

OPINION 6

PERSONA AND PARTIES
MATTER, NOT ALLIANCES

WORLD 9

SL PROTESTERS CELEBRATE TAMIL
NEW YEAR OUTSIDE PREZ OFFICE

MONEY 10

CENTRE OK'S ₹19K CR
FOR TEXTILE PLI

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY APRIL 15, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

KKR TO FACE
SUNRISERS
IN IPL 2022
12 SPORT

CAPSULE

IMD: MONSOON TO BE
NORMAL THIS YEAR

New Delhi: For the fourth consecutive year, India is likely to witness normal rainfall during the southwest monsoon season with favourable La Nina conditions predicted to continue during the June-September period. The rainfall during the southwest monsoon season in 2022 will be 96 per cent to 104 per cent of the average.

GUJARAT CONG LEADERS
HARASSING ME: HARDIK

Ahmedabad: Gujarat Congress working president Hardik Patel on Thursday alleged that the leaders of his party's State unit were harassing him and want him to leave the party.

TERROR DEATH: RAJPUTS
MULL LEAVING VALLEY

Kulgam: The killing of a Rajput driver by a terrorist has generated a sense of fear and uncertainty among members of the tiny community in Kakran village in Kulgam district who have stayed on in Kashmir Valley despite decades of militancy but are now considering leaving for a safer place.

ATROCITIES AGAINST
WOMEN IN WB: TMC MP

Kolkata: Senior TMC MP Sougata Roy stirred a hornets' nest on Thursday by saying that not a single incident of violence against women should occur in a State helmed by a woman Chief Minister and there should be zero tolerance against such incidents.

Zika virus single mutation
away from global outbreakResearchers in
California claimPIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ NEW DELHI

The Zika virus could be a single mutation away from exploding into a worldwide outbreak, new research has found. The infectious virus, responsible for a global health emergency in 2016, needs a single change in its genetic code to create a contagious new variant that could cause devastating birth defects which affected many infants during the previous outbreak.

Results of the research, conducted in mice by researchers from the La Jolla Institute for Immunology in California, were published in the Cell Reports journal.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) too last week warned that the next pandemic could be triggered by insect-borne pathogens, including Zika and dengue.

Emerging viruses, especially those that pose health risks to humans, are monitored and experimented with constantly to identify potential threats and treatments. Experts working with coronaviruses have now proposed theoretical changes to the virus genome that could potentially alter its

DDMA meet on Apr 20
on Covid uptick in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In view of the uptick in Covid-19 cases in the national Capital, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) will hold a meeting on April 20 to discuss measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the city, officials said on Thursday.

transmissibility. Other viruses, such as Zika, are no different. Zika spreads mainly through mosquitoes and has relatively mild symptoms.

However, pregnant women infected with the virus then pass it on to their unborn children, resulting in microcephaly that causes infants to have tiny heads and underdeveloped brains. The Zika epidemic that started in Brazil and affected the USAs in 2015 and 2016 caused more than 3,500 cases

of infant microcephaly. The World Health Organization said it represented a significant, long-term problem.

The new study has identified a possible evolution of Zika that could enable it to increase transmissibility, even in countries immune from previous outbreaks. The researchers used a mouse model and mosquitoes to simulate the transfer of the virus between the vector and the human hosts and discovered small genetic mutations, which increased the virus' infectious characteristics. It created a variant capable of evading immunity provided by past infection of dengue or a similar pathogen, suggesting the mutation would enable Zika to return to countries previously affected.

The study's lead author Professor Sujan Shrestha said the Zika variant had evolved to the extent where the cross-protective immunity afforded by previous dengue infection was no longer effective in mice.

If this variant becomes prevalent, the same issues would have to be dealt with in real life, the researcher added.

According to the WHO, dengue fever infects 390 million people in 130 countries annually where it is endemic, while the Zika virus was detected in at least 89 countries during the 2016 outbreak.

Tesla's CEO Musk
offers to buy Twitter

AP ■ NEW YORK

Elon Musk is offering to buy Twitter, just days after the Tesla CEO said he would no longer be joining the social media company's board of directors.

Twitter Inc said in a regulatory filing on Thursday that Musk, who currently owns slightly more than 9 per cent of its stock and is the company's biggest shareholder, provided a letter to the company on Wednesday that contained a proposal to buy the remaining shares of Twitter that he doesn't already own.

Musk offered \$54.20 per share of Twitter's stock. He called that price his best and final offer.

"I invested in Twitter as I believe in its potential to be the platform for free speech around the globe, and I believe free speech is a societal imperative for a functioning democracy," Musk says in the filing.

"However, since making my investment I now realise the company will neither thrive nor



serve this societal imperative in its current form. Twitter needs to be transformed as a private company."

The buyout offer from Musk is just the latest development in his relationship with Twitter. The billionaire revealed in regulatory filings over recent weeks that he'd been buying shares in almost daily batches starting January 31.

Only Vanguard Group's suite of mutual funds and ETFs controls more Twitter shares.

At that point Twitter quickly gave Musk a seat on its board on the condition that he not own more than 14.9 per cent of the company's outstanding stock, according to a filing. But Musk backed out of the deal.

Continued on Page 2

K'taka Min quits over
contractor's suicideEshwarappa to
send resignation
letter to Chief
Minister today

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Karnataka Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister KS Eshwarappa, accused of abetment to suicide of civil contractor Santosh K Patil over 40 per cent commission to clear his bills, on Thursday announced his resignation from the State Cabinet.

Addressing a press meet at Shivamogga in central Karnataka, Eshwarappa said, "I have served as the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister in the Karnataka Government. I have taken a decision today to resign from my ministerial position."

Eshwarappa would send his resignation letter to Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Friday.

The Minister was named as the first accused by the police on Wednesday in the case of the suicide of Patil, who was

found dead in a hotel in Udupi. "I decided to resign because I don't want to put in an uncomfortable situation those who helped me rise to this position, such as seniors in the party, Chief Minister Bommai and our national leaders," Eshwarappa added.

A day ago, Eshwarappa had said there was no question of his resignation as he has done nothing wrong and even referred to a defamation case against the contractor filed by him.

Karnataka Lokayukta had raided Eshwarappa in 2012 and discovered a currency counting machine at his residence. Eshwarappa admitted owning it saying there was nothing wrong in possessing it as he was a businessman.

After the Congress demanded his arrest and dismissal from the Karnataka Cabinet, the BJP central leadership was anxious to resolve the rising controversy building around the case at the "earliest", sources said.

Though a meeting between the Chief Minister and Eshwarappa could not take place (Eshwarappa refused to come to Bangalore) he was given the message that he



should put in his paper in the party's interest, sources said.

The BJP State executive is to meet at Hospet, Vijaynagar district, on April 16-17. Party's national president JP Nadda will also be present at the meeting.

Karnataka CM and Nadda are set to discuss cabinet reshuffle during the latter's visit to Hospet and work out ways to better governance in the State which is to go to Assembly polls next year.

The State Cabinet has presently 30 Ministers, including the Chief Minister, against the sanctioned strength of 34. With the resignation of Eshwarappa, a rejig in the council of Ministers has become more urgent.

The "commission" charges

against the BJP Minister had given the Congress momentum to attack the Modi Government's anti-corruption plank.

No sooner did the controversy break out, the Congress stepped-up pressure on the BJP at the Centre and the State. Sit-in-protests were held before the residence of Union Minister Amit Shah here.

Former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala along with many top Congress leaders courted arrest on Thursday while marching to lay siege to the Bommai's residence demanding Eshwarappa's arrest and his dismissal from the State Cabinet.

Continued on Page 2

CNG price hiked
again; auto, cab
drivers to strike
from April 18

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prices of CNG in the national Capital on Thursday were hiked by ₹2.50 per kg and that of piped cooking gas by ₹4.25 per unit to record levels on the back of surge in raw material cost.

CNG in the national Capital territory of Delhi now costs ₹71.61 per kg, up from ₹69.11 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.

Following which members of auto, taxi and cab drivers' associations on Thursday warned authorities that they will go on a strike from April 18 to press for their demand of subsidy on gas prices.

This is the third price hike this month and the 11th since March 7.

Continued on Page 2

4 LeT terrorists killed
in Shopian encounter3 Army soldiers
on way to spot die
in road accident

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A joint team of the security forces on Thursday eliminated four Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) terrorists responsible for targeting non-local labourers in the Badigam area of Zainapora in Shopian.

At the same time, three soldiers of the Indian Army were killed and five others were injured after the vehicle they were traveling in overturned on way to the encounter site near Kanipora village in Shopian district.

So far security forces have eliminated 53 terrorists in anti-terrorist operations across the Kashmir valley since January 1, 2022.

According to a police spokesman, all the killed terrorists were part of groups

involved in several terror crime cases, including attacks on police/security forces and civilians.

"They were active in Shopian and adjacent areas of Pulwama. They were involved in 6 terror crimes, including attacks on outside labourers," the police spokesman said in a written statement.

The slain terrorists have been identified as Aaqib Farooq Thoker, son of Farooq Ahmed Thoker; Waseem Ahmed Thoker, son of Abdul Ghani Thoker, both residents of Heffkhuri, Zainapora; Farooq Ahmad Bhat, son of Abdul Salam Bhat, and Shooqeen Ahmad Mir, son of Mohd Abdullah Mir, both residents of Sugan.

As per police records Aaqib Farooq Thoker was involved in snatching a 12 bore rifle from JK guard Murran TP branch in which bank guard Abdul Hamid Wani of Tahab got injured.

Continued on Page 2



Sikh devotees take a dip in the holy sarovar at Gurudwara Bangla Sahib on the occasion of Baisakhi festival in New Delhi on Thursday
Ranjani Dimri | Pioneer

Ramana 1st CJI to visit
Attari-Wagah border

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/AMRITSAR

Chief Justice of India NV Ramana visited the Attari-Wagah border, becoming the first Chief Justice of India to visit this India-Pakistan international border near Amritsar.

CJI Ramana, along with his family, watched the famous beating the retreat ceremony at the Attari-Wagah border and was seen cheering for India. The CJI had also visited the Border Security Force museum and Zero-point.

On Thursday, the CJI Ramana made an appeal for eternal vigilance against divisiveness and for unity after vis-

iting the Partition Museum at Amritsar.

"This museum reminds us of our tragic past and warns us against divisions of all kinds. It portrays vividly the losses suffered by mankind on an unprecedented scale due to the divide and rule policy of colonial powers. This dark chapter in our history should serve as a lesson to mankind. We must remain ever vigilant against divisiveness. Only through unity can we achieve peace and progress," the CJI wrote in the visitor's book after walking through the museum on Thursday.

Continued on Page 2

Modi unveils Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, buys first ticket

Gandhis skip
event, but kin
of other ex-PMs
attend function

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya here and described the museum as a "living reflection of the shared heritage of each Government".

Underlining that every Prime Minister of the country has contributed immensely towards achieving the goals of constitutional democracy, the Prime Minister said, "To remember them is to know the journey of Independent India. People coming here will be familiar with the contribution of the former Prime Ministers of the country, their background, their struggles, and creations."

Modi expressed pride in the fact that many of the Prime Ministers came from ordinary families. The fact of such leaders coming from extremely poor, farmer families reaching

the position of the Prime Minister strengthens the faith in Indian democracy and its traditions, he said.

"It also gives confidence to the youth of the country that even a person born in an ordinary family can reach the highest positions in the democratic system of India," said Modi.

The Prime Minister hoped that the museum will expand the experience of the young generation. The more our youth knows about key occasions of Independent India, the more relevant will be their decisions, he said.

Noting India's status as the mother of democracy, the Prime Minister said, "The great feature of India's democracy is that it has been continuously changing with the passage of time. In every era, in every generation, there has been a continuous effort to make democracy more modern and empowered."

The Prime Minister said barring a couple of exceptions, India has a proud tradition of strengthening democracy in a democratic way.

"That's why we also have



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the inauguration of Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya in New Delhi on Thursday
PTI

an obligation to keep strengthening democracy with our efforts," he added. Highlighting the inclusive and accommodative elements of Indian culture, Modi said "our democracy inspires us to accept modernity and new thoughts."

Recalling the rich history

and prosperous era of India, the Prime Minister laid stress on spreading awareness about the correct picture of India's heritage and present.

He said the Government's efforts to bring back the stolen heritage from abroad, celebrating places of the glorious

heritage, preserving memories of the freedom fighters in places like Jallianwala Memorial, Panch Teerth commemorating Babasaheb, Freedom Fighter Museum, and tribal history museum are steps in that direction.

Continued on Page 2

JP Nadda inaugurates new BJP office in Gurugram

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president J.P. Nadda on Thursday inaugurated the party office in Haryana's Gurugram district.

He arrived in Gurugram on Thursday evening for the event.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister Rao Inderjeet Singh and a large number of party leaders, and functionaries were present on the occasion.

The office is spread over 1 lakh sq and is located on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway in Sector-30 Gurugram. The office is equipped with



all modern facilities including the IT cell.

While inaugurating the district offices, which have been named 'Guru Kamal' Nadda said that the setting up of party offices at the state and district level was being done to strengthen the organisation from the grassroots level.

"The BJP will have a party office soon in all 22 districts" he added.

Maurya: Prepare development plan up to grassroots level

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, on Thursday, said that development plans were being prepared at every level for the all-round development of the state.

He asked the officials to prepare the development plan up to the grassroots level and intimate the government about the 100-day development action plan in time and also inform it about the priorities in development of Bareilly.

The deputy chief minister said that a list should be made of villages which were left behind in the stream of development. He said the targets and schemes for these villages

should be clearly mentioned. He said that a list of such villages should also be prepared and presented which had come under the category of 'saturated'. He said that preparing such a list would facilitate implementation of public welfare schemes and development works.

The deputy chief minister was reviewing departmental development works at Vikas Bhawan auditorium in Bareilly on Thursday.

The deputy chief minister said that development work in villages was the top priority of the government. He said that in the villages where for some reason proper development work had not been done, the details of what were the difficulties in those villages should also be listed. He said that all possible efforts should be made to improve the condition of cow shelters in the district. He said that arrangements should be made so that at least one gau sevak was available in every gaushala.

He also directed officials to make special arrangements for marketing the product of self-

help groups working in Bareilly and said that such proposals should be made available to the government and from time to time these works and budget expenditure should be reviewed and the government apprised of it.

Maurya said that there was a need for improvement at every level in the working of the departments implementing the development works in rural areas and it was everyone's responsibility to make efforts for the benefits of development works to reach the real beneficiaries.

Member of Parliament Santosh Kumar Gangwar, MP Dharmendra Kashyap, Mayor Umesh Gautam, district panchayat chairperson Rashmi Patel, MLC Kunwar Maharaj Singh, MLA from Faridpur Dr Shyam Bihari Lal, MLA from Bithri Chainpur Dr Raghavendra Sharma, MLA from Cantonment Sanjeev Agarwal, MLA from Nawabganj Dr MP Arya, Chief Development Officer Chandra Mohan Garg and other officers concerned were present.

Tesla's CEO Musk....

From Page 1

Musk's 81 million Twitter followers make him one of the most popular figures on the platform, rivalling pop stars like Ariana Grande and Lady Gaga. But his prolific tweeting has sometimes gotten him into trouble with the SEC and others. Musk and Tesla in 2018 agreed to pay \$40 million in civil fines and for Musk to have his tweets approved by a corporate lawyer after he tweeted about having the money to take Tesla private at \$420 per share. That didn't happen but the

tweet caused Tesla's stock price to jump. Musk's latest trouble with the SEC could be his delay in notifying regulators of his growing stake in Twitter.

Musk has described himself as a "free speech absolutist" and has said he doesn't think Twitter is living up to free speech principles - an opinion shared by followers of Donald Trump and a number of other right-wing political figures who've had their accounts suspended for violating Twitter content rules.

Shares of Twitter jumped 11% before the market open.

US fashion brand Patagonia places repeat order for Khadi Denim

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

US-based leading fashion brand Patagonia has placed a repeat order for purchasing Khadi Denim fabric. This comes as a global appreciation of Khadi's world-class product quality and punctuality in fulfilling the supply order. The order is for four types of Denim fabric made of 100 per cent cotton.

In March this year, Patagonia, through textile giant Arvind Mills, placed an order for purchasing 17,050 meters of Khadi Denim fabric worth nearly Rs 80 lakh from Udyog Bharti, a Rajkot-based Khadi Institution in Gujarat. The repeat order comes after the successful completion of the previous order for 30,000 meters of Khadi Denim fabric worth Rs 1.08 crore. Patagonia is using the handcrafted Khadi Denim fabric for making

Denim apparel.

In July 2017, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) signed an agreement with Arvind Mills Limited, Ahmedabad, to trade Khadi Denim products around the world. Since then, Arvind Mills has been purchasing a large quantity of Khadi Denim fabric every year from KVIC-certified Khadi institutions of Gujarat. With the latest order, the total Khadi Denim purchase by Patagonia has gone up to 47,000 meters worth nearly Rs 1.88 crore

Chairman KVIC Vinai Kumar Saxena lauded the development saying the repeat order from Patagonia was a result of Khadi's Denim's outstanding quality that matched all international standards.

"While supplying the order, special attention was given to maintaining the highest quality standards, uniformity of the product and timely supply of the

fabric. The previous order was executed exactly in 12 months' time as per the schedule. The repeat order for Khadi Denim has reaffirmed that Khadi is an apt example of 'Local to Global' as envisaged by the Prime Minister," Saxena said.

The purchase of Khadi Denim fabric is also creating extra man-hours for Khadi artisans of Gujarat. In all, the purchase of Khadi Denim by Patagonia has created additional 3 lakh man-hours of work for Khadi artisans.

Last year, a team from Patagonia visited Udyog Bharti, a Khadi Institution based in Gondal, Rajkot (Gujarat) to see the manufacturing process of Khadi Denim. Impressed by the manufacturing process and quality of the handcrafted Khadi Denim fabric, Patagonia, through Arvind Mills, placed the purchase orders for different quantities of Khadi Denim fabric.

Fire Safety Week launched

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To avert fire mishaps during summers, Uttar Pradesh started a state-wide Fire Safety Week from Thursday with special emphasis on the dictum that 'prevention is better than cure', so that the loss caused by fire is the least.

To mark the launch of the Fire Safety Week from April 14 to April 20, the officials of the Fire Service department also affixed a flag pin to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence.

The objective of the Fire Safety Week is not only to protect the state, particularly rural areas, farm barns and kutcha houses from fire hazards but also to create and raise caution and awareness among the public.

The major emphasis during the Fire Safety Week will be on propagating the theme of 'prevention is better than cure' and to generate fire safety awareness among the people through a series of demonstrations and messages through various digital and social media channels like YouTube. Offices, markets, schools and commercial institutions at prominent places

have been specifically selected for the demonstrations.

For quick control of fire accidents, while instructions have been given to the Fire Service to maintain preparedness, wide publicity has also been started for effective prevention of fire accidents in places such as hospitals, nursing homes, multi-storey buildings, schools. The staff concerned is being trained by conducting mock drills in such places.

The Fire Safety Week is focusing on the basic mantra of 'Learn Fire Safety, Increase Productivity' in industrial and commercial establishments.

In the ongoing campaign, people will be made aware of the main causes of fire accidents such as electrical short-circuit, electrical overloading, careless use of gas cylinders, smoking etc., through digital means.

In multi-storeyed buildings, the residents will be trained to safely exit in emergency situations by evacuation drills, and mock drills. This exercise will not only give a substantial boost to the Fire and Rescue Service forces in the state but will also bring down such incidents amid the rising summer heat.

4 LeT terrorists....

From Page 1

He was also involved in Case FIRs 25/2022 & 26/2022 of PS Litter pertaining to the attack on driver namely Dheeraj Dutt resident of Pathankot and cleaners namely Surinder Singh and Sonu Sharma, both residents of Pathankot at Nowpora and Yadar respectively in which they got injured.

In Srinagar, Defence PRO in a statement said, "Owing to the wet road conditions, the driver seemingly lost control

over the vehicle and it skidded off the road. The eight injured soldiers were shifted to the district hospital Shopian, where two among them were declared dead. One soldier had received minor injuries and was discharged from the district hospital.

The five other injured soldiers were evacuated to 92 Base Hospital, Srinagar, where the third soldier also succumbed to his injuries. Four soldiers are presently at the 92 Base Hospital and are being treated.

45-year-old man stabbed to death in Bhajanpura

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 45-year-old man was allegedly stabbed to death near his house by two to three men on Wednesday night in Shaithan Chowk near Bhajanpura.

The deceased has been identified as Damkeen, an ice-cream vendor by profession and he was standing near his house when two to three men came on a bike and started following him on foot.

"They then stabbed the victim and fled on the two-wheeler. He was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead," said a senior police official.

"Police have registered a case under section 302 (murder) and 34 (Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. We have got some leads and are working on them to nab the culprits," he added.

The motive of the murder was not clear and all angles were being probed, the police said, adding CCTV cameras in the area were being scanned.

The body will be handed over to the family of the deceased after post-mortem, police added.

Ramana 1st CJL....

From Page 1

He had also visited the Jallianwala Bagh on the occasion of the 103rd anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on Wednesday, and paid homage to the martyrs. In the visitor's book, he wrote, "Jallianwala reflects the strength and resilience of the people of this country. This serene garden is symbolic of the great sacrifice made in the face of tyranny. It serves as a reminder of the heavy price paid for freedom, which we must always cherish and protect."

Justice Ramana was on Punjab visit with his family. On his arrival, he was received by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on

Delhi temp touches 39.4 degrees C, 3 notches warmer

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital witnessed the maximum temperature of 39.4 degree Celsius on Thursday, which was three notches warmer than the normal temperature for the season, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The IMD data showed that the minimum temperature of 26.2 degrees Celsius was recorded at Delhi's base station, Safdarjung Observatory, which was five notches above normal for this time of the year.

The highest humidity recorded was 35 per cent at 8:30 A.M. in the morning and the lowest humidity recorded

was 20 per cent at 5:30 in the evening on Thursday.

The weather stations at Ridge, Ayanagar, Mungheshpur, Najafgarh, Pitampura and Palam recorded maximum temperatures of 41.6 degrees Celsius, 40.2 degrees Celsius, 41.1 degrees Celsius, 41.1 degrees Celsius and 39.7 degrees Celsius respectively, stated the IMD data.

The IMD also predicted that the weather in Delhi on 15 April will be partly cloudy sky and the maximum temperature will go up to 40.0 degree Celsius and the minimum temperature will be 25.0 degree Celsius.

Nearly 1,000 BJP leaders will join AAP in Himachal: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia on Thursday said that at least 1,000 local BJP leaders in Himachal Pradesh will join the AAP soon and several big guns in the poll-bound state are also "in touch" with the Arvind Kejriwal-led party. Sisodia asserted that the AAP will form its government winning assembly elections to be held later this year in the hill state.

Sisodia's claims come a day after three BJP leaders, including national executive member of the saffron party's Scheduled Caste Morcha Harmen Dhiman, joined the AAP along with their supporters.

Addressing a press conference here in the National Capital, Sisodia said that Dhiman ji has joined the party along with 20 other district level leaders and now, 1,000 district and block leaders of the BJP are going to join the AAP as their hopes were shattered.

"They feel that the BJP is not going to do anything for the people of the state. They will join the AAP "in a few days," said Sisodia adding that several big leaders of the BJP are also

Sisodia's claims come a day after three BJP leaders, including national executive member of the saffron party's Scheduled Caste Morcha Harmen Dhiman, joined the AAP along with their supporters

in touch with us and the BJP is completely scattered in the state now.

Sisodia also said that the process is underway to reorganise the party's working committee by bringing in dedicated leaders in the poll-bound state.

He asserted that the AAP has gained significant support base in Himachal Pradesh with leaders from the BJP and other parties joining it.

The BJP is so "rattled" with the "growing popularity" of the AAP that the saffron party has resorted to inducting those AAP leaders who were to be ousted from the party, Sisodia said.

"The people are looking towards the AAP with hopes. The AAP governments in Delhi and Punjab are doing good work, and we will do that in Himachal Pradesh as well," Sisodia said.



THANKSGIVING

Thankyou holy spirit for all blessings Celine.

PD(9176)C

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Pushpa Kumari, D/o Krishna Deo Singh, R/O, D 242, Gali No-6, Shankar Marg, Mandawala, New Delhi-110092, have changed my name to Prisha Singh.

PD(9177)C

PUBLIC NOTICE
FORM No. URC-2
Advertisement giving notice about registration under part I of Chapter XXI of the Act (Pursuant to section 374 (5) of The Companies Act 2013 and rule 4 (1) of the Companies (Authorized to register) rules 2014)

1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuant of Sub Section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after fifteen days hereof but before the expiry of thirty days hereinafter to the Registrar at New Delhi that DEV POWER TECHNOLOGIES PRIVATE LIMITED, may be registered under Part I of chapter XXI of Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.

2. A copy of the draft Memorandum and Articles of Association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office a1218A, SECTOR-11D, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121006.

3. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at Central Registration Centre (CRC), Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Plot 6, 7, 8 Sector-5, IMT, Manesar, Gurgo-en-122050 within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.

Name of Applicant
**1. VINOD CHOPRA (PARTNER)
2. MRIDULA CHOPRA (PARTNER)**

E-mail ID: cebuildings_orissa@yahoo.co.in
cebbuildings@rediffmail.com
Tel. -(0674)- 2391523

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA
NIRMAN SOUDHA, UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

File No- B-II-GA-(SP)-1/2019 14707 / Bhubaneswar, the 11th Apr. 2022
1st Corrigendum

Tender Reference No. OSD C.E. (B) – 01 / 2022-23
Name of the Work – “Construction of a new building in premises of office building of OPSC in the District of Cuttack”

The following changes have been made in Bid Identification No. OSD C.E. (B) – 01 / 2022-23

1. Bid documents such as DTCN / BOQ etc. can be seen / downloaded from the Govt. Website i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in, during the period dt.21.04.2022 to 17 hours of dt.05.05.2022 instead of dt.11.04.2022 to dt.26.04.2022 for ONLINE BIDDING respectively.
2. Online bids shall be received till 17.00 hours of dt.05.05.2022 instead of dt.26.04.2022.
3. The technical bids will be opened at 11.30 A.M. of dt.06.05.2022 instead of dt.27.04.2022.

All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

Sd/-
OSD C.E. (Buildings),
Odisha, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-34117/11/0004/2223

Will bring SOP for schools if needed: Kejriwal

No need to panic as hospitalisation due to Covid has not increased, says CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said that his Government is keeping an eye on the Covid-19 situation in the city, and will bring in a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for schools if the need arises.

Reports of infections from schools have sparked concerns weeks after they opened for completely offline classes following a two-year gap due to the pandemic.

Kejriwal said that hospitalisation related to Coronavirus has not increased and there is no need to panic. "We are keeping an eye on the situation. If need be, we will bring in a SOP for Delhi schools for Covid," he told reporters on the sidelines of an event. Meanwhile, Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday said that

the city Government will soon issue guidelines for schools in view of the slight rise in Covid-19 cases. His comments came amid reports of some school students testing positive for the virus in Delhi as well as the National Capital Region (NCR). "Covid cases have slightly increased but there is no rise in hospitalisation, so we need not worry.

There is no need to panic but stay alert. We have to learn to live with Covid. We are constantly monitoring the situation," Sisodia told reporters.

"I have got reports from a few schools in the past few days where parents have informed about their child testing positive. The education department will issue guidelines to schools in this regard," he added.

Kalkaji MLA and senior AAP leader Atishi said, "There are reports of a child and a teacher testing positive for Covid. Other students of the class have been sent home. We are closely tracking the situation." However, she did not specify the name of the school where cases have been reported. Meanwhile, the Directorate of Education on Thursday also

issued an advisory. "If any Covid case is noticed/reported to the school authority the same must be intimated to Directorate and concerned wing or the school as a whole must be closed down for the time-being," stated the advisory.

Schools in Delhi have four days holidays starting Thursday on account of Ambedkar Jayanti and Good Friday followed by the weekend. The Delhi BJP demanded that in view of the rise in cases, the Government should once again make masks mandatory at public places including public transport, schools, colleges and cinema halls.

Delhi had reported 299 new Covid cases on Wednesday, a jump of 118 per cent in two days. The positivity rate stood at 2.49 per cent, according to data shared by the city health department.

The Covid positivity rate in Delhi has jumped from 0.5 per cent to 2.70 per cent in a week, even as doctors on Tuesday said it was "not a panic situation" as the daily cases count was still low. They doctors have, however, cautioned against dropping Covid-related protocols.

Active corona cases in Noida cross 100-mark

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The Gautam Budh Nagar health department on Thursday said that 44 people, including 15 children, have tested positive for Covid-19 in city. The number of active cases in district has crossed 100-mark to reach 121 now, it said.

According to official figures, 44 people tested positive for the infection since Wednesday 6 a.m. while 13 got cured during the period.

"Of the new cases, 15 children were found to be Covid positive. None of these children were reported from any school," Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr. Sunil Kumar Sharma said.

The CMO said 68 samples were being sent on Thursday to Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, Delhi, for genome sequencing. In the wake of increasing cases, health department had on

Wednesday issued an advisory asking all schools across Noida and Greater Noida to immediately inform it about any child suffering from cough, cold, fever, diarrhoea or showing any symptom of Covid for timely treatment.

"If any child studying in your school has cough, cold, fever, diarrhoea or any symptom of Covid, then you are requested to immediately inform the Chief Medical Officer's office using help line no-1800492211 or email cmogbnr@gmail.com or ncmogbnr@gmail.com, so that proper treatment can be provided in time," the advisory stated.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020, a total of 98,787 people in Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh have tested positive for Covid-19, while 490 of them have died due to the corona infection, according to official data.



A tableau of Babasaheb BR Ambedkar on his 131st birth anniversary, at Parliament Street, in New Delhi on Thursday.
RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

'Babasaheb gave highest importance to education'

Specialised School of Excellence will be Ambedkar School of Specialised Excellence

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

On the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, the key architect of India's Constitution, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that the city Government's Specialised School of Excellence will now be known as BR Ambedkar School of Specialised Excellence.

"Babasaheb gave the highest importance to education in his life. The school he went to made him sit separately outside the class.

He wasn't allowed to drink water from the common vessel unless a peon poured it towards him from a distance. The same man who faced these sufferings, not just went abroad, but got PhDs from the London School of Economics and Columbia University," said Kejriwal. "Babasaheb had a dream that every child in this country, whether rich or poor, must receive good quality education.

He wanted no child to undergo hurdles to get educated in an independent India, no matter what the background, as it is the right of every child to obtain the best form of education," said Kejriwal.

"However, even 75 years after Independence, the politicians have not been able to fulfil Babasaheb's dream. There are two systems of education in

this country, private for the rich, public for the poor. We came to power with a motive to change the system.

We made Government schools so spectacular that they all would be compelled to send their children there," said Kejriwal. "This year 3.75 lakh children shifted to Government schools from private schools.

I am delighted to see Babasaheb's dreams being fulfilled like this today," said the CM. "Following the vision of Babasaheb, all the Government schools in Delhi were revolutionised and if anyone, nationally or internationally, today

wants to witness the peak quality of Government schools, it would be Delhi Government's BR Ambedkar Schools of Specialised Excellence," said Manish Sisodia, Delhi's Deputy CM.

The decision to rename the schools was taken by the Government during a meeting of the State Naming Authority held on Tuesday.

There are 31 SoSEs in the city of which 30 will be renamed after Dr B R Ambedkar, while the Armed Forces Preparatory School has already been named after revolutionary Bhagat Singh.

Fires in two restaurants in city, one dead



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two incidents of fire were reported in two restaurants in the national Capital. One man died and at least five people sustained injuries after an

identified as Danish, who works at Waffel Mania restaurant, Aju, Saan Mohammad, Bijay and Ikra. Police said that Ikra was discharged from hospital after the treatment.

According to police, as per the information collected so far, an ac compressor exploded in a Waffle Mania restaurant in the area and total six persons including a woman were admitted in Holy Family hospital.

Meanwhile, the fire department said that a fire call was received regarding the incident around 3: 50 PM following which three fire tenders were rushed to the Tikona Park, near Jamia. "Around 13 persons got injuries and they were shifted to Holy Family hospital," said the fire official. In another incident, a massive fire broke out at a restaurant-cum-bar in

west Delhi's Punjabi Bagh area on Thursday afternoon. No casualty has been reported so far. The police said the restaurant had four floors and a parking facility. The fire, which started allegedly due to a short circuit, spread to all the floors, police said.

"Fire department received a call about the fire at Troy Lounge and Bar on club road in Punjabi Bagh at 1.35 pm and three fire tenders were rushed to the spot," said Atul Garg, Director, Delhi Fire Service (DFS) adding that nine more fire tenders were rushed to the spot later.

"A total of 12 fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the blaze was doused. No one was reportedly inside the building when fire broke out. Further investigation is underway," a senior police official said.

Woman jumps off Metro platform; quick CISF action saves her

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A woman aged around 20-22 years, who tried to commit suicide by jumping off a 40-foot-high elevated platform of Akshardham Metro station on Thursday morning was saved by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel and others. An amateur video of incident was widely shared over social media in national Capital on Thursday.

According to a senior CISF officer, some passengers noticed the woman, who hails from Punjab, standing at the edge of platform No. 2 around 7:30 a.m. and CISF personnel were called. They rushed to the spot and tried to dissuade her from taking the fatal leap.

"A team was rushed to ground floor so that arrangements could be made to catch her safely if she jumped," he said. The woman jumped off the platform and was caught on a blanket stretched by CISF personnel and people present there.

"Due to severity of fall, the woman sustained severe injuries but her life has been saved. She was immediately taken to a nearby hospital where she is under treatment," a CISF spokesperson said.

₹476 cr allocated for development of mandis: Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Development Minister, Gopal Rai, on Thursday said that a budget of more than ₹476 crore has been passed for the development of Delhi's mandis for the financial year 2022-23. The move comes after a meeting chaired by Rai with the officials of the Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board

(DAMB) and Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) was held at the Delhi Secretariat regarding the development of mandis in the national Capital. "For the financial year 2022-23, the board has allocated approximately ₹178.73 crore for the APMC Azadpur, ₹13.34 crore for the fruit and vegetables market in Ghazipur, ₹13.96 crore for the

FP and EMC market in Ghazipur, ₹8 crore for the flower market, ₹18.91 crore for the APMC, Keshopur, ₹45.03 crore for APMC Narela, ₹5.32 crore for APMC Najafgarh and ₹193.57 crore for the Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board," said Rai. "Along with development of Tikri Khampur wholesale mandi, the development of Ghazipur's fruit and vegetable

mandi and poultry market will be carried out, with a budget allocation of ₹303 crore," said Rai. "To monitor work being done in mandis, orders have been issued by board to install CCTV cameras in all the mandis across city. With this, the security of the mandis will be kept under strict surveillance and movement of people will also be taken care of," said Rai.

AIIMS, Delhi to start a Deep Brain Stimulation clinic

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

In a move that would ensure quality of life to patients suffering from degenerative diseases related to movement like Dystonia, the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Delhi is going to start a Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) clinic from Saturday.

Dr Achal Kumar Srivastava who will head the clinic told *The Pioneer* that "The centre will be opened for the patients every Saturday from 9 A.M till

12 P.M."

He said that the patients afflicted with movement disorders like advanced Parkinson's disease, Dystonia, and Essential tremor, who need DBS will be referred by the Neurology department to this clinic. Dr. Srivastava, Professor of Clinical Neurophysiology in the Department of Neurology said that the DBS is a breakthrough technology in the medical sector. "It is a functional surgery where electrodes are placed in specific

areas of the brain and stimulated with the help of a pacemaker placed in the chest wall.

In this case, the pacemaker is unique as it has the capability to receive feedback from the brain and relay the exact amount of stimulation on demand to the implanted electrodes for the brain to function accordingly. Dr. Srivastava explained. "It stops tremors and rigidity associated with said movement disorders, enabling the patient to live a normal and quality life," he added.

Water supply will be hit in NCR due to rise of ammonia in Yamuna: DJB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Due to the rise of ammonia pollutants in Yamuna river at Delhi's Wazirabad Pond, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on Thursday said that the water supply will be affected in several parts of the national Capital till the ammonia level in river reduces to treatable limit.

According to DJB order, the areas likely to be affected are Civil lines, Hindu Rao Hospital and adjoining areas, Kamla Nagar, Shakti Nagar

and adjoining areas, Karol Bagh, Pahar Ganj and NDMC areas, Old and New Rajinder Nagar, Patel Nagar (East and West), Baljeet Nagar, Prem Nagar, Inderpuri and adjoining areas, Kalkaji, Govindpuri, Tugalkabad, Sangam Vihar, Ambedkar Nagar, Prahladpur and adjoining area, Ramlala Ground, Delhi gate, Subhash Park., Model Town, Gulabi Bagh, Punjabi Bagh, Jahangirpuri, Moolchand, South Extension, Greater kailash, Burari and adjoining areas, parts of cantonment



areas and south Delhi. The DJB also advised the public to make judicious use of water to avoid any problem and the water tankers will be available on demand.

JNU student hurt as part of bathroom ceiling collapses

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A student was injured after a portion of the bathroom ceiling collapsed at the Sabarmati Hostel in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Thursday morning.

The All-India Students' Association activist Madhurima Kundu said that the student was severely injured and has been taken to the Safdarjung Hospital.

"This is a clear case of criminal negligence on part of the hostel wardens and the Dean of Students. We have time and again brought up the issue of dilapidated hostel infrastructure and falling ceilings with the authorities, but the JNU administration has been trying to digress the issue in the name of lack of funds," said Kundu. A senior university official con-

firmed the incident and said that due to dampness, the portion of the bathroom ceiling collapsed and injured the second year student of BA (German).

"The student sustained minor injuries and was taken to Safdarjung Hospital by the hostel warden. He is doing fine. He underwent an X-ray which shows everything is fine. The report of CT Scan is awaited," the official said.

The official said there are infrastructure issues in the university and hostels, specifically the ones that are old, require repair.

"We have not got funds. We have sought Rs 54 crore to carry out major repair work in hostels but the approval is awaited. We have carried out minor repair work in Brahmaputra Hostel.

PICTALK



Sikh devotees take a dip in the holy sarovar at Gurudwara Bangla Sahib on the occasion of Baisakhi in New Delhi on Thursday

RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

ED grills ex-Punjab CM Channi for 6 hrs in sand mining case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi has been questioned for over six hours by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering investigation linked to a sand mining case in the State.

The ED recorded Channi's statement at its zonal office in Jalandhar on Wednesday under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The 59-year-old Congress leader said in a tweet that he was "summoned by the ED yesterday regarding the mining case".

"I attended and replied to the queries put by them to the best of my knowledge. A challan in this case has already been presented by ED in the Hon'ble court. The authorities have not asked me to come again," he said in his post on the social media platform.

Channi's nephew Bhupinder Singh alias Honey was arrested in this case by the agency days before the February 20 Punjab Assembly polls.

A charge sheet was also filed against him and others before a special PMLA court in Jalandhar on March 31. Honey, currently undergoing judicial



custody, has recently applied for bail.

The agency questioned Channi, who had earlier skipped a few summons, about his links with Honey and others and about certain visits his nephew made to the Chief Minister's Office, sources said.

The former CM was also questioned about the allegations of certain transfer and posting of officials in the State as part of the illegal sand mining operations, they said.

Channi resigned as the Punjab CM after the counting of votes on March 10 as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) swept the recently concluded polls in the State.

Channi lost the election

from both the Assembly constituencies he contested -- Chamkaur Sahib and Bhadaur.

The ED action in the case began on January 18 after it conducted raids against Honey and others and seized about Rs 7.9 crore cash from his premises and about Rs 2 crore cash from a person linked to him, identified as Sandeep Kumar.

Earlier, the ED had said that it recorded statements of Kudratdeep Singh, Honey, his father Santokh Singh and Sandeep Kumar during the searches and it was "established" that the seized Rs 10 crore "belonged to Bhupinder Singh".

"Further, Bhupinder Singh accepted that he received the

seized cash in lieu of facilitation in sand mining operations and transfer/postings of officials," the ED had said in a statement.

The accused in the case Honey, Kudratdeep Singh and Sandeep Kumar are directors of a company Providers Overseas Consultants Pvt Ltd which was raided by the ED in January.

The money laundering case was filed by the ED in November last year after taking cognisance of a Punjab Police (Rahon police station, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar) FIR of 2018 under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 to probe allegations of illegal sand mining.

Active Covid cases rise first time in 80 days, positivity up in three States

Active cases increase from 10,870 to 11,058 in 24 hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country is witnessing a gradual rise in active Covid-19 caseload for the first time in 80 days. There is an uptick in new cases and test positivity rates in at least three States — Delhi, Gujarat and Haryana.

Active cases increased from 10,870 to 11,058 in the last 24-hours. Also, there are 27 districts in the country which have weekly test positivity rates of over 5 per cent and these include 23 districts in Kerala alone.

This has sparked concerns over the spread of the virus again with experts urging people not to lower their guards and continue with their Covid appropriate behaviour.

Many hospitals and doctors in these states also confirmed that there has been a rise in patients visiting OPDs with Covid-19 symptoms. However, they also say that the majority of the patients are mildly symptomatic with fever, cold and cough and do not need hospitalisation.

Overall, the country reported 1,007 daily new coronavirus cases on Thursday, the second day in a row that fresh infections in a 24-hour period were above 1,000. The fresh tally of Covid-19 cases takes the total confirmed infections to 4,30,39,023.

As many as 18 states and UTs in India have reported a rise in active cases in the 24-hour period. Daily test positivity rates



were registered at 10.47 per cent for Mizoram, 3.05 per cent at Haryana, 2.63 per cent at Nagaland and 2.49 per cent for Delhi.

Many countries across the world - including France, Germany, Italy in Europe and China - have been registering a sharp rise in Covid patients since March. Amid worries over new variants, including the BA.2 subvariant of Omicron, and XE variant (a recombinant variant of BA.1 and BA.2), experts have suggested that people in India should not lower their guards.

On Wednesday, India's national capital added 299 fresh cases, a 48 per cent jump over the 202 infections the previous day. The city had recently eased the Covid curbs, dropping the mask mandate among other steps. So did Mumbai as the Maharashtra government relaxed Covid restrictions ahead of the festival of Gudi Padwa.

The country's overall coronavirus tally stands at 4,30,39,025, and the active caseload currently stands at 11,058, accounting for 0.03 percent of the total caseload,

according to the Union health ministry data. The recovery rate currently stands at 98.76 percent. According to the health ministry data, the daily positivity rate stands at 0.23 percent, while the weekly positivity rate stands at 0.25 percent.

At least two cases of the highly transmissible XE variant have been recorded in Mumbai and Gujarat by the local government officials.

The rising trajectory of the coronavirus is being noticed though there is no confirmation yet, either from the Union Health Ministry or INSACOG- the Government's Covid-19 genomic surveillance programme- on any new SARS CoV 2 variant that may be causing the higher number of infections," said the sources in the Ministry.

Meanwhile, according to the figures shared by the ministry, only one new death was reported in the 24 hours, which is the lowest in 747 days since March 28, 2020. Overall, 5,21,737 people have succumbed to the infectious disease in India as per official numbers.

Zargar designated terrorist by MHA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, who was involved in a series of terror attacks in Jammu & Kashmir and was one of the released terrorists in the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 in 1999, has been designated as a terrorist by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Zargar is the fourth individual to have been designated as a terrorist by the Centre in the last one week.

In a notification, the MHA said, Zargar alias Latram (52), belongs to Nowhatta in Srinagar and is the founder and chief commander of terror group Al-Umar-Mujahideen and had been affiliated with Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front. Zargar is currently based in Pakistan. He had gone to Pakistan to obtain illegal arms training and was one of the ter-



rorists released in exchange for the hostages during the 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814.

The Union Home Ministry said Zargar has been running an incessant campaign from Pakistan to fuel terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. He has been involved in various terror crimes including murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, planning and execution of terrorist attacks and terror

funding, said the MHA notification. The Home Ministry said Zargar is a threat to peace, not only to India but across the world, with his contacts and proximity to radical terrorist groups like the Al-Qaeda and Jaish-e-Mohammed and the central government believes that Zargar alias Latram is involved in terrorism and he is to be notified as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

He is the 35th individual to have been declared a designated terrorist by the government. On April 8, the government had designated Hafiz Talha Saeed, a key leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the son of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed, a terrorist. Three days later, on April 11, Pakistani national Mohiuddin Aurangzeb Alamgir, who was involved in the terror attack on a CRPF bus in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, was designated as a terrorist.

On April 12, Ali Kashif Jan, the Pakistani handler of the 2016 terror attack on Pathankot airbase, has been designated as a terrorist by the Union Home Ministry. The Act empowers the Central Government to notify the name of an individual in its Fourth Schedule if it believes that he is involved in terrorism.

India, US committed to free, open Indo-Pacific: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US reaffirmed their commitment to working together for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific and beyond, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in Hawaii. Visiting the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) there, he also said the two sides held wide ranging talks in a bid to further advance India-US defense collaboration across all domains.

Expressing satisfaction at the significant progress in the defence and strategic, he said on Wednesday "the Military to Military relationship between India and the United States has been strengthened in recent years," the defence ministry said here on Thursday.

The Indo-Pacific Command is a combined combatant command of the United States Armed Forces responsi-



ble for the key Indo-Pacific region. The USINDOPACOM and Indian military have wide-ranging engagements, including a number of military exercises, training events and exchanges.

Rajnath visited the INDOPACOM headquarters in Honolulu on Wednesday after holding 2+2 dialogue with the US in Washington on Monday. He also held separate bilateral meeting with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin at the Pentagon.

Admiral John Aquilino,

Commander USINDOPACOM, received Rajnath at the Command's headquarters in Hawaii, the Defence Ministry tweeted on Thursday.

Earlier, he visited various training sites of the US Army, Pacific (the Army Service Component Command to INDOPACOM) located around the island of Oahu. He also laid a wreath at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

During his brief visit to the Hawaiian capital, the defence minister also paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at his statue there.

India, the US and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's rising military manoeuvring in the strategically important region.

China claims nearly all of

the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea.

In Washington, Rajnath along with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar attended the '2+2' Ministerial Dialogue. It was the first under the Biden administration. The US side was represented by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin at the dialogue.

In the bilateral meeting with Austin, the two ministers reviewed the entire gamut of Indo-US defence ties and agreed to step up military-to-military relations. Rajnath and Jaishankar also attended a virtual meeting between US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Cong plans CWC meet ahead of 'Chintan Shivir'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) is being worked out for early next week ahead of the 'Chintan Shivir' to chalk out the party's future strategy.

Several meetings have already been held for the preparation of the conclave with senior leaders Ambika Soni, Jairam Ramesh, Mukul Wasnik and party general secretary organization KC Venugopal deliberating on the preparations of the Chintan Shivir, likely to be held at Jaipur in Rajasthan which is a Congress ruled state, sources said.

A senior functionary, however, said a section of party leaders has advised the leadership to consider a venue of the conclave in any poll-bound states like Gujarat or Himachal Pradesh where elections are to be held at the end of the year.

"We are in the process of

finalizing the dates and venue and the matters to be taken into account in the 'Chintan Shivir' of the party. Within two-three days the final proposal of the 'Chintan Shivir' will be worked out and a final nod will be given at the CWC meet to be chaired by party chief Sonia Gandhi," a AICC functionary said.

The Chintan Shivir has been necessitated since the dissidents have been raising voices against the present functioning of the party. The G-23 is up against Rahul Gandhi and his team, even as the party's interim chief Sonia Gandhi has been holding meetings with the dissidents to cull internal rift. In the last CWC meeting held two days after the party's dismal performance in assembly elections in five states, it was decided by the party to call a 'Chintan Shivir' to formulate a strategy for the course correction to reverse the trend

of electoral defeats. The party is now in power in only two states of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and is part of the ruling coalition in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

In the meantime, Sonia has held deliberations with party leaders including those of the G23 who had been critical of the leadership and have demanded organisational overhaul and they themselves conducted a series of meetings in between prompting Sonia as well as Rahul Gandhi to engage with them including top leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Anand Sharma.

Sonia in her address to the parliamentary party had said that the revival of the party was essential for democracy and the results of the elections were "shocking" and "painful" and hence to ponder over issues the party needs to hold a conclave at the earliest.

Modi Govt recognised Ambedkar's role in shaping modern India: BJP



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the Congress of belittling B R Ambedkar and limiting his identity to just a Dalit leader, the BJP on Thursday asserted that it was the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government that recognised Ambedkar's role in shaping modern India, and restored to him the credit of being a founding father of the independent nation.

On the occasion of Ambedkar's birth anniversary, the ruling BJP said the architect of the Constitution was given the country's highest honour Bharat Ratna by a government which had support of the BJP in 1989.

It said a life-size portrait of Ambedkar was placed in the central hall of the parliament due to the efforts of the party's veteran leaders A B Vajpayee and L K Advani.

Eol invited to build national digital health ecosystem

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Health Authority (NHA), the implementing agency for the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, has invited expressions of interest (EoI) in developing innovative solutions that will help build a national digital health ecosystem.

This collaborative approach will not just help speed up the development but also help in making digital public goods available to public and/or private entities, the NHA said in a statement on Thursday.

Interested parties shall provide these solutions as a service at no cost to public and private entities, it said.

The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aims to create a seamless online platform that will enable interoperability within the digital healthcare ecosystem. The mission has been conceptualized as a set of 'digital building blocks'.

Each building block is seen as a 'digital public good' that can be used by any entity in the digital health ecosystem and provides key capabilities that enable the ABDM vision, the statement said.

On the invitation for expressions of interest (EoI), NHA CEO R S Sharma said, "The ABDM endeavours to give impetus to open and interoperable standards in the digital health ecosystem. Such an undertaking will not only expedite universal health coverage goals in India, but also have ripple effects on the global health ecosystem."

However, such an ambition requires all hands on deck. In this regard, the National Health Authority is giving an open call inviting all interested parties to contribute to the Unified Health Interface (UHI), Health Claims Protocol (HCP), and various other open-source digital public goods being created to expand the digital health ecosystem."

Cong's Indranil joins AAP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD

In a blow to the Gujarat Congress, its former MLA Indranil Rajguru on Thursday joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Rajkot, citing that the party has emerged as the best option to serve the people and uproot the ruling BJP in the state.

Rajguru showered praises on AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, claiming that the Delhi chief minister fights for the people, not for his party.

"This attitude impressed me a lot. I was in the Congress from the beginning because I

wanted to serve the people.

The BJP has acquired power by fooling people, while the Congress has lost its ability to become an alternative."

My only problem with the Congress is that it lacks the will to defeat the BJP," he said.

Rajguru won as Congress MLA from Rajkot-East seat in 2012. In 2017, he decided to quit his safe seat to fight the Assembly polls against the then Chief Minister Vijay Rupani from Rajkot-West seat.

But he eventually lost to Rupani. Rajguru was the richest candidate in that election, having declared assets worth Rs 122 crore.

India likely to see normal monsoon for 4th year in a row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the fourth consecutive year, India is likely to witness normal rainfall during the southwest monsoon season with favourable La Nina conditions predicted to continue during the June-September period.

The country had received normal rainfall during the four-month southwest monsoon season in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The rainfall during the southwest monsoon season in 2022 will be 96 per cent to 104 per cent of the Long

Period Average (LPA) of 87 cm of the 1971-2020 period, the India Meteorological Department said on Thursday.

Earlier, the IMD used to consider the LPA of 88 cm of the 1961-2010 period.

Quantitatively, the June to September monsoonal rainfall is likely to be 99 per cent of the LPA with a margin error of 5 per cent, it said.

The Met office predicted that there is a 40 per cent probability

of 'normal' rainfall, 15 per cent probability of 'above normal' (104 per cent to 110 per cent of LPA) and 5 per cent

probability of 'excess' rainfall (more than 110 per cent of LPA).

There is a 26 per cent probability of 'below-normal' rainfall (90 per cent to 96 per cent of LPA) and a 14 per cent chance of 'deficient' rainfall (less than 90 per cent of LPA).

Normal to above-normal rainfall is most likely over many areas in the northern part of peninsular India, central India, along the foothills of the Himalayas and some parts of northwest India.

Below-normal rainfall is likely over many parts of the northeast, some parts of

northwest India and southern parts of the peninsula, it said.

The IMD will issue an updated forecast for the monsoon season towards the end of May.

It said La Nina conditions over the equatorial Pacific region are likely to continue during the monsoon season.

Also, neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions prevailing over the Indian Ocean are predicted to continue till the beginning of the southwest monsoon season. Thereafter, an enhanced probability

of negative IOD conditions is predicted.

The El Nino-Southern Oscillation is an irregular cycle of change in wind and sea surface temperatures over the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean, affecting the climate of much of the tropics and subtropics.

The warming phase of the sea temperature is known as El Nino and the cooling phase as La Nina.

El Nino is generally known to suppress monsoon rainfall in India while La Nina increases it.

Indian Ocean Dipole, also

known as Indian Nino, is an irregular oscillation of sea-surface temperature in which the western Indian Ocean becomes alternately warmer and then colder than the eastern part of the ocean.

IOD has three phases -- neutral, negative and positive. The positive IOD phase is beneficial for the monsoon and negative IOD obstructs the progression of the monsoon over India.

However, the relationship of the Indian monsoon with IOD is not as strong as compared to the relationship with El Nino.

Congress leader to visit UP to assess reasons for poll defeat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Former Union Minister Bhanwar Jitendra Singh will visit Uttar Pradesh on Friday to review the reasons for the defeat of the Congress in the recent Assembly elections. Sources said that after discussions with party's State office-bearers and candidates, Singh will submit his report to the top leadership of the Congress. After the electoral defeat, Congress president Sonia Gandhi had entrusted Bhanwar Jitendra Singh last month to assess the situation arising within the party in the state and to suggest changes in the organisation after holding discussions with the party candi-

dates and senior leaders who contested the election. Singh was also the chairman of the screening committee set up by the Congress for the UP assembly elections. Singh will hold the review meetings on April 15 and 16 at the UP Congress Committee office in Lucknow. On April 17, he will hold a review meeting at the District Congress Committee office in Varanasi and on April 19 in Jhansi. After this, on April 20 and 21, he will hold a meeting at the Congress office at Gurdwara Rakabganj in New Delhi. To participate in the review meetings, a letter has been sent to the party's office-bearers on behalf of Congress state general secretary (organisation) Dinesh



Singh. It may be mentioned that soon after the party's worst-ever defeat in the history of elections in UP, Sonia had removed Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay

Kumar Lallu. However, party general secretary and incharge of UP, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has yet not submitted her resignation or take responsibility for the defeat. Many senior leaders also targeted Priyanka's personal secretary Sandeep Singh, holding him entirely responsible for the defeat of the party and claiming that Priyanka made all wrong decisions at her secretary's behest and never discussed the party matters with any other senior leader. Priyanka also either removed or forced the senior leaders to leave the Congress after they tried to protest her style of functioning specially on 'advice' of Sandeep Singh, they said.

Guv slams Govt for Bengal's lawlessness

Guv's comments came days after the Court ordered CBI investigation into the Rampurhat carnage and Hanshkhali gang-rape case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after he called Chief Minister to Raj Bhavan to discuss the "alarming" law and order situation in the State, Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday slammed the State Government for letting the law order slip out of control and also questioned the increasing cases of corruption in the governmental transactions. Expressing concern about the number of CBI investigations ordered by the High Court in a matter of a couple

of weeks the Governor said that Bengal had become a gas chamber for democracy. His comments came days after the Court ordered CBI investigation into the Rampurhat carnage and Hanshkhali gang-rape case. "West Bengal has become a gas chamber for democracy. First the people are burnt alive and the victims of the family members are offered jobs. Why are there so many questions on the Central Bureau of Investigation probe?" he said ruining how the State Government would not forward any report to the Governor when demanded to do so. "The crime against women is on the rise. No action was taken even after so many incidents of post-poll violence in the state. I wonder whether some consider themselves to be above the law ... and when reports are sought the State Government does not forward

any report to the Governor." the Governor said apparently ignoring Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee's request to avoid such issues. Referring to the scuffle among lawyers over boycotting the court of Justice Avijit Gangopadhyay — (by pro-TMC advocates) — who had ordered CBI investigations into School Service Commission recruitment scams the Governor said, "What happened at Calcutta High Court on Wednesday was most unfortunate. The temple of justice was shamed. The people of the state are living with constant fear." The Judge had ordered the CBI to go to the extent of grilling former Education Minister, and senior TMC leader Partho Chatterjee (presently the state commerce & industries minister) for his alleged role in SSC scam. Subsequently holding the

Governor guilty was "crossing his limits" the Speaker said "the Governor says a lot of things, many of which are not true. We operate as per provisions of the India constitution." Senior Minister and TMC leader Firhad Hakim too attacked the Governor for "acting like a BJP man," adding the State Government was not bound always to give reports about everything to the Governor. "The governor can seek report or give suggestions to the state government. But the state cabinet runs the administration as per constitutional provisions. If the governor desires extra constitutional power, that is never possible," he said. Meanwhile in a related development the CBI on Thursday took charge of the Hanskhali gang-rape case seizing a number of forensic materials from the crime scene sources said.

2 honour killings rock Moradabad, Baghpat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A girl was brutally hacked to death by her family members in Moradabad, allegedly for the sake of family honour, while in a similar incident in Baghpat, a youth killed his minor sister as she had left home in the night without informing the family members. Reports from Moradabad said that one Neelam (18) of Bhojpur area was having an affair with a youth belonging to the same area even when her family was against the affair and had warned her of dire consequences. On Wednesday night, when Neelam's father, Subhash Kashyap, reached home, he learnt that his daughter was missing since morning. He along with his elder son, Mohit Kashyap, left the house and

within a few minutes they returned home with their hands and clothes soaked in blood. Subhash told his wife, Kusum, that for the sake of family honour, he had hacked Neelam to death with an axe and her body was lying in her lover's house. Without any feelings of guilt, Subhash told his wife not to shed tears for the girl who had defamed the entire family. Both Subhash and Mohit later went to wash their hands and take bath. Reports said that on receiving information about the murder, the circle officer of Thakurdwara reached Subhash's house and grilled him regarding the killing of Neelam. Later both father and son duo confessed that they killed the girl with an axe. They were taken into custody by the police and sent to jail.

Surprisingly, the police pleaded with the other family members throughout the night to take Neelam's body from the mortuary for the last rites but they refused. Finally, the cops handed the body to the local gram pradhan and got the formalities of the last rites completed on Thursday. In a similar incident in Baghpat, a class 9 student was killed by her brother on Wednesday night for leaving the house without informing him. The victim lived with her grandmother, her brother and two uncles in Baghpat. Her brother slit her throat and fled home. On arriving at the scene, police found the girl's body lying on the floor along with the knife. Superintendent of Police of Baghpat, Niraj Kumar Jadon, said on Thursday, "Last

evening, around 7:30 pm, we got information from Tilpani village that the dead body of a girl was found. We immediately rushed to the spot and sent the body for post-mortem. Her brother, Monish, has been arrested for the crime. He said that he killed the girl because she had left the house in the night without informing him. Legal action is being taken against him." Meanwhile in Mahoba, a man reportedly killed his wife's lover with an axe after he caught them in a compromising position. The incident took place in Maudaha area of Mahoba district. The assailant was arrested on Wednesday night, police said. Reports said that on Wednesday evening, the cops at Maudaha police station learnt

that the body of one Santosh, a resident of the same area, was lying in his neighbour's house. The cops rushed to the spot and found that the victim was brutally hacked with some sharp-edged weapon. The cops sent the body for autopsy and grilled the house owner. During interrogation, the man broke down and confessed to killing Santosh with an axe after finding him in a compromising position with his wife in the wee hours of Wednesday. The victim often used to visit his house in his absence, the accused said, claiming that he had warned both but they went on with their affair. He claimed that after nabbing them red-handed, he lost his cool and in a fit of rage, he attacked Santosh with an axe and killed him.



President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, and other dignitaries pay tribute to Babasaheb Ambedkar on his 131st birth anniversary, at Parliament House in New Delhi on Thursday

Photo | Ranjan Dimri

Swamy initiates village road link programme in Kasaragod

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KASARAGOD

It turned out to be a dream come true for people in Meenja Panchayath in Kasaragod district of Kerala. Despite their efforts for the last four decades, the people's representatives and administration have failed to lay a road linking Meenja with Uppala, the nearest town. Politicians like Shalini Shetty who was a member of the Meenja Grama Panchayth blame it on the cumbersome land acquiring process. "Life has become extremely difficult for us because of the delay in constructing a road linking us with Uppala. Now we have to travel 13 km through a rocky terrain to reach Uppala. Taxis or ambulance vans are reluctant to undertake trips to this panchayath because of this issue," said Harsha, administrator, Sri Nithyananda Yogashrama, Kondevooru, Kasaragod. According to Jagadish V Shetty, national general secretary, Virat Hindustan Sangam, the initiative to build the road got a momentum with the keen interest shown by Subramanian Swamy, Rajya Sabha Member and BJP leader. The village has a considerable population of Harijans. Though there are two matric-



ulation schools in the panchayath, residents were dependent on government colleges in Uppala for their education. "When the local population assisted by Virat Hindustan Sangam approached the district administration, the staff members came with open hands to take up the mission. Dr Swamy parted with Rs 2.40 crore from his MP's Local Area Development Fund as the initial expenses. The day turned out to be a festival in this village spread across the Kerala - Karnataka border," said Sundari Shetty, president, Meenja Grama Panchayath. Swamy's gesture has inspired other representatives. AKM Ashraf, Manjeshwaram MLA declared in the public

meeting that he would do whatever he could to make the dream of the people a reality. "Once this road becomes operational, people from Meenja need to travel only 2 km to reach Uppala. This will help the oppressed classes a lot because they could send their children for higher education to Uppala," said Swamy. This is a new benchmark in rural development," said Yogananda Saraswathi, head of Nithyananda Yogashrama, Meenja. Hundreds of people turned up for the foundation stone laying ceremony on Thursday. Later in the say Swamy inaugurated the first ever Samrat Ashok Birth anniversary at Mulki near Mangalore.

Mayawati: Casteist parties neglected Ambedkar

'Now competing to pay tribute for political gains'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Thursday, targeted both Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress, alleging that the casteist parties which neglected Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar were now competing to pay tributes to the Dalit icon just for political gains. Taking a jibe at the programmes organised by various political parties to pay tribute to Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, Mayawati said that the ultra-caste parties and forces had always neglected and despised Babasaheb's era-changing, humanistic thinking and struggles but today the same people were competing to pay tributes to him for the sake of political interest. "If it's not their dual gait, character, face what else? They should first clear their intentions towards the marginalised sections and give them their rights and stop injustice

and atrocities," Mayawati asserted while remembering Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary here on Thursday morning. Mayawati said that it had always been clear in the politics of the country that casteist parties, especially the Congress and the BJP, may make any Dalit an MP, MLA, minister, deputy chief minister and president but even then that person would remain neglected. She said even if that person made some effort for this as an exception, then these parties expel him from their party and government. Mayawati said that in such a situation, Dalits had to live only as their slaves. She said with this mindset, society could not be saved and progressed at all. Mayawati further said that every kind of struggle for rights, justice and political participation for these oppressed classes was a veil of BSP. "This struggle will continue, no matter how many tactics the opposition parties and their governments adopt against it," she added.

The BSP chief said contrary to the thinking and struggle of Dr. Ambedkar, along with the inaction on reservation by selling government properties in private hands, as well as being confined in the vaults of a handful of big capitalists and wealthy people in the country, poverty and economic problems in the country continued. She said inequality continued to grow alarmingly, for which the Congress and the BJP governments were to blame. Mayawati said that the rival parties and their governments suffering from casteist mentality were ignoring the struggles and messages of Dr Ambedkar, as a result of which exploitation, injustice, atrocities and malice towards Dalits continued and only the BSP was fighting for their self-respect and this movement was not going to stop. She said, the country could never forget the architect of the Constitution, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar and his historical contribution towards the uplift of crores of weak and neglected people.

Kerala 'Love Jihad' takes turn as couple posts pics

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The "Love Jihad" involving Islamic youth Shijin and a Christian girl took a new turn on Thursday as the lovers posted their pictures on the social media and swearing their affection for each other even as the girl's father went on record declaring that his daughter has been cheated by a group of extremists. "We have no faith in the investigation being carried out by the Kerala Police. The probe should be entrusted to a central agency. Though we approached the police with a complaint that our daughter has gone missing, they did not bother to order an investigation and even tried to divert the attention of the people," Joseph, father of Jyothsna told media at Kozhikode on Thursday. He said the indifference being shown by the police came out in the open as Shijin and Jyothsna were posting their pictures in the social media. "It is easy to find out the exact locations from these postings. But the police is not

showing any interest to trace them," alleged Joseph. Joseph has filed a habeas corpus petition with the Kerala High Court which the court is likely to take up on Monday. Meanwhile, the Christian Alliance for Social Action (CASA) joined issue with the CBI(M) and the Police lambasting the tardy progress the latter has made in the probe. "Instead of taking action against Shijin who took the girl by force, the police is filing cases against those who are protesting against Love Jihad. The situation in Kerala is tragic as most of the time the truth is hidden from the public. If Joseph is anxious about the safety of his daughter, it is for the police to attend to the case and trace the youngsters," said Kevin Peter, general secretary, CASA. But Bishop of Thamarassery, Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil said in a statement that certain reactionary forces were trying to subvert the communal harmony in Kerala. He asked the faithful not to fall into any kind of traps.

BJP organises seminar on social harmony on Ambedkar Jayanti

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, Bharatiya Janata Party organised a seminar on social harmony in which party's state president and Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh said the government was working to help the person on the last rung of society. "It was Babasaheb who ensured pride among the Dalits. He has helped in binding all sections of society. He drafted the Constitution to ensure that the deprived section of society gets the due respect they deserve," Singh said in a function organised in Visvesvaraya hall. He said the Bharatiya Janata Party had realised the mantra of Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay. He said it

was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who recognised the work of Babasaheb and announced the celebration of Constitution Day on November 26 every year and even suggested that the birth anniversary of Babasaheb should be celebrated in the United Nations because of the work done by Dr Ambedkar for the uplift of society. Bharatiya Janata Party media incharge Praveen Garg said that on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti, floral tributes were paid at different functions organised at the booth level. He said meritorious students were honored and a cleanliness campaign was carried out across the state while health and vaccination camps were organised in various districts.

Save Constitution day on Ambedkar Jayanti, AAP holds functions

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Aam Aadmi Party celebrated Dr BR Ambedkar's birth anniversary as Save Constitution Day, and organised various functions at party offices across Uttar Pradesh. In Lucknow, AAP workers and leaders assembled at the party office in Gomtinagar where former state president Sabhajet Singh garlanded a portrait of Dr Ambedkar. Singh said the AAP leaders and workers took an oath to follow the principles set by Dr Ambedkar. "Dr Ambedkar dreamt of imparting good education to the children to make them independent and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's government is doing the same. The Delhi government is dedicatedly ensuring education to children of the poorest families," he said.

Farmers deploy guards to protect lemons in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Farmers have deployed lathi-wielding guards to protect lemon from thieves as the skyrocketing price of this citrus fruit has made it as precious as gold or diamond. Reports from Kanpur say that unidentified thieves have stolen 15,000 lemons weighing approximately 750 kg from an orchard in Bithoor in the last four days. In the neighbouring Etawah, theft of 60 kg of lemon was reported from an orchard in Shyamnagar village. Abhishek Nishad, owner of a 3-bigha orchard in village Shividin Purva in Bithoor, has lodged a complaint with the police saying that over 15,000 lemons have been stolen from his orchard in the last four days. "We did not have security and it was never required because this area is conducive for citrus cultivation and almost every household has an orchard. But, now we need

guards," Nishad told this reporter. Amarnath Vishwakarma, a police officer, claimed that he has received two complaints of theft of lemons from orchards. "We are looking into the matter. The investigation is on," he said. With police paying lip service, the villagers have now deployed lathi-wielding guards around the orchard 24x7 to protect their produce. These guards charge Rs 450 per day (Rs 150 per shift of eight hours). Nishad said this was the first time that lemon orchards were being guarded. "Earlier, no one stole lemon. In fact, we never cared about it. But now the situation is different," he said. Lemons have become a precious commodity as they are selling at the rate of Rs 10 per piece or Rs 300 per kg whereas in normal times their price was anything between Rs 60 to Rs 80 per kg. With the early

onset of summer, the demand for lemon has increased which in turn has jacked up its price. Lemons are grown in about 2,000 bighas of orchards in Chaubepur, Bithoor, Katri, Mandhana and Pariyar regions around Bithoor in Kanpur district. Hundreds of families are dependent on this citrus fruit for their livelihood. This is not the first time that theft of lemons has been reported since its prices have gone up. Earlier, cases of lemon theft were reported from Shahjahanpur and Bareilly. Thieves stole 50 kg of lemons on Sunday night from Delapir Mandi in Bareilly. At the same time, 60 kg of lemons were stolen from the Bajaria vegetable market in Shahjahanpur. Along with this, the thieves had also taken 40 kg of onion and 38 kg of garlic from the market in Shahjahanpur. FIRs have been registered in both cases under Section 380 of the Indian Penal Code.

Kin of former PMs happy with museum; Gandhis skip event

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A spinning wheel which former prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri got as "dowry", Chaudhary Charan Singh's diaries and P V Narasimha Rao's spectacles are among the articles that their families have offered for display at the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday. Members of the Nehru-Gandhi family, which gave the country three prime ministers, chose to skip the event, while kin of former premiers Chaudhary Charan Singh, P V Narasimha Rao, H D Deve Gowda, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri attended it with enthusiasm. Located at the Teem Turi Complex in New Delhi and built at a cost of Rs 271 crore, the museum will shed light on the lives and contributions of all the 14 former prime ministers of the country.

The erstwhile Nehru Museum building, designated as Block I, now has a completely updated, technologically advanced display on the life and contributions of Jawaharlal Nehru. A number of gifts received by him from all over the world but not exhibited so far have been put on display in the renovated Block I. Many of the family members said that they were emotional and were awestruck at the expanse of the museum and the space accorded to each prime minister. "We gave them anecdotes, books, photographs for the museum. A spinning wheel which was given to my father as dowry has also been given to the museum. When my father had refused dowry, he was given the 'charkha'. These are very personal things and we gave them with a heavy heart. A badminton racket he used and a vase he got as a present during his last visit to Tashkent are also part of the collection," said.

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Breaking colour line

The SC has given a leg up to people suffering colour deficiency in the eye

The judiciary is taking the first steps towards removing the stigma of people suffering from colour blindness. The Supreme Court this week directed India's premier creative fine arts body, the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), to give admission to colour blind applicants to courses hitherto banned for them. Film and television works are the product of creative minds and they cannot be stifled because of any limitation that can be overcome by external help, the court said. The court gave its decision ignoring the institute's reasoning that deficiency can hamper technical work. The ruling is progressive and inclusive. The operative part of the judgment is where it says external assistance can help a colour blind person overcome the deficiency. This is in keeping with the higher judiciary's attempts to encourage people with deficiencies and disabilities to take up challenging work. Pranjal Patil of Maharashtra is India's first visually impaired IAS officer. The courts have intervened to provide the help of scribes to help the visually impaired or those suffering from writer's cramps to sit for competitive examinations. The latest court ruling draws our attention to the issue of colour blindness that has so far adversely affected the career choices of thousands of people who suffer from colour vision deficiency. Colour blindness is not a disability. It is not included in the various legislations related to disability. Those afflicted are disqualified from maritime or flying activities, railways, mining, forest services, policing and advanced scientific operations.

It is only now that the world of fine arts has opened up for them, thanks to the Supreme Court directive to FTII. This is only the first step in what is a long fight. Several fine arts subjects that require precision colour identification — aesthetic, portrait painting, environmental education, composition painting, graphic printmaking, graphic designing, ceramic and moulds, illustrations, poster designing, press advertisements — need to be accessible to the colour blind with the help of external assistance. Colour blindness is the inability to perceive differences between some colours. Largely a genetic disorder, damage to the eyes, nerves or brain can also cause it. India needs a national campaign to undertake testing in schools to detect colour blindness at an early age. Otherwise, children do not realise their problem until they grow up and the deficiency is revealed in a medical examination conducted as a pre-condition for admission to professional and colour-sensitive courses. Many students face the ignominy of being called slow learners when they are actually colour blind. Often, such students avoid activities involving colour, including lab experiments, painting, drawing, or field trips. Parents and teachers need to be sensitised about the issue. All schools should have learning materials available to give colour blind students a level playing field. The affliction cannot be cured but only corrected to an extent, a latest research says. Some companies are testing colour correction glasses or rejuvenating the cone cells in the eyes responsible for colour perception.



Devotees gather at Har ki Pauri on the occasion of 'Baisakhi', in Haridwar

Back again?

It's time to return to a strict hygiene regime if we don't want a repeat of the deadly COVID run

Just when we thought that things were returning to normal on the health front, alarm bells have started ringing regarding the presence of XE, the new subvariant of Omicron, in the Delhi-NCR areas. Cases pertaining to XE have already been reported in some parts of the world and at least two cases have been identified in India (in Mumbai and Gujarat). After registering a declining trend for several weeks, COVID cases are once again on the upswing in the Delhi-NCR, including Gautam Buddha Nagar, Ghaziabad and Gurugram. In Uttar Pradesh's GB Nagar alone, more than 20 schoolchildren have tested positive this week for the virus. The rise in the number of cases, however, is being attributed to the higher number of tests being undertaken by the authorities. The country's population of late has been taking the COVID-19 scare lightly, assuming that the worst is over. Also, with various State Governments relaxing the rigid COVID-appropriate behaviour norms, a popular thought has set in that the pandemic has been put behind us. However, this is not the case, as the latest spurt in the number of cases tells us.

No less a person than Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently said that Coronavirus has not gone away and it keeps resurfacing, cautioning people not to let their guard down in the battle against the pandemic. Calling it a "bahuroopiya" disease, he pointed out that the pandemic was a big crisis, and it is not over though it may have taken a pause. As virologists and other experts have been telling us, the new subvariant of Omicron seems to be more transmissible than its predecessor but might not be as severe as Delta. The World Health Organisation had last week issued a warning in this regard. 'XE' is a mutant hybrid of the two previous versions of the Omicron variant, BA.1 and BA.2, which spread across the world. XE comes with symptoms such as running noses, sneezing and sore throats, as opposed to the original strain of the virus which generally led to fever, coughs and a loss of taste or smell. However, there is no need to panic though it's the need of the hour to take all necessary precautions — including full vaccination doses, wearing masks, social distance, and regular hand hygiene practice — in order to avoid extreme circumstances.

Persona and parties matter, not alliances

In Indian politics, ideologies help to hold parties together, but do not necessarily attract voters. People vote for or against a personality

Neither the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) nor the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) can keep any political party together. One of the reasons Atal Bihari Vajpayee lost the 2004 general elections was the projection of more of the NDA and less of his own party, the BJP. The party cadres, who have been trained all their working lives that their mission is the attainment of a Hindu *rashtra*, were not impressed. The party's name itself had undergone a change thrice; from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh to the Janata Party and then finally its current avatar, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

So long as Hindu *rashtra* remains the mission, the cadre and workers know what to do. When they were made to listen to the symphony of the NDA, or "India Shining" and "Feel Good", confusion set in, taking Vajpayee to his political oblivion. His ego took refuge in the supposed cause of riots having taken place in one of the country's States. In actual fact, Vajpayee's successors rode to power twice in subsequent years. In the hour of the 2004 electoral defeat, it was rumoured that the symphony of the NDA had been orchestrated by Vajpayee and his minions; more so the latter, in order to distance themselves from the RSS and move towards becoming a centrist party. The Sangh, for its part, had serious reservations about the proclivities of this group.

What was true of the NDA is also true of the UPA, albeit in a different way. In Indian politics, the name of the central party, which we may refer to as the mother party, enjoys brand equity of a high degree. If a central party has to enter into political alliances, every alliance partner reduces the goodwill and does not add to the mother party's prospects, or even image. The combination of two or more political parties conveys the impression the main party is weak and is therefore seeking the help of smaller constituents, some of whom are wont to do



the disappearing trick the moment they smell an opportunity to further their own political interests. In the event of such circumstances, the cadres would be satisfied with even a subtle change of leadership. As my grandmother used to say, a daughter is as good as a son.

The loyal echelons of the mother party appear to be unaware of the enormity of the brand equity bequeathed to their party. There can arise situations in the life of a political party, causing much despondency, but there never need be undue defeatism. Downs are often followed by ups, and back again. One has to remember that the ruling party of today had managed to obtain only two seats in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. Earlier, in 1977, the Congress had failed to win a single seat from Amritsar to Calcutta, in the elections that were held after the Emergency.

Politics is not a game of intelligence, but one of popularity. Rajiv Gandhi knew little important beyond gadgets and computers. Indira Gandhi had a political gut and the sense to seek expert advice. She saw no reason to strain her own mind. Her



THERE HAVE BEEN OCCASIONS WHEN AMBITIOUS POLITICIANS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO SPLIT FROM THE MOTHER PARTY TO TRY THEIR OWN LUCK, ONLY TO DISAPPEAR INTO NOTHINGNESS. INDIA'S VOTERS RESPOND TO PERSONA

father Jawaharlal Nehru, on the morrow of Independence, told General Lockhart, the interim commander-in-chief of Indian Army, to make preparations to disband the Indian Army; India's credo was peace and police were sufficient to take care of the safety of its people, he said.

Moreover, it should be realised that ideologies help to hold parties together, but do not necessarily attract voters. The reason is that the country is large and diverse in so many ways that ideologies and manifestos are seldom read and, therefore, have little effect. People vote for or against a personality whom it is easier to identify with.

The Congress in its heyday certainly reflected this truth and even today, despite having lost its primacy in the country's politics and becoming a pale shadow of its former self, operates on this principle. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty is the be-all and end-all of its politics. There is absolutely no scope for any outsider to become its leader. Many, from the days of Jawaharlal, Indira, Rajiv and the Italian-born Sonia have tried to, only to splinter from the mother party and fade out

before long. Some splinters have ended up as regional parties, but these two have survived only around one leader and his family, or a particular caste, whatever high-sounding ideological labels they might sport.

The BJP thankfully has eschewed the trap of dynastic feudalism, but nonetheless remains the mother party because of its basis in nationalism rooted in the country's civilisational ethos. Its brand equity flows from its parent organisation, the RSS. The core of the BJP's brand equity, as that of its parent, is the unequivocal commitment to cultural nationalism. The party has waxed and waned in direct proportion to its adherence and willingness to act on this ideological commitment. There have been occasions when ambitious politicians have attempted to split from the mother party to try their own luck, only to disappear into nothingness. India's voters respond to personas, parties and a core ethos, not to contrived alliances.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

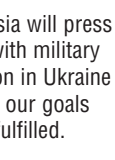
SOUND BITE

India desires peace and stability in the region for our people's development.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

Russia will press on with military action in Ukraine until our goals are fulfilled.



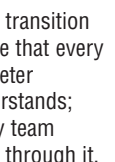
Russia President — Vladimir Putin

He (Amitabh) is very excited. I'm a parent as well, so I know you can't see beyond your children.



Actor — Abhishek Bachchan

It's a transition phase that every cricketer understands; every team goes through it.



Mumbai Indians vice-captain — Jasprit Bumrah

There's no major reason to panic. We are keeping a close watch on the COVID situation.



Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BRITISH PM SETS A POOR EXAMPLE

Sir — Hardly ever in the history of Britain, no Prime Minister, except for Boris Johnson, has apologised to the country so many times in the last few months. Yes, Johnson has broken all records in this department. Because, to date, while remaining on the post, not a single British Prime Minister was ever found guilty in any criminal case. But on Tuesday, the London Metropolitan Police imposed monetary penalties on two of that country's top leaders, Boris Johnson and his Finance Minister (Chancellor of the exchequer) Rishi Sunak. It is clear that those whose responsibility it was to implement the COVID-induced lockdown smoothly, they themselves had been flouting rules and making a mockery of the law.

There is no moral ground left for these two to stay even for a moment longer in their residences at 10 and 11 Downing Street, respectively. People in the Conservative Party should also think that Johnson is becoming a burden for the party. So it would be better to get rid of him. By the way, Rishi Sunak, who is of Indian origin, has also been embroiled in many controversies, be it his wife's income tax issue or his own blot on being a US green card holder. He is finally going to be dealt with a heavy hand in public life.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

THE PANDEMIC HIT WOMEN'S JOBS

Sir — There is no reason for people to continue losing jobs in the name of the COVID pandemic as the situation has come back to normal. However, pay cuts and exclusion penalties did make a vast difference and have had an adverse effect on citizens. Thus, men suffered partially and women were forced to quit jobs due to lack of flexibility. A research reveals that 72 per cent of working women are rejecting job roles that don't allow them to work flexibly, while 70 per cent have already quit or considered quitting jobs because they were not offered suitable flexible terms. It is assumed that flexible working is the number one priority today for all profes-

Need for more sensitivity



Why so much hullabaloo over West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's comment ("It was a love affair... If a couple is in relationship, can I stop it?") on the rape-murder of a 14-year-old girl in Hanskhali, Nadia district, though it's enough to make one dumbfounded. But what's new in it? Did not Didi earlier also describe the Park Street case of the late Suzette Jordan, a single mother of two who was gang-raped in a moving car in February 2012, as a fabrication constructed to embar-

rass her Government? Shockingly not only Didi, even Dr Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, an MP of Didi's party, said it was not a case of sexual assault but a "misunderstanding" during a deal between a woman and her "client".

One cannot imagine how a woman can say something like this about another woman. This time, however, another Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra said that even consensual sex with a minor is rape as per the law. But Didi, instead of unequivocally condemning this incident in the strongest words possible and calling to bring the culprits to book, is busy in simply cleaning her party's image by sullying the image of the dead victim. This way, of the TMC's slogan of "Maa, Mati, Manush", Maa (mother) has lost respect, Maati (motherland) has lost her glory, and Manush (people) has become frustrated. Above all this, Didi has lost her credibility as a woman.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

sionals, especially for working women.

Even before COVID, women employees were enjoying flexible facilities at their workplaces due to the soft nature of administrative officers and, moreover, the authorities feared facing stern action if they punished women workers in the name of "job tension". The research finds that poor employer sentiment towards flexible working and career breaks is holding women back from asking for greater flexibility and re-entering the workforce. Even companies managed by women entrepreneurs are not ready to be lenient towards their women employees and, in this scenario, expecting such a gesture from the companies managed by men is too much for asking.

MR Jayanthi | Chennai

WINNING AS A HABIT

Sir — Winning is a habit and coming up on the top in international tournaments gives rise to confidence among the sports fraternity. In the Indian sports field, we pay importance to those hitting headlines and

garnering praise and hype, hysteria and hoopla created by the media. But the end results are not showing after getting Mokka to perform at the highest level. Like Indian cricket, Indian hockey is also not an exception to this rule. This time, the clash for the third place went up to the shootout stage and it was disappointing to lose 0-3 and we came out empty-handed. In the early league stage when we were winning games, the press created a hue and cry about the team's performance, which only went down in the end.

We lost out the semifinal race and could not come up trumps in the penalty shootout. The Indian team cut a sorry figure as superstars failed to score and lost out without putting up much of a fight. Thus, we missed out on the chance of winning the bronze medal as well. Hype, hoopla and hysteria are over for all of us, for now at least.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A FREE TRADE PACT WITH THE GCC

India needs to move beyond its recent agreement with the UAE



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Free trade agreements and early harvest deals are the talk of the season in India which has recently concluded two of them — a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with UAE and an agreement with Australia that gives Indian goods, services, trained personnel and students barrier-free access to the Australian market while replicating a similar setup in India for Australia. The deal is significant, as it is one of the first with a developed country and could potentially accelerate similar trade related agreements with other rich economic geographies. India is currently in early stages of negotiations for similar deals with UK, Canada, Israel and EU. These trade deals could set India's economic trajectory on an accelerated crescent and place it at a sweet spot on large global trading marketplace.



The India UAE deal promises to increase India's reach in the Gulf region, which is part of an extended neighbourhood. The gulf region is host to a framework of intergovernmental, political and economic partnership between 6 countries known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). India has ancient cultural ties with these countries which are home to nearly 10 million Indian diaspora India's heavy dependency for its energy needs from GCC countries adds to the significance of this relationship. An early framework for economic cooperation between India and the GCC was signed as early as 2004 with the stated aim of expanding trade relations, ultimately leading to free trade agreement. Consequently, two rounds of negotiations happened in 2006 and 2008 with no deliverable outcomes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi understood the strategic importance of GCC and paid an in-person visit to almost all important country capitals of the region early on during his first tenure in office.

India's CEPA with UAE could be the pivot for renegotiating the trade agreement with GCC. The gulf region has been a focus area for India during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. India ensured supply of essential medicines, in some cases vaccines and healthcare products to keep the relationship warm during Covid years. This was also the time when a significant portion of the Indian population settled in the region returned or was left jobless due to pandemic related restrictions. This created a dent in India's remittances from the Gulf countries. It was during this period when India's crude imports of petrol and petroleum products came down significantly due to sudden brakes on the economy. However, those pandemic years may be behind and Covid has opened new horizons of cooperation and growth between the India and the GCC. The GCC countries are hugely dependent on imports for meeting their food security needs. In the past they have known to invest directly in companies dealing with food grains, fruits and vegetable in countries such as Ukraine and some others in Eastern Europe. The ongoing crisis in Ukraine could leave several questions on the viability of these food supply chains and make many of these countries start looking for partners in their neighbourhood. India being one of the largest producers of food grains, fruits and vegetables could be a long-term partner for the GCC in building resilient supply chains. India may look at opening up the food processing sector for investments from Gulf, which could potentially lead to more negotiations on the other sensitive issues related to agriculture. Another area of potential collaboration is the on the entire focus of digitising the economy. The Indian IT sector already counts large corporations in the gulf as their clients. A trade agreement encompassing some of the digitising aspects could provide better growth potential for Indian IT sector.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Chenab Bridge: The arch in position, finally!



Its magnificent arch is higher than the Eiffel Tower and the bridge would be the tallest railway bridge in the world

The rail bridge under construction by Indian Railways (IR) between Bakkal and Kauri in the Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir on the river Chenab, known as the Chenab bridge, has become part of engineering folklore of the country. This magnificent arch bridge has become a symbol of a resurgent India, not merely because it is identified as the mainstay for seamless railway connectivity to the Kashmir valley. Its magnificent arch, which is far higher than the tip of the Eiffel Tower, and the fact that it would be the tallest rail bridge in the world, has come to proudly embody the skill and proficiency of Indian engineers.

Hailed repeatedly as an 'infrastructure marvel in making' by a series of railway ministers and government/IR functionaries, the bridge has a chequered history. We have been hearing about this bridge for nearly two decades. It was originally intended to be completed in 2009 but the project was halted in 2008 as its stability came into question. After re-examination of the issue, construction was restarted and since then the date of completion has been regressing, from the initial 2015 to 2021 till last year itself. As all these targets were miscarried, and yet IR continued to extol the enormity of the project in the media, a feeling of cynical and sneaky déjà vu among public at large had started becoming palpable. A signature project was in the danger of becoming a victim of its overhyped narrative.

The light at the end of the tunnel is now visible. The imposing steel arch of the bridge across the river Chenab has finally been completed. Not with standing various delays in the way, this event in itself is a big achievement and a firm step forward to achieve the dream of linking Kashmir valley with the rest of the country.

There is not an iota of doubt that this project task required great engineering skills right from design to fabrication to erection etc. The task of construction of the bridge has also been in the same league. The bridge is the most challenging and fascinating structure of Udhampur- Srinagar- Baramulla rail link project. The steel arch bridge, amidst Hills of mighty Himalayas engorging the serpentine Chenab river is indeed a symbol of technical excellence of Indian Engineers. It is 1315 metre long with, with an arch span of 467 meter and stands 359 metre high above the river. At both end of the arch, there is viaduct portion and the complete configuration of the bridge is a compound and complex structure. Over the central arch, there are eleven steel piers supporting 10 spans of 48 m. The steel pier at Katra end foundation of arch itself is about 120 metre tall. Besides the arch, the other most challenging task has



AS OF NOW, THE CHENAB BRIDGE AND OTHER MISSING LINKS OF THE PROJECT ARE IN ADVANCE STAGES OF COMPLETION. BESIDES IMPROVING THE LIVES OF POPULATIONS LIVING ON EITHER SIDE OF THE RIVER IN THE KASHMIR VALLEY, IT WILL HELP TO OPEN NEW VISTAS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION

(Gupta is a retired Member (Engineering), Indian Railways and Mani is a retired General Manager, Indian Railways. Both are independent rail consultants. The views expressed are personal.)



been to build two foundations for the arch, which required massive specialised soil /rock strengthening work in the young Himalayan region.

Apart from being the highest rail bridge in the world, it has many firsts to its credit. The bridge can withstand wind speeds of over 266 kmph, an unprecedented feat. The bridge falls under seismic zone IV, but designed for earthquake forces corresponding to zone V. This work involved approximately 30,000 MT high quality steel fabrication and sophisticated launching scheme. The entire fabrication of steel work is being done at a special fabrication workshop established at site. The launching of the arch segments was done with the help of a specially-designed wire rope crane and after fixing every piece of arch and the cantilever arch was tied with wire ropes to hold them in position, till the last central piece was inserted in position.

The bridge is designed for a service life of more than a century with trains to ply on it at 100 kmph. At this speed, a train would take less than a minute to pass over the entire bridge; those who would travel on a train negotiating this bridge would have this much time to wonder at a spectacle; it might have taken more than decade to build but

they would certainly marvel at this bridge bearing mute testimony to the significance of modern technology coupled with human endeavour in improving human existence.

While the numerous prorogations in completion of the project can be criticized but not all delays were avoidable, rooted in any inefficiency or procrastination. Many of them were beyond the control of project engineers and contractors, like various PILs regarding alignment of the project, ban on sand mining in Jammu and Kashmir and adverse situations due to Covid-19 pandemic.

There will be many daunting challenges in future as well for IR's Bridge engineers and management, once the bridge is opened for rail traffic. Some of the challenges foreseen after opening of the bridge are: Inspection and health monitoring of bridge due to its inaccessibility, particularly in high wind and possible seismic activities, periodic painting of the bridge during its life, avoidance of any train derailment/ accident over the bridge as any restoration work at that height would be a near-impossible task and protection against natural disasters. In addition, this would be a big target for terrorists and this would require very close coordination

with local administration. It is hoped that appropriate equipment and technology for its regular inspection and condition-monitoring, maintenance, and contingent plans, would be in place before commissioning of the project.

As of now the Chenab bridge and other missing links of the project are in advance stages of completion. Besides improving the lives of populations living on the either side of the river in the Kashmir valley, it will help to open new vistas of development of the region. The rail link, in any case, is going to have its own strategic importance.

It will also be worthwhile to preserve and consolidate the lessons learnt and the expertise gained in the project and as the same would be of immense use in future projects as our country marches on the path of development. The confidence that IR engineers in particular, and engineers in general, gain from this project would undoubtedly propel them to excel themselves in coming days.

The celebrations and felicitations should be withheld till the completion of the project, once the project is completed there would be ample opportunities for IR to pat itself on its back, and rightfully so. Till then, we must wait with proud but restrained optimism.

POINT COUNTERPOINT



PAKISTAN'S SACRIFICES IN FIGHTING TERRORISM ARE WELL KNOWN. LET'S SECURE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE.

— PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER SHEHBAZ SHARIF

WE SPOKE WITH OUR US COUNTERPARTS ABOUT (PAKISTAN) COUNTER-TERRORISM AND HOW IT HAS BEEN USED AGAINST INDIA.

— DEFENCE MINISTER RAJNATH SINGH

RBI tough, Govt manages with more FTAs

In the present global scenario, boosting the rupee is a priority task

The feel-good factor may be impacted as RBI estimates the growth to lower, inflation to remain high, and crude prices to be around \$100 a barrel.

RBI Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) revised assumption of the crude oil price for making inflation and growth forecasts is sharply higher than the previous one. The growth estimates to lower to 7.2 per cent from 7.8 per cent even as it keeps repo rate unchanged at 4 percent and reverse repo at 3.35 per cent, meaning interest rates will remain low.

Retail Inflation averaging 6.3 per cent in the first quarter (April-June 2022), 5 percent in the second quarter, 5.4 per cent in the third quarter, and 5.1 per cent in the fourth quarter



SHIVAJI SARKAR

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

(January-March 2023) will be a concern. Wholesale rate remain at 13 per cent.

Inflation projections have been primarily revised upwards due to war-induced factors, according to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das. It may entail difficult times as government finances may be impacted in meeting the inflationary pressures.

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) finds the rate of recovery slowing down after the second pandemic wave can reduce consumer sentiments and by March 2023 it could be 15 per cent lower.

On the other hand, with 83 unicorns valued at \$277 billion would be able to create 11 lakh jobs, Nasscom-Zinnov says. The net non-farm employ-



down by \$14 billion though they are still comfortable at \$619 billion.

Proposals for foreign investment in infrastructure are fraught with risk. There are suggestions from former RBI governor Bimal Jalan that infra development should be done in rupees. This would hedge the rupee and the economy. Higher FDI would also have higher outgo in repatriation. Jalan suggests tax cuts and says rising petrol prices, supposedly highest in the world, are concerns.

No action is off the table when the need is to safeguard the Indian economy, Das says. Some more belt-tightening is possible though the Centre may like to adhere to the possible extent to its budgetary programmes.

CMIE says that the slower recovery does not bode well. Various international impediments add to risks. Such consumer sentiments can impact spending and therefore, growth in private final consumption expenditure that accounts for about 55 percent of the country's GDP.

The consumer sentiment expanded by 5 per cent in January but in March it declined to 3.7 per cent. It would take three years to recover to the pre-Covid level provided there is no other jerk to the economy. The RBI apparently took a note of it.

The Ukraine war related sanctions imposed by the US affects India's exports to an extent as well.

The government has taken to various international tie-ups

to tide over the crisis. The latest free trade pact with Australia is a move to counter China. It opens up avenues for coal and other raw material imports as well as export of garments, pharmaceuticals, steel and other products. It also allows Australian liquor and other companies to set up their units in India.

Another decision to invite Gulf country companies to invest in Kashmir is being seen as a major gain. These companies in their meeting with the governor say they have spotted 4226 sites for hotels, tourism centres and factories under the FTA with UAE.

Meanwhile, phasing out imports of 101 more defence items will give a push to self-reliance and save forex. The plan is to make the country a

global hub for defence manufacturing. It could be a big forex earner as well as create an aura for the country.

It is hoped that these would gradually tide over the balance of trade issue. At present, despite \$400 billion of exports there remains trade deficit of \$192 billion as imports in value terms have become expensive. It also adds to forex loss despite higher earnings. It is not easy to tide this over as rupee continues to slide beyond Rs 75. In the present global scenario boosting the rupee is a task.

Amid these problems FDI has increased to over \$560 million. It shows the confidence of the investor in the country's policies. The country is through a difficult phase but it has to get over for a bright future.

Ukraine says it sank Russian flagship, Moscow denies

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine said on Thursday its forces sank the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet in a missile attack, but Moscow said the vessel was merely damaged, making no mention of an assault.

The loss of the ship would be a major military and symbolic defeat for Russia as its troops regroup for a renewed offensive in eastern Ukraine after retreating from much of the north, including the capital.

Russia said a fire aboard the Moskva, a warship that would typically have 500 sailors on board, forced the entire crew to evacuate the vessel.

It later said the fire had been contained and that the ship would be towed to port with its guided missile launchers intact.

The ship carries 16 missiles, according to a military analyst, and its removal from combat would greatly reduce Russia's firepower in the Black Sea.

Regardless of the extent of the damage, any attack would represent a major blow to

Russian prestige seven weeks into a war that is already widely seen as a historic blunder.

It was not immediately possible to reconcile the vastly different accounts, and cloud cover made it impossible to locate the ship or determine its condition based on satellite photos.

The news of damage to the ship came hours after some of Ukraine's allies sought to rally new support for the embattled country.

On a visit with leaders from three other EU countries on Russia's doorstep who fear they could next be in Moscow's sights, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda declared that "the fight for Europe's future is happening here."

Meanwhile, U.S. President Joe Biden, who called Russia's actions in Ukraine "a genocide" this week, approved \$800 million in new military assistance to Kyiv.

He said weapons from the West have sustained Ukraine's fight so far and "we cannot rest now."

The news of the flagship's damage overshadowed Russian claims of advances in the



southern port city of Mariupol, where they have been battling the Ukrainians since the early days of the invasion in some of the heaviest fighting of the war - at a horrific cost to civilians.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Wednesday that 1,026 troops from the Ukrainian 36th Marine Brigade surrendered at a metals facto-

ry in the city.

But Vadym Denysenko, adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, rejected the claim, telling Current Time TV that "the battle over the seaport is still ongoing today."

It was unclear when or over what time period a surrender may have occurred or how many forces were still defending Mariupol.

Russian state television

broadcast footage that it said was from Mariupol showing dozens of men in camouflage walking with their hands up and carrying others on stretchers. One man held a white flag.

Mariupol's capture is critical for Russia because it would put a swath of territory in its control that would allow its forces in the south, who came up through the annexed Crimean Peninsula, to link up

with troops in the eastern Donbas region, Ukraine's industrial heartland and the target of the coming offensive.

Moscow-backed separatists have been battling Ukraine in the Donbas since 2014, the same year Russia seized Crimea.

Russia has recognised the independence of the rebel regions in the Donbas.

But the loss of the Moskva, named for the Russian capital, could set those efforts back.

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC show the Moskva steaming out of the port of Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula on Sunday.

Maksym Marchenko, the governor of the Odesa region, across the Black Sea to the northwest of Sevastopol, said the Ukrainians struck the ship with two Neptune missiles and caused "serious damage."

Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Ukraine's president, then said the ship sank, calling it an event of "colossal significance."

Russia's Defense Ministry said ammunition on board detonated as a result of a fire, without saying what caused the

blaze.

It later said the ship was afloat and would be taken in for repairs. It said its "main missile weapons" were not damaged.

The Neptune is an anti-ship missile that was recently developed by Ukraine and based on an earlier Soviet design.

The launchers are mounted on trucks stationed near the coast, and, according to the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, the missiles can hit targets up to 280 kilometers away. The U.S. was not able to confirm Ukraine's claims of striking the warship, U.S. National security adviser Jake Sullivan said Thursday.

"We don't have the capacity at this point to independently verify that," he told the Economic Club of Washington. Still, he called it "a big blow to Russia."

"They've had to kind of choose between two stories: One story is that it was just incompetence, and the other was that they came under attack, and neither is a particularly good outcome for them," Sullivan said.

Oleg Zhdanov, a Ukrainian military analyst, said the ship's loss, if confirmed, would reduce the number of Russian cruise missiles in the Black Sea to 56.

"The loss of 16 cruise missiles at once will force the Russians to preserve their strength and change their tactics on the water," he said.

Hours after the damage to the ship was reported, Ukrainian authorities said on the Telegram messaging service that explosions had struck Odesa, Ukraine's largest port.

They urged residents to remain calm and said there is no danger to civilians.

Russia invaded on Feb. 24 with the goal, according to Western officials, of rapidly seizing Kyiv, toppling the government and installing a Moscow-friendly replacement.

But the ground advance stalled in the face of strong Ukrainian resistance with the help of Western arms, and Russia has lost potentially thousands of fighters. The conflict has killed untold numbers of Ukrainian civilians and forced millions more to flee.

Kremlin crackdown silences war protests

AP ■ MOSCOW

A former police officer who discussed Russia's invasion on the phone. A priest who preached to his congregation about the suffering of Ukrainians. A student who held up a banner with no words - just asterisks.

Hundreds of Russians are facing charges for speaking out against the war in Ukraine since a repressive law was passed last month that outlaws the spread of "false information" about the invasion and disparaging the military.

Human rights groups say the crackdown has led to criminal prosecutions and possible prison sentences for at least 23 people on the "false information" charge, with over 500 others facing misdemeanor charges of disparaging the military that have either led to hefty fines or are expected to result in them.

"This is a large amount, an unprecedentedly large amount" of cases, said Damir Gainutdinov, head of the Net Freedoms legal aid group focusing on free speech cases, in an interview with The Associated Press.

The Kremlin has sought to control the narrative of the war from the moment its troops rolled into Ukraine. It dubbed the attack a "special military

operation" and increased the pressure on independent Russian media that called it a "war" or an "invasion," blocking access to many news sites whose coverage deviated from the official line.

Sweeping arrests stifled antiwar protests, turning them from a daily event in large cities like Moscow and St Petersburg into rare occurrences barely attracting any attention.

Still, reports of police detaining single picketers in different Russian cities come in almost daily.

Even seemingly benign actions have led to arrests.

A man was detained in Moscow after standing next to a World War II monument that says "Kyiv" for the city's heroic stand against Nazi Germany and holding a copy of Tolstoy's "War and Peace". Another was reportedly detained for holding up a package of sliced ham from the meat producer Miratorg, with the second half of the name crossed off so it read: "Mir" - "peace" in Russian.

A law against spreading "fake news" about the war or disparaging the military was passed by parliament in one day and took force immediately, effectively exposing anyone critical of the conflict to fines and prison sentences.

The first publicly known criminal cases over "fakes" tar-



geted public figures like Veronika Belotserkovskaya, a Russian-language cookbook author and popular blogger living abroad, and Alexander Nevzorov, a TV journalist, film director and former lawmaker.

Both were accused of posting "false information" about Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure in Ukraine on their widely followed social media pages -- something Moscow has vehemently denied, insisting that Russian forces only hit target military targets.

But then the scope of the crackdown expanded, with police seemingly grabbing any-

one.

Former police officer Sergei Klokov was detained and put in pretrial detention after discussing the war with his friends on the phone.

His wife told the Meduza news site that in casual conversation at home, Klokov, who was born in Irpin near Kyiv and whose father still lived in Ukraine when Russian troops rolled in, condemned the invasion.

Klokov was charged with spreading false information about the Russian armed forces and faces up to 10 years in prison.

St Petersburg artist Sasha

Skolichenko also faces up to 10 years in prison on the same charge: She replaced price tags in a grocery store with antiwar flyers. On Wednesday, a court ordered Skolichenko to pretrial detention for 1 1/2 months.

The Rev Ioann Burdin, a Russian Orthodox priest in a village about 300 kilometers (about 185 miles) northeast of Moscow, was fined 35,000 rubles (\$432) for "discrediting the Russian armed forces" after posting an antiwar statement on his church's website and talking to a dozen congregants during a service about the pain he felt over people in Ukraine dying.

China rejects 'pressure or coercion' over Russia relations

AP ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday said it would reject "any pressure or coercion" over its relationship with Russia, in response to a call from U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen for Beijing to use its "special relationship with Russia" to persuade Moscow to end the war in Ukraine.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian defended China's position on the war, saying it had "made considerable efforts to de-escalate the situation, defuse the crisis and rebuild peace."

"China is playing a constructive role in the Ukraine issue," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing.

China has refused to condemn the invasion of Ukraine by strategic partner Russia, or even refer to the conflict as a war in deference to Moscow, which uses the term "special military operation."

"We oppose unfounded accusations and suspicions against China, nor will we accept any pressure or coercion," Zhao said. "Time will tell that China's claims are on the right side of history."



China has also amplified Russian propaganda about the war, including unsupported claims that the U.S. And Ukraine have been developing biological weapons.

It has staunchly opposed economic sanctions against Russia and has abstained or sided with Moscow in U.N. Votes following the beginning of the war on Feb. 24, just weeks after Russian leader Vladimir Putin met with China's Xi Jinping in Beijing.

In a speech Wednesday, Yellen said Beijing "cannot expect the global community to respect its appeals to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity in the future if it does not respect these principles now."

"The world's attitude towards China and its willingness to embrace further economic integration may well be affected by China's reaction to our call for resolute action on Russia," she said.

Yellen's speech at the Atlantic Council, a nonpartisan think tank, came a week before the world's finance ministers and central bank governors convene in Washington for the International Monetary Fund-World Bank Group Spring Meetings. Her direct appeal to China underscores an increasing frustration that the United States and its allies have with a country that has only deepened its ties with Russia since the invasion of Ukraine.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be it, known to all that I, Manita Batra W/o Late Mr. Mani Batra, Plo A-2/122 Paschim Vihar New Delhi-63 have lost the original documents of Property No A-2/122 Paschim Vihar New Delhi-63 1. Lease Deed 2. Possession Letter 3. N.O.C. 4. Site Possession Letter 5. All Challans & GPA, A.T.S., Will, Receipts & Conveyance Deed in favor of Bal Krishan Batra dated 16/4/2001. An FIR logged vide LR no 239906/2022 dated 22/03/2022. Any person claiming any right, interest having any objections may write/contact 9990086002/999008782 within 15 days for the date of publication of the notice and call personally inform or write to Dy. Director(H) LAB or Asstt. Director(H) LAB, D-Block IInd Floor Vikas Sadan New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE

KHETARPAL HOSPITAL
F-95 Bati Nagar, Main Najafgarh Road, Near Ramesh Nagar, Metro Station, New Delhi-110015
Khetarpal Hospital hereby, through this Public Notice brings to the kind attention of the concerned that it is going to destroy its all Medical records, for the year of 2016 as per Government's Documents retention Policy. In case any Person/ Patient/ Relative thereof wants to see their treatment record or to have a copy of the same, may please contact **Medical Record Department of the Hospital**, by 30th April, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General public that by MRS SUNTJA JAIN wife of MR. D. K. JAIN is authorized to deal with A Residential Plot Bearing No. W2-555H-20, Land Area Measuring 88 Sq. Yds., Second Floor, Front Side without roof terrace rights, Out of Kharsa No. 179/12, Situated at Old La Dora (1908-1909) of Village Naraina, New Delhi-110028, vide Notarized General power of attorney and other documents Dated 27.04.2013. All persons are hereby informed that Mr. Vishal Mehant is purchasing Second Floor, Front Side without roof terrace rights, Plot Bearing No. W2-555H-20 Out of Kharsa No. 179/12, Situated at Old La Dora (1908-1909) of Village Naraina, New Delhi-110028 of the above-mentioned property from MRS SUNTJA JAIN, wife of MR. D. K. JAIN by way of registered sale deed. General public hereby informed that if anybody has any charge/interest in the said property or any kind of dispute, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

Mrs. Prasoon Lata, Advocate, SG Associates (Law Firm)
Unit No 7, Basement, Plot No C 78, Sector 2, Noida, UP 201301.
E-MAIL: sgassociatespl@gmail.com,
Ph: 7011172754, 8130200837

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client, Sh. Anun Kumar Jain S/o Late Sh. Darshan Lal Jain, who has co-inherited the property bearing no. 19 Rishab Vihar Delhi -42 alongwith his brothers, Sh. Sanjay Kumar Jain, Late Sh. Sudhir Kumar Jain and Late Sh. Rakesh Kumar Jain, (through their legal heirs), vide registered G.R. Deed dated 12.09.2016 registration no. 678 at SR-1/B, Delhi executed by their mother late Smt. Chakresh Wali Jain W/o Late Sh. Darshan Lal Jain. The previous chain documents of the property i.e. original allotment letter, possession letter and conveyance deed dated 15.09.2011 registration no. 16,124 registered at SR-VII, Delhi have been lost/misplaced. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned Mr. Vishal Mehant, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/D within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice having any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived.

Vishal Mehant (Advocate)
E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092
Mobile No. 9811215181

FORM NO. INC-26
[Pursuant to rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rule, 2014]
NOTICE
BEFORE THE LD. REGIONAL DIRECTOR,
NORTHERN REGION,
In the matter of sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5) of Rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014
AND
In the matter of SUNSHINE TRADETOWER PRIVATE LIMITED, having its registered office at KH. No. 403/268/2, H. No. C-239, New Ashok Nagar, Near Kali Badi Mandir, New Delhi-110 096
.....Petitioner
NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the company proposes to make application to the Central Government under Section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the Special Resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on Monday, 11th Day of April, 2022 to enable the Company to change its Registered Office from "State/National Capital Territory of Delhi" to the State of "Uttar Pradesh". Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the Registered Office of the Company may deliver either in the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Ld. Regional Director, Northern Region, B-2 Wing, 2ND Floor, Parayavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003, within fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company, at its registered office at KH. No. 403/268/2, H. No. C-239, New Ashok Nagar, Near Kali Badi Mandir, New Delhi-110 096.
For and behalf of the Applicant
SUNSHINE TRADETOWER PRIVATE LIMITED
SD/-
Harender Kumar, Director
DIN: 01121795
Date: 15.04.2022
Place: Delhi
Address: 433-D, First Floor, Arun Vihar, Sector-29, Noida,
Dist- Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301

Office of Executive Engineer,
Provincial Division, P.W.D. Sambhal
E-Procurement Notice Inviting Tenders
No. 816/E-Tender/22- 23 Dated : 04/04/2022
1. on behalf of the Governor of UP, tenders for following work are invited by the Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, PWD, Sambhal online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> from registered contractors from 22-04-2022 at 10.00 am to 27-04-2022 at 5.00 pm. Technical bid/Prequalification of tenders shall be opened on 28.04.2022 at 12:00 pm in office of undersigned by tender committee in presence of authorised representatives/bidders who wish to be present. Final bid of the tenders who qualify in technical bid shall be opened on date and time as specified by a notice in the office of undersigned. In case of Government holiday the required process shall be carried out of next working day.

Sl. No	DIST-RICT	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs.in Lacs)	Time of completion of the work (Including rainy season)	Cost of tender documents including GST (Rs.)	Category of road contractor eligible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Sambhal	Patch Repair Work of SH, MDR, ODR roads Under AE 1	25.00	2.50	11 Months	854.00	"A, B, C & D" roads work category
2	Sambhal	Patch Repair Work of Village roads Under AE 1	25.00	2.50	11 Months	854.00	"
3	Sambhal	Patch Repair Work of SH, MDR, ODR roads Under AE 2	25.00	2.50	11 Months	854.00	"
4	Sambhal	Patch Repair Work of Village roads Under AE 2	25.00	2.50	11 Months	854.00	"
5	Sambhal	Patch Repair Work of SH, MDR, ODR roads Under AE 3	25.00	2.50	11 Months	854.00	"
6	Sambhal	Patch Repair Work of Village roads Under AE 3	25.00	2.50	11 Months	854.00	"

3. In PWD technical evaluation of tenders is to be done by Prahari Software. URL for Prahari is <http://wms.uppwd.gov.in/Prahari/> On opening of the website Prahari login page will open in which user type Contractor is to be selected. User name and password for login on Prahari shall be same as used for contractor's registration on Chakaya Portal. Bidders have to upload all the basic information and required document on Prahari as given in Prahari in detail. If a bidder does not upload information and document on Prahari technical evaluation of the tender shall not be done and the bidder will be responsible for that. Rules/conditions & details of the tender are available at website <http://etender.up.nic.in>.
Executive Engineer,
Provincial Division, PWD Sambhal
For and on behalf of Governor of UP 05923-232577
UP- 174857 Date 13.4.2022 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

Neighbours back Ukraine, demand accountability for war crimes

AP ■ KYIV

The presidents of four countries on Russia's doorstep toured war-ravaged areas near the Ukrainian capital and

demanding accountability for what they called war crimes, as Kyiv and Moscow gave conflicting accounts of what happened to a badly damaged missile cruiser that is the flag-

ship vessel of Russia's fleet in the Black Sea.

Wednesday's visit by the leaders of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was a strong show of solidarity from the



country's banks.

Elsewhere, in one of the most crucial battles of the war, Russia said more than 1,000 Ukrainian troops had surrendered in the besieged southern port city of Mariupol, where Ukrainian forces have been holding out in pockets of the city. A Ukrainian official denied the claim, which could not be independently verified.

And in the Odesa region, Governor Maksym Marchenko said Ukrainian forces struck the guided-missile cruiser Moskva - the flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet - with two missiles and caused "serious damage".

Russia's Defence Ministry confirmed the ship was damaged but it said it was hit by Ukraine - not that it was hit by Ukraine - it said ammunition on board detonated as a result of a fire of as-yet undetermined causes. The entire crew was evacuated, it added; the cruiser typically has about 500 on

board.

Russia invaded on Feb 24 with the goal, according to Western officials, of taking Kyiv, toppling the government and installing a Moscow-friendly one. But the ground advance slowly stalled and Russia lost potentially thousands of fighters. The conflict has killed untold numbers of Ukrainian civilians and forced millions more to flee. It also has rattled the world economy, threatened global food supplies and shattered Europe's post-Cold War balance.

A UN task force warned on Wednesday that the war threatens to devastate the economies of many developing countries that are facing even higher food and energy costs and increasingly difficult financial conditions.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the war is "supercharging" a crisis in

food, energy and finance in poorer countries that were already struggling to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and a lack of access to funding.

A day after he called Russia's actions in Ukraine "a genocide", US President Joe Biden approved \$800 million in new military assistance to Kyiv, saying weapons from the West have sustained Ukraine's fight so far and "we cannot rest now." The munitions include artillery systems, armoured personnel carriers and helicopters.

Appearing alongside Zelenskyy in an ornate room in Kyiv's historic Mariinskyi Palace, Nausėda, Estonian President Alar Karis, Poland's Andrzej Duda and Latvia's Egils Levits reiterated their commitment to supporting Ukraine politically and with military aid.

SL protesters celebrate Tamil New Year outside Prez office

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan protestors, including some celebrities, welcomed the traditional Sinhala and Tamil New Year outside the presidential secretariat by boiling milk and distributing traditional sweets on Thursday, the sixth day of their anti-government stir demanding resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his powerful family for mishandling the country's worst economic crisis.

Protesters are occupying the entrance and surroundings of President Gotabaya's office, holding him responsible for the economic situation.

The protesters on Wednesday rejected Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapksa's offer for talks and demanded the resignation of President Gotabaya and all members of his family from the government.

The protestors hailed the dawning of the new year at 8.41 am and then boiled milk at the auspicious time of 9.07 am. The spill of milk at the auspicious time is the indication of well being in the New Year. At 10.17 am, the time for the first meal in the new year, they distributed the traditional sweets outside the president's office where they have been camping since Saturday.

Social media posts from the participants said they were unwilling to have any talks unless the Rajapaksas quit



from all positions in the government.

The protest is being carried out round-the-clock by youths demanding a total transformation of the "corrupt political culture", which they claim has been prevailing in the island nation since it gained Independence from Britain in 1948.

Several celebrities, musicians, artists and writers have joined the protests. On Thursday, veteran musician Victor Ratnayake joined the protesters at the site. Roshan Mahanama, the celebrity cricketer who was a member of the 1996 World Cup winning team, also participated in the protest.

Faced with critically low forex reserves, the govern-

ment announced on April 12 that it is suspending repayments of foreign debt, including bonds and government-to-government borrowing, pending a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund. Sri Lanka had to meet USD 7 billion of debt payments this year.

Meanwhile, international rating agency Fitch on Thursday downgraded the island's sovereign rating to 'C' from 'CCC'. Sri Lanka on April 18 has to pay a bond valued USD 1250 million. Fitch will be issuing a restricted default rating RD after the April 18 payment is not paid.

The president and his older brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, continue to hold power, despite their

politically powerful family being the focus of public ire. The Rajapaksas have refused to resign but the crisis and ongoing protests have prompted several Cabinet members to quit. Four ministers were sworn in as caretakers, but many key government portfolios are vacant.

The government remains unable to appoint its new Cabinet after the Opposition parties declined to join the call to form a unity Cabinet.

President Gotabaya has defended his government's actions, saying the foreign exchange crisis was not his making and the economic downturn was largely pandemic driven by the island nation's tourism revenue and inward remittances waning.

Nothing to do with politics: Pak Army; Gen Bajwa to retire in Nov

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Army, apparently ruffled by a vicious social media campaign against it, said on Thursday that it has "nothing to do with politics" and it will remain "apolitical".

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) - the media wing of the Army- Director General Major General Babar Iftikhar also asserted that Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa was not seeking an extension and will neither accept one.

Maj Gen Iftikhar said that Pakistan's survival lies solely on democracy and its strength lies in the institutions, be it Parliament, Supreme Court or the Armed forces.

The Pakistan Army has "nothing to do with politics" and the institution has decided to remain apolitical in the future as well, he said while addressing a press conference, three days after Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif was sworn-in as the new Prime Minister after prolonged political turmoil.

He clarified that Gen Bajwa was "unwell" on the day Sharif took office and had to skip the oath taking ceremony.

He said that instead of saying that the Army had been neutral, it was more appropriate to say that "it is apolitical as per the constitutional require-



ment and demands made by various political parties" over the years.

"We have many security challenges and we cannot be involved in any other thing. If we can only handle the security challenges properly, it will be fine," he said.

He also made an announcement that Gen Bajwa "is neither seeking an extension nor will he accept an extension."

"No matter what, he will be retiring on the 29th of November 2022," the spokesman said.

He also rubbished the rumors about the threat of a martial law at the height of the recent political turmoil. "There will never be martial law in Pakistan."

To a question about opening of courts in the middle of night when the battle for the no-confidence vote was going

on, he said that it was a decision by the courts and the army had nothing to do with it.

He also vehemently rejected the media reports about the visit of the army chief and the ISI chief to the PM House ahead of his decision to leave the official residence. "Totally untrue... Nobody went there... In the entire process, there was no interference by the army. Let me put this thing to rest," he stated.

Maj Gen Iftikhar said that there is no truth about the army chief having meetings with the opposition leaders in Pakistan or outside Pakistan in the days leading up to the no-confidence vote.

He said that then prime minister Khan had approached the army chief to help find a solution to the political crisis. "It is unfortunate that our political leadership was not ready to talk. So the army chief and DG ISI went to the PMO and three scenarios were discussed," he said, recalling that one was that the no-confidence motion should be held as it was.

The other were that the prime minister resigns or the no-confidence motion was retracted and the assemblies were dissolved.

"No option from the establishment was given," Iftikhar said.

Pak Army officer beaten up by 7 men associated with political party

PTI ■ LAHORE

Amid crackdown on the people involved in running a malicious campaign against the Pakistan Army after the ouster of Imran Khan from the office of the prime minister, an army officer was severely beaten up by some men associated with a political party, police said on Thursday.

Lahore police on Thursday registered an FIR against seven persons involved in the torture of the army officer named Major Harris. "We have arrested three of the nominated suspects and raids are underway to nab the other four," Lahore police chief Shahzada Sultan told a press conference on Thursday. He said the accused belonged to a political party but did not mention the name of the party.

According to the FIR, the seven persons boarding a four-wheeler hit a car, which was driven by Major Harris, on Ferozpur Road. "Major Harris was not in uniform but he introduced himself but the men beat him severely," alleged the father of Harris in the FIR.

On the other hand, Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested a total 15 suspects in Punjab province over their alleged involvement in a defamatory campaign against state institutions, especially Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa during the last three days.

UN watchdog installs new cameras at Iran centrifuge workshop

AP ■ DUBAI

The United Nations atomic watchdog said on Thursday it installed surveillance cameras to monitor a new centrifuge workshop at Iran's underground Natanz site after a request from Tehran, even as diplomatic efforts to restore its tattered nuclear deal appear stalled.

The start of work at the new workshop comes after Iran's centrifuge facility in Karaj found itself targeted in what Iran described as a sabotage

attack in June. Natanz itself has twice been targeted in sabotage attacks amid uncertainty over the nuclear deal, assaults that Tehran has blamed on Israel.

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said it installed cameras and removed seals from machines at the workshop on Tuesday. Those machines will be used to make centrifuge rotor tubes and bellows, crucial parts for the devices that spin at very high speeds to enrich uranium gas.

Trump aide Miller to testify to Jan 6 committee

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Stephen Miller, who served as a top aide to President Donald Trump, will appear Thursday before the congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Miller was a senior adviser for policy during the Trump administration and a central figure in many of Trump's policy decisions. He has resisted previous efforts by the committee, filing a lawsuit last month seeking to quash a committee subpoena for his phone records.

The person familiar with the matter

spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private testimony. It's unclear whether Miller will appear in person or virtually. A spokesperson for the committee said the panel had no comment.

Miller's scheduled testimony before the committee comes weeks after Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner also agreed to sit down with congressional investigators, months after the committee had reached out.

The nine-member panel subpoenaed the former Trump adviser in November along with Steve Bannon and former press secretary Kayleigh McEnany. Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., the

Democratic chairman of the panel. Said in a statement at the time that Miller had "participated in efforts to spread false information about alleged voter fraud."

The House voted last week to sent contempt charges against former Trump advisers Peter Navarro and Dan Scavino for their monthlong refusal to comply with subpoenas. The move was the third time the panel has sent contempt charges criminal referrals against those in the former president's orbit to the Justice Department for possible prosecution. The first two referrals, sent late last year, were for former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and Bannon.

4 Germans held over extremist blackout, kidnapping plan

AP ■ BERLIN

Four people were arrested in Germany and weapons were seized in an investigation into suspected anti-government extremists who allegedly planned to cause a long nationwide blackout and kidnap well-known figures including the country's health minister, authorities said Thursday.

Prosecutors in Koblenz and Rhineland-Palatinate's state criminal police office said that raids were carried out at 20 properties across Germany Wednesday following an investigation launched in October.

The suspects were members of a chat group called "United Patriots" on the Telegram messaging service.

Investigators said the suspects were associated with the protest movement against coronavirus restrictions and with the Reich Citizens movement, which disputes the legitimacy of the post-World War II German constitution and, by extension, the current government. In all,

12 people are under investigation. Authorities said the group's declared aim was to destroy electricity supply facilities and cause a long blackout across the country, with the goal of producing "conditions similar to civil war" and ultimately overthrowing the country's democratic system.

Police seized 22 firearms, including a Kalashnikov rifle, along with hundreds of rounds of ammunition, thousands of euros in cash, and numerous gold bars and silver coins. They also found forged COVID-19 vaccination and test certificates. The group allegedly planned to kidnap well-known public figures. Investigators said those included Health Minister Karl Lauterbach. Lauterbach said he was "appalled" by the news and thanked investigators.

"The whole thing shows that corona protests have not just become more radical, but that it is now about more than corona - that there is an attempt here to destabilize the State," he told reporters during a visit to Husum on Germany's North Sea coast.

Anti-virus shutdowns in China spread as infections rise

AP ■ BEIJING

Anti-virus controls that have shut down some of China's biggest cities and fuelled public irritation are spreading as infections rise, hurting a weak economy and prompting warnings of possible global shockwaves. Shanghai is easing rules that confined most of its 25 million people to their homes after complaints they had trouble getting food.

But most of its businesses still are closed.

Access to Guangzhou, an industrial centre of 19 million people near Hong Kong, was suspended this week. Other cities are cutting off access or closing factories and schools.

Spring planting by Chinese farmers who feed 1.4 billion people might be disrupted, Nomura economists warned Thursday. That could boost demand for imported wheat and other food, pushing up



already high global prices.

The closures are an embarrassment to the ruling Communist Party and a setback for official efforts to shore up slumping growth in the world's second-largest economy. They come during a sensitive year when President Xi Jinping is expected to try to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as leader.

Beijing has promised to reduce the human and economic cost of its "zero-COVID" strategy, but Xi on Wednesday ruled out

joining the United States and other governments that are dropping restrictions and trying to live with the virus.

"Prevention and control work cannot be relaxed," Xi said, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. "Persistence is victory."

The risk that China might tumble into recession is increasing, Ting Lu, Jing Wang and Harrison Zhang of Nomura warned in a report.

"The logistics crunch is worsening," they said.

"The markets should also be concerned about the delayed spring planting of grain in China."

The government reported 29,411 new cases Thursday, all but 3,020 with no symptoms. Shanghai accounted for 95% of that total, or 27,719 cases. All but 2,573 had no symptoms.

A health official warned Wednesday that Shanghai didn't have the virus under control despite its easing restrictions.

Some 6.6 million people were allowed to leave their homes in areas that had no new cases for at least a week.

But at least 15 million others still are barred from going outdoors. Most people have obeyed despite grumbling about shortages of food, medicine and access to elderly relatives who need help.



JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLICE

DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS JAMMU

0191-2561578 (H), 0191-254780 (F), email-sspjammu@jkpolice.gov.in

LOOK OUT NOTICE

SP Rural, Jammu vide communication No. Rdr/2022/6415-16/SP(R) dated 06.04.2022, intimated that one Amarjeet Singh S/O Sevak Singh R/O Sungal, Akhnoor, District Jammu was missing since 29.03.2022. Accordingly his missing report was entered at P/S Gharota vide DDR No. 16 dated 29.03.2022. Despite thorough search his whereabouts are still unknown

As such photograph of missing Amarjeet Singh S/O Sevak Singh R/O Sungal, Akhnoor, District Jammu is being published for the information of Police establishments/public in general and if anybody having any clue related to his whereabouts / present location, kindly communicate the same on the below mentioned contact/Telephone numbers.

Description Roll:-

Name
S/O
Address
Age
Height
Complexion
Dress

Amarjeet Singh
Sevak Singh
Sungal, Akhnoor, District Jammu
28 years
5' 6"
Wheatish
Pent Shirt, leather shoes

Contacts/Telephone Numbers:-

1. DPO, Jammu
2. SSP Jammu Mail I.D
3. PCR Jammu
4. SP Rural Jammu
5. SDPO Akhnoor
6. P/S Gharota

0191-2547807,0191-2561578
sspjammu@jkpolice.gov.in
0191-2542000
0191-2605949
01924-252225
0191-2624319

Sd/-
For Sr. Superintendent of Police, Jammu

कार्यालय, नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ (छत्तीसगढ़)							
क्रमांक 51/स्वा.वि./न.पा.नि./2022		रायगढ़, दिनांक 13/04/2022					
॥ ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट द्वितीय निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना ॥							
नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ऑनलाईन (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-							
क्र.	सि.नि. क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत राशि रु. (लाख में)	निविदा डाउनलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि			
1	97280	Supply of Un-Skilled Placement Labour - 62 for Nagar Nigam Raigarh Zone-1	70.98	28-04-2022			
2	97284	Supply of Un-Skilled Placement Labour - 62 for Nagar Nigam Raigarh Zone-2	70.98	28-04-2022			
3	97288	Supply of Un-Skilled Placement Labour - 61 for Nagar Nigam Raigarh Zone-3	69.83	28-04-2022			
4	97299	Supply of Un-Skilled Placement Labour - 63 for Nagar Nigam Raigarh Zone-4	72.12	28-04-2022			
5	97300	Supply of Un-Skilled Placement Labour - 56 for Nagar Nigam Raigarh Zone-5	64.11	28-04-2022			
6	97303	Supply of Un-Skilled Placement Labour - 56 for Nagar Nigam Raigarh Zone-6	64.11	28-04-2022			
उपरोक्त कार्यों की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, धरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञप्ति, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है।							
आयुक्त नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ (छ.ग.)							

AXIS BANK LTD.		PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION OF PLEDGED ASSETS BEING GOLD ORNAMENTS				
THE BORROWERS, IN SPECIFIC AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL ARE HERE BY NOTIFIED THAT PUBLIC AUCTION OF THE GOLD ORNAMENTS PLEDGED IN THE BELOW ACCOUNTS IS PROPOSED TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE AXIS BANK AT THE BELOW MENTIONED BRANCH. THE BELOW MENTIONED BORROWERS HAS AVAILED THE CREDIT FACILITY FROM THE AXIS BANK LIMITED AGAINST THE PLEDGE OF GOLD ORNAMENTS ("GOLD LOAN FACILITY") IN FAVOUR OF THE BANK TOWARDS THE SECURITY. THE DEMAND NOTICES WERE ISSUED TO THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS CALLING UP THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS TO PAY THEIR OUTSTANDING AMOUNT TOWARDS THE GOLD LOAN FACILITY AVAILED. AS THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS HAVE FAILED TO REPAY THE OUTSTANDING LOAN AMOUNT, THE BANK IS CONSTRAINED TO INVOLVE THE PLEDGE AND PROPOSED TO CONDUCT AN E-AUCTION SALE OF PLEDGED GOLD ORNAMENTS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY HEREUNDER ON 25.04.2022 AT 12.30 PM TO 3.30 PM ON "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", "WHATSOEVER THERE IS" AND "NO RECOURSE BASIS". DETAILS OF BORROWERS AND OUTSTANDING AMOUNT						
SR. NO.	BRANCH NAME	CUSTOMER NAME	LOAN A/C NO.	AMOUNT OUTSTANDING	DATE OF RECALL	GROSS WEIGHT
BRANCH NAME: ASHOK VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
1.	ASHOK VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]	UMESH SINGH	921060057029003	531857.51	28-Feb-22	201.2
BRANCH NAME: FARIDABAD [HR]						
2.	FARIDABAD [HR]	RAHUL	921060051088068	236728	30-Apr-21	88
BRANCH NAME: KALKAJI, NEW DELHI [DL]						
3.	KALKAJI, NEW DELHI [DL]	RAJWANT SINGH	920060053681101	202000	22-Jun-21	73.9
4.	KALKAJI, NEW DELHI [DL]	MD NAZ	920060049733573	75674.3	25-Mar-21	22.9
BRANCH NAME: NOIDA [UP]						
5.	NOIDA [UP]	BIVASH MONDAL	920060051255229	111477	22-Jun-21	39.3
BRANCH NAME: ROHINI, DELHI [DL]						
6.	ROHINI, DELHI [DL]	CHANDER PRAKASH PANDEY	920060052360043	450952	30-Apr-21	145.7
BRANCH NAME: SECTOR 14, GURGAON [HR]						
7.	SECTOR 14, GURGAON [HR]	SUMIYA AHMED	920060049889582	154731	22-Jun-21	78
8.	SECTOR 14, GURGAON [HR]	ABHINAV PRAKASH	920060040632435	150830	20-May-21	52.7
BRANCH NAME: SECTOR 16, FARIDABAD [HR]						
9.	SECTOR 16, FARIDABAD [HR]	MUKESH KUMAR	921060050577891	842265	20-May-21	253.1
10.	SECTOR 16, FARIDABAD [HR]	DEEPAK	9210600505636254	126628	29-Jan-22	62.4
11.	SECTOR 16, FARIDABAD [HR]	VISHAL MAKKAR	920060018039590	28976	30-Apr-21	12.3
BRANCH NAME: SHALIMAR BAGH, DELHI [DL]						
12.	SHALIMAR BAGH, DELHI [DL]	MANNU KUMAR	921060056942064	63924	07-Jan-22	23.9
BRANCH NAME: SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]						
13.	SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]	ANIL KUMAR	920060006750313	205453	26-Dec-20	93.8
14.	SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]	RAHUL	921060053578455	745028	20-May-21	240.1
15.	SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]	KANHAIYA KUMAR	921060052611982	418608	18-Jul-21	119
16.	SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]	KANHAIYA KUMAR	921060053329936	371713	22-Jun-21	112.4
17.	SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]	AMIT KUMAR	921060053609764	345103	22-Jun-21	114.6
18.	SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]	RANJIT KUMAR PODDAR	921060053722432	86088	28-Feb-22	35.6
BRANCH NAME: TILAK NAGAR, DELHI [DL]						
19.	TILAK NAGAR, DELHI [DL]	RUDRADEV PANDEY	921060052974102	68887	22-Jun-21	24.1
BRANCH NAME: VAISHALI, GHAZIABAD [UP]						
20.	VAISHALI, GHAZIABAD [UP]	ADITYA GANJOO	920060052307864	44052	22-Jun-21	14
21.	VAISHALI, GHAZIABAD [UP]	SARIKA SINGH	920060051527595	310912.66	07-May-21	102.4
BRANCH NAME: VIKAS PURI, NEW DELHI [DL]						
22.	VIKAS PURI, NEW DELHI [DL]	NAMRITA JHA	921060050168956	416738	30-Apr-21	130.3
AXIS BANK LTD. HAS THE AUTHORITY TO REMOVE ACCOUNT/CHANGE THE AUCTION DATE WITHOUT ANY PRIOR NOTICE. AUCTION WILL BE HELD ONLINE HTTPS://GOLD.SAMIL.IN BETWEEN 12.30 PM TO 3.30 PM. FOR DETAILED TERMS AND CONDITIONS, PLEASE LOG INTO GIVEN WEBSITE HTTPS://GOLD.SAMIL.IN						
PLACE: DELHI DATE: 14-04-2022				SD/-, AUTHORIZED OFFICER AXIS BANK LTD.		

Centre OK's ₹19K cr for textiles PLI



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday said it has approved 61 applications of companies, including Ginni

Filaments, Kimberly Clark India Pvt Ltd, and Arvind Ltd, with an investment potential of over ₹19,000 crore under the production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for textiles.

Textile Secretary U P Singh said that a total of 67 proposals were received under the PLI scheme for the textiles sector."In the approved 61 applications the proposed total investment expected from the applicants is ₹19,077 crore and a projected turnover is ₹184,917 crore with a proposed employment of 240,134 people," Singh told reporters here.

The government had approved the PLI scheme for Textiles products like MMF apparel, MMF fabrics and products of technical textiles for enhancing manufacturing capabilities and boosting exports with an approved financial outlay of ₹10,683 crore over a five-year period. Out of 67 applications, 15 were received under Part-1 and 52

under Part-2, the official said.

In Part 1, the minimum investment requirement is ₹300 crore and the minimum turnover required to be achieved for incentive is ₹600 crore, and in Part-2, the minimum investment should of ₹100 crore and the minimum turnover is ₹200 crore.

The companies whose proposals have been approved include Avgol India Pvt Ltd; Goa Glass Fibre Ltd; H P Cotton Textile Mills; Kimberly Clark India Pvt Ltd (subject to formation of a new company for investment and production under the scheme); Madura Industrial Textiles; MCPI Pvt Ltd; Pratibha Syntex; Shahi Exports; Trident Ltd; Donear Industries; Gokaldas Exports; and Arvind Ltd. Singh said that

the scheme would help increase India's share in the global man-made fibre and technical textiles sector. "We are targeting to increase exports of technical textiles from \$2 billion to about \$8-10 billion," he added.

Talking about the Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA) scheme, the secretary said they have received 17 proposals from 13 states, including Madhya Pradesh (4) and Karnataka (2).

The Textiles Ministry will follow a "challenge method" to select states for the scheme, under which seven parks will be set up in the country."We are evaluating these proposals as under the scheme, only seven parks will be approved in the first phase..We are also sending teams to these states to know

about the ground reality," he said.

Apart from 1,000 acres of land for one such park, the ministry will look at some important things like nearby availability of raw material, all kinds of infrastructure including port, road and rail connectivity, water and power availability, and incentives of states among others.

In the phase-2, "we will find master developers because we would be giving 30 per cent assistance for infrastructure or ₹500 crore maximum and another ₹300 crore incentive for industries...But balance investment has to be done by a private investor, who will recover the money from the industry that would come there at the park," he said.

FDI may touch \$100 bn in 2022-23, says PHD Chamber

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is expected to attract \$100 billion foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2022-23 on the back of economic reforms and ease of doing business in recent years, industry chamber PHDCCI said on Thursday.

It also said the current financial year is expected to attain a GDP growth of more than 8 per cent.

However, the inflation scenario has been stoked by rising international commodity prices, particularly of crude oil, it said. "India is expected to attract a \$100 billion FDI

inflow in 2022-23 supported by various ground touching economic reforms and significant ease of doing business in recent years," the chamber said.

It has suggested a ten-pronged strategy to strengthen the economic growth and achieve the target of becoming a \$5 trillion economy in next five years.

The suggestions include speedy infrastructure investments, inclusion of more sectors under PLI scheme, increase in public investments in agriculture sector, addressing high commodity prices and shortages of raw materials.

NITI Aayog: Working on gaushala economy to deal stray cattle issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Keen on improving the gaushala (cow shelter) economy, government think-tank Niti Aayog is working on a roadmap to enable commercial use of cow dung for multiple purposes, and resolve various issues connected with stray cows which often become liability for farmers, its member Ramesh Chand has said.

The Aayog has also asked economic think tank NCAER to prepare a report on the economics of gaushalas to ensure its commercial viability.

"We are just looking at what are the possibilities to improve the gaushala economy..We are looking at the possibility that we can have some value created or value addition for the by-products, which is cow dung," he told PTI.

A team of government officials under Chand has visited big gaushalas in Vrindavan (Uttar Pradesh), Rajasthan and other parts of India to assess their conditions.

He pointed out that maybe 10 per cent or 15 per cent of cows give a small quantity of milk but that is not enough to cover labour, fodder and treatment costs.

"Cow dung can be used to make Bio-CNG...So we are looking at those kinds of possibilities," Chand, who oversees farm policies at the government think tank said.Menace of stray cattle, abandoned by their own-

ers, had become a major talking point in the Uttar Pradesh elections.

The NITI Aayog member highlighted the advantage of producing bio-CNG from cow dung."So rather than it (gas) damaging the environment, we will use it as energy which will give returns also," he argued.

The eminent agriculture economist observed that leaving unwanted cattle in the open is also harmful for crops. "That's why we are working on the gaushala economy," he asserted.

According to the National Dairy Development Board, India had 192.5 million cattle in 2019 and 109.9 million buffaloes, taking the total bovine population to 302.3 million.

Asked whether India has anything to learn from Sri Lanka, whose organic farming push aggravated the island country's economic and political crisis, Chand said Sri Lanka just decided to go for it (organic farming) for the whole country and it just said that fertiliser import etc will not be there. "In the case of India, whenever we come with any initiative (about organic farming), you know it will happen gradually," he said.

While noting that right now because India has some surplus in food, Chand said: "We can try it (organic farming or natural farming) gradually on a small scale."

SBI to hire consultant to explore biz potential in EV charging space

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the government's thrust on electric vehicles (EVs), the country's largest lender SBI has decided to hire a consultant to explore the business potential of digital payments in EV charging space.

As per the RFP document inviting bids from potential candidates, SBI said the consultant will be required to study the existing transport landscape and design a roadmap with detailed milestones and timelines to drive digital payments for EV charging across different modes of transport by identifying opportunities and barriers to build an e-mobility ecosystem.

SBI said the consultant will be tasked to explore and foresee the market potential for digital payments in EV charging space across the globe as well as to develop a strategic roadmap for EV charging payments solutions for various modes of transport and allied infrastructure including identification of vendors/dealers in value chain.

Among others, the consultant will also have to identify potential initiatives and areas of work to undertake through the capacity building programme and the necessary stakeholders and partnerships to execute the initiatives.

Also, it will be required to "provide recommendations on next steps and areas for support through investments and capacity building by development partners," SBI said in the request for proposal (RFP) document.

Bank of India moves NCLT against Future Retail Files insolvency petition

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bank of India has moved the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), filing a petition to initiate insolvency proceedings against debt-ridden Future Retail Ltd.

Earlier this month, Future Retail Ltd (FRL) had reported a default of ₹5,322.32 crore to its lenders on account of the ongoing litigations with e-commerce major Amazon and other related issues. "Bank of India (BoI) has served an advance intimation of filing an application under Section 7 of

the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 against the company for default on non-payment of monies due in terms of the Framework Agreement entered into between the company and Bank of India," FRL said in a regulatory filing. The Future group firm said it has received a copy of the petition and is in the "process of taking legal advice".

BoI, the lead banker of the consortium of lenders of FRL, had last month through a public notice in newspapers claimed its charge over the assets of FRL and warned the

public against dealing with assets of the Kishore Biyani-led Future group firm. Several Future Group companies, including FRL, had entered into agreements with their respective lenders in terms of the RBI circular dated August 6, 2020, in which a resolution framework for COVID-related stress was announced.

FRL is part of the ₹24,713 crore deal announced by Future Group in August 2020, under which it is to sell 19 companies operating in retail, wholesale, logistics and warehousing segments to Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL).All 19 companies would be consolidated into one entity -- Future



Enterprises Ltd -- and then transferred to RRVL under the proposed deal. Future Group companies will be conducting meetings of their respective shareholders and creditors between April 20-23, 2022 to seek their approval for the ₹24,713 crore deal. The deal is contested by Amazon and is under litigation at various

forums, including the Supreme Court, Delhi High Court and Singapore International Arbitration Center. Earlier this week, Amazon warned FRL against holding meetings of its shareholders and creditors to approve the sale of its retail assets to Reliance Retail.

In a 16-page letter to Kishore Biyani and other promoters on April 12, the US e-commerce giant said such meetings are illegal and would not only breach 2019 agreements when Amazon made investments into FRL's promoter firm but also violate a Singapore arbitral tribunal's injunction on sale of retail assets to Reliance.

BMW launches new F 900 XR bike in India tagged at ₹12.3 lakh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury carmaker BMW on Thursday said it has launched the updated version of F 900 XR bike in India priced at Rs 12.3 lakh (ex-showroom).

The adventure sports tourer will be available as a completely built-up unit (CBU) and can be booked at BMW Motorrad dealerships, the company said in a statement. Deliveries of the bike will commence from June 2022, it added. "BMW Motorrad has brought the world's finest premium motorcycles to India and created a distinct place for itself among motorcycling

enthusiasts. XR represents an uncompromising combination of athleticism and long-distance riding performance," BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah noted.

The new profile of adventure sports tourer F 900 XR's unique performance is combined with powerful features that further enhance riding in a distinctive and future-oriented style of a genuine XR, he added.

The new F 900 XR comes with a 895-cc engine which generates an output of 105 hp. The bike sprints from 0-100km/hr in just 3.6 seconds and achieves a top speed of over 200 km/hr.

Duty free import of raw cotton to push exports of value added textiles: FIEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government's decision to waive customs duty on cotton imports will help boost exports of value added products of textiles, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President A Sakthivel said on Thursday.

The move, he said, will promote exports of apparel and made-ups sectors significantly by softening the prices of yarn and fabrics as well.

The finance ministry on Wednesday waived customs duty on cotton imports till September 30, a move which will benefit the textile industry and lower prices for consumers. Currently, cotton imports attract 5 per cent



Basic Customs Duty (BCD) and 5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC). The industry had been demanding a duty waiver to lower domestic prices. The Central Board of

Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) notified the exemption from customs duty and AIDC for import of cotton."Cotton textile exports will get further boost as the high prices of cotton were blunting the competitive edge," Sakthivel said.

He added that India has increased its market share in apparel exports in the US and many other countries recently and the signing of free trade pact with the UAE and Australia will further accelerate it.

"The Government has provided all support to the textile sector and we should endeavour to reach USD 100 billion of textile exports by 2030," he added.

Britain's Financial Ombudsman Service selects TCS to drive digital transformation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's largest IT services company Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Thursday said it has been chosen as a strategic partner by UK's Financial Ombudsman Service to accelerate digital transformation.

TCS will help futureproof the Ombudsman's technology capabilities with a new digital portal that would improve the experience for complainants and respondents, the company said in a release. TCS did not divulge the size of the contract.

Announcing its selection as a strategic partner by the Financial Ombudsman Service, TCS in a statement said that operating within the UK public services sector, the ombudsman provides free and easy-to-use services that help resolve complaints between consumers, small businesses, and financial services businesses.

"The Ombudsman has partnered with TCS to enhance and futureproof its digital services capabilities, to help achieve its goal of preventing complaints and unfairness, and for better serving and supporting its customers," the release said.

TCS will design and implement a new greenfield digital customer portal to 'significantly improve' the experience for complainants and respondents.

The company will also develop and maintain complaint management and reporting system to enhance the ombudsman's public service offering and organisation performance.

India's mineral production rises 4.5% in Feb

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's mineral production increased 4.5% in February 2022 over same month a year ago, the mines ministry said on Thursday. The index of mineral production of mining and quarrying sector for the month of February was at 123.2, registering a rise of 4.5% as compared to level recorded in year-ago month, it said in a statement. The mineral production recorded cumulative growth of 13.2% in April-February 2021-

22, according to provisional statistics of Indian Bureau of Mines. In February this year, the production of coal was at 795 lakh tonne, lignite at 47 lakh tonne, natural gas (utilised) 2,515 million cubic metres and petroleum (crude) at 23 lakh tonne.

The minerals whose production showed growth were diamond, lignite, phosphorite and bauxite, among others. Production of minerals like limestone, gold, manganese ore and chromite showed the contraction.

BPCL teams up with Microsoft to leverage cloud, AI technologies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Microsoft have entered a strategic cloud partnership aimed at accelerating the firm's digital transformation and driving innovation in the oil and gas industry.

According to a joint statement, the collaboration seeks to unlock the opportunities that Microsoft's cloud provides to address the unique challenges of the oil and gas sector, enabling BPCL to accelerate the modernisation

of its tech architecture. This, in turn, will enhance and redefine customer experience.

Through a seven-year collaboration, Microsoft will provide infrastructure as a service (IAAS), platform as a service (PAAS), network and security services on the cloud, including Azure native services on Azure Datafactory, IOT (Internet of Things) and analytics.

"The partnership gives a strong fillip to BPCL's digital-first strategy, as part of 'Project Anubhav' to redefine customer experience through the

pillars of trust, personalization, and convenience," it said. Microsoft's secure cloud platform with data privacy at the crux will fuel BPCL's cloud transformation, providing the intelligence to transform operations, build smarter supply chains and increase customer engagement.

Both companies have also been working closely to provide a secure collaboration experience for BPCL's employee ecosystem across the country, with Microsoft Teams and workplace productivity suite.

Petronet may look at building 4th LNG import terminal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petronet LNG Ltd, the operator of the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal, may look at setting up a fourth facility in the country to meet the rising energy demand in Asia's third-largest economy, its CEO A K Singh said.

Petronet operates a 17.5 million tonnes a year LNG import facility at Dahej in Gujarat and another 5 million tonnes facility at Kochi in Kerala. It is looking to set up a floating LNG import terminal at Gopalpur in Odisha in the next 3 years at a cost of ₹ 1,600 crore.

"We believe gas demand will continue to grow and we will need avenues to meet such requirement," he told PTI in an interview. With limited domestic production, gas

demand will have to be met through imports. "We could possibly look at setting up a fourth LNG import and regasification terminal," he said without giving details. "These are preliminary thoughts and we will come back to you once plans are firmed up."

Natural gas consumption will have to rise to over 500 million standard cubic meters per day from the current 165 mmscmd to achieve the government's goal of raising the share of natural gas in the country's primary energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6.7 per cent.

With domestic production of gas barely meeting half of the current consumption, import of gas in the form of LNG will have to grow. According to Shell, India would need 35 to 40 million tonnes of additional LNG

imports between 2020 to 2040. (1 million tonnes of LNG is equal to 3.60 mmscmd).

Besides Petronet's terminals, India currently has an operational import facility at Hazira and Mundra in Gujarat, Dabhol in Maharashtra and Ennore in Tamil Nadu (all 5 million tonnes per annum capacity each).

Singh said Petronet plans to make a foray into the petrochemical business by investing ₹12,500 crore in a Propane Dehydrogenation Plant at Dahej to convert imported feedstock into propylene.

"We plan to build a jetty at Dahej for import of ethane and propane. While propane will be used as feedstock for our petrochemical plant, ethane will be for sale to petrochemical plants of other companies such as that of OPAL," he said. This jetty will cost ₹1,650

crore and will take three years to build. Petronet will invest ₹ 600 crore in raising the capacity of the Dahej LNG import terminal to 2.5 million tonnes per annum from the current 17.5 million tonnes, ₹1,245 crore in building an additional storage tank and bays for truck loading of LNG.

The Dahej import terminal is the largest in the world and the port will host the third jetty that besides propane and ethane, will also be used for LNG imports, he said.

Petronet will set up a 4 million tonne a year floating storage & regasification (FSRU)-based LNG import facility off the Gopalpur port that later will be turned into a land-based terminal with a higher 5 million tonne capacity, with scope for raising it in future, he said.The company had some years back planned

to set up a terminal at Gangavaram in Andhra Pradesh for the import of supercooled gas in ships.

The company management stopped pursuing that terminal in 2015-16 on grounds that there isn't enough demand to justify a 5 million tonne a year import facility. Gangavaram would have been the first terminal on the east coast. Soon after that, Adani Group began work to set up a 5 million tonne a year import terminal at Dhamra port in Odisha.

Petronet now sees that there is demand for gas in the eastern region and despite the Dhamra LNG terminal, it is now looking for a facility at Gopalpur. Petrochemicals, made using crude and natural gas as feedstock, form raw material for plastics, packaging material, and personal care

Honda unveils City e:HEV sedan; launch next month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese auto major Honda Cars on Thursday unveiled its new offering for the Indian market — City e:HEV sedan, marking its foray into the mainstream strong hybrid electric vehicle segment in the country.

The company, which is present in India through a wholly-owned subsidiary, has commenced the bookings of the model and plans to introduce it in the market next month.

As per the company, the model, an extension of its City model range, would feature self-charging two-motor strong hybrid system connected to a 1.5 litre petrol engine, entailing a peak power of 126 PS and fuel efficiency of 26.5 km per litre.

The model would also come with various safety features including a high-performance front camera with a wide-angle, far-reaching detection system to scan the road ahead and alert the driver to minimise risk of accidents and in some cases intervene to avoid a collision or lessen its severity.

In an interaction with PTI, the newly-appointed President & CEO of Honda Cars India Takuya Tsumura noted that introduction of the model marks the start of the company's journey towards introduction of new-age electrified models in the country. "We are committing to electric vehicles and towards carbon neutrality by 2050 globally. That is the company's direc-

tion.In India we are starting with City e:HEV and of course based on Honda's direction we will see what is the best solution we can bring to the market here," he said.

Honda globally plans to launch 30 EV models by 2030, with an annual production volume of more than two million units. The auto major aims to invest around USD 40 billion over the next 10 years in the EV space.

"The city e:HEV is a result of our consistent commitment to offer a product having reliable data with latest safety measures and which meets the environmental challenges of the future," Tsumura said.

The model is also in sync with the vision laid out by Honda global to realise carbon neutrality and zero collision fatalities by 2050, he added. "We are all well aware of the environmental challenges of global warming and emissions.

As a socially responsible enterprise, Honda is striving to sell two thirds of its global sales through electrified models, like hybrid fuel cell vehicles and battery electric vehicles by 2030," Tsumura stated. And by 2040, the company aims to achieve 100 per cent transition to EVs and fuel cell vehicles globally, he added."The government of India is also focused upon environmental and safety issues associated with mobility.

And it brings us great joy and satisfaction to introduce the company's innovative products that contribute to this direction.

LIVERPOOL IN CL SEMIS



AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool booked a Champions League semi-final showdown against Villarreal as the quadruple chasers survived a late collapse in Wednesday's 3-3 draw against Benfica.

Jürgen Klopp's side already had one foot in the last four after winning 3-1 in the quarter-final first leg in Lisbon.

They were on cruise control for long spells in the second leg at Anfield, but had to hold their nerve before advancing 6-4 on aggregate after an uncharacteristic meltdown in the closing stages.

Ibrahima Konaté put Liverpool ahead before Goncalo

Ramos equalised late in the first half.

When Roberto Firmino netted twice after the interval, the tie looked all but over.

However, Roman Yaremchuk and Darwin Nunez struck for Benfica to briefly give the visitors hope of an astonishing escape act, before Liverpool finally restored order.

The Reds will face Spanish side Villarreal in the semi-finals as they look to reach their 10th Champions League final and claim a seventh title in the competition.

Despite Villarreal's impressive wins over Bayern Munich and Juventus in the last two rounds, Liverpool will be firm favourites to make a third

THE REDS WILL FACE SPANISH SIDE VILLARREAL IN THE SEMI-FINALS AS THEY LOOK TO REACH THEIR 10TH CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL AND CLAIM A SEVENTH TITLE IN THE COMPETITION

Champions League final in the last five seasons.

That would put them a step closer to an incredible clean-sweep of all four major trophies in one campaign.

Significantly, Klopp was able to keep Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mané and Virgil Van Dijk fresh as he started with his stars on the bench.

Klopp made seven changes from Sunday's 2-2 draw with Premier League leaders Manchester City as he opted to keep his stars fresh for Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against Pep Guardiola's side at Wembley.

FIRMINO STARS

Konate had headed the opener in the first leg at Benfica

and Liverpool's towering centre-back tormented the Portuguese side with his aerial prowess again in the 21st minute.

Kostas Tsimikas whipped an outswinging corner towards Konate and he climbed above three Benfica players to head into the far corner from 10 yards.

Benfica snatched their equaliser against the run of play in the 32nd minute.

Diogo Goncalves' pass clipped off James Milner and ran through to the unmarked Ramos, who smacked a fine finish past Alisson from just inside the area.

Any hopes of a stunning Benfica fightback seemed over when the visitors shot themselves in the foot in farcical fashion in the 55th minute.

Goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos was the instigator of Benfica's meltdown as he fumbled what should have been an easy interception of Naby Keita's over-hit pass.

Jan Vertonghen's panicked attempt to clear the danger wasn't much better and Jota crossed back into the six-yard box, where Firmino had the simple task of tapping into the empty net.

Firmino followed his first home Champions League goal for two years with another 10 minutes later.

Tsimikas curled a superb free-kick to the pass and Firmino eluded Benfica's sloppy marking to volley home from close-range.

With Klopp's men taking their foot off the gas, Yaremchuk struck in the 73rd minute, rounding Alisson to slot home after beating Liverpool's off-side trap.

There was a sharp intake of breath around Anfield when Nunez scored with a predatory finish in the 82nd minute.

Moments later, Nunez's low strike tested Alisson, but Liverpool held on to keep the quadruple dream alive.

Man City see off Atletico to set up Real Madrid clash



AP ■ MADRID

Manchester City held off a late surge by Atletico Madrid on Wednesday as a bad-tempered stalemate at the Wanda Metropolitano saw Pep Guardiola's side safely through to the Champions League semi-finals.

Kevin De Bruyne's first-leg strike last week at the Etihad Stadium proved enough for City to claim a 1-0 victory on aggregate in Madrid, although the Belgian had to go off with an injury which, if serious, would be a hammer blow to their hopes of winning the treble.

Kyle Walker also hobbled off in the second-half.

City will now face Real Madrid, with Liverpool up against Villarreal in the other semi to complete an all Spanish-English line-up in the last four.

A prickly contest boiled over in the final minutes when Atletico's Felipe was sent off for a wild swipe at Phil Foden, the City midfielder already with his head in a bandage from an earlier Felipe challenge.

The exchange sparked a mass brawl in the corner, which only checked Atletico's momentum as the hosts finally put an otherwise dominant City under pressure in the last 10 minutes.

Diego Simeone was widely criticised for Atletico's negative tactics in the first leg and there was only a minor shift here, with the plan still to keep the game tight ahead of a final push.

Atletico, though, could not find the goal they needed and instead City advance to the semis for a second consecutive year, in sight again of their first Champions League triumph.

After a rousing ceremony before kick-off, Atletico made a stirring start, harrying City high up the pitch and snapping at their heels in midfield.

Foden was cluttered by Felipe, Stefan Savic bulldozed Ilkay Gundogan over and Walker poked a ball out of play, under stress from the Atletico press.

But City survived the early, physical onslaught and established control, even if Atletico looked a threat on the break, failing only with their final pass.

With 25 minutes left, De Bruyne was replaced by Raheem Sterling and soon after Simeone decided it was time to attack, Angel Correa, Yannick Carrasco and Rodrigo de Paul all coming on.

Simeone rolled the dice, Luis Suarez and Matheus Cunha thrown on for the last eight minutes.

In the 86th minute, Correa chested down for Cunha but his finish was blocked by the left leg of John Stones. From the corner, Ederson failed to clear and the goal was gaping but Savic was unable to steer in.

A feisty contest erupted at the end when Foden was taken out again by Felipe, who swung his leg at the City midfielder on his way down. A swarm of players, substitutes and staff rushed in and it was only a few minutes later that Felipe was sent off.

It seems like BAI is happy to put me out of CWG and Asiad: Saina

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two-time Commonwealth Games Gold medallist Saina Nehwal on Thursday questioned the timing of selection trials and slammed the Badminton Association of India for "putting" her out the two mega sporting events later this year.

The governing body had called for selection trials on April 2 to pick the Indian team for big-ticket events including the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, the Asian Games in Hangzhou and Thomas Cup and Uber Cup in Bangkok from May 8 to 15.

Saina, a former world No 1, said she had informed BAI about her decision to skip the trials which begins at the IG stadium on Friday but it did not mean that she was not eager to participate at the major events including the Commonwealth Games and Asiad.

"Surprised to see all the articles stating that I don't want to defend my CWG title and my Asiad medal. I'm just not participating in the trials because I just got back from 3 weeks of Europe events and according to the schedule there's Asian Championships," Saina tweeted.

"In 2 weeks time, as a



senior player to participate in back to back events nonstop is impossible and it's risking injuries, such short notice is not possible. I've conveyed this to BAI but there has been no response from them. It seems like they're happy to put me out of CWG n Asiad."

BAI has exempted players

inside the top 15 in the BWF rankings from the trials but said shuttlers ranked between 16 to 50 in the latest world rankings, released on March 29, will have to participate in the trials to be selected for the team.

Saina, 32, however, questioned the logic of having trials at this juncture.

"I wish we had better understanding about how to manage a schedule and not announce events with 10 days notice. I'm world no.23 currently and I almost beat the world no.1 Akane in All England. One loss at India open and BAI tries to pull me down. Shocking."

Saina has been battling injuries and poor form for the past couple of years, which saw her ranking slip to 23rd but she did show signs of returning to form when she played a three-game match against Akane Yamaguchi at this year's All England Championships.

Among the current crop of women's singles players, Malvika Bansod, Aakarshi Kashyap, Ashmita Chaliha and Anupama Upadhyaya have been in good form but none of them have beaten top international stars in the world stage.

Saina had returned to the circuit after recovering from a groin and knee injury this year but she didn't have the desired results as her India Open campaign ended in the second round.

After a gap of few weeks, she played three events last month — German Open, All England and Swiss Open — where she failed to cross the second round.

Southee named Black Caps player of the year for 2021

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand pacer Tim Southee on Thursday won the Sir Richard Hadlee Medal, an honour bestowed on the country's performer in a calendar year.

On the final day of the three-day awards ceremony, Southee shared the podium with Bert Sutcliffe Medal recipient Penny Kinsella; the Test Player of the Year, Devon Conway, and the women's and men's Domestic Players of the Year -- Nensi Patel, and joint male winners Tom Bruce and Robbie O'Donnell.

The 33-year-old Southee, who is representing Kolkata Knight Riders in the ongoing IPL-15, won the award after a stellar 2021 season, both at home and abroad, and in red as well as white-ball cricket.

In the year, he has captured 36 Test wickets at 23.88, including best figures of six for 43 against England at Lord's and five wickets against India in the victorious ICC

World Test Championship final at Southampton.

In all, Southee has taken 338 Test wickets, which is just 23 fewer than Daniel Vettori and 93 short of the record-holder the award is named after, Hadlee.

"It's a huge honour to win such a prestigious award," Southee said, speaking from KKR's base in Mumbai, according to www.Stuff.Co.Nz

He added, "Like most cricketers growing up I knew all about the exploits of Sir Richard and it's certainly pretty humbling to win his award this year."

"While the accolades are nice, I think it really just reflects the way we have worked together as a group and played our cricket for a long period of time."

"It's been great to be a part of this period and being able to win games for our country which is something that's very special," he said on the occasion.



Jeff Vaughan steps down as Oz assistant coach

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian men's team assistant coach Jeff Vaughan has stepped down from his role to take up coaching duties at state side Tasmania.

The development comes close on the heels of Andrew McDonald's appointment as Australia's head coach.

"I feel very fortunate with how everything has worked out," Vaughan said in a statement.

"I have been connected to the program throughout and am confident that I have continued to develop my coaching and leadership skillset to assist the development of the Tigers' program holistically and for the players as individuals."

He thanked Cricket Australia for the opportunities he received while he was part of the national squad.

"I'm incredibly grateful to Cricket Australia for the opportunity, and to Cricket Tasmania for being so open-minded about my return, so I really can't wait to just get stuck in and am looking forward to maintaining the direction of the program for an extended period of time."

Vaughan was appointed Australia's assistant coach in July 2021 alongside Michael Di Venuto.



Felix confirms retirement this year

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

US track and field great Allyson Felix on Wednesday confirmed that she will retire this year, bringing the curtain down on a career that spanned three decades and included a record-setting 11 Olympic medals.

The 36-year-old said in an Instagram post she planned to embark on her farewell season as a gesture of gratitude to the sport.

"I have given everything I have to running and for the first time I'm not sure if I have anything left to give," Felix said.

"I want to say goodbye and thank you to the sport and people who have helped shape me the only way I know how - with one last run," she added.

"This season isn't about



the time on the clock, it's simply about joy."

"If you see me on the track this year I hope to share a moment, a memory and my appreciation with you."

Felix did not give details of her competitive schedule, but it is likely she is targeting this year's World Championships, which will be held in Eugene, Oregon in July.

Felix is the most decorated woman in the history of Olympic track and field, winning the first of her 11 medals at the 2004 Olympics in Athens and the last at last year's Tokyo Games, a Gold in the 4x400m relay.

She is also the most decorated athlete - male or female -- in the history of the World Championships with 18 medals, seven from individual events and 11 from relays.

Korda beats Alcaraz in Monte Carlo

AP ■ MONTE CARLO

Carlos Alcaraz insists that his shock exit at the Monte Carlo Masters was not a consequence of his sudden rise to fame which has seen him earmarked as a future Grand Slam champion and world number one.

The 18-year-old Spaniard, seeded eight, was stunned 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 by American Sebastian Korda in their second round clash on Wednesday.

Alcaraz had arrived on the back of winning the prestigious Miami Masters title.

However, the world number 11 was outgunned by Korda in a thrilling clay court battle lasting just over three hours.

"I'm a bit disappointed with myself. I had a lot of chances to be up in the match and close to winning, but these losses are



sometimes good to live. You have to play matches," Alcaraz said.

"But I didn't think about the expectations that the people have for me. I just focused on me and what I have to do. But as I said, you have to play more

matches on clay courts."

Alcaraz is the second big name to exit the tournament following world number one Novak Djokovic who also lost his opener on Tuesday. Alcaraz committed 36 unforced errors in Wednesday's defeat.

"It's not easy to get your bearings on clay," he added.

"It was a difficult match, but I feel mentally ready to play these types of matches, long and tight."

"I am ready to return to training and focus on the next

tournaments."

Korda -- ranked 42 in the world and like Alcaraz competing at Monte Carlo for the first time -- will play fellow American and Indian Wells champion Taylor Fritz in the next round.

Fritz defeated Marin Cilic 6-3, 4-6, 6-4.

Russia's fifth seed Andrey Rublev, the runner-up in 2021, came back to defeat Alex de Minaur of Australia 2-6, 6-1, 6-4. German Alexander Zverev, the second seed, saw off Federico Delbonis of Argentina, 6-1, 7-5.

Sixth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime was also a loser on Wednesday, falling to 83rd-ranked Italian Lorenzo Musetti 6-2, 7-6 (7/2).

British seventh seed Cameron Norrie was defeated by Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-4, 2-6, 6-4.



the pioneer

INDIAN
PREMIER LEAGUE

2022

12

If you're not winning games, you've got to try to find a way you can succeed as a team as a batting group. So we're trying to find different ideas, different thought processes

— ROHIT SHARMA

Resurgent and rejigged SRH
ready for KKR challenge

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Hyderabad vs Kolkata
Live from 7:30 pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1

Back to winning ways, a resurgent Sunrisers Hyderabad will be forced to tinker their successful combination following Washington Sundar's injury as they face Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Friday.

After a subdued start to the tournament, SRH turned things around with back-to-back wins over Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans, and Kane Williamson's team is now eyeing a hat-trick of victories.

However Washington, a vital cog in the SRH wheels, will be missing in action after he sustained a split webbing on his bowling hand while fielding against GT.

Washington plays the duel role of restricting the batters with his spin bowling and chipping in with some runs as a floater. He has taken four wickets and scored a half-century so far in the season.

But coach Tom Moody has made it clear that he won't be available for at least two matches and it will be interesting to see who replaces the all-rounder in the XI.

Hyderabad have the option of Shreyas Gopal and Jagadeesha Suchith in the spin department or they might give another chance to Abdul Samad, who looked ordinary in the first two matches.

For Sunrisers, it was the batting failure which was

with openers Abhishek Sharma and Williamson producing the goods in the last two outings. If Sharma shone with match-winning knocks of 75 and 42, Williamson scored 32 and 57 to set up the chase in the last two games.

Rahul Tripathi was looking good against GT before he retired hurt following what seemed like a cramp, and his availability will be crucial for SRH.

In Tripathi's absence, Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram completed the job against GT and the team will expect them to show consistency and take the responsibility in the middle-order.

In bowling, Marco Jansen have taken a wicket each in the last two games, while his pace colleagues T Natarajan and Bhuvneshwar Kumar have contributed with crucial wickets.

KKR are heading into the match after a loss against Delhi Capitals but it

remains a formidable side and would look to bounce back from the reversal. The Knight Riders are placed in the second spot with six points from five outings.



► pointstable

PO. TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1. RR	4	3	1	0	6	0.951
2. KKR	5	3	2	0	6	0.446
3. PBKS	5	3	2	0	6	0.239
4. LSG	5	3	2	0	6	0.174
5. GT	4	3	1	0	6	0.097
6. RCB	5	3	2	0	6	0.006
7. DC	4	2	2	0	4	0.476
8. SRH	4	2	2	0	4	-0.501
9. CSK	5	1	4	0	2	-0.745
10. MI	5	0	5	0	0	-1.072

► boundarymeter

4s	641
6s	350

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Skipper Hardik Pandya impressed with another responsible knock to take Gujarat Titans to 192 for four against Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League here at Dr DY Patil Sports Academy on Thursday.

Hardik (87 not out off 52) first found an able ally in Abhinav Manohar (43 off 28) before he exploded in the company of David Miller (31 not out off 14) to power the IPL debutants to their highest score of the tournament.

Hardik and Manohar shared an 86-run stand for the fourth wicket before the skipper and Miller blasted 53 off 25 balls to end the innings in style.

After put in to bat, Gujarat found themselves reeling at 53/3.

While Hardik's 52-ball knock was studded with eight fours and four sixes, Manohar struck four fours and two maximums.

Miller, who overall hit five boundaries and a six, fetched 21 runs in the penulti-



mate over off Kuldeep Sen (1/51).

To start with, Hardik was aggressive on pacer Kuldeep as he hammered him for three successive boundaries in the fifth over.

He then fetched his first maximum in the seventh over, when he clobbered Riyan Parag over his head.

The duo upped the ante when Manohar launched into inform Yuzvendra Chahal, hammering him for a four and maximum, a lofted inside-out drive over cover.

The two then took on Kuldeep, hammering him for three boundaries in the 14th over, where Hardik also notched up his fifty, with a cut towards backward point fence.

And in the next over, Pandya clobbered



two successive maximums off seasoned spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who leaked 16 runs in the over.

With Titans reaching 130/3 in 15 overs, the stage was set for a big total.

After Manohar departed, Miller ably supported the skipper.

Earlier, Gujarat Titans lost opener Matthew Wade (12) cheaply, courtesy a direct hit by Rassie Van Der Dussen from cover.

Gujarat slipped to 15/2, as Vijay Shakar (2) also perished cheaply and then a rusty looking Shubman Gill (13) became Parag's first victim, after he was caught by Shimron Hetmyar at the long-on fence.

I am not concerned about Rohit's form: Jayawardene

PTI ■ PUNE

Mumbai Indians coach Mahela Jayawardene says it's just a "matter of time" before skipper Rohit Sharma plays a big knock, something which his team desperately needs to arrest its slide in IPL-15.

The MI captain has failed to capitalise on the starts, managing just 108 runs at an average of 21.60 this season.

"If you look at the way he starts, the way he hits the ball, it's brilliant. He's timing it, he's getting some really, really good starts. Yes he's disappointed as well, that he's not being able to convert them," Jayawardene said.

"We've seen Rohit batting deep, batting for 14-15 overs and getting those big scores. It's just a matter of time. He's a quality player and I am not concerned about the form as such."

MI on Wednesday suffered a 12-run loss at the hands of Punjab Kings — their fifth successive defeat — to inch closer to elimination.

"Today (Wednesday) was to try and take the game deep, because we were playing with six batters. And there's no better person than Surya to finish a game off," Jayawardene said.

"In the powerplay, they would swing the ball a bit and all that. So I didn't want Surya to go into that situation and not be able to play his natural game also. It was just a tactical thing."

The 44-year-old said the idea was to give the youngsters more freedom in the middle as Suryakumar and Kieron Pollard play the role of finishers. "The two young guys, we know what they are capable of. So given them a bit of freedom to go and control that situation, so that Polly



and Surya are able to chase that. That was the initial thinking.

"It's a call that we will take depending on how we've set up tactically against certain opposition."

Jayawardene admitted that injured Jofra Archer's absence is hurting the team as the bowling unit has not been able to sustain the pressure.

"...Obviously, one of the best bowlers that we've bought in the auction is Jof (Jofra Archer) — Jof is not here. So it is tough when you are in that kind of situation, but we are trying to see how best we can manage."

"In terms of the last four-five games, we've had

MI skipper Rohit fined ₹24
lakh for team's slow over rate

PTI ■ PUNE

Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma and others members of the playing XI were fined for maintaining a slow over rate during their IPL game against Punjab Kings here. Punjab Kings won the match by 12 runs on Wednesday night.

"The Mumbai Indians

have been fined after they maintained a slow over rate during their IPL match against Punjab Kings at the MCA Stadium, Pune on April 13," the IPL stated in a media statement.

"This was the team's second offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences."

"Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma was fined ₹24 lakhs and the rest of the members in the playing eleven were fined ₹6 lakhs or 25 percent of their match fee, whichever is lower," it added. Earlier, Rohit was fined ₹12 lakh for his team maintaining a slow over rate in its game against Delhi Capitals.

some really good spells, we controlled things for a while. But we cannot hold that pressure going on, because in certain times, it's either two or three overs that we go big and that has hurt us.

"So that's something that we really have to nail down and make sure that our execution is better in those situations."

MAYANK IS BACKING ME A 100%: ODEAN

West Indies all-rounder Odean Smith (4/30) redeemed himself after his horror outing (he was hit for sixes in last two balls) against Gujarat Titans as he got three wickets in the final over to help Punjab defend 198 total against MI.

Smith attributed his success to the backing that

he received from skipper Mayank Agarwal, the coach and the team management.

"They have been very motivating. They have helped me mentally to be able to come into this game and put in the performance today. They have been a major help for me. I would like to thank the coach."

"Captain Mayank has been amazing. He has always come to me and told me that he is backing me a 100 percent, no matter what happens. It's just for me to believe that I can do it because I have the belief of the entire team behind me."

Defending 22 in the last over, Smith was hit for a six in the first ball but came back strongly to take three wickets to seal it for Punjab.

Watson picks Kohli ahead of
Smith, Root, Kane & Babar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Test cricket as well.

Former Australia all-rounder Virat Kohli as the best batter among the 'big five' in Test cricket, preferring to not read much into the Indian maestro's failure to score a hundred since November 2019.

As per Watson's list, the former India captain has piped the likes of Steve Smith, Kane Williamson, Joe Root and Babar Azam. "In Test match cricket, I am always going to say Virat Kohli," Watson said when asked by Isa Guha who he thought is the best Test batter in the world, in his latest episode of the ICC Review.

"It's nearly superhuman, what he is able to do because he has such high intensity every time he goes out to play," Watson added. While Kohli has slipped to 10th on the ICC rankings, the Indian great continues to hold a remarkable Test batting record. He has scored 27 Test centuries and 28 half-centuries and currently has a Test batting average of just under 50.

The world's current No.1 Test batter Marnus Labuschagne, who has played 26 Test matches and averages 54.31, would have increased the 'big five' to a 'big six', but was left out of the debate for this topic due to a 40-Test minimum criteria, the ICC said in a report on its official website.

Regarding Pakistan skipper Babar, who he has kept at number two, Watson noted, "Babar Azam is playing incredibly well." (It's great) to be able to see how he has adapted his game to really move his game to

"Babar Azam would probably be No 2 at the moment."

Babar is currently ranked the fifth best batter in the world and appears to be on the rise if his recent performances against Australia are anything to go by. He stroked a superb 196 during the second Test in Karachi and finished the series with a total of 390 runs.

About Watson's third best batter Smith, he said the Australian star "has just started to come off a little bit."

"It looks like Smith has really started to play for time a little bit more and is not putting as much pressure on the bowlers as he did when was at his absolute best. For me, Steve has dropped down that list a little bit."

Smith is second on the ICC rankings, with only Australian team-mate Labuschagne ranked ahead of him.

About Williamson, who Watson considers the world's fourth best at the moment, the Australian said, "Kane knows his game inside out and knows how to put pressure on bowlers in any conditions."

While Williamson has played just two Test matches in the last 12 months, he remains ranked as the third best batter. The Kiwi veteran has 24 Test centuries to his name and may still have plenty of cricket left in him if he can overcome his injury issues.

Coming to his fifth best batter Root, Watson said, "Joe Root recently scored a hundred but he has had a bit of time along the lines of Smith where he hasn't been able to nail the big scores like he has done in the past."

Chakravarthy looks to up his game with new variation

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Kolkata Knight Riders' mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy is not worried about a rather quiet start to this IPL season and is banking on a new variation to become an improved bowler.

The 30-year-old leg-spinner was the highest wicket taker for KKR last season with 18 wickets from 17 matches and this season, he has got just four wickets from five games.

"It is bound to happen, people will have plans against me. Last year in the Indian leg, I had six to seven wickets in seven matches. Later on, I picked up more wickets, so you cannot predict how many wickets you are going to get," Chakravarthy said.

"I am working on a new variation which I am looking forward to bowl more. If it starts clicking well it will definitely add a new dimension to my game," he said ahead of



KKR's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday.

Asked further about the new variation, he said, "I am working on a leg-spin. I have been working for it in the last two years. I have bowled in few matches and I have got a wicket out of that also."

"I need to be a little more

confident (bowling the new variation) and start bowling it more." An injury-prone Chakravarthy returned to competitive cricket in the IPL after featuring in the T20 World Cup last year when he failed to pick a wicket before being sidelined due to a calf injury.

"I was at the NCA for the

treatment of my injury. Now it is resolved very well. I could take the field without any pain killer. So, I am feeling fitter and that has helped me to bowl a lot better."

Asked what kind of adjustments he used to make on wickets which favour batsmen, he said, "Stick to your basic plan, stick to your strength rather than focussing on the batsmen. So, to change the mental set-up."

He considers Afghanistan star and Gujarat Titans player Rashid Khan as the best spinner currently in world cricket.

"In cricket, you are bound to be hit. The best spinner right now is Rashid (Khan) and even he has gone for runs (in some matches) but he is still the best."

"It happens in a few matches, you will have a bad day and you just need to bounce back."

He also said that he shares a special relationship with his fellow spinner in KKR team,

Sunil Narine of West Indies.

"Sunil is like a big brother to me. If I go through a lean patch he will come to me and talk to me. He has also shared to me personal things of which he is vulnerable."

"It is great of such a legend to talk to me about such things, to let me know he is vulnerable and he also goes through lean patches and tough times. So, talking to him gives you confidence and reinforces self belief."

He also said that the current competition among Indian leg-spinners does not put any pressure on him as far as national team spot is concerned.

"I see it as healthy competition. I messaged Yuzi also, the way he bowled, he is in amazing form right now, Ravi Bishnoi is bowling brilliantly, Kuldeep is doing very well for his team, Rahul Chahar is brilliant. I just feel nice when a leg spinner does well."