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KAPTAANKHAN AS  
THE 'TEESRA' BOWLER**WORLD 8**  
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CONTINUE: MOSCOW**MONEY 9**  
AGRI EXPORT TOUCHES RECORD  
USD 50 BN MARK IN 2021-22DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
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NATHAN  
COULTER-NILE  
OUT OF IPL  
12 SPORT

# India's 1st Covid XE case reported from Mumbai

## Union Health Min disputes Maha Govt's claim, says it's not XE variant

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
MUMBAI/DELHI

A fifty-year-old film costume designer of South African origin, who arrived in Mumbai on February 10, has emerged as the country's first patient to test for the Covid XE variant.

However, the Union Health Ministry differed with the Maharashtra Government's claim that it has detected the country's first XE variant of coronavirus from Mumbai during random genome sequencing.

According to sources in the Union Health Ministry, the variant was analysed in detail by genomic experts who have inferred that the genomic constitution of this variant did not correlate with the genomic picture of XE variant. "It's not an XE variant," they said.

A senior BMC medical official said here on Wednesday



Workers dismantle Covid-19 care equipment at the CWG Village Covid Care Centre in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

that the woman of South African origin tested positive for Covid XE, considered 10 per cent more transmissible mutant than any strain of Covid-19, during routine testing carried in a private suburban laboratory.

The woman, whose identity has not been disclosed yet, was part of a film shooting crew that arrived here from South Africa. She had no previous international history and had been administered both

doses of Comirnaty vaccines. She tested negative for Covid-19 on her arrival in the country on February 10.

However, during routine testing done by Suburban Diagnostics on March 2, she was found positive. She was immediately quarantined in a room in the Hotel Taj Land's End, Bandra, where another test was conducted on her the following day by Spice Health. She diagnosed negative in the second test.

First detected in the United Kingdom, the new XE variant — as per the notification issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) last week — is a mutant hybrid of two other Omicron versions BA.1 And BA.2, and accounts for a minuscule fraction of cases globally. The WHO has said the new mutant is around 10 per cent more transmissible than the BA.2 sub-variant of Omicron.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Fulfil *atmnirbharta* dream, Modi exhorts BJP workers

## India following independent line in foreign policy for national interests: PM

**DEEPAK K UPRETI ■** NEW DELHI

Affirming that India is following an "independent line" without coming under any pressure in a "fast-changing global polity", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asked the BJP cadre to work with "increasing responsibility" to fulfil the India dream of "atmnirbharta" (self-reliance).

He pointed out that the recent return of "double-engine" Governments of the BJP in four States showed the rejection of "parivarvad network" (dynasty politics) across the country.

Stressing the slogan of "*desh badal raha hai*", Modi also drew the attention of the party workers and leaders to the fact that after three decades the BJP is the only party that has crossed the mark of 100 seats in the Rajya Sabha.

Addressing the BJP workers virtually here on the party's 42nd foundation day — it was founded on April 6, 1980 — the Prime Minister said his



Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addresses BJP workers on the occasion of the party's foundation day

PTI

Government has a definitive policy (niti) and decision making and determination too (nishchay) globally and domestically.

"India without any pressure is leading an independent line globally when world is divided in two groups", Modi said, adding that his Government is pursuing "national interest" and also pursuing "manav-tavd". India is globally being seen as a country which speaks firmly about humanity, he said.

Modi's speech was listened to by BJP leaders in the party headquarters here and across all States by BJP functionaries who were sporting caps bearing BJP symbol and party name inscribed on it.

Modi was also seen wearing the cap as were Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and party MP and former actress Hema Malini.

The PM said the responsibility of the a BJP is increasing towards realising the Indian dream of "self-reliance" making "local-global" and ensuring "social justice and harmony".

Pointing to the BJP's return to power in four States — Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur — the Prime Minister again berated "parivarvad" which, he said, was the "biggest enemy of democracy" that shut door for youth and went against "Constitutional norms" and that "people well understand it now". He also said dynasties across the States protect each other's "corruption and misdeeds" as against the interests

of poor.

He said members of some families dominate from local bodies to Parliament and added that only the BJP has challenged them and made it an electoral issue and that it is a matter of pride for the party.

Asserting that the BJP stood for "rashtra bhakti" and its rivals for "parivar bhakti", the PM said people are gradually coming to this realisation and the return of BJP's "double-engine governments" in the Assembly elections was a reflection of this fact.

Modi said BJP Governments have run welfare schemes "without any discrimination" and worked to take them to every beneficiary while previous dispensations were driven by vote bank politics. He said the Government machinery now works to reach every intended beneficiary as part of its resolve for saturation coverage of welfare programmes.

For the BJP, he said "rajniti" (politics) and "rashtra niti" (policies for country's welfare) cannot be separate.

The PM specifically mentioned the support that the BJP received from women in the country. He said women were in forefront in backing the party as his Government has tried to "lessen their burden" by providing electricity, ration, gas and other basic necessities.

# Pawar meets Modi, raises ED action against Raut, Maha Guv's dilly-dally



NCP chief Sharad Pawar addresses the media during a press conference at his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

Bhagat Singh Koshiyari's delay in approving 12 names recommended by the State Cabinet for nomination to the Legislative Council.

Pawar met Modi at the Prime Minister's Office in Parliament along with NCP Lok Sabha member PP Mohammad Faizal, who raised issues related to his constituency Lakshadweep. The Modi-Pawar meeting lasted for 20-25 minutes.

"The Governor has not been functioning as per norms for the past two-and-a-half years. He has kept pending the issue of nominating 12 members to the Legislative Council. I drew the Prime Minister's attention to these issues...he promised to look into them," Pawar said, addressing the Press after the meeting in the Parliament premises.

Pawar said he also took up the issue of the ED action against Raut. "Raut is a Rajya Sabha member.

*Continued on Page 2*

BJP national president JP Nadra during his meeting with Head of Missions namely, (L-R) Ugo Astuto (EU), Vincenzo De Luca (Italy), Carlos Pereira Marques (Portugal), Pham Sanh Chau (Vietnam), Emmanuel Lenain (France), Hans Jacob Frydenlund (Norway), Daniela Sezonov Tane (Romania), Simon Wong Wie Kuen (Singapore), Ralf Heckner (Switzerland), Andras Laszlo Kiraly (Hungary), and others, at BJP headquarters, in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI photo

*Detailed report on Page 4*

# Prez won't resign, says Lankan Govt

**PTI ■** COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Government on Wednesday said that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa will not resign under any circumstances and will face the current issues, as it defended the embattled leader's decision to enforce a state of emergency, which he later revoked after huge public protests demanded his resignation over the country's worst economic crisis.

Speaking in Parliament, Chief Government Whip Minister Johnston Fernando said the Government will face this problem and there is no reason for the President to resign as he was elected to office.

Claiming that the Opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramunawas (JVP) party was behind the violence in the country, Fernando said that this "thug politics" should not be allowed and called on the peo-

ple to end the violence.

He said the Government will continue to work to address the issues faced by the public at present, the Colombo Page portal reported.

Rajapaksa had declared the emergency last week after protesters demonstrated near his home in Colombo. The protests initially began over shortages of essentials such as cooking gas, petrol, electricity and milk powder, but now have spread across the island nation and the demonstrators are demanding the resignation of Rajapaksa and his Government.

The President late on Tuesday night revoked the emergency after huge public protests demanded his resignation. The President and his older brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, continue to hold power in Sri Lanka, despite their politically powerful family being the focus of public ire.

*Continued on Page 2*

## CAPSULE

### CNG PRICES IN DELHI, MUMBAI SEE STEEP HIKE

**New Delhi:** CNG prices in Delhi, Mumbai and Gujarat on Wednesday saw steep hikes after the Government raised input natural gas prices to record levels. Mahanagar Gas Limited raised CNG price by ₹7 per kg to ₹67 per kg in Mumbai while Gujarat Gas hiked rates by ₹6.5 per kg to ₹76.98.

### INDIA TO KEEP FASTEST GROWING TAG: ADB

**New Delhi:** India is likely to maintain its position as the fastest-growing major economy with the ADB outlook projecting a growth rate of 7.5 per cent for 2022-23 on strong investment prospects against 5 per cent for China in Jan-Dec 2022.

### MUSKAN'S DAD TO QAEDA: 'PEACEFUL IN INDIA'

**Mandya:** Distancing himself from the video statement released by Al-Qaeda chief Ayman Al Zawahiri, praising Karnataka college student Muskan Khan for defending hijab, her father on Wednesday said he and his family are living peacefully in India.

# Just 4% officers in Army are women, says CAG

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

In an effort to give more representation to women in the Army, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on Wednesday said there is an urgent need for increasing the vacancies for women short service (SSC) officers.

In its report tabled in Parliament, the CAG said there were 1,648 women officers as of January 2020, accounting for just four per cent of the total strength of the commissioned officers in the Army.

The CAG report was on "Selection and Training of officers in Indian Army". The number of prospective women candidates aspiring to join the services was far larger than the vacancies available to them, it mentioned, and added that increasing the vacancies for women will also help the Army address the shortage of officers in the long run.

There was almost full sub-



scription in all the four entry courses for women and the meritorious women candidates who were found medically fit were approximately twice the number of those finally selected based on vacancies, it said.

"While the ratio of the release of vacancies in respect of women to men showed a steady increase from 29 per cent in 2015 to 50 per cent in 2019 in Judge Advocate

General Women entry, it declined in SSC Women (Technical) entry from 16 per cent to eight per cent during the same period," it mentioned.

The CAG said, "This points towards the urgent need for increasing the vacancies for women SSC entries. It could facilitate the ongoing efforts of the Army towards addressing the shortage of officers in the longer run."

# Israeli PM loses majority

**PTI ■** JERUSALEM

Israel's fragile Government on Wednesday was reduced to a minority in the 120-member House with the ruling coalition's whip quitting on religious grounds, raising the possibility of elections in the Jewish nation in less than a year after Prime Minister Naftali Bennett took charge.

Idit Silman of Prime Minister Bennett's Yamina party quit the Government, surviving on a razor thin margin, over the question of "Jewish values" related to a dispute about Passover "matzo" rules.

"I can no longer serve in a coalition that is adversarial towards the values we all hold dear," Silman said in a letter to the PM, urging him also to join forces with the right wing.

The coalition now holds just 60 seats in the 120 member Knesset. Bennett's shaky Government remains in power following the defection but will face severe challenges legislating on key issues.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Evacuated from Ukraine, students to finish MBBS in neighbouring nations

## Govt in talks with Hungary, Romania, Kazakhstan and Poland: Jaishankar

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Medical students who returned to war-torn Ukraine might get the opportunity to complete their education in countries like Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Kazakhstan. This was indicated by Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday when he told the Lok Sabha that the Government is in talks with "Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, and Poland (about continuing education for the students evacuated from Ukraine) because they have similar models of education."

He was responding to the Opposition's concerns over the

disruption of the studies of the evacuated medical students.

Sources said the External Affairs Ministry started looking for option to get the students enrolled on foreign soil in east European nations after it was realised that it was not technically as well as legally possible to relax provisions of the NMC (Foreign Medical Graduate Licentiate) Regulations, 2021, or find alternatives to enable Ukraine-return medical students to complete their courses in private colleges in India.

Presently, there are no norms and regulations under the National Medical Commission Regulations to accommodate medical students, who were studying abroad and had to return to India midway, in Indian medical colleges in between academic sessions.

On the Opposition criticism that the Government sent Union Ministers to neighbouring countries to gain polit-

ical mileage, Jaishankar said the presence of the Ministers helped the evacuation process.

"Had the four Ministers not gone to countries neighbouring Ukraine, India would not have got the same level of cooperation from them, and, in fact, the ministers worked as a team," he said.

Commenting on India's advisories, Jaishankar said, "Our advisories helped people get updates on which border was open and where to move for them in Ukraine."

He further said the Ukraine Government decided that there will be relaxation (for students) in respect of completion of medical education.

"The KROK 1 (Ukrainian Medical Examination) exam, for 3rd-year medical students to go to the 4th year, was postponed to next academic year. The students are allowed to progress to the next academic year on the basis of the completion of the study requirement," Jaishankar said.



# Maurya: Meet deadlines of rural development projects

**UP Deputy CM warns of stern action against those failing to accomplish the target within the time frame**

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya set a target of 100 days for several rural development projects and asked officials to meet the deadline so that the all-round development of the state could be ensured.

Maurya, who holds the Rural Development department portfolio, also warned of stern action against those failing to accomplish the target within the time frame.

On Wednesday, Maurya said that a target had been set to get several works done in the next 100 days in the Rural Development department, including construction of one

lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin). He said under the Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana (Rural), 8,200 houses were to be completed in 100 days.

He said registration of all beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Chief Minister Awas Yojana would be approved for 2022-23.

Maurya said that under the State Rural Livelihood Mission, 50,000 new self-help groups would be formed and Rs 400 crore of RF/CIF would be provided to 80,000 such groups.

There is also a target to form 100 producer groups.

In the next 100 days, the process of setting up 200 nutritional manufacturing units will be completed, which will ensure the supply of nutrition in 600 development blocks. The target of 58,000 Banking Correspondent Sakhi would also be fulfilled under the Women Empowerment Scheme which will be started in five clusters.

Maurya said that under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Phase-3, the construc-

tion of 5,000 kms of roads would be completed in the next 100 days against the approved 19,000 km routes, the total cost of which is Rs 15,000 crores.

In the next 100 days, the periodic renewal of 2,800 km of roads will be completed by spending Rs.12,000 crore.

A total of 197 projects will be completed under Syama Prasad Mookerjee Rurban Mission. Under Deendayal Upadhyaya State Rural Development Institute, 300 training sessions will be organised and 15,000 beneficiaries of departmental schemes and officers/employees will be trained. Besides, under MNREGA, construction work of play-grounds will be started in 2,600 gram panchayats.

The work of deepening/revival of 6,000 ponds will be carried out in this time frame. Also 150 hi-tech nurseries will be set up. Rehabilitation work on selected 61 rivers will be started under the MNREGA and 15,000 women mates will be selected/trained and associated with MNREGA works.

# AAP gears up for Himachal elections

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the elections in Himachal Pradesh scheduled this year, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) organised a 'Tiranga yatra' at Mandi. The party's National Convenor and the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal along with his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann urged voters here to elect the AAP in the coming elections if they want corruption eradicated from the state.

Addressing AAP supporters at Seri Chowk in Mandi district, Kejriwal said they don't know "how to do politics", but "how to do work and wipe out corruption".

"If you want to get rid of corruption in Himachal Pradesh, elect AAP candidates to form an honest government in the coming elections. We know how to create good schools, excellent hospitals, uninterrupted water and power," said Kejriwal.

Kejriwal claimed that the party first eradicated corruption from Delhi, and now the Bhagwant Mann-led government has wiped it out from

Punjab within 20 days of its formation.

"If we ended corruption in just 20 days, why have the other parties failed for the past 75 years? This is because our intentions are clear, while theirs are tainted. We are staunchly honest people. Earlier, the money used to flow from the bottom level to the top offices all the way to the CM, but now that the CM is an honest man, this system has completely ended. Whoever dares to indulge in corruption now goes straight to jail," said Kejriwal.

"You gave more than 30 years to the Congress and 17 years to the BJP; all I am only asking for is five years from you. Give the Aam Aadmi Party a chance. If we do not deliver, vote us out next season. But if you give this one chance to the Aam Aadmi Party, you will forget that any other party exists," said Kejriwal.

Before their address, the party leaders carried out a road show from New Victoria Bridge. Earlier, Mann appraised the gathering and said "It seems as if I am in Sangrur not in Mandi".

# CPM ready to cooperate with Cong to defeat Modi: Yechury

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M) is ready to cooperate with the Indian National Congress to defeat Narendra Modi and the RSS, declared Sitaram Yechury, the general secretary of the party. While inaugurating the delegates' session of the 23rd Party Congress which began at Kannur on Wednesday morning, Yechury wanted the Congress to mend its ways with regard to Hindutva. "Most of the time it looks like the Congress is resorting to a soft-Hindutva line to counter the communal policies of the BJP and the RSS. Our aim is to forge an alliance of the secular, liberal, democratic forces in the country to take on the BJP and the RSS," declared Yechury.

The CPI(M) general secretary said that India under Narendra Modi regime has failed in all spheres of civilisation. "There is no democracy or secularism in India now. Modi has become a dictator and does not allow any opinion other than that of him to be heard by the country. All democratic institutions have been destroyed by Narendra Modi. There is only one option to save India and that is to

defeat Narendra Modi and the RSS," said Yechury.

He blamed the Narendra Modi government for India's failure to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. "Kerala under Pinarayi Vijayan has done an excellent job in preventing the Covid-19 pandemic and this is the success of the socialist system of governance. The Kerala model has been appreciated across the world. Narendra Modi and the BJP failed miserably in controlling the prices of essential commodities, especially that of petroleum products," said the general secretary who is likely to get an extension of three more years as the party's top boss.

Enthusied by the words of Yechury, the party's chief ideologist M A Baby declared that the CPI(M) was willing to join hands with any "devils" to defeat the communal BJP and the RSS. "It has been proved beyond doubt that only the Left, democratic and secular forces could save the world from Fascist and communal elements," said Baby.

Yechury said the triennial party congress is being held at the most critical juncture since the formation of the CPI(M). "The BJP government at the Centre is trying to saffronise

history text books. The country has not seen communalism of this kind at any point of time," he said. Yechury blamed the United States of America for the Russia-Ukraine war and wanted the Government of India to disband the Quad which he described as an alliance against peace loving China.

Earlier in the day, senior Polit Bureau member S Ramachandran Pillai hoisted the party flag announcing the beginning of the five day party congress. Pillai turned emotional while addressing the delegates as it was time for his superannuation from the party leadership. Alappuzha born Pillai turned 84 this February and according to the new guidelines he is not eligible to be a member of the polit bureau or central committee. Though he had hoped that the party would nominate him either as party general secretary or as the chief minister of Kerala, the hopes turned sour in 2016. Despite being ignored for any important positions, Pillai exhorted the cadre not to be complacent against the BJP and RSS and asked them to work for the introduction of classical socialism.

# Cong attacks BJP over rising prices, to stage protest today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Congress, on Wednesday, attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party Governments at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh over inflation claiming that the victory of the saffron party seems to have given them licence to loot the public.

Attacking the BJP here on Wednesday afternoon, Congress national spokesperson Gaurav Vallabh asked whether the victory in the election gave a licence to "rob" the common man's pocket.

Gaurav said that due to the farmers' movement, the price of a bag of potash urea had increased by 21 per cent. He said the 50 kg urea bag that

used to cost ₹1,200 was now ₹1,300.

"Earlier the good morning message was received, now the WhatsApp message informs that petrol/diesel prices have increased by 80 paise," he said. Gaurav said ₹14,700 crore more would have to be paid in diesel.

"There are 26 crore families living in the country. In the last eight years, every Indian family has given ₹1 lakh in the name of fuel tax," he said.

Vallabh claimed that petrol and diesel prices remained stable due to elections, but since then they had increased by about ₹10 per litre.

He said that Congress would protest against inflation in Lucknow on Thursday.

# Yogi's initiative to make UP economy number 1 in India paying off: Official

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's initiative towards making the economy of Uttar Pradesh number one in the country has started paying off as instead of seeking jobs, youths are now providing employment.

Uttar Pradesh has become the first state to provide maximum investment and employment under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) in the country. This was recorded despite many roadblocks like the global pandemic and the 2022 assembly elections.

"This Government is instrumental in changing the

condition and direction of the state which was ranked and labeled as a BIMARU state five years back. More than 21 new policies of various departments have been implemented in the state and it has risen from 14th to the second rank in Ease of Doing Business," a Government spokesman said.

As a result of this, for the first time in comparison to many previous regimes, proposals for investment of ₹4.68 lakh crores have come in the state, out of which proposals of more than ₹3.5 crores have come to the ground.

Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Dr Navneet Sehgal said that the State had the largest number of industries in

India and pointed out that there had been an increase of 110 per cent in PMEGP in 2021-22 financial year. In 2020-221, a total of 11,107 units were set up with an investment of ₹1,464 crore and more than 96,000 people were given direct and indirect employment, he added.

All the states have registered 91 per cent achievement in PMEGP at the national level, against the target of ₹2,867 crore at the national level, of which only ₹2,603 crore has been fulfilled. Whereas 110 per cent achievement has been registered in UP where UP Khadi and Village Industries Board has logged an achievement of ₹148 crore against ₹110 crore, District

Industries Centre ₹165 crore against 146 crore, Khadi and Village Industries Commission has recorded an achievement of ₹51 crore against ₹77 crore.

UP Khadi and Village Industries Board, District Industries Centre, Khadi and Village Industries Commission together have given about ₹366 crore as subsidy to the units, against the target of ₹334 crore.

The fund left by the states which have not been able to fulfill the target given by the Central government to all states in PMEGP has been used by the state government in UP. With the money of other States, more people have been benefited in the state than the target.

# Gorakhpur case: Murtaza brought to Lucknow, ATS carries out more raids

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Was the lone wolf attack on Gorakhnath temple by Ahmad Murtaza Abbasi on Sunday, carried out in haste? Had the sickle-wielding Abbasi, who was easily overpowered by the PAC personnel, preponed the attack apprehending that he might be netted by sleuths of the Anti-Terrorists Squad (ATS), as they had been tailing him?

If well-placed police sources are to be believed, the answer is 'Yes'.

A top UP Police official said that the ATS, which had Murtaza on its radar, paid a visit to his home at Civil Lines in Gorakhpur on Saturday but found him missing. The ATS raid was confirmed by Abbasi's father too.

Upon learning of the ATS visit, Abbasi went to Nepal and sensing that he was in trouble, he planned a 'hasty' attack. While returning to Gorakhpur, he purchased a sharp-edged sickle from Maharajanj and tried to storm the Gorakhnath temple premises and in the process injured two PAC jawans before being overpowered and arrested.

Meanwhile, the ATS officials confirmed that Central intelligence agencies had shared Murtaza's details, apprehending his involvement in some subversive activity involving Gorakhnath temple.

"On March 31, the Central intelligence agencies shared profiles of 16 people plotting an attack on Gorakhnath temple," disclosed an ATS source, claiming that Murtaza's profile was in that list.

Subsequently, a two-member ATS team went to Murtaza's house but failed to locate him on Saturday.

On Wednesday, Ahmad Murtaza Abbasi was brought to the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) headquarters in Lucknow for further quizzing.

Before leaving Gorakhpur, Abbasi was subjected to a medical test on Wednesday morning. His laptop and mobile phone were also sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for investigation.

After his arrest, several ATS teams carried out a series of raids in at least six districts, including Saharanpur, and picked up over a dozen suspects, who were in touch with Abbasi.

Sources confirmed that after finding that he was in touch with Abbasi, an ATS unit picked up a suspicious youth from Chhutmulpur area of Saharanpur on Tuesday night. The detained suspect, Abdul Rehman, runs a grocery shop 'Kashifi General Store' in Muslim Colony of

Chhutmulpur and hails from Badkala hamlet of the district.

It surfaced that Rehman and Abbasi went to Nepal and were in touch with Syria-based terror groups. The ATS sleuths were quizzing Rehman but refused to make any comment.

Besides, the ATS has also detained two people from Deoband, who met Abbasi during his Deoband visit a few months back. Also, some people from Kanpur, Lucknow, Noida, Shamli, Sambhal and other cities have also been detained for quizzing.

While two persons were picked up from Sambhal, eight others were nabbed from Shamli, Noida and Delhi. The ATS is on the lookout for 40 suspects who met Abbasi and contacted him over the phone.

The top official said that the ATS probe till date pointed that Abbasi had sent lakhs of rupees to the bank account of banned terror outfit ISIS. The bank details of Abbasi were being scanned by the investigating agencies.

Besides an account of ICICI Bank, Platinum Federal Bank, IDFC First Bank, some other accounts were also being screened. It is suspected that money was transferred from these accounts.

ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said that Abbasi was brought to the ATS headquarters on remand and whatever was confiscated from him was being scrutinised.

ATS sources maintained that Abbasi was being treated as part of a sleeper cell. Abbasi was frequently seen on social media with radical views, as per data recovered from his laptop and cell phone. He used to watch videos of beheadings in Syria, 9/11 twin tower attacks in America and lone wolf attacks by terrorists in western countries.

Investigators believe that Abbasi was brainwashed by these videos and inflammatory speeches and he was ready to carry out a major incident.

During his overnight quizzing, the probe team also learnt about Abbasi's mentor, an American Imam Anwar al-Halaki from Yemen.

Sources also said that the parents of Abbasi's estranged wife stay in Jaunpur where the ATS team reached to quiz his wife. Abbasi married in 2019 but his wife left his place a couple of months later.

Sources also confirmed that Gujarat ATS team was also reaching Lucknow to interrogate Abbasi as some documents recovered from him pointed to his link with Jamnagar.

# India's 1st Covid....

From page 1

Mumbai Municipal Commissioner IS Chahal said in view of her recent international travel, the BMC had sent this sample for genome sequencing along with 230 other positive samples of which one was found XE variants, one Capa, and the rest are Omicron BA.2 variants.

Even after the woman tested positive for the Covid XE variant, her condition was described as asymptomatic and without co-morbidities. "All her high-risk contacts are negative and there is no cause for worry," Chahal said.

Earlier in the day, the

Mumbai civic body BMC said the patient, a 50-year-old woman, who has been found to have the XE variant is fully vaccinated against the virus and has shown no symptoms so far. She also suffers from no comorbidities.

In its latest sero survey report, the BMC said of the 230 samples sent for sero survey from patients from Mumbai, 21 were subsequently hospitalised. However, none needed oxygen support or intensive care, the report said.

Of those hospitalised, nine had taken both doses of the vaccine. The rest were all unvaccinated. None of the patients who had taken their first jab had to be hospitalised, the report said.

As many as 228 samples were found infected with the

Omicron variant. One tested positive for the XE variant while the other for the Kappa variant.

As per the initial studies, the XE variant has a growth rate of 9.8 per cent over that of BA.2, also known as the stealth variant because of its ability to evade detection. The XE variant has also been detected in Thailand and New Zealand. The WHO has said further data is required before more can be said about the mutation.

It said, "Early-day estimates indicate a community growth rate advantage of 10 per cent as compared to BA.2. However this finding requires further confirmation. XE belongs to the Omicron variant until significant differences in transmission and disease characteristics, including severity, may be reported."

There is no evidence XE is any more serious in disease severity, with all Omicron variants so far shown to be less severe, said the global health agency.

Meanwhile, India recorded 1,086 new cases of the coronavirus, along with 71 deaths due to the infection in the past 24 hours. According to the data shared by the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday, India saw a total of 1,198 discharges in the last 24 hours, taking the total recovery rate at around 98.76 per cent and total recovery data reached to 4,24,97,567.

The total active cases of Covid-19 in India have declined to 11,871 (0.03%) the Ministry data said.

acteristics, including severity, may be reported."

There is no evidence XE is any more serious in disease severity, with all Omicron variants so far shown to be less severe, said the global health agency.

Meanwhile, India recorded 1,086 new cases of the coronavirus, along with 71 deaths due to the infection in the past 24 hours. According to the data shared by the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday, India saw a total of 1,198 discharges in the last 24 hours, taking the total recovery rate at around 98.76 per cent and total recovery data reached to 4,24,97,567.

The total active cases of Covid-19 in India have declined to 11,871 (0.03%) the Ministry data said.

# Prez won't resign....

From page 1

On Tuesday, a verbal clash took place in Parliament between ruling party and Opposition members when they held a debate over the current crisis in Sri Lanka.

Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena was forced to suspend sittings twice as a result of a heated situation which arose in Parliament.

The main Opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) also held placards in Parliament during the debate.

The Opposition questioned the state of emergency enforced and later lifted by the President and also insisted that the President steps down.

Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Office on Tuesday said it is closely following developments in Sri Lanka and urged the authori-

ties to engage in a meaningful dialogue with political parties and civil society to find a solution to the deepening economic crisis, the Colombo Page reported.

Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Liz Throssell said public frustration had been rising in recent months with largely peaceful demonstrations taking place across the country and the situation has worsened over the past two weeks amid sudden shortages in fuel, cooking gas and some essential food items, as well as power cuts.

The Spokesperson said the Human Rights Office is concerned over the measures taken by the government declaring a state of emergency, curfew and internet ban and police violence against protesters.



CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Uzma wife of Shababat Husain, Resident of F-37/68/1, Zakir Nagar, Jamia Nagar, Okhla, New Delhi-110025, have changed my name from Uzma to Uzma Ahmed for all future purposes.**

PD(9171)A



NOTICE

In the army records of my husband Late Hariraj Singh-Havaladar (Regiment AEC Trg college and centre), my name and date of birth are wrongly mentioned as Omvati Nain, 01 jun 1949. While my correct name is Om Nain and D.O.B. is 18-08-1947, the same is recorded in my Aadhar card and birth certificate. I am the only wife of Late Hariraj, Omvati Nain and Om Nain are the same woman. Om nain who late Hariraj Resident B-210 sector-48 Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

# Pawar meets Modi....

From page 1

What was the need for the ED action against Raut? Injustice has been done to Raut who is also Editor of an established and reputed news organisation," Pawar said he told the Prime Minister. Asked whether the Central investigation agencies' action against leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) affected the stability of the Maharashtra Government, Pawar exuded confidence that the Government will complete its entire term. Shiv Sena-NCP and Congress are in an alliance Government in Maharashtra led by Uddhav Thackeray.

"The MVA Government will complete its full term. There is no threat to the Government. After five years, we will form the government again," he said.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar too downplayed the meeting, saying not much should be read into it.

"The country's Prime Minister and the leader of a national party can meet to discuss development issues. There are some important issues on which discussion is required...they must have taken those up," Ajit said.

BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar said the meeting showed there was no bitterness between the NCP and the BJP. "The meeting between the two leaders only highlights the fact that despite the ED action against NCP leaders, there is no bitterness between the BJP and the NCP," he claimed.

Pawar's meeting also came in the backdrop of the demand by NCP youth wing to appoint him the UPA chairperson. However, two days ago in Kolhapur, Pawar had said he was not interested in becoming the UPA chairman. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had also met Pawar last week in New Delhi in connection with the "misuse" of investigative agencies by the Central Government.

# Israeli PM loses.....

From page 1

Silman opposed allowing people to bring leavened bread and other foodstuffs into public hospitals — products prohibited according to religious tradition during the Passover holiday — leading to a public spat with Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz who had decided to allow entry of such products into hospitals during the Passover, a major Jewish holiday that celebrates the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

For some devout Jews, the mere presence of such foods in the hospital is not kosher, but the country's Supreme Court ruled in 2021 that hospitals could not bar people from doing so.

The coalition, seen by many as an assembly of strange bedfellows from eight political parties of all ideological hues, ranging from Islamists to hard-line nationalists and dovish liberals, was glued together in its opposition to former Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that it wanted to oust from power.

Some members of Bennett's party have been uncomfortable with Yamina's union with Islamist and liberal parties since the government's formation in June last year which has kept his confidantes on their toes permanently.

One of the seven elected members of the party broke ranks at the inception and has maintained his opposition to the coalition.

Bennett rushed to summon Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked, his longtime political partner, and others to ensure they too did not leave his coalition and join hands with the Opposition.

The Knesset is on a break and it remains unclear if the Opposition will now have enough support to hold a no-confidence vote and send Israelis to the spectacle of fifth elections in just over three years' time.

# Sub-Inspector gives triple talaq to wife for giving birth to a daughter

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

Naushad Ali, a Sub-Inspector posted at the medical post of Civil Lines police station Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh has been accused by his wife of giving triple talaq on WhatsApp on the birth of a daughter. In this regard, a case has been registered against husband and in-laws in Ghaziabad. At the same time, the woman met the SSP Aligarh, Kalanidhi Naithani and asked for help narrating the whole incident.

Kareena Bano, a woman of Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad, who reached the SSP office, told that she was originally married to Naushad Ali of Mainpuri Nagla Cover Gola Bazar on 29 December 2019. At that time dowry was given.



# 1 dies as speeding car ploughs into girls

3 schoolgirls on their way to school; driver arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a tragic incident, a class XII student died while two of her friends were injured after a speeding car allegedly hit them in Outer Delhi's Paschim Vihar West area on Wednesday morning. Police said that the girls were on their way to school and were crossing the road when all three of them were hit by a speeding car. One of them got critical injuries after the car first hit her and later rammed into a truck carrying LPG cylinders.



A file photo of the deceased girl Manisha Kumari; family members of the schoolgirl

According to the police both the drivers were at fault. The deceased has been identified as Manisha Kumari (18) while the other two injured girls have been identified as Kalpana and Sanjana.

All the three girls are residents of JJ Cluster, Udyog Nagar and are students of class XII, Sarvodya Bal Vidyalaya, Peeragarhi. The drivers of the car and the truck fled the spot leaving their vehicles behind



PNS photo

but were arrested late in the night, police said. The car driver has been identified as Pushpender, a resident of Haryana, while the truck driver has been identified as Mukesh, a resident of Bihar.

According to Sameer Sharma, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, on Wednesday, at around 8 AM, a police control room (PCR) call was received at Paschim Vihar West

police station regarding a road accident, following which an Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) was dispatched for the spot. "When the police team reached the spot, they found the three injured girls. They had been heading to school when they were hit by a car, which further came in contact with a truck carrying LPG cylinders causing fatal injuries to one of the girls," said the DCP.

The critically injured girl

Manisha was declared brought dead at Balaji Hospital, while other two girls Kalpana and Sanjana who were admitted to hospital and are out of danger.

The vehicle has been impounded by police and driver of vehicle is on run. Two dedicated teams have been constituted to trace accused driver as well as owner of the vehicle. As per initial enquiry, both car and truck driver are at fault," said DCP.

## Hit and run in Wazirabad: Youth dies on Ring Road

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A man died after he was allegedly hit by an unknown vehicle at Outer Ring Road in North Delhi's Wazirabad area on Wednesday morning.

Police said that no document which could reveal the identity of the deceased was found on the spot and efforts are being made to identify him.

According to Sagar Singh Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, a police control room (PCR) call was received at around

7:21 AM regarding a fatal accident involving a male. Aged around 30 to 35 years, the man was hit by an unknown vehicle at Outer Ring Road, Wazirabad, following which a police team was dispatched for the spot.

"The accused driver fled the spot soon after the accident along with the vehicle. Police did not find any document related to the man at the spot but efforts are being made to identify him.

For now, his body has been shifted to a mortuary of a nearby hospital where post-mortem would be conducted. Once the victim is identified we will inform his family

about his accident," said the DCP.

A case has been registered against the driver of the offending vehicle under Sections 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and 304 A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Wazirabad police station, said the DCP.

"Police teams are scanning for CCTV cameras installed in the vicinity of crime scene to identify the offending vehicle and its driver which will also help us in establishing the exact sequence of events which led to the accident," said the DCP.

# No respite from heatwaves in city

Mercury will soar to 43 degrees Celsius by Saturday: IMD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi is unlikely to see any respite from the prevailing heatwave as the maximum temperature on Wednesday touched 40 degrees Celsius. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the mercury will soar to 43 degrees Celsius by Saturday in the national Capital. Delhi recorded 39.6 degrees Celsius on March 30, making it the highest of this season so far.

In its latest forecast, the IMD said that northwest India and adjoining parts of central India including Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, South Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are predicted to see "more intense and frequent heatwave" conditions in April.

The IMD said that the continuing scorching heat in Delhi is likely to increase further and no relief is expected at least for the next six days. The maximum temperature in Delhi is forecast to reach 40

degrees Celsius on Wednesday and 42 degrees Celsius by Friday. The maximum temperature of 39.6 degrees Celsius was recorded at the base centre on Wednesday last week, which is the highest temperature so far this season.

"We are expecting the temperature to be higher than normal in the entire northwest India and adjoining central India, starting with Gujarat, Rajasthan and up to east Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh," IMD Director-General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said on Wednesday at a virtual event on "Building Climate Resilience for the Most Heat Vulnerable".

The IMD had earlier predicted that April will be "more severe" than March and the temperatures will be higher than normal, Mohapatra said. "The frequency of intense heatwave conditions will be higher in April as compared to March.

And, we expect the heatwave conditions to continue till April 15 in some parts," he added. The IMD in a statement said the ongoing heatwave spell started mainly over west Rajasthan and the adjoining areas of Gujarat and west Madhya Pradesh from March 27. It extended to east Rajasthan, east Madhya

Pradesh, south Haryana, Delhi and southern parts of Uttar Pradesh by March 29.

"This spell has been continuing for a longer period and has already completed more than a week. Besides, a persistent heatwave is being observed over northern plains, central India and parts of the western Himalayan region with the maximum temperature in the range of 25 to 33 degrees Celsius at higher ridges. Heatwave data for April (2017-2021) shows this type of longer

spell is not unusual," it said. Eight to 12 days long heatwave spells were observed over Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, Punjab and parts of Gujarat in April 2017 and 2019. Six to eight days' long heatwave spells were observed over parts of the western Himalayan region covering Himachal Pradesh and Jammu in April 2017, the IMD said.

India recorded its warmest March in 122 years with a severe heatwave scorching large

swathes of the country during the month. The IMD has attributed the heat to the lack of rainfall due to the absence of active western disturbances over North India and any major system over South India.

According to the IMD, a "heatwave" is declared in plains, when the maximum temperature is over 40 degrees Celsius and at least 4.5 notches above normal. A "severe" heatwave is declared if departure from normal temperature is more than 6.4 notches, according to IMD.



Women use stoles to protect themselves from the hot summer sun

PNS photo

## Jal Shakti Min inspects 564 MLD Okhla STP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Wednesday inspected the 564 MLD Okhla Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) which is currently being constructed under the Yamuna Action Plan-III for which funds are being provided by the Centre. The total sanction cost of the Okhla STP project is Rs 665.78 crore.

Shekhawat first visited the Chhat Ghat at ITO and took a boat from there to reach Okhla Boat Club, 12 kilometers away. From there, Shekhawat reached the Okhla STP site by road. Director-General, National Mission for Clean Ganga, G Asok Kumar was also present during the inspection. At the Okhla Sewage Treatment complex there are six wastewater treatment plants - Phase-I (136

MLD), Phase-II (55 MLD), Phase-III (205 MLD), phase-IV (168 MLD), Phase-V (73 MLD) and Phase-VI (136 MLD). The existing Phase-I, II, III and IV plants were constructed before 1993. As the old plants outlived their life, it was decided that a new STP of combined capacity of Phase I, II, III & IV (136+55+205+168) = 564 MLD must be constructed with stringent effluent parameters, including removal of biological nutrients.

Shekhawat said that considering the situation in Delhi, it has been directed to expedite the STP works in Delhi, keeping in mind December 2022 timeline. He added that after December 2022, a difference will certainly be felt in quality of water as Okhla STP is biggest sewage treatment plant in Asia. After construction of this 564 MLD, there will be a consider-

able improvement in the water quality of River Yamuna. Being an integrated project, the sludge management has also been included in scope of work, as per which, the sludge will be properly disposed in a scientific manner addressing environment-related issues.

As per the cost sharing arrangement of the Okhla STP, 85 per cent of the cost is borne by the Centre under the Namami Gange Programme and 15 per cent by State Government.

At presently in Delhi, under the Namami Gange Programme, a total of 11 projects for treatment of 1,268 MLD sewage have been taken up at a cost of Rs 2,009 crore by the NMCG to conserve River Yamuna. The major share of these projects is being borne by Central Government through Namami Gange Programme.

## With no official order, meat shops open as usual

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Citing the absence of official Corder, the meat shops owners across the national Capital opened their shops as per routine on Wednesday, even as mayors threatened the meat shop owners a day earlier to down their shutters during Navratri.

Several meat markets had remained shut on Tuesday under fear of action from the authorities. Meanwhile on Wednesday shopkeepers in South Delhi including Jamia Nagar, Zakir Nagar, and INA said that if an official order comes, they will close their shops.

There are around 40 shops in the INA market which were open on Wednesday. Meat shops in Zakir Nagar and Jamia Nagar too were found open. There are around 15 shops in Jamia Nagar, and the majority of them were open. According to Yunus Idres Qureshi, vice president of Delhi Meat Association, the meat busi-

ness across Delhi is functioning as usual as no official order has been issued. "The sale of meat is anyway impacted during Navaratri. Our sale drops to 20-25 per cent during Navaratri every year. We have not received any official order asking us to shut our shops, hence our business is functioning as usual. Mayor's request is politically motivated," said Qureshi.

Sanjay Kumar, manager at Bombay Fish Shop in INA, said: "All shops are open. Yesterday we closed them down as there was a sense of fear that action will be taken against us. We were expecting official order by Tuesday evening.

No order has been issued so far, so we have opened shops." Kumar said that most shopkeepers are waiting for an official order. "Once order comes, we will close these shops," he said. Meanwhile, in Lajpat Nagar and Kalkaji Mandir, shopkeepers said they keep their shops closed during Navaratri every year.

## NDMC nixes order on Muslim staff leaving office early for Ramzan

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has withdrawn its order on Wednesday which allowed all its Muslim employees who are observing the fast during the month of Ramzan to leave office early. The order was opposed by NDMC Vice Chairman Satish Upadhyay, saying any such directive was not secular.

Also, on Tuesday the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) had rescinded within hours its order allowing its Muslim employees a two-hour break from work daily during Ramzan. The order was opposed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). According to a new circular issued by NDMC

on Wednesday, the competent authority has decided to withdraw order with immediate effect. Ramzan is ninth month of the Islamic calendar during which followers of faith fast from dawn to dusk, pray for peace and guidance, and give back to community inform of charity.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Upadhyay had said, "I have spoken to NDMC Chairman and Competent Authority of civic body and urged him to immediately withdraw order allowing Muslim employees to leave office at 4.30 pm during Ramzan. "I never knew of any such order and as it came to my knowledge I opposed such order which is unsecular."



**A MAN HELD FOR RAPING TEENAGE GIRL**

**Noida:** A man was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly kidnapping and raping a 17-year-old girl who had gone missing from her home in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida last year. The girl was found recently and reunited with her family. The accused, who lived in the same neighbourhood as the victim, had taken her to Gujarat.

**3 MEN ARRESTED FOR CHEATING PEOPLE**

**New Delhi:** Three men were arrested in the national capital for allegedly cheating people on the pretext of increasing their credit cards limit, police said on Wednesday. Two laptops, 20 mobile phones, one wi-fi router, 45 SIM cards and six diaries have been recovered from the accused, the police said.

**RAI TO MEET OFFICIALS ON APRIL 12**

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday announced to hold a meeting with officials on April 12 at the Delhi Secretariat. According to Rai, the government set a goal of planting 33 lakh saplings in the previous year but it exceeded it by planting 35 lakh saplings.

**AUTHORITIES MAKE MASTER PLAN FOR DNGIR**

**Noida:** The Noida authorities have in its master plan for Noida or Dadri-Noida-Ghaziabad Investment Region (DNGIR), have added 12 new villages

### Two fire incidents reported in national Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two fire incidents were reported in national Capital on Wednesday. In first incident, eight people were rescued after a fire broke out at a house in Badli Extension in Outer Delhi, while in the other incident, a DTC bus caught fire in south-west Delhi's Mahipalpur area.

According to Atul Garg, the Director of DFS, a call was received at around 5: 49 AM about fire in a house and that some persons were suspected to be trapped following which total three fire tenders were rushed and eight people were rescued from the upper floors of the house.

### City saw highest-ever power demand of 4,648 MW in Mar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's peak power demand rose to its highest-ever level of 4,648 MW for month of March, which was recorded as warmest in country in 122 years, the discoms said on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the power demand had gone to 7323 MW on Wednesday.

The peak power demand of Delhi in March 2022 was 25 per cent more than that of corresponding period of last year, discoms said. India recorded its warmest March in 122 years with a severe heat wave scorching large swathes of country in month. From a maximum temperature of 26 degrees Celsius

at start of month, the national capital recorded a high of 39.9 degrees Celsius on March 31. "The peak power demand of Delhi during March 2022 clocked 4,648 MW on March 31 which is highest-ever power demand recorded during March in the national capital," the discoms said.

Delhi's peak power demand during March was 3,725 MW in 2021, 3,775 MW in 2020 and 4,016 MW in 2019, they said. The overall peak demand of Delhi in 2022 is expected to cross 8,000 MW in the summer season. The current all-time high demand is 7,323 MW recorded in 2021, the discoms said.

### Twitter war breaks out over Urdu writing on savoury package



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A Twitter war broke out over package after a video went viral on the micro-blogging site. In the video, a news reporter can be seen questioning a store manager of a Haldiram outlet about the

description and the ingredients of the savoury mixture being written in Urdu on the packaging. The reporter pushes a microphone in front of the manager's face as her cameraman records her forced interview. She asks the manager, who is also a woman, what Haldiram's is trying to hide by printing the description of the savoury mixture in Urdu.

As the reporter continues to aggressively push the microphone in front of the manager's face and question her, the manager says that the food inside the packet is not a health hazard. She then asks the reporter to leave the store. "If you want to have this you can have it, if you don't want to have it, you can just keep this here and go from my outlet,"

she says.

A crowd of people and a police officer can be seen witnessing the confrontation in the video. The snack in question is called 'Falhari Mixture' in new packaging.

The description at the back of the savoury is written in Urdu while the main text on the front is in English. It also clearly displays the green vegetarian symbol.

Haldiram's Falhari Mixture contains a sweet mingle of peanuts and potatoes with mild spices. It is one of the popular snacks at Haldiram's that are consumed by people who are fasting during the ongoing nine-day Hindu festival of Navratri.

The episode drew widespread comments and con-

demnation on social media with people arguing for and against the "issue." Some suggested that the writing on the packet was in Arabic and it was there because Haldiram products are widely exported to the Middle East.

However, others supplied examples of how everything, from Indian Railways signages to currency notes, have Urdu text on them. A Twitter user wrote, "Haldiram using URDU print on its packet of Falhari Mixture – are they serving Halal Food to "H"?". While another tweet reads, "This is Bikaji bhujia.... In place of Hindi.... Urdu language is written.... How much % of Indian know Urdu.... Hindi is our national language.... They why Urdu is written."



# India calls for probe into Bucha killings in Ukraine

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said in the Lok Sabha that India is "deeply disturbed by civilian killings" in Bucha, Ukraine and supports an independent probe into what is an "extremely serious matter".

Replying to the discussion in the House on the situation in Ukraine, he said India favours peace and an immediate end to violence in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. "This is our stand in the United Nations," he added.

The External Affairs Minister said, "We are strongly against the conflict".

"If New Delhi has chosen a side, it is the side of peace and for an immediate end to violence. We are deeply disturbed by civilian killings and support and call for an independent investigation," he said in reference to alleged mass civilian killings in the Ukrainian city of Bucha, Ukraine.

"We strongly condemn the killings that have taken place there. This is an extremely serious matter," he said on the issue that has fuelled an international outrage.

He said the conflict in Ukraine has consequences for all across the world as "for us" too, he said and alluded to economic interdependence. He said India is pursuing its own interest

Jaishankar said India was

the first country to evacuate its citizens and "served as an inspiration" to others. He said India encourages talks between Ukraine and Russia, including at the level of their presidents, and asserted that if New Delhi can be of any assistance in this matter, it would be "glad to contribute".

India's approach will be to promote dialogue to end the conflict, he said adding in this day and age, dialogue and diplomacy are the right answers to any disputes.

"One should bear in mind that the contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter, on respect for international law and for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, he said reaffirming that India is on the side of peace.

Jaishankar also said that attributing a political colour to India's actions vis-a-vis the Ukraine situation was unfortunate. In response to RSP member N K Premachandran drawing a contrast between advisories by the Indian embassy with that of other countries, he said the Western countries had a political approach and agenda.

His advisories did not have the same intent as ours - welfare of community concerns, Jaishankar said. "When we left Sumi, along with us more non-Indian came out and they came out because of a ceasefire that we had arranged," he told the house.



He said some foreign ministers told him that they watched India and said they will also do something.

Rejecting the criticism that the government's actions in the matter were guided by assembly polls in five states, Jaishankar said the prime minister in the middle of an election campaign came back to supervise the overall evacuation and personally spoke to the top leadership of different countries.

He said that in terms of diplomacy, India continues to press forcefully for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to violence.

"We encourage talks between Ukraine and Russia, including at the level of their presidents. Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) himself has spoken to them both in this regard. This was precisely the message that was conveyed to

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov when he was in Delhi. If India can be of any assistance in this matter, we would be glad to contribute," Jaishankar said.

He said the ground situation calls for an urgent humanitarian relief and that India has already provided 90 tonnes of relief material, and did so even while we were in the middle of an evacuation.

"At a time when energy costs have spiked, clearly we need to ensure that the common person in India is not subject to an additional and an unavoidable burden. Similarly, fertilizer prices have a direct implication for the livelihood of a majority of our population and indeed for food prices for all of us. Even the security of the nation is at stake as we maintain our defence posture in the manner that the current security challenges warrant," he said.

# Bill seeking ban of WMD funding gets LS approval

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed a Bill which seeks to ban funding of weapons of mass destruction and also empower the Centre to freeze, seize or attach financial assets and economic resources of people engaged in such activities.

Responding to a discussion on the Weapons of Mass

Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the passage of the amendment will strengthen India's national security and global position.

The House passed the bill by a voice vote with members expressing unanimity that such

a measure was the need of the hour. The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, passed in 2005, only banned manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. "In recent times, regulations relating to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems by international organisations have

expanded," Jaishankar said in the statements of objects and reasons of the bill.

He noted that the United Nations Security Council's targeted financial sanctions and the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force have mandated against financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

# 4 Kashmiri Pandits among 14 Hindus killed by ultras in J&K since 2019, Govt informs RS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday informed Parliament that four Kashmiri Pandits among 14 Hindus were killed by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir since 2019. Moreover, 34 people belonging to minority communities were killed by terrorists there in the last five years including 11 in 2021, it said.

Giving this update in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Home Nityananda Rai also said the government is making all efforts to restore assets to Kashmiri migrants and properties of 610 applicants have been returned.

Replying to questions, the minister said after the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution, 2105 migrants have returned to Kashmir valley for taking up jobs provided under the Prime Minister's Development Package.

Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was abrogated on August 5, 2019 and the erstwhile state was bifurcated into two Union Territories - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Rai said the government has taken several measures to ensure the safety of minorities in the valley. These include robust security and intelligence grid, group security in the form of static guards and day and night area domination.

Making this assertion, he also said the state government has provided jobs to migrant Kashmiris. Giving the break up, he said 841 jobs were provided in 2020-21 and 1,264 in 2021-22. Rai said the government is ready to give jobs to migrant Kashmiris who wish to return and settle in their home state.

The Minister said the District Magistrate has been designated as the custodian of the migrants' properties. The state government has also started a portal to resolve the complaints of migrants.

"The Modi government and Home Minister is capable of returning the assets to migrant Kashmiris. Constant efforts are being made," he said.

Rai said Jammu and Kashmir is on a development track and informed the House the state has received an investment proposal of Rs 51,000 crore for industrial

development which will help create employment opportunities for 4.50 lakh people.

The construction of about 13 roads has provided better reach in the state. Prior to 2019, the speed of construction was at 6.54 km per day, which has increased to 20.68 km per day now.

A village housing over 1,000 people is connected with roads.

By 2023, a hamlet with 500 people will also get the road connection, he added. The Minister further said there is a 24 hours electricity supply due to excess power production.

On the employment front, Rai said about 26,303 posts have been identified in the state from 2019 and till date. The process of hiring is underway, he said, and an employment portal has been set up, counselling sections and career centres have been put in place in the state.

Besides these measures, a development package was announced in 2015 for the state, the minister said adding Rs 58,466 crore was approved as part of the package.

# CBI books Indian Olympic Association president Batra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a Preliminary Enquiry (PE) against Indian Olympic Association president Narinder Batra for alleged misuse of Rs 35 lakh of Hockey India funds. The move to initiate a PE follows a complaint against Batra being received by the CBI. A preliminary

enquiry is the first step to establish prima facie criminality in the complaint and gather basic evidence to sustain a Regular Case (RC) of First Information Report (FIR), officials said. Once material evidence is gathered to substantiate the allegations in the complaint, the CBI is likely to register a Regular Case against the suspects, they further said.

# Envoys of nations meet Nadda at BJP HQ on party's foundation day

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president JP Nadda on Wednesday interacted with envoys of several nations on the party's foundation day on April 6 under 'know the party' programme.

The envoys spent three hours in the BJP headquarters and the question answer session itself lasted one and half hours, according to the BJP.

The heads of Missions who exuded keen interest to know about the party were shown a documentary on the foundation of the BJP detailing its history, ideology and the electoral progress. BJP vice-president Jay Panda briefed the envoys.

Nada gave them details about the BJP's core ideological

beliefs- Rashtravad & ekatmanavtavad- and it's 'goal' to help the last man on the ladder.

The BJP president also explained to envoys the policies and programmes of the Modi-government in last eight years.

Nadda met around 13 heads of missions which included those from Emmanuel Lenain (France), Carlos Pereira Marques (Portugal), Dr Ralf Heckner (Switzerland), Adam Burakowski Tane, Muhammad Imran (Bangladesh) and Simon Wong Wie Kuen (Singapore).

Besides, envoys from Poland, Romania, EU delegation, Slovakia, Italy, Hungary, Vietnam, Norway also exchange views with the BJP President who understood to have briefed BJP's programmes, policy and ideology to the visiting dignitaries.

The top diplomats met Nadda at the BJP headquarters which is seen as party's major outreach to different countries and a step to create awareness about the ruling party. BJP would also initiate party to party interactions in these countries.

Several top BJP leaders have in the past visited China on the invitation of Chinese Communist party.

It is understood that Nadda apprised the envoys who attended the BJP's foundation day ceremony at the BJP headquarters about the structure, organization and history of the party.

More of such diplomatic interactions are on the card, said a BJP leader.

The meeting of Nadda with foreign envoys on BJP's foundation day comes soon after the visit of Nepalese prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg office.

Dr Vijay Chauthaiwale BJP In-charge, Department of Foreign Affairs, welcomed the dignitaries.

A day before the BJP President also met Russian ambassador to India Nikolay Rishatovich Kdashev.

RSS too had planned a similar outreach in the past and organized selective interactions with its functionaries with the foreign diplomats.

# ED summons Dhinakaran in money-laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran this week for questioning in a money laundering case linked to alleged bribing of Election Commission officials to get the AIADMK's 'two leaves' symbol for the VK Sasikala faction of the party.

The move comes after the agency recently arrested jailed 'conman' and another accused in this case, Sukesh Chandrashekar.

Both Dhinakaran and Chandrashekar were arrested by the Delhi Police crime branch in 2017.

The agency recorded the statement of Chandrashekar in this case early this month and now the officials want to question Dhinakaran to take the probe forward, officials said.

Dhinakaran, 58, is general secretary of AMMK. He has been asked to depose before the agency here on Friday, they said, adding his statement will be recorded under the



Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) once he deposes.

Chandrashekar was arrested in April 2017 from a five star hotel by the Delhi Police for allegedly taking money from Dhinakaran to bribe EC officials to get the AIADMK's 'two leaves' symbol for the VK Sasikala faction in a by-election to the R K Nagar Assembly seat in Tamil Nadu.

Dhinakaran, who was chargesheeted by the police, was

also arrested by the Delhi Police after four days of questioning for allegedly attempting to bribe EC officials for the party symbol.

The bypoll was held following the death of the then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, who represented the Assembly constituency.

The EC had frozen the AIADMK's symbol after the two factions -- one led by Dhinakaran's aunt Sasikala and the other by former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam -- staked a claim to it.

Earlier, Dhinakaran's close aide Mallikarjuna was also arrested for allegedly facilitating a Rs 50 crore deal between him and Chandrashekar.

Dhinakaran was the treasurer of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and was expelled from the party in August 2017 along with Jayalalithaa's confidante Sasikala.

He later launched his political party styled as the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK).

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता

लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड, राजेन्द्र पार्क चौक, दुर्ग (छ.ग.)

दूरभाष क्र. 0778-2323633, E-mail : eedurg-pge-cg@nic.in

// ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा सूचना (द्वितीय आमंत्रण) //

छत्तीसगढ़ के राज्यपाल की ओर से लोक निर्माण विभाग छ.ग. शासन में एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत 'सी' एवं उच्च श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से प्रपत्र "ए" में प्रतिष्ठित दर पर दुर्ग जिले के विकासखण्ड पाटन के निम्नलिखित ग्रामों में जल जीवन मिशन अंतर्गत रेड्रोफिटिंग नलजल प्रदाय योजना योजनांतर्गत विभिन्न कार्य हेतु ऑनलाईन (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र.	नि.सू.क्र./दि.	सिस्टम क्र.	विकासखंड	ग्राम का नाम	अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)
1.	10/04/2022	96644	पाटन	दरबारगोखली	108.82

नोट:- उपरोक्त कार्यों की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, धरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञप्ति, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेबपोर्टल <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> दिनांक 11.04.2022 से देखे जा सकते हैं तथा बिड सबमिशन की अंतिम तिथि दिनांक 20.04.2022 है।

हस्ता / कार्यपालन अभियंता

R.O. No:- 90082/8

R.O. Date:- 06/04/2022

लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड

दुर्ग (छ.ग.)

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that Omaxe Heritage Private Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956, having its registered office at 10, Local Shopping Centre, Kalkaji, New Delhi, India, 110019 (earlier known as Ansh Builders Private Limited) ("OHPL") has entered into a Concession Agreement dated July 10, 2018 with North Delhi Municipal Corporation ("NDMC") ("Concession Agreement") to design, engineer, finance, construct, operate and maintain the Parking Facilities, Commercial Facilities, Public Convenience Facilities and Walkway over the plot of land admeasuring 18,524 (eighteen thousand five hundred and twenty four) sq. mtrs. situated at Gandhi Maidan, Chandni Chowk, New Delhi. This is to inform the general public that OHPL has lost the original Concession Agreement, and the same is not traceable. OHPL has filed an information report in this regard with police station crime branch, Delhi on April 06, 2022 vide LR No. 288956/2022.

If any person(s) or entity(s) including but not limited to any bank or financial institution is in custody of the original Concession Agreement, or if any person(s) or entity(s) finds the original Concession Agreement, then you are requested to contact the undersigned and handover the same to the undersigned.

Date: April 06, 2022

By: Advocates Hardeep Sachdeva and Abhishek Awasthi AZB & Partners A-8, Sector 4, Noida-201301 Emails: hardeep.sachdeva@azbpartners.com abhishek.awasthi@azbpartners.com Mobile: 9810065311 / 9910811156

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given that Deepthi Khurana for self and as Guardian of Aneesa Srivastava and Ayanish Srivastava 'Sellers' claims to be the owner and in possession of bearing No. J-100, Block I, Sector-41, Noida, (UP) by virtue of law of Inheritance after the Death of Arvind Kumar Srivastava and said Arvind Kumar Srivastava was the owner of the said property vide transfer Deed Dated 02.02.2005. Thereafter said property is mutated by Noida in favor of Deepthi Khurana and Aneesa Srivastava (Minor) and Ayanish Srivastava (Minor) and said Deepthi Khurana has taken permission for the sale of Minor share in the said property from court of Mr. Mino Pandey, Sub-Judge No. 5, Eastam Buzh Nagar in the Case No. W 216/2021 titled as Deepthi Khurana and Others Vs Uttar Pradesh and said Deepthi Khurana for self and as Guardian of Aneesa Srivastava and Ayanish Srivastava has agreed to sell the said property to Mr. Parth Gupta and said Mr Parth Gupta has agreed to create mortgage of the said Property in favour of our client, IDFC First Bank Limited, having its office at ITO. All person/s/Institution/s having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, interlineage, lien or otherwise however, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 14 days from the date hereof. Failing which the claim, if any, of any such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan against the said property and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof.

Vishal Diwan (Advocate) For Diwan and Company Advocates and Solicitors House No.2 (LGF), NRI Complex, N. Delhi-19 M. 5818359999

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mr. Jai Chand alias Mr. Jai Chander who is owner of Plot No. 43, (Property No. L-24/43 as per Technical Record), area measuring 150 sq.yds., out of Kharsa No. 58/21, situated in the revenue area of village Hastals, colony known as Mohan Garden, Block-2, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi also known as Property No. L-24/43 & Property No. L-24/43, area measuring 150 Sq. Yds., out of Kharsa No. 58/21, situated in the revenue area of village Hastals, colony known as Mohan Garden, Block-2, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi, vide Notarized General Power of Attorney, Agreement to sell & WILL dated 04.03.1991 Notarized General Power of Attorney, Agreement to sell & WILL dated 31.08.1995 and intent to mortgage against the financial assistance from Capital India Finance Ltd. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and / or creating mortgage of the said property/Is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 7 days below address: Lucern Legal LLP 269, Rama House, Ground Floor, Masjid Mohi, Opp. Uday Park, South Ext.II, New Delhi-110049 Contact # 011-4046316

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given that Deepthi Khurana for self and as Guardian of Aneesa Srivastava and Ayanish Srivastava 'Sellers' claims to be the owner and in possession of bearing No. J-100, Block I, Sector-41, Noida, (UP) by virtue of law of Inheritance after the Death of Arvind Kumar Srivastava and said Arvind Kumar Srivastava was the owner of the said property vide transfer Deed Dated 02.02.2005. Thereafter said property is mutated by Noida in favor of Deepthi Khurana and Aneesa Srivastava (Minor) and Ayanish Srivastava (Minor) and said Deepthi Khurana has taken permission for the sale of Minor share in the said property from court of Mr. Mino Pandey, Sub-Judge No. 5, Eastam Buzh Nagar in the Case No. W 216/2021 titled as Deepthi Khurana and Others Vs Uttar Pradesh and said Deepthi Khurana for self and as Guardian of Aneesa Srivastava and Ayanish Srivastava has agreed to sell the said property to Mr. Parth Gupta and said Mr Parth Gupta has agreed to create mortgage of the said Property in favour of our client, IDFC First Bank Limited, having its office at ITO. All person/s/Institution/s having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, interlineage, lien or otherwise however, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 14 days from the date hereof. Failing which the claim, if any, of any such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan against the said property and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof.

Vishal Diwan (Advocate) For Diwan and Company Advocates and Solicitors House No.2 (LGF), NRI Complex, N. Delhi-19 M. 5818359999

# Panel set up for higher damages for road victims

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Road Transport Ministry has constituted a standing committee under a scheme to provide higher compensation to road accidents victims. The committee was set up under the Compensation to Victims of Hit and Run Motor Accidents Scheme, 2022.

According to an office memorandum issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Amit Varadan, joint secretary in the road transport ministry, has been appointed as chairman. Two joint secretaries from the finance ministry Saurabh Mishra and Amit Singh Negi have also been named as members of the Standing

Committee, among others. Last month, the road ministry had issued a notification to mandate the procedure for detailed investigation of road accidents, detailed accident report (DAR) and its reporting along with timelines for different stakeholders for quick settlement of claims by the Motor Accident Claim Tribunal (MACT).

# World Health Day tips

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Say yes to fruits and vegetables. Keep hydrated. Shun cigarettes and excessive alcohol. Junk the junk food. Exercise daily and limit the gadget timings. These are some of the common medical advice that still hold true as the countries celebrate World Health Day on Thursday in the backdrop of Covid pandemic which still holds its sway in many pockets of several countries.

In fact, the theme for the World Health Day as envisaged by the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises on the need for a healthy body and mind, as Covid has made us realise the importance of good health. This is reflected in this year's theme "Our Planet, Our Health" too.

Himesh Joshi, Co-Founder and CEO, Ayu Health Hospitals points out that the pandemic has highlighted the need for better healthcare infrastructure and digitization of healthcare services. "In the last two years, we've witnessed major improvements on these fronts but there's still a long way to go. In many places, we still see healthcare workers who rely primarily on traditional practices such as using pen-paper to make health data records of patients."

Dr RP Parashar, Psychiatrist and ayurveda expert and head of Ayurvedic Panchakarma Hospital at Prashant Vihar in Delhi too maintained that instead of consuming packaged and processed food or fast or junk food that are high in salt, sugar and fat, one should consume fresh home cooked food. Also, gadget timings should be limited while one should exercise daily to remain physically and mentally fit. Prof. (Dr). Tanuja Manoj Nesari, Director, All India Institute of Ayurveda, under the Ayush Ministry, talked about the important role the diet plays in ensuring good health. "Ayurveda, a widely accepted traditional medicine system, lays great emphasis on Ahara (food), which is believed to be the most important factor for sustenance of life. This is shown in Covid-times. "

"In fact, we have launched Master Chef competition in association with the National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN), Pune and the Central Council for Research in Naturopathy to highlight the importance of incorporating AYUSH into our modern diets, and bring to the fore the nutritional value of our native grains, cereals, millets and other natural ingredients to promote a healthy way of living." As per the WHO the health is not only just physical but also mental and social well-being.

# Parliament passes Criminal Procedure Bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament on Wednesday

passed the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill that seeks to allow investigators to collect certain identifiable information of convicts and other persons for purposes of identification and investigation in criminal matters.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by a voice vote after Home Minister Amit Shah allayed concerns raised by the Opposition which claimed that the draft law was draconian. The Lok Sabha had passed the bill earlier.

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022 replaces the Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920. Shah said the bill has been brought in to ensure that police and investigators remain two steps ahead of criminals. He said the biometric data of political detainees will not be collected if they have been detained during participation in any agitation. "I want to assure you that this is not going to violate privacy of anyone," Shah said. He said that the data collected will remain completely secure and the government will make sure there are no loopholes in the bill that can lead to the violation of privacy and human rights.

# Cap on fees in pvt medical colleges, more seats in Govt colleges figure in RS debate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Issues like regulating fees charged by private medical colleges, increasing the number of seats in Government medical colleges and manual scavenging figured prominently in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. Raising the issue of plight of medical students, Jai Ram Ramesh (Congress) said just about 53 per cent of all medical institutions in the country are government colleges and the rest are private whose population has been increasing over the last few years.

He also said relying on the private medical colleges to train doctors and meet the challenge of acute shortage of doctors is "deeply flawed and deeply dangerous". The Congress leader maintained the private colleges practice the principle of "pay now and learn later". The government, he said, came up with the National Medical Commission Bill in 2017 that provided the body to regulate fees and all other charges for not more than 40 per cent seats in private medical colleges.



# CBI gets Deshmukh’s custody in graft case

■ MUMBAI

For the first time since his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in November last year in a money laundering case, the CBI on Wednesday got the custody of Maharashtra’s former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in a ₹400 crore corruption case, as a city court remanded him to its custody till April 11.

In a development that came a few hours after two judges of the Bombay High Court recused themselves from hearing Deshmukh’s challenging the orders of two special courts sending him to CBI custody, Special CBI judge B.C. Barde remanded the former Home Minister to CBI custody till April 11.

On its part, the CBI had sought 10 days’ custody of Deshmukh on the ground that it wanted to question him on the confessional statements made by his personal assistant Kundan Shinde, personal secretary Sanjeev Palande and suspended police officer Sachin Vaze, who were in its custody.

CBI’s counsel Rajmohan

Chand told the special court that Shinde, Palande and Vaze had made made confessional statements about the “extortion” money being collected from the owners of bars and restaurants allegedly at the behest of Deshmukh.

Opposing the CBI’s plea, Deshmukh’s advocate Aniket Nikam asked as the CBI wanted his client’s custody, since the latter had already before the CBI earlier and had cooperated with its officials.

Nikam told the court that since Deshmukh’s bail plea was listed to be heard by the Bombay High Court on April 8, that was why the CBI want bent on arresting him. He said the CBI officials wanted to take Deshmukh with medical ailments to Delhi when the entire case was being investigated in Mumbai and Maharashtra.

Advocate Nikam also told the court that Deshmukh had dislocated his shoulder, needed to undergo surgery for the same and at this juncture, travelling to Delhi could be tiring for his client.

After hearing the arguments from both sides, special CBI

judge Barde sent Deshmukh to CBI custody till April 11.

Deshmukh has been in the ED’s custody since November 2 last year when it arrested placed him under arrest in the early hours of Tuesday in the alleged money laundering case linked to the charges of extortion made against him by Mumbai’s former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Earlier in the day, Justices Revati Mohite Dere and PD Naik of the Bombay High Court on Wednesday recused themselves from hearing Deshmukh’s appeal challenging orders of two special courts that granted the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) custody over him in a corruption case.

When the matter came up for hearing before Justice Mohite Dere, she recused. The petitioner subsequently mentioned matter before Justice Naik. However, he also recused.

It may be recalled that on November 2, the ED had arrested Deshmukh under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on charges of bribery, conspiracy and misuse of office.

Deshmukh had resigned from his post as the State Home Minister on April 5 2021 within hours after the Bombay High Court ordered a “Preliminary Enquiry” (PE) by the CBI into the serious charges of corruption made against him by Mumbai’s former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh. He is being investigated by the CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) over the allegations of corruption made by Param Bir Singh.

It may be recalled that on March 20, the former commissioner of police had alleged that State Home Minister Deshmukh had asked now arrested and dismissed police officer Sachin Vaze to “collect” a staggering ₹100 crore per month from bars, restaurants and other sources in Mumbai.

Deshmukh is being investigated by the CBI in connection with a First Information Report (FIR) registered by it on April 24 section 7 of the amended Prevention of Corruption Act and section 120-b (conspiracy) of IPC for an “attempt to obtain undue advantage for important and dishonest performance of the public duty”.

Having prima facie found “cognisance offences” of corruption and conspiracy against him during a Preliminary Enquiry (PE) conducted by it into the allegations made against him by Mumbai’s former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, the CBI had on April 21 last year registered a regular case against him and other unknown people.

Having established a trail for ₹4.7 crore allegedly paid by the 10 bar owners in Mumbai over a period of three months December 2020 and February 2021, the ED had conducted raids on the three residences and one property of Deshmukh on June 25.

The ED has alleged that of the total amount, Rs 4.18 crore was then deposited in cash with four Delhi-based shell companies — Reliable Finance Corporation Pvt. Ltd., VA Realcon Pvt. Ltd., Utsav Securities Pvt. Ltd. and Sital Leasing and finance Pvt. Ltd. These firms subsequently donated the entire money to Shri Sai Shikshan Sansthan Trust, a charitable trust headed by Anil Deshmukh and his family.

# Bengal a safe haven for Bangla criminals: Adhikari

■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday accused the Trinamool Congress administration of allowing Bangladeshi criminals to settle in this part of the border.

Attacking the Mamata Banerjee Government for doing nothing about trans-border migration he said “you have wanted criminals from Bangladesh including the assassin of late President Mujibur Rehman living peacefully at Park Circus area of Kolkata for the past 15 years ... the Rajakars and Jamaat criminals have made Bengal their hideouts ... these criminals are entering India through the sea route and everyone including the police know this ... but this Government is turning blind eye to that... this Government is bringing entire Bangladesh to Bengal.”

He made these observations after illegal drugs of Bangladeshi make were found in two Government hospitals of East



Midnapore district.

The Opposition parties took up the issue after Government hospitals at Contai and Nandigram distributed Cefradine an antibiotic made and meant for use only in Bangladesh.

Though the distribution of the drugs was immediately stopped and the Health Department ordered an inquiry into the matter, senior officials said that the medicines had been supplied by the central government to the State.

“We had picked up the consignments from the central drug store which was sent to the

State in June 2021 for distribution ... hence it is for those who responsible for sending the drugs to Bengal who have to answer,” the senior officials said.

Meanwhile, in an unrelated development the Trinamool Congress on Wednesday lodged with the Election Commission of India a complaint against Adhikari for entering a local police station in Ballygunge Assembly constituency — which will go to by-elections on April 12 — and threatening the officials.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said “Suwendu Adhikari entered the Rabindra Sarobar Police Station on March 31 with a number of supporters and threatened the officers with dire consequence ... just because they were discharging there election duty ... he told them that he would get the EC to transfer them to some remote areas.”

The BJP leader later said that he would provide an explanation to the ECI if he was asked to do so.

# J&K HC gives Govt 6 weeks to identify illegal foreign immigrants

■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has given six weeks to the Government to identify immigrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh who are illegally staying in the Union Territory. A bench comprising Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi passed the order on a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by advocate Hunar Gupta seeking deportation of such illegal immigrants.

“We direct the secretary home, UT of J&K to consider the matter and to evolve a mechanism for the identification of all illegal immigrants and to prepare a list after identifying them. “The said exercise may be carried out, most promptly, within a period of six weeks,” the bench said in its order last week. According to government

data, over 13,700 foreigners, including Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals, are settled in Jammu and Samba districts of Jammu and Kashmir, where their population has increased by over 6,000 between 2008 and 2016. Over 200 Rohingyas, a Bengali-dialect speaking Muslim minority from Myanmar, are lodged in a holding centre at Kathua after they were found living illegally in Jammu city during a verification drive in March last year.

Earlier, senior counsel Sunil Sethi, appearing for the petitioner, said though it is very easy to identify such illegal migrants, the Government should come up with a complete mechanism for identifying them and submit a list of all such immigrants to the court. The court noted that one of the orders dated May 24, 2017 passed in the PIL indicates that at that time the Government

had constituted a group of ministers to examine the various issues relating to illegal migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh.

“The group of ministers was supposed to take up the matter, examine it and furnish a report thereof. But till date, nothing has come on record. In the meantime, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated and the UT of J&K has been created,” the order said.

Advocate General D C Raina and Additional Advocate General Raman Sharma appeared for the UT and the case was listed for hearing on July 15.

In his PIL, Gupta has demanded the deportation of illegal immigrants and also prayed for the withdrawal of all benefits given to them from the state exchequer and from the scheme and benefits meant for the residents of J&K.

# Two ultras gunned down by security forces in Tral

■ JAMMU

Two local terrorists belonging to Ansar Gazwat ul Hind (AuGH) and Lashkar-e Tayyeba (LeT) were eliminated by the joint team of security forces in Tral area of Awantipora on Wednesday. Around 66 terrorists belonging to Jaish-e- Mohammad and LeT have been neutralised by the security forces in the last four months across Kashmir valley.

Meanwhile, a driver of a local tourist van from Jammu was critically injured in a mysterious blast in the parking area of Botanical gardens in Srinagar. The Resistance Front, a shadow outfit of the Pakistan based Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, has claimed responsibility for the blast.

“Had already warned to carry out a surprise attack in Srinagar. The Cadre of Falcon Squad TRF carried out the IED blast (Magnetic) at ‘Tulip/Botanical Garden area’, the TRF statement circulated in the social media claimed.

However, Srinagar police have said that the prima facie blast appears to be accidental in

nature, probably caused due to a cylinder or other pressure equipment failure. “FSL team is on job and checking the vehicle to rule out any other probability,” they added.

According to an eyewitness account, soon after dropping the tourists the driver of the ill fated van identified as Amjad Ali had parked his vehicle in the parking area. Around 2.35 p.m when he approached the rear door of the vehicle a powerful blast took place in which he received grievous injuries. Lying in a pool of blood several other fellow drivers shifted Ali to a nearby hospital. The condition of the driver, hailing from Nagrota, was stated to be critical. He has been kept on ventilator support, confirmed local hospital authorities.

Referring to the killing to two terrorists in Awantipora, a police spokesman in a statement said the operation in the area of Tral, Awantipora was launched late Tuesday night. During the ongoing search operations while the security forces were zeroing on the targeted hideout the hiding terrorists opened indiscriminate firing on the search party lead-

ing to an encounter.

According to a police spokesman, one terrorist was neutralized and another was holed up. Meanwhile, reinforcements of Army (42RR) & 180Bn CRPF reached the encounter site and joined the operation. The joint team later neutralized the second holed up terrorist and the bodies were retrieved from the site of encounter. They have been identified as Umar Nabi Teli @Talha son of Ghulam Nabi Teli resident of Ladoo Khrew and Shafat Muzaffar Sofi @Muavia son of Muzaffar Ahmad Sofi resident of Batagund Tral, police spokesman added.

As per police records, both the killed terrorists were categorized terrorists and linked with proscribed terror outfits AuGH and LeT and involved in several terror crime cases including attacks on security forces and civilian atrocities. Before shifting to Tral area, both the killed terrorists were involved in several terror crimes in Srinagar city including recent killing of Sarpanch (Sameer Ahmad) in Khanmoh Srinagar.

# Yogi’s gift to 4 lakh villagers: Home ownership papers



■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath Government is coming up with a big gift for the villagers under which it will provide rural residential documents, also called ‘gharauni’ certificate, to villagers for ownership of their houses.

Preparations are underway to provide the certificates to more than four lakh villagers. A grand ceremony will be organised this month in which gharauni certificates will be given to the villagers by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Till December 23 last year, 27.47 lakh villagers have been provided papers under the swamitva yojana (ownership scheme). Further to this, the Revenue Board is preparing to provide home ownership certificates to more than four lakh villagers of 4,000 villages. UP is at the forefront in providing household documents to the villagers.

It is worth mentioning here that the villagers get the documents of their residential property in digital form and for this, the State Government has prepared a scheme to computerize 7.65 crore properties in about one lakh villages of the State. The scheme was launched on October 12 last year.

Under this, on the lines of khatuani of agricultural fields, the Revenue Board is prepar-

ing documents of ownership of residential properties of the villagers.

A Government spokesman said that gharauni praman patra is to be prepared in about one lakh villages of the State through digital maps.

“A digital map is being prepared by surveying villages with the help of drones. So far, after surveying 15,940 villages through more than 70 drones, 27.47 lakh villagers have been given gharauni certificates,” the official said.

Emphasising the benefits, the official said one could get loans from rural banks through the gharauni certificate.

Till now, banks do not give loans to the villagers on their houses, because they do not have any document proving the ownership of the houses.

“Survey is to be carried out in all 75 districts of the State to implement this scheme of the Central Government. The ownership plan is to be completed by the year 2025.

A roadmap is being prepared for the implementation of this scheme in a stipulated time frame and work is being done on it in a phased manner. Out of the villages where aerial survey has been completed, gharauni certificates of 27.47 lakh residential properties in 15,940 villages have been provided to the villagers,” the official said.

# People will have to rebel if BJP gives ‘ghar, ghar ED’ call: Shiv Sena

■ MUMBAI

Slamming Maharashtra BJP Schief Chandrakant Patil for stating that he will ask the Enforcement Directorate to probe the alleged transfer of money to bribe voters in the upcoming Assembly bypoll in Kolhapur, the Shiv Sena on Wednesday said the people will have to “rebel” if the BJP gives “Ghar, Ghar ED” call.

In an editorial in the party mouthpiece ‘Saamana’, the Sena wondered if the ED should probe voters in the states from where BJP won elections recently.

The Sena dared the ED and the BJP to start the investigation from Panaji and Sakhal (Sanquelin) seats — the constituencies won by BJP MLA Atanasio Monserrate and chief minister Pramod Sawant.

“Chandrakant Patil has a

nice plan to get voters probed by the ED. If ‘Har Har Modi, Ghar Ghar Modi’ slogan is coupled with ‘Har Har ED, Ghar Ghar ED’, then people will have to rebel,” the Sena said. The Kolhapur North assembly constituency bypoll is scheduled to be held on April 12. The seat fell vacant after the death of sitting Congress MLA Chandrakant Jadhav last December.

The BJP has fielded Satyajit Kadam, while the Congress has given the ticket to Jadhav’s wife Jayashree.

On Sunday, Patil said he will write to the Enforcement Directorate to investigate the alleged transfer of money into the accounts of a large number of voters from Kolhapur north.

Notably, the ED on Tuesday attached properties linked to Sena MP and Saamana’s executive editor Sanjay Raut.

# 4 yrs on, trial in Gauri Lankesh killing to start from May 27

■ BENGALURU

More than four years after Journalist-activist Gauri Lankesh was shot dead by motorcycle-borne men outside her house here, the trial in the case is set to start from May 27, the prosecution lawyer said.

“The hearing of the case had not started yet. It will start now from May 27,” senior advocate S Balan told PTI.

According to him, more than 60 lawyers were engaged initially by the accused, and their petitions delayed commencement of the trial.

Balan said 17 accused including the alleged kingpin Amol Kale, shooter Waghmore and the motorcycle rider Ganesh Miskin would face the trial while one more accused is at large.



Sand artist Manas Kumar Sahoo creates a sculpture with the message ‘Your health is in your hands’, on the eve of World Health Day, at Puri beach on Wednesday

PTI

# Govt to release 135 poor prisoners

**The inmates were languishing in jail as they failed to pay fines imposed by court in UP**

■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government will release 135 prisoners who failed to clear their financial penalties due to their poor financial condition.

According to reports, there are 135 prisoners who are lodged in jail for a long time due to non-payment of the financial fine imposed on them by the courts.

Minister of State for Prisons (Independent Charge) Dharamveer Prajapati has issued instructions for their release. It is said that it has been



decided to release these prisoners on humanitarian grounds. Prajapati has also asked jail officials to consider reciting Gayatri mantra or Mahamrityunjaya mantra in the morning, besides organising discourses and satsangs.

The minister gave these directions during a meeting with the departmental officers on Tuesday. He asked the Prisons department to issue a toll-free number for registering the related complaints. By gradually ending the offline system of meeting the prisoners in jails, he directed the officials to make the meetings online.

While giving instructions for a better system of imparting vocational training to the prisoners, Prajapati said that this would enable the prisoners to make good quality products which would fetch good prices in the market.

The Minister said that any employee related to the Prisons department could meet him anytime and express his views. He asked the officials to promote the use of pottery in the prison department.

He assured to include the suggestions of the officers in the 100-day action plan of the department.

# To be developed like CBI: UP Govt

■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government stressed that the Crime Branch of Criminal Investigation Department (CB CID) no longer remained a dumping ground of investigations and that the credibility of the agency had increased due to speedy and quality disposal of important probes.

The Government further claimed that attempts were further being made to develop the probe agency like Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by increasing the level of credibility and quality of CB-CID.

These claims were made by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi soon after he visited the CB-CID headquarters and reviewed ongoing investigations in Lucknow on

Wednesday morning.

Awasthi said that all out efforts were being made to make the agency more resourceful and increase its level of credibility and quality of probe on instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Reviewing probes being conducted in all nine sectors of the CB-CID, the additional chief secretary directed officers concerned to ensure maximum punishment to persons indicted in the charge-sheets.

He also enquired about pending cases under the sanction of prosecution and directed their speedy disposal.

Awasthi also directed that inspectors probing cases along with supervisory officers like superintendents of police should visit the spot to ensure



quality investigation.

He also asked the officers to make all out efforts so that maximum punishment could be meted out to the culprits through effective prosecution in ongoing cases in courts.

Appreciating the achievements of the CB-CID officials, the additional chief secretary directed the brass to make

efforts to ensure quality analysis and also for effective supervision.

Director-General (CB-CID) Gopal Lal Meena informed the additional chief secretary that following the State Government’s policy of zero tolerance towards crimes, old cases pending in the agency were cleared by running a sys-

tematic campaign.

“As a result, while hundreds of probes were pending in all nine sectors of the CB-CID earlier, their number has come down to only 106 due to dedicated efforts made by officials of all the sectors. Our focus is to complete probes into cases as soon as possible with utmost transparency and ensure that the culprits get maximum sentences,” the DG (CB-CID) said.

Meena also said that sometimes the officials found it difficult to collect forensic evidence as the cases were handed to the agency after a long time of occurrence of the incident, but even then, on the basis of available evidence and records etc., officers ensured quality probes with absolute transparency.

On this occasion, ADG Dawa Sherpa and LV Antony Dev Kumar posted at CB-CID headquarters and other senior police officers were present.







FIRST COLUMN

TWO TRUCES IN THREE WARS

Tired Ethiopia and Yemen are desperately looking for peace



GWYNNE DYER

Two weeks ago, the three biggest wars in the world were in Ukraine, Ethiopia and Yemen. Now truces have silenced the guns and the airstrikes in two of the three. They are only temporary truces so far, but there is a reasonable chance that they could grow into something more permanent. The Ethiopian government's declaration of a 'humanitarian truce' on March 24 came as a surprise. Six months ago, rebels advanced from their home province of Tigray more than halfway to the country's capital, Addis Ababa, and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed seemed on the brink of defeat. But the Tigrayans outran their supplies, Abiy Ahmed took delivery of some Turkish-made drones, and by the end of the year the front line had moved all the way back north to Tigray's border. There the Ethiopian army stopped, aware that taking the rebel province by force could involve huge casualties on both sides and had no guarantee of success. Tigray is landlocked, so an Ethiopian blockade on all food supplies from outside was the obvious option. If Tigray was ever to be persuaded to stay in Ethiopia, however, the blockade had to end before huge numbers starved to death. Abiy Ahmed understood that, but it's still unlikely that he would declare a truce without some assurance from the Tigrayan leaders that they would respect it, and that real negotiations would follow. The war in Yemen is much older (seven years now) and much bloodier (400,000 deaths and counting). It is usually portrayed by the international media as a war between the 'legitimate' Yemeni Government and 'Houthi' rebels, with a variety of Arab monarchies and dictatorships backing the government and Iran backing the rebels. None of that is true.

The Houthis are the militia of northern Yemeni tribes who rebelled when the Saudi-controlled regime tried to cut them out of their share of the country's limited oil revenues. (The oil is all in the south.) Iran sympathises because the Houthi tribes, like Iran, are Shia Muslims, but Tehran does not and cannot support them militarily. The 'legitimate' Government is a former Yemeni field marshal and politician called Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi who was installed as interim president (without an election) for a two-year transitional period eleven years ago. He got the job by doing a deal with the Saudis, who always want an obedient placeman in power in the turbulent country to their south. Hadi was merely seeking to secure his own position when he tried to deprive the Houthis of their share of oil revenues, because he is from the south himself. When they rebelled and took control of most of the country, he fled to Saudi Arabia, where he has spent the great majority of his time ever since. The Saudis and their Gulf friends (with Western backing) have been bombing Yemen ever since, but their armies are mostly poorly motivated mercenaries so they don't do well on the ground. The war has been a stalemate for years, and an almost complete blockade has brought most of the country close to famine. Most of those 400,000 deaths are from hunger. So, the two-month truce is a blessing, although so far it only allows fuel to come into the ports, not food. There is no principle at stake on either side, just squalid considerations of money and power, so in theory they should be able to make a lasting peace deal where everybody shares the (quite limited) wealth. If it works, there will still be a big and dangerous war in Ukraine, but two of the world's three worst wars will be over. Compared to the long and bloody past, that's not a bad record.

*(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Sri Lankan economic crisis and India

Important to revive Sri Lanka's agriculture, reschedule repayment of sovereign debt, deal with lack of raw materials, and ensure availability of essential items

Sri Lanka has been going through very serious economic problems for some time now. Sri Lankan government is seemingly clueless about how to deal with this crisis, which is believed to be first of its kind for the country. There is no consensus in the Government about how to deal with this situation.

Sri Lanka had come out of a very painful civil war in the past, which continued for 26 years and ended only in 2009. But despite the severity of the civil war at that time, Sri Lanka did not experience any big economic crisis. The rampant inflation in food and fuel in Sri Lanka, after January this year followed by acute shortage of goods is making life hell for the people of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's per capita income in the year 2020 on the basis of market exchange rate was recorded at \$4053 annually and on the basis of purchasing power parity, it was \$12537 annually, which was more than double of that of India. If we talk about human development, according to the Human Development Report of the United Nations (2020), Sri Lanka ranked at 72nd position in the world, whereas India was at 131st position.

Sri Lanka's credit rating has been significantly lowered by international agencies, pushing Sri Lanka out of the international capital market. As a result, Sri Lanka could not reschedule its foreign borrowings. The devaluation of Sri Lanka's currency started due to the paucity of foreign exchange, and when Sri Lanka tried to curb imports, it led to shortage of commodities, especially fuel and food, causing hyperinflation. The Sri Lankan government believed that by curbing imports, foreign exchange would be saved and domestic production would be encouraged, which would also increase exports. But this could not happen and the foreign exchange reserves kept depleting further. The Sri Lankan government had to sell its gold reserves and enter into currency swap agreements with India and China to prevent any default in repayment of international debt.

Behind Sri Lanka's crisis is China's old strategy of debt trap. Not only Sri Lanka, but many more countries of the world have been trapped by China. The story starts with Sri Lanka accepting China's proposal for development of Hambantota port, without any feasibility study. Between 2007 and 2014, China gave five loans amounting to \$1.26 billion for the development of this port, in the beginning at 1 per cent or 2 per cent, but later escalated to 6.3 per cent with short repayment periods. After that China invested \$1.4 billion in Colombo port city project. Billions of dollars in loans have been given to Sri Lanka by China, for developing a seaport, airport, highways and power stations. By 2020, Sri Lanka's total liability to China had increased to about \$ 8 billion (2020), but these projects are far from

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IT IS TRUE THAT AS A NEIGHBOUR AND FRIENDLY COUNTRY, INDIA IS PROVIDING ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA AND IT SEEMS THAT THIS WILL CONTINUE IN FUTURE ALSO. BUT GIVING AID IN TIMES OF CRISIS WILL NOT BE ENOUGH. TO DEAL WITH THIS IMPENDING CRISIS IN FRONT OF SRI LANKA, INDIA WILL ALSO HAVE TO HELP THEM MOVE TOWARDS A SOLUTION

(The writer is Professor, PGDAV College, University of Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



earning adequate revenues for debt servicing, even today.

The Covid-19 pandemic accentuated the problems further. Sri Lanka has traditionally been a tourist attraction and tourism has been contributing significantly to their foreign exchange earnings. Last year tourism revenues fell by about \$5 billion due to the pandemic.

Sri Lanka suddenly decided to move towards completely organic farming, in a very irresponsible manner, and chemical fertilizers were banned. Due to the ban on the import of chemical fertilizers, agricultural production was affected badly and the prices of agricultural commodities started increasing wildly. Due to this the export of tea also got affected significantly. Although there is no harm in organic farming, but doing the same in an unmindful manner is no good.

While Government revenues were already declining, the Sri Lankan Government's reckless reduction in direct and indirect taxes made matters even worse. Due to compulsion to increase Government spending, the budget deficit widened; leading to inevitable increase in money supply, and therefore inflation.

Sri Lanka has been importing a lot of essential goods for consumption; and when imports were banned, naturally there was a shortage of food and fuel. Sri Lanka's exporting industries were also affected due to non-availability of imported raw materials and essential intermediates. Due to which Sri Lanka's exports decreased significantly. With a trade deficit of \$10 billion on the one hand and huge foreign debt, including sovereign bonds, the problem of repayment of debt is nothing less than a nightmare for Sri Lanka. On top of all this, being caught in the clutches of China, condition for Sri Lanka is even more precarious. A few years ago, Sri Lanka had to undergo a worst humiliation, when they had to lease out its strategically important port Hambantota to China, but even after that there is no end to Sri Lanka's woes.

China has provided billions of dollars in loans to Sri Lanka for developing a seaport, airport, highways and power stations. While the country's debt liability to China has increased to about \$ 8 billion (2020), these projects have yet to yield adequate revenues for debt servicing.

Significantly, Sri Lanka is home to a large number of Tamil people, who migrated from Tamil Nadu centuries ago. In view of the deteriorating situation in Sri Lanka, a large number of Tamil refugees are reaching the Tamil Nadu coast. Naturally, humanitarian help to them will be the priority of the Government of India and State government of Tamil Nadu. Apart from this, the government has given a credit line of \$ 1 billion to Sri Lanka and has also given assistance of \$500 million to buy essential petroleum products. Apart from this, the Sri Lankan government has sought additional assistance of \$1.5 billion from the Indian Government.

It is true that as a neighbour and friendly country, India is providing all possible assistance to Sri Lanka and it seems that this will continue in future also. But giving aid in times of crisis will not be enough. To deal with this impending crisis in front of Sri Lanka, India will also have to help them move towards a solution. It is true that Sri Lanka has applied for International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance, but it is well known that IMF debt comes with conditions and those conditions are mostly against the borrowing countries. Therefore, other options will also have to be considered. The Government of India, in addition to just lending in this matter, can also try to help Sri Lanka restructure its debt.

At the global level, the international organizations will have to come united and respond to this ill-fated effort of China. In addition, the Government of India may provide humanitarian and commercial assistance to Sri Lanka, and help them with an action plan for Sri Lanka's sustainable development. For this, the revival of Sri Lanka's agriculture, apart from rescheduling of debt and repayment of the sovereign debt; help in ending instability caused by the lack of raw materials in industries, ensure availability of essential commodities for the common people; are some other contours of India's help to Sri Lanka.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN HAS NOMINATED FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE GULZAR AHMED AS THE CARETAKER PM. — PAKISTAN EX-MINISTER FAWAD CHAUDHRY



WE WON'T PARTICIPATE IN THE (CONSULTATION FOR THE CARETAKER PM) PROCESS AS IT IS ILLEGAL. — LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION SHEHBAZ SHARIF

# Is it time to abolish Delhi Assembly?

The Assembly is at present agendaless and has turned into a dull, drab monotonous and uninspiring institution having no utility



SK SHARMA

*(The writer is former Secretary, Lok Sabha and Delhi Assembly, Constitutional expert and author. The views expressed are personal.)*

Chief Executive Councillor, and Delhi Administration. The Council was an elected body which was not competent to enact any law but could only recommended to the Central Government appropriate legislation. The Chief Executive headed a 4-member Executive Council to aid and advise the Lt. Governor in matters of administration. The Administration was subordinate and subservient to the Central Government.

Due to constant clamor for self-government and statehood in Delhi, in 1987 the Union Government appointed a committee to suggest proper administrative and political set up for Delhi. It recommended Delhi be given a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers to aid and advise the Lt. Governor. So, the Metropolitan Council became the Legislative Assembly, the Chief Executive became Chief Minister, and the Administration became the Government (of NCT of Delhi).

The substitution of expressions utterly confused not only the people in general but also the political class. Everyone believed that by giving Delhi a Government, a Legislative Assembly and a Chief Minister, Delhi has been placed at par with the other States of Indian Union. Facts, however, were just the opposite. The Transaction of Business Rules which supplemented the Constitutional provisions of Article 239AA were more or less the same as were applicable on erstwhile Delhi Administration (which was a

subordinate and subservant set up to the Central Govt.

What in fact was given to Delhi by the Sarkaria Commission was only an ornamental clap trap of words and expressions. Because the Transaction of Business Rules made applicable to the new setup remained more or less unchanged; hence no extra power actually stood bestowed on the new set up. Soon Madan Lal Khurana who took over as the first CM under the new set up, subsequently followed by Sahib Singh Verma, Shiela Dixit, realized that expression "Chief Minister" was no more than a misnomer and a fancy. No real power stood conferred on the CM or the Delhi Government.

Let us have a look as to what the intent of the framers of the Constitution was with regard to nation's capital. There were sharp differences among members of Constituent Assembly with regard to the future political set up of Delhi. Some wanted self-government and statehood. Many others favoured a centrally controlled Delhi. The President of the Constituent Assembly (Dr. Rajendra Prasad) had formally assigned the task of finding a viable solution to the Chairman of the Drafting Committee (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar). Dr. Ambedkar for this purpose, summoned an emergent confidential meeting of his Drafting Committee on Monday, July 25, 1949 (in the afternoon) not at its designated venue the Constitution Hall of Parliament House but at the official residence of Sardar Patel at 1, Aurangzeb Road (now re-



# ‘Sri Lanka’s political crisis should end with snap poll’

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's ongoing political storm triggered by the country's unprecedented economic crisis can be ended with a snap election, veteran left-wing politician Vasudeva Nanayakkara said on Wednesday, emphasising that there must be a government with everyone participating in it for at least 6 months before polls are held. Democratic Left Front politician Nanayakkara was among the 42 members who declared independence in He, however, ruled out joining hands with opposition groups. While Parliament meets on Wednesday to have a debate on the current political crisis, the ruling coalition officials said

there could be more loss to the ruling party in terms of numbers. The ruling coalition, which had won 150 seats in the 2020 general elections and went on to increase its numbers through defections from the Opposition, lost the support of 42 MPs. The names of the 42 lawmakers to leave the coalition were announced by party leaders in Parliament. They have now become independent members, leaving President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government with fewer than the 113 members needed to maintain a majority in the 225-member house. The government, however, claimed that it commands a simple majority. Sri Lanka is currently experiencing its worst economic crisis in history. With

long lines for fuel, cooking gas, essentials in short supply and long hours of power cuts, the public has been suffering for months. Despite the declaration of a state of emergency and a weekend curfew, people joined the protests calling for the resignation of Rajapaksa throughout the island nation on Tuesday. Protesters even blocked the access roads to parliament. The protests took place in all parts with a large crowd thronging opposite prime minister's official residence here. Meanwhile, economists have warned that country will plunge into more serious economic and political crises by the end of May. "We have been hit by two crises, eco-



nomic and political," said Professor Janak Kumarasinghe. He said both crises need urgent solutions to prevent further disasters. President Rajapaksa is still struggling to appoint a cabinet as none of political parties responded positively to his offer to form a unity cabinet to tackle the crisis. He appointed just four ministers and one of them, the new finance minister, resigned after less than 24 hours in job. The Ministry of Finance is without a minister and its top bureaucrat with the resignation of incumbent S R Attiyagalle. The forex crisis had also hit the foreign service. The foreign ministry said that it was closing Sri Lankan missions in Oslo and Baghdad while shutting consulate in

Sydney. Following 2019 Sri Lankan elections, the Rajapaksa family kept several portfolios in the government under their control. While President Rajapaksa holds the all-powerful executive presidency, his elder brother Mahinda, who is a former president, is the current prime minister. Basil held the finance ministry and Mahinda's son Namal, the heir apparent, was the minister of youth and sports. India recently announced to 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.

## Propose dates for holding elections, Pakistan Prez Alvi asks election body

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan President Arif Alvi on Wednesday asked the election commission to propose dates for holding general elections, even as the Supreme Court was hearing for the last four days the legality of the rejection of a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan and the dissolution of the National Assembly. In a letter to the Election Commission of Pakistan, President Alvi stated that he had to appoint a date, not later than 90 days from the date of dissolution of the National Assembly, for holding general elections. "In order to carry out the mandate of the Constitution of announcing the date of general elections, consultation with the Election Commission is required under Section 57(1) of the Elections Act, 2017," the letter added. Embattled Prime Minister Khan stunned the Opposition parties on Sunday by recommending snap elec-

tions, after a no-confidence motion against him was dismissed by the deputy speaker of the National Assembly. Khan then got President Alvi to dissolve the 342-member National Assembly before its term ended in August 2023. The apex court within hours took suo motu notice of the political developments on Sunday and a five-member bench started hearing the case on Monday. The President's letter to the election commission came a day after the poll body on Tuesday said it will fulfil its responsibility to hold general elections in the country if required. "The Election Commission will fulfil its responsibility under the Constitution and the law. The meeting will review the preparation in the event of general elections," the spokesperson of the Election Commission of Pakistan said, even as Supreme Court is hearing the case against rejection of the no-trust motion against prime minister Khan.

## Ties with Pakistan ‘rock solid’, political crisis won't hit cooperation, CPEC projects: China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Asserting that its ties with Pakistan are "unbreakable and rock solid", China on Wednesday said the raging political crisis in Islamabad will not affect the overall cooperation between the all-weather allies as well as the projects under the \$60 billion CPEC. A wary China has been keeping a close watch on the recent rapid political developments in Pakistan, leading to dissolution of Parliament over Prime Minister Imran Khan's allegation of the US hand behind Opposition parties' no-confidence motion against him. The Opposition parties in Pakistan moved Supreme Court to adjudicate legality of dissolution of Parliament and declaration of fresh elections. When asked for his reaction to political and constitutional crisis in Pakistan, Chinese Foreign

Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here that while political situation may not affect Beijing's close ties with Islamabad, he hoped that parties will close ranks to stay united for development and stability of country. "China always follows principle of non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs," he said. "China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. History has proven once again that no matter how international landscape may evolve, and how our respective domestic situations may change, China and Pakistan relations will always stand unbreakable and rock solid," Zhao said. "We believe that the overall China-Pakistan cooperation and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) construction will not be affected by the political sit-

uation in Pakistan. As an iron-clad friend of Pakistan, we hope all parties in the country can stay united and jointly uphold national development and stability," he said. Under the \$60 billion CPEC which connects Pakistan's Gwadar port in Balochistan province to China's Xinjiang, China is building a host of infrastructure projects. India has protested to China over the CPEC, the flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as it traverses through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). This is the second-time China has commented on political crisis in Pakistan. In run-up to tabling of no-confidence motion by Pakistan's Opposition parties last week, China on March 31 had made an appeal to all political parties to close ranks in interest of stability and development.

## Australia, UK, US alliance to develop hypersonic missiles

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States, United Kingdom and Australia have announced they will work together via the recently created security alliance known as AUKUS to develop hypersonic missiles. The move comes amid growing concern by the US and allies about China's growing military assertiveness in the Pacific. US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the plan after holding a check-in on the progress of AUKUS, the Indo-Pacific alliance that was launched by the three countries in September. The leaders said in a joint statement they are "committed today to commence new trilateral cooperation on hypersonics and counter-hypersonics, and electronic warfare capabilities, as well as to expand information sharing and to deepen cooperation on defense innovation."

## Hong Kong's No 2 official resigns, announces leadership attempt

AP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong's No. 2 official and a staunch supporter of a Beijing-backed crackdown on pro-democracy activists tendered his resignation on Wednesday to pave way for his run in city's upcoming leadership race. John Lee, who is city's chief secretary for administration, submitted his resignation to Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam, according to a government statement. "If my resignation is approved by Central People's Government, I shall plan to stand for upcoming Chief Executive election," said Lee during a news conference. "Having been in government for over 40 years, to serve people of Hong Kong is a glory." Lee, who is seen as Beijing's favoured candidate for chief executive position, is a staunch advocate of city's national security law, which has been used since 2020 to target pro-democracy activists, supporters and media, diminishing freedoms promised to Hong Kong at Britain's handover to China in 1997. His potential leadership

of Hong Kong could signal a further tightening of Beijing's grip around semi-autonomous Chinese city. Lam said Monday she would not seek a second term, following a rocky five years punctuated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a crackdown on political freedoms and Beijing's growing influence over the territory.

## Hong Kong police arrest 6 accused of sedition

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong's national security police used a colonial-era sedition law to arrest six people on Wednesday on suspicion of causing a nuisance at court hearings in December and January. The suspects - four men and two women aged between 32 and 67 years old - were arrested on suspicion of committing an "act or acts with seditious intent," an offense under the Crimes Ordinance. (AP)

<div><div><div><div><div><div></div></div></div><div><div><div><b>MAHINDRA RURAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED</b></div></div></div><div><div>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</div></div></div></div><div><div><div><b>Demand Notice</b></div></div></div></div> <div><div><div>Branch Office :- 3rd Floor 139-141 Mangal Pandey Nagar Opposite CCS University Meerut Uttar Pradesh 250002,</div><div>Branch Office :- F/F, Plot No-17, Sanajay Nagar, District. Center, Near Vishal Megha Mart And Pnb Bank, Sanjay Nagar Ghaziabad UP 201001.</div></div></div> <div><div><div>Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The Undesignated is the Authorised Officer of Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Limited under the above said Act. In exercise of power conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act, Calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them, the content of which is re-produced below.</div></div></div>
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# Talks with Ukraine continue: Moscow

AP ■ MOSCOW

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov says negotiations with Ukraine are continuing despite allegations of war crimes against civilians in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha.

Peskov said Wednesday the talks continued with Ukraine but that the Bucha revelations - which he referred to as a "staging" - had hampered talks and there was "a fairly long road ahead".

"The working process continues but it is going much more tough than we would like. Of course we would like to see more dynamism from the Ukrainian side, but the process has not been broken off and is continuing," Peskov said. Russia retreated from areas around Kyiv and the northern cities of Chernihiv and Sumy after talks with Ukraine in Turkey last week. Ukrainian troops entering the areas found evidence of widespread killings of civilians. Russia denies any war crimes and has alleged Ukraine has faked the incidents.

Since the talks in Turkey, Russia and Ukraine's delegations have continued talks via video link.

The International Committee of the Red Cross says one of its teams in Ukraine has led some 500 people who fled Mariupol on their own initiative in a humanitarian convoy of buses and private cars to a safer location in the embattled country.

The ICRC says its team that has been trying to enter Mariupol since last Friday got within 20 km (12 miles) of the

besieged city, but security conditions made it impossible to enter. The convoy escorted the civilians from coastal Berdyansk to Zaporizhzhia, to the north.

"This convoy's arrival to Zaporizhzhia is a huge relief for hundreds of people who have suffered immensely and are now in a safer location," said Pascal Hundt, ICRC's head of delegation in Ukraine. "It's clear, though, that thousands more civilians trapped inside Mariupol need safe passage out and aid to come in." He said the Geneva-based organisation remains available as "a neutral intermediary" to help escort civilians out of Mariupol "once concrete agreements and security conditions allow it."

The aid group Doctors without Borders says its staff have witnessed an attack on a hospital in the Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv.

The group, known by its French acronym MSF, said Wednesday that a four-member team had just entered the city's cancer hospital when the area came under fire.

It quoted team leader Michel-Olivier Lacharite saying Monday's attack lasted about 10 minutes. Upon leaving the hospital the team saw several injured people and dead bodies.

Lacharite was quoted as saying the bombardment of the hospital, located in a residential area, was likely to have caused civilian casualties and called on medical facilities not to be targeted.

The group didn't provide



information on which side in the war might have carried out the attack. Under international law, attacks on medical facilities and workers are deemed war crimes.

Italian firefighters have put out a fire at a villa on Lake Como reportedly owned by the pro-Putin Russian television personality Vladimir Solovyev, who has been hit with European Union sanctions.

An official at the Como fire station confirmed that firefighters extinguished the early morning blaze Wednesday at the villa in Menaggio, one of the picturesque towns that dot the lake in northern Italy.

He said police were investigating the fire as a suspected act of protest. The villa was under renovation and the blaze involved tires at the site, said the official who declined to be identified by name, citing official policy.

Italian daily Corriere della Sera and news agency LaPresse said the villa was owned by Solovyev, a presenter on state run Channel One.

According to the EU list of sanctions, Solovyev is "known for his extremely hostile attitude towards Ukraine and praise of the Russian government." The EU says he was targeted because of his support for "actions or policies which undermine the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine."

Italian carabinieri are investigating. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has accused Russia of using hunger as a weapon of war by deliberately targeting Ukraine's essential food supplies.

In an address to Irish lawmakers Wednesday, Zelenskyy said Russian forces "are destroying things that are sustaining livelihoods" including food storage depots, blocking ports so Ukraine could not export food and "putting mines into the fields."

"For them hunger is also a weapon, a weapon against us ordinary people," he said, accusing Russia of "deliberately provoking a food crisis" in Ukraine, a major global producer of staples including wheat and sunflower oil.

He said it would have international ramifications, because "there will be a shortage of food and the prices will go up, and this is reality for the millions of people who are hungry, and it will be more difficult for them to feed their families". Zelenskyy spoke by video to a joint session of Ireland's two houses of parliament, the latest in a string of international addresses he has used to rally support for Ukraine.

# China for probe into Bucha killings

AP ■ BEIJING

China on Wednesday said images of civilian deaths in the Ukrainian town of Bucha are "deeply disturbing" but that no blame should be apportioned until all facts are known.

Emerging evidence of what appeared to be widespread civilian massacres in the wake of Russian withdrawals from the Kyiv areas may complicate Beijing's attempts to guide public opinion over the conflict, in which China has refused to criticise Moscow.

China supports all initiatives and measures "conducive to alleviating the humanitarian crisis" in the country, and is "ready to continue to work together with the international community to prevent any harm to civilians," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters at a daily briefing.

"The truth and the cause of the incident must be verified," Zhao said. "All parties should exercise restraint and avoid unfounded accusations before a conclusion of the investigation is drawn."

Zhao's remarks echo those of China's ambassador to the United Nations, Zhang Jun, who earlier called for an investigation, also describing the reports and images of civilian deaths in Bucha as "deeply disturbing".

"The relevant circumstances and specific causes of the incident should be verified and established," Zhang said in remarks to the Security Council on Tuesday, adding that, "before the full picture is clear, all sides should exercise restraint and avoid unfounded accusations."

China has called for talks while refusing to crit-



icize Russia. It opposes economic sanctions on Moscow and blames Washington and NATO for provoking the war and fuelling the conflict by sending arms to Ukraine.

The entirely ruling Communist Party-controlled media have largely stuck to a pro-Moscow narrative, including repeating Russian disinformation and unfounded conspiracy theories about issues such as alleged American-Ukrainian bioweapons production.

Zhao repeated China's objections to sanctions, while accusing the US of having manipulated the sit-

uation to "profit from the chaos and make a lot of money". "History and reality have proven that sanctions do not bring peace and security, but only bring lose-lose or multiple losses, adding to the already difficult world economy and impacting the existing world economic system," Zhao said.

The hashtag "China expresses Bucha death incident must be thoroughly investigated" was a trending topic on Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter, with nearly 30 million views and more than 500 discussions by afternoon Wednesday.

Despite the pro-Russian stance of authorities who regularly censor postings, opinions were divided between support for Moscow, demands Russia be held accountable, accusations of untrustworthiness against the West and Ukraine, and calls for an impartial investigation.

"This is merely a play acted out by the Americans and Ukrainian Nazis in an attempt to divert public opinion, but people of the world with eyes and hearts won't ignore the facts of the US and Ukraine researching bio weapons," read one posting signed "Understands the Cold War Better Than America".

The Russian Embassy in Beijing also made use of the platform to reject the accusations, while its Ukrainian counterpart drew attention to "Russian war crimes against civilians in Irpin," another town where atrocities allegedly occurred.

Prior to the Feb 24 war, China had dismissed talk of a Russian invasion as "fake news" and US fear-mongering. Since then, it has claimed to be holding to an independent, and often contradictory,

## Russian media campaign claims Bucha deaths fake

AP ■ WASHINGTON

As gruesome videos and photos of bodies emerge from the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, Kremlin-backed media are denouncing them as an elaborate hoax — a narrative that journalists in Ukraine have shown to be false.

Denouncing news as fake or spreading false reports to sow confusion and undermine its adversaries are tactics that Moscow has used for years and refined with the advent of social media in places like Syria.

In detailed broadcasts to millions of viewers, correspondents and hosts of Russian state TV channels said Tuesday that some photo and video evidence of the killings were fake while others showed that Ukrainians were responsible for the bloodshed.

"Among the first to appear were these Ukrainian shots, which show how a soulless body suddenly moves its hand," a report Monday on Russia-1's evening news broadcast declared. "And in the rearview mirror it is noticeable that the dead seem to be starting to rise even."

But satellite images from early March show the dead were left out on the streets of Bucha for weeks. On April 2, a video taken from a moving car was posted online by a Ukrainian lawyer showing those same bodies scattered along Yablonska Street in Bucha.

## In Bucha, burned, piled bodies among latest horrors

AP ■ BUCHA

One blackened body had arms raised in supplication, the face contorted in a horrible scream. The skull of another had a bullet hole in the left temple. The small blackened foot of a child could be seen in the tangle of charred bodies piled together in Bucha, the town outside of Kyiv where graphic evidence of killings and torture has emerged following the withdrawal of Russian forces.

The six burned and blackened corpses were just the latest gruesome scene to emerge from Bucha as world leaders push for Russia to be held accountable, including for possible war crimes.

It was not clear who the people were or under what circumstances they were killed.

The pile of bodies, seen by Associated Press journalists Tuesday, was just off a residential street, near a colorful and empty playground, visible to passersby as they warily went outdoors to collect aid.

In a house nearby, the twisted and bloody body of a young man who had been shot to death lay in the basement entrance. At least four other bodies lay strewn in the street, one with the eye gouged out, apparently by a bullet.

"It's horrible," said Ukrainian Interior Minister

Denys Monastyrsky at the scene, which included other journalists. The minister said Russian President Vladimir Putin should "go to hell."

Andriy Nebytov, head of police in the Kyiv region, noted one of the charred bodies was a child. The AP has seen dozens of dead bodies around Bucha, where Russian forces withdrew in the past week. The images, which included some with their arms bound, have horrified the world.

Many victims appeared to have been shot at close range, some in the head. At least two had their hands tied.

High-resolution satellite imagery from Maxar Technologies showed that many of the bodies had been lying in the open for weeks, during the time that Russian forces were in the town.

Ukrainian officials have said the bodies of at least 410 civilians have been found in towns around Kyiv that were recaptured from Russian forces in recent days.

The Ukrainian prosecutor-general's office has described one room discovered in Bucha as a "torture chamber."

The grisly images of battered and burned corpses left out in the open or hastily buried has led to calls for tougher sanctions against the Kremlin, especially a cutoff of fuel imports from Russia.

## UK to donate fleet of ambulances for urgent care in Ukraine

PTI ■ LONDON

A fleet of the UK's National Health Service (NHS) ambulances will provide urgent care for those injured in Ukraine in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, the UK government said on Wednesday.

The donation of around 20 NHS ambulances is aimed at bringing vital lifesaving care to Ukrainians remaining in towns and cities reported to be facing Russian bombardments.

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said its donation will help replace those Ukrainian ambulances lost in attacks and bolster resilience as the "barbaric" conflict goes on.

"We have sadly seen day after day the horrific impacts of Putin's cruel war on the people of Ukraine, including evidence of appalling acts by Russian troops in towns such as Irpin and Bucha," said UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss.

"The UK has been among the biggest aid donors, providing food, medicines and generators to help those affected. These world class NHS ambulances will now help bring lifesaving care directly to those injured in the conflict," she said.

The South Central Ambulance Service NHS

Foundation Trust (SCAS) is donating four of its ambulances, with further donations from NHS trusts across the UK to follow.

"The UK government has stood shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine and provided them with the lifesaving medical equipment they need," said UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid.

"The invasion has damaged key medical infrastructure and the generous donation of four ambulances by South Central Ambulance Service will ensure people in Ukraine can receive urgent care. It marks the first of many ambulances the UK government and the NHS is donating to Ukraine in the coming days," he said.

The first set of ambulances will arrive in Ukraine this week, destined for Lviv in the west of the country, where they will be transported on to those areas most in need.

"Ambulance Trusts around the country have been rallying to provide ambulances and we in SCAS are immensely humbled to also be able to support those in need in Ukraine. We hope that this small gesture goes some way to helping provide immediate frontline healthcare support to the many people who desperately need it," added Paul Kempster, SCAS Chief Operating Officer.

# Killing of civilians could bring more sanctions

AP ■ KYIV

Western governments were preparing on Wednesday to impose tougher sanctions against Russia, as Ukraine documents and investigates widespread killings of civilians and other alleged war crimes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy kept up demands for war-crimes trials for Russian troops and their leaders while warning they were regrouping for fresh assaults on Ukraine's east and south.

The Ukraine military said Russia was preparing for an offensive in Ukraine's east, with the aim "to establish complete control over the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions."

Overnight, Russian forces attacked a fuel depot and a factory in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region, the region's governor Valentyn Reznichenko said on the messaging app Telegram early Wednesday.

The number of casualties was unclear.

"The night was alarming and difficult. The enemy attacked our area from the air and hit the oil depot and one of the plants. The oil depot with fuel was destroyed. Rescuers are still putting out the flames at the plant," Reznichenko wrote.

Police in the Romanian capital Bucharest said a car rammed the gate of the Russian Embassy early Wednesday, bursting into flames and killing the driver. There was no imme-



diate information on a possible motive or other details.

In Ukraine's eastern Luhansk region, shelling of Rubizhne city on Tuesday killed one person and injured five more, its governor Serhiy Haidai said on Telegram.

Parts of Donetsk and Luhansk have been under control of Russia-backed rebels since 2014 and are recognized by Moscow as independent states. So far, Ukrainian forces have been holding back Russian troops trying to push east but remain outnumbered in both troops and equipment, Zelenskyy said in a video address to his country late Tuesday.

Evidence of what appears to be intentional killings of civilians in Bucha and other towns before Russian forces withdrew from the outskirts of Kyiv has drawn a global outcry. Western nations have expelled scores of Moscow's diplomats and are expected to roll out more sanctions Wednesday.

They would include a ban

on all new investment in Russia, a senior US administration official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the upcoming announcement.

The EU's executive branch, meanwhile, proposed a ban on coal imports from Russia, worth an estimated 4 billion euros (USD 4.4 billion) per year. It would be the first time the 27-nation bloc has sanctioned the country's lucrative energy industry over the war.

In an address Tuesday to the UN Security Council, Zelenskyy said civilians in towns around Kyiv were tortured, shot in the back of the head, thrown down wells, blown up with grenades in their apartments and crushed to death by tanks while in cars.

Those who carried out the killings and those who gave the orders "must be brought to justice immediately for war crimes" in front of a tribunal similar to the one established at Nuremberg after World War II, he said.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Kabita Mitra D/o Late Sh. Chitta Ranjan Das Cont. 9560423366 Email: mgobinda@yahoo.co.in R/o DDALIG Flat No.113, G.F. Pocket-2, Sector-14, Dwarka, New Delhi is the owner of DDA LIG Flat No.113, G.F., Pocket-2, Sector-14, Dwarka, New Delhi has applied conversion of aforesaid property from lease hold to freehold in DDA. Original DDA Possession Letter and NOC for Electricity and Water issued by DDA, of aforesaid property have been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in police station on dated 06.02.2022. Any person claiming any right, having any objection or found in possession of original document may write/contact with above named person at above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and can personally contact: Deputy Director LAB(H) LIG, D-Block, 2nd Floor, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

In the Court of Sh. Shirish Aggarwal Administrative Civil Judge-cum-Additional Rent Controller (Central), Delhi Court Room No. 28, Ground Floor, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi SC No. 35/2022 Ashok Sharma Versus The State & Ors. Sh. Ashok Sharma S/o Late Sh. Ram Sharan Sharma R/o H.No. 3619, First Floor, Mori Gate, Delhi-110006

Petitioner FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925 To All Concerned Whereas in the above noted petition the applicant/ petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, in respect of the debt and securities of Rs. . As per record to be standing in the name of Kidar Nath Trust deceased. Whereas the 18-04-2022 at 10' o'clock in the forenoon has been fixed for hearing or the application notice is hereby given to all concerned. Given under my hand and the seal of the court on this 05-04-2022.

Sd/ SHIRISH AGGARWAL Administrative Civil Judge-cum-Additional Rent Controller (Central), Delhi

Seal

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

## E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLCL Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com) & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments/ corrigendum etc.

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| (A) | 1. 31/CGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/21-22- M/O STP-54 (Two Year repair of PVC/M.S. Irrigation lines in different part & green belt of connected Sectors for STP-54) Noida. Cost: 47.64 Lac |
|     | 2. 32/CGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/21-22- M/O STP (S/F 500 KVA DG Set with shed & Platform for 54 MLD SPS in STP-Compound, Sector-54) Noida. Cost: 48.98 Lac                              |

Which can be uploaded by date 13.04.2022 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened /downloaded on date 18.04.2022 at 11.00 AM.

Principal General Manager NOIDA

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

## Public Notice

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the ALLOTMENT of following unit which was allotted to the allottees mentioned herein below in the project- Amanvilas, Sector-89, Faridabad, STANDS CANCELLED in our records, due to breach of the terms of the allotment agreement, i.e. NON-PAYMENT of the requisite agreed installments despite several demand letters, reminders and cancellation notices. Hence the Buyers Agreement for the said unit executed in favour of said allottees ALSO STAND CANCELLED.

S. No.	Name of Allottee	Plot/ Unit No.	Project Name	Buyers Agreement Date	Cancellation Letter Date
1	Narendra Chawla/ Ruchi Arora	OC/B/208/P Area-312 SqYd	Amanvilas, Sector-89, Faridabad	02-01-2017	20-07-2021

All the members of the General Public are hereby informed not to deal or carry out any transaction with allottees/anyone with respect to the said unit. As the allotment of the said unit stand cancelled in the records of the company, the company shall be at liberty to alienate/sell/book/allot the said unit to any other third party, as the company has already offered the repayment of disbursed amount of loan to ICICI Bank and allottee.

Dated : 07, April 2022 Sd/- Puri Construction Pvt. Ltd. Fantabulous Town Planners Pvt. Ltd. 4-7B, GF, Tolstoy House, Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh. Delhi-110005

## PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(6)] Notice for sale of immovable assets E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of movable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Rajesh Kumar (Borrower), Mrs. Ratnavali (Co-Borrower) LBBWD00002987335	Plot No-178, Plot-S Khasra No-556 557 558 559, Shree Paras Residency Vill Patan Kala Teh Tijara, Bhiwadi, Rajasthan. area: 908.55 Sq.ft	Rs. 6.44, 301.06 as on March 29, 2022	Rs. 7,20,000/- Rs. 72,000/-	April 12, 2022, From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 PM	April 29, 2022, From 11:00 AM Onwards

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>) of our auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till April 28, 2022 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh. Delhi-110005, and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before April 28, 2022 before 05:00 PM along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh. Delhi-110005 on or before April 28, 2022 before 05:00 P.M. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8657476284 or M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited on 9710029933/9810029926/0124233933 Please note that Marketing agencies1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit [www.icicibank.com/n4p4s](http://www.icicibank.com/n4p4s)

Date: April 07, 2022 Place: Delhi/ NCR Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited



# Agri export touches record USD 50 bn mark in 2021-22

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's agriculture exports have touched an all time high of USD 50 billion in 2021-22. As per the provisional figures released by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), the agricultural exports have grown by 19.92 per cent during 2021-22 to touch USD 50.21 billion.

As per the data, wheat exports jumped nearly four-fold from \$568 million in 2020-21 to touch \$2.12 billion in 2021-22.

"Highest ever exports have been achieved for staples like rice (USD 9.65 billion), wheat (USD 2.19 billion), sugar (USD 4.6 billion) and other cereals (USD 1.08 billion).

Wheat has recorded an unprecedented growth of more than 273%, jumping nearly four-fold from \$568 million in 2020-21 to touch close to \$2119 million in 2021-22," the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement on Wednesday.

The ministry data said that increase in exports of these products has benefitted farmers in states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra etc. India has captured nearly 50% of the world market for rice.

The growth rate is remark-



able as it is over and above the growth of 17.66 per cent, at \$41.87 billion, achieved in 2020-21 and has been recorded despite unprecedented logistical challenges in the form of high freight rates, container shortages etc.

Notably, India's merchandise exports spurt to a record high of USD 418 billion in the 2021-22 fiscal on higher shipments of petroleum products, engineering goods, gem and jewellery and chemicals.

Export of marine products, at USD 7.71 billion, is also the highest ever, benefitting farmers in the coastal states of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Spices exports has touched USD 4 billion for second year in a row. Despite facing tremendous supply side issues,

coffee exports have crossed USD 1 billion for the first time, which has improved realisations for coffee growers in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic during first quarter of 2020 resulted in increased demand for staples, which provided an opportunity for increasing agriculture exports. Because of the institutional framework, already in place at State and district levels, and special efforts made to overcome the pandemic-induced bottlenecks, India was able to rise to the occasion and emerge as a reliable supplier of food.

Even during the current crisis due to Russia-Ukraine war, the world is looking at India for supplies of wheat and other food grains.

# India to grow at 7.5% in FY-23 on strong investment, to rise to 8% next fiscal: ADB

**New Delhi:** India is likely to maintain its position as the fastest-growing major economy with the ADB outlook projecting a growth rate of 7.5 per cent for 2022-23 on strong investment prospects against 5 per cent for China in January-December 2022.

The Asian Development Bank Outlook 2022 said that India's growth in the next fiscal year 2023-24 will accelerate further to 8 per cent, though China will witness a deceleration in growth to 4.8 per cent in 2023.

The ADB, however, flagged inflation as a major issue mainly on account of a rise in prices of commodities in wake of the ongoing Russia Ukraine war.

In its India Chapter, ADB said: "GDP is forecast to grow by 7.5 per cent in FY2022 (fiscal to be ending in March 2023) and 8 per cent in FY2023 (to be ending in March 2024), driven by strong investment growth, with public investment helping crowd-in private investment.

FY2022 refers to the 12 months ending 31 March 2023, ADB said about the India chapter. The Indian economy expanded by 8.9 per cent in the fiscal ended March 2021. China posted a growth rate of 8.1 per cent in 2021.

"Economies in developing Asia are starting to find their footing as they slowly emerge

from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic," ADB Chief Economist Albert Park said.

"However, geopolitical uncertainty and new COVID-19 outbreaks and virus variants could derail this momentum. Governments in the region will need to remain vigilant and prepared to take steps to counter these risks. That includes making sure as many people as possible are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Monetary authorities should also continue to monitor their inflation situation closely and not fall behind the curve," Park said. In the report, the Manila-based multilateral funding agency said the growth in South Asia is projected to slow to 7 per cent in 2022, before picking up to 7.4 per cent in 2023. The subregion's growth dynamics are largely driven by India and Pakistan, it added. Pakistan's growth is forecast to moderate to 4 per cent in 2022 on weaker domestic demand from monetary tightening and fiscal consolidation before picking up to 4.5 per cent in 2023, it said. Developing Asia's economies are predicted to grow by 5.2 per cent this year and 5.3 per cent in 2023, thanks to a robust recovery in domestic demand and continued expansion in exports, ADB said. Developing Asia comprises 46

member countries of ADB by geographic group: the Caucasus and Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

ADB said the Russian invasion of Ukraine poses the most severe risk to developing Asia's economic outlook. However, uncertainties stemming from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the continuing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and monetary tightening by the US Federal Reserve pose risks to the outlook.

"The war is already affecting economies in the region through sharp increases in prices for commodities such as oil, and has heightened instability in global financial markets. COVID-19 continues to impact many parts of developing Asia, with some economies experiencing new surges in cases," according to ADO 2022. For India, it said the growth outlook assumes sustained progress in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccinations and that any new variants of the virus are of limited severity.

It also factors in the impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine—primarily higher global oil and commodity prices that will contribute to rising inflation and a widening of the current account deficit, it added. **PTI**

# CNG prices in Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat see steep hike

**New Delhi:** CNG prices in Delhi, Mumbai and Gujarat on Wednesday saw steep hikes after the government raised input natural gas prices to record levels.

Mahanagar Gas Limited (MGL) raised compressed natural gas (CNG) price by Rs 7 per kg to Rs 67 per kg in Mumbai while Gujarat Gas hiked rates by Rs 6.5 per kg to Rs 76.98.

In the national capital, Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL) raised CNG price by another Rs 2.5 per kg, taking the total increase in rates in the last one month to about Rs 10 per kg.

CNG in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi now costs Rs 66.61 per kg, according to the information posted on the website of Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL) - the firm which retails CNG and piped cooking gas in the national capital and adjoining cities.

According to MGL, the price of cooking gas piped to household kitchens too has been increased to Rs 41 per cubic meter in Mumbai.

There was no change in rates of piped cooking gas by Gujarat Gas or IGL. In Delhi, it costs Rs 41.61 per cubic meter.

Prices vary from city to city depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT.

The increases come on the back of the government move than doubling natural gas prices to USD 6.1 per million British thermal unit from April 1.

Natural gas when compressed becomes CNG for use as fuel in automobiles. The same gas is also piped to household kitchens and industries for cooking and other purposes.

The increase in CNG prices follows Rs 10 per litre hike in petrol and diesel prices in 16 days and a Rs 50 per cylinder raise in the cooking gas LPG rates.

A record 137-day hiatus in petrol and diesel price revision ended on March 22. On the same day, the price of a 14.2-kg LPG cylinder was increased to Rs 949.50 in the national capital. In some places, the LPG price has touched Rs 1,000.

Last week, MGL had announced a reduction in the retail price of CNG by Rs 6 per kg and piped gas by Rs 3.50 per scm, effective April 1 after the Maharashtra government cut VAT on the fuel from 13.5 per cent to 3 per cent.

Accordingly, the retail price of CNG was cut by Rs 6 to Rs 60 per kg and domestic piped natural gas (PNG) by Rs 3.50 to Rs 36 per standard cubic meter (scm) in and around Mumbai. However, the rates have now been increased. **PTI**

# Indian consumers ready for warning labels on packaged foods: Study



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A national study by leading social scientists revealed that Indian consumers are ready for warning labels on the front of packaged foods high in nutrients of concern.

The study comes at a time when after a hiatus of several years, FSSAI has once again initiated the process of drafting an Front-of-Package Label (FOPL) regulation.

Undertaken in the interest of public health by the Indian Institute of Population Sciences, India's premier research and learning institute known for its landmark surveys like the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Longitudinal Ageing Survey of India (LASI), the field research was conducted in early 2022.

Calling it timely and scientific, one of the principal investigators of the study Dr SK Singh, Professor at IIPS, Mumbai, said, "Visually arresting, simple, negative warning labels will convey information about the healthfulness of a product and at the same time influence purchasing decisions."

# Air Asia to resume Malaysia, Thailand flights this month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AirAsia on Wednesday said it is resuming flights connecting India with Malaysia and Thailand from this month. After two years of coronavirus-induced suspension, India resumed regular international flights on March 27. In a press release, Malaysian carrier AirAsia said flights will gradually resume on six routes between India and Malaysia.

While the flights on Bengaluru-Kuala Lumpur and Chennai-Kuala Lumpur routes began on April 1, the flight on the Tiruchirappalli-Kuala Lumpur route began on April 5, it mentioned.

The flights on Kochi-Kuala Lumpur, Kolkata-Kuala Lumpur and Hyderabad-Kuala Lumpur routes will commence from April 18, April 23 and May 1, respectively, it noted.



The Malaysian carrier said flights on five India-Thailand routes will begin in May.

The flights on Bengaluru-Bangkok, Chennai-Bangkok, Kolkata-Bangkok, Kochi-Bangkok and Jaipur Bangkok will commence on May 4, May 4, May 2, May 1 and May 1, respectively, it mentioned. AirAsia is different from AirAsia India airline, which is based out of India and owned by the Tata group.

# Govt defers proposal to merge BSNL, MTNL

**New Delhi:** The government has deferred the merger of state-run telecom firms BSNL and MTNL due to financial reasons, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

Minister of State for Communications Devusinh Chauhan in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha said that a proposal for the merger of Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is under examination.

"Government has approved the revival plan of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) on October 23, 2019, which inter-alia includes in-principle approval for the merger of MTNL and BSNL.

Due to financial reasons including high debt of MTNL, the merger of MTNL with

BSNL is deferred," Chauhan said.

BSNL Chairman and managing director PK Purwar, who also heads MTNL, has submitted before a Parliamentary panel that the Department of Telecom should consider carving out of over Rs 26,500 crore debt of MTNL and its assets under a special purpose vehicle.

He suggested that thereafter operations of MTNL should be merged with BSNL.

MTNL was earlier expected to turn profitable by 2020-21 and BSNL by 2023-24 after both PSUs were jointly given a relief package of around Rs 70,000 crore in 2019.

"With Rs 26,000 crore debt, even if God comes to earth and tries to address its problems, the company cannot be revived. It is a fact of life; we have to accept it," MTNL CMD told the panel. **PTI**

# Reliance sets up free EV charging infra for employees

**New Delhi:** In a first, billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has set up electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure at its Mumbai campus to allow employees to charge their EVs free of cost.

The company's HR on Wednesday sent mailers to employees informing about the Jio-bp pulse EV charging zone at its Navi Mumbai campus, Reliance Corporate Park (RCP). "Charge your electric vehicle at RCP @ no cost!" the mailer said detailing the process of accessing the facility.

The charging station set up by Jio-bp - the company's fuel retailing joint venture with British energy giant bp - is in line with the firm's promise to achieve net carbon neutrality.

Reliance is likely to create such infrastructure at other campuses too. According to the email by HR, the Jio bp pulse facility will be available to Reliance employees to charge their electric vehicles free of cost. The Jio bp pulse zone at Reliance Corporate Park presently includes six chargers of different configurations to cater to both electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers. Reliance employees need to register through the Jio bp pulse Charge mobile app and scan the QR code on the charging unit to start the EV charging session, it said.

Reliance BP Mobility Limited, operating under the brand name Jio-bp, is working with multiple demand aggregators, OEMs and technology partners with a vision of being the leading EV charging infrastructure player in India. During 2021, Jio-bp constructed and launched one of the country's largest EV charging hubs in Dwarka, Delhi with BluSmart as its primary customer. **PTI**

# Govt forms advisory committee for Semicon India

**New Delhi:** The Government has formed an advisory committee to drive the ₹72,000-crore project, Semicon India, to make the country a global leader in semiconductor manufacturing, design and innovation, an official statement said on Wednesday.

The panel formed under the chairmanship of electronics and telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw includes

venture capitalist Vinod Dham, who led Intel's iconic Pentium microprocessor from inception, and Arogyaswami Paulraj, who invested in MIMO wireless communication that is used in 4G technology.

"The newly-formed Advisory Committee shall steer the objectives in a structured, efficient, and strategic manner, and provide necessary guidance to the ISM executives. It

shall also provide insights and suggestions to develop a sustainable semiconductor and Display ecosystem in India," the statement said.

The committee is mandated to provide key inputs for building a resilient supply chain, promoting investments, financing mechanisms, global engagement, research and innovation, and IP generation for the semiconductors. **PTI**

# PM food security projects checked poverty levels during pandemic: IMF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released a paper, "Pandemic, Poverty, and Inequality: Evidence from India", which said that extreme poverty was below one per cent in the pre pandemic year 2019 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's food security project — the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKY) — has prevented a rise in extreme poverty levels in India during the Covid-19 pandemic. Under the extended PMGKY, each beneficiary will get an additional 5 kg free ration per person per month in addition to the normal quota of foodgrains under the National Food Security Act.

According to the IMF paper titled 'Pandemic, Poverty and Inequality: Evidence from India', authored by Surjit Bhalla, Karan Bhasin and

Arvind Virmani, found that extreme poverty in the country was less than 1 per cent in the pre-pandemic year 2019, and food transfers were instrumental in ensuring that it remained at that low level in the pandemic year 2020.

"Extreme poverty was as low as 0.8 per cent in the pre-pandemic year 2019, and food transfers were instrumental in ensuring that it remained at that low level in pandemic year 2020," the paper said adding that "Extreme poverty (less than PPP\$ 1.9 per person per day) in India is less than one per cent in 2019 and it remained at that level even during the pandemic year 2020".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has extended the PMGKY by six months till September 2022. The government has spent approximately Rs 2.60 lakh crore so far on the scheme and another Rs 80,000

crore will be spent over the next six months till September 2022, taking the total expenditure under PMGKY to nearly Rs 3.40 lakh crore.

It noted that it remained at the same level even during the pandemic year 2020. The report noted that the low level of extreme poverty in two consecutive years, including the pandemic year, could be considered the elimination of extreme poverty. Furthermore, the study found that subsidy adjustments on poverty are striking. The Gini Coefficient -- used to measure real inequality declined to near its lowest level reached in the last forty years. It was .284 in 1993/94 and in 2020-21 it reached .292. The paper attributed this to the incorporation of food subsidies into the calculation of poverty.

"Extreme poverty has stayed below 1 per cent for the last three years," the study said.

# Bal Adhaars: UIDAI spent avoidable ₹310 cr till Mar 2019

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has incurred avoidable expenditure of ₹310 crore on issue of 'Bal Aadhars' till 31 March 2019. The UIDAI needs to review the issue of Aadhaar to minor children below five years and find alternate ways to establish their unique identity, especially since the Supreme Court has stated that no benefit will be denied to any child for want of Aadhaar document.

This has been revealed in the performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) of the functioning of the UIDAI for the period from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

In a report submitted to the Parliament, the CAG said that

the issue of Aadhaar numbers to minor children below the age of five, based on the biometrics of their parents, without confirming uniqueness of biometric identity goes against the basic tenet of the Aadhaar Act. "Apart from being violative of the statutory provisions, the UIDAI has also incurred avoidable expenditure of Rs 310 crore on issue of Bal Aadhars till 31 March 2019.

In Phase- II of ICT assistance a further sum of Rs 288.11 Crore was released upto the year 2020-21 to states/schools primarily for issue of Aadhaars to minor children," the report said.

The report said that all Aadhaar numbers were not paired with the documents relating to personal information of their holders.

# CAG: Poor contract management delayed Indo-Nepal road projects, raised cost

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The performance audit of the Indo-Nepal border roads project between 2010-2018-19 brings out inadequacies in planning and financial management, which, coupled with poor contract management and execution of works led to undue delays and cost enhancement.

In a report submitted to the Parliament, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India said that the Central government in November 2010 took up the construction of 1,377 km of roads along the Indo-Nepal Border in Bihar (564 km), Uttar Pradesh (640 km) and Uttarakhand (173 km) at a cost of Rs 3,853 crore.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) released the funds aggregating Rs 1,709.17 crore to these states as of March 31, 2021. The timeline

for completion of the project was March 2016, but it was subsequently extended to December 2022.

On project planning and execution, the CAG said that in West Champaran (Bihar), the proposed alignment approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in September 2010 was in proximity with the India-Nepal Border (INB) touching Valmikinagar, which was on the northernmost side of the wildlife reserve area.

Although the wildlife clearance under single-window system was available for the border road, presuming that wildlife clearance would not be given by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF), Road Construction Department (RCD) did not apply for the same and changed the alignment (April 2011), the CAG said.

The alignment was shift-

ed to the southernmost boundary (April 2011) of the wildlife reserve area more than 20 km away from the international border, it said, adding the shifting did not serve the purpose of border road, as it was beyond the patrolling jurisdiction of the SSB, which guards the border.

As on March 2021, 363 BOPs (81 per cent) were away from the main alignment of the proposed border road. Out of 363 BOPs, 125 BOPs were away at a distance of ranging one km to 20 km and 16 were away at a distance of more than 20 km.

No provision was made to provide connectivity to such BOPs which were away from the proposed border road, the CAG observed.

Fifteen bridges were constructed in the alignment of the roads along the Indo-Nepal border in Bettiah (West Champaran District) of Bihar before August 2016.



# LIVERPOOL PUT 3 PAST BENFICA

AP ■ LISBON

Liverpool took charge of their Champions League quarter-final against Benfica on Tuesday as Sadio Mane, Ibrahima Konate and Luis Diaz gave them a 3-1 lead after the first leg in Lisbon.

Konate nodded in his first Liverpool goal from a corner before Mane tapped home to put Liverpool in command at the Estadio da Luz.

Benfica made a game of it early in the second half when a Konate error allowed the lively Darwin Nunez to pull one back, but Luis Diaz, who was superb all night, added a late third to put Liverpool in sight of the semis.

Liverpool will be supremely confident of finishing the job at Anfield next week, with Jurgen Klopp comfortable enough to take off Mohamed Salah, Mane and Thiago Alcantara after an hour.

Salah, in particular, was surely being preserved for Sunday, when Liverpool face Manchester City in what could prove to be the decisive match in the Premier League's neck-and-neck title race.

Benfica are dotted between a Liverpool-City league and cup double-header, with the FA Cup semi-final at Wembley coming after the second leg next week, before Klopp's team continue a crunch period with league games against Manchester United and local rivals Everton.

Liverpool's convincing victory may offer Klopp the luxury of rotating players for the return leg next week.

Klopp has been downplaying



suggestions Liverpool could yet win an historic quadruple this term.

"We are not favourites in one of the competitions we are in, but who cares? We will give it a try," he said in a press conference on Monday.

But this contest demonstrated

**Liverpool's convincing victory may offer Klopp the luxury of rotating players for the return leg next week**

the gulf between the Premier League's heavyweights and some of the old, European elite. Despite a 20-minute surge in the second half, Benfica were clearly second best.

They came into the tie dreaming of inflicting another upset, having already seen off Barcelona in the group stage and Ajax in the last

16, and they began with the intent of under-dogs, as Alex Grimaldo stirred the crowd with a thumping, sliding challenge.

But the initial exertion soon faded and Liverpool took control, the chances coming with increasing regularity as the first half wore on.

## De Bruyne gives Man City slender lead

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Kevin De Bruyne broke Atletico Madrid's stubborn resistance as the Manchester City midfielder's second-half strike clinched a 1-0 win in Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final first leg.

Pep Guardiola's side spent much of the night banging their heads against the red and white brick wall assembled by Atletico's massed defence at the Etihad Stadium.

But Guardiola sent on Phil Foden midway through the second half and his sublime pass teed up De Bruyne to finally reward City for their territorial dominance.

While Guardiola launched a water bottle in a frenzied celebration that underlined what a testing night it had been for his team, the City boss will know the tie is far from over.

At the start of a season-defining 11 days for treble-chasing City, this was a qualified success that justified their patient performance.

But Atletico have already knocked out Manchester United in the last 16 this season, while Liverpool fell victim to Diego Simeone's side when the Reds were the holders in 2019-20.

The Spanish champions will still believe they can cause another surprise in the second leg in Madrid on April 13.

City have no margin for error



over the next two weeks as the Premier League leaders host Liverpool, just a point behind them in the title race, on Sunday.

They head to Madrid next week before facing Liverpool again in the FA Cup semi-finals at Wembley three days later.

Guardiola has often been criticised for his curious team selections in previous Champions League knockout stages defeats with City.

That charge elicited a scathing response from Guardiola on Monday when he joked he always "over-thinks" his "stupid" tactics.

However, Guardiola's game-changing decision to introduce Foden should silence a few of his critics after it turned a difficult evening into a vital victory.



## Koeman to take over as Netherlands coach after WC

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Former Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman will take over as Netherlands boss from Louis van Gaal after this year's World Cup, the Dutch football federation said on Wednesday.

Van Gaal announced at the weekend that he had been receiving treatment for prostate cancer for the last two years but that he still hoped to lead the team at the finals that kick off in Qatar in November.

It will be 59-year-old Koeman's second term in charge of the Dutch national team after taking the reins from 2018 to 2020, when he left the post to become coach of Barcelona.

He was dismissed by the Spanish giants in October last year after 14 difficult months in

charge which included the departure of Lionel Messi to PSG as the club plunged into financial difficulties.

"I am looking forward to working together again. When I left the national team a year and a half ago, it was certainly not because I wasn't happy," Koeman said.

Marianne van Leeuwen, the director of professional football at the Dutch federation, said: "We're very happy that Ronald is coming back next year."

"During his last term in charge as national coach, his work and his results were very satisfying."

The Netherlands will play the opening match of the World Cup in Qatar against Senegal. They also have the host nation and Ecuador in their Group A.

## Priyanka's trike hands India victory against Egypt

PTI ■ ZARQA

Priyanka Devi scored the solitary goal as the Indian women's football team registered a 1-0 win over lower-ranked Egypt in the first friendly at the Prince Mohammed Stadium here on Wednesday.

It was Priyanka's first-ever goal for the Blue Tigresses against 95th ranked Egypt.

The first half began with the Indian side pressing hard to seize the initiative. Captain Ashalata Devi tried to earn an early lead in the 18th minute via her shot from distance but Anju, who latched on to the ball, missed the chance.

Couple of minutes later, Manisha almost scored the

first for the night through Dalima's pass from the right but was collected by the Egyptian custodian.

Before the opposition could settle into the game, a sudden strike by Priyanka in the 30th minute gave India the early lead, and remained the only goal of the match.

Dalima managed to pass the ball to Priyanka after Manisha essayed a brilliant cross from the left and eventually, the young midfielder found the back of the net. The half time score therefore read 1-0 in favour of India.

The second half was played out on similar lines with India creating more chances, as head coach Thomas Dennerby made



his first change at the restart, replacing forward Renu with Pyari Xaxa.

Ten minutes after the resumption, Pyari came close to scoring in the 53rd minute as she got on the end of a cross from Manisha with an excellent run, but the shot was saved by the keeper.

Couple of more substitutions followed as Sandhya came on in place of Anju Tamang, and Soumya and Ratanbala were introduced in place of Grace and Priyanka Devi respectively.

The prolific captain Engy Ahmed Sayed tried her luck from close range before the hour-mark, but Sowmiya stood tall to deny her confidently.

Hayam Abdellatif had the final effort for Egypt in the dying minutes of the game but her effort landed safely into Sowmiya's gloves.

The last change was made by Dennerby at the final minutes of the regulation time when Manisha was replaced by Mariyammal.

The match soon came to an end as India earned their first victory in Jordan.

This is the first match since the national team was forced to withdraw from the group stage of the AFC Asian Cup, which India hosted in January-February, after it failed to field a team due to a COVID-19 outbreak inside its bio-bubble in Mumbai.

## No quarantine but bio-bubble to be maintained at Women's Sr T20 Trophy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The players will not have to undergo mandatory quarantine, a norm over the past two seasons, but a bio-bubble will be maintained as Women's Senior T20 Trophy gets underway across six venues from April 18.

Players had to undergo a five-day quarantine ahead of the Ranji Trophy which took place in February-March after a two-year gap. Its second phase will be held post IPL.

With COVID caseload coming down drastically over the last couple of months, the BCCI has decided to do away with the quarantine protocol but bio-bubble will be in place and testing will take place regularly.



Majority of the India players who were part of the Women's World Cup squad in New Zealand are expected to take part in the domestic T20 competition.

In a communication to state units, the BCCI operations team wrote "there will be no mandatory quarantine but bio-bubble will be maintained. All teams will arrive at the respective venues with a negative rt-pcr test."

A BCCI official explained the updated COVID protocols to PTI.

"The only relaxation is the mandatory quarantine in hotel room. Players will be tested during the competition. They arrive on April 15 and train for the following days before the first game on 18th.

"In no way, we are lowering our guard when it comes to COVID. The quarantine protocol has been done away with for cost reasons and with virus situation under control. No player will be allowed to leave the hotel," the official said.

Five elite pools will have six teams each while the plate group will have seven teams. The matches will be played in Pondicherry, Trivandrum, Rajkot, Mohali, Ranchi and Guwahati. The knock outs will be played in Surat.

"Each venue will host three matches per day on two grounds. Two morning matches will start at 8.30 am and evening match will be played under lights from 4.30 pm," read the BCCI communication.

## Sindhu, Srikanth sail into Korea Open 2nd round

PTI ■ SUNGHEON

Top Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth made impressive starts to their respective singles campaign, progressing to the pre-quarterfinals with straight game wins over their respective opponents at the Korea Open Super 500 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, trounced USA's Lauren Lam 21-15, 21-14, while Srikanth saw off Malaysia's world no 35 Daren Liew 22-20, 21-11 at the Palma Stadium.

The third seeded Sindhu, who had claimed the Swiss Open title recently, will next meet Japan's Aya Ohori, while world championships Silver medallist Srikanth, seeded fifth, will be up against Israel's Misha Zilberman.

Indian men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty and MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila also



progressed to the second round.

While Satwik and Chirag got the better of Korea's Tae Yang Shin and Wang Chan 21-16, 21-15, Arjun and Dhruv got a walkover from Korea's Ba Da Kim and Hee Young Park.

Satwik and Chirag, seeded third, will take on Singapore's Hee Yong Kai Terry and Loh Kean Hean, while Arjun and Dhruv face second seeded Indonesian pair of Mohammad

Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan next.

Sri Krishna Priya Kudaravalli, however, bowed out after losing 5-21, 13-21 to second seeded Korean An Seyoung in an women's singles match.

On Tuesday, World C'ships Bronze medallist Lakshya Sen and fast-rising Malvika Bansod had entered the second round with three-game wins.

## Covid-free Vettel keen to start F1 season at last

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Sebastian Vettel on Wednesday said that it felt like "arriving late to school" as he starts his season at the Australian Grand Prix this week after missing the opening two races.

Germany's four-time world champion was ruled out of the Bahrain and Saudi Arabia grand prix last month with coronavirus.

"After testing positive and missing the first two races, it feels a bit like arriving late to school so I'm really keen to get going again," said Vettel, who has triumphed three times in Melbourne.

F1's youngest world champion is now, at 34, in his 15th full season. He first won at Albert Park in 2011 driving a Red Bull, then did so in 2017 and 2018 when at Ferrari.

He will have plenty of catching up to do in terms of learning about his Aston Martin car after limited pre-season testing and with most of his rivals hav-



ing two races under their belts.

"For me, after nearly a month out of the car, it will be important to learn throughout the practice sessions and I hope we can take some steps forward in what is usually an exciting and unpredictable race," said Vettel.

His replacement while he was out with Covid, reserve driver Nico Hulkenberg, finished 17th and last in Bahrain and then 12th in Saudi Arabia.

## Four Indian boxers enter finals of Thailand Open

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian pugilists Ashish Kumar, Govind Sahani, Varinder Singh and Monika entered the finals of their respective events at the Thailand Open International Boxing Tournament in Phuket on Wednesday.

Ashish, who won Gold medal in the last edition in the 75kg class, lived up to his billing and produced a flawless performance to register an easy 5-0 win over Maikhel Roberdd Muskita of Indonesia in the men's 81kg semifinal bout.

In the men's 48kg category, Govind had to work hard against Vietnam's Nguyen Linh Phung as the bout witnessed heavy exchange of punches but the Indian took the charge of the contest in time and tilted the result in his favour by a split 4-1 decision.

In the men's 60kg semifinals, Varinder was given a walkover by Palestine's Abdel Rahman Abunab.



Among women, 26-year-old Monika, who upstaged two-time

World Championships medallist Josie Gabuco in the previous round, also looked solid against Tran Thi Diem Kieu from Vietnam in the 48kg last-four bout as she notched up an equally domi-

nating win by unanimous decision without breaking a sweat.

Meanwhile in the men's quarterfinal bouts played earlier in the day, Amit Panghal emerged victorious while Rohit Mor (57kg) crashed out with a 0-5 loss to Thailand's Rujakran Juntrong.





the pioneer

INDIAN  
PREMIER LEAGUE

2022

12

Tilak has shown a lot of potential in both the innings he has played for Mumbai Indians. I am impressed looking at his wide range of shots- front foot, back foot, sweep

— RAVI SHASTRI

## Cummins keeps MI winless

Pat scores joint-fastest IPL fifty in 14 balls to help KKR thrash Mumbai

## ▶ pointstable

Po.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	KKR	4	3	1	0	6	1.102
2.	RR	3	2	1	0	4	1.218
3.	GT	2	2	0	0	4	0.495
4.	PBKS	3	2	1	0	4	0.238
5.	LSG	3	2	1	0	4	0.193
6.	RCB	3	2	1	0	4	0.159
7.	DC	2	1	1	0	2	0.065
8.	CSK	3	0	3	0	0	-1.251
9.	MI	3	0	3	0	0	-1.362
10.	SRH	2	0	2	0	0	-1.825

## ▶ boundarymeter

4s	387
6s	214

PTI ■ PUNE

Premier pacer Pat Cummins shone with the bat like never before, equalling the record for the fastest fifty in the IPL, including amassing 35 in an over, as Kolkata Knight Riders crushed Mumbai Indians by five wickets here on Wednesday.

Cummins blazed away to his fifty in just 14 balls, joining KL Rahul on the top of the leaderboard, while opener Venkatesh Iyer batted through the innings for his unbeaten 41-ball 50, as KKR completed a chase of 162 with as many as four overs to spare.

It was unbelievable stuff from Cummins as KKR, needing 35 from 30 balls, got them all in just six deliveries with the Australian Test captain hitting six sixes and four boundaries in his 15-ball 56.

Daniel Sams bore the brunt of Cummins' onslaught the most, conceding 35 runs in the 16th over, which sealed it for KKR.



Together with Iyer, Cummins, who came in at number six, shared 61 runs in just 2.1 overs to overhaul MI's total of 161 for four.

MI, thus, slumped to their third defeat in as many matches.

KKR made a sedate start reaching 16 off the first four overs. The wickets of Ajinkya Rahane and skipper Shreyas Iyer made life difficult for KKR as they slumped to 35 for two in the sixth over.

Sam Billings made 17 off 12 balls before he dismissed by Murugam Ashwin.

Iyer, on the other hand, went about

his business in his own way and kept the scoreboard ticking.

While Iyer stood firm at one end, wickets kept tumbling from the other as Nitish Rana failed once again, caught at deep midwicket by Sams off Ashwin.

Andre Russell played a five-ball 11-run knock before he left Iyer stranded, top-edging a Tymal Mills short delivery to Dewald Brevis.

Cummins then took the attack to the opposition and struck Mills for a boundary and a six of consecutive balls.

Having conceded 23 runs in the final over when MI batted, Cummins clob-

bered the MI bowlers to all parts of the ground to take KKR home in a grand fashion.

Earlier, veteran Kieron Pollard complemented Suryakumar Yadav's brisk half-century by amassing 23 runs in the last over to propel MI after KKR kept things tight for a major part of their innings.

After an 83-run fourth-wicket stand between Suryakumar Yadav (52) and Tilak Varma (38 not out), Pollard (22 not out) smashed the world's premier fast bowler Pat Cummins for three sixes to end MI's innings on a high.

Opting to bowl first on a fresh pitch with plenty of grass, KKR's opening bowlers used the conditions to perfection as pacer Umesh Yadav (1/25) struck first blood in the third over with a back-of-length delivery to get Rohit for the fifth time in IPL.

Then came another debutant Dewald Brevis (29), known as 'Baby AB' for his 360 degree shot-making abilities, and he tried to attack the KKR bowlers.

He succeeded in his endeavour for a brief period, hitting two fours and as many sixes, but fell to Varun Chakravarthy (1/32).

All this while, MI's man-in-form Ishan Kishan (14 off 21) was a quiet spectator at the other end.

Kishan's struggle came to an end in the 11th over when he miscued a pull off Cummins to KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer.

Varma got a reprieve in the 13th over when Ajinkya Rahane spooned him after a confusion with Billings.

Yadav struck a four and a huge six in the final two deliveries of the same over to give MI's innings some momentum.

Varma grabbed the missed chance with both hand and scooped Cummins over fine leg for a maximum and then followed it with a slash over mid-wicket for a boundary off Chakravarthy.

Yadav, on the other hand, looked in ominous form after returning from injury, dealing mostly in fours and sixes to notch up his fifty in 34 balls.

## LSG to face Delhi today

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Lucknow vs Delhi  
Live from 7:30 pm IST  
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant, the two enormously gifted cricketers, earmarked as future India captains will be showcasing their tactical acumen when newcomers Lucknow Super Giants square off with Delhi Capitals in an IPL match on Thursday.

Rahul and Pant, both match-winners in their own rights even with the bat, will like to seize the initiative in these early rounds.

India will be playing a lot of cricket in next few years and with national captain Rohit Sharma's workload management is paramount, Rahul and Pant will both like to make a strong case for themselves going into the future.

And hence, the availability of the dashing David Warner and fit again Anrich Nortje for Capitals and the dependable Marcus Stoinis for LSG will certainly add to the depth of the playing XIs and bolster the competitive edge. It is expected that Tim Seifert will make way for

Warner in the Capitals line-up and Nortje is set to enter the playing eleven at the expense of either Rowman Powell or Mustafizur Rahman who starred with the ball in the previous game.

All-rounder Stoinis, who was picked by Lucknow from the draft, might replace one among Andrew Tye or Evin Lewis. As of now, replacing Tye looks more imminent.

Both teams have had issues with their bowling but Lucknow under Gautam Gambhir's mentorship, has managed pretty well.

The addition of Jason Holder has made them stronger and Delhi will be hoping that Warner gives them a rollicking start alongside mercurial Prithvi Shaw.

In case of LSG, skipper Rahul two good knocks against CSK and Sunrisers Hyderabad would like that Quinton de Kock also repeats his performance against CSK.

However it is LSG's bowling that needs to stop DC's batting firepower which will grow manifold in Waner's presence and skipper Pant and Shaw also waiting for their big knocks.

While Lalit Yadav is growing in confidence with each passing game, it is veteran batter Mandeep Singh, who is the weakest link in the batting line-up.

However with LSG's attack not having an express quick in absence of Mark Wood, Pant and coach Riecky Ponting might be tempted to give the former Punjab captain one more chance.

In case, he doesn't get it then the three available options are Kona Bharat, Sarfaraz Khan and Yash Dhull. Sarfaraz was in great form during First-Class season while Bharat did well for RCB last year in the few chances that he got.

In case Lucknow, Manish Pandey has looked horribly out of touch but Gambhir is known to back his players which could well save him from getting the axe.

## 'Warner and Nortje available for selection'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals assistant coach Shane Watson on Wednesday confirmed that Australian batter David Warner and South African fast bowler Anrich Nortje are available for selection in the upcoming IPL match against Lucknow Super Giants on Thursday.

"David Warner is out of quarantine, so he's definitely available for selection for the next game, which is very exciting. Anrich Nortje has been going incredibly well over the last couple of weeks, since he's arrived here in India. And he has passed his fitness test to be available for selection," the former Australian all rounder said.

Speaking about the Lucknow Super Giants team, the former Rajasthan Royals, RCB and CSK player said, "The Lucknow Super Giants have got a very strong team. KL Rahul can take the game away from an opposition very quickly, especially if he's in the mood of tak-

ing the game on. There's Quinton de Kock, everyone knows the incredible skill he's got as a batter. We've to watch out for Deepak Hooda and Avesh Khan as well."

Watson also shared his thoughts on all-rounder Lalit Yadav, "Lalit has incredible skill and has great power. It's been incredible to see the shot options that he has got against pace and spin. And the performance he put up against Mumbai Indians has really boosted his confidence and given himself belief that he has got the game to win a game for his team."



PTI ■ MUMBAI

It was in 2006 that a young Dinesh Karthik won 'Player of the Match' award for his cheeky 30-odd in India's first ever T20I. Sixteen years hence, Karthik, nearing 37, with 330 shortest format matches under his belt, is showing signs of being another eternal comeback man of Indian cricket, trying to do justice to the phenomenal talent that he is blessed with.

"I made a conscious effort to do justice to myself. Felt I could have done better in the last few years," said Karthik, whose 44 off 23 balls, took RCB to victory over Rajasthan Royals in an IPL game.

Karthik, who has always been in demand during every edition of IPL, hasn't been selected for India after their heart-breaking semi-final loss against New Zealand in the 2019 ODI World Cup.

His form for KKR nose-dived a bit in the past two years and 18 years after his India debut, Karthik knows very well that a 8-ball-29 in a Nidahas Trophy can't be his singular legacy when he calls it quits.

So how has it been different and the Tamil Nadu stumper, who literally dashed Ravichandran Ashwin's dreams of T20I comeback, hammering him into submission, said that he has changed his training methods. "The way I have trained has been different. I was telling myself I am not done

yet. I have a goal and I want to achieve something," Karthik said after the game.



When he came in, RCB needed 12 runs per over and Karthik launched into his state-mate Ashwin with one boundary behind square, followed by six over long-on and a rocket-like-shot over mid-off and finally added insult to injury with a reverse sweep.

"We needed 12 runs an over, so you need to figure out what to do. Stay calm, know your game and who you can take on." A career strike rate of 134 and average of 27.58 doesn't do justice to the kind of ability he has had. He knows that there aren't too many years of cricket left in him and he is trying to maximise his utility. He doesn't play red ball cricket anymore and knows it is T20 which will remain his calling during the business end of his career.

## DK playing his best cricket, needs to put his name back in international cricket: Du Plessis

MUMBAI: RCB skipper Faf du Plessis on Tuesday backed his teammate Dinesh Karthik to make another India comeback following the wicketkeeper batter's match-winning knock against Rajasthan Royals in the IPL here.

"DK is playing his best cricket. I think he needs to put his name back into

international cricket, doesn't he," said du Plessis at the post-match presentation.

"To pull it out of nowhere you need some good characters, and DK is as big a character as you can get. That calmness towards the end allows others to just come in," said the former South Africa skipper.

## RR's Nathan Coulter-Nile out of IPL due to side strain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a big blow to Rajasthan Royals, Australian pace bowling all-rounder Nathan Coulter-Nile was on Wednesday ruled out of the ongoing IPL, owing to a side strain he suffered during the team's first game against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The 34-year-old has returned home for rehabilitation.

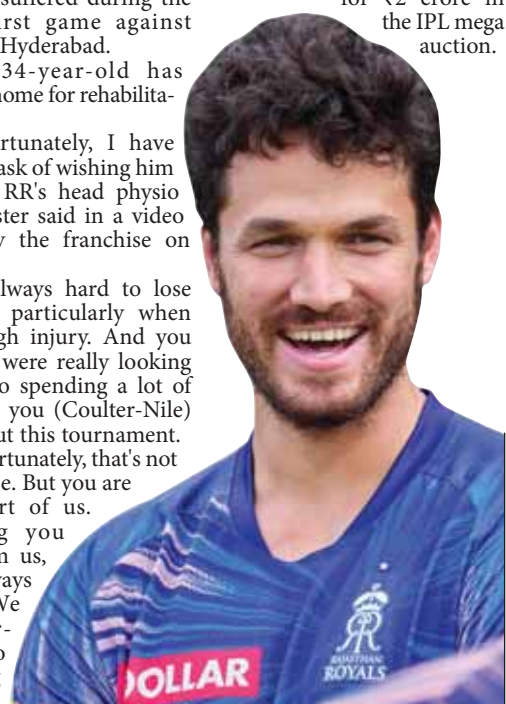
"Unfortunately, I have the hard task of wishing him farewell," RR's head physio John Gloster said in a video posted by the franchise on Twitter.

"It's always hard to lose someone, particularly when it's through injury. And you know we were really looking forward to spending a lot of time with you (Coulter-Nile) throughout this tournament.

"Unfortunately, that's not going to be. But you are a big part of us. Anything you need from us, we are always here. We look forward to having you back with us, whenever that might be."

It was in the final over of the SRH innings when Coulter-Nile began to struggle in his follow-through and walked off the field on March 29.

He was picked up by RR for ₹2 crore in the IPL mega auction.



## Oz beat Pak by 3 wickets in one-off T20I

AP ■ LAHORE

Australia rounded off its first tour to Pakistan in 24 years with a three-wicket victory in the one-off T20I.

Captain Aaron Finch smashed 55 and anchored Australia to 163-7 with five balls to spare as Ben McDermott flicked Haris Rauf to backward square leg for a boundary.

Nathan Ellis picked up 4-28 and pulled Pakistan back to 162-8 after Babar Azam continued his run of golden form and struck 66 off 46 balls when Finch won the toss and elected to field first.

Australia won the three-Test series 1-0, its first in Pakistan since 1998, and lost the ODI series 2-1 after several of its players were rested from the white-ball series while Mitchell Marsh and Steve Smith were ruled out



due to injuries.

"Thought the way our bowlers attacked that game was fantastic," said Finch, who came into the final game of the series after failing to score in the last two ODIs against Pakistan.

"Nathan Ellis had a tough start but showed real charac-

ter. Everything we do is (with) one eye to the World Cup. There's been a lot of great performances on this tour ... to see so many young cricketers come on is super exciting."

Travis Head, who scored a century in the first ODI, hit a brisk 26 off 14 balls and provided Australia a whirlwind

start with Finch of 40 in 21 deliveries to set up a strong platform.

Josh Inglis, who missed out the ODI series after testing positive for COVID-19, also made a brisk 24 while Marcus Stoinis blasted five boundaries in his 9-ball 23 against some wayward Pakistan bowling - especially Hasan Ali, who conceded 30 runs off his three overs without taking a wicket.

Fast bowler Mohammad Wasim (2-30) clean bowled Stoinis and Cameron Green in successive overs but Australia made sure not to let the game slip away through some clinical hitting.

Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-21) had Finch caught on the edge of the boundary in his last over and also had Sean Abbott clean bowled before McDermott sealed the game in the final over.

## Babar, Brathwaite &amp; Cummins in race for ICC monthly award

PTI ■ DUBAI

International captains Babar Azam from Pakistan, Kraigg Brathwaite of West Indies and Australia's Pat Cummins have been shortlisted for the ICC men's Player of the Month award following their outstanding individual performances in March.

In women's category, England bowler Sophie Ecclestone, and run-machines Rachael Haynes (Australia) and Laura Wolvaardt (South Africa) are in the running to scoop the award following stellar performances in the recently concluded ODI World Cup.

The winners will be announced next week.

Babar played an integral part in Pakistan's batting dur-

ing the recent series against Australia, amassing 390 runs during the month in Tests, including a record-breaking 196 in the second Test to salvage a draw.

In addition, his efforts at the crease in the two ODI matches during the month saw Babar score 57 and 114 respectively, with the latter helping his side chase down an imposing target of 349 set by Australia. West Indies skipper and opening batter Brathwaite led from the front during the recently-concluded successful WTC series against England, scoring 341 runs at an average of 85.25.

Cummins, on the other hand, stood out for his bowling performances in unforfeiting conditions during the WTC Test series which was dominated by

run scoring. He led his side to victory in Pakistan with a match-winning spell, taking 5 for 56 in the first innings and following it up with 3 for 23 in the second innings of the final Test. Taking 12 wickets at an average of 22.50 helped Cummins secure his first nomination in the ICC Player of the Month awards.

In women's category, Ecclestone was nominated for the second time following her outstanding bowling performances which helped steer her side to the World Cup final. She took 20 wickets during the calendar month at an average of 12.85.

Haynes too was at the forefront of Australia's unbeaten run through to the World Cup Final, scoring 429 runs in the eight matches at an average of 61.28 and a healthy strike rate of 84.28 during the month.

Wolvaardt, on the other hand, played a critical role in taking South Africa to the semi-finals. She was the tournament's leading run-scorer, amassing 433 runs at an average of 54.12, passing 50 on five occasions.

