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NEW DELHI, SATURDAY AUGUST 27, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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## Ghulam frees self, slams Rahul for letting sycophants run party

Azad raps Rahul for demolishing entire consultative mechanism in Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In another jolt to the Congress leadership, senior party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad who served the party in various capacities, including as Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, on Friday ended his five-decade association with the grand old party, terming it “comprehensively destroyed” and lashing out at former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi for “demolishing” its entire consultative mechanism.

Azad wrote a five-page no-holds-barred letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, describing her as a “nominal figurehead” and alleging that all important decisions are being taken by Rahul or rather worse “his security guards and PAs”.

The Congress called Azad's resignation “unfortunate” and termed the timing “awful”, saying it has come at a time when the party is engaged in combating the BJP on various issues.

“Azad was a senior leader of the Congress. It is saddening that when the party fighting against inflation and polarisation, he decided to quit. It is most unfortunate and regret-



In this Sept 10, 2018 file photo, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad with party leader Rahul Gandhi during a 'Bharat Bandh' protest, in New Delhi PTI

table that this has happened when the entire organisation is engaged in combating the BJP on issues of price rise and unemployment”, the Congress said.

Azad, whose resignation from all positions in the party, including its primary membership, comes ahead of crucial organisational elections, accused the leadership of committing a “giant fraud” on the party in the name of “farce and sham” internal polls. He said no such exercise had taken place at any level and lists are being prepared by the coterie that runs the AICC.

Before Azad, several senior leaders like Kapil Sibal, Hardik Patel, Sushmita Dev, Jiten Prasada, RPN Singh too resigned from the party in the recent past.

Jyotiraditya Scindia, who

helped the Congress to return to power in Madhya Pradesh in 2018, resigned in March last year, paving the way for the return of the BJP Government in the State.

Only last week another veteran Congress leader Anand Sharma resigned from the chairmanship of the party's steering committee for poll-bound Himachal Pradesh.

Hours after Azad quit the Congress, five senior party leaders, including two former Ministers in Jammu & Kashmir resigned the party's basic membership with sources saying more are likely to go.

Former ministers RS Chib and GM Saroori, former MLA Mohammad Amin Bhat, former MLC Naresh Gupta, and party leader Salman Nizami resigned in support of Azad.

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## Azad to launch party, likely to hit Cong's prospects in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After saying goodbye to the Congress, former Union Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad is set to inflict more pain on the party with which he was associated for more than 50 years. Azad's declaration that he would launch a new political party may spell doom for the Congress in Jammu, where he has considerable influence.

In all probability, Azad's maiden entry on the political landscape in a new avatar is more likely to benefit the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which is eyeing maximum number of Assembly seats from the Jammu region to form the popular Government on its own strength.

His decision to quit the party has left the Jammu & Kashmir unit of the Congress in total disarray. The National Conference and PDP have also failed to consolidate their support base in the Jammu region.

Some popular leaders of these regional parties have already switched sides and joined the BJP and Jammu

and Kashmir Apni party.

As many as seven senior Congress leaders, including former Ministers and party legislators, on Friday forwarded their resignations to the party high command till late evening.

These included ex-MLA from Inderwal GM Saroori, Mohd Amin Bhat, Gulzar Ahmad Wani, Haji Abdul Rashid, Choudhary Mohd Aslam, RS Chib and Jugl Kishore. Some more Azad's loyalists may quit the party.

Hari Om, a retired professor who headed History department of Jammu University, told *The Pioneer* that Azad's decision to dump the Congress at this crucial juncture may have stunned many, but he seems to be have been working behind the scenes for a long time to become a major stakeholder in the corridors of power.

Prof Hari Om said the BJP will be the major beneficiary in the poll arena if Azad fields his party candidates in the fray during the Assembly polls.

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## Sonali's drink was spiked before her death: Police

Economic interest likely motive: Cops

PTI ■ PANAJI

Haryana BJP leader Sonali Phogat was fed some “obnoxious chemical” through her drinks by her two aides during a party at a North Goa restaurant which apparently caused her death, police said on Friday.

The two accused, Sudhir Sagwan and Sukhwinder Singh, have been arrested and charged with murder. The motive behind the murder of the 42-year-old politician could be “economic interest”, said a senior police official, adding the duo was arrested to “avoid the possibility of destruction of evidence and influencing the witnesses”.

Sagwan and Singh were her associates and had arrived in Goa with the BJP leader on August 22.

Phogat, who first found fame on TikTok, a popular short-form video hosting service now banned in India, was brought dead to St Anthony Hospital at Anjuna in North Goa district on August 23 morning from her hotel.

Doctors had then said prima facie it appears she died of a heart attack. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Omvir Singh Bishnoi said both the accused have been arrested by the Anjuna police under whose jurisdiction the crime took place.



2 men seen taking Phogat to washroom of the restaurant around 4.30 am and the three of them were inside the toilet for 2 hours — Investigators

He said the CCTV footage of the restaurant was examined by the investigating officer and it was found Sagwan was forcefully making Phogat drink the alleged liquid in a water bottle.

The incident took place at ‘Curlies’ restaurant at Anjuna in North Goa district on the intervening night of August 22 and 23, Bishnoi said.

Sagwan and Singh confessed during questioning that they had intentionally mixed the substance in her drinks, the

IPS officer said.

The motive behind killing her could be some “economic interest,” the IGP said.

The two men were seen taking Phogat to the washroom of the restaurant around 4.30 am on August 23 and the three of them were inside the toilet for two hours, he said.

Custodial interrogation will throw light on what happened during those two hours, Bishnoi added.

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## FIFA lifts ban on AIFF; now Women WC back in India

PTI ■ ZURICH

World football governing body FIFA on Friday lifted the ban imposed on the AIFF after the Supreme Court terminated the mandate of the Committee of Administrators (CoA), clearing the decks for India to host the Women's U-17 World Cup in October.

FIFA had suspended the AIFF on August 15 for “undue influence from third parties” and had said the U-17 Women's World Cup “cannot currently be held in India as planned”.

The suspension, the first time in AIFF's 85-year history, lasted just 11 days.

“As a consequence, the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2022 scheduled to take place on 11-30 October 2022 will be held in India as planned,” he FIFA said in a statement.

## It's madhushala behind AAP facade of pathshala: Anurag

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a scathing attack on the Kejriwal Government's excise policy, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Friday said that while education may feature prominently in the AAP's lexicon but it is “liquor” which finds reflection in their work. The Union Minister said that liquor scam has exposed the real face of the AAP leaders.

Questioning the “silence” of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia to the queries raised by him over the liquor scam, Thakur said the AAP Government in Delhi did not make “pathshala” (schools) but opened many “madhushala” (liquor vends).

“The liquor scam has unmasked the AAP and showed how it is neck-deep in corruption. Why are its leaders not answering the questions



raised by us over its excise policy?” Thakur said.

The AAP Government should answer as to why ₹144 crore was returned to liquor dealers besides ₹30 crore earnest money, he asked.

“If the excise policy was correct, then why was it withdrawn? The truth is serious corruption has occurred. Their Health Minister is in jail on corruption charges and the

‘liquor minister’ is under probe. What kind of impact such a ‘Minister’ will have on education,” Thakur said.

Sisodia is in charge of excise as well as education ministries. If a Minister is busy expanding liquor stores, then can he be expected to focus on education, Thakur said.

“Education is in their words while it is liquor which drives their work,” said Thakur.

## Kejriwal to bring trust motion on Mon, slams bid to poach MLAs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on Friday extended the special session of the Delhi Assembly by one day to place a “confidence motion” on Monday even as he unleashed a scathing attack on the BJP inside the Assembly.

Addressing the special Assembly session, Kejriwal said the BJP toppled several Governments in the country till date — Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya. “There is a serial killer in the city who is committing one murder after the other. People choose a Government, they topple it,” he said.

Earlier, the Delhi Assembly witnessed stormy scenes with the ruling AAP shouting “khokha-khokha”, accusing the BJP of trying to buy its MLAs, and the Opposition hitting



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal speaks during a special session of the Delhi Legislative Assembly in New Delhi on Friday. Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia is also seen PTI

back with “dhokha-dhokha”, referring to the alleged liquor scam.

Amid the slogan shouting, Deputy Speaker Rakhi Birla marshalled out all the eight BJP MLAs for the entire day of the one-day session over an alleged video recording charge levelled by an AAP MLA on chief

whip of the Opposition Ajay Mahawar. After being marshalled out of the House, the BJP MLAs staged a protest under the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Assembly premises. They also went to meet Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena to lodge a complaint.

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## SC rejects plea against HC order on Yogi speech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea challenging the Allahabad High Court judgment on an alleged hate speech of 2007 involving Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The High Court had upheld the State Government's 2017 decision to refuse sanction to prosecute Yogi.

A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana said it is not necessary to go into the issue of denial of sanction in this case. “The legal questions of sanction will be kept open to be dealt with in an appropriate case,” the bench also comprising Justices Hima Kohli and CT Ravikumar said.

In its verdict delivered in February 2018, the high court had said it has not found any procedural error either in the conduct of an investigation or in the decision-making process of refusal to grant sanction to prosecute.

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## Two slapped with 27-year RI, ₹43 cr fine for Ponzi scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In one of the rarest convictions, a trial court in Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) on Friday sentenced K Mohanraj and Kamalavalli (both private persons) to undergo twenty seven years rigorous imprisonment (consecutively for all offences) with fine of ₹42.76 crore each.

The court also imposed a fine of ₹28.74 crore each on three private accused firms — Paazee Forex Trading India Pvt Ltd, Paazee Trading Inc. and Paazee Marketing Company — in a case related to cheating the depositors to the tune of ₹870.10 crore, the CBI said in a statement.

The total fine imposed amounts to ₹171.74 crore. The CBI had registered a



case on June 15, 2011 on the orders of the Madras High Court against the accused.

It was alleged that Paazee Marketing Company, Tirupur, run by K Mohanraj, Director, and others, including other private companies, floated various schemes between July

2008 and September 2009, and cheated various depositors to the tune of ₹870.10 crore by collecting deposits from them on the false promise of high returns, it said.

It was further alleged that the accused including directors of the companies through

paazeemarketing.com fraudulently mobilised deposits and investments dishonestly promising that the same made by the public would be used in Forex Trading business.

The accused further promised that a huge dividend/interest would be paid in very short duration on the deposits so collected.

The accused issued post-dated cheques drawn on various banks where the accused opened accounts in the names of Paazee Forex Trading India Pvt Ltd, Paazee Trading Inc and Paazee Marketing Co. After investigation, a chargesheet was filed against the accused on October 7, 2011.

The trial court found two accused and three companies guilty and convicted them, it added.

## Army deploying tanks for mountain warfare as LAC stand-off lingers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the stand-off persists at the border in Ladakh and increased threat from China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) likely to remain in the “foreseeable future,” the Indian Army has initiated Project Zorawar to deploy indigenously built light tanks in high altitude areas.

The induction of tanks will enable the Indian forces to counter any threat posed by the Chinese tanks deployed along the LAC in Ladakh and some other regions, sources said here on Friday.

The light tanks can be airlifted to the inaccessible areas and enable the local commanders to move fast and provide



agility in operations.

During the ongoing stand-off, the Chinese last year had inducted light tanks at various forward locations along the LAC, especially in the Ladakh region.

Countering the move, India deployed its T-90 and T-72 tanks. The T-90 weighs about 46 tons and the T-72 about 45 tons.

Explaining the need for light tanks, sources said

armoured columns add muscle to readiness and the army is keen to have an edge over China in both offensive and defensive terms, they said.

The Army is now awaiting clearance from the Government and acceptance of necessity (AON) for manufacturing these tanks weighing about 25 tons.

The proposal will be put for nod in September, they said.

Once okayed, the trials of the tanks after manufacturing will commence within three years, they said.

The Government in March this year had accorded in-principle approval for the indigenous design and development of light tanks for mountain warfare.

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NCRPULSE

**WHITELAND CORP REFUTES LINK WITH TEJASHWI**  
**Gurugram:** Gurugram-based developers Whiteland Corporations, which is being reported to have links with Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav, issued an official statement pointing out conspiracy against them against the backdrop of ED raids at multiple locations related to “land-for-jobs” scam row. “The dragging of name of Whiteland Company has been accused of being beneficiary in political money. This is prima facie, and seemingly with malicious intent to damage the Company’s reputation and business. Whiteland Corporation is known to always ensure the highest level of all compliances, integrity and work ethics. We are fully co-operating with investigative authorities in every manner and available for any kind of investigation at any time,” the Whiteland Corporation said in their statement after Tejashwi’s denial of having share in Gurugram-based company.

**WOMAN CONSTABLE COMMITS SUICIDE AT HOME**  
**New Delhi:** A woman constable posted at the control room allegedly hanged herself to death at her residence in southwest Delhi’s Palam area on Friday morning. She was posted in the control room. A suicide note was recovered and she has not been blamed anyone for taking the extreme step.

**WOMAN STABBED BY HER HUSBAND AT DAKSHIN PURI**  
**New Delhi:** A 29-year-old woman was allegedly stabbed multiple times by her drunk husband in south Delhi’s Dakshin Puri area. According to police, the incident took place on Thursday.

Army deploying...  
From Page1

The Army wants a light tank with a maximum weight of 25 tons with the same fire-power as its regular tanks and Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled systems, integration of tactical surveillance drones to provide a high degree of situational awareness and loitering munition, along with an active protection system. The tanks will also have protection shield to counter anti-tank guided missiles.

Moreover, the tanks will be amphibious to negotiate riverine terrain, including the Pangong Tso lake in Eastern Ladakh. The lake saw the first stand-off in May 2020 triggering tension along several other friction points in the region

between India and China. As regards the title of the project, sources said it was named after Zorawar Singh Kahluaria, a military general who served under Jammu’s Raja Gulab Singh - known as the “conqueror of Ladakh”.

A lightweight agile platform with a high power-to-weight ratio with substantial firepower, protection, surveillance, and communication capabilities is essential to provide the Army the versatility to execute operations in varying terrain against diverse threats and equipment profiles of adversaries, sources said.

The decision to manufacture light tanks within the country was also taken after the ongoing Ukraine conflict impacted the supply chain of defence related equipment.

Sonali’s drink...

Since post-mortem report has not mentioned the exact cause of death and would be available only after chemical examination of viscera (large internal organs in the body), histopathological and serological reports which would take a while, to avoid the possibility of destruction of evidence and influencing the witnesses, both the accused are arrested,” the IGP said.

Two other women were also with the accused at the party and were seen cutting a cake, he said, adding both were being questioned. Asked about the “multiple blunt force injuries” on her body mentioned in the post-mortem report, Bishnoi said as per the accused these could have been caused by abrasion while she was being taken to the hospital.

When she was taken to the hospital, there were no visible injuries, hence doctors suspected that she died due to a heart attack, the IGP said. But Phogat seemed to have actually died due to substance she was fed at the restaurant, he said.

Police will also record the statement of taxi drivers who ferried her from ‘Curlies’ restaurant to the hotel where she was staying and later to hospital, Bishnoi said. More people were supposed to join Phogat and others from Mumbai, the police official said.

UPA holds ground amid J’khand crisis

Raj Bhawan still silent on EC letter, its recommendation

PNS ■ RANCHI

The United Progressive Alliance, which is led by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Jharkhand, is trying its best to keep the flock intact despite an imminent threat to membership of Chief Minister Hemant Soren in the State Legislative Assembly.

While the Governor House is silent on the letter sent by ECI in the office of profit case against Soren, the UPA is weighing different options for the future if the worst becomes inevitable. Two meetings of UPA legislators were called on Friday at CM’s official residence, which was attended by 37 MLAs of flock. Some of



Chief Minister Hemant Soren chairs a meeting of United Progressive Alliance (UPA) legislators in Ranchi on Friday

PNS

MLAs could not join the meetings for being away from city or on medical, legal grounds. JMM insiders said that in both the meetings it was clearly asked to MLAs not to move away from Capital city and be ready for any situation that may come after Raj Bhawan takes action on recommendation of ECI. While media houses across the country on Friday were quick enough to announce (attributing to sources) that Governor

Ramesh Bais has given his recommendation to cancel membership of House of Soren, the MLAs attending meetings feigned ignorance on issue and said that they were ready for any situation. In the meeting of the UPA legislature party called in the evening, all the MLAs of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Congress reached one by one. Congress Legislature Party leader Alamgir Alam and party working president Bandhu Turkey also attended meeting.

Cong demands Min Sattar’s resignation in Maha TET scam

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Within a couple weeks the Maharashtra Council of Examinations (MSCE) debarred Maharashtra Minister Abdul Sattar’s two daughters and the name of another MLA Ramesh Bornare’s daughter surfaced in the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) scam, the Opposition Congress on Friday demanded the minister’s resignation and a thorough investigations into the scam.

Talking to media persons here, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) president Nana Patole said that with the new disclosures, the scope of the TET appeared to be widening and Sattar had no moral right to continue in the office.

“Abdul Sattar is facing serious allegations. He has no moral right to hold the ministerial post. Will the Shinde-Fadnavis government take action against Sattar and MLA Bornare or will they still be protected? ...A thorough investigation should be conducted into how many people benefited from the scam that broke during the Devendra Fadnavis Government and the

culprits should be strictly punished,” Patole said.

Early this month, the names of Heena Kausar Abdul Sattar Shaikh and Uzma Nahid Abdul Sattar Shaikh, daughters Sattar, figured in the list of candidates who have been debarred by the MSCE for their alleged involvement in TET scam. Now it has emerged that the certificate of MLA Ramesh Bornare’s daughter’s is also fake.

In December 2021, it came to light that thousands of TET candidates got their marks inflated and several of them got fake certificates by paying money.

In the first week of August 2022, the MSCE released a list of over 7,800 TET candidates whose involvement was allegedly found in the scandal. Among those named in the list were Sattar’s two daughters. Consequently, their eligibility in 2019 TET was cancelled and the two have been barred from appearing for the exam again.

Rooting for stern measures to deal with the TET scam, Patole said: “We will not tolerate this injustice done to t teachers who gave TET exam with great effort and honesty.

Parliament panel grills Twitter officials over data security, privacy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Parliamentary panel on Friday questioned top Twitter officials over a whistleblower’s revelations on its India operations, and gave them a dressing-down as their replies on issue of data security and privacy were “not satisfactory”, sources said.

Top Twitter executives including Senior Director (Public Policy) Samiranj Gupta, Director (Public Policy) Shagufra Kamran deposed before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology chaired by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor.

The panel questioned them about the reports on former head of Twitter (security) Peiter Zatkos’ allegations the microblogging site knowingly allowed the Indian government to place its ‘agents’ on the company payroll where they had “direct unsupervised access to the company’s systems and user data”.

The Twitter officials denied any such thing having happened and refused there was any data security breach in India, sources in the panel said. The members also

questioned the social media giant’s officials if their data security policies is in synch with local policies and with the single global privacy policy.

They also asked how does the microblogging site handles conflicts in national privacy policies of different countries, with the sources saying the executives didn’t give satisfactory replies.

They also evaded questions about data safety and privacy, a member said, following which they were reprimanded by the MPs.

Zatkos’ allegations were reported by international media houses. Twitter has already stated it was a ‘false narrative’ and the allegations and “opportunistic” timing appear designed to capture attention and inflict harm on the company, its customers and its shareholders.

The Tharoor-led panel has been holding meetings with various stakeholders including tech companies, social media firms, ministries and other regulators on the issue of citizens’ data security and privacy.

The parliamentary committee is also working on a comprehensive report on data privacy and security.

Kejriwal to bring trust motion on Mon, slams bid to poach MLAs

From Page1

While addressing the Assembly, Kejriwal added: “All anti-national forces have come together against Delhi’s AAP Government, ours is the most popular one, these forces want to break us but all our MLAs are together. They’ll fabricate false cases against us till Gujarat polls.”

During the session, Kejriwal added that if the BJP wanted to work against corruption, then it should investigate the paper leaks in Gujarat and how hundreds were killed by poisonous liquor. “The BJP’s fortress in Gujarat is under threat and is crumbling now. ED, CBI raids on us are due to the upcoming polls in Gujarat,” he alleged.

Kejriwal alleged the BJP is using money collected through GST and hike in petrol and

diesel prices to poach MLAs. “The BJP has bought 277 MLAs till now across the country. Delhi Lieutenant Governor has now started a probe in our schools. They want to stop good work being done in schools and hospitals,” he said.

Earlier, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said the first information report (FIR) filed against him over implementation of the now-withdrawn excise policy was a fake and that the CBI will not find anything incriminating even if it carries out 1,000 raids.

Speaking in the House, Sisodia said that this is the first corruption case in the country where no additional financial burden has been put on the citizens and the Government is also getting more revenue in form of licensing fees.

Ghulam frees self...

From Page1

They said five more leaders are likely to quit including former MP Jugal Kishore Sharma and ex-legislators Haji Abdul Rashid, Chowdhary Mohd Akram and Gulzar Ahmad Wani. Another prominent leader, Muneer Ahmad Mir, is also likely to resign, the sources said.

The majority of the senior leaders who have quit the Congress have slammed Rahul and his style of functioning and the coterie culture prevailing in the Congress. In his scathing criticism of the leadership, particularly Rahul, the 73-year-old termed the former Congress chief a “non-serious individual at the helm”.

Proxies, Azad wrote to Sonia, are being propped to take over the leadership and they will be nothing more than “a puppet on a string”.

“This all happened because the leadership in the past eight years has tried to foist a non-serious individual at the helm of the party,” he alleged.

“It is therefore with great regret and an extremely leaden heart that I have decided to sever my half-a-century-old association with the Indian National Congress and hereby resign from all party positions including the primary membership of the Indian National Congress,” Azad said.

Terming the entire organisational election process a “farce and a sham”, he said at no place anywhere in the country have elections been held at any level of the organisation. “Handpicked lieutenants of the AICC have been coerced to sign on lists prepared by the coterie than runs the AICC sitting in 24, Akbar Road.

At no place in a booth, block, district or state was an electoral roll published,” he said. “The AICC leadership is squarely responsible for perpetrating a giant fraud on the party to perpetuate its hold on the ruins of what once was a national movement that fought for and attained the Independence of India,” Azad told Sonia.

“Does the Indian National Congress deserve this in the 75th year of India’s independence is a question that the AICC leadership must ask itself,” he said. In his view, “the Indian National Congress has lost both the will and the ability under the tutelage of the coterie that runs the AICC to fight for what is right for India”.

In fact, before starting the Bharat Jodo Yatra, the leadership should have undertaken a ‘Congress jodo’ exercise across the country, he said. “Unfortunately, the situation in the Congress has reached such

a point of no return that now ‘proxies’ are being propped up to take over the leadership of the party.

Referring to the letter written by him and 22 other leaders in August 2020 to flag the “abysmal drift” in the party, Azad said, “the coterie chose to unleash its sycophants on us and got us attacked, vilified, and humiliated in the crudest manner possible”. He alleged that on the directions of the coterie that runs the AICC today, “my mock funeral procession was taken out in Jammu”.

Instead of taking those views on board in a constructive and cooperative manner, “we were abused, humiliated, insulted and vilified in a specially summoned meeting of the extended CWC meeting”, he said.

A member of the G-23 group that sought a change in the Congress, Azad told Sonia the party had “lost both the will and ability under the tutelage of the coterie” running the affairs of the party to fight for what is right for India.

All senior and experienced leaders were sidelined and the new coterie of inexperienced sycophants started running the affairs of the party,” he alleged. Azad said the Congress at the national level has conceded political space available to the BJP and State-level space to regional parties.

On their part, Congress leaders said Azad’s observations in the letter were more of a “personal vilification, targeting Rahul. “A man who has been treated with the greatest respect by the Congress leadership has betrayed it by his vicious personal attacks which reveals his true character, Congress chief spokesperson Ramesh tweeted, adding that “GNA’s DNA has been Modi-fied,” said Congress general secretary in-charge of communications JaiRam Ramesh.

Ramesh also questioned the contents of the letter written by Azad. “First Modi’s tears in Parliament, then Padma Vibhushan, then the extension for residence. Ye sanyog nahi sahyog hai (It’s not a coincidence, it’s a collaboration),” Ramesh said in a tweet in Hindi.

One of the probable candidates for the new Congress chief, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot took a dig at Azad and said it is not right for people whose very identity is due to the party to say such things. Gehlot said no one had expected that someone who was never kept without an office by the Congress for 42 years would say such things about the party.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**TENDER NOTICE**

**Tender No. 156-DRM-MB-22-23 Dated-26.08.2022** Sr.DEN/I/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No **156-DRM-MB-22-23** closing date **20.09.2022 16:00** hrs. Name of work: Misc. track work in the section of SSE/P/Way/SAN under ADENI/HRI. Tender closing date/time- **20.09.2022 16:00**. Cost of work **Rs-7999927.00**, Earnest Money **Rs-160000.00**. Tender Cost NIL. Bidding start date **06.09.2022** and Period of Completion 12 Months. Bidders will be allowed to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. For detail information please log into **www.ireps.gov.in**. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on **IREPS** portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

2194/2022

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given to the General public that Mr. Diwan Nandlal Sawhney was absolute owner of Apartment No. C/6/72 located in Wing B on 7th Floor, having super area of 124.77 Sq. Mtrs. (1343 Sq. Ft.) alongwith Parking Space No. 48B107 (OpenCovered) in the Multi-storied Building No. 4, known as "DLF Carlton Estate" constructed on Plot of land area measuring 5.428 Acres. Situated in the revenue estate of Villages Wazirabad, and located in Group Housing in the residential colony known as DLF City (Jailor known as DLF Qutub Enclave Complex), Phase-IV, Gurgaon(Haryana) vide Conveyance Deed dated 27.04.2005, Document No. 1962 and Unfortunately, Mr. Diwan Nandlal Sawhney expired and after his death, his Farida became the owner of above said property vide Will dated 22.09.2016 executed by Mr. Diwan Nandlal Sawhney. Now, Mrs. Farida is intending to sell the above said property to Mr. Vikram Mehta vide Sale Deed. Further, Mr. Vikram Mehta is mortgaging the above said property to Axis Finance Limited in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 7 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dhawan/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocate) Law Vestas, Nagla no 907, Vistra Floor, E-11, Northex Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/9818228636 (M).

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

My Clients, Sh. Dharmendra S/o Late Sh. Jagram and Sh. Rajesh Kumar S/o Late Sh. Jagram, who are the registered owners of Property Bearing No. RZ-7-M, (Old Plot No. 559), Land Measuring 100 Sq. Yds., Out of Khassa 97/1, situated in the area of Sector-16, Saket, Delhi-110016, is the Mutatee/owner of the Flat No. 3, Main Sagarpur, New Delhi-110046 vide Registered Relinquishment Deed dated 06.02.2022 Registration No. 2287 executed by 1. Sh. Bhawan Singh S/o Late Jagram 2. Smt. Neelam D/o Late Jagram 3. Smt. Promila Devi W/o Late Sh. Krishan Kumar 4. Sh. Nitesh Kumar S/o Late Sh. Krishan Kumar 5. Sh. Nitesh Kumar S/o Late Sh. Krishan Kumar in favour of Sh. Dharmendra S/o Late Sh. Jagram and Sh. Rajesh Kumar S/o Late Sh. Jagram. The said property is going to be mortgaged with IFL Home Finance Limited. Any other Legal Heir/persons/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notify to the undersigned(Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered AD within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived.

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

**MIG, D-Block, Third Floor, or Director LAB(H)**  
**MIG, DDA Vikas Sadan INA New Delhi-110023**

Good Samaritan dies trying to save dog

**NEW DELHI:** In an unfortunate incident, a 24-year-old helper-cum-cook at a five star hotel died when he was hit by a pickup van after he slipped while trying to save a dog in north Delhi’s Wazirabad area. The incident occurred on Thursday night. The deceased has been identified as Rahul, a resident of Biharipur. The

(DCP), North district, a police control room (PCR) call received information around 11.29 PM on Thursday about a motorcyclist found in an injured condition on Pusta Road. “People at the spot said that the victim slipped while trying to save a street dog. The man was then hit by a passing pickup van. SR

Azad to launch...

From Page1

Prof Hari Om, however, feels the Assembly polls are not going to take place in the near future. “Azad may get enough time to raise his party machinery to his satisfaction in order to give a tough fight to his political opponents in the fray,” added Prof Hari Om.

The vertical split in the J&K unit of the Congress party may take its toll on the poll preparations of the party as several senior party leaders have decided to support Azad instead of strengthening the party base. In the 2014 Assembly polls, the Congress had won only 5 seats from Jammu region. From the plain areas of Jammu, Samba and Kathua the party failed to open its account. It won two seats from the Reasi district, and one each from Doda, Ramban and Poonch.

Bickering within the People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration is also going to impact the poll outcome across Jammu region due to multi-corner contests on most of the seats. Division of votes between different Opposition parties may help the BJP win the majority votes on closely-contested seats. Friendly contests on some of the seats, or pre-poll adjustment may also allow BJP to come closer to the majority

mark with the help of other like-minded parties in the Kashmir valley. Azad had earlier earned the sobriquet of party’s lucky mascot for scripting a glorious victory for the party during 2002 polls in Jammu & Kashmir. After winning 20 Assembly seats the party had formed an alliance Government with the Peoples Democratic Party.

Azad returned to the State in 2005 only to become the first Chief Minister of the Congress in the last three decades replacing Mufti Mohd Sayeed as per the power sharing arrangement.

For almost three years, he worked tirelessly to build infrastructure in the State with little or virtually no help from his alliance partners, who remained busy in unsettling his apprecart. After his unceremonious exit from the State in 2008, Azad shifted base to New Delhi and served as Union Minister in Manmohan Singh Government. In 2014, he failed to win Lok Sabha seat from Udhampur-Doda. He was defeated by Dr Jitendra Singh by a huge margin of over 60,000 votes.

In 2019 he declined to contest Lok Sabha seat. Observers closely watching Azad’s political career point out that when he was at helm in New Delhi he never allowed state PCC to flourish and function smoothly.

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

**I'm Gyanendra Kumar s/o Shri Om Saijun 9/24, M-8, Gayatri kunj Sector-3, Rajendra nagar, Sahibabad- Ghaziabad, My name is Gyanendra Kumar not Gyanendra. In all papers my name should be changed to only Gyanendra Kumar.**  
**PD(90156)A**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Be it known that my clients (1) **RAJESH KUMAR PURI** S/o Late Shri Gulzari Lal Puri (2) **NISHA PURI** W/o Shri Rajesh Kumar Puri both R/o 204, First Floor, Vaisnali, Pitampura, Delhi-110034, have disowned and severed all their relation with their son namely Mr. **ANKIT PURI**, his wife Mrs. **BHARTI PURI** and Grandsons (1) **JEEHAN PURI** & (2) **NISHAKARSH PURI**. That my clients have debarred all the four above named persons from their movable and immovable properties / assets due to the mis-behaviours of their son & daughter-in-law. Any body dealing with them in any matter (socially / monetary etc) shall be doing at his/her/their own risk. Cost and responsibility and my clients will not be responsible for any act.

**PARKASH CHAND, Advocate**  
Enrolment No. D-9065/2019  
Chamber No. 914, 9th Floor, Lawyers Chamber, Rohini Court Complex, Delhi-85

**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**

**ICICI Bank**  
**Whereas**  
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Munendra Dikshit/ Jyoti Dikshit/ LBGUR00001378121	Flat No- 3020, 3rd Floor, Type-C, Srikrishna Lok, Vrindavan Mathura, Mathura- 281204 / August 24, 2022	May 23,2022 Rs. 7,10,683/-	Delhi/ NCR and Mathura Up

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantor(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgagee properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

**Date : August 26, 2022**  
**Place: Delhi/ NCR**

**Authorized Officer**  
**ICICI Bank Limited**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given that **S Manjit Singh** claims to be owner and in possession of **Entire Third Floor with Roof Rights of Property No. 4, Road No. 66 at Purni Bagh West, M.D-26** (hereinafter called the said property) by virtue of two Reg. Relinquishment Deeds Dated 15.04.2010 and 16.04.2010 r/w reg. gift deed executed by Kartar Kaur on 07.02.2011 vide doc no. 899. Initially S Indar Singh and Kartar Kaur was the Owner of said property and after the death of Indar Singh, the entire property is transferred to S Manjit Singh as aforesaid and now said S Manjit Singh has agreed to sell the said Property to **HARJINDER SINGH AND KUNWAR SINGH AND SAID HARJINDER SINGH AND KUNWAR SINGH** has agreed to create a mortgage in favour of our clients, **IDFC FIRST BANK LTD., ITO Branch, New Delhi** All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or of any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/ registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, lien or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within **10 days** from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan against the said property and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof.

**Vishal Diwan (Advocate)**  
For Diwan and Company LLP  
Advocates and Solicitors  
House No.2 S (JGF), NRI Complex New Delhi -110019  
Mobile No. 9818399999

**MIG, D-Block, Third Floor, or Director LAB(H)**  
**MIG, DDA Vikas Sadan INA New Delhi-110023**



**CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL CLASSROOMS IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

# L-G seeks CS’ answer over delay in acting on CVC report

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena has sought a report from the Chief Secretary (CS) over a delay of more than 2.5 years in acting on a Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) report on a plaint on the construction of additional classrooms in Government schools. The report, which found gross irregularities and procedural lapses in execution of the projects, was sent by the CVC to the Vigilance Secretary in February 2020, seeking comments for further investigation and action.

“The L-G has taken a serious view of this inordinate delay that appears to be an

obvious attempt at covering up gross malpractice pointing towards corruption, apart from violating relevant clauses of the CVC manual. The L-G Secretariat had received a complaint enclosing a copy of the CVC communication to the Directorate of Vigilance,” sources at the L-G’s office said.

The CVC report found financial irregularities in Government schools and suggested that there had been violation of provisions of General Financial Rules (GFR). Irregularities were observed in the preparation of extra ordinary repairs (EOR) indents and utilisation of funds in the construction works undertaken in Government schools to achieve student per class ratio

equal to or less than 50.

The tender for works in 194 schools for additional classrooms was floated and the CVC had also suggested investigation into all 689 EOR indents in the schools.

The report further alleged that construction cost escalated by up to 90 per cent in the name of richer specifications without calling tender and the Delhi Government sanctioned cost escalation of Rs 500 crore without tender.

The CVC had received a complaint in July 2019 regarding irregularities and cost overruns in construction of additional classrooms in Government schools. Delhi BJP MLA Vijender Gupta, who had lodged the complaint



demanding that corruption in construction of classrooms should be probed by the CBI and action taken against Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who is also the Education Minister.

As per report, the complete work of construction of classrooms in ‘Priority-1 project’ was split in 63 tenders. “Total

initial sanction obtained from Delhi Government was Rs 939.26 crore for 7,180 ECRs under 15 proposals and total awarded value for all the 63 tenders was Rs 860.63 crore. After award of tender, additional sanction of Rs 66.67 crore was accorded for 308 classrooms plus other works,” the report stated.

“As finally constructed ECRs are only 7,137 against total 7,488 (7,180+308) ECRs to be constructed additionally sanctioned amount appeared not used for the purpose it was sanctioned. After submission of RPEs by PWD total amount already sanctioned and under process for sanction, for all works under Priority-1 became Rs 1,315.57 crore and out of this, Rs 1,173.68 crore was sanctioned (including all originally sanctioned estimates and 3 RPEs) by the Government while the remaining amount of Rs 141. 83 crore was under process for sanction,” the report stated.

“It is noted that original sanctioned amount of Rs 989.26 crore was revised to Rs

1,315.57 crore, an increase of Rs 326.25 crore and three of the RPEs were already sanctioned and rest were under process for sanction,” the report stated.

“Three additional sanctions of Rs 283 crore, Rs 5.18 crore and Rs 5.25 crore were accorded by Secretary/Education for additional classrooms in the schools where the work was already being done under some other contract. The value of original awards was Rs 11.80 crore, Rs 14 crore and Rs 12.65 crore,” stated the report.

The CVC report also said that the cost escalated to the extent of Rs 326.25 crore, which is 53 per cent higher than the awarded amount of tender. This escalated cost was utilized

for the construction of only 4027 classrooms against 6133 that were to be constructed.

“In 194 schools, 1214 toilets were constructed against the requirement of 160 toilets with extra expenditure of Rs 37 crore. Toilets were counted and projected as classrooms by Delhi Government. Only 4027 additional classrooms were constructed in 141 schools against assessed requirement of 6133 classrooms in 194 schools,” the report said.

“The average cost of each classroom comes to Rs. 33 lakh (approx). During inspection, only 2 Rainwater Harvesting Systems were found in place against the PWD’s claim of 29 Rainwater Harvesting Systems,” it said.

## LoP-led BJP team meets L-G

Seeks legal action at BJP MLAs’ expulsion post row over alleged live-streaming of Assembly proceedings

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A BJP delegation led by Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri met Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday seeking legal action at their expulsion from the Assembly. They termed the expulsion as unconstitutional and alleged that the ruling AAP Government crossed all limits and destroyed the sanctity of the House.

After the meeting with the L-G, the LoP said the Kejriwal Government was acting like a dictatorship and not allowing the Opposition to express its views in the House. “The way BJP MLAs were expelled from the House without any reason, was unconstitutional. It seems that the ruling party had decided to marshal out BJP MLAs,” Bidhuri said.

“It all began when Deputy Speaker Rakhi Birla said that BJP MLA Ajay Mahawar made a video recording and was live streaming the proceedings of the House from his phone. This led to a ruckus in the House and it



Delhi BJP MLAs stage a protest at the Delhi Legislative Assembly during a Special Session, in New Delhi on Friday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

was adjourned for some time,” Bidhuri said. He alleged that Mahawar had not recorded anything of the proceeding of the House.

Bidhuri further said that notices for discussion of four issues were given for Special Mention under Rule-280 by the BJP and were accepted by the Assembly Secretariat. These subjects were also included in the agenda of the Legislative Assembly. These notices were given by Omprakash Sharma, Jitendra Mahajan, Ajay Mahawar and Abhay Verma.

“Four of our MLAs wanted to speak on their subjects but were not allowed. Mohan Singh Bisht had also requested a short-term discussion under Rule-55, which was about the liquor scam. When he was not allowed

to speak, the BJP MLAs said that if this notice has been given and it has been accepted for discussion, then why is the ruling party running away from the debate?” Bidhuri questioned.

“Following which the MLAs of the ruling party came to the Well and started misbehaving with the BJP MLAs,” he said, adding that this led to the adjournment of the House proceeding for 10 minutes.

“When the proceedings resumed, the Deputy Speaker did not listen to the Opposition and expelled the entire Opposition from the House, saying that Mahawar was live streaming the proceedings of the House from his phone. Surprisingly, no reason was given for the expulsion of the rest of the members,” he alleged.

## Stormy scenes in Assembly’s Special Session

### BJP, AAP MLAs trade charges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly’s Special Session on Friday witnessed stormy scenes with the ruling AAP shouting ‘khokha-khokha’, while accusing the BJP of trying to buy its MLAs, and the Opposition hitting back with ‘dhokha-dhokha’, referring to the alleged liquor scam. The House proceedings were suspended for 10 minutes amid ruckus and sloganeering as ruling AAP MLAs accused the BJP of trying to topple the Government by offering money.

AAP MLA Saurabh Bharadwaj entered the Well of the House raising slogans and alleging that bribe offers of ₹20 crore each were made to the AAP MLAs by the BJP for switching sides and joining the saffron party. BJP members responded with counter slogans over the alleged liquor scam as the Assembly’s one-day special session commenced.

Delhi Minister Rajendra

Pal Gautam accused the BJP of toppling Governments in States such as Maharashtra by threatening and bribing lawmakers. “We will uncover their conspiracy in Delhi. We want to tell them that these threats being made by using the CBI and ED should be stopped. Everything will be kept before the people of the country and we are not afraid.”

AAP members alleged BJP lawmakers made phone recordings of the proceedings in violation of House rules. Deputy Speaker Rakhi Birla asked BJP lawmaker and chief whip of the Opposition Ajay Mahawar as to why his phone must not be seized for recording the proceedings. Eight BJP lawmakers protested and were later marshalled out of the House for the entire day, where the proceedings resumed around 11.30 A.M.

However, the AAP’s accusation on Mahawar was denied by the Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri in the House. After being marshalled out of the House, the BJP MLAs staged a protest under Mahatma Gandhi’s statue on the Assembly premises.

## CM Kejriwal is another name of corruption: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Friday staged a protest at Ring Road close to the Delhi Assembly, demanding the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia who is a prime accused in the alleged liquor scam case.

The protest was led by the BJP State president Adesh Gupta. Several senior party leaders including Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, former Union Minister Vijay Goel, MPs Manoj Tiwari, Pravesh Sahib Singh Verma and Ramesh Bidhuri also participated in the protest. The protesting BJP workers also shouted slogans like “Gaali gaali shor hai, Manish Sisodia chor hai” and burnt the effigies of AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal and Sisodia. The BJP protesters tried to break the barricades near the Delhi Assembly, but the police used a water canon to disperse them.

Addressing the protest, Gupta alleged that Kejriwal is another name of corruption and he is the most corrupt CM this country has ever witnessed.

“Which development model does Kejriwal keep talking about? Opening liquor vends in the streets of Delhi? Colluding with liquor mafia to siphon crores of rupees? Getting women protesting against the opening of liquor vends beaten up by bouncers and playing with the future of Delhi by making youth addicted to alcohol is the development model he talks about,” Gupta said.

“When corruption in the Excise Policy has been exposed, Kejriwal has kept silence. It is the same Kejriwal who keeps express-



BJP workers during their protest against the Arvind Kejriwal-led Government over the Excise Policy case, near Delhi Vidhan Sabha in New Delhi on Friday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

ing his views on the problems happening not only in Delhi but in the country, but today when allegations are leveled against him, one wonders why he is maintaining a stoic silence,” Gupta added.

BJP MP Pravesh Sahib Singh Verma said that jail is the place for people who loot Delhi’s treasury in league with the liquor mafia, not the Cabinet.

“Under the new liquor policy, a bribe of crores of rupees was given to Manish Sisodia to increase the commission from 2.5 per cent to 12 per cent and Rs 150 crore was given to Sisodia as its first installment,” he alleged.

Union Minister Vijay Goel said that while the country was facing the Corona pandemic crisis, Kejriwal was preparing a plan to loot the Capital. Instead of providing facilities to Delhiites during Covid, they were preparing to fill their pockets.

## Assam, Delhi CMs spar on Twitter over schools’ closure

Sarma says Delhi just a municipal corporation, Kejriwal says India needs more schools

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when the Arvind Kejriwal Government is on the radar of the CBI in the alleged liquor scam case involving Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia as a

prime accused, a Twitter spat broke out between Chief Minister Kejriwal and his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday.

Sarma asked the AAP supremo to “do his homework” before commenting on the Assam Government’s decision to close schools in the State, while Kejriwal said his intention was not to “point out faults” but to “learn from each other” to make the country stronger. Sarma on Friday asserted there can be no comparison between the north-eastern State and Delhi as the

national Capital is more like a “municipal corporation”.

The debate was triggered by a report that the Assam Government has decided to shut down 34 schools where class 10 students failed. Reacting to the report, Kejriwal said on Twitter that shutting the schools was not a solution. “The country needs many more new schools... Instead of shutting them, improve the schools,” Kejriwal tweeted.

Reacting to Delhi Chief Minister’s tweet, Sarma said Kejriwal’s remarks came “without any homework”. Stepping



up the attack, Sarma asked Kejriwal to come to Assam and see for himself Government-run education and healthcare units, while stating that he will also visit similar facilities



in Delhi during his frequent trips there. “Delhi is a State merely in name. It is more of a municipal corporation” the senior BJP leader claimed. He argued that if Assam has to be

compared with other States, it has to be with places like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, or Punjab.

“I have seen their ‘mohallah clinics’. But after seeing the facilities at our Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, what is there to see in those clinics?” Sarma said.

Kejriwal replied to Himanta and said he did not want to ‘fault’ him. “We are all in one country. We have to learn from each other. Only then India will become the No. 1 country,” Kejriwal said. “I will come to Assam. Give me a date

when I can come to Assam to witness the good work in education being done in the State. You also come to Delhi -- I will show you what we have done,” Kejriwal tweeted.

The war of words escalated with BJP’s Amit Malviya joining the debate. “No one can take offence to what Kejriwal says as he knows nothing. You don’t even know how many liquor shops have been opened or how much the Delhi Government lost because of the liquor policy or how much the sellers profited or how much bribe you took,” Malviya tweet-

ed. The Chief Minister was speaking to reporters after reviewing the progress of work of a ‘Swahid Smarak and Park’.

In the education sector, Sarma maintained that Delhi has about 1,200 schools with 6,000-7,000 teachers while there are 60,000-70,000 State Government schools, employing nearly 2.5 lakh teachers in Assam. “If we had only 1,200 schools, I would have visited the institutions every day... Fish would have been served daily for breakfast, meat for lunch, and pulao for dinner,” Sarma said.

### Visually-impaired girl dies in G’gram hospital, family blames school

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

A 7-year-old visually impaired girl, a native of Jharkhand died under mysterious circumstances in a hospital after she was admitted by her school management over an alleged infection in her stomach on August 25.

However, the parents of the girl accused the school saying that she was thrashed at school and even the family was not informed about her condition. The relatives of the girl assembled at the mortuary, demanding the registration of a murder case and a fair probe against the school.

According to them, the girl was admitted to a Blind School in the village of Bahrampur, Gurugram on July 18. “I talked to her over the phone in which she informed me that she was beaten with sticks and tortured in the school. She wanted to come home,” Gopal Prashad Varnwal, the father of the victim,” stated in his police complaint.

## Your money will be refunded: SC to buyers of homes in twin towers

### IRP ordered to deposit ₹1 cr with top court registry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday assured the home buyers of the to-be-razed 40-storey twin-towers of real estate firm Supertech in Noida that they will be refunded the full amount deposited with the builder. The apex court also asked the Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) of the firm, facing insolvency proceedings, to deposit ₹1 crore with the apex court registry.

A Bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, AS Bopanna, and JB Pardiwala said that the home buyers of twin towers will get their total refund but for the time being, they will be paid ₹1 crore, which will be deposited by the IRP by September 30.

The Bench said that it would ensure that the home buyers of the twin towers get

their refund in compliance with the August 31, 2021 order of the court.

“In the meantime, in order to ensure that the home buyers who are covered by the judgement of this court get some refund of their outstanding dues, we direct the IRP to deposit an amount of ₹1 crore with the registry of this court on or before September 30,” it said.

The bench said that amicus curiae Gaurav Agarwal, will sit together with the IRP in the first week of October and jointly work out the outstanding dues of the home buyers and submit the details before the next date of hearing so that disbursement of some amount could be made to the hassled home buyers.

“The amicus and the IRP would jointly work out the outstanding dues of the home buyers, who have approached the court and submit their details on the next date of listing so that directions can be issued for the disbursement of the fund...,” it said.

## Towers’ demolition order has led us to make norms more stringent: Noida Authority CEO

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Noida Authority CEO Ritu Maheshwari on Friday said that the ‘Supertech Twin Tower’ incident has led the authority to revise norms and make them more stringent in disbursal of floor area ratio (FAR) to developers, a move to prevent such episodes in the future.

“If there is a violation then definitely its responsibility will be fixed, if not today then tomorrow. Everybody should abide by all the norms fixed by the Government and by the court,” said Maheshwari.

“There were directions from the Supreme Court and it was an old matter which was taken seriously by the Uttar Pradesh Government. The State Government formed an SIT (special investigation team) that found involvement of 26 officials in different periods of time. FIRs were lodged against all these officials,” said Maheshwari.

“The Government has



Barricades used to block a road leading to Supertech twin towers ahead of their demolition with explosives in compliance with a Supreme Court order, in Noida on Friday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

taken strict action against them. There has been a strong message from the court and the Government that violation (of rules) will not go unpunished,” she said. “This Government and the Noida Authority are continuously making efforts to ensure work is done with transparency and accountability. Also, whatever new works

and initiatives take place, they should be done with the larger public interest in mind so that everyone benefits from them,” she added. Maheshwari said in the case of twin towers, it was not that the maps were not approved by the Noida Authority. “Even the court noted that there was connivance between Noida

Authority officials and the builder. Approvals for construction were given by the Noida Authority itself. The FAR purchase was also approved in keeping with the then norms and bylaws,” she said. “The violations were related more to technical aspects like the distance between the towers and so on. Besides, residents’ consent was not taken,” she added.

On measures to prevent such episodes in the future, the Noida Authority CEO said they have revised the norms for consent and made them more stringent in disbursal of FAR to builders besides streamlining payment methods.

“The Noida Authority has come out with a new format in which developers have to get the consent of buyers for such constructions, a practice that was not in place earlier. What happened earlier was that the builders took the home buyers’ consent only at the time of selling inventory,” Maheshwari said.

## Yogi reviews demolition preparations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday reviewed preparations for the demolition of Supertech Twin Towers in Noida, which is scheduled to take place on August 28.

According to a statement issued by the Government, Adityanath said people’s safety should be ensured at all cost. He also directed to take care of the environmental challenges in view of the demolition.

Water tankers, sprinklers and smog guns will be used to clear the dust generated as a result of demolition. Sweeping machines will be installed on the roads within two kilometre radius of the buildings.

After the chief minister’s review, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Arvind Kumar issued detailed guidelines. Kumar said the preparations for the demolition of the towers have been completed.



# Regret not doing enough on listing, posting issues: CJI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Terming pendency of cases a “huge challenge”, outgoing Chief Justice of India NV Ramana on Friday expressed regret for not being able to pay much attention to issues of listing and posting of matters for hearing in the Supreme Court. The CJI, who is retiring from office on Friday, said there is a need to deploy modern technology and artificial intelligence to find a solution. He was speaking at the farewell function at Court number 1 which for the first time was put on live streaming for public to watch.

Later, in the evening farewell function of the SC Bar Association, Chief Justice of India-designate UU Lalit listed out his three priorities during his upcoming 74-day tenure. He said he will try to bring transparency in the listing process and a system to freely mention the urgent matters besides striving to ensure that one Constitutional Bench functions throughout the year.

“Even though we tried developing some modules, because of the compatibility and security issues, we could not make much progress,” Justice Ramana, who was heading the ceremonial bench, said. He said during the Covid-19 pandemic, the priority was running of the courts and unlike commercial establish-



ments, “we cannot secure the technological tools from the market directly”.

“We have to admit the fact that the pendency is a huge challenge before us. I am sorry that issues of listing and posting of matters is one of the areas on which I could not pay much attention,” the CJI said, adding, “We are busy in fire-fighting on all days”.

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave broke into tears while bidding adieu to the CJI, saying he maintained checks and balances between the judiciary, executive and Parliament, and did so “with a spine”. While Dave described Ramana

as a citizen’s judge, his colleague and senior advocate Kapil Sibal said the court will remember him for “maintaining balance even in turbulent times”.

“When the sea is calm, the ship will sail. We are going through very turbulent times. It is difficult for the ship to sail. This court will remember you for maintaining balance even in turbulent times. You have ensured that dignity and integrity of this court is maintained. That the Government is called to answer,” Sibal said.

Attorney General KK Venugopal said 224 vacancies in the high court were filled up and over 100 members in the

tribunals were appointed during the tenure of Justice Ramana as the CJI. He termed the CJI’s achievements “remarkable”, and said the vacancies were filled up during his tenure and for the first time, the apex court had a full strength of 34 judges. “What is outstanding for the CJI is the persuasion with which he was able to clear appointments and vacancies,” Venugopal said.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, who is also the president of the SCBA, said Justice Ramana’s retirement is a great loss for all. “The prestige of the institution has also been maintained and a clear signal has been given that this court will uphold the Constitution and protect the constitutional rights of the people,” he said.

Hailing from an agriculturist family in Ponnavaaram village of Andhra Pradesh’s Krishna district, Justice Ramana had succeeded S A Bobde on April 24, 2021 with a dire situation of huge unfilled vacancies in the top court and the High Courts staring at the face of the judiciary. Ramana also worked as journalist.

Justice Ramana will be succeeded by Justice UU Lalit as the CJI who will have a tenure of a little more than two months. Justice Lalit’s retirement in November will pave the way for Justice DY Chandrachud to take over as CJI for a bit over two years.

# Unfortunate Azad left when party fighting BJP on many issues: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday called senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad’s resignation “unfortunate” and termed the timing “awful”, saying it has come at a time when the party is engaged in combating the BJP on various issues.

“Ghulam Nabi Azad was a senior leader of the Congress. It is saddening that when the party fighting against inflation and polarisation, he decided to quit. It is most unfortunate that this has happened when the entire organisation is engaged in combating the BJP on issues of price rise and unemployment,” the Congress said in a statement.

Congress leaders said Azad’s observations in the letter were more of a “personal vilification” targeting Rahul Gandhi.

“A man who has been treated with the greatest respect by the Congress leadership has betrayed it by his vicious personal attacks which reveal his true character,” Congress’ chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh tweeted, adding that “GNA’s DNA has been Modi-fied”.

Hours after Azad quit the Congress, five senior party leaders including two former ministers in Jammu and Kashmir resigned from the party’s basic membership with sources saying more are likely to go.

Ramesh also questioned



the contents of the letter written by Azad. “First Modi’s tears in Parliament, then Padma Vibhushan, then the extension for residence. Ye sanyog nahi sahyog hai (It’s not a coincidence, it’s a collaboration),” Ramesh said.

One of the probable candidates for the new Congress chief, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot took a dig at Azad and said it is not right for people whose very identity is due to the party to say such things.

Referring to Congress stalwarts Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi attending Azad’s wedding in Srinagar, Gehlot said they wanted “this young boy” to move forward.

The party gave him various responsibilities in the organisation and subsequently, made him the Chief Minister of

Jammu and Kashmir, a Union Minister and a Member of Parliament, he pointed out.

Asked about the allegation that top Congress leaders are surrounded by sycophants, the veteran leader said, “All those who were with Sanjay Gandhi, including Ghulam Nabi Azad, were considered to be sycophants at that time. But Sanjay Gandhi did not care and that is why Azad saab became such a big leader. Had Sanjay Gandhi removed sycophants under pressure, as Azad is expecting Rahul Gandhi to do today, no one would have known Ghulam Nabi Azad or any other leader.”

Veteran Congress leader M Mallikarjun Kharge said the party had given Azad “everything” during his long innings, and his comments on Rahul were “not in good taste”.

“We have seen the love between Narendra Modi and Azad in the Parliament, and that love has been manifested in this letter,” said media department head of Congress Pawan Khara.

Asked about the reference to an incident from 2013 when Rahul had tore apart a copy of an Ordinance brought in by his party-led UPA government and mentioned by Azad in his resignation letter, Khara said Azad did not speak out then as he was holding a post.

The Congress also rejected Azad’s reported criticism that he was not properly consulted before a rejig of the Jammu and Kashmir’s Congress unit. Azad participated in four meetings at the party’s 15 GRG ‘war room’ on Kashmir union rejig with the last one being on July 14, sources said.

Azad’s resignation from the Congress marked the most high-profile exit of one of the “Group of 23” (G-23) leaders, who had written to party chief Sonia Gandhi two years ago for a “collective and inclusive leadership” in the organisation, exposing the faultlines in the grand old party.

Former Union minister Anand Sharma, who created a flutter recently by resigning as the chairman of the party’s steering committee for Himachal Pradesh, months ahead of the Assembly polls in the hill state, appears to be mending his ways by asserting his loyalty to the Congress.

# India, Tanzania review defence, strategic ties



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Tanzanian Minister of Defence and National Service Stergomena Lawrence Tax during a bilateral meeting and others in New Delhi on Friday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Tanzania on Friday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence and strategic ties during talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his visiting Tanzania counterpart Stergomena Lawrence Tax. The two leaders agreed to boost bilateral military-to-military cooperation in sync with India’s broader priority to deepen strategic ties with Africa.

The two Defence Ministers also explored new avenues for defence and industrial cooperation to further strengthen bilateral engagements, officials said. Following the talks, Rajnath said India and Tanzania share the same strategic space and New Delhi considers the African nation as a “major Western Indian Ocean Player”.

“Reviewed the full range of India-

Tanzania defence ties during the fruitful meeting with the Tanzanian Defence Minister, Stergomena Lawrence Tax in New Delhi. India and Tanzania share the same strategic space. India gets Tanzania a major Western Indian-Ocean Player,” he tweeted.

“There is immense scope to boost defence and military-to-military cooperation between both the countries. I am confident India-Tanzania partnership will continue to grow over the coming decades, taking the bilateral relations to greater height,” Rajnath said. In the last few years, India has been focusing on expanding overall Co-operation with the African continent including in areas of defence and security. India’s cumulative investments in Africa stand at USD 70 billion (one billion =100 crores) while it has extended Lines of Credits (LoCs) worth USD 12.26 billion to the continent.

# India, B’desh finalise Kushiya river water sharing MoU text

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh have finalised the text of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on interim water sharing of Kushiya river and welcomed finalization of the design and location of water intake point on the Feni River to meet the drinking water needs of Sabroom town in Tripura as per the October 2019 India -Bangladesh MoU on this subject.

These developments took place here during the 38th Meeting of Ministerial-level Joint Rivers Commission of the two countries on Thursday, the ministry of external affairs said on Friday. The Indian delegation was led by Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Zaeed Farooque, State Minister for Water Resources led the Bangladesh side.

India and Bangladesh reviewed the process of river water sharing of common rivers, sharing of flood data, addressing river pollution, conducting joint studies on sedimentation management and river bank protection during the meeting.

The meeting assumes signif-



icance as it was held after a long gap of 12 years, though the technical interactions under the framework of Joint Rivers Commission(JRC) have continued in the intervening period. The meeting was preceded by Water Resources Secretary-level interaction on August 23, 2022.

Incidentally, the meeting on rivers took place days ahead of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s proposed visit to New Delhi in September. She will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on issues ranging from defence to trade and connectivity. The two leaders may also ink the pact on water sharing of Kushiya river.

As regards the current meeting, the ministry of external affairs said, one of the important areas of cooperation, where India has been assisting Bangladesh, is

sharing of real time flood data. India has recently extended the period of flood data sharing beyond 15 October to help Bangladesh address unforeseen flood events.

India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers, of which seven rivers have been identified earlier for developing framework of water sharing agreements on priority.

During the meeting, it has been agreed to widen this area of ongoing cooperation by including eight more rivers for data exchange.

The matter will be further discussed at the Technical Level Committee of JRC.

The Joint Rivers Commission of India and Bangladesh was constituted in the year 1972 as a bilateral mechanism to address issues of mutual interest on common rivers.

# SC raises ceiling limit of iron ore mining for Bellary, Chitradurga, Tumkur districts

## Conservation of environment must go hand-in-hand with eco dev: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday raised the ceiling limit of iron ore mining for Bellary, Chitradurga, and Tumkur districts in Karnataka, saying conservation of the ecology and environment must go hand in hand with the spirit of economic development. The apex court raised the ceiling

limit of iron ore mining from 28 MMT to 35 MMT for Bellary district, and from 7 MMT to 15 MMT for Chitradurga and Tumkur districts.

“Conservation of the ecology and the environment must go hand in hand with the spirit of economic development and the fine balance between the two goals is what is sought to be achieved even now,” the bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana said. The bench, also comprising Justices Hima Kohli and CT Ravikumar, passed the order on pleas seeking lifting of the ceiling limits of iron ore mining in these districts.



It referred to the May 20, 2022 order passed by the apex court which had granted certain reliefs relating to the sale

ceiling limit for production of iron ore there.

The bench referred to the history of ceiling limits on the production of iron ore through court orders and noted that on July 29, 2011, and August 26, 2011, the apex court had imposed a ban on mining in these three districts based on the report of the Centrally Empowered Committee (CEC).

The bench noted that in 2017, Karnataka had submitted before it that the ceiling limit may be raised to 40 MMT, and gradually increased later to 50 MMT. “However, the state of Karnataka is now in favour of a complete removal of the ceil-

ing limit,” it said.

The top court said it appeared that the CEC, the state, the Ministry of Steel, Karnataka Iron and Steel Manufacturers Association, and mining lease holders are all “ad idem” (in agreement) that the changed situation on ground warrants a complete removal of ceiling limits that were imposed by the court. It said advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the original petitioner, has objected to the request for the lifting of the ceiling limit, on principles. The bench said the concerns of the original petitioner and the monitoring committee merit due consideration.

# AI-enabled swarm drones to boost op readiness at LAC, LoC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) playing a major role in modern-day warfare, the Indian Army is now inducting swarm drone systems. They will enhance operational readiness of the forces deployed at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing China and the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan. Two Indian start ups have

manufactured these artificial intelligence(AI)enabled drones.

A group of drones (swarm) operating in conjunction with the ground manoeuvre forces will provide an aerial manoeuvre capability during both offensive and defensive operations, thereby enhancing the combat potential of the ground forces.

Giving details here on Friday, sources said drone technology has proved to be a force multiplier in military operations as evident from its

application in various recent conflicts across the world. Even in our context, the recent incidents along the borders have seen a noticeable increase in drone related incidents along our borders, they said.

The application of swarm drones in various recent conflicts across the world especially Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria and strikes on oilfields in Saudi Arabia and the recent Russia-Ukraine conflict clearly highlighted the potency of this niche technology.

Swarm drones in the Indian context are needed for providing tactical commanders with a force multiplier capable of providing surveillance inputs, undertaking close reconnaissance of a particular area to confirm inputs received from other ISR resources, engage varied targets like vehicles, artillery and Air Defence equipment, enemy command and control centers and opportunities.

Drones can be employed in both offensive and defensive



operations, providing a decisive edge to the tactical commanders employing them.

Swarm Drone System consists of a number of aerial vehicles which are Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled and capable of communicating with the control station as well as among themselves.

The AI based Swarming algorithms enable the swarm drones to automatically distribute the tasks among themselves, navigate to the area of interest, ensure collision avoidance during movement to the target area and carryout search of the area.

The AI based Automatic Target Recognition (ATR) feature enables the drones to automatically recognise targets line tanks gun gum, vehicles and human and display it on the control station screen thus minimizing chances of the operator missing any target and also facilitating engagement by suitable type of weapon platform.

To induct this niche technology, the Indian Army has procured Swarm Drones from two Indian startup companies.

In addition, the Army has also initiated a Make-II case, Autonomous Surveillance and Armed Drone Swarm (A-SADS) which includes a number of improvements and also a version for High Altitude Area.

This procurement is recognition of the Indian Army’s embrace of emerging and disruptive technologies to transform itself from a manpower intensive to a technology enabled force to meet future security challenges.



# ‘Recovery of a Chinese rifle from ultras unusual’

Premature to say if there is nexus between terrorists, Pak and China Army, says Indian Army

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Security forces have recovered a Chinese-made M-16 assault rifle from the three militants killed on Thursday during an anti-infiltration operation along the Line of Control in Uri, with the Army describing the recovery as “unusual”. The Army said two AK series weapons, one Chinese M-16 weapon and ammunition were recovered from the Pakistani militants killed in Kamakote area of Uri while trying to infiltrate into the Indian side.

“Usually, we find AK series and at times, the M-4 rifles being recovered. This M-16 is a Chinese-made 9-mm calibre weapon. This is an unusual recovery,” General Officer Commanding (GoC) of the Army’s 19 Infantry Division

Major General Ajay Chandpuri told reporters in Baramulla in north Kashmir.

He, however, said it would be premature to say if this hints at a probable nexus between the Pakistani Army, terrorists, and the Chinese Army. “It would be too premature to speculate on the larger context of it. So, I think, we will have to really examine and go into the details,” he said.

On the number of militants on the launchpads across the LoC, Maj Gen Chandpuri said based on multiple inputs “there were close to 100-120 terrorists attempting to infiltrate and present in 15-20 launchpads which are close to the LoC”, opposite this sector alone.

“So, while the ceasefire understanding is largely holding good for the benefit of the people on the both sides, the presence of terrorists on the launchpads and their continuous attempts to infiltrate are on,” he added.

The GoC said Pakistan is desperate and frustrated, and will continue to try to infiltrate terrorists and send in arms and

ammunition despite a robust anti-infiltration grid in place.

“The LoC is over 740 km which includes very difficult terrain and then there were spells of inclement weather. So, despite the vigilance, there are gaps from where they try and infiltrate terrorists and war-like stores,” he said. However, he said, with each passing day, the level of technology and alertness is improving. “So, the infiltration has come down significantly, which is also indicated by the peace in the hinterland.

So, we feel they are getting more and more desperate to push in these people from any-way possible. This one attempt made early in the morning is indicative of their desperation and their frustration,” he said.

He said the swift elimination of terrorists sends a clear signal of the level of preparedness of troops on the LoC. Asked if there were any attempts to drop weapons using drones in the sector, the GoC said “not really”. “But, we are watching out for that and prepared to deal with it.

# TMC’s Hakim next in line for prison, says Majumdar

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after the arrest of two senior Trinamool Congress leaders Partha Chatterjee and Anubrata Mondal Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar on Friday said that another Bengal Minister and TMC’s minority face Firhad Hakim is next in line.

Saying that both the jailed TMC leaders were repeatedly falling sick in jail and required a Hakim (doctor) to take care of them Majumdar told at the end of a massive rally a Behrampore in Murshidabad that “soon Trinamool Congress’ Hakim will be sent in to treat” Chatterjee and Mondal in jail.

Hakim immediately hit back saying he was not afraid of going to jail but asked Majumdar to stop humiliating him in public.

The Enforcement Directorate had arrested former Bengal minister and TMC secretary general Chatterjee and his close aide Arpita



Mukherjee after more than Rs 50 crore and property deeds worth many more crores were recovered from her house. The CBI arrested Mondal from Bolpur in relation to cow smuggling case. Hakim who is facing charges in Narada pay off case and also defending a PIL on disproportionate asset in the Calcutta High Court hit back saying he was not afraid of going to jail.

“I am only afraid of losing prestige... I am not afraid of going to jail ... I have not committed any crime so as to be humiliated like this,” the powerful Brngal minister said adding he would continue to

raise hi voice against “saffron communalism,” even if he is sent to jail.

“It is strange to accept the narrative that those who are in opposition parties are criminals and corrupt... But as soon as they enter the BJP’s washing machine they are clean,” Hakim said asking Majumdar to “bring all the agencies with you ... I am ready to go to jail... But only tell me in advance about the conspiracy and false case you are planning against me.”

Meanwhile in more embarrassment for ruling Trinamool Congress, senior party MP Saugato Roy on Friday said that some corruption was acceptable in order to run bigger parties.

The BJP and Left immediately reacted saying Roy’s statement amounted to offering apology for rampant corruption that the party leaders were involved in. “It only shows that TMC leaders are not ashamed of their black deeds,” CPI(M) central committee member Sujana Chakrabarty said.

## National parties collected ₹15K cr from unknown sources between 2004-05 and 2020-21: ADR

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The national parties have collected more than Rs 15,077.97 crore from unknown sources between 2004-05 and 2020-21, an analysis by the poll rights body— Association for Democratic Reforms, showed.

The total income of national and regional parties from unknown sources for 2020-21 stands at Rs 690.67 crore. ADR considered eight national parties and 27 regional parties for this analysis.

The national parties comprised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), Community Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India (CPI) and National People’s Party (NPEP).

The regional parties included AAP, AGP, AIADMK, AIFB, AIMIM, AIUDF, BJD, CPI(ML)(L), DMKD, DMK, GEP, JDS, JDU, JMM, KC-M, MNS, NDDP, NPE, PMK, RLD, SAD, SDF, Shivsena, SKM, TDP, TRS and YSR-Congress.

The analysis conducted on the basis of the parties’ Income Tax Returns (ITR) and donations statements filed with the Election Commission of India (ECI) found that between FY 2004-05 and 2020-21, the

national parties have collected Rs 15,077.97 crore from unknown sources. “For FY 2020-21, eight national political parties have declared Rs 426.74 crore income from unknown sources and 27 regional parties received Rs 263.928 crore income from unknown sources,” it said.

During FY 2020-21, Congress declared Rs 178.782 crore as income from unknown sources which is 41.89 per cent of the total income of national parties from unknown sources (Rs 426.742 crore),” the analysis said.

BJP declared Rs 100.502 crore as income from unknown sources which is 23.55 per cent of the total income of national parties from unknown sources.

The top five regional parties in terms of unknown income are YSR-Congress with Rs 96.2507 crore, DMK with Rs 80.02 crore, BJD with Rs 67 crore, MNS with Rs 5.773 crore and AAP with Rs 5.4 crore. 47.06 per cent of the total Rs 690.67 cr account for income from electoral bonds.

The ADR said the combined income of Congress and NCP from the sale of coupons between FY 2004-05 and 2020-21 stands at Rs 4,261.83 crore.

There are reporting discrepancies in audit and contribution reports of seven political parties for FY 2020-21.

## Yogi’s OSD dies in road accident, wife critically injured

**Lucknow:** In a tragic incident, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in Gorakhpur, Motilal Singh, succumbed to his injuries after his car met with an accident on the national highway near Khajauli area of Basti district.

The incident took place when Motilal Singh and his wife, Veena, were travelling from Gorakhpur to Lucknow late Thursday night.

The accident took place when the car, while trying to save an animal on the road, rammed into a tree, causing critical injuries to Motilal Singh as well as his wife.

PNS



Nuns light candles in front of a portrait of Saint Teresa of Kolkata on her birth anniversary, in Agartala on, Friday.

PTI

## RJD leader unanimously elected Bihar Assembly Speaker

PTI ■ PATNA

Veteran RJD leader Awadh Bihari Chaudhary was on Friday unanimously elected as Speaker of the Bihar Legislative Assembly. The post had fallen vacant upon resignation of Vijay Kumar Sinha, against whom a no confidence motion was moved by the ‘Mahagathbandhan’, after it came to power in the state earlier this month.

Chaudhary was escorted to the Chair by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Sinha, a senior BJP leader, who has now become Leader of Opposition. The proceedings were, however, marked by BJP members creating a ruckus over “dropping” from list of businesses a report of Ethics Committee.

The report was on the conduct of several MLAs of RJD, which was then in opposition, in March last year when Sinha was held hostage inside Speaker’s chamber for several hours. The BJP members had

entered House carrying placards and raising slogans to press for demand for tabling of report, and entered well when Deputy Speaker Maheshwar Hazari took Chair. However, as Hazari ordered commencement of the Speaker’s election, the BJP members relented and took their seats.

The issue of the Ethics Committee report was raised by Sinha, in his congratulatory speech, while Speaker asked him to keep it focused on agenda of day. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav were among those who spoke on floor of House to congratulate Chaudhary, a several-term MLA from Siwan.

A special session of the House is underway in which the ‘Mahagathbandhan’ (Grand Alliance) had proven its majority on floor two days ago. The seven-party coalition assumed power after Kumar, with his JD(U), quit NDA over alleged attempts by BJP to “break” the regional party.

## Pizza boy shot at in spat over torn note in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A bizarre incident has come to light from Shahjahanpur district where a 21-year-old pizza delivery boy was allegedly shot at by two men for refusing to accept a torn ₹200 note on Wednesday.

The victim, Sachin Kashyap, was rushed to the district hospital from where he was taken to a specialised medical centre in Bareilly. His condition is said to be critical.

The accused, Nadeem Khan (27) and his brother Naeem (29), had ordered a pizza over phone when the outlet was about to close at 11 pm on Wednesday.

At around 11:30 pm, Sachin and his colleague, Ritik Kumar, delivered the food and left after taking payment. The colleagues then went to buy a soft drink with the Rs 200 note that they were paid with. However, the shopkeeper told them it was torn and refused to

accept it. The two immediately went back, knocked on Nadeem’s door, and requested him to replace the note.

However, Nadeem got angry and started abusing them. Soon, his brother came out and allegedly shot at Sachin with a country-made pistol. After hearing the gunshot, a neighbour informed the police.

Station House Officer of Sadar Bazaar, Amit Pandey, said an FIR was registered against the accused Nadeem Khan and his brother Naeem. The two were arrested and country-made pistols were recovered from their possession.

The SHO said, several teams had been deployed in the area to nab the accused brothers. Meanwhile, in an old enmity in Rae Bareli, two youths riding a motorcycle shot at another youth who was going to Rae Bareli from Barabanki to bring kanwar, near Chandapura turn on Thursday night.

# UP Govt drafting its maiden services export policy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government is drafting its maiden ‘services export’ policy to woo private investors and earn foreign exchange.

The proposed policy will accord priority to key services sectors of medical value travel, tourism, information technology/ information technology enabled services, logistics and education.

“Uttar Pradesh is among the top five merchandise exporting states in India. Now we are aiming to become a leading services exporter to

realise our grand vision of becoming a trillion dollar economy in the coming years,” UP Industrial Development and Export Promotion Minister Nand Gopal Gupta ‘Nandi’ said.

He noted that export was a vital component of a modern economy and the state’s progress in promoting exports had been phenomenal over the past five years.

He said the state was targeting to increase merchandise exports to almost ₹3 trillion in the next three years. “We have more than doubled our merchandise export from about

₹77,000 crore to ₹1.56 lakh crore in five years. Now, we are focusing big time on catalysing in the service sector exports by identifying 12 ‘champion sectors’ for targeted growth,” he said.

These 12 sectors comprise IT/ITeS, tourism and hospitality, medical value travel, transport and logistics, accounting and finance, audio visual, legal, communication, construction, engineering, environmental, financial and education.

While services exports contribute a significant share in India’s exports, the global market size of services sector

imports is estimated to be \$6 trillion. Currently, the Yogi Adityanath Government is in the process of holding parleys with stakeholders of respective sectors to take their feedback before hammering out a detailed state services export policy. The minister said UP was fast emerging as a preferred higher education hub for foreign students, especially from the neighbouring countries.

The state is also bullish on the tourism sector’s potential to attract private investment and create job opportunities for the youth, especially in the smaller towns. The govern-

ment will leverage the state’s rich cultural, religious and ecology paradigms across the state to attract domestic and foreign backpackers.

According to a government official, the state’s tourism and hospitality sector is rapidly recovering from the pandemic shocks, which is evident from robust upsurge in demand for hotel rooms and allied hospitality services.

In 2018, the Yogi Adityanath Government had promulgated its new tourism policy, which so far has fetched 1,084 tourism development projects worth ₹3,000 crore.

# CPM Govt humiliating, belittling me on each and every occasion: Kerala Gov

Will not sign legislations to be passed by Govt to curtail my powers to appoint V-Cs: Arif Mohammed

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI



The ties between Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and the CPI(M)-led Kerala Government has reached a point of no return as the former accusing the latter of insulting and humiliating him for the last two years.

“Since the day I took over as the Governor of the State, the Government has been humiliating and belittling me on each and every occasion. This is unbefitting of a State administration which I was trying to help,” the Governor told the vernacular language news channels in separate interviews on Friday.

While lambasting the CPI(M)-led Kerala Government for impropriety and favouritism in appointing faculty members and vice-chancellors of the State-owned Universities of which he was the Chancellor, the Governor said the appointment of the wife of a party leader as associate professor in Kannur University was the last straw. “She has no qualifications or experience as mandated by the University.

The appointment was against all norms prescribed by the University Grants Commission. She has no academic qualifications or teaching experience. A person who met all requirements was looked down by the vice-chancellor to appease his political masters.

This is not the first instance

# Anil Deshmukh faints in prison, taken to hospital

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh was taken to the State-run J J Hospital here after he fainted in the prison on Friday, an official said. Deshmukh, lodged in the Arthur Road prison here in an alleged corruption case, felt dizzy and fainted, a prison official said.

The Nationalist Congress Party leader also complained of chest pain. His blood pressure was found to have increased and ECG report was abnormal, the official said, adding that Deshmukh was undergoing treatment at the hospital now.



He was arrested first by the Enforcement Directorate in November 2021 and later by the Central Bureau of Investigation. Currently he is in judicial custody.

# Twitter brawl between SP, UP Excise MoS

Nitin Agarwal calls SP chief ‘Aurangzeb’, SP calls him ‘daaru mantri’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Akhilesh Yadav is ‘Aurangzeb’ and UP Minister of State for Excise Nitin Agarwal is ‘daaru mantri’ was the agenda of the Twitter brawl between the Samajwadi Party and the Minister, who was riding the ‘cycle’. The war of words on the micro-blogging site began with Nitin Agarwal calling SP a party of goons that gives patronage to criminals.

This resulted in a no-holds-barred battle on Thursday with daru, tharra, rum and whiskey lacing the verbal duel between the SP and Minister of State for Excise Nitin Agarwal. Both sides accused each other of patronising goons.

Nitin, a former SP leader, called Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav ‘Aurangzeb’ for having ‘humiliated’ his father Mulayam Singh Yadav in the past, while the SP hit back calling the Minister’s father, former SP leader Nareish Agarwal, “Tharra Naresh” and a “mausam vaigyanik” (a weather vane). “Daaru mein jise bhagwan dikhe, woh hai tharra Naresh. Daaru mantri hai jiska ladka, woh hai rum, whiskey, gin premi tharra

Naresh (the one who saw God in liquor, that is country-liquor loving Naresh. Whose son is the minister of alcohol that is rum, whiskey, gin loving Naresh),” the SP tweeted in an attack on Nareish Agarwal who had quit the party to join the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2018. The SP’s tweet was in response to Nitin attacking Akhilesh Yadav on Twitter: “Pitaji ko jisme beizzati kiya, chacha ko diya sandesh, samajwadi ke naam par, Aurangzeb hai Akhilesh.”

Nitin had rebelled against the SP in 2021 and formally joined the BJP in 2022 and has been elected as BJP MLA. The latest round of the verbal duel between the two sides began hours after the SP targeted Nitin for his comment that the SP has been giving “patronage to goons and mafias”.

Nitin earlier had backed Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati who, in a tweet, had said the SP is a party that gives patronage to criminal elements.

Targeting Nitin Agarwal for his comments on the SP, associating it with “goons”, the party’s official handle tweeted old news clipping of a statement made by Nitin on how he had once told the UP police to not enter homes where raw liquor is prepared, otherwise, he “will have to do something about it”.

“Listen, Nitin Agarwal, are you making statements under

influence of the same kacchi-pakki (raw-English alcohol) in accordance with the department you represent? Oh, son of Naresh, the mausam vaigyanik who stays under the influence all day, this is your statement. And going by this, you are the one who gives patronage to goons,” the SP tweeted.

In his response to the SP, Nitin labeled Akhilesh as “Aurangzeb.” The party (SP) chief is known as Aurangzeb, who has been disrespecting his honourable father often under the influence of some foreign intoxicant.

We can only expect such kind of language from him and his party. He could not be faithful to his father; how can he be expected to be faithful to the public?” Nitin hit back.

Doubling down on the Aurangzeb reference, he also wrote that Akhilesh—who has humiliated his father and “sent a message” to his estranged uncle and Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) chief Shivpal Singh Yadav—is an “Aurangzeb” pretending to be a socialist.

As the online war continued, the SP media cell also tweeted an old video of Nareish Agarwal in which he purportedly made controversial comments about Hindu Gods Vishnu, Rama, Sita and Hanuman in Rajya Sabha in 2017.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Modern-day Bourbons

Azad exit from Congress shows that Gandhis have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing

Senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad's exit from the Congress is not just a big blow to the grand old party but also an indication of a deeper malaise: the Gandhi family-dominated leadership is unable, unwilling, or both to chart out a revival plan. His lamentation in his five-page resignation letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi that the situation in the party has reached a point of "no return," should not be seen as the culmination of a frustrated leader but as a statement of fact. After all, his association with the GOP is about half-a-century old. And it has been a fruitful association from his perspective: he has been Union minister, Jammu & Kashmir chief minister, and leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha. For some time, he has been unhappy with the manner in which the party has been run; he has also been a member of the so-called G-23, senior Congress leaders who want reforms in the party leadership. The party 'high command' has been unable to address the issues raised by Azad and other G-23 luminaries. Hence his exit. But this is not unprecedented; a number of important Congress leaders have quit the party in recent years, around half a dozen just in 2022.

Kapil Sibal, also a former Union minister when the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance was in office, left the Congress in May this year. Former Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar not only quit the party but also joined its arch-rival the Bharatiya Janata Party. Former Union ministers Ashwani Kumar and RPN Singh also left the party, as did Hardik Patel, the Gujarat Congress working president. All of them left this year. Other senior Congress leaders who earlier quit the party include former Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh and former Union ministers Jitin Prasada and Jyotiraditya Scindia. And of course there is Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is now with the BJP. The thread running through the grievances of all these Congress leaders was their exasperation with the Gandhis. In fact, the Gandhis have started resembling the Bourbons of yore. It was said about the Bourbons, the ruling dynasty at the time of the French Revolution (1789), that they had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. For, after the fall of Napoleon and their restoration, they continued with their old ways, the ways that had led to the Revolution in the first place. Sonia Gandhi is ailing; Priyanka has proved to be a dud missile. As for Rahul Gandhi, other than providing catchy quotes to the media, he doesn't offer anything substantive for Congress revival in terms of the party's positioning, policy paradigm, workable programmes, and organisational rejig. Worse, he has surrounded himself with a deracinated coterie, many of them being Leftists trying to inject their own quixotic agenda in the GOP. It seems that the Gandhis are determined to make Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of Congress-mukt Bharat a reality.



A heavily damaged train after a Russian attack yesterday on Ukraine's Independence Day in Chaplyne, Ukraine

## AAP survives a massacre

AAP not only survived the BJP attack on its leaders but has successfully used it to its advantage

Aam Aadmi party has once again proved that it is not the one that can be cowed down easily. The BJP once again employed investigative agencies to tame its political rival. The CBI inquiry ordered by Delhi LG to probe alleged corruption in AAP's liquor policy was a smart move though, did not work. AAP has successfully projected itself as a victim of the Modi government. The CBI raided Manish Sisodia the number two man in the AAP dispensation to uncover alleged irregularities and corruption in Delhi's controversial excise policy. The campaign had begun with Satyendra Jain and next in line was Manish Sisodia who happens to be excise minister of Delhi. A spectacle was made out of it sending the message across that there was high level wheeling dealing in distributing liquor licenses and corruption that went to the top most level to the party. But what happened next was not what the BJP had planned. Not only did Kejriwal and his party survived but emerged stronger by playing victim card and deflecting the liquor issue successfully.

AAP must get the credit for dexterity it showed. It not only handled it well, not wilting but also using it to its advantage by playing the victim card, showcasing its achievements published in New York Times and creating the perception that the BJP was out to topple its government by buying its MLA. It turned out that the BJP was no match to AAP's counter attack. It had no clue and played into the hands of Kejriwal. They tried to discredit NYT report which fell flat, the raids have been by and large unsuccessful if they found anything it is at least not made public. Thereafter AAP

went for the final assault saying BJP was poaching its MLAs and made offer to at least 12 of them inclining Sisodia with Rs 20 crores. People lapped it too as the Maharashtra is still fresh in the memory and completely ignored the liquor issue. The BJP knows AAP can upset its apple cart in the apple state of Himachal Pradesh and PM's home state Gujarat where elections are due shortly so needs to be reined in. But for now in the round one Kejriwal wins hands down and the BJP is left licking its wounds. Definitely round two would begin soon. But for that the BJP would have to do a lot of homework. AAP has created a perception that the BJP has unleashed Operation Lotus in Delhi, and went on to Rajghat to pray to hammer its message. In politics messaging and the messenger matter most.

# Bid on Rushdie's life is disgraceful

There's a crying need for civil society members and writers in India, and everywhere else, to sharply condemn the forces of religious bigotry

The utterly condemnable attack on author Salman Rushdie on August 12, 2022, at Chautauqua, New York state, raises several issues. The first is the deafening public silence of most political personalities, civil society figures and writers in India. Do they not regard the attack, which was clearly aimed at killing Rushdie, as sufficiently horrific to deserve condemnation? Or is that the attack, which occurred in faraway United States, is only a blip in the periphery of their consciousness? Something they are aware of but which causes only a passing feeling of concern and not burning anger?

A debate over possible answers is likely to stretch over hours without leading anywhere. That notwithstanding, it needs to be stressed that their silence is conspicuous given the issues the attack raises. The basic one concerns freedom of speech and a writer's ability to speak what is on his/her mind. Rushdie's son, Zafar, wrote on Twitter on August 20, "Free speech is the whole thing, the whole ball game. Free speech is life itself." That it is, indeed, so becomes clear when the attack is viewed in the context of the storm Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, first published in September 1988, had unleashed, triggering public protests in many countries, including India, where most Muslims held that some of its contents insulted Prophet Mohammad and were blasphemous. It was banned in many countries, including India. On February 14, 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who had become Iran's supreme leader in 1979 following the defenestration of the regime of Shahanshah (King of Kings) Mohammad Reza Shah, issued a *fatwa* or a religious edict calling upon Muslims to kill Rushdie.

A religious organisation, 15 Khordad Foundation, which announced a bounty of \$2.7million on Rushdie's head following the *fatwa*, raised it to \$3.3million in 2012. On the 27th anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's edict in February 2016, 40 news outlets in Iran added another \$600,000 to the bounty, taking the total to



\$3.9million. The *fatwa* and the bounty stand though the former was declared inoperative by Iran's then President, Sayyid Mohammad Khatami, in 1998.

It is wrong to hurt people's religious sentiments, particularly in the form of blasphemy. It is equally wrong to shut out legitimate questioning by dubbing it blasphemous. Besides, who decides what is blasphemous? It should not be the cleric who has proclaimed something as blasphemous. Even if someone has said or done something that is blasphemous beyond doubt, the answer lies in condemning it and rebutting it by reason and information and not murdering the perpetrator. Murder in such cases is meant not merely to punish the perpetrator but spread terror so that no one else dares to do or say the same thing or something similar. Once murder is accepted as a permissible punishment for blasphemy, it can also be prescribed in cases — like allegations of corruption against the clergy — where blasphemy is alleged not on genuine grounds but to squelch legitimate criticism. Along with the doctrinal issues it raised, one of the main planks of the Reformation, which began in 16th century in Europe, was widespread corruption in the

DEBATES AND CRITICISM ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE CREATIVE EVOLUTION OF RELIGIONS, MAKING FOR THEIR CONTINUED RELEVANCE TO SOCIETY. CRITICISM IS ALMOST ALWAYS INITIALLY CONDEMNED AS HERESY BUT IS OFTEN SUBSEQUENTLY ACCEPTED

Roman Catholic Church reaching right to the top. The Reformation progressed through debates, which led to the emergence of Protestantism as a vibrant stream of Christianity.

Religions exist not in vacuums but in communities whose cultures have evolved through history following changes in social and economic relations and the spread of knowledge. Religions are not just doctrinal and metaphysical phenomena but sources of sets of spiritual and moral coordinates that enable people to cope with the many challenges and setbacks confronting them in their quotidian existence. To be able to play this role, they themselves must be open to change in response to new situations emerging over time.

An example from the history of Christianity will be instructive. RH Tawney writes in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926), which remains a classic despite the decades, "When the age of Reformation begins, economics is still a branch of ethics, and ethics of theology...the legitimacy of economic transactions is tried by reference, less to the movements of the market, than to moral standards derived from the traditional teachings of the Christian Church; the church

itself is a society wielding theoretical, and sometimes practical, authority in social affairs."

All this changed drastically by the middle of the 17th century. The conflict between the new social and economic forces clamouring for recognition of their legitimacy and the traditional doctrines of the church whose moral authority had been undermined by the Reformation, was suspended by a truce, under which politics, business and spiritual exercises, each assumed "a separate and independent vitality."

Debates and criticism are essential for the creative evolution of religions, making for their continued relevance to society. Criticism is almost always initially condemned as heresy but is often subsequently accepted, leading to changes in doctrine and praxis. Murder and its sanctioning have no place in the world's moral, spiritual and theological universe. The attempt on Rushdie's life has to be condemned unequivocally. Silence is not an option when religious bigotries of all variety — Muslim, Christian and Hindu, for example — are globally on the rise.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)

## SOUND BITE

It apparently seems that BJP leaders, including a BJP MP and his puppet journalists, have themselves drafted the ECI report.

Jharkhand CM — Hemant Soren

I am truly shocked by the strikes that yesterday killed and injured civilians close to the rail station in

Chaplyne, in central Ukraine. UN humanitarian coordinator — Denise Brown

I think their (South) cinema is relevant because they are not aping Hollywood. They are telling stories, over here we are selling stars. Actor — Anupam Kher

If there is a lot more corporate sponsorship at the grassroots levels, it would be more beneficial to promote sports in India. Athlete — Neeraj Chopra

The problem of Rahul Gandhi, his party and associates, is that they have so much animosity towards our PM that they resort to falsehood to expand their party. The moment the falsehood explodes, the party shrinks further. BJP leader — Ravi Shankar Prasad

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE MENACE OF POTHOLES

Sir — As a concerned citizen, I wish to draw the attention of the authorities concerned towards the increase in road accidents across Indian cities due to potholes. With each monsoon rain, more and more degradation in the surface and quality of road structure is observed. The roads these days have become a death trap due to these potholes, and no driver feels safe. Many human lives are lost, vehicles' shock absorbers and wheel rims get destroyed. As per a prominent newspaper report, accidents caused by potholes killed 5,626 people during 2018-19.

The foremost thing concerning potholes is that either roads are not designed accordingly to correct engineering design specification or, during construction, proper material is not used. Uninterested inspection practices and poor maintenance add to the trouble. The Government must formulate a multi-pronged strategy to address the issue of road safety, in particular to potholes. I urge Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari to take initiative and ask the State Governments to take swift action and fill up the potholes with quality materials. Also as the work of smart cities is going on, the Government must see to it that roads are developed to correct specifications.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

### AZAD: SAD OR FRUSTRATED?

Sir — The frustrated and depressed senior Congress leader and former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, quit all positions in the Congress party including the primary membership as he did not see any hope of survival in the party. Azad is the second member of the Congress' dissident G-23 group to leave the party after former Union Minister Kapil Sibal quit earlier this year. He blamed former Congress president Rahul Gandhi for destroying the Congress party, which shows his utter disloyalty towards the party which gave him everything.

Azad said that since the entry of

## Much ado about nothing



The findings of the report of the expert committee constituted by the Supreme Court in the so-called Pegasus espionage case underline that the attempt to launch a well-planned campaign against the Central Government in this case had no head or feet. The expert committee report not only debunks the allegations of espionage, but also indicates that the country's time was wasted along with putting the Government in the dock by resorting to propaganda without any solid

Rahul Gandhi into politics, and particularly after January 2013 when he was appointed as the Congress vice-president, the entire consultative mechanism which existed earlier was demolished by him. All senior and experienced leaders were sidelined and a new coterie of inexperienced leaders and sycophants started running the affairs of the party. Such statements coming from a senior leader, who had been associated with the Congress for nearly five decades, show the signs of frustration, depression and his anti-party attitude. It is not surprising that Azad may join the BJP in the coming days, which will fully expose his selfish political attitude.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### AN ECO-FRIENDLY GANESH CHATURTHI

Sir — Festivals in India are generally celebrated with all the frills, and the same is true for Ganesh Chaturthi. Right from handpicking flowers and decking up puja rooms and pandals, to making *modaks* filled with coconut and jaggery, people tend to immerse themselves in a host of

basis. It cannot be ignored how there was a ruckus not only on the streets, but also in Parliament with the allegation of espionage. During that time, little work was done in the monsoon session of Parliament.

According to the report, out of the 29 mobile phones that were handed over to it for investigation, only five were found to contain malware, ie technical virus, but it cannot be called the Pegasus software. As far as malware is concerned, it can get into any technical device that is equipped with the internet. Finding malware in a mobile phone does not mean that the phone holder is being spied on through it. It is common to find malware in computers, laptops and mobile phones. It can easily enter mobiles of not only any important person but also the common man. It does not mean that s/he is being spied upon.

Divyansha Sharma | Ujjain

activities. However, we often don't realise the extent of harm we might be causing to the environment. Many of the Ganesh idols sold in the market are made of plastic, thermocol, POP and other non-biodegradable materials, which have a detrimental effect on both the plant and animal life.

For decoration, use only fresh flowers, *diyas* and electric bulbs. Avoid shiny ribbons, thermocol, plastic beads, etc. Avoid purchasing betel nut, *haldi-kumkum* or other puja items in packets as they typically cannot be recycled. Instead, buy the whole betel nut or buy *haldi-kumkum* in a box. Also, do use a reusable bag when shopping. Immersion of Ganesh idols in lakes, tanks, rivers and other water bodies is not good for the environment or marine life. Many a time, the idol does not dissolve entirely and leaves several pollutants behind. Hence, symbolic immersion in the comfort of your home is a better option.

Jubel D'Cruz | Mumbai


Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

INADEQUATE FORENSIC LABS DELAY JUSTICE

Excessive cases are stuck at lower courts, delaying justice




PRIYANKA AGRAWAL

When it comes to forensics, popular imagination in India still harks back to the classic show, CID, where a certain Dr. Salunkhe helps accelerate the investigative team's probe with his laser-sharp forensic insights from the laboratory. However, for many justice seekers in India's mammoth criminal justice institutions, the reality is far from this. Often, years go by before forensic reports are processed and presented. As a result, justice remains a far cry for victims and families, while criminals may walk the streets.

The analyses and results of forensic laboratories at the state and Central levels are critical for the criminal justice system in any country. This ranges from crime scene reconstruction, photography, collection and packaging of evidence, digital and cyber forensics, examination of handwriting, signatures, photograph, fingerprints and currency, and chemical and biological forensics, among others.

The right to a bias-free and speedy investigation is the right of every citizen enshrined under Article 21 of Constitution of India. Given how quality and timely forensic analysis is the backbone of many cases, delay in obtaining forensic reports or mishandling of forensic evidence stands between a victim and the justice they deserve.

In a reply by the Directorate of Forensic Services to a recent Right to Information (RTI) query, it was revealed that more than 50 per cent of cases reported to the labs each year for forensic investigation remain pending and unresolved. This was true for the six Central Forensic Science Laboratories located at Chandigarh, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune, Guwahati and Bhopal that fall under the Directorate's jurisdiction.



However, this is the data for just six labs. Each state has its own forensic laboratories, serving different functions. But then consider the fact that there are 4.7 crore cases pending in India at different levels of the judiciary.

Out of these, four crore cases are pending at the district court level and many might be pending due to lack of forensic reports, which are integral support functions of investigations.

As per a newspaper report from August, around 20,000 forensic tests were pending at the Forensic Science Laboratory in Rohini as of June 2022. In many of the cases pending, the time factor is shocking, with pendency stretching to as many as three years for chemical and toxicology results. For evidence of biological or chemical nature, chances of contamination and scope of manipulation is directly proportional to the time taken to analyse them, thereby increasing the margin of error in a scientific procedure and therefore the final case itself.

Moreover, in India, there's a lack of preserving space for existing evidence, which ranges from DNA samples and fingerprints to devices like mobiles, laptops that might not switch on if a few years outdated that technology. Delaying testing limits the scope of testable evidence.

Moreover, there are very few laboratories in India that demonstrate quality in their analyses and report presentations. There is also a severe shortage of staff trained in forensic science across laboratories, further slowing down the in-lab investigation. This all contributes to lack of forensic evidence in India.

There has been discourse in civil society that calls for an increased judge-to-population ratio, as the judicial system in India is under tremendous pressure. In a scenario with a significant number of pending cases, one can imagine the volume of pendency caused by lack of forensic processing on time. It is safe to say that 35-40 per cent of all cases pending to be tried, simply due to the improper handling of forensic cases.

*(The author is Director, Connectel, whose forensic division is India's first & only private forensic science laboratory to get accredited by NABL.)*

# Policing New India needs service reforms

## A fresh look at police system is required; the top-down approach should go and cadre system be revisited



SUMEET BHASIN

The soul of policing in India still belongs to the British Raj. The police were the instruments of the British Raj to lord over the subjects. Seventy five years have gone by since Independence, yet policing remains jaded and rusted. The police forces are essentially taken as means of providing employment. The time has changed. The pattern of crime has changed. Society has changed. The means and modes of crimes have changed. Yet, the policing remains the same.

Policing gaps led to creation of several agencies, with specific mandates to address issues of inter-state crimes. The principal culprit of the rotten policing system is said to be political interference. In some states, political workers of ruling parties are more effective than the state police. The people in place of going to the police knock at the doors of such political workers.

Robin Hoods carved out their respective territories, and became the custodians of justice for the victims in the true spirit of the laws of the Jungle that the powerful lords over the weak subjects. One may single out Bihar for such Robin Hoods, but their breed holds grounds in several states, inspiring the Mumbai industry to make films after them.

Indeed, registering an FIR remains a herculean task, as the police remain firm to ask the complainants to write plain paper complaints and forget them. An FIR would call for filing a charge-sheet by conducting investigation, and there isn't time for the police to engage in meticulous tasks. The alibi is obvious that the police forces are overburdened. A major chink of them is deployed for the security of the VIPs. Such alibis existed two decades ago; they exist now, and they may still be offered another two decades later.

The time is running out and the police reform requires a fresh look, for the people aren't the same, who would helplessly lament their fate. The people seek accountability. Law and order has become the principal poll agenda in several states. Also, policing has to be modern, because the inter-state crimes now have transnational ramifications. There are too many dots in policing that cannot be left for the police personnel to brood over in the darkness.

Law and order is a state subject. This on the lines of agriculture remains the main stumbling block for any reform. The police reform has been attempted several times. Scores of committees were set up. They gave their reports. Heavy volumes of such reports afterwards gathered dusts. The Supreme Court too tried its hands to force reforms on the states.

The National Police Commission was set up in 1979. In 1996, two retired DGPs moved the Supreme Court for implementation of its reports. The apex court in 1998 set up the Ribeiro Committee and



THE NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION WAS SET UP IN 1979. IN 1996, TWO RETIRED DGPS MOVED THE SUPREME COURT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS REPORTS. THE APEX COURT IN 1998 SET UP RIBEIRO COMMITTEE AND IN 2000, PADMANABHAN COMMITTEE

*(The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre.)*



In 2000, the Padmanabhan committee. This paved the way for the Soli Sorabjee Committee to draft the new model police bill. In the Prakash Singh case, the Supreme Court in 2006 gave its order, binding the states and the union territories with seven directives. The apex court set up a two members committee to monitor implementation of the seven directives. The core mantra of the seven directives was to ensure that there is no political interference in the functioning of the police.

Over the years, it has been found that the non-compliance of the seven directives of the Supreme Court ranged from 57 to 80 per cent. The directives were procedural in nature such as fixed terms for the district police heads, transparent appointment of the director general of police, stability of tenure of the personnel, process-based transfer and posting, establishment of police complaint authority, separation of investigation and law and order functions.

Now that the aspirations of the people, which were reflected in the constitution of the first commission in 1979, remain unfulfilled even while India celebrated the 75th anniversary of Independence, the occasion calls for drastic measures.

To begin with, policing must be process-based, and the training and the career progress of the personnel from bottom to top of the hierarchy be linked to the tangible performance on duty. It has to be admitted that the British Raj polic-

ing was top to bottom approach, which has survived seven and a half decades in the country. The time has come to just reverse it, and make it bottom to top.

This can be done if 'Kaptan-based' policing is given a fresh look. Someone who has been very studious, who cracks one examination in a course of two to three years, becomes the head of the district police set up is erroneous. Let us open the channel that someone who dares to take bullets on his chest, and relentlessly skills on the job with training be shown the path to climb the hierarchy ladder fast.

The police academy at the Central level and their branches in each state should be entrusted with the task of rapid training and skill with modern policing, while arming them with the latest gadgets so that one police person can function as a mobile police station. The task of the academy should be to train the manpower in policing in such a manner that they discharge their duties on the basis of a laid down process, which is well-publicised and visible that minimizes the interference of anyone, including the political dispensations.

The career graph of the police personnel be compulsorily linked to the conviction rates in cases dealt by them, and also the verifiable crime statistics in their jurisdictions — beats, blocks, tehsil, mofussil, district, and state. The National Crime Research Bureau states that the conviction rates of all the law enforcement agencies

put together come to about 70 per cent. This is despite the fact that not all complaints are converted into FIRs.

Thus, it will be worthwhile to see if a police person who has a record of 80 per cent or less under his or her jurisdiction be compulsorily retired after 10 years of service. This can act as a force multiplier along with the norm that each complaint be automatically converted into an FIR, and all the relevant statistics be displayed prominently at the police stations, roundabouts and railway stations.

It will be equally important to ensure that the service rule reforms for the Indian Police Service (IPS) be attempted, with clear aims to check the political abuse of the police forces. This can be done by ensuring that no IPS officer works in a state for more than seven years, and the Centre should dissolve the permanency of the cadre system.

With this, when an IPS officer comes to the Centre for deputation in another state, his service records should be the basis for his or her retention in the services, and if they are not up to the mark they should be compulsorily retired. Thus, a cadre should be of just seven years, and it should become dynamic with rotation of the officials.

Indeed, there will be a need for an authority at the Centre to oversee such functions of policing, which should be done with a mandate from Parliament.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

AAP IS EARNING MONEY BY PERPETRATING A SCAM IN SELLING LIQUOR AND TRYING TO SAVE THEMSELVES BY USING BAPU'S NAME.  
—THE BJP YOUTH WING LEADER ABHIMANYU TYAGI



I'VE GOT SOMEONE LIKE MANISH SISODIA WITH ME. HE REJECTED THEIR OFFER. NOW THEY (BJP) ARE AFTER OUR MLAS OFFERING MONEY TO JOIN BJP.  
—DELHI CM ARVIND KEJRIWAL

# Russia may exit WTO amid Western sanctions

## Russia is bracing to hit back at the European Union, the US by leaving WTO, WHO as individual countries slap sanctions

In view of the economic sanctions imposed by NATO members and other European Union countries on Russia for invading Ukraine, Moscow plans to quit the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This is being mulled in response to the decision to remove its "most favoured nation (MFN)" status for invading Ukraine. Several countries have suspended Moscow's trade preferences and imposed tariffs in excess of what WTO rules typically allow.

Russia may, therefore, sever ties with prominent international bodies, including the WTO and the World Health Organisation (WHO), saying they have "neglected all obligations toward our country".

Pyotr Tolstoy, deputy speaker of



Russia's Assembly, or Duma, said membership of these bodies brings no benefit "but instead directly harms our country." He said Moscow's Foreign Ministry had sent a list of international organizations to Parliament (Federal Assembly) with orders to review and break obligations or treaties that damage Russia.

The announcement comes two months after a pro-Kremlin minority party in the Duma drew up a bill calling for Russia to quit the WTO following a decision by a group of countries, including most European nations such as Canada, Japan, and the United States to suspend Moscow's trade preferences.

Hundreds of western businesses, from Adidas, McDonald's, and Pepsi to BP,

Renault, British American Tobacco, and Starbucks, have pulled out of Russia to protest the war. Removal of Russia's "most favoured nation" status means those countries can impose tariffs on Russia in excess of what WTO rules typically allow, in addition to allowing them to sanction Russian companies.

The MFN status is an economic position in which a country enjoys the best trade terms given by its trading partner(s). It is mandatory for all the member countries of the WTO to grant MFN status to each member country. As per MFN, the countries cannot normally discriminate between their trading partners. Grant someone a special favour (such as a lower customs duty rate for one of their products) and you

have to do the same for all other WTO members.

India had given the MFN status to Pakistan in 1996 after the establishment of WTO in 1995. But Pakistan has not given MFN status to India till date, violating the WTO rules. Therefore, the trade between India and Pakistan has been curtailed, resulting in extreme poverty in Pakistan.

However, some exceptions are allowed. For example, countries can set up a free trade agreement that applies only to goods traded within the group — discriminating against goods from outside. Or they can give developing countries special access to their markets. Or, a country can raise barriers against products that are considered to be traded unfairly from specific countries. And in

services, countries are allowed, in limited circumstances, to discriminate.

In general, MFN means that every time a country lowers a trade barrier or opens up its market, it has to do so for the same goods or services from all its trading partners—whether rich or poor, weak or strong. Politico reported that the idea of withdrawing "appears to be a U-turn from the government's side," noting that Russia's WTO mission had written to the news organization in April "the government provides counter-arguments in support of our membership."

But Russian President Vladimir Putin said in April that "illegal" sanctions on Russian companies by Western trading partners had violated WTO rules and told his gov-

ernment to "prepare an updated strategy for our actions in the World Trade Organization" by June 1. It's not the first time Russia has discussed leaving the WTO, which it joined in 2012 after 19 years of negotiations.

James Bacchus, a professor of global affairs at the University of Central Florida and a former member of the WTO's Appellate Body, wrote in March that Russia should be expelled from the WTO. Although there is no specific provision in the Marrakesh Agreement that established the WTO, "it is possible for two-thirds of the WTO's 164 members to alter the rights and obligations of members and—if a member refuses to agree—for three fourths of the members to expel that member from the organization," he

wrote, adding that this option is set out in Article X of the agreement.

It merely means that it is very difficult for the WTO to get a two third/three fourth majority for expelling a country and there are no veto powers as such. The WHO members have also pressed the Geneva-based health body, which usually avoids taking a stance on politics, to take action against Russia. On May 10, the WHO's European Committee adopted a non-binding resolution, condemning Russian attacks on Ukrainian health care facilities and the war's impact on public health. The same resolution urged WHO chiefs to close their Moscow office for non-infectious diseases and relocate it to another country.



# Vatican’s Russia-Ukraine diplomacy sees setbacks

AP ■ ROME

The Vatican’s Russia-Ukraine diplomacy suffered two setbacks Thursday when the head of the Russian Orthodox Church cancelled a planned meeting with Pope Francis and Ukraine summoned the papal ambassador to complain about Francis’ latest comments about the war.

“The Ukrainian heart is torn apart by the pope’s words,” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told reporters in Kyiv after the Vatican nuncio was summoned. “It was unfair.” He was responding to Francis’ comments about the weekend car bomb slaying in Moscow of Darya Dugina, a nationalist Russian TV commentator and daughter of the right-wing Russian political theorist, Alexander Dugin, who ardently supports the war.

Francis listed the “poor girl” killed by a car bomb in Moscow, as well as orphans in Ukraine and Russia, among the “innocents” who have been victimized by the “insanity of war.”

Russia has accused



Ukrainian intelligence in the bombing, which Ukraine denies.

Francis has denounced the war in Ukraine but has tried to keep a door open to dialogue with Moscow, refraining from condemning Russia, President Vladimir Putin or the head of the Russian Orthodox Church by name. His balanced

approach has angered Kyiv, but it follows the Vatican’s tradition of quiet diplomacy and refusal to take sides in a conflict.

That said, Patriarch Kirill cancelled his planned attendance at an interfaith meeting in Kazakhstan next month where he had been expected to meet with Francis, according to

his foreign envoy, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk.

Kirill has justified Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on spiritual and ideological grounds, calling it a “metaphysical” battle with the West. He has blessed Russian soldiers going into battle and invoked the idea that Russians and Ukrainians are one people.

# IAEA mission seeks to visit Zaporizhzhia plant amid concerns

AP ■ KYIV

A mission from the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency is expected to visit the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant next week after it was temporarily knocked offline and more shelling was reported in the area overnight, Ukrainian officials said on Friday.

Fire damage to a transmission line at Europe’s largest nuclear plant caused a blackout across the region on Thursday and heightened fears of a catastrophe in a country still haunted by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

Lana Zerkal, an adviser to Ukraine’s energy minister, told Ukrainian media on Thursday evening that logistical issues are being worked out for the IAEA team to come to the Zaporizhzhia plant, which has been occupied by Russian forces and run by Ukrainian workers since the early days of the six-month-old war.

Zerkal accused Russia of trying to sabotage the visit. Ukraine has alleged that Russia is essentially holding the plant hostage, storing weapons there and launching attacks from around it, while Moscow accuses Ukraine of recklessly firing on the facility.

“Despite the fact that the Russians agreed for the mission to travel through the territory of Ukraine, they are now artificially creating all the conditions for the mission not to reach the facility, given the situation around it,” she said, offering no details.

There was no immediate comment



from Moscow to the claims. The atomic agency’s head, Rafael Mariano Grossi, also said Thursday he hopes to send a team to the plant within days. Negotiations over how the team would access the plant are complicated but advancing, he said on France-24 television.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials said an area close to the plant came under a barrage of shelling overnight, amid mounting concerns that an armed conflict near a working atomic plant could cause more serious damage, even as Zaporizhzhia’s reactors are protected by reinforced concrete containment domes.

Dnipropetrovsk governor Valentyn Reznichenko said shelling in the city of Nikopol, which is across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia plant, damaged 10 houses, a school and a sanatorium, causing no casualties.

A power line also has been cut, leav-

ing up to 1,000 local residents without electricity, he added.

Nikopol has been under nearly constant Russian shelling since July 12, with eight people killed, 850 buildings damaged and over half the population of 100,000 fleeing the city.

On Thursday, the Zaporizhzhia plant was cut off from the electrical grid after fires damaged the last operating regular transmission line, according to Ukraine’s nuclear power agency, Energoatom.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy blamed Russian shelling and said the plant’s emergency backup diesel generators had to be activated to supply power needed to run the plant.

Zaporizhzhia’s Russian-installed regional governor, Yevgeny Balitsky, blamed the transmission-line damage on a Ukrainian attack. It was not immediately clear whether the damaged line carried outgoing electricity or incoming power, needed for the reactors’ vital cooling systems. A loss of cooling could cause a nuclear meltdown. As a result of the transmission-line damage, the two reactors still in use out of the plant’s six went offline, Balitsky said, but one was quickly restored, as was electricity to the region.

Many nuclear plants are designed to automatically shut down or at least reduce reactor output in the event of a loss of outgoing transmission lines.

The IAEA said Ukraine informed it that the reactors’ emergency protection systems were triggered, and all safety systems remained operational.

# Nuclear treaty conference near end with Ukraine in spotlight

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

As 191 countries approach Friday’s end to a four-week conference to review the landmark U.N. Treaty aimed at curbing the spread of nuclear weapons, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and takeover of Europe’s largest nuclear power plant and rivalries between the West and China were posing key obstacles to agreement on a final document.

Argentine Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen, president of the conference reviewing the 50-year-old Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which is considered the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament, circulated a 35-page draft final document on Thursday. After listening to objections from countries at a closed-door session, diplomats said he was planning to revise the document for a final closed-door discussion Friday morning, ahead of an open meeting in the afternoon to end the conference.

Any document must be approved by all parties to the

treaty and it’s uncertain whether an agreement will be reached before the conference ends. There is a possibility that only a brief statement reaffirming support for the NPT might get unanimous support.

The NPT review conference is supposed to be held every five years but was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The last one in 2015 ended without an agreement because of serious differences over establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Those differences haven’t gone away but are being discussed, and the draft final document obtained by The Associated Press would reaffirm the importance of establishing a nuclear-free Mideast zone. So this is not viewed as a major stumbling block this year.

The issue that has changed the dynamics of the conference is Russia’s Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine and Russian President Vladimir Putin’s warning that

Russia is a “potent” nuclear power and any attempt to interfere would lead to “consequences you have never seen,” and his decision soon after to put Russia’s nuclear forces on high alert.

Putin has since rolled back, saying that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought,” a message reiterated by a senior Russian official on the opening day of the NPT conference on Aug. 2. In addition, Russia’s occupation of Europe’s biggest nuclear plant at Zaporizhzhia in southeastern Ukraine, where Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of shelling, has raised fears of a nuclear disaster.

Earlier this week, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the Security Council that the Biden administration is seeking a consensus final document that strengthens the treaty and acknowledges “the manner in which Russia’s war and irresponsible actions in Ukraine seriously undermine the NPT’s main purpose.”



Russia’s U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the United States and its allies at that council meeting of “politicizing the work on the final document, putting their geopolitical interests in punishing Russia above their collective needs in strengthening global

security.”

“Against the backdrop of the actual sabotage by the collective West of the global security architecture, Russia continues to do everything possible to keep at least its key, vital elements afloat,” Nebenzia said.

The 35-page draft docu-

ment has at least three specific references to the Zaporizhzhia plant, including expressing “grave concern” over its security, the military activities conducted at or near it, and the loss of control over the facility by Ukrainian authorities. The draft expresses sup-

port for efforts by the U.N. Nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, to visit the plant and ensure the non-diversion of nuclear material.

Under the NPT’s provisions, the five original nuclear powers — the United States, China, Russia (then the Soviet Union), Britain and France — agreed to negotiate toward eliminating their arsenals someday and nations without nuclear weapons promised not to acquire nuclear weapons in exchange for a guarantee to be able to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

India and Pakistan, which didn’t join the NPT, went on to get the bomb. So did North Korea, which ratified the pact but later announced it was withdrawing. Non-signatory Israel, which is believed to have a nuclear arsenal but neither confirms nor denies it, has been an obstacle in discussions of a Mideast zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Nonetheless, the treaty has been credited with limiting the

# Latvia brings down Soviet-era monument’s obelisk in capital

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

A concrete obelisk topped by Soviet stars that was the centerpiece of a monument commemorating the Red Army’s victory over Nazi Germany was taken down Thursday in Latvia’s capital — the latest in a series of Soviet monuments brought down after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Heavy machinery was spotted behind a green privacy fence at the foot of the nearly 80-metre obelisk shortly before it was felled. The column, which had stood like a high-rise in downtown Riga, crashed into a nearby pond, causing a huge splash at Victory Park.

A Latvian media outlet broadcast the event live as onlookers, some with Latvian flags wrapped around their shoulders, cheered and applauded.

The obelisk, made up of five spires with three Soviet stars at the top, stood between two groups of statues — a band of three Red Army soldiers and on the other side a woman representing the “Motherland” with her arms held high.

The monument was built in 1985 while Latvia was still part of the Soviet Union. It has stirred controversy since Latvia regained independence in 1991 and eventually became a NATO and European Union member.

On Twitter, Latvia’s foreign minister said by taking down the monument, Latvia was “closing another painful page of the history and looking for better future.”

The country shares a 214-kilometer border with Russia and has a large ethnic Russian population. On Russia’s annual Victory Day, which commemorates the Soviet victory over Germany in World War II, people gathered in front of the Riga monument to lay flowers.

Latvia’s parliament voted to approve the demolition of the Victory Park monument in May, and the Riga City Council followed suit. Work to clear away the monument started three

days ago with the removal of statues. The area was then cordoned off and authorities issued a flight ban for drones. Police temporarily closed traffic near the park on Thursday, citing security reasons.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in late February has prompted authorities in several eastern European countries to remove symbols from their communist eras. The government in Poland — another country once was part of the Soviet sphere — said Thursday that a memorial site in neighbouring Belarus containing the graves of Polish soldiers who died during World War II is being levelled to the ground by the Belarusian authorities.

# Poland, S Korea to seal USD 5.8 bn military deal



AP ■ MORAG

Poland is scheduled to seal a deal with South Korea on Friday for the purchase of some USD 5.8 billion worth of tanks, howitzers and ammunition as the European country steps up its defense and deterrence capabilities in the face of Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Polish Deputy Prime Minister Mariusz Blaszczak, who is also his country’s defense minister, and the head of South Korea’s Defense Acquisition Program Administration, Eom Dong-hwan, are expected to sign the contracts at a military base in the northern Poland town of Morag.

Poland’s conservative government, in power since 2015, has worked to strengthen the country’s armed forces in response to neighboring Russia’s policies and actions.

Poland, like other European nations and the United States, has sent military equipment to Ukraine during the 6-month war. The Polish government is seeking to replace some of the equipment it shared with new acquisitions, including US-made Abrams tanks.

Under the deal with South Korea, Poland is purchasing 180 K2 Black Panther tanks, made by Hyundai Rotem and worth some USD 3.4 billion, along with 212 K9 Thunder howitzers made by Hanhwa Defense, worth some USD 2.4 billion. The deal includes training, logistics and ammunition.

“The ordered equipment constitutes a real strengthening of Poland’s deterrence and defense potential,” Poland’s Defense Ministry said.

Some of the items are expected to arrive this, and all by the end of 2025.

Poland and South Korea also plan to sign an agreement this year for the purchase of 12 FA-50 planes, a light training and combat aircraft made by Korea Aerospace jointly with Lockheed Martin, according to Blaszczak. Poland is seeking a technology transfer so it can launch production domestically.

# Germany promotes Baltic Sea’s ‘enormous’ energy potential



AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Germany’s foreign minister said on Friday that estimates show the Baltic Sea can produce “more than twice the installed capacity of all German coal-fired power stations” as the country works to meet climate change targets and to wean itself off of Russia-supplied energy.

In a video message ahead of a meeting in Denmark’s capital, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Germany wants to hasten the expansion of wind power produced in the Baltic Sea.

The countries around the Baltic Sea “need to set the sails, work together and set course towards making our region more sustainable, more resilient and more secure,” Baerbock said.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz has said Germany remains committed to ending its greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, the earliest of any major industrialized nation. To meet the goal, his government has said it would close coal-fired power plants that were reactivated during the war in Ukraine, end imports of Russian oil and coal this year and aim to

stop using Russian gas within the next two years.

The potential for the Baltic Sea “is enormous,” Baerbock said.

“The European Commission estimates that the Baltic Sea could potentially produce more than 90 gigawatts in wind energy. That is more than twice the installed capacity of all German coal-fired power stations.”

“Wind energy from the Baltic Sea will help us fight the climate crisis. And it is an investment in our security: it will help make us less dependent on gas from Russia,” Baerbock said.

On July 1, Germany assumed took over the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States for one year. The intergovernmental forum for regional cooperation consists of the European Union and 10 member nations: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden.

Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the council suspended Russia from its activities. Moscow later said it had decided to withdraw from the council, saying the organization was turning into “an anti-Russian tool.”

**Office of the Superintending Engineer**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh**  
E-Mail : [sepwdpth@rediffmail.com](mailto:sepwdpth@rediffmail.com)

**Letter No. : 5580/ 984 C-03/2022**

**E-Tender Notice**

**Dated : 25/08/2022**

The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (**Two Bid System**) in anticipation of Sanction on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from date 30-08-2022 at 5.00 Pm onward on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lac)	Cost of Tender (in Rs.)	Validity of Tender (day)	Period of Completion (months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	Improvement & P.C. work of village Sakun Main Road to Garhmaheshwar temple & 3 years maintenance under State Plan. (Length - 1.700 km.) Block Munakote District Pithoragarh.	3.42	5000.00 + 18% GST	120	15	Category 'B' and Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India / Govt. Undertaking.
2	Improvement & Painting (with premix carpet) work of Lelu Khel Maidan to Gaoun tak Sampark marg & 3 years maintenance in Pithoragarh under State Plan. (Length - 1.825 km.)	3.06	5000.00 + 18% GST	120	15	Category 'B' and Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India / Govt. Undertaking.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General Public is hereby informed that the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Haryana, Bays No. – 55-58, Paryatan Bhawan, Sector – 2, Panchkula vide their letter no. – SEIAA/HR/2022/165 dated 16.08.2022 has accorded the “Environmental Clearance” with Gold Rating to M/s Vipul Limited for Group Housing Scheme (Modification & Expansion) Under Mixed Land use (19.244 acres) at Sector-53, District Gurugram, Haryana in accordance with the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. General Public is further informed that copy of said Environmental Clearance letter is available with SEIAA, Haryana on the website <http://environmentclearance.nic.in> This public notice is issued in compliance to the Condition No. (1) of X (Miscellaneous) of the Environmental Clearance Letter.

Authorized Signatory  
For Vipul Limited

Place: Gurugram  
Date: 27.08.2022



# Taiwan: China, Russia disrupting, threatening world order

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan's leader on Friday said China and Russia are "disrupting and threatening the world order" through Beijing's recent large-scale military exercises near the island and Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

President Tsai Ing-wen was speaking during a meeting in Taipei with US Sen. Marsha Blackburn, who is on the second visit by members of Congress since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip earlier this month. That visit prompted China to launch the exercises that saw it fire numerous missiles and send dozens of warplanes and ships to virtually surround the island, including across the centre line in the Taiwan Strait that has long been a buffer between the sides.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary. Beijing has also boosted relations with Russia

and is seen as tacitly supporting its attack on Ukraine. "These developments demonstrate how authoritarian countries are disrupting and threatening the world order," Tsai said.

Blackburn, a Republican from Tennessee, reaffirmed shared values between the two governments and said she "looked forward to continuing to support Taiwan as they push forward as an independent nation."

China sees high-level foreign visits to the island as interference in its affairs and de facto recognition of Taiwanese sovereignty. China's recent military drills were seen by some as a rehearsal of future military action against the island, which US military leaders say could come within the next few years.

Along with staging the exercises, China cut off contacts with the United States on vital issues — including military matters and crucial climate cooperation — raising concerns over a lasting, more

aggressive approach by Beijing. It also called in U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns to formally complain. He later said China was overreacting in order to manufacture a crisis.

Due to the separation of powers in the U.S. Government, the executive branch has no authority to prevent legislators from making such foreign visits and Taiwan benefits from strong bipartisan support in Washington. China, whose ruling Communist Party wields total control over the country's politics, refuses to acknowledge that fundamental principle.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said members of Congress and elected officials "have gone to Taiwan for decades and will continue to do so," saying it was in line with U.S. Policy to only maintain formal diplomatic ties with Beijing.

"We're going to continue to take calm and resolute steps to uphold peace and stability in



the region and to support Taiwan in line with our long-standing policy," Patel said at a briefing Thursday.

Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu told reporters Friday that "China's motivation is to destroy the

Taiwan Straits' status quo, and after this they want to cut down on Taiwan's defensive space."

Taiwan is seeking stepped-up defense cooperation and additional weaponry from the U.S., along with closer economic ties.

In their meeting, Tsai and Blackburn underscored the importance of economic links, especially in the semiconductor sector, where Taiwan is a world leader and the U.S. is seeking greater investment at home.

Blackburn arrived in Taipei late Thursday after visiting Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea as part of a U.S. Push to "expand our diplomatic footprint in the area," her office said in a statement.

"The Indo-Pacific region is the next frontier for the new axis of evil," Blackburn, a supporter of former President Donald Trump, was quoted as saying. "We must stand against the Chinese Communist Party."

China has been making inroads in the western Pacific, signing a broad security agreement with the Solomon Islands. And allies such as

Australia see as an attempt to overthrow the traditional security order in the region.

Pelosi was the highest-level member of the U.S. Government to visit Taiwan in 25 years. China's response was to announce six zones surrounding the island for military exercises that included firing missiles over the island, some of which landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Following Pelosi's trip, a delegation of House and Senate members visited. This week, Indiana's governor made a visit focused on business and academic cooperation. U.S. politicians have called their visits a show of support for the island.

"I just landed in Taiwan to send a message to Beijing — we will not be bullied," said Blackburn in a tweet early morning Friday. "The United States remains steadfast in preserving freedom around the globe, and will not tolerate efforts to undermine our nation and our allies."

## US senator meets Taiwan Prez amid tensions with China

AP ■ TAIPEI

US Sen. Marsha Blackburn met with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen on Friday, in the second visit by members of Congress since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip earlier this month sharply raised tensions with China.

In her remarks, Tsai pointed to the large-scale military exercises that China launched in response to Pelosi's visit, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as posing challenges to democratic governments such as the U.S. and Taiwan.

"These developments demonstrate how authoritarian countries are disrupting and threatening the world order," she said.

Blackburn, a Republican from Tennessee, reaffirmed shared values between the two governments and said she "looked forward to continuing to support Taiwan as they push forward as an independent nation."

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory, to be taken by force if necessary, and sees high-level foreign visits to the island as interference in its affairs and de facto recognition of Taiwanese sovereignty. China's recent military drills were seen by some as a rehearsal of future military action against the island, which U.S. Military leaders say could come



within the next few years.

In their meeting, Tsai and Blackburn also underscored the importance of economic links, especially in the semiconductor sector, where Taiwan is a world leader and the U.S. is seeking greater investment at home.

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"The Indo-Pacific region is the next frontier for the new axis of evil," Blackburn, a staunch supporter of former President Donald Trump, was quoted as saying. "We must stand against the Chinese Communist Party."

## Explosive detonates in Baghdad, targets Australian diplomats

AP ■ BAGHDAD

A small homemade explosive detonated on Friday near Baghdad's Green Zone as an Australian diplomatic convoy made its way into the area, two security officials told The Associated Press.

No injuries were reported. The blast happened amid Australia's diplomatic mission's efforts to mediate between influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and an Iran-backed faction of rival Shiite parties, according to the secu-

rity officials, to end one of Iraq's worst political crises in recent years. Caretaker Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi has been unsuccessful in trying to bring the quarreling groups to a settlement. Al-Sadr's party declined to attend a meeting Al-Kadhimi held last week.

Despite the explosion, the Australian convoy was able to enter the Green Zone.

The followers al-Sadr and his political rivals, a coalition of Iran-backed Shiite groups called the Coordination Framework, have been at odds

since after last year's parliamentary elections.

Al-Sadr won the largest share of seats in the October vote but failed to form a majority government, leading to what has become one of the worst political crises in Iraq in recent years. His supporters in late July stormed the parliament and have held frequent protests there.

The firebrand clerics supporters have regularly protested, demanding the dissolution of parliament and early elections.

## Work permits lifeline for Gaza and lever for Israel

AP ■ KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP)

Ibrahim Slaieh can point to three great moments of joy in his life in the Gaza Strip: his graduation from university, his wedding, and the day last year when he got a six-month permit to work inside Israel.

The permit — a little piece of paper, wrapped in protective plastic — allows the 44-year-old to work at a grocery store in southern Israel, making 10 times what he could in Gaza. It means a better education for his six children, bigger family meals and treats like pastries, fruit yogurt and chocolate milk.

Without it, he would have to seek meager wages inside the narrow coastal strip, which has been under a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade since the Islamic militant group Hamas



seized power 15 years ago. With unemployment hovering around 50%, that might mean salvaging rubble from years of conflict or trapping birds to sell to pet shops. "It's incomparable," Slaieh says. "One month of work there equals three years of work here." Israel acknowledges the permits are also a powerful tool to help preserve calm or — in the eyes of its critics — control.

Israel has issued up to 15,500 work permits since last

year, allowing Palestinians like Slaieh to cross into the country from the Gaza Strip and work mostly menial jobs that pay far higher wages than those available inside Gaza.

They are among the first Gazan labourers to work officially inside Israel since the Hamas takeover of the territory in 2007. More than 100,000 Palestinians from the occupied West Bank have similar permits that allow them to enter Israel for work.

The permits give Israel a form of leverage over the Palestinians who rely on them — and over Hamas. Gaza's militant rulers risk being blamed if the border is closed and the workers are forced to stay home — as they were earlier this month during the latest flare-up in violence.

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Justice Department is set to release Friday a heavily blacked out document explaining the justification for an FBI search of former President Donald Trump's Florida estate earlier this month, when agents removed top secret government records and other classified documents.

The document, expected by noon, is likely to offer at least some new details about an ongoing criminal investigation that has brought fresh legal peril for Trump just as he lays the groundwork for another presidential run. Though Justice Department officials are expected to have removed sensitive details about witnesses, and the scope and direction of the probe, the affidavit may offer the fullest explanation yet about the events leading up to the Aug. 8 search of Mar-a-Lago.

The document being released is the redacted form of an affidavit, or sworn statement, that the FBI submitted to a judge so it could obtain a warrant to search Trump's property. Affidavits typically contain vital information about an investigation, with agents spelling out to a judge the justification for why they want to search a particular property and why they believe they're likely to find evidence of a potential crime there. But affidavits routinely remain sealed during pending investigations, making the judge's decision to reveal portions of it all the more striking.

In an acknowledgment of the extraordinary public interest in the investigation, U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart on Thursday ordered the department by Friday to make public a redacted version of the affidavit. The directive came hours after federal law enforcement offi-



cials submitted under seal the portions of the affidavit that they want to keep secret as their investigation moves forward.

The redactions proposed by the Justice Department are likely to be extensive given the sensitivity of the investigation, lessening the likelihood that the document will offer a comprehensive look at the basis for the unprecedented

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
My Client Bal Kishan Sharma S/o Sh. Mool Chand Sharma & Bimla Devi W/o Sh. Bal Kishan Sharma Both R/o House No. D-199, Radha Krishan Mandir Road, Swaroop Nagar, Delhi-110042 have sever all their relations and debar their son Vinod Sharma @ Kuku R/o House No. D-199, 1st Floor, Radha Krishan Mandir Road, Swaroop Nagar, Delhi-110042 from all their movable-immovable properties due to his misconduct and misbehavior, if anybody dealing with him, he/she/they will do so at his/her/their own risk and consequences, my client will not be responsible for his any acts and deeds in future.  
**L.D. Mual Gola (Advocate)**  
Ch. No.4, Rohini Courts, New Delhi.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
My Client Abdul Ghaffar S/o Bundoo Khan R/o House No. D-278, Okhla Village, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025 have severed his relations and debar his son Abdul Wahid Khan from all his movable-immovable properties due to his misconduct and misbehavior, if anybody dealing with him, he/she/they will do so at his/her/their own risk and consequences, my client will not be responsible for his any acts and deeds in future.  
**L.D. Mual Gola (Advocate)**  
Ch. No.4, Rohini Courts, New Delhi.

**UJVN LIMITED**  
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephone: 0135-2763808 Fax: 0135-2763508  
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

**e-TENDER NOTICE**  
Dated: 25.08.2022  
The office of Executive Engineer (Generation), Maneri Bhai Stage-II, Chinyalsaur (Uttarkashi) invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:  
Tender No: NIT-11/EE (GEN)/MB-II/2022-23  
Name of work / Supply/Services: Supply & Fabrication of Different Types Dowel Pin & Other Items for Generator Maintenance at MB-II, Dharasu Power House.  
Estimated cost: Rs 679850/- only + GST extra respectively  
Date of availability of bid document on website: - 28.08.2022 from 16:00 Hrs.  
Last date for submission of bids on website: - 19.09.2022 up to 16:00 Hrs.  
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal http://uktenders.gov.in  
**Executive Engineer (Generation)**  
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**RIDGECRAFT HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED**  
Registered Address: 3rd Floor, Next Door, U-Block, BPTP Parklands, Sector-76, Faridabad 121001 • Website: www.ridgecraft.in

This Public notice is being issued in compliance of Memo No. LC-3845/AD(NK)/2022/25552 dated 25.08.2022 issued by The Director, Town & Country Planning, Haryana Chandigarh ("DTCPP").  
Whereas Ridgecraft Homes Private Limited is in the process of undertaking the development of an Affordable Residential Plotted Colony under DDJAY, 2016 in Sector 85, Faridabad over an area measuring 5.575 Acres in accordance with the provision of License No. 80 of 2019 dated 30.07.2019 granted by DTCPP.  
And whereas, the earlier approved Layout plan bearing drawing no. DTCPP-7245 dated 20.11.2019 for the said Colony is now proposed to be revised.  
And whereas, the office of Director, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh vide Memo no. LC-3845/AD (NK)/2022/25552 dated 25.08.2022 has in principle approved the layout plan for seeking of objection/suggestions from the existing allottees / general public.  
Accordingly, vide this notice objections/suggestions are hereby invited on the proposed revision of the Layout Plan of the said Colony from the allottees of the 5.575 Acres DDJAY colony falling in Sector-85, Faridabad as approved vide License no. 80 of 2019. A copy of the earlier approved Layout Plan bearing drawing no. DTCPP-7245 dated 20.11.2019 and the revised "In Principle" approved Layout Plan vide memo no. LC-3845/AD (NK)/2022/25552 dated 25.08.22 along with drawing no. DTCPP-8559 dated 24.08.22 are available for perusal on our website www.ridgecraft.in. The said Layout Plan can also be perused at the office of the undersigned at 3rd Floor, Next Door, U-Block, BPTP Parklands, Sector-76, Faridabad 121001 as well as in the office of District Town Planner (Planning), HSPV Complex, Sector-12, Faridabad.  
For providing approach to Type E-1A to E-27, the company has donated land, for development of 9 mtr wide road which is part of 18 mtr wide internal circulation road, by way of a Gift Deed in favour of Govt. of Haryana.  
Any allottee having any objection to the revised Layout plan may file his/her objection in the office of District Town Planner (Planning), HSPV Complex, Sector-12, Faridabad within a period of 30 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it shall be presumed that there are no objections to the said revised Layout Plan of the Colony.  
Place: Faridabad  
Date: 26.08.2022  
**Rohit Mohan**  
For Ridgecraft Homes Pvt. Ltd.

**आज्ञा से :- अभित कुमार, द्वितीय अपर सिविल जज (एस&डीओ) हरिद्वार**  
न्यायालय द्वितीय अपर सिविल जज (वरिष्ठ प्रमाण) हरिद्वार  
मूलवाद सं- 142 सन 2017  
समान वास्तो कारदार उमूल तनकीह तलब  
(आर्डर 5 कायदा 1 व 5)

पंतजलि आयुर्वेद लिमिटेड, ए लिमिटेड कम्पनी डब्ल्यू कॉर्पोरेटयुट अन्डर इण्डियन कम्पनीज एक्ट 1956 कापॉरेट ऑफिस युनिट तृतीय पंतजलि फूड एण्ड हर्बल पार्क ग्राम पदार्थ हरिद्वार लक्सरोड हरिद्वार 249404, उत्तराखण्ड बरा अधिकृत हस्ताक्षरी ...वादी

**बनाम**  
1. स्ट्रेण्डड पैकेजिंग मशीन प्लॉट नं 18, हरगोविन्दा एकलेव विकास मार्ग नई दिल्ली 110092 इण्डिया पार्टनर श्री राजेश राणा  
2. श्री राजेश राणा पार्टनर स्ट्रेण्डड पैकेजिंग मशीन प्लॉट नं 18 हरगोविन्दा एकलेव विकास मार्ग नई दिल्ली 110092 इण्डिया ।  
3. श्री केशव अन्वर पार्टनर स्ट्रेण्डड पैकेजिंग मशीन प्लॉट नं 18, हरगोविन्दा एकलेव विकास मार्ग नई दिल्ली 110092 इण्डिया ।

.....प्रतिवादीगण  
हरगाह वादी ने अपने नाम एक नालिशा बाबत वस्तुी धनराशि के दायर किया है लिहाजा आपको हुजम होता है कि आप बताये 06 माह 09 सन् 2022 बवक्त 10.30 बजे दिन असातलतन या माफत वकील जो मुकदमा के हालात से कारा वाकई किया गया हो और कुल उमुरात अहम मुतालिका मुकदमे का जवाब दे के या जिसके पास कोई सख्ता हो कि जवाब ऐसे सवालात का दे सके, हाजिर हो और जवाबदेही दावा की करे और हरगाह वादी तारीख को आपके इजहोरो के लिए मुकदमे है वास्तो इन्फिनाल कर्टी मुकदमा की वजवीज हुई है अब सइतना लाजिम है कि उसी रोज अपने जुमला गवाहे की जिनकी शहादत पर निज तमाम दस्तावेज को जिन पर आप अपनी जवाबदेही के तईद इस्तेमाल करना चाहते हो, पेश करे, आपको इतिला दी जाती है कि बरज मजकूर आप हाजिर न होगे तो मुकदमा बोरग हाजिरी आपको मरमूह और फैसला होगा ।

बसख्त मेरे हस्तखत और मुहर अदालत के आज बताये 06 माह 08 सन् 2022 को जारी किया गया ।  
**प्रबन्धक**  
न्यायालय द्वितीय अपर सिविल जज (वरिष्ठ प्रमाण) हरिद्वार

**UJVN Limited**  
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephones: 0135-2763808, Fax: 0135-2763508  
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866  
Website: www.ujvn.com

**RO No. 569 TENDER NOTICE**  
Dated : 26/08/2022  
The office of Executive Engineer (Generation), Maneri Bhai Stage-II, Chinyalsaur (Uttarkashi) invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:  
Tender No: NIT-11/EE (GEN)/MB-II/2022-23 (2) 13/EE (GEN)/MB-II/2022-23  
Name of work / Supply/Services: 1) Painting of Generating Transformer and Associated Structure at MB-II, Dharasu Power House, Chinyalsaur, Uttarkashi.  
2) Repairing of Power Convenience & Light Sub. Distribution Board at MB-II, Dharasu Power House.  
Estimated cost: Rs 546084/-, Rs. 659259/- only + GST extra respectively  
Date of availability of bid document on website: 28.08.2022  
Last date for submission of Bids: 19.09.2022 up to 15:30 Hrs.  
For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "www.ujvn.com"  
**Executive Engineer (Generation)**  
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

**EDELWEISS ASSET RECONSTRUCTION CO. LTD.**   
CIN - U67100MH2007PLC147459  
Registered Office : Edelweiss House, Off CST Road, Kalina, Mumbai 400098  
+91 22 4088 6090 / 6620 3149

**APPENDIX IV-A(See proviso to Rule 8 (6))**  
**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Asset under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.  
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and to the Borrower(s) in particular that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Limited acting in its capacity as Trustee of EARC Trust SC-406 ("EARC"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of EARC on August 09th, 2022 will be sold by way of e-auction through e-auction agency, M/s e-Procurement Technologies Limited (Auction Tiger) on their website/portal, <https://edelweissarc.auctiontiger.net> on **October 07, 2022 at 11:00 am to 1:00 pm with unlimited extension of 5 minutes each**, if a bid is made before close of e-auction, on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis, for recovery of Rs. **34,80,02,343/- (Rupees Thirty Four Crores Eighty Lacs Two Thousand Three Hundred and Forty Three only)** being due as on August 27, 2022), together with interest at contractual rates and other costs and expenses thereon to EARC from M/s. Magpie India Private Limited, Golden Lotus Investments Private Limited, Mr. Kaish Chaudhary, Mr. Suresh Jain, Ms. Anuradha Jain, Ms. Rani Jain, Mr. Manish Bhaskar and Magpie International Limited ("Borrower(s)").  
The Reserve Price & Earnest Money Deposit for the property described below shall be as follows:

Reserve Price	Rs.28,00,00,000	Earnest Money Deposit	Rs.2,80,00,000			
Increment in Bidding	Rs. 1,000,000 (Rupees Ten Lakhs Only)					
Date of Inspection of Secured Assets	25/09/2022 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM					
Last Date of Submission of Bid	Before 3.00 PM on 06/10/2022					
eAuction Portal / Helpdesk	<a href="https://edelweissarc.auctiontiger.net/">https://edelweissarc.auctiontiger.net/</a> / 099785 91888 / 092655 62818					
Date & time of e-Auction	07/10/2022 at 11.00 AM to 1:00 PM with unlimited extensions of 5 minutes each					
<b>Description of the Immovable Property:</b> All that piece and parcel of land bearing Plot No. TP-4, admeasuring 16011.60 square meters and situated in Sector-38, Phase-I, HSIIDC Industrial Estate Rai, Sonapat, Haryana-131001. North : Vacant plot, East : Road to Industrial estate, West : 45 mt wide road, South : Road (Rai to Bahadurgarh), Along with all the buildings, structures thereon.						
For detailed terms and conditions of the Auction Sale, please refer to the link provided in the Secured Creditor's website i.e. <a href="http://www.edelweissarc.in/PropertySale">www.edelweissarc.in/PropertySale</a> The interested bidders may remit the Earnest Money Deposit to the bank account of EARC, details are given below:						
Bank: IDBI Bank,	A/c Name: Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd					
A/c No. 0004103000054719,	IFSC Code No. IDBI0000004					
Branch : Mittal Court, Nariman Point						
Before submitting the bids, prospective bidders are advised to visit the websites mentioned above and go through the bid document containing the detailed terms and conditions of the E-auction.						
Authorized Officer			Sd/			
Date : 27.08.2022	For Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Limited					
Place : Mumbai	Phone No: 88797 89517					



# FM: India to grow at 7.4% in FY23

'To continue at same level next year as well'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the Indian economy will grow at 7.4 per cent in this fiscal and continue at the same level in the next fiscal as well.

"Our own estimates have also shown based on the developments, that we are definitely at that range...7.4 (per cent) and that level will continue even next year," Sitharaman said, speaking at the FE Best Banks Awards event here.

She said the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have projected India's growth to be the fastest for the next two fiscal years, and their estimates are in sync with that of the Reserve Bank of India as well.

The global situation continues to be challenging and it is not the right time to throw caution to the winds as yet, she said.

The export sector will face difficulties as the global growth slows down, and the government will work with such entities to face the headwinds, she said.

Meanwhile, underlining



that we need a rigorous debate on the freebies side, but stressed that political parties making pre-poll promises should make budgetary provisions for taking care of the expenditures and not push the burden on other entities.

Sitharaman said power discoms and generating companies have been seen to bear the brunt of such freebies as they get paid in part or in some cases not at all, despite having no role to play in the announcements.

# Inflation trajectory heavily contingent on geopolitical developments: RBI Dy Guv

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Inflation trajectory continues to be "heavily contingent" upon the evolving geopolitical developments, international commodity prices and global financial sector developments, Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra has said.

The RBI on its part has front-loaded monetary policy response, with a cumulative 140 basis points increase in the benchmark rate so far with an aim to check high inflation which is ruling above its comfort zone of 6 per cent for the past seven months.

In its meeting early this month, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the RBI decided to remain focused on the withdrawal of accommo-

dation to ensure that inflation remains within the target going forward while supporting growth.

Also, the RBI is engaged in withdrawal of the liquidity infused into the economy during the pandemic in a calibrated, multi-year time frame.

"In the near-term, however, the inflation trajectory continues to be heavily contingent upon the evolving geopolitical developments, international commodity market dynamics and global financial market developments," Patra said on Wednesday in his keynote address at the SAARC FINANCE Seminar hosted by India here.

The Reserve Bank uploaded his speech on its website on Friday. India has adopted an inflation targeting



framework since 2016, with a target of 4 per cent defined in terms of headline CPI inflation within a tolerance band of +/- 2 per cent around it.

While inflation averaged under 4 per cent during 2016-20, it rose to 6.2 per cent in 2020-21 - when the first wave of COVID-19 hit the country.

It moderated in the following year (2021-22) to 5.5 per cent and was projected to ease further to 4.5 per cent in 2022-23 as recently as February

2022. Patra said the war in Ukraine has altered the outlook drastically.

"Although it (inflation) appears to be moderating from its peak of 7.8 per cent in April this year, we would prefer to await more incoming data before we are convinced that this a durable trend," the Deputy Governor said, who is also a member of RBI's MPC.

While some easing of international commodity prices and supply chain pressures, both globally and domestically, are positive developments, upside risks remain in the form of potential second order effects and the transmission of input cost pressures to the sticky core component of inflation, he added.

For the financial year 2022-23 (April-March) as a whole,

the RBI has projected that headline CPI inflation would average 6.7 per cent. Patra further said the RBI has taken several initiatives to strengthen inflation monitoring and improve the accuracy of forecasting. Besides widening the ambit and depth of a suite of forward-looking surveys, a data science lab has been set up to explore alternative forecasting techniques and models, including artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML), he said.

Patra informed that the RBI has stepped up the gathering of market-based intelligence from trade bodies, traders, domain experts and regional units.

"We face challenging trade-offs in our day-to-day functioning and keen public scruti-

ny. Mostly unsung, our role has undergone a transformation in recent years.

"From lenders of the last resort, we have become defenders of the first resort. Hence, our response to inflation shocks such as the one we face today has to be predicated on managing expectations and fortifying credibility," he said.

The Deputy Governor further said that if the inflation target is breached for a prolonged period, this could unsettle expectations and eventually get reflected in higher inflation.

"At the current juncture, our experience is that by front-loading monetary policy actions, credibility is demonstrated by showing commitment to the inflation target," he said.

## Bank credit up by 15.32%; deposits by 8.84%: RBI data

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Bank credit grew by 15.32 per cent to Rs 124.305 lakh crore and deposits by 8.84 per cent to Rs 169.49 lakh crore in the fortnight ended August 12, the RBI data showed.

In the fortnight ended August 13, 2021, bank advances stood at Rs 107.79 lakh crore and deposits at Rs 155.72 lakh crore, according to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Scheduled Banks' Statement of Position in India



as on August 12 released on Friday.

In the previous fortnight ended July 29, bank credit grew by 14.52 per cent and deposits by 9.14 per cent.

In FY 2021-22, bank credit rose by 8.59 per cent and deposit by 8.94 per cent.

## Personal retail loan disbursements rise 42% at end-March 2022: Study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Personal retail loan disbursements recorded an impressive growth of 42 per cent from March 2021 to March 2022, reflecting an improvement in overall economic and business sentiment, said a joint study by Equifax and Andromeda.

The number of active personal loans increased from 3.5 crore as of March 2020 to 4 crore by March 2021, and to 6 crore by March 2022, it added.

The book size of personal loans rose from Rs 5 lakh crore as of March 2020 to Rs 6 lakh crore as of March 2021 and further to Rs 8 lakh crore as of March 2022.

"This is a strong indicator of the revival in consumption in the country," said K M Nanaiah, Managing Director, Equifax Credit Information Services Pvt Ltd and Country Leader, India & MEA, Equifax.

The total portfolio outstanding of retail industry increased from Rs 71 lakh crore (March 2020) to Rs 80 lakh crore (March 2021), and further to Rs 89 lakh crore as of March 2022.

Private banks experienced the highest growth of portfolio outstanding with a 32 per cent increase from March 2020 to March 2022, while that of public sector lenders stood at 21 per cent.

"If the trend in the growth of personal loans sustains, we can safely assume the economy will do well in the coming years. At the same time, we must keep in mind interest rates are on the rise following three consecutive rate hikes by the Reserve Bank in four months," said Raoul Kapoor, Co-CEO, Andromeda Sales and Distributions Pvt Ltd.

The retail industry reported 46 crore active loans as of March 2022, the study added.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Equifax is a data, analytics, and technology company. Founded in 1991, Andromeda is one of India's largest loan distributors.

# US wants India to join coalition on Russia oil price cap

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The US on Friday pressed India to join a coalition seeking to impose a price cap on Russian oil aimed at squeezing revenue streams for Moscow and softening the global energy prices.

US Deputy Secretary of Treasury Wally Adeyemo, who is on a three-day visit to India, discussed with policy makers about economic relations between the two nations as well as measures to limit earning of Russia post its invasion of Ukraine.

India snapped up discounted Russian oil that was shunned by buyers of Europe and other places post Russia's invasion of Ukraine. India has been guarded in its criticism of Moscow.

With oil prices surging past USD 100/barrel mark, the US along with other G7 nations is looking at imposing some sort of price cap on Russian oil. Adeyemo said energy and foodgrain trade by Russia has been kept out of sanctions and nations like India were free to enter into deals using any currency, including local currency.

The war has disrupted the global supply chain which has resulted in rising prices of crude oil and some food products.

"Indian policy makers are interested in learning more about joining the global price cap coalition to keep Russian fuel prices in check as it is aligned with India's objective of lowering energy prices for consumer," Adeyemo said during an interaction with media here.

"We think that objective is aligned with our objective, which is to reduce Russia's revenue. So we're providing them with information. We're going to continue the conversation with them," he added.

The G7 countries are inclined towards having a price



ceiling on Russian oil.

On the other hand, Russia is discussing cheap long-term oil deals with Asian buyers in an attempt to counter the G7 bid to cap export prices.

Adeyemo said there is no decision on the final price but it should take into account that the oil production does not become unviable for Russia. However, it would reduce revenues earned from export of oil by Moscow.

"It is in the best interest of our people to get energy but also to deny Russia revenues that they can use to prop up their economy and the further the war in Ukraine. Our goal ultimately is to try and build out a coalition that is going to join us in implementing the price cap," he said.

Earlier in the day, Adeyemo met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and among other topics, they discussed about Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and India's G20 Presidency.

India will hold the Presidency of the G20 from

December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023. India will host the G20 summit next year.

G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation that plays an important role in global economic governance.

"During my conversation with the Finance Minister, we did talk about the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework that the President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Modi have agreed to," Adeyemo said.

There were also discussions about supply chains and climate change and how does the US and India can do more to build supply chain resiliency, he said.

With regard to clean technology, Adeyemo said both the US and India have scope for technology transfer and collaboration.

Stressing that America sees India as one of the premier partners, he said that US financial firms are looking at India increasingly as an investment destination.

# Sensex, Nifty post slim gains; close lower for the week

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices closed modestly higher on Friday as fag-end choppiness trimmed most of the day's gains amid a largely firm trend in overseas markets.

Global investors were in wait-and-watch mode ahead of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech at the annual Jackson Hole symposium, where he is expected to provide clues on the US central bank's rate hike trajectory.

The BSE Sensex opened firm and soared over 500 points to an intra-day high of 59,321.65, but succumbed to profit-booking towards the end of the session. It finally closed at 58,833.87, up 59.15 points or 0.10 per cent.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 36.45 points or 0.21 per cent to end at 17,558.90.

NTPC was the biggest gainer among the Sensex constituents, spurring 2.80 per cent, followed by Titan, PowerGrid, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel and Mahindra & Mahindra.

On the other, IndusInd Bank, HDFC, Asian Paints, Bharti Airtel, Dr Reddy's and Reliance Industries were among the prominent laggards, shedding as much as 1.92 per



cent. The market breadth was positive, with 21 of the 30 Sensex stocks closing in the green.

"Investors' lack of confidence and caution in anticipation of the Fed chair's remarks led to a significant sell-off towards the close of the session. Western markets are trading with cuts as they await clues on further policy actions by the Fed to tame elevated inflation. This is expected to impact demand.

"On the sectoral front, metals and PSBs led the rally, while IT turned green after continued selling pressure," said Vinod Nair, Head of

Research at Geojit Financial Services.

On a weekly basis, the Sensex tumbled 812.28 points or 1.36 per cent, while the Nifty lost 199.55 points or 1.12 per cent.

"The benchmark indices headed toward a weekly decline, ending the 5-week-long positive streak. The market witnessed some profit booking amid concerns over the outcome of the US Fed speech later Friday," said Sunil Damania, Chief Investment Officer, MarketsMojo.

"Indian equities have seen positive momentum in the recent week with an increased infusion of foreign funds and

easing domestic inflation numbers... FIIs have infused close to Rs 50,000 crore in the equity markets this month, the highest in the last 20 months. The recent correction in commodity prices and the retreating US Dollar from record highs has aided the re-entry of FIIs in the Indian markets," he added.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.40 per cent and smallcap index gained 0.35 per cent in Friday's session.

Among the BSE sectoral indices, metal climbed 1.62 per cent, followed by consumer durables (1.50 per cent), utilities (1.31 per cent), industrials (1.25 per cent), power (1.18 per cent) and basic materials (1.06 per cent).

FMCG, healthcare and realty were the laggards. Elsewhere in Asia, markets in Seoul, Tokyo, and Hong Kong ended in the green, while Shanghai closed with losses.

Stock markets in Europe were trading lower during mid-session deals. Wall Street had ended with gains on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the international oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.14 per cent to USD 100.5 per barrel.

The rupee appreciated by 6 paise to close at 79.86 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, supported by foreign fund inflows.

## 'Realtors must follow 3 Ts of RERA transparency, trust bldg, time adherence'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Real estate developers should "circulate" transparency, trust building and time adherence" as envisaged under the RERA law for the growth of this industry, said Gautam Chatterjee, former Chairman of MahaRERA. He was speaking at a webinar organised by realtors body NAREDCO on the occasion of completing 24 years and entering to the silver jubilee.

Chatterjee, who was the founder Chairman of Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority (MahaRERA), noted that there has been a paradigm shift in the sector with the enactment of RERA law in 2016.

The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016, known as RERA, has formalised the sector and brought it under a much needed regulatory framework. He noted that the sector has bounced back after the second wave of



the COVID pandemic and there is renewed investors interest. "But the interest is especially in projects that are led by trusted developer implying that trust is a key factor that can shape decision making of the customers going ahead," Chatterjee said.

There has been an uptick in the consumer sentiment, he said, adding that the demand has risen for affordable housing as well as arger homes.

The fast development of

infrastructure like highways, metro projects and others will ensure that the real estate industry gets an option to spread its wings to the outskirts of city limits as well, Chatterjee said. Going forward, he stressed that builders need to inculcate and internalise the "three T's of RERA - transparency, trust building and time adherence."

Transparency means removal of information asymmetry and opaque practices in the sector, he said.

Chatterjee pitched for online disclosures in public domain, besides bringing in accountability and financial discipline, and empowering people to make informed choice. "Trust building bridges the trust deficit, which has been one of the pains of the sector. So trust building will breach that trust deficit between promoters and buyers and provide speedy grievance redressal," he said.

Chatterjee also emphasised on the timely completion of registered projects, which has a real pain point of the past. Moreover, he said the Naredco as an association and its members should effectively deal with the legacy issues of stalled projects.

Chatterjee also talked about bringing professionalism, skill and expertise across the board. He also advocated use of technologies in a big way in the sector, enabling the developers to plan their projects properly and avoid piling up of unsold inventories.

## Foreign exchange reserves decline to USD 564.053 bn



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's foreign exchange reserves fell USD 6.687 billion to USD 564.053 billion in the week ended August 19, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.

In the previous week ended August 12, the reserves declined USD 2.238 billion to USD 570.74 billion.

The drop in the reserves during the week ended August 19 was due to a fall in the Foreign Currency Assets (FCA) and the gold reserves, as per the

Weekly Statistical Supplement released by RBI on Friday.

FCA fell USD 5.779 billion to USD 501.216 billion in the reporting week.

Expressed in dollar terms, FCA includes the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves declined USD 704 million to USD 39.914 billion, the data showed.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) decreased USD 146 million to USD 17.987 billion.

## SRM hospital gets autism centre of excellence

Kattankulathur: Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE) was inaugurated by Founder Chancellor of SRM Institute of Science and Technology Dr TR Paarivendhar at SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre (SRM MCH&RC), Kattankulathur. This centre offers children with autism all necessary services under one roof. This centre is also first-of-its-kind in an Indian medical college hospital. The centre has been setup by SRM College of Occupational Therapy.

The mission of this centre is to provide all the essential services, such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, special education, and clinical psychology in one place with well-trained professionals.

Strong emphasis on integrating them into regular classrooms and enabling them to live independently in the community.



Satwik-Chirag claim India's first men's doubles medal at World C'ships; heartbreak for Prannoy

# HISTORYMAKERS

PTI ■ TOKYO

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Friday became the first Indian pair to win a medal in the men's doubles competition at the World Championships but HS Prannoy's impressive run ended in agony as he went down narrowly in the men's singles quarterfinals here.

Satwik and Chirag, the world number 7 combination, which had claimed the Commonwealth Games Gold medal earlier this month, stunned the local favourites and defending champions Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi 24-22, 15-21, 21-14 in an hour and 15 minutes to claim its maiden medal at the prestigious tournament.

It is India's second World Championships medal in the doubles event with Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa claiming a Bronze way back in 2011 in the women's doubles.

Overall, it's India's 13th medal at the showpiece with PV Sindhu winning five, including a Gold in 2019, and Saina Nehwal (Silver and Bronze) claiming two. Kidambi Srikanth (Silver), Lakshya Sen (Bronze), B Sai Praneeth (Bronze) and Prakash Padukone (Bronze) were the other medallists.

It could have been double delight for the country but China's Zhao Jun Peng had other plans as he broke Indian hearts with a 19-21, 21-6, 21-18 win over former



world number 8 Prannoy, who went down on one knee with his head hanging in disappointment after the gut-wrenching loss.

Earlier, MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila's fine run also ended after the Indian pair lost 8-21, 14-21 to three-time champions Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan in another men's doubles quarterfinals.

Having assured themselves of at least a Bronze, Satwik and Chirag will now face the sixth seeded Malaysian pair of Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in the semifinals.

## WE WANT TO FINISH THINGS ON A BIG NOTE: SATWIK

Ecstatic after winning a maiden World Championships medal, India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy on Friday said the season has been a "dream" for him and his doubles partner Chirag Shetty and the two would look to finish the tournament on a "big" note here.

The world number 7 pair has been simply sensational this year, claiming a super 500 India Open title in January before fashioning India's epic win in Thomas Cup and then winning a maiden Commonwealth Games Gold earlier this month.

"It has been a dream for us, starting with the India Open, the Thomas Cup and then the Commonwealth Games Gold. As I speak, I am feeling so happy and excited," Satwik said after assuring the pair of at least a Bronze here.

"It is a big win for us. We haven't played them (Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi) in a long time. They are the current world champions and we badly wanted to play against them but we are always up against the top seeds Kevin (Sukamuljo) and (Marcus) Gideon in tournaments," Satwik said.

"We were excited as we wanted to see our level against them and I'm very happy with the way we played.

We took a revenge on our former coach, Tan Kim Her, so I am happy for that," he added.

Tan Kim Her from Malaysian was instrumental in forming the Indian pair during his stint as India's doubles coach. He is currently coaching the Japanese doubles team.

The Indian combination will meet sixth seeded Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in the semifinals. Satwik and Chirag had lost to the Malaysian duo during the finals of mixed team event at CWG in Birmingham.

"Here we want to finish it on a big note, not just finish in semifinals but go further. Tomorrow, it will be a revenge match," Satwik said.

Asked where does the medal rank amid their achievements, Chirag said: "We haven't finished the tournament and we want to go all the way but Thomas Cup is up there at the top. If we win it here, it will be at par with the Thomas Cup."

# 'No regrets' as Loh loses crown

AP ■ TOKYO

Singapore's reigning badminton world champion Loh Kean Yew said he had "no regrets" after his title defence ended in a quarter-final loss to Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn in Tokyo on Friday.

Number eight seed Loh lost 21-12, 17-21, 21-8 to rising star Vitidsarn and said he had felt "no pressure" trying to defend his crown after winning the title last year in the Spanish city of Huelva. "This week was fine," said the 25-year-old, who said he struggled to cope with the drift inside Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium. "I just tried my best to fight for every point and that was all that matters."

The 21-year-old Vitidsarn is a three-time junior world champion who is seen as one of world badminton's best young players.

He said Loh had made "some easy mistakes" in their match and that he looked forward to a semi-final against China's unseeded



Zhao Junpeng.

"This week I go step-by-step because it's a big tournament with many top players and very difficult to play," said Vitidsarn.

"I don't think too much because if I think too much I have pressure in the game. I want to learn about the top players."

# Marin vows to return to top

AP ■ TOKYO

Spanish badminton star Carolina Marin vowed to get back to her dominant best after her bid for a record fourth world title was ended by Japan's Akane Yamaguchi on Friday.

Marin is feeling her way back into competition after suffering a horror knee injury last year that forced her to miss the Tokyo Olympics and kept her out of action for a year.

She returned to the court in May this year but current world number one Yamaguchi was too strong in their world championships quarter-final in Tokyo, advancing with a 21-17, 21-17 win.

Marin said she "felt quite good" physically but "made many



mistakes in my strategy" as Yamaguchi wore her down in front of an expectant home crowd.

The Spaniard said she would "keep looking forward" as she tries

to recover the form that made her a three-time world champion and an Olympic Gold medallist at the 2016 Rio Games.

"I know that if I keep going, if I keep practising hard, I will get back to my best level," said the 29-year-old.

"It's tough to lose in a quarter-final at the worlds but this is the life and times. Sometimes we need to learn about losing."

Yamaguchi's win meant all four top seeds advanced to the semi-finals of the women's competition.

The Japanese ace will face South Korea's An Se-young, who beat China's Han Yue in a 21-14, 15-21, 22-20 thriller, while the other match between Chen Yufei and Tai Tzu-ying will be a re-run of last year's Olympic final.

# Osaka headlines as Pan Pacific Open returns after Covid-19

AP ■ TOKYO

Home favourite Naomi Osaka will defend her title at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo next month, organisers said on Friday, as the tournament returns for the first time since the pandemic.

Four players currently ranked inside the top 10 will compete in the September 17-25 event, including two-time Grand Slam winner Garbine Muguruza and fellow Spaniard and world number four Paula Badosa.

Japan's Osaka beat Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in the 2019 final but the tournament was cancelled for the past two years because of coronavirus. Osaka, a four-time major winner and former world number one, has slipped to 44 in the rankings and lost in the first round of the ATP/WTA Cincinnati Masters last week.

Former champion Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic also returns to Tokyo, while world number six Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus and Russia's world number 10 Daria Kasatkina make their tournament debuts.



## US Open qualifiers: Yuki Bhambri knocked out in second round

PTI ■ NEW YORK

India's singles challenge at the US Open qualifiers came to an end as Yuki Bhambri was handed a straight-set defeat by Belgium's Zizou Bergs in the second round here.

The 30-year-old went down 3-6, 2-6 to his Belgian opponent on Thursday.

It was always going to be a tricky affair for Bhambri (552) against the higher-ranked Bergs (155), but the

Indian managed keep the scores levelled at 3-3 in the first set.

Things, however, changed quickly in favour of the Belgian as he made it 5-3. Bergs then won his next service to clinch the first set 6-3.

In the second set too, Bergs was better player than the Indian and dominated from the word go and it did not take the former long to pocket the second and final set 6-2.

# Casemiro could make Man Utd debut at Southampton

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United's new midfielder Casemiro could make his debut at Southampton on Saturday, but Anthony Martial has been ruled out with an Achilles injury.

Casemiro has moved from Real Madrid to Old Trafford in a £60 million (\$71 million) deal and was presented to fans prior to Monday's 2-1 win against Liverpool.

United manager Erik ten Hag on Friday said the 30-year-old Brazilian could feature for the first time in this weekend's trip to St Mary's.

However, France striker Martial is absent again, having missed the first two Premier League matches with a hamstring complaint.

The France forward returned as a half-time substitute against Liverpool and provided the assist for Marcus Rashford's goal, but an Achilles issue means he is absent again this weekend.

"Casemiro is fit. He did all the training sessions. He trained first individually and the last days he trained with the team," Ten Hag told reporters.



CASEMIRO HAS MOVED FROM REAL MADRID TO OLD TRAFFORD IN A £60 MILLION DEAL AND WAS PRESENTED TO FANS PRIOR TO MONDAY'S 2-1 WIN AGAINST LIVERPOOL

"Martial came out with a problem on his Achilles, out of the game, so we have to wait.

"I cannot tell a prognosis, how long it takes. I hope he will be available for the next game."

# Benzema sets sight on Ballon d'Or and WC

AP ■ ISTANBUL

For Karim Benzema, the UEFA men's player of the year prize is unlikely to be the last recognition he receives for his role in Real Madrid's memorable run to Champions League glory last season.

The Ballon d'Or will surely follow in October, before he heads to the World Cup in Qatar with France in November and December with the aim of completing a truly remarkable career renaissance.

Benzema scored an astonishing 44 goals in 46 games for Real last season, including 27 in La Liga as he ended the campaign as the top scorer in Spain's top flight by a distance.

But his very best form came in the Champions League, in which he was also the leading marksman with 15 goals in just 12 appearances.

Wearing the captain's armband, Benzema scored five times in the group stage for Carlo Ancelotti's side, but the best was to come in the knockout rounds.

He scored a stunning hat-



trick in 17 second-half minutes in the spectacular last-16 comeback win over Paris Saint-Germain, and another away to Chelsea in the quarter-final

first leg.

It was also his extra-time goal in the return leg of that tie that nipped a Chelsea comeback in the bud, and he then scored three more goals over both legs of the semi-final against Manchester City, including an extra-time spot-kick in the return leg at the Santiago Bernabeu which secured Real's spot in the final.

"Football is difficult, there are moments when you are dominated and have to hang in there. At Madrid we never give up," said Benzema.

He was not the standout player in the final itself, with Vinicius Junior scoring the only goal of the game and goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in inspired form at the other end.

Courtois was also nominated for the UEFA prize, along with Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne, but there was little question of anyone other than Benzema being crowned.

"What is most important to me is to win collective trophies. If you do things well on the field, individual awards will follow," said Benzema.

# PKL's new season begins on October 7

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The ninth season of the Pro Kabaddi League is set to welcome back fans to the stadiums when it begins on October 7, the organisers announced on Friday.

The player auction for the upcoming ninth season was held on August 5 and 6, Mashal Sports, organisers of the event, said in a media release.

The league stage will be conducted in Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad and will go on till mid-December.

The last season of the league had been held without fans due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anupam Goswami, League Commissioner VIVO PKL said: "We are enthusiastic about the upcoming vivo PKL Season 9 as our fans will be back in stadiums across Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad to experience the pulsating action up-close of their favourite teams and stars."

# Red Devils to face Real Sociedad in Europa

AP ■ ISTANBUL

Manchester United were placed in the same section as Real Sociedad in Friday's draw for this season's UEFA Europa League in Istanbul, while Arsenal will come up against PSV Eindhoven.

United, who won the Europa League in 2017, will also meet Moldovan champions Sheriff Tiraspol and Omonia Nicosia of Cyprus in Group E.

Real Sociedad qualified for Europe by finishing sixth in La Liga last season — they faced United in the Champions League group stage in 2013/14, while the Premier League side won 4-0 on aggregate in the round of 32 on their way to the Europa League final in 2021.

Sheriff, the club from the breakaway Russian-speaking region of Transnistria who have won seven straight Moldovan league titles, famously beat Real Madrid away in last season's Champions League group stages.

Knocked out in this season's Champions League qualifiers, they have been ordered to play home European games in the capital Chisinau — a decision taken by UEFA because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Cypriot Cup winners Omonia are managed by former Celtic boss Neil Lennon, who played for Manchester City as a



youngster.

Arsenal's draw appears slightly tougher on paper, as they will also take on Norwegian champions Bodo/Glimt and Swiss title holders FC Zurich in Group A.

All three of the Gunners' rivals failed to make it through the Champions League qualifying phase.

PSV, coached by Ruud van Nistelrooy,

beat Monaco in the Champions League third qualifying round before losing to Rangers in the play-offs and dropping into the Europa League.

Zurich defeated Hearts in the play-off round.

Elsewhere, Jose Mourinho's Roma, who won last season's Europa Conference League, will face Spanish Copa del Rey winners Real Betis in Group C, as well as Bulgarian champions Ludogorets and Finnish champions HJK Helsinki.

Monaco will take on Red Star Belgrade, Ferencváros and Turkish champions Trabzonspor in Group H.

Dynamo Kyiv, who lost to Benfica in the Champions League play-offs, will face Rennes, Fenerbahçe and AEK Larnaca of Cyprus in Group B.

Lazio and Feyenoord were drawn together in Group F, while French Cup holders Nantes — in their first European campaign in two decades — will play Olympiakos, Freiburg and Qarabag of Azerbaijan.

The group stage will begin on September 8 and concludes on November 3, earlier than usual due to the World Cup in Qatar.

This season's Europa League final will be played at the Puskas Arena in Budapest on May 31, next year.

# Arteta hints at deal to replace Pepe

AP ■ LONDON

Mikel Arteta said on Friday Arsenal could sign a replacement for Nicolas Pepe after the Ivory Coast winger left the Premier League leaders to join Nice.

Arsenal has been linked with a move for Wolves winger Pedro Neto and Arteta admitted he could adapt his transfer philosophy after prioritising early deals for Manchester City duo Gabriel Jesus and Oleksandr Zinchenko at the start of the window.

"We have done it in a different way. At the start of the window we signed players before getting other players out," Arteta told reporters.

"Now we have done something different, we have let a player go and maybe we'll be able to recruit somebody.

# Audi to make Formula One debut in 2026

AP ■ PARIS

German car manufacturer Audi will become an engine supplier in Formula One for the first time in the 2026 season, chairman Markus Duesmann announced on Friday.

Audi will announce the team they will supply by the end of the year although it is widely expected to be Sauber, who presently race as Alfa Romeo with a Ferrari engine.

Those expectations moved closer to reality when Alfa Romeo announced in a statement later on Friday they would cut ties with Sauber "at the end of 2023".

The Audi announcement was made at Spa Francorchamps, the venue for Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix with Formula 1 President and CEO Stefano Domenicali and Mohammed ben Sulayem, President of the International Automobile Federation (FIA), motorsport's governing body

present.

"Formula 1 is both a global stage for our brand and a highly challenging development laboratory," Duesmann said in a statement.

The engine will be developed at Audi Sport's facility in Neuburg near Ingolstadt with the company heralding the fact it will be "the first time in more than a decade that a Formula 1 power train will be built in Germany."

Adam Baker -- who before joining Audi in 2021 worked for FIA for three years -- will take over the management of the company and the Formula 1 project as CEO.

Audi added in the statement that Formula One's stated goals to become more sustainable attracted them.

Their decision comes shortly after it was agreed at FIA's World Motor Sport Council new engines, or power units (PU), would be required in Formula 1 by 2026, aimed at greater sustainability.



# ASIAN GIANTS RESUME RIVALRY

PTI ■ DUBAI

The unpredictability of the T20 format and the growth of the game in the region could make the 2022 Asia Cup, beginning Saturday, the most closely fought edition ever.

Pakistan legend Wasim Akram has already predicted the six-team tournament as having the potential to showcase quality that has never been seen before.

Leaving aside the lone qualifier Hong Kong, the five other teams including record seven-time champions India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Bangladesh can beat each other on their day.

The tournament, which is being staged in the T20 format after six years, had to be moved to the UAE after hosts Sri Lanka expressed their inability to organise it back home amid the economic crisis faced by the island nation.

Though the conditions in the UAE will be different from what teams will be experiencing in the World Cup in Australia in October-November, all the competing sides will be looking to identify their final squad for the ICC event over the course of the next two weeks.

There is enough at stake as well for the participating teams. India will be looking to execute their ultra-aggressive approach with the bat in a high-pressure environment, starting with the opener against Pakistan on Sunday.

All eyes will be on Virat Kohli who will be expected to come out of a prolonged lean patch. The performance of



## SQUADS

**INDIA:** Rohit Sharma (c), KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Deepak Hooda, Dinesh Karthik, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, R Ashwin, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan. Standby: Shreyas Iyer, Axar Patel, Deepak Chahar.

**PAKISTAN:** Babar Azam (c), Shadab Khan, Asif Ali, Fakhar Zaman, Haider Ali, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Hasnain, Shah Nawaz Dahani, Usman Qadir.

**BANGLADESH:** Shakib Al Hasan (c), Anamul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Afif Hossain, Mosaddek Hossain, Mahmudullah, Mahedi Hasan, Mohammad Saifuddin, Hasan Mahmud, Mustafizur Rahman, Nasum Ahmed, Sabbir Rahman, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Ebadot Hossain, Parvez Hossain Emon, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Taskin Ahmed.

**SRI LANKA:** Dasun Shanaka (c), Danushka Gunathilaka, Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, Charith Asalanka, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Ashen Bandara, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersay, Praveen Jayawickrama, Chamika Karunaratne, Dilshan Madushanka, Matheesha Pathirana, Nuwanidu Fernando, Dinesh Chandimal.

**AFGHANISTAN:** Mohammad Nabi (c), Najibullah Zadran (vc), Afsar Zazai (wk), Azmatullah Omarzai, Farid Ahmad Malik, Fazal Haq Farooqi, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Hazratullah Zazai, Ibrahim Zadran, Karim Janat, Mujib ur Rahman, Naveen ul Haq, Noor Ahmad, Rahmanullah Gurbaz (WK), Rashid Khan, Samiullah Shinwari and Usman Ghani.

**HONG KONG:** Nizakat Khan (c), Kinchit Shah, Zeeshan Ali, Haroon Arshad, Babar Hayat, Aftab Hussain, Ateeq Iqbal, Aizaz Khan, Ehsan Khan, Scott McKechnie (wk), Ghazanfar Mohammad, Yasim Murtaza, Dhananjay Rao, Wajid Shah, Ayush Shukla, Ahan Trivedi, Mohammad Waheed.

the top three including skipper Rohit Sharma and K L Rahul will be in focus while injured pacer Jasprit Bumrah will be missed.

Pakistan, a team which has been on the rise over the past 12 months, will be aiming to win the tournament it last won 10 years ago when it was played in the ODI format.

They were pegged back by a few injury concerns ahead of the tournament with star pacer Shaheen Afridi being ruled out of the tournament due

to a knee injury.

With a relatively inexperience middle-order, there will be over dependence on the opening duo of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan.

Afghanistan, under the leadership of the seasoned Mohammad Nabi, will be looking to beat the higher-ranked teams, something they were unable to in the T20 World Cup here last year. Rashid Khan as usual will be their trump card with the ball and will be expecting the batters to step up.



## Shanaka looks to lift Sri Lankan morale with Asia Cup title

AP ■ DUBAI

Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka on Friday said victory in the Asia Cup would lift the spirits of fans in the cricket-crazy island nation as it struggles through its worst economic crisis.

The six-nation T20 tournament will begin in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday after being moved from Sri Lanka because of political unrest.

Sri Lanka will take on Afghanistan in the tournament opener, which will serve as a tune-up for the T20 World Cup in Australia in October and November. "The cricket always brings a different kind of vibe to Sri Lankan people, winning is the most thrilling thing," Shanaka told reporters. "So we look forward to delivering for our country."

Sri Lanka has been hit in recent months by food and fuel shortages along with power blackouts, but enjoyed success in a home series in

June when they beat Australia in ODIs.

They also drew level in Tests with Australia and Pakistan.

Shanaka said playing at home would have been a definite advantage but added that there are no favourites in the T20 format.

"Hosting this tournament in Sri Lanka would have favoured us more because the crowd support is there and playing in home conditions has a bigger advantage," he said.

"When it comes to the favourites, India is a leading side at the moment but in T20 there are no favourites. On a day if we play good cricket, we can be the favourites as well."

Sri Lanka may play spoilers to a predicted India-Pakistan clash in the final of the tournament. Wanindu Hasaranga remained key for the side in the white-ball series against Australia at home and Shanaka said the team would rely on the all-rounder in the UAE.

## ‘Coaching stints with RCB, Oz will help me’



PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India cricketer Sridharan Sriram, who has recently been appointed as Bangladesh's technical consultant, on Friday said his previous coaching experiences with Australia and IPL side Royal Challengers Bangalore will stand him in good stead in his new assignment. The 46-year-old, who will be associated with the Bangladesh team in the Asia Cup and the upcoming T20 Cup World in Australia in October, said he is pretty clear about his responsibilities.

Sriram was appointed Australia's spin bowling coach in 2016 under then chief coach Darren Lehmann and also served as RCB's batting and spin coach in 2020.

"I think it's (my role) very simple and I am very clear about my role here, probably bring the resources together. We got some very good skill coaches and I trust what they are doing completely and my job is to basically work with the captain, work with the team director and bring the skill coaches together," Sriram was quoted as saying by The Daily

Star newspaper.

"Bring all the three components together and use my T20's experience of IPL and Australia and bring a strategy where we can use our resources properly and so I am very clear about my role and I am not saying I am leading the side and I am just trying to collaborate," he added.

Sriram, who amassed over 9,000 runs in first class cricket and earned a reputation as a prolific batter, also said that he is not carrying baggage of his playing days.

"I just forgot the fact that I was a player and it doesn't matter how many runs you have scored because at the end of the day I am here to help other people and that is my biggest strength and I don't carry baggage of my playing days, my frustration and my past into coaching," Sriram said.

"The others have different set of eyes and my experience of dealing with different cultures like work with the IPL, work with the Indian boys and work with the Aussie set-up and so I think there is a good mixture of the east and the west," he noted.

## Mandhana dazzles with fifty in Southern Brave's 10-wicket win

**SOUTHAMPTON:** India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana struck a scintillating half-century to help Southern Brave crush Trent Rockets by 10 wickets and book their place in the knockout stages of The Hundred here. Mandhana impressed with a 31-ball 57 that included nine fours and two maximums after Lauren Bell (4/10) picked up the best figures of the season to restrict Rockets to 88 for eight at the Ageas Bowl on Thursday.

Chasing a below par total, Mandhana joined forces with fellow opener England's Danni Wyatt (36 off 25) as the hosts cruised to victory with 44 balls to spare. **PTI**

## With revenge on his mind, Rahul ready to challenge himself vs Pak

PTI ■ DUBAI

KL Rahul is ready to "challenge himself" as a batter and pounce on a quality Pakistan side in India's Asia Cup opener in his bid to exact the revenge of the humiliation suffered during T20 World Cup last year.

Rahul hasn't played any T20I in 2022 and will need to start as an opener with an attacking batting philosophy that the team has employed in recent times.

"Every team wants to start an event like World Cup with a win. Unfortunately, that did not happen for us last year. We were outplayed by a strong Pakistan team. So, it's a big opportunity (in Asia Cup) for us (to bounce

back). It's a contest we are all looking forward to," vice-captain Rahul said in a press conference. Rahul, himself, was sidelined for quite a while as he underwent surgery and also contracted COVID-19. The 30-year-old star batter made a comeback against Zimbabwe after a successful recovery and the also led the side to three-match ODI series win.

"I enter this tournament feeling a little more confident and I can focus on my skills. It does not matter how good I am batting in the nets. I want to challenge myself in the middle and this tournament gives opportunity," said Rahul, who has been a prolific run-getter in IPL over past four-five seasons. "For me, the Zimbabwe

tour was quite important, post the injury. The series helped me understand how much I recovered. It gives you a lot of confidence and being out in the middle is always to assess your own form and how your body is feeling," Rahul said.

In the Asia Cup, both the teams squared up against each other 14 times and it is India that have an advantage, winning eight, while Pakistan managed to win five. And on Sunday, the stage is set for the Rohit Sharma-led Indian side to extend the lead. "We are all very excited. As players, we always look forward to this India-Pakistan clash in big tournaments. It's a great challenge for all of us to compete against a good team," Rahul said.

## ‘Kohli needs to score runs not only for India but also for himself’

PTI ■ KOLKATA

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Friday said struggling batting maestro Virat Kohli needs to score runs not only for India but "for himself" too.

In the Asia Cup starting here on Saturday, Kohli will resume the quest to score his first international hundred since 2019, having failed in all his previous attempts.

"He needs to score runs not only for India but for himself. Hopefully it will be a good season for him. We all are confident that he'll come back," Ganguly said during an interaction.

"I'm sure like all of us are waiting for him to get that hundred, he's working for it as well," Ganguly said.

"The chances of getting a hundred in a T20 is less because of the time. But, hopefully, this will be a big season for Kohli."

The 33-year-old former India captain, who was last seen in action in England in June-July, is back after a one-month break that saw him skip two white-ball series in the West Indies and Zimbabwe.

Kohli's highest score in his last five matches has been 20 in India's loss to England in the rescheduled fifth Test at Birmingham.

Having relinquished captaincy at RCB as well, Kohli had a quiet IPL-15, scoring 341 runs from 16 matches at an average of 22.73.

Ganguly, during his interaction with the media on the sidelines of Senco Gold &



Diamonds' DG Gold promotional event here, refused to agree that a big player like Kohli can endure a lean patch as long as this.

"He's a very big player, there for a long time. I know he has his own formula to score runs. It's not possible that players of his stature can't have such a long lean patch. I know he will definitely score runs.

"If he was not a great player, he would not have scored so many runs for so long," Ganguly maintained.

Ganguly said the T20 World Cup loss would have little bearing on the outcome of the coming games.

"Since 1992 I've been following Indo-Pak matches closely. In these 30 years we have lost only once. It's not magic that you will

always win. You lose once or twice, it's not a big deal," Ganguly said.

Asked about the pressure that comes with playing Pakistan, he said: "The ones who play regular cricket like in my playing days, it's just another game where you have had to perform. I never played thinking 'Pakistan, Pakistan' only. Maybe during a World Cup semifinal, qualifier match, that sort of emotions were there."

"If you take all that into consideration, I know the likes of Rohit (Sharma), KL Rahul, Virat, (Rishabh), Pant know how to handle the pressure."

When asked whether Pakistan would miss their star pacer Shaheen Afridi, Ganguly said: "I don't think one player makes a difference in any team.

## I can do it, I'm the right man for president's post: Bhutia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former captain Bhaichung Bhutia on Friday cited his "credibility", "experience" and his equivalent in cricket, Sourav Ganguly, to hammer home the point that he is "definitely the right man" to lead the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

Both Bhutia and Ganguly are iconic former captains of their respective sport and while the cricketer was born and brought up in Kolkata, the ace footballer shares a deep bond with the city, having spent so much time there while playing for Mohun Bagan and East Bengal in his heyday.

Bhutia threw his hat into the AIFF election ring once again even as former goalkeeper Kalyan Chaubey, seen as the BJP candidate,

has emerged as the front runner for the top job. Both the former players filed their nominations on Thursday.

"Today what I've become is only because of football. I'm a Padma Shri because of it. I played for India for 16 years — this is my moment to give back to my sport. It needs reforms with the ban happening," Bhutia said during an interaction.

"I'm not new to AIFF. I'm working with the government and the sports ministry. The government is supporting all sportspersons. Our PM is helping sports grow in India."

"I have the experience, the knowledge, and plans for Indian football. I can do it. With so much negativity around, we need reforms. Sportspersons are now motivated to enter administration."

A decorated player with more



than 100 international appearances, Bhutia added, "Look at Sourav Ganguly, he is an iconic cricketer and doing so well in cricket administration."

Bhutia was all praise for Chaubey's keenness to help the sport navigate its way through one of its toughest phases as an administrator, but reiterated that he can do a "much better job".

Given a chance to run the AIFF, he said he will do his best to arrange substantial funding for all state associations, in order to organise regular tournaments in all age-groups, set up football centre of excellences across the country, and also use the training facilities to develop coaches and conducting advanced courses for the referees.

He also said that regional lan-

guages must be introduced in coaching programmes so that the ones aspiring to become coaches are not made to do it in English as they might not be fluent in it.

"I want to help the state associations financially, technically. We need both long-term and short-term goals."

Though he had once contested the legislative elections and also floated a political party in his native state of Sikkim, Bhutia said he does not belong to any big national party, and it can help him in managing football administration better.

"See, whenever there were big politicians at the helm you would hear one state saying he belongs to my party, he belongs to another. But with me, I can go to any state with-

out any issues, because I am not affiliated to a big national political party."

"Our priority should be to produce players, we need to play the World Cup on merit and not just as hosts. We have to make sure that football is the winner."

"Let me and Kalyan sit and have a discussion, and the media can also be part of it and then decided who is the better man to lead Indian football. Let's not make this election political," he said.

"Let's not get politics involved and destroy this beautiful sport."

To buttress his belief that he is good at administration, Bhutia also cited his experience as an advisor at the Sikkim Football Association, besides running of the United Sikkim club for nearly two decades.