mykolaiv on Tuesday. Rescuers sent by State Emergency Service have been searching the wreckage for survivors since Russian forces struck building, which housed office of regional governor Vitaliy Kim.

The governor, who was not on premises at time of attack, later posted social media images showing a gaping hole in nine-story structure. The confirmed death toll has risen steadily as search and rescue operation continues. Mykolaiv, a strategically important city en route to Ukraine's largest port of Odesa, has withstood weeks of shelling by Russian forces.

US welcomes United Nations mediated truce in Yemen

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States on Friday welcomed the United Nations-mediated truce in Yemen, with President Joe Biden saying that the initiative is a long-awaited reprieve for the people of the country.

"I welcome the announcement today of a two-month truce in the Yemen conflict. This initiative is a long-awaited reprieve for the Yemeni people. It entails a halt to all military activities by any party inside Yemen and across its borders, the entry of fuel ships into Hudaydah port, and the renewal of commercial flights to and from Sana'a to agreed destinations," Biden said. These are important steps but they are not enough, he said. "The ceasefire must be adhered to, and as I have said before, it is imperative that we end this war."

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER Construction Division-2, P.W.D. Bulandshahr

E-Tender Notice Dated: 28.03.2022
On behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Executive Engineer, Bulandshahr, Construction Division-2, P.W.D. Bulandshahr invites following percentage rate bid online through <http://etender.up.nic.in> from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, from Date 12.04.2020 10.00 A.M. to 21.04.2022 upto 12:00 Noon as per the prescribed T-1 of Govt. of U.P. The technical bids will be opened online on dated 21.04.2020 at 12:30 Noon. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day, at the same time and validity of bid will be considered from the original date. The date and time of opening of the financial bid shall be notified on the website.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Work Completion	Tender Document fee including GST	Contractors Category
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	New Construction of Kaser Kalan Shiv Mandir to Chhimapur Link Road	14.00	1.40	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
2.	New Construction of Vijay Nagliya to Parihawli Missing Part Link Road	19.00	1.90	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.300+500+ GST 18% 144=944	A,B,C & D (Road work)
3.	Special Repair of Nagla Jatni Link Road	37.00	3.70	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.300+500+ GST 18% 144=944	A,B,C & D (Road work)

- The Bid Security and Tender Document Fee must be deposited online through Internet Banking only. All registered contractors have to upload Turnover certified by C.A. of last 5 year and details of maximum cost work satisfactorily completed in last 5 years on Chanakya Software before submission of tender. Details of e-tender uploaded on <https://etender.up.nic.in> shall also be uploaded on upwd Chanakya software, before last date & time of submission of bid.
- Tender or have to upload required documents as per Government order No. 879/(11)/23-7-2020 P.W. Anubhag-7 Lucknow Dt. 25-08-2020 for Prarahi Application in Chanakya Software for Tendering Process.
- Terms & Other Conditions related to bid are available on <https://etender.up.nic.in>

Assistant Engineer Construction Division-2, PWD Bulandshahr UP- 174516 Date 1.4.2022
Executive Engineer, Construction Division-2, P.W.D. Bulandshahr

Executive Engineer PD, P.W.D, Bulandshahr

Letter No. 10611/A Dated: 25.03.2022

E- Procurement Tender Notice

On behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, U.P.P.W.D., Bulandshahr invites following percentage rate bids online through <http://etender.up.nic.in> from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with P.W.D. class as per column no. 10 below Roads work Category as applied from Date 30.04.2022 to 09.05.2022 upto 12:00 Noon as per the prescribed T-1 of Govt. of U.P. The technical bids will be opened online on dated 09.05.2022 at 02:00 P.M. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day, at the same time any validity of bid will be considered from the original date. The date and time of opening of the financial bid shall be notified on the website.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lakh)	Time of Completion work including rainy season	Tender Cost (in Rs.)	Address of Executive Engineer	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer	Category
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Under Renewal with general repair in the financial year 2022-23									
1	Renewal of Bulandshahr Nagar Pull to Narendrapur Shafingar via Avantika Dev Mandir link road in Km 12/500, 13, 14 & 15/600.	4.55	0.46	01 Month	150+500+ 18% GST 117.00 = Rs. 767.00	Executive Engineer, P.D. P.W.D. Bulandshahr	Superintending Engineer, BSR Circle P.W.D. Bulandshahr	Chief Engineer, Meerut Zone, P.W.D., Meerut	A,B,C,D (Road Work)
2	Renewal of Narsana Nahar Pull to Narendrapur Shafingar via Avantika Dev Mandir link road in Km 12/500, 13, 14 & 15/600.	29.45	2.95	01 Month	300+500+ 18% GST 144.00 = Rs. 944.00	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-	A,B,C,D (Road Work)

- Time allowed for completion of Whole work in column No. 5, including rainy season.
- The Tender Document Fee must be deposited through Internet Banking only.
- All registered contractors have to upload Turnover certified by C.A. of last 5 years and details of maximum cost of work satisfactorily completed in last 5 years on Chanakya Software before submission of tender. Details of e-tender uploaded on <http://etender.up.nic.in> shall also be uploaded on upwd Chanakya Software before last date & time of submission of bid.
- Terms & Conditions related to bids are available on <http://etender.up.nic.in>
- During execution of work contractor should ensure the all safety Measures for COVID-19 issued by the Uttar Pradesh government.
- In PWD technical evaluation of tenders is to be done by Prarahi Software URL for Prarahi is <http://wms.upwd.gov.in/Prarahi/>.

Assistant Engineer P.D. P.W.D BULANDSHAH UP- 174512 Date 1.4.2022
Executive Engineer P.D. P.W.D BULANDSHAH UP- 174526 Date 1.4.2022

Federal tax probe into Biden's son, Hunter, moves forward

Washington: A federal grand jury has heard testimony in recent months about Hunter Biden's income and payments he received while serving on board of a Ukraine energy company, according to two people familiar with probe. It remains unclear whether he might be charged. But grand jury activity underscores that a federal tax investigation into President Joe Biden's son that began in 2018 remains active as prosecutors continue to examine foreign payments and other aspects of his finances. A lawyer for Hunter Biden did not return a phone message and email seeking comment on Friday. A Justice Department spokesman deferred a request for comment to U.S. Attorney's office in Delaware, which is handling the investigation. A spokesperson for office did not return a phone message seeking comment. The people familiar with the investigation could not discuss details of ongoing probe publicly and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity. No matter how investigation resolves, it has already presented a political headache for Biden administration. (AP)

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER CONSTRUCTION DIVISION-2, PWD BULANDSHAHR

E-Tender Notice Dated: 28.03.2022
On behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Executive Engineer, Bulandshahr, Construction Division-2, P.W.D. Bulandshahr invites following percentage rate bid online through <http://etender.up.nic.in> from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, from Date 12.04.2022 10.00 A.M. to 21.04.2022 upto 12:00 Noon as per the prescribed T-1 of Govt. of U.P. The technical bids will be opened online on dated 21.04.2022 at 12:30 Noon. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day, at the same time and validity of bid will be considered from the original date. The date and time of opening of the financial bid shall be notified on the website.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Work Completion	Tender Document fee including GST	Contractors Category
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Patch Repair of Various Village Road under Assistant Engineer 1st	15.00	1.50	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
2.	Patch Repair of Various SH, MDR, ODR Road under Assistant Engineer 1st	15.00	1.50	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
3.	Patch Repair of Various, MDR, ODR Road under Assistant Engineer IInd	11.00	1.10	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
4.	Patch Repair of Various SH, MDR & ODR Road under Assistant Engineer IInd	11.00	1.10	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
5.	Patch Repair of Various Road under Assistant Engineer IInd	15.00	1.50	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
6.	Patch Repair of Various, MDR, ODR Road under Assistant Engineer IInd	11.00	1.10	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
7.	Patch Repair of Various Village Road under Assistant Engineer IVth	15.00	1.50	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
8.	Patch Repair of Various ODR Road under Assistant Engineer IVth	12.00	1.20	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
9.	Patch Repair of Various Village Road under Assistant Engineer Vth	10.00	1.00	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
10.	Patch Repair of Various ODR Road under Assistant Engineer Vth	6.00	0.60	06 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)
11.	Renewal of Narsana Canal Bridge to Shafingar via Narendrapur Avantika Devi Mandir (ODR) Km. 4/500, 5/6, 7 (640) & 8/500	32.00	3.20	03 Month	Tender Cost-Rs.225+500+ GST 18% 131=856	A,B,C & D (Road work)

- The Bid Security and Tender Document Fee must be deposited online through Internet Banking only.
- All registered contractors have to upload Turnover certified by C.A. of last 5 year and details of maximum cost work satisfactorily completed in last 5 years on Chanakya Software before submission of tender. Details of e-tender uploaded on <https://etender.up.nic.in> shall also be uploaded on upwd Chanakya software, before last date & time of submission of bid.
- Tender or have to upload required documents as per Government order No. 879/(11)/23-7-2020 P.W. Anubhag-7 Lucknow Dt. 25-08-2020 for Prarahi Application in Chanakya Software for Tendering Process.
- Terms & Other Conditions related to bid are available on <https://etender.up.nic.in>
- Work at Sr. No. 5 Shall be carried out by Hot Mix Plant.

Assistant Engineer Construction Division-2, PWD Bulandshahr UP- 174526 Date 1.4.2022
Executive Engineer, Construction Division-2, P.W.D. Bulandshahr

New Mexico launches cannabis sales

Santa Fe (US): New Mexico brought recreational marijuana sales to the doorstep of Texas, the largest prohibition state, as the movement toward broad legalisation sweeps up even more of the American West. Anyone 21 and older can purchase up to 2 ounces (57 grams) of marijuana - enough to roll about 60 joints or cigarettes - or comparable amounts of liquid concentrates and edible treats. First-day sales reached about USD 2 million by early Friday evening. New Mexico has nurtured a medical marijuana program since 2007 under tight restrictions. Friday's launch still represents

a sea change for local law enforcement, taxation officials, commercial growers and residents who thought full-blown legal access to pot would never come. At a Santa Fe dispensary, customers said they were thrilled to buy openly and cut black market ties. "When they legalized it here, I didn't need my guy anymore," said Devin Killoy, a painter and handyman in clothes speckled with white. Antonio Rodriguez, a 38-year-old grocery worker, said he was content to pay taxes on recreational cannabis: "I want everyone to be legit, even if it's more expensive."

Would-be marijuana farmers are bidding for water rights and learning to raise the crops, as experienced medical cannabis producers ramp up production and add retail showrooms. New Mexico is among 18 states, including neighbouring Arizona and Colorado as well as the entire West coast, that have legalised pot for recreational use, with implications for cannabis tourism and conservative Texas, where legalisation efforts have made little headway. A marijuana decriminalization bill won US House approval Friday, but is unlikely to pass Senate.

**MAHINDRA RURAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED**

Sale Notice

Corporate Office:- Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. Sadhana House, 2nd Floor, 570, P.B. Marg Worli, Mumbai 400 018 India,Tel: +91 22 66523500 Fax: +91 22 24972741

Regional Office:- LDA Colony,B2/B70 Kanpur Road, Near Phoneix Mall, Lucknow.

Branch Office: 5th Floor 501-511 Kan Chamber Civil Linnes Kanpur Near Green Park Chauraha Kanpur.

Disposal of Secured Assets under Private Treaty, as provided under Rule 8(5)(d) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Particulars of which are given below:-

In exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (4) of Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (herein after referred to as "SARFAESI Act") and Rule 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (hereinafter referred to as "Rules")for the purpose of recovering the secured debts, the authorized officer of the secured creditor M/s Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "MRHFL") has decided to sell the secured asset (immovable property), the possession of which had been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor under S. 13 (4) of SARFAESI Act, described herein below on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IT IS BASIS" and the public and all concerned including the concerned borrowers/mortgagors, their representatives, as the case may be are hereby informed that the secured asset listed below will be sold, particulars of which are given below:

Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of the Immovable property (Secured Assets)	Offer Amount Received
Branch: GHAZIABAD Borrower: SHADAB Co-Borrower: SHAHIN Address: BULANDSHAHR AT:- ROAD AMEREMUJAYIYA MASJID RAFAEK NAGAR PEERBAUDDIN 3, HAPUR, UTTAR PRADESH-245101 LAN: 779899/ XSEMGB00656800	3-Dec-20 Rs.9,45,878/- Physical Possession Date 25-June-21	PLOT NO-21, PART OF KHASRA NO-1277, MOHALA NEW ABADI GARH -, PILKHUWA, PARGANA DASNA, TEHSIL DHAULANA ,DIST HAPUR, UTTAR PRADESH - 245101. Boundary- NORTH - PLOT LOKESH SAINI, SOUTH - HOUSE OF LOKESH SAINI, EAST - 15 FT ROAD, WEST - PLOT OF SITARAM SAINI	Rs.2,60,000/- (RUPEES TWO LAKH SIXTY THOUSAND ONLY)

- MRHFL acting through its Authorized Officer has now received offers to buy the same (offer amount is tabulated in the table above), and we intend to accept it, interalia considering the fact that the previous public auction held was unsuccessful.
- To Participate in Auction intended bidder has to deposit 10 % of the Reserve Price.
- The detail terms and conditions of the auction sale are incorporated in the prescribed tender form. Tender forms are available on www.mahindraruralhousingfinance.com as well as above branch office. The sale will be subject to terms and conditions mentioned in Tender Form.
- For further details, contact the Authorised Officers, **Deep Chandra Joshi 8853265434** Last date of submission of sealed offers in the prescribed tender forms along with EMD is **19 - April - 2022 Time 10 Am To 6 Pm** at the branch office address mentioned herein above. Tenders that are not filled up properly or tenders received beyond last date will be considered as invalid tender and shall accordingly be rejected. No interest shall be paid on the EMD.
- Date of opening of the offers for Property is **21 - April - 2022 Time 10 Am To 2 Pm** at the above mentioned branch office address. The tender will be opened in the presence of the Authorised Officer.
- Date of inspection of the immovable property is **18 - April - 2022 Time 10 Am To 6 Pm**
- The Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) are hereby given **15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002** to pay the sum mentioned as above before the date of Auction failing which the offer received will be accepted and the immovable property will be auctioned and balance, if any, will be recovered with interest and costs. If the Borrower pays the amount due to Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd., in full before the date of sale, auction is liable to be stopped.
- The immovable property will be sold to the highest tendered. However, the undersigned reserves the absolute discretion to allow inter se bidding, if deemed necessary.

Place :- Ghaziabad Date:-03.04.2022
Sd/- Authorised Officer Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Limited



sunday pioneer

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2022

7

I am happy to do whatever the team requires. I am looking to bowl in the death. If the captain wants me to bowl one in the powerplay, I am more than happy to do that

— ANDRE RUSSELL

JOS THE BOSS

Buttler's 100 helps RR beat Mumbai Indians by 23 runs

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Jos Buttler's manic mayhem was matched in equal measure by spin twins Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal as Rajasthan Royals beat Mumbai Indians by 23 runs in an IPL match on Saturday.

Buttler (100 off 68 balls) scored his second IPL ton off only 66 balls to help the Royals to 193 for 8, which seemed slightly sub-par due to Jasprit Bumrah's (3/17 in 4 overs) brilliant effort.

Ishan Kishan (54 off 43 balls) and unheralded N Tilak Verma (61 off 33 balls) added 81 in 8 overs before Ashwin (1/30 in 4 overs) and Chahal (2/26 in 4 overs) decisively tilted the game in RR's favour before overs 14 to 16 as MI managed only 170 for 8 after 20 overs.

While Royals have now won two out of two, MI have lost both their games in another dismal start to an IPL season.

In the end, there were two factors that combined to bring about MI's downfall.

Firstly, it was Buttler's (11 fours and five sixes) assault against MI's weak-links like Basil Thampi and Murugan Ashwin that made the difference. Three such overs yielded 73 runs and even Bumrah's brilliance didn't seem to be enough in the final context of the match.

And then while bowling, in between overs 14 and 16, Chahal-Ashwin combination gave away only 16 runs and the chase was derailed.

In the last four overs also, Trent Boult (1 for 29 in four overs), Prasidh Krishna (1/37 in 4 overs) and Navdeep Saini (2/36 in 3 overs) kept things tight



by not giving Kieron Pollard (22 off 24 overs) any room to free his arms.

All of them knowing Pollard's weakness against fast wide yorkers, bowled them aptly to keep the West Indies white-ball skipper under tight leash.

If there was one plus point for MI, that will be young Tilak Verma, who

could be the next big player for the franchise with his eye-catching elegance coupled with brute power. The reverse swept six off Ashwin was brilliant but Tilak played one slog sweep too many to get out off the next ball.

Buttler played shots all round the park to bring up his second IPL hundred

and first of the current edition. It was all the more praiseworthy as Yashashvi Jaiswal (1) and Devdutt Padikkal (7) were dismissed cheaply.

Skipper Sanju Samson (30 off 21 balls) played a good knock as he and Buttler conjured 82 runs for the third wicket.

A late cameo by Shimron Hetmyar (35 off 14 balls; 3x4; 3x6) compounded the bowling team's woes.

Buttler, who was off the mark with a boundary to fine-leg and hit his first maximum, a pull shot over mid-wicket, off Daniel Sams (0/32), in the second over seemed on a rampage.

He tore into Basil Thampi's fourth over, hammering him for three maximums and two boundaries, as Rajasthan fetched 26 runs and raced to 43/1.

Buttler, who hit two successive boundaries off Sams, brought up his fifty in just 32 balls and then took the Mumbai Indians attack to task.

At 87/2, after 10 overs, the stage was set for a big score. Buttler was playing big shots at will and was ably supported by his captain. The duo was brutal on Murugan Ashwin, hitting him for 21 runs in the 11th over.

Samson struck three sixes and a four, before being dismissed by Kieron Pollard in the 15th over. Then it was the Hetmyar show, as he hit compatriot Pollard for two fours and as many sixes in the 17th over, where RR got 26 runs.

Buttler paced his innings well and reached to the three-figure mark with a single. However Bumrah's 19th over partially got MI back in the game.



PTI ■ PUNE

New Zealand fast bowler Lockie Ferguson scalped four wickets for 28 runs in a stunning display of pace and accuracy after Shubman Gill's imperious 84 to help Gujarat Titans beat Delhi Capitals by 14 runs and register their second consecutive win in their maiden IPL season here on Saturday.

Ferguson, who was bought for a whopping Rs 10 crore in the IPL auction, dismissed dangerous opener Prithvi Shaw (10), Mandeep Singh (18), captain Rishabh Pant (43 off 29 balls) and Axar Patel (8) to rock the DC's run chase of 172.

Veteran pacer Mohammed Shami (2/30) chipped in with two late wickets to hand DC, who finished on 157 for nine, their first defeat in the tournament.

Titans captain Hardik Pandya got his first wicket as he dismissed DC opener Tim Seifert (3) while Rashid Khan (1/30) also chipped in with the scalp of Shardul Thakur. It was not the best of

► pointstable

Po.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	RR	2	2	0	0	4	2.100
2.	KKR	3	2	1	0	4	0.843
3.	GT	2	2	0	0	4	0.495
4.	DC	2	1	1	0	2	0.065
5.	LSG	2	1	1	0	2	-0.011
6.	RCB	2	1	1	0	2	-0.048
7.	PBKS	2	1	1	0	2	-1.183
8.	CSK	2	0	2	0	0	-0.528
9.	MI	2	0	2	0	0	-1.029
10.	SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-3.050

► boundarymeter

4s	288
6s	151

starts for DC as they lost opener Seifert in the second over. Ferguson then rocked DC's innings with two wickets in the fifth over — Shaw and Mandeep — as the Titans found themselves in the ascendency.

But DC captain Pant and Lalit Yadav (25), who had played a major role in DC's win in their previous match, revived the chase with a 61-run stand off 6.5 overs for the fourth wicket.

Earlier, Gill struck an imperious 84 off just 46 balls — his highest T20 score, to power the Titans to 171 for six after being asked to bat.

Gill, who struck six boundaries and four sixes during his stunning innings, and captain Pandya (31) revived the Titans innings.



Traditional rivals Aus, Eng face off in Women's WC final

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Women's WC Final
Live from 6:30 am IST
STAR SPORTS 2

Relentless Australia will be out to underline their credentials as one of game's greatest sides against a battle-hardened England unit that will also seek greatness in a blockbuster ICC Women's World Cup final here on Sunday.

Both England and Australia have been marching towards the big day in their own way.

Defending champions England have been emboldened by an incredible turnaround that saw them prevail in five must-win games after losing their first three matches of the tournament.

While the Australians, gunning for a record seventh world title, have been on a roll extending their winning streak to 11 matches.

Interestingly, despite having won 10 of the previous 11 World Cups between them, England and Australia will face off in an ICC World Cup final for the first time in 34 years. The two sides started their campaigns together almost a month ago in Hamilton and will end them together, one holding the trophy, the other looking on at the Hagley Oval.

Australia have lost only one World Cup final but it was not too far away from the setting for Sunday's finale. Back in 2000, just down the road from Christchurch at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Lincoln, Australia lost the closest final the tournament has ever seen, defeated by New Zealand by just four runs.

That year, England recorded their worst-ever World Cup finish of sixth before fighting back to take the trophy from Australia in 2009.

In doing so, they would go on to have a remarkable year also claiming their first, and only, T20 World Cup as well as an Ashes victory.

It is something that Australia are hoping to match 13 years later, as they already hold the T20 trophy having secured that on home soil in 2020 before the Ashes were wrapped up with two games to spare in February, but the one-day World Cup evades them.

Vice-captain Rachael Haynes already has a winner's medal from 2013, and she is well on her way to a competition record, the opening batter sitting on 429 runs for the tournament, 27 behind Debbie Hockley of New Zealand's all-time best set in 1997.

That is not the only record that could be broken on Sunday as left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone has the chance to surpass Australian Lyn Fullston, whose haul of 23 wickets in 1982 remains the mark to beat.

Ecclestone sits on 20 wickets having taken her maiden international five-wicket haul in the semi-final win against South Africa ending on six for 36, the best figures by an England bowler in a World Cup.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Chennai Super Kings have so far looked like anything but IPL's defending champions and to effect a turnaround, new skipper Ravindra Jadeja will seek improvements on multiple fronts against Punjab Kings here on Sunday.

CSK's title defense has begun on a disappointing note. After going down to Kolkata Knight Riders in the tournament opener, they lost to new entrants Lucknow Super Giants.

While the batting unit failed to fire in the opening game, heavy dew made life difficult for the bowlers as they failed to defend a target in excess of 200 runs.

The toss is already playing a significant role in the outcome of the games. With the

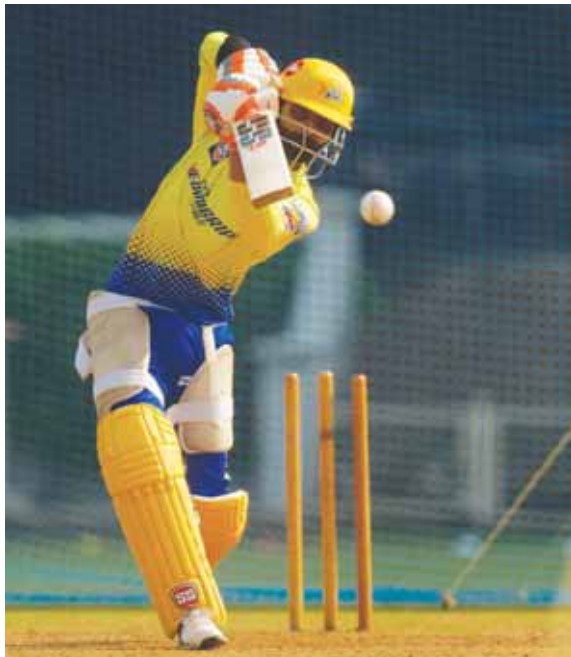
second innings dew in mind, teams are opting to chase and CSK will hope to be better prepared to bowl with the wet ball.

The CSK bowling attack is also feeling the absence of pacers Deepak Chahar and Adam Milne and death-over specialist Chris Jordan.

They were forced to bowl all-rounder Shivam Dube in the penultimate over against Lucknow, which cost them 25 runs and took the match away from them.

The CSK bowlers need to tighten things up to keep the opposition batters in check. Tushar Desphande and rookie Mukesh Choudhary struggled against LSG and will have their task cut out against a strong Punjab line-up, especially at CCI, where bowling hasn't been easy.

Dwayne Bravo, now IPL's



Chennai vs Punjab
Live from 7:30 pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1

leading wicket-taker, has been the standout performer, but he needs support from others.

Skipper Jadeja has not been his usual self and needs to pull up his socks. After failing in the opening game, Chennai's batting clicked against Lucknow. A vintage Robin Uthappa, a clinical Moeen Ali and an equally hard-hitting Dube were seen and they would be more than keen to repeat their performances.

Ruturaj Gaikwad, last edition's leading run scorer, needs to get runs under his belt. Mahendra Singh Dhoni can be expected to do the job in the middle-overs and can play the role of a finisher.

Punjab Kings, on the other hand, have quite a few big hitters

in their ranks, but they faltered against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Smarting from a six-wicket defeat, they will be eager to return to winning ways and would expect the batters to step up.

With Mayank Agarwal, Shikhar Dhawan, Bhanuka Rajapaksa at the top, Punjab can dominate the opposition attack with ease.

Odean Smith and Shahrukh Khan are also known to tonk the ball and will need to play the finisher's role on a more consistent basis.

Punjab, who added Kagiso Rabada to their attack, came up short against Andre Russell. They would quickly need to regroup and forget the hammering and bowl in the right areas.

The role of the two spinners Rahul Chahar and Harpreet Brar becomes crucial and could be a factor in deciding the outcome of the game.

Pak win ODI series against Aussies

AP ■ LAHORE

Pakistan thrashed Australia by nine wickets in the final one-dayer to claim a 2-1 series victory on Saturday.

The foundation of the win was laid by Pakistan's fiery pace trio of Haris Rauf, Mohammad Wasim and Shaheen Afridi who bundled out Australia for 210 inside 42 overs.

Babar smashed an unbeaten 105 and opener Imam-ul-Haq made 89 not out as they made light work of the meagre chase to guide Pakistan home with 12.2 overs to spare.

Australia, put into bat, got off to a horror start when they slumped to six for



three.

Shaheen (2-40) removed in-form Travis Head with the first ball of the match before Haris (3-39) dismissed

Aaron Finch and Marnus Labuschagne in quick succession.

Alex Carey (56) top-scored for the tourists and

Ben McDermott (36), Sean Abbott (49) and Cameron Green (34) helped them pass the 200-mark but the Australia bowlers had little to defend.

Nathan Ellis removed Fakhar Zaman for 17 but Imam and Babar ensured there was no dramatic batting collapse that would allow Australia back into the contest.

Babar, who forged an unbroken 190-run partnership with Imam, hit 12 boundaries in his 16th ODI century.

Australia, who won the three-test series 1-0, will conclude their first tour of Pakistan in 24 years with a one-off Twenty20 match, also in Lahore, on Tuesday.

India to play rescheduled double header against Germany on April 14-15

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The FIH Hockey Men's Pro League double header between India and Germany, which was postponed after a COVID-19 outbreak in the visitors' camp last month, was on Saturday rescheduled to April 14 and 15. The announcement comes a day after Hockey India received a confirmation from the International Hockey Federation.

The matches will be played at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar. The last time the two teams met was during the Bronze medal match at the Tokyo Olympic Games where India prevailed 5-4 in a

thrilling match to earn a historic podium after a gap of 41 years.

The Indian men's team and Germany were originally scheduled to play on March 12 and 13, but the matches had to be postponed after several members of the German squad tested positive for COVID-19.

The German men's team has so far played eight matches out of which they have won five, while India, who are placed second in the pool standings behind Germany by only a point, have also played eight games, winning five and losing two in regulation time and one in shootout.

AP ■ MIAMI

Norway's eighth-ranked Casper Ruud reached his first ATP Masters 1000 final on Friday, beating surprise package Francisco Cerundolo in straight sets at the Miami Open.

This was Ruud's fourth last semi-final at the elite Masters level but the first he's won. The 23-year-old overpowered the



Argentina -- making his Masters tournament debut - 6-4, 6-1. Ruud will now play

18-year-old Spanish sensation Carlos Alcaraz who beat defending champion Hubert

Latham shines in NZ win

PTI ■ HAMILTON

New Zealand on Saturday defeated Netherlands by 118 runs as the hosts took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match ODI series here in Hamilton.

Tom Latham was the architect of the victory. New Zealand were in dire straits against the sprightly opponents, reduced to 89/6 within 23 overs. However, Latham played the ultimate captain's knock, his 123-ball 140* reviving the hosts and eventually taking them to a mammoth 264/9.

His knock - it was his career-best score in ODI cricket - was laced with 10 fours and five sixes. It was his birthday, and he couldn't have rung in his thirties any better.

Netherlands faltered in their chase. They were bundled out for 146 in 34.1 overs, with Michael Bracewell returning figures of 3/21.

The victory meant New Zealand




jumped from No.11 to eighth in the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League table, leapfrogging Pakistan, with 50 points.

Hurkacz of Poland 7-6, 7-6 in Sunday's final.

"This means a lot for me," Ruud said in an on-court interview.

"Getting to a Masters final was a goal of mine, we will see a lot more of Francisco in the future but my serve helped me come through.

The conditions were quite tough, it was humid but I am happy to make the final."




talktime

TAARUK RAINA

The actor, who is playing Rishi Kapoor's son in his latest film Sharmaji Namkeen, speaks with SUPRIYA RAMESH about how he bagged the role in this movie, what he learnt on set and his upcoming project

IT WAS AN HONOUR TO WORK WITH RISHI KAPOOR SIR



■ **How did your journey as an actor begin?**
I was born and brought up in Delhi, I spent the majority of my life there until I went to Australia for further studies. My journey kickstarted on a surprise note. While I was studying in college, I gave an audition for a project, and I actually got it. I then decided to come and give it a try. Later on, I kept getting projects and was travelling back and forth for it. I decided that this is my destiny. I want to act, I want to sing. Sometimes, I find it ridiculous how a student can decide his career in such a casual manner. Maybe, I was just young and reckless, but I am glad too.

■ **How did you bag Sharmaji Namkeen?**
It was the usual audition process. I was 22 years old when I auditioned for the part. I was nervous, because of the fact that I would be sharing the screen with a legendary artist.

■ **Recall a few anecdotes from the sets and memories with Rishi Kapoor.**
There are so many memories. Our conversations about food, his amazingly inspiring stories from his film shoots of the 70s and 80s and a lot more. However, I also remember my most embarrassing moment with him. It was our second or third day on the set, and I had to perform a scene with him. Sir was saying his lines, and I was just in awe of his craft. I was smitten by him and I forgot my own lines. I didn't know what to say, but Hitesh sir (director) covered for me and made it pass. I just couldn't help it.

■ **Throw light on your role in the movie.**
I play the role of Sharmaji's younger son, Vincy. He aspires to become a dancer but doesn't express his dreams openly. He believes himself as a misfit in society, much like his father, who is going through a post-retirement crisis, and that's where they form a special relationship. Vincy isn't judgemental, and he tries to keep the family together.

■ **As an actor what were your learnings from Rishi Kapoor?**
With him, I learnt something new every day. When he was on set, he was the character Sharmaji, and he didn't need anything. He wasn't even concerned about his look. He could switch between his reel and real-life seamlessly, and this talent comes with experience.

■ **It took almost four years to complete this film. How did you manage the continuity of the character?**
Luckily, every time we shot we knew well in advance, so we could grow or cut our hair, gain or lose weight accordingly. Yes, we did reshoot some parts that were incomplete before.


■ **Pareesh Rawal carries forward Rishi Kapoor's role. How different was it working with both of them?**
It was completely different, they were both very different, different personalities, different methods, different energies altogether but at the same time, both of them made us comfortable and made our work easy. It was truly an honour to work with both of them.

■ **You are first a musician and then an actor. You are also in the theatre. How do you balance all these roles?**
Well the short answer is, I don't. I always focus on the task at hand and what I am currently working on and that becomes my priority. My music did take a back seat due to the pandemic, but this year I will be back with more for sure.

■ **What other projects are in the pipeline?**
There are a few in the pipeline, but I can only tell you about Mismatched, Season 2. The series will soon be out on Netflix.

Plan Your Day

INCHING CLOSER



INCHING CLOSER
an interactive shared listening experience

W 6 & 10th April, 2022
LIVE in Zoom @ 7 pm IST | Tickets on invite

curated and hosted by
Pragathi Vittal Rao | designed and directed by
Pragathi Vittal Rao

supported by
SAB, Dharm Yoddha Garud, and the Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Inching Closer is an interactive live digital audio-only experience on intimacy and connection. An exploration into the beauty of chance encounters, we listen to stories of intimacy in different kinds of relationships and give strangers a chance to build a deeper connection with one another, completely over audio. Language: English and Hindi, Duration: 90 minutes, Age Limit: 18 years and above

What: Theatre and Arts
Where: Online
When: April 9 and 10
Time: 7 pm and 8 pm

Sound of music



Music is the best medicine. Here are the top 10 songs of the week that will lift up your weekend mood

Bollywood vibes

Srivalli (Javed Ali)
Jugnu (Badshah, Nikhita Gandhi)
Shukar (Andra)
Pardesi (Arko, Asees Kaur)
Joganiya (Shivi)

English Vinglish

Oh My God (Adele)
Life (Ree)
It'll Be Okay (Shawn Mendes)
Whole Life (Slick Naim)
LOUD (Sofia Carson)

AESTHETICALLY PLEASING TO THE EYE

Renovation of Bougain Villa is influenced by Mediterranean style of architecture. In interior designing, this style of architecture is characterised by simple and romantic aesthetics of Southern European countries, says ANAIS MEON

The Bougain Villa is a luxurious place, full of amenities and is close to nature. It is located at Shankarpally Road, Hyderabad. Situated in between the forest of Khanapur village, the villa is spread over two acres of land. This double-storey villa is composed of one central and very generous open space, (hosting the living room, dining area and the open kitchen). One can reach to the first floor by a passerelle linking the ensuite bedroom from one side with the home cinema/office space. There are 2 other bedrooms on the ground floor, a play area and an open kitchen, all surrounded with a large estate, vegetable garden and orchard. It was not inhibited for over ten years. The Bougain villa was a blunt canvas until redesigned to perfection.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE
The renovation of Bougain Villa is influenced by the Mediterranean style of architecture. In interior designing, the Mediterranean style of architecture is characterised by simple and romantic aesthetics of Southern European countries which include wrought iron, decorative tiles, visible wooden beams, ornamentation, and use of local materials. Use of light and warm tones in the color scheme has been applied. The villa has many windows and transparent glasses for natural light.

NATURE-BASED THEME
The interiors of the Bougain villa are designed in continuity with the nature that surrounds them. The presence of beautiful tropical plants with long leaves and trees blurs the limit of inside-out. The roof structure of the villa offers diagonal beams for indoor creepers to grow.

In accordance with the nature theme, Indian teakwood has been used in crafting most of the furniture, 'baldaquin' bed (canopy bed), wardrobe, music cabinet, pantry and



shelves, all tied up in appearance and feel. Very gifted local carpenters were employed for this purpose. Several plant pots are decorated with floral plants for a natural and vibrant look. Local carpenters were employed for this purpose.

SUSTAINABILITY
To soften the limit of space, raw bamboo curtains have been used in the living room and at the entrance. Elsewhere very light organic cotton fabric sheer dresses all the windows, which gives a close-to-nature look. The dining table placed in the center of this villa has been constructed with the use of Terrazzo, a man-made stone created out of chipped glass pieces. Terrazzo is one of the most durable flooring materials available today as it is impervious to water and stain damage. For flooring purposes, large tiles are often covered by Kerala hand-woven Coir



(coconut coil technique) and colorful Moroccan rugs, giving different texture and feels when walking around the house. It is hand-woven material done by local craftsmen.

GRACEFUL LIGHTING
During the day, the abundance of natural light coming from the colossal windows on each side of the façade is gently replaced by warm decorative

lighting dotting around the space. The right lighting can beautify the living space without any added effort. Therefore, lights are prominently chosen according to the ambience which includes indirect lights, moon lights and warm lights. These statement lights illuminate the villa as per the need. Special ambience lights are focused around tables and chairs to give a warm and intimate feel to the



place. The luxurious lamp fixtures add a rich layer to the classy interior look of this place.

DECORATIVE SEGMENT
The walls are decorated with large pieces of modern Art, the owner's Ichi's (Japanese Artist) paper-cut paintings collection, illuminate the walls with vivid colors such as orange, yellow and green. The roofs of the villa space have diagonal bridges for indoor creepers to grow in the same direction. This homely place does not echo though it is in a forest. Spending time in this homely place will make you feel like Spain or South France while staying in Hyderabad's peaceful outskirts!

The eye-catching Bougain villa has been aesthetically renovated with an amalgam of ancient and modern style. The nature-based theme has added natural beauty to the place which is eye-catching. The villa is near a lake and surrounded with greenery which makes it an ideal place for special events.

The writer is Design Director, Urban Living Spaces

Masterstroke



Portrait and realism tattoos: India's first award-winning, internationally experienced artist, Lokesh Verma-Founder of Devilz Tattoo is best known for his coloured realism and portraits style of tattooing that is mastered by only a few people across the world!


"We see an increasing number of people getting their pet tattoos and I think that is people reciprocating the selfless love that the pet shows to the owner. As pets usually have a shorter life span, a lot of pet lovers commemorate the memory of their furry friends by engraving a mark of their paw or maybe a portrait of them on the body forever. I think we usually do a couple of them every week," says Verma.

Mostly rendered in a realistic style that portrays a head shot of a person. Portrait tattoos are usually for tattoo lovers who want to memorialise an important figure or person. They typically represent something or someone extremely meaningful—could be of a loved one who recently passed away, a newly born baby, a pet or a favourite musician.

TELLY TALE


CONFESSING CAN BE TRICKY

Following an interesting turn of events in Sony SAB's Sab Satrangi, Daddy Khushwa (Satyajit Sharma) finally gets to know the truth about Vishwas (Pulkit Bangia) staying at the Maurya house. Mannu (Mohit Kumar) has been trying his best to prove to Gargi (Kangan Baruah) that Vishwas is not the right guy for her. However, Gargi is far from seeing the truth. For her, Vishwas might be wrong sometimes but she loves him nevertheless. However, Mannu, despite his promise of leaving Gargi, has started developing feelings for her. The upcoming track will definitely see a change in Mannu and how he reacts towards Gargi. Shyam Babu suggests the latter confess his feelings to Gargi.




SOMETHING DIFFERENT

I am very excited as this is my first show with Sony SAB. Dharm Yoddha Garud is very special to me and I am making a comeback on television with this show. So far, the feedback for Kadru has been great. I want to give my all to this show so much so that my hard work gets translated well on screen. It's going to be very different as firstly, no one has ever shed light about Garud, as a mythological character before on television, hence for the audience, for the first time ever, they will get to hear unknown tales of the almighty Garud.



LENDING A HELPING HAND

Sanjay Kapoor is currently basking in the success of his recent web show The Fame Game that saw him reunite with Madhuri Dixit Nene. Following its success, the actor even came on board Sriram Raghavan's next, Merry Christmas alongside Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi. And now, the actor has associated himself with the NGO Wells On Wheels, using his stature to help the society. Water scarcity is a big problem in many parts of the country even today and many young girls have to travel for miles carrying heavy water on their head in the heat, giving their education a miss owing to that. Wells On Wheels, started by Shaz Menon, aims to eradicate that problem by giving water wheels to villages for free.




BHILWARA SUR SANGAM 9TH EDITION

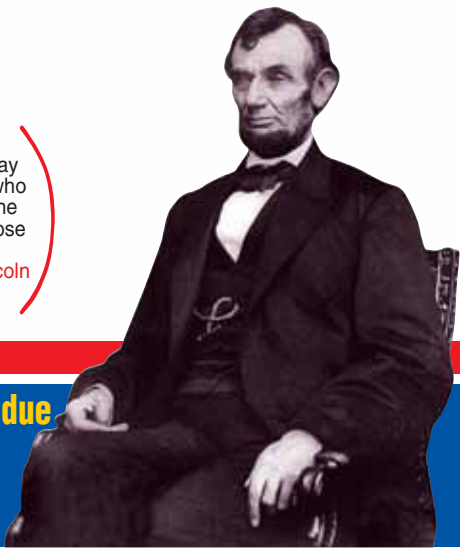
In the continuation of the BSS journey, exploring the treasures of Indian Classical Music, LNJ Bhilwara Group, celebrated the 9th edition of Bhilwara Sur Sangam, a festival of classical music at The Red Fort, New Delhi on April 1 and 2, 2022.

With a dedicated mission to keep India's rich heritage and culture alive and promote its beauty, every year, LNJ Bhilwara Group invites a unique blend of musicians. The musicians are masters of their craft who bring along their traditions to attain a confluence of melodies and joy with mesmerising variety. This year, the maestros who performed at the festival were: Padma Shree Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan along with Pt Ronu Mazumdar, Ustad Sabir Khan, Ustad Akram Khan & Pt Anubrata Chatterjee, Padma Bhushan Dr L Subramaniam, Ambi Subramaniam and his team of eight renowned musicians presented a fusion concert based on Indian ragas on Keyboard, Guitar, Bass Guitar, Tabla, Mridangam, Drums, and Duff, etc.

Over the years, Bhilwara Sur Sangam has created a unique identity for itself. Following the tradition of preserving Indian culture, the festival has earned a great reputation for providing a platform for the confluence of music and tradition.



Great things may
come to those who
wait, but only the
things left by those
who hustle
— Abraham Lincoln



Watch before you open that food packet
Carcinogenic risk found higher than the threshold for several food items, the highest being in milk and spinach

10



12

Let marriage happen when naturally due
In nature's scheme of things, there is a purpose behind delayed marriage



MUMBAI THE BUDDHIST CONNECTION

The Buddhist architecture, associated remains, sculptural remains, and inscriptions prove beyond doubt that Greater Mumbai held a prominent position in the Buddhist and trading networks of the past. Its varied terrain and landscape included hills, rivers, estuaries, creeks, flatlands, dense forests, lakes, and natural water bodies. These provided abundant niches and resources for Buddhism to flourish, prosper and continue., writes SUSAN MISHRA

Mumbai, one of the most celebrated cities in the world, has attracted people from diverse regions, religions and ethnicity over centuries making it a cultural melting pot. The Kala Ghoda precinct in Fort area of Mumbai with its museum, colonial structures, art galleries and festival, stands testimony to Mumbai's cultural past, present and future. The CSMVS Museum, located in this precinct, stands out as a tribute to the spirit of Mumbai and its resolve to preserve art, cultural and historical heritage. The Museum celebrates its centenary this year and on display is its valued and unique collection of artefacts of the lost Kahu-jo-Daro Buddhist stupa of Mirpurkhas dating to 5th century CE. The stupa site was located in Sindh, Pakistan, and was excavated by archaeologist Henry Cousens in 1909, through whom a very sizeable number of artefacts unearthed from Kahu-jo-daro landed in the then Prince of Wales Museum (CSMVS Museum).

The engrossing collection sparks an interest in delving further into Mumbai's centrality in context of Buddhism. As it turns out, Mumbai is a focal point for many Buddhists in today's world. The Vipassana centre located at Gorai is a replica of the Shwedagon Pagoda of Yangon, Myanmar and enshrines the relics of the Buddha. The methodology, approach and precept involved in teaching the technique of Vipassana meditation are similar to those followed 2500 years ago. Vipassana meditation was introduced to the country by S.N. Goenka from Burma / Myanmar where the original Vipassana technique of meditation has been preserved in its pristine form for centuries. The Vipassana Pagoda, with its capacity to accommodate 8000 visitors at one time, has over the years helped Buddhist and non-Buddhists alike, from all over the world, achieves an inner peace and help attain a harmony within as well as in society.

The other important monument in today's world of Buddhism is the Chaityabhoomi located at Dadar Chowpaty. The site has a chaitya structure enshrining the ashes of Dr. Ambedkar, the architect of our constitution as also of the Neo Buddhism movement in India. This chaitya holds immense significance for

Ambedkar's followers and it stands witness to the voluntary conversion of 500,000 followers to Buddhism on the day of Dr. Ambedkar's cremation-- December7, 1956. On December 6, every year thousands of followers and devotees from various parts of the country throng to this revered site of pilgrimage to celebrate his death anniversary or Mahaparinirvan Diwas. In December 2016, the government of Maharashtra approved "A" class pilgrimage and tourist destination status for Chaityabhoomi, which is supposed "to pave the way for the overall development of the place of historic importance".

Mumbai's international Buddhist connect is further affirmed by the lesser known and rarely frequented Japanese Buddhist Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple in Worli. The temple is almost 50 years old, and the motivation behind its construction is traced to a prophecy about 700 years ago. In the 13th century CE, a monk in Japan called Maha Bodhisattva Nichiren prophesized that the salvation of humans would lie in India. In 1931, the Japanese monk Nichidatsu Fuji, founder of the Nipponzan-Myohoji- Daisanga order of Nichiren Buddhism, travelled along with his disciples to India with the intention of fulfilling the prophecy by communicating the Lotus Sutra in India. He travelled to Mumbai as well and it is here that a Japanese temple was constructed to fulfil the prophecy. In 1952, Jugal Kishore Birla, with funding from Raja Baldeo Das Birla, undertook construction of the temple, and on December 27, 1956 the temple was officially opened to the public. The temple has been maintained by the Birla trust.

While new Buddhist temples and structures were constructed, the significance of historical Buddhist sites of Mumbai never waned. This is evident from a Japanese inscription engraved in cave number 90 at the important historical Buddhist site of Kanheri, The inscription reads Namō Sad-dharma Pundarika Sūtraya, Namō Nichirena Mahabodhisatvaya" and was probably inscribed by one of the followers of Buddhist monk Nichiren (1222–1282 CE) who visited the site in 20th century. Another set of three inscriptions of greater antiquity were engraved by members of the Zoroastrian community who visited Kanheri in the 11th Century. The inscriptions primarily contain numerous names of individuals.



“AS IT TURNS OUT, MUMBAI IS A FOCAL POINT FOR MANY BUDDHISTS IN TODAY'S WORLD. THE VIPASSANA CENTRE LOCATED AT GORAI IS A REPLICA OF THE SHWEDAGON PAGODA OF YANGON, MYANMAR AND ENSHRINES THE RELICS OF THE BUDDHA”



In the past, the site of Kanheri was a famed Buddhist centre attracting pilgrims and donors from Sindh in the North West to Bengal in the east. The region's association with north western parts of the subcontinent is evident from an inscription found at Kanheri. James Bird's excavations at Kanheri (in the forecourt of the main chaitya cave) in 1889 brought to light two small copper urns, one of which contained some ashes mixed with rubies, small pieces of gold, a small gold box and a piece of cloth. In the other urn was a silver box and some ashes. Interestingly, also found were two copper plates containing legible inscriptions. The inscription is dated to 493-494 CE and records the construction of a chaitya by an inhabitant of Kanaka identified with a village in the Sindhu country. The inscriptions reveal that Kanheri was an important centre of Buddhist learning into the 9th century CE, and it also received patronage from donors from Bengal. The inscription datable to 854 CE records the donation of a per-

petual endowment, by Gomin Avighnakara from Gauda (Bengal), for the clothing of monks and rooms for meditation at the Maharaja Mahavihara. Excavations carried out in the forecourt of one of the caves brought to light 24 clay sealing, datable to the 8th -9th century CE, which are similar to the Nalanda type with "Buddha and ye dharma maha shramana" inscribed on it. Three Pahlavi inscriptions in another cave list the name of individuals who visited Kanheri in the 11th century CE.

Kanheri holds immense importance and significance as the longest surviving Buddhist site and is also known for its commendable water management system. Engraved on a detached rock opposite cave 41 is an inscription which records that sethi Punaka from Sopara donated for the construction of a water reservoir on the hills of Kanheri. This structure was part of a larger water management system wherein water from three reservoirs located at a higher level flowed into the dam. The water released from here would then form the rivulet that descended and formed the rivulet flowing the length of Kanheri caves and ending in a waterfall. It's amazing to find that each of of the 100 odd caves at the site has a cistern attached to it, showing a careful planning regarding channelization of rain water so as to ensure its deposition in the cistern. If one were to walk on the top of the Kanheri hill, the cutting or shaping of the hill into gradients is noticeable. This was done to ensure the proper flow of rain water for storage and future use. The small tanks with steps and other smaller water holes provided separate areas of access to water for varied purposes.

The Kondivite/ or Mahakali cave site is ASI protected Buddhist seen here are 19 caves placed in two rows- 15 on the south east face of the hill and another four on the north-west face. The chaitya at the site is considered amongst the earliest chaityas in India, and is unique as well owing to the the inner chamber with the stupa being enclosed by a circular wall, a feature not seen at any other chaitya site. An inscription at Kondivite in Pali dating to 3rd century CE records gift of a vihara by a person hailing Pachikama (identified with Pachmarhi).

WATCH BEFORE YOU OPEN THAT FOOD PACKET

Packaged dairy products, milk in plastic bags, fruits and vegetables tested by the team had a high content of priority PAEs, capable of interfering with the endocrine system of the human body, writes KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Indians are vulnerable to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDC) present in food and drinking water, according to a team of international scientists who conducted a study under the auspices of agencies such as the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), Mu Gamma Consultants Pvt Ltd., The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Toxics Link, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, and RECETOX of Czech Republic.

According to Dr. Girija K Bharat, lead scientist, who was honored recently by NITI Aayog for her contribution to 'Sashakt Aur Samarth Bharat', toxic Phthalic Acid Esters (PAEs) have been detected in food items like cottage cheese (paneer), fish stored in plastic packaging materials.

Packaged dairy products, milk in plastic bags, fruits, and vegetables tested by the team had a high content of priority PAEs, capable of interfering with the endocrine system of the human body.

The endocrine system is a network of glands and organs that secrete hormones essential for our growth and development. "EDCs enter our bodies through food, water, air, dermal contact and can alter our endocrine system. The EDCs cause serious developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune effects in both humans and wildlife. Some of these chemicals can even cause cancer," Dr. Girija told The Pioneer while explaining the significance of the findings.

It is a cause of concern that India didn't have a consolidated regulation dealing with EDCs in general. Food and drinking water samples were collected from different zones of urban Delhi as well as peri-



urban areas of Dehradun, in order to form representative data for the Indian subcontinent. "Through in-depth research, we have quantified them for an extensive list of chemical compounds," she said.

The researchers concluded that India is likely to be a hotspot for Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals. Several EDCs can be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy and lactation, said Dr. Girija.

The study also found that

many of the food items contained Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) including pesticide residues, such as DDT and Lindane as well as Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), Dioxins, heavy metals, and plasticizers. Carcinogenic risk due to heavy metals such as Nickel and Arsenic in the diet was higher than the threshold for all food items, the highest being in milk and spinach.

The majority of vegetables had concentrations of Cadmium and

EDCS ENTER OUR BODIES THROUGH FOOD, WATER, AIR, DERMAL CONTACT AND CAN ALTER OUR ENDOCRINE SYSTEM. THE EDCS CAUSE SERIOUS DEVELOPMENTAL, REPRODUCTIVE, NEUROLOGICAL, AND IMMUNE EFFECTS IN BOTH HUMANS AND WILDLIFE. SOME OF THESE CHEMICALS CAN EVEN CAUSE CANCER

— DR GIRIJA

Lead higher than permissible limits while pulses had high Nickel content. Phthalic Acid Esters were high in industrially packaged cottage cheese (paneer) and fish. Bisphenol-A (BPA) was found to be high in potatoes and local fish.

Toxic metals such as cadmium and lead (and to a lower extent nickel), were dominant across all food matrices. The highest concentrations of the target heavy metals were found in vegetables, with cadmium, lead, and nickel

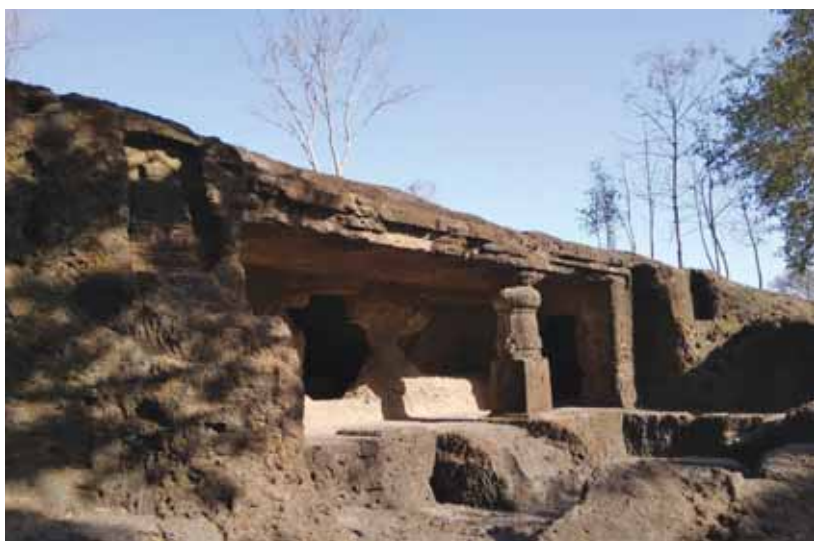
being found beyond permissible limits in okra, spinach, and cauliflower. The maximum loading in the distribution of individual toxic heavy metals for estimated daily intake was observed in vegetables having contributed as much as 92 percent cadmium. Dairy products had the highest loading for zinc, nickel, and selenium.

According to Dr. Girija, children and pregnant women were at "very high risk" of exposure to such heavy metals, plasticizers, and many EDCs. "We should adopt a routine national monitoring plan to track the occurrence and temporal trends of EDCs in food, and for early identification of contamination hotspots," she has suggested to the Government of India in her report.

EDCs accumulate in the body from food and the environment during one's lifetime. They can be transferred to fetuses causing transgenerational effects. Particular attention should be paid to reducing exposure in women of child-bearing age and children. Research points to EDCs as the possible cause of health impairments such as obesity, diabetes, female and male reproductive dysfunctions, hormone-sensitive cancer insurgence in females, prostate cancers, thyroid dysfunction, and neurodevelopment and neuroendocrine system impairment.

India stands to gain by updating its food regulation by having stringent EDC standards to protect its large population from the harmful effects of EDCs. "The time for action is now because the cost of not taking action is very high," signed off the scientist who holds a post-doctoral fellowship from an international university.

FROM PAGE 9



A votive stupa from the area of Shivaji Park in Dadar belonging to 9th century CE is currently under worship.

The Buddhist architecture, and associated remains, sculptural remains and inscriptions prove beyond doubt that Greater Mumbai held a prominent position in the Buddhist and trading networks of the past. Its varied terrain and landscape included hills, rivers, estuaries, creeks, flat lands, dense forests, lakes and natural water bodies. These provided abundant niches and resources for Buddhism to flourish, prosper and continue. Greater Mumbai was also the centre of architectural-artistic developments manifested in the creation of eloquent and grand cave temples of Elephanta, Mandapeshwar and Jogeshwari. Greater Mumbai also held a central position in trading networks connecting the coastal areas of Gujarat and peninsular India with major trading towns of the interior such as Kalyan and Nashik. The continued importance of Mumbai and its islands is evident from the fact that Thane became the capital of the Silahara dynasty of north Konkan and its prosperity and fame spread as far as the Arab world. Mumbai's strategic importance in the maritime and commercial routes and networks continued well into the modern period with the island of Salsette becoming a stronghold of the Portuguese and later the seven Islands emerging as the focus of the British empire.

The writer is a research scholar, worked as Project Associate and recipient of Devangana Desai Senior Fellowship CSMVS Mumbai. She has also co-authored two book.

MUMBAI THE BUDDHIST CONNECTION

Many sites with Buddhist association were reported in the Gazetteer from the 19th century and some of these are now untraceable. Pandit Bhagwan Lal Indrajai noticed symbols, engravings and inscriptions cut on the surface of a rock of the once existent Padan hill. Amongst these findings of interest were carvings of a large conch, a pair of large human footmarks, a Buddhist trident with inscription of 2nd /3rd century CE and the Buddhist formula 'ye dharma hetu' (5th /6th century CE). An underground Buddhist water cistern dated to 100-500 CE and some old bricks of probable Buddhist association were reported at Mulgaon, and the area may have also once contained Buddhist shrine or relics. Sadly at Magathane the Buddhist caves datable to the 6th-7th century CE are in a state of utter neglect. The monolithic stupas, recorded from site, are now worshipped as Siva lingas. The complex consisted of a main cave, two smaller caves, a few

square cells, measuring from one square feet to two-and-a-half, and a huge water tank which was located in the open court area of the cave. The site has fallen prey to encroachments and is in a state of neglect.

Nala Sopara, located in island of Vasai, is known for the Buddhist stupa, which is under the ASI. The lesser known fact is that Nala Sopara once had edicts of king Ashoka. A basalt rock with Edict IX was discovered in the neighbourhood of Sopara; the Edict XI was found from the site of Bhuigaon. Based on find of these two edicts, it has been postulated that Nala Sopara may once have had all the 13 Edicts of Ashoka. In 1882, Pandit Bhagwan Lal Indrajai excavated the Nala Sopara stupa and unearthed a relic casket which contained a set of bronze images. This set of images is unique as nothing similar has been reported from any other Buddhist site. The casket had eight images placed in eight cardinal direc-



tions. The images consisted of seven mortal or human Buddhas. and the eight and central figure represented the future Buddha Maitreya. These are now preserved in the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. Another object of interest recovered from the copper casket was the image of Buddha on a thin gold plaque plate on a lotus seated. This is dated 7th / 8th century CE.

Moving south, a boat ride from the Gateway of India leads one to the World Heritage Site Elephanta/ Gharapuri Island, famed for its Hindu caves. What is often overlooked and hardly visited are the Buddhist remains on the eastern hill. On the path leading to the summit of the hill one comes across two caves of which the larger one has a water cistern. Both of these are in a state of ruin. On the summit of the hill is a large stupa, surrounded by votive stupas of varying dimensions. The main stupa has been ascribed to the



2nd century BCE and may have been contemporaneous to the stupa at Sopara

In addition to these architectural remains, archaeological surveys and explorations over the years have brought to light sculptural remains of Buddhist association attesting to Mumbai's continued association with Buddhism. An image of Avalokitesvara dating to 10th century CE was unearthed from Anushakti Nagar in Trombay while constructing a road at Deonar Complex in 1976. A metal image of the Buddhist goddess Tara was found from within the compound of the BARC in Trombay and is now housed in the CSMVS. This bronze image is dated to the 9th -10th century CE, and has stylistic affinities with the Pala bronzes (Bengal).

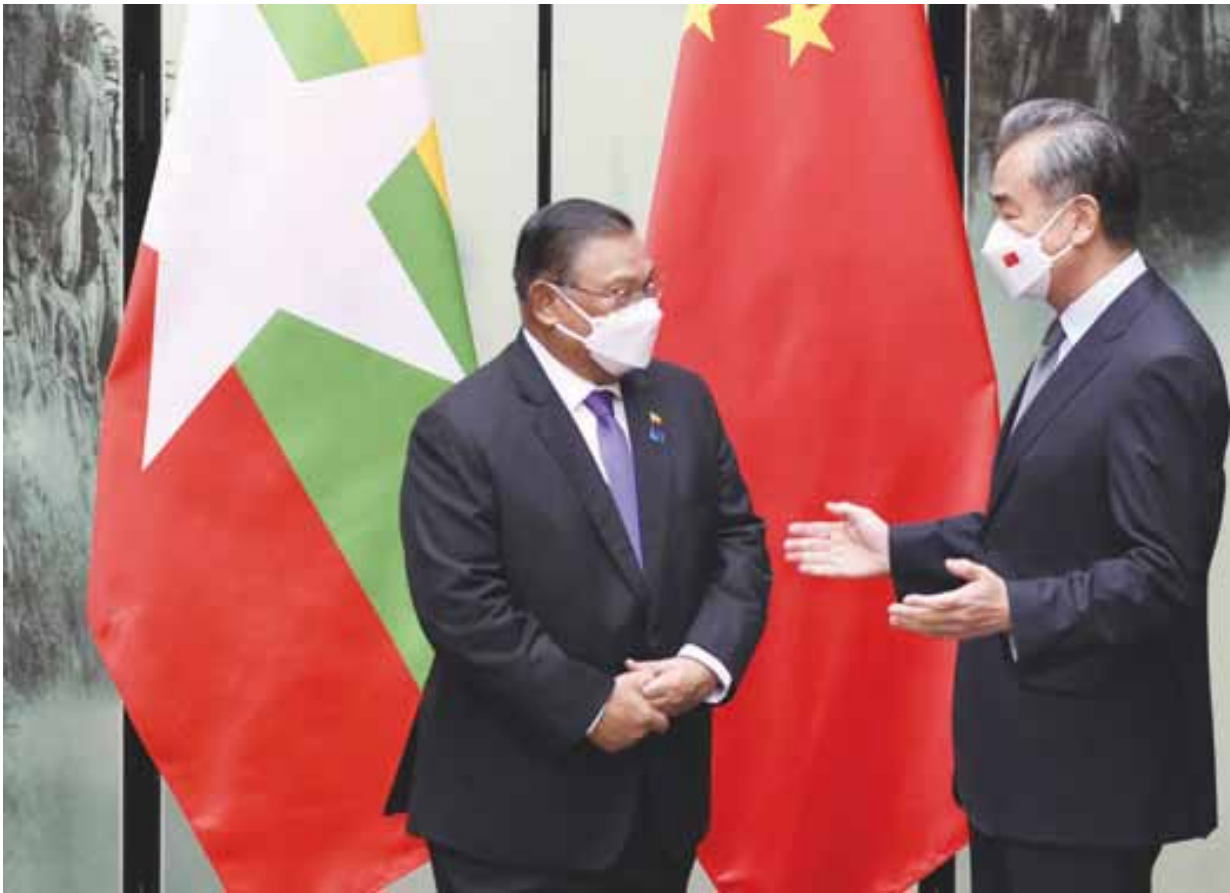
Annihilate them to an end: Myanmar Junta

Myanmar junta has completed more than one year in power since February 1, 2021. With the elected government ousted and protesters clamouring for return of democracy, the Southeast Asian nation is heading for a post-Covid-19 economic catastrophe. What further worries the international community, particularly its neighbours, is the inhuman military crack-down on the protesters. While observing the Armed Forces Day last week, the ruling head of the junta, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing termed the opponents of the regime “terrorists” and vowed to “annihilate them to an end”.

Aung San Suu Kyi is languishing in jail. Her party, the National League for Democracy, and millions of its supporters have been fighting street battles with the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army called in local Burmese language) for over a year now. The road ahead is difficult for the protesters as facing the forces each day is an uphill task for them. They look for urgent support from outside. The military junta is currently detaining more than 10,000 demonstrators all around the country. Various rights group claim that many of these prisoners have been tortured and kept in deplorable conditions.

Today, Myanmar’s “Spring Revolution” is passing through a trying time. Since the military takeover, the civilians from cross-sections of society have started the civil disobedience movement. In fact, the National Unity Government (NUG) in exile was formed by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, a group of elected representatives of Parliament. The NUG has been continuously backing the commoners to fight the forces on the ground.

With Suu Kyi ageing, the fate of the next generation leaders is undecided. Undoubtedly, she had the rare charisma, accompanied by a



In this photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with Myanmar's Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin in Tunxi in eastern China's Anhui Province on April 1, 2022. China says it will back neighbour Myanmar 'no matter how the situation changes,' in the latest show of unequivocal Chinese support for the ruling military council that seized power last year

AP

huge global acceptability. These two elements certainly catapulted her to power with a massive mandate in the year 2015 and subsequently in 2019. Both these parliamentary elections clearly displayed her acceptability as a towering leader of the impoverished Myanmar.

The worst part of the movement is that the detainees can rarely hope for a fair trial under the Tatmadaw controlled courts. In civilian courts, the defence lawyers are allowed to be present, but they are hardly given an opportunity to cross-examine the witnesses. Further, all such trials are barred for the ordinary public and all such hearings are too

brief. Judgments are declared as fast as possible. Interestingly, all those who go for trial are found to be guilty. Such is the fate of detainees under the reign of terror unleashed by General Hlaing.

Is there any future for democracy in Myanmar? The answer seems to be a big no for now. The UN has warned of deepening humanitarian crisis in Myanmar with an intensification of violence and a rapid rise in poverty. With an economy highly affected by the Covid-19 and the continued mass protests across the country, the nation will find it difficult to survive in the days to come. The generals may either have to allow softening stand

on the pro-democracy movement or simply continue to rule like a regime very familiar to the Burmese before 2010.

And why the junta will survive in Myanmar? It is because of unwavering support from neighbouring China and distant Russian Federation. In fact, the triangular axis of Naypyidaw-Beijing-Moscow is largely making the democratic experiment impossible to sustain for long. Moreover, the generals are quite familiar with global sanctions, and they know very well how to survive. From 1962 till 2011, the junta survived despite severe economic sanctions accompanied by international isolation from powerful countries such as the

US, the UK, etc.

General Hlaing needs to read the writing on the wall. Each passing day, the tyranny of the military is rising. And the nascent democracy is backsliding in Myanmar. With the apprehension for the rise of autocracy in Myanmar growing, the tide of democracy movement is getting momentum.

The NUG and the constituents of civil disobedience movement are the true future of Myanmar. The West, the UN, the EU and the ASEAN (though bound by its regional compulsions) might see to it that the legitimate government of the country comes back to power soon. Around the same

time, countries such as China and Russia must realise that the grand designs hatched against the commoners don't augur well for long. And, the proof itself is Myanmar only. When the 8888 Uprising started in 1988, no one could visualise that one fine day this would herald democratic wave to the iron gates of Myanmar. From General Ne Win to Gen Saw Maung to Than Shwe, all played the same game and displayed the age-old tactics to keep people at bay. They all wanted to crush the democratic movement of the country at different levels. From the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the military was all in the game.

It fully controlled and captured the political landscape of the country for decades until the advent of nascent democracy in the year 2010. But the army was always retaining the major share of power with them. Alongside, they all tried to ignore the interests of all minority groups, including the hapless Rohingyas. But the Myanmar Army played the role of a nationalist and conveyed the message to the majority Burmans that it is indispensable for the stability of the country. Else the country will be torn into pieces. The nation needs stability more than anything else.

The problem came when the army saw overwhelming support for Suu Kyi in the general elections of 2015. Her party the National League for Democracy (NLD) romped home massive victory and the same experience repeated after five years in 2020 elections. And this time, the Army was fully obliterated from the electoral scene of the country. And obviously, it was a cause of concern for once powerful Tatmadaw. Suu Kyi should have been little cautious about the hidden agenda of the generals. But even then, what the Army did on February 1, 2021, was completely out of her control. The latest election victory startled the Army. And so the immediate actions came from General Hlaing last year.

Recently, US President Joe Biden and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong issued a joint statement calling on the Myanmar junta to release the political prisoners, allow humanitarian access and begin restoring democracy in that country. Around the same time, Phil Robertson, the Deputy Asia Director for Human Rights Watch, commented that Myanmar has quickly outstripped the dismal records of its autocratic neighbours in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Clearly, the junta in Myanmar is taking the country back to its military days after a decade of experience with democracy from 2010 - 2020.

Finally, the current political dynamics in Myanmar is affecting the security architecture and regional stability of the entire Southeast Asian countries. Precisely, the ASEAN has failed to made changes to the mindset of the junta. The generals headed by Hlaing have proved that they don't live in the 'City of Kings' (meaning of Naypyidaw in Burmese language), but they are real kings in 21st century. They are the true royals in an impoverished country wherein millions are suffering from poverty and injustice. A nation of more than 54 million people is crying for justice!

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There is a fighting chance of the return of democracy in Myanmar if the pro-democracy protesters dig in their heels despite brutal crackdown by the military. Realising this, ruling head of the junta Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has termed the opponents of the military regime ‘terrorists’ and has vowed to destroy them



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

Yoon can bring South Korea closer to India

South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol's criticism of China by calling for 'doing away with South Korea's submissive diplomacy toward China' and strong belief in robust democracy, independent of outside powers, have potential to further improve relations with New Delhi

India's relation with South Korea is bilateral, regional and global. Both the nations are connected with history, as according to “Samguk Yusa” or “The Heritage History of the Three Kingdoms” written in the 13th century, a princess from Ayodhya (Suriratna) went to Korea, married King Kim-Suro, and became Queen Heo Hwang-ok in the year 48 AD. Buddhism made the relation strong and natural.

After India's opening of the economy in 1991, Korean companies have seized the opportunity with Samsung, LG, Hyundai, Daewoo, Hanwha, Kia, SK, Lotte and more becoming Indianised from core. Indian companies like Mahindra and Mahindra, Tata Motors and banks like State Bank of India and Bank of Baroda have large investments in South Korea. Bilateral trade has crossed around \$21 billion dollars. So happenings in Korea are important to India and vice versa.

Yoon Suk-yeol, candidate for the People Power Party, has been elected South Korea's next President in the Presidential election. Lee Jae-myung of the ruling Democratic Party lost by a small margin. According to the ballot count, Yoon won 48.6 per cent of the vote, a figure 0.8 percentage points higher than Lee's 47.8 per cent. The Opposition lost because it didn't learn its lessons from the ill effect of dragging on real estate policies, perceived hypocrisy and party's losses in by-elections for the Seoul and Busan mayoralities on April 7 last year. Although there was some last-minute unity in the party, it was too late for it to save the situation.

In Korea, most of the former Presidents had political experience.



South Korea's President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol shows a bird's eye view of his planned relocation of the presidential office during a news conference in Seoul

AP file photo

Since 1987, most of the President-elects had been in the National Assembly. Former Presidents like Kim Young sam served nine terms, Nobel laureate Kim Dae-jung served six, Roh Moo-hyun and Lee Myung-bak both had two, Park Geun-hye had five, and most recently Moon Jae-in had one. However President-elect Yoon's journey is very interesting: Just 371 days after stepping down as prosecutor general for 27 year he won presidency on his political debut.

However, political analysts are

worried about Yoon's poll campaign promises and speeches. His remarks: “People ought to work hard for up to 120 hours a week”, and “The destitute and uneducated don't even know what freedom is”, are some of the disturbing assertions for the Koreans. Yoon placed particular emphasis on the “rule of law” and rooting out corruption. His message externally to North Korea was hard-line attitude, while emphasising principles: “I plan to respond resolutely according to principle to illegal and irrational acts by North

Korea, while always leaving the door open for inter-Korean dialogue.”

On China also, Yoon's take is strong and special. During election campaign, he had called for “pursuing additional anti-missile system deployment,” and “doing away with South Korea's submissive diplomacy toward China,” and had said “young (South Koreans) dislike China.”

Yoon argues that China deserves criticism for its return to authoritarianism and its high-handed behaviour in Taiwan, Hong Kong and the South China Sea. “We will

also need to respond more assertively if China attempts to dismiss South Korea as a ‘small country,’ he had said during his speeches.

For major part of its history, South Korea has kept its diplomacy focused predominately on major powers around the Korean peninsula: China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. However, as US-China frictions intensify, South Korea is increasingly concerned about being entangled in great power competition. This has been especially true since 2017, when China launched a campaign of economic coercion in retaliation for Seoul's decision to allow the deployment of a US THAAD missile defense system in South Korea. Seoul experienced first-hand Beijing's willingness to weaponise economic ties to influence its strategic decisions.

Seoul is looking to diversify its economic and strategic partnership with India under South Korea's New Southern Policy (NSP). The policy has three pillars: peace (meaning political and strategic cooperation), prosperity (meaning economic cooperation), and people (meaning socio-cultural cooperation).

The policy's goal is to elevate ties with India to the same level as South Korea's relationship with China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. But the new President, who is a conservative, wants to go with US very powerfully as he openly supported THAAD Missile System in Korea and pre-emptive strikes on North Korea. However, whether he will be partnering with US or buckle under the Chinese pressure has to be seen?

South Korea's approach to Quad

has been similar to its approach to the free-and-open Indo-Pacific narrative: Work with partners practically, while avoiding open endorsement of their regional strategies. South Korea is not a member of the Quad, it was a part of the Quad Plus meetings in March 2020, where it participated in talks on the pandemic response. How it will respond has to be seen in the changing geo-political scenario.

Finally one can say that a democratic South Korea likes India due to its democratic nature, freedom of press, religion, dissent and more. Geopolitics is becoming more dangerous, Ukraine as an example.

India needs a stable prosperous democratic South Korea and wants North Korea to stop nuclear brinkmanship and get back to the negotiating table resolve the issues with South Korea.

An independent South Korea, not crumbling under global superpowers' pressure, is good for India. Therefore free market and strong democracy can bring South Korea closer to India. However militarisation in East Asia from China to Japan and assertiveness of Russia has to be watched.

For now, India needs Korean hardware for Indian software, and cooperation on defence, automobile semiconductors, battery joint production, cutting edge technology, supply chain, logistics, 6G research and people to people contact. If South Korea under the new President can respond on this favourably, it will be win-win situation for both India and Korea.

(The writer is a spokesperson of the BJP)



TS CHANDRASHEKHARA

