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## Hijab ban in classroom valid, rules K'taka HC

HC reasons: It is not essential part of Islam; verdict challenged in SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Muslim girl students cannot wear hijab (headscarf) inside classrooms. The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday upheld the ban on hijab in educational institutions in the State by dismissing pleas of Muslim girls. The court said hijab is not part of the essential religious practice in the Islamic faith.

The HC order drew criticism from senior Muslim leaders like Mehbooba Mufti (PDP), Omar Abdullah (National Conference), and AIMIM leader and Lok Sabha member Asaduddin Owaisi. The Muslim girls who had opposed the Government order against wearing hijab in classrooms rejected the judgment.

Within hours of the HC order, a Muslim student filed a plea in the Supreme Court challenging the HC verdict.

A three-judge full bench of the High Court said the prescription of school uniform is only a reasonable restriction, constitutionally permissible which the students cannot



Police personnel at the entrance of Karnataka High Court in Bengaluru on Tuesday

PTI

object to.

Muslim students' body Campus Front of India (CFI) protested against the "anti-constitutional order" and vowed to take all efforts to protect constitutional and individual rights.

Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi-led bench said, "We are of the considered opinion that wearing of hijab by Muslim women does not form part of essential religious practice in the Islamic faith." The CJ read

out portions from the order. The other two judges in the panel were Justice Krishna S Dixit and Justice JM Khazi.

The bench also maintained that the Government has power to issue the impugned order dated February 5, 2022, and no case is made out for its invalidation.

By the said order, the Karnataka Government had banned wearing clothes that disturb equality, integrity, and public order in schools and col-

leges, which the Muslim girls had challenged in the HC.

The bench also rejected the plea to initiate a disciplinary enquiry against the college, its principal and a teacher. "In the above circumstances, all these writ petitions being devoid of merits are liable to be dismissed. In view of the dismissal of the petition, all the pending applications pale into insignificance and are accordingly disposed of," said the HC.

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## Cong cracks whip on PCC chiefs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Tuesday cracked the whip on its chief of State units where the party had a dismal performance in the just-concluded Assembly elections under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi.

"Congress president Sonia Gandhi has asked the PCC presidents of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur to put in their resignations in order to facilitate reorganisation of PCCs," Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said on a day when dissensions within the party came in public after senior leader and former Union Minister Kapil Sibal asked the Gandhis to quit and pave way for others to run party affairs.

The move also came two days after a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) to discuss the party's performance and in which Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka had offered to relinquish their posts but were asked by certain members to continue. The CWC then authorised Sonia to make comprehensive changes in the party structure at the State and national levels.

AICC sources said that process for the overhaul of the organisational structure has begun and during the next meetings of the CWC and the proposed chintan shiv in Jaipur there could be announcements to advance the organisation elections presently scheduled for September 2022.



Sonia has been the interim chief since 2019 after Rahul quit the post in the wake of poor Lok Sabha performance and Congress rout in several Assembly elections.

Among those who have been asked to tender their resignation to Sonia is Navjot Singh Sidhu. Appointed the Punjab Congress chief in July by Rahul and Priyanka, Sidhu was singularly responsible for the ouster of the then Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh. Sidhu also locked horns with Charanjit Singh Channi, Captain's successor and Congress Chief Ministerial face in Punjab elections. As a result of this infighting, the Congress was reduced to 18 seats in the Punjab Assembly polls.

The Congress was unable to unseat the BJP in Uttarakhand and won only 19 out of 70 seats where it had a very formidable chance along with Goa. The elections were fought under the leadership of Uttarakhand PCC chief Ganesh Godiyal and former Chief Minister Harish Rawat.

Continued on Page 2

## Blame game on in Punjab Cong

Timing of Capt's ouster cause of rout, say leaders

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

After the fatal performance, the post-mortem! Days after the Congress party virtually faced political annihilation in Punjab, its leaders on Tuesday carried out a detailed dissection of the debacle, slinging the mud of humiliation at each other and blaming, among other things, timing of Capt Amarinder Singh's ouster from the Chief Minister's post.

Former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, State Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, and senior leader Sunil Jakhar too took the direct hit for singing different tunes as a part of the same choir.

At the same time, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has asked Sidhu to submit his resignation to facilitate the reorganisation of the State party unit.

Congress in Punjab could secure just 18 seats, with the Aam Aadmi Party sweeping the Assembly polls with a thumping majority of 92 seats in the 117-member House.

As the Congress State leadership met on Tuesday to discuss the "reasons" for the poll

debacle, the party leaders lashed out at the top three leaders — Channi, Sidhu and Jakhar — for openly speaking against one another in the run-up to polls. Demands for ousting Channi, removing Sidhu as PPCC chief, fixing accountability were raised during the meeting of contesting candidates called by the State party affairs in-charge Harish Choudhary at Punjab Congress Bhawan on Tuesday to introspect on the party's drubbing.

"This was expected. Many leaders want to replace Sidhu as they believe that he did not work the way a party president should have during the elections. He was continuously questioning his own party's government, he was pointing fingers at the Chief Minister... and there is no doubt that the Congress has to face defeat because of that," a senior party leader, who was part of the manthan, told *The Pioneer* while reacting to Sonia's decision to seek Sidhu's resignation.

Sources in the party maintained that after the poll defeat, Choudhary himself was in favour to remove Sidhu as the State party chief. Besides, party's Ludhiana MP Ravneet Singh Bittu and even Channi are believed to have called for replacing Sidhu with new party chief.

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## CAPSULE

### INDIA'S MISSILE SYSTEM VERY RELIABLE: RAJNATH

**New Delhi:** Asserting that India's missile system is very reliable and the safety procedures are of the highest order, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday described the recent accidental missile release as "regrettable" and said a review of standard operations and maintenance was being conducted and any shortcoming if found, will be rectified.

### LANKA TO INK BAILOUT PACKAGE WITH INDIA

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa on Tuesday left for New Delhi to ink a fresh USD 1 billion bailout package with India.

### LASHKAR TERRORIST GUNNED DOWN IN J&K

**Srinagar:** A Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) militant was killed in an encounter with security forces in Pulwama district in south Kashmir on Tuesday, police said.

### BUSES TO START AFTER 2 PM ON HOLI: DTC

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) on Tuesday said bus services will start after 2 pm on Holi.

## Ukrainian varsities discouraged students from leaving: Jaishankar

### India evacuated 22,500 citizens: Minister in Parl

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ukraine universities discouraged stranded Indian students from leaving the war-torn nation and showed reluctance to offer them online courses, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in Parliament on Tuesday.

Elaborating upon the fall-out of the ongoing war for India, Jaishankar said it has major economic implications and the same can be seen in the rising prices of energy and commodities.

Giving details of Operation Ganga to bring back the stranded Indians from Ukraine after the Russian offensive began on February 24, Jaishankar said India managed to evacuate 22,500 of its citizens, including students, from

there.

"Despite our efforts, however, a large majority of students elected to continue staying in Ukraine. We must understand the predicament in this regard. There was a natural reluctance to leave the educational institutions and affect the studies. Some universities actively discouraged and showed reluctance to offer online courses. Many of them received conflicting advice regarding safety," Jaishankar said.

He said in the period leading to February 24, the political signals were confusing as well. "Public urgings not to be taken by alarmism and reports of force withdrawal created a confusing picture. The net result was that about 18,000 Indian nationals were caught in the midst of conflict when it started," Jaishankar said.

The Minister said students did what they thought is right under the circumstance. He said India prepared in advance of the actual conflict situation.

Narrating the time-lines, Jaishankar said the Indian embassy in Ukraine had started a registration drive for Indian nationals in January, and as a result, 20,000 Indian nationals registered with the Indian embassy.

The Minister said 4,000 students left Ukraine through direct and indirect flights. India also rescued 147 foreign nationals of 18 countries, including Nepal and Bangladesh from Ukraine, he informed both Houses.

Continued on Page 2

### Relief for Indians as Ukrainian varsities start online classes

**New Delhi:** Several Ukrainian medical universities have started online classes, giving a ray of hope to the Indian students who feared a bleak future after fleeing the war-torn country amid a fierce Russian military offensive.

P8

## SC restores MediaOne's licence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the directive of the Centre revoking licence of Malayalam news channel "MediaOne" and banning its telecast on security grounds. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant, and Vikram Nath said the news and current affairs channel will continue its operations as it was operating prior to the ban of the telecast.

"We are of the view that the case of grant of interim relief has been made out. We order and direct that order dated January 31, 2022, of the Union Government revoking the security clearance of Madhyamam Broadcasting Ltd stands stayed pending further orders," the bench ordered.

Continued on Page 2

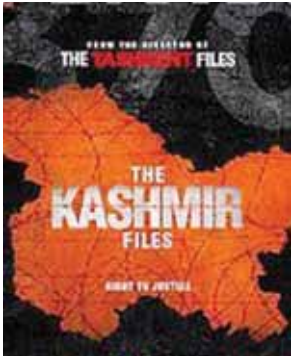
## PM lauds Kashmir Files for revealing 'ugly truth'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday lauded "The Kashmir Files", a movie focusing on the plight of Kashmiri Pandits, for "unearthing the truth". The PM also came down heavily on those criticising it saying they are part of the "eco-system" around and don't do justice to the self-espoused concept of freedom of expression.

The movie has been made tax-free by eight BJP-ruled States — Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Tripura, Goa, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana.

Written and directed by Vivek Agnihotri, the film depicts the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley in the 1990. Starring Anupam Kher,



Darshan Kumar, Mithun Chakraborty and Pallavi Joshi among others, the movie has stirred a running debate on the Kashmiri Pandits ouster from the valley. Many in the social media has demanded a probe into the what they called "ethnic cleansing".

Modi, who was addressing the Parliamentary party meet-

ing first time after BJP's thumping election victory in four of the five State Assembly elections, praised the film saying "truth should be unearthed".

A day before, director of the film Agnihotri along with the cast of the film met Modi at the latter's residence.

The Prime Minister strongly hit out at those who he said were "criticising the film" and blamed it on what he said was the "eco-system" around, saying liberal voices are not doing justice to the concept of freedom of expression.

Modi said "no one could do a film on the Emergency or the partition of India. There is no authentic film...now a film on Kashmir and people are creating 'hangama'...the flag bearers of freedom of expression discrediting the film..."

Continued on Page 2

East India Company and all foreign companies have looted India financially, politically and culturally to make us dependent on them. Let's break free from the shackles of this slavery and join hands with **Swadashi Movement** of Patanjali to make Bharat self-reliant and a super power.

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# Allocate more budget for clean air prog: Parl panel tells green Ministry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Parliamentary panel has pulled up the Union Environment ministry for "non-cooperative" and "unresponsive" behaviour of its officials towards public representatives and asked it to work towards greater budgetary allocation to fight air pollution.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change, in its 363rd report - 'Demands for Grants (2022-23) of the Ministry of Environment', directed the ministry to sensitise authorities to accord due courtesy to public representatives and make available the information sought by them.

The Committee yet again expresses its deep concern on the issue of non-cooperative and unresponsive behaviour of the officials dealing with environmental matters towards the public representatives. "The

Committee reiterates its previous recommendation that the Ministry of Environment, being nodal central Ministry dealing with these matters, must impress upon state governments as well as their own officers to sensitize all concerned authorities to accord due courtesy to public representatives, attend to their grievances, respond to their communications and make available the information sought by them," the panel said.

Pulling up the ministry for failing to provide quantifiable details of targets and their achievements under National Clean Air Program

(NCAP) during 2021-22, panel said it should make more efforts to get increased budgetary allocation for the NCAP considering the impact of rise in air pollution on climate change. "The Committee is constrained to note this casual approach of the Ministry in furnishing the data and strongly recommends the Ministry to

ensure that such data is maintained in a proper format, updated regularly and provided to the Committee in a manner which is convenient and insightful for the Committee to examine so as to get a clear picture of the actual physical and financial targets achieved.

"Funds allocated to NCAP and its utilisation needs a transparent elucidation. The ministry should make more efforts to get increased budgetary allocation for the NCAP considering the impact of increase in air pollution on climate change.

The Committee, recommends that concerted efforts should be made by Ministry for optimum utilisation of funds under NCAP," it said. Noting that a budgetary allocation of ₹470 crore was made under the head 'Control of Pollution' in budgetary expenditure (BE) 2021-22 which was reduced to ₹390.10 crore at revised estimate (RE) stage, the Committee urged ministry to

take proactive steps in coordination with state machinery towards controlling air pollution. "The Committee recommends that there should be transparency in funding mechanism of ministry with states/UTs, municipalities, SPCBs for better coordination and implementation of varied schemes under head 'Control of Pollution'," it said.

Recognising importance of plastic waste management and elimination of single-use plastics, the panel asked the ministry to run awareness programs on a regular basis as single-use plastics are a bio-hazard which not only impact wildlife and ecosystems but also pollute the environment.

"The Committee recommends ministry to run awareness programmes on regular basis, to educate people about ill-effects of single-use plastics and encourage them to use other sources as a replacement to plastic products in day to day usage."The Committee also

recommends bringing stricter norms and regulations to discourage use of single-use plastics and also lay down clear allocation of roles and responsibilities," it said.

On issue of man-animal conflicts, the panel recommended proactive steps by ministry of environment, noting that incidents were on rise and still remain an area of concern. "As such, there is an urgent need to minimize instances of man-animal conflict that was resulting in both human and animal killings. The

panel recommends that ministry should take proactive steps to sustainably manage and minimise man-animal conflict in a balanced manner, whereby wildlife habitat is improved," it said. The Committee urged ministry to evolve a mechanism for uniform compensation, early settlement of compensation and rehabilitation of victims of man-animal conflict.



BSP supreme Mayawati lights a candle to pay tribute to party founder Kanshi Ram on the occasion of his birth anniversary at the party office, in Lucknow on Tuesday PTI Photo

## Hijab ban in classroom valid, rules K'taka HC

From Page 1

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said everyone should abide by the verdict of the High Court on the hijab row, and cooperate with the State Government in implementing it. Speaking to reporters here, he said it was a matter concerning the future and the education of students, and nothing was more important than education.

"Everyone should abide by the verdict of the three-judge bench of the High Court. While we (Govt) implement it (the order), everyone should cooperate and maintain peace. Maintaining peace and order in society is of utmost importance. I appeal to the people, leaders of all communities, parents, teachers, and stu-

dents to accept the order and cooperate in imparting education to students, in accordance with the court order," he added.

He also asked students not to boycott classes and exams as some of them did during the preparatory exams, keeping their future in mind.

Primary and Secondary Education Minister BC Nagesh said efforts will be made to bring the "misguided" Muslim girls to the mainstream, even as he described the verdict as "landmark". "We will try to win the hearts of those girls who were misguided.

We will try to bring them in the mainstream of education," Nagesh told reporters. But the Udupi Muslim girls who have filed the petition in the High Court seeking permission to wear hijab inside the classrooms were defiant and said they will not go to college without a hijab and fight the case legally till they get "justice".

"We had approached the High Court seeking permission to wear hijab in the classrooms. The order has come against us. We will not go to the college without hijab but we will fight for it. We will try all the legal ways.

We will fight for justice and our rights," one of the girls said in a press conference in this coastal town. Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan welcomed the court ruling.

At the start of the hijab controversy, Khan had said the wearing of the headscarf was not an essential religious practice in the Islamic faith. "I sincerely pray and hope that these continuous attempts to push back the young women, especially young Muslim women, into the four walls of the house, fall down," Khan said.

The Campus Front of India, responding to the HC order, said the "court verdict on hijab ban destructs the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution." "The BJP regime is trying to implement their agenda and dehumanise a community and the High Court verdict can now be a catalyst for their polarising agenda," CFI said in a statement uploaded on Twitter.

"It is an alarming sign that the judiciary interprets religious texts...We will never accept this anti-constitutional verdict and will continue all efforts to protect the constitution and individual rights,"

it added. AIMIM leader and Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi rejected the HC judgment and wanted the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and organizations of other religious groups to appeal against the order. ...If it is my belief & faith that covering my head is essential then I have a right to EXPRESS it as I deem fit. For a devout Muslim, Hijab is also an act of worship."

"It's time to review the essential religious practice test. For a devout person, everything is essential & for an atheist nothing is essential..." he said in a series of tweets.

PDP leader and Jammu & Kashmir former chief minister of Mehbooba Mufti said, "Karnataka HC's decision to uphold the hijab ban is deeply disappointing. "On one hand we talk about empowering women yet we are denying them the right to a simple choice. It isn't just about religion but the freedom to choose," she wrote on Twitter.

National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah said it was a "travesty" that the court did not uphold the basic right of a woman to choose how she wants to dress.

## No embassy can be part of negotiations to pay 'blood money', says Delhi HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday refused to direct the involvement of the Central Government in the payment of 'blood money' in connection with the death sentence awarded to a Kerala woman in a murder case in Yemen and said that no embassy can be part of negotiations to pay blood money.

Justice Yashwant Varma, who was hearing a petition by an organisation seeking Centre's intervention to save the life of the Indian citizen-- Nimisha Priya, said the court cannot ask the government of India to countenance such a payment and requested the authorities to facilitate the appropriate legal action against the conviction of the woman.

The petitioner, 'Save Nimisha Priya International Action Council', sought a direction to the Centre to "facilitate

diplomatic interventions as well as negotiations with the family of victim on behalf of Nimisha Priya to save her life by paying blood money in accordance with the law of the land in a time bound manner". Blood money refers to the compensation paid by an offender or his kin to the family of the victim.

"No embassy can be part of negotiations to pay blood money. You can do it personally, privately," the court stated.

"In so far as the first relief is concerned, the court cannot command the union to be a party to the negotiations which the family of the convict proposes to initiate," it opined. Lawyer Subhash Chandran KR, appearing for the petitioner said that the petitioner will pay the blood money and negotiate with the tribe of the victim but the assistance of the government was needed in view of the present social and political situation in Yemen. The court stated

that it can, at best and in law, call upon the Centre to facilitate the petitioner in pursuing the judicial remedy under the laws of Yemen. Central government lawyer Anurag Ahluwalia said that bearing in mind that the convict is an Indian national, the authorities shall take all proactive steps to institute an appeal before the next appellate

forum in accordance with the prevalent law and the concerned consular shall extend all cooperation and facilitate the travel of the petitioner to Yemen. "Accordingly, concerned Ministry is requested to duly pursue the remedy against the order of conviction as affirmed by court of appeal," the court stated.

The court further requested the Ministry of External Affairs to communicate to concerned consulate to facilitate travel of the petitioner as well as to provide help of interpreters if so required. The petition said

Nimisha Priya was an Indian nurse working in Yemen and she was convicted in 2020 for the murder of the Yemini national. It said Priya was accused of murdering Talal Abdo Mahdi who died in July 2017 after she injected him with sedatives to get her passport that was in his possession. It said she injected him with sedatives so that she could take her passport from him while he was unconscious. However, he died of an overdose.

The plea alleged that Mahdi had forged documents to show that he was married to her and that she was allegedly abused and tortured by Mahdi. Though she appealed against death penalty, it was rejected, it said, adding that another chance of appeal before Supreme Court there still exists but Priya is unlikely to be spared and therefore, her only hope to come out of death sentence is if victim's family accepts blood money.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The General Public is hereby informed that the Maharashtra Saini CGHS Ltd. Plot No. 25, Sec-12, Dwarika is recommending the names of the following members to the Registrar of Cooperative Societies Parliament Street New Delhi:

- 1. Madhu Jain M.S. 282
- 2. Sunil Dev M.S. 315
- 3. Shyam Lal Rastogi M.S. 284
- 4. Neeru Sarawat M.S. 329

Any person having objections to the said recommendation may submit his/her objection to the society office within 15 days of the publication of the present notice so that appropriate action may be taken by the society.

**THE PRESIDENT/SECRETARY**  
Plot No. 25, Sector-12, Dwarika, New Delhi-75



### छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल

पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.)

#### // सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी ई आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन 2006 (यथा-संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि (1.) मेसर्स श्रीमती होरोबाई गोड देवडोगर लाईम स्टोन माईन), खसरा क्रमांक-344(पार्ट), 350/1, 350/2, 350/3, 351, 352 एवं 353 लीज परिया-1.95 हेक्टेयर, खदान उत्खनन क्षमता-16,500 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम-देवडोगर, तहसील व जिला-राजनांदगांव (2.) मेसर्स श्रीमती नीलम पोद्दार (खरबदाल लाईम स्टोन माईन), खसरा क्रमांक- 391/1 (पार्ट), लीज परिया-2.02 हेक्टेयर, खदान उत्खनन क्षमता-49,996 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम-चंवरदाल, तहसील व जिला-राजनांदगांव (3.) मेसर्स श्रीमती पुष्पलता ओसाला (खरबदाल लाईम स्टोन माईन), खसरा क्रमांक-566/1 एवं 568, लीज परिया- 1.125 हेक्टेयर, खदान उत्खनन क्षमता-6,000 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम-चंवरदाल, तहसील व जिला-राजनांदगांव (4.) मेसर्स श्री सनीर पोद्दार (खरबदाल लाईम स्टोन माईन), खसरा क्रमांक-391/1 (पार्ट), लीज परिया-1.942 हेक्टेयर, खदान उत्खनन क्षमता-39,900 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम-चंवरदाल, तहसील व जिला-राजनांदगांव (5.) मेसर्स देवडोगर लाईम स्टोन क्वारी (प्रो.- श्री अतुल गोयल), खसरा क्रमांक-342 (पार्ट), लीज परिया-1.67 हेक्टेयर खदान उत्खनन क्षमता-18,000 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम- देवडोगर, तहसील व जिला- राजनांदगांव के लिये पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई बाबत छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त परियोजनाओं के संबंध में आपत्ति / सुझाव / विचार / टीका- टिप्पणी इस सूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के अंदर क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, 5/32 बंगला, भिलाई, जिला-दुर्ग में मौखिक अथवा लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। उपरोक्त परियोजनाओं के लिए संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 21/04/2022 को समय दोपहर 12:00 बजे से, स्थान- ग्राम पंचायत चंवरदाल भवन के प्रांगण में, ग्राम-चंवरदाल, तहसील व जिला-राजनांदगांव (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। यह भी सूचित हो कि:-

1. लोक सुनवाई के दौरान सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों को फिजिकल / सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन करना अनिवार्य होगा।
2. लोक सुनवाई के दौरान सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों द्वारा मास्क का उपयोग किया जायेगा तथा समय-समय पर सेनेटाईजर का उपयोग किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।
3. लोक सुनवाई स्थल पर सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों की बैठक व्यवस्था कम से कम 02 मीटर की दूरी रखना अनिवार्य होगा।
4. कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।

ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन 14 सितम्बर 2006 (यथा-संशोधित) के अनुसार संबंधित व्यक्तियों के अवलोकन / पठन हेतु डाउटई आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी भाषा तथा सी.डी.(साइट कोपी) डाइरेक्ट, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, अरुण मंदन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, रायपुर, छत्तीसगढ़, कलेक्टर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर, जिला- राजनांदगांव, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत, जिला- राजनांदगांव, महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र, जिला-राजनांदगांव, सरपंच / सचिव ग्राम पंचायत चंवरदाल, जिला-राजनांदगांव, सरपंच / सचिव ग्राम पंचायत डुमराडीहखुर्द, जिला-राजनांदगांव,क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, 5/32 बंगला, भिलाई, जिला-दुर्ग एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर में रखी गई है।

**सदस्य सचिव**  
**छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,**  
**नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)**

## Neuro and spine cancer seminar held in city

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over the last few years, new techniques have revolutionised the treatment of brain and spinal cord tumours. These treatments with high precision are leading to total removal of tumours while preserving the organs and leaving the least detrimental effect on their functionality. To spread awareness about these new techniques, Rajiv Gandhi

Cancer Institute & Research Centre (RGCIRC) organised a Neuro & Spine Onco Update at RGCIRC in Rohini in the national Capital. Experts from two of India's largest and dedicated Neuro-onco set-ups namely Tata Memorial and RGCIRC besides leading lights from major hospitals, including AIIMS, GB Pant Hospital, RML hospital and Safdarjung Hospital, delivered talks and shared their experiences.

Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Piyush Goyal, Pralhad Joshi, and others also attended the meeting.Pitching on the BJP's anti-dynasty plank, the Prime Minister conveyed to the party MPs that it is at his behest that many children of party MPs were "denied tickets" in the recently held Assembly elections.Modi made it clear in the meeting that the BJP would not

## Ukrainian varsities discouraged students from leaving: Jaishankar

From Page 1

He said most of the Indian students studying in Ukraine hail from 35 States and Union Territories with over 1,000 students each from Kerala, UP, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar and Rajasthan. The Minister also said more than half the students were in universities in eastern Ukraine that borders Russia and has been epicenter of conflict so far. Jaishankar said the Indian Government

issued an advisory on February 15 advising Indian citizens in Ukraine to leave the country. "In view of the continued build-up of tensions in February, the Embassy issued an advisory on 15 February 2022, advising Indians in Ukraine whose stay isn't essential to leave country temporarily. It also advised Indians not to travel to Ukraine or undertake non-essential movements within Ukraine," he said.

Operation Ganga saw more than 90 special flights including 76 civilian flights and 14 were Indian Air Force flights. The evacuation was undertaken from Romania, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. "While IAF rose to the occasion, most of the private airlines also participated enthusiastically," he added.

## Congress cracks whip on PCC chiefs

From Page 1

In Goa, party came down to 11 seats under the leadership of State Congress chief Girish Chodankar as compared to 17 in the last Assembly. In Manipur, where it was able to secure only five seats under the leadership of Manipur PCC chief Nameirakpam Loken Singh and former Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh, Congress could not even secure the office of Leader of Opposition as JD (U) bagged six seats. Earlier during the day senior

Congress leaders lashed out at their party colleague Sibal for his remarks against the leadership with the party's Lok Sabha whip accusing him of speaking the language of the BJP and the RSS.

Sibal in an interview to an English newspaper said Gandhis should step aside and give some other leader a chance to lead the party. While Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot termed the Sibal's comment "unfortunate", Manickam Tagore, a staunch Rahul loyalist, said the RSS and the BJP

want the Gandhis to be out of leadership position to kill the Congress party and destroy the idea of India, Congress national spokesperson Pawan Khara said Sibal should contest elections for the post of Congress president instead of making public comments against the leadership.

Congress put out a video of all its former leaders from Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, on its Twitter handle. "We will fight on. We will overcome. We will continue to raise your voice," the party said.

Joining in, former MLA and party candidate from Baghapurana Darshan Singh Brar also said that Channi should leave the Congress. "The main reason is the lack of coordination between the top leaders — Sidhu, Channi, and also Jakhar...Every day they all come up with different statements, attacking one another," he added. Former Minister and Gidderbaha MLA Amarinder Singh Raja Warring added that the "indiscipline in the party, intense infighting led to party's defeat. And because of this, the people of Punjab felt that we are non-serious".



# Another major win for Kejriwal, AAP

HC nixes plea to order probe against Delhi CM, party over alleged Khalistani links; befittng reply, says Arvind

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

In a major victory for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and its national convenor, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed a petition seeking a high-level enquiry against Arvind Kejriwal alleging that he has links with Khalistani separatists.

Soon after that Kejriwal said that the court's decision was a reply to those who called him a "terrorist". Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court had termed as "completely frivolous" and dismissed the petition filed by Congress leader Jagdish Sharma seeking an investigation into the allegations that AAP and Kejriwal have links with banned organ-



isation Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) and other Khalistani forces and have received funds from them to contest the elections in Punjab.

Reacting to the court order, Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi, "First the public gave a befitting reply (in the elections) to those who called me a terrorist, and today the court has given them the reply."

The AAP has made a clean sweep in Punjab after winning 92 of the 117 Assembly seats. A Bench of Acting Chief Justice Vipin Sanghi and

Justice Navin Chawla also asked the counsel for the petitioner not to file such frivolous petitions. "In your petition, you say that the authorities are cognisant of the letter of erstwhile Chief Minister of Punjab to the Union Home Minister.

Where is the question of us directing for any inquiry? Please don't file such frivolous petitions. It is completely frivolous. Is there any reason to think that authorities will not take action or are not taking action?" the Bench said while dismissing the petition.

The petition referred to a letter written by former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjeet Singh Channi levelling the same allegations and the statement of former AAP leader Kumar Vishwas on the same lines.

The petition also sought temporary suspension of the AAP's recognition and also barring of the party from contesting any elections till the inquiry is completed.

# Will develop Delhi as centre of world-class education: Sisodia

## Delhi Teachers Univ 1st Board meeting held

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

The AAP Government will develop the national Capital as the centre of world-class teacher education and the Delhi Teachers University (DTU) will make this vision a reality, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Tuesday.

Sisodia said that the education sector is dominated by Finland, Singapore, Japan, America and European countries today. The DTU would be the answer for India. "This would allow India to be considered among the top countries of the world in the field of teachers' education," he said.

The first meeting of the Board of Management of DTU was held on Tuesday regarding this vision. In his message to the Board, Sisodia said that the aim of this university, estab-

lished by the Delhi Government is to create a world-class institution in the field of teacher education as good as premium institutes like IIT-IIM. He said that the DTU would emerge as a brand for teacher education all over the world.

He further said that the teaching profession has become the last career resort for everyone today. "The DTU will change this perspective. It will encourage the youth towards the teaching profession and produce hundreds of excellent teachers in every session.

Such excellent teachers will further prepare the future of the country for the coming tomorrow by delivering quality education to their students," he added.

The DTU will collaborate with national and international organisations to provide world-class training to trainees as well as to exchange new ideas and practices. In the Board meeting, it was agreed that unlike most of the teacher training programs currently offered in the country, the courses offered at the DTU will



not focus solely on subject knowledge but on capacity building of trainees as well. Trainees would be equipped with practical skills so that they can be better prepared for classroom teaching.

It was also discussed that the DTU would not only emphasise on teacher-training but also focus on fundamental and applied research in the field of education, Sisodia's office said in a statement.

On this occasion, the Vice-Chancellor of DTU, Dhyanaj Joshi said that the DTU would work to fulfil the vision of Delhi Government for education and would emerge as the best institution of teacher education not only in India but in

the world. Tamil Nadu Teachers University Vice-Chancellor Professor N Panchanatham said that DTU will offer new-age courses by creating a multidisciplinary eco-system as per the recommendations of NEP 2020.

The Delhi Assembly in January passed a Bill for setting up a world-class teachers' training university. The university will offer teacher education programmes such as BA-BED and BSc-BED to create a new generation of teachers.

Students of the university will collaborate with Delhi Government schools for the duration of their courses and get hands-on experience with a focus on research.

## DMRC bags responsible org excellence award 2020-21

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has been awarded with first prize at 'ASSOCHAM 10th responsible organization excellence awards 2020-21' under category of 'unlisted company with turnover more than 1000 crores'. DMRC's MD Dr Mangu Singh received award in a virtual ceremony where Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of State, Ministry of Culture, was chief guest.

The performance of organisations was evaluated on various performance based parameters such as Environment, Governance, Customer Satisfaction, Corporate Social Responsibility, Energy Efficiency; Suppliers based performance, health and safety etc. The ASSOCHAM is one of country's oldest apex chambers and a prominent interface between industries and government comprising leaders, academicians, economists and independent professionals.

# Probe Delhi riots as per law, sans influence: HC

**PTI ■** NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday asked the Delhi Police as to why it has not filed a charge sheet in the case concerning the death of a 23-year-old man who was forced to sing the national anthem during the 2020 northeast Delhi riots and asked it to conduct its investigation without influence as per the law.

Justice Chandra Dhari Singh, who was hearing a petition by the deceased's mother seeking a speedy and proper investigation, said that the case was to be taken seriously and asked the investigating agency to "take into account" the "suggestions" by the petitioner in her plea.

The incident relates to a video that had gone viral in which the deceased - Faizan

could be seen allegedly being beaten by policemen while being made to sing the national anthem and chant 'Vande Mataram'. Kismatun, the mother of the deceased man, has sought an SIT probe into the death of her son, who along with four other Muslim men, was seen in the video.

The woman has claimed that the police illegally detained her son and denied him critical medical attention due to which he succumbed to the injuries on February 26, 2020.

The DCP concerned told the court that the case involves "technical evidence" and that the investigation has "zeroed down a head constable making the video" and not assaulting the victim and that no stone was being left unturned in the probe. The judge, who remarked that there was "no

ground to disbelieve" one of the highest officers in the police machinery, was further informed by Delhi police lawyer Amit Prasad that while they have "identified some people, confirmation was needed from all angles".

The court was informed that the agency will take eight more weeks to complete the probe. The court clarified that it was not interfering with the manner of investigation and added, "The son of a mother has died. I'm not commenting on how and when (but) it has to be taken very seriously" and dealt with as per the criminal law.

Delhi police said that the statements of the witnesses have been recorded and one of the surviving persons, who was with the deceased, has not alleged any "violence" and

that the investigating agency was awaiting the outcome of certain other technical tests.

Lawyer Vrinda Grover, appearing for the petitioner, stated that no arrest was made in the case and the police earlier made a false statement concerning the status of CCTVs in the concerned police station and that the investigating agency was not probing the "second scene of the crime" i.e the police station and sought permission to file a response to the police status report.

The court asked the petitioner to raise objections after the charge sheet is filed and asked her to "have some faith in the investigating agency" and observed that there was "no reason to disbelieve" their stand by invoking the writ jurisdiction. The matter would be heard next in May.

## Check adulterated food in markets during Holi: Delhi Govt to officials

The Food Safety Department of Delhi Government has directed officials to conduct special drives to ensure that adulterated food products are not sold during Holi. A circular is also issued by department in this connection. "It has been decided by Commissioner, Food Safety to conduct drive during Holi season to lift both surveillance and legal samples of sweets, especially Gujiya and related items," the circular issued by department said. A senior official said "It is often seen that traders and other people engaged in food business use adulterated products or stale food items during festival season." This drive will continue even after Holi.

# Andhra BJP, regional leaders join AAP

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

Prominent leaders of the BJP and other regional parties joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) from Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday after it registered a stupendous victory in Punjab Assembly polls. Former BJP leader Chinnam Rama Kotaiah and Jan Sena leader Attili Raju joined AAP, the party said. They joined AAP in presence of senior party leader and MLA Somnath Bharti.

Chinnam Rama Kotaiah has been a member of BJP. He contested Lok Sabha elections from Pileru constituency on BJP's ticket in 2019, and was MLA from TDP for Nuzvid Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh for years 2009-2014. He also served as General Secretary of trade



union at HMDA for 14 years. He has also earned a doctorate in Infrastructure Development. Somnath Bharti said: "I heartily welcome him to party on behalf of Arvind Kejriwal.

The entire country is being heavily influenced by Kejriwal model of development and kind of progress that it has made in State of Delhi." People are constantly joining AAP after seeing phenomenal work

being done by Kejriwal Government in all sectors including schools, hospitals, electricity, water, roads and public welfare," he said. Many BJP and Congress leaders from Haryana had also joined party on Monday. The BJP's former Gurugram MLA Umesh Agarwal and ex-Minister and senior Congress leader Bijendra Singh were among those who joined AAP.

## PICTALK



Anganwadi workers, helpers and Mid-Day Meal workers stage dharna under the banner of Centre of Indian Trade Unions at Jantar Mantar to press their various demands, in New Delhi on Tuesday

# Cops find Vijay Goel's phone, arrest snatcher

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 22-year-old snatcher and recovered the mobile phone of former BJP MP Vijay Goel.

Sajan, a resident of Daryaganj, had allegedly snatched Goel's phone last evening when he was going from Daryaganj towards Red Fort through Upper Subhash Marg, police had said.

Sajan, who had allegedly snatched Goel's phone from him near Red Fort in north Delhi, was arrested from Daryaganj area, they said. Describing the incident, Deputy Commissioners of Police (North) Sagar Singh Kalsi had said Monday that around 6.45 pm, when Goel's car reached near Jama Masjid metro station, a person wearing blue shirt and white cap came towards him, snatched his phone from his hand and

fled. Police said they have registered a case and began their investigation. Police said they examined more than 100 CCTV cameras to evolve an outline of snatcher, which helped them zero in on him and finally arrest him.

The snatcher had changed his clothes and the pair he wore during the incident has been recovered, Kalsi said Tuesday.

After his arrest, Sajan disclosed to the police that he had sold the mobile phone to a person name Mohammad Asif (23), a native of Muradabad in Uttar Pradesh, for Rs 2,200, according to the officer.

At his instance, Asif has also been arrested, the DCP said, adding 23-year-old works as a helper in a shop. The snatched mobile phone has been recovered from Asif, police said, adding that Sajan was previously involved in four cases of snatching and Arms Act.

# Prez to open Heritage Park near Red Fort

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

A new heritage-themed park near the iconic Red Fort, the 'Heritage Park' constructed by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC), is all set to be inaugurated by the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday.

"This park is spread in about 8650 sqm area, comprises of beautiful boundary wall with rich carving works in red, quartzite stone and iron grills. The park has structures like walkways, Baradaris, Open Air Theatre, Panorama, Chhatris, sitting tires, under tensile structure built of red stone and white marble, are present in Park," a senior official said. Talking about features of park, the official said that it will be equipped with a range of public facilities

such as toilets, parking, shopping counters, designer lamp posts and focus light. "The heritage park will become a major attraction for tourists as it presents a unique blend of heritage with modern amenities and natural beauty," he said.

The guests will also get to enjoy delicious cuisine of Chandni Chowk and handicrafts of Old Delhi area at the park, said officials. "The park is built in two phases with the total cost of Rs 17.68 crore. In the first phase, an area of about 1.75 acre was developed with an estimated cost of Rs 7.65 crore. In the second phase, the remaining 2.25 acre was developed with an estimated cost of ₹10.03 crore," he said. The park is named after Charti Lal Goel, the former deputy mayor of municipal corporation and first Speaker of Delhi Legislative Assembly.

# AAP alleges nexus between BJP, building mafia in city

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

After an under-construction building collapsed in Kashmere Gate area, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleged that the incident happened due to "negligence" and "conspiracy" of the BJP and the building mafia. AAP senior leader and MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said that the party will file FIRs against BJP Councilors, the Mayor and the BJP state president and demand the strictest punishment.

Accusing the BJP leaders, Pathak said that the civic body was well aware of the threat as AAP MLA Prahlad Singh Sawhney complained several times to the MCD but the BJP leaders did not act upon it. "BJP leaders fraudulently got the map of a 180 sq yard building approved under the SARAL scheme by showing it to be of 80 sq yards. SARAL scheme

applies only to buildings up to 100 sq yards in area," he said.

Leader of Opposition in North MCD Vikas Goel said, "I am certain that once this matter is investigated the links of the builder with the BJP leaders will be exposed." Pathak said that AAP MLA Sawhney wrote a letter to the Commissioner, the Mayor and all authorities concerned, stating that the project was in violation of MCD's rules and regulations and is completely illegal. "Sawhney wrote two more letters dated 8th and 9th February respectively.

Through these letters and communication channels, he shared all the details of the illegalities of the construction project. He even wrote a letter to the L-G on 9th February informing him about the illegitimate construction that can pose a threat to lives of people working and living in the area. But no action was taken in this regard," he added.

# Two men held for murdering gas godown guard

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested two persons for allegedly killing the security guard of a gas godown in order to rob money from the warehouse in northeast Delhi's Shastri Park area. The accused have been identified as Manish Kumar Mandal (19) and Vishal Singh (20), both residents of Bihar.

Police were informed around 9 am on Monday that a man was found dead at site number 2 of GS Enterprises, a gas agency. When police reached the spot, they found the security guard was lying in a pool of blood, in a cabin adjacent to the gas godown, police said. The deceased was identified as Ganesh Lal Kori (50), a resident of UP. His mobile phone was also found missing,

police said. They checked the CCTV footage and found three suspected persons near the guard room around 9:30 pm on Sunday. One of them was noticed entering it with a rod in his hand, a senior police officer said.

He was identified as Manish who earlier used to work as a labourer there. Manish's brother Virender still works at the godown as a driver.

On early Tuesday, a raid was conducted and two persons were nabbed from Tripathi Enclave, Suleman Nagar, Kirari, Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Sanjay Kumar Sain said. During interrogation, they revealed that their third associate is a juvenile. The accused are drug addicts and were facing a financial crunch.



# High-risk children priority under vaccine plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

High-risk children will be priority under the vaccination plan being kicked off from Wednesday for kids in the 12-14 age group, said the government even as it asked people not to be complacent in view of rising Omicron cases in countries like China and Singapore.

Meanwhile, sources said that the decision on whether to allow mixing of vaccines for the third shot among the general population in India is expected soon. Investigators from Christ-ian Medical College, Vellore, who have been carrying out a cl-inical study on mixing vaccin-es, are likely to present their int-erim data from 400 volunteers to the panel of the DCGI

"The decision to vaccinate children (12-14 years) is based on scientific evidence and is in line with the WHO recommendations," Chairman of COVID-19 Working Group of National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation Dr NK Arora said.

The primary focus was immunisation of children with comorbidities but due to the unavailability of data of such children, we have decided to open immunization for all the

children between the age group of 12-15 years, said Dr Arora.

He further said, "Almost three months ago, the Standing Technical Sub-Committee (STSC) of NTAGI meeting took place where we suggested that the vaccination should be opened for all the children between the age group of 12-18 with comorbidities as and when approved v a c c i n e comes."

Dr Arora also asked people not to let their guards down and follow Covid appropriate behavior in view of rising Omicron cases in several countries like China and Singapore. "We are safe as most of the people will be vaccinated. But this should not make us complacent in view of the unpredictable nature of the virus."

An official from the Union Health Ministry said that States have been asked to organise dedicated Covid vaccination sessions through earmarked centres, and train vaccinators to avoid mixing of vaccines during the inoculation of kids in 12-14 age-group.

The COVID-19 vaccine to be administered would be



Corbevax manufactured by Biological E. Limited, Hyderabad. Beneficiaries can get the shot after online registration (beginning 9 am on Wednesday) or through onsite walk-in.

As per the guidelines, two doses of Biological E's intramuscular vaccine Corbevax would be administered to the beneficiaries in the 12-14 years age group at an interval of 28 days. All beneficiaries born in 2010 or earlier — those who have already attained the age of 12 years — will be able to register on CoWIN, says the guidelines.

The states were also advised to ensure judicious utilisation of available COVID-19 vaccines. As per earlier guidelines, states can replace those that are due for expiry and also replace them from one district within the state to another to ensure that vaccines are not wasted.

# Para-commandos, Special Forces carry out drill Modi, Kishida likely to discuss China's aggression at LAC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to hone its capabilities to fight in all kinds of terrain and weather, the para-commandos and Special Forces carried out two-day drill in the peninsular region of the country on March 14 and 15.

This drill came days after the commandos carried out a similar drill in the strategically important Siliguri corridor near Sikkim. Two similar exercises were conducted near the Line of Actual Control(LAC)in Ladakh and Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands last year.

The latest exercise saw the army carrying out a two-day airborne insertion and rapid response exercise in the country's peninsular region in sync with its overall approach to maintain operational readiness, officials said here on

Tuesday.

The exercise that concluded on Tuesday involved advanced aerial insertion techniques, or air dropping of soldiers, "combat free fall" and integrated battle drills by airborne and Special Forces troops.

The airborne and Special Forces of the Indian Army practiced their aerial insertion capability and rapid response anywhere on the mainland and in its island territories, in an airborne exercise in Peninsular India on March 14 and 15, officials said here on Tuesday. As regards the importance of the Siliguri corridor where the Army conducted the drill ten days back, they said it is a stretch of land bordering Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It connects the Northeast region with the rest of India and is considered crucial from the military perspective.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

China's aggressive posturing in the Indo-Pacific region and continuing stand-offs at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh are likely figure prominently in the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida here on Saturday. The two leaders are also likely to review the situation arising due to the Ukraine crisis.

The Japanese prime minister will visit New Delhi for a day and will leave for Cambodia the next day, sources said here on Tuesday. Besides security related issues, the two leaders will also explore ways to further enhance their ties in the field of trade and commerce and more bullet train projects besides the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor, they said.

The 17-billion dollar project was inaugurated in 2017 by former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe and Modi. The project is



largely funded by loans from Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The annual summit between the two leaders was put off several times since 2019 due to various reasons. The upcoming event comes at a time when this year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of India-Japan bilateral ties. The two leaders will also discuss the upcoming QUAD summit in Tokyo.

India and Japan have forged a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership," and started annual summit level talks in 2005. The talks are held alternately between the two countries each year. The last in-person, 13th

annual summit was held in 2018 when Prime Minister Modi visited Japan.

Abe's visit for the 14th annual summit was cancelled at the last minute as he was due to visit Guwahati when protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act broke out in 2019. The covid pandemic forced postponement of summit in 2020. The two Prime Ministers held telephonic talks in September 2020.

Modi then met Abe's successor Yoshihide Suga for a summit on the sideline of the first in-person meeting of the heads of states of Quad nations in Washington last year hosted by the US.

## 'Chair of Excellence' to be set up in first CDS' memory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 'Chair of Excellence' in memory of India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)General Bipin Rawat will be set up at the United Services Service Institution(USI), a leading military think tank.

The announcement in this regard by Army Chief General M M Naravane here on Tuesday came a day ahead of the 65th birthday of General Rawat. He was killed in a helicopter crash near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu on December 8 along with his wife Madhulika and 12 armed forces personnel. The 'General Bipin Rawat memorial Chair of Excellence' will focus on the field of jointness and integration among the armed forces.

"Late General Bipin Rawat who served as India's first CDS as well as the 27th Chief of Indian Army was an outstanding professional and was in the

midst of steering one of the most radical transformations of the Indian military," the Army said.

"The Chair of Excellence is a befitting tribute to the astute leadership and professionalism of the General," it said in a statement. Naravane said General Rawat was passionate about strategic thoughts and invested considerable time and energy in the activities of various think tanks.

"And, therefore, his 65th birthday provided an opportune moment to reinforce the services' bond with their intellectual institutions. The Chair will be open to veterans of three services and civilians having expertise in the field of national security," Naravane said.

The topic for this year's research has been chosen as "jointness and integration in the context of land warfare in



India", officials said. They said the 'Chair of Excellence' will be open to all veteran officers of the armed forces and civilians having expertise in the field of national security and military affairs. The period of research would be from July 1 for a period of one year, every year.

General Rawat took charge as the first CDS on January 1, 2020, with a mandate to bring in convergence in the functioning of the Army, the Navy and the Indian Air Force and

bolster the country's overall military prowess.

A key mandate of the CDS was to facilitate the restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in

operations, including through the establishment of theatre commands. As the CDS, General Rawat carried out the extensive groundwork to roll out tri-services reforms.

## Naxal violence has fallen 77%, Govt tells Lok Sabha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Naxal violence in the country has reduced by 77 per cent, from an all-time high of 2,258 in 2009 to 509 in 2021, Union Minister Nityanand Rai told the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The MoS Home Affairs said the Central Government has been supplementing the efforts of states as envisaged in the 'National Policy and Action Plan to address Left Wing Extremism', which was launched in 2015.

He said the steadfast implementation of the policy has resulted in consistent decline in violence and constriction of its geographical spread. "The incidents of LWE violence have reduced by 77 per cent from an all-time high of 2,258 in 2009 to 509 in 2021. Similarly, resultant deaths — civilians and security personnel — have reduced by 85 per cent from all-time high of 1,005 in 2010 to 147 in 2021," he said while replying to a written question.

## SC to set up Bench to hear Ashish Mishra bail case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it would set up a Bench to hear on Wednesday a plea challenging the grant of bail by the Allahabad High Court to Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra, in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence. A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana took note of the submission of lawyer Prashant Bhushan, appearing for some farmers, that there was an attack on one of the prime witnesses of the case where eight people, including four farmers, dead.

The people who attacked the witness threatened by saying "now that BJP has won, they will take care of him," Bhushan said, adding that other co-accused are also seeking bail relying on the Allahabad High Court order granting bail to Ashish Mishra. The CJJ said he would constitute the bench which had

heard the case earlier and list it for hearing on Wednesday.

A bench of the CJI and Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli had earlier heard the case pertaining to the incident that had left eight people, including four farmers, dead and had appointed a former judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, to monitor the probe. On March 11, the top court had agreed to list for hearing on Tuesday the plea seeking cancellation of Mishra's bail in the case.

A single-judge bench of the high court, on February 10, had granted bail to Mishra who had spent four months in custody. Three family members of farmers who were killed in the violence have sought a stay on the February 10 bail order of the high court, saying the verdict was "unsustainable in the eyes of law as there has been no meaningful and effective assistance by the state to the court in the matter".

## ED attaches assets of 2 Gujarati bizmen for selling fake shots

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached over Rs 21.5 crore in five separate cases of money laundering across the country, including assets worth Rs 1.04 crore of two Gujarat-based businessmen, who allegedly sold "fake" Remdesivir injections packaged in the style of a reputed brand during the second wave of the Covid pandemic last year.

Kaushal Mahendra Bhai Vora and Punit Guntvantil Shah manufactured fake injections of the antiviral drug at a farmhouse-cum-manufacturing facility in Surat and sold them in Madhya Pradesh and some other states, the agency said.

"The said fake Remdesivir injections were being manufactured by mixing glucose and salt in the deceptively similar bottles having similar stickers to that of branded original injections. Empty bottles of the same size and similar

appearance, huge quantities of glucose and salt, huge packing material, fake stickers and other raw materials in huge quantities were seized during the raids conducted at the farmhouse-cum-manufacturing facility at Surat by the Morbi Police, Gujarat," the ED said in a statement.

"The accused sold fake Remdesivir injections to various vendors who further sold the same to needy retail customers at exorbitant prices. In some cases, the injections were directly sold to retail customers who were identified by the accused persons through social media platforms during the peak of the second wave of COVID-19," it said.

Huge number of fake Remdesivir injections were purchased and injected to various patients at "exorbitant prices" by a hospital based in Madhya Pradesh, the ED probe found.

The anti-viral drug was part of the clinical management of coronavirus patients.

Of the attached assets, Rs 89.20 lakh cash was found in possession of Vora, who "masterminded" the entire conspiracy of manufacturing fake Remdesivir injections and Rs 11.50 lakh cash and Rs 3.92 lakh worth deposits in bank were found in possession of Shah, the co-conspirator in the production and supply of the fake injections.

In a separate case, Rs 1.5 crore of former Odisha BJD MLA Anam Naik was attached by the ED under the anti-money laundering law while it attached 15 immovable properties worth more than Rs 13.51 crore in Servomax India Private Limited bank fraud case worth Rs 402 crore.

The ED also attached assets worth Rs 3.94 crore in a case registered against Nalini Prusty, an Odisha Financial Service officer, Bijaya Ketan Sahoo, an OAS officer (her husband) and others for "assets disproportionate to their known source of income".

## ₹1,000 monthly EPFO pension grossly inadequate: House panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel on Tuesday said that the minimum monthly pension of Rs 1,000 for subscribers of the pension scheme run by retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is "grossly inadequate" and it is imperative for the labour ministry to pursue a proposal for raising the amount.

"...Rs 1000 per month pension which was fixed eight years back appears to be grossly inadequate now", the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour said in its 30th report on Demand for Grants , tabled in Parliament on Tuesday,

The panel said it becomes imperative on the part of the Ministry of Labour and Employment to pursue the matter with the Ministry of Finance for obtaining adequate budgetary support as recommended by the High-Empowered Monitoring

Committee, besides impressing upon the EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) to make an actuarial assessment of all its pension schemes so that the monthly member pension is enhanced to a reasonable extent.

The panel noted that in 2018, the ministry constituted a High-Empowered Monitoring Committee for complete evaluation and review of the Employees Pension Scheme, 1995. That committee in its report had inter-alia recommended that minimum monthly pension payable to the member/widow/widower pensioner may be raised to at least Rs 2,000, provided annual budgetary provision for the same is made, it stated.

However, it also noted that the Ministry of Finance has not agreed to any such enhancement in minimum pension beyond Rs 1,000 per month. The parliamentary panel found that the issue has been discussed in detail by several committees which have come

to the conclusion that unless the actuarial assessment of surplus/deficit of EPFO's pension schemes is made, revision of the monthly pension cannot be done.

It also said difficulties are being faced by EPFO members for e-nomination, especially by those who retired before 2015, as well as in the functioning of the Online Transfer Claim Portal (OTCP). While taking note of the appreciable efforts made by the EPFO to maximise use of information and technology tools in line with Digital India initiative, the panel suggested that the retirement fund body should strive further to usher in systemic improvements to address the problems faced in e-nomination.

The pane further noted that out of the target of 71.80 lakh beneficiaries by March 31, 2022 under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY), a total of 47.06 lakh employees have benefited as on February 6, 2022.

## IMD predicts heat wave in parts of India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the rise in the maximum temperature in most parts of the country, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted a heat wave to severe heat wave in some parts of Saurashtra, Kutch, Konkan and West Rajasthan and heat wave conditions over West Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat region, East Rajasthan and Odisha.

"Heat wave to severe heat wave condition alert for some parts of Saurashtra, Kutch, Konkan and West Rajasthan and heat wave conditions over West Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat region, East Rajasthan and Odisha," it said. This heat wave is essentially a period of abnormally high temperatures that are higher than the normal



maximum summer temperatures for that particular region.

"Weather likely to be dry over most parts of the country except light isolated rainfall over Kerala & Mahe during

next 5 days; over South Interior Karnataka during 17 th -19 th; Tamilnadu, Puducherry & Karaikal on 18th & 19th March," it added. The IMD predicted that a low pressure area is likely to form over Indian

Ocean and adjoining south west Bay of Bengal in the next 24 hours.

The IMD predicted severe heatwave conditions in Mumbai on Tuesday and Wednesday. The situation is expected to improve by Thursday, it added. At the same time, the temperature in Delhi will also increase between 36 and 37 degree Celsius by March 18.

The IMD said that the maximum temperatures were above normal by 3-6°C at most places over Punjab and Uttarakhand; at many places over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad; at a few places over Himachal Pradesh, West Rajasthan and Saurashtra & Kutch; at isolated places over East Rajasthan and Gujarat Region.

## Myopia an emerging health issue in schoolchildren

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Myopia (near-sightedness) is already an emerging public health problem in both urban and rural school going adolescents in India. With the Covid-19 induced impact of digital screen time being feared to cause its progression., Ophthalmologists from the Dr RP Centre of AIIMS, Delhi, are mulling a study in this regard to frame corrective steps.

Dr JS Titiyal, Chief of RP Centre, AIIMS, Delhi, said there have been complaints of Myopia progression among children. "But we do not have exact data for India. The results could be alarming. We are working on a strategy to assess the extent of the pro-

gression stage," he told The Pioneer.

It is important to study the habits that increase Myopia among children who have been left to rely on digital devices to continue with their education.

Uncorrected Myopia can result in an increased number of blindness, and the risk of retinal detachments, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration while an increase in Myopia could lead to many not having access to services for prescriptions, thereby increasing amblyopia.

Doctors point out that among the risks to eye health associated with the use of digital devices are unstable binocular vision (using both eyes adequately to create a single

visual image), eye strain, uncorrected refractive error and dry eyes.

Health experts advise that kids should spend time outdoors, especially in early childhood, as it can slow the progression of nearsightedness.

According to a review paper, published in the Journal of School Health and led by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), various research studies showed a consistent picture of increased digital screen time for children and adolescents across the countries.

The review also reported that "children and adolescents often use several devices at once, for example to browse social media on their phone while watching content on another device. Switching

between devices increases the strain on the eye by 22 per cent, as this entails switching distances between different devices, forcing the eyes to adjust."

The WHO has also raised alarm that the prevalence of myopia is increasing at an alarming rate; 1.89 billion people in the world have myopia.

According to a study published in the PLoS One journal by Indian doctors in 2020 there is an increasing trend of myopia in India over the last four decades. It showed "crude prevalence of myopia over the last four decades is 7.5 per cent in the 5-15-year age group, being 8.5 per cent and 6.1 per cent in urban and rural school going children respectively."



# HC rejects Malik’s interim bail plea

Says Maha Minister’s arrest was in order, ED complied with PMLA provisions

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday rejected the interim bail application of Maharashtra Minister and senior NCP leader Nawab Malik in a money laundering case, after holding that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had duly followed the requirement under section 19 the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), in effecting Malik’s arrest.

Rejecting Malik’s contention that his arrest was illegal and his plea for interim bail, a HC bench of Justices SM Modak and PM Varale noted: “In the present case, there is no dispute on the factual aspect that custody order is passed by the competent Court of jurisdiction i.e., the Special Court and secondly, merely because the order is against the

Petitioner it cannot be termed as patently illegal or suffers from non application of mind. In our opinion, this twin test is duly applied in the present matter.”

The HC bench also noted that “... we find merit in the submission of learned Additional Solicitor General (ASG) that the requirement of Section 19 (of PMLA) is duly followed”.

“At this stage, we are not impressed by the arguments of learned Senior Advocate Shri Desai that there is no act attributable to the Petitioner so as to attract the provisions of the PMLA, 2002,” the Judges noted.

Holding that the investigation initiated by the ED was at an initial stage, the bHC bench observed that the court was not expected to assess evidence and record any finding in respect of material collected by the probe agency. “So we deem it proper to peruse them (the papers) once the Petitioner will argue the Petition to the fullest extent,” the Judges noted.

Malik was arrested by the ED officials on February 23 in connection with the purchase of a huge plot of plot of land at “a throw-away price” from two



alleged henchmen of Karachi-based Dawood Ibrahim.

The ED’s contention is that Malik 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.

In the backdrop of the ED’s contention, the HC bench noted: “When we have perused the un-amended provisions of Section 3 we may find that “process or activity connected with proceeds of crime” is one of ingredient. It’s a wider term. Its constitutional validity is not challenged before us. So prima facie we feel that the said contention cannot be accepted

at this stage”.

“There is an FIR registered by NIA dated 03.02.2022 and on that basis there is ECIR registered on 14.02.2022. There are also previous FIRs and on that basis separate ECIR in the year 2017 and 2019 were registered. Now the Enforcement agency has merged them and combined investigation is undertaken... Considering all the above referred grounds, we are not inclined to allow the prayers in the said applications. Resultantly, Interim Applications are rejected,” the HC bench ruled.

After being in the custody of ED for 12 days, Malik is currently in the judicial custody till March 21 in the money laundering case.

# BJP looking for new UP Speaker after poll victory

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party, after its second consecutive victory in UP Assembly elections, has initiated the process for the election of the Assembly Speaker. Speaker of the 17th UP Assembly, Hriday Narayan Dikshit, had not contested the Assembly election as he had turned 75 years. The BJP is looking for his successor in the new Assembly.

“The exercise to elect the new speaker will be conducted after the swearing-in ceremony of the chief minister and the cabinet. The names of Suresh Khanna, Satish Mahana and Ramapati Shastri are doing rounds as prospective names for the position,” a senior BJP leader said. These leaders are senior-most in terms of legislative experience among all BJP MLAs in the state, he added.

A nine-time MLA from Shahjahanpur, Khanna (68) has served as a minister in the governments of Yogi Adityanath, Kalyan Singh, Rajnath Singh and Ram Prakash Gupta. He was also a minister of state in the Bahujan Samaj Party-Bharatiya Janata Party coalition government headed by Mayawati in 2002. In the earlier Yogi Adityanath-led government,

Khanna was minister for parliamentary affairs, medical education and finance.

Mahana is another senior BJP MLA who is being considered for the post of assembly speaker. In his tenure as a legislator, Mahana contested from Kanpur Cantonment constituency for the first five terms and then from Maharajpur constituency for the remaining terms. The 61-year-old leader also owns a business.

Like Khanna, Mahana has also been a minister of state in the governments led by Kalyan Singh, Rajnath Singh, Ram Prakash Gupta, Mayawati and cabinet minister in the Yogi Adityanath government.

The third name that is being considered is Ramapati Shastri, 72, who is the newly elected MLA from Mankapur (SC) seat in Gonda district. The agriculturist-turned-politician has served as a cabinet minister in the governments of Kalyan Singh, Rajnath Singh and Yogi Adityanath. He is a six-term MLA.

“As he belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, Shastri’s name is under consideration. His appointment as the assembly speaker will send out a strong message to the Dalits,” a party leader observed.

# Maya: BSP to follow path shown by Dalit scions in difficult ‘chamcha era’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Tuesday, called the present time as “chamcha era” and said that it was very difficult to stick to the mission shown by Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar but still her party would carry its struggle and move forward on the path shown by the great Dalit scions.

Remembering the party’s founder Kanshi Ram on his birth anniversary here on Tuesday, Mayawati said that only the struggle of the BSP to bring crores of Dalits, adivasis, backwards and other oppressed people out of the life of helplessness and make them stand on their feet, was a true tribute to Manyavar Kanshi Ram ji.

Mayawati said that she fought hard for life and made infinite sacrifices to bring alive the humanitarian movement of Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar’s self-respect. “It also earned a lot of success on its strength and gave a new dimension to the politics of the country,” she added.

Referring to the work done by Kanshi Ram, Mayawati said, “In order to make the memories of such a great man, during the BSP governments in UP, many grand sites, parks, educational institutions, hospitals and residential buildings have been named in his name. Colonies etc. were built and

public welfare schemes were run. Manyavar Kanshi Ramji memorial established in the capital Lucknow is the most prominent among them.”

In the wake of the recent defeat in UP, Mayawati said, “In fact it is in the present chamcha era that the BSP is still devoted to the missionary caravan of Dr Ambedkar by the money earned through blood and sweat. Standing on the strength of the money earned through hard work is not a minor thing, but a big thing, which is the result of this movement and on the basis of which the BSP has also earned many historical successes especially in UP.”

“In the future also, we have to remain persistent in the struggle with our principles at any cost,” she asserted, claiming that the BSP would again come to power. Meanwhile, in wake of the humiliating defeat in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati has taken a big decision.

She replaced Ritesh Pandey as the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha with Girish Chandra Jatav. Sangeeta Azad will replace Girish Chandra Jatav as the chief whip. Mayawati has given this information by writing a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. This decision of Mayawati is being linked to the party’s defeat in

the UP elections and a change in the party’s strategy regarding the next Lok Sabha elections.

Mayawati has written a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, giving information about the changes, saying that the party has now nominated Girish Chandra Jatav in place of Ritesh Pandey, the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha.

Ram Shiromani Verma will become the deputy leader.

It has been decided to make Sangeeta Azad the chief whip in place of Girish Chandra Jatav.

The BSP has suffered a crushing defeat in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. If the party won just one seat, its vote share also came down by about 10 per cent. It is believed that after this defeat, Mayawati can make a big change in the party organisation in the coming days.

Ritesh Pandey was given the responsibility in January 2020 BSP chief Mayawati made Ambedkar Nagar MP Ritesh Pandey the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha in January 2020. Mayawati had then said that being the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha and the BSP president of Uttar Pradesh, being from the same community, little had changed in it. Instead of Danish Ali, Ritesh Pandey was made the leader of BSP in the Lok Sabha.

# Shatrughan to fight from Asansol

Terms Mamata ‘Tigress of Bengal’, says honoured to fight polls under her SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



Two days after Mamata Banerjee announced her decision to nominate veteran cine star Shatrughan Sinha for the Asansol Parliamentary by-elections, the former Union Minister on Tuesday said that he had joined the Trinamool Congress and would feel honoured to fight under the leadership of a “mass leader” like the Bengal Chief Minister.

Terming Banerjee the “tigress of Bengal” Sinha wrote on the twitter “Happy to share that on an invite from our own, tigress of Bengal, tried, tested, successful honourable CM, Bengal ... I have joined TMC.

Shall be contesting under the dynamic leadership of a great lady, great leader of the masses in true sense, Mamata Banerjee.”

Sinha, a veteran BJP leader and a Union Minister in the Atal Behari Vajpayee candidate, had left that party to join the Congress. He however lost to BJP nominee Ravi Shankar Prasad from Patna Sahib constituency in 2019 general elections.

Banerjee had on Sunday said that Sinha would be contesting on Trinamool Congress ticket from Asansol, a seat that fell vacant after the sitting MP and former Union Minister Babul Supriyo left the BJP.

He two subsequently joined the Bengal ruling outfit and has been chosen by Banerjee as her party’s nominee for the Ballygunge Assembly seat which too fell vacant after the death of the veteran TMC leader and Bengal minister Subroto Mukherjee.

Sinha who earlier said that his “association with Bengal is half-a-century old” apparently referring to his role in Bengali film Jaban said winning would not be difficult for him with “Mamata ji by my side.”

With an apparent reference of the BJP’s “outsider” barbs -- an accusation that the Chief Minister herself leveled on the BJP leadership ahead of the last year’s Assembly elections when the national leaders camped in Bengal to campaign for the safe-confront party --- Sinha claimed that he could speak Bengali and Hindi equally.

“I can speak Bengali like I speak Hindi. And in Asansol, I will be speaking in both when I meet people from all walks of life. I want to be in their hearts,” Sinha also referred

to as Bihari babu said.

Asansol, the second largest city of Bengal and an industrial belt is known to have a substantial section of Hindi-speaking voters. “Almost 50 percent voters of this constituency speak Hindi though not all of them come from Bihar ... and many of them are Sikhs, Marwaris etc.,” said a local Trinamool Congress leader adding “this is a master stroke that Didi has given to offset BJP’s general following among the Hindi-speaking population.”

“While Sinha has his own charisma, the Chief Minister’s personal appeal will definitely carry the day for him.”

Meanwhile, sources in the Election Commission of India said that there were little chances of changing the dates of elections that has been scheduled for April 12. Earlier the State Government had written to the ECI requesting for a change of date considering the Higher Secondary (Class XII) exams the dates of which fall on April 11 and 13.

# Cracks developing in SP-led alliance, Mahan Dal to leave

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Cracks are developing in the Samajwadi Party-led alliance as one of its partners, Mahan Dal president Keshav Maurya, has indicated parting company with the main Opposition party.

Samajwadi Party on Monday had advised its leaders and the leaders of the allies to refrain from making statements to the media.

The Mahan Dal president attacked SP leader Swami Prasad Maurya who lost the Assembly election from Fazilnagar constituency in Deoria district.

Questioning the entry of Swami Prasad Maurya in the Samajwadi Party ahead of the UP Assembly elections, the Mahan Dal leader said, “Swami Prasad Maurya’s entry in the Samajwadi Party was a conspiracy by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Maurya was drafted in the Samajwadi Party at the behest of the BJP with a clear political design.”

Swami Prasad Maurya was labour minister in the Yogi Adityanath government and had joined the Samajwadi Party in January.

“With the entry of Swami Prasad Maurya a sense of complacency gripped the Samajwadi Party. The SP became confident that it would now get the majority of votes of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The SP leadership should have realised that no particular leader commands the votes, it is the political party which has the vote bank,” the Mahan Dal president said.

He charged that due to the influence of Swami Prasad Maurya, the full potential of Mahan Dal was not used during the elections.

“The overconfidence of Swami Prasad Maurya proved to be a disaster for the

Samajwadi Party as he led Akhilesh Yadav to be complacent about closely contested UP assembly elections,” the Mahan Dal president said, and added, “Swami Prasad Maurya has lost the confidence of the people and he could not even win the election but he is in the habit of making tall claims.”

“Mahan Dal was not given due importance in seat distribution among the allies of the Samajwadi Party. Mahan Dal was given only two seats while more seats were given to Rashtriya Lok Dal and Apna Dal (Kamerawadi). If the Samajwadi Party fails to honour the allies and does not give due importance to us then the Mahan Dal will be constrained to explore other options,” said Mahan Dal president Keshav Maurya.

Pitted in a direct contest with the BJP, the SP increased its seat tally and its vote share by 11 per cent but fell way short of the half-way mark of 202 in the UP assembly. In 2017, when the SP fought the polls in alliance with the Congress, it had won 47 seats, with a vote share of 21.28 per cent. This time, it has won 111 seats with a vote share of 32 per cent.

After losing the 2017 assembly election and the setback in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Akhilesh Yadav decided against alliance with former partners Congress and Bahujan Samaj Party. For 2022 assembly elections, Akhilesh made more strategic alliances, with small caste-based parties, thus forging cohesive, calculated vote banks. These included Om Prakash Rajbhar’s Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP), Mahan Dal led by Keshav Dev Maurya, Janwadi Party (Socialist) led by Sanjay Singh Chauhan, Apna Dal-Kamerawadi led by Union Minister Anupriya Patel’s mother Krishna Patel, and most importantly the RLD in western.

# Yogi for short, medium, long term plans to strengthen law & order

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the direction of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to further improve the law and order situations and to effectively control crimes in Uttar Pradesh, efforts have been started by the Home department.

An action plan is being prepared for this, in which short-term, medium-term and long-term goals will be set.

According to an official communique, a high-level meeting was held at the Command Centre here on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, in which the senior officials of the Home department deliberated in this regard and had a preliminary brainstorming session.

The proposed scheme is being considered for implementation in three phases. For this, it has been proposed to fix short-term goals of one to two years, medium-term goals for two to five years and long-term goals of more than five years. On this basis, the police department and its various units and the police at the district level will be made strong and effective in a planned manner.

In the meeting, after discussing the initial proposal prepared by the Police department, discussions were held on various points like budget plan etc for making it more rational and practical.

For the strengthening of law and order, the control command centre will be equipped with more robust and state-of-the-art resources. Social media cells will be made more effective. Similar action is being planned to be taken at district level also.

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# Priyanka asks leaders to file UP debacle reasons report

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary and UP in-charge Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has summoned senior leaders from Uttar Pradesh with a review report on the reasons for the defeat of the party in the UP Assembly elections.

Meanwhile, Congress supremo Sonia Gandhi has asked the presidents of the Pradesh Congress Committees of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur to put in their resignations to facilitate reorganisation of PCCs, Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala said in a tweet on Tuesday.

Now UPCC chief Ajay Kumar Lallu has to resign.

In the review meeting held at the Congress headquarters here on Monday, the candidates enumerated the reasons for their defeat. Only two Congress MLAs, including the party’s leader in state assembly, Aradhana Mishra ‘Mona’, have won the election.

Vadra on Tuesday evening also held discussions with the leaders on the reasons behind

the party’s debacle in New Delhi.

Earlier, party national secretaries Taugir Alam, Pradeep Narwal, Rajesh Tiwari, Bajirao Khade and Satyanarayan Patel and UPCC president Ajay Kumar Lallu held a meeting with the candidates and office-bearers and inquired about the reasons for the defeat.

Many candidates complained of non-support of the organisation and no help by local leaders. Most of the candidates attributed the election to direct fight between the two parties as the reason for the defeat of the Congress candidates as well as those of Bahujan Samaj Party.

At the same time, the candidates were also asked which people helped them and how many did good work. Many candidates also shared their experiences in writing.

They also highlighted the high command’s failure to build cadres and to keep the leaders with a significant voter base in their areas in the party fold.

Sources in the party said that before the elections, organ-

isational leaders had assured that at least 10-member committees were formed at every booth before the election but many candidates got less than 1,000 votes in assemblies having about 400 booths.

“We were told that 10 youth committees were formed at the booth level in every constituency. There are about 400 booths in every assembly segment. But a candidate getting 1,200-1,500 votes means that even those 10 members that party claimed were party workers did not vote for the party nominees,” said a party candidate, and added, “Not even women got votes.”

Nearly all the leaders were unanimous that AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra worked hard and came up with ideas that could have clicked but said there was no cadre on the ground to “execute” the ideas.

Interestingly, some of the candidates who attended Monday’s meeting, on request of anonymity, revealed that the seriousness of the top leadership in UP as well as those looking on behalf of AICC



could be gauged from the fact that they were playing games or watching videos on their mobile phones when they were sharing the reasons for their defeats.

It may be mentioned that Congress candidates have not been able to perform well in the elections. Only two leaders, Aradhana Mishra ‘Mona’ and Virendra Chowdhary, have won. While four candidates were at number two position, 387 candidates forfeited their deposits.

Priyanka Gandhi also made a new experiment under the ‘Ladki Hoon, Lad Sakti Hoon’ campaign and gave 40 per cent tickets to women but the move failed as except for Aradhana Mishra, who is already a two-time MLA, all other women candidates lost their deposits.

# Rajnath: Our missile system reliable, regret crash into Pak, probe ordered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days after one of its unarmed supersonic missile crashed into Pakistan, India on Tuesday asserted its missile system was reliable and the safety procedures were of the highest order.

Giving this assurance in Parliament, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed “regret” over the incident. Noting that the accidental firing was taken seriously by the Government, Rajnath also informed both Houses that a high level probe was ordered to find out the cause.

A review of standard operating procedures was also initiated, he said. In his statement in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister said, “I would like to brief this august House about an incident that took place on March 9, 2022.

This incident relates to

inadvertent release of a missile during inspection. During routine maintenance and inspection, a missile was accidentally released at around 7 pm.”

The Minister said it was later learnt that the missile had landed inside the territory of Pakistan. “While this incident is regretted, we are relieved that nobody was hurt due to the accident. I would like to inform the august House that Government has taken serious note of the incident,” he said.

Pointing out that Government has ordered a high-level inquiry to determine the exact cause of the accident, the Minister said a review of the Standard Operating Procedures for operations, maintenance and inspections was being conducted. “We attach highest priority to safety and security of our weapon systems.

If any shortcoming is found, the same would be



immediately rectified, he said. “I can assure the House that the missile system is very reliable and safe.

Moreover, our safety procedures and protocols are of the highest order and are reviewed from time to time. Our Armed Forces are well-trained and disciplined and are well experienced in handling such systems,” he said. A missile launched from a base in Sirsa crashed more than 140 km inside Pakistan in an area called Mian Channu.

Pakistan summoned the Indian Charge d’Affaires in Islamabad two days later to lodge a protest.

It also called for a joint probe by both the countries while expressing dissatisfaction over an Indian Defence Ministry statement regretting the incident.

Islamabad termed the statement as a “simplistic explanation.” Backing India’s stand, the United States said there is no indication that the recent firing of a missile from India which landed in Pakistan was anything other than accidental. While China had backed Pakistan’s demand for a joint probe, the US said it was an accident. “We have no indication, as you also heard from our Indian partners, that this incident was anything other than an accident,” State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters at his daily news conference on Monday.



## Clear as mud

### The Karnataka and Kerala HC rulings on hijab are at variance; now the SC needs to clarify

The Supreme Court of India has to intervene in the Karnataka hijab case for the simple reason that we now have two judgments, of the Karnataka High Court on Tuesday and the Kerala High Court of 2016, that differ on whether the hijab is an essential Islamic practice. The Karnataka judgment says it is not. It banks, apart from various Islamic sources, on the work of jurist Abdullah Yusuf Ali who states that "...for Muslim women generally, no screen or hijab (purdah) is mentioned, but only a veil to cover the bosom, and modesty in dress". The Kerala High Court banks on the "analysis of the Quranic injunctions and the Hadiths" to conclude that "it is a farz to cover the head and wear the long-sleeved dress except (the) face part and exposing the body otherwise is forbidden (*haram*).... When *farz* is violated by an action opposite to *farz*, that action becomes forbidden (*haram*)". The girls of the educational institution in Udipi, who are not able to attend their classes because they refuse to remove their hijabs in classes and fear that they may miss out on their examinations due shortly, will not be wrong if they cannot decide which judgment to follow. The Karnataka High Court agrees that while the *Quran* does not mandate the wearing of hijab for Muslim women, "there is sufficient intrinsic material within the scripture itself to support the view that wearing hijab has been only recommendatory, if at all it is".



Recommendatory does not amount to being mandatory surely, but it also does not prohibit the use of the hijab. It only means it leaves it to the discretion of the user. Also, the court says "this apparel at the most is a means to gain access to public places and not a religious end in itself. It was a measure of women's enablement and a figurative constraint". Then where is the problem? The point being

made here is how we end up splitting hairs and cross the realm of reasonableness if the essential practices doctrine is rigidly followed where matters of religion happen to conjoin matters of personal choice and freedom. The Karnataka High Court also says the hijab cannot be part of the uniform code because a uniform instils a sense of discipline. Interestingly, on Tuesday, the same day as the judgment, news reports say Sikhs can carry a small '*kirpan*' with them to high-security installations like airports. Sikh students wear headgear and unshorn hair in schools, the colour of the headgear often matching their uniforms. Religious symbols are allowed to be worn in several uniformed services where discipline is mandatory. The hijab case, therefore, needs a clarification from the Supreme Court so that the essential practices doctrine is not misconstrued to be regulating diversity in the name of discipline and uniformity and deny individual choices and freedoms in cases which do not pose any danger to society to invite restrictions.



Devotees pull Lord Shiva's chariot during the annual 'Panguni' celebration at Kapaleeswarar Temple, in Chennai

## Ugly truth

### Every creative expression has the right to live, and to get discussed. Don't muzzle it

The ongoing controversy over Vivek Agnihotri's *The Kashmir Files* is highly uncalled for; it's against basic civility. We are witnessing a strange phenomenon in a country that claims to be democratic, secular and pluralistic. Goons affiliated to certain political and religious outfits are threatening cinema hall proprietors and management to screen, or to take off, the movie based on the suffering of Kashmiri Pandits who were forced to flee their native State as part of ethnic cleansing in January 1990. Their slaughter and unending trauma in the name of religion are open secrets; now they are forced to live as refugees in their own motherland. Their houses, land and business establishments were taken over by extremists while the State Government facilitated such a takeover by bringing in legislation suited to the oppressors, like the Roshni Act. It is natural for any person with artistic and literary talents to compose poems, stories and novels based on the 'Great Exodus'. That's how Agnihotri made a movie without any big stars or famous technicians. The end result, according to people who have watched it, is a great work which would remain etched in their hearts for decades.



But this is not the first time a movie is politicised because of its content. We saw right-wing activists demonstrating across the country when Deepa Mehta released her trilogy, *Fire*, *Earth* and *Water*, because these apparently projected Indian society in poor light. In fact, movies, dramas, novels, stories and poems are mirrors that reflect the true image of their society and no purpose will be served by blacking out the truth. Way back in the 1980s, when Doordarshan telecast *Tamas*, a TV serial based on Bhisham Sahni's novel of the same name, Hindu fundamentalist outfits protested in front of all Doordarshan Kendras across the country. Did it help our country in any way? The truth, however unpalatable, must be told as it helps us understand the real history. If the stories behind the destruction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya and Kashi Vishwanath Temple remained deficient in light, we would only be cheating ourselves. But how can today's Islamic community be held responsible for the despicable acts of its forefathers? Similar scenarios were witnessed around Kamal Haasan-starrer *Vishwaroopam* and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's magnum opus *Padmaavat*. All forms of creativity, whether written, verbal or visual, are and ought to be above caste, community, religion or region.

# Ukraine validates our NPT mistrust

### The hopeless Ukrainian situation corroborates the Indian perspective of securing its sovereign and strategic interests, and not falling for the NPT trap



BHOPIINDER SINGH



Invaluable lessons have emerged from the Ukraine crisis — one is the validation of India's age-old apprehension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Promoted with the supposed objectives of preventing the misuse of nuclear weapons and fostering complete nuclear disarmament, India despite its avowed pacifist moorings, has historically and consistently opposed the treaty. While wholeheartedly supporting the cause of a nuclear weapon-free world, Delhi never believed that NPT was the formulation to achieve the same. India has maintained that the treaty was structurally discriminatory as it perpetuated the hegemony of the 'haves' (exclusive club of pre-1967 'nuclear weapon States' ie, the US, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China), without obligating them to liquidate their own dangerous stockpile. The exclusivity of nuclear deterrence with the so-called 'non-nuclear weapon States' (as per NPT definition) by debarring others from acquiring a similar and equal nuclear deterrence with its implied retaliatory or mutually destructive portents, is unfair entitlement.

Not only have the NPT 'nuclear weapon States' not destroyed their stockpile, their belligerence and intimidatory expansionism on the 'have-not' nations has been disconcerting. From unsubstantiated case of the WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction) in Iraq, reneging of Iran N-treaty despite IAEA's confirmation of full compliances, China's blatant territorial expansionism, to now Russia's free run in Ukraine — the privileged five beneficiaries of NPT have hardly demonstrated reassuring and responsible behaviour. Even on Article 1 of the NPT that mandates 'nuclear weapon States' to not transfer N-weapons or knowhow, China's assistance to Pakistani, North Korean and Iranian nuclear programmes is a proven fact that shreds all pretences of NPT suppositions. For India, memories of the 1962 Chinese aggression (followed by Chinese

nuclear test in 1964), or the intimidating sailing of the US 7th fleet flotilla in 1971, were staring concerns of regional and strategic threats that warranted hedging its own options, deterrents and asserting its sovereign freedom of action. India demonstrated its N-capability with 'Smiling Buddha' in 1974 (albeit calling it 'peaceful nuclear explosion').

Nonetheless, this opposition to signing the NPT has put India in an unlikely set of non-signatories (each for different reasons) with Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and South Sudan. However, unlike many NPT signatories and especially of the 'haves', India's responsible behaviour towards non-proliferation speaks for itself. Delhi remained committed to any non-discriminatory treaty that truly entailed fair play and guaranteed security amongst all, without privilege to some. India has a policy of credible minimum deterrence based on 'no-first-use' and 'non-use' of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States. Unlike China, Russia or the US, it has undertaken no territorial expansionist endeavours. Despite being routinely chided as an outlier from the prism of NPT, India's



DESPITE BEING ROUTINELY CHIDED AS AN OUTLIER FROM THE PRISM OF NPT, INDIA'S INSISTENCE ON THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING IN TERMS OF EFFICACY OR CONSEQUENTIAL SOVEREIGN BEHAVIOUR HAS BEEN ITS COMPELLING CASE

insistence on the proof of the pudding in terms of efficacy or consequential sovereign behaviour has been its compelling case.

In 1991, when Ukraine broke from the USSR construct, it had one-third of the entire Soviet nuclear arsenal and means of production — notionally, third largest nuclear stockpile (1,700 warheads) in the world. It could have practically persisted with its nuclear deterrence status given the inheritance and availability of the wherewithal, but it traded the same for financial compensation and ostensible security assurances from three of the five 'nuclear weapon States' as per NPT (Russia, US and United Kingdom) under the Budapest Memorandum. It was a move made in good faith on the word of the 'haves'. The memorandum had explicitly noted, among many guarantees, "to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine" as also "reaffirm their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine". It had further captured "to refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate" and, above all,

"to provide assistance to Ukraine, as a non-nuclear weapon State party to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, if Ukraine should become a victim of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression". Today, as Russia unconcernedly violates Ukraine's territorial integrity, and the US and UK (as principal components of Nato) leave Ukraine high and dry — the assurances of Budapest Memorandum sound so hollow.

Despite the 2014 annexation of Crimea, Ukraine had cavalierly persisted with reaffirming its 1994 decision towards NPT. Calls by odd Ukrainian parliamentarians and security strategists to arm themselves, too, went unheeded. Instead, Vladimir Putin had brazenly invoked N-weapons in defending Crimea, just like he has again dangerously posited the language of nuclear weapons today. In 2019, Secretary of the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council admitted "nuclear disarmament was a historic mistake" and that "guarantees given to us are not even worth the paper they are written on". It was a classic case of fatally late realisation.

Ensuing drama of the hopeless Ukrainian situation validates the Indian perspective of securing its sovereign and strategic interests, and not falling for the NPT trap. As Kyiv desperately beseeches Delhi to intervene, memories of Ukraine condemning India's nuclear re-testing ('Operation Shakti') in 1998 is a conveniently forgotten footnote. India has consistently charted its own security considerations beyond the NPT imperatives, which have delivered far more responsible outcomes than those of most NPT signatories.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CIVIC EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL WOMEN

Sir — I recently came across the news of a woman who was sexually harassed amid a crowd by three men but the only action the onlookers took was to record it on their phones. It was a tribal woman and the incident took place at a tribal festival in Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh, last Friday. There have been 15 arrests till now but the point of concern is that no complaint has been filed by the woman. Police Superintendent Manoj Singh said that if it was not for the incident's video, they would have never known about it.

There are two key issues here: The response of the onlookers, and the response of the woman. The 'spectators' rush to the spot as if it were an interesting street show to be recorded. This shows how normal such incidents are for them. Two, the victim didn't come out to file a complaint. So either she isn't aware of her rights, or she is ashamed of the mishap and society's reaction. It shows us people's outlook towards women in Madhya Pradesh, especially tribal women. It again underlines the need for civic education among tribals and rural people. They need to be made aware of the laws; education can change their mindset.

Archan Kundu | Kolkata

### TAX TOBACCO PRODUCTS MORE

Sir — There has been a consistent demand from various sections of the society for a higher tax burden on tobacco manufacturers in our country since quite a lot of revenue is generated from the sale of tobacco and affiliated products. Increasing excise duty on all tobacco products can be an effective policy measure to address the immediate need of the economy battered by the Coronavirus pandemic over the last two years. It will not only help the Union Government generate more revenue but, at the same time, limit the use of tobacco, thereby reducing tobacco-related diseases and COVID-related comorbidities.

Also, the increase in the tax revenue could significantly contribute to the increased need for resources during the pandemic, including vaccinations and fur-

## Criticism shouldn't bother KCR



This refers to 'Why criticism on CM's health, KTR chides Oppri' (March 15). Since the formation of the Telangana State, the Opposition parties are hell-bent on finding fault with the State Government and try to keep finding ways and means to pull its image down. It has invariably been a bad and deep-rooted habit of the Opposition to indulge in criticism, mudslinging, backbiting and to be officious. But they don't realise that this criticism is a stepping stone to the prosperity of the

State Government. We need more critics for inspiration and encouragement. We should never lose heart in the face of criticism. The more critics we have, the more we can prosper and succeed.

Industries Minister KT Rama Rao should care two hoots for such criticism. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is above criticism and his style of ruling Telangana is infallible and incomparable. If KCR was hospitalised due to some health complications and problems, it must not be misunderstood and misconstrued by anyone. It had nothing to do with the victory of the BJP. Defeat and victory are two sides of the same coin. Only gallant and intrepid people can continue to take the bull by the horns and keep trying until they succeed. The Opposition parties must desist from misconception and misinformation regarding the Chief Minister of Telangana as he is an astute and sagacious statesman.

Zubair Khan | Hyderabad

ther augmenting the health infrastructure. Reports reveal that tobacco use, which is a slow-killing pandemic itself, claims the lives of 13 lakh Indians every year. Therefore, it is critical than ever before to keep tobacco products out of the reach of our youth and the underprivileged sections of the society. Raising taxes on tobacco products is perhaps the single most effective way to reduce tobacco use and save precious lives.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

### FREEDOM AS THE DRIVING FORCE

Sir — What is the one absolute human need? Some may think it's equality, justice or love but the human mind craves for freedom like nothing else: Freedom to choose a career, freedom to love, freedom to live. In one sense, freedom is the state of not being imprisoned. Patriots fighting for India's freedom from the British, is a viable example. But in its deeper sense, freedom holds a whole new

meaning. A man works to secure a future for his children; a woman works to create an identity. They seek freedom from fear of not doing the right thing.

It is for freedom that millions of people in Ukraine are fighting in the face of death. When freedom of any kind, from something or the true sense of it, becomes the driving force of life, it changes the course of history. Lord Sidhartha sought freedom from suffering. For Eklavya, his journey was in the pursuit of learning from the best, to be free of ignorance by acquiring the most coveted skills. And, searching for freedom, Sidhartha started Buddhism, Eklavya became a symbol of determination and India earned its Independence. Freedom is one of the most powerful motives and pursuits.

Samridhhi Khandelwal | Gwalior

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

The BJP knows there's an AAP wave and that they'll lose the (MCD) elections.

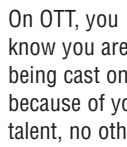


Delhi CM — Arvind Kejriwal



Russia would pay a severe price if it uses chemical weapons in Ukraine.

US President — Joe Biden



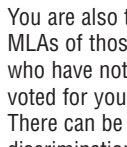
On OTT, you know you are being cast only because of your talent, no other reason.

Actor — Sanjay Kapoor



When I was waiting to bat, I could see there's drama happening every over.

Indian batter — Shreyas Iyer



You are also the MLAs of those who have not voted for you. There can be no discrimination.

Punjab CM-designate — Bhagwant Mann



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA IN A CHURN OVER ECONOMY, LEADERSHIP

The Opposition challenge in upcoming Assembly elections must not be Utopian



SHIVAJI SARKAR


The assembly elections have elements of surprise, feelings of relief, introspection for the opposition, diminution of smaller parties and a question whether 2024 Lok Sabha would be a cakewalk for the BJP or counter a new challenge. The path to 2024 can possibly be replicated through sound economic progress, less of privatisation, stable rupee and emancipation that can boost the pride of individual voters - a new order. The BJP and allies reclaim UP with reduced mandate; unexpectedly trounce Congress in Uttarakhand though its chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami loses; and retain Manipur and Goa. The Congress loses the remaining glory. The Samajwadi Party may not have been that powerful in dislodging BJP but certainly has broken barriers to cut down BJP numbers. Aam Aadmi Party springs the greatest surprise by winning Punjab by a whopping margin. The political tsunami of its leader Arvind Kejriwal started with Chandigarh UT's local body. In Punjab, AAP demolishes all traditional political powers. It is likely to emerge as a major contender in the ensuing Municipal Corporation of Delhi elections. The move for reunifying three MCDs into one is credited to the rise of AAP. His rise is a challenge to the entire privileged political class. It complicates comprehension of the electoral mood. The electorate have gone through a period of turbulence, difficulties, social tension on account of three farmers' bills, Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, demonetisation, GST, marginalization of SMEs, an acute pandemic that sent at least over 12 crore people trekking back to their homes and bodies of the Covid dead in the Ganga river. It follows a severe stagflationary situation, with food, edible oil and commodity prices reaching new highs. The Samajwadi Party's performance denotes the simmering anger but Akhilesh Yadav has to come out of his caste cloak to look at new realities in a changing Indian society. His caste engineering did not work wonders.

The difficult economic pangs are forgiven but not forgotten by the soothing new MY (Modi-Yogi) touch. Or are the people merely satisfied by the food and cash doles and free benefits? Difficult questions but the electorate, possibly believing that a BJP dispensation can perform better, threw their lot with it. That the contest was too close is testified by an array of seats being won or lost by low margins. The BJP leader's sharp assault on SP's 'love' for minorities could not prevent 35 Muslims from getting elected to the UP assembly. It is also being claimed that the poorest among the minorities may have supported the BJP thanks to benefits of government houses, gas cylinders and free food. Not only in UP but other states as well. The RSS-BJP understands that Yogi Adityanath's 80: 20 formula has paid dividend again despite Samajwadi Party's touted bonhomie with kisans, Jats and minorities in western UP. Parties like the BSP must be worried with vote share plunging to 12 percent. It means that BSP leader Mayawati is no more the force to lead her Dalit vote bank, particularly Jatavs, despite Amit Shah exchanging niceties with her. Evidently, a new Dalit politics is surfacing. It changes the scenario for BJP too in its march to 2024 elections. If SP acts with vigour, forges effective national alliances with TMC of Mamata Banerjee, NCP of Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena, TRS, the residual Left and may be also the Congress, a resistance can be put up. The impending Gujarat and Himachal polls would set the tone. If such alliances remain utopian, like the Goa experiment of Mamata Banerjee, the BJP may remain comfortable. But an emerging Kejriwal can create a national alternative as voters can break away from identity silos. Punjab is a lesson.

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

Achieving SDGs via Great Indian Kitchen

Because of the asymmetry in the household-level power dynamics, women have hardly been the decision-makers for even choosing the cooking fuel for their kitchens



KUSHAGRA MITTAL NIDHI PRABHA TEWARI

The Great Indian Kitchen, a recent Malayalam film, very aptly depicts the inadequately addressed oppression of women in our kitchens. Women have traditionally been expected to remain confined to their socially prescribed household roles. A particular sequence of the film shows a very poignant reality. A newlywed woman starts her life in the adopted household. From the first day itself, family members savour the delicacies cooked by her. However, no one cares about the issues that she has to face day in day out. For instance, a drain is blocked in her kitchen, leading to a foul smell and an extremely unhygienic situation which makes her vomit the moment she enters the kitchen. While she raises this immediately with her husband and subsequently keeps reminding him, he keeps forgetting it, and very conveniently so. And why wouldn't he? For him, the blocked drain changes nothing. He continues to get his lunch-pack in time, his clothes are pressed before he emerges from his shower, and so on.

Others in the family are also not helpful. The aged father-in-law touchessambhar only if it is prepared in an earthen pot on a traditional 'chulha'. It doesn't occur to him that the well-educated bride has to spend a large part of her day in a smoky room.

In traditional Indian households, decisions, important or otherwise, are normally taken not by those who face their consequence. Because of this asymmetry in this household-level power dynamics, women have hardly been the decision-makers for even choosing the cooking fuel for their kitchens. Programmes like Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and Direct Benefit Transfer attack at the root of this asymmetry. The connection is only given to women from poor families and the subsidy amount is credited to their bank accounts directly.

Since PMUY's launch in May 2016, 9 crore connections have been given under the scheme. The scheme has made a definitive contribution in improving India's performance on Sustainable Development Goals-SDG3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 5 (gender equality) and specially SDG 7, which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. The contribution of Ujjwala Yojana may be seen in the Fig-1 and Fig-2.

**Fig 1 :** Progress in LPG coverage in the country ( Source : PPAC)

**Fig 2:** Number of active LPG consumers in the country ( Source : PPAC)

There is wide agreement now that Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is not just a clean cooking energy access programme, it is also an instrument to achieve women empowerment. While the upfront economic barrier removed by PMUY is an obvious benefit of the scheme, some far more impactful but less obvious benefits have been found by various independent studies. TERI's Policy Brief on "Clean Fuel for Cooking: Solution to Achieve Better Air Quality" mentions that switching from 100 per cent dung-based cooking to 100 per cent LPG for cooking reduces the human exposure rate (PM 2.5) by about 93 per cent (from 516 ?g/m3 to 35 ?g/m3). The study confirms the view that LPG is a far eco-friendlier fuel, despite belonging to the fossil fuels family. In another paper, Tripathi and Sagar (2019) estimate the cost of economic loss per non-LPG household due to health burden arising from household air pollution at about ₹69000 per year (calculated using USD/INR at 69). Clearly, the benefit of using LPG full-time for cooking far outweighs the cost borne by the consumer.

In its new phase launched recently, Ujjwala 2.0 focuses on migrants, an important category of women who were relatively left out of government entitlements. Most of these migrants are engaged in unorganised sectors and earn their livelihoods doing odd jobs. Women working as domestic help constitute a significant share out of these migrants. Time is precious for them, the more time they save from doing their household chores, the more they can earn. Let's discuss the story of one such woman.

Reeta (name changed), had migrated to Punjab with her husband a few years back. She worked there as a labourer. When things didn't work out well with her husband, she came back to Lucknow, her maternal home and started working as a domestic help in several houses. She had heard about Ujjwala from many, but never applied for it. She thought since she does not have any local address proof, she will not be able to get an Ujjwala connection. Reeta has an AADHAR card and a bank account both registered in Punjab. Her bank has recently been merged with another bank and so she believed that her bank account was no longer working. She has no document as an address proof.

She had been trying unsuccessfully for a few months to get her AADHAR address updated and to get her bank account transferred. Given most of her mornings and afternoons were spent in working, she was not able to find time to pursue the updation of her key documents systematically.

However, things changed swiftly for her after the launch of Ujjwala 2.0. She got an Ujjwala 2.0 connection under the migrant category. She just had to submit a copy of her Punjab AADHAR card and a simple self-declaration for her current address. Ujjwala 2.0 solves the address-proof problem for millions of migrants like Reeta. The documentary requirement for migrant applicants has been relaxed to a bare minimum. They can simply submit a copy of their Aadhaar card for identity and a simple self-declaration as proof of address and declaration of family.

Similarly, Ranjeeta (name changed) who lives in Navi Mumbai and like Reeta, works as domestic help, got an Ujjwala 2.0 connection. She has an AADHAR card of West Bengal. Her husband had left her and she now lives with her two young daughters. She opted for two 5 Kg cylinders connection as the upfront cash expense each month is lower in this option. Gradually Rising patronage of the 5 Kg connection is a testimony to its popularity because of its convenience.

With women like Reeta and Ranjeeta part of the clean cooking ecosystem now, India is on track to achieve the targets under SDG 7.1, i.e., universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services. Of the 99 lakh connections given across the country under Ujjwala 2.0, more than 2.5 lakh connections have been availed by migrants and as word-of-mouth spreads about this innovative and citizen-centric policy tweak, more migrants are expected to onboard Ujjwala 2.0.


Ujjwala 2.0 has greatly simplified the application form and applicants can apply online as well. Additionally, all beneficiaries are being provided free stoves and first refills to incentivise LPG ecosystem onboarding and make it a smooth and hassle-free experience. Considering the tremendous response to the scheme, the government has recently extended the scheme for the release of another 60 lac connections which will lead to a total of 9.6 crore Ujjwala beneficiaries.

Programmes like Ujjwala are relatively small in their financial outlays but epochal in the transformation they bring into the lives of ordinary citizens.


UJJWALA 2.0 HAS SIMPLIFIED THE APPLICATION FORM AND APPLICANTS CAN APPLY ONLINE AS WELL. ADDITIONALLY, BENEFICIARIES ARE BEING PROVIDED FREE STOVES AND FIRST REFILLS TO INCENTIVISE LPG ECOSYSTEM ONBOARDING AND MAKE IT A SMOOTH AND HASSLE-FREE EXPERIENCE. CONSIDERING THE TREMENDOUS RESPONSE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY EXTENDED THE SCHEME

(Mittal is Deputy Secretary at Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Tewari is Senior Social Sector Specialist, Ujjwala - MoPNG. The views expressed are personal.)

POINT COUNTERPOINT




ALL OPPOSITION PARTIES MUST COME TOGETHER TO DEFEAT THE BJP. THERE'S NO NEED TO WAIT FOR THE CONGRESS. — WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE



PM MODI'S AND MAMATA'S STAND IS SIMILAR. BUT THE AAP NOW HAS MORE RELEVANCE THAN THE TMC. —WEST BENGAL CONGRESS CHIEF ADHIR RANJAN CHOUDHURY

Divided Opposition Modi's secret weapon in 2024?

The Opposition should work on a common minimum programme to mask its inherent contradictions and put up a semblance of unity



KALYANI SHANKAR

Odds appear to favour the BJP for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The party is gung ho about its rosy prospects, as barring a few losses, the BJP's winning streak doesn't appear to be reversing. The party has retained four of the five states that went to the polls recently. It considers its poll victories as an endorsement of the policies and schemes of the Modi Government.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also suggested that the trend confirms the BJP victory, and Modi is not wrong in his 2024 forecast. His secret weapon is a divided Opposition.

Congress cannot mount a credible challenge in 2024 or even lead the opposition coalition. The Gandhi family has gotten away with so many defeats since 2014 mainly because Congress could not agree on any other person outside the family to lead the party. In its Sunday Congress Working Committee, the party has again reposed faith in the Gandhis, ignoring the poor results. It shows that the party has no intention of dumping the Gandhi trio.

Arvind Kejriwal's AAP and Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress will probably vie for the opposition leadership. Of course, an x-factor could play a role in the next two years, and in politics, a week is said to belong.

Congress could have easily won Uttarakhand, Goa, and Punjab of the five states. There was enough groundswell for the party, but it, messed up the whole thing. The Gandhi sibilings are mainly responsible for this pathetic situation. Punjab should have been in Congress kitty had not the party removed Captain Amarinder Singh just a few months ahead of the polls. Uttarakhand was in its pocket had the party activated the poll machinery. So was Goa.

The regional parties also have not fared well. Samajwadi Party in UP has indeed improved but not within striking distance of snatching power. BSP chief Mayawati should blame herself for not protecting her turf as it is clear that Dalits have moved away from her. TMC was a loser in Goa.

All these show that the opposition had given away these states in a platter to the BJP. All this, when regional satraps like Trinamool Congress chief, Mamata Banerjee, Telangana chief minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the new poster boy of the Opposition, are trying to make unity moves with or without Congress.

Opposition unity is eluding because of the ego clashes of the regional leaders.

The first question is who will lead the Opposition? Congress claims to have a pan-national presence. But that was the position before Modi appeared on the national scene in 2014. Today Congress is almost a regional party. It faces a leadership crisis at the top. Factionalism is at its peak, and dissidents have emerged. The leadership has no accountability.

Kejriwal is the Opposition's new poster boy. He managed to win Punjab within ten years of the formation of his party. AAP projected itself as an anti-establishment force and kept its campaign focused on developmental issues. There are credible regional satraps within the Opposition like the West Bengal chief minister. In Goa, too, after seeing no success in the last election, AAP stayed the course and has opened its account by winning two seats.

Whoever leads the Opposition, there is an urgent need for its unity both in Parliament and outside.

Secondly, the Opposition should come up with an alternate pragmatic programme. They could have a common minimum programme to resolve the inherent contradictions.

Thirdly, the Opposition should have a new narrative and not just Modi-bashing. It should attract the youth, particularly first-time voters.

Fourthly, Congress should not claim the opposition leadership; it should step back to allow others to lead.

Fifthly, the Opposition should look at the Hindu votes as the BJP wins mainly by the Hindu consolidation. Some leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Kejriwal have realized it and have started wooing the Hindus with their temple runs and chanting of *Hanuman Chalisa*.

Sixthly, the Opposition should avoid emotional issues and focus on administration, development, and welfare programmes.

While the Congress will still get opportunities to regain its clout, with elections in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh lined up before the final battle in 2024, the party shuns any changes.

The Opposition will never be able to defeat Modi and his party so long as it cannot decipher why Modi wins. After all, it is the voter connection, excellent communication, and 24/7 poll machinery that helped Modi win.



# Russian offensive edges deeper into Kyiv, more talks planned

AP ■ KYIV

The Russian offensive in Ukraine edged closer to central Kyiv on Tuesday even as the two countries kept open a narrow diplomatic channel with more planned talks.

Shortly before dawn, large explosions thundered across Kyiv. A series of Russian strikes hit a residential neighborhood in the capital, igniting a huge fire and a frantic rescue effort in a 15-story apartment building. At least one person was killed and others remain trapped inside.

Shockwaves from an explosion also damaged the entry to a downtown subway station that has been used as a bomb shelter. City authorities tweeted an image of the blown-out facade, saying trains would no longer stop at the station.

When Russia launched the war nearly three weeks ago, fear of an imminent invasion gripped the Ukrainian capital, as residents slept night after night in subway stations or crammed onto trains to flee. But as the Russian offensive bogged down, Kyiv saw a relative lull. Fighting has intensified on the outskirts in recent days, and sporadic air raid sirens ring out around the capital.

There was a rare glimmer of hope in the encircled port city of Mariupol after a convoy of 160 civilian cars left along a designated humanitarian route, the city council reported. Over the past 10 days or so, the lethal siege has pulverized homes and other buildings and left people desperate for food, water, heat and medicine.

The latest negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, held by video Monday, were the fourth round involving

higher-level officials from the two countries and the first in a week. The talks ended without a breakthrough after several hours, with an aide to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying the negotiators took "a technical pause" and planned to meet again Tuesday.

The two sides had expressed some optimism in the past few days. Mykhailo Podolyak, the aide to Zelenskyy, tweeted that the negotiators would discuss "peace, cease-fire, immediate withdrawal of troops & security guarantees." Previous discussions, held in person in Belarus, produced no lasting humanitarian routes or agreements to end the fighting.

Zelenskyy is seeking to extend martial law until April 24 and to require men ages 18 to 60 to stay in the country to fight. Zelenskyy submitted the extension in a bill to parliament, which is expected to vote on it this week.

In Washington, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said that while the Biden administration supports Ukraine's participation in the talks with Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin would have to show signs of de-escalating in order to demonstrate good faith.

US National security adviser Jake Sullivan warned China against helping Russia during a meeting in Rome with a senior Chinese diplomat.

Two administration officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information, said China had signaled to Moscow that it would be willing to provide both military support in Ukraine and financial backing to help stave off effects of Western sanctions, which

include a fourth set of EU sanctions announced late Monday. The Kremlin has denied asking China for military equipment to use in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia was able to continue the operation itself and it was "unfolding in accordance with the plan and will be completed on time and in full." In Kyiv, the early morning explosions were artillery strikes, the Ukrainian military said. They hit the Svyatoshynskiy district of western Kyiv, adjacent to the suburb of Irpin that has seen some of the worst battles of the war.

Flames shot out of the apartment building as firefighters climbed ladders to rescue people. Smoke choked the air. A firefighter at the scene confirmed one person had died and that several had been rescued, but others remained inside as rescuers tried to reach them. Damage from unspecified ammunition prompted a fire in a 10-story apartment block in the Podilsky district of Kyiv, north of the government quarter. One person was hospitalized, the state emergency agency reported.

Russian forces also stepped up strikes overnight on the northwest suburbs of Irpin, Hostomel and Bucha, said the head of the Kyiv region, Oleksiy Kuleba.

"Many streets (in those areas) have been turned into a mush of steel and concrete. People have been hiding for weeks in basements, and are afraid to go out even for evacuations," Kuleba said on Ukrainian television.

But overall, nearly all of the Russian military offensives remained stalled after making little progress over



## Ukraine TV tower attack death toll rises to 19

AP ■ LVIV

Local authorities say the number of people killed in a Russian rocket attack on a TV tower in western Ukraine has risen to 19.

The Rivne regional government posted on its Facebook page Tuesday that 19 people were killed and nine were injured in the strike on the TV tower in Antopol, a village outside the city of Rivne.

The village is only about 160 kilometers (100 miles) from the border of NATO member Poland and comes as Russia presses its invasion of Ukraine.

Initial casualty reports had put the death toll from Monday's TV tower attack at nine.

## More than 3 million people have fled Ukraine

AP ■ GENEVA

The International Organisation for Migration says more than 3 million people have fled Ukraine since Russian invaded last month. The new milestone also indicated that some 157,000 third-country nationals - people who aren't Ukrainian - were part of the outflow in what UN officials have called the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. IOM spokesman Paul Dillon said at a UN news briefing in Geneva on Tuesday that the totals were compiled from figures provided by national authorities. The UN refugee agency UNHCR, which provides a more detailed count than the IOM though based on similar data, has reported that more than 1.8 million of the refugees were in Poland.

## EU imposes 4th set of sanctions against Russia

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union has announced that the 27-nation bloc has approved a new set of sanctions to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

France, which holds the EU presidency, said the bloc "in consultation with our international partners, has approved a fourth package of sanctions targeting individuals and entities involved in the aggression against Ukraine, as well as several sectors of the Russian economy."

The French presidency said in a late Monday statement that the bloc also approved a declaration to the World Trade Organization "on suspending the application of the most-favoured-nation clause for Russia and suspending the examination of Belarus' application for accession to the WTO." If Russia is suspended, its companies would no longer receive special treatment throughout the bloc. The announcements were in line with what leaders had announced at the Versailles summit last Friday, that a stringent package of sanctions would be upcoming if Russia continued its invasion of Ukraine. The exact details of the latest package of sanctions will only be known upon publication in the EU's official journal.

Since the war started last month, the EU has adopted tough measures targeting Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia's financial system and its high-maintenance oligarchs. Last week, the bloc's nations agreed to slap further sanctions on 160 individuals and added new restrictions on the export of maritime navigation and radio communication technology.

They also decided to exclude three Belarusian banks from SWIFT, the dominant system for global financial transactions. Altogether, EU restrictive measures now apply to a total of 862 individuals and 53 entities. In a statement published after the summit, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the fourth package of sanctions will further isolate Russia "and drain the resources it uses to finance this barbaric war." She said the EU will work in lockstep with Group of Seven countries to ramp up the pressure against Moscow. Efforts to agree on an oil boycott against Russia are complicated, because some EU countries, including Germany and Italy, are much more dependent than others on Russian energy.

# Braving conflict, many women join flow back into Ukraine

AP ■ PREZEMYSL

While tens of thousands of people have fled Ukraine every day since Russia's invasion, a small but growing number are heading in the other direction.

At first they were foreign volunteers, Ukrainian expatriate men heading to fight and people delivering aid. But increasingly, women are also heading back.

Motivated by a desire to

help loved ones in trouble, or just to contribute to the defense and survival of their country and compatriots in ways large and small, such women are braving the bombs that have increasingly pounded Ukraine since Russian forces invaded on Feb. 24.

Many are not refugees themselves but women who had been living and working abroad. Others had already chosen to stay put in their country but were forced to cross the bor-

der to shop for needed goods as supplies dry up under the onslaught at home.

"I will go back and help. I am a health worker, so the hospitals need help," said Iryna Orel, 50, tugging her luggage before boarding a train from Przemysl, Poland, to Lviv in western Ukraine.

"And I will stay until the end," Poland has taken in more than 1.8 million refugees, or over 60% of the total exodus of 3 million people since the invasion.

# Foreign fighters in Ukraine await weapons in chaos of war

AP ■ LVIV

They are idealists who abandoned their jobs for the battlefields of Ukraine, looking for a cause or simply to fight.

The Ukrainian president's call for foreign volunteers to join an international brigade to help bolster his country's defence with a new layer of resistance to Russia's invasion is for now a rag-tag army.

Recruits say they are often waiting for weapons and training, leaving them feeling exposed.

"Pure hell: fire, shouting,

panic. And a lot more bombs and missiles." That is how Swedish volunteer Jesper Söder described Sunday's attack on Yavoriv, the military training base in western Ukraine pounded by Russian missiles that killed 35 people, according to Ukrainian authorities. Russia said the death toll was much higher.

Söder said he led a group of foreigners including Scandinavians, British and Americans out of the base and back across the nearby Polish border. He told *The Associated Press* by phone from Krakow,

Poland, that he said he didn't know how many foreign volunteers were being trained at the base but estimated they were in the hundreds.

Unlike Söder, who fought alongside Kurdish fighters in Syria against Islamic State group militants, many of the volunteers at Yavoriv had no previous military training, he said.

But some arrive to discover that there are no weapons, protective gear or proper training in a multilingual force short on organization and breeding a sense of chaos.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my Client has entered into an Agreement to Sell in respect of property bearing No. A-34, Gulmohar Park, New Delhi with its owner, Mr. Har Prasad Gupta. Under the said Agreement, my Client has made advance payment towards the agreed sale consideration of the said Property to Mr. Har Prasad Gupta. The Public at large is hereby informed not to deal with the said property in any manner whatsoever. If any person deals with the said property, it shall be at his/her own risk and peril.

**SONALI CHOPRA Advocate**  
D-680/2013  
+91 9999728767  
sc@sonalichopra.co

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby, informed to the general public that, I, Chander Prakash Mittal, S/O Hardwarilal Vaish, R/o 84-A, 2nd Floor, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025, INDIA, have lost the Original Provisional Allotment Letter issued by Jaiprakash Associates Limited in respect of Unit bearing No. SEA Court, Tower - 2, Flat no. 104 in Jaypee project, situated at Jaypee Greens, Noida/ Greater Noida/ Sports City. Any one finding the said document is requested to kindly return the same to me or to the company.

Name: Akhil Mittal  
Address: 84-A, 2nd Floor, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025, INDIA  
Mobile No.: 9811090403  
Email id: akhil@laangza.com

**UJVN Limited**  
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)  
H.O. "UJJWAL" Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephone-0135-2763808, Fax 0135-2763588  
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC02586 Website: www.ujvn.com

**E-TENDER NOTICE** Date: 15.03.2022  
Office of the Executive Engineer (P&C) Ganga Bhawan, Dehradun invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:  
Tender No.04 /EE(P&C)-2021-22.  
Name of Work/Service/Supply - Procurement of different Tyres & Tubes for various Power House/Sites vehicles of UJVN Ltd.  
Estimated cost : Rs.787951.00 (Excluding Tax)  
Date of availability of bid document on website: 16.03.2022 from 16:00 hrs.  
Last date for submission of bids on website: 07.04.2022 upto 17.00 hrs  
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>  
Executive Engineer (P&C)

**MAHARISHI MARKANDESHWAR UNIVERSITY**  
**KUMARHATTI-SOLAN (HP) 173-229**

## ADMISSION NOTICE MD/MS (2021-22)

Applications are invited for admission to the Mop-up Round counselling for MD/MS course for the session 2021-22 in MM Medical College & Hospital, Kumarhatti, Solan a constituent Institute of Maharishi Markandeshwar University, Kumarhatti - Solan. Application Form is available on the University website ([www.mmusolan.org](http://www.mmusolan.org)). Last date of receiving duly filled up application form along with a DD of Rs.2000/- in the name of MMMC&H, KH, Solan is 17-03-2022 upto 9:30 AM positively in the Principal Office of the Medical College. Physical counselling shall be held for vacant seats on 17-03-2022 from 10.30 AM in the Administrative Office.  
Ph. : 01792-268221

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Vijay Singh, S/O Hari Singh, R/O H no D-8/26, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, DLF Ankur Vihar Loni, Ghaziabad, UP. I Have Lost DDA original demand letter/ allotment letter, original possession letter, original site possession letter & original lease-deed & Bank Chalaans of H no 410, Pocket & Block D-16 Sector-7 Rohini, Delhi.

If anybody have information of these documents then please contact me at +91 8851979333

**Proclamation under order 5, Rule 20, CPC**  
**In the Court of Mr. Karam Partap Singh, Civil Judge, Chamba, District Chamba**  
**Civil Suit : 275/2019**  
**Fixed For : 24.03.2022**  
Malvika Pathania D/o Gulab Singh R/o Mohalla Surara Chamba Town, Tehsil and District Chamba A/p Govind Bhawan Jassur, Tehsil Nurpur, District Kangra H.P.

Versus  
Sangeet Singh and Ors.

...Judgement Debtor  
**Order VII Rule 1 CPC**  
**Notice to : 7. Mis Nandita D/o Arvind Singh (Ali R/o 227 Krishna Apartment 27 IP extension Paharganj New Delhi 110092)**  
Whereas in the above noted case, it has been proved to the satisfaction of this court, the above named defendants can note serve through ordinary course of process issued against him/her. Hence, this proclamation under order 5 Rule 20 CPC is hereby issued against above named to appear before this court on **24.03.2022 at 10:00 AM** to defend the case personally or through an authorised agent or pleader failing which ex-parte proceedings will be taken against her/him.

Given under my hand and the seal of this court on this 14th day of December, 2021.  
**Civil Judge Chamba District Chamba**

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY**  
**KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND**  
**NOTICE**  
With reference to the advertisement in the month of December 2018 for the recruitment on the post of **Staff Car Driver** and the notice No. A.12019/2/2018-Esst.267 dated 11.03.2022 issued for Written Examination at Central Institute of Psychiatry, Kanke, Ranchi, it is to inform that due to some unavoidable reason the Written Examination scheduled to be held on 20.03.2022 for the post of **Staff Car Driver** has been cancelled. **Sd/- Director**

**कार्यालय अधिसूचना, केन्द्रीय मण्डार, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, जल भवन, श्री ब्लाक, नेहरू कॉलोनी, देहरादून**  
पत्रांक:-929 / ई-निविदा / 2021-22 दिनांक:- 15.03.2022  
उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान की ओर से केन्द्रीय मण्डार, देहरादून द्वारा निम्न कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा, दृ-बिड सिस्टम (स्कनीकी बिड एवं कार्मिशियल बिड) आधार पर निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदा सं.	कार्य विवरण	घरदोर धनराशि रु.	ई-निविदा प्रपत्र डाउनलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा प्रपत्र अपलोड करने की प्रारंभ एवं अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा सूचना क्र.सं. 7 अनुसार मूल करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	निविदा की वैधता	फि-बिड-प्रिड से संबंधित सूचना/संकेतन ई-निविदा-प्रिड-प्रिड पर संकेतन की तिथि एवं समय
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
23	65,000.00	16.03.2022 from 11:00 a.m. to 01.04.2022 upto 5:00 p.m.	26.03.2022 from 11:00 a.m. to 01.04.2022 upto 5:00 p.m.	01.04.2022 upto 5:00 p.m.	04.04.2022 at 11:00 a.m.	120 days upto 11:00 a.m.	21.03.2022	
24	1,00,000.00	16.03.2022 from 11:00 a.m. to 01.04.2022 upto 5:00 p.m.	26.03.2022 from 11:00 a.m. to 01.04.2022 upto 5:00 p.m.	01.04.2022 upto 5:00 p.m.	04.04.2022 at 11:00 a.m.	120 days upto 11:00 a.m.	21.03.2022	

अर्हता:- Only manufacturers of Sewer jetting cum suction machine are allowed to take part in this tender.  
आईएम पर अनुबंध पर, Supply of Sewer jetting cum suction machine 10000 Ltrs capacity (sludge water 3000 Ltrs and 4000 Ltrs fresh water) tank mounted on truck chassis complete in all respect And Operation and maintenance of the same for five years after guarantee/warranty period.  
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## SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Mayank Malhotra/ Priyanka Malhotra- LBJA100004865936	Flat No 901 and 903, 9th Floor, Block A, Auric Prime Suites Group Housing, Khasara No 994/1, 1001/1, 1002 Village Jaisinghpura, Bhankrota, Ajmer Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan, Jaipur- 302011/ March 10, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 42,12,569.00/-	Delhi/ Gurgaon/ Jaipur
2.	Ishwar Dayal Singh/ Mahashweta Singh- LBJA100004105924	Flat No. E-301, 3rd Floor, Uma Aangan, Block E, Khasara No 49/1, 49/2, Village Mukundpura, Ajmer Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan, Jaipur- 303006/ March 10, 2022	August 30, 2021 Rs. 28,41,052.00/-	Delhi/ Jaipur

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

Date : March 16, 2022  
Place: Delhi/ NCR (Gurgaon)  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Be it known to all that I, HIMANSHU VAID S/O CHANDER MOHAN VAID R/o LG Flat No. 77-A, Ground Floor, Pocket-FG-3, Block-F, Vikaspur, New Delhi-110018. I am the legal owner of LG Flat No. 77-A, Ground Floor, Pocket-FG-3, Block-F, Vikas Puri, New Delhi-110018, FILE NO. L-7 (35111983)/ NPS/ Vp which is allotted by the DDA. Original Possession Letter of the above Plot has been lost. An FIR/NCR to this effect has lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No. 216115/2022, Dated-14-03-2022. Any person (s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/ph.no. 9871527455 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Any person claiming any right, interest, or having any objections with respect to this property can also personally inform/contact me.

**कार्यालय अधिसूचना, केन्द्रीय मण्डार, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, जल भवन, श्री ब्लाक, नेहरू कॉलोनी, देहरादून**  
पत्रांक:-929 / ई-निविदा / 2021-22 दिनांक:- 15.03.2022  
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**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Mayank Malhotra/ Priyanka Malhotra- LBJA100004865936	Flat No 901 and 903, 9th Floor, Block A, Auric Prime Suites Group Housing, Khasara No 994/1, 1001/1, 1002 Village Jaisinghpura, Bhankrota, Ajmer Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan, Jaipur- 302011/ March 10, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 42,12,569.00/-	Delhi/ Gurgaon/ Jaipur
2.	Ishwar Dayal Singh/ Mahashweta Singh- LBJA100004105924	Flat No. E-301, 3rd Floor, Uma Aangan, Block E, Khasara No 49/1, 49/2, Village Mukundpura, Ajmer Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan, Jaipur- 303006/ March 10, 2022	August 30, 2021 Rs. 28,41,052.00/-	Delhi/ Jaipur

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

Date : March 16, 2022  
Place: Delhi/ NCR (Gurgaon)  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

## Leaders of 3 EU States head to Kyiv as attacks intensify

AP ■ WARSAW

The leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia travelled by train on Tuesday to Kyiv to meet with Ukraine's top leadership as Russia's offensive moved closer to the centre of the capital.

The visit by the leaders of three countries which belong to

the weekend, according to a senior U.S. Defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon's assessment. Russian troops were still about 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the center of Kyiv, the official said. The official said that Russian forces have launched more than 900 missiles but that Ukraine's airspace is still contested, with Russia not achieving total air superiority.

Ukrainian authorities said two people were killed when the Russians struck an airplane factory in Kyiv, sparking a large fire. The Antonov factory is Ukraine's largest aircraft plant and produces many of the world's biggest cargo planes. The Ukrainian general prosecutor's office on Tuesday released details of two deadly Russian attacks the day before.

the EU but also NATO, comes as a series of strikes hit a residential neighbourhood in Kyiv.

They described their visit into the war zone as a mission by the European Union to support Ukraine, though EU officials characterised it as trip the central European leaders had undertaken independently despite the security risks.

**HOLI SPECIAL TRAINS -2022**  
In addition to already announced Holi Special Trains, following additional Holi Special Trains will be operated by railways as per following details:-

04072/04071 Anand Vihar T.-Patna Jn.- Anand Vihar T. Superfast Express Special				02 Trips
TRAIN NO. 04072	STATIONS	TRAIN NO. 04071	ARR.	DEP.
—	13:25	Anand Vihar T.	00:45	—
05:30	—	Patna Jn.	—	07:15

**Days of Run :** 04072 Ex Anand Vihar T. on Wednesday 16.03.2022 and 04071 Ex Patna Jn. on Thursday 17.03.2022  
**Accommodation:** AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.  
**Stoppages:** Kanpur Central, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar & Ara Jn. stations.

09062 Barauni Jn.- Bandra Terminus Express Special			
TRAIN NO. 09062	STATIONS	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE



For National Aluminium Company Limited  
(N.K. Mohanty)  
Date : 15.03.2022 GGM & Company Secretary



# Take call to decriminalise Legal Metrology Act: Goyal to States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to stop harassment of small shopkeepers, the Union Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday directed his department's officials as well as states to convene a meeting next week on the issues pertaining to the certain provisions of decriminalize the Legal Metrology Act. The minister pointed out that in 2018-19, the cases of first offence were 89,724 and the second offence only 11. "In 2019-20, the first offence cases were 92,000 while second offence only two while in 2020-21 the first offence cases were 85,000 and second offence zero," "I fail to understand that after the first offence, which is compoundable, how the number of cases for second offence, which can actually put you behind bars,

which is criminal, comes down drastically. You can understand the meaning of this what could have happened between the first and the second offence," Goyal said while addressing the "Fair Digital Finance" on the occasion of the World Consumer Rights Day, organised by his ministry.

Recalling his own harassment 35 years ago when he started out as a young entrepreneur, Goyal listed out the number of cases registered under three different sections of the Legal Metrology Act and pointed out the vast difference between the number of cases under first and second offences. Citing data of the last three years, Goyal said broadly 51,000-54,000 cases were filed as first offence under Section 33, about 20,000-22,000 cases filed under Section 36 (1) and 8,000-10,000 cases

filed under Section 25. "This is all first offence which is compoundable. I fail to understand after the first offence is filed how the number of second offence falls. The second offence can put you behind bars as it is criminal," he said.

The Legal Metrology Act 2009 enforces standards related to weights and measures. In its present form, the law prescribe imprisonment, in addition to fine, for second or subsequent offence. "I personally would like to flag off a couple of concerns...Because I do believe that it's important. I do believe it's important that what Rohit Kumar Singh (Consumer Affairs Secretary) said about decriminalisation should also be understood by all of us," he said.

The Minister also blamed the state government and the consumer organisations for opposing reforms.

Secy: There should no monopoly by e-commerce players'

Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh on Tuesday stressed that there should not be a situation of monopoly by large e-commerce players like Amazon and Flipkart, and there is a need to prepare a new framework to protect consumers as well as small retailers. Stating that the size of e-commerce players like Amazon and Flipkart will keep growing, Singh stressed on the need to protect consumers from possible monopolistic situation.

On the sidelines of the event, the secretary said the symmetry between consumers and suppliers is going in favour of intermediaries (market places).

## Banks recover over ₹7.34 lakh cr in six-and-a-half years till Dec 2021

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Banks recovered over Rs 7.34 lakh crore in the past six years and the first six months of the current fiscal year, the government said in Parliament on Tuesday.

During the past six financial years and the first six months of the current financial year, banks have effected an aggregate recovery of Rs 7,34,542 crore, in non-performing assets and written-off loan accounts, including those reported as fraud, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

On recovery of fraud amounts, the minister said Rs 55,895 crore have been recovered in the past six financial years and the current financial year up to December 31,

2021, he said.

The minister said the Reserve Bank of India had issued master directions on fraud to banks in 2016 and the government has instituted wide-ranging structural and procedural reforms to check frauds in banks.

He added that these systematic and comprehensive checking of frauds, including the legacy stock of non-performing assets, led to the unearthing of frauds perpetrated over the years.

These steps have helped in a sharp decline in fraud amount from Rs 68,962 crore in 2015-16 to Rs 11,583 crore in 2020-21.

During the April-December period of 2021-22, the amount involved in bank frauds stood at Rs 648 crore, he added.

## Sensex snaps 5-day winning run amid global weakness; auto shares spurt

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmarks halted their five-day rally to close with deep cuts on Tuesday, in line with a sell-off in global markets as participants dialled back risk exposure ahead of a key policy meeting of the US Federal Reserve amid continuing uncertainty over the Ukraine crisis.

A depreciating rupee and foreign capital outflows also weighed on sentiment, traders said.

After opening with gains of over 200 points, the 30-share Sensex turned highly volatile and tumbled in afternoon trade, before finally finishing 709.17 points or 1.26 per cent lower at 55,776.85.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty dived 208.30 points or 1.23 per cent to 16,663.

Tata Steel was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, sliding 4.89 per cent, followed by Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Reliance

Industries, HCL Tech and PowerGrid.

Mahindra & Mahindra and Maruti Suzuki topped the gainers' list, climbing as much as 2.31 per cent, after these firms featured in the list of 75 companies whose applications were cleared under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the automobile and auto components sector.

Asian Paints, Titan, Nestle India and Bharti Airtel were among the other winners.

"The world equity market lost its momentum as new financial and trade sanctions were imposed on Russia along with the suspension of gas imports. It is a setback for the market sentiment, which was improving in anticipation of a truce in war. The Indian market was outperforming due to ease in commodity prices.

"World markets are also lower ahead of the US Fed meeting," according to Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

## No power crisis in India, generation capacity greater than peak demand: Power Min

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is not facing any power crisis as the installed electricity generation capacity stood at 395.6 gigawatts (GW) against the peak demand of 203 GW recorded in 2021-22, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

"There is no power crisis in the country. As on February 28, 2022, the installed generation capacity is around 395.6 GW, which is sufficient to meet the demand of electricity in the country. The peak demand experienced during the current year was only 203 GW," said Power Minister R K Singh in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

In another reply to the House, the minister told the House that as per the information compiled by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), the import of coal reduced to 22.7 MT (million tonnes) during 2021-22 (April-January) as against 39 MT during the same period last year, mainly due to high

imported coal price in the international market.

The shortfall in imported coal has been compensated through the enhanced supply of domestic coal i.e. From 442.6 MT during 2020-21 (April-January) to 547.2 MT during 2021-22 (April-January).

Thus, he stated, that the generation loss due to the reduction in import of coal has been compensated from high carbon generation from domestic coal-based plants.

"We aim to achieve 500 GW installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based capacity (hydro, nuclear, solar, wind, biomass, etc.) by 2030. This will reduce the pressure on coal-based generation to a large extent," he also told the House.

The reply showed that 938.36 billion units (BU) power is generated through coal-based thermal plants during April-February (2021-22) compared to 850.89 BU in the same period of 2020-21.

The power generation from coal-based power plants stood at 950.93 BU (2020-21),



961.21 BU (2019-20) and 987.68 BU (2018-19).

The power was generated at the total coal-based monitored capacity of 203.89 GW in the country.

The minister told the House that there was a decrease in the coal-fired electricity produced in the country during the financial year 2020-21 as compared to the previous year 2019-2020 due to the

COVID-19 pandemic.

However, he stated that coal-fired generation has increased during the current year 2021-22 (up to February 2022) as compared to the same period of the previous year.

As on March 6, 2022, coal-based generation capacity is 2,03,889.5 MW out of the total capacity of 395,592.86 MW i.e. About 52 per cent.

As per optimal generation

capacity mix projections for 2029-30 prepared by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), the capacity for coal-based thermal projects will be about 267 GW in 2030. This is out of the total projected capacity of 817 GW i.e. About 32 per cent, due to the corresponding increase in non-fossil fuel-based electricity generation capacity.

In another reply to the House, the minister said 1,16,766 MW of power generation capacity is under construction, including 72,606 MW renewable (including large hydro projects), 15,700 MW nuclear and 28,460 MW thermal. The increasing demand for power in the country is being met with a commensurate increase in power generation.

A generation capacity of 15,978.84 MW has been added during the year 2021-22 (up to February 28, 2022), which includes 3,825 MW of thermal, 213 MW of hydro (above 25 MW capacity) and 11,940.84 MW from other renewable energy sources.

## Sri Lanka Finance Minister Rajapaksa leaves for India to sign \$1 billion bailout package

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa on Tuesday left for New Delhi to ink a fresh USD 1 billion bailout package with India, amid a crippling economic meltdown staring at the island nation.

Rajapaksa left for India for a two-day official visit for crucial talks with the Indian Government for broader financial assistance to tide over Sri Lanka's economic crisis.

During the visit, Rajapaksa will discuss the USD 1 billion loan that is expected to fund the country's fuel, food and medicine imports, the finance ministry here said.

The Finance Minister is accompanied by the Secretary to the Treasury, S.R. Attiyagalle, the state-run Daily News newspaper reported.

In December 2021, Basil Rajapaksa, the younger brother of Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime

Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, embarked on a two-day trip to India, his first overseas visit since he assumed office in July 2021.

In January this year, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with Basil Rajapaksa and discussed projects and investment plans by India that would strengthen the economy of the island nation.

Interestingly, Rajapaksa's visit to New Delhi comes on the day when the Sri Lankan government said it will seek financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as it desperately tries to salvage the country's beleaguered economy that is currently reeling under a severe foreign exchange crisis.

Sri Lanka's worsening foreign-exchange shortage has seriously impacted the energy sector, which depends entirely on imports for its oil needs.

The fuel shortage has led to

long queues at understocked pumps across the country.

Sri Lanka's economy is also seeing a scarcity of food and other essentials, which has pushed inflation to a record 25 per cent last month. Tourism, another key foreign-exchange earner for Sri Lanka, was hit hard due to the pandemic. PTIDC/Single Govt gets Rs 4,353 cr as dividend tranches from 7 CPSEs

New Delhi, Mar 15 (PTI) The government on Tuesday said it has received Rs 4,353 crore as dividend tranches from seven public sector enterprises, including Coal India and PFC.

"Government has respectively received about Rs 575 crore and Rs 2038 crore from Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd and Coal India Ltd as dividend tranches,"

Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted.

## Irregularities found in appointment of chief strategic adviser at NSE: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday said irregularities in the appointment of chief strategic adviser in the NSE during the tenure of a former MD&CEO were observed and the appointment was made without following due process.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has informed that an ex-MD&CEO of NSE, had sought guidance from a 'siddha purusha/yogi', Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhry said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

During the course of investigation by Sebi, it was found that certain emails on various matters were exchanged by that MD&CEO with the yogi, he said. "Sebi has informed that irregularities were observed in the appointment of the chief strategic advisor (CSA), during the tenure of that ex-MD&CEO of NSE. This

appointment was made without following due process of appointment," Chaudhry added.

Accordingly, Sebi imposed monetary penalty and other restrictions on that ex-MD&CEO and the then CSA for violation of provisions of Sebi Act, 1992 and SCRA, 1956/Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act.

The matter relates to former NSE CEO Chitra Ramkrishna and Group Operating Officer Anand Subramanian, who are currently under the custody of the CBI, as the agency is probing them in the co-location scam.

In the co-location facility offered by NSE, brokers could place their servers within the stock exchange premises giving them faster access to the markets.

It is alleged that some brokers in connivance with insiders abused the algorithm and the co-location facility to make

windfall profits.

The CBI probe has shown that Ramkrishna was appointed as Joint MD of NSE in 2009 and remained in the position till March 31, 2013, with the power of DMD. She was elevated as MD and CEO on April 1, 2013, and left the bourse in 2016.

Earlier on February 11, the capital markets regulator levied a fine of Rs 3 crore on Ramkrishna, among others for violating securities contract rules in appointment of Anand Subramanian as group operating officer and advisor to MD.

It also levied fine of Rs 2 crore each on the NSE, former CEO Ravi Narain and Subramanian.

Ramkrishna, who succeeded former CEO Ravi Narain in 2013, had appointed Subramanian as her advisor who was later elevated as group operating officer (GOO) at a fat pay cheque of Rs 4.21 crore annually.

## Rupee falls for 3rd day, closes 8 paise down at 76.62 ahead of Fed policy



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared its early gains to close down by 8 paise at 76.62 against the US dollar on Tuesday, marking its third straight day of losses due to sustained forex outflows, concerns over inflation and expectations of rate hike by the US Federal Reserve.

Besides, heavy selling in domestic equities also weighed on the domestic unit, forex traders said.

Uncertainty over the conflict in Ukraine and an expected rate hike by the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday are keeping markets edgy, they said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened strong at 76.40 against the American dollar. However, it pared gains later to enter the negative territory as investors turned cautious amid intensifying Russia-Ukraine conflict. During the day, it moved in the range of 76.32 and 76.68.

The local unit settled at 76.62 against the dollar, down 8 paise from the previous close. The rupee has declined by 0.25 per cent in three sessions to Tuesday.

"The rupee movement remains muted in the last two days even after fall in crude oil prices as market participants await FOMC meeting outcome. Rise in US bond yields ahead of Fed meeting, as market is anticipating a 25 bps rate hike, which supported broad-based dollar strength," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

The focus will remain on US Fed statements on future rate hike and impact of geopolitical uncertainty on inflation and growth, he added.

Spot USD/INR is expected to oscillate between 76.30 and 76.85 with medium-term bullish trend, Parmar said.

Jateen Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said that the currency market awaits trigger from Fed's policy meeting on March 16. A dovish stance shall strengthen the rupee whereas any hawkish indications can affect the rupee negatively.

"Crude prices sell-off has given strength to the rupee but rising inflation has kept pressure with hikes expected from the US Fed's meeting. The rupee has seen limited gains despite the fall in crude prices," Trivedi added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.31 per cent lower at 98.71.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share Sensex ended 709.17 points or 1.26 per cent lower at 55,776.85, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 208.30 points or 1.23 per cent to 16,663. Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude futures slipped 5.36 per cent to USD 101.17 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors continued their selling spree in Indian markets as they offloaded shares worth Rs 176.52 crore on a net basis on Monday, according to the exchange data.

Gold tumbles ₹668; silver tanks ₹1,390 tracking weak global trends

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price tumbled Rs 668 to Rs 51,727 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday following a decline in the international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal settled at Rs 52,395 per 10 grams. Silver also tanked Rs 1,390 to Rs 67,997 per kg from Rs 69,387 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold traded 1 per cent lower at USD 1,930 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 25.58 per ounce.

"Gold prices traded lower with spot gold prices at COMEX trading 1 per cent down at USD 1,930 per ounce on Tuesday," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst Commodities Tapan Patel said.

## No public sector bank faced loss in three quarters to Dec' 21 of this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

No public sector bank has faced any loss in the April-December period of the current fiscal year, and clocked a collective net profit of Rs 48,874 crore during this period, the government said in Parliament on Tuesday.

"No PSB has suffered losses in the current financial year up to December 31, 2021. During the said period of the first three quarters of the current financial year, all the PSBs have registered net profit of Rs 48,874 crore," Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

Responding to a query on profit earned by PSBs since 2010, the minister citing the data from the Reserve Bank, said the public sector banks earned a combined net profit of Rs 31,820 crore in 2020-21.

However, there were collective losses for five straight years during 2015-16 to 2019-20. The highest amount of net loss was registered in 2017-18 at Rs 85,370 crore, followed by Rs 66,636 crore in 2018-19; Rs 25,941 crore in 2019-20; Rs 17,993 crore in 2015-16 and Rs 11,389 crore in 2016-17.

During the period from 2009-10 to 2014-15, the PSBs were earning profits on their books.

When asked if the number of branches of PSBs has decreased over time, Karad said: "No".

During the period from March 31, 2010 to March 31, 2021, he said the number of branches of PSBs have increased from 58,650 (including 13,596 metropolitan and 14,959 semi-urban branches) to 84,694 (including 16,369 metropolitan and 23,347 semi-urban branches).

## UK bans luxury exports to Russia, imposes high tariffs on vodka in new sanctions

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK government on Tuesday announced a ban on exports to Russia of high-end luxury goods and imposed new import tariffs on key Russian products like vodka as part of a latest wave of economic sanctions in response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Russian vodka is one of the iconic products affected by the tariff increases, while the export ban will also affect luxury vehicles, high-end fashion and works of art.

The British government said the latest measures will cause maximum harm to Russian President Vladimir Putin's war machine while minimising the impact on UK businesses.

"Our new tariffs will further isolate the Russian economy from global trade, ensuring it does not benefit from the rules-based international system it does not respect," said UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak.

"These tariffs build on the UK's existing work to starve Russia's access to international finance, sanction Putin's cronies and exert maximum economic pressure on his regime," he said.

The UK has published an initial list of goods worth GBP 900 million, including beverages and spirits, glass and glassware, paper and paperboard, machinery, antiques, and artificial fur, which will now face additional 35 percent tariff, on top of current tariffs.

## Cybersecurity in automotive sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With aim to detect, manage, and remediate cyber threats and vulnerabilities, automotive components manufacturing company Steelbird International is facilitating Cybellum Technologies Ltd.

"This is a breakthrough initiative. As we move in an increasingly interconnected world, the threat of cyberattacks and the need to adopt effective solutions has also skyrocketed. Currently, a very small percentage of vehicles, both ICEs and EVs, are protected by cybersecurity solutions," says Manav Kapur, Executive Director, Steelbird International.



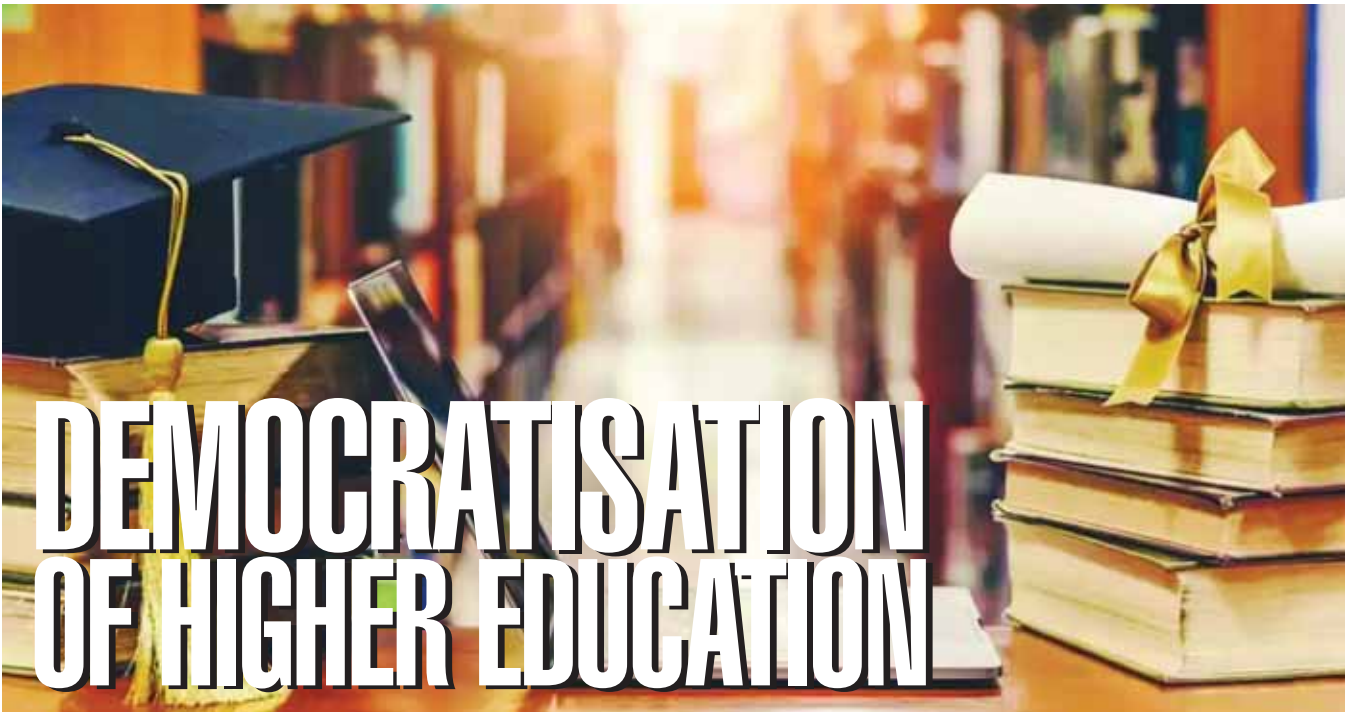
The US Education Secretary in the 1960s, John Gardner, once wondered, can we be equal and excellent at the same time. Since then, co-existential frames of access, equity, quality and affordability in education have been widely debated. Such an all-encompassing education system needs to ensure access to quality education to all knowledge seekers at their doorstep and at an affordable cost for creating a large pool of effective learners endowed with domain knowledge, soft and hard skills and the ability to communicate across cultures, time and space. The student community, especially in India, is a heterogeneous group with a great diversity of needs and requires a variety of formats of learning, pace, style choices of learning, and other associated forms of flexibility.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can help us a great deal in this regard as it is fast emerging as an enabler for bringing innovative disruptions in higher education and is creating new narratives of learning. Technological advancement in the modern world is so fast and relevant that higher education institutions (HEIs) that are unable to make use of technological disruptions in higher education to equip themselves to embrace the changes happening in the teaching and learning processes will lose their relevance.

Digitalisation of higher education is a crucial factor in this context as it helps create responsive administration, multidisciplinary curriculum, appropriate pedagogies (experiential learning) and real-time performance evaluation in commensuration with learning outcomes, effective communication, inter-connectedness, seamless availability of e-learning resources even in remotest rural areas, innovations and entrepreneurship, and collaboration and outreach. Moreover, digitalisation will help those learners who cannot be in the classroom and those who are differently-abled.

Digitalisation in Indian higher education began with the production of quality e-content and courseware by Electronic and Multimedia Resource Centres (EMRC) under Consortium for Educational Communication and their dissemination through 24x7 Vyas higher Education TV channel and thirty-two SWAYAMPRABHIA DTH channels. This digitalisation process has been accelerated during the last decade by the Ministry of Education through several initiatives related to access to online courses, quality digital academic content, academic research, and institutional administrative practices.

For online courses and access to online content, Massive Open



## DEMOCRATISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

For the learners, digitalisation powered flexibility, adaptability, and personalisation make learning a joyful enterprise, in both online and traditional classroom learning, says RAGHAVENDRA P TIWARI



Prof Raghavendra P Tiwari, Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda

Online Courses through SWAYAM platform, National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning, e-PG Pathshala (curriculum-based interactive e-content), e-Acharya (a portal to host all e-content developed through projects under NME-ICT), FOSSE (Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education) and SAKSHAT (a one-stop education portal) are available.

e-Shodh Sindhu (Consortia for higher education e-resources), e-ShodhGangotri (a digital repository of thesis and dissertations), Shodh Shudhi (plagiarism detection software), National Digital Library (a digital repository of vast academic content) are databases and tools made available to further academic research.

Similarly, to facilitate skill development and innovation through virtual learning environment in science, engineering, technology and design development, e-Yantra (labs for training in embedded systems), e-Kalpa (digital learning environment for design), Virtual Labs (Web-enabled experiments designed for remote – operation), Spoken Tutorial (Tutorials in IT application), SOS Tools (software and simulation packages), Text Transcription of Video Contents, OSCAR (Open Source Courseware's Animation Repository) are available. Additionally, VIDWAN (a digital database of experts), is made available to promote expertise sharing and collaboration among academics and institutions.

isation in course design, practice-driven teaching, research, assessment, and all other aspects of teaching and learning to create a next-generation learning environment.

For the learners, digitalisation powered flexibility, adaptability, and personalisation make learning a joyful enterprise, in both online and traditional classroom learning. Through technology-enabled flipped classes, virtual reality sessions, virtual labs, digital models and simulations, gamification, e-documents, e-text and reference books, online assignments, apprenticeships and vast and open educational resources, students can have engaging learning experiences.

To facilitate the impending transition, HEIs need to use appropriate technology for building a credible ecosystem that improves learning outcomes and provides personalisation. This can be accomplished by using ICT, embracing hybrid learning models, building industry associations and developing 21st-century life skills and competencies. The HEIs continuously need to upgrade their curricula, course contents, pedagogy, evaluation, integrate problem-solving research with academics, conduct research in the digital environment with peers across the globe and adapt modular models. HEIs also need to turn to learner-centric approaches revolving around soft and domain-specific skills crucial for enhancing learners' employability. They need to embrace hybrid learning models comprising offline,

online, on-labs, onsite platforms and include industry, skill-hubs and unorganised learning centres in rural India by building industry-academia collaboration and outreach activities.

Implementation of National Education Policy-2020 cannot be thought of without the digitalisation of higher education. Capacity building of faculty members in digitalisation technologies must be carried out for empowering them to embrace the advancement that the teaching-learning process is witnessing. However, funding will be a great barrier to the effective digitalisation of higher education since large-scale investments in hardware, software and in providing high bandwidth internet connectivity in remote and rural areas is needed to create a robust digital architecture required for an all-encompassing, all-inclusive and flexible learning ecosystem. Overcoming these roadblocks should be paramount for the long-term success of the ongoing process of the digitalisation of higher education. This success will ensure that the screen savvy tendency of gen-next is harnessed in the right earnest and that their dwindling memory span is also enhanced. Educational planners and leaders need to appreciate this and take responsibility for the digitalisation of their respective institutions. Those HEIs not becoming part and parcel of this process and thus not keeping themselves digitally ready will, in fact, be doing a great disservice to the learning system of the nation.

## Empathy & innovation: Way to post-pandemic education

School is not merely a classroom restricted to teaching and assessment.

It is a second home where they learn basic interpersonal skills of caring, sharing, learning together and class-conduct, says DR MANISHA SHARMA

The bells are ringing again, laughter echoes in the halls and classrooms, the swings have come back to life-it is so good to see children back where they belong amidst their friends and teachers. A pall of gloom has been lifted from the dull, lifeless classrooms. There is a buzz of activity—the tiny tots entering their schools for the first time physically-intimidated by the sudden socialising, unable to sit in class or follow basic instructions. The middle-schoolers, bursting with energy and curiosity, glad to be out of confinement. The high schoolers are partly lackadaisical due to the prolonged lockdown, partly stressed due to the imminent board exams.

The onus lies on the educators now. We need to reflect, understand our learners, re-connect with them and adapt to this change. We have to keep aside our personal challenges of resuming work and adopt new patterns and new techniques to bond with our students. School is not merely a classroom restricted to teaching and assessment. It is a second home where they learn basic interpersonal skills of caring, sharing, learning together and class-conduct. Think of the toddler who has stepped into a real classroom for the first time, met his teacher whom he has hitherto only seen on screen. Every minute in the school is a novel experience for him-unfamiliar and somewhat scary. I recently met the mother of one such 6-yr old.

She shared how the child was very excited to come to school on the first day, but was reluctant on the next day. He had done his maths-if he stayed at home, he could play or lie down after one hour of online classes but coming to school involved the arduous task of getting ready, sitting in class, paying attention and mingling with other bewildered toddlers like him. He decided it was easier to stay at home. To follow a routine, be a part of a team, obey orders, conduct himself as expected were all too intimidating for him.

These are going to be our challenges in the coming months. The teaching fraternity will need to muster up all their patience and perseverance,



Dr Manisha Sharma, Principal, Venketeshwar International School

innovate and engage their learners in diverse ways.

The adolescent students will have to be handled with delicacy too. Pre-adolescent mentality, lack of exposure to opposite sex, lack of physical activity, too much screen time, over-dependency on gadgets and virtual well-being will have to be assessed and borne in mind while helping them adjust well in classrooms again.

Teachers will need to be more flexible while teaching and assessing. We will have to re-invest ourselves to adopt active learning techniques. The thrust needs to be in getting the children ready for school-and sustaining it. If all teachers are empowered to engage children in active learning, they will certainly look forward to coming back. With a clear understanding of keeping the happiness quotient high in our classrooms, we should be able to address this challenge appropriately. We need to prepare the earth before we can begin sowing the seeds of learning. We need to nurture more than ever before.

In the shape of Metaverse and AI, the complete postulation of a virtual community playing an uttermost part in our lives evolved this year (Artificial Intelligence). A shift towards having customized and lavish residences, located in desirable and open locations, has raised the demand for high-quality homes. Various features such as business centers, convenience stores, home theaters, and medical facilities are a necessity today. Space is the real luxury.

Here are three architectural trends to watch for this year.



### Metaverse A Virtual

scroll down on this page and fill out the available form

**Application deadline:** May 31, 2022, at 4 pm

**International Entrance Awards at Langara College, Canada**  
Undergraduate programmes undertaken at Langara College by international students will be covered under the award amount from this grant. Students must have achieved an IELTS score of 7.0 and 76 per cent from their previous institution to be eligible to receive this award.

**Award:** Tuition fee  
**Course Level:** UG  
**Eligibility:** The applicants must be approved for admission to Langara as an international student.

**Supporting documents:** Copy of your Offer of Admission letter, Copy of IELTS score, if applicable, Copies of transcripts from previous institutions showing a minimum average of B+ (or equivalent), Two references and Personal statement  
**Admission requirements:** Must have met all admission requirements and received an offer of admission and have a B+ average, equivalent to a GPA of 3.33 or 76 per cent from their previous institution (high school or post-secondary)  
**Language requirement:** IELTS – 7.0  
**How to apply:** Admission applications to Langara College must be made on its application portal. Students interested to participate to win the award can

### Community

In the Tech Scene metaverse is the hottest buzzword. From the real economy to the digital economy the whole world is witnessing a major shift, and the integration of real and digital economy has been accelerated dramatically since the Pandemic. In the metaverse, architects play a key role in the realisation of innovative designs. Metaverse is a vision of interconnected, real-time, and enduring virtual communities of individuals teleporting across digital realities. In this new realm for architecture would be the capacity it gives to people of all ages to make a name in the architecture industry.

**WEB DEVELOPMENT AT HELPER4U SERVICES**  
Location – Work From Home  
Stipend – ₹10,000/Month  
Link – internshala.com/i/d3e8f7  
Deadline – March 24, 2022

**JAVA AND MICROSERVICES DEVELOPMENT AT NATWEST GROUP**  
Location – Work From Home  
Stipend – ₹15,000/Month  
Link – internshala.com/i/bddd4b  
Deadline – March 24, 2022

**VIDEO CREATION AT SDLC CORP**  
Location – Work From Home  
Stipend – ₹10,000/Month  
Link – internshala.com/i/32ca2a  
Deadline – March 24, 2022

**OPERATIONS AT ERGON SERVICES DMCC**  
Location – Work From Home  
Stipend – ₹30,000/Month  
Link – internshala.com/i/b0db30  
Deadline – March 24, 2022

**SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT ENGINEERING (WEB) AT SPRINGWORKS**  
Location – Work From Home  
Stipend – ₹25,000/Month  
Link – internshala.com/i/17eebe  
Deadline – March 24, 2022

**RECRUITMENT AT GLOBALBEEES**  
Location – Delhi  
Stipend – ₹25,000/Month  
Link – internshala.com/i/dd0cb9  
Deadline – March 24, 2022

**WEB DEVELOPMENT AT RACLOOP TECHNOLOGIES**  
Location – Chandigarh  
Stipend – ₹15,000/Month  
Link – internshala.com/i/aea9f5  
Deadline – March 24, 2022

## MIND IT

### Smart and Home Automation and 3D printing

Home automation is the newest trend in the architecture industry that allows you to control almost every aspect of your home through the (IoT) Internet of Things. Because you can use it for home security, smartphone apps that automate door locks, managing appliances, monitoring energy use, as a personal assistant, caring for the elderly or disabled, and more just about anywhere in

the country, the potential of Home Automation continues to rise. Nowadays a smart building provides additional convenience to its occupants while also lowering utility costs. The requirement to produce and consume ethically and responsibly shows a social understanding of sustainability in domestic architecture.

In addition to being employed for elaborate construction and technology, 3D printing has been rigorously tested in the

### IN BRIEF

#### ONLINE CERTIFICATION EXAMS FOR ASCI

Pearson VUE, the global leader in computer-based certification and licensure testing, announced today it will be delivering a new six-month online certification program for the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI).

The ASCI has a long heritage of executive education, specializing in the training of civil servants of corporate and government sectors and urban management since 1956. In partnership with Pearson VUE, ASCI will be launching a new internationally recognized certification in 'Strategic Human Resource Management'. The self-taught modular course will cover topics including the shift from the traditional role of HR to a more strategic one, recruitment, selection and strategic onboarding, employee professional development and employee engagement.

Through studying a range of best practice scenarios, candidates will be better able to align the HR function with their employer's organizational goals, after pursuing this new online certification. Competency-based credentials in HR are growing in popularity in India; busy working HR professionals will benefit from being able to take their exam from home with Pearson VUE's online proctoring solution. Registrations for the SHRM certification will start from March 2022.

#### COTTAGE HANDLOOM EXPO 2022

In an endeavour to promote Indian handlooms products and the spirit of craftsmanship, CCIC presents Handloom Expo handcrafted by Weavers & Master weavers till March 19, 2022 from 10 am to 7 pm. The exhibition was inaugurated by Shri.Uppendra Prasad Singh IAS, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of textiles. The exhibition has things from different parts of the country, with the assurance of authenticity, quality & value for money.

#### SPARK 2022, TECHNO-CULTURAL FEST

The Sanskriti University organised the biggest Annual Fest- SPARK 2022, an organizational fest which they are repeating this year as well. The two-day Mega fest hosts a myriad of competitive events that have been tailor-made to compatibility for an exceptional engrossing experience. The two-day Mega fest hosts a myriad of competitive events that have been tailor-made to compatibility for an exceptional engrossing experience.

housing industry as well. In reality, several 3-D printing residential constructions have been created this year, while using a variety of materials. With these beneficial implementations in mind, digital visualization of every component, via software such as BIM has been critical in progressing the printing process. It is possible to see how elements and features of design integrate. This results in a smarter, more innovative design – by precisely modelling construction systems, with all of their dimensions and layers. A tool not available till recently.

#### Multifunctional Spaces

There has been a need to improve the

efficiency of spaces making them multi-purpose because from work to Play surprisingly our homes have become the hub for just about everything these days after Covid. For architects, WFH (Working from Home) has meant determining how each nook is used and how they may improve overall functioning and ergonomics rather than starting from scratch. Architects are finding more ways to guarantee multi-purpose efficiency while also preserving a noticeable desire for more balanced setups in the home.

The writer is Shabnam Dhar partner at STUDIO ARCHOHM

#### SERIES OF CAREER ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMMES

EmpowerYouth.com, the career-tech platform, announces a partnership with GoDaddy Academy, to bring a series of career enhancement programs to its students. The career certification programmes from GoDaddy that will now be available to EmpowerYouth members are Certified Web Professional, Certified Web Developer, Certified Web Architect and Certified Digital Marketing

Professional. EmpowerYouth is the world's first holistic career management platform. The company helps students, specially in tier II and below markets, by providing them with various opportunities including campus placement for jobs internships and making them skill-ready for jobs. In addition, it assists institutions and individuals in providing a career

enhancement engagement model. "At EmpowerYouth.com, we focus on creating a definitive enhanced learning programme for our students and young professionals, leading to their holistic career transformation.

Our partnership with GoDaddy is a step to add multiple course platform partners. We hope this partnership will help our users.

#### CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN RAPID PROTOTYPING

World University of Design has established a Centre of Excellence in Rapid Prototyping for fabrication of designed products and parts created in CAD, using additive layer manufacturing techniques, without using the traditional manufacturing processes. India's manufacturing scene has grown by leaps and bounds in recent

times. Given the disruption induced by technology (4th Industrial Revolution) and augmented by the pandemic, any move forward to stimulate overall economic activity and creation of new jobs will have to involve design and futuristic manufacturing. PM's Make-in-India needs to be coupled with Design-in-India so people can create new products.

#### AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Department of PGDM & MIB of Institute of Management Studies, Noida organised the Faculty Development Programme on Research methodology: Parametric Test and Factor analysis. Many participants from various eminent institutions and IMS joined the session. The six days Online Faculty Development Program included the sessions on types of management scales, reliability

analysis of scales using SPSS, assumptions of normality, and univariate analysis and concepts on SPSS. The guest speaker of the session was Dr Kulneet Suri, Senior Director IMS Noida and Faculty Department of Management, Dr Pratiksha Tiwari.

Dr Pratiksha Tiwari explained different kinds of data like nominal, ordinal, interval, and data cleaning steps on SPSS. She further added, "There are several ways to clean data using the Record and Field Operation nodes in IBM SPSS Modeler. The Data Quality Report prepared during the data understanding phase contains details about the types of problems particular to your data. It can be used as a starting point for data manipulation in IBM SPSS Modeler."



# India face England in Women's WC

PTI ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

Their confidence high after an impressive win over the West Indies, India would look for much-needed consistency with the bat against a struggling England in their fourth league stage match of the ICC Women's World Cup here on Wednesday.

Currently placed third after a morale-boosting 155-run against the West Indies, India would like to keep the winning momentum going and maintain its stay in the top four especially when they take on table toppers Australia after England.

After an inexplicably slow performance against New Zealand when the Indian batters played out 162 dot balls, Smriti Mandhana (123 off 119) and Harmanpreet Kaur (109 off 107) produce a splendid batting display, slamming twin centuries against the West Indies to power India to their highest total (317/8) in the history of the showpiece event.

Mandhana played a fluent 123 run-knock while Kaur also continued her fine run, bringing up her fourth ton and the first since hitting the famous 171 not out against Australia in the 2017 World Cup.

The duo will be eager to continue in the same vein with the race for semifinal berths heating up. However, all-rounder Deepti Sharma, who has been elevated to the top, has to do more with the bat as does skipper Mithali Raj, who has also been off the boil recently.

Young Richa Ghosh, who has been brilliant behind the wickets, has so far crumbled under the pressure with the bat. The 18-year-old is yet to



## Aus crush West Indies

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Australia routed the West Indies by seven wickets in Wellington on Tuesday to maintain their perfect record at the Women's Cricket World Cup.

The tournament's red-hot favourites produced another ruthless display to race to a 4-0 winning record at the one-day showcase, highlighted by an unbeaten 83 from Rachael Haynes.

The win puts the six-time champions at the top of the standings with a healthy run rate, virtually guaranteeing a semi-final spot.

The West Indies have won two of their four matches and remain in with a chance of making the top four in the round-robin standings.

West Indies skipper Taylor



made the most of her chance by battling on to 50 but could not find any support with Shemaine Campbelle the next highest score on 20.

Perry finished on 3-22 and Ashleigh Gardner took 3-25 as the West Indies were skittled for 131 in 45.5 overs.

The paltry total was never going to be enough against the strongest batting line-up in women's cricket, but the West Indies did well to make Australia work for 30.2 overs to reach the 132-run target.



## Sindhu, Sen begin quest for elusive All England title

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

All eyes will be on in-form Ashutthar Lakshya Sen, double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu and World Championships Silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth as they look to break India's 21-year title drought at the All England Championships, which begins here on Wednesday.

The top Indian players, including Sindhu, Saina Nehwal and Srikanth have failed to lift the prestigious trophy with Pullela Gopichand (2001) and Prakash Padukone (1980) still remaining the only two Indians to claim the coveted title.

While Saina had come close by reaching the finals in 2015, it remained elusive for Sindhu, who has otherwise claimed medals in all other big-ticket events such as Olympics, World Championships, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

While Sindhu, seeded sixth, will once again be in the reckoning, it will be unseeded Sen who will be in focus this time, given the kind of build-up the 20-year-old had ahead of the Super 1000 event.

The Almora shuttler will be the cynosure of all eyes as he steps on to the court against compatriot Sourabh Verma in the opening round.

Sindhu, however, exited in the second round at the German Open after a shock defeat to a lower-ranked Zhang Yi Man of China and would look to quickly recover from the loss when she opens her campaign against a tricky world No 17 Chinese Wang Zhi Yi.

Saina, who struggled against Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon at

German Open, will face a huge challenge when she opens against another another Thai player and world No 10 Pornpawee Chochuwong.

Former world No 1 Srikanth too has looked in good touch but he has not been able to go the distance in close matches and that would be high on his agenda when he opens against Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen.

For Tokyo Olympian B Sai Pranneth it would be easier said than done as he faces Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen in the opening round.

Among others, Sameer Verma could be a dark horse as he looked in good touch in the few events he had played before a calf injury ruled him out last year. He will begin his campaign against Dutch Mark Caljouw.

On a comeback trail, HS Prannoy will square off against the supremely talented Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand.

In men's doubles, Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy will look to continue the momentum after their title run at India Open in January.

The duo has been pitted against Scotland's Alexander Dunn and Adam Hall in the first round and could face world No 1 Kevin Sukamuljo and Marcus Gideon in the quarterfinals.

Dhruv Kapila and MR Arjun will face an uphill task as they cross swords with world No 2 pair of Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan in the first round.

In women's doubles, Commonwealth Games Bronze winners Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy will meet Japan's Kie Nakanishi and Rin Iwanaga in the first round.



## SKY unlikely to be available for MI's IPL opener

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star batter Suryakumar Yadav might have to sit out of the Mumbai Indians' IPL opener against Delhi Capitals on March 27 as he is unlikely to fully recover from a hairline fracture on his thumb.

Yadav, one of the four players retained by Mumbai Indians, sustained the injury during the T20 series against the West Indies and subsequently missed the assignment against Sri Lanka.

"Surya is currently at the NCA doing his rehabilitation. He is well on his way to recovery but there is a possibility

that his participation in the opening game will be a real touch and go affair," a senior BCCI source said. "So there could be a possibility that he might be advised by the board's medical team to not risk playing the opener," he added.

### 2 DRS REFERRALS/TEAM

The BCCI has communicated the Playing Conditions to all the franchises and one of the welcome additions is the provision of two Decision Review System (DRS) referrals per team.

Also, all new rules recommended by the MCC will also be applicable, which means saliva won't be allowed to shine the ball, a restriction that came into effect due to COVID-19 but has been codified as a permanent change by the custodian of cricket laws.

The new MCC code has also moved run-outs at non-striker's end, popularly called 'Mankading', out of the law relating to 'unfair play'.

### WATSON JOINS DC

IPL franchise Delhi Capitals on Tuesday appointed former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson as an assistant coach for the upcoming season of the league.

The 40-year-old joins the DC coaching staff comprising Ricky Ponting (Head Coach), Pravin Amre (Assistant Coach), Ajit Agarkar (Assistant Coach) and James Hopes (Bowling Coach).

"The IPL, the best T20 tournament in the world. I've got incredible memories as a player, first of all with Rajasthan Royals winning it in 2008, led by the incredible man Shane Warne, RCB and then CSK," Watson said in a statement issued by DC.

"I've got incredible memories as a player, and now coaching opportunities. It's come to be able to work under the great Ricky Ponting. He was an amazing leader as a captain, and now to be able to coach under him.

## 8 SA's IPL players picked for Bangladesh ODIs

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Eight South African cricketers with IPL contracts will play in a one-day series against Bangladesh before leaving for India.

Cricket South Africa on Tuesday named a 16-man squad for the three-match series, which is part of the World Cup Super League.

The series will be played between March 18 and 23. The IPL starts on March 26 which means that the South African players may miss the start of the tournament because of quarantine requirements.

But it is not yet clear whether IPL-bound players will be available to play for South Africa in two World Cup Championship Tests against Bangladesh which follow the one-day games and only finish



on April 12.

Fast bowler Anrich Nortje, who has not played for South Africa since the T20 World Cup in November, remains unavailable as he continues rehabilitation because of a hip injury. The IPL players in the squad are Quinton de Kock, Marco Jansen, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada and Rassie van der Dussen.

## Medvedev loses No 1 rank after Indian Wells exit



AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Daniil Medvedev was sent crashing out of the ATP/WT Indian Wells Masters in a stunning defeat to Gael Monfils on Monday that ended the Russian's three-week reign as World No 1. On a day of upsets in the California desert, Medvedev was the highest-profile casualty to be sent packing, outfoxed 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 by veteran Frenchman Monfils.

The defeat means Novak Djokovic will on Monday return to the top of the world rankings, three weeks after Medvedev claimed the spot.

The shocks continued in the evening session as Greek

fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas tumbled out to 21-year-old American Jenson Brooksby.

Brooksby, ranked 43rd in the world, advanced to the last 16 with a 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 win. As Medvedev was left reflecting on his early exit, Rafael Nadal's unbeaten start to 2022 continued with a straight-sets defeat of Britain's Dan Evans.

The 21-time Grand Slam champion recorded his 17th straight victory of the year with a 7-5, 6-3 defeat of the 27th seed.

Nadal will play Reilly Opelka in the last 16 after the American 17th seed downed Canada's Denis Shapovalov, seeded 13, 6-7(4), 6-4, 6-4.

## Indian campaign ends in Singapore

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

India's campaign in the \$2 million Singapore Smash came to an end with the quarterfinal exit of Manika Batra and Archana Kamath in the women's doubles here on Tuesday.

The second-seeded Japanese pair of Hina Hayata and Mima Ito needed just 25 minutes to dispose of the Indian duo 11-7, 11-4, 11-8 to enter the semifinals. Ranked No 6 in doubles, Manika and Archana struggled against the left-right Japanese onslaught, but tackling left-hander Hayata's powerful spins turned out to be a big ask.

There was no respite for the Indians from the right-hander Ito either. The Indian players face their next challenge in the March 13-17 WTT Feeder Doha 2022.

## Dominant Man City held at Crystal Palace



AP ■ LONDON

Manchester City wasted a host of chances in a damaging 0-0 draw at Crystal Palace on Monday that severely dented their bid to retain the Premier League title.

Pep Guardiola's side had 18 shots and 74 percent of the possession, but left Selhurst Park ruing a series of misses on a significant night in the title race.

Bernardo Silva and Aymeric Laporte were guilty of the most glaring miscues, with Palace keeper Vicente Guaita keeping the leaders at bay with several saves.

With second placed Liverpool having won at Brighton on Saturday, City are now just four points clear of Jurgen Klopp's team.

Liverpool can close to within one point of City if they win their game in hand at fourth placed Arsenal on Wednesday.

City had won four of their last five league games, including a scintillating 4-1 demolition of Manchester United in their most recent top-flight outing.

But, given Liverpool's red-hot form, the stalemate in south London could tip the balance of power towards Merseyside.

## Babar ton headlines PAK resistance

AP ■ KARACHI

Captain Babar Azam's first Test hundred in two years and Azhar Shafique's 71 led Pakistan's resistance after Australia set up a huge target of 506 on day four Tuesday of the second Test.

Babar was unbeaten on 102 off 198 balls and Shafique followed his maiden Test hundred in the drawn first Test with an undefeated 71 off 226 balls to take Pakistan to 192-2 at stumps. Pakistan still needs an improbable 314 runs to achieve a world record run chase on the last day or survive the remaining 90 overs to deny Australia taking a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Babar and Shafique defied Australia's reverse swing and Nathan Lyon's spin on an abrasive pitch for well over four hours. Babar, who made his last Test century in February 2020



against Bangladesh, raised his sixth Test hundred when he top-edged a sweep for two runs late in the last session. It took him just over four hours off 180 balls with 12 foures.

Babar and Shafique joined in the second over after lunch when Azhar Ali's labors for more than an hour to score 6 were undone by an lbw from Cameron Green. Video showed a spike coming off the gloves before it hit Azhar on the body, but he chose not to review.

Pakistan's highest successful chase in Test matches is 382-3 in 2015 when it beat Sri Lanka by seven wickets at Pallekele.

Earlier, Australia extended its lead to 505 when Cummins declared the second innings at 97-2 after Marnus Labuschagne, on 44, played Shaheen Afridi back onto his stumps off a mistimed pull shot.

Afridi and Hasan Ali didn't allow first innings century-maker Usman Khawaja, 44 not out, and Labuschagne to score quickly in the half hour after Australia resumed on 81-1. The declaration came earlier than expected.

## Benzema breaks scoring record

AP ■ MADRID

Karim Benzema became the highest French goalscorer in history on Monday after his double gave Real Madrid a 3-0 win over Mallorca, sending them 10 points clear at the top of La Liga.

But the Frenchman had to go off late on with what looked like an injury in his lower left leg, giving Madrid a serious headache before Sunday's Clasico against Barcelona.

Vinicius Junior, who opened the scoring, and

Rodrygo also suffered problems in the second half.

Benzema's absence for the game at the Santiago Bernabeu would come as a serious blow to Madrid, after the striker continued his scintillating recent run with two more goals at Son Moix.

After scoring a hat-trick to help Madrid defeat Paris Saint-Germain 3-1 in the Champions League last week, the 34-year-old's penalty against Mallorca took his career tally to 412 goals, putting him one above Thierry Henry in the all-time list of French scorers.

**Benzema's absence for the game at the Santiago Bernabeu would come as a serious blow to Madrid, after the striker continued his scintillating recent run with two more goals at Son Moix**

Benzema then made it 413 for him and three for Madrid with a superb header late on, only to limp off in obvious discomfort.

### IMMOBILE'S NEW FEAT

Rome: Ciro Immobile broke Lazio's all-time Serie A scoring record on Monday with the only goal in his team's 1-0 win over struggling Venezia which moved them fifth.

Immobile, who also had a goal ruled out for offside just after the break, smashed home a 58th-minute penalty to take his top-flight tally with

Lazio to 144, one more than Italian goalscoring icon Silvio Piola.

Piola is Serie A's all-time leading scorer with 274 goals over a 25-year career in which his biggest honour was the 1938 World Cup for his national team.

He played at Lazio for nine of those years and scored 149 times overall for the Roman club, another record broken towards the end of last season by Immobile who is now on 175 Lazio goals in all competitions after netting a league-leading 21st of the season.

