

OPINION 6
INDIA'S BIG DREAMS OR
PLAIN HALLUCINATION?**WORLD 8**
RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: SHELLING,
EVACUATION CONTINUE**MONEY 9**
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JADEJA IS
WORLD NO.1
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12 SPORTHheads roll over
EVMs' shifting

EC removes 3 from election duty in UP, suspends Varanasi ADM

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

On the eve of the counting of votes, the Election Commission on Wednesday removed three officials from election duty in Uttar Pradesh and suspended Varanasi Additional District Magistrate Nalini Kant Singh for negligence in electronic voting machines (EVM) transportation and initiated disciplinary actions against them.

The commission has deputed Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi to Meerut and Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar to Varanasi as special observers to oversee counting arrangements amid complaints from Opposition parties about alleged irregularities in Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls after an official of Varanasi publicly admitted to lapses.

"ECI has taken action against any type of breach of protocol. ECI has suspended ADM Varanasi" senior Deputy Election Commissioner Chandra Bhushan Kumar said.

Disciplinary action has been initiated against the Varanasi ADM. The Varanasi ADM has also been barred from going to the counting spot. Additional District Magistrate (Finance and



Police personnel on duty at Diksha Bhawan, Gorakhpur University counting centre, a day before counting of votes for UP Assembly polls, in Gorakhpur on Wednesday

PTI

Revenue) Sanjay Kumar has been made the nodal officer, EVMs.

Meanwhile, Additional Election Officer VK Singh was removed from the election process in Bareilly after ballot boxes and other election items were found inside a garbage collection bin of the local municipality in the Baheri area.

In Sonbhadra district, where ballot slips were recovered from a box inside the vehicle of the additional district magistrate, Ghorawal returning officer Ramesh Kumar was removed from election work.

The commission has ordered disciplinary proceedings against them. The Varanasi DM said all EVMs were checked late at night in the presence of election observers

Steps to ensure
smooth counting

- Four officials, including Varanasi's ADM NK Singh suspended
- Delhi and Bihar CEOs deputed to Meerut and Varanasi respectively as special observers
- 671 counting observers, 130 police observers, and 10 special observers will be on the ground to ensure the counting process is smooth
- 50,000 officials deployed for the counting of votes
- 1,200 counting halls have been set up

and candidates after the ruckus over the alleged replacement of EVMs on Tuesday.

This comes a day after Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav accused the ruling BJP of "stealing" votes and claimed that his party workers intercepted a truck carrying EVMs in Varanasi.

He also claimed that vehicles transporting ballots were intercepted in at least three districts. On Wednesday, taking to Twitter, the party put out a video of the official admitting there were "lapses".

Continued on Page 2

Last group of stranded
Indians evacuated

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has managed to bring out most of its nationals, including students from war-torn country, as the last big group of about 700 Indian students were evacuated from the northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy by a special train from Poltava. They are likely to board a flight to India from Poland on Thursday.

With this evacuation, India rescued more than 18,000 of its citizens via nearly 80 special flights as part of "Operation Ganga" starting February 22. Union Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday "Operation Ganga" was the result of the "whole Government approach" of the Prime Minister.

He also charged the Congress and other Opposition parties of reaching "a new low in politics" by seeing the Government efforts from the prism of "publicity".

Informing that the last batch of Indian students have safely moved away from Sumy and proceeded to the Poland border on their way back home, he complimented the PM for taking "strong measures" to evacuate Indian nationals from Ukraine.

While lashing out at the Congress for "not standing together" in the hour of crisis be it Galwan, coronavirus pandemic or now on the Ukraine issue, Goyal said the Modi Government adopted the

Bangladesh PM, Pak girl praise
Modi for rescuing their citizens

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's gesture of evacuating students of neighbouring countries along with its citizens from Ukraine came in for praise as the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Pakistani girl Asma Shafique thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for this effort.

Hasina on Wednesday thanked Modi for rescuing her country's nationals under "Operation Ganga," alongside the stranded Indian nationals. At least nine Bangladeshi stu-

dents besides some Nepalese and a Pakistani student were rescued.

Ama was evacuated from a war zone in Ukraine with help from the Indian Embassy in Kyiv. In a video, she thanked the Indian Embassy and the Indian Prime Minister for helping her escape a "very difficult situation". She said, "I'm very thankful to the Embassy of India in Kyiv for supporting us all the way here as we were stuck in a very difficult situation."

Continued on Page 2

"whole Government approach" in evacuating students.

"Modi took eight ministerial meetings and each day took strong measures to get each Indian citizen back home ...spoke to Russian President three times, Ukraine head twice and chiefs of five countries bordering Ukraine ...", he said.

The BJP leader said, "We are proud that the last batch of Indian students have safely moved to a camp and would be on their way to their country."

He claimed there is no such example from any other country — China evacuating their first batch on March 5 and "America giving prior advisory to their nationals to leave."

Continued on Page 2

SC grants bail to
Rajiv case lifer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted bail to AG Perarivalan, who has been serving a life sentence in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. The SC considered his long incarceration of over 30 years and the fact that there was no complaint against him when he was out on parole.

On February 18, 2014, the SC had commuted the death sentence given to Perarivalan to life imprisonment.

Continued on Page 2

No upper age limit
for NEET-UG now

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major decision aimed at meeting the shortage of doctors in the country, the Government has done away with the fixed upper age limit of 25 years for appearing in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for Undergraduate or NEET-UG.

An official of the Union Health Ministry said that under the Graduate Medical Education Board, the National Medical Commission has decided to remove the fixed upper age limit for appearing in the NEET-UG examination.

"The upper age cap put by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in 2017 was 25 years for unreserved candidates and 30 years for reserved

candidates," he said.

"I would like to inform that it has been decided in the 4th NMC meeting held on 21st October, 2021 that there should not be any fixed upper age limit for appearing in the NEET-UG examination. Therefore, the information bulletin may be modified accordingly.

"Further, the process for official notification to suitably amend the Regulations on Graduate Medical Education, 1997 to this effect has been initiated," a communication sent by Dr Pulkesh Kumar, Secretary NMC to Dr Devvrat, Office of Senior Director, National Testing Agency, on March 9 said. The age criteria had often been questioned in the Supreme Court and high courts of the country.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

BJP'S LANDSLIDE WIN
IN ASSAM CIVIC POLLS

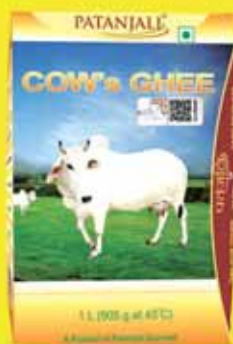
Guwahati: The BJP secured a runaway victory in Municipal Board polls in Assam by cornering 73 civic bodies out of the total 80, as per poll results declared by the Assam State Election Commission said on Wednesday.

BORDER PEACE MUST FOR
TIES, INDIA TELLS CHINA

New Delhi: India has made it clear to China that peace and tranquillity in border areas is essential for the development of overall bilateral ties.

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2008 SERIAL BLAST CASE
HC notices to 38 for death sentence confirmation

Ahmedabad: The Gujarat High Court on Wednesday issued notices to 38 convicts in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blast case to confirm their death sentence before it gets executed, under the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

The division bench of Justices Sonia Gokani and Mauna M Bhatt issued notices to all 38 convicts who were sentenced to death by a special court on February 18.

A special court had sentenced 38 convicts to death and sentenced 11 others to life imprisonment for the blasts, in which 59 people were killed and over 200 injured.

The state government had moved a criminal confirmation case in the High Court under the CrPC for convicts who received death sentence.

As per section 366 of the

As per Section 366 of the CrPC, a death sentence is not executed unless it is confirmed by a High Court in case the sentence is awarded by a Sessions Court

CrPC, a death sentence is not executed unless it is confirmed by a High Court in case the sentence is awarded by a sessions court.

At the same time, the High Court cannot confirm the sentence or acquit the persons before the time allowed to prefer an appeal has expired, or the appeal is disposed of, as per section 368 of the CrPC.

"The court has issued notices to 38 convicts returnable on June 9. The court will

hear the confirmation case only if the convicts do not appeal against the sentence before that time. They are allowed 90 days to file an appeal," public prosecutor Mitesh Amin said.

On July 26, 2008, 22 bomb blasts occurred in different parts of Ahmedabad city. The police had claimed that people associated with the terror outfit Indian Mujahideen (IM), a faction of the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), were involved in the blasts.

The court had sentenced 49 convicts under section 16 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which deals with terrorist acts, along with other relevant provisions of the law, as well as sections 302 (murder) and 120 b (criminal conspiracy), of the IPC. As many as 28 accused were acquitted.

Bihar Govt furnishing fake MNREGA figures: Tejashwi

Patna: The Nitish Kumar Government in Bihar appeared to have been caught on the wrong foot inside the Assembly on Wednesday, when Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav claimed inaccuracy in reply to a query about jobs provided under the MGNREGA scheme.

Yadav raised a supplementary question, armed with a print-out of the reply furnished online by the rural development department to his query about the number of people who got jobs under the scheme.

He pointed out that the department's reply stated that 62.09 lakh applications had been received and more than 99 per cent of applicants got jobs.

"The government has come out with a 'farji' (fake) figures. Data uploaded on the MGNREGA website states that in Bihar 1.53 crore applications were received. I wonder how the figure of 62 lakh was arrived at," Yadav fumed.

He also claimed that as per the website, only 45 lakh people in the state have been given jobs and only 14,590 of them had completed 100 mandays. BJP member Sanjay

Saraogi tried to interject only to be reprimanded by Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha, who told him gravely "don't try to guide the Chair. Don't commit such a mistake. Your utterances shall not be considered a part of the proceedings".

Minister for Rural Development Shrawan Kumar rose to reply and said "an inquiry will be conducted within a week and if it is found that I have been misled by an official, he will face stern action".

He also explained that often job card holders were not able to avail of 100 days' work guaranteed in the scheme as they took up assignments elsewhere. "We have tried our best to provide employment to the applicants under all circumstances, even when the Covid pandemic had brought economic activity to a grinding halt," asserted the minister.

Yadav, however, seemed dissatisfied with the reply, and with a rhetorical flourish, he challenged the minister to summon the officials concerned inside the House besides urging the Speaker to treat the government's submission as

"sthagti" (pending).

The Speaker, however, did not agree to the demand and asked the leader of the opposition to have faith in the House and rest assured of a satisfactory reply within the time specified by the minister.

Later, talking to reporters outside the House, Yadav vented some spleen.

"The state of affairs show that this government is running 'bhagwan bharose' (God's mercy). The bureaucrats now have the temerity to furnish the minister with a false reply in the House," Yadav lamented.

The RJD leader recalled that MGNREGA was launched during the previous UPA government at the Centre in which his father Lalu Prasad was a cabinet minister, and his late party colleague Raghuvansh Prasad Singh was hailed for being the brain behind the job guarantee scheme.

"I smelt a dead rat the moment I read the reply online. How could a state which has such a large population and where unemployment is so high have only 62 lakh applications.

Counting of votes in five States today

New Delhi/Lucknow/Panaji: Political parties were bracing for the assembly election results on Thursday in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and politically volatile Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, sending out feelers for possible post-poll tie-ups.

On the eve of the counting of votes, the Election Commission announced the removal of three officials, including the nodal officer for EVMs in Varanasi, after a massive controversy erupted over Samajwadi Party's allegation that electronic voting machines were being shifted in an unauthorised manner.

The poll panel also deputed Delhi's Chief Electoral Officer as a special officer in Meerut and the Bihar CEO in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary seat, to supervise the counting of votes.

It is a high-stakes election in Uttar Pradesh for the BJP and the Modi government as the state sends the highest number of 80 MPs to Lok Sabha and the party's performance is expected to have a bearing on the next general election slated for 2024.

Several exit polls have forecast a clear majority for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and for the Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab, while predicting a hung assembly in Goa and a tight race between the BJP and the Congress in Uttarakhand. Except for Punjab, all other states were under the BJP.

As the post-poll scenario could throw up surprises due to multi-cornered contests, the parties have dispatched senior leaders to the states and were also wooing other parties to ensure that they get the better of their rival claimant in case outside support is needed to form a government.

The Congress has sent Karnataka Congress chief D K Sivakumar as special observer to Goa and party general secretary Mukul Wasnik and Chhattisgarh Health Minister T S Singh Deo besides Vincent Pala to Manipur. The party had lost the race for government formation in the two states in 2017 despite emerging as the single largest party. Goa Congress chief Girish Chodankar told reporters that AAP leaders were "already in talks with Congress leaders".



Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal, former MP Dr Anita Arya and Haryana MP from Sirsa, Sunita Duggal and National President of Bhartiya Bauddh Sangh Bhanthe Sanghpriya Rahul at the Mahila Sashaktikaran Mahasammelan organised in New Delhi on Wednesday

Last group...

From Page 1
Answering a question, the BJP leader said the Government gave an advisory on February 15 but unfortunately students did not take it seriously..their universities too misled them, he said.

He said the Prime Minister also approached non-Governmental Organisations and religious, spiritual sects and Indian businessmen in Ukraine to help the stranded students.

Besides, he said the Prime Minister asked district officials to meet families of the students and inform the Ministry of External Affairs. Goyal hit out at Congress

leader Rahul Gandhi for sharing Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's tweet on the issue and Congress falsely claiming a student from Kashmir not being rescued "while he himself releasing a video thanking government for bringing him back."

"The Congress touched a new low in politics and sought to see rescue operations as publicity...," he said and pointed out that a Southern State Chief Minister wanted their students to be given "priority in the evacuation," he said.

He said India evacuated its citizens through neighbouring nations and people brought their pets back too. "We evacuated citizens from Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh as well," Goyal said.

As regards bringing out foreign nationals including the Pakistani woman, sources said here 17 foreign nationals were

rescued. Besides the Pakistani woman, a Nepalese citizen, two Tunisian and 13 Bangladeshi nationals were rescued by India, along with nearly 700 Indian citizens.

All these people were evacuated from Sumy on Tuesday by the Indian Embassy with help from the International Committee of Red Cross, after Russia and Ukraine agreed to create a humanitarian corridor following separate telephonic conversations Modi had with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky. Trains will take the students to Lviv in western Ukraine, from where they will be taken to Poland in buses, Anshad Ali, a student coordinator, said. The distance between Poltava and Lviv is around 888 km.

The rescue operation in Sumy began on Tuesday morn-

ing when the last big group of around 700 Indians was evacuated from the city. The Indian nationals were taken from Sumy in a convoy of 13 buses escorted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to Poltava city, Ali said.

Ali, who spoke to PTI from Poltava, said it is a nearly-12-hour train journey to Lviv, from where the students will be taken to Poland via buses. Lviv is located about 50 km from the Poland border.

After crossing the frontier, the students will be flown out on evacuation flights from Poland. "The students left Sumy at around 9:30 am. First, they reached Poltava, which is 170 km away and then they boarded a train to Lviv," Ali said.

"From Lviv, they will be taken to Poland in buses and then they are expected to board a flight for India on Thursday," he added.

PM hails BJP's victory in Assam

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hailed the BJP's landslide victory in municipal board polls in Assam, saying this shows the people's faith in the party's development agenda.

The BJP secured a runaway victory in the polls by bagging 73 civic bodies out of the total 80, according to the results declared by the Assam State Election Commission (ASEC) on Wednesday.

"Gratitude to the people of Assam for blessing BJP and our allies in the recently concluded municipal elections. This shows their faith in our Party's development agenda," Modi tweeted.

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Heads roll...

From Page 1
The poll panel officials have already rejected allegations that EVMs used for voting in just-concluded polls were moved out. However, Akhilesh has claimed that no information was given with regard to the transport of ballots. "If the EVMs were being transported for training, why weren't the candidates informed? I have known this DM since he was posted in

SC grants bail to Rajiv case lifer...

From Page 1
A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and BR Gavai directed the convict, whose death penalty was commuted into life term in 2014, to report to a local police station near Chennai in the first week of every month and ordered that the additional conditions for release would be decided by a local court there.

"There is no dispute regarding the fact that the applicant has undergone the sentence of 32 years. We are informed by the counsel for the applicant that he was released on parole thrice earlier and there was no complaint about his conduct during his release," the bench said in its order.

It also took note of the submission that the convict is on parole at present as well, and there is sufficient material produced about his conduct during his long incarceration.

The bench considered the fact that Perarivalan has acquired educational qualifications and has been suffering ill health during incarceration. "Taking into account the fact that the applicant has already spent more than 30 years in prison, we are of the considered view that he is entitled to be released on bail in spite of the vehement opposition of the ASG (additional solicitor general, who appeared for the Centre), subject to the final disposal of the SLPs (special leave petitions) here," the court said.

The bench said the pleas have to be heard finally in view of the stand taken by the Centre

Muzaffarnagar. He is letting things happen. He will say what the party (BJP) wants him to say," Akhilesh said, demanding action against Varanasi DM Kaushal Sharma and Commissioner.

The counting of votes for the recently-concluded Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Punjab, and Uttarakhand will begin at 8 am on Thursday. Altogether, 671 counting observers, 130 police observers, and 10 special observers will be on the ground to ensure the counting process is smooth, the commission said.

"The Commission has also deputed two special officers — CEO Delhi to Meerut and CEO Bihar to Varanasi — to supervise the counting arrangements," it added. In the past also, electoral officers from different States were deployed as special observers, mainly to address concerns

that the State Government did not have the power to entertain the mercy petition under Article 161 (power of the Governor to grant remission) of the Constitution in view of the fact that the convict has already taken the benefit of remission earlier when his death penalty was commuted to life imprisonment.

The top court has been hearing pleas, including the one in which Perarivalan sought suspension of his life sentence in the case till the MDMA probe is completed.

The CBI, in its affidavit of November 20, 2020, had told the apex court that the Tamil Nadu Governor has to take a call on grant of remission to Perarivalan. Later, the Governor referred the mercy plea to the President of India saying he did not have the power to decide it.

The mercy plea has been pending since then and the apex court said that till the time the legal issue over the power to grant remission is decided, it would grant the bail to the convict.

The State Government had earlier told the top court that the Cabinet had already passed a resolution on September 9, 2018, and recommended to the Governor for the premature release of all seven convicts in the case.

In its May 1999 order, the top court had upheld the death sentence of four convicts — Perarivalan, Murugan, Santham, and Nalini. In April 2000, the Tamil Nadu Governor had commuted the death sentence of Nalini on the basis of the state government's recommendation and an appeal by former Congress president and Rajiv Gandhi's widow Sonia Gandhi.

On February 18, 2014, the top court had commuted the death sentence of Perarivalan to life imprisonment, along with that of two other prisoners — Santhan and Murugan — on the grounds of an 11-year delay in deciding their mercy pleas by the Centre.

or complaints about any bias.

According to EC, more than 50,000 officials have been deployed for the counting of votes on Thursday in the five States where Assembly polls were held recently.

Nearly 1,200 counting halls have been set up where results will be recorded from electronic voting machines (EVMs). Uttar Pradesh, which has a maximum of 403 Assembly constituencies, will have more than 750 counting halls, followed by Punjab with over 200.

The EC said elaborate and foolproof arrangements have been made at all the counting centres. "All strong rooms, where polled EVMs are kept, are under three-layered security with inner cordon manned by Central Armed Forces. Concerned candidates have been watching the strong room arrangements through CCTV coverage of 24x7," it added.

No upper age...

From Page 1
With the age limit criteria removed, aspirants can now appear in the medical entrance exam as many times and even after taking admission to other courses, an official said. The move will also be helpful to those seeking admission to foreign countries.

NEET UG is one of the dream exams for the students who seek admission to medical institutes after Class 12. The National Testing Agency (NTA) has the responsibility to conduct this exam nationwide for all the aspirants.

Dr Rakesh Bagdi, national president of the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), welcomed the decision calling it a big relief for aspiring doctors. "This is the decision taken in favour of students, we are thankful to the Government," he said. Echoing similar sentiments, Dr Manish, President, FORDA said, "There's already a shortage of doctors in the country, with this step more and more people will get an opportunity to pursue MBBS. Our country can then have more doctors."

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

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I, Sushmita Kumari Poudel D/o Ramji Kumar Poudel R/o 2002, Village - Pilanji Kotla Mubarakpur Delhi-110003, have changed my name from Sushmita Kumari to Sushmita Kumari to Sushmita Kumari Poudel for all Future purposes. PD(9159)C

Public Notice
This is to inform general public that Mr. Lal Singh, Mrs. Suniti Devi, Mrs. Prakash, Mrs. Geeta Devi, Mr. Deenak, Mr. Tan Singh, Mr. Nitesh and Mrs. Laxmi are the owners of Land area measuring 19 Kanta, 4 Maras, out of Khasat No 11, Khasat No 11 Mustafi No. 42, Kila No. 25(8-0), Must No. 41, Kila No. 20(2-12), Khasat No. 457, Khaton No. 482, Must No. 42, Kila No. 18(1-18), Khasat No. 95, Khaton No. 96, Must No. 41, Kila No. 21(11-0), 21(21) (1-12), Khasat No. 435, Khaton No. 457/458, Must No. 42, Kila No. 24(2-9), 10(2-46), situated at Bissarakhapur, Tawadu, Distt. Nuh, Haryana. Above said owner have misplace the Original SFA dated 21.12.2019 executed by Mr. Faleh Singh in favour of Mrs. Sukhi Devi in respect of the Land area measuring 1 Kanta and Original Sale deed dated 21.11.2008 executed by Mr. Prem Singh Ambawat in favour of Mrs. Sukhi in respect of the Land area measuring 9 Kanta, 18 S Maras Doc. No. 2925 and Original Sale Deed dated 10.03.2014 executed by Mr. Surajmal in favour of Mrs. Sukhi in respect of the Land area measuring 2 Kanta, 4 Maras Doc. No. 3329. Anyone who find the above said documents shall handover the same to the Manager of M/s. Avanse Financial Services Ltd. having its Siding No. 75, 3rd Floor, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Building, Jhandewalan Extension, Delhi-110055. Above said owners are availing loan on above said property from M/s. Avanse Financial Services Ltd by mortgaging the said property. Hence anyone has any objection regarding the mortgage of the said property, the same may be raised within 10 days of the publication of this notice in the newspaper. Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocate), Law Vertices, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-111, Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9606707172/ 9818228636 (M).

SEC defers announcement of MCD election schedule

EC has knelt before Centre, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The State Election Commissioner (SEC) on Wednesday deferred the announcement for conducting elections for the three municipal corporations after it received a communication from the Centre in this regard. The move came in for criticism from Opposition parties, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

There are 104 wards each in the North and the South Delhi Municipal Corporations. The East Delhi Municipal Corporation has 64 wards.

Addressing the media SEC of Delhi, SK Srivastava said: "I received some communication from the Central Government at 4.30 PM, so I can't announce the dates right now. We were about to announce them but now it will take another five-seven days to announce the dates." "The Government perhaps desires reorganisation of the MCDs. May be they could re-unify the three corporations. So we have to think over it, and then announce the poll dates. We will examine their advice. If the three MCDs are unified, then we will have to decide accordingly. We are taking legal opinion on the issue," he added.



The SEC's announcement drew a sharp reaction from Opposition parties. Reacting to the development, Arvind Kejriwal questioned the SEC, saying that the decision was taken under pressure.

"Can the Central Govt 'direct' any EC to delay/cancel any elections? Under which provision? Are these 'directions' binding on the EC? Why is the EC buckling under pressure?" Kejriwal tweeted.

Addressing the media, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged that the term of the Houses of the civic bodies in Delhi is ending, and there was a pre-announced press conference where the dates were to be announced. Now, under pressure from the BJP at the Centre, the dates have been withheld. Sisodia charged that never since Independence, has an "election commission acted in this manner". "It (election body) has bent, and knelt down before the BJP at the Centre, after getting scared of it (BJP)," he charged.

Delhi BJP president Adesh

Gupta said that the party "never fears elections and our organisation always stands prepared for polls." "Ten years ago, the MCD was trifurcated into three parts but it did not help in betterment of administration and in fact caused an economic crisis in the civic bodies," he said. The BJP president further alleged that the biased attitude of the Kejriwal Government towards the civic bodies has increased problems. "In the last seven years the Kejriwal Government has withheld municipal funds to weaken the civic bodies' administration. The Centre has decided to intervene in this matter to improve its functioning," he said.

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Anil Kumar said that both the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party are trying to postpone the municipal elections fearing defeat. "We demand that the Delhi Election Commission ensure that the polls should be held on time in a free and fair manner," he said.

‘Delhi to be one of world’s top tourism capitals’

DDC, Delhi Govt working towards this ambitious vision, says Jasmine Shah

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has decided to develop the national Capital into one of the top tourism capitals of the world, said Jasmine Shah, vice-chairperson, Dialogue and Development Commission (DDC) on Wednesday, adding that the tourism industry will play a key role in accelerating economic growth in Delhi.

Addressing the fourth edition of the 'Delhi Tourism e-Conclave' organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as the chief guest, Shah said that Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal has announced his vision for 2047 to develop Delhi into one of the top global cities, which requires the support and expertise of all stakeholders including the industry.

"The DDC and Delhi Government across various departments have been continuously designing and implementing short-term, mid-term and long-term measures towards this ambitious vision," said Shah.

Shah highlighted some key initiatives of the Government to boost tourism in Delhi including the 'Dekho Meri Dilli' the Delhi tourism App launched in September which has recorded downloads from across the globe.

"The Delhi Film Policy to brand Delhi as a vibrant tourist and travel destination and monthly fairs and festivals are also recording a footfall of over 30,000 people per day.

Babasaheb-the grand musical organised by the Delhi Government was another pioneering initiative to make a grand musical theatre based on the life of Dr BR Ambedkar accessible to the general public and has also recorded a footfall of over 30,000 people every day since its launch," said Shah.

Sharing the broad policy interventions for the future of tourism in the city, Shah said that the national Capital has the potential to become a street food capital.

"The city Government is also working towards reducing the regulatory burden on Hotels, Restaurants and Café (HORECA) and Breakfast and Bed (B&B) industries," Shah said.

"The Government is also reviving over 500 lakes and water bodies and developing over 1,000 neighbourhood parks with world-class infrastructure. These spaces are being designed as accessible venues with all public amenities," he said. Shah also expressed the Delhi Government's keen interest in engaging with the CII and its industry members in branding Delhi as a top global tourism

DDC to upgrade Capital's neighbourhood parks, gardens

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the aim to make the national Capital a modern, equitable and sustainable city by 2047, the Dialogue and Development Commission (DDC) on Wednesday launched the 'community parks' initiative to transform neighbourhood parks and gardens into modern and world-class spaces.

According to a senior DDC official, the initiative will be a collaboration between the DDC, Delhi Parks and Gardens Society, Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) and CSR organisations.

"They all will work towards holistic transformation of 1,000 community parks of Delhi in the next five years. The first set of parks will be set up with the support of ICICI Foundation, JK Cement and CII Delhi," said the official.

On the occasion of the launch, DDC vice-chairperson, Jasmine Shah said that the community parks initiative was an important pillar of the Delhi@2047 initiative which was launched by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in August 2021.

"The DDC, in collaboration with its partners, will enable the resources that are needed to transform basic parks facilities into modern, world-class parks.

These parks shall be designed as multi-use spaces. The local communities would be involved in the design and development of these parks in order to ensure that they cater to the needs of diverse stakeholders," said Shah.

Reena Gupta, advisor to the Minister of Environment, said that well-designed parks are spaces for culture, recreation, community development, heritage, health, wellness and economic development. "The Delhi Government recognises the importance of green and open spaces for Delhi to become a world-class city. For post-Covid public life, parks far outvalue other public spaces as safe and inclusive havens for the community. Therefore the community parks initiatives is a key pillar of the Delhi@2047 initiative," said Gupta.

Saurabh Singh, the president, ICICI Foundation for Inclusive Growth said that they were pleased to partner with the Delhi Government in the effort to improve the ecology and water conservation projects of the Capital for the benefit of the citizens of Delhi.

capital, while inaugurating a report drafted by KPMG regarding tourism in Delhi.

A lighthouse to show way to better future

City's first Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University Lighthouse inaugurated in Kalkaji

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday inaugurated the first Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU) Lighthouse in Kalkaji.

Last year, the DSEU had entered into an agreement with Pune-based non-profit Lighthouse Communities Foundation to set up light-houses near slum clusters of Delhi in order to help disadvantaged youth earn a livelihood. The other lighthouses are expected to come up at Malkaganj, Matia Mahal and Patparganj.

While inaugurating the Kalkaji Lighthouse, Sisodia, who is also the Education Minister, said that this lighthouse will offer high quality short-term vocational skill courses as well as a plethora of employment opportunities for youth between 18-30 years of age.

"The DSEU is the first one in the country, which has taken such a unique step to equip youth of underserved communities with new-age skills at a university-level centre in the slum clusters itself," said the Education Minister. Sisodia further said that in the unprecedented times of Covid,

crores of people have lost their jobs across the country and keeping in view the need for jobs in the city, the Delhi Government has started this lighthouse in association with experts from

Lighthouse Communities Foundation and Michael and Susan Dell Foundation to provide world-class skills, professional development and job oriented skills training to the youth of Delhi.

"Even after graduating today, youth struggle for jobs, but after they pursue skill-based courses here, companies themselves will come and give jobs to the youth," he added.

"The DSEU will also go to the slums and give admission

to the children there. This will be the first time in the history of the country when children will not go to the university to take admission, but the university itself will go to the children and give them admission," said Sisodia.

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader, Atishi said that it is the vision of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal that every child of Delhi gets a good education and then a good job.

"My community members at Kalkaji had been requesting me to do something to get jobs for the youth of the Kalkaji area. So the Government decided to get the first DSEU Lighthouse here, to end all their woes about their children's future.

This Lighthouse will spread the light of education among youth of Kalkaji and Delhi, will open new avenues for employment," said Atishi.



FIR filed against Bihar cricket association prez on rape bid accusation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has registered an First Information Report (FIR) against Bihar Cricket Association president Rakesh Kumar Tiwari after a woman allegedly accused him of molesting and attempt to rape her at a five-hotel in the national Capital.

According to the FIR registered at Parliament Street police station, the complainant, who runs a company that deals in sports management, event management and advertisement, alleged that in March 2021, Bihar Cricket Association announced a league and gave the work of handling advertisement, branding and campaign to the complainant's company.

"After completing the work, the complainant's company gave the bill to the BCA in April last year. The complainant claimed that when she asked for the payment, the accused allegedly asked her to come at a five-star hotel in central Delhi. She went to the hotel on July 12 where the

accused allegedly molested her inside the room," the FIR stated.

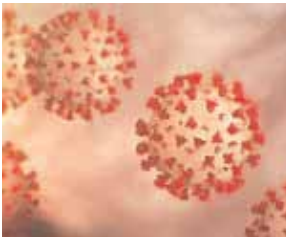
"The victim pushed the accused and came out of the room. She called her brother and narrated the whole incident, following which he called the accused person who apologised for his act and said that it will never happen in future. He also assured the complainant that he will clear the bills of the complainant's company," the FIR stated.

Later, he called the woman and his brother at the hotel to talk about the payment. On July 23, they both went to the hotel room.

He asked complainant's brother to take a bag from the room to the hotel reception. When her brother went out of the room, he allegedly touched her inappropriately, the FIR further stated.

The woman resisted his act and told her brother about the incident, it said, adding that the case has been registered under sections 354, 376 and 511 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) on Monday.

Burari hosp to start non-Covid services



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid decline in the COVID-19 cases in the National Capital, the Delhi government has given its nod for starting non-Covid services at the state-run Burari hospital.

According to data shared by the official, the number of daily cases in Delhi has been on the decline after touching the record high of 28,867 on January 13. The city had recorded a positivity rate of 30.6 per cent on January 14, the highest during the ongoing wave of the pandemic.

Delhi on Tuesday recorded 177 new Covid cases and two more fatalities, while the positivity rate stood at 0.51 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here.

"In view of the decrease in positivity rate of Covid cases in Delhi and sufficient Covid bed availability, the competent authority has approved to start non-Covid services at Burari Hospital with immediate effect," read official order. The Burari Hospital was inaugurated in July 2020 by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The national capital's case count stands at 18,62,047, while death toll mounted to 26,139.

Gadkari lays foundation of 19 infra projects on NH-48



STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The Union Minister for Road Transport and National Highways, Nitin Gadkari laid the foundation stone of 19 projects worth Rs 1,407 crore, including the inauguration of a four-lane U-turn underpass on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway (NH-48) built at a cost of about Rs 103 crore near

Bhiwadi link road, the flyover at Kapriwas Chowk and Dwarkadhish Chowk at a cost of about Rs.147.51 crore.

Gadkari also laid the foundation stone for the construction of an elevated highway and a small bridge in Manesar at a cost of Rs 86 crore besides this, the construction of a flyover in Bilaspur, bridge near Masani barrage and Dodhai, culvert near Laduwas Gurjar, construction of flyover at Bawal Chowk.

He also laid the foundation stone of Dehni VUP, flyover at Jagguwas Chowk in Behror, bridge near Sotanala, flyover near Bansurmod, flyover near Putli Cut, Nilka and Bhabharu in Behror and Khotolai besides flyover via duct at Shahpur Tiraha. Gadkari also laid the foundation stone for the maintenance and remaining work of the Delhi-Jaipur Highway in the States of Haryana and Rajasthan.

Ex-IB man rapes minor; on the run

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 17-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a former Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer in Central Delhi's Karol Bagh area by luring her on the pretext of getting her a job. Police said that the accused is absconding and multiple teams have been formed to nab him.

The 60-year-old accused, a resident of Uttam Nagar, is a friend of the victim's father. According to the police, the girl has completed her education till high school and is pursuing a course to become a beautician.

"On March 7, the accused took her to a hotel and allegedly raped her. He then dropped her back home and warned her against revealing the incident to her parents. However, a day later, on Women's Day, the victim mustered the courage to share her ordeal with them," said a senior police officer.

"Based on her statement, the accused has been booked under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and POC SO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act. The victim was also counselled," the senior police officer said.

Doctors treat Uzbek woman suffering from postpartum kidney failure

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 23 year-old Uzbek national, who was suffering from both kidneys failure, was saved at Delhi's Aakash Healthcare Super Speciality Hospital when her mother's kidney was transplanted to her in a complicated and rare procedure.

According to officials, the patient, Mokhichekhrakhon Sultonova, who recently became a mother, kidneys failed due to hypotension (low blood pressure), resulting in tubular necrosis, a kidney disorder involving damage to the tubule cells of the kidneys.

"Patient's mother Mavjuda Khalilova, had contacted the Aakash Hospital via email after her daughter's condition deteriorated in their home country. She made the decision to donate her kidney to her daughter since she was unable to nurse and care of her child but most importantly she was gradually losing her life," said the official.

Dr Vikram Kalra, the Additional Director and senior consultant, Nephrology and Kidney Transplant, Aakash Healthcare said that the donated kidney is functioning normally after surgery, and both the mother and the daughter are doing well. "Patient had very difficult time after deliv-

ery at Uzbekistan and had ileostomy (stool stoma over abdominal wall). She was very happy and excited to know when we told her that the closure of ileostomy was possible and after 3 weeks, she will be fit to undergo kidney transplantation. Mokhichekhrakhon is now able to resume her normal life and spend all of the time she has missed with her daughter," said Dr Kalra.

"It brings me great joy to see my daughter and granddaughter spending time together once more. Mokhichekhrakhon spent the majority of her time in the hospital following her delivery.

There was no time for the baby who had just been born. Thanks to Aakash Hospital, my daughter has recovered and my grandchild is back with her mother, free of any medical concerns.

I will be eternally grateful to India for its assistance," says Mavjuda Khalilova. Dr Aashish Chaudhry, Managing Director, Aakash Healthcare, Dwarka said that India has been one of the most popular destinations for Uzbek nationals seeking medical care. "Indian hospitals provide a wide variety of pre-surgery and post-surgery services, from cutting-edge equipment and facilities to leading drug development and treatment alternatives.

Delhi Govt school building in Aram Bagh inaugurated

This school has all facilities like science lab and modern sports ground

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After a wait of 50 years, a new Delhi Government school building in Delhi's Aram Bagh was inaugurated in the National Capital.

The official said that the city government has provided all facilities including mathematics and science labs and playgrounds in the new complex.

On this occasion, Vishesh Ravi, the senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said that since 1972 the Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya was functioning in a porta-cabin, but not one Congress-BJP government tried to fix it.

Ravi said that in 2019, the Delhi's Chief Minister, Arvind

Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia decided to give this school a permanent complex. "Despite the obstacles posed by the corona pandemic, they have shown their commitment by getting it built in record time," said Ravi

"The earlier governments had always neglected education and the school was never made permanent.

As soon as the Delhi Government of the AAP was formed, the work of construction of schools was done rapidly.

This school has all facilities like math lab, science lab and a modern sports ground. Classes will start in this school from the session 2022-23," said Ravi.

"It is magic of the miraculous work of chief minister that seven years ago, the government school around which parents and students did not even think of wandering, today there is a huge competition for admission," Ravi added.




Retired Sub-Inspector, 3 Constables get jail for extortion

Gurugram: A court of Additional District and Session Judge (ASJ), Ashwani Kumar Mehta on Wednesday sentenced 5-year jail for 4 cops including a retired sub-inspector for extortion, confining a cyber cafe owner in 2009.

The cops have been identified as Ram Dyal (retired sub-inspector), who will serve 5 years jail term and the remaining three identified as constable Rajesh, Sunil and Vinod will serve 3 years each jail term and Rs 40,000 penalty each.

All of them were sent to district jail on Wednesday. The convicts were all posted in the crime branch. All four have been taken into custody on February 23.



SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
ADVERTISEMENT DEPARTMENT

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Civic Centre (25th Floor), Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, New Delhi-110002, Ph. No. 011-2322-7511
Email ID: coadvtt.sdmcc@gmail.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

Bids are invited on behalf of Commissioner, SDMC through following three different e-Tenders from eligible bidders:-
1. E-Tender Notice No. CO/Advtt/E-Tender-19/2021-22/SDMC/NIT/D-945 dated 08.03.2022 for allotment of advertisement rights through Unipole Clusters/Individual Unipole sites under the jurisdiction of SDMC on monthly license fee basis in two bid system (i.e. Technical and Financial) for an initial period of three years.
2. E-Tender Notice No. CO/Advtt/E-Tender-20/2021-22/SDMC/NIT/D-944 dated 08.03.2022 for allotment of advertisement rights through LED Clusters/Individual LEDs under the jurisdiction of SDMC on monthly license fee basis in two bid system (i.e. Technical and Financial) for an initial period of three years.
3. E-Tender Notice No. CO/Advtt/E-Tender-21/2021-22/SDMC/NIT/D-945 dated 08.03.2022 for allotment of advertisement rights through flag signs/MUPI/advertisement instruments/product display platform/welcome gate/led in market clusters under the jurisdiction of SDMC on monthly license fee basis in two bid system (i.e. Technical and Financial) for an initial period of three years.
The Last Date of Submission of bids in all above e-tenders is : - 30.03.2022, Till 16.00 Hours.
The detailed Tender documents are available on SDMC's website i.e. www.mcdonline.nic.in and <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>
RO NO. 81/DPV/S/2021-22
Commercial Officer, Advertisement Department

‘SPV soon to monetise surplus land of CPSEs’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved creating a new company to hold and monetise surplus land and buildings of Government agencies and PSUs that are being privatised or being shut down.

The special purpose vehicle (SPV) called the National Land Monetisation Corporation (NLMC) will be set up as a wholly-owned Government of India company with an initial authorised share capital of Rs 5,000 crore and paid-up share capital of Rs 150 crore, an official statement said.

"NLMC will undertake monetization of surplus land and building assets of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and other Government agencies," it said. With monetization of non-core assets, the government would be able to generate substantial revenues by monetizing

unused and under-used assets, the statement added..

The Government has in recent months spoken of asset monetisation as means of not just revenue generation but also boosting economic activity as Asia's third-largest economy emerges from the pandemic.

Asset monetisation is the process of creating new sources of revenue for the government and its entities by unlocking the economic value of unutilised or underutilised public assets.

"At present, CPSEs hold considerable surplus, unused and underused non-core assets in the nature of land and buildings. For CPSEs undergoing strategic disinvestment or closure, monetization of these surplus land and non-core assets is important to unlock their value. NLMC will support and undertake monetization of these assets," the statement said. NLMC will hire professionals from the private sector just as in the case of similar

specialised Government companies like the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) and Invest India, the statement said, adding that this was considering that real estate monetisation requires specialised skills and expertise in areas such as market research, legal due diligence, valuation, master planning, investment banking and land management.

The new company, which will be set up under the administrative jurisdiction of the Finance Ministry, will be a lean organization with minimal full-time staff, hired directly from the market on a contract basis.

The Board of Directors of NLMC will comprise senior Central Government officers and eminent experts to enable professional operations and management of company. The chairman, non-Government directors of the NLMC will be appointed through a merit-based selection process.

WHO centre for traditional medicine to be set up in Gujarat's Jamnagar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the establishment of a WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (WHO GCTM) in Gujarat's Jamnagar by signing a host country agreement, the first and only global outpost centre for traditional medicine across the globe.

The WHO GCTM will be established under the Ministry of AYUSH. The agreement would help position AYUSH systems across the globe and provide leadership on global health matters pertaining to traditional medicine, an official statement said.

WHO GCTM will ensure quality, safety, efficacy, acces-

sibility and rational use of traditional medicine besides developing norms, standards, and guidelines in relevant technical areas, tools and methodologies, for collecting data, undertaking analytics, and assess impact.

The Cabinet was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Germany in December 2021.

The objectives of the MoU are to enhance cooperation in the field of medical sciences/health research in areas including toxicology, neglected (Tropical) disease, rare diseases and any other areas of mutual interest. It was also

apprised of a MoU between ICMR and the Oxford University, the UK in November 2021 for capacity building for Indian scientists and researchers, collection of data compliant with international standards and regulatory requirements, development of India towards becoming a regional hub for capacity development using its own funds and following the principles of equity and sovereignty.

The cabinet also approved a MoU signed between ICMR and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), National Institute of Health of Department of Health and Human Services, US, in September 2021.

ED attaches immovable, movable properties in KSBL money laundering case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached immovable and movable properties in the form of lands, buildings and share holdings worth Rs 1,984 crore under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a money laundering investigation against Karvy Stock Broking Ltd (KSBL) and its Chairman Commander Parathasarathy and others.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of FIRs filed by the CCS Police Station, Hyderabad Police, on the complaints of lending banks who complained that the Karvy Group had availed large amounts of loans by illegally pledging their clients' shares worth about Rs 2,800 crore. Subsequently, these loans turned into non-performing assets (NPA) after the release of the client's securities as per the orders of NSE and SEBI.

The KSBL was one of the leading stock brokers in the country with millions of clients. The scam came to light after a limited purpose inspection of KSBL conducted by NSE in 2019 revealed that KSBL had not revealed a Depository Participant DP Account and credited the funds raised by pledging of client securities to six of its own bank accounts ("Stock Broker-own Account") instead of the "Stock Broker-Client Account", the ED said in a statement.

The ED has collected the audit conducted by NSE and the orders passed by SEBI and ROC against KSBL and the forensic audit reports of BDO India LLP. On September 22, 2021, the ED had conducted searches at nine locations and subsequently, Parathasarathy, CMD of Karvy Group, and G Hari Krishna, CFO, were brought on production warrant and produced before ED PMLA Special Court. They were arrested under PMLA on January 20 this year.

They are presently in judicial custody. Parathasarathy has been totally evasive and non-cooperative during the investigation and while admitting a few wrong doings by KSBL, has been shifting the entire blame on the CEO, CFO and other senior management.

In a separate case, the ED has provisionally attached movable and 376 immovable properties worth more than Rs 268 crore in Akshaya Gold Farms & Villas India Limited (AGFVIL) Ponzi scam case.

The attached properties are in the name of AGFVIL and sister concerns, its directors, relatives of directors and their benamidars.

Meanwhile, the ED has arrested 11 key accused persons involved in Chennai Port Trust-Term Deposit fraud case worth over Rs 45 crore in relation to money laundering case. In this case, the ED had initiated a money laundering investigation on the basis of FIR registered by the CBI, ACB, Chennai.

The ED had searched 15 premises across Tamil Nadu in June 2021 and during the course of investigation, the suspected persons were examined and it was found that the proceeds of crime or the money obtained out of liquidation of the Fixed Deposits pertaining to Chennai Port Trust was invested in acquiring more than 230 acres of land, several plots, vehicles, gold and deposits and the same were attached in December 2021 and February 2022, it added.

Corruption case filed in maintenance contracts of gardens at UP's historical sites

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case of corruption in the maintenance contracts of gardens at Uttar Pradesh's historical sites, including Taj Mahal and The Residency in Lucknow, allegedly by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) officials in collusion with a private contractor.

The contractor allegedly siphoned off government funds by submitting fake bills showing unskilled workers engaged in Mysore circle of the ASI tending lawns of historical sites 2,000 kilometers away in Lucknow. Labourers listed under ASI's Kota and Delhi circles were also shown as working in Lucknow.

Similar bogus bills were also reimbursed on the basis of bogus bills submitted for maintenance of lawns in cities like Kushinagar, Agra, Kanpur, among others by the private contractor Kuldeep Singh.

The complaint, now a part of the FIR, gave specific details about archaeological sites in Uttar Pradesh like the iconic Taj Mahal and The Residency in Lucknow.

The Residency, also called as the British Residency and Residency Complex, is a group of several buildings in a common precinct in Lucknow. It served as the residence for the British Resident General who was a representative in the court of the Nawab.

The complaint further alleged that similar fraud was also perpetrated in Agra's Sikandara, Ram Bagh and Fatehpur Sikri.

The accused contractor was allegedly aided by Horticulture Assistant at The Residency Vineet Agrawal, Deputy Superintending Horticulturist posted at ASI's Agra Division-I which covers most of Uttar Pradesh, P K Choudhary; and retired officer Raj Kumar.

Singh was awarded a Rs 2.5 crore contract on October 22, 2019 for upkeep of archaeological gardens in Uttar Pradesh for fiscal 2019-20 which was CBI again extended for next year at same rate.

AK Antony hangs up boots after 52-year-long illustrious career in electoral politics

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran Congress leader and former Union minister AK Antony has informed the Congress leadership that he will not seek re-election to his Rajya Sabha seat and move back to his home state of Kerala after his tenure comes to an end in April. The announcement marks the end of Antony's nearly 52-year-long illustrious career in electoral politics which includes three terms each as Union minister and chief minister of Kerala. Elections to three Rajya Sabha seats in Kerala are due on 31 March.

"The time has come now for me to end my journey in electoral politics and my parliamentary career. I will leave Delhi in April and return to live in Thiruvananthapuram," Antony said.

Antony thanked Congress president Sonia Gandhi for the opportunities given to him to represent the party in Rajya Sabha. The 81 year old leader said that he was thinking of quitting politics for a while and had also informed Sonia Gandhi about it a few months ago. "After thinking about parliamentary politics for a while, I informed Sonia ji a couple of months ago about my decision not to seek another Rajya Sabha term. During my visit to Kerala last month, I told the PCC president and other colleagues about the same," Antony said at a press conference in Kerala.

Earlier, the Election Commission announced the dates for elections to three Rajya Sabha seats in Kerala which are currently occupied by Antony, CPI(M)'s K Somaprasad and MV Shreyams Kumar. The former Defence

Minister's political career began in Kerala during the 1970s and he earned the reputation of being one of the Congress' most honest and upright leaders, earning him the moniker 'St Antony of Congress'. He was known to be one of Sonia Gandhi's most trusted lieutenants, and also had good terms with former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

Antony first became MLA in the Kerala Legislative Assembly in 1970, after graduating from his student politics days, and went on to serve the first of his three terms as the state's chief minister at the age of 37 in 1977. Apart from his five terms as MLA, he has also served as the chief of the Congress' Kerala unit for 10 years. He served as Union minister for three terms - including the longest stint by any defence minister in the country- from 2006 to 2014. He has also been a Rajya Sabha MP for five terms.

After the split within the Congress party in 1978, he quit as chief minister of the Congress (U) faction that led the coalition government in Kerala.

The decision was a protest against the party's support to Indira Gandhi in the 1978 bypoll. Antony had also asked Indira Gandhi to withdraw the Emergency earlier. After quitting as chief minister, Antony launched his own Congress faction called Congress (A), which later joined the Congress with Indira Gandhi attending the merger ceremony in Kochi.

Thereafter, Antony was made AICC general secretary in 1984 and has been a long-time member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC).



Students from Khalsa College, wearing traditional Punjabi attire, perform 'Giddha' during a cultural event, in Amritsar on Wednesday.

PTI Photo

Peace on border vital for ties: India to China ahead of talks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As both the countries are poised for the 15th round of military level talks on Friday to find ways to ease tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India on Wednesday made it clear to China that peace and tranquility in border areas is prerequisite for bilateral ties.

Making this assertion two days before the Corps Commander level talks in Ladakh, Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla also said the relationship has to be based on the "three mutuals" of respect, sensitivity and interest. He also said India wants a good relationship with Pakistan, but it cannot be at the expense of its security. The Foreign Secretary

made these observations in an event at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration.

"We have made it clear to China that peace and tranquility in the border areas is essential for the development of our relationship. Development of India-China relationship has to be based on 'three mutuals' - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest," Shringla said. On ties with Afghanistan, Shringla said India has continued its "special relationship" with the friendly people of that country.

"In response to the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, India has decided to gift 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat to the people of Afghanistan. The first convoy carrying wheat was

flagged off last month from the Attari border," he said. Shringla also said India remains engaged with Myanmar with which it shares a nearly 1,700 km long border. "In our engagement, we have emphasised India's interest in seeing Myanmar's return to democracy at the earliest," he said.

"We remain committed to a relationship that provides for our cooperation with Myanmar in areas of security, economy and humanitarian assistance," Shringla added.

He underlined that neighbourhood comes "first and foremost" in India's foreign policy priorities. "The neighbourhood first policy, at the instance of prime minister, accords highest priority to our relations with Afghanistan, Bangladesh,

Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka," he said. "It is these countries - with exception of Pakistan - that we work most closely with," he said adding the countries in the neighbourhood are of special significance to India.

Shringla pointed out that neighbouring countries have direct relevance to India's border states, adding that India realises that its prosperity and growth are linked to that of its neighbours.

"We cannot develop unless our neighbours develop. It was in this spirit that cabinet secretary wrote to all government ministries and departments asking them to accord priority to India's neighbours in their international activities, programmes and projects," he said.

Maha Govt conspiring with police to frame senior leaders in false cases: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI:

The clash between the 'Maha Vikas Aghadi' of Shiv Sena-Congress-NCP coalition Government and the BJP reached a new bitter scale on Wednesday with the latter demanding a CBI probe against the alleged conspiracies hatched by what it called 'Maha Vinash Aghadi Government' against the BJP State leaders.

The BJP alleged that the leaders of Maharashtra government are conspiring with police to frame its senior leaders in false cases with the active involvement of top Ministers and demanded a CBI probe into the matter.

Addressing a press conference here party spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla, while quoting a recording of alleged conversation of State's special public prosecutor, said he was collaborating with some Ministers of the Maharashtra government and officials to framing senior BJP leaders including former state Chief Minister Devendra

Fadnavis in false cases.

The BJP leader quoted from the video recording "lasting 125 hours" where various fake cases, including those of drugs, are being planned to be "planted" against top state BJP leadership, he alleged.

Poonawalla alleged that state government is working to suppress the opposition voice. He also said that the State police was involved in alleged extortion and conspiracy as is evident from the recording.

"In the recording the special government prosecutor who is assigned the task of fixing BJP state leaders is saying that ex-Maharashtra Minister Anil Deshmukh had extorted minimum of Rs 250 crore in 2-3 months from builders...", said Poonawalla.

The Poonawalla said the prosecutor, however, also affirms that Deshmukh is right for (fixing) job. Deshmukh is currently in jail for money laundering case. The BJP spokesman also alleged that the recording also talked about a judge of a lower court being fixed and quotes the price.

SC adjourns hearing in contempt case against Vijay Mallya

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court adjourned till Thursday hearing on a plea related to appearance of fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya, accused in bank loan default case of over Rs 9,000 crore involving his defunct Kingfisher Airlines, in a contempt case where he has been found guilty.

A bench comprising justices U U Lalit, S Ravindra Bhat and P S Narasimha on Wednesday posted contempt case for hearing at 2 PM Thursday after senior advocate and amicus curiae Jaideep Gupta sought adjournment on grounds that he would be busy arguing another case.

The top court, on February 10, had fixed the contempt case against Mallya for hearing on Wednesday and had given fugitive businessman last opportunity to appear before it either personally or through his lawyer.

The bench had said it has given multiple opportunities to Mallya to appear either personally or through a lawyer and had even given specific directions in its last order dated November 30, 2021. Amicus curiae Gupta had said court has found contemnor guilty of contempt of court.

SII's Covovax vaccine given Emergency Use Authorisation: DCGI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI:

Serum Institute of India's Covovax vaccine has been given Emergency Use Authorisation by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for adults and for children above the age of 12.

Sharing the information, SII CEO Adar Poonawalla said that the younger age groups will follow shortly and added that Novavax in global trials has demonstrated more than 90% efficacy.

Interestingly, Covovax is the fourth vaccine to receive the regulator's nod for use among those below 18 years. The approval from the DCGI comes after the Subject Expert Committee on COVID-19 of the CDSCO last week recommended granting emergency use authorisation (EUA) to Covovax for those aged 12 to 17.

Amid this development, the Centre has still not taken a decision on vaccinating those aged below 15 years.



The health ministry has consistently said that additional need for vaccination and inclusion of population for vaccination are examined constantly.

In the EUA application to DCGI, Prakash Kumar Singh, director (government and regulatory affairs) at SII on February 21 had stated that the data from two studies on about 2707 children aged 12 to 17 years show that Covovax is highly efficacious, immunogenic, safe and well tolerated in this age group of children.

Herbs can be life savers for CKD patients: Experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the World Kidney Day on Thursday, experts have said that traditional ayurvedic herbs like Punarnava, Gokhuru and Varuna can provide natural remedies to the patients suffering with chronic kidney disease (CKD) which are on rise in the country due to sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy diet.

Professor KN Dwivedi, Dean, Faculty of Ayurveda, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), called the herbs as life-savers for the CKD patients as they can help rejuvenate the cells of the damaged kidney.

While the well-known diuretic herbs like Varuna is a good blood purifier that helps to maintain homeostasis, Gokhuru is beneficial in regenerating kidney's nephrons, Prof. Dwivedi said, adding that several patients have found such formulations beneficial. Punarnava is a natural diuretic that has been prescribed in Ayurveda for many other urinary problems. It also has anti-inflammatory and



rejuvenating properties. Punarnava can be used daily to keep kidney functions healthy, he said. b'NEERI-KFT is one such ayurvedic drug based on extracts of such kidney-friendly medicinal plants like tulsi, ashwagandha and guduchi having anti-oxidants properties."

Prof Dwivedi said that if detected properly and in time, CKD can be cured with the help of extracts from these identified herbs. More the delay in detection, the longer the treatment, he warned. "When detected early, the dialysis cycle can be brought down with the help of the polyherbal formulation which helps in strengthening the kidney," he explained. Developed by AIMIL Pharmaceuticals after intensive research, benefits of NEERI-KFT in managing CKD have been men-

tioned in studies published in journals like Soudi Journal of Biological Sciences. "If the ayurvedic formulation is prescribed in early stages of the CKD, the kidney can be saved from getting ruptured. Its usage has been found to be reducing levels of Creatine, Urea and Uric Acid," Prof Dwivedi said.

In fact, the formulation is also found to control TNF Alfa too, an indicator of disruption in the kidney, as well as in protecting the organ from dietary AGEs, harmful compounds caused by poor eating habits.

CKD is a serious progressive medical condition characterized by a gradual loss of kidney function, usually accompanied by other comorbidities such as cardiovascular diseases (hypertension, heart failure and stroke) and diabetes, eventually leading to kidney failure. Because of the increasing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and other risk factors, the burden of CKD is increasing globally. The disease affects approximately 10% of the world's adult population, as per various studies.

Landslide victory for BJP in Assam civic poll

BJP WINS 73 OF 80, CONGRESS FACES ROUT

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The BJP secured a runaway victory in Municipal Board polls in Assam by cornering 73 civic bodies out of the total 80, as per poll results declared by the Assam State Election Commission (ASEC) on Wednesday.

The Congress, the principal Opposition party of the state, failed miserably and could not win a single civic body till now. The result of one civic body is yet to come.

Interestingly, in Mariani Municipal Board, Independent candidates won seven of the 10 wards while the remaining three were bagged by the BJP.

The poll results also gave five hung municipal boards, the

ASEC said.

The ASEC said a total of 672 wards have been bagged by the BJP, while 71 were won by the Congress. Others have won in 149 wards.

Altogether 57 wards were won uncontested.

Commenting on the results, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the massive mandate is for growth and development, and will inspire the party to pursue the agenda of progress with renewed vigour.

"I congratulate all @BJP4Assam karyakartas & leaders who worked tirelessly spreading the development ideals of Adarniya PM Shri @narendramodi ji.

"I bow my head in gratitude to the people of Assam for the thumping victory of can-



didates from @BJP4Assam & its allies in the municipal elections," he said in a series of tweets.

On the humiliating defeat faced by the Congress, the state chief Bhupen Kumar Borah said that rise and fall in politics are a continuous process and every party passes through both good and bad times.

We have to work hard for

good times and have to wait patiently for the opportunity. I accept the responsibility of the municipal board results," he said in a tweet.

The polling to 80 municipal boards across the state was held on March 6 through electronic voting machines (EVMs) for the first time in the history of civic elections in Assam. An estimated 70 per cent voter turnout was registered.

Sarpanch killed by terrorists in Srinagar

PNS ■ JAMMU

A sarpanch was killed in cold blood by unidentified terrorists after they barged inside his home and opened indiscriminate firing in Khonmoh area of Srinagar late Wednesday evening.

The elected public representative has been identified as Sameer Ahmad Bhat.

According to a police spokesman the terror incident was reported around 6.50 p.m on Wednesday.

Preliminary investigations conducted by the police revealed that terrorists barged in to the house of Sameer Bhat and targeted him from a very close range.

Critically injured Bhat was rushed to a nearby hospital where he succumbed to his fatal injuries.

The police authorities have registered a FIR and launched investigations in the case.

Row over rules for Maha Speaker's elections

Maha Guv, CM don't trust each other: HC

ASKS TWO TO 'SIT TOGETHER' TO SORT OUT DIFFERENCES

DISMISSES PETITIONS CHALLENGING ASSEMBLY SPEAKER ELECTION RULES

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Averring that the "ramblings" between the Maharashtra Governor and Chief Minister "do not take the State forward", the Bombay High Court on Wednesday observed that it was "unfortunate" that the two highest functionaries of the State "do not trust each other" and asked them to "sit together" and "sort out" the differences between them.

Refusing to accept petitioners' plea seeking an order declaring the amendment as "unconstitutional and illegal" on the ground – as stated by petitioner Girish Mahajan's lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani that when amendments were made, Mahajan was serving his suspension period, Chief Justice Datta noted: "Say these rules are made in your absence, which affect the public at large. Can you come back and say that decision should be reversed. Can that be done? Can you seek reversal? No, it cannot be done!"

While rejecting Jethmalani's contention that the public at large were affected by the amendment, CJ Datta observed: "The public is least concerned with the election of speaker and deputy speaker. Just ask in this very courtroom who is the Lok Sabha speaker. How many will be able to reply? Until and unless this deals with the public at large, this cannot be entertained in a public interest litigation," CJ Datta remarked.

On his part, Jethmalani and Advocate Subhash Jha, appearing for the second petitioner Janak Vyas, told the HC bench that the Chief Minister could not ask the Governor at all to fix a date for the speaker election. He went on to argue that the purpose of the Court was to ensure that everyone remained within their boundaries and followed good governance.

However, the HC bench did not accept the arguments made by the petitioners' lawyers. "The rules do not say anywhere the Chief Minister is unilaterally taking a decision to appoint speaker and deputy speaker. He is only taking a decision on the date of election," the HC bench noted, while dismissing the two petitions.

Wednesday was the second occasion in the last eight months when the high court has passed some serious remarks about the Governor. It may be recalled that on August 12, 2021 a HC bench, headed by Chief Justice Datta himself, had made telling comments while disposing of a PIL seeking its intervention over the Governor's "inaction" in taking a decision on the Maharashtra government's recommendation made on November 6, 2020.

At that time, a HC division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G. S. Kulkarni had observed: "Of course, the Governor is not

answerable to the Court in view of Article 361 of the Constitution and no direction can issue to the Governor; hence, the petitioner has not joined the Secretary of the Governor as a party despite liberty granted by an earlier order of this Court".

"Before parting, this Court expresses hope and trust that things will be set right at an early date. If indeed, during the pendency of this writ petition, the Governor has acted on the advice of the Council of Ministers, in whatever way it was thought appropriate by him, that would take care of the petitioner's concern completely. The Public Interest Litigation is, accordingly, disposed of with no orders as to costs," the HC bench had said.

In its earlier observation in the judgement, the HC bench averred: "This Court, therefore, concludes the judgment by making a public law declaration that the obligation, which the Constitution vests on the Governor to either accept or return the recommendations as made by the Council of Ministers forming part of advice, has to be discharged within a reasonable time".

"Eight months, in fact, seems to be beyond reasonable time. This Court, having regard to the gravity of the issue involved and the necessity to fill up the vacant seats of members expeditiously as well as to subserve the aims set by the Constitution, would consider it eminently desirable if the obligation, in the present case, is duly discharged without undue delay".

In its remarks preceding its conclusion, the HC bench had made some pertinent observations when it said: "The recommendations made by the Council of Ministers have become eight months old by the time this Court commenced hearing of this petition. If the saying that everything happens for a reason is to be believed, this Court ought to assume that there was/were genuine reason(s) for the Governor not to convey his decision earlier, whatever be the nature thereof".

"However, it is time that the impasse is resolved. It is mature, sensible and responsible governance, both at the Centre as well as in the States, that the people look up to. Should there be any misunderstanding or miscommunication between two Constitutional authorities/functionaries, right steps in the correct direction ought to be followed to obviate the same," the HC bench had observed.

"If there be minor differences of opinion, the same ought to be resolved in such manner as deemed fit and appropriate including, inter alia, a discussion between the Governor and the Chief Minister in the guiding spirit of the Constitution. Indeed, if there are major differences, the same have to be made known for ironing out such differences," the Judges had noted.

1 civilian killed, 14 injured in Udhampur blast

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A civilian was killed and 14 others were injured, six of them critically, in a mysterious blast outside the office of Tehsildar near Slathia Chowk in Udhampur on Wednesday.

The powerful blast created panic in the area. Several vital installations including Northern Command headquarters, Air Force station are also located in the district.

The relatively peaceful district witnessed a blast almost after a gap of 11 long years.

Earlier, terrorists had set-off a car bomb explosion near the Northern Command Headquarters in which a civilian was killed and four others were injured on May 3, 2011.

According to preliminary investigations carried out by the local police authorities the blast was reported around 12.50 p.m in which one of the street vendors selling fresh vegetables bore the maximum brunt and suc-



cumbed to his fatal injuries in the district hospital.

Majority of residents injured in the blast had received splinter injuries.

Medical Superintendent of the Udhampur District Hospital Dr Vijay Raina told reporters they had received 15 injuries in the hospital after the blast took place. One of the injured succumbed to his injuries while doctors on the duty struggled to revive him. Dr Raina said several patients had splinter injuries.

Additional Director General of Police Jammu Zone, Mukesh Singh also visited the site of blast at Salathia Chowk Udhampur and inspected the scene with DIG, SSP, NIA officials, CRPF commandant and bomb disposal experts. Briefing media persons Mukesh Singh said, preliminary examination suggests a low intensity IED explosion took place in which one civilian lost his life while 14 others were injured. He said, a forensic examination and careful and minute scrutiny of the site will reveal more accurate facts. Investigation of the case has commenced. Singh also visited the injured at the hospital and spoke to them.

Fadnavis, BJP MLAs detained for protesting, seeking Malik's ouster

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra's former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and other BJP legislators were detained in south Mumbai when they staged a protest march demanding the resignation of senior NCP Minister Nawab Malik over his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate and his alleged links with the underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's aides connection with a money laundering case.

Fadnavis and other party leaders, including State BJP chief Chandrakant Patil, Ashish Shelar, Mangal Prabhat Lodha – who were detained near Metro Cinema – were taken to the Yellow Gate police station. They were, however, released subsequently.

"No FIR has been registered against the BJP leaders. We released them after completing the legal formalities," a senior police officer said.

The BJP legislators, led by Fadnavis -- who had staged a protest outside the Maharashtra Vidhan Bhavan on Tuesday to demand Malik's resignation – upped the ante on Wednesday by taking out a morcha to press for the same demand.

Malik was arrested by the ED on February 23 in connection with a money laundering case. Initially, a special PMLA court sent him to ED custody till March 3. His custody was subsequently extended to March 7. On Monday, the special court sent Malik to judicial custody till March 21.

The ED, in its application seeking Malik's remand that had contended that he, allegedly in connivance with members of the Dawood gang, hatched a conspiracy to grab the ancestral property of a woman in Kurla, Goawala Compound, at a throwaway price though it was worth around Rs.300 crore.

The ED's contention is that

he and his family had purchased 2.80 acre plot of land from the "front men" of Dawood Ibrahim's sister Haseena Parker -- Mohammad Salim Patel — and 1993 blasts accused Badshah Khan at a throw away price in 2005.

It may be recalled that in the second week of November last year, senior BJP leader and Leader of opposition in the State Assembly Devendra Fadnavis had sought to link him to the underworld by alleging that he and his family had purchased a huge plot of land at 'a throw-away price' from two henchmen of Karachi-based Dawood Ibrahim.

Releasing the documents relating to a 16-year old transaction at his much-awaited news conference, Fadnavis had said that M/s Solidus Investments Pvt. Ltd. (SIPL), a firm linked to Malik, had struck a "land deal" with Mohammed Salim Ishaq Patel

and Sardar Shahvali Khan, both close aides of Dawood. "Shavali Khan is a convict sentenced to life imprisonment in the March 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts," he had said.

Fadnavis had claimed that there was a "direct underworld" connection in the deal involving the purchase of a prime plot of land worth several crores located on LBS Marg at Kurla in north-central Mumbai by Malik-linked SIPL for mere Rs 30 lakh. Malik's son signed the "land deal".

Daring Fadnavis to approach any investigating agency for a probe into the allegations made by him, Malik had said: "For the first time in 62 years of life in Mumbai, someone has linked me to the underworld when there is none. I am not the one get scared by these kinds of allegations. I am prepared to face any kind of inquiry — be it by the CBI or ED".

On the "questionable" land

deal that his family struck at Kurla in 2005, Malik had said: "The deal in question was getting ownership rights as we were the tenants of a landlady (the Goawala Compound owner) who had vested her Power of Attorney (PoA) with Mohammed Salim Ishaq Patel. A housing society 'Madinatul Aman CHS', with over 125 tenants was already there since 1984 and on the adjoining plot there are slums. We paid whatever applicable duty to the government to purchase the rights".

The NCP leader said that when they went to register their ownership rights, they discovered that the father of Sardar Shahvali Khan — who used to work as a watchman — had grabbed 300 metres of the plot and the latter's name figured in the land records. "We paid money to Khan's father and purchased the rights for that small piece of land," Malik said.

BJP MLAs suspended from WB House

Action for creating ruckus during Budget Session; BJP destroying Federal structure, alleges Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Government-versus-Opposition conflict reached new heights on Wednesday with two BJP MLAs being suspended for the rest of the Budget session for their alleged unruly conduct inside the House on Monday.

Sudip Mukhopadhyay and Mihir Goswami were suspended from attending the rest of the Budget session, sources said adding the motion — seeking the suspension of the BJP MLAs — was brought by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Partha Chatterjee and was put to vote by Speaker Biman Banerjee. The motion was passed by a voice vote.

State Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday had to abandon his inaugural speech Budget for the Budget Session reading only initial and concluding lines even as legislators from both Opposition and Treasury benches engaged each

other in slogan shouting.

While Opposition Leader attacked the TMC Government for victimising the BJP legislators, Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh hit back saying the BJP should remember the way they had suspended the TMC MPs in Parliament.

Speaking on the Monday's ruckus in the House Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday attacked the BJP for not only disturbing the constitutional procedures inside Bengal but the Assembly but also destroying federal structure of the country.

"Here is an indecent party that has been trying to destroy all the democratic institutions of the country ... they are using central agencies to finish our federal structure," Banerjee said adding the people of the country would soon throw



that party out of power.

"Abki baar pagar paar (out of the ring in Bengali)" the Chief Minister said about the BJP's prospects in the coming days. She had on Monday attacked the saffron outfit calling it a party of rioters and corrupt people.

"BJP is the 'dangabaz' (rioter) and corrupt party...they want to destroy democracy...thanks to women MLAs of TMC for saving democracy in Vidhan Sabha yesterday," Banerjee on Tuesday said in reference to the Monday's ruckus inside the House that led Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari to allege that two women minis-

ters had physically assaulted the Governor inside the House. The two ministers later brought a privilege motion against the Opposition Leader.

In a related development Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee has politely turned down the request of the Governor who had asked him to meet him within three days for a discussion on the Monday's unruly scenes inside Assembly. The Speaker reportedly told the Governor that he would be busy with the Session of the House and hence would not be able to visit Raj Bhavan.

Meanwhile, leaders of Bengal BJP on Wednesday said that they would descend on the streets after the party's expected victories in the Assembly elections the results for which would be declared on Thursday.

"We will take inspiration from the victory in Uttar Pradesh, Goa and other States and will launch fresh movements in Bengal from the next week," State BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said adding, a positive result in the exit polls had already rejuvenated the party rank and file.

If rail project will displace people then put it on hold: Church leader to Kerala

PNS ■ KOCHI

Face off between staff of the Thiruvananthapuram-Kasaragod Semi High Speed Rail Project and the people who would be displaced from the land to be acquired for the work has become a daily routine in Kerala. At no point of time in history, the State has seen this kind of resistance and opposition to a development project, according to Wednesday's editorial in Magalam, a popular pro-development and privatisation newspaper in the State.

But what has come as a shocker to the Kerala Government, the main promoter of the semi high speed rail project, was a statement issued on Wednesday by Mathews Mar Thimothios, Metropolitan of Malankara Orthodox Church, who in a heart rending plea has asked the Government to put the project in abeyance.

The Metropolitan said developments of all kind are resplendent with hope and happiness. "If people lose their dwelling places and are displaced from their residences and farm lands, the project would bring only tears and discontentment to the victims. This would lead to the loss of purity and serenity of the project. Hence the Government should immediately put on hold the land acquiring process," the Metropolitan said in a signed statement.

The 529.45 km long rail track connecting Kasaragod in the north with Thiruvananthapuram in the south would bring the commuting time from the present 12 hours to less than four hours, claims the Government of Kerala. A heavy posse of policemen and armed cops of the Special Armed Battalion of the Kerala Police accompany the revenue officials deputed for installing stone markers in

the land meant for acquisition. The owners of the land are aggrieved over the indifference of the Government to their demand to provide alternate land and houses.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has declared from all public platforms that come whatever may, his government would go ahead with the implementation of the Rs 64,000 crore project. "The high speed journey should not get sinned by the tears of the poor, oppressed and downtrodden sections. We are yet to provide basic health and education facilities to the people in the State. The Government should have clarity on its priorities. The best option is not to go ahead with the project because the resistance by poor sections would lead to total anarchy in the State," said the Metropolitan.

Meanwhile, K Purushothaman, former General Manager, State Bank

of India's Global Market, said in a statement that the detailed project report of the "silver line" was full of gaps, inconsistencies and mismatch. "Considering the high stakes in this much-debated project of the Kerala Government, the DPR needs to be vetted by an expert committee comprising experts from areas like technology, project finance, law, environment, earth sciences, governance and human rights," said Purushothaman.

The Government has installed stone markers along the 140 km route through which the tracks would be laid despite massive agitation by the population. Most of the stone markers have been removed by the people affected though the police and revenue officials have warned of dire consequences. According to K-Rail officials, stone markers would soon be installed along the 390 km stretch.

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA’S PRUDENT DIPLOMACY IN WAR

India’s diplomatic stand is influenced by NAM and Panchsheel



BISHALDEEP KAKATI BAGMITA BORTHAKUR


Amid the on-going Russian-Ukraine crisis, India’s diplomatic strategies have once again come under the scanner and many pundits feel India should take a side (either Russia’s or Ukraine’s) in order to prevent the war from accelerating. But India has displayed a strong diplomatic character by choosing not to take sides in a situation involving the US-led NATO and Russia. Indian Prime Minister’s telephonic talk with the Russian President and India’s External Affairs minister’s talk with the Russian foreign minister have both highlighted the effort of India to stop the war by taking the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogues on one hand and a lasting solution for this problem on the other. India’s neutral stand is mainly because all the key protagonists in the crisis are India’s close allies. Hence, India’s unaligned and diplomatic efforts. India and the US have good bilateral ties and have come together on several issues including the pandemic, climatic issues, trade and investment, and cyber security and emerging technological advancements. The USA has also been critical of China’s hostile behaviour on India’s territory and terror attacks from Pakistan. The USA has been consistently supporting India in the latter’s emergence as a global power.Both countries have tried to ensure peace in the Indo-Pacific region. In this scenario, where Ukraine wants to be a member of NATO, if India votes in favour of Russia, it might affect its bilateral relations with USA. Although Ukraine is not a NATO member, it is still considered a partner country and that is why the US, Britain, Germany, Netherlands, and Poland have sent military help to Ukraine. This shows that a possible support to Russia might hamper India’s relations with the NATO countries, including USA.

Despite a divergent geo-political and strategic drift in India-Russia relationship with Russia embracing China and Pakistan, both being India’s diplomatic foes, the age-old India-Russia relationship still continues to remain strong. This is evident when we take into consideration that the first in-person Russian bilateral meeting since the onset of the pandemic was with India. Moreover, Russia has been a significant supplier of military equipment. India is also procuring the S-400 Triumf Missile from Russia, despite strong US opposition. A deal worth over Rs. 5000 crore for the manufacture of Russian AK203 assault rifles is also in the pipeline. There are also hints of a new ten-year defence pact between the two countries. Speaking of economic relations, India-Russia annual trade is also worth about \$10 billion. India’s support to Ukraine may not hamper Indian-Russian ties but might mean Russia developing stronger ties with China and Pakistan. That can be a real-time threat to India’s national security. Moreover, speaking of India and Ukraine relationship, history has shown us that Ukraine has seldom supported India. Ukraine has been consistently taking anti-Indian position in the United Nations, be it in terms of voting against India in UNSC after 1998 nuclear tests, voting for UN intervention in Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370 or in terms of selling military equipment to Pakistan to use against India. So, in this regard as well, India’s diplomatic stand in terms of abstaining support in favour of Ukraine is quite justified.India’s diplomatic stand is influenced by the non-aligned movement and the Panchsheel framework of mutual non-aggression and non-interference.Hence, India has always been a supporter of diplomatic settlement of disputes rather than military aggressions. India wants de-escalation of the crisis, but only through arbitration or conciliation. Thus, considering all the angles to this crisis, India is adopting the strategy to solve this dispute keeping in mind that any country’s national interest is above the overall global interest.

(Kakati is an advocate in Gauhati High Court and Borthakur is a student in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Pondicherry Central University. The views expressed are personal.)

India-Aus CECA and the dairy saga

The rise in disposable income and preference for high-protein diets have created a consumer base for such niche dairy products



AS PER THE PROJECTIONS ON DAIRY DEMAND IN INDIA, IT IS EVIDENT THAT PRODUCTION NEEDS TO BE INCREASED TO MEET DOMESTIC DEMAND. THERE IS ALSO A NEED TO INVEST IN EDUCATING AND TRAINING DAIRY FARMERS, AND PROVIDING BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COLLECTING, TRANSPORTING & PROCESSING OF MILK TO AUGMENT PRODUCTIVITY AND IMPROVE ITS QUALITY

The Indian dairy industry is the largest globally with milk production of 198.4 million tonnes in 2019-20. It provides livelihood to a large number of people and is dominated by milk cooperatives and small and medium-size dairy farmers, who face challenges towards achieving economies of scale in their operations. Dairy is not considered a separate enterprise in most rural households. Instead, it is well integrated with the farming system. Dairy not only supplements the agricultural incomes of farmers, but also provides a regular income and helps them overcome financial crisis during the off-season and thus, a valuable asset.

Approximately 35 percent of the dairy sector is organised in India with more and more private companies investing in developing an efficient milk procurement network, and marketing liquid milk and value-added products. The

National Dairy Development Board projects a demand for milk and milk products at a pan-India level to reach 266.5 million metric tonnes in 2030.

Out of the total milk produced in India, 48 percent is consumed in the rural areas and the rest is marketable surplus for consumers. Despite being the largest producer, India’s share in the global milk trade is small. India exports dairy products to the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, the United States of America, Bhutan and Singapore. Skimmed milk powder accounts for 30 percent of total dairy exports. Butter, butter oil, cheese, ghee and buttermilk also form a part of the export basket. India imports (as well as exports) buttermilk, curdled milk, cream and kephir from Australia. Milk non-concentrated, cheese of all kinds, milk and cream powder are also among the dairy products imported from Australia in 2020.

The Indian dairy industry supports around 70 million rural households, which consist of mostly small and marginal farmers. The milk cooperatives, dairy farmers, and trade unions have opposed Free Trade Agreements with milk surplus economies such as Australia and New Zealand. Assuming that a lowering of tariffs may lead to dumping of cheap imported products and resultant disruption of the domestic dairy industry, several industry spokespersons have taken a stringent position against the opening of this sector.

The majority of large dairy importing nations across the world have applied various tariff and non-tariff measures to protect imports. The European Union, for instance, has not granted export clearance to Indian dairy plants under the pretext of veterinary control, levels of antibiotic and pesticide residues, etc. Even Australia permits only retorted products to be imported. While countries like the EU and USA give massive export subsidies to their dairy farmers, in India, no such support is provided to dairy farmers, making them uncompetitive in global trade.

The government has assured the dairy farmers that it will protect their interests. At the same time, the possibility of giving greater market access, by reducing tariffs or other import restrictions, to select agriculture and dairy products that are neither produced nor consumed in great quantities domestically, has been kept open. This is a sensible step, considering the growing domestic demand and consumer preference for premium, high value processed products. Furthermore, this can also be seen as a window for structural reforms to make the sector more competitive.



These reforms, particularly in supply chain management, are crucial and should comprise enhancing the quality of cattle feed, procuring quality milk, instituting rigorous quality controls, and cold chain management to increase shelf life. All with huge investment opportunities.

As per the projections on dairy demand in India, it is evident that production needs to be increased to meet the domestic demand. There is also need for investment in educating and training dairy farmers, and providing better infrastructure for the collection, transportation, and processing of milk to augment milk productivity and improve the quality of processed milk. Foreign investment, including that in agriculture and dairy services, can be sought for cold chain establishment, distribution and marketing.

It is also important to remember that foreign dairy players in the country prefer partnerships with local entities and avoid backward integration of direct procurement from farmers. Such backward integration could have benefitted our dairy farmers a lot. Another step could be to move forward and lower tariffs on dairy products not produced in India or those having high domestic demand. The rise in disposable income and preference for high protein diets has created a consumer base for such niche products. These steps may be small, but would provide a significant change in the dairy landscape of India.

POINT COUNTERPOINT


THE TMC AND STATE POLICE LOOTED VOTES IN CIVIC POLLS BUT THE GOVERNOR’S SPEECH DIDN’T HAVE A WORD ON IT. — BENGAL LEADER OF OPPOSITION SUVENDU ADHIKARI



THE BJP IS SHAMELESS. THEY LOST IN THE ELECTIONS AND ARE NOW TRYING TO STAGE A DRAMA. —BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE

The gender war in South Korea election

Political parties try to win young men back with carefully modulated anti-feminist dog whistles



GWYNNE DYER

Gender is not the only issue in this election in South Korea, but it’s the hot-button topic. It’s not clear if there was ever a successful sexual revolution in the country, but the counter-revolution is definitely doing well. The ‘F-word’ (feminism) is being used a lot by both major parties, and not in a good way.

The conservative People Power Party (PPP), unsurprisingly, deplores the activism of young feminists. Presidential candidate Yoon Suk-yeol claims that “gender discrimination no longer exists”, and blames feminism for South Korea’s very low birth rate: “Some say feminism has been politicised to make it emotionally hard for men and women to date.”

What’s surprising is that the liberal Democratic Party’s candidate, Lee Jae-myung, sort of agrees. He’s a bit shame-faced about it, but he has expressed his “distaste” for feminism and recently shared a post online that said the “madness” of feminism had to be stopped.

This is a long way from the politics of outgoing President Moon Jae-in, who is also a member of the Democratic Party. When Moon took office five years ago, he declared himself the country’s first ‘feminist president’, raised the minimum wage and cut the maximum work-week from 68 to 52 hours.

Lee is not necessarily more conservative than Moon (he’s promising a universal minimum wage), but on the gender issue he has had to retreat. Most of Korean politics is unchanged - the south-east and older people vote conservative, the south-west and younger people vote liberal, etc. - but on this one issue there has been an anti-feminist landslide.

In by-elections last April for the mayors of South Korea’s biggest cities, a staggering 72.5 per cent of young men in their 20s in Seoul voted for the PPP. The second city, Busan, was not far behind, and even among men in their 30s the conservatives were far ahead of their usual score. There is a huge male backlash going on, and even the Democrats can’t ignore it.

Their calculation is as simple as it is ugly. Young women who normally vote for the Democrats have nowhere else to go politically: there’s no other liberal-inclined party with a chance of winning office. So, they can take the female vote for granted, and try to win the young men back with carefully modulated anti-feminist dog-whistles.

But what has happened to the young men? South Korea is still a strongly patriarchal society, but the young of both sexes were much more open to changing all that than the older generations - young women more so than young men, for obvious reasons, but there was certainly not the yawning gap between the sexes that has opened up today.

Perhaps part of the reason was the country’s first woman president, Park Geun-hye, who was impeached in 2017, found guilty on corruption charges, and sentenced to 25 years in prison. That wasn’t misogyny - she really did disgrace her office.

There is also a general shortage of suitable jobs for the generation now coming out of the universities and colleges, 70 per cent of whom have a post-secondary qualification. The Ministry of Gender Equality’s activities gave young men who didn’t get good jobs a reason to blame feminism.

It backed initiatives like startup loans for female entrepreneurs, incentives to businesses to promote gender balance on their boards, and a pledge to allocate 30 per cent of cabinet posts to women. All that was long overdue, actually, but it fed the fire of misogyny.

And above all, the feminist movement itself took a wrong turn in about 2015. Radical online feminist sites adopted a strategy called ‘mirroring’, in which they took the worst kind of derogatory anti-female abuse and reshaped it as anti-male abuse, e.g. ‘hannamchoong’ (male pest) for a man and ‘gisaengchoong’ (parasite) for a male fetus.

There were probably never more than a couple of hundred women involved in the ‘mirroring’ campaign, and the leading radical feminist website, ‘Megalia’, was closed down after only two years. The “Four No’s” slogan survives (no dating, no sex, no marriage, no child-rearing) as a lifestyle choice, but has limited appeal (4,000 self-proclaimed adherents).

What the radical campaign did, however, was to give misogynists, and the patriarchy in general, enough ammunition to wage a ruthless and largely successful anti-feminist, even anti-female campaign in the media. That’s why 75 per cent of urban young men vote for the PPP, and why many Korean feminists now call themselves ‘equalists’ instead.

This too shall pass in the end, but it was a serious tactical error.

While both Lee and Yoon share some similar economic and welfare policies, they've clashed over North Korea and other foreign policy issues.

Digital shopping India ranks 2nd for global investment



PTI ■ LONDON

India is the second-largest global venture capital investment hub for digital shopping companies, growing by a whopping 175 per cent from USD 8 billion in 2020 to USD 22 billion in 2021, according to an official analysis released here on Wednesday.

On a global scale, India came in second to the US last year, which attracted USD 51 billion in investment, followed by China at third with USD 14 billion and the UK at fourth with USD 7 billion.

Within India, Bengaluru comes out on top globally with USD 14 billion worth of Venture Capital (VC) investments in digital shopping in 2021, followed by Gurugram at No. 7 with USD 4 billion and Mumbai at No. 10 with USD 3 billion.

Bengaluru almost tripled its investments from USD 5 billion in 2020 to take the top spot, ahead of other leading cities in the world - New York City (second), San Francisco (third), London (fourth) and Berlin (fifth).

According to the London & Partners analysis of Dealroom.Co investment data, increasing demand for online purchases during a series of lockdowns across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic led to global investors showing a strong appetite for backing e-commerce companies.

"Today's data shows that

the UK and India are two of the world's leading hubs for digital shopping companies with high levels of global investment and unicorns," said Hemin Bharucha, Country Director, India at London & Partners - the Mayor of London's international trade and investment agency.

"It's fantastic to see Bengaluru emerge a global leader for digital shopping investment last year. This surely creates several opportunities for collaboration with an already strong market in London.

"As Europe's largest hub for digital shopping investment, there has never been a better time for India's strong pool of fast-growing e-commerce companies to choose London as the destination to scale their business outside of their home market," he said.

The data also shows that Bengaluru ranked number 5 among cities with the potential for future unicorns, just behind London.

Three of the 15 global cities with the highest count of current unicorns are in India - Bengaluru at No. 6 with 19 unicorns in 2021 (up from three in 2020, Gurugram at No. 7 with 13 unicorns (up from 3 in 2020) and Mumbai at No. 14 with 7 unicorns.

London is the leading European hub for digital shopping investment, with a record USD 5 billion raised by digital shopping companies based in the capital in 2021.

Notable investment rounds into London-based digital shopping companies in 2021 included: USD 180 million series H funding round for online food delivery service, Deliveroo; USD 150 million raised by online used car marketplace, Carzam; and USD 55 million raised by online dog-food delivery service, Butternut Box.

"London has always been a city with a distinct creative style that comes from the grassroots and the street," said Julia Hawkins, partner at venture capital firm LocalGlobe.

"The huge growth in e-commerce has pushed many consumers into communities where they can find their tribe. Combining London's creative flair with e-commerce and embedded fintech can create new opportunities for start-ups in London that the rest of the world will look to," she said. Overall, global venture capital investment into digital shopping more than doubled in 2021 following a significant consumer shift to e-commerce platforms during the pandemic.

The total global VC investment for 2021 stood at a record USD 140 billion, up from USD 68 billion in 2020.

London & Partners said the figures relating to investment into digital shopping companies are based on analytics firm Dealroom.Co's definition of online marketplaces, which supplied the VC investment data as of February 15 this year.

'Jail for doing biz' report: DPIIT Secy says bulk of trouble due to labour laws, States need to act

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A bulk of the laws still making it difficult for businesses to operate is on the labour front, and State Governments will have to adopt the simplified labour codes passed by Parliament to make it easier for enterprises to thrive, a top Union Government official said on Wednesday.

Reacting to a think-tank's report of there being 26,000 laws where a breach can land an entrepreneur in jail, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade secretary Anurag Jain said the Government found out that 70 per cent of those relate to labour laws.

"On studying it with the same group of people (the think tank), we found that almost 70 per cent relate to labour laws and as far as Parliament is concerned, they have enacted four Labour

Codes.

And they have really simplified those laws," Jain said, speaking at an event organised by IVCA, a lobby group representing the venture investing industry.

"Now, the next step which is required is state governments adopting the notifications and thereafter a formal notification will be done. So, we expect that to happen a few months down the line," Jain added.

The bureaucrat said we need to work together with the state governments, to ensure that they come on board quickly and the requisite notifications are issued to make it easier for businesses to operate. He also urged IVCA to initiate policy advocacy efforts in the same direction.

In a report released last month, think-tank Observer Research Foundation backed by richest Indian Mukesh

Ambani's Reliance Industries said that among the 69,233 unique compliances that regulate 'doing business in India, 26,134 clauses have imprisonment clauses as a penalty which means non-compliance with two of five compliances can send an entrepreneur to jail.

Jain said in the last one year, the government has reduced 25,000 cumbersome compliances but was quick to add that it is cognizant of more work to be done on the same.

"Recently, there was an article about 'jail for doing business'....27,000 laws where a person can be jailed for doing business. We had a close look at it. We are very open that if somebody brings it out to our notice, we need to engage and see how to improve our systems," he said.

Jain also said that the government is separately working on ease of doing business 2.0 framework as well in order to

facilitate entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, Jain said industry players in IVCA can deploy the mandatory 2 per cent corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding towards honing startups focused on sustainability goals or from the sectors identified as sunrise ones.

He also said that the growing number of Indian unicorns can each adopt one of the 100 districts identified for its backwardness as 'aspirational districts' and take efforts towards making entrepreneurship flourish at such places which are faraway from big cities like Bengaluru and Mumbai which are associated with business.

Jain said he is confident that good quality entrepreneurial talent exists in the smaller towns and cities of the country, and urged the industry to play its part to tap the same. He cited the case of cricket to illustrate the point, and said that the IPL

tournament helped deepen the talent discovery and now the Indian team consists of players from different parts beyond what used to be the established base.

The official said startups also need to seize the opportunities which will come the private sector's way with the newly announced Gati Shakti scheme, stressing that there is a scope for innovation in the project.

He said the startup ecosystem is key for the India at 2047 development agenda because of its ability to solve problems and also as a centre of wealth creation.

Acknowledging that startups existed even before 2016, when the present Narendra Modi government launched a programme aimed at such enterprises, Jain said that they had not seen such a push from the policy front as it happened after the Startup India programme.

Sensex, Nifty soar over 2% as Reliance, HDFC twins gain

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Extending the gains for a second day, key stock indices Sensex and Nifty jumped by more than 2 per cent on Wednesday as oil and energy, financials and IT stocks advanced amid reports of diplomatic efforts to end Russia's attack on Ukraine.

The benchmark BSE Sensex opened in the green and further jumped 1,469.64 points or 2.75 per cent to 54,893.73 during the day. It finally settled at 54,647.33, higher by 1,223.24 points or 2.29 per cent, notching up the biggest single-day gain since February 25.

The broader Nifty of the NSE climbed 331.90 points or 2.07 per cent to end at 16,345.35 as 40 of its stocks advanced.

From the 30-share pack, Asian Paints, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, Indusind Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Maruti Suzuki, HDFC Bank and UltraTech Cement were the major gainers.

Asian Paints was the lead gainer, rising by 5.56 per cent. Reliance Industries soared 5.24 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 5 per cent and HDFC Bank by 3.29 per cent.

Among IT stocks, Tech Mahindra rose by 2.85 per cent, Infosys by 1.97 per cent,



TCS gained close to 1 per cent.

IndusInd Bank spurred by over 4 per cent after the bank said that it has set up a panel to assess the accountability of its staff, if any, in the matter related to disbursement of loans by its microfinance subsidiary BFIL without the consent of customers during March 2020-October 2021.

In contrast, Power Grid Corporation, NTPC, Tata Steel, Nestle India and Wipro were the laggards.

"D-Street bulls finally held the upper hand on reports suggesting that the Ukrainian President is no longer pressing for NATO membership," S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP securities said.

Top diplomats of Russia and Ukraine have agreed to meet in Turkey on Thursday.

"Domestic indices carried forward yesterday's gains fol-

lowing a clawback in European markets and US futures as smart investors saw value in the current market valuations.

"The domestic market is also reacting positively to exit polls and in anticipation of in-line state election results. In the near term, the domestic market will trade as per the positive or negative surprise in the state election results and global trend," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Aviation stocks were in huge demand on Wednesday's trade as after a two-year hiatus, India will resume regular international flights from March 27. Shares of InterGlobe Aviation zoomed 6.94 per cent and SpiceJet jumped 6.05 per cent.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap index jumped 2.37 per cent and the smallcap gauge gained 2.16 per cent.

A total of 2,657 stocks advanced, while 684 declined and 94 remained unchanged.

Bourses in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo settled lower. Stock exchanges in the US closed in the negative territory on Tuesday.

European stocks opened higher while Futures for Wall Street's S&P 500 index and Dow Jones Industrial Average rose up to 1 per cent.

Biden signs order on cryptocurrency as its use explodes

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden on Wednesday signed an executive order on Government oversight of cryptocurrency that urges the Federal Reserve to explore whether the Central bank should jump in and create its own digital currency.

The Biden administration views the explosive popularity of cryptocurrency as an opportunity to examine the risks and benefits of digital assets, said a senior administration official who previewed the order Tuesday on the condition of anonymity, terms set by the White House.

Under the executive order, Biden also has directed the Treasury Department and other federal agencies to study the impact of cryptocurrency on financial stability and national security.

Brian Deese and Jake Sullivan, Biden's top economic and national security advisers, respectively, said the order establishes the first comprehensive federal digital assets strategy for the United States.

"That will help position the U.S. to keep playing a leading role in the innovation and gov-



ernance of the digital assets ecosystem at home and abroad, in a way that protects consumers, is consistent with our democratic values and advances U.S. Global competitiveness," Deese and Sullivan said Wednesday in a joint statement.

The action comes as lawmakers and administration officials are increasingly voicing concern that Russia may be using cryptocurrency to avoid the impact of sanctions imposed on its banks, oligarchs and oil industry due to the invasion of Ukraine.

Last week, Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Mark Warner, and Jack Reed asked the Treasury Department to provide information on how it intends to inhibit cryptocurrency use for sanctions evasion.

Not authorised any entity to address public grievances: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday said it has not authorised any external agency to redress public complaints against regulated entities.

Instances of misinformation being spread through certain sections of the social media about the Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme 2021 (RB-IOS) - have come to the notice of the RBI, the central banks said in a state-

ment.

These messages are conveying to the public at large to lodge their complaints against entities regulated by the RBI through third parties for a charge/fee or otherwise for early redress of grievances, it said.

"It is clarified that RBI does not have any such arrangement with any entity for (the) redress of grievances against the Regulated Entities (REs). RBI has laid down a



cost-free grievance redress mechanism under RB-IOS, which does not involve payment of fees or charges in any form or manner," it said.

Customers having grievances against REs for deficiency in services, which is not redressed satisfactorily or in a timely manner by the REs can directly lodge their complaint on the Complaint Management System (CMS) portal (<https://www.Rbi.Org.In>) or by e-mail at crpc@rbi.Org.In, the

apex bank noted.

"Complainants having queries on RB-IOS or desiring information relating to their complaints lodged through the above methods, can reach the Contact Centre of RBI at toll-free #14448 (currently available from 9:30 am to 5:15 pm on working days) in Hindi, English and nine regional languages (Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Odia, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu)," it said.

Rupee rebounds 44 paise to 76.56 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 44 paise to 76.56 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday following a retreat in crude oil prices and rebound in domestic equities. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 76.90 against the greenback and wit-

nessed an intra-day high of 76.55 and a low of 76.92.

The rupee quoted 76.56 at 1530 hrs, registering a rise of 44 paise over its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee fell 7 paise to close at a lifetime low of 77 against the US dollar, weighed

by surging crude oil prices. Rupee appreciated following a rebound in risk assets and expectations of inflows in bond markets as global fund houses exclude the Russian debt from bond indices, said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.



Public Notice
This is to inform general public that Mr. Lal Singh, Mrs. Sukhi Devi, Mrs. Prakash, Mrs. Geeta Devi, Mr. Desai, Mr. Tan Singh, Mr. Nitesh and Mrs. Laxmi are the owners of Land area measuring 19 Kanal, 4 Marla, out of Khevala No. 11, Khatoni No. 11 Musil No. 42, Kila No. 25(8-0) Musil No. 41, Kila No. 20(2-12), Khebat No. 457, Khatoni No. 482, Musil No. 42, Kila No. 16(1-4-16), Khebat No. 95, Khatoni No. 96, Musil No. 41, Kila No. 21(1-1-0), 21(2-1-12), Khebat No. 435, Khatoni No. 457/458, Musil No. 42, Kila No. 24(2-4-0), 15(2-4-0), situated at Bisarajapur, Tawadi, Distt. Nuh, Haryana. Above said owner share misplaced the Original SPA dated 31.12.2014 executed by Mr. Prem Singh Ambawat in favour of Mrs. Sukhi Devi in respect of the Land area measuring 1 Kanal and Original Sale Deed dated 21.11.2006 executed by Mr. Prem Singh Ambawat in favour of Mrs. Sukhi Devi in respect of the Land area measuring 9 Kanal, 19.5 Marlaas Doc. No. 2625 and Original Sale Deed dated 10.03.2014 executed by Mr. Prem Singh Ambawat in favour of Mrs. Sukhi Devi in respect of the Land area measuring 2 Kanal, 4 Marlaas Doc. No. 3329. Anyone who find the above said documents shall handover the same to the Manager of M/s. Avanse Financial Services Ltd. at 5th Floor, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Building, Jhandewalan Extension, Delhi-110055. Above said owners are availing loan on above said property by mortgaging the said property. In case anyone has any objection regarding mortgage of the said property, the same may be raised within 10 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dhanani/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Offices, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-ITL Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9607671727/ 9816229636 (M).

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that I Hariharan Venkataraman S/o Late V. Hariharan R/o 37-C, Pocket-1, Mayur Vihar, Ph-1, Delhi-110091, allottee/mutatee of flat No.37-C, Category, DDA Built-up MIG, situated on the First floor in Pocket-1, Mayur Vihar, Ph-1, Delhi-110091 have applied for conversion of the aforesaid Flat from leasehold to freehold vide application dated 18/11/2021 in DDA, I, have lost original possession letter No F-9(66)81/HBM dated 15.06.1981. Any person(s) claiming any right interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents/demand letter, may write/contact with above named person at above address/Phone No.9769860382, within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to the Dy. Director, (LAB)H or Director(I), D-Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is publically notified that residential plot No. 17 Block-'A' Sector-72, Noida is allotted to Shri Brahm Singh through Transfer Memorandum No. Noida/Res Plots/3007 dated 31.03.2006 and Shri Brahm Singh has appointed his Registered General Power of Attorney Smt. Saroj Agrawal W/o Shri Onkar Nath Agrawal R/o B-5 Sector-30, Noida on 07.08.2010. Vide GPA, Smt. Saroj Agrawal has applied for the transfer of said property that is Plot No. 17 Block-'A' Sector-72, Noida in favour of M/s Nath Real Estate LLP through its Director Shri Onkar Nath Agrawal, Regd. Office- B-5, Sector-30, Noida-201301. If any body has any objection regarding the transfer of said property, then he has to contact OSD-Residential, NOIDA Authority within 30 days of this publication of this notice, with all documents & proof. After that no objection will be entertained by NOIDA Authority.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Raman Saini, Raman Saini (Proprietor), Raman Saini, Sunita Saini, Sunita Saini, 33, Sector 10 A, Near Huda Market, Gurgaon, A/c No:- 057050500381	House No- 33 Sector 10 A Near Huda Market Gurgaon 122001	14/02/2022 Rs. 71,02,096/-	29/12/2021
2.	Laxmi Trading Co., Surendra Kumar, Alka, Surendra Kumar, Hukmaram, Hukmaram, IX/ 6339 Savitri Gali No. 3, Gandhi Nagar, Delhi, A/c No:-102405000649	Khasra No- 437, Rajal Desar, Ward No. 8 Thana Road, Churu Babat Shashwat Rajaladesar, Teshil Ratnagarah Churu Rajasthan	31/01/2022 Rs. 15,57,771.96/-	29/12/2021
3.	Infusson Travel & Holiday Boutique P L, Reena Jaswal, Reena Verma, Reena Jaswal, Reena Jaswal, Represented By Director Reena Jaswal & Reena Verma, UG SR 01 A Ansal Plaza, Sector -1 Vaishali, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, A/c No:-125405000097	Apartment No:-707, Gaur Heights, 7th Floor, Vaishali Sector 4, Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh	31/01/2022 Rs. 11,53,066.59/-	30/06/2021
4.	British Certification Inc, Anil Kumar Tomar, Anil Kumar Tomar, Meena Tomar, Anil Kumar Tomar, Office No-4, C- 477, 1st Floor, Acharya Niketan Mayur Vihar, Ph 1, Near Tng and Relexo Showroom, Delhi, A/c No:-629705015777	Mig Flat No-156- B, Ground Floor, Pocket-1 Mayur Vihar Delhi-110091	31/01/2022 Rs. 30,84,199.1/-	12/10/2021
5.	Mahalaxmi Agencies, Mohit Singhal, Mohit Singhal, Suman Singhal, Jack Compound Ghookna, More, Meerut Road Behind, Tyagidairy, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, A/c No:-695505600328	Plot No-3 F, 1/21, Nehru Nagar Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh	31/01/2022 Rs. 36,48,654.56/-	04/10/2021

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : March 10, 2022
Place: Delhi/NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Notice Inviting e-Tender

No.SSA/Esst/Print/Karmaputhi/Ka-Sreni/78/2022/9355 Date:09.03.2022

Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam (Samagra Shiksha) invites tender through e-Tendering process from reputed offset printing presses having Web Offset Machine/ Sheet Offset Machine for printing and supply of Karjapatra in Assamese version.

To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Mission Director, SSA, Assam Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Notice Inviting e-Tender

No.SSA/TT/Learning Enhancement etc./373/2021/PT-I/9354 Date:09.03.2022

Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission (Samagra Shiksha), Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites tender through e-Tendering process from Web Offset Machine/ Sheet Offset Machine for printing and supply of Science Activity Book and Maths Activity Book in Assamese, Bengali, Bodo and English Version To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Mission Director, SSA, Assam Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

POWERGRID to provide smart classrooms in Haryana

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a 'Maharatna' Company under the Ministry of Power, Government of India, signed an MoU with deputy commissioner, Gurugram for providing financial assistance for the installation and operationalisation of 480 smart classrooms in 240 government schools across 12 districts of Haryana.

The agreement was signed by Shri V K Singh, director (Personnel), POWERGRID and Shri Nishant Kumar Yadav, deputy commissioner, Gurugram in the presence of senior officials from POWERGRID and Haryana State CSR Trust.

Singh highlighted that POWERGRID through its CSR initiatives is trying to form a



bridge between the digital divide and inclusive growth by helping improve access to quality education in the country.

The deputy commissioner, Gurugram, emphasised that Smart Classes in Government schools will modernise the Indian education scenario, by providing quality education to students, which is an essential

requisite in today's competitive environment.

POWERGRID has already established 330 smart classrooms in 165 government schools in 10 districts of Haryana. Further, evaluating the success of the initiative and knowing very well that education is the first step in developing a sustainable

workforce for the digital economy, POWERGRID has undertaken this project of providing 480 smart classes to various Government Schools located in various parts of Haryana. Implementation of Smart Class CSR Project in Haryana will be coordinated by POWERGRID, Northern Region-I.



ITBP to organise programmes on Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

Various programmes are being organised by Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), especially in the remotest parts of the country on the theme of 'Desh Ki Hifazat-Desh Ki Suraksha' to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the country's independence as 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' from March 6-13. These are on the themes of humane face of security, honouring the martyrs' families, band displays and programs by Himveer Wives Welfare Association.

ITBP will also be organis-

ing free medical camps and undertaking many other programmes such as distribution of stationary & sports items for school children in the border regions and left-wing extremism hit areas. Band displays will be held at prominent places in the areas of deployment of the ITBP units.

For the past year, the ITBP has organised programmes around Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which include cycle rallies, fitness walk/run, band display, plantation drives, blood donation camps and more.

NTPC reinforces its commitment towards empowering women

In its continuous endeavour to promote women empowerment, India's largest integrated energy company, NTPC Ltd has introduced multiple initiatives to promote work-life balance, inclusiveness, diversity and develop leadership among its female employees.

To enhance women's representation, NTPC had launched a recruitment drive for women executives. NTPC has recruited an all women Engineering Executive Trainees' (EETs) batch. These 45 EETs have undergone four months of technical training, one month of general management training, 15 days of simulator training and have been posted at Simhadri, Solapur and Mauda. These EETs will now be working in the Operation department in shifts.

The company plans to have an all-women shift at one of its power stations.

Women employees are granted paid Child Care Leave (CCL) for two years which can be availed in different spells.

Additionally, the incentives include waiving the application fee for women, paid parental leaves, maternity leave and sabbatical leave. NTPC is providing special leave for adopted children and children born through surrogacy. In a first-of-its-kind initiative, NTPC PMI (Power Management Institute) in the year 2020 started 'NTPC Women Leaders Annual Conclave' to celebrate women leadership, encourage networking and facilitate women leaders from all walks of life to inspire and connect.



SRM University-AP celebrates National Science Day

Every year National Science Day is celebrated across the nation to commemorate the discovery of the Raman Effect by Indian physicist Sir CV Raman, a milestone in the realm of science that won him the Nobel Prize. SRM University- AP celebrated the event in collaboration with South Asian Meteorological Association (SAMA) under the 2022 theme 'Integrated Approach in Science and Technology for a Sustainable Future'.

An array of programmes — including a science exhibition, laboratory visit, and quiz competition — were also organised. Nearly 400 students from various schools in and around the city of Guntur and Vijayawada actively participated in the events. Special talks on the works of Nobel laureates of Physics, 2021 shed light on latest research practices and developments.

The inaugural address was delivered by Prof V S Rao, vice-chancellor.

Changlang Battalion of Assam Rifles distributes wheelchairs, walking sticks and hearing aids

To ensure effective mobility and enhance the quality of life for deprived people who have physical disabilities in the region, Changlang Battalion of Headquarters 25 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of Headquarters Inspector General Assam Rifles (North) distributed wheelchairs to physically challenged, walking sticks to blind and hearing aids to deaf individuals on March 7.

During interactions with villagers and village GBs of various villages in battalion area of responsibility, the need for medical assistance/ healthcare was felt. To develop a rapport with the local populace, the battalion took the initiative and identified basic healthcare requirements of destitute elderly living in the battalion area of responsibility and provided them with medical assistance in form of wheelchairs, walking sticks and hearing aids.



The distribution camp organised at Battalion Headquarters, Changlang was graced by Colonel Surender Kumar, VSM, Commandant of the Battalion. The project was conceptualised and completed as a part of the Directorate General Assam Rifles Civic Action Project for the financial year 2021-2022.

Assam Rifles have always been committed to various development projects of the remote areas of the North East and have been providing basic amenities to the local populace. The distribution camp village, GBs and individuals with physical disabilities of various villages attended. Villagers expressed their gratitude and appreciated this initiative for expressing their grievances.



NTPC Faridabad Gas Power Station, Haryana was the winner at the Government of India's National Safety Award for excellent performance in Industrial Safety during 2018. NTPC Auraiya Gas Power Station, Uttar Pradesh and NTPC Pakri-Barwadih Coal Mining Project, Jharkhand were the runner-up at the Government of India National Safety Award for outstanding performance in Industrial Safety. NTPC Auraiya was commended for achieving Lowest Average Frequency Rate in 2018.Hon. Cabinet Minister (Labour & Employment) Shri Bhupendra Yadav presented the awards



DDA, under the MoHUA, celebrated 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' from February 19 to March 06. A series of six events were organised. This included Avartan Rally — cycling in and around the flood plains of River Yamuna. The sixth and the concluding event 'Avartan Rally' hosted by DDA on March 6 saw huge participation by cyclists



POWERGRID, NR-I celebrates Women's Day



Shri Sudheer Kumar, Ex Additional Member Transformation, Planning & Railway Electrification has written a book *Never a bystander: Indian Railways in Transition*, a collection of actual stories of change and transformation that give the reader an insider's view of the incredible world of the Indian Railways. Uncompromising integrity, service orientation, learning agility and intuitive use of emotional intelligence have been the pillars of the author's transformation agenda



Sitare Foundation's 5 students admitted in US universities

Sitare Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation aiming to "Transform 50,000 lives through education by 2050", announced the names of its first batch of five talented underprivileged senior secondary school students who have secured admissions in universities in the United States of America, in undergraduate Computer Sciences programmes. Milan Ramdhari will join Virginia Tech, Tanisha Nagori will join Case Western Reserve University, Kusum Choudhary, Mahendra Kumar, and Nisha Choudhary have received multiple admissions from several universities including the University of Minnesota, Ohio State University, University of California - Santa Cruz, and Arizona State University.

Metro Railway observes International Women's Day

International Women's Day was celebrated in Metro Railway with the objective to highlight the steps taken by the organisation for the empowerment of women.

Free Health Check Camps were organised for lady commuters in association with Pailan Group of Institutions at Kavi Subhas, AMRI Hospitals at Mahanayak Uttam Kumar and Theism Diagnostics at Dum Dum Metro stations. Health parameters of lady commuters like blood pressure, blood sugar, height, weight, pulse rate, Body Mass Index (BMI) were checked in these camps. Personal commodities were also distributed at Kavi Subhas Metro station to lady commuters.

A cultural programme was organised at all women managed



Netaji Bhawan Metro station. Women staff of this station presented recitation, songs and dance in this programme. They shared their thoughts about the empowerment of women and the challenges therein. Senior Metro officers were also present.

A discussion on enhancing the role of women in all fields of Metro

Railway was held at Metro Rail Bhawan. Smt Vinita Jain, principal chief personnel officer, Smt Samhita Soren, principal chief materials manager, Smt Saumya Mathur, principal financial adviser, Ms Aparna Ghosh, dy. secretary (Sports & Genl.) and other senior lady officers, staff participated in this discussion.

International Women's Day celebration at TRIFED

TRIFED celebrated Women's Day in line with the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, in the august presence of Shri. Bishweswar Tudu, Hon'ble Ministers of State for Tribal Affairs, Shri. Anil Kumar Jha, Secretary, Tribal Affairs and Shri. Ramsinh Rathwa, Chairman TRIFED. At this International Women's Day Celebrations, the focus was on initiatives and programmes that showcase tribal women artisans and Van Dhan beneficiaries from across the country and their contributions towards enhancing livelihoods.

Celebrating the occasion in



a function held in the hybrid model, TRIFED recognised the contributions of 75 tribal women achievers by recognising the efforts of the Tribal Women Achievers who have contributed

significantly to effect change in their communities. During the event, the women achievers were presented with a souvenir and certificate highlighting their contributions and achievements.

PFC inks agreement to provide LED street lighting systems in Faridabad villages



PFC, A Maharatna Company and India's leading NBFC in power sector, has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF), Haryana for supply, installation and commissioning of LED Street Lighting Systems as part of its CSR initiative. As per the MoA, PFC will provide financial assistance of ₹3.56 crore to Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF) for supply, installation and commissioning of 4,324

LED street lighting systems in 21 villages of Faridabad, Haryana.

The MoA was signed in the presence of Shri Krishan Pal, Hon'ble Minister of State (Power) & Minister of State (Heavy Industries), Shri R.S. Dhillon, CMD, PFC, Shri Abhishek Meena, APMC, Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF), Shri P K Singh, senior advisor & former director, PFC and Shri Rizwanur Rahman, executive director and other senior officials of Ministry of Power, PFC and MCF.



VIT-AP University celebrates International Women's Day

VIT-AP University celebrated International Women's Day virtually and invited all to break the bias. Chief guest Padmaja Chunduru, managing director & CEO, National Securities Depository Limited, Mumbai said, "Women should attain financial stakes in their lives to attain social, economic and professional equality." G Muthazhagi, chairman, VITAA (VIT Alumni Association)

said, "No one can make you inferior without consent." Dr G Viswanathan, founder and chancellor urged all-party men to thrive hard to offer 1/3rd representation to the women at parliament to the pan-chayat. Dr SV Kota Reddy, vice-chancellor, Dr C L V Sivakumar, registrar, Dr Anupama Namburu, deputy director, Student Welfare, faculty, staff and students of VIT-AP University were also present.

PFC to provide motorised tricycles for orthopedically impaired

PFC, A Maharatna Company and India's leading NBFC in the power sector, has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) for distribution of motorised tricycles to Orthopedically Impaired Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjans) under its CSR initiative.

As per the MoA, PFC will provide financial assistance of around ₹4.70 crore to ALIMCO for the distribution of motorised tricycles among the beneficiaries by organising a series of distribution camps at the block and the district level.

The MoA was signed in the presence of Shri R S Dhillon, CMD, PFC, Shri Rajan Sehgal (IFoS), chairman and managing director ALIMCO, Shri Rizwanur Rahman, executive director (PFC) and other senior officials of ALIMCO and PFC were also present on this occasion.

VIT-AP University conducts 2-day National Level Annual Business Plan Competition



VIT-AP School of Business (VSB) and Technology Business Incubator - Innovation Incubation centre (TBI-IIC) held a two-day National Level Annual Business Plan competition on March 4 and 5 virtually. Ramesh Kaza, senior managing director, State Street Bank & Trust, Boston, USA was the chief guest. He said "Business plans play a vital role in strategies and the perfect execution of business with profitability and sustainability."

Dr Raghavendra, associate dean-VSB said that a business plan can bring clarity to the decision-making process regarding key aspects of the business such as capital investments, leases, resourcing, etc. The valedictory programme was also graced by Dr S V Kota Reddy, vice-chancellor, VIT-AP, Dr C L V Sivakumar, registrar VIT-AP, Dr Y V Pavan Kumar, deputy director of TBI - IIC, Dr Vikas Mehra (VSB), professors, students and staff.

Forty four teams competed and 15 got into the finals

The first prize winners were Team A squared members Anirudh Gupta, Anusha Priyadarshi of Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad, and won a prize of ₹1,00,000. The second prize winner, Searchyourspace, VIT-AP University, Andhra Pradesh won a prize of ₹50,000. Team members are Shaik Sameeruddin, MD Abdul Razzaq and Mohammed Suhail. The third prize winner, Hustlers, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar won a cash prize of ₹25,000/- rupees. Members of the team are Ravi Sinhar, Kirti Sharma. Special Mention: Sutul, VIT-AP University won ₹5,000. Team members are Sunil Kumar Singh, Atul Kumar Singh. Special Mention: Project Sankalp, Symbiosis Law School, Noida won ₹5,000. Team members are Shivam Sharma, Garima Mangla

Lewandowski's hattrick

AP ■ MUNICH

Whatever hope Salzburg had of overcoming Bayern Munich was extinguished by Robert Lewandowski scoring a hat trick in 11 minutes.

It was game over by the time Lewandowski's third hit the net in the 23rd minute on Tuesday to make it the quickest treble ever seen at the start of a Champions League match.

A second leg that started at 1-1 was tilted 4-1 in Bayern's favor by the striker's scoring masterclass. An 8-2 aggregate win to reach the quarterfinals was completed by further goals from Serge Gnabry, a double from Thomas Müller, and Leroy Sané. At least Salzburg avoided complete humiliation of not scoring with Maurits Kjaergaard netting for the Austrian team in Bavaria.

"That was a statement win," Bayern captain



Manuel Neuer said. "I think we showed a different side of ourselves today and didn't concede as many chances on the break. We were also more stable in defense, which obviously gives us hope that things can continue in that vein."

Tuesday's other round of 16 game was far tighter with Liverpool relying on its 2-0 victory at Inter Milan to advance after losing 1-0 at Anfield.

It was three weeks ago when Bayern was reliant on

a late equalizer from Kingsley Coman to avoid losing the first leg.

After failing to score — or even hit the target in Salzburg — Lewandowski has now taken his season tally to 42 goals in all competitions.

It took only 12 minutes to score his first against Salzburg, from the penalty spot after being brought down by Maximilian Wober. The defender fouled him again and Lewandowski converted his penalty again in the 21st.

The third came from open play, running onto Müller's pass and then knocking a shot past the advancing goalkeeper Philipp Köhn from the edge of the penalty area.

The previous quickest hat trick from the start of a Champions League match came in 24 minutes from Marco Simone for AC Milan against Rosenborg in 1996.

"Today it was an opponent on a different level," Salzburg defender Rasmus Kristensen said. "We had some chances but if you don't make them count, it is difficult. We gave everything but it wasn't enough. It had nothing to do with attitude, focus or the match

plan. They simply have been better in all aspects — that's it."

Coman seized the ball off Mohamed Camara to set up Gnabry in the 31st to shoot under Köhn.

Müller scored nine minutes into the second half before Kjaergaard struck a superb left-footed consolation for the knock-out phase newcomer.

But Müller swept in his 52nd Champions League goal in the 83rd after exchanging passes with Lewandowski and Sané in the buildup.

The rout was completed with an assist from the striker who started it. Lewandowski back-heeled the ball for Sané to net the seventh in the 85th.

"Today we had the luck that was completely missing in Salzburg," Müller said.

"We could have gone 1-0 down after five minutes. You're always a little dependent on situations like that, but overall we were better."

Liverpool reaches QF of CL despite loss to Inter Milan

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool could cope with its first Anfield loss in a year to still overcome Inter Milan and reach the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

Leading 2-0 from the last-16 first leg in Italy, Lautaro Martinez's swerving shot that reduced the deficit in the 61st minute gave the Italian champions a hope of a comeback.

But within two minutes, Inter's task was made more difficult when Alexis Sanchez was sent off after his follow-through on Fabinho earned him a second booking.

Liverpool held on to lose 1-0 and advance 2-1 on aggregate. The 2019 Champions League winners are in the quarterfinals for the fourth time in five years despite its first loss in the competition this season.

Liverpool had chances to level. Mohamed Salah volleyed against the post and Luis Diaz's close-range shot was deflected over by Arturo Vidal.

"We struggled in the beginning," Salah said. "We managed to hold the ball up more in the second half. The most important thing is we qualified. Hopefully we'll be better in the next game." Inter went out with only the consolation of being the first team to win



at Anfield since Fulham 366 days earlier.

"The difficulties we had were pretty close to what I expected," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp told broadcaster BT Sport. "Inter are a really good side and set up for these kind of games. They are really fighters and I'm happy we don't play this type of team every week."

Liverpool is still in contention for a quadruple after winning the League Cup last month, then reaching the quarterfinals of the FA Cup and closing Manchester City's lead at the top of the Premier League to six points with a game in hand.

Inter's focus now returns to trying to catch AC Milan in Serie A, with two points to make up and a game in hand.

"We did our best at Anfield," Inter coach Simone Inzaghi said.



CWG hockey: Indian men, women to open campaign

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Indian men's hockey team will open its campaign at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games against minnows Ghana on July 31 while the women team will also square-off against the same rivals on July 29.

Two-time silver medallist Indian men are placed in a relatively easy Pool B along side England, Canada, Wales and Ghana while the Pool A consists of six-time champions Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan and Scotland.

The Indian women are in Pool A, which also has England, Canada, Wales and Ghana.

After Ghana, the Indian men will play hosts and last edition's bronze winner England on August 1, followed by matches against Canada (August 3) and Wales (August 4). After Ghana, the women will play Wales on July 30, England (August 2) and Canada (August 3).

The top two teams from each pool in both men and women's competition qualify for the semifinals. The men's semifinals will be played on August 6 and the final on August 8. The women's semifinals and final will be played on August 5 and 7 respectively.

India will be sending its 'A' teams for both men and women at the Birmingham Games due short turnaround between CWG and the

Hangzhou Asian Games, which is a qualifying tournament for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The two events will be held just 32 days apart and the national federation wants to keep its first-choice players fresh for the Asian Games.

The Birmingham CWG is scheduled to be held from July 28 till August 8.

Among other matches, gold and silver medallists from Gold Coast 2018, Australia and New Zealand, will face each other in the group stages of both the men's and women's tournaments.

According to the competition schedule for hockey, announced on Wednesday, both the women's and men's competitions will begin on July 29, with the opening session of the women's tournament featuring reigning champions New Zealand against Kenya and South Africa playing Scotland. Hosts England will face Ghana in the first match of the men's competition with New Zealand facing Scotland in the same session.

There will be 54 hockey matches in total, with 40 group games, six classification matches, four semi-finals, four medal matches. All these matches will be played at a University. "It's going to be a fantastic tournament with an impressive lineup of teams, featuring all of the medallists from the last edition of the Commonwealth Games," Matt Kidson, Director of Sport for Birmingham 2022, said.

Djokovic in draw at Indian Wells, status still up in air

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Novak Djokovic was placed in the men's draw for the BNP Paribas Open, although it remains to be seen whether the second-ranked player will be allowed to enter the United States.

Djokovic isn't vaccinated against COVID-19. The U.S. Requires visitors to be vaccinated to enter the country. Additionally, tournament officials have said everyone at Indian Wells must be fully vaccinated to be on site.

Djokovic's name was on the entry list when the men's draw was made Tuesday, so the five-time tournament champion was included. He received a first-round bye and would play either David Goffin or Jordan Thompson in the second round.

"We are currently in communication with his team; however, it has not been determined if he will participate in the

event by getting (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) approval to enter the country," tournament officials said in a statement.

Djokovic's photo was included on a "We Miss You" wall of players who are absent from Indian Wells.

He last played at a tournament in Dubai last month, losing in the quarterfinals to Jiri Vesely.

He was deported from Australia in January after his visa was canceled on the eve of the Australian Open.

Djokovic said a previous COVID-19 infection meant he was exempt from rules stating that all arriving visitors must be fully vaccinated. He was detained in an immigration facility before being ordered to leave. Meanwhile, Barbora Krejickova withdrew because of an elbow injury.

The second-ranked Krejickova said she's been both-



ered by the injury since the tournament in Qatar nearly two weeks ago. She said the pain worsened overnight, a day before the Indian Wells event begins. "I will focus on getting the right treatment as soon as

possible and I hope I can be back on the court soonest," Krejickova said in a statement.

The 26-year-old from the Czech Republic is the defending champion at the French Open, which begins May 22.

The desert tournament already lost top-ranked Ash Barty, who announced last week that she wouldn't play since she hasn't sufficiently recovered after her victory in the Australian Open in January.

Ron Stander, 'Bluffs Butcher,' dies; fought Frazier in 1972

AP ■ OMAHA (USA)

Ron Stander, whose fight against unbeaten world heavyweight champion Joe Frazier in 1972 was the highlight of his 13-year career, has died. He was 77.

Toddy Stander said her husband died Tuesday from complications of diabetes at their home in the Omaha, Nebraska, suburb of Ralston.

Standar was known as the "Bluffs Butcher," a nod to both his hometown of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and his aggressive, brawling style. He was 38-21-3 in a professional career that spanned the years 1969-82.

Standar first drew national notice with a fifth-round knockout of Earnie Shavers in 1970, and he was 23-1-1 when he got his opportunity against Frazier on May 25, 1972.

The Frazier fight was at the Civic Auditorium in Omaha, across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs, and Standar went right at the champion from the opening bell.



The two fought on even terms early, but Frazier was able to impose his will and bloodied Standar's face, and the fight was stopped after four rounds.

Ramkumar bows out of Indian Wells Masters' qualifying event, Prajnesh advances in Mexico

PTI ■ INDIAN WELLS

Ramkumar Ramanathan's winless run against Liam Broady continued as the Indian Davis Cupper suffered his fourth straight defeat against the Briton to bow out of the Indian Wells Masters' qualifying event but Prajnesh Gunneswaran advanced at the Mexico Challenger tournament.

Ranked 170, Ramkumar came into the tournament after winning both his singles in the Davis Cup tie against Denmark.

He lost 2-6 6-3 4-6 to 17th seed and 124th ranked Broady in the opening round of the hard court event. Meanwhile, left-handed Prajnesh made a winning start at the Challenger 100 event in Monterrey, knocking out American wild card Ryan Harrison 6-3 6-4. His next opponent is also an American in Alex Rybakov, who disposed off the challenge of Rubin Statham 7-5 6-3. Prjanesh did not get play a single match in the home Davis Cup tie against Denmark.

Indian GM S L Narayanan wins Cattolica International Open chess tourney



PTI ■ CATTOLICA (ITALY)

Indian Grandmaster S L Narayanan emerged winner in the Grandisacchi Cattolica International Open here on Tuesday while his compatriot R Praggnanandhaa finished runner-up.

Narayanan and six others, including Praggnanandhaa, finished equal first on 6.5 points after nine rounds. However, Narayanan took the top spot on the basis of a better tie-break score. The 24-year-old Indian GM, the top-seed, remained unbeaten through the nine rounds. He drew against Pier Luigi Basso (Italy) in the ninth and final round on

Tuesday.

He posted four wins and secured five draws to score 6.5 points. The wins came against Italian Alex Dobbolaletta, compatriot Akshat Khamparia, Jobaova Baadur (Georgia) and Belarusian Sergei Azarov. Among his drawn games, one was against Praggnanandhaa.

Praggnanandhaa too finished with four wins and five draws. He scored wins over Sauat Nurgaliyev (Kazakhstan), Nikolas Wachinger (Germany), Dutchman Lucas Van Foreest and Meruert Kamalidenova (Kazakhstan). In the final round, Praggnanandhaa shared the point with Lorenzo Lodici of Italy.

Sindhu, Srikanth, Sen & Saina enter second round of German Open

PTI ■ MUELHEIM AN DER RUHR (GERMANY)

Top Indian shuttlers, including double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu and World Championships silver and bronze winners Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen, progressed to the second round of the German Open, here on Tuesday.

London Olympics bronze medallist Saina Nehwal and former top 10 player H S Prannoy also made an impressive start at the USD 180,000 Super 300 badminton tournament.

Seventh seed Sindhu trounced Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan 21-8 21-7 in a lop-sided contest after Srikanth, seeded eighth, saw off France's world number 39 Brice Leverdez 21-10 13-21 21-7 in 48 minutes.

It was Sindhu's 15th win over the world number 11 Thai player, while Srikanth too extended his head-to-head count over Leverdez to 4-0 after this victory.

Sindhu, a 2019 world champion, will meet China's Zhang Yi Man next, while world number 11 Srikanth will take on China's Lu Guang Zu.

Srikanth, who was forced out of the India Open Super 500 event in January after testing positive for COVID-19, has a 2-0 head-to-head record against the Chinese, ranked 27th.



dished out a superb performance to outwit Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen 21-6 22-20.

Saina, who has been struggling with fitness issues for most part of last year and early this year, had to dig deep to stave off a challenge from Spain's Clara Azurmendi with a 21-15 17-21 21-14 win.

Sen will now square off against fourth seed Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia, while Saina is likely to take on eighth seed Ratchanok Intanon.

On a comeback trail, Prannoy, who had reached the quarterfinals at World Championships, also made a winning

start, beating Ng Ka Long Angus 21-14 21-19 in 40 minutes. He will face either Indonesia's Shesar Hiren Rhustavito or Malaysia's Lee Cheuk Yiu.

In other results, Indonesian pair of Adnan Maulana and Mychelle Crhystine Bandaso ended the campaign of India's Dhruv Kapila and Gayatri Gopichand with a 21-19 21-19 win, while Haritha Manazhiyil Harinarayanan and Ashna Roy were no match for Italian combination of Martina Corsini and Judith Mair, losing 9-21 10-21.

The mixed doubles pair of Sai Pratheek K and N Sikki Reddy endured

a difficult time against top seeds Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai of Thailand, going down 19-21 8-21 in their opening match.

Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto played their hearts out before going down 19-21 22-20 9-21 to England pairing of Gregory Mairs and Jenny Moore.

M R Arjun and Treesa Jolly also lost 9-21 18-21 to seventh seeded French pair of Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue.

Sindhu was playing in a different gear against Busanan, who failed to pose any threat to the Indian during the 32-minute match.

It was a complete domination from the Indian as she moved to 11-4 in no time and soon earned the bragging rights. The second game was also not too different as from 7-5, Sindhu marched ahead and shut the door on her rival without much ado.

In the men's singles match, Srikanth looked in good touch as he zoomed from 6-6 to 19-8 in a jiffy and pocketed the opening game comfortably.

Leverdez made a roaring comeback in the second game as he dominated the proceeding and led from the start to finish, making it 1-1.

In the decider, Srikanth found his rhythm back as he made his way to 11-5 at the break and kept his nose ahead to jump to 18-7 before sealing it comfortably in the end.

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian Formula One driver Nikita Mazepin said he's still shocked about being fired from the Haas team following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and is creating a foundation to help excluded athletes.

Mazepin was fired on last Saturday following F1's decision to terminate its contract with the Russian GP. "I did not expect Haas would break the contract with me. I didn't see it coming," Mazepin told reporters on Wednesday in a news conference.

"It was a very painful and unexpected situation for me."

He was not informed by team owner Gene Haas or team principal Guenther Steiner, but by a lawyer.

"I do feel like I should have had more (support) because there has been no legal reason for

the team to terminate my contract," he said.

"I lost my dream."

Mazepin, whose father reportedly has close links with Russian President Vladimir Putin, sidestepped questions about the war, saying he sees it "on many more levels" than outsiders.

Mazepin learned he was fired at the same time the press did.

"I'm a young man at 23 and I was not ready," he said.

"I did not receive any hint or any support to say This is the decision we've taken, it's going to go live in 15 minutes, just be ready for it."

He wants to come back to F1 but not with Haas.

"Formula One is a dangerous sport, and you have rely and believe in the team you are working with," he said.

"It's a question of safety. I think it's fair to say I do not have that trust in them."



PTI ■ DUBAI

India's Ravindra Jadeja climbed to the top spot in the ICC Test rankings for all-rounders on Wednesday after his match-winning performance against Sri Lanka in the opening Test in Mohali.

"Ravindra Jadeja's performance at India's recent Test win against Sri Lanka

in Mohali has catapulted him to the no. 1 position in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's Test Player Rankings," the ICC said in a statement. His unbeaten 175 lifted him up to 17 places from 54th to 37th with the bat and he added nine wickets to move up to 17th with the ball. His all-round contribution was enough for him to regain the top all-round spot from Jason Holder, who had held the position since February 2021. Jadeja's only previous time

on top was in August 2017, when he spent a week at number one. Jadeja was named player of the match for his show against Sri Lanka in Mohali, where India triumphed under three days by an innings and 222 runs. In the same list, Ravichandran Ashwin dropped a rung to third while Axar Patel was next best Indian at 14th, after going down two positions. Patel did not play the Mohali Test due to injury. Among batters, Virat Kohli

rose two spots to be fifth in the latest list, followed by India skipper Rohit Sharma static at sixth. Rishabh Pant, who impressed with an explosive 96-run knock in Mohali, entered the top 10 at 10th after gaining one spot. Australian Marnus Labuschagne occupied the top spot. In the bowlers' chart, Ashwin was static at second, while Jasprit Bumrah was also unchanged at 10th. Pat Cummins led the pack, continuing his reign at the top.

State memorial at MCG for Warne set for March 30



AP ■ MELBOURNE

Home to many of famed Australian spin bowler Shane Warne's greatest sports moments, the Melbourne Cricket Ground will host his public farewell on March 30. Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews on Wednesday confirmed the MCG as the venue for a state memorial service to honour Warne, who died of a suspected heart attack last week in Thailand. He was 52. The family has announced it will hold a private funeral before the MCG service. "There's nowhere in the world more appropriate to farewell Warnie than the 'G," Andrews tweeted on Wednesday. The MCG was the stage of

Warne's famous Ashes hat trick in 1994 and his 700th test wicket on Boxing Day in 2006 during his final series before retiring from international cricket. He was born and raised in Melbourne. Autopsy results confirmed the death was due to natural causes with no signs of foul play. Following his death on the Thai resort island of Koh Samui on Friday, Warne's body was taken by ferry to the mainland city of Surat Thani on Sunday. It was transported to Thailand's capital, Bangkok, on Monday night and was being prepared to fly home to Melbourne. Warne's family issued a statement on Monday describing the night of his death on March 4 as the beginning of "a never-ending nightmare."

Bairstow ton leads England recovery from 48-4 to 268-6

AP ■ ST. JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)

Jonny Bairstow's classy century led England's escape against the West Indies from a noose-tightening 48-4 to a breathe-easy 268-6 on the opening day Tuesday of their three-test series. England's new top order looked like the old top order as it was routed inside the first 16 overs. The recovery was started by Bairstow and Ben Stokes crawling to lunch at 57-4. They combined for 67 to take England past 100. Bairstow and Ben Foakes made 99 together to take England past 200, then Bairstow reached his eighth test century in the company of all-rounder Chris Woakes. Those two saw out play to stumps, including six overs of the new ball, to complete a remarkable turnaround. Bairstow finished the day 109 not out from 216 balls with 17 fours. He has a partnership of 54 going with Woakes, who was on 24, almost his test average. Fast bowler Jason Holder was the pick of the West Indies battery. Holder conceded 15 runs from his 16 overs and took two wickets. He didn't leak a run in his first five overs and bowled nine maidens. Jayden Seales deserved the wickets of Stokes and Crawley for 64 runs from 19 overs. Kemar Roach bagged the big wicket of Root and the first wicket,



Alex Lees. But their efforts came as the attack tired amid sloppy fielding at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium. Root chose to bat first as he saw the pitch flattening out and becoming friendlier for the batsmen. But he and the top order couldn't survive the early roasting from the West Indies quicks. Openers Lees, on debut, and Zac Crawley were gone inside four overs, Root was bowled at 27-3, and Dan Lawrence departed on 48-4. Bairstow and Stokes limped to lunch, but came back refreshed for a fight and started hitting boundaries regularly as West Indies became too loose. Stokes had just hit his third and fourth boundaries when he dragged on against Seales and ended a gritty and necessary 95-ball stay for 36. But that was England's only loss of the middle session. Foakes punished anything slightly loose and hit eight boundaries before succumbing lbw to Holder for 42 from 87 balls. Woakes was yet to score when he survived a difficult catching chance by Holder in the slips off Alzarri Joseph. Bairstow was on 80 at the time. He'd bided his time, found his range, and punished the tiring West Indians. He moved relatively quickly to his ton, which he reached by sweeping captain Kraigg Brathwaite through backward square to the fence. Bairstow punched the air in delight after his second hundred in two tests, following his score in the fourth Ashes test in Sydney.

Sreesanth retires from all forms of domestic cricket



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World Cup-winning India fast bowler Sreesanth on Wednesday retired from all forms of domestic cricket, drawing curtains on his tumultuous career. Sreesanth played 27 Tests, 53 ODIs and 10 T20Is for India, picking up 87, 75 and seven wickets respectively. The 39-year-old right-arm pacer was last seen in action during Kerala's Ranji Trophy match against Meghalaya last month when he returned with two wickets in their innings and 166-run victory. Making his announcement in a series of tweets, Sreesanth said he has chosen to end his 25 years' career for the next generation of cricketers. "It has been an honor to represent my family, my teammates, and the

people of India. Nd everyone who loves the game. With much sadness but without regret, I say this with a heavy heart: I am retiring from the Indian domestic (first class and all formats) cricket," the Kerala-born pacer wrote. "For the next generation of cricketers..I have chosen to end my first class cricket career. This decision is mine alone, and although I know this will not bring me happiness, it is the right and honorable action to take at this time in my life. I ve cherished every moment," he added. Having made his international debut in an ODI against Sri Lanka at Nagpur on October 25, 2006, Sreesanth went on to win the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007 and also the coveted ODI World Cup in 2011 under Mahendra Singh Dhoni's captaincy.

MCC removes run-out at non-striker's end

PTI ■ LONDON

Custodian of cricket laws, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), has decided to move the law relating to run-outs at non-striker's end from its "unfair play" section besides completely banning the use of saliva to shine the ball in amendments to its 2022 code that will come into effect in October. Run-outs at non-striker's end when batters back up too far have often triggered heated debates on spirit of the game and several players like India's premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin have advocated for it as a fair mode of dismissal. "Law 41.16 – running out the non-striker – has been moved from Law 41 (Unfair play) to Law 38 (Run out). The wording of the Law remains the same," the MCC said in a media statement late on Tuesday. It was in 1948 when the dismissal first came to be known. Indian legend Vinoo Mankad ran out Australian wicket-keeper Bill Brown at the non-striker's end after duly warning him for backing up too far. The Australian media dubbed it as 'Mankading,' a name which stuck in popular parlance but was vehemently opposed by legends like Sunil Gavaskar for being "disrespectful" towards Mankad. The MCC also said that using saliva to shine the ball would be treated as an unfair practice. Saliva application was barred by the ICC in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and MCC said its research found that applying saliva had no impact on the ball's movement. "When cricket resumed following the onset of Covid-19, playing conditions were written in most forms of the game stating that applying saliva to the ball was no longer permitted. "MCC's research found that this had little or no impact on the amount of swing the bowlers were getting. Players were using sweat to polish the ball, and this was equally effective," it said. "The new Laws will not permit the use of saliva on the ball, which also removes any grey areas of fielders eating sugary sweets to alter their saliva to apply to the ball. Using saliva will be treated the same way as any other unfair methods of changing the condition of the ball," it asserted. The changes in the code, which first came into existence in 2017, were suggested by MCC Laws sub-committee "which were subsequently approved at the Club's Main Committee meeting last week."

Shreyas, Mithali, Deepti nominated for ICC's 'Player of the Month' award

PTI ■ DUBAI

Talented Indian men's team batter Shreyas Iyer, women's team captain Mithali Raj and star all-rounder Deepti Sharma were on Wednesday nominated for the ICC's 'Player of the Month' award for their performances in February. The nominations in the men's category also feature UAE batter Vriitya Aravind, and Nepal's Dipendra Singh Airee. In the women's category, New Zealand all-rounder Amelia Kerr is in the list alongside Mithali and Deepti. Iyer was in unstoppable form in the month of February and played a vital role in India's white-ball domination. He started the month with a



player of the match-winning 80 against West Indies in the final ODI and a 16-ball 25 in the last T20I. With India opting to rest players and injury to Suryakumar Yadav, Iyer was promoted to No.3 in the T20I series against Sri Lanka.

He scored three unbeaten fifties in three games and finished with 204 runs at a blistering strike rate of 174.35 and was awarded the Player of the Series for his exploits. Mithali was one of the few shining lights for India in the ODI series

against New Zealand. She was the highest run-scorer for India and the second-highest overall with 232 runs, including three fifties, averaging 77.33 with a strike rate of 82.56. In the final ODI, she played the role of the finisher to perfection, remaining unbeaten on 54 as India chased down 252 with four overs to spare. With that, India ensured that they finished the series with a win in their kitty. All-rounder Deepti was brilliant with both the bat and ball in the series against New Zealand. She took the most wickets (10) in the ODI series and was handy with the bat as well, aggregating 116 runs in five matches. She grabbed a four-for in the second ODI and followed it up with a 69 not out in the next match.

High time we stopped criminalising bowlers in name of spirit of cricket: Kartik on removing run out at non-striker's end

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vilified multiple times for running out non-strikers backing up too far, former India spinner Murali Kartik was a happy man on Wednesday after custodian of the game's laws, the MCC, amended its code to "stop the criminalisation" of bowlers in the name of 'spirit of cricket'. One of the finest left-arm spinners of his era with 644 first-class wickets, Kartik, who represented the country in eight Tests and 37 ODIs, ran as many as five batters out at the non-striker's end across formats during his playing days. On Wednesday, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) amended the laws and stated "...Running out the non-striker has been moved from

Law 41 (Unfair play) to Law 38 (Run out). The wording of the Law remains the same." This is something that Kartik, along with stars such as Ravichandran Ashwin, have been advocating for more than a decade. "There is spirit of cricket. But what I have always argued is that this is not 'Spirit of Cricket'. That people who are actually flouting it were the ones hiding behind the garb of 'Spirit of Cricket'. It was a classic case of 'pot calling kettle black'," Kartik . So does he feel vindicated after all these years? I would say it is a vindication of what I have felt right. It was definitely high time that we stopped criminalising the bowlers for doing it," the renowned commentator said.

ICC Women's WC: West Indies beat defending champions England

PTI ■ DUNEDIN

The West Indies edged past defending champions England by seven runs in a thrilling league-stage encounter of the ICC women's World Cup here on Wednesday, leaving the tournament favourites in a spot of bother. Bating first, the West Indies women, despite an impressive opening stand of 81 between veterans Deandra Dottin (31 off 64 balls) and Hayley Matthews (45 off 58 balls), managed a mediocre 225 for 6 in 50 overs after opting to bat in their second league match. Keeper-batter Shemaine Campbell (66 off 80 balls) and Chedan Nation (49 off 74 balls) were the stars of the show as they added 123 runs for the fifth wicket to steer the team. In reply, England nearly pulled through, courtesy a 61-run stand between Sophie Ecclestone (33 no) and Kate Cross (27) for the ninth wicket before being all-out for 218 in 47.4 overs. This was the West Indies' women's first ever World Cup win over England. "It's a nice feeling. Nerve-wrack-

ing for me though. When we checked the stats at this ground, we found that we were about 10 under par. We knew we had to bowl well and field well," West Indies captain Stefanie Taylor said in the post-match presentation. West Indies have now won both their games and are placed second on points table while England, with back-to-back defeats, including the opening round game against Australia, are placed sixth among eight teams. "They batted outstandingly at the start and came hard at us. We came back well with the ball, but just struggled to break that partnership (Campbell-Nation). Also gave a few too many in the last few overs. Obviously there is frustration," said England skipper Heather Knight. Happy with the attacking intent shown from our batters but we need to be more clinical in execution at crunch times," she added. It was a steady start by the Caribbean women as Dottin and Matthews safely negotiated the first 20 overs before a collapse saw them slump to 81 for three from 81 for no loss and subsequently 98 for 4 just



after the halfway stage (26.1 overs). Campbell, who won 'Player of the Match' award, struck four boundaries while Nation had three to her credit. "There was some pressure when

I went out to bat, we had lost some quick wickets and I tried to build a partnership. I gave myself a chance and played every ball on its merit. I knew as long as I stuck in there, the runs would come," Campbell said

after the match. Despite Carisbrook Park being known for aiding seamers, it was slow left-arm orthodox Ecclestone (3/20 in 10 overs), who was brilliant throughout the middle overs, not

letting the Windies batters get away. When England batted, their innings never had the momentum as they were 72 for four at one stage and then 156 for 8 at the end of the 36th over before Ecclestone and Cross nearly carried them home with their highly effective partnership. It came down to the last three overs and it looked like the duo were going to get the job done as England required just nine runs for victory and still had two wickets in hand. But Cross was run out at the non-striker's end when backing up too far and Anya Shrubsole was bowled by spinner Anisa Mohammed (2/24) three balls later to set off jubilant celebrations for the triumphant West Indies side. Pacer Shamilia Connell (3/38) was the most successful Windies bowler among the eight used by skipper Stephanie Taylor. **Brief Scores** **West Indies:** 225/6 in 50 overs (Shemaine Campbell 66, Chedan Nation 49, Sophie Ecclestone 3/20) beat England 218 all out in 47.4 overs (Sophie Ecclestone 33 no, Anisa Mohammed 2/24, Shamilia Connell 3/38) by 7 runs.