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## हम निकल पड़े हैं प्रण करके... नये भारत का नया उत्तर प्रदेश बनाने को...



## रापथ

### राष्ट्रवाद की, सुशासन की, सुरक्षा की, विकास की

दिनांक : 25 मार्च, 2022 | समय : अपराह्न 4:00 बजे

स्थान : भारत रत्न अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय इकाना क्रिकेट स्टेडियम, लखनऊ



सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश



# CM: Phone call made from PMO to defer MCD polls



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a scathing revelation, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday alleged that a phone call was made from the Prime Minister's Office to State Election Commissioner asking him to defer the municipal corporation elections. Speaking in the Delhi Assembly, Kejriwal said "This would not have happened anywhere in the world that a PM is getting an election deferred by directly calling and sending a letter to the election commission. The BJP doesn't want elections. BJP leaders broke all

the records of loot in the MCD," Kejriwal's remarks came after the Delhi SEC had earlier this month deferred the announcement of election schedule for the civic bodies after it received a communication from Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajaj, saying the Centre plans to bring a Bill in the Budget session of Parliament to unify the three municipal corporations of Delhi. The Union Cabinet on Tuesday gave its nod to a Bill to merge the three municipal corporations in Delhi. The Bill regarding the unification of civic bodies in Delhi is likely to

be tabled in the ongoing Budget session of Parliament. The AAP national convenor also sought to know why the BJP did not reunify all the three municipal corporations in the last seven years. "Were you (BJP) sleeping for seven years? The State Election Commission (SEC) was scheduled to declare the dates of MCD elections on March 9 at 5 pm, but a phone call from the PMO was made to the commissioner and a letter was sent just an hour before the announcement to cancel the polls," he claimed. Addressing the House, the chief minister alleged that the BJP hated Babasaheb Ambedkar because he gave the Constitution and democracy. He dared the BJP to fight MCD elections timely and win. "The biggest party of the world (BJP) got scared by the smallest party of the world (AAP)," Kejriwal said. According to sources, there may be some reorganisation of wards in Delhi which might delay elections.

# BJP leaders call AAP MLAs 'tukde tukde gang' BJP, RSS opposing installation of Tiranga, alleges Somnath

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The second day of Delhi Assembly began on stormy note with an MLA of the ruling party Somnath Bharti alleged that the BJP and the RSS were opposing the installation of a high-mast tricolour in his constituency while the BJP leaders called AAP MLAs part of the "tukde tukde gang". Following the heated exchange of words, Speaker Ram Niwas Goel directed that BJP MLAs Vijender Gupta and Jitendra Mahajan be marshalled out of the House. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia lashed out at the BJP, saying that it is opposing the installation of Tiranga in Delhi and dared them to stop the AAP Government from doing it. "Every single AAP worker and leader will lay their lives but will not allow the BJP to disrespect the national flag. Did Bhagat Singh-Sukhdev-Rajguru sacrifice their lives for us to see this day

where BJP conveniently goes around disregarding the Tiranga," he asked? "The Delhi Government decided to celebrate the 75th year of Indian Independence by installing 500 massive Tirangas all over the state. Our motive behind the project was to instill a feeling of Deshbhakti in each and every citizen the moment they step out of their house. If any BJP Councillor has the audacity to say that the tricolour cannot be installed at a site because a certain group hoists their own flag then there just cannot be a bigger traitor than one who has no regard for the national flag," he said. AAP MLA Somnath Bharti said "We have all heard from many sources that the people belonging to the BJP hold no attachment to our beloved Tiranga in any form or manner. Their leaders made absolutely no contributions in our fight to attain freedom, in liberating the Tiranga whatsoever. However,

an incident from my constituency has been brought to my notice recently, which has left me stunned and disconcerted."We had taken permission from the South MCD in order to install one of the Tirangas in the Maharaja Sursaini Park in my constituency. As soon as we arrived at the site, some people arrived and objected to us installing the national flag. When I asked the reason behind their objection, they stated that they use the park to set up their Shakhas, and hence only their flag can be hoisted at the park," he added. Responding to the allegation, Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has said that it is regrettable that MLA Somnath Bharti and other AAP leaders are playing "dirty" politics in the name of hoisting tricolour. Bharti wanted to hoist the flag in one corner of the park while local residents requested him to hoist it in the centre of the park.

# Learner's driving licences validity extended till May 31

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Department has extended the validity of learner's driving licences expiring on March 31 by two months till May 31, 2022. Delhi's Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot announced the development and said it is the final opportunity for people to get their learner's licenses renewed. "Those Learner's License whose validity is going to expire by March 31 has been extended for a period of 2 months i.e., up to May 31. Pls note that this is the last and final opportunity," Gahlot said in a tweet. He also attached a picture of the order issued by his department in this connection. The order issued by the Transport Department on Thursday said that the validity of driving learner's licenses has been extended from time to time because driving skill test and new appoint-

ments for the test were suspended in pursuance of Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) guidelines to contain COVID-19 spread. "It has come to notice that several learner's license holders, which were declared valid between February 1, 2020 and March 31, 2022 due to extended validity on account of pandemic situation, have not yet got the skill test appointments and there are many more applicants than the available driving skill test slots. "Therefore, the validity of those learner's license issued by this department whose validity going to expire by March 31, 2022, is further extended as a final opportunity for a period of two months i.e., upto May 31, 2022," the order issued by the department said. The order further said that last extension for validity of driving learner's license was given up to March 31, 2022 in January this year.

# Demand for independent floors up in Gurugram's upscale areas: Report

**Gurugram:** After the Covid-19 impact in Gurugram, the demand for independent floors has increased in the city. A report of Jones Lang Lasalle (JLL), a property consultant (India) private limited, said the share of independent floors in the total housing units launched here in 2021 reached a whopping 74per cent. According to its data, of the total 9,232 units launched in Gurugram in 2021, 6,850 were independent floors. The desire for large living spaces and factors like work from home, hybrid culture, and e-schooling have aggravated the demand. Notably, excellent metro connectivity, Delhi-Ajmer Expressway, Mehrauli-Gurugram Road and the upmarket Golf Course Road have made city's premium residential pocket DLF City Phase III one of the top picks of the affluent. "Since October 2020 we have launched a series of premium independent floors across DLF City in Gurugram and have received

a phenomenal response from the market. We also assured provision of civic amenities such as water, electricity, sewage system, walkways, and much more in residential developments," said Aakash Ohri, Group Executive Director & Chief Business Officer, DLF Home Developers Ltd. Furthermore, the area offers residents an impressive array of wellness, entertainment, and leisure amenities in the form of Cyber Hub, and access to DLF City Club and also connected to Delhi via NH-48 and MG Road and direct access to Faridabad and Indira Gandhi International Airport along with commercial hubs such as Cyber City and Udyog Vihar. As per JLL, demand for independent floors is set to grow and the number is expected to cross 10k mark this year. The residential corridors in Gurugram, where independent floors have been launched in last two years, include Golf Course Extension Road, Dwarka Expressway (Sector 37D), New Gurgaon (Sector 81, 89, 92), Sector 73, DLF City Phase II, III and IV and Sohna. "The popularity of Independent floors has so much to do with shorter project turnaround time, privacy and bigger spaces. This is becoming a trend, investing in robust infrastructure, connectivity to prime locations of city," said Shashank Vashishtha, Executive Director, eXp India. **SF**

# Raghav resigns as MLA after party nominates him for RS



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP MLA Raghav Chadha on Thursday resigned as a member of the Delhi Assembly as he has been nominated for a Rajya Sabha seat by the party. Chadha is one of five Aam Aadmi Party nominees for Rajya Sabha polls scheduled on

March 31. If elected, the 33-year-old Raghav Chadha will be the youngest member of the House. Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel praised Chadha for his work. Recalling his time as an MLA, Chadha said it was around two years back that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asked him to

contest assembly elections from Rajendra Nagar. Chadha said he worked really hard in his constituency. "Be it during the pandemic or getting water pipelines installed, all the residents of our constituency are thankful to Kejriwal. I want to assure them that MLA will change but work will continue. I will always respect honour that they bestowed on me. I am thankful to all residents. This little brother and son of yours will always be there for you," he said. He said it's only in AAP that ordinary middle class people get such huge opportunities. "It is Kejriwal's model under which a person's patriotism and dedication is honoured. We are students of Kejriwal school of politics. He has chosen a different stream for me. I will miss

this house. Jai Hind. Jai Bharat. Inquilab Zindabad," he said during his parting address in the Assembly. Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri also congratulated Chadha on his Rajya Sabha nomination. "I am happy that he has been nominated for a Rajya Sabha seat. I want to congratulate him. We will hugely miss Raghav Chadha. If possible please come back to house," he said. Calling Chadha his younger brother, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said he will be Delhi's and country's voice in Upper House. "This was probably his farewell speech. I am very happy that my younger brother Raghav Chadha has scaled up to Rajya Sabha by creating space for him at such a young age," he said.

# Umar denied bail in connection with Feb 2020 Delhi riots case



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Thursday denied bail to former JNU student Umar Khalid in a case of larger conspiracy in connection with Delhi riots during February 2020. Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat had reserved the order on March 3rd after hearing arguments from the counsel appearing for Khalid and the prosecution. During the arguments, the accused told the

court that the prosecution lacked evidence to prove it's case against him. Khalid and several others have been booked under the anti-terror law (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act) in the case for being "masterminds" of February 2020 riots, which had left 53 people dead and over 700 injured. The violence had erupted during protests against citizenship law CAA and National Register of Citizens. Besides Khalid, activist Khalid Saifi, JNU students Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita, Jamia Coordination Committee members Safoora Zargar, former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain and several others have also been booked under the stringent law in the Delhi riots case.

# Property tax offices of SDMC to remain open on weekend

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Property tax offices of South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) will remain open on coming Saturday and Sunday to allow people to pay their taxes with rebate during the financial Year 2021-22. The move will facilitate property tax payers for filing of Self Assessment Property Tax Return (SAPTR) and to avail the benefit of waiver of interest and penalty on payment of

outstanding demand of property tax under ongoing Amnesty Scheme-2021-22, a senior SDMC official said, adding that all offices will be open from 9 am to 5:30 pm. The official said that special arrangements have been made at all offices of the property tax department and counters have been set up to assist the property tax payers. The last date of filing of property tax return is March 31, 2022. The civic body has requested property tax payers living in its area to avail benefits of Amnesty Scheme-2021-22 and to avail waiver on penalty and interest by filing return on time.

# Lalit Narayan Mishra Memorial Lecture series organised

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lecture series was organised at national Capital's Constitution Club, to mark 99th birth anniversary of former Railways Minister Lalit Narayan Mishra. The 'Lalit Narayan Mishra Memorial Lecture Series' was held while remembering the life and legacy of Late Lalit Narayan Mishra with an interactive discussion on topic "India Moving Forward". Former Cabinet Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, Vivek Tankha, senior Advocate and Member Of Parliament, Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh, Shiva Kirti Singh, former Judge, Supreme Court and

Chairperson Telecom Disputes Appellate Tribunal were among the key speakers. Mishra was also former Foreign Trade Minister, Minister of State for Defence Production, Deputy Foreign Minister and Deputy Minister For Home Affairs. He was part of freedom movement from his college days and went to jail in 1941 and 1942 for being part of freedom movement and for protesting against the atrocities of British rule. Krishna Sinha, Bihar's first Chief Minister recommendation to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru led to appointment of Mishra as a Parliamentary Secretary.

# Karol Bagh AAP MLA demands amendment to Delhi Professional Colleges or Institutions Act 2007

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA from Karol Bagh Vishesh Ravi requested an amendment to Delhi Professional Colleges or Institutions Act, 2007 in the Delhi Legislative Assembly on Thursday. "I came across several incidents of deserving meritorious students being bereft of benefits of this act due to definition of Delhi candidate and hence decided to take up matter," said Ravi. The AAP MLA said that the current definition of a Delhi Candidate as per act defines candidate as one candidate who has appeared or

passed qualifying examination from a recognized school or institution situated in Delhi. "Whereas I have proposed definition be changed to one who has appeared or passed qualifying examination from a recognized school or institution situated in Delhi or is a resident of Delhi," he said. "This is possible when GNCT of Delhi amends Section 2 (f) of Act by choosing "Institutional or Residential" method to decide the "Delhi Candidate" in order to remove this barrier to access higher education opportunities currently faced by Delhi residents", he said.

**Public Notice**  
This is to inform general public that Mr. Pawan Kumar & Mr. Ishwar Dass have acquired the Property bearing no. 1496, area measuring 80 sq.yds. situated in the colony known as Tri Nagar, Gali no. 106, in the area and revenue estate Tihaya Bohran Khan, Delhi state, Delhi on POA basis vide registered Irrevocable GPA dated 14.03.1992 & ATS & VIII dated 13.02.1992, executed by Mrs. Naro Devi, and Now, Mr. Pawan Kumar & Mr. Ishwar Dass are intending to sell the above said property to Mr. Sanku Gupta vide Sale Deed. Further Mr. Sarthak Gupta is mortgaging the above said property with Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd. and in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Munesh Chavhan Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas, Unit no 307, 9th Floor, GD-JTL Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at: 9066707172/9818228636 (M).

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**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Aishwarye Ahluwalia, S/o Sh. Gurdeep Kumar R/o DA-95B, DDA LIG Flats, Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110064, have changed my name from Aishwarye Walia to Aishwarye Ahluwalia. In future my name will be treated as Aishwarye Ahluwalia. PD(9166)C

**NOIDA**

**New Okhla Industrial Development Authority**  
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Website : [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com)

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

**(A) 1. 14/PGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/21-22- Emergency work (Shifting of 400mm dia treated water line at chainage 10.30 KM Noida Gr. Noida expressway due to construction of major Under-Pass) Noida Cost.96.76 Lac**

Which can be uploaded by date 08-04-2022 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 11-04-2022 at 11.00 A.M.  
**Principal General manager**  
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**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Ratnesh Kumar, who is purchasing Residential Plot of land area measuring 40 sq. yards out of Kharsa No. 1069M/N, Situated at Chaman Vihar, in the Village of Loni, Pargana Loni, Tehsil & Dist. Ghaziabad, (U.P.) from Mrs. Narayan Awasthi W/o Mr. Arun Awasthi, who is the owner of subject property through Sale Deed Dated 14.07.2011 executed by Mrs. Premlata Dube W/o Mr. Shyam Sunder Dube in favour of Mrs. Narayan Awasthi W/o Mr. Arun Awasthi, Vide Doc. No.16506, and same to be financed & mortgaged by Roha Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. However, Original Sale Deed Dated 28.02.2007 executed by Mr. Narendra Singh S/o Late Mr. Sheeshram in favour of Mrs. Premlata Dube W/o Mr. Shyam Sunder Dube, Vide Doc. No.4687 has been lost and not available and an FIR has lodged on dated 24.02.2022 with LP No. 2474/02/2022 for loss of document. If any Person having any type of claim/ right/title/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, disputes etc.  
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Office No. G-03, at Ground Floor, on Plot No. D-61, Sector-2, Noida, UP-201301 Contact # 0120-4130438

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निम्नलिखित कार्य के लिये ऑनलाईन निविदा प्रतिशत दर पर निविदा प्रपत्र-'अ' में केन्द्रीयकृत प्रणाली के अंतर्गत लोक निर्माण विभाग में उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत फर्म/टेकदारों से आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र एवं अन्य शर्तें <a href="http://imptenders.gov.in">http://imptenders.gov.in</a> पर देखी जा सकती है।					
ऑनलाईन निविदा क्र.	विवरण	अनुमानित लागत	घरोहर राशि	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य	कार्य अवधि
2022 UD-185183_2	FENCING WORK AT DIFFERENT PLACES FOR PLANTATION WORK FROM ZONE 1 TO 19. (EMPANELMENT BASED TENDER)	रुपये 17152214/-	रुपये 171522/-	रुपये 12500/-	12 माह
नोट :- 1. सशर्त निविदा मान्य नहीं होगी। 2. घरोहर राशि केवल ऑनलाईन ही मान्य होगी। 3. सफल निविदाकार को ठेके की राशि के 3 प्रतिशत राशि के बराबर परफार्मेन्स सिक्यूरिटी जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा।					
कार्यालयन बंडी ( उद्यान ) नि.क्र.1337/021/022					

# BSES to Delhiites 'Switch off lights to observe Earth Hour'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BSES has appealed to its over 46 lakh consumers and residents of the national capital to switch their lights, electrical appliances and non-essential lighting fixtures off from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm to observe 'Earth Hour' on Saturday. The theme of this year's Earth Hour is 'Shape Our Future' for people from all around the globe to stand together to call for a safer, fairer and more sustainable future for everyone. Showing solidarity with the event, BSES is actively and whole heartedly supporting and promoting the Earth Hour initiative. The discom and its consumers are once again gearing up to take up the challenge and make Earth Hour event a success in Delhi. Commenting on the importance of a sustainable planet, a BSES spokesperson said "We sincerely appeal to our over 46

lakh consumers and around 1.8 crore residents in our area to make the right choice for the planet and for the future generations that will inherit it. This Earth Hour, all our actions, albeit small will 'Shape Our Future'. Citizens can help protect the natural world to safeguard our future by switching off". "BSES discoms are actively championing sustainable growth by promoting renewable, roof-top solar, EV charging, electric vehicles, battery storage, behavioural energy efficiency and demand side management programs. As a conscientious corporate citizen, we also urge consumers to adopt a sustainable way of life and adopt green options like solar energy. We urge our consumers to join our over 4200 other BSES roof-top consumers in harnessing the power of the sun," he added. BRPL and BYPL are taking several steps to share concern over climate change amongst its customers and employees such as Earth



Hour message in Samvad, BSES' monthly/bi-lingual newsletter going to over 46 lakh consumers, SMS messages to consumers, through web site [www.bsesdelhi.com](http://www.bsesdelhi.com), engaging RWAs and employees. Earth Hour is a global environmental movement of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). It started in 2007. Earth Hour has become the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment, inspiring individuals, communities, businesses and organisations in more than 190 countries and territories to take tangible environmental

action. Historically, Earth Hour has focused on the climate crisis, but more recently, it has strived to address a range of concerns facing people and the planet. The movement recognizes the role of individuals in creating solutions to the planet's most pressing environmental challenges and harnesses the collective power of its millions of supporters to drive change. BRPL and BYPL are premier power distribution companies and Joint Ventures between Reliance Infrastructure Limited and INOCTD.



OPINION 6

WHY 'WAHABI' PAK  
KILLS SHIA MUSLIMS

WORLD 8

US TO WELCOME UP TO 1L  
REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

MONEY 9

SENSEX, NIFTY DECLINE  
FOR 2ND DAY

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JADEJA TO  
BE NEW CSK  
CAPTAIN  
12 SPORT

## Wang's visit raises hopes for elusive LAC resolution

Chinese Foreign Min  
arrives in India, to talk  
with Jaishankar, Doval

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and China will make all efforts to end the two-year-old stalemate at the border in Ladakh during the talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi here on Friday. Wang Yi is also likely to meet National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss ways for the speedy return of Indian students to China. There are more than 15,000 Indian students studying in various universities there and forced to return home after the outbreak of the corona pandemic more than two years back, sources said here on Thursday.

Yi arrived in India on Thursday evening. He flew into New Delhi from Kabul and is the first Chinese Minister to come to India since trouble erupted between forces of the two nations in May 2020 resulting in a bloody brawl later in the Galwan valley.

Moreover, he comes a day



after India criticised him for his remarks on Jammu and Kashmir. New Delhi rejected the "uncalled reference" to Jammu and Kashmir in his speech in a function in Pakistan.

"Matters related to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are entirely the internal affairs of India. Other countries, including China have no locus standi to comment. They should note that

India refrains from public judgment of their internal issues," Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi had said on Thursday.

Wang had made a reference to Kashmir in his opening speech at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Pakistan. "On Kashmir, we have heard again today the calls of many of our Islamic friends. And China shares the same hope," he had said.

As regards talks on the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the two leaders will review the progress made so far during 15 rounds of military-level talks besides several rounds of parleys at the diplomatic level.

Wang and Jaishankar met twice after the incident — in Moscow in September 2020 and Dushanbe in September 2021.

Continued on Page 5

## Birbhum massacre 'mastermind', 21 others arrested

Mamata visits  
Bagtui, orders  
arrest of culprits

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Sheikh Anarul Hussein, a Trinamool Congress district committee member — and the alleged mastermind behind the Birbhum mass killings — and 21 others were on Thursday arrested hours after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited Bagtui village in Birbhum district where 10 people, including six women and two children, were on Tuesday evening hacked and then burnt alive.

Anarul orchestrated the carnage in retaliation of the murder of his close crony Bhadu Sheikh, a panchayat vice pradhan who was bombed to death a couple of hours before the Bagtui carnage.

Mamata, who had on Wednesday advocated a "large-

er conspiracy" angle on Thursday, toned down the "conspiracy" rhetoric ordering the arrest of Anarul after visiting Bagtui. "I could never have imagined that such a barbaric act can take place in modern day Bengal... where women, mothers and even children are burnt alive... this incident must not go unpunished and so I ask the police to immediately arrest the culprits," Mamata said before ordering the arrest of Anarul, a mason-turned-TMC politician with a multi-million empire.

In what the Opposition parties immediately saw "an attempt to suppress and dilute the real case," Mamata said, "I hear that one of our block presidents is guilty of not sending in the police despite being repeatedly requested by the victims' family members." She also ordered the suspension of the Rampurhat officer in-charge of police.

Continued on Page 5

## Post 'Kashmir Files' on YouTube, Kejriwal retorts to BJP's call

BJP had asked  
CM to make film  
tax free in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the BJP legislators demanded *The Kashmir Files* be made tax-free in Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said the movie should be uploaded on YouTube and make it free for all.

Speaking in the Assembly, Kejriwal accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of using the movie for political gains. Kejriwal said the BJP leaders were demanding to make *The Kashmir Files* movie tax-free when Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal was speaking in the House on Wednesday.

"They (BJP) are demanding that the movie be declared tax-free in Delhi. Upload it on YouTube, the movie will become free and everyone will

be able to watch it," he said in the Assembly.

Kejriwal slammed Modi, alleging that even after ruling the country for eight years he has to take the help of the movie for political gains.

Kejriwal, who is also the AAP national convener, further alleged that the entire BJP machinery was busy sticking posters of the movie across the country.

"Some people are earning crores in the name of Kashmiri Pandits and you (BJP) have been sticking posters of the film," he said.

Reacting to Kejriwal's response to the BJP MLAs' demand, the party's Delhi unit chief Adesh Gupta said Kejriwal's response showed his insensitivity towards the pain of Kashmiri Pandits.

"The AAP had in the past supported the demand for a plebiscite by Kashmiri separatists. So, appreciation fo *The Kashmir Files* movie cannot be expected from him (Kejriwal)," he said.

## Yogi elected BJP House leader, to take oath as CM today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The BJP legislature party in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday completed the formality of electing Yogi Adityanath as its leader, paving the way for his return as the Chief Minister. Yogi will take oath on Friday in a gala function.

The meeting was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah as observer. Senior BJP leader and nine-time MLA Suresh Khanna proposed the name of Yogi as the leader while Surya Pratap Shahi, Baby Rani Maurya, Ram Naresh Agnohari, Sushil Shakyam, and Nand Gopal Nandi seconded his name.

Yogi then called on the Governor Anandiben Patel and staked claim to form the next Government. He will be sworn in as the CM on Friday in a function at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Stadium.

"Today I have been elected as the leader of the legisla-



ture party. This is a matter of pride for us. But this also means we have to work with more vigour to ensure that benefits of the Government schemes should reach the targeted audience," Yogi said while addressing the legislators after being elected as leader.

Stressing on the importance of the BJP's victory in 2022 elections, Amit Shah said that this win has written a new chapter in UP's history. In the last 35 years never a party has been re-elected after completing a tenure of five years. In both the times the BJP got two-thirds votes and this was possible because of Yogi, he added.

Continued on Page 5

## SC panel invites public response on Pegasus row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court's Pegasus probe panel on Thursday invited public response on alleged State surveillance through telephone tapping and suggestions on checks and balances and safeguarding of privacy through legislation.

Justice RV Raveendran headed the probe panel's website has posted 11 questions seeking public response on the surveillance by the Governments and safeguarding the privacy of persons. The last day for response is March 31.

"The existing boundaries of State surveillance of personal and private communications of citizens, for the purposes of national security, defence of India, maintenance of public order, and prevention and investigation of offences, are well defined and understood? Are there any other purpose for

such a war without this?"

"It feels like we're in a gray area, between the West and Russia, defending our common values," Zelenskyy said in his video address to the summit. "This is the scariest thing during a war — not to have clear answers to requests for help!"

A Biden administration official, who requested anonymity, said Zelenskyy did not repeat his demand for a no-fly zone, a demand NATO already has rejected.

Continued on Page 5



AP ■ BRUSSELS

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for "military assistance without limitations" as he addressed an emergency NATO summit on Thursday, the first of three urgent meetings US President Joe Biden and world leaders are holding in response to the Russian invasion.

Zelenskyy pleaded for anti-air and anti-ship weapons, asking "is it possible to survive in

## CAPSULE

### DELHI RIOTS: UMAR KHALID DENIED BAIL

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court on Thursday denied bail to former JNU student Umar Khalid in a case of larger conspiracy in connection with Delhi riots during February 2020, saying there were reasonable grounds to believe that the accusations against him were prima facie true.

### SONIA CONVENES MEET ON CURRENT AFFAIRS

**New Delhi:** Congress president Sonia Gandhi has convened a meeting of party general secretaries and State in-charges on March 26 to discuss organisational elections, the party's membership drive and the current political situation.

### HC: REGULAR HEARING IN KASHI-GYANVAPI CASE

**Allahabad:** The Allahabad High Court on Thursday decided to hold regular hearings from March 29 in the matter related to decades-old Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque dispute of Varanasi.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers' income in some States — Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Nagaland and Odisha — has declined despite the monthly agricultural household income of the country having increased from ₹8,059 to ₹10,218.

As per the data furnished to a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture, the Department of Agriculture has stated that farmers' income in Jharkhand it has come down from ₹7,068 to ₹4,895, in Madhya Pradesh from ₹9,740 to ₹8,339, in Nagaland from ₹11,428 to ₹9,877, in Odisha from ₹5,274 to ₹5,112.

This has been revealed in a reply by the Department of Agriculture before a parliamentary standing committee on Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. The report was tabled in Parliament on Thursday.

Taking note of the department's reply, the Committee headed by PC Gaddigoudar has

said the department should formulate a special team to figure out the reasons for falling farmers' income in those States and take corrective measures so that the doubling of farmers' income is not lost sight of.

The report said the income of farmers has gone down when the monthly agricultural household income of the country has increased from ₹8,059 to ₹10,218.

"During the course of evidence, when the department has asked to inform the steps taken by it to increase farmers income in the States of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Odisha, the department's Post Evidence Reply was lackadaisical in replying that the input in this regard will need to be sought from the concerned State Governments," said the report.

It is a fact that many departments, organisations and Ministries of Government of India are responsible for doubling the income of each and



every farmer of this country within a fixed time frame. "But there is no denial that the

major task for doubling of income of farmers lies with the department of Agriculture and

Farmers Welfare," it added.

Meanwhile, the Jharkhand Government is to request the

Centre to extend the deadline for paddy procurement till April 30 this year, in case it fails to achieve the target by March 31, a senior Minister informed the State Assembly on Thursday.

The target for 2021-22 is 80-lakh tonne, and the deadline for procurement is expiring on March 31. The State has achieved over 71 per cent of its paddy procurement target till March 23.

State Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Minister Rameshwar Oraon told the House, "We have already achieved 71.33 per cent of the target till March 23 and there are seven more days to go. "We are hopeful of achieving the target by March end. In case we fail to do so, a request will be made to the Centre to extend the deadline till April 30." Oraon was replying to a question raised by BJP legislator Manish Jaiswal over poor paddy procurement in the State.

## Miffed at dog barking, youth kills its owner

**New Delhi:** Riled by the excessive barking of his octogenarian neighbour's pet, a 17-year-old boy allegedly killed the 85-year-old man while he tried to rescue the animal, police said on Thursday.

According to the wife of the deceased, the boy barged into their house and hit the man on his head with an iron rod.

The police said the teenager wanted to kill the dog, but as the old man came to its rescue, the boy ended up killing him.

The police identified the deceased as Ashok Kumar, a resident of Najafagarh area here.

Around 5.30 pm on Friday, Kumar's son called up the local police station and complained to them about the incident. They arrived at the Rao Tula Ram Memorial Hospital and recorded the statement of Meena (65), the victim's wife.

Continued on Page 5



# SC refuses urgent plea on Hijab ban



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused an urgent hearing on the pleas challenging the Karnataka High Court verdict on Hijab ban in class rooms.

A bench comprising Chief Justice NV Ramana and Justice Krishna Murari denied the request of senior advocate Devadatt Kamat who mentioned the matter seeking urgent listing saying that examinations are going on. "Exams have nothing to do with the issue," the bench said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted that they are repeatedly mentioning the matter. "Mr SG, can you wait," the apex court said, while asking Kamat not to sensitise the issue.

"These are girls...The exams are from 28th. They are being prevented from entering

the schools. One year will go," Kamat said. The apex court, however, did not accede to the request.

On March 16, the apex court had agreed to list for hearing after Holi vacation the pleas challenging the Karnataka High Court verdict which dismissed the petitions seeking permission to wear hijab inside the classroom saying it is not a part of the essential religious practice in the Islamic faith.

The high court had dismissed the petitions filed by a section of Muslim students from the Government Pre-University Girls College in Udupi, seeking permission to wear hijab inside the classroom. The prescription of school uniform is only a reasonable restriction, constitutionally permissible which the students cannot object to, the high court had said.

# SC directs Centre to probe fake Covid death claims in four States



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Permitting the Centre to conduct an inquiry into fake claims for ex-gratia meant for family members of those who have lost their lives due to Covid-19, the Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Government to verify 5 per cent of claims in four States — Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh — where the gap between number of claims and recorded deaths was wide.

A bench of Justices M R Shah and B V Nagarathna said, "Nobody can be permitted to avail the compensation by making a false claim or submitting the false certificate. We permit the National Disaster Management Authority/Union of India, through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, to carry out the random scrutiny," the bench said.

If it is found that anybody has made a fake claim, the same shall be considered under Section 52 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and liable to be punished accordingly, the bench said.

The apex court also set a

period of 60 days which would be given to all such persons who are eligible as on date to apply for the ex-gratia compensation and 90 days shall be given to the future claimants.

"We deem it appropriate to fix the outer limit of 60 days from today to file the claims for compensation in case the death occurred due to COVID-19 prior to 20.03.2022. For future deaths, 90 days' time is provided from the date of death due to COVID-19 to file the claim for compensation.

"The earlier order to process the claims and to make the actual payment of compensation within a period of thirty days from the date of receipt of claim is ordered to be continued," the bench said.

The top court directed the concerned States to assist in carrying out the scrutiny of the claim applications.

It also directed the states to submit all the necessary particulars of the respective claims that have been attended/processed to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, who shall carry out the scrutiny within a period of three months from today and submit the report before this Court.

# New Delhi favours dialogue to end Ukraine war: Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday said in Parliament that India follows a foreign policy to safeguard its interests and wants the world to abide by international rules upholding sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

Giving this assurance in the Rajya Sabha in the backdrop of ongoing conflict in Ukraine, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also said New Delhi favours dialogue to end the war.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held three rounds of talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine President in this regard, he said. Modi was present in the house when Jaishankar gave this information. Elaborating upon the country's foreign policy, he said India's position on Ukraine is based on six principles. Firstly, India calls for an immediate cessation of violence and hostilities. India stands for peace.

Secondly, India believes that there is no other way than the return through the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

Thirdly, India recognised that global order is anchored on law, UN Charter and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states.

Fourthly, India calls for humanitarian access to a conflict situation.

Fifth, India is for humanitarian access and has given 90 tonnes of humanitarian assistance so far. Sixth, India is in touch with Russia and Ukraine, he said.

On India's stand on the conflict, the minister said "Our



position is not that, this is not our problem. Our position is that we are for peace.

When the Prime Minister spoke to Presidents (of Russia and Ukraine), the intent obviously at that time was the evacuation of students..But there was a larger conversation on what we could do which lead to the cessation of hostilities and return of dialogue and diplomacy. I think today that sentiment is widely shared by many countries. We have articulated it very strongly".

He also informed the House that India takes note of all international developments, including Russia-Ukraine (conflict), and India monitors it in its own national perspective and fashion strategy in accordance with those developments.

Regarding the impact of the conflict on trade, he said the government is examining various trade-related aspects, including those related to payments. He also said the crude oil import from Russia is less than one per cent. In fact, several other countries import ten or 20 times more than India's import from Russia, he

added.

Replying to a supplementary during question hour in the Rajya Sabha, Jaishankar said the government is examining various aspects, including the payment aspect. There is a group within the government composed of different ministries led by the finance ministry to examine these matters.

On trade amid the Russia-Ukraine crisis, he said, "Indian foreign policy decisions are made in Indian national interest and we are guided by our thinking, views and interests. So, there is no question of linking Ukraine situation to issues of trade". Meanwhile, the government had also informed Parliament on Wednesday India's relations with both the United States and Russia stand on their merit despite the Ukraine conflict.

"We have friendly relations with both the nations," Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi said. Earlier this week, US president Joe Biden said India was the only one of the Quad group of nations that was "somewhat shaky" in acting against Russia.

# Korean culture centre to resume progs in offline mode in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

South Korea is reeling under a massive Covid-19 wave. But with the situation in India having vastly improved, the Korean Cultural Centre (KCCC, India) here has decided to resume its different programmes in offline mode.

Classes for Samulnori, K-Pop, Korean language, Taekwondo besides special exhibitions of exchanges between Korean and Indian artists, Korean traditional culture experience rooms and libraries among others will be run offline.

Hwang Il-yong, Director of Korean Cultural Centre India, Adwaita Gadanayak, DG, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), and Saurabh Wasson, Head of Exhibitors relations, India Art Fair were among many distinguished guests besides fans present at the 'KCCI Reboot' event held to mark the occasion on Wednesday.

The director said, "The Centre (Situated at Lajpat Nagar in the national capital) returns to our Indian friends.

"The registrations of all offline classes will be resumed. Korean culture, which has been firmly rooted and expanded during the pandemic, is about to explode like dynamite, KCCI will play the role of its fuse"

Chang Jae-bok, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India, said, "The Korean entertainment business- the K-Pop and K-Drama can have the creativity to please the world community and young people in the world."

# People indulging in wrongdoings will be punished, says Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People indulging in wrongdoing will be punished and the Modi Government does not hesitate to take action if some big people indulge in wrong practices, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal told Parliament on Thursday while responding to the debate on the demands for grants of the Commerce and Industry Ministry.

Goyal said in the Lok Sabha that Prime Minister Narendra Modi got a huge mandate from people as he does not hesitate to take actions if some big people indulge in wrong practices.

The minister said that a member in the House has stated that several raids are taking place in the country and on account of which industry is not investing.

"I am amazed...I do not understand the relation between raids and investments...Is there any provision or law in the country that if you are a big politician or a big industrialist, action would not be taken for their wrongdoings...Action will be



taken....Jo galat kaam karega wo saja bhutega uske liye (One who does wrong will be punished for that)," he said.

A day before NCP leader Supriya Sule had hit-out at the government over the raids by investigating agencies on industrialists and claimed that several restrain themselves from speaking openly about issues bothering them.

Another member BSP member Danish Ali has said that an atmosphere of fear was prevailing in the country and industry leaders refrain from speaking out freely about their concerns.

Goyal also said that the high level of foreign direct investments (FDI) coming into the country reflects the growing

confidence of global investors for India.

"India is the destination," he said, adding there is no better destination than India to invest.

FDI into the country is recording high growth year after year and that is helping in further strengthening the country's forex reserves and economy, he said.

On the point raised by some members that exports are increasing due to high commodity prices, Goyal said that several commodities like auto, gems and jewellery, rice, meat, and carpets are recording growth in both value and volume terms.

Petroleum prices are high, so obviously it would have an impact on exports, he said.

# 'Implement augmentation of city bus services in mission mode'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing disappointment over the delay of a new Scheme "Augmentation of City Bus Services including Associated Infrastructure and Green Urban Mobility Initiatives, a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs recommended that scheme may be implemented in mission mode with no further delay and the necessary approval from the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) may be taken without further loss of time.

In another observation, the committee has recommended to involve local elected representatives from local bodies, Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parliament in formulating a project and they should also be informed about details of third party inspections of the project.

The Modi government has announced a Rs 18,000 crore scheme to augment public transport in urban areas in its budget last year and the scheme

has not been approved in the Expenditure Finance Committee so far. The scheme was announced to facilitate deployment of innovative public private partnership (PPP) models to enable private sector players to finance, acquire, operate and maintain over 20,000 buses.

The Committee, headed by MP Jagdambika Pal, tabled its report in Parliament on Thursday, said that the Ministry's reply is silent on the suggestion for taking up the scheme under Mission mode; and, (ii) even after the passage of one year, the said Scheme is yet to have the approval of EFC.

"The Committee find from the reply of the Ministry that the delay in launching the Scheme was due to (i) advise of the EFC for structural change in the Scheme; and, (ii) the various stakeholder meetings held with the officials of State Governments, City Officials, Bus Manufacturers and Bus Operators to receive their feedback/inputs," the Committee said.

The report further said

that the Ministry has informed that the proposal is at advance stage of approval in MoHUA and is only being considered for posing it to Department of Expenditure for appraisal by EFC in the month of March, 2022. "While acknowledging the need for taking all the stakeholders on Board and complete the processes before actual implementation, taking one year even to place final proposal for approval of EFC may not be desirable," the report said adding that the Committee may also be briefed regarding the modalities.

In its another observations, the Committee recommended that elected representatives from local bodies, Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parliament of the concerned ward/constituency may be involved from the stage of project formulation to implementation and may also be informed of the details of the third party inspection such as the details of the inspecting agency and the time of inspection well in time to ensure the smooth conduct of the same.

# NIA conducts searches in AP espionage case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday conducted searches at multiple locations in Gujarat and Maharashtra in the espionage case of Andhra Pradesh.

The case relates to involvement of Pakistani agents in espionage activities in India. Investigation revealed that they had conspired with other accused persons based in Visakhapatnam, Mumbai and Gujarat for gathering sensitive information for conducting terror acts in India, the NIA said in a statement here.

The NIA conducted the searches at four locations in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The case was initially registered as FIR No. 1/2020 dated January 10, 2020 at Police Station Counter Intelligence Cell, Andhra Pradesh, Vijayawada and was later re-registered by NIA on December 23 last year.

"Indian SIM cards were fraudulently procured and one time passwords (OTPs) were received through their Indian

associates for activation of WhatsApp by Pakistan-based handlers which was then used to establish contact with defence personnel to elicit sensitive information related to vital installations," it said.

The searches were conducted in Godhra, Gujarat and Buldana, Maharashtra at the premises of suspects. During the searches, digital devices, suspicious SIM cards and incriminating documents have been seized. Further investigation in the case is continuing, it said.

In a separate case, the NIA filed a supplementary chargesheet against an accused Shahid Kasam Sumra of Kutch, Gujarat, in NIA Special Court, Ahmedabad in a drugs smuggling case. The case was initially registered by Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS)/Gujarat on August 12, 2018 pertaining to a criminal conspiracy hatched by accused based in Dubai and Pakistan for smuggling and distribution of 500 kg of illegal narcotic drugs (heroin) from Pakistan to Gujarat by sea route, the NIA said in a statement.

# LRUs' import banned to boost self reliance in defence production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sustaining its drive to achieve self-reliance in defence production, the Government on Thursday banned import of 107 strategically important Line replacement Units (LRUs) and sub-systems. Earlier, the Government had banned import of nearly 2,800 sub systems covering all the three Services.

In the latest order, the items can only be procured from the Indian industry, especially Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU), officials said here. The sub systems cover the entire gamut of weaponry including helicopters, tanks, guns, ships and submarines, radars, drones and electronic warfare systems.

Indigenisation of these items will be taken up by the DPSUs under 'Make' category. 'Make' Category aims to achieve self-reliance by involving greater participation of Indian industry. Projects involving design and develop-

ment of equipment, systems, major platforms or upgrades thereof by the industry can be taken up under this category.

The DPSUs will offer these identified LRUs and Sub-systems for industry led design and development. This will be a great opportunity for the Indian industry to get integrated in the supply chains of manufacturing major defence platforms. The indigenous development of these systems projects will bolster economy and reduce the import dependence of DPSUs. In addition, it will help harness the design capabilities of domestic defence industry and position India as a design leader in these technologies.

This list is in continuation to the Positive Indigenisation List of 2,851 sub-systems, assemblies, sub-assemblies and components which had been earlier notified by the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence on December 27, 2021.

# Govt hopeful of achieving elimination of TB by 2025

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Diversification of health resources to contain Covid-19 pandemic and related restricted activities have severely hindered the tuberculosis management plan in the country with the number of infections increasing by 19 per cent to 1.93 million in 2021. But the Government is hopeful to achieve its target of eliminating the deadly infectious disease by 2025.

On World Tuberculosis Day on Thursday, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya tweeted, "Tuberculosis is a preventable & treatable disease. On World TB Day, we reaffirm commitment to make India TB-free by 2025 by ensuring access to quality healthcare & advanced treatment. Together we can and we will eliminate TB and work towards a healthy and disease-free environment."

"Spreading awareness on TB through sand art! On World TB Day 2022, let us all pledge to 'Step Up To End TB,'" he said, adding that this will be achieved by ensuring access to quality healthcare and advanced treatment.

According to data available from the Union Health Ministry, there has been a 19 per cent increase in tuberculosis patients in 2021, up from 1.62 million cases in the year before.

In 2020, TB cases had come down by nearly a third from the 2.4 million cases reported in 2019.

As per the Ministry, Covid-19 had a major impact on the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) because patients stopped visiting or couldn't visit hospitals due to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions.

These statistics were revealed in the Annual Tuberculosis Report 2022 released by Mandaviya on the occasion of the D Day.

In 2021, 34 states/union territories conducted active case finding (ACF) campaigns at the state and district level

which led to the screening of 22.3 million people, out of which 1.75 million samples were tested for TB, and 73,772 additional TB patients were identified, said the report. More than 200,000 people living with HIV (PLHIV) on active care and 120,000 household contacts (HHC) of confirmed TB patients were initiated on TB Preventive Treatment (TPT).

As per the national TB prevalence survey (2019-2021) aimed to know the actual disease burden in India at the national level, Delhi has 534 cases per lakh population followed by Rajasthan (484), Uttar Pradesh (481), Haryana (465), Chhattisgarh (454).

Among the diagnosed TB cases, 12 per cent were already on treatment and 23.3 per cent had a history of TB treatment.

Approximately Rs 1488 crore have been paid to 5.7 million TB patients (Rs 500 each patient) under Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) from April 2018 to February 2022.

# 'Second-hand smoking killing 1.2 million'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Secondhand smoke (SHS) in the country is not only consuming nearly 1.2 million lives, particularly women and children but also resulting in a loss of Rs 568 billion, being spent as healthcare costs annually, accounting for 8 per cent of total annual health care expenditures in the country.

This is on top of the staggering Rs 1773.4 billion in annual economic burden from tobacco use, according to a first-of-its-kind study by the Indian researchers and published in the Journal of Nicotine and Tobacco Research.

In fact, the Rs 568 billion represents only one part of the total economic costs of SHS exposure, said the study as it painted a grim picture of the toll the SHS was taking on the individuals who were silently affected by the smoker's habit.

All those people who do not smoke breathe in SHS and they take in nicotine and toxic chemicals the same way smokers do. The more the exposure, the higher the levels of these harmful chemicals in the body.

"The monetary burden does not include the additional indirect economic costs due to lost productivity, morbidity, and mortality caused by illness and early deaths arising from SHS exposure, that would further increase the final figure," warned the team of authors led by Dr Rijo M John, an economist and researcher from the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences.

The study has quantified the tremendous economic burden of SHS exposure in India, using public data sources and a prevalence-based attributable risk approach to quantify the healthcare cost of continued exposure to SHS among non-smokers aged 15 and older.

"In fact, increasing tobacco taxes is one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking, yet India has not had any significant tax increase on any tobacco products for the past four years. The current tobacco tax collected in India from all tobacco products combined is less than the Rs 567 billion in health care costs caused by exposure to SHS," Dr John lamented.

# ED asks TMC MP Abhishek to appear again

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a fresh summons to Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee, asking him to appear before it for questioning on March 29 in a money-laundering case linked to a coal scam of West Bengal.

The TMC national general secretary and nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was questioned by the agency for about eight hours on Monday. This was the second time he was questioned by the ED in the case. He was first grilled in September last year and his role and links with other accused in the case are being investigated.

The last ED summons against Banerjee and his wife Rujira was issued after the Delhi High Court, on March 11, dismissed a plea moved by the couple, challenging the notices asking them to appear before the agency in Delhi instead of Kolkata. The ED lodged the money laundering case on the basis of a November 2020 FIR.



# SC transfers probe against Param Bir Singh to CBI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief to former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, the Supreme Court on Thursday transferred probe on all cases against him to CBI, registered by Maharashtra Police. A very murky affair is going on amid echelons of power on who should investigate the matter, a bench of Justices S K Kaul and M M Sundresh said, while transferring the probe to the central investigative agency.

"The exigencies in the advancement of principles of justice require the investigation to be transferred to CBI. We are not saying appellant (Singh) is a whistle-blower or anyone involved in this case is washed with milk," the bench noted. The bench also refused to revoke the suspension of Singh and said all future FIRs, too, will be transferred to CBI. The apex court said a thorough

investigation is required to regain the faith of people in the state police.

"We are unable to accept the contention that an FIR is registered by those who had complaints against the petitioner. We are of the view that state itself should have allowed CBI to carry the investigation. We are of the prima facie view that there is some concerted effort which needs the investigation by CBI. What is the truth, who is at fault how does such scenario come to prevail is something which investigation must get into. CBI must hold an impartial inquiry into all these aspects," the court said.

The bench, however, noted it was not commenting on the merits of the allegations as it does not want the investigation to be influenced in any manner.

"We do not want the investigation to be influenced by the observation of this court. The High Court (Bombay) has treated this as

a service dispute which it is not and thus we set aside the HC verdict.

We allow the appeal and direct the probe into 5 FIRs and three PEs be transferred to CBI with all records. Such transfer to be completed within one week and all officials to extend full cooperation to CBI to try arrive at the truth," the bench said.

After falling apart with Maharashtra Government, Singh is facing multiple cases of extortion, corruption and misconduct, and was removed from the post of Mumbai police chief over his alleged mishandling of the Antilia bomb scare case.

The Maharashtra police had earlier told the apex court that Singh cannot be considered a "whistle-blower" under the law as he chose to speak out against alleged corruption involving former state home minister Anil Deshmukh only after he was transferred.

## Properties used for providing shelter to militants to be attached under UAPA: J&K Police

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Sending out a tough message to the sympathisers of terrorist outfits across Kashmir valley the Jammu & Kashmir police on Thursday warned the immovable properties used to provide shelter to terrorist commanders will be attached under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

The twitter handle of Srinagar police also warned local residents against providing shelter or harbouring terrorists/terror associates who assemble at one place to execute terror plots targeting security personnel.

To begin with, the process of attachment of properties has been started from Srinagar district.

"Process has started for attachment of some immovable properties which have been used for the purpose of militancy as per section

2(g) & 25 of ULP Act. Don't give shelter or harbour militants / associates. Legal action will be supplemented by property attachments as per law," tweeted Srinagar police.

SSP Srinagar Rakesh Balwal said "Houses where encounters took place, houses where terrorists took shelter and planned attacks on security forces and civilians will be attached".

In the recent months the central kashmir district has witnessed series of terror strikes involving 'hybrid' terrorists.

These terrorists, according to local policemen, were using safe houses in residential colonies for their regular meetings and took shelter after targeting the security personnel. In the recent weeks the police teams have exposed several terror modules and arrested Over ground workers operating from their safe hideouts to keep the terror pot boiling.

## Attacked, manhandled by Delhi Police during protest: UDF MPs from Kerala in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

United Democratic Front (UDF) MPs from Kerala on Thursday complained to Speaker Om Birla on the alleged "attack and manhandling" of them by the Delhi Police when they were leading a protest march from 'Vijay Chowk' to the Parliament, against the proposed semi-high-speed K-Rail-Silverline Project in the state.

Raising the issue in Lok Sabha soon after the Question Hour, Congress member K Suresh said a total of 12 MPs, including women parliamentarians, had started their protest march from Vijay Chowk on Thursday morning when Delhi police personnel came and "blocked them without any provocation" and did not allow them to enter the parliament complex.

"We told them we were MPs. They (police) said you (protesting MPs) are shouting slogans. We said it is our right to shout slogans. They assaulted us, manhandled us, pushed

us without any provocation," Suresh told Lok Sabha Speaker.

Speaker asked them to give the details on writing and would do the needful on the issue after hearing from the concerned officers.

The SilverLine project of the CPI(M)-led government in Kerala has been facing massive protests over the survey and marking of the corridor boundary, and is embroiled in a political controversy. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national capital on Thursday.

RSP member N K Premchandran called the incident "unfortunate" and said the police personnel were well aware that all those participating in the protest were MPs, but still did not allow them to enter the Parliament complex.

"This is a question of our privilege. They even came to the precincts of Parliament and prevented us," he said and asked, "What is the authority of Delhi police to forcibly prevent the MPs from entering Parliament."

# Sonia calls meeting to discuss organisational elections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi has convened a meeting of party general secretaries and State in-charges on Saturday to discuss organisational elections, the party's membership drive and the current political situation besides planning agitational programmes. Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal will chair the meeting at the AICC party headquarters and all general secretaries and state in-charges states have been asked to attend.

Sonia Gandhi, who is likely to attend the meeting, will review the progress of membership drive so far as well as the party's future agitational programmes. The meeting comes in the wake of the party's massive loss in the recent assembly elections in five states. "A meeting of AICC general secretaries/ in-charges is being scheduled to be held on March 26, 2022 at AICC Office New Delhi. The agenda for the meeting is special membership drive and organisational elections, besides planning agitational programmes," a note by Venugopal said.

It also comes in the backdrop of Sonia Gandhi meeting some of the lead-

ers of the G-23 grouping, which has been critical of the party leadership and have been demanding an organisational overhaul for a long time.

Sonia Gandhi has so far held consultations and deliberations with some of the G23 leaders including Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Manish Tewari and Vivek Tankha.

Ever since the poll results were announced on March 10, several party leaders, other than the G23, have been expressing their concerns for the fate of the grand old party and what has to be done for revival and issues were taken just two days later at the Sonia chaired Congress Working Committee meeting during which she offered to resign from the post. The party in its CWC had already scheduled September 2022 for the election of a new party president the process of which will begin in June towards complete organizational overhaul.

AICC sources said after Saturday's meeting another round of CWC will be scheduled in a weeks time which will be followed by a Chintan Shivir either in Jaipur in Rajasthan or Raipur in Chhattisgarh, the only two State where Congress is in power on its own.

## Mumbai's BDD chawls to be named after Rajiv Gandhi, Bal Thackeray, Pawar

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A major policy initiative, the Shiv Sena-led MVA Government on Thursday announced that it would name the three major Bombay Development Department (BDD) chawls' redevelopment projects in Mumbai after late Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, NCP president Sharad Pawar and late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Replying to a debate in the State Assembly, Maharashtra Housing Minister Jitendra Awhad said that the BDD chawls' redevelopment project involving several chawls at Worli would be named after late Bal Thackeray, the project at Naigaon would be named as the Sharad Pawar Nagar and the project at NM Joshi Marg would be christened as Rajiv Gandhi Nagar.

The decision to name three major BDD redevelopment projects has been taken keeping in view that the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress are the three alliance partners in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government in the state.

"Similarly, we intend to name

the Patrachawl after redevelopment as Sidharth Nagar. The work on a chawl redevelopment would begin at Kamathipura in the next three months," Awhad said.

The Bombay Development Department, set up by the British in 1920, constructed BDD chawls to provide more housing areas/units to be used as tenements. Currently, at the BDD chawls, there are 207 ground-plus-three-storied buildings in an area spread over 93 acres -- each with identical 160-sq.foot 'face-to-face' tenements with a 20-feet wide centre passage, common water supply, bathing and toilet areas. These chawls are located at Worli, N M Joshi Marg (Parel), and Naigaon.

The three major erstwhile BDD chawls complexes -- comprising one of the chawls where Mahatma Gandhi spent a night among the sweepers' community members in 1937 -- are coming up in Mumbai as part of what is billed as Asia's biggest redevelopment project worth Rs. 20,000 crore.

The project got underway in August. 2021.

Awhad said that the work on the complexes was progressing well and all the residents would get their new homes over the next five years in the upcoming 32 swanky towers with 500-sq.foot 2-BHK ultra-modern flats and other top amenities.

Being developed by Tatas,

L&T and Shapoorji Pallonji, the well-planned new complexes will have 32 tall towers -- some of 40-storied ones and 22 storied ones with floors for parking, wide roads, at least 4 four schools, welfare centres, mini-hospitals, gardens, playgrounds, markets and shopping plazas.

## 300 rural legislators to get free flats in Mumbai

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced on Thursday that the State Government would construct 300 flats for legislators belonging to all political parties from rural areas at Goregaon in north Mumbai.

Replying to a debate on matters relating to the Housing and Urban Development departments, Uddhav said: "We intend to give 300 flats on permanent basis to as many legislators coming from rural areas -- who represent all political parties -- in Mumbai. They do not have houses". Uddhav, who has not been keeping well for more than six months -- was speaking for the first time during the

budget session of the State Legislature.

Earlier, State Housing Minister Jitendra Awhad said: "The flats would be given to those legislators who do not have a house in Mumbai and who do not represent any constituency in the city.

The beneficiary MLAs will be from areas outside the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR)". Awhad said that the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) would construct this housing complex in suburban Goregaon. There would be High Income Group (HIG) category flats in the flats," he said.

## ED summons Didi's nephew again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate probing money a laundering case related to the multi-crore coal and cattle scam has once again asked Trinamool Congress second in command Abhishek Banerjee to appear before its officers in Delhi.

Banerjee has been asked to appear at the ED office in Delhi on March 29, sources said, adding he had not fully cooperated in the earlier sessions. The information provided by the TMC leader was not complete and so he was being summoned once again, sources said. Banerjee was summoned in a money laundering case pertaining to some foreign accounts linked to some members of his family.

Abhishek Banerjee is the TMC general secretary and Diamond Harbour MP.

## SP's Jaswant's nomination paper rejected, BJP's Rishipal become MLC unopposed

**Aligarh:** The candidature of SP candidate Jaswant Singh Yadav for the Legislative Council from Aligarh-Hathras was rejected.

After the objection to the name of the proposers in the nomination paper, he could not present the third proposer. Although the lawyers presented all the arguments, strongly defending them, but in the presence of observer Rajendra Pratap, District Election Officer and DM Selva Kumari rejected the nomination papers of the SP candidate.

The time for withdrawal of nomination papers was fixed on Thursday, after which BJP candidate Ch. Rishipal Singh was announced the unopposed MLC. But there is great resentment among the SP workers regarding this decision.

BJP candidate for Legislative Council from Aligarh-Hathras local body, Ch. Rishipal Singh and SP candidate Jaswant Singh Yadav had filed their nominations. During the scrutiny of nomination papers, BJP candidate

Ch. Rishipal Singh, through his lawyer, objected to the names of three proposers Sarbati Devi, Guddi Devi and Pramod Kumar out of ten proposers of SP candidate Jaswant Singh Yadav.

It is alleged that the signatures and thumb impressions of the three proposers are not theirs.

These are fake. On this, DM and District Election Officer Selva Kumari J gave notice to SP candidate Jaswant Singh Yadav and asked him to file a reply to the objection. On this, the SP candidate presented Sarbati Devi and Guddi and got their statement, signature and thumb impression matched, but fail to present the third proposer Pramod Kumar son Badan Singh resident Sarai Mahamai, Sikandrau, Hathras.

The DM had given permission to the SP candidate after talks with observer Rajendra Pratap and the Election Commission.

SP candidate Jaswant Singh Yadav was given time till Wednesday to present the third proposer.

## Cong ups ante against Silver Line Rail, to intensify agitation

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Indian National Congress will intensify its agitation against the controversial Semi High Speed Silver Line Project of the Kerala Government from Friday.

"This is the most anti-people, anti-environment and anti-ecology project which has been undertaken by a ruling dispensation in this State.

There is conspiracy by the CPI(M), Sangh Parivar and certain corporates to get this project implemented irrespective of the concerns of the people," said V D Satheeshan, Leader of the Opposition in Kerala.

Speaking to media persons within minutes of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's press meet at New Delhi after the latter's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Satheeshan said the chief minister has not said anything new about the project. "His claim that the project would be executed at a cost of Rs 64,000 crore is simply nonsense. The NITI Aayog in its report has said that the project would cost Rs 2.5 lakh crore. How Vijayan reached the figure of Rs 64,000

crore is anybody's guess," said Satheeshan who looked upset and annoyed over the statements made by the chief minister.

He said that the Kerala Government is slapping fake and baseless cases against those who oppose the Silver Line project that links Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod in less than four hours. "The chief minister accuses the opposition parties of hand in glove with terrorist organisations and communalists in sabotaging the project. It is because of his lack of confidence in himself that Vijayan is resorting to this kind of propaganda," said Satheeshan.

The Chief Minister while briefing the media after his 30 minutes long meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi had blamed the opposition parties for undermining the development activities in Kerala. "This is a project for the CPI(M) and its leaders to amass wealth. The technology they are using to import is literally scrap and is not used anywhere in the world. A project of this magnitude should undergo environmental and sociological impact.



Marwadi women gather to listen to the story of Hindu Goddess Shitala Mata, on the occasion of 'Shitala Satam', in Ahmedabad on Thursday

## Birbhum massacre...

From Page 1

The Chief Minister also announced Rs 2 lakh compensation for rebuilding the burnt houses. She also announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh each to the next of the kin of the victims, and Rs 50,000 each to those injured besides promising jobs to ten families affected by the violence from the Chief Minister's quota.

Notwithstanding the Chief Minister's swift orders CPI(M) State secretary Md Salim pointed out how she was "trying to dilute the charges against Anarul who is directly involved in the attack ... by allegedly sending in the goons ... and who actively stopped the police from rescuing the victims ... it is not an act of omission but commission," he said wondering "whether a Bblock president is responsible for sending

in police..."

BJP State president Sukanto Majumdar who also visited the place along with a BJP central fact finding team also wondered whether it was the duty of the Chief Minister to order daily procedural works of the police.

"Is it a child's play that the CM is ordering the arrest of the culprit apparently to show the crowd that she was a benevolent ruler ... it is the routine job of the police brass ... today she is ordering the police to arrest Anarul ... tomorrow she will secretly tell the SP to release him and he will be released ... there is no credibility of her government."

Earlier the BJP delegation and the one led by Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury was stopped from visiting the area leading to a brief commotion. However subsequently the administration allowed them reach Bagtui.

## Wang's visit raises ...

From Page 1

India has all along maintained that peace and tranquility at the border is a prerequisite for normalising ties between the two countries. China, however, insists that the border row should be separated from other relations. At present, more than 50,000 troops each of India and China are facing each other at some friction points at the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

While the situation at the LAC will obviously top the agenda, the two countries may also hold parleys on Quad. China has all along protested against this grouping comprising India, the US, Japan, and Australia to ensure peace and stability in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region, they said.

The two Ministers may also take stock of the situation arising from the ongoing Ukraine conflict.

The talks at various levels have seen the withdrawal of troops from the north and east banks of the Pangong Tso (lake) in Ladakh in February last year. Since then, the parleys failed to yield any tangible results and the two leaders are likely to focus on it, sources said.

India wants a quick disengagement on remaining friction points such as Patrolling Point 15 (Hot Springs), Depsang Bulge, and Demchok.

Incidentally, days before the announcement of the 15th round of talks, the Chinese Foreign Minister had admitted in Beijing early last week that the ties between India and China have seen some setbacks.

Jaishankar last month had said India-China ties were going through a "very difficult phase" after Beijing violated agreements that were signed not to bring military forces to the border and maintain peace and tranquility along the LAC.

Wang had said differences over the disputed boundary and "recent setbacks" in relations should not impact overall ties between the two countries. "China, India relations have encountered some setbacks in recent years which don't serve the fundamental interests of two countries and the two peoples," Wang said.

## Yogi elected BJP...

From Page 1

Yogi said when he was elected leader of the legislature party for the first time in 2017 he did not have administrative experience. "I was just a Member of Parliament and had earlier never been a Minister even. I worked under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Shah. They taught me the nuances of administration. It was their guidance under which I was able to pull the State out of morose of misrule and transformed it to a performing State in just five years," Yogi said.

In his around 20-minute speech Yogi elaborated on the achievements of the Government which ranged from free distribution of ration to effective control of pandemic, from improving law

and order situation to inviting investments in the State.

"In 2017 I learnt the difference between MP and Chief Minister. As a Member of Parliament I was responsible for the development of a constituency while as a CM I am answerable to each and every person of the State. People's welfare is my responsibility, and this lesson I learnt from Modi ji and Amit Shah ji," the Chief Minister-designate said.

He even recounted how Shah had asked him to increase the State's budget size if our Government wanted to meet the aspirations of the people. "Under his (Shah's) guidance the budget size was increased from Rs 2 lakh corer to Rs 6 lakh crore in just five years. The per capita income has been doubled while there is a sharp increase in the SGDP too," he said.

He said every word written

in the election manifesto needed to be implemented. "We will fulfill all the promises we have made during election campaign," he said.

Setting a clear agenda for the Yogi 2.0 Government, Shah asked the leaders to strengthen the base of good-governance built during the last tenure of Yogi so that Uttar Pradesh could become Number 1 State of India.

"Uttar Pradesh has seen transformation in the last five years. The work done by Yogi as Chief Minister has infused a new hope among people that transformation can be brought about in UP through su-ranj (good governance). In the next five years we need to strengthen the base of this good governance so that UP can become the best governed state of the country," Shah told legislators during the meeting..

"Good investment will

bring more revenue which in turn will help in implementation of the welfare schemes for the poor and downtrodden. More we work for the poor, the more we will be acclaimed," said the union minister.

He said that UP had been the centre of political instability since its inception. After independence political values declined with the result the parties that bred on caste-based and dynastic politics flourished. "This led to political instability. In the 2014 general elections when Modi, who was then Chief Minister of Gujarat, was projected as the PM candidate there was jubilation among masses. That time we won 73 out of 80 seats in UP. This result gave us a belief that if the BJP can win 73 seats in 2014, we can win over 300 seats in the Assembly election. And this proved correct in 2017," Shah said.

## India balances stand on Ukraine

From Page 1

"Russia is the aggressor, the attacker, the invader -- the sole party in Ukraine engaged in a campaign of brutality against the people of Ukraine -- and they want us to pass a resolution that does not acknowledge their culpability," she said.

UK Ambassador Barbara Woodward said that her country will not vote for any resolution, either in the Security Council or in the General Assembly, that does not recognise that Russia is the sole cause of this unfolding humanitarian catastrophe -- and therefore key to ending it. "Russia's draft called for all parties to respect international humanitarian law. It ignored that Russia is committing war crimes. Russia's draft called for the protection of civilians, including women and children. But it omitted that Russia is bombing maternity hospitals, schools and homes," Woodward said.

The Russian resolution in the Security Council was one of the three resolutions on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine that were put up before the UN General Assembly and the Security Council Wednesday.

The UN General Assembly resumed its 11th Emergency Special Session on Ukraine Wednesday and had two resolutions for consideration before it. The 193-member General Assembly is expected to vote on the resolutions Thursday.

## Zelenskyy pleads for military aid at NATO summit

From Page 1

Western officials fear such a step would lead to direct conflict between NATO and Russia, which Biden described as a potential World War III.

However, in brief opening remarks as the NATO summit began, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance must boost its defences and "respond to a new security reality in Europe".

"We gather at a critical time for our security," he told the leaders seated at a large round table. "We are united in condemning the Kremlin's unprovoked aggression and in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity." Stoltenberg said the alliance is "determined to continue to impose costs on Russia to bring about the end of this brutal war."

Over the course of Thursday, the European diplomatic capital is hosting the NATO summit, a gathering of the Group of Seven industrialized nations and a summit of the European Union. Biden will attend all three meetings and hold a news conference afterward.

## Miffed at dog barking...

From Page 1

The police said based on the complaint, they apprehended the 17-year-old, but was later released

by the juvenile justice board.

Kumar died in the hospital a couple of days later on Sunday. Following this, the statement of his wife was recorded again.



## Missing education

The Taliban’s inhuman order doesn’t allow senior Afghan girls to attend school

It is so much easier for an Afghan girl to die of hunger or sexual exploitation than attend school. The Taliban, true to their colour, have reneged on their promise to allow girls to continue with secondary and high school education. Thousands of girls who were ready to attend grade six or above on the first day of the new school year were shocked this week when told to stay home instead. It was a typical Taliban decree. “What is our crime? That we are girls?” There is nobody to hear them wail. Girls still manage to go to school till the sixth grade, though. The Taliban have not indicated when the higher classes will be open for girls. The general assumption is that the Taliban were under pressure from the rural Afghan tribes which are the backbone of the Taliban movement. These tribes provide armed fighters for the organisation. The tribals are extremely conservative, patriarchal and believe women and girls have no duties outside of their homes. One can only speculate what happens now. Will the Taliban shut the doors for senior girl students? Or will they be asked to come to school in regressive attire, covering their bodies except for their eyes? The girls are willing to even wear ‘burqas’; that is how eager they are to attend school. But the Taliban may also insist that girls should be taught only by women teachers, well aware they are scarce.

The international community had warned the Taliban last year that the recognition of their Government would depend on, among other things, women being free to return to jobs and girls to school. The latest Taliban order is inhuman and against all norms of civil society. The international community has to do more than issue statements of protest. The world must realise the true extent of gender inequality in Afghanistan. We all know the facts; we rarely act on them. Over half of the country’s girls do not attend schools because their parents or communities force them to stay home. The legal age for marriage is 16 but most girls are married off when they enter their teens. That is the primary reason why they cannot be in school. Most girls in their early teens are sexually exploited or harassed. In a country where sons are preferred, many girls die of hunger in the rural areas where development and food are a trickle. In conservative Afghanistan, they simply do not have schools for girls. After the Taliban Government was removed from power in 2001, girls began to attend schools and adopted western ideas of education and employment. However, that was largely limited to the urban and suburban areas. The return of the Taliban ended that practice. The world cannot expect girls to fight the orthodox cultural norms on their own. They do not mind their tears so long as the world pays more than in helping them go to school.



Marwari women listen to the story of Goddess Shilita Mata, on the occasion of ‘Shilita Satam’, in Ahmedabad

## Animal Farm?

The Kerala Govt is ruining lives, incomes and ecology in the name of development

The legal maxim ‘Audi Alteram Partem’ is a universally accepted doctrine in judicial parlance in all civil societies. The Latin phrase means ‘hear the other side’ or ‘nobody shall be condemned unheard’. This maxim is used to signify the principle of natural justice. Though dictatorial, autocratic and communist regimes across the world do not subscribe to the maxim, India does not belong to that category of nations. The authorities are bound to listen to the version of the poor person who is likely to be affected by the move of powers that be. The 530-km Silver Line Semi High Speed Rail that links Thiruvananthapuram with Kasaragod in less than four hours has become a major controversy in the State. The project costing ₹64,000 crore would displace 30,000 people from their houses and farmlands. A majority of people who stand to lose their farmlands and houses are small and medium farmers who own less than one acre of land. No alternative land has been allotted/offered to those who would be thrown out of their houses once the Government takes over their land.

Though Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has declared that those who lose their lands would be offered three times the price of the acquired land, it is going to be of no help to the poor farmers. In a State which is hard-pressed for land because of its small size and heavy population density, these unlucky ones would not get the piece of farmland which could sustain their lives. No purpose will be served if they are compensated with arid or semi-arid land. Same is the case with those whose houses would be acquired for laying tracks. They will never be able to buy plots and construct the house of their dreams with the Government’s compensation package. The tragedy with this ill-conceived mega project is that no social impact survey has been held by the authorities before launching it. The CPI(M) that staged all-India demonstrations against the Ahmedabad-Gujarat Bullet Train Project under the garb of displacement of poor farmers and ecological disaster has made a volte-face and has started pontificating about development. Environmental scientists warn that the destruction of wetlands as part of the rail line would make the State poorer by a mindboggling ₹28 lakh crore. Vijayan and his party leaders should bear in mind that Kerala is not an Animal Farm.

# Why ‘Wahabi’ Pak kills Shia Muslims

Shias are totally against Wahabi terrorism but its strain from centuries past forces its followers to obey the violent re-interpretation of true Islam

The hardcore terrorist group (un-)Islamic State’s affiliate in the region, known as (un-)Islamic State in Khorasan (ISIS-K) and headquartered in Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the devastating attack on a mosque/Imambargah in Kucha Risaldar, a predominantly Shia Muslim neighbourhood in Peshawar. The ISIS-K terrorists on March 4, 2022, attacked a crowded Shia congregation with a powerful suicide bomb in Qissa Khwani Bazar in ‘Wahabi’ Pakistan, when the victims were offering Friday prayers. The death toll was an instant 68, while around 300 were critically injured.

Earlier, on August 19, 2021, Pakistani terrorists by ripping a powerful bomb in a Moharram procession had killed three Shias and wounded over 50 people in Bahawalnagar of Pakistan. On October 8 the same year, (un-)Islamic State (Daesh) terrorists struck at a mosque packed with Shia worshippers during a Friday prayer in northern Afghanistan. The United Nations mission in Afghanistan said in a tweet: “Initial information indicates more than 100 Shia Muslims killed and injured in a suicide blast inside the mosque.” (In June 2015, then British PM David Cameron told BBC and other media houses: “I wish you would stop calling it ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; now only IS) because it is not an Islamic State. It is a poisonous death cult that is seducing youth to fight for it.” ISIS terrorists again on October 16, 2021, in a deadly suicide attack on a Shia mosque in southern Afghanistan, killed 63 people and wounded scores more. After the October 8 attack, the IS-K thugs said in a statement that Shias will be targeted in their homes and strongholds by its network, whenever possible. Al-Naba, the IS group’s weekly, had published this warning on October 17, reported Khaama Press. Earlier, the ISIS beasts on May 12, 2020, attacked a maternity hospital in the Dashte-e-Barche area of Kabul, killing 13 people including two newborn babies, for whom the



journey from cradle to the grave lasted only a few hours.

Islam prohibits violence and promotes peace and justice. The Quran says: “Prophet Mohammad was sent to the world as a mercy to mankind (21:107).” It categorically states: “Allah abhors any disturbance of peace (2:205).” When there is no permission of violence in Islam, why is there worldwide terrorism in its name? The answer to this crucial question is that 50 years after the death of Prophet Mohammad in 632 AD, the true faith of Islam was hijacked by self-proclaimed caliphs to use the religion as a platform for establishing their empire with the support of the growing influence of Islam in Arabia. As a result, the true religion started getting defaced by virulent political power wielders through the night of the sword.

This devastating process mainly began by the immoral and hardcore terrorist Yazid-ibn-Muawia who, after subscribing to Islam outwardly with the criminal intention to capture political power, proclaimed himself as “false caliph of Islam” and leader of the “faithful” by terrorising and killing Muslims through his gang of thugs to silence the opposing voices. The real successor of the Hon’ble seat



YAZID-IBN-MUAWIA DEMANDED ALLEGIANCE FROM HAZRAT IMAM HUSAIN TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIM AS THE LEADER OF THE FAITHFUL. IMAM HUSAIN REFUSED TO PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE CRIMINAL AND THE MURDERER AS THE CALIPH

of Caliphate was Hazrat Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet, whose rightful succession was usurped by Muawia. He demanded allegiance from Hazrat Imam Husain to acknowledge him as leader of the faithful. Imam Husain refused to pledge allegiance to the criminal/murderer as the caliph. Muawia then assassinated Hazrat Imam Husain and 72 of his family members and companions mercilessly in the desert of Karbala (Iraq) in 680 AD. Muawia defaced the true teachings of religion and pseudo-Islam emerged. This was the beginning of terrorism in the cloak of Islam.

However, the current scenario of terrorism is the revival of Muawia’s model of terrorism in the form of Wahabi/Salafi ideology, an offshoot of the Sunni Muslim sect. Wahabism can best be explained through the words of British historian Charles Allen, who in his book *God’s Terrorists — The Wahabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad*, writes: “Wahabi is the guiding ideology behind modern Islamist terrorism. In the late 18th century, a violently intolerant re-interpretation of Islam took root in the Arabian desert. Its followers became known after their founder (Sheikh Muhammad Najdi ibn Abd-



HASAN KHURSHID

al-Wahab) as Wahabis.” Wahabi ideology is enshrined in *Kitab-al Tawhid* (book of unity), which prescribes forceful conversion of Muslims and others to his Wahabi ideology wherein he manifestly says: “Follow my ideology, else get ready to be killed.”

His ideology was strongly opposed by Muslim masses, especially the Shia Muslims. However, when the opposition mounted against his ideology, Najdi was shrewd enough to find a patron in Muhammad-ibn-Saud, a Bedouin tribal chief. Ibn Saud belonged to the Zionist tribe of Anza Ben Wael. Islam is not the original religion of Saudi Arab rulers. Sheikh Najdi, too, belonging to Zionist ancestry, not only made an alliance with Ibn Saud but also got his daughter married to Ibn Saud’s son Abd-Al-Aziz Ibn Saud. Thereafter, the faith was of Sheikh Najdi and the sword was of Ibn Saud. A dynastic Government was established as a result of this partnership, which is still continuing in the name of Saudi Arabia.

Again the question arises as to why Wahabi terrorists kill Shia Muslims? The answer is that Shia Muslims are totally against Wahabi terrorism.

(The writer is a legal journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CUET IS A WELCOME STEP

Sir — Recently, the UGC and the Government have decided that only the marks of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) will be considered for admission to the undergraduate courses in colleges under Central universities, which is really a welcome step. It will prove to be a milestone in increasing the quality of higher education. During the pandemic, there were several possibilities of discrepancies in the process of admission to colleges on the basis of marks obtained in Class XII, based on the different methods and procedures of evaluation used by different education boards. This effort to eliminate them through the CUET is a commendable step.

No student should have an objection to this. Through this entrance test, all students will get equal rights of admission, and the admission process will be completely transparent. If part of the Class XII marks percentage is included in the merit list on the basis of CUET, it will also maintain the usefulness of the class marks. But this percentage should not exceed 20. The Government should make provision for entrance examinations for admission to all undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the country so that admission rigging can be prevented and quality included in the education system.

Rajendra Kumar Sharma | Rewari

### THE US IS RIGHT, BUT ONLY PARTIALLY

Sir — The way US President Joe Biden called the Indian response “shaky” with respect to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is not right. Yes, it is true that India chose to be neutral despite Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s personal request to Narendra Modi for urging Russia to halt this aggression. But the view from India is that we can’t question Russia as history knows how much we are grateful to their aid ever since gaining Independence. Even our forefathers took inspiration from Russia and Stalin to invoke similar nationalism and revolution back in

## A bold representation



The Kashmir Files should be an eye-opener for those harping on the theory that all religions are equal and no religion teaches hatred. The so-called secularists have fallen flat on their face. The gory truth depicted in the movie has hurt many sane hearts. Those who gave mute consent to the perpetrators of the crime are claiming it is a propaganda film. However, people believe that the movie has brought forth the truth behind the Hindu genocide distinctly which was deliberately kept hid-

den from them by the powers that allowed the massacre to take place in the first place. The movie is based on the interviews of those who actually suffered the inhumane treatment.

The persecution of the minority Hindus in the Valley by the brute majority of Muslims has few parallels in human history. Wherever there is Muslim majority, the area witnesses rampant riots and the nation’s 70-year history is a testimony. Kerala leads with the highest rate of riots per one million (10%). Contrary to what is perceived by many, the movie is not about what happened to the Hindus 32 years ago, but about what can happen to them in the next 32 years if the real terrorists and those in the garb of common man become a majority in India. If the population control bill is not passed, history will repeat itself with vengeance.

Arvind Tapkire | Mumbai

India against the foreign masters.

The US must understand the position of India vis-a-vis Russia, just like Australia and Japan respect the same for India in this matter. We had a “shaky” response in this matter considering our own interests and history, which is deeply tied to Russia. The US must understand this, long-lasting ties can’t be broken in a jiffy, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t understand Ukraine’s misery. We need global unity; together we must lead these countries at war to a position to be able to settle their issues bilaterally. No single country can bring them to hold a dialogue; global cooperation is needed for it.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

### SPARE A THOUGHT FOR STRAY DOGS

Sir — Mindless urban planning has led to an increase in the stray dog population in India. Choked, overflowing garbage has provided street dogs an excellent opportunity to survive and thrive. Dog bites and rabies are very common in our country. On an average, India accounts for 35 per cent of rabies deaths

in the world. Mass neutralisation is an effective way of dog control wherein dogs are neutered and returned to their territories. But this clause has ruffled the feathers of quite a few citizens who want the animals to be removed from the area altogether.

Nonetheless, neutralisation is not a panacea for stemming the street dog population. It is important not to feed stray dogs near residential areas because they may start guarding the area they were fed at. Some areas away from human dwellings should be marked to specifically feed these dogs so that they do not form clusters around homes. At the same time, since well-fed dogs have the ability to produce an abundance of offspring, they can be caught and sent for neutralisation. Rehabilitation of dogs is an issue that cannot be sidetracked. Even the courts have not ruled unambiguously on the issue.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

In two years, the price of EVs will be at par with petrol and diesel-run automobiles.

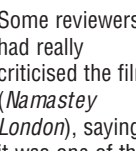


Road Transport Minister — Nitin Gadkari



Vladimir Putin wasn’t anticipating the extent of our strength of our (Nato and Quad) unity.

US President — Joe Biden



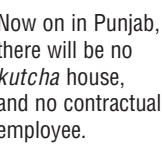
Some reviewers had really criticised the film (*Namaste London*), saying it was one of the two worst films that year.

Director-producer — Vipul Amrutlal Shah



It sort of became clear to me that I had to bat through after we lost a couple of early wickets.

Australia captain — Meg Lanning



Now on in Punjab, there will be no *kutchra* house, and no contractual employee.

Punjab Chief Minister — Bhagwant Mann



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S QUAD PLAY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India concluded a high-level meeting with two QUAD partners last fortnight. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was in Delhi a few days back and Australia's Scott Morrison had high-level virtual meetings. India and Australia also decided to elevate their bilateral relationship to an annual summit, where both Prime Ministers will exchange visits to supervise the progress in the relationship. After Japan and Russia, the Australian annual bilateral summit is the third India has in its bouquet of developing closer relations with like-minded partners. It is worthwhile mentioning that Japan and Australia form the foundational pillars of the QUAD framework and are geographically located in the Indo Pacific, where the next theatre of supremacy is playing out. India has done well to highlight to both QUAD partners its priorities in the Indo-Pacific. An aggressive China, gobbling up or creating new military bases in the Indo-



Pacific, threatening sovereign rights of nations such as Taiwan and encroaching in India's territory and neighbourhood besides militarily monitoring the sea routes, with least concern for globally accepted rules-based world order, are shared regional concerns for India, Japan and Australia. Australia knows it has to depend on regional allies and partners if it wants to take on China in its backyard. Its defence alliance with Japan also known as the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) assumes significance in this context. Australia has also recently entered into a military alliance with the US and the UK which provides it access to nuclear-capable submarines. There are many lessons for Indian policy makers in India to learn. First, the US-centricity of the regional order is shrinking fast. Japan, which has traditionally relied on the US for its security needs, is willing to pick up the gauntlet and lead in the region. A signal has been sent to smaller economies in the region that Japan will stand up against Chinese aggression and establish a rules-based regional order, as an empowered independent player. Similarly, Australia with its bitter experiences with China has quickly gone ahead to forge new trade and security pacts with major partners in Europe, the US, the UK, India and Southeast Asia. China, meanwhile, has announced a "no barriers" friendship with Russia. As the world order reshapes, post-Ukraine crisis, and a hardening of stances by NATO, the situation for Russia appears unfavourable. The bite of western sanctions, together with frosty diplomatic and strategic relationships on world platforms, will make Russia more dependent on China. This could also mean India landing in embarrassing positions when the Russia question comes up. India at this stage will have to calculate its security interests to suit its strategic and economic goals. Except for severe dependence on Russia for military equipment, India does not have any significant ties with Russia. Over four decades of close bonding between Russia and India, where each side chose not to step into each other's sensitive spots on international fora, may be a ghost of the Cold war once the entire fallout of the Ukraine invasion plays out. India will have to carefully calibrate its place in the changing geopolitics and choose its partners. India and US have a strategic partnership for nearly a decade now. However, India's unwillingness to take a hard stance on Russia publicly could make several lawmakers in the US question the foundations of the relationship. The world, despite ideological differences, cannot ignore the US and its strategic importance as a large superpower. India has to keep working on its relationship with the US for a free, open, transparent, rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. Separate bilateral agreements with QUAD partners such as Australia and Japan would also help.

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

# Self-reliance must in global payments

After the Russian example, we should not be subject to the whims of other countries in payments. For this, it is necessary to achieve self-reliance

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has recently said that self-reliance is the best-suited strategy to deal with situations arising out of the Russia-Ukraine war. With regard to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, some people believe that if this war goes on like this and Ukraine's friends, such as the United States of America and European countries join this war, then this war may head towards the World War III. But apart from this concern, there are many other concerns in India and the rest of the world. Given these apprehensions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for self-reliance as a strategy.

It is noteworthy that Russia is the third-largest producer of crude oil of the world; and if supply of crude oil is blocked by way of sanctions, the prices of crude oil in the world may increase further. Currently, amidst fluctuating oil prices, Russia has offered to supply oil to India at 25 percent discount. India has also accepted this proposal and import of crude oil has already started. But the road to importing oil from Russia is not easy. Though the US has said for the time being that this import of crude oil by India, doesn't violate sanctions, the issue of payments continues to be an area of concern. In this context we need to ensure that nothing comes in way of cheaper import of oil by India, to keep away oil price inflation in the country.

The US and European countries have blocked Russian banks from the international payment gateway, SWIFT, used in global financial transactions. Finding a solution to this problem, India and Russia have decided that they will settle their transactions in Rupees and Rubbles, that is, India will not only buy oil 25 percent cheaper, but payment for that oil will be made in rupees.

The question is, what will be the impact of blocking of SWIFT on India and the world? With the blockade of SWIFT, India and the world will have to create alternative payment systems. Payment can also be made through China's payment system called the Cross Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS). However, India and Russia have decided to exchange in Rupee-Rouble. On the other hand, Indian banks can do business with Russia by registering with China's payment system CIPS, but since CIPS uses the RMB as currency, it would be good for India to create an alternative payment system which is based on Indian Rupee.

One of the options for India is to integrate its UPI payment system with Russia's MIR system to make payments easier. Russian banks can open their accounts with the Reserve Bank of India and where Russian banks can keep deposits of Indian rupees. But here the difficulty may come that since India has a trade deficit in the trade of India and



CENTRAL BANKS OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES KEEP FOREIGN EXCHANGE IN OTHER COUNTRIES. FOR EXAMPLE, THE RBI KEEPS ITS FOREIGN CURRENCY IN THE CENTRAL BANK OF AMERICA (FEDERAL RESERVE); SIMILARLY OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO KEEP RESERVES OF DOLLARS IN THE FEDERAL RESERVE, WHICH INCLUDES RUSSIA. RUSSIA'S ACCESS TO ITS FOREX RESERVES HAS NOW BEEN BLOCKED

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



Russia, the deposits of Indian Rupees with Russia will increase. In such a situation, Russia can pay in rupees for imports coming from other countries that accept payment in rupees. Apart from this, another option is that of payment through digital currency of the central bank,

Central banks of different countries keep foreign exchange in other countries. For example, the Reserve Bank of India keeps its foreign currency in the Central Bank of America (Federal Reserve), similarly other countries also keep reserves of dollars in the Federal Reserve, which includes Russia. Russia's access to their foreign exchange reserves has now been blocked due to US and European countries blocking Russian banks in SWIFT. In such a situation, while Russia has definitely lost confidence in the US Federal Reserve; other countries of the world are also now thinking that their deposits in central banks of other countries are not safe.

No doubt, Russia is in trouble due to economic and other sanctions imposed by US and its allies, though there is no immediate threat, such sanctions may also be imposed on India, on one or the other pretext. India had been the victim of such sanctions in the past as well. We would need to deal with such an eventuality. Recently, the Reserve Bank governor has also said that even if there is no reason for economic sanctions on India, we still think that all countries must now rethink about their

foreign exchange reserves. India has already started diversifying its foreign exchange reserves and today we are keeping our reserves in many other currencies including gold, dollars, euros etc.

Since the world's trade is dominated by dollars and dollars are kept only in American banks, because the sovereign currency of any country can be kept only in the banks of that country. For instance, euros can be kept in European banks, dollars in American banks, yuan in Chinese banks and Indian rupees in Indian banks only. Nostro account is opened for mutual transactions, owned by residents of another country. It would be useful for India that India should have its own payment system which is based on Rupee.

Countries on which economic sanctions have been imposed, finding it difficult to sell their goods, are ready to sell goods cheaper than the market to India. Due to the war, oil prices in the international market have increased significantly, but not only Russia but also Iran is ready to sell oil at cheaper prices and on our terms (in exchange for payment in rupees). For imports from such countries, we can make payments in our currency under the barter system. But we have trade deficit with many countries, so barter is not always practical.

For a more viable payment system, we can create linkage between our payment system (UPI) and payment systems of dif-

ferent countries, and can circumvent SWIFT system under the influence of USA and European countries. For example, India can establish self-reliance in international payments by establishing a linkage with the payment systems of other countries including Russia's Mir payment system and China's payment system.

Not only this, nowadays the trend of digital currency has also increased. However, due to the huge fluctuation in the value of private cryptocurrencies, it would not be advisable to use them for payments. India has recently decided to launch its own digital currency through our central bank, that is, the Reserve Bank of India. This is called Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). Experts believe that international payments can also be possible through use of this digital currency.

Today, when India is moving forward towards the goal of self-reliance in all spheres of the economy including defence goods, electronics, telecom, chemicals, consumer goods, etc., with regard to international payments, we should not be subject to the whims of countries like the US and Europe in payments also. For this it is necessary to achieve self-reliance in international payments as well. This we will have to achieve by any means. Whatever the process, whether barter or linking of different payment systems or use of digital currency, we will have to achieve self-reliance in payments.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHY DID THE BJP THINK OF THE (MCD) UNIFICATION ONLY AFTER THE EXIT POLL RESULTS FOR PUNJAB? — SENIOR AAP LEADER ATISHI



THIS (UNIFICATION OF THE THREE CORPORATIONS) DECISION IS ONLY GOING TO STRENGTHEN THE CIVIC BODY. — DELHI BJP CHIEF ADESH GUPTA

# Farmers and FCI need a new regime of MSP

The FCI must assist farmers in selling food grain through auction to private channels under its supervision

After independence, due to inadequate irrigation infrastructure, there was consistent shortage of food grain that used to aggravate in drought years. In the 1960s, green revolution was pursued. In 1965, Food Corporation of India (FCI) was incorporated for storing buffer stocks. To incentivise higher production, in 1965-66, Minimum Support Price (MSP) was introduced. As a result, India became surplus in wheat and rice production. Thereafter, open market prices could not keep pace with other industrial products. Food grain exports were highly restricted. Low sale price at farm gate and the inflation in the farm inputs impacted farmer's incomes. Agro input subsidies could not compensate such losses. This caused



R P GUPTA

*(The writer is an economics analyst and author. The views expressed are personal.)*

perennial distress, suicides and agitations among farmers. Therefore, ways and means must be designed to ensure MSP to all farmers for all produce except perishable produce. The moot question is, how to make it feasible for the Government?

In FY-2020, under MSP, the Government had procured 23 eligible crops at barely 26 per cent of its value. Despite this, the unsold stock with FCI is about 32 million tons and 24 million tons with the States. The debt of FCI has also exceeded Rs. 4 lakh crore, incurring huge interest and storage costs. Therefore, it is not feasible for the Government to buy the entire production at MSP.

Unlike industrial products, the production cycle of food



grain is too long. Hence, it is to be procured and stored during crop arrival season and then sold to ultimate consumers as per demand. India must develop food processing industries and trade channels for sharing the procurement burden during crop arrival season. But private trade channels might exploit farmers. Considering the complexity, India needs a new regime of MSP surmounting past legacy which will

enable the farmers to get MSP while the fiscal and debt burden of the Government and FCI also reduces except during the initial years.

The FCI must assist farmers in selling food grain through auction to private channels under its supervision. The floor price must be kept about 93-95 per cent of MSP. FCI should fix quality standards and provide testing facility to avoid any arbitrary deduction by pur-

chaser on the quality ground. Unsold stocks must be essentially stored by FCI and the cheap loan may be extended to farmer up to 90 per cent of stock value at MSP price. Same can be refinanced by banks to FCI at SLR rate. In the absence of such stocking facility, the farmer is compelled to sell the produce at distress prices to trade channels.

A Goods Receipt (GR) may be issued to farmers against stocks mentioning the quantity, quality and loan amount. The validity period of such GRs may be 5-6 months. They must be tradable in the open market, e-NAM and Commodity exchanges. The FCI must assist and charge a nominal fee of 0.5 per cent of sale value. Interest and storage charges may be levied at 9 per cent per

annum on the stock value. That may be recovered from the ultimate buyer during delivery of goods. The balance money may be remitted to farmers. This will eliminate interest and storage cost of FCI.

If the stock is not sold by farmers within validity period of GR, they shall lose selling rights and it shall be deemed sale to FCI at MSP. After the expiry of validity of GR, FCI shall remit balance money after adjusting debt, interest and storage charges.

With above arrangements, the farmers might get about 95 per cent of MSP. Hence, MSP may be increased by 5-7 per cent. After stabilizing the system, there are fair chances for getting higher price to farmers. The FCI shall also be benefited since its debt burden and

storage cost shall reduce. Rather, it might earn gross profit in future years from service fee and storage charges. In the meantime, FCI should increase the network of Mandis and storage capacity. It should also build marketing infrastructures.

In this process, the stock with FCI might increase due to excess production or poor market demand. In such situations, the FCI must quickly export directly or through trade channels. The Government must encourage export and give export incentives to compensate for the loss to the FCI and trade channels and processing industries. By this, the debt of the FCI shall reduce and the storage capacity shall be available for the arrival of the fresh crop.



# Russian war in Ukraine marks 1 month with no end in sight

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia's war in Ukraine since February 24 has killed thousands of people, reduced entire cities to rubble and forced millions to flee their homes.

The largest military conflict in Europe since World War II has also upset the international security order and sent dangerous ripples through the global economy.

A look at pivotal moments of the conflict, a month later:

## THE ROAD TO WAR

A buildup of Russian troops near Ukraine in early 2021 raised fears of an offensive.

Moscow withdrew some of the forces in April, paving the way for a June summit between President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Their meeting, however, failed to meaningfully ease Russia-US tensions.

A renewed buildup of Russian troops along Ukrainian borders began in late October and reached an estimated 150,000 troops by the year's end.

From the beginning of the troop surge, Moscow denied any plans to attack Ukraine, calling such Western concerns part of a campaign to discredit Russia.

At the same time, it urged the US and its allies to keep Ukraine from joining NATO

and roll back the alliance forces from Eastern Europe, demands the West rejected as non-starters.

Putin on February 21 this year abruptly upped the ante, recognising the independence of pro-Russia rebel regions in eastern Ukraine.

Insurgents have been fighting Ukrainian forces there since 2014, when Ukraine's Moscow-friendly president was driven from office by mass protests and Russia responded by annexing the Crimean Peninsula.

## INVASION BEGINS

In a televised address on February 24, Putin announced the launch of a "special military operation" intended to demilitarise Ukraine and uproot alleged "neo-Nazi nationalists".

As he spoke, the Russian military unleashed a series of air raids and missile strikes on Ukraine's military facilities and key infrastructure.

Russian troops rolled into Ukraine from Crimea in the south, all along the eastern border and from Moscow's ally Belarus, which borders Ukraine from the north.

Putin argued that Russia had no choice but to act after Washington and its allies ignored its demand for security guarantees. Western leaders dismissed the claims as a false pretext for the attack.

The Russian military advanced on the Ukrainian



## US to welcome up to 1L refugees from Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A US official says the United States will welcome up to 100,000 refugees from Ukraine as 3.5 million flee Russia's invasion. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity ahead of the announcement later Thursday.

The White House has been saying for weeks that the US would accept refugees from Ukraine, but officials had expected most would want to remain in Europe to stay close to their

homeland or to family members around Eastern Europe.

Refugee agencies had urged the Biden administration to do more, saying the US could expedite the entry of Ukrainians who had already been in the process of applying to enter the United States through the country's refugee programme or expanding the total number of Ukrainians who could come into the country under the cap that the administration sets in consultation with Congress.

capital Kyiv, located just 75 kilometres south of the border with Belarus, closed in on Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv in the east and pushed along the Sea of Azov and Black Sea coasts in the south.

While Russia claimed it was only targeting military facilities, air raids and artillery strikes hit residential areas, schools and hospitals across Ukraine. The assault turned particularly deadly in March, with a Russian rocket hitting the regional administration building in Kharkiv on March 1, killing 24 people.

On March 9, a Russian airstrike devastated a maternity hospital in the besieged port of Mariupol, killing at least three and injuring 17.

A Russian bomb on March 16 flattened a historic theatre in

Mariupol, even after Ukrainians had scrawled the word "children" in huge white letters on the pavement next to it to indicate that civilians were sheltering inside.

Officials said hundreds of people who were hiding in the basement survived.

At least eight people were killed in a Russian airstrike on a shopping mall in Kyiv on Monday.

Russia's top objective in the south is Mariupol, a strategic port on the Sea of Azov that has been under siege for weeks.

Relentless bombardment by the Russians has reduced entire neighbourhoods to rubble and killed thousands, turning the city into an emblem of civilian suffering.

Thousands have fled the city, part of a wave of refugees fleeing the country that United Nations officials estimate at more than 3.5 million.

## RUSSIA STUNG BY WEST-ERN SANCTIONS

Western allies quickly responded to the invasion with unprecedented economic and financial sanctions.

Several waves of crippling penalties froze an estimated half of Russia's USD640 billion hard-currency reserves, cut key Russian banks out of the SWIFT financial messaging system, barred Moscow from getting cash in dollars and euros and targeted broad sectors of the Russian economy

with rigid trade restrictions. Major international com-

## China rejects disinformation accusations

AP ■ BEIJING

China is rejecting accusations of helping Russia spread disinformation over Washington's involvement in Ukraine, while repeating Moscow's baseless claims about secret American biological warfare labs in Ukraine.

"Accusing China of spreading disinformation on Ukraine is disinformation in itself," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily

Briefing Thursday. He said China has acted in "an objective and just manner."

Wang claimed the international community continues to have "grave concerns" about US biolabs in Ukraine, despite rebuttals from independent scientists.

"The US cannot muddle through with silence or claiming that as disinformation."

The US should make serious clarifications on whether that is disinformation or not," Wang said.

panies moved quickly to leave the Russian market.

The severe measures - of a magnitude previously only levied against such countries as Iran and North Korea - sent the ruble into a nosedive, provoked a run on deposits and triggered consumer panic.

Russian authorities responded by introducing tight restrictions on hard-currency transactions and stock markets.

## UKRAINE PLEADS FOR MORE WEAPONS, NO-FLY ZONE

While hailing Western sanctions and weapons supplies, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has challenged the US and other Western allies to take even stronger measures to stop Russia. He has continuously urged the US and NATO to declare a no-fly zone over Ukraine, a demand the allies rejected for fear that it could result in a direct confrontation with Russia and even spark a global conflict.

Zelenskyy has also pleaded with Western allies to provide Ukraine with warplanes and long-range air defence systems. Russia has sternly warned the West against such a move, and discussions on possible deliveries of Soviet-era fighter jets and air defence weapons from Eastern Europe to Ukraine have stalled as the West seeks to avoid a dangerous escalation.

# UN Council defeats Russia resolution on Ukraine

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN Security Council on Wednesday overwhelmingly defeated a Russian resolution that acknowledged Ukraine's growing humanitarian needs -- but didn't mention the Russian invasion that caused the escalating crisis which has left millions of Ukrainians in desperate need of food, water and shelter.

To be adopted, Russia needed a minimum of nine "yes" votes in the 15-member Security Council and no veto by one of the four other permanent members - the U.S., Britain, France and China.

But Russia got support only

from its ally China, with the 13 other council members abstaining, reflecting Moscow's failure to get widespread backing for its war in Ukraine, which marks its one-month anniversary Thursday.

The Russian defeat came on the same day the General Assembly started considering a resolution drafted by Ukraine and two dozen other countries and co-sponsored by nearly 100 nations which clearly states that Russia's aggression is responsible for the growing humanitarian emergency.

The assembly was also to consider a rival South African resolution that doesn't mention Russia and is similar to Moscow's defeat-

ed council resolution. Action on those resolutions was delayed until Thursday because of the huge number of speakers.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, told the council before the vote that its resolution "is not politicized," just like other Security Council humanitarian resolutions, and he categorically rejected a U.S. Claim that his country had no right to submit such a resolution.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield countered that Russia was "attempting to use this council to provide cover for its brutal actions." "It really is unconscionable that Russia would

have the audacity to put forward a resolution asking the international community to solve a humanitarian crisis that Russia alone created," she said.

"Russia does not care about the deteriorating humanitarian conditions. ... If they cared, they would stop fighting. Russia is the aggressor, the attacker, the invader, the sole party in Ukraine engaged in a campaign of brutality against the people of Ukraine, and they want us to pass a resolution that does not acknowledge their culpability."

Nebenzia took the floor again after the vote saying it exposed all countries "for whom politicisation

of the humanitarian dossier" is more important than helping to get aid to Ukrainians. If diplomats go on to lament the lack of a ceasefire and provisions for evacuations, "we will remind you that they were before you, but you refused to vote in favor of them for political reasons," he said.

Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun, explaining his country's vote in favor of the Russian resolution, said council members should focus on humanitarian issues, "transcend the political differences" and try to reach consensus and "respond to the humanitarian crisis in a positive, pragmatic and constructive manner."

Over the course of Thursday, the European diplomatic capital is hosting the emergency NATO summit, a gathering of the Group of Seven industrialized nations and a summit of the European Union. Biden will attend all three meetings and hold a news conference afterward.

The schedule left Brussels interlaced with multiple police checkpoints and road closures to help motorcade crisscross the city as the leaders go from one meeting to the next.

Biden arrived late Wednesday with the hopes of nudging allies to enact new sanctions on Russia, which has seen its economy crippled by several weeks of bans, boycotts and penalties.

While the West has been largely unified in confronting Russia after it invaded Ukraine, there's wide acknowledgement that unity will be tested as the costs of war chip at the global economy. The bolstering of forces along NATO's eastern flank, almost certainly for at least the next five to 10 years if Russia is to be effectively dissuaded, will also put pressure on national budgets.

"We gather at a critical time for our security," Stoltenberg said, addressing the leaders seated at a large round table. "We are united in condemning the Kremlin's unprovoked aggression and in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

He said the alliance is "determined to continue to impose costs on Russia to bring about the end of this brutal war."

## Ukraine refugees' hopes of return waning

AP ■ MEDYKA

As Russia launched its war in Ukraine last month, exhausted and frightened refugees arrived in neighboring countries. They carried whatever they could grab in a hurry. Many cried. They still do.

The United Nations says that more than 3.6 million people have fled Ukraine since the war started exactly one month ago Thursday in what is the biggest movement of people in Europe since World War II. Unprepared, most refugees believed they would soon be back home. That hope is waning now. "At the beginning, we thought that this would end pretty soon," Olha Homienko, a 50-year-old woman from Kharkiv said. "First of all, nobody could believe Russia would attack us, and we thought that it would end quickly." Now, Homienko said, "as we can see, there is nothing to look forward to." Homienko's hometown of Kharkiv is among several Ukrainian cities and towns that have been encircled and shelled heavily by the Russians.

## Ukraine to press world for more support

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on people worldwide to gather in public Thursday to show support for his embattled country as US President Joe Biden and other world leaders met for talks focused on pressuring Russia to end the invasion that is entering its second month.

"Come to your squares, your streets. Make yourselves visible and heard," Zelenskyy said in English during an emotional video address late Wednesday that was recorded in the dark near the presidential offices in Kyiv. "Say that people matter. Freedom matters. Peace matters. Ukraine matters."

"This is a month now," Zelenskyy said Thursday in an address to Sweden's parliament, the latest of many to whom the Ukrainian leader has pleaded for help. "We have not seen a destruction of this scale since World War II."

After a month of fighting, Western analysts say Ukrainian forces need stocking up again with the weapons that have helped them slow and repel Russian advances. Both sides claimed Thursday to have inflicted more blows. Ukraine's navy said it sank a ship that had been used to resupply the Russian campaign with armored vehicles. Russia claimed to have taken a town, Izium, in eastern Ukraine after heavy fighting.

## Putin crossed line into barbarism: UK

AP ■ BRUSSELS

NATO leaders are refusing to rule out retaliation against Russia should it launch a chemical weapons attack on Ukraine - but British Prime Minister Boris Johnson thinks Moscow has already gone too far.

"The reality is that (President) Vladimir Putin has already crossed the red line into barbarism," Johnson told reporters Thursday as he arrived for summit of NATO leaders.

Johnson says that "it's now up to NATO to consider together the

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Date: 21.03.2022  
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of Debts due to Banks and  
Financial Institutions Act, 1993  
read with Rules 12 and 13 of  
the Debts Recovery Tribunal  
(Procedure Rules, 1993)  
Original Application  
No. O.A No. 43/2022  
ICICI BANK LTD. ...Applicant  
Versus  
Mr. SACHIN AGRAHARI &  
OTHERS ...Defendants  
To,  
1. SACHIN AGRAHARI S/o  
DINESH CHANDRA AGRAHARI  
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practitioner in this Tribunal, after  
serving copy of the same on the  
applicant or his counsel/duly  
authorized agent after publication  
of the summons, and thereafter to  
appear before the Tribunal on  
13/07/2022 at 10.30 A.M., failing  
which the application shall be  
heard and decide in your absence.  
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सूचना

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रसीट का पूरा बच नोएडा में कहीं  
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Dy. Chief Engineer/ MM-II/GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of  
"AMC for Repair of Conveyor Belts & Pulley Lagging of CHP as per tender  
specifications.  
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Note:- Corrigendum & addendum if any, will be published online at  
<https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>  
76155/12/727/2021/13026 GHTP-07/22



**UJVNL LTD.**  
H.O.: 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephones : 0135-2763808 & Fax : 0135- 2763507  
CIN No.-U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website.: [www.ujvnl.com](http://www.ujvnl.com)

Letter No. 94 Tender Notice Dated 24.03.2022  
Office of the Executive Engineer, Project Distribution Division,  
Dakpathar (D.Dun), invites sealed tenders for following works:  
Tender No. PDD-16/2021-22: **Supply of C&S ACB panel spares  
and servicing of C&S ACB panels .**  
Estimated cost : **Rs. 12.31,770/- + GST extra**  
Date of availability of bid document on website : **24.03.2022**  
Last date for submission of tender : **19.04.2022 (up to 13.00 hrs.)**  
For eligibility criteria and full & further details, kindly visit our web  
site. Tenders can only be downloaded from our website  
**"www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com"**.  
Executive Engineer



**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**

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 details. 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 Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	M/s Dolor Remedies Pvt Ltd/ Jhuma Choudhary/ A/c No. 084305000298	Flat No 654 Pocket 13 LIG DDA Flats Mangla Puri Bus Stand Dwarka New Delhi 110075 / March 23, 2022	September 30, 2021/ Rs. 73,18,045/-	New Delhi

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 25, 2022  
Place: Delhi/Ncr

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR  
Office of the Chief Executive Officer,  
Integrated Watershed Management Programme,  
Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Jammu/Srinagar

Notice for hiring of 02 No. of vehicles for JK-IWMP

Sealed proposals are invited from the registered travel agencies for hiring of two number of vehicles for the **office of Chief executive Officer, IWMP, Jammu & Kashmir** on the approved rates of Transport Commissioner, J&K, the interested travel agencies can submit the quotations in the office of CEO, IWMP, Panchayat Bhawan, Rail Head Complex Jammu (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) by or before 31-03-2022 up to 2:00 PM addressed to the Financial Advisor/ Chief Accounts Officer, IWMP, J&K. The bidders should quote the rates less than the approved rates of Transport Commissioner, J&K.

No. DIPK-19889/21  
Dated: 24-03-2021

Sd/- Financial Advisor/CAO,  
JK-IWMP

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
AGRA CIRCLE, P.W.D AGRA

Short Term Notice inviting E-Tender

Letter No. 1050 / 14M-AC Dated: 21-03-2022

1. The Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the Percentage rate bids from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP, PWD, Road work. The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

2.

Sl. No.	Dist-ri-ct	Name of Work	Estima-ted Cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs.in Lacs)	Cost of Docu-ment (in Rs.)	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer Executing the Work	Address of Super-intending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer	Categ-ory of Con-tractor	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1		Agra	Re-construction work of minor bridge on the damaged bridge chainage-0.540 on road from Agra-Shamshabad-Rajakheda road to ABK road via Pawali on Agra Lower Canal under District Agra, Vidhan Sabha Agra Rural.	56.00	4.80	STC+T+C+GST = 2340.00	04 Month	Executive Engineer, CD-2 PWD, Agra	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A, B, C

3. Time allowed for completion is including Rainy Season.  
4. Bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> and <http://wms.upppwd.gov.in/Prahari> From 04-04-2022 to 11-04-2022. Bids must be submitted online only at e-tendering portal of <http://etender.up.nic.in> and <http://wms.upppwd.gov.in/Prahari> App with all documents as per GO No 14/2020/879(1)/ 23-7/2020/176(IK0)/06 Dt 25-08-2020 on or before 12:30 pm Dt 11-04-2022. Technical Bid received online will be opened on 11-04-2022 at 3:30 pm.  
5. The prospective bidders who do not possess Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) must get the same issued from approved agencies before submission of bids.  
6. Contractor should Quote their rates without G.S.T. which shall be paid extra as per applicable at the time of payment.  
7. Labour Cess @ 1.00% will be deducted from contractor's bill at the time of payment.  
8. Original MM-11 forms proof of royalty shall have to be produced at time of every running bill in accordance to Principal Secretary, Directorate of geology & mining under Pradesh Letter No-2146/86-2019-52(IK0)/2019 Dt. 30.09.2019, G.O. No- 115(1)/86-2020 dated 15.01.2020 and other relevant Government orders, circulars for all the materials procured from the quarries.  
9. The bidders are required to submit Original receipt of Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account as per G.O. No.- 742/78-2-2018-42 I.T/2017 T.C., I.T. & Electronics Section-2 Dated-03-12-2018 follows as :  
(1) Online Tender Cost towards the cost of bid document (As per Column 6) by Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account (Non Refundable).  
(2) Online Bid security (As per Column 5) in favour of **designa-tion of Column 9** by Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account.  
(3) Original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B(ii) of ITB as per G.O. No.-3070/78-2-2018-42I.T/2017(22)/I.T. and Electronics Section-2 Dated-03-01-2018.  
(J.P. Singh)  
Executive Engineer  
CD-2, P.W.D., Agra  
(Anand Kumar)  
Superintending Engineer  
Agra Circle, P.W.D., AGRA  
UP- 174300 Date 24.3.2022 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट [www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध है।



# Shringla, UN chief discuss issues on UNSC's agenda

PTI ■ UNITED NATION

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla met UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres here and discussed issues on the UN Security Council's agenda, including evolving situation in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Myanmar. Shringla arrived in New York on Tuesday and participated in the UN Security Council briefing on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States held under the Council Presidency of UAE on Wednesday. The UNSC briefing was chaired by UAE Minister of State Khalifa Shaheen Almarar. After the UNSC briefing, Shringla met Guterres at the UN headquarters.

New York. Discussed issues on the UN Security Council's agenda, including Ukraine, Afghanistan and Myanmar," Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted. Sources said that Shringla's meeting with Guterres lasted for about an hour and the two discussed the situation in Ukraine. It is understood that Guterres said that a country like India has a very major role to play given that India is one of the few countries that commanded respect across the board and was able to reach out to both the sides over the current situation, which needs countries and leaders who can play a role in helping resolve the issue. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held several phone conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and called for immediate cessation of violence as well as concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue. Last week, Guterres had said that he was in close contact with a number of countries, including China, France, Germany, India, Israel and Turkey, on mediation efforts to "bring an end to this war." Sources added that the UN Secretary General was also concerned about the impact of the war on oil prices and food security as there will be countries who face serious challenges if the crisis continues. They said Guterres felt that the UN could play a role to meet these challenges and India could also play a prominent role. On the situation in Afghanistan, it is learnt that the

UN chief was told that India was among the first countries to come forward and offer humanitarian assistance for the people of the war-torn country and provide medicines and other essential supplies, using UN agencies for distribution. Sources said it was also underlined that international benchmarks had to be met, whether it was equal rights for women or issues related to terrorism and more representative and inclusive government. Guterres is learnt to have voiced disappointment over the announcement by the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan that girls' education from the sixth grade has been suspended until further notice. Sources said that on Myanmar, which shares a border with India, it was pointed out that anything that happens in the country impacts India as well.

# Dialling up pressure, North Korea tests long-range missile

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea test-fired possibly its biggest-yet intercontinental ballistic missile toward the sea Thursday, according to its neighbours, raising the ante in a pressure campaign aimed at forcing the United States and other rivals to accept it as a nuclear power and remove crippling sanctions. The launch, which extended North Korea's barrage of weapons tests this year, came after the US and South Korean militaries said the country was preparing a flight of a new large ICBM it first unveiled in October 2020. South Korea's military responded with live-fire drills of its own missiles launched from land vehicles, a ship and aircraft. It said it confirmed readiness to execute precision strikes against North Korea's missile launch points as well as its command and support facilities.

The South's reaction underscored a resumption of inter-Korean tensions as nuclear negotiations remain frozen. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff and Defense Ministry said the ICBM missile fired from the Sunan area near capital Pyongyang travelled 1,080 kilometers while reaching a maximum altitude of over 6,200 kilometers. This indicated the missile was fired on a higher-than-usual angle to avoid reaching the territorial waters of Japan. Japan's Deputy Defense Minister Makoto Oniki also said the flight details suggested a new type of ICBM. After arriving in Belgium for the Group of Seven summit meetings, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters the missile possibly landed near Japanese territorial waters off the northern island of Hokkaido. "It's an unforgivable recklessness. We resolutely con-

demn the act," Kishida said. Tokyo's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the missile flew for 71 minutes and that Japan may search for debris inside its exclusive economic zone to analyse the North's weapons technology. Japan's coast guard issued a warning to vessels in nearby waters, but there were no immediate reports of damage to boats or aircraft. South Korean President Moon Jae-in called an emergency National Security Council meeting where he criticised North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for breaking a self-imposed moratorium on ICBM tests and posing a "serious threat" to the region and the broader international community. Moon instructed officials to pursue "all possible response measures" based on its alliance with the United States and cooperation with other international partners, his office said.

# Germany unveils fuel subsidies, discounts public transport

AP ■ BERLIN

The Germany government on Thursday announced a package of measures to help cushion the blow of high energy prices to consumers, with fuel subsidies, discounted public transport, tax benefits and additional support for the poorest. Senior lawmakers unveiled the measures after lengthy haggling between the three parties that make up the governing coalition. Rising energy costs due to the war in Ukraine and sanctions imposed on Russia have caused significant price pain for companies and consumers across Europe in recent months. The measures announced include temporary tax cuts on gasoline, a 300 euro (USD330) refund for taxpayers, 100 euros per child and a further 100 euros for people on benefits.

# Kashmir remarks at OIC based on falsehood: India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking exception to remarks on Kashmir in a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Wednesday, India on Thursday said they were based on "falsehoods and misrepresentation". The criticism of Indian policy on Kashmir was made in the Foreign Ministers' meet of the OIC in Islamabad. The ministry of external affairs said here "the statements and resolutions adopted at the meeting demonstrate both the irrelevance of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation as a body and the role of Pakistan as its manipulator." Making this assertion, the ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi also said "References have been made to India that are based on falsehoods and misrepresentation. The absurdity of this body commenting on the treatment of minorities, that too at the instance of a serial violator of human rights like Pakistan, is so evident." He made these observations following media queries on the issue and said "Nations and governments that associate themselves with such exercises should realise the impact it has on their reputation." On Wednesday, the government rejected the "uncalled reference" to Jammu and Kashmir by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his speech at the opening ceremony of the OIC and said matters related to the union territory "are

entirely the internal affairs of India". Foreign Office of Pakistan in a statement said on Thursday the Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) supported Pakistan's call for a joint probe to accurately establish the facts surrounding the accidental firing of a projectile into the country from India earlier this month. The Foreign Office said in a statement that a resolution was adopted at the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad on Wednesday. The resolution urged India to "work constructively with Pakistan for enhancing regional security and stability through the settlement of outstanding disputes and positively responding to Pakistan's proposal for a Strategic Restraint Regime, including measures for arms control, restraint and confidence building." The OIC foreign ministers expressed serious concern over the incident which "constituted multiple violations of international law", besides "posing a grave threat to regional and international peace, security and stability. The resolution further calls on the UN Secretary-General and relevant international bodies, including UN Security Council and International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO), to pursue the matter with India, in line with their mandated duties, to accurately establish the facts to prevent such occurrences in the future. The OIC comprises 57 countries.

# Ex-prosecutor: Trump guilty of numerous felony violations

AP ■ NEW YORK

A prosecutor who had been leading a criminal investigation into Donald Trump before quitting last month said in his resignation letter that he believes the former president is "guilty of numerous felony violations" and he disagreed with the Manhattan district attorney's decision not to seek an indictment. In the letter, published Wednesday by The New York Times, Mark Pomerantz told District Attorney Alvin Bragg there was "evidence sufficient to establish Mr. Trump's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt" of allegations he falsified financial statements to secure loans and

burnish his image as a wealthy businessman. "The team that has been investigating Mr. Trump harbors no doubt about whether he committed crimes - he did," Pomerantz wrote. Pomerantz and his former co-leader on the Trump probe, Carey Dunne, resigned on Feb. 23 after clashing with Bragg over the future of the case. Both were top deputies tasked with running the investigation on a day-to-day basis. Both started on the probe under former District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., and Bragg asked them to stay when he took office in January. Both Vance and Bragg are Democrats.

In his resignation letter, Pomerantz wrote that Vance had directed his deputies to present evidence to a grand jury and seek an indictment of Trump and other defendants "as soon as reasonably possible." No former president has ever been charged with a crime. "I believe that your decision not to prosecute Donald Trump now, and on the existing record, is misguided and completely contrary to the public interest," Pomerantz wrote. Danielle Filson, a spokesperson for Bragg, said in a statement Wednesday night that the investigation into Trump is continuing and that a "team of experienced prosecutors is working.

# White House releases report on Native American voting rights

PTI ■ ARIZONA

Local, state and federal officials must do more to ensure Native Americans facing persistent, longstanding and deep-rooted barriers to voting have equal access to ballots, said a White House report released on Thursday. Native Americans and Alaska Natives vote at lower rates than the national average but have been a key constituency in tight races and states with large Native populations. A surge in voter turnout among tribal members in Arizona, for example, helped lead Joe Biden to victory in the

state that had not supported a Democrat in a White House contest since 1996. The Biden administration's report comes a year after he issued an executive order promoting voting rights and establishing a steering committee to look into particular barriers to

voting in Indigenous communities. Those include state laws and local practices that disenfranchise Indigenous voters, unequal access to early voting and reliance on a mail system that is unreliable, the report stated.

# 4 dead, 1 injured after family falls from Swiss building

AP ■ MONTREUX

Swiss police say three adults and a child have died and a teenager was seriously injured after falling from a seven-story residential building Thursday in the lakeside town of Montreux. Police said the victims were all French citizens and members of the same family. Officers had tried to execute a warrant in connection with the home-schooling of a child shortly before the incident, police said. In a statement, police identified the people killed as a 40-year-old man, his 41-year-old wife, her twin sister and the couple's 8-year-old daughter. They said the couples 15-year-old son was seriously injured. Authorities have opened an investigation "to determine the exact circumstances and reasons for this tragedy," police said.

# Prominent Somali woman lawmaker among 15 killed in suicide bombing

AP ■ MONGADISHU

A prominent Somali woman lawmaker is among at least 15 people killed in a suicide bombing that hit a polling station in rural central Somalia, police said Thursday. The attack took place late Wednesday in the town of Beledweyne, the capital of Somalia's Hirran region. Among its victims was opposition lawmaker Amina Mohamed Abdi, an outspoken government critic who was campaigning to retain her seat in the National Assembly. Al-Shabab, Somalia's Islamic extremist rebel group, claimed responsibility for the attack. The 15 people killed were "mostly civilians" and the attack wounded "an unspecified number" of people, police officer Ahmed Hassan told AP by phone. "I was at a walking distance to the polling station when a suicide bomber rushed towards the member of parliament Amina and embraced her and

blew himself up," eyewitness Dhaqane Hassan said. "Shots were fired in the air by the soldiers who seemed shocked, but unfortunately she instantly died at the scene." Abdi, the legislator killed at a polling station, was in Beledweyne campaigning for re-election in a vote expected to take place this week. "Somalia has lost a promising giant leader, an activist, a fearless advocate who finally paid the ultimate price for seeking justice for Ikram Tahliil," said lawmaker Abdirizak Mohamed, speaking of a female intelligence officer whose killing Abdi had been trying to investigate. President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble condemned the attack. Two other extremist attacks occurred in Beledweyne Wednesday, killing former lawmaker Hassan Dhuhul, a traditional elder and civilians sitting outside a busy restaurant, police said.

# Legal experts to weigh in on last day of Jackson hearings

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Legal experts and interest groups will weigh in on Ketanji Brown Jackson as the Senate Judiciary Committee wraps up four days of hearings on her historic nomination to become the first Black woman on the Supreme Court. Jackson faced down a barrage of Republican questioning over two days about her sentencing of criminal defendants, her bid to join the Supreme Court veering from lofty constitutional questions to attacks on her motivations on the bench. On Thursday, the last day of hearings, interest groups including the American Bar Association and civil rights organizations will testify about Jackson's suitability for the court. Witnesses chosen by Republican senators will also speak. The American Bar Association, which evaluates judicial nominees, last week gave Jackson its highest rating, unanimously "well qualified." On Wednesday, her final day of Senate questioning, Jackson declared she would rule "without any agendas" as the high court's first Black female justice.

# Searchers find wing, engine parts from China Eastern crash

AP ■ WUZHOU

Hundreds of searchers wearing rubber boots and full rain gear headed into muddy, forested hills in southern China on Thursday to try to find the second black box from a China Eastern passenger jet that crashed in southern China with 132 people on board earlier this week. Three days after the crash, larger pieces of debris were reported found for the first time, including engine components and a white wing section with the red and blue China Eastern logo

on it, state broadcaster CCTV said. One of the black boxes, believed to be the cockpit voice recorder, had been found Wednesday. Its outer casing was damaged but the orange cylinder was relatively intact, investigators said. Pumps were being used to drain a water pond as an off-and-on light rain hampered the search effort for a second straight day. More than 300 searchers were taking part, said Huang Shanguo, a deputy chief in the Guangxi Fire and Rescue Department.

**FORM NO.5**  
**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL**  
**600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow-226007**  
**(Ares of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)**  
Summons for Filing Reply & Appearance by Publication  
**O.A. No. 25/2022**  
**Date 11/03/2022**  
**(Summons to defendant under section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993)**  
**Original Application No. 25 of 2022**

ICICI BANK LTD. ...Applicant  
Versus  
ROHIT GARG & OTHERS ...Defendant

**To,**  
**1. ROHIT GARG S/O OM PRAKASH GARG**  
R/o M-28, Sec-23, Rajnagar, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201002  
**Also at:**  
Flat No. 601, 6th Floor, Tower- C2 Victory Ace, Pocket No.2 Plot No. Gh-02, Sector-143, Noida-203011.  
**2. SONALI GARG W/O ROHIT GARG**  
R/O M-28, Sec-23, Rajnagar, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201002.  
**Also at:**  
Flat No. 601, 6th Floor, Tower-C2 Victory Ace, Pocket No.2 Plot No. Gh-02, Sector-143, Noida-203011.  
**3. DREAM PROCON PRIVATE LIMITED**  
**Registered Office at:** 702-704, D-Mall, Netaji Subash Palace, Pratapnagar, New Delhi- 110034.  
**Corporate office at:**  
D1, Sector-3, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301  
In the above noted application, you are required to file in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/ duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on **06/07/2022 at 10.30 A.M.** failing which the application shall be heard and decide in your absence.

**Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal Lucknow**

**BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI.**  
4th Floor Jeevan Tara Building Parliament Street New Delhi - 110001.  
**OAN 1082/19 DATE: 22.03.2022**  
**Phoenix Arc Pvt. Ltd. Applicant**

**M/s Turquoise Exim Pvt. Ltd. & Ors. Respondent**

To, Defendant  
**1. M/s Turquoise Exim Pvt. Ltd. (Borrower),** Formerly M/s Gaurson Exim Pvt. Ltd. Plot No. 1 & 2 Gaur Residency Basement Chander Nagar Ghaziabad Up-201011.  
**2. Vikas Shandilya (Guarantor/Mortgagor) S/o Mr. A.K. Sharma, C-1339, Gaur Avenue Abhaykhand Indirapuram Ghaziabad Up-201106**  
**3. Mrs. Meenakshi Sharma (Guarantor) W/o Vikas Shandilya S/o Mr. A.K. Sharma C-1339 Gaur Avenue Abhaykhand Indirapuram Ghaziabad Up-201106**  
**4. M/S N.B. Fabricators Pvt. Ltd. B 02/49/S1, 1st Floor Plot No. 25,27,28 & 29 Knowledge Park-II Greater Noida Gautam Budh Nagar Up-201301**  
Whereas the above named applicant (s) has / have instituted a case for recovery of **Rs 6,21,88,860/- (Rupee Six Crore Twenty One Lakh Eighty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Sixty Only)** against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **13.06.2022 At 10.30 A.M.**  
Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.  
**Due to ongoing Pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through video Conferencing and for that purpose:**  
(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/software:  
(ii) "Meeting ID" and Password for the date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer-/and Recovery Official e.drt.gov.in shall be displayed in the daily cause list itself at DRT Official Portal i.e. **drt.gov.in**  
(iii) In any exigency qua that the Advocate/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. **23748478**.  
**Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal this 22nd day of March, 2022**  
By Order Of The Tribunal,  
**Assistant Registrar DRT-II, DELHI.**

**APPENDIX IV A**  
[See proviso to Rule 8(6)]  
**Sale Notice for sale of immovable property(ies)**  
E-Auction sale notice for sale of immovable assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.  
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property(ies) mortgaged/charged to **Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor")**, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is", "whatever there is" and "without any recourse" basis on **29.04.2022 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M.** (with unlimited automated extensions of 5 minutes each in terms of the Tender Document), for recovery of **Rs. 26,30,575/- (Rupees Twenty Six Lakh Thirty Thousand Five Hundred Seventy Five only)** pending towards Loan Account No. **HHLNOI00415390**, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till **16.03.2022** with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. **17.03.2022** along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from **SOURENDRA BANDYOPADHYAY and PAPIA BANDYOPADHYAY**.  
The Reserve Price of the immovable Property(ies) will be **Rs. 38,00,000/- (Rupees Thirty Eight Lakh only)** and the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD") will be **Rs. 3,80,000/- (Rupees Three Lakh Eighty Thousand only)** i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price. The EMD shall be paid by DD/ RTGS/ NEFT or through any other proper banking channels to the credit and in favour of **INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LTD.,** Account No. **32180585427** with State Bank of India (IFSC: **SBIN0009995**), having its branch at CAG Branch, Mumbai (Maharashtra), before submitting the tender in order to participate in the online public auction. The successful bidder shall pay 25% amount of the sale price (less 10% of the Reserve Price paid before submitting the tender) immediately i.e. either on the same day or not later than the next working day and the remaining balance of the Sale Price shall be paid within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY(IES)**  
**ENTIRE FIRST FLOOR, PLOT NO. -334, SECTOR - II B, VAISHALI, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH - 201010.**

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. **www.indiabullshomeloans.com** and **www.auctionfocus.in**  
**Date : 21.03.2022**  
**Place : GHAZIABAD**  
**Authorized Officer INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED**

**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.	Vineet Kumar Rattan/ Sarita Sharma/ LBFDB00004810598	Flat No- 1101, Happy Homes Grand- Tower- 3 Floor 11, Sector 85 Faridabad/ March 21, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 10,37,550/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Dip Kumar Das/ Sarabani Karmakar Das/ LBNOD00001202412	Flat No- B 254, 1st Floor, Sector- B, Right Hand Side Green Field Colony Faridabad/ March 21, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 11,55,920/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Sahi Ram Rawat/ Rajesh Devi Rawat/ M/s Rawat Crain Services (P) Ltd./ LBFDB00001442283/ LBFDB00001442283	Plot No- 411, Sector-22 Housing Board Colony Faridabad/ March 21, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 10,99,918/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Sarojini/ G Senthil Kumar/ LBFDB00004405051	Flat No-706, 7th Floor, Auric City Homes Tower 8, Sector- 82 Faridabad/ March 21, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 10,23,555/-	Delhi/ NCR
5.	Jyoti Datta/ Rahul Dutta/ Kamal Kant/ LBDEL00002146773	House No-259, Surya Nagar, Phase-II, Sector 91 Faridabad/ March 21, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 11,61,013/-	Delhi/ NCR
6.	Archana Mishra/ Avinash Mishra/ LBNOD00002206648/ LBNOD00005198782	Flat No. F-1011, 10th Floor, Tower F, Piyush Heights, Sector 89 Faridabad, Village Rewaspur & Khari Kalan, Haryana/ March 21, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 42,64,429/-	Delhi/ NCR
7.	Arun Kumar Mondal/ Seema Singh/ LBFDB00005124694	Flat No-B-1402, Tower-B, Floor-14, Mulberry County, Village Mujeri, Sector-70 Faridabad, Haryana/ March 21, 2022	June 23, 2021 Rs. 49,43,604/-	Delhi/ NCR
8.	Kavita Chaudhary/ Vineet Kumar/ LBFDB00003045174	Entire Second Floor of Plot No- 4030 With Roof and Terrace Rights, Block- K Sainik Colony Sector-49, Faridabad, Haryana/ March 21, 2022	June 25, 2021 Rs. 37,38,088/-	Delhi/ NCR
9.	Subhash Chand/ Rekha/ LBFDB00002906010/ LBFDB00005130245	Flat No. F- 801, 8th Floor, Tower No. F, Princess Park, Sec- 86 Budena, Faridabad, Haryana/ March 21, 2022	June 25, 2021 Rs. 38,85,156/-	Delhi/ NCR
10.	Yogita Gour/ Amit Sharma/ LBGHZ00002718056	Plot No.1886 I, Ground Floor, Aravali Vihar, Sector 49, Faridabad, Haryana/ March 21, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 30,41,844/-	Delhi/ NCR
11.	Savita Bajaj/ Bajaj Holographics India Pvt Ltd/ Hemraj Bajaj/ Kapil Bajaj/ LBMNJ00003460942	Flat No- Gaa-014, Tower-A, 1st Floor, New Tow Heights, Dlf-II, Sec-86, Gurgaon/ March 21, 2022	August 16, 2021 Rs. 89,27,026/-	Delhi/ NCR
12.	Raghavendra Naik/ B D Arpitha/ LBDEL00002365536	Flat No. 1202, 12th Floor Tower C-01 Krishi, Ibiza Town, Sector-39, Faridabad/ March 21, 2022	July 23, 2021 Rs. 78,69,456/-	Delhi/ NCR
13.	Raj Kumar/ Suman Devi/ LBGUR00005172448	Plot No-12 and 13, Road No U-66, Dlf City, Phase III, Gurgaon Haryana/ March 21, 2022	June 23, 2021 Rs. 80,97,443/-	Delhi/ NCR
14.	Leena Kumari/ Sudesh Kumar/ LBDEL0000338638	Flat No F- 305, 3rd Floor, orchard Avenue, Tower F, Village Hayatpur, Sector 93, Haryana, Gurgaon/ March 21, 2022	August 30, 2021 Rs. 21,96,397/-	Delhi/ NCR
15.	Sugandha Kaushik/ Manoj Pal/ LBDEL00004320550	Flat No B-201, 2nd Floor, Tower B, Gls Avenue 51, Village Wazirpur, Sector 92, Gurgaon/ March 21, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 20,72,474/-	Delhi/ NCR
16.	Gourav Gupta/ Neera Gupta/ LBFDB00005050878/ LBFDB00005077155	Flat No C 502, Floridaa- Tower C, Floor 5, Sector- 82, Faridabad/ March 21, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 20,62,907/-	Delhi/ NCR

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 25, 2022**  
**Place: Delhi/ NCR**  
**Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited**



# Sensex, Nifty decline for 2nd day as banking, auto stocks retreat

**Mumbai:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower in highly volatile trade on Thursday due to selling in banking, auto and FMCG stocks amid a weak trend in global equity markets.

Extending losses for a second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended down by 89.14 points or 0.15 per cent at 57,595.68. During the day, it touched a low of 57,138.51 and a high of 57,827.99.

The broader NSE Nifty dipped 22.90 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 17,222.75 as 27 of its components declined and 22 advanced.

"The market now lacks direction and is moving up or down on a daily basis responding to news regarding crude price, FPI flows and speculation on what the Fed might do in the coming policy meets," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

"Sensex and Nifty ended a volatile session with losses amid heightening volatility due to surge in global crude oil prices and prospects of the US Fed raising interest rate," Mohit Nigam, Head - PMS, Hem Securities, said.

From the 30-share pack, Kotak Mahindra Bank fell the most by 3.09 per cent, followed

by Titan which declined 2.63 per cent.

HDFC Bank dropped 2.23 per cent, ICICI Bank by 1.94 per cent, and HDFC by 1.5 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra fell by 1.31 per cent and Maruti Suzuki India by 1.17 per cent.

IndusInd Bank, Hindustan Unilever Limited, Nestle, Axis Bank and State Bank of India were also among the losers.

In contrast, Dr Reddy's Laboratories rose the most by 4.9 per cent, UltraTech Cement by 1.77 per cent, and Tech Mahindra by 1.75 per cent.

Gains in Reliance Industries, Tata Steel, NTPC, ITC, TCS and HCL Technologies Limited limited the losses in the benchmark index.

In the previous trade, the BSE barometer declined 304.48 points or 0.53 per cent while Nifty dipped 69.85 points or 0.4 per cent.

"Markets traded dull and ended marginally lower amid mixed global cues. After the initial dip, the benchmark oscillated in a narrow range," Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"All eyes are on the outcome of the NATO summit as it could provide the direction to the lingering Russia-Ukraine tension. Indications are in the

Tokyo's Nikkei 25 declined by 0.3 per cent, Seoul's Kospi dropped 0.5 per cent while the Shanghai Composite index fell 0.5 per cent. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong rose by 0.2 per cent.

## Rupee rises 6 paise to 76.33 against US dollar

**Mumbai:** The rupee appreciated 6 paise to close at 76.33 against the US dollar in a restricted trade on Thursday, as investors assess the global economic impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict amid elevated global crude oil prices to find a decisive direction.

A weak trend in domestic equities and strengthening US dollar in the overseas market capped the gains in the domestic unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened slightly up at 76.37 against the greenback. During the session, it moved in a tight range of 76.24 and 76.41.

The rupee finally settled at 76.33, a rise of 6 paise over its previous close.

# Indian Oil R&D celebrates golden jubilee

## Petroleum Minister lauds Indian Oil for research, innovation

A programme was held in New Delhi on Thursday, marking the culmination of landmark Golden Jubilee celebrations of Indianoil R&D. Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas & Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep S Puri was the Chief Guest on the occasion. The event was also graced by Minister of State for Petroleum & Natural Gas & Labour and Employment, Rameshwar Teli, Padma Vibhushan Dr. R.A. Mashelkar, Padma Vibhushan Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Secretary, MoPNG Pankaj Jain, Indian Oil Chairman S.M.Vaidya, IndianOil's Director (R&D) Dr. SSV Ramakumar, Manju Kumar, CPMG, and captains of Indian industry.

On the occasion, a special

commemorative postal MyStamp was released. An innovative solar cooktop - Surya Nutan - was also launched on the occasion. Citation of 1501 patents of IOC R&D, was unveiled. The Minister also spoke to the beneficiaries of solar cooktop about their experiences of the new product. The Minister gave away prizes to the winners of Indianoil R&D Golden Jubilee National Essay Competition in which over 1500 entries were received.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Hardeep S Puri said that 50 years of pioneering research to make energy secure and accessible in India is truly an enormous achievement. He said that recognised as the apex organisation for research and innovation in the sector, IOC R&D has transcended to the gold standard for industry innovation.

The Minister said that IOCL R&D has had glittering success in developing consumer-focused products such as

high-performance fuel, mini-LPG cylinders, world-class automobile lubricants, automation of retail outlets, and LPG distributors. It is also developing innovative technologies for the mass rollout of Biofuels, EVs, FCEVs and Green Hydrogen - the future of India's energy security paradigm.

Talking about the solar cooktop launched today, Shri Puri said that it could be a path-breaking innovation for the average Indian consumer. Urging the IOCL to popularize it on a large scale in reasonable period of time, he said that this could bring empowerment to millions of households, especially to women.

Lauding the IOCL R&D for developing and commercialising 53 indigenous technologies and new products, and filing more than 1,500 patents in that process in the last ten years alone, the Minister wondered how many Fortune 500 companies-or for that matter, even research institutions-produce such high-quality output

in their field.

He said that this Golden Jubilee is not just a celebration of the sustained success of IOCL R&D, but also of its increasing relevance in the Indian innovation ecosystem.

Puri said that India today is considered a global hub of scientific research.

"However, we need to be doing much more to achieve our national and global targets. We need to continue to ramp up our scientific research to accomplish a technological breakthrough that could fast-track our economic growth. I believe that cutting-edge R&D-which aims to produce equitable, sustainable and large-scale innovations-will be at the forefront of change in the coming years, particularly in dynamic areas such as the energy sector."

Puri said that India is undergoing a period of transition in the energy sector where India is trying to become energy-secure even as it moves towards renewable energy.

# IOC, BPCL, HPCL lost USD 2.25 bn over fuel price freeze: Moody's

**New Delhi:** India's top fuel retailers IOC, BPCL and HPCL have together lost around USD 2.25 billion (Rs 19,000 crore) in revenue between November and March by keeping petrol and diesel prices unchanged despite a sharp rise in crude oil prices, Moody's Investors Service said on Thursday.

Petrol and diesel prices remained unchanged between November 4, 2021, and March 21 despite prices of crude oil (raw material for producing fuel) averaging around USD 111 per barrel in the first three weeks of March compared to around USD 82 in early November.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) on March 22 and 23 raised petrol and diesel prices by 80 paise per litre each but paused the increase on Thursday.

"Based on current market prices, the oil marketing companies are currently incurring a revenue loss of around USD 25 (over Rs 1,900) per barrel and USD 24 per barrel on sale of petrol and diesel, respectively," Moody's said in a report.

If crude oil prices continue

ue to average around USD 111 a barrel, the three rated entities - IOC, BPCL and HPCL - will incur a combined daily loss of around USD 65-70 million on the sale of petrol and diesel unless fuel prices are increased to cover the rising crude oil prices, it said.

"Based on our estimates of average sales volume between November and first three weeks of March, the state-owned refining and marketing companies together have lost around USD 2.25 billion in revenue on petrol and diesel sales," Moody's said.

This equates to around 20 per cent of the combined FY2021 EBITDA for the three entities.

The rating agency estimated that IOC's revenue loss to be around USD 1-1.1 billion while that of BPCL and HPCL to be about USD 550-650 million each over the same period.

"This loss in revenue will add to the short term borrowings, funded with working capital lines, of the refiners until such time that crude oil prices stay at elevated levels." Over time, the companies might be able to make up for some of these losses if oil prices come down," it added.

# 5G scope: Airtel recreates Kapil Dev's iconic 175-run inning from '83 World Cup

**New Delhi:** Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Monday showcased the possibilities of 5G era, as it harnessed immersive video technology using the next generation network, to recreate in-stadia experience of Kapil Dev's legendary 175-run inning from the 1983 cricket World Cup.

Airtel also demonstrated a live 5G-powered hologram as the legendary cricketer's virtual avatar interacted with the audience in real-time from a remote location.

"Using cutting-edge immersive video technologies over its high-speed 5G test network, Airtel recreated the in-stadia experience of Kapil Dev's famous 175 not-out vs Zimbabwe during the 1983 cricket World Cup," Airtel said in a release.

The demo brought to life key moments from the match which had no actual video footage due to a strike at that time by TV technicians.

With over 1 Gbps of internet speed, more than 50 concurrent users had a highly personalised 4K video experience of the match on 5G smartphones with real-time access to multiple camera angles, 360-degree in-stadia view, shot analysis and statistics.

Airtel carried out the demonstration at its Network Experience Center in Manesar (Gurugram) using Ericsson 5G gear over 3,500 MHz band test spectrum allotted by the Department of Telecom.

During the demo, a 5G-powered virtual avatar of Kapil Dev appeared on the stage and interacted with the audience and walked them through the key moments of his inning.

Randeep Sekhon, CTO, Bharti Airtel, said that gigabit speeds and millisecond latency of 5G is set to transform the way entertainment is consumed.

# Fuel prices rise due to hike in int'l mkt: Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**P**etroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday sought to defend the Government over the steep rise in the fuel prices saying it is due to the increase in its prices in the international market. On another issue, the Ministry of Minority Affairs informed the Lok Sabha that the government was waiting for Saudi Arabia's signal for 'Haj' to happen this year.

On the matter of price rise, Congress MP Sashi Tharoor pointed out to the government that it has not reduced tax on oil to bring down the fuel prices.

Puri assured that efforts are being made to make fuel available to people at 'affordable prices'.

Replying to a question in Lok Sabha, the minister said the prices of LNG in the international market has gone up by "more than 37 per cent" if compared from April 2021 to February 2022, because of "an unsettled condition and military action in one part of the world following the Covid crisis".

"Whereas, our increase at

the bunk has been only five per cent," he told the House during Question Hour.

As for the LPG price, which is based on Saudi CP (Contract Price), the hike has been 37 percent in the last six months alone, he said.

"So, I just want to place these facts before the members and this august House, so that they understand what the international situation today is," he said.

The government is making "every effort to make sure that the consumer at the point of consumption gets fuel at an affordable price", he sought to say.

On another issue, Union Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi informed the Lok Sabha that government was waiting for Saudi Arabia's decision on hosting the annual Haj pilgrimage, but has started preparations to send pilgrims from 10 embarking points, Union Minorities Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said in Lok Sabha on Thursday.

Naqvi said there has been no Haj pilgrimage for the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

# SBI chairman flags off mobile medical unit project

**Mumbai:** India (NewsVoir) State Bank of India's Chairman, Dinesh Khara flagged off "SBI Sanjeevani-Clinic on Wheels", a mobile medical unit project at State Bank Bhavan, Mumbai. A batch of 5 such Mobile Medical Units were flagged off to provide primary healthcare services in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh & Uttarakhand. SBI Sanjeevani provides primary, preventive, diagnostic, and referral health services at the doorstep of the people in the remote areas. The Mobile Medical Unit will be equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic facilities and accompanied by a dedicated medical team consisting of a doctor, lab technician and pharmacist.

These units will provide services throughout the year, which will help rural communities for availing healthcare facilities at their doorsteps, thus saving their valuable time for daily livelihood activities.

Along with the clinical facilities, the unit will also run specialized health and awareness camps in these remote villages. The project also leverages collaborations with local health departments/medical colleges for support. As on date, such facility has been sanctioned for 18 States and 2 Union Territories. SBI Foundation, the CSR arm of the Bank has partnered with various NGOs for implementation of the initiative that aims to provide primary healthcare facilities in rural areas. SBI General Insurance Company Limited has provided the funding support for purchase of Mobile Medical Units to implement the project, in the above five States.

# PKH Ventures files draft papers for IPO with Sebi

**New Delhi:** PKH Ventures, a construction and hospitality firm, has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an Initial Public Offering (IPO). The public issue comprises fresh issuance of 1.826 crore equity shares and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 0.983 crore shares by its promoter, according to the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP).

The company may also consider a pre-IPO placement of 15 lakh equity shares. Proceeds of the issue will be used to invest in subsidiaries, funding long-term working capital requirements.

# Zee Entertainment shares rally nearly 17%; mcap jumps ₹4,139.83 cr

**New Delhi:** Shares of Zee Entertainment Enterprises on Thursday rallied nearly 17 per cent after Invesco Developing Markets Fund, the largest shareholder in the company, said it will support the Zee-Sony merger deal and has decided not to pursue the call for ZEEL EGM to remove Managing Director and CEO Punit Goenka and two independent directors.

The stock jumped 16.83 per cent to settle at Rs 299.15 on BSE. During the day, it zoomed 19.99 per cent to Rs 307.25.

On NSE, it rallied 16.89 per cent to close at Rs 299.30. Its market valuation jumped Rs 4,139.83 crore to Rs 28,733.83 crore on BSE. In volume terms, 41.16 lakh shares were traded on BSE and over 8.67 crore on NSE. Invesco Developing Markets Fund said it will support the merger of Zee and Sony, contending the "deal in its current form has great potential for Zee shareholders" but added if it is not completed as currently proposed, Invesco retains the right to requisition a fresh EGM. Two days after the Bombay High Court ruled that Invesco's call for EGM was legally valid, the investment firm in a statement said, "Since we announced our intention to requisition an EGM and add six independent directors to Zee's Board of Directors, Zee has entered into a merger agreement with Sony."

# Tata Motors, PPS Motors join hands to launch their first dealership in Chennai

**E**xpands its network footprint by adding the 19th Tata Motors' dealership in Tamil Nadu Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India (NewsVoir) Tata Motors, in partnership with PPS Motors has inaugurated a new state-of-the-art dealership at Pallikarnai - in the city of Chennai.

With this new facility, the company aims to extend its presence and build a strong foothold in the city. The new dealership facility with presence in Pallikarnai and ECR, Chennai will provide access to world-class Tata Motors Passenger & Electric Vehicles to customers in the region. The showroom has been designed and built as per the Company's Dealership

Standards and is strategically located to provide a convenient access to the visitors and customers. The dealership employees have been trained under the supervision of Tata Motors experts and will provide a quality customer experience to the visitors. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Ramesh Dorairajan, Senior General Manager - Network Management & EV Sales, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd. Said, "We are extremely happy to embark on this journey with PPS Motors as our authorised dealer in Chennai. This is the first Tata Motors showroom from PPS Motors in Chennai, which will help us penetrate deeper into the market with the support of their reach."

# Veranda Learning Solutions IPO to open on March 29; fixes price band of ₹130-₹137 per equity share

**Chennai:** Veranda Learning Solutions on Thursday said it has fixed price band of Rs 130-137 per equity share of face value of Rs 10 each for its forthcoming initial public offering scheduled to begin from March 29. The offer consists of equity shares of face value of Rs 10 each of the issuer aggregating up to Rs 2,000 million (Rs 200 crore). The offer to remain open from March 29 to March 31, 2022 and bids can be made for a minimum of 100 equity shares and in multiples of 100 equity shares thereafter, the company said. Veranda Learning said, "...Not less than 75 per cent of the net offer shall be available for allocation on a proportionate basis to Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIB)".

"Further not more than 15 per cent of the Net Offer shall be available for allocation on a proportionate basis to Non-Institutional Bidders and not more than 10 per cent shall be available for allocation to retail individual bidders", the company said.

The company said five per cent of the Net QIB shall be available for allocation on a proportionate basis to mutual funds only and the remainder of the Net QIB portion shall be available for allocation on a proportionate basis to all QIBs, mutual funds, subject to valid bids being received at or above the offer price, the company said.

# IIFL Home Fin ties up with SBI for affordable housing loans under co-lending model

**New Delhi:** IIFL Home Fin has entered into a strategic co-lending partnership with State Bank of India to accelerate effective and affordable credit to small home buyers in the country.

IIFL HFL, a digital-first home finance company, has signed an agreement with SBI for co-lending of priority-sector home loans.

"This is SBI's first co-lending agreement with a home finance company. The loan sourcing and servicing will be managed by IIFL HFL. Under the arrangement, 80 per cent of the loan will be provided by SBI," it said in a release on Thursday.

IIFL HFL will service the

customers throughout their entire loan cycle, from sourcing, documentation, disbursal to collection.

This will help the company to penetrate further into the affordable home loan segment. This arrangement will also help the company in offering attractive interest rates to its customers.

"This collaboration will enhance our distribution network, as we aim to extend our credit reach to more home loan borrowers in unserved and underserved segments. Such partnerships align with our commitment to accelerate effective and affordable credit to small home buyers in India and contribute to the vision of

Housing for All by 2024," Dinesh Kumar Khara, SBI Chairman said.

Earlier this year, IIFL HFL signed agreements with Union Bank for extending home loans, Central Bank of India for LIG and MIG sector loans and Punjab National Bank for extending home loans and MSME loans.

It also partnered with foreign-based Standard Chartered Bank for extending credit to MSME loans.

"We are looking forward to further strengthening our foothold in the affordable home space with co-lending. With this association, we target to align our goals with the government's agenda of improving

the flow of credit and make funds available to the ultimate beneficiary at an affordable cost," Monu Ratna, CEO & ED, IIFL HFL said.

The company has disbursed loans totaling Rs 1,500 crore till February 28, 2022 under the existing co-lending arrangements.

In November 2020, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) came out with the Co-Lending Model (CLM) scheme under which banks can provide loans along with NBFCs to priority sector borrowers based on a prior agreement. The CLM, is an improvement over the co-origination of loan schemes announced by RBI in September 2018.

# Mukunda Foods raises USD 5 mn from Zomato, others

**New Delhi:** Food robotics and automation firm Mukunda Foods on Thursday said it has raised USD 5 million (over Rs 35 crore) in a funding round led by Zomato.

The fresh round of funding takes the company's post-money valuation to USD 30 million, Mukunda Foods said in a statement.

The company further said it plans to utilise funds to expand its reach across QSRs, cloud kitchens and fine dine segment, besides using a part of the raised capital to introduce multiple models to help the food and beverages (F&B) businesses scale up.

The brand had previously raised funds from Ncube Capital, Singapore Angel Network, and Indian Angel Network.

So far, the brand has raised a total of around USD 8 million, including the current fundraising.

Commenting on the fundraise, Mukunda Foods CEO, and Co-Founder Eshwar K Vikas said, "Zomato and Mukunda Foods share the vision of reaching every restaurant and helping them grow."

"While Zomato does it by helping restaurants reach more customers and increasing their revenues, we help the F&B

brands increase their profitability and grow fast with our kitchen technologies. This common interest will help the F&B industry greatly."

A Zomato spokesperson said the company's investment will help Mukunda Foods scale faster, help reduce restaurant food prices, expand margins and enhance customer satisfaction.

Last week, in a regulatory filing Zomato had said its board has also approved acquisition of 16.66 per cent stake in Mukunda Foods for an aggregate cash consideration of rupee equivalent of USD 5 million.

# Welspun India forays into mattress business

**New Delhi:** Home textiles major Welspun India on Thursday announced its foray into the mattress category under its home linen brand SPACES.

The company said it has launched 'SPACES Matchress' with a variety of offerings on the back of extensive market research as an extension of its home wellness offerings.

Manjari Upadhye, CEO of Welspun India Ltd, Domestic Business, said the company's deep understanding of stated and unstated consumer requirements provides it with the insights to innovate and offer the most relevant products and solutions to the country's diverse and fast-growing consumer base.

"The launch of 'SPACES Matchress' is another step in this direction, backed by market research with a pure intent to address the gaps in the segment and offer a product that our customers want," Upadhye added.

The brand offers customisable, orthopedic, firm and fab mattress ranges for different consumer preferences. The mattress comes with the benefits of an in-built mattress protector, odor-free and anti-pilling, 12 years warranty, among others, the company said.

Welspun India said its move to enter the mattress category underscores SPACES' aggressive focus on the domestic market and its aim to capitalise on emerging opportunities in this high-potential segment with innovative offerings.



# Barty cagey on future plans

AP ■ BRISBANE

Ashleigh Barty was coy about her future on Thursday, telling media "you'll have to wait and see" as speculation mounts about what comes next after her shock retirement from tennis.

The world number one and three-time Grand Slam champion stunned the tennis world on Wednesday by quitting aged just 25, saying she had fulfilled her dreams and was "spent physically".

It sparked an outpouring of praise for the down-to-earth Australian, led by Serena Williams.

Barty spoke publicly for the first time on Thursday since her announcement but repeatedly deflected questions on her future plans.

"You'll have to wait and see, I'm not giving you everything right now. It's alright, you can be patient. Patience is a virtue," she told reporters in Brisbane. "We'll see."

Barty previously walked away from tennis to play in cricket's Big Bash League, with local media speculating a return to the crease could be on the cards, or even becoming a professional golfer or playing Australian Rules.

"I have seen some brilliant photo-shops as a jockey, lawn bowls," the multi-talented Barty joked.

"I love sport, I'm a sport nut like a lot of Australians are. I'll be lured to it. I have always been an athlete in the sense of trying different things, but we'll see how we go."

She did confirm she wanted to work more with Indigenous Australians and spend time with her



num and dad, calling herself "a homebody". "I have always wanted to have the time to contribute more in other ways," Barty said.

"And I think now I have got that opportunity and I've been fortunate enough to have so many opportuni-

ties given to me from tennis, and now I'm ready to really give back in ways that I'm passionate about."

Marriage is on the horizon to long-term boyfriend Garry Kissick. A date has been set, but Barty would not say when. In a social media message

## Swiatek poised to be No 1

AP ■ BRISBANE

Ashleigh Barty on Thursday said that she will remove herself from the WTA rankings after announcing her retirement, opening the door for Poland's Iga Swiatek to become world number one.

The three-time Grand Slam-winning Australian has held top spot for more than two years but stunned the sports world on Wednesday by quitting at just 25.

The 20-year-old Swiatek is a massive 2,204 ranking points behind Barty, but could be elevated to number one depending on what happens at the ongoing Miami Open.



"My name will be taken off the list in the next ranking," Barty said at a press conference in Brisbane, the first time she has spoken publicly since her retirement announcement.

"It's going to be an exciting time for the WTA Tour with a new number one and it's going to be a really cool period for them now."

"But we have done everything that we needed to on our side with them. We have worked with the WTA Tour and they have made my journey so enjoyable and made it really comfortable."

Swiatek is currently 691 points ahead of third-ranked Maria Sakkari of Greece after winning at Indian Wells last week, her second title in as many tournaments after her triumph in Doha in February.

on Wednesday, Barty said achieving her life-time dream of winning Wimbledon last year changed her perspective and sparked retirement thoughts.

But her coach Craig Tillyer admitted she had been thinking about it as far back as her breakthrough Grand Slam success at the French Open in

2019. "The first thing she said to me was, 'Can I retire now?'. I sort of went, 'Hang on, I'm not ready for that,'" he said alongside Barty.

"It's not a shock to me. Ash does her own thing and when we started together she wanted to do it the way she wanted to do it. I think it's the right time."

## Sathiyar-Manika pair wins Silver



PTI ■ DOHA

India paddlers finished the WTT Contender Doha 2022 with two medals, including a singles Bronze won by Achanta Sharath Kamal, as seniors showed the way on the concluding day of the competition.

As expected, G Sathiyar and Manika Batra settled for the Silver, capitulating in the final of the mixed doubles against the top-seeded Chinese Taipei pair of Lin Yun-Ju and Cheng I-Ching. The Indians lost 4-11, 5-11, 3-11.

Sharath Kamal, on the other hand, failed to up the ante from an advantageous position in the sixth game and went down fighting 3-4 (5-11, 11-8, 6-11, 11-7, 11-5, 10-12, 9-11 in the semifinals of the men's singles against Yuan Lichen of China.

This was the first medal for Sharath in two years. The Indian veteran had won a Gold in the Oman Open in 2020.

The No 7 Indian mixed pair found the going tough against the Taipei combine right from the start. Their troubles only multiplied when Sathiyar and Manika failed to comprehend the left-right combination that went about the task clinically.

Yet, it was creditable for the Indians to resist as much as they could before eventually surrendering to the Taipei paddlers.

But Sharath will rue his missed opportunity on a day when he had the rhythm and form on his side. Trailing 1-2, the higher-ranked Indian (No 41) came back strongly to go 3-2 up against the Chinese, ranked 264.

In the sixth game, Sharath was up 9-7 but frittered away his chances and let Lichen off the hook. The Chinese not only reduced the margin but was on game-point. Sharath managed to deuce but failed to hold his serve, allowing his opponent to level the score.

In the decider, Sharath once again led 6-4. But he could not maintain it and the Chinese, gaining confidence, kept the lead before completing the task without giving any opportunity to his rival.

## Bajrang secures 65kg spot in team for Asian C'ship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Taking the mat for the first time since winning a Bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics, star Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia was far from his dominant best as he just about managed to prevail 4-2 against a fighting Rohit to secure his place in the Indian team for the Asian Championships.

The national federation put Bajrang, Tokyo Olympic Silver medalist Ravi Dahiya and Deepak Punia directly in the finals, a move which did not amuse other competing wrestlers and their coaches.

Eventually all three made the Indian team for the Championships, starting April 19 in Mongolia, with Ravi (57kg) getting a walkover from hard-working Aman, who like Ravi trains at Chhatrasal stadium.

Aman chose not to compete after developing stiff back following four tough bouts and



Deepak (86kg) beat Vinod 6-0 in an ill-tempered final, which ended when the latter was given a third caution.

Bajrang, who had planned to compete in a couple of Ranking Series event to start his season but could not do so due to a left-knee issue, was not sharp and perhaps surprised by the aggression of his opponent.

"This was my first bout after Olympics. It takes time to

get that sharpness when you go to mat after so many months. After my injury I did my rehab on my own. I did not have a personal physio with me, otherwise I could have recovered early," Bajrang said.

"Overall I am happy with my performance considering that I competed after eight months. I felt good."

The 28-year-old had injured his left knee during the National camp at Sonepat, late in January. He had trained in Iran before returning to country.

## Indian girls face B'desh in SAFF U-18 C'ship



PTI ■ JAMSHEDPUR

India will take on Bangladesh in their final game to decide the winner of the SAFF U-18 Women's Championship here on Friday.

It will be a "real battle", India head coach Thomas Dennerby said on the eve of the match.

India have played three games in the tournament which is being hosted in Jamshedpur, and have won all those matches -- two against Nepal and one against Bangladesh -- scoring 13 goals, while conceding just one.

However, Dennerby remained cautious ahead of the Bangladesh game, in which a draw would be enough for India to seal the championship.

"It was a tight game last time, and I think it will be the same in this one as well. We have seen the games between Nepal and Bangladesh, and they have been a little slower, but they are still a very good side," said Dennerby.

"Of course, it's the last game of the championship, and everything depends on it. This will be a real battle, so we have to stay 100 per cent

focussed."

The 'Young Tigresses', who have nine points on the board, will be looking to end the championship with another win at the JRD Tata Sports Complex.

"We are here to win all the games, there has not been anything that would prompt us to change anything about that. We will look forward to another great game and hope for another three points.

"We want to end the tournament with a perfect record, which will help in the future as well," said the head coach.

India captain Shilky Devi echoed Dennerby's sentiments, saying she is looking forward to having a good game against Bangladesh.

"Coach has told us from the start that no matter what, we want to win all the four games, and that remains our target. We have all worked hard for the last few months and we would love to see the results on the pitch as well," Shilky said.

"We not only want to win, but also want to have a good game against Bangladesh."

## Japan beat Australia to reach WC, Saudis also qualify

AP ■ SYDNEY

Substitute Kaoru Mitoma Scored twice in the dying minutes as Japan beat Australia 2-0 on Thursday to book their place at a seventh straight World Cup and in doing so also helped Saudi Arabia qualify.

It was a crushing blow for an understrength Socceroos who now face a perilous play-off to keep alive their hopes of making Qatar.

The game in a wet Sydney looked destined for a draw before Mitoma converted from close range on 89 minutes, and then again after a mazy run in injury time to spark joyous celebrations from the visitors.

"I knew it was going to be a close match so when I was on the bench all I was thinking was, when I got on the field of play I just had to do my job and score a goal," said Mitoma, 24, who plays for Belgium's Union SG on

loan from Premier League Brighton.

"I feel really happy for the players and people back in Japan, and everyone who is a Japanese fan."

Victory pushed the Blue Samurai to the top of Asian Group B qualifying on 21 points, six clear of Australia with only one more game to play.

The Saudis, on 19 points, face China in Sharjah later Thursday but are assured of their place in Qatar courtesy of Japan's win.

Australia now cannot finish higher than third, forcing a play-off against the third-placed team in Asian Group A. The winner will then meet a team from South America for the right to play in Qatar later this year.

Japan started their qualifying campaign with two losses from their first three games, but have now won six in a row.

## Srikanth, Kashyap enter Swiss Open quarterfinals

PTI ■ BASEL

World Championships Silver medalist Kidambi Srikanth staved off aspired challenge from France's Christo Popov to progress to the men's singles quarterfinals of the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament here on Thursday.

World no 12 Srikanth eked out a fighting 13-21, 25-23, 21-11 win over Popov, in a second-round match that lasted an hour and 13 minutes.

The seventh seeded Indian will face second seeded Dane Anders Antonsen next.

Former Commonwealth Games Gold medalist Parupalli Kashyap too entered the quarterfinals after top seed and Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen gave a



walkover.

Third seeds Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, however, lost 19-21, 20-22 to Pramudya Kusumawardana and Yermia Erich Yocher Yacob Rambitan in the men's doubles.

In the women's singles, Ashmita Chaliha put up a tough fight before going down 18-21, 20-22 to eighth seeded Scot Kirsty Gilmour in the second round. On Wednesday night, Sindhu had entered the second round with a 21-14, 21-12 win over Denmark's Line Hojmark Kjaersfeldt here.

Also progressing was the women's doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy, who got the better of local pair Aline Muller and Jenjira Stadelmann 21-15, 21-16 in straight games.

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian men's hockey team will begin the new season of FIH Hockey Pro League against New Zealand and Spain, the world governing body (FIH) said on Thursday, announcing the schedule of the fourth edition of its ambitious tournament.

India will host New Zealand and Spain in the tournament opener between October 28 and November 6 later this year.

India will play New Zealand in the first match on October 28, followed by the second game against Spain on October 30.

The Indians will play their return



leg matches against New Zealand and Spain on October 4 and 6 respectively.

In between, both New Zealand and Spain will also play a double-header against each other on October 29 and November 5.

"Interesting to see the 2022-23 Pro League schedule released today. As far as our draw is concerned, it is well spaced out and provides us with practice opportunity before the 2023 World Cup," Indian men's hockey team chief coach Graham Reid said.

In March next year, India will play Germany and Australia at home. India will face off against Germany on March 10 and after a

day's break will take on Australia in their first match of the two-legged tie.

The second-leg matches against both Germany and Australia will be played on March 13 and 15 respectively.

Germany and Australia too will play their FIH Pro League tie against each other in India. In what appears to be an action-paced Olympic cycle, India will next embark on a tour to Europe for their away matches against reigning Olympic Champions Belgium (May 26 and June 2), Great Britain (May 27 and June 3), Netherlands (June 7 and 10) and Argentina (June 8 and 11).



## 10 wrestlers barred from national trials, Geeta Phogat out with injury

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sending out a stern message that indiscipline will not be tolerated, the Wrestling Federation of India has barred 10 women wrestlers, including U-23 World Championship Bronze medalist Nisha Dahiya and a few youngsters, from competing in the trials for the upcoming Asia Championship.

The barred wrestlers either did not report for the national camp in Lucknow or left after just two days, making excuses. The camp began on February 9.

The Asian Championship is scheduled to be held in Mongolia from April 19-24 and the trials for women wrestlers are scheduled for Friday at the SAI Centre in Lucknow.

The wrestlers in question, including Nisha, who competes in 65kg category, requested to be let off but the WFI did not budge. Nisha was in the news recently when the report of her murder in Haryana emerged, which turned out to be fake.

Other wrestlers who have been kicked out of the national camp are Honey Kumari (50kg), Ankush (53kg), Anju (55kg), Raman (55kg), Geeta (59kg), Bhateri (65kg), Priyanka (65kg), Naina (68kg) and Pooja (76kg).

Bhateri, Anju and Honey also sought permission from the WFI to compete in trials but the

federation put its foot down.

The celebrated Geeta Phogat, who recently made a comeback during the National Championship in Gonda, has reported an injury.

Missing out on this opportunity is a huge loss for Anju, who is coming up nicely and opening up an option in the category of star wrestler Vinesh Phogat.

Since Sonam Malik is still unfit and Bhateri and Priyanka are barred from trials, the road has become easier for struggling Sakshi Malik to book her slot in the Indian team in 65kg.

"We will ask for an explanation from the wrestlers why are they not taking national camp seriously. Missing out on a chance to compete in a tournament like Asian Championship will certainly teach them a lesson," WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh told PTI on the sidelines of the men's trials at the IG stadium here.

"Our second line is pretty strong, so we can take these tough steps to ensure discipline at the national camp. We don't want to hurt chances of good wrestlers but they need to understand that they can't take things for granted," he added.

The federation believes that more than the wrestlers, their personal coaches are responsible for the mess.



# Dhoni hands over CSK captaincy to Jadeja



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Twelve seasons, four title triumphs and five runner-up finishes later, the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni has decided to hand over the captaincy of Chennai Super Kings to his trusted lieutenant, Ravindra Jadeja.

However, in a brief statement, CSK said the 40-year-old will continue to represent the franchise for the "season and beyond", having led one of the most successful IPL sides since the tournament's inception in 2008 -- barring the two seasons when the team was suspended in the wake of the spot-fixing scandal.

MS Dhoni has decided to hand over the leadership of Chennai Super Kings and picked Ravindra Jadeja to lead the team. Jadeja, who has been an integral part of Chennai Super Kings since 2012, will only be the third player to lead CSK," said CSK in a statement on Thursday.

"Dhoni will continue to represent Chennai Super Kings this season and beyond," the franchise added.

Dhoni, 40, who had announced his international retirement on August 15, 2020, had led CSK to their fourth title last season.

CSK play KKR in the IPL 2022 opener here on Saturday.

The World Cup-winning captain has always been his

own man when it comes to leaving captaincy or announcing his retirement.

He quit Test captaincy and also the five-day game in the middle of a series in Australia in 2014. And when he was sure Virat Kohli was ready to lead India across formats, Dhoni made way for him in 2017.

Though the inspirational leader carried on to play the IPL after announcing his international retirement in his inimitable style, his decision to hand over the CSK leadership to Jadeja was not entirely surprising.

Dhoni knew that he can't go on forever and the 33-year-old Jadeja, who is at the peak of his prowess, is ready for the challenge. The southpaw was CSK's number one retention before the auction ahead of Dhoni, Moeen Ali and Ruturaj Gaekwad.

The announcement still took CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan by surprise but he said "if Dhoni takes a decision, it has to be in the best interest of the team".

"See whatever decision MS takes it is in the best interest of the team. So there is nothing to worry for us. We respect his decision. He is always there to guide us," Viswanathan said.

"He has always been the guiding force and will continue to be the guiding force."

Asked if the 2022 edition can be his last season, the CEO

## I don't need to worry because...: Jadeja reacts after replacing Dhoni as CSK's new skipper

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Newly appointed Chennai Super Kings skipper Ravindra Jadeja says that he is feeling good to get the chance to lead the side in the upcoming edition of the IPL that starts in two days' time.

Jadeja, who has been part of a CSK outfit for almost a decade now, joined the franchise in 2012 and has represented them in eight seasons, playing 132 matches. The all-rounder was the team's first retention as well ahead of the mega auctions this year and will earn Rs 16 crore. In a video released by the

Super Kings Twitter handle shortly after the big announcement, Jadeja said that he has big boots to fill and carry forward MS Dhoni's legacy.

"Feeling good at the same time, I also need to fill in big boots. Like, Mahi bhai already set a big legacy, so I need to carry forward. So hopefully, I don't need to worry too much because he is here, so whatever I have a question to ask, I will definitely go to him. He will be my go-to person. He was and still is today. So, I am not too worried. Thank you for all your wishes and love. Cheers. Keep supporting us. Thank you," Jadeja said."

added: "I don't think it will be his last season. As long as he is fit, we want him to play. That is my wish, I don't know about him (what he thinks)."

On Jadeja's ascension as captain, Viswanathan said the all-rounder is primed to do well.

"See Jaddu will do well. He is probably in the best form of his career. He will definitely do well under MS' guidance. Jaddu has been with us for 10 years and he very well knows the team culture," he added.

It can be safely said that CSK couldn't have become the brand it became without the charismatic Dhoni, who developed a special bond with the team and its fanatical fans.

Even when representing Pune Supergiant, when CSK was suspended for two seasons in 2016 and 2017, Dhoni's heart remained with Chennai.

"I will be lying if I say that I have moved on. I cannot suddenly say that I am very excited to play for a new team and it will be wrong if I don't give credit to CSK and the people of Chennai for the last eight years of love and affection that they have given to the team and me," Dhoni had said ahead of the 2016 edition.

His stature grew as he scripted CSK's fairytale comeback after a two-year suspension, leading the team to its third title in 2018.

Mumbai Indians are the

most successful IPL franchise with five titles but they have not been able to match CSK's consistency in reaching the play-offs.

Branded the *Dad's Army* due to an ageing squad in 2020, when CSK failed to reach the play-offs for the very first time, Dhoni and Co made a remarkable comeback last season to win their fourth title. He may not have been the finisher he was in his heydays but the skipper was able to galvanise the team and take it to the distance in the presence of emerging stars.

Under his leadership, CSK have registered a record 121 wins in 204 matches in the IPL.

## Virat took a smart decision to relinquish captaincy: Shastri



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India coach Ravi Shastri thinks Virat Kohli has taken a "smart decision" by giving up captaincy from all forms of cricket, paving the way to express himself better in the upcoming Indian Premier League.

Shastri, who witnessed Kohli's leadership from close quarters during his stint as India coach, however, also feels the 33-year-old star batter could have continued as the captain in Test cricket.

"I think this (giving up captaincy) could be a blessing in disguise, to be honest. The pressures of captaincy off his shoulders, the expectations that come with being captain no longer there, he can go out, express himself, play freely, and I think he'll look to do just that," Shastri said.

"I think he has taken a smart decision of relinquishing captaincy. I would have still preferred if he stayed on as India's red-ball captain but that's his personal choice," Shastri was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.Com.

Kohli left many in shock when he stepped down as Royal Challengers Bangalore captain after 2021 IPL.

Subsequently, Kohli quit Test captaincy following India's 1-2 series loss to South Africa. He had earlier relinquished T20 captaincy after the World Cup last year, a decision which led the BCCI to remove him as ODI skipper also.

"I think the most important thing is not to worry about his own performances, because he's done enough in world cricket for people to know where he stands."

"It's about him wanting to enjoy himself out there. I think that is the key. It's mind over matter, it's a case of telling yourself, 'I want to go there, express myself, and enjoy myself.'"

The former all-rounder said captaining the Indian cricket team has its own challenges.

"It (captaincy) certainly does (have a shelf life). It's not easy to be captain of a team in all three formats of the game, more so India because it is the most demanding job in the world."

"No other team captain faces the kind of pressure than the Indian team captain faces and that is simply because of the expectations of the billion people. Expectations are huge."

"And especially as a captain if you set standards like Virat Kohli has, people expect you to win every game but that's never going to happen. Even the greatest of team will have an off season, will have a period where nothing fires and the pressure will build," Shastri said.

## Pitches will get slower as IPL progresses, adaptation key to success: RR's Daryl Mitchell

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rajasthan Royals all-rounder Daryl Mitchell feels adapting to the pitches will be key for all teams in the upcoming IPL as the surfaces will get slower as the tournament progresses.

"I feel the pitches will definitely get slower as the league stage goes on. For us as a team, it's about adapting and being in the right frame of mind on a particular surface," said Mitchell, who is looking to make an impression in his maiden IPL season.

Mitchell was bought by RR for ₹75 lakh in the mega auction earlier this year, and the 30-year-old just wants to contribute to the team's cause in whatever way possible.

"My goal is to play the game with a



smile on my face. I'm proud to represent Rajasthan Royals here and will do whatever it takes to help the team on the field or off the bench," he said.

"It feels good to be a part of a massive tournament such as the IPL. Boasting of some of the best players in the world, I think it's a great learning school and I'm happy to have that opportunity for myself to learn from the best here."

Mitchell's trans-Tasman rival turned IPL teammate, Nathan Coulter-Nile is looking forward to working with Sri Lankan legend Lasith Malinga, who has joined RR as the team's fast bowling coach.

"He's unbelievable, it was amazing seeing him go about his work during my time with Mumbai and now at the Royals," said Coulter-Nile about his former Mumbai Indians teammate Malinga.

## Pak need 278 runs to win series

AP ■ LAHORE

Pakistan survived an intriguing last session to reach 73-0 on day four after a bold declaration by Australia set a tricky target of 351 runs in the series-deciding third Test on Thursday.

Opening batters Imam-ul-Haq, 42 not out, and Abdullah Shafique, 27 not out, survived television referrals against offspinner Nathan Lyon to leave the home team still needing 278 runs in a minimum 90 overs on the last day on Friday.

Shafique had a close escape when Steve Smith's poor run in the slips continued as the Australia vice-captain couldn't hold onto a sharp chance off Marnus Labuschagne's penultimate ball of the day.

Captain Pat Cummins declared Australia's second innings at 227-3 shortly after tea, Usman Khawaja having achieved an unbeaten 104, his second successive century to round off a brilliant tour to the country of his birth.

It gave Australia nearly four sessions to have a crack at Pakistan, after missing out in the second Test at Karachi where Pakistan batted for 171.4 overs and forced an epic draw.

Khawaja featured in three half-century stands and raised his hundred at the stroke of tea as Australia blunted the reverse swing of Naseem Shah (1-23) and Shaheen Shah Afridi (1-45) while scoring freely against spinners Nauman Ali and Sajid Khan.

Khawaja made 97 in the drawn first Test at Rawalpindi and followed with 160 and 44 not out at Karachi.

Despite being ill on the opening day of this Test, Khawaja scored 91 in the first innings. The left-hander has an impressive 496 runs at a series average of 165.33.

Khawaja combined in a 96-run opening stand with David Warner, who was clean bowled on 51 by Afridi in the penultimate over before lunch.

Labuschagne, with 36, then shared another brisk 65-run stand with Khawaja before he swept hard at left-arm spinner Nauman and was caught at deep mid-wicket in the second session.

## Mumbai police says it will ensure full security for IPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Police is geared up to ensure full security for the IPL which will kick off this weekend. Adequate security arrangements will be made at the two stadiums in the city (Wankhede and Brabourne) where matches will be played as well as the hotels where the players and support staff will be staying, police said.

## Smith fastest to 8,000 Test runs

AP ■ LAHORE

Steve Smith's legacy as a Test great continues to grow.

When Australia's number four reached seven in the second innings of the third Test against Pakistan, Smith became the fastest man to 8,000 runs, reaching the milestone in his 151st innings.

Smith eclipsed Sri Lanka legend Kumar Sangakkara, who reached the mark in his 152nd

innings.

All-time great Sachin Tendulkar rounds out the podium, after the 'Little Master' brought up 8,000 Test runs in his 154th innings in 2002.

Boasting an overall Test batting average of over 60 with 27 centuries, the 32-year-old Smith will have plenty more records in his sight.

In 2019, Smith became the fastest to 7,000 Test runs in a home Test match against

Pakistan. The latest milestone for Smith comes despite a recent lean period, by his lofty standards. Since the 2019 Ashes series, Smith has scored just one century in his 29 innings prior to the current match in Lahore.

Among the other Australians to pass 8,000 Test runs, Smith soared past Matthew Hayden (164 innings), Ricky Ponting (165), Michael Clarke (172), Allan Border (184) and Steve Waugh (194).

## Semis in reach for England after big win over Pak

AP ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Defending champions England continued their Women's Cricket World Cup resurgence with an emphatic nine-wicket win over Pakistan on Thursday to stand on the brink of the semi-finals.

England pace bowler Katherine Brunt roared back into form after an indifferent tournament, taking 3-17 as she and Sophie Ecclestone helped bundle Pakistan out for 105 in Christchurch.

Brunt had taken only one wicket in five previous matches at this year's one-day showcase but formed a potent attack with Ecclestone, who took 3-18.

Danni Wyatt then shook off her own tentative start to the tournament, smashing an unbeaten 76 to see England home.

The result moves England into the top four at the expense of India on a better net run rate and they can



confirm a place in the semi-finals with victory over Bangladesh on Sunday.

Captain Heather Knight said the

2017 champions were building momentum after making a disastrous start to the tournament with three straight losses.

"It's about reminding the girls that it's not how you start, it's how you finish," she said.

"We're not there yet and we've got a big game coming up against Bangladesh."

England made the perfect start after putting Pakistan into bat when Brunt dismissed opener Nahida Khan with the first ball of the innings, coaxing an outside edge that went straight to first slip.

Pakistan captain Bismah Maroof then threw away her wicket when she was run out for nine trying to sneak a second run to square leg.

The run rate slowed to a crawl and Pakistan were 33-3 when Omaima Sohail was also run out on 11 with a direct hit from Tammy Beaumont.

Sidra Ameen tried to rebuild but was bowled for 32 and Sidra Nawaz was the only other batter to offer resistance, making 23 as Pakistan were bowled out for 105 in 41.3 overs.



AP ■ WELLINGTON

South Africa reached the semi-finals of the Women's Cricket World Cup on Thursday when rain washed out their crunch match against the West Indies in Wellington.

Both teams received a point from the abandoned fixture, putting South Africa second

in the table to Australia and beyond the reach of their rivals for the playoff spots.

The West Indies can still make the top four but need results involving India and England to go their way.

A downpour delayed the start of the match in the New Zealand capital for more than four hours, then officials attempted to proceed with innings of 26 overs apiece.

But that was scrapped after 10.5 overs with South Africa 61-4 and looking to rebuild with Mignon du Preez unbeaten on 38 from 31 balls.

Chinelle Henry took 3-19 and West Indies captain Stafanie Taylor felt they were on top when play was called off.

"It's not the way we'd like (the match to end) but you can't do much about God's plan, it's something we can't control," she said.

South Africa captain Sune Luus said her players were "pumped" at having the chance to make the final for the first time after semi appearances in 2000 and 2017. "Everyone's extremely excited and obviously very happy to be in the semi-finals," she said.