

OPINION 6

WILL BJP REFORGE  
ITS PROGRAMMES?

WORLD 8

'CHINA COULD BOOST  
MILITARY IN SOLOMONS'

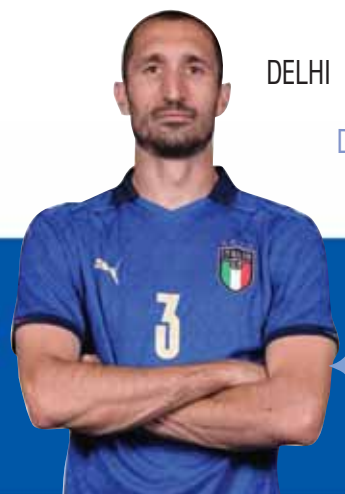
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SPECTRUM AUCTION SOON, 5G  
LAUNCH BY YEAR END: GOVT



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## Yogi begins 2nd innings; 24 Ministers lose berth

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Yogi Adityanath was sworn in as 41st Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in a grand function at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana International Cricket Stadium in Lucknow on Friday along with two Deputy Chief Ministers and 50 other Ministers.

The Yogi 2.0 Cabinet has a mix of youth and experience as the Chief Minister has given chance to many newcomers and first time MLAs. He dropped as many as 24 Ministers and retained only 22 Ministers from his first term as CM. 12 Ministers could not win the Assembly polls.

Governor Anandiben Patel administered the oath of office and secrecy to Yogi and his council of Ministers in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, national BJP president JP Nadda, and Union Defence Minister and local MP Rajnath Singh.

A number of Union Ministers and Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States attended the function at Ekana Stadium, which was chock-a-block with people.

While Cabinet Ministers took oath separately, the Minister of State (Independent charge) took the oath in a group of two and the Ministers of State in a group of four.

Yogi replicated the template of his 1.0 Government of having two Deputy Chief Ministers. He reposed faith in Keshav Prasad Maurya despite his losing the election and appointed him Deputy CM.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP leader Yogi Adityanath, during the latter's swearing-in ceremony as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, at Atal Bihari Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on Friday

PTI

Instead of Dr Dinesh Sharma, Yogi appointed Brijesh Pathak as Deputy CM, thus projecting him a Brahmin face of the BJP.

Two Deputy CMs — Maurya and Pathak — 16 Cabinet Ministers, 14 Minister of State (Independent charge), and 20 Ministers of State took the oath of office and secrecy.

Prominent among those dropped in the second term of the Yogi Government include Jal Shakti Minister Dr Mahendra Singh, Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh, MSME Minister Sidharth Nath Singh, Urban Development Minister Ashutosh Tandon, Excise Minister Ram Naresh Agnihotri, Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma,

Industry Minister Satish Mahana, Power Minister Shrikant Sharma, Minority Welfare Minister Moshin Raza, Tourism and Religious Affairs Minister Neelkanth Tiwari, Agriculture Export Minister Sriram Chauhan, Transport

Minister Ashok Kataria, Social Welfare Minister Ramapati Shastri, and MoS Medical and Health Atul Garg.

Danish Azad Ansari, a new Muslim face, replaced Mohsin Raza as a Minister.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Yogi 2.0 sets caste equations right

**21 upper caste, 21 OBCs, 8 SCs, 1 Sikh, Muslim, ST each in Govt**

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

With an eye to consolidate its base among the OBCs and Dalits, Yogi Adityanath has given major representation to the two social groups in his Cabinet.

The 53-member council of Ministers includes 21 Ministers from the upper caste, 21 OBCs, 8 SCs, 1 Sikh, one ST, and one Muslim. The OBCs include 4 Kurmi, 1 Yadav, 2 Nishad, 1 Maurya, 1 Saini, 3 Jat, one from Rajbhar community, one from Kashyap community, and three others.

The thrust of the Cabinet formation was on consolidating Brahmins, Other Backward Classes, and Dalit communities — a section of whom had shown signs of unease against the Yogi Government. There is

only one Rajput Minister Jaiveer Singh in the Cabinet.

Keshav Prasad Maurya, a prominent face of OBCs, has again been inducted as Deputy Chief Minister despite losing the Assembly election from Sirathu.

Swtantrdev Singh, State BJP president and senior leader from the dominant Kurmi community, has been made a Cabinet Minister.

Dharmpal Singh from the dominant OBCs Lodha community too has found a place in the Cabinet. He was a Cabinet Minister in the previous Yogi Government also. He was dropped from the Cabinet during the reshuffle.

Rakesh Sachan, former Lok Sabha member from the Samajwadi Party and now BJP MLA from Bhognipur (Kanpur dehat), has been included in the Cabinet.

Baby Rani Maurya from the Jatav Dalit community too has found a place in the Yogi Cabinet. She was earlier Governor of Uttarakhand and Mayor of Agra.

*Continued on Page 2*

## 300 killed in Russian strike on Kyiv theatre

KYIV: Ukrainian authorities in the besieged ruins of Mariupol said Friday that about 300 people died when a Russian airstrike blew up a theatre where hundreds of civilians were sheltering — a catastrophic loss of civilian life that, if confirmed, is likely to further crank up pressure on Western nations to step up military aid.

In a vain attempt to protect those inside the grand, columned theatre from missile and airstrikes that Russia has rained down on cities, an enormous inscription reading "CHILDREN" in Russian was posted outside the building and was visible from the air.

For days, the Government in the battered port city was unable to give a casualty count for the March 16 attack. The

post on its Telegram channel Friday cited eyewitnesses. It was not immediately clear whether emergency workers had finished excavating the theatre ruins or how witnesses arrived at the horrific figure of lives lost.

Still, the emerging picture of gruesome casualties could refocus attention on the refusal of the Yogi Government to protect those inside the grand, columned theatre from missile and airstrikes that Russia has rained down on cities, an enormous inscription reading "CHILDREN" in Russian was posted outside the building and was visible from the air.

Soon after the attack, Ludmyla Denisova, the Ukrainian Parliament's human rights commissioner, said more than 1,300 people had been inside, many whose homes were destroyed in Russia's siege of the city.

*Continued on Page 2*

## CAPSULE

### SC ALLOWS DISABLED TO APPLY FOR IPS, DANIPS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday allowed persons with disabilities to apply for Indian Police Service (IPS), DANIPS and Indian Railway Protection Force Services provisionally as their preferences in the civil services and asked them to submit application forms in this regard to the UPSC by April 1.

### DELHI CIVIC POLLS AFTER 5-6 MONTHS: EXPERTS

New Delhi: With the total number of municipal wards in Delhi proposed to be revised, experts on Friday said the civic polls here is not likely to take place before five to six months from now.

### SC MIFFED AT BOUNCERS EVICTING GOVT OFFICIALS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday expressed surprise after it was informed that bouncers were being sent by a private firm for eviction of properties occupied by government officials living in Sujana Singh Park near Khan Market here.

## 25K Supertech homebuyers hit by NCLT order

New Delhi: Real estate developer Supertech on Friday was declared bankrupt by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), a move that could have a bearing on 25,000 homebuyers of the firm's ongoing projects in the Delhi and NCR region.

Acting on a petition filed by the Union Bank of India for non-payment of around ₹432 crore worth dues, the bankruptcy court ordered the initiation of insolvency proceedings against real estate firm Supertech Ltd, one of the companies of Supertech group. The NCLT said "there has been a default in payment of the financial debt" and appointed Hitesh Goyal as the Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) superseding the board of Supertech Ltd.

A two-member NCLT bench comprising P S N Prasad

and Rahul Bhatnagar said the documents submitted by the financial creditor Union Bank of India as well as the corporate debtor Supertech had "substantiated" the former's claim that there was a debt on which the builder had defaulted.

"In light of the above discussion, after giving careful consideration to the entire matter, hearing arguments of the parties and upon the appreciation of the documents placed on record to substantiate the claim, this tribunal admits this petition and initiates CIRP on the corporate debtor with immediate effect," the NCLT said. CIRP refers to Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP). Supertech Ltd has 38,041 customers and out of them, homes have been delivered to 27,111 people.

*Continued on Page 2*

## HC orders CBI probe into ghastly Birbhum carnage

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Refusing to place faith in the Special Investigation Team created by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Calcutta High Court on Friday ordered CBI investigation into the Rampurhat arson and mass murder case directing the SIT to stop investigation and transfer forthwith the case to the Central agency.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Justice Rajarshi Bhargava directed the CBI to submit a preliminary report before the court by April 7.

Pulling up the SIT for failing to make any significant progress in the investigation, the court directed the CBI to take charge of the case without delay.

The judges observed, "The case diary of the incident has been produced before us. We have minutely examined it.

*Continued on Page 2*

## LAC situation not normal, parleys sluggish, rues India

**Disengagement of troops must for continuing dialogue: Min**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday said situation is "not normal" at the border in eastern Ladakh and talks with China to ease tension are moving at "a slower pace than desirable." The disengagement of troops from both sides is a must for de-escalation and continuing dialogue is "work in progress," it said.

India raised these concerns during the three-hour long meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. It was the first visit by a Chinese Minister to New Delhi since trouble erupted at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh nearly two years ago. At present, more than 50,000 troops each from both the sides are facing each other at some friction points at the LAC leading to heightened tension.

Wang's visit signalled a possible thaw in the stalemate. Asked if any timeline was agreed upon for disengagement and de-escalation along the LAC, Jaishankar said, "There was no timeline... A



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during their meeting, at Hyderabad House, in New Delhi

PTI

parallel but a separate discussion took place in regard to sorting out the situation in border areas." Giving details of his delegation-level talks with the Chinese Minister, Jaishankar told the media the current situation between India and China on the eastern Ladakh issue is "a work in progress" but moving at a "slower pace than desirable."

He said talks with his Chinese counterpart were held in a candid and open manner and the agenda was broad and substantive.

Stressing that tension at the LAC led to disturbance in the region, Jaishankar said restora-

tion of normal bilateral ties will require normalcy there. He said there should not be any effort to change the status quo.

He said 15 rounds of talks were held between the Corps Commanders of the two Armies since April 2020 leading to some progress at several friction points.

Though he did not elaborate, the Minister was obviously referring to disengagement of troops from the north and south banks of the Pangong Tso (lake) in Ladakh in February last year followed by withdrawal of troops from some points in Gogra.

*Continued on Page 2*

## New Delhi objects to Wang's Kashmir remarks at OIC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday raised the issue of terrorism emanating from Pakistan and disapproved Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent comments on Kashmir, which he made in a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held two days back in Islamabad.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said he raised India's objections to Wang's comments on Kashmir. The Chinese Minister had made a reference to Kashmir in his opening speech at the OIC in Pakistan, saying, "On Kashmir, we have heard again today the calls of many of our Islamic friends. And China shares the same hope."

Jaishankar said he had referred to the comments and had conveyed why India found them objectionable. "I conveyed that we hope China will not allow its policies with respect to India to be influenced by other countries."

Also, he said there was no discussion on Quad meet with the Chinese Foreign Minister.

*Continued on Page 2*



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REMOVAL OF ENCROACHMENTS FROM KALKAJI TEMPLE

SC refuses to interfere with HC order

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday refused to interfere with the Delhi High Court order directing removal of encroachments and unauthorised occupants and shopkeepers, who do not have any valid legal rights to occupy the shops, in Kalkaji Temple in South Delhi here.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Surya Kant said, "We are not inclined to entertain the plea. We grant liberty to the petitioners to move the administrator appointed by the High Court with their grievances and the administrator will place the report before the High Court for suitable directions".

The bench said, "In some matters, we need to trust our High Courts. We all have been judges of the High Court. We are not here as an appellate forum in every matter. The dignity of the deity must be preserved".

At the outset, the bench told senior advocate P N Mishra, appearing for the petitioners, that they should have cooperated with the drive.

"We have seen the judgement of

the High Court. The reason that the High Court has considered is the fact that Navaratri is starting and you are only interested in making money," the bench said.

Mishra submitted that his clients are not interested in the money but the land which belongs to them and they have been there for years.

The bench said that those displaced will be rehabilitated.

Mishra pointed to the report filed by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) which said that the land belonged to the Pujaris (priests) and not to the deity.

"When the court had entertained the petition in 2013, these Pujaris came forward with the claim of their land. A direction was issued to the SDM to ascertain the actual owner of the land. The SDM filed the affidavit which said that it is a private land belonging to the Pujaris and not of deity. It is not government land but private land", he said.

Mishra said that demolition is taking place of Jhuggis which are unauthorised constructions but there are Dharamshalas which are 200

years old and these Pujaris are staying there with their families for years. The bench said, "You can very well approach the administrator appointed by the High Court with your grievances or you can approach the High Court".

Justice Surya Kant said that there are no directions as such to evict the Pujaris and the order only deals with unauthorised constructions.

Justice Chandrachud said that the urgency in the matter is Navratra festival and moreover the High Court is seized of the matter.

On September 27, last year, the High Court had directed removal of encroachments and unauthorised occupants and shopkeepers, who do not have any valid legal rights to occupy the shops, in Kalkaji Temple in South Delhi and said the action be taken within five days keeping in view the forthcoming Navratra festival.

The high court had said it is essential for a temple, where thousands of devotees visit for conducting puja every day, irrespective of its public or private status, to be devoid of unauthorised encroachments

which results in extreme inconvenience and safety and security concerns for the devotees.

It had appointed retired Delhi High Court judge, Justice J R Midha as the administrator of the Kalkaji Temple for performing various functions in relation to the religious place.

The High Court had also appointed Goonmeet Singh Chauhan, a renowned Architect who has undertaken various projects of public importance, to submit a redevelopment plan for the Kalkaji Mandir and the entire surrounding complex and said he shall work closely with the Administrator and his team.

The court had said that the mandate of the administrator shall be to take all necessary steps in the interest of devotees, pilgrims, baridaars (persons managing temple affairs), in order to ensure their safety and security, as also to preserve the integrity and sanctity of the deity and the mandir which is of utmost historical importance to the people of Delhi.

Sisodia visits school to check educational activities' progress

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

In order to check the progress of various educational activities in the schools, the Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia who also holds the education portfolio on Friday paid a surprise visit to Government Girls Sr Sec School (GGSSS), Kirti Nagar and Government Co-Ed School I-Block Karpura in the national Capital. During the inspection in GGSSS, Kirti Nagar, Sisodia found that all mindset curriculums are being implemented brilliantly by the school and appreciated the efforts of the school management.

"The school has developed three corridors using the school resources in a very unique way. The school has created an Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum (EMC) corridor to inculcate the understanding of this curriculum among children, while the aim of the Happiness Corridor is to make the children learn to be happy through vari-

ous activities. The school has constructed the Deshbhakti Corridor to inculcate the feeling of patriotism in the children and to express their gratitude towards the martyrs. Children in the school have also created a 'Gratitude Wall' to express their gratitude towards each other," Sisodia said.

Meanwhile in the Government Co-Ed School I-Block, Karampura, it was found that even though the new building is ready in the school, children are still being taught in the old building. Taking immediate cognisance, the deputy CM ordered the officers to issue show cause notices against the head of the school.

Sisodia said that there are such great facilities in the school, yet children are not able to take advantage of it, this is a serious case of laxity. He instructed the officials that the students should be shifted to the newly constructed classrooms at the earliest.

M3M launches Lakshya awards scholarships to support emerging players

**Gurugram:** A beacon of hope for emerging athletes, the M3M Foundation, launched its flagship 'Lakshya- Udaan Hauslon' Ki programme to support the country's talented youngsters in the field of arts and sports on Friday.

The event was held at Club Elevate, M3M Golf Estate in Sector 65, Gurugram.

"M3M Foundation has always championed the cause of encouraging children in the field of arts and sports. We have been actively running various initiatives and are confident that this newly launched program will achieve its objectives successfully. We are delighted to receive immense support from everyone and want to thank the eminent dignitaries and personalities for acknowledging our efforts," said Dr Payal Kanodia, Trustee, M3M Foundation.

Realizing that making a career in the field of sports and arts comes with many roadblocks, the 'Lakshya-Udaan Hauslo' Ki program will bridge the existing gaps and act as a pillar to support their dreams of talented youngsters.

25K Supertech...

**From Page 1**

As many as 10,930 homes are yet to be delivered and among them, over 70 per cent construction is complete with respect to over 8,000 homes, according to Supertech Group Managing Director Mohit Arora.

The tribunal has also directed the IRP to make a public announcement in this regard and declared a moratorium against the company as per the provision of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code.

Moratorium will continue till a resolution plan is approved and during that period no new cases or claims can be filed against the company in any court of law, tribunal, arbitration panel or any other authority.

Apart from this, Supertech is also barred from transferring, encumbering, alienating, or disposing of any assets.

This is the second major setback for Noida-based developers in the last one year.

On August 31 last year, the Supreme Court had ordered the demolition of Supertech Ltd's twin 40-storeyed towers, which are part of the under-construction Emerald Court project in Noida for violation of building norms. Supertech Group said it would challenge the order before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

"In the matter of appointment of IRP in one of the Supertech Group companies by the NCLT, management of the company stated that the company will be approaching NCLAT in an appeal against the order," Supertech Group said in a statement.

‘Tactical Urbanism’ trials launched in north Delhi area to improve road safety

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

In order to save lives on Delhi's roads, Delhi Traffic Police and Delhi Transport Department in association with Save Life Foundation and HDFC ERGO General Insurance Company launched 'Tactical Urbanism' trials at Burari Chowk and Gandhi Vihar black spots in north Delhi area to improve road safety in the city. The two sites witnessed 18 and 10 road crash deaths respectively between 2018 and 2020.

Tactical Urbanism (TU) trials are temporary, quick and relatively low-cost interventions, which test out urban design, transportation planning and infrastructural changes for improving road safety for all road users, especially the most vulnerable, like pedestrians,

cyclists and other non-motorised transport users. Once the interventions are proven, the relevant Government agencies are expected to make them permanent.

As part of the Zero Fatality Corridor (ZFC) Project, SaveLIFE Foundation is testing temporary urban design interventions to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and other road users. The trials include road space redistribution to ensure modal equity, road geometrics modification, traffic channelisation, vehicular speed reduction, and the addition of pedestrian and cyclist safety infrastructure.

Speaking about the need to support such interventions, Mr. Jasmine Shah, Vice Chairperson of the Dialogue and Development Commission, said, "Innovation is

the key to public problem solving. The Tactical Urbanism trials underway in collaboration between SLF and various Government Agencies are increasingly proving that such low cost solutions should be replicated, in Delhi and beyond, to save lives. The Delhi Government's vision is to make Delhi's streets the safest in the country."

While inaugurating the trials, Ashish Kundra, Commissioner of Transport, GNCTD said, "The Delhi Government is committed to creating safe mobility solutions, which prevent road injuries and fatalities. We have been collaborating with SaveLIFE in this regard for the past four years. Such initiatives and projects which redesign high-fatality spots in the city will help in instilling a sense of road safety for all users."

Kangana Ranaut hails khadi's sustainability

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Khadi made an emphatic presence in the global fashion arena with an exclusive presentation at the ongoing Lakme Fashion Week 2022 in New Delhi on Thursday. Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut walked the ramp as the showstopper for Khadi India. She was flanked by six internationally acclaimed designers — Mossi Traoré, Abhishek Gupta Benaras, Anavila, Anju Modi, Charu Parashar and Rina Dhaka.

This is for the first time that an international designer, Mossi Traoré from Paris, participated in a Khadi fashion show. Mossi stole the show with architectural silhouettes in his designs.

This is for the second time that Khadi has taken part in the Lakme Fashion Week. The Khadi India show was curated by Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI). Minister of State for MSME, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma, Chairman KVICi Vinai Kumar Saxena, and Secretary MSME Swain were present on the occasion.

Kangana Ranaut caught the eyeballs with her scintillating appearance on the ramp in an off-white Khadi Jamdani Saree, a heritage craft of West Bengal. She made a strong pitch for promoting Khadi as the most sustainable clothing and urged the youngsters to buy "Swadeshi Only" products.

"It was a pleasure to be back on the ramp and for something so special like Khadi. The whole world is now talking about Indian fabrics, particularly Khadi which is organic, skin-friendly and environment friendly. Indian fabrics have



existed for thousands of years. When we buy Khadi, we not only help restore our heritage crafts but also create a livelihood for many in the country. Whenever you buy something, ensure it is made in India. Khadi should be our identity," Kangana said.

Saxena termed Khadi as the most sustainable and simple but trendy clothing. "Khadi is the only product in modern history that has stood the test of time as a tool of sustainable development. Khadi is the fabric of the nation and it has the potential to bring about a sea change in the lives of millions," he said.

The Khadi India collection celebrated the Indian savoir-faire with its characteristic colors and silhouette and aesthetics. The designers used natural whites and black as well as vibrant color schemes.

The entire collection, with a contemporary approach, sought to present timeless Khadi clothing with a new trendy twist.

Yogi begins 2nd innings

**From Page 1**

Sources said the outgoing Deputy CM Sharma could be made the chairman of the Legislative Council while former Industry Minister Satish Mahana could be the new Speaker of the Assembly.

The Cabinet Ministers are Suresh Kumar Khanna, Surya Pratap Shahi, Swatantra Dev Singh, Baby Rani Maurya, Lakshmi Narayan Chaudhari, Jaiveer Singh Dharmpal Singh, Nand Gopal Nandi, Bhupendra Singh Chaudhari, Anil Rajbhar, Jitin Prasada, Rakesh Sachan, Arvind Kumar Sharma, Yogendra Upadhyay, Ashish Patel and Sanjay Nishad.

Minister of State Independent charges are: Nitin Agarwal, Kapil Dev Agrawal, Ravindra Jaiswal, Sandeep Singh, Gulab Devi Girish Chand Yadav, Dharmveer Prajapati, Aseem Arun, JPS Rathore, Dayashankar Singh, Narendra Kashyap, Dinesh Pratap Singh, Arun Kumar Saxena and Daya Shankar Mishra 'dayalu'.

Minister of States are Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh, Dinesh Khatik, Sanjeev Gaud, Baldev Singh Alakh, Ajit Pal, Jaswant Saini, Ramkesh Nishad, Manohar Lal alias Mannu Kori, Sanjay Gangwar, Brijesh Singh, KP Malik, Suresh Rishi, Sumendra Tomar, Anup Pradhan Valmiki, Pratibha Shukla, Rakesh Rathore Guru, Rajni Tiwari, Satish Sharma, Danish Azad Ansari and Vijaylakshmi Gautam.

Yogi 2.0 sets caste...

**From Page 1**

The Cabinet also includes two leaders from Jat community — Lakshmi Naryan Chowdhary and Bhupendra Chowdhary.

The leaders of two allies of the BJP have been inducted in the Cabinet — Sanjay Nishad, president of Nishad Party, and Ashish Patel of Apan Dal (Sonelal). His wife Anupriya Patel is the Union Minister of State.

The OBCs faces among the Ministers of State (Independent charge) are: Sandip Singh, grandson of former CM Kalyan Singh, Gulab Devi from Chandusi, Girish Chandra Yadav from Jaunpur, Dharmveer Prajapati from Agra, Narendra Kashyap. Among the Dalit face is former IPS and police commissioner of Kanpur Asim Arun.

The OBCs among the Minister of State are: Sanjay Gangwar from Pilibhit; Rakesh Nishad, and Jaswant Saini from Saharanpur; Ajit Pal, and Sanjeev Gaud from Sonbhadra. Vijay Lakshmi Gautam from Deoria is from the Dalit Jatav community and Dinesh Khatik is from the Dalit community. Danish Ansari Azad from Ballia is the sole face of the minority community in the council of Ministers. He is also not a member of either House of the UP Legislature.

HC orders CBI...

**From Page 1**

We find that though the SIT was constituted on March 22, till now there has been no effective contribution by the SIT to the investigation. It has been submitted that in spite of the fact that the police station is very near to the spot of the incident, the police did not reach on time and persons trapped inside the houses kept on burning."

Ten people, including six women and two children, were on Monday night hacked and then burnt alive by a rival faction of the ruling Trinamool Congress barely a couple of hours after a Deputy Pradhan of a local Panchayat was bombed to death.

Even as the news became public, the High Court on Wednesday took suo motu cognizance of the matter directing the SIT to produce the case diary before it on Thursday. After going through the case diary the court transferred the case to the CBI observing why the police failed to reach the spot despite the fact that the police station was barely a few minutes' drive. Pursuant to the court order, the

CBI had filed a First Information Report and had started procedural formalities, sources said.

The SIT had earlier arrested 21 people, including a local TMC Block president and a district committee member Sheikh Anarul Hussein.

The intervening lawyers arguing before the court also pointed out that Hussein was arrested only after Mamata visited the village three days after the incident and directed the police to arrest him for "not sending the police to the village despite being repeatedly requested by the victims' kin." The Chief Minister besides forming an SIT announced Rs 5 lakh compensation for the families of the victims and Rs 50,000 for those injured. Besides, she also offered government jobs to the victims' kin and an additional Rs 2 lakh to reconstruct their houses.

Even as the Opposition parties welcomed the court order demanding a "comprehensive investigation so as to net the big fishes," the Trinamool Congress leadership warned the BJP and the CBI to "act legally" failing which the party would descend on the streets.

300 killed in Russian...

**From Page 1**

The building had a relatively modern basement bomb shelter, and some survivors did emerge from the rubble after the attack.

The new reported death toll came a day after US President Joe Biden and other leaders promised after meeting in Brussels that more military aid for Ukraine is coming. But they stopped short of providing heavy weaponry that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wants. NATO nations fear that providing planes, tanks and other hardware that Zelenskyy says is urgently needed could increase the risk of them being drawn into direct conflict with Russia.

But the US and the European Union did announce a move to further squeeze Russia: a new partnership to reduce Europe's reliance on Russian energy and slowly squeeze off the billions of dollars the Kremlin gets from sales of fossil fuels.

Despite the efforts to target Russia's economy to push the Kremlin to change course, the misery for civilians grows ever more acute in cities that, day-by-day, increasingly resemble the ruins that Russian forces left behind in previous campaigns in Syria and Chechnya.

Those who can are trying to flee, emptying out their cities. In relentlessly shelled Kharkiv, mostly elderly women came to collect food and other urgent supplies. In the capital of Kyiv, ashes of the dead are piling up at the main crematorium because so many relatives have left, leaving urns unclaimed.

Meanwhile, the vulnerable — the elderly, children and others unable to join millions of refugees heading westward — face food shortages in a country once known as the breadbasket for the world.

Fidgeting with anticipation, a young girl in Kharkiv watched intently this week as a volunteer's knife cut through a giant slab of cheese, carving out thick slices — one for each hungry person waiting stoically in line.

Hanna Spitsyna took charge of divvying up the delivery of food aid from the Ukrainian Red Cross, handing it out to her neighbours. Each got a lump of the cheese that was cut under the child's watchful gaze, dropped chunk by chunk into plastic bags that people in line held open like hungry mouths.

"They brought us aid, brought us aid for the elderly women that stayed here," Spitsyna said. "All these people need diapers, swaddle blankets and food."

Unable to sweep with lightning-quick speed into Kyiv, their apparent aim on Feb. 24 when the Kremlin launched the war, Russian forces are instead rained down shells and missiles on cities from afar. Kyiv, like other cities, has seen its population dramatically reduced in the vast refugee crisis that has seen more than 10 million displaced and at least 3.5 million fleeing the country entirely.

Russia's military claimed Friday that it destroyed a massive Ukrainian fuel base used to supply the Kyiv region's defences, with ships firing a salvo of cruise missiles, according to the Interfax news agency.

**SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**TENDER NOTICE FOR FURNISHING WORK**

Tender Notice No.: **SR.DREE(RS&G)BSP/OTP/21-22-18**, Dated: **17.03.2022**. Name of Work: "Officer Rest House: Furnished VIP Suite - 08 Rooms and Normal Rest House - 08 Rooms." Tender Value (Approx.): **₹ 42,45,455.60**. Earnest Money Deposit: **₹ 84,900/-**.

Tender Closing Date & Time: **08.04.2022 at 15.00 hours**.

For further details, eligibility criteria and the complete details for the above work, please refer/download tender document which is available on our website: **www.iireps.gov.in**

**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engg. CPRI/10/388 (RS&G)/Bilaspur**

**f South East Central Railway @Secral**

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER**

**RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SAMBALPUR.**

**E-mail: secrcircle@odisha.gov.in**

**O-1878 No. 697 /RWCSBP //Dated. 24/03/2022**

Due to un-avoidable circumstances the tender for BID ID

No.Bridge tender online RWCSBP-51/2021-22 invited vide this office e-procurement No.555 dt.09.03.2022 is hereby cancelled.

**OIPR-250911/110070/2122**

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur

कार्यालय नगर पालिका परिषद, डबरा जिला-ग्वालियर ( म.प्र. )							
क्रमांक/857/जलप्रदाय/ई-टेंडर/ डबरा, दिनांक - 21.03.2022							
// निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना //							
एदत द्वारा केन्द्रीयकृत प्रणाली के अंतर्गत लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत टेन्डरों से ऑनलाईन निविदायें मध्यप्रदेश नगरीय प्रशासन एवं विकास विभाग का आई.एस.एस.आर. प्रभावशील दिनांक 02 अगस्त 2021 से आज, दिनांक तक संशोधित सहित अपेन्डिक्स 2.10 प्रपत्र-ए पर प्रतिशत दरों के आधार पर ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाईट <a href="https://mptenders.gov.in">https://mptenders.gov.in</a> पर नीचे दर्शित तालिका अनुसार निम्न कार्य ऑन लाईन निविदा दिनांक 26.04.2022 समय 5.30 तक आमंत्रित की जाती है।							
क्र.	सिस्टम (ऑनलाईन)	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलन राशि	अमानत राशि	निविदा प्रपत्र राशि	कार्य की अवधि	निविदा हेतु टेण्डर की श्रेणी
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1-	2022_UAD_192035_1	अमृत योजनागत डबरा शहर की पेयजल योजना में 7000 बाटर हाउस होल्ड सर्विस कनेक्शन कार्य।	26110329/-	130560/-	15000/-	12 माह	सक्षम श्रेणी या उच्च श्रेणी
नोट :- नियम शर्तें कार्यालय के लोक निर्माण शाखा एवं ऑनलाईन रूप से देखी जा सकती है। निविदा में किया गया कोई भी संशोधन उक्त वेबसाईट पर किया जावेगा पृथक से कोई भी प्रकाशन नहीं किया जावेगा।							
प्रशासक एवं अनुविभागीय अधिकारी राजस्व डबरा जिला-ग्वालियर				मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी नगर पालिका परिषद, डबरा			



# Delhi ranks third in per capita income



Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Manish Sisodia busy with his core committee members before presenting the Economic Survey and the Outcome Budget during the ongoing Budget Session of Delhi Assembly, at Vidhan Sabha in New Delhi on Friday

## Goa is first, Sikkim second, says Economic Survey of Delhi 2021-22

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Per Capita Income of Delhi is ranked at third place among the States/UTs in the country. According to the Economic Survey of Delhi 2021-22, Goa stood at first place and Sikkim at second place. It also said that Delhi's GDP at current prices increased by about 50 per cent in the last six years from ₹6,16,085 crore in 2016-17 to ₹9,23,967 crore in 2021-22. According to the survey, Delhi's per capita income grew 16.81 per cent year-on-year to ₹4,01,982 in fiscal 2021-22. The per capita income of Delhi was three times higher than the national average in 2021-22, it said.

"Delhi's Per Capita Income during 2021-22 at current prices, has been worked out to ₹4,01,982 as against ₹3,44,136 during 2020-21, showing a growth of 16.81 per cent. Per Capita Income of Delhi is ranked at 3rd place among States/UTs while Goa stood at 1st place and Sikkim at 2nd place," the survey said.

The Economic Survey for the financial year 2021-22 was presented in the Assembly on Friday by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

"Delhi's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) records a growth of 17.65 per cent in the financial year 2021-22 from the previous year as it stands at ₹9,23,967 crore," the report added. Delhi recorded a revenue surplus of ₹1,450 crore in 2021-22. The surplus revenue has declined by 0.04 per cent during 2021-22, as per the report. "Delhi's revenue surplus was 0.18 per cent of GSDP dur-

ing 2020-21 and 0.14 per cent during 2021-22 (BE)," the report said. Delhi's fiscal deficit increased in 2020-21. "There is a fiscal deficit of ₹9,972.96 crore during 2020-21 (prov) as compared to a fiscal deficit of ₹3,227.79 crore in 2019-20, which is 1.27 per cent of the GSDP as compared to 0.41 per cent during 2019-20," it said.

According to the Economic Survey, during 2021-22, the transport sector has been allocated the major share of about 23.45 per cent of the total budget allocation of schemes and projects, followed by education (19.52 per cent), medical and public health (13.74 per cent), social welfare (11.74 per cent), water supply and sanitation (8.66 per cent), energy (8.53 per cent) and housing and urban development (8.51 per cent). According to the survey, the forest and tree cover area of Delhi increased to 342 sq km in 2021.

It means that the share of forests in the total geographical area has increased to 23.06 per cent. It cited the latest India State of Forest Report, 2021, and said Delhi has the largest forest cover of 194.24 sq km followed by Mumbai and Bengaluru, among the seven major megacities. The income from manufacturing has increased from ₹18,907 crore in 2011-12 to ₹42,230 crore in 2021-22, the report noted.

As per India Tourism Statistics-2021, Delhi secured 4th rank in total foreign tourist visits in 2020, with a total share of 9.50 per cent, it added.

Important vital indicators like infant mortality rate, neonatal mortality rate, the under-five mortality rate in respect of Delhi stand at lower levels of 11, 10 and 19 compared to all India levels of 30, 23, and 36, respectively, it noted. "Total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.5 in Delhi, is among lowest in India (all India level - 2.2), which indicates achievement of the replacement rate.

## Pandemic cuts Delhi Govt's tax collection

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 pandemic hit the tax collection of Delhi Government with all components of revenue registering a sharp decline in 2020-21, according to Delhi Economic Survey, 2021-22, tabled in the Assembly on Friday.

The tax collection of Delhi declined by 19.53 per cent during 2020-21 compared to a 0.16 per cent contraction in 2019-20. "The decline in tax revenue collection during 2020-21 is due to Covid-19 pandemic. All components of tax revenue declined sharply," read the report tabled by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Manish Sisodia.

The motor vehicles tax has shown a negative growth of 13.96 per cent, GST (including VAT and other taxes of luxury and entertainment etc.) recorded a negative growth of 19.46 per cent, the report said. Tax collections under State excise recorded a negative growth of 18.94 per cent, stamps and registration tax (including land revenue) recorded highest neg-

ative growth of 22.91 per cent in 2020-21. A growth of 46.13 per cent in tax collection for year 2021-22 was budgeted by Kejriwal Government. The total revenue collection of Delhi Government was ₹41,863.60 crore (5.33 per cent of GSDP) in 2020-21 against ₹47,135.81 crore (5.94 per cent of the GSDP) during 2019-20. During 2020-21, the revenue receipts decreased significantly with a negative growth rate of 11.19 per cent.

The main reason for such deficit is Covid pandemic, the report stated. Like earlier Central Finance Commissions, Delhi has not yet been covered under Term of Reference of the 15th Central Finance Commission whose term covers the period from 2020-21 to 2025-26, the report pointed out. The dispensations to be recommended by 15th Central Finance Commission to States which include Share in Central Taxes, Grants-in-aid for Local Bodies, Revenue Deficit grants, Sectoral grants, grants for Calamity Relief do not cover Delhi due to this, it said.

## Gross cropped area in Delhi increased to 47,850 hectare in 2021-22: Economic Survey

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

According to the Delhi Economic Survey 2021-22 tabled in the Delhi Assembly on Friday by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, the gross cropped area in Delhi increased to 47,850 hectare in 2021-22 from 43,569 hectare in 2020-21.

"The estimated gross cropped area in 2021-22 has increased to 47,850 hectares (estimated) from 43,569 hectares in 2020-21. In 2012-13, it was 35,178 hectares," the report stated. It said that the remaining areas of Delhi are being used for non-agricultural purposes or are forest, fallow and un-cultivable land.

The report, however, said that the share of agriculture in Delhi's Gross State Value Added (GSVA) reduced in 2021-22 as compared to 2011-12. The percentage contribution of the agriculture sector to the GSVA at current prices reduced from 0.94 per cent in 2011-12 to 0.36 per cent in 2021-22, it stated.

The report also said that agricultural activity is continuously declining in Delhi due to rapid urbanisation and growth in other economic activities in the trade and industry sectors.

It said that the number of rural villages is also reducing and it has come down to 112 (according to the 2011 census) from 214 in 1981. This results in the reduction of the share of this sector to the Gross State Domestic Product of Delhi, the report said.

Since returns from traditional agriculture are currently less attractive as compared to the high value of commercial horticulture and other agricultural activities, the Delhi government is, therefore, encouraging farmers to take-up vegetables, floriculture production and mushroom cultivation, it said. "Under the programme of Farmers Training and Education Centre, as many as 1,605 farmers were provided training in 56 training and demonstration camps held during 2020-21.

## 93% city households have access to piped water supply



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Around 93 per cent of households in Delhi now have access to piped water supply, and water production during summer season is being maintained at 953 million gallons a day (MGD) consistently, according to Delhi Economic Survey 2021-22. The survey report presented in Assembly on Friday by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia

also said Delhi's water demand is set to increase to 1,505 MGD this year against expected supply of 1,200 MGD. Water is supplied to a population of about 20 million through the existing water supply network of 15,041-km-long pipelines and about 125 underground reservoirs (UGRs), it said. "Besides, a total of 407 new water tankers with stainless steel containers fitted with GPS have been engaged in improving the water tanker supply delivery system in city.

Apart from these approximately 530 mild steel hired tankers (during peak summer), 250 newly-purchased stainless steel tankers are being added to existing fleet to supplement water supply in water deficit areas," the report said.

Based on norm of 60 gallons per capita per day (GPCD), a population of 23 million (as per projections) required 1,380 MGD of water this month. It said Government has been able to provide regular water supply to 1,583 (88 per cent) of the 1,797 unauthorised colonies, while 602 have been connected to sewer network so far.

## Delhi Govt rolled out many initiatives in edu sector

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government, which makes the highest budgetary allocation for the education sector among States and Union Territories, rolled out various initiatives such as the Deshbhakti Curriculum on September 28 last year and establishment of the Delhi Board of School Education (DBSE), according to the Economic Survey 2021-22. The per student per annum expenditure incurred by the Government declined to Rs 63,556 in 2020-21 from Rs 66,593, it said.

According to the Economic Survey, the city has a total of 1,231 Government and Government-aided schools -- 21.73 per cent of the total number of schools. The share of enrolment in Government and Government-aided schools is 39.36 per cent of the total admissions in Delhi in 2020-21. The survey also stated that the share of enrolment in private schools at the primary and middle-level had increased significantly from 31.07 per cent in 2014-15 to 46.72 per cent in 2019-20.

However, it came down to 43.91 per cent in 2020-21. Similarly, the share of enrolment in private schools at secondary and senior-secondary level had also increased from 29.08 per cent in 2014-15 to 31.90 per cent in 2019-20, but declined to 29.94 per cent in 2020-21.

According to the State Budget Analysis Report of the RBI, the Government of Delhi had the highest budgetary allocation of 22.8 per cent in the education sector among all States in 2021-22. The total expenditure on education has increased from Rs 6,555 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 15,707 crore in 2020-21.

The survey also highlighted that DBSE was launched in March 2021 and it entered into a partnership with International Baccalaureate (IB) to 'inculcate cutting-edge pedagogy and assessments in schools of Delhi.' The Board started functioning with 30 schools of Delhi Government.

In the next few years, all schools of the Delhi Government and willing private schools may be affiliated to the DBSE, it said.

## Number of vehicles in city grew by 3 per cent

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The total number of vehicles in the national Capital increased by 3.03 per cent in 2020-21 compared to that in 2019-20, according to the Delhi Economic Survey 2021-22. The report of the survey was tabled in the Assembly by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday.

The total number of motor vehicles on the roads in Delhi as on March 31, 2021 was 122.53 lakh, showing 3.03 per cent growth from the previous year. Cars and jeeps accounted for around 28 per cent of the total registered motorised vehicles, whereas two-wheelers are about 67 per cent of total registered vehicles," the report said. In 2019-2020, the total number of vehicles in Delhi was 1,18,92,877.

The report said of the over 1.22 crore vehicles, 82,39,550 were two-wheelers while 33,84,736 were cars and jeeps. The city also has 1,14,869 autorickshaws and 1,12,401 taxis. The report said the daily average passenger ridership in DTC and Cluster buses has gone down during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The daily average passenger ridership in DTC was 12.24 lakh and 8.5 lakh in Cluster buses during the year 2020-21, however, during the pre-Covid period, it was 33.31 lakh in DTC buses and 17.71 lakh in Cluster buses," the report said.

It also said that before the lockdown, the average daily passenger journeys of Delhi Metro was about 57 lakh but due to social-distancing norms, the average daily passenger journey recorded in the July-to-September quarter of 2021 was 23.34 lakh.

## Power consumers in Delhi rose to 64 lakh in 2020-21

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Electricity consumers in the National Capital increased to 63.87 lakh in 2020-21 but the peak demand and energy consumption failed to pick up due to the Covid pandemic, says the 2021-22 Economic Survey.

The survey was tabled in the Delhi Assembly on Friday by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. Delhi Transco Limited met a peak power demand of 6,314 MW in 2020-21, a significant decline from 7,409 MW in 2019-20. The energy consumption declined to 29,534 mega units in 2020-21 from 33,082 mega units in 2019-20, it said.

The report also said that during the period 2011-12 to 2020-21, the number of electricity consumers increased from 43.01 lakh to 63.87 lakh. The number of consumers in 2019-20 stood at 61.98 lakh. The peak demand increased from 5,028 MW in 2011-12 to



7,409 in 2019-20. Energy consumption recorded an average annual growth of about 3.27 per cent for 2011-12 to 2019-20, it said. "... However, peak demand and energy consumption could not pick up in 2020-21 due to the Covid pandemic," the report noted.

On the Aggregate Technical and Commercial Losses (ATCL), it said that after reforms in the power sector, the loss in Delhi has reduced significantly from 52 per cent in the pre-reform era in 2002 (before July 2002) to

6.92 per cent in 2020. The ATCL is the difference between energy units put into the system and the units for which the payment is collected. It is the actual measure of overall efficiency of the distribution business as it measures both technical as well as commercial losses.

The survey also said that three waste-to-energy (WTE) plants at Timarpur-Okhla (20 MW), Ghazipur (12 MW) and Narela-Bawana (24 MW) with a total capacity of 56 MW are in operation.

Setting up of WTE plants at Bhalswa (15 MW) and Tehkhand (25 MW) and eight MW expansion of the existing WTE plant at Ghazipur has also been planned, it said.

The grid-connected solar projects have contributed nearly 223.601 MW of power in Delhi till December, 2021. The total installed capacity of renewable energy (solar and WTE) was 279.601 MW as on December 31, 2021, the report said.

## Hassle-free services for Divyangjans

## Welfare dept holds 'Divyangjan camp' at LNJP Hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to provide public services to the specially abled people under one roof in a hassle-free manner, the department of social welfare has organised 'Divyangjan camp' at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Hospital on Friday. On this occasion, Social Welfare Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam said, "The purpose of these camps is to ensure that public ser-

vices are available to the divyangjan's in a hassle free manner. We are organising such camps in all districts of Delhi in order to assist the citizens and also to ensure that their grievances are addressed."

In this camp, divyang citizens are provided with various types of services like, disability certificate, Unique Disability Identity (UDID) card, Digital handicap certificate, Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) pass,

Railway department pass, Loan etc on the same day itself. Along with this, citizens were also made aware about the welfare schemes run by the Delhi Government in the national capital.

The concept behind disability assistance camp is that all facilities should be provided to specially abled people under one roof so that their problems can be resolved quickly and they have don't have to travel to different offices for their tasks.

## CM reviews road revamp work with PWD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal chaired a high-level review meeting at Delhi Secretariat on Friday regarding roads being revamped in State on lines of European countries. During this meeting, Kejriwal directed officials to complete pilot project by August 2022. Under the pilot project, the Kejriwal Government is redeveloping seven roads of 32.5 km length to European levels. In this way, the Kejriwal Government will redevelop a total of 540 kms of roads in Delhi and take them up to standards of European countries. The Tourism Department of Delhi Government has also

been engaged for beautification of these roads. The tourism department is developing roadside greenery and other facilities on lines of countries like Dubai, Singapore, London which are renowned for their landscaping. It is noteworthy that Kejriwal government is working upon redeveloping roads totalling up to 540 kms and transforming them as per the level of European countries.

The PWD officials informed CM that the work on pilot project is going on in full swing and will be completed by August 2022. Under this pilot project, there are seven roads of length 32.5 km, which are being beautified on the lines of European roads. The CM

## SEVEN ROADS BEAUTIFIED UNDER PILOT PROJECT

- Ring Road From Mayapuri to Moti Bagh Jn.
- Ring Road from AIIMS to Ashram
- Vikas Marg-Laxmi Nagar Chungi to Karkari More
- Narwana Road-Mother Dairy to Punch Mahal Niwas
- Britannia Chowk to Outer Ring Road, West Enclave, Pitampura
- Wazirpur Depot Crossing (NSP) to Rithala Metro Station
- Shivdasপুরी Marg and Patel Road (from Moti Nagar T-Point to Pusa Road about)

directed officials to complete pilot project by August, so that

further work on other roads can be started expeditiously.

## AAP Govt set to roll out eHealth Card

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government is all set to provide every Delhiite with an eHealth Card by next year. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal chaired a high-level meeting to assess the progress of Delhi's Health Information Management System (HIMS).

Kejriwal has specifically instructed the concerned departments to distribute the e-Health Cards at least three months before HIMS system is implemented. It is expected to begin from March 2023. The HIMS aims to revolutionise healthcare management in state by taking it to global standards. "A project of this scale and calibre has never been taken up in India. Notably, the e-Health Cards too, will be first of their kind in country where all medical information of patient will

be stored on cloud," Office of Chief Minister said in a statement. Along with Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Health Minister Satyendra Jain were present in meeting along with senior officials of concerned departments.

The officials apprised Chief Minister of timelines with regards to implementation of project and presented him data on progress made so far. Instructing officers to leave no stone unturned in delivering international-level healthcare service in Delhi, the Chief Minister said, "This project is very crucial for transforming healthcare facilities of Delhi. We must ensure that whole Health Information Management System project is implemented by 2023. At same time, the government must start distributing the Health

Cards at least 3 months before the HIMS project comes to the ground. They will be able to use the system as soon as it starts functioning.

In this manner every resident will be able to benefit from it and we will be able to make our world-class facilities accessible to all." After the implementation of the Health Information Management System, people will get freedom from the long queues of hospitals.

They will be able to get an appointment with the doctor they wish to see by accessing an online portal from the comfort of their homes. The Delhi Government is trying to implement HIMS in all government hospitals of Delhi as soon as possible, a senior official said, adding that private hospitals will also be connected to it in a phased manner.

## Delhi Govt presents Outcome Budget

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Manish Sisodia presented the status report of the Outcome Budget for the year 2021-22 in the Legislative Assembly on Friday. Sisodia said the AAP Government was the first to introduce the Outcome Budget wherein they put out details of the status of various projects undertaken by the Government.

On this occasion, Sisodia said, "In the 75 years of the country's independence, many governments came to India, but under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Delhi government is the only government which started this tradition and fixed its own accountability to the residents." Outcome Budget is an

annual exercise of the Kejriwal Government that seeks to ensure complete transparency and accountability in public spending.

While presenting the status report, he said the city government constructed 13,181 classrooms in its schools while the number of students enrolled in government schools rose from 15 lakh to 18 lakh.

"Nearly 80,000 applications for 4,800 seats were received for the 31 schools of excellence. The Deshbhakti curriculum has been implemented in all government schools and will be implemented in private schools from the next year," said Sisodia, who is also Delhi's Education Minister.

As per the government's Outcome Budget presented on Friday, around half of the samples collected from sewage

treatment plants in Delhi in the financial year 2021-22 (up to December) did not meet the prescribed standards for wastewater. It said that out of the 438 samples collected for monitoring of STPs up to December, 52 per cent met the prescribed standards.

Of the 206 samples tested from Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) in the period against the annual target of 156, around 63 per cent did not meet the norms.

The environment department collected 176 samples up to December 2021 for monitoring of stack emissions from industries, power plants, hotels etc., against the annual target of 700. All samples met the prescribed standards, the Outcome Budget said. Poor quality of treated wastewater discharged from STPs and CETPs is the

main reason behind high levels of pollution in the Yamuna River. Delhi generates around 720 million gallons of wastewater a day.

The 35 STPs at 20 locations across Delhi can treat up to 577 MGD of sewage and have been utilising around 89 per cent of their capacity. Thirteen common effluent treatment plants in the city treat effluent from industrial areas across Delhi.

The data showed authorities inspected 6,460 industries up to December, 2021 for violation of pollution control laws. According to the data, 75 per cent of the 1,778 defaulting units had been closed up to December, 2021.

The government said 93 per cent of the 14,980 complaints received on the Green Delhi App for violation of anti-pollution norms had been

resolved till December end. Delhi also recorded an increase of 493 hectares of green cover up to Dec 2021 against the target of 600 hectares during 2021-22.

More three crore women availed the facility of free travel in public transport buses in Delhi in 2021-22 since the free bus ride scheme for women was launched by the AAP government in the national capital in 2019. Sisodia informed the Legislative Assembly on Friday.

There is a combined fleet strength of 6,900 buses in the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and the Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System (DIMTS). "In the last year, more than three crore women availed the free bus ride scheme in public transport buses," Sisodia said.



# Haryana Cong leaders meet Rahul, discuss strategy after AAP rise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Worried over the rising stature of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), both in neighbouring Delhi and Punjab, Congress leaders from Haryana on Friday met former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and deliberated on the party's strategy going forward and ways to strengthen the organisation.

The leaders discussed the challenges before the party in Haryana, especially after the AAP victory in neighbouring Punjab, and how to address those as the party has almost poached the Congress vote-bank.

AICC sources said the leaders put forth their views before Rahul, who gave a patient hearing to all of them. The meeting lasted for three hours, after which the former chief met some leaders individually. Sources said Rahul also sought the views of the party leaders to strengthen the organisation and reach out to the grassroots level.

The series of meetings between the leaders and high command- Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka

Gandhi — who have been in line of fire of the G-23 for the massive defeats in the just concluded assembly elections, comes a day before the State presidents and General Secretaries incharge are scheduled to meet on Saturday.

The leaders suggested several measures to strengthen the party and how to reach out to the people. Some called upon the leadership for early decisions on revamping the organisation in the state, which has not been done for several years.

Among those who attended the meeting were AICC in charge of Haryana Vivek Bansal, former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Haryana Congress chief Kumari Selja, AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, Kuldeep Bishnoi, Kiran Chaudhary, Rajya Sabha MP Deepinder Singh Hooda and Captain Ajay Singh Yadav.

Selja later told reporters that there are issues that need to be addressed, including



strengthening the party at the grassroots. People expressed their views and Rahul Gandhi heard each of them, she said.

Bhupinder Hooda said everybody kept their views on how the party can be strengthened. He said there were no differences among the leaders and elections will be fought unitedly. The meeting comes days after Rahul Gandhi met Bhupinder Hooda and exchanged views on the current political situation in the state.

Rahul Gandhi has been having several rounds of meetings with state leaders and had met party leaders from Gujarat

earlier this week.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi had also met party leaders from Himachal Pradesh last week and in between several senior leaders who have become dissidents ever since the party has been suffering from continuous poll defeats.

Party leaders from Madhya Pradesh are also set to meet Sonia Gandhi soon. Some of them have rushed to Delhi to meet her over the functioning of the Pradesh Congress Committee under Kamal Nath. Some of them have expressed unhappiness in his leadership and differences are coming out in the open, sources said.

# SC miffed at bouncers evicting Govt officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday expressed surprise after it was informed that bouncers were being sent by a private firm for eviction of properties occupied by Government officials living in Sujan Singh Park near Khan Market here. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed a bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana that Government officials were being forced out of Sujan Singh Park flats with the help of bouncers.

"How can they send bouncers against the Government of India? List it next week before the appropriate bench," said the bench, also comprising Justices Krishna Murari and CT Ravikumar. "The impugned order permits the other side to get it vacated and they are sending bouncers. I am sorry, but it's quite unusual but there are Government officials," Mehta said while seeking urgent listing of the matter. The Centre has moved the top court against a Delhi High Court judgment of January 2020 directing it to pay arrears of rent owed to Sobha Singh and Sons. Sobha Singh and Sons had filed an eviction petition before the Additional Rent Controller who passed a judgment in its favour.

## SC passes interim order for physically disabled persons to apply for IPS



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday passed an interim order allowing physically disabled persons who have cleared the civil services exam, to provisionally apply to the Union Public Service Commission for selection in Indian Police Service and other police services.

Those successful in written exams can submit hard copies with these choices to UPSC Secretary-General by April 1, said the Bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar, comprising Justice Abhay S Oka on a petition filed by an NGO National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled.

The top court directed that the petitioners and similarly placed petitioners submit their applications by April 1 physi-

cally or through courier. The Court had listed the matter for further hearing on April 18. Earlier, the Bench had sought response from AG KK Venugopal and asked to file an affidavit. Petitioner's advocate Arvind Datar insisted for an interim order.

The Court was hearing a petition challenging a government notification which grants a blanket exemption from the grant of reservation to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the Indian Police Service, Indian Railways Protection Force Service, DANIPS and Railway Protection Force. The petitioner has sought to quash Notification dated August 18, 2021 as it grants a blanket exemption from the grant of reservation to PwDs in the IPS, DANIPS and IRPFS.

## SC reserves order on review petition in 1987 Sidhu road case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday reserved its judgment on the review petition in the 1987 road rage case leading to murder involving Navjot Singh Sidhu.

The apex court had in 2018 quashed the three-year sentence of Sidhu and fined only Rs.1000. The victim Gurnam Singh's family then filed a review petition.

The review petition was heard before the Bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and Sanjay Kishan Kaul. Appearing for petitioners, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra argued that the injuries caused during the road rage was the reason for the death later.

Abhishek Manu Singhvi, arguing for Sidhu, said that the matter was a 34 year old incident and accused petitioners for abusing the process of law. Sidhu was acquitted by the trial court and the High Court had sentenced him for three years

# No shortage of Defence Budget: Govt in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Friday said in the Lok Sabha that there is no shortage in the defence budget and that India for the first time has reached the 25th spot among defence export nations.

Answering questions during the zero hour on the need to increase the defence budget in view of recent developments on the borders, Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt said India's spending between 2011 and 2020 rose 76 per cent as against the global average of 9 per cent.

Assuring the opposition members, Bhatt said India is the third largest spender in the defence sector after the US and China and there is no shortage in the defence budget which has increased as per the requirements.

He quoted the report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) saying India's spending between 2011 and 2020 rose 76 per cent in comparison to the global average of 9 per cent.

As per SIPRI, he said India is the third highest spender on defence after the US and China.

"There is no shortage of budget. Also in 2020, India for the first time reached the 25th spot among defence export nations for the first time," Bhatt said.

In reply to questions from DMK's T R Balu that Indian defence expenditure was low in terms of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Bhat said "The overall trend in defence spending is based on defence capability development requirements and the expen-

diture on defence services, including modernisation, and has been increasing year after year. Defence budget which was Rs 2,53,346 crore in 2013-14 has more than doubled to Rs 5,25,166 crore in 2022-23.

More importantly, spending under capital outlay which includes modernisation and infrastructure development of the defence services, has grown by 76 per cent to Rs 1,52,370 crore in 2022-23 from Rs 86,741 crore in 2013-14. The defence budget is the highest among all ministries," he said.

Bhatt said India has been on the front foot on the defence needs and responses as has been seen in Galwan borders.

Balu had pointed out that defence spending was only 2.33 per cent of the GDP,

lower than in the US and Russia.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in his intervention said the Kargil Review Committee which studied the defence expenditure issue in detail had not recommended fixing of the defence budget as a percentage of the GDP.

The committee had illustrious members who were not in favour of fixing the defence budget as a percentage of the GDP and had recommended targeting of maximum value against every rupee spent.

"The committee said there was no need for a fixed GDP to budget allocation ratio and advised prioritisation of defence spending, restructuring of restructure forces efficiency in defence production. We are doing all that the panel", Singh said.

# No question should be raised on EVM: Rijiju

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday said no questions should be raised on electronic voting machines (EVM) as they are kept in the Election Commission's custody after being handed over to the poll panel by manufacturers. He also informed the Lok Sabha that the government is considering linking Aadhaar with the electoral rolls to check fraudulent voting besides granting of online voting to Indians working abroad.

The issue of EVM came up during the zero hour when Congress member Manish Tewari sought a "specific reply" from the minister on whether the source code of the EVMs remain with the EC or the companies that manufacture them.

Answering the question the Law Minister said the Indian election system has been recognised as "one of the best" adding globally lessons are received from India in conducting elections. Further, he said, "If a company manufactures machines and hands them over to the Election Commission, how will it control the EVMs? That comes under the EC."

"No question should be raised on the EVMs. I won't want to draw any inference on this," he said.

Following his reply, Tewari and other opposition members said answer on the EVM issue has not been responded to by the minister.

"The judges are appointed by the government but once they are appointed, they become independent. No one should question the EVMs and there should not be any inference too," the minister said.

At this stage, Speaker Om Birla intervened and said the Election Commission should be thanked for the way it conducts elections in the country. He also said that he has visited many countries, but nowhere in the world has he seen such a big election system developed in any democracy.

Tewari, however, was dissatisfied with the minister's reply, and asked him not to "dodge or evade" his question. On another question, Rijiju said the government is considering proposals for linking Aadhaar with the electoral rolls to check fraudulent voting and granting of online voting to Indians working abroad.

Rijiju said electoral fraud is a serious matter and the government is considering at the union law minister's level how

to check fraudulent voting. "Linking Aadhaar with the electoral roll is one of the ways. As of now linking Aadhaar with electoral rolls is voluntary. Our aim is to ensure 'one nation, one electoral roll' to check double names in electoral rolls and fraudulent voting and ensure a clean voting process," he said.

Replying to a supplementary on the proposal to grant voting rights to 'Pravasi' Indians, the minister said the government has suggested to the Election Commission to look into how to give voting rights to those Indians who are working abroad or whether to allow them online voting.

"But before taking any decision, we have to ensure safety and transparency of the process and that it is free from malfunctioning," he said.

# Birbhum massacre rocks both Houses of Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

West Bengal's Birbhum district violence rocked the Parliament on Friday when the BJP and TMC members in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha attacking and blaming either sides. BJP's Rajya Sabha member Roopa Ganguly demanded the imposition of President's Rule in West Bengal and even broke down while raising the issue.

Massive protest by the TMC members led to brief adjournment of the Upper House and the ruling party at Centre and ruling party TMC in West Bengal trading charges against each other in Lok Sabha briefly.

Ganguly broke down as she raised the issue of eight people, including two children, being burnt to death in Bogtui village



in Birbhum, saying to be born in West Bengal is not a crime. During the Zero Hour (morning session), she said, "(People) were burnt to death.... There is no trust in police."

The autopsy report points out that the victims were first beaten up and locked up, before being burnt to death. She termed the incident "mass killings" and also referred to other "political killings" in the state, she said.

"West Bengal is a part of India. The place is not safe to

live. I, Roopa Ganguly, demand President's Rule in the state. We have a right to live. It is not a crime to be born in West Bengal," the BJP member said as she broke down. She also said people are fleeing the area after the incident.

As she raised the matter, the (TMC members started protesting and countered the allegations. Some of them trooped into the well raising slogans. The members on the treasury benches too got engaged in counter-sloganeering.

Deputy Chairman Harivansh tried to restore order in the House, but the protesting members were unrelenting. The deputy chairman then adjourned the proceedings for about 25 minutes till 12.10 pm. After the brief adjournment, the House went ahead with the scheduled Question Hour.

# Opp members walk out over fuel prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the third day Opposition members from various parties in the Lok Sabha on Friday staged a walk-out against the hike in the fuel prices, with a Congress MP questioning the need to raise petrol, diesel and cooking gas prices following a 137 days hiatus after the conclusion of polls in five states.

Congress member Gaurav Gogoi (Cong), who raised the issue, said people hit by inflation and Covid-19 needed relief and wondered as why government suspended the hike all through the assembly polls. He asked why prices of petrol and diesel were increased three times in a week after a hiatus of 137 days. He claimed that tensions between Russia and Ukraine were simmering since December last year, but blaming the conflict now, the prices were

hiked. "We don't know how many more hikes await the people of India and the people of India have just returned from Omicron. They want an environment where they can do their business but all these price hikes have increased the cost of business, especially the price of transportation and this will lead to inflation," said the Congress member.

Gogoi and other members from various opposition parties, sought a reply from the government as to why for 137 days they managed to keep the prices stable. They said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who was present in the House, should respond.

Congress, DMK, NCP, Left, and IUML, walked out of the House to register their protest on the issue, brief walkouts for the last three days on the issue of fuel hike.

## Defence Ministry signs contract to boost indigenisation of ship building

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a boost to indigenization in ship building, the defence ministry on Friday signed a contract worth over Rs 800 crore with Larsen and Toubro for acquisition of Two Multi-Purpose Vessels (MPVs) for the Indian Navy. The deal amounting Rs.887 Crore is under "Buy-Indian" Category and was signed here in the presence of Vice Admiral SN Ghormade, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff and Pankaj Agarwal, Additional Secretary and Director General Acquisition. Delivery of vessels is scheduled to commence from May 2025. Giving details of the contract, officials said the MPVs will be the first of its kind platform, constructed to provide a cost-effective solution to meet a variety of requirements of the Navy.

## Covid management in India displays exemplary model: Health Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Highlighting India's success in pandemic management, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that Covid management in India displayed an exemplary model with the Centre and States working together in harmony which has been hailed across the world.

In his keynote address at Aksha-Lessons from India, an event that was recently organised by the Bill Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) to discuss India best management and vaccination practices for COVID-19, the Health Minister commended India's covid management for its innovation, dedication, partnership and technology-driven approach.

# India to celebrate 'National Dolphin Day' every year on October 5

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Environment Ministry has rechristened the 'Ganga River Dolphin Day', as 'National Dolphin Day', to be celebrated every year on October 5 from this year.

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav tweeted: "Happy to inform that the Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife in its 67th meeting has decided that October 5 from this year will be celebrated as National Dolphin Day. 'Generating awareness and community participation is (are) integral for conservation of this indicator species,'" Yadav said.

In India, mostly Gangetic dolphins, a species of freshwater dolphins, are sighted in long

deep river reaches in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Gangetic river dolphins were declared national aquatic species in 2010 by the then Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh during the UPA regime.

Almost ten years later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August 2020 announced 'Project Dolphin' to conserve both freshwater and marine dolphins. According to official figures, there are about 3,700 Gangetic dolphins in the Indian river systems.

"We will focus on both types of dolphins living in the rivers and in the seas. This will also give a boost to biodiversity and also create employment opportunities," Modi had said.

Being an indicator species of river ecosystems, Gangetic river dolphins play a vital role in providing valuable ecosystem services. The Gangetic river dolphins are found in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli river systems of India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

The construction of dams and barrages, and increasing pollution have led to a decline in the population of aquatic animals in the rivers in general and of dolphins in particular. Aquatic life is an indicator of the health of river ecosystems. As the Gangetic dolphin is at the top of the food chain, protecting the species and its habitat will ensure conservation of aquatic lives of the river, according to an official from the Ministry.

# Delhi-NCR to have single-point taxation for taxis, autorickshaws and buses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There will be a single-point taxation system for taxis, autorickshaws and State-run buses in Delhi-NCR, with Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi and UP signing an agreement of Combined Reciprocal Common Transport Agreements (CRCTA) covering both Contract Carriage & Stage Carriage for seamless movement of mass public transport vehicles of State transport undertaking inter-city buses, to ease traffic congestion and reduce air pollution.

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the CRCTA shall come into force with immediate effect, for ensuring seamless movement of passenger vehicles in NCR shall be valid for next 10 years.

"All Motor cabs/Taxis/Auto Rickshaws; All Educational Institution vehicles; and All Stage Carriage Buses of State

Transport Undertakings (including City bus services) of NCR participating states will be covered under this agreement. All permits/licenses including temporary permits/licenses (Contract Carriage and also Stage Carriage, as applicable) shall be issued only on Vaahan Software, as updated from time to time," the agreement said.

According to ministry's officials, the age of the Stage Carriage vehicles as well as Contract Carriage vehicles shall be limited to 10 years for diesel vehicles and 15 years for petrol/CNG vehicles till any further directions are issued in this regard. The new Combined agreement also provides for exemption in such taxes to buses etc. of educational institutions. The NCR States have agreed to forego such revenues in larger public interest of cleaner NCR. Such revenue loss is estimated to be around

Rs.100 crore annually. "The new agreement provides for single-point taxation to state owned transport bodies wherein road tax/passenger tax etc. shall be payable by them only in one NCR State and exempted from such taxes/fee in other NCR States. This has been agreed by all the NCR States with a view to nudge passengers shift from private to public transport to contribute towards reduction in pollution in NCR," officials added. As per the agreement, NCR States shall take initiative to computerize the database of drivers, vehicle registration and other related information in the NCR districts on priority basis. States should also endeavor to implement the usage of RFID, Speed Control device, Fast Tag, Trauma Care, single window Tax collection, bar-coding of finger-prints of drivers and GPS vehicle tracking system in a phased manner.



SECOND SWOOP ON SENA LEADERS IN A WEEK

ED attaches Sena MLA Sarnaik's assets

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In the second such attachment made in less than a week of an immovable property linked to the functionaries of the Shiv Sena or individuals close to its leaders, the Enforcement Directorate attached two flats and a parcel of land worth ₹11.35 crore owned by influential Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik at Thane in an alleged money laundering case relating to NSEL fraud.

On the basis of money trail, scrutiny and identification of assets relating to two transactions between two firms controlled by Pratap Sarnaik and his family members, the ED attached two flats and a parcel of land worth ₹11.35 crore owned by Sarnaik under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

On his part, Sarnaik said he would soon move the court to clarify his position in the matter and would fully cooperate with the ED

as he had done in the past.

Forty-six-year-old Pratap Sarnaik is a three-time MLA from Ovala-Majiwada constituency in Mumbai's satellite city of Thane and is the Chairman of Vihang Group of Companies with interests in varied sectors.

Talking to media persons after the ED attached his properties, Sarnaik said: "This (matters relating to him in the investigation by the ED) has been going on ever since I moved against (actress) Kangana Ranaut and journalist Arnab Goswami last year... I have full faith in the judiciary".

The attachment of properties worth Rs 11.35 crore came on the heels of the ED attaching ₹ 6.45 crore-worth immovable properties belonging to a company owned by Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray's brother-in-law Shridhar Madhav Patankar at Thane an alleged money laundering case on March 22, 2022.



The attachment of Sarnaik's properties by the ED worth ₹11.35 crore were made as part of a money laundering investigation initiated by it on the basis of an FIR registered on September 30, 2013 registered by Economic Offence Wing, Mumbai Police against the directors of the National Spot Exchange Limited (NSEL), key officials of NSEL and 25 defaulters of NSEL and others.

"In this case, accused persons hatched a criminal conspiracy to defraud the investors, induced them to trade on the platform of NSEL, created forged documents like bogus warehouse receipts, fal-

sified the accounts and thereby committed criminal breach of trust in respect ₹5,600 Crore of approximately 13,000 investors," the ED said in its statement.

The ED said that the investigations had revealed that the money collected from various investors were diverted by borrowers/trading members of NSEL for other activities like investment into real estate, repayment of outstanding debts and other activities.

According to the ED, one Aastha Group consisting one of the defaulting members of NSEL has liability of ₹242.66 crore towards NSEL. Aastha Group had diverted ₹21.74 crore of M/s Vihang Aastha Housing Projects LLP in the period of 2012-13.

Out of ₹21.74 crore received by M/s Vihang Aastha Housing Projects LLP, ₹11.35 crore was transferred to M/s Vihang Enterprises & M/s Vihang

Infrastructure Pvt. Limited, both of which are controlled by Pratap Sarnaik and his family members.

"On the basis of money trail, scrutiny and identification assets consisting of 02 flats and a parcel of land in Thane, Maharashtra amounting to total ₹11.35 crore held by Pratap Sarnaik, valued at ₹11.35 crore have been provisionally attached under PMLA, 2002," the ED said in its statement.

The ED said that the remaining amount of ₹10.50 crore originating from Aastha Group was paid to one Yogesh Deshmukh. This amount of ₹10.50 crore had already been attached under PMLA and the same has been confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority (PMLA).

Earlier in this case assets amounting to ₹3,242.67 Crore have been attached. The value of total attached assets in this case now stands at ₹3,254.02 crore. Further investigation is under progress.

If you are so desperate to come to power, please put me behind bars, Uddhav tell BJP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Hitting back at the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its "perverted" efforts to "defame" his family members and the ruling MVA leaders, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday dared the BJP to put him behind the bars if it was desperate to come to power in the state.

Replying to a debate in the State Assembly on a resolution tabled on the last day of the budget session, Uddhav said: "The BJP is conducting itself in a perverted manner by defaming our families. Just because you want power, you are trying to defame our family members under tension by defaming them. I would like to tell you (BJP leaders): If you want to come with me, I am prepared to come with you not for sharing power but to facilitate you to put me behind the bars".

Coming down heavily on the Modi government's for "misusing" the ED and other agencies against his family members and other MVA leaders, the chief minister said: "If you (BJP) want to put in me in trouble, deal with me directly. But, why are you targeting my family members? Have we ever tired defame your family members? Have we ever tried to wash dirty linen in matters relating to your family members?".

"You must remember how late

Sena chief Bal Thackeray saved all those leaders from your party difficult situations in the past. Will these leaders have any explanation to offer to late Thackeray when they die.. Please do not Shiv Sainiks' houses," an emotional Uddhav said.

In his vicious criticism of the BJP, Uddhav indirectly held the Opposition responsible for Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari cutting short his address to the joint sitting of the both the House of Maharashtra Legislature on the first budget session.

"I am unhappy that the Governor could not deliver his address at the joint sitting of the two Houses. I am also unhappy that the Governor left the hall without waiting for the national anthem to get over. No person holding such a high position would have faced such a humiliation as the Governor faced," the chief minister said.

"The Governor's constitutional post. The Opposition parties go on many occasions to him with their complaints. They enjoy that right. At the same time, they need to follow traditions and practices of the state. The Governor was to speak about the various works done by our government but some people did not allow him to deliver his joint address," Uddhav said, as he laid the blame at the BJP's for the Governor's failure to deliver his speech.

Zoji la reopens in record 73 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Zoji La Pass was on Friday opened for civilian traffic. It was for the first time in over six decades that the Zoji La Pass, on NH-1, faced a closure for only 73 days, as against an average of 150 days, the Defence Ministry said.

The first civilian convoy comprising 560 vehicles carrying fresh supplies, medicines and other essential items and passenger vehicles crossed over to Ladakh from Sonamarg.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) established the unprecedented breakthrough on the gateway connect between Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir on March 19, 2022 when the first Trial Convoy was flagged off by DGBR, Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhry from Zoji La to Ladakh, the Ministry said.

Known as the "Mountain

Pass of Blizzards", Zoji la is located in Drass, Ladakh at an altitude above 11,650 ft and historically remains closed for the major part of the winter season. This year BRO kept it open till 04 Jan 22, a first ever accomplishment in the recorded history.

Various precautionary measures were put in place by BRO before the road was declared open for traffic.

Since the road stretch has a large number of avalanche prone locations dedicated teams comprising lookout men along with heavy duty equipment have been prepositioned astride identified avalanche and accidents sites.

Another set of teams is employed on the road stretch to carry out road maintenance to ensure uninterrupted trafficability in the coming days while small teams continue to clear and widen the road stretch to facilitate movement of heavy duty vehicles.

Asim Arun 1st IPS officer to get berth in UP Cabinet

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Former Commissioner of Police of Kanpur Nagar, Asim Arun, made a tryst with history by becoming the first direct Indian Police Services officer to find a place in the Council of Ministers of Uttar Pradesh. Arun was sworn in as a Minister of State with independent charge in the Yogi Adityanath Government's council of Ministers which assumed charge for a second consecutive term in Lucknow on Friday.

Arun is the second Dalit (Jatav) officer of the elite IPS cadre who was given prominence by the Bharatiya Janata Party and made a minister.

Earlier, Arun's mentor and former UP DGP Brij Lal, also a Dalit officer, had joined the BJP soon after his retirement and was made a Rajya Sabha member by the saffron outfit. In 1996 too, a police sub-inspector, Satya Pal Singh Baghel, had quit his job to join politics and went on to become a four-time MP. He first joined the Samajwadi Party, then switched over to Bahujan Samaj Party before finally shifting to the BJP and becoming a Union Minister in the Narendra Modi Government.

He also contested the recent assembly election against SP chief Akhilesh Yadav from Karhal seat (Mainpuri) but

got a drubbing.

Like Arun, another 1980 batch IPS officer and former Mumbai Police Commissioner, Satya Pal Singh, had opted for voluntary retirement and is a two-time MP from Baghpat and finds a place in the Modi council of ministers at the Centre.

Earlier, SP leader Ahmed Hassan, who recently passed away, had also served the UP Police before taking a plunge into politics. He was promoted to the Indian Police Services (IPS) cadre from Provincial Police Services (PPS) cadre. Hassan too served as cabinet minister in the SP government and was leader of the opposition in the UP Legislative Council when he breathed his last.

However, Hassan never contested an election and remained as member of Council whereas Arun is the first direct IPS officer from UP to quit services as commissioner of police in Kanpur Nagar and successfully win his first assembly poll from Kannauj Sadar constituency, defeating SP candidate Anil Dohre by more than 6,000 votes. Arun's late father Shree Ram Arun also served as a DGP in UP.

Besides Arun, another man in khaki to don the saffron and win the recent assembly poll from Sarojininagar

constituency of Lucknow is former Enforcement Directorate Joint Director Rajeshwar Singh. A PPS officer with UP Police, Singh was tipped to be made a minister in Yogi's government which ultimately did not happen.

In the last 25 years, about a dozen police officers joined politics but most of them failed to achieve considerable success. Among them is 1972 batch IPS officer SR Darapuri, who retired as inspector general in 2003 and contested the 2004 Lok Sabha polls from Lucknow and then again from Robertsganj in 2014, but lost on both occasions.

Similarly, 1991 batch deputy superintendent of police with Special Task Force, Shailendra Kumar Singh, quit his job to join the Congress and contested the 2009 Lok Sabha polls from Chandauli, but lost. In the 2012 assembly polls, he again tried his luck but bit the dust.

Other former IPS officers like Kush Saurabh, Dawa Sherpa were active politically but did not contest polls. Interestingly, Sherpa had also resigned from services before going to contest polls. However, after losing the election, since his resignation was not accepted, he joined the services and is now ADG (CB CID) in UP.

Lok Sabha passes Finance Bill, completes budgetary exercise

New Delhi : The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Finance Bill, which gives effect to new taxation, thus completing the budgetary exercise for 2022-23 fiscal. The House accepted 39 official amendments moved by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and rejected the amendments proposed by the opposition by voice vote.

Replying to a discussion on the Finance Bill, Sitharaman said India was probably the only country that did not resort to new taxes to fund the recovery of the economy hit by the Covid pandemic.

She said that according to an OECD report, as many as 32 countries have increased the tax rates after the pandemic. "Instead, we put more money where multiplier effect would be maximum," she said while referring to the Budget's focus on raising capital expenditure. The Budget 2022-23 raised Capex by 35.4 per cent to Rs 7.5 lakh crore to continue the public investment-led recovery of the pandemic battered economy.

Observing that the Modi government believes in lowering taxes, she said the reduction in corporate tax has "helped the economy, Government and companies, and we are seeing the progress". She said ₹7.3 lakh crore has been collected as corporate tax so far this fiscal. The number of taxpayers has increased to 9.1 crore from 5 crore a few years back, she said, adding the government is taking steps to widen the tax base and the faceless assessment has been received well by the people.

Responding to the concerns expressed by members on imposing customs duty on umbrella, she said it was done to encourage domestic manufacturing by MSMEs. She further said that IFSC in Gujarat is making steady progress, and several global funds and insurance companies are setting up offices at the International Financial Services Centre in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT).

Initiating the debate Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi expressed concerns on frequent hike in fuel prices and taxation on unregulated virtual digital assets and crypto currencies. He said the Government is still sending mixed signals on virtual digital assets, and asserted there should be clarity on the definition of crypto. It is not clear if it is an asset, currency or something that can be speculated upon, he said.

Gogoi further said that the Government should take a view on this so that virtual digital assets do not

become a preferred route for money laundering, drug smuggling or crime. "I expect the policy to come out sooner than later...Crypto is a risk at the moment," he said. On fuel price hike, Gogoi said it has been increased for the third time in one week and added the government should maintain status quo to provide relief to common people who have just come out from the third wave of Covid-19.

"They need a chance to conduct their businesses in a free and fair atmosphere, not always under the burden of high inflation and high fuel prices. And it is a bit ironic as to the answer that the Government or its spokespersons are giving on fuel prices, they are saying that the fuel prices are bound to happen (increase) because of the conflict in Ukraine," he said.

Countering the Opposition, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said economy is recovering and pointing out the increased figures in exports. Dubey hit out at the previous UPA Government for issuing oil bonds to soften the impact of the high international crude prices.

"These oil bonds carried an interest rate ranging from 6.35 per cent to 8.4 per cent. The government had to pay ₹ 40,000 crore as interest on these oil bonds," Dubey said, adding that all big businessmen with a net worth of ₹5,000 crore and more benefited from this.

Supriya Sule of the NCP demanded a ban on crypto, saying various committee have suggested so. She questioned the imposition of 30 per cent tax on capital gain out of virtual digital assets even when there is no legislation on that. Danish Ali (BSP) said the Government should clarify its position on crypto currency if it is legal or not. On the promise of doubling of farmers' income, Ali said the Government should inform if it has been achieved. Forget about doubling of income, Ali said, instead the cost of farming has increased significantly.

Aparupa Poddar (TMC) said the government talks about increasing GDP which means Gas, diesel and Petrol (prices). She also sought to know the quantum of black money reduced because of demonetisation. Appreciating the Finance Minister for presenting a "well-balanced" Finance Bill, N K Premchandran (RSP) said it is right time for the review of Goods and Services Tax (GST) given the complexities involved.

Fadnavis likens Uddhav to Nero

Mumbai: Charging that Maharashtra had "zero governance", former Chief Minister and current Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Devendra Fadnavis on Friday likened Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to Roman Emperor Nero.

Alluding to the much-used history-related expression "Nero fiddled when Rome burned", Fadnavis took a pot shot at the Chief Minister by saying: "When Rome was burning...Nero was playing 'pungi'...or whatever that is ...bansuri..."

Talking to media persons after the end of the budget session of the State Legislature, Fadnavis contended that Maharashtra lacked governance "Tell me where is governance in Maharashtra...it is zero," he said.

Dismissing Uddhav's challenge that he be put behind the bars, Fadnavis said: "Does it happen that way? Tomorrow deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar would say the same...it does not happen that way. The investigating agencies take action only when there is evidence and only against whom there is evidence," he said.

Slamming the chief minister for defending jailed minister Nawab Malik, Fadnavis said: "We crusaded for the resignation of tainted minister Nawab Malik. But it is unfortunate that the chief minister defends a leader (Malik) who has links with Dawood Ibrahim and who took money from Dawood's sister Haseena Parkar," Fadnavis said.

—PNS

Guj Cong MLAs protest against Par-Tapi-Narmada river link project

Citing displacement of tribals

Gandhinagar: Several Gujarat Congress leaders, including state unit president Jagdish Thakor, were detained by police on Friday as they tried to march towards the Assembly complex to register their protest against the proposed Par-Tapi-Narmada river link project, which it claimed will displace tribal residents of the region.

Before the police detained around 80 Congress workers and leaders from Satyagrah Chhavni ground in sector 6, some 15 Congress MLAs staged a walk out on the same issue just minutes before the House proceedings ended for the day. Hundreds of tribals had gathered for the 'Adivasi Satyagrah', a rally organised by the Congress to raise issues concerning tribals and to protest against the dams proposed to be constructed on Par river in south Gujarat as part of the Union government's river link project, said Gujarat Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi.

When the Congress workers and leaders started marching towards the Assembly on the appeal of Jagdish Thakor, police swung into action and detained nearly 80 protesters, including Thakor, Gujarat Congress in-charge Dr. Raghu Sharma, state working president Hardik Patel, Leader of Opposition Sukhram Rathva, former LoP Paresh Dhanani and former state unit president Amit Chavda among others.

"We have detained nearly 80 protestors as police did not give any permission to the organisers to hold this foot march. We will release them after completing legal procedures," said Gandhinagar Range Inspector General Abhay Chudasama.

During the day's discussion on budgetary demands for the Tribal Development Department, Congress MLAs came down heavily on the ruling BJP.

PTI



Devotees gather to worship Hindu goddess Sheeta Mata, on the occasion of Sheeta Ashtami, during a fair at a school, in Fatehpur Shekhawati on Friday

2023 K'taka Assembly polls will be my last, but will continue in politics: Siddaramaiah

Mysuru (K'taka): Senior Congress leader Siddaramaiah on Friday said the 2023 Assembly election in Karnataka will be his last, but will continue to remain in politics.

The Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly said he is yet to decide on the constituency from where he will contest the next election, and will abide by the party's decision regarding the Congress' chief ministerial face for the polls. "I will remain in politics, but electoral politics - most likely the next Assembly election will be the last that I will be contesting," Siddaramaiah told reporters at his native village Siddaramanahundi here.

Responding to a question on which constituency he will be contesting from, he said there is still one more year for the assembly elections, and is yet to take a call in this regard.

"Party workers and well-wishers from Varuna, Hunsur, Chamarajpet, Badami, Kolar, Hebbal, Koppal and Chamundeshwari are asking me to contest from their constituencies. I'm yet to decide from where (to fight the polls)," he added.

There have been speculation within the party for some time now that the former chief minister, who currently represents Badami in north Karnataka, may return to his home turf of the old Mysuru region or somewhere in Bengaluru for the next assembly election. His loyalist and Chamarajpet legislator B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan, who is among those projecting him as the CM face for the next assembly polls, that caused some differences within the party, has even offered to vacate the con-

stituency for the Congress Legislature Party leader.

Siddaramaiah has already said he will not contest again from Chamundeshwari assembly constituency in Mysuru, where he had tasted defeat during the 2018 assembly polls. To a question on contesting from Chamundeshwari constituency, he said, "I was defeated in the last election in the same constituency where I had got my political rebirth. But it doesn't mean that I will forget the people of Chamundeshwari. They had made me win five times and gave me political strength to this level."

Siddaramaiah, the then sitting chief minister, had lost in Chamundeshwari in 2018 to JD(S) G T Deve Gowda by a margin of over 36,042 votes.

He, however, won Badami, the other constituency from where he had contested, defeating BJP's B Sriramulu by a margin of just 1,696 votes.

Making his debut in the Assembly in 1983, Siddaramaiah had got elected from Chamundeshwari on a Lok Dal Party ticket. He has won five times from this constituency and tasted defeat thrice.

After neighbouring Varuna became a constituency in 2008 following delimitation, Siddaramaiah represented it till he vacated the seat for his son Dr Yatindra (MLA) in the 2018 assembly polls and went back to his old constituency of Chamundeshwari.

Ahead of the May 2018 assembly polls, Siddaramaiah had said it would "most likely" be his last election.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

# Fair justice

Higher courts are overturning an increasing number of death and murder convictions

A crisis of credibility faces the Indian judiciary. Increasingly, death sentences and life terms awarded by lower courts in murder cases are getting reversed in appeals by the higher courts for reasons of error, subjectivity, or sentiment. Is there a case to recommend a course-correction exercise for the judges? A crime-control approach can sometimes have a subjective influence on the application of law. Take the latest case of the Allahabad High Court acquitting a murder accused by setting aside the death penalty awarded to him by a lower court. The High Court rejected the reference made to it to confirm the death penalty and acquitted the accused. The court's observation is startling: "The evidence....does not have a ring of truth. The story of prosecution and the evidence led to prove the same is not worthy of credence.... The evidence is not such as to raise the confidence of the court...." It is an indictment of the entire process undertaken by the lower court. Imagine the trauma of the accused who must have suffered unimaginable mental anguish when he was sentenced to death. What can, or who will, compensate him for the wrong? What is the guarantee that the errors will not be repeated? Is there a feedback mechanism in the judiciary that helps overcome such fundamental problems? Chief Justice NV Ramana was himself part of a Supreme Court bench that reversed a Section 302 order last May.

Barely a fortnight after taking the oath of office, Justice Ramana and two other judges set aside a judgment of the High Court in a murder case. A lower court had acquitted the accused in the case but in appeal before the High Court, the acquittal was set aside and the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment. Setting aside the life term order, the SC bench noted that the proof submitted was "too thin a piece of evidence to convict someone under Section 302 of the Code.... The first Court of facts on appreciation of evidence had acquitted the appellant. We do not find any major lacuna in its reasoning which would have warranted interference by the Appeal Court for reversing such finding into that of guilt". Justice Ramana was part of another bench to give almost a similar ruling in another life sentence case. Project 39A, which fights for fair justice, said in a 2016 report that nearly a third of 1700 death sentences awarded by trial courts in 15 years till 2015 were eventually acquitted while 65.3% of sentences were commuted to life. Only 4.9% of the sentences were confirmed. Of the 102 death sentences awarded in 2019, the Supreme Court that year confirmed only six death sentences. There should be a similar statistical analysis of the High Courts as well. It means most death sentence cases do not meet the high threshold set by judicial standards. The reasons for such dissonance need probing. A wrong conviction is worse than a wrong acquittal.



Students at the inauguration of Red Fort festival 'Bharat Bhagya Vidhata', in Delhi Ranjan Dimri | The Pioneer

# Truth or dare?

The Kashmir Files has reopened wounds among people, and chapters among the political class

Well, a lot of hue and cry is being witnessed these days about *The Kashmir Files*. There are narratives, both allegedly "secular" and "pan-India secular", and then there are the "believers", too. Nationalists who were peacefully snoring for over 30 years since the Kashmiri Hindu Pandits were forced out (no, it wasn't an exodus; it was almost a genocide!) of the Valley with loudspeaker threats to life, limb, property and their womenfolk one cold January night in 1990 — they were sound asleep, really, save to stir themselves for an occasional yawn or a burp, and even though their *saiyaan bhaye kotwal* since 2014 — have suddenly kicked themselves up in righteous anger, vertebrae upright. Needless to say, this theme has also sprung forth certain captains of the opposite camp who are willy-nilly trying to prove that the cinematic projection is mere propaganda. First things first: They don't notice anything unusual in lakhs of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits, infirm or old or waiting to join their employment posting a week later, fleeing their homes in the early morning chill. Then, in the light of the surreptitious Roshni Act, they comfortably take over the abandoned properties on cheap money, or even for free, "for upkeep".

And now certain MPs are claiming that the BJP is "promoting" the movie with an eye on the forthcoming Assembly polls in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Well, wouldn't it rather work on 'The Godhra Files' or the 'Bhanwari Devi Diaries'? Of course, *The Kashmir Files* leaves behind a gut-wrenching pain because the so-called "exodus" was a hurt in itself, as a people and as a nation, but such politics is digging further nails into that pain to bring about an unsavoury memory back to further the chasm between Hindus and Muslims that, agree to it or not, has been cracking deeper ever since 2014 when Narendra Modi first entered Parliament as the Prime Minister and changed the narrative of the country as well as of soft Hindutva as was practised by their older leaders such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Understand, this Modi is not a toot, he is a hoot! Meanwhile, the behaviour of most Kashmiri Muslims is as warm as the weather in the snow-clad Valley. There's still time; there's still half a chance for course correction. Here's hoping for the sake of all Indians, and humanity at large, that we are proved wrong in the stereotyped image of our Muslim brethren.

# Will BJP reforge its programmes?

A point of interest, and debate, is whether the recent Assembly poll results would persuade the party to recast its governance ideology

Sunday, March 20, saw an interesting debate in the print media. The point of discussion was whether its resounding victory in the recent Assembly elections would induce the BJP to reforge its ideology of governance. The debaters have been anxious to know whether the electoral results were a change of Governments or a change of regime. The BJP's ideology of Hinduness has traditionally had a connect with the soil of India. In fact, most other political ideologies the world over are 'isms' based on the socio-economic classes they sprung from, rather than on the specific ethos of the countries concerned. It was so with capitalism, which has had its roots in mercantilism. Socialism and then of course communism which followed it, was conceived of by those who believed that religion is the "opium of the masses" and nationalism is an instrument of the rich exploiting class to keep the toiling working class in chains. In complete contrast to all this, the BJP's ideology and the programmes emanating from it are the closest to India's own ethos.

The advantage of an ideology that has grown from a country's soil is that people normally take to it like fish to water. Those who have been influenced by thinking that has originated overseas find it difficult to digest it though. Dr BR Ambedkar (*Complete Works*, published by the Government of Maharashtra) put this point across lucidly. He was at the time thinking of which faith to convert to since he had decided he would not die as a Hindu. His quest led him to reject Islam and Christianity because, in his words, "they would have a denationalising effect on his people"; those religions have been founded in other countries. In the end, he chose Buddhism because it was born in India. Has he not proved to be a visionary in the decades since he made his choice some 70 years ago?

Welfarism or a welfare State is one of the themes in vogue in the current milieu, and is sup-



posed to be the touchstone on which the worth of political ideologies ought to be judged. Most students of political science would relate the concept to the West, the term having first emerged in the UK during World War II. It has since been used much more broadly to describe systems of social welfare that have developed since the 19th century. The original promise of a welfare State covered every citizen regardless of income. It offered nothing less than cradle-to-grave welfare. That was the great promise dangled before the British electorate in 1945.

But a welfarist society is the traditional concept that has been rooted in India since time immemorial. One need look no farther than the countless *langars* in our *gurudwaras* and *bhandaras* during the poor, the meals were willingly donated by the rich/well-to-do. It is therefore a voluntary transfer of wealth from the rich to the needy individual. This is unlike the European method of taxing the rich at high rates. Taxing public money for the supposedly noble purpose of spending the proceeds on the poor is a dubious idea, as no effec-



PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI IS ACUTELY AWARE OF THIS REALITY AND HAS BEEN INSISTENT ON DIRECT DELIVERY OF BENEFITS TO THE INTENDED BENEFICIARIES. ANOTHER INDIAN REALITY HAS BEEN THE DEMAND FOR AT LEAST ONE TOILET PER FAMILY

tive mechanism for ensuring the delivery of taxed wealth to its intended beneficiaries has been developed.

Regimes and countries that have met with collapse in trying to enforce this system fill textbooks. Late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had once said that out of every ₹100 allocated for the welfare of the poor, only ₹15 actually reached them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is acutely aware of this reality and has been insistent on direct delivery to the intended beneficiaries. Another Indian reality has been the demand for at least one toilet per family. This need was more acute for orthodox Muslim women, who could not expose their faces outside their homes, which would have been inevitable during the daytime. Scholars might reject this point as unnecessary in the context of ideology. We in India question the use of ideology, which does not include every citizen's comfort as essential. Thousands of pages of Marxist and socialist ideology are useful, but ineffective for a leader to make a promise to his electorate.

One particular allegation



PRAFULL GORADIA

has been that the BJP polarises the electorate. Would anybody believe that the party is a club of wasters who polarise Hindus and Muslims without rhyme or reason? Yogi Adityanath got only nine votes in a particular pocket in his constituency. In other words, his party is not popular among Muslims everywhere. By polarising or doing anything against Muslims, the BJP would lose whatever little support it gets from the community, whether men or women. This would apply equally to Mahadalits, or the most backward, among the Hindus.

A new theory is current that traditional electoral democracy has been vitiated by the ruling party to the extent that it is coming in the way of the all-important constitutional democracy. The problem before us is to research what constitutional democracy is, as distinct from electoral. I can only think of the Greek concept of the three classes, of which only the uppermost mattered. I wonder if I am right.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A HELPLESS CRY FOR ENVIRONMENT

Sir — The pollution in Delhi has reached its worst levels again. Unfortunately, it has earned the dubious distinction of being the most polluted Capital city in the world. It is a matter of grave concern. November 8, 2017, is a red-letter day in the history of Delhi; the air quality index indicated pollution levels of 999, way above the upper limit of the worst AQI category. Let's talk about the causes: Carbon emission from vehicles is tremendous and industrial waste into air and water is one of the primary reasons for air pollution, besides various chemical factories pollute the air as well as water.

Contaminated water due to industrial water destroys marine and organic life. This has an awful impact as the air becomes increasingly poisonous and gives rise to various health issues. This sorry development calls for immediate attention by every State of the nation and the entire world as human survival faces a grave danger. Some kind of public awareness programme must be launched and general public should be involved in fighting this man-created menace. More trees should be planted. All this will require great political will and zeal and I am of the view that all parties lack it.

Poonam Boyat | Ujjain

### FOREIGN POLICY FACES TOUGH TIMES

Sir — Currently, as the Russian-Ukraine war rages and the world is in turmoil, our foreign policy is also facing a difficult test. Many countries are not tired of praising India's foreign policy. Keeping itself balanced between two superpowers, it has been successful in maintaining not only commercial but also political relations. As a developing nation, India's policy has always been of non-violence, cooperation and harmony. It has always strived to create an independent foreign policy and self-reliant image, so India's foreign policy has been the biggest nurturer of non-alignment and co-existence.

But it must be appreciated that the

## IPL extravaganza begins today



The wait is over for the 15th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL), to be called 'TATA IPL 2022'. The League has come back home after the pandemic pause and this edition will be played only in Maharashtra, and the fun begins at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai today. The addition of two new teams, Gujarat Titans and Lucknow SuperGiants, compelled the Board of Control for Cricket in India to re-introduce the Indian Premier League's 2011 playing format. While dividing the 10 teams into two groups

of five, a random draw was used to determine the groups and who played them across the groups once and twice.

The only time an IPL event was held in the 10-team format was in 2011 and it was won by Chennai Super Kings. It will be interesting to see who will be crowned the 'champion' in this year's event. Returning home, the event will host defending champions Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, Gujarat Titans, Kolkata Knight Riders, Lucknow SuperGiants, Punjab Kings, Rajasthan Royals, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Sunrisers Hyderabad that will be battling for the coveted title. Cricket has certainly come of age in India and the IPL has brought glitz and enormous amounts of money to everyone involved. The way teams are rushing to buy players, it's worth a watch. Sometimes nail-biting finishes, too.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

success of our country's foreign policy is that India is still not included in any group; it remains constant on peace, harmony and co-existence. In fact, India's foreign policy is a reflection of our civilisation, culture and political traditions, in which great thinkers like Kautilya are on the same page as Ashoka's theory of peace and equality, Gandhi's philosophy and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Even America clearly understands that this new India is not going to back down from its principles and its interests. We need to be cautious and strengthen our foreign policy for our national interests.

Devanand Roy | Delhi

### INDIA MUST CARE FOR ITSELF

Sir — US President Joe Biden suffered knocking knees and chattering teeth when India and China were almost on verge of the largest military conflagration since World War II in Ladakh. Even today, the countries are in eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with 1,00,000 troops each with the most modern weaponry. The Biden Administration kept out

because of its economic interests in China, so why should India get involved in the Ukraine-Russia issue which, according to Prof John Mierscheimer of Chicago University, is of US making as it tried to make Ukraine part of Nato and the EU in violation of its solemn promise to Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990 that these groupings would not expand to cover the erstwhile Warsaw Pact countries.

Among the Quad members, with the possible exception of India being somewhat "shaky" in part, Japan has been extremely strong — and so has Australia — in terms of dealing with Putin's aggression. So the US President essentially said the countries that align with the policy of the US are "strong" and those with an independent foreign policy are "shaky". The only advantage the US and the West have is having big companies and institutions of the world order in their basket, nothing else.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

Let's further water conservation and contribute to a sustainable planet.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



US President — Joe Biden

I feel the pressure. There's just so much expectation from my fans.



Actor — Siddharth Nigam



Australian ex-allrounder — Shane Watson

The special school for armed forces training in Delhi will be named after Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh.



Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal



FIRST COLUMN

CRISIS-HIT INDIAN ECONOMY

Particularly affected are infrastructure, electric vehicles and the National Education Policy



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The Ukraine war is upending India's dream budget and now gets further bruised with a rise in crude prices and retail inflation. The nation has to tighten its belt, go slow on reckless infrastructure spending, and be austere as indicators go for a toss amid efforts of the government to stabilize the economy. Oil and gas are set to bleed the country even as the government looks for alternative sources but the discounted products from sanctioned Russia look irresistible. The war is hardening the international market, soaring energy prices, making exports difficult as the rupee plunges against the dollar. Imports are growing at \$616.91 billion, a 55 per cent increase, exports are at lower volumes at \$335.88 billion. The trade deficit at \$228.92 billion, a rise of 47 per cent. Borrowings are high and a likely cut on infra spending of budgeted ₹10 lakh crore looms large. The atmos-



phere throws Indian business and consumers at the mercy of global winds. It is also likely to fetch lower prices for the LIC privatisation move. As per the World Inequality Report, the country stands out as poor and very unequal with the top one per cent of the people holding more than one-fifth of total national income in 2021, and the bottom half, just 13 per cent. Average Indian's income is ₹204,200 per annum or about ₹17,016 a month and the bottom's is still less at ₹53,610. As of now, the government must do away with the unnecessary subsidy of ₹2908 crore (increased from ₹800 crore) for electric cars (EV). Similarly, it needs to review infra projects that defy the norms of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It also can consider cuts for many other infra projects. Such austerities are needed in various areas and the country must reconsider its decision to rush for EVs. Maruti-Suzuki chairman R C Bhargava has appropriately suggested not going for it merely for the issue of emission or pollution. He says: "EVs are not clean cars. These are far more expensive and does not suit Indian needs. EVs depended on coal fired thermal plants will not reduce carbon emissions or greenhouse gases in the next 10-15 years." In other words, it virtually goes against the basic concern of the IPCC.

"If we just adopt whatever strategies the US and Europe are following, I don't think we will be doing justice to what we need to do in India," Bhargava says. So, India needs to rethink on its investments on unsettled EV technology, building of charging stations and making the country dependent on imports of battery. The battery, unless made with elements found in India would remain extremely expensive and supply uncertain. India may continue with CNG for now. Inflation and, low manufacturing are hitting the country. But these are not being addressed. The infra increases incomes of large groups but does not accelerate growth. India to grow has to carefully cut on infra and spend more on merchandise production. Times are difficult and complex solutions have to be worked out. The average Indian youth is in a perennial rush to enter the job market at the earliest. However, the National Education Policy, in a bid to align it with that of the affluent United States, is making them stick around in schools and universities for two years more. Primary education is delayed by a year and graduation is now four years instead of three. As education gets prolonged, it becomes expensive and can lead to unpaid study loans or increased college dropouts. This anomaly in the policy needs to be corrected right away.

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

# The invasion of Ukraine: What next?

## The Russians have not lost the war yet; they have just failed to win it quickly and cheaply



GWYNNE DYER

*(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Dishing out history a la carte

There is a reason why some people love to consume history. They cherish the comfort of the completed past over the uncertain present or a possible future

In the 1970s, cricketing meant international Test series. Three-day matches between visiting sides and Ranji zonal teams were also part of an India tour. Then, the 50-over match, the day-and-night match, and eventually the T20 came about.

Back then, cricket fans in India would follow matches involving Somerset, Northamptonshire, etc., as top Indian players took part in the English leagues. No one then might have imagined that the world's star cricketers would flock to be among the ten teams in an Indian league. Far fewer Test games are played than T20 tournament matches.


When Conan Doyle and J.M. Barrie were playing the game, or for that matter even when Vijay Hazare captained the Indian team to its first ever Test win, no one imagined how the formats and skills would evolve, to the greater benefit of a much larger global audience.

On the contrary, consider a pack of playing cards. Printers still follow an outmoded convention without any redesign. Obsolete symbols such as K and Q and J ought to have given way long ago to Councillor, Mayor, Judge and Governor. The French Revolution of 1789 was a landmark event that heralded the era of the citizen and dusted out the monarchy. Yet, in many parts of the world, there's a slowness in adopting the egalitarian language of citizens. In fact, some political parties choose to signal a continuity with medieval dynasties and past insignia of power to demand a cultural allegiance from the present generation.

Rather than economic history or technological history, it is political history that is framed and projected as a means of wielding power over people. By controlling the prevalent social view of the present so that it appears less amenable to the aspirations of the lowly placed, the spirit of a democracy can be stifled.

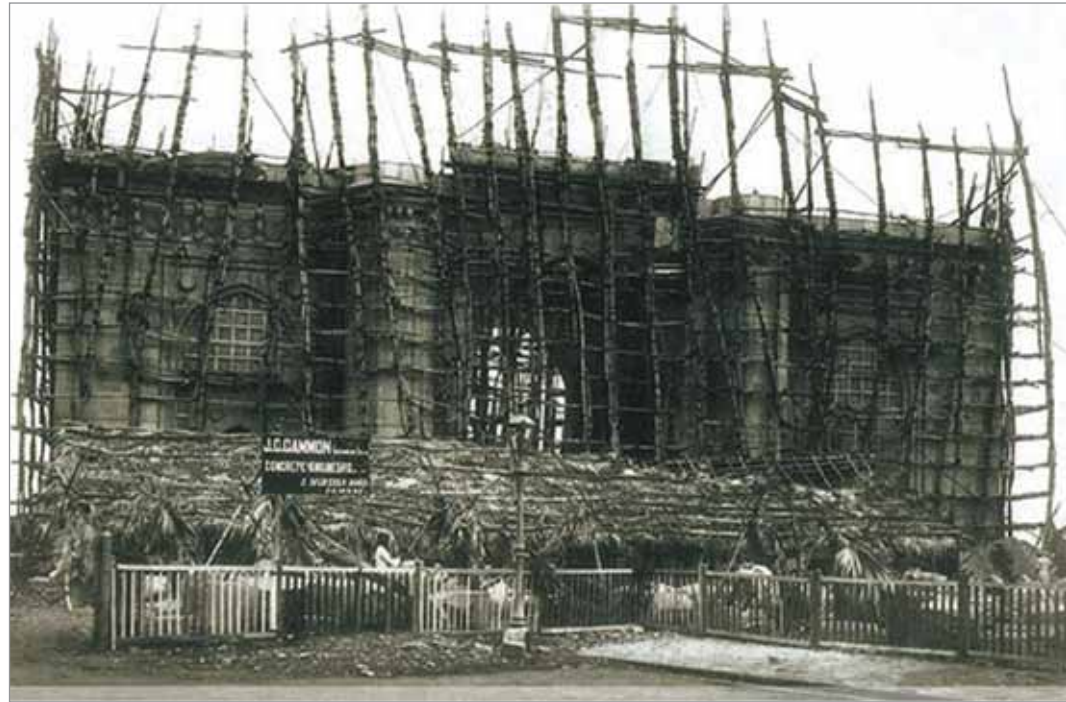
The invention of the printing press, the electric bulb, the airplane, the telephone, digital photography, have all redefined human capacities in a profound way. They will shape our future more than many traditional concepts will. And yet, there will be people who direct our attention to old mythologies, primitive frameworks of understanding, and fetishize 'ancient marvels' at a time when many young people of today are themselves creating innovative solutions, working with advanced methods, and apply a global understanding than a regional or monocultural one.

Now there are ways and ways in which we can relate to history. It can serve as knowledge that informs our current and future practice and policy without entirely determining it. Or history can get fed to an upcoming generation as an inheritance - on its own, a wealth to revel in - which can preclude the need to acquire any glory for themselves in the future through talent and effort. This latter type of shiny armour to readily strap on and preen one-



ONE'S DAILY BATTLE AGAINST INERTIA, VICES, SELF-DOUBT, CYNICISM AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IS WORTH RECORDING AND IN FACT, STATISTICALLY, IT IS THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL SEE-SAW THAT AGGREGATES INTO THE AMITY OR HOSTILITY, OPTIMISM OR DESPAIR, AFFIRMATION OR SHAME, INTEGRITY OR CORRUPTION THAT HOVERS AS A CULTURAL CLOUD AT THE SOCIETAL LEVEL

*(The writer is a creative director, advertising faculty, and an amateur epistemologist. The views expressed are personal.)*



self in has been getting very popular among those with weaker educational aptitude.

There is a reason why some people love to consume history whether in writing or in cinema over other genres like musicals, relationship stories, comedies, social commentary etc. They cherish the comfort of the completed past over the uncertain present or a possible future. You either already know how an event ended so there's no suspense in it, or at least know that it's of the past and that its outcome is not now getting decided. So, it guarantees a passivity and a diversion that a current newsreel or contemporary theme cannot bring.

The past provides a sense of familiarity and continuity, or even security in an ever-changing world. Someone may know next to nothing of world history but can know a lot about the history of an area of 5 km radius. They know how a street, a locality or a campus has come to be what it is. Who built or occupied the earliest buildings, are they still occupying them, who or what arrived next, who were the first doctors or chemist stores, which was the first bank, or boutique, or gym.

They like to associate and identify with the continuing history of something larger than themselves or their family - a colony, a community or a city.

With the explosion of social media, there is now a ready market for new cultural products - short films, poems, booklets, blogs, photo albums, interviews - that can provide this comfort fodder, this community binding material that evokes common reminiscences, shared nostalgia and establishes a ready heritage.

Then there are the few grand historians who've looked at longer arcs of history and at causes that brought about shifts in power or economic change and who analyse how communities or nations flourish or decline.

Today, whether it's a common-man historian or an academically proficient historiographer or a party propagandist or a seasoned journalist, they are all quite unlike the official court historians of earlier centuries. However, their position is like that of a commissioned portrait photographer - they feel an audience pressure to make a person or specific group of people look really good, and to deflect attention from unflattering features.

Our consumption of history, whether through an Amar Chitra Katha illustrated book, a TV serial, a book by Percival Spear or Manu S Pillai, or a dramatised film does leave us with a learning or two, and leaves some emotional impact. To estimate how much, we have to consider three axes: where - nearby or faraway, smaller radius or a larger area; when - recently or long ago, lasting an hour or a decade; and what - an achievement or a calamity, a crisis or an adventure.

It's been rightly observed that there are macro level insights that can be obtained when we pay close attention at a micro level, which is readily accessible to every one of us

- our own day-to-day experience. Some of us keep an account of our own days in a diary. Now, would one tend to be candid in a mostly private diary or be so deluded as to continually compliment themselves on everything and depict their average day as a splendid triumph over dread foes? What is the texture of our daily living - is it pervaded mainly by cordiality or are there frequent bouts of hostile feelings?

In a sense, one's daily battle against inertia, vices, petty diversions, self-doubt, cynicism and negative emotions like suspicion and anger is worth recording and in fact statistically, it is this psychological see-saw that aggregates into the amity or hostility, accommodation or intolerance, optimism or despair, affirmation or shame, integrity or corruption that hovers as a cultural cloud at the societal level.

Writing out a concise history of one's day or week is a way to become self-aware of how we respond to people and events around us. It is a practical way of developing a sense of personal history. Actually, the history of institutions, of communities, etc., is reflective of what their members did or did not do during a given tenure. Not only that, it will also be about how during an inner struggle between many emotions, the ones most relevant to the best possible future are the ones we choose to accord the most amount of time and our attention.

That way, some of the future can indeed be of our scripting.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHY IS AN ANTI-CONVERSION LAW NEEDED WHEN THERE ARE PROVISIONS IN THE IPC TO ACT AGAINST FORCED CONVERSIONS?

— HARYANA LEADER OF OPPOSITION BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA



A PERSON CAN CHANGE RELIGION OF HIS OWN FREE WILL, BUT NOT FORCIBLY OR BY USING ALLUREMENT.

— CHIEF MINISTER MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR

# The invasion of Ukraine: What next?

## The Russians have not lost the war yet; they have just failed to win it quickly and cheaply



GWYNNE DYER

*(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)*



However, it's a whole different game if the real problem with the Russian troops is morale. Street-fighting eats up troops like no other military operation, so the Russian reluctance to launch a full-scale ground attack on big cities like Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odesa is understandable. But the alternative of just standing back and

problem is not just logistical. It is also about the reluctance of Russian soldiers to destroy the big Ukrainian cities, or maybe even to fight any more at all. There have been stray reports of Russian units refusing to fight already, but that may just be Ukrainian propaganda. Yet it could also be true, because the soldiers will know by now that they are in Ukraine as invaders, not as friends, and that will be a very uncomfortable feeling. A majority of adults in Ukraine speak Russian well enough to make their feelings known to the invaders in person and in considerable detail, so the Russian soldiers will not be fooled by the official propaganda that still misleads their friends and family back home. They will feel that they have

been lied to by their own authorities. The Russian army's supply system has been managed so badly that the soldiers have had to spend much of their time 'living off the land', which actually means stealing, buying or begging food and water from the local Ukrainian population, so they will be feeling nothing but contempt for their own leaders. Their own mobile phones were confiscated by their officers at the border, but their more enterprising comrades will have acquired Ukrainian ones by now, so they will know what is actually happening elsewhere almost at once, including any outbreaks of disobedience by Russian troops. Armies do sometimes just melt away, or at least cease to

function as military hierarchies. I'm not confidently predicting that this is going to happen to the Russian army in Ukraine, but it's certainly the ideal conditions to breed that sort of collapse. So the Ukrainians should (and probably will) wait a while longer and see if the Russian army really does fall apart. If it doesn't and the Russian bombardment really starts wrecking the big cities, then wait longer, because in the end they will have to send their troops in to occupy them. If they refuse that order, then you have won. If they obey it, then you have lost the conventional war. Send President Volodymyr Zelensky abroad to lead the government-in-exile if he's still alive, and start planning the guerrilla war of resistance.



# ‘China could boost military in Solomons’

AP ■ WELLINGTON

A leaked document indicates that China could boost its military presence in the Solomon Islands — including with ship visits — in a development that is raising alarm in nearby Australia and beyond.

The Solomon Islands revealed on Thursday it had signed a policing cooperation agreement with China. But more concerning to Australia was the draft text of a broader security arrangement that was leaked online.

Under the terms of the draft agreement, China could send police, military personnel, and other armed forces to the Solomons "to assist in maintaining social order" and for a variety of other reasons.

It could also send ships to the islands for stopovers and to replenish supplies.

The draft agreement stipulates that China would need to sign off on any information that's released about joint security arrangements, including at media briefings.

Without directly addressing the content of the draft agreement, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a statement saying "We would be concerned by any actions that destabilize the security of our region."

The department said that after riots last year in the Solomon Islands' capital, Honiara, Australia and its neighbors had been able to send security assistance "without the need for external support."

"Pacific Island nations have



the right to make sovereign decisions," the department said. "Australia's cooperation with our Pacific family is focused on the economic prosperity, security and development of our region."

New Zealand said it planned to raise its concerns about the document with both the Solomon Islands and China.

"If genuine, this agreement would be very concerning," Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said. "Such agreements will always be the right of any sovereign country to enter into; however, developments within this purported agreement could destabilize the current institutions and arrangements that have long underpinned the Pacific region's security." Questioned about the agreement, China's Foreign Ministry said Beijing and the Solomons "conducted normal law enforcement and security cooperation on the basis of equal treatment and win-win

cooperation."

"This is in line with the international law and international practice, conducive to maintaining social order in the Solomon Islands and promoting peace and stability in the region, and helpful to enhance common interests of China and the Solomon Islands, as well as all countries in the region," ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters at a daily briefing on Friday.

Wang referenced China's previous support for the Solomons in handling riots and "maintaining stability," but did not cite the agreement directly. Referring to Australia, he said China hoped "the relevant party will see this objectively and calmly, and refrain from overinterpreting it." "It is irresponsible and unhelpful for regional stability and development

that the individual Australian official hyped the fallacy of China's so-called

coercion and deliberately created tensions," Wang said.

Anna Powles, a senior lecturer in international security at New Zealand's Massey University, said Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. Would all be "very concerned" about the draft agreement, which was ambitious on China's part.

Powles said it would be interesting to know what kind of goods China might want to send to the Solomons to service its ships, and whether there was the potential for mission creep in the future, like China developing a naval base.

She said she was concerned China was trying to direct the political narrative by controlling what information could be publicly released.

A lot of the wording in the draft agreement was vague, Powles said, including exactly what type of military and paramilitary forces that China might send to the Solomons. She said it was either clumsily worded or deliberately opaque.

It was not immediately clear when the security agreement might be finalized, signed or go into effect.

The Solomon Islands, home to about 700,000 people, in 2019 switched its diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to Beijing, which was a contributing factor to last year's riots. Last month the US announced plans to open an embassy in the Solomon Islands, laying out in unusually blunt terms a plan to increase its influence in the South Pacific nation before China becomes "strongly embedded."

The US previously operated an embassy in the Solomons for five years before closing it in 1993. Since then, US diplomats from neighbouring Papua New Guinea have been accredited to the Solomons, which has a US consular agency.

A news release from the Solomon Islands government on its new policing agreement with China revealed few details. The statement said the agreement had been signed in a virtual meeting between China's Wang Xiaohong, an executive vice minister, and Solomon Islands Police Minister Anthony Veke.

Wang said in the release that since the Solomon Islands began diplomatically recognizing China, "the bilateral relations have developed rapidly and achieved fruitful results" and that China was ready to "advance practical cooperation in police and law enforcement." Veke, meanwhile, said the Solomon Islands government attached great importance to its relationship with China.

# Japan OK's bigger budget to host US forces, step up alliance

AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese parliament on Friday approved a new agreement with the United States, endorsing its government spending exceeding one trillion yen (USD8 billion) for hosting US troops as the two sides strengthen their military alliance in the face of growing threat from China and North Korea in the region.

The 1.05 trillion yen (USD8.6 billion) host nation support budget covers the purchase of advanced arsenals used in their joint military exercises, as well as utilities and facilities used by the US troops and their Japanese employees working on American bases in the country through March 2027.



The upcoming five-year budget includes a new funding category of up to 20 billion yen (USD164 million) for the purchase of advanced virtual combat training systems for joint exercises between the two forces.

The roughly 200 billion yen (USD1.6 billion) for the first year is included in the

cal 2022 national defence budget - a record 5.4 trillion yen (USD44 billion) - beginning in April.

Japan's government now describes the host-nation support budget as necessary for strengthening the alliance, rather than for "kindness" as it used to be considered.

Japan has been expanding its defence budget and capability for about a decade and is now revising its key national security strategy in the face of threats from China, North Korea and now Russia.

Japan is especially concerned about Chinese military activity in waters in the East China Sea surrounding the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands, which Beijing also claims and calls Diaoyu.

# Second black box of crashed Chinese plane not found yet, says official media

PTI ■ BEIJING

The second black box of the crashed Chinese passenger plane has yet to be found, official media reported on Friday, retracting an earlier announcement that it has been recovered from the crash site.

The state-run China Daily had reported earlier quoting the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) that the second black box has been recovered.

However, the daily quoted a report by the state-run news agency Xinhua that the second black box had not been found.

The black box could offer vital clues about the crash in which 132 people are feared to have died.



The first black box, stated to be the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) which was recovered earlier, is being decoded at a laboratory in Beijing and the data downloading and analysis work is underway, officials said.

The second black box located in the back of the plane was stated to be the flight data recorder (FDR). The flight data recorder stores information about speed, altitude and direction, as well as pilot actions and performance of important systems.

The data of the Cockpit Voice Recorder was awaited keenly as China Eastern Airlines flight MU5735 sharply dropped from an altitude of 29,100 feet to 9,075 feet in just two minutes and 15 seconds, crashing into a mountainous area.

# Lankan President meets Tamil minority leaders for first time since taking up reins

PTI ■ COLOMBO

For the first time since taking office over two years ago, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Friday met leaders of the TNA, the country's most prominent Tamil political grouping, officials said.

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and Rajapaksa have failed to meet for talks since Rajapaksa assumed office in November 2019.

A group of TNA Parliamentarians last month staged a protest in front of the Presidential Secretariat

demanding to meet the President and discuss the issues faced by the Tamil people in the north and east of the island nation.

The TNA had asked for a meeting with Rajapaksa several times ever since he was elected in November 2019.

At least on two occasions, the meeting had been cancelled at the last minute without any reason, the Tamil leaders had charged at the protest.

The TNA wants the 13th Amendment to the Constitution to be made "meaningful" to address the political concerns of the Tamil minority.

The 13th Amendment was the result of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, inked by the then Sri Lankan President JR

Jayawardena and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

It provides for devolution of powers to the minority Tamil community in Sri Lanka. India has continually reaffirmed its commitment to protect the rights of Sri Lanka's Tamil community through the full implementation of the 13th Amendment, early convening of Provincial Council elections and achieving reconciliation.

However, the LTTE, who led a three-decade-long armed campaign for a separate Tamil homeland, rejected the 13th Amendment, saying it offered too little in the form of power sharing to meet Tamil aspirations for self-determination.

Presently, the ruling Sri Lanka People's Party's Sinhala majority hardliners have been advocating for a total abolition of the island's Provincial Council system. On Thursday, TNA's main spokesman M A Sumanthiran said the alliance was planning to center talks with Rajapaksa on the possibility of making the thirteenth amendment more "meaningful".

# Jackson as 1st Black women SC judge? GOP votes in doubt

AP ■ WASHINGTON

After more than 30 hours of hearings, the Senate is on track to confirm Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman on the Supreme Court.

But Democrats seem unlikely to confirm her with a robust bipartisan vote, dashing President Joe Biden's hopes for a grand reset after partisan battles over other high court nominees.

On Thursday, just hours after the hearings came to a close, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell announced he will vote against Jackson's confirmation.

He said in a Senate floor speech that he "cannot and will not" support her for a lifetime appointment.

McConnell slammed the liberal groups that have supported Jackson and he criticized her for refusing to take a position on the size of the nine-member court, even though that decision is ultimately up to Congress.

Some advocacy groups have pushed for enlarging the court after three justices nominated by

former President Donald Trump cemented a 6-3 conservative majority.

McConnell also cited concerns about her sentencing of criminal defendants - a subject that dominated much of the four days of hearings and was part of a coordinated GOP effort to portray her as soft on crime.

His position was expected, and does not affect Jackson's trajectory to be confirmed by mid-April.

But the leader's quick declaration could prompt many of his fellow Republicans to follow suit, thwarting Biden's efforts to bring back the overwhelming bipartisan votes that were commonplace for Supreme Court nominees when he first came to the Senate five decades ago.

"I think whomever I pick will get a vote from Republican side," Biden said after Justice Stephen Breyer announced he would step down from the court this summer. As he started his search for a replacement, the president made a point of inviting Republican senators to the White House to hear their advice.



While many GOP senators have praised Jackson's vast experience and qualifications, it was clear at the hearings that Biden's outreach had little effect.

Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee interrogated Jackson about her nine-year record as a federal judge, frequently interrupting her answers. Jackson, supported by committee Democrats, pushed back aggressively on Republicans who said she gave light sentences to sex offenders, explaining her sentencing process in detail and telling them "nothing could be further from the truth."

The focus on crime dovetails with an emerging GOP



theme for this year's midterm elections and is likely to be decisive for many Republican senators. Others have brought up separate reasons to vote against her - from her support from liberal groups to her so-called "judicial philosophy."

One or more Republicans could still cast a vote for Jackson's confirmation, but the contentious nature of the four-day hearings laid bare a familiar partisan dynamic, seen over years of pitched fighting over judicial nominations.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin, who has been privately lobbying GOP colleagues to support Jackson, said after McConnell's

announcement that it will be "sad for our country and sad as a commentary on where the parties are today" if her historic nomination is approved on a strictly partisan vote.

"The Republicans are testing their messages for the November election," Durbin said.

Durbin said he is "still hoping that several Republicans - I hope many more" will vote for her.

If not, Democrats can confirm Jackson without any GOP support in the 50-50 Senate, with Vice President Kamala Harris breaking a tie.

As talk turned to the voting ahead, the Judiciary panel held its final day of Senate hearings Thursday with a top lawyers' group, which said its review found Jackson has a "sterling" reputation and "exceptional" competence and is well qualified to sit on the Supreme Court.

"Outstanding, excellent, superior, superb," testified Ann Claire Williams, chair of the American Bar Association committee that makes recommendations on federal judges.

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Notice No. 1001ACI/2(EI)R/N/2022 Dated: 24.03.2022

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UPRRN Ltd. invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from Chartered Accountants/Cost Accountants firms of the **Empanelment for conducting Internal Audit/Concurrent Audit of its Zonal Offices and its field Units for the F.Y. 2022-23** located at various places in India. Detailed descriptions and Application Form are available on UPRRN Website: <http://www.uprrn.co.in>. Last date of submission of application is **17th April 2022 up to 5:00 P.M.**

**Managing Director**

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Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, Invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:

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2 Approx. cost of work	Rs. 52.03,135.75/-
3 Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 1,04,100/-
4 E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	04.04.2022 (00.00 Hrs.) to 18.04.2022 (15.00 Hrs.)
5 E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	18.04.2022 (15.00 hrs.)
6 Website particulars where complete details of tender document can be seen	<a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>

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**Pooja Mehta**  
**R/o S-75, Greater Kailash-I**  
**New Delhi-110048**

# Israel to host top Arab diplomats during Blinken's visit

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel said on Friday it would host the foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Bahrain during U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit early next week.

The three Arab countries normalised relations with Israel in 2020 in the so-called Abraham Accords. The Biden administration welcomed those agreements, which were concluded under then-President Donald Trump, and has expressed interest in negotiating additional ones.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said it would host the four top diplomats on Sunday and Monday, with additional details to be provided later.

Blinken will visit Israel, the occupied West Bank, Morocco and Algeria starting this weekend, as U.S. Diplomacy faces serious tests related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as Middle Eastern regional issues.

In Israel, Blinken plans to speak with Israeli officials about their efforts to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. He will also update them on the status of talks aimed at reviving Iran's nuclear deal. Efforts to promote Israeli-Palestinian dialogue will also be on the



agenda.

"The secretary will emphasize to all of the foreign leaders he meets that the United States stands in solidarity with the government and people of Ukraine in the face of the Kremlin's aggression," the State Department said Thursday.

Israel was strongly opposed to the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers and welcomed Trump's decision to unilaterally withdraw from it.

Israel has warned against reviving the agreement and says it will not be bound by any new deal.

Israel has meanwhile walked a fine line between Russia and Ukraine since hostilities began last month. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has expressed support for the Ukrainian people but stopped short of condemning Russia's invasion, and in recent weeks has served as a mediator.

# China's foreign minister arrives in Nepal on three-day visit

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrived here on Friday on a three-day official visit during which he will hold talks with Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and other top leaders.

Wang, who is also a State Councilor, is visiting Kathmandu at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart Narayan Khadka.

This is the first visit of a high-ranking Chinese official to Nepal since Nepali Congress President Deuba became the Prime Minister in July last year for a record fifth time.

Wang, who arrived here from New Delhi, started his trip from Pakistan, followed by unannounced visits to Afghanistan and India.

During his stay in Kathmandu, he will also call on President Bidya Devi Bhandari, MyRepublica newspaper reported. The two sides are likely to ink some agreements on economic and technical assistance.

Citing officials familiar with the visit preparations, the Kathmandu Post said that as many as 10 agreements related to technical and economic assistance to Nepal are likely to be signed during Wang's visit.

# Pakistan's National Assembly session adjourned without tabling of no-trust motion against Imran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan National Assembly's crucial session on a no-trust motion against embattled Prime Minister Imran Khan was adjourned on Friday without tabling of the resolution, amid vociferous protests from opposition lawmakers.

National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser said that the session was adjourned till 4pm on March 28 due to the demise of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf lawmaker Khayal Zaman on February 14.

According to Pakistan's Parliamentary conventions, the first sitting after the death of a lawmaker is limited to the prayers for the departed soul and tributes from fellow lawmakers. Several prominent opposition members, including Leader of the Opposition in National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan Peoples' Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and co-chair Asif Ali Zardari were in the Parliament House on Friday to participate in the much-anticipated session.

As Speaker Qaiser adjourned the session, opposition leaders started protesting, requesting him to take up the motion but the speaker did not turn their microphones on and retired to his chamber.



The speaker said that the decision on taking up the no-confidence motion would be taken in the next session.

The voting on the resolution should be held at least three to seven days after it has been laid before the National Assembly, according to rules.

The National Assembly Secretariat had on Thursday issued a 15-point 'Orders of the Day' for the NA session, which included the no-confidence resolution.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Asif tweeted that out of 163 opposition lawmakers, 159 were present in the house.

It was not clear how many ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party lawmakers attended the session.



# ‘Half the population of Kharkiv has fled’

AP ■ KHARKIV

About half the population of the eastern city of Kharkiv has left, and food and other essentials are dwindling for those who stay behind.

A line formed on Thursday at an apartment block as neighbours waited for aid from the Red Cross.

"Among those who stayed, there are people who can walk on their own, but many who cannot walk, the elderly," said Hanna Spitsyna, who distributed the food to the sound of explosions behind her.

Kharkiv has been under siege by Russian forces since the start of the invasion, with relentless shelling that has forced people to sleep in metro stations and in basements.

Ukraine's government said shelling on a group of people awaiting aid elsewhere in the city killed six people on Thursday. It was not immediately possible to verify the allegation.

Ukraine president presses Biden, NATO for more aid as war enters second month ,UN votes to condemn Russia for humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

Russian stock market, crushed by war, partially reopens. Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analysed by The Associated Press showed thick black smoke rising over the port in the Ukrainian

city of Berdyansk, with a large ship on fire on Thursday.

The timing of the photos correspond with what the Ukrainian navy described as a successful attack that saw a



Russian landing craft ferrying armoured vehicles to the city sink off the port.

The image also corresponds to online videos purportedly showing the attack at the port in the city held by Russia on the Sea of Azov.

Russian forces fired two missiles on Thursday at a Ukrainian military unit on the outskirts of Dnipro, the fourth-largest city in the country, regional emergency services said.

The strikes destroyed buildings and set off two fires, it said, while the number of those killed and wounded was still being established.

Dnipro is west of the regions along the Russian border that have been controlled by Russian-backed separatists since 2014.

With the war headed into its second month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke of hope and determination in his night-time video address to the nation on Thursday.

"It is already night. But we are working," he said in a quiet voice.

"The country must move toward peace, move forward. With every day of our defence, we are getting closer to the peace that we need so much. We are getting closer to victory. ... We can't stop even for a minute. For every minute determines our fate, our future, whether we will live."

He reported on his conversations that day with leaders of NATO and European Union countries gathered in Brussels, and their promises of even more sanctions on Russia. "We need to look for peace," he said. "Russia also needs to look for peace."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked EU leaders for working together to support Ukraine and impose sanctions on Russia, including Germany's decision to block Russia from delivering natural gas to Europe through the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

# Prominent Russians quit jobs, refuse to support Ukraine war

AP ■ NEW YORK

The resignation of a senior Russian government official and his reported move abroad wasn't the first voluntary departure of a person from a state job since the start of Russia's war with Ukraine, but it certainly was one of the most striking.

Anatoly Chubais, who was President Vladimir Putin's envoy to international organisations on sustainable development, is well known in Russia.

He held high profile posts for nearly three decades, beginning under Boris Yeltsin, the first post-Soviet leader.

A number of public figures have condemned the invasion of Ukraine and left their posts at state-run institutions and companies, which could signal divisions in Russia's official ranks over the war. So far there have been no indications that the resignations have reached into Putin's inner circle.

The handful of departures came as Putin blasted those opposing his course as "scum and traitors," which Russian society would spit out "like a gnat."

Some of the high-profile figures who have turned their backs on the Kremlin because of the war .On Wednesday, the Kremlin confirmed media reports about the resignation of Chubais, 66, who was the architect of Yeltsin's privatization campaign. The reports, citing anonymous sources, said he stepped

down because of the war.



He hasn't publicly commented on his resignation.

Under Yeltsin, Chubais reportedly recommended the administration hire Putin, a move that was widely seen as an important stepping stone in Putin's career. Putin became president of Russia in 2000, when Yeltsin stepped down. Chubais also was deputy prime minister from 1994 to 1996 and first deputy prime minister from 1997-98. The Russian business newspaper Kommersant reported Wednesday that Chubais was seen in Istanbul this week and ran a photo of a man resembling him at a Turkish ATM. Since the start of the invasion, Istanbul has taken in many Russians looking to relocate.

Arkady Dvorkovich once served as Russia's deputy prime minister and is currently chairman of the International Chess Federation, or FIDE. He criticized the war with Ukraine in comments made to Mother Jones magazine on March 14 and came under fire from the Kremlin's ruling party.

"Wars are the worst things one might face in life. Any war. Anywhere.

Wars do not just kill priceless lives. Wars kill hopes and

aspirations, freeze or destroy relationships and connections. Including this war," he said.

Dvorkovich added that FIDE was "making sure there are no official chess activities in Russia or Belarus, and that players are not allowed to represent Russia or Belarus in official or rated events until the war is over and Ukrainian players are back in chess." FIDE banned a top Russian player for six months for his vocal support of Putin and the invasion.

Two days after Dvorkovich's comments, a top official in the United Russia party demanded that he be fired as chair of the state-backed Skolkovo Foundation. Last week, the Dvorkovich decided to step down.

# US general: Ukraine resistance highlights need to prepare

AP ■ BANGKOK

Ukraine's stiff resistance to the Russian invasion, which has turned Moscow's advance into a grinding war of attrition, has underscored the importance to American allies of the need to be prepared for any eventuality, the top US Army commander in the Pacific said Friday.

Gen. Charles Flynn told The Associated Press that the events in Europe highlight the need for regular training exercises with partners, like the one that just concluded between the Royal Thai Army and the US Army.

"The will of the Ukrainian army, the will of their government, the will of the resistance is a contributing factor to what's unfolded," said Flynn, who was in Thailand for the end of the exercise and for talks with military commanders as part of a trip meeting counterparts throughout the region.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine just over a month ago, many quickly drew comparisons to the situation

between Taiwan and China, which claims the self-ruled island as its own territory.

China has stepped up its military harassment of Taiwan in recent years and has not ruled out the use of force against it, though China's President Xi Jinping has stressed that "peaceful reunification" is in the best interests of both sides.

Analysts say the situation between Taiwan and China does not fit a simple narrative and that imminent military action from China is unlikely. But Taiwan's Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng said this week he was considering extending the current four-month compulsory military service amid growing concerns about tensions with China, which have been underscored by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Last week, US Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth suggested that American allies in the Indo-Pacific would be following the events in Ukraine closely to see what lessons can be applied in their own planning.

# Moscow forcibly taking civilians to Russia, alleges Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine has accused Moscow of forcibly taking hundreds of thousands of civilians from shattered Ukrainian cities to Russia, where some may be used as "hostages" to pressure Kyiv to give up.

Lyudmyla Denisova, Ukraine's ombudsman, said 402,000 people, including 84,000 children, have been taken against their will.

The Kremlin gave nearly identical numbers for those who have been relocated, but said they wanted to go to Russia.

Ukraine's rebel-controlled eastern regions are predominantly Russian-speaking, and many people there have supported close ties to Moscow.

A month into the invasion, meanwhile, the two sides traded heavy blows in what has become a devastating war of attrition.

Ukraine's navy said it sank a large Russian landing ship near the port city of Berdyansk that had been used to bring in armoured vehicles.

Russia claimed to have taken the eastern town of Izium after fierce fighting.

At an emergency NATO summit in Brussels, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded with the Western allies via video for planes, tanks, rockets, air defence systems and other weapons, saying his country is "defending our common values." US President Joe Biden, in Europe for the summit and other high-level meetings, gave assurances more aid is on its way, though it appeared unlikely the West would give Zelenskyy everything he wanted, for fear of triggering a much wider war.

Around the capital, Kyiv, and other areas,

Ukrainian defenders have fought Moscow's ground troops to a near-stalemate, raising fears that a frustrated Russian President Vladimir Putin will resort to chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

Ukraine and Russia exchanged a total of 50 military and civilian prisoners, the largest swap reported yet, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.

The pro-Moscow leader of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, warned that Poland's proposal to deploy a Western peacekeeping force in Ukraine "will mean World War III." In Chernihiv, where an airstrike this week destroyed a crucial bridge, a city official, Olexander Lomako, said a "humanitarian catastrophe" is unfolding as Russian forces target food storage places. He said about 130,000 people are left in the besieged city, about half its prewar population.

Russia said it will offer safe passage starting Friday to 67 ships from 15 foreign countries that are stranded in Ukrainian ports because of the danger of shelling and mines.

Kyiv and Moscow gave conflicting accounts, meanwhile, about the people being relocated to Russia and whether they were going willingly as Russia claimed - or were being coerced or lied to. Russian Col. Gen. Mikhail Mizintsev said the roughly 400,000 people evacuated to Russia since the start of the military action were from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Moscow separatists have been fighting for control for nearly eight years.

Russian authorities said they are providing accommodations and dispensing payments to the evacuees.

# Hungary rejects Zelensky's appeal for weapons

AP ■ BUDAPEST

Hungary's Prime Minister on Friday rejected an emotional appeal from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to supply Ukraine with weapons and support sanctions on Russia's energy sector.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban said in a video posted to social media that Zelensky's requests were "against Hungary's interests," and

that sanctions on Russian energy "would mean that the Hungarian economy would slow down and then stop with in moments."

The rejection came after Zelenskyy on Thursday addressed a meeting of European Union leaders in Brussels where he specifically addressed Orban, who is widely considered Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally in the EU.

"Listen, Viktor, do you know what is happening in Mariupol?" Zelenskyy said. "I want to be open once and for all - you should decide for yourself, who you are for."

# Biden plans gas shipments to Europe to cut Russian leverage

AP ■ BRUSSELS

President Joe Biden on Friday is expected to announce increased shipments of liquefied natural gas to Europe, part of a long-term initiative to wean the continent off Russian energy after the invasion of Ukraine.

He plans to discuss the issue with Ursula von der Leyen, head of the European Union's executive arm, shortly before leaving for Poland, the final leg of his four-day trip.

Earlier this week, Von der Leyen said "we are aiming at having a commitment for additional supplies for the next two winters." And Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, recently told reporters that the administration wants to, quickly "surge" gas to Europe.

Russian energy is a key source of income and political leverage for Moscow. Almost 40% of the European Union's natural gas comes from Russia to heat homes, generate electricity and power industry.

After leaving Brussels, Biden travels to Rzeszów in Poland, where U.S. Troops are based roughly an hour's drive from the Ukrainian border.

He'll get a briefing on the humanitarian response to the refugees streaming out of Ukraine and those still suffering inside the country. And Biden will meet with U.S. Service members from the 82nd

Airborne Division, who serve alongside Polish troops.

Biden is then expected to continue on to Warsaw, where he will meet with Polish President Andrzej Duda on Saturday.

Before returning to Washington, the White House said, Biden will give an address "on the united efforts of the free world to support the people of Ukraine, hold Russia accountable for its brutal war, and defend a future that is rooted in democratic principles."

**उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग**  
हरिद्वार  
पिन कोड- 249404

संख्या- 345/04/E-3(I)/D.R/OI/ARO(Account)/2017-18, दिनांक 25 मार्च, 2022

प्रेस विज्ञापित

एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि उत्तराखण्ड सचिवालय / उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग, समीक्षा अधिकारी (लेखा) / सहायक समीक्षा अधिकारी (लेखा) मुख्य (परम्परागत प्रकार) परीक्षा-2021 का आयोजन दिनांक 07 अप्रैल, 2022 से 08 अप्रैल, 2022 तक परीक्षा मवन, उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग, हरिद्वार में स्थित परीक्षा केंद्र पर किया जायेगा।

अभ्यर्थी उक्त परीक्षा हेतु प्रवेश-पत्र दिनांक 28 मार्च, 2022 से आयोग की वेबसाइट [www.ukpsc.gov.in](http://www.ukpsc.gov.in) से डाउनलोड कर सकते हैं। इस हेतु पृष्ठक से प्रवेश पत्र डाक द्वारा प्रेषित नहीं किये जायेंगे। अधिक जानकारी के लिये अभ्यर्थी आयोग की वेबसाइट [www.ukpsc.gov.in](http://www.ukpsc.gov.in) पर प्रसारित विस्तृत विज्ञापित का अवलोकन अवश्य कर लें।

(कर्मन्द् सिंह) सचिव।

**Punjab State Power Corporation Limited**  
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)  
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813  
Website: [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in) (Contact Number 9646117607)

**Tender Inquiry No.69/CHP/OP-309/GHTP/2022-23 Dated 25-03-2022**  
**Tender Inquiry No. 70/CHP/OP-310/GHTP/2022-23 Dated 25-03-2022**

**Dy. CE/MM-II/GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tenders for the work of following tenders:-**

- "General Housekeeping/ cleaning & reclamation of spilled coal etc. from all locations of coal handling plant Stage-I. (Unit 1 & 2) & Stage-II (Unit 3 & 4) at Coal Handling Plant, GHTP Lehra Mohabbat".
- "Providing support at the vital location /equipments for operation of coal handling plant as per scope of work on Stage-I & II at CHP, GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat Dist. Bathinda".

For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://leproc.punjab.gov.in> from 28-03-2022 from 17:00 PM onwards.

**Note:** Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://leproc.punjab.gov.in>

**76155/12/735/2021/13066** **GHTP-10/22**

**Notice Inviting e-Tenders**  
**Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya**  
**Vishwavidyalaya Chitrakoot**

Ref No Pur/22/ ID-5/795 Distt. Satna (M.P.) 485334 Date 17/03/2022

Online bids for Printing of Answer Book are invited from Printers/ reputed firms registered in appropriate registration authorities.

NIT No	Name of Work	Probable Amount (Rs. in Lakh)	Compl Period Days	Cost of tender form
91/pur/etend	e-tender for supply of examination answer books for DEC	22.00	30	2000.00

- Interested bidders can view the NIT and tender detail on web-site <http://mptenders.gov.in>
- The Bid Documents are available only online from 01.04.2022, 16.00 hrs, bid submission end date will be 22.04.2022 time 17.00 hrs. For other important dates please refer NIT document on site.
- Amendments to NIT and tender document if any, would be published in <http://mptenders.gov.in> only, and not in newspaper  
Ph 07670-265411 mail: [purchase.gramodaya@gmail.com](mailto:purchase.gramodaya@gmail.com)  
**Registrar**

**Office of the Superintending Engineer**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Circle, Public Works Department, Nainital**  
Phone/Fax: 05942-235728/ 232030 Email: [sepwdnti@rediffmail.com](mailto:sepwdnti@rediffmail.com)

**Letter No. : 881/41M-2/2021-22** **Dated : 23/03/2022**

**National Competitive Bidding (E-Tender)**

The Superintending Engineer, 2nd Circle, Public Works Department Nainital on behalf of "Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand" invites tender in two bid system through e-tender for the following civil engineering works. All related information will be available online in <http://www.uktenders.gov.in> from Dt. 06.04.2022

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (₹ in Lacs)	Cost of Tender Form	Validity of Tender (Days)	Period of Completion (Month)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	Reconstruction/ Maintenance under the C.M. Announcement no 326/2020 of Kumaon Colony to J.D.M. Public School, Piliokothi-Dhanmill - Rampur Road and J.D.M. Public School to Basanti Mehra home road, by DBM/BC within nagar nigam region of Kaladhungi Constituency of Nainital District.	5.95	5000 +GST	120	12 Month	<b>Registered in Class 'B' and above in any State Govt./Central Govt. or any Govt. Undertaking in Road Works.</b>

**Registered Office Address:** Unit No.601, 6th Floor Piramal Amiti Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Opp Fire Station, LBS Marg, Kuria (West), Mumbai- 400 070. CIN: 165910MH1984PLC032639, Website: [www.piramalfinance.com](http://www.piramalfinance.com)  
**Branch Address :** Dhiraaj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agra Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) – 400 602.

**DEMAND NOTICE**

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) (formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. (DHFL) under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Description of secured asset (immovable property)
(LC No. 00004695 of New Delhi Branch) Saranjai Jain (Borrower) Poonam Jain (Co Borrower 1) Ajay Jain (Co Borrower 2) Mona Jain (Guarantor 1)	22-02-2022 /R 10683471 /-(₹ One Crore Six lakh Eighty Three Thousand Four Hundred Seventy One) NPA (09-01-2022)	Prop No-6/115, Kharsa No-40 Vill Turk Meerpur Pur Chandu Nagar, Main Road Karawal Nagar Shahdara, New Delhi Delhi :- 110095
(LC No. 00042237 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch)Ankit Singh (Borrower) Nandu (Co Borrower 1) Pushpa Singh (Co Borrower 2)	22-02-2022 /R 6801472 /-(₹ Sixty Eight lakh One Thousand Four Hundred Seventy Two) NPA (09-01-2022)	House No-121, F Block, Kharsa No-19/18. Shiva Enclave, Gali No 10 Vikas Nagar, Uttam Nagar New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110059
(LC No. 00001800 of Rohini Branch) Akash Kedia (Borrower) Vikash Kedia (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 2568189 /-(₹ Twenty Five lakh Sixty Eight Thousand One Hundred Eighty Nine) NPA (09-01-2022)	Plot no-101, First floor without roof, Pocket-5, Sector-21 Rohini, New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110085
(LC No. 00041463 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch)Salish Sharma (Borrower) Sangeeta Sharma (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 2504298 /-(₹ Twenty Five lakh Four Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Eight) NPA (09-01-2022)	Plot No. 122 And 123 First Floor (front Side) Kh. No 72/12 Om Vihar Extn Uttam Nagar New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110059
(LC No. 00042830 of Delhi - Safdarganj Branch) Preeti (Borrower) Vinod Kumar (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 2419248 /-(₹ Twenty Four lakh Nineteen Thousand Two Hundred Forty Eight) NPA (09-01-2022)	Prop- 55/3 Upper Ground Floor Front Side Safdarganj Enclave Arjun Nagar Near Sukhmani Hospital Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110029
(LC No. 00001704 of Delhi Janakpuri Branch) Indrajit Singh (Borrower) Shobha (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 2368974 /-(₹ Twenty Three lakh Sixty Six Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy Four) NPA (09-01-2022)	Flat No-GF-02, Ground Floor (HIG), Rear Side, DLF Ankur Vihar, hadbasti Village-Sadulabad, Gaziyabad, UP Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh :- 201102
(LC No. 00041683 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch)Mem Biri (Borrower) Omvir Chaudhary(Co Borrower 1) Panraj Kumar Singh (Co Borrower 2)	22-02-2022 /R 2242747 /-(₹ Twenty Two lakh Forty Two Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Seven) NPA (09-01-2022)	Plot No. T-19, Third Floor With Roof Front Side, Kharsa 08, Village Bindapur Gali No.02, Block T, Uttam Nagar Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110059
(LC No. 00001754 of Delhi Janakpuri Branch) Mohit. Dutta (Borrower) Neelika (Co Borrower 1) Suresh Dutta (Co Borrower 2)	22-02-2022 /R 2015781 /-(₹ Twenty lakh Fifteen Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty One) NPA (09-01-2022)	P.No.95,T.F With Roof Right.Kh.No.456 Vill. Nawada Mazra Hastasli,Block.WE, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110059
(LC No. 00000322 of Greater Noida Branch) Dipendra Nath Sinha (Borrower) Sonamani Sinha (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 2004309 /-(₹ Twenty lakh Four Thousand Three Hundred Nine) NPA (09-01-2022)	Unit No. -1885, 18th Floor Block- Narmada, Ghaziabad, N.P. Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh :- 201010
(LC No. 00001398 of New Delhi-west Branch) Dablu Gupta (Borrower) Preeti Gupta(Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 1916724 /-(₹ Nineteen lakh Sixteen Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty Four) NPA (09-01-2022)	Plot No-159, Ground Floor Pocket No-3 Block-I, Sector-16 Rohini Delhi Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110085
(LC No. DEL34944 of Delhi - Safdarganj Branch) NITIN KHURANA (Borrower)	22-02-2022 /R 1654670 /-(₹ Sixteen lakh Fifty Four Thousand Six Hundred Seventy) NPA (11-04-2021)	H/flat No.285, Floor No. Third, Plot No. Gali No. 6, Ram Nagar, Village - Krishna Nagar New Delhi Delhi :- 110051
(LC No. 00000819 of Delhi Rajouri Garden Branch) Dinesh Kumar (Borrower) Suman (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 1380878 /-(₹ Thirteen lakh Eighty Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy Eight) NPA (09-01-2022)	Plot No-251/2-c-2nd Floor Lhs Flat,Block No-4,kharsa No-1824/415,vill-chandrawali Sri Ram Nagar,shahdara, Near- Uco Bank, New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110032
(LC No. 00001872 of Greater Noida Branch) Suraj Dutt (Borrower) Suman Dutt (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 1337146 /-(₹ Thirteen lakh Thirty Seven Thousand One Hundred Forty Six) NPA (09-01-2022)	Flat No. SF-2,plot No 27,kh No. 78, MI, Second Floor Rhs, Sudamapuri, Krishna Vajika, Dunderia, Ghaziabad up Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh :- 201009
(LC No. 00042355 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch) Sushma (Borrower) Rinku (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 1156015 /-(₹ Eleven lakh Fifty Six Thousand Fifteen) NPA (09-01-2022)	WZ-48, Third floor with roof, Kh.13/15 Gali no.30, Village Chaunkhandi, Sant Garh, New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110018
(LC No. 00001096 of Karkarduma Noida Branch) Nazim N (Borrower) Tabrez Alam Mohd (Co Borrower 1)	22-02-2022 /R 900825 /-(₹ Nine lakh Eight Hundred Twenty Five) NPA (10-12-2021)	Part of Plot No. 503, Part of Kh No.1342/ 12MI,Khanna Nagar, Hadubust,vill Ioni,nr dhanu ram sweet, ghaziabad, UP Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh :- 201012
(LC No. 00002144 of New Delhi-west Branch) Satish Maurya (Borrower) Anita Devi (Co Borrower 1)	26-02-2022 /R 1352039 /-(₹ Thirteen lakh Fifty Two Thousand Thirty Nine) NPA (09-01-2022)	RZ-G-465B, (TF Rear side with roof) kh No-50/1/2 & 2, Vill-palam, gali no-17 Raj Nagar-2, Palam Colony New Delhi North West Delhi Delhi :- 110177
(LC No. 00002880 of Noida Branch) Chanson Motors Pvt Ltd (Borrower) Harjeet Singh Chandhok (Co Borrower 1) Daljeet Kaur (Co Borrower 2)	26-02-2022 /R 5351751 /-(₹ Fifty Three lakh Fifty One Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty One) NPA (09-09-2021)	Flat No. 95-c, Second Floor, Block C Dda Lig Flat, Shalimar Bagh Delhi Gautam Budh Nagar Delhi :- 110088
(LC No. 00043364 of Gurgaon- Sohna Road Branch) Amit Dabas (Borrower) Ashok Kumar (Co Borrower 1)	26-02-2022 /R 3648840 /-(₹ Thirty Six lakh Forty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Forty) NPA (09-11-2020)	Plot No- D-20, 2nd Floor, Sec-08, Bagdolia Dwarka Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110075
(LC No. 00008325 of Chandigarh Metro Branch) Satellite Group (Borrower) Digvijay Singh (Co Borrower 1) Pratima Singh (Co Borrower 2) Freedom Fighter (Guarantor 1)	26-02-2022 /R 3044534 /-(₹ Thirty lakh Forty Four Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Four) NPA (09-01-2021)	M_MACHINE_NAME - 1) Auto Hot Glue BOPP labeling Machine 2) Zno PVC Water Storage Tank 1000ltr cap sintex DW/3 3) Auto Pouch Filling Machine 4) Auto Rinsing Filling and Capping machine for Pet water bottles capacity 60 BPM 5) Carbon 6) Chiller 7) Conveyor 32 Feet 8) Dosing Pump (Pentair) 9) Dryer 10) Feed Water Pumps With Pump 11) Filtration Filter 12) Filter Media 13) I.R Heater 14) Ink Jet Printing Machine 15) Membrane Housing 16) MS Carbon Filter Vessel 17) MS Sand Filter Vessel 18) Ozone Consistator 19) One Old & Used reconditioned silent D C set 20) ORP Meter, PH meter, Flow Meter 21) Ozone Blending System (SS Tank & Pump) 22) Post Micron Filtration 23) PVC Tank 24) R.O Plant 10000LPH Complete (Versal 351 Membrane Housing) 25) R.O Plant 10000LPH Complete (Versal SS Membrane Housing) 26) S.S. Pipe and Fitting 27) S.S.Tank (5000 liter) 28) Semi Automatic Pet Stretch Blow Molding Machine 29) Stainless Steel C.I.P Tank with Pump 30) Stainless Steel Nutrition Tank with VFD & Motor 31) Ultraviolet Steriliser

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Sd/-  
(Authorised Officer)  
**Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited**

Date : 26-03-2022  
Place: Delhi



# Spectrum auction soon, 5G launch by year end: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spectrum auctions will be conducted very soon, and the next-generation 5G services are expected to commence before the end of the year, Minister of State for Communications Devusinh Chauhan said in the Rajya Sabha on Friday.

Replying to a supplementary question during Question Hour, Chauhan also said that the four companies have been allotted spectrum for conducting trials and added that the trials are expected to be completed soon.

In parallel, the minister said that the telecom regulator TRAI has also been asked to give its recommendations related to the upcoming auction.

"We will conduct auctions very soon. By the end of this year, we will start 5G services in the country," he said.

He also asserted that state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) will begin its 4G services this year.

The minister said that a "great revolution" has taken



place in the telecom sector over the last seven years and that data consumption has soared while tariffs are at the lowest.

There is a robust public grievance mechanism in place and complaints pending for over 48 hours are escalated to senior officials, Chauhan said.

The government has taken a slew of measures to revive telecom PSUs BSNL and MTNL.

The quality of BSNL services will also improve with the launch of the state-owned corporation's 4G services, he asserted.

Chauhan also outlined the reforms undertaken by the government in the telecom sector and cites measures like re-definition of AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue).

In a written reply, Communication Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said, "There is no decline in the number of mobile subscribers in the country in the year 2020-21."

As per the monthly Telecom Subscription Data released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the number of mobile subscribers in India increased

from 1,157.75 million in March 2020 to 1,180.96 million in March 2021.

To improve the Quality of Service (QoS), he said drive test and Radio Frequency (RF) optimization are carried out regularly by mobile service providers.

"Further in order to provide state-of-the-art and prompt service to mobile customers, service providers optimally manage the increasing traffic by way of adding more number of sites, providing fibre backhaul, using small cells and undertaking network optimization," Vaishnav said.

Moreover, TRAI has issued guidelines and set various parameters & benchmarks to monitor QoS. These parameters are assessed for the entire license service area on a quarterly basis.

For ensuring compliance with the QoS benchmarks and to protect the interests of the consumers, TRAI has prescribed the system of financial disincentives for non-compliance with the benchmarks, Vaishnav said.

# Sensex, Nifty fall on inflation, rate worries

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined for a third straight day on Friday due to profit taking in consumer durables, FMCG, banking and IT shares amid lingering worries over commodity prices, interest rate hike and geopolitical tensions.

The 30-share BSE benchmark dropped 233.48 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 57,362.20. During the day, it tanked 495.44 points to 57,100.24.

The broader NSE Nifty declined 69.75 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at 17,153.

The equity indices closed the week lower after two straight weeks of gains. Sensex fell by 501 points while Nifty closed the week lower by 134 points.

"The Indian equity market continue to be in a grind, influenced by and reacting to incremental news flow on the global front, especially related to the geopolitical situation and Fed rhetoric. The two key challenges and monitorables for the markets in the near term are the persistent infla-

tionary pressures and the rising bond yields," said Milind Muchhala, Executive Director, Julius Baer.

From the 30-share pack, Titan fell the most by 3.59 per cent, Tech Mahindra by 2.35 per cent, Maruti Suzuki India by 1.79 per cent, and Wipro by 1.18 per cent.

Among major index downers, HDFC Bank declined 0.76 per cent, TCS by 1.12 per cent, and Infosys by 0.55 per cent.

ICICI Bank, Nestle India, Larsen & Toubro, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel and ITC also dropped.

On the other hand, Dr Reddy's continued its stellar run, rising by 0.77 per cent. Asian Paints rose 0.76 per cent, and Reliance Industries by 0.73 per cent. Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India and Kotak Mahindra Bank also advanced.

"After the recent 10 per cent rally, the market has turned sideways with a negative bias due to increase in commodity prices, tightening monetary policy and inflationary pressure. Domestic market is showing strong resilience but to sustain the trend a lot will depend on the outcome of the

war and commodity prices," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap dipped 0.36 per cent and smallcap gauge declined 0.33 per cent.

A total of 2,078 declined, while 1,329 advanced and 103 remained unchanged.

Among BSE sectoral indices, consumer durables declined the most by 2.28 per cent, followed by capital goods (0.95 per cent), FMCG (0.72 per cent) and Information Technology (0.68 per cent).

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower, while Tokyo and Seoul settled with marginal gains. Stock exchanges in the US ended higher in the overnight session.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.44 per cent to USD 117.32 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) turned net sellers in the capital market, as they sold shares worth Rs 1,740.71 crore on Thursday, according to stock exchange data.

Airtel repays ₹8,815 cr towards deferred liabilities for 2015 spectrum

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Friday said it has paid Rs 8,815 crore to the government towards part prepayment of deferred liabilities pertaining to spectrum acquired in the 2015 auction.

The prepayment is for instalments due in FY2021 and FY2022, the Sunil Mittal-led telco said in a statement.

"Airtel prepays Rs 8,815 crore to clear deferred liabilities for spectrum acquired in 2015," the company said.

Over the last four months, Airtel has cleared Rs 24,334 crore of its deferred spectrum liabilities ahead of schedule.

These liabilities carried an interest rate of 10 per cent and have been paid off through a combination of free cash generated by the business, equity proceeds, and significantly lower cost debt of a similar tenor.

Airtel said it continues to focus on financial flexibility via its capital structure, including optimising the cost of financing and capitalising on all opportunities of significant interest saves, like the latest prepayment.

# Rupee rises 9 paise to close at 76.24/\$ on fall in crude oil

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee rose further by 9 paise to close at 76.24 against the US dollar on Friday following a fall in crude oil prices and weakness in the American currency in the overseas markets.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 76.15 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 76.12 and a low of 76.29.

The rupee settled at 76.24, registering a rise of 9 paise over its previous close of 76.33.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.16 per cent to 98.62.

The rupee rebounded amid dollar softness and lower crude oil prices but trimmed the early gains following weaker domestic equities and foreign fund outflows, said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Ahead of the financial year-end, the rupee tends to show a high swing on the back of rebal-

ancing-related inflows and outflows, Parmar added.

"The balance of risks for USDINR remains skewed to the upside following geopolitical worries and broad based selling by foreign institutions. Spot USDINR is expected to settle in the range of 76 to 76.50 this month, medium term direction remains bullish as long as it holds 75.70," Parmar noted.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 1.27 per cent to USD 117.52 per barrel.

According to Emkay Global Financial Services, geo-political tensions continued to dominate market sentiments this week.

"The members of the G7 countries said that they are ready to apply additional sanctions as required and will spare no efforts to hold Putin and his supporters accountable. The US went ahead with imposing fresh sanctions on a dozen of Russian defence firms. Global markets are clearly worried that the sanctions will affect the economic recovery going forward," it said.

Crude oil prices have so far gained 10 per cent this week as European nations also mull sanctions on Russian oil and gas imports. US central bankers were very active this week as most of them were unanimous in their call for aggressive rate hikes this year to curb soaring inflation in the US.

# Imports from China slip 7.2% to \$65.21 bn in '21

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Imports from China declined 7.2 per cent to USD 65.21 billion in 2020-21 from USD 70.31 billion in 2018-19, Parliament was informed on Friday.

On the other hand, India's exports to China rose 26 per cent to USD 21.18 billion in 2020-21 from USD 16.75 billion in 2018-19, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Anupriya Patel said in a written reply to the Rajya Saha. "The imports from China have exhibited a declining trend from USD 70.31 billion in 2018-19 to USD 65.21 billion in 2020-21, a decline of 7.2 per cent," she said.

The minister said India has made sustained efforts to achieve a more balanced trade

with China, including bilateral engagements to address the non-tariff barriers on Indian exports to China and measures against unfair trade practices.

In a separate reply, the minister said the trade deficit with China stood at USD 44.02 billion in 2020-21 as against USD 48.65 billion. Replying to another question, Patel said representations from industry are received from time to time on surge in imports from ASEAN countries, Japan and Korea, which are examined in consultation with the concerned administrative ministries.

They are taken up with the respective trading partners under the existing institutional mechanism enshrined in the respective free trade agreements, she added.

"FTAs have inbuilt provi-

sions to check any misuse of the FTA concessions, which inter-alia include strict compliance of the Rules of Origin, checking mis-declaration, if any, and taking trade remedial actions," the minister noted.

To another question, she replied that the ministry is holding regular meetings with stakeholders to draw a road map and strategy to control the expected loss in the trade industry due to the Ukraine-Russia conflict. On a similar question, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the impact can be assessed only after the situation stabilises.

"However, the Department of Commerce is holding regular consultation with all stakeholders to find out the impact on bilateral trade between India and Russia," he said.

# EU OK's new digital rules to rein in big tech dominance

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union set the stage for a stepped-up crackdown on big tech companies with an agreement on landmark digital rules to rein in online "gatekeepers" such as Google and Facebook parent Meta.

EU officials agreed late Thursday on wording for the bloc's Digital Markets Act, part of a long-awaited overhaul of its digital rulebook. The act, which still needs other approvals, seeks to prevent tech giants from dominating digital markets, with the threat of whopping fines or even the possibility of a company breakup.

For instance, they face

tighter restrictions on using people's data for targeted online ads - a primary source of revenue for the likes of Google and Facebook. And different messaging services or social media platforms will be required to work together.

The new rules underscore how Europe has become a global pacesetter in efforts to curb the power of tech companies through an onslaught of antitrust investigations, stringent regulations on data privacy and proposed rules for areas like artificial intelligence. "What we have been deciding about yesterday will start a new era in tech regulation," European Union lawmaker

Andreas Schwab said at a press conference Friday.

The European Consumer Organisation, or BEUC, welcomed the agreement, saying it would help consumers by creating fairer and more competitive digital markets.

Tech companies were less enthusiastic. Apple said it was concerned that parts of the Digital Markets Act "will create unnecessary privacy and security vulnerabilities for our users while others will prohibit it from charging for intellectual property in which we invest a great deal."

Google said it will study the text and work with regulators to implement it.

# Sebi penalises 3 for violations in Titan share trades

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Friday imposed penalties on three individuals for violation of insider trading norms in the shares of Titan Company Ltd during the April 2018 to March 2019 period when they were designated employees.

A fine of Rs 1 lakh each has been imposed on G S Saravanan, Ashik M P and V L George, according to three separate orders.

Sebi had conducted an investigation into the shares of Titan after it was intimated about contravention of prohibition of insider trading regulations and the company's code of conduct for prevention of insider trading by

some of its designated persons/ employees.

The probe found non-compliance by the individuals with respect to the regulations during the April 2018 to March 2019 period.

During their employment with Titan, they had transacted in the securities of Titan Co Ltd but failed to make the requisite disclosures to the firm as required under the prohibition of insider trading norms, as per Sebi.

The disclosure requirements were triggered on account of the transactions concerned exceeding the traded value of Rs 10 lakh.

For violation of the norms, the individuals have been penalised by the regulator.

# \$22.4 billion help for women-owned businesses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Unilever, Intel and several global companies have committed to source \$22.4 billion in goods and services by 2025 from Women-owned businesses and there will be a special focus on companies with diverse ownership and on women-owned firms. At least 10 of the WEConnect International member organizations has collectively committed to source at least \$22.4 billion. "We are thrilled that 10 of our member buyers have made a public commitment to increase their spend with women business owners around the world," said Elizabeth A. Vazquez, CEO and Co-Founder of WEConnect International.

# Number of recognised startups increases to 65,861: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sustained efforts by the government have resulted in increasing the number of recognised startups from 726 in FY 2016-17 to 65,861 in FY 2021-22 (as on 14th March 2022)," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. He said that the recognised startups are spread across over 640 districts and have reported a creation of more than seven lakh jobs with an average of 11 jobs being created by them.

The recognised startups, he said, are spread across 56 diversified sectors such as IT services, finance technology, technology hardware, enterprise software, artificial intelligence, and nanotechnology.

Replying to an another

question, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Som Parkash said that as on February 28 this year, the ministry has allocated Rs 2,791.29 crore to SIDBI, which in turn committed Rs 6,795 crore to 82 Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), while Rs 8,785 crore have been invested by supported AIFs in 574 startups.

"The Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) aims to provide financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialization...Rs 945 crore has been allocated under the scheme for a period of four years starting from 2021-22," he added.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
To be known to all that my client, (1) Smt. SARU W/O CHRI RAM KISHAN RAMWAL and (2) Shri RAM KISHAN RAMWAL S/O SHRI SHADI LAL RAMWAL both residents of HOUSE NO.3/8, YEENA ENCLAVE, RAJOURI PARK, NANGLOI, NEW DELHI, are the sole owners of BDA US FLAT NO.271, ON THIRD FLOOR, BLOCK-A, PLOT-4, SITUATED AT LOKNATH PURAM, NEW DELHI, VIDE DDA FILE NO. L/483(559)/2006/AA/V/LN, have applied for Substitution and Conversion of leasehold from freehold of the above property in DDA. The original documents i.e. Original NOC FOR ELECTRICITY & WATER CONNECTION and SITE POSSESSION SLIP of the above said property have been lost or misplaced by my client and is not traceable inspite of his best efforts. As it is NCD to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (LR No.25/989/2022 dated 25.03.2022. Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/ contact with above named person at above Address Phone No.8076305331, within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director U/G (Housing) or Director (Housing), Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

Naveen Aggarwal (Advocate)  
Ch.No. M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to all concerned that, under the instructions of our client, we are investigating, rights, title, entitlement and interest, including but not limited to any transferable development rights, FAR, FSI, entitlements, etc., of Omaxe Heritage Private Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956, having its registered office at 10, Local Shopping Centre, Kalkaji, New Delhi, India, 110019 (earlier known as Ansh Builders Private Limited) ("OHPL") over the plot of land admeasuring 18,524 (Eighteen Thousand Five Hundred And Twenty Four) sq. mtrs. situated at Gandhi Maidan, Chandni Chowk, New Delhi, which land parcel is earmarked for development of a commercial complex cum multi-level car parking, together with all buildings and structures, including commercial spaces, parkings, public conveniences, walkways being constructed/ constructed thereon, and all other fixtures attached thereto and all the rights, title, interests, benefits and easementary rights appurtenant thereto (collectively "Property"). Any person(s) or entity(s) including but not limited to any bank or financial institution having or claiming or asserting to have any rights, title, interest, demand, estate in respect of the Property or to any part thereof including but not limited to any leasehold rights, development rights, FAR, FSI, entitlements, etc., of any nature whatsoever and, or, any claim, by way of, under or in the nature of any sale, exchange, assignment, charge, gift, license, lease, tenancy, inheritance, lien, mortgage, hypothecation, encumbrance, pending litigation, possession, contract/ agreement, development rights, partnership, family arrangement/ settlement, partition, decree or order of any court of law, acquisition by government or any entity, prohibition or any other impediment with respect to the Property, or any part thereof and, or, having any objection(s) of any manner whatsoever, are hereby required to give notice in writing to the undersigned of any such claim, accompanied with all necessary and supporting documents and other proofs within [10 (ten)] days from the date of publication hereof, failing which it will be presumed that no party or person has any right, title, interest, entitlement, claim, share, demand in the Property of any nature whatsoever, and OHPL is vested with absolute, clear and marketable title and interest in the Property, and the claim or objection, if any, has been knowingly waived and thereafter no claims or objections of any sort from any person will be entertained and taken into consideration, and shall not be binding on our client.

By:  
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Date: March 25, 2022

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY**  
KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND

The Director, Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi, Jharkhand, invites applications from Officers of Central or State Government or Union Territories or Central or State Government University or Central or State Government Autonomous Institutions or Central or State Government Public Sector Undertakings to fill up the following post in Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi on Deputation (including short term contract):

Sl.No.	Name of post	Pay Scale	No. of post
1.	Senior Radiographer	Level 12 of Pay Matrix (Rs.35400-112400)	01 (One)

(The details of application format and qualifications are published in the Employment News dated 26.03.2022 as well as available at the CIP website i.e. [www.cipranchi.nic.in](http://www.cipranchi.nic.in)) Sd/-Director

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Sl.No.	Name of post	Pay Scale	No. of post
1.	Professor of Clinical Psychology	Level 12 of Pay Matrix (Rs. 78800-209200/-)	01 (One)
2.	Professor of Psychiatric Social Work	Level 12 of Pay Matrix (Rs. 78800-209200/-)	01 (One)
3.	Associate Professor of Psychiatric Social Work	Level 11 of Pay Matrix (Rs. 67700-208700/-)	01 (One)
4.	Library and Information Officer	Level 11 of Pay Matrix (Rs. 67700-208700/-)	01 (One)

(The details of application format and qualifications are published in the Employment News dated 26.03.2022 as well as available on the CIP website, i.e. [www.cipranchi.nic.in](http://www.cipranchi.nic.in)) Sd/- Director

## Virgin Atlantic to start second daily flight on Delhi-London route

PTI ■ MUMBAI

British carrier Virgin Atlantic on Friday said it will operate a second daily service between Delhi and London starting from June 1. The flight will be operated from Heathrow airport to Indira Gandhi International Airport in the national capital.

The airline has also announced some changes in the departure timings of its Mumbai flight, effective March 27. Coupled with its service from Mumbai, Virgin Atlantic will offer three daily flights from India, it said in a statement. The announcement comes ahead of the resumption of regular international flights to and from India from March 27.

Scheduled commercial international flight services were suspended in the last week of March 2020 in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Virgin Atlantic said that from June onwards, it will offer morning as well as night departure Delhi-to-London flights.

## IN BRIEF

**BMW vehicle prices up from April**  
NEW DELHI: Luxury carmaker BMW India on Friday said it will increase prices of its entire model range by up to 3.5 per cent from April 1 to offset the impact of rise in input costs. The price increase will be brought into effect to adjust the material and logistics costs, impact of current geo-political situation and exchange rates, the German automaker said in a statement.

**Initiative to end tuberculosis**  
NEW DELHI: On World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, Johnson & Johnson India announced the launch of a youth-focused digital-first initiative "Be The Change For TB" as part of its commitment to the Corporate TB Pledge, a joint initiative with the Central TB Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in India, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), supporting the Indian Government's goal to end TB.

**Hyperconverged infra to modernise IT systems**  
NEW DELHI: Greenpanel, a major manufacturer of wood panels, has chosen Dell EMC VxRail hyperconverged infrastructure to modernise its data centre and optimise manufacturing and business operations. Bolstered by the booming construction industry, the competitive wood panels industry has grown at 10-12% annually. Businesses are relying heavily on new technologies to innovate and succeed in a competitive landscape, said Manish Gupta.

**Airbus, Airlift Global for chopper ambulance service**  
HYDERABAD: Aircraft-maker Airbus on Friday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Airlift Global, a company backed by UK-based AUM Capital, to develop helicopter emergency medical service (HEMS) and associated air medical service in India.

## SIDBI, Meghalaya Govt to develop MSME ecosystem

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has joined hands with the Meghalaya government to develop an ecosystem for small and medium businesses. SIDBI has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Meghalaya Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation Ltd (MidFC) to develop the MSME ecosystem in the state, SIDBI said in a release.

SIDBI is the country's principal financial institution for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Under the MoU, SIDBI and the state government will work closely to facilitate the development of the MSME ecosystem in Meghalaya.

As per the MoU's few broad objectives, SIDBI will aid in entrepreneurship development in the State; development of MSME clusters; capacity building of NGOs/development organisations and more.



# Italy miss out on WC, again



AP ■ PARIS

Reigning European champions Italy will miss a second straight World Cup after losing to a dramatic stoppage-time goal against North Macedonia on Thursday, but Portugal, Wales and Sweden all made it through to qualifying play-off deciders.

Four-time World Cup winners Italy were stunned in Palermo as Aleksandar Trajkovski -- who used to play club football in the Sicilian city -- fired past Gianluigi Donnarumma from range in the second minute of injury time to give North

Macedonia an incredible 1-0 victory.

There was no time after that for Italy to recover and they will again be absent from the World Cup in Qatar after also failing to qualify for the 2018 tournament in Russia when they lost in a play-off to Sweden.

That was a traumatic experience for a nation that had previously been to every tournament since 1958, and this failure is all the more remarkable given that they were crowned European champions less than nine months ago.

That success for Roberto Mancini's side came while they were on a world record 37-game

unbeaten run, but four draws in their last five qualifiers last autumn saw them finish second in their group to Switzerland, exposing them to the dangers of the play-offs again.

North Macedonia, the Balkan nation of just two million people, held Italy to a draw in Turin in 2018 World Cup qualifying and beat Germany away in this campaign before appearing at their debut European Championship last year.

**PENALTY MISS COSTS TURKEY**

They will now go to Porto to face Portugal next Tuesday, after the Euro 2016 winners defeated Turkey 3-1 at the Estadio do Dragao, albeit only after Burak Yilmaz missed a crucial late penalty for the visitors.

The home side were cruising thanks to first-half goals by Brazilian-born midfielder Otavio and Liverpool forward Diogo Jota.

But Turkey's veteran skipper Yilmaz pulled a goal back in the 65th minute, setting up a tense finish.

Turkey were then awarded a late penalty when a foul on Enes Unal was detected by the German referee following a VAR review, but Yilmaz put the spot-kick over the bar and Matheus Nunes secured Portugal's victory in stoppage time.

Turkey have not appeared at the World Cup since coming third in Japan and South Korea in 2002.

Portugal have not missed out on the tournament since 1998 and, at 37, Cristiano Ronaldo's dream of World Cup glory remains alive.

**BALE BRILLIANCE**

Meanwhile, Gareth Bale was in inspirational form as his brace secured a 2-1 win for Wales against Austria in Cardiff.

Bale has only played five times for his club Real Madrid this season, and just twice since August, but the Wales captain started at the Cardiff City Stadium and opened the scoring from a stunning 25th-minute free-kick.

He then struck again, with a superb hit across goalkeeper Heinz Lindner and into the far corner, to double the lead six minutes after half-time.

Wales, who are bidding to qualify

for their first World Cup since 1958, then held on after Austria reduced the deficit in the 64th minute when Marcel Sabitzer's shot deflected in off Ben Davies.

Robert Page's team will be at home in the play-off final but must wait until at least June for that, with the ongoing war in Ukraine meaning their tie away to Scotland remains on hold for now.

Sweden set up a play-off final against Poland next week after an extra-time strike by Robin Quaison gave them a 1-0 win over the Czech Republic in Solna.

Quarter-finalists in 2018, Sweden had to be patient before edging a Czech side who owed their place in the play-offs to their performance in the last UEFA Nations League.

Saudi Arabia-based Quaison scored in the 110th minute, finishing after a one-two with Alexander Isak.

Poland received a bye to the play-off final after would-be opponents Russia were suspended from all international competition until further notice following the invasion of Ukraine.

Scotland and Poland drew 1-1 in a friendly in Glasgow, with Kieran Tierney giving the home side the lead only for Krzysztof Piatek to level with a stoppage-time penalty.



## Ecuador, Uruguay qualify

**AP ■ MONATVIDEO**

Giorgian de Arrascaeta sent Uruguay to the World Cup with the only goal of the game against Peru on Thursday, a result that also booked Ecuador's ticket to Qatar, with a helping hand from Brazil.

Ecuador slumped to a 3-1 defeat in Paraguay but still qualified for a World Cup for the just the fourth time -- all this century -- thanks to Uruguay's victory and already-qualified Brazil's 4-0 win over Chile.

Nineteen teams have now qualified for the finals in Qatar later this year, with 13 spots still available.

With Argentina, who play Venezuela on Friday, also already qualified, Peru and Chile will now vie for the fifth-place intercontinental play-off spot from the single South American qualification group alongside Colombia, who emphatically ended a seven-match goalless streak with a 3-0 win over Bolivia.

It has been a remarkable turnaround for Uruguay since a disastrous spell at the end of last year when they lost four matches in a row, conceding 11 goals, scoring just one and slipping to seventh in the 10-team group.

That spelled the end for iconic coach Oscar Tabarez, who spent a record 15 years at the helm and guided the "Celeste" to a World Cup semi-final in 2010 and Copa America title a year later.

But his successor Diego Alonso has won three out of three and taken Uruguay -- winners in 1930 and 1950 -- to a fourth straight finals.

Ecuador's qualification owed more to a solid campaign than Thursday's shambolic performance in driving rain on a difficult pitch in Ciudad del Este.

The omens were poor before kick-off as Ecuador had already lost on all eight previous trips to Paraguay for World Cup qualifiers dating back to 1981.

Strikes from Robert Morales, a Piero Hincapié own goal and Miguel Almiron won the game for Paraguay before Jordy Caicedo's late penalty consolation.

Neymar marked his return to the Brazil team by scoring a penalty while Vinicius Junior, a Philippe Coutinho penalty and Richarlison heaped misery on Chile, whose hopes of qualification hang by a thread.

Goals from Luis Diaz, Miguel Borja and Mateus Uribe kept Colombia's chances alive.

# Coach Stimac hints more changes against Belarus



PTI ■ MANAMA

Up against higher-ranked Belarus in their second international friendly here on Saturday, national football team head coach Igor Stimac on Friday said he would continue trying out new faces so as to keep his blueprint ready for the Asian Cup final round qualifiers in June.

India almost secured a draw against Bahrain with a second-half equaliser from Rahul Bheke but only to concede an 88th minute goal to go down 1-2 in the first friendly here on Wednesday.

Belarus are 10 notches above 104th ranked India.

Stimac, however, is not afraid of trying out youngsters and hinted at including Kerala

Blasters' 21-year-old defender Ruivah Hormipam in the Belarus match on Saturday.

"Definitely, there will be big changes for the Belarus game, some of it coming as a result of not good enough performance from some players from the previous game, some of it coming as an opportunity for those who I count on for the future," the 54-year-old Croat said in a virtual press conference.

"We need to see what they can do at the International level. They had promising seasons in the ISL and this was a great challenge for them. So there will be the likes of Hormipam, Anwar (Ali), Roshan (Singh) on the pitch. New team is coming up, there will be fresh energy of course.

"Friendly games are the best opportunity to give players the chance to perform, and I believe if you don't take risks, you will never succeed," he added.

From the 25-member squad for the two friendlies, Stimac had given maiden call-ups to seven players -- Prabhshukhan Gill, Ruivah Hormipam, Anwar Ali, Roshan Singh, VP Suhair, Danish Farooq and Aniket Jadhav.

Out of which, Stimac tried out five players against Bahrain.

While VP Suhair and Danish Farooq were named in the starting line-up, Naorem Roshan Singh, Aniket Jadhav and Anwar Ali came on as second-half substitutes.

India also got a boost as more players would be available. Amrinder Singh, Chinglensana Singh, Akash Mishra, Anirudh Thapa, Brandon Fernandes and Aniket Jadhav reached Manama on the day of Bahrain match due to visa-related issues. Only Thapa and Jadhav played against Bahrain.

"We are more optimistic this time, we have a few more faces in the middle of the pitch with the likes of Brandon, Thapa joining us. Also Jaekson Singh is available for this game, so we have more options of playing creative games," he said.

# Sindhu, Prannoy enter Swiss Open semis

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu and H S Prannoy stormed into the semifinals of the Swiss Open badminton tournament with straight-game victories in their respective women and men singles events here on Friday.

While Sindhu, seeded second in the tournament, made short work of fifth seed Michelle Li of Canada 21-10 21-19 in 36 minutes, Prannoy beat compatriot and former Commonwealth Games gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap 21-16 21-16 in a quarterfinal match that lasted 43 minutes.

Former world champion Sindhu will meet unseeded Supanida Katethong of Thailand in the semifinals on Saturday.

Prannoy, on the other hand, faces third seeded Anthony



Sinisuka Ginting in the semifinals. The Indonesian beat another Indian Sameer Verma 21-17 21-14 in a quarterfinal match that lasted 39 minutes.

Sindhu was in good touch

as she simply outplayed her opponent in the first game. After the scores were levelled at 3-3, Sindhu grabbed seven straight points twice. She was ahead 10-3 first and then was

leading 17-4 before pocketing the first game.

The second game was a close affair with none of the two shuttlers giving an inch to the other. Sindhu was trailing 0-3 but quickly made it 4-4. She was ahead 7-4 but the Canadian fought back to reduce the gap to just one point.

Sindhu again roared back to a 14-9 lead before Li made a remarkable comeback to make it 16-16. The second game could have gone either way as the scores were levelled 17-17, 18-18 and 19-19 but ultimately it was Sindhu who held her nerves to grab it 21-19 and pocket the match.

In the women's doubles, the Indian pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy went down fighting to the Malaysian duo of Vivian Hoo and Chiew Sien Kim in the quarterfinals. The Indian pair

lost 20-22 21-23 in 55 minutes.

**HIMANTA RE-ELECTED AS BAI CHIEF**

Incumbent Himanta Biswa Sarma was re-elected unopposed as the president of Badminton Association of India (BAI) for a second term of four years -- 2022 to 2026 -- during its General Body Meeting here on Friday.

Sarma, who is also the current Chief Minister of Assam, was elected as BAI chief for the first time in 2017. He is also a Badminton Asia vice president and a member of the Badminton World Federation Executive Council.

Former junior national coach Sanjay Mishra will be the new general secretary of BAI with incumbent Ajay Kumar Singhania becoming vice president in the new Executive Council.

# Anshu, Sarita to lead Indian women's

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World championships Silver medallist Anshu Malik and bronze winner Sarita Mor will lead a 10-member Indian women's wrestling team at the Asian Championships to be held in Ulaanbatar, Mongolia next month.

While Anshu, a Silver medallist in the 2021 World Wrestling Championships in Oslo, will represent in her pet 57kg category, Sarita



will be take part in the 59kg section.

Sarita is a Bronze medallist in her category at the 2021 World Championships.

The team was picked after the selections trials held at the SAI Training Centre in Lucknow on Friday.

In the other high-profile bout in the trials, Manisha defeated Rio Olympics medallist Sakshi Malik 1-5 to seal her place in the 62kg category.

# New Delhi Marathon last chance for Indians

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The seventh edition of the Ageas Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon on Sunday will be the last opportunity for the country's marathon runners to qualify for this year's two multi-sport events -- the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games. Leading the pack will be Anish Thapa Magar, Nitendra Rawat, Belliappa AB and Arjun Pradhan, who have all been preparing for the season's most-awaited race, with an eye to secure their tickets to Birmingham, UK and Hangzhou, China.

# Another win for Osaka at Miami Open

AP ■ MIAMI

Two days, two wins and making it look easy.

Naomi Osaka sure seems like herself again. The former world No 1 is through to the third round at the Miami Open, easily handling 13th-seeded Angelique Kerber of Germany 6-2, 6-3 on Thursday. It was every bit as one-sided as the score made it seem, with Osaka winning 89% of first-serve points and 61 of the 100 points played in the match overall.

"It means a lot to me," said Osaka, unseeded in Miami after falling to No 77 in the world because she's missed considerable time to focus on her mental health in recent years. "She's the first high-seeded player I've



beaten this year."

Osaka's win set the tone for a day where 11 seeded women were ousted from the tournament, a stunning series of results headlined by Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu defeating top-

seeded Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 6-4. Begu had lost 17 of her last 18 matches against top-10 players entering Thursday.

Also gone: No 3 seed Anett Kontaveit. She lost to Ann Li, a 21-year-old American who got

her first win over a top-10 opponent - a 6-0, 3-6, 6-4 triumph. Kerber is ranked 15th in the world; the last time Osaka defeated a top-15 ranked player was when she topped then-No 10 Serena Williams in the 2021 Australian Open semifinals. Osaka went on to win that tournament and hasn't been to a final since, but her win over Kerber - who had been 4-1 against Osaka entering Thursday - certainly made her look the part of a Miami contender.

The rest of the ousted women's seeds: No 6 Karolina Pliskova, No 11 Emma Raducanu, No 15 Elina Svitolina, No 18 Leylah Fernandez, No 19 Tamara Zidansek, No 25 Daria Kasatkina, No 31 Alize Cornet and No 32 Sara Sorribes Tormo,

all of them defeated on Thursday.

Pliskova - in just her second match after missing about four months with a broken arm - lost 6-3, 6-3 to qualifier Anna Kalinskaya.

Olympic doubles Gold medallist Katarina Siniakova of the Czech Republic needed just under three hours to beat Raducanu, the reigning US Open champion, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Svitolina, who had a number of fans wearing pro-Ukraine shirts watching her match in tribute to her homeland, lost to Britain's Heather Watson 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (4).

Fernandez - a US Open finalist last year - lost to Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic 6-4, 7-6 (3). Muchova, who

# MURRAY OFF THE MARK

AP ■ MIAMI

Andy Murray opened his Miami Open campaign with a straight sets win over Argentina's Federico Delbonis to set up an intriguing second round encounter with Daniil Medvedev on Thursday.

Murray, the three-time Grand Slam champion, may never return to the glorious highs of winning Wimbledon and the US Open but with his metal hip and granite resolve, the 34-year-old still loves competing. The veteran Scot was snarling and fist pumping just like in his



heyday as he eventually eased to a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 triumph.

Next up is world number two Medvedev who will once again test the British player's ability to string wins together since making a return to the tour after a second hip operation.

He has failed to back up first round wins in his last five tournaments and his clash with Medvedev will be the first time in five years he has come up against a top two player.

Murray, however, is just happy to still be in the mix at the biggest tournaments.

ing off Anna Bondar of Hungary 6-3, 3-6, 6-4. No 8 seed Ons Jabeur was another winner, getting past Poland's Magda Linette 7-6 (1), 6-2, and No 22 Belinda Bencic eased by Maria Kostyuk 6-3, 6-1.



# IPL RETURNS HOME BIGGER THAN EVER

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian cricket's crown jewel, the IPL, is back home: bigger, better and longer. It will be the first time since 2011 that 10 teams be fighting it out for the most coveted T20 trophy in world cricket.

Two new entrants, Lucknow Supergiants and Gujarat Titans, fetching a combined price of approximately \$1.7 billion shows that brand IPL keeps getting bigger.

It took 14 years but the league has now well and truly gone global.

The owners of the iconic Manchester United also wanted a slice of the IPL pie but lost to the RPSG Group and Britain-based CVC group on the bidding table.

With the COVID situation under control in the country, the board's top-brass can breathe easy and after a two year gap, IPL is set to be held in India in its entirety with at least 25 percent capacity of crowd allowed in stadiums this season.

The number of games have been increased to 74 from 60 with the addition of new teams, extending the IPL window to over two months.

All teams however will play 14 games each like in the past but will a longer tournament impact the intensity and quality of cricket, only time will tell.

The board has learnt from the harsh lessons of the 2021 edition when the tournament had to be suspended midway due to the raging pandemic and could only be completed in the UAE four months later.

No air travel will be required this season with all the league games to be organised in four venues in Maharashtra (three Mumbai and one in Pune).

For curators, maintaining the trueness of pitches over two months will be a challenge but at least the half of the tournament is set to be a high-scoring affair.

One can expect more bounce on the red soil pitches of Wankhede, CCI and D Y Patil



while the black soil surface in Pune is expected to offer more turn.

With Supergiants and Titans building their teams from scratch and the existing franchises having to release a chunk of their players before the mega auction, the 2022 edition can well be one of the most competitive in tournament history.

Ahead of the World Cup to be played in Australia later this year, the IPL will also decided fate of a few Indian players.

## NO HOME ADVANTAGE FOR MI?

Rohit Sharma has insisted that there will be no home advantage for Mumbai Indians but he and the likes of Kieron Pollard, Suryakumar Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah and Ishan Kishan won't certainly mind playing in their own backyard.

Having let of go of Pandya brothers and Trent Boult, the team doesn't look the same formidable outfit at least on paper.

At Royal Challengers Bangalore, all eyes will be on Virat Kohli like usual, though, he has happily relinquished the captaincy.

With the burden of leading the side off his shoulders, the former India skipper is expected to come back to his batting best and play an important role in taking the team to its elusive title.

Longtime CSK batter Faf du Plessis has been given the captaincy with a hope that he would be able to do what has not been done before at RCB.

### FAREWELL SEASON FOR DHONI?

Dhoni has done a Dhoni by giving up CSK captaincy three days before their opening game. While his decision did not come as a shock, it has fuelled speculation whether he would feature in all the games.

The 40-year-old stepping aside has also put the spotlight on Ravindra Jadeja, who will be captaining a high-profile team for the very first time.

Jadeja's stellar form in international cricket over the last couple of years would surely give him the confidence to lead from the front and in times of crisis, he will anyway have Dhoni by his side.

### TIME FOR NEW SKIPPERS

Having led Delhi Capitals to their first ever final, Iyer was sidelined from captaincy following a shoulder injury. He decided to go back into the auction and KKR paid big money for his services.

The stylish batter has shown rich form for India of late and he will be hoping to carry that into the IPL and inspire KKR to their third title.

His India teammate Hardik Pandya's progress will be followed closely over the course of the IPL. Having lost his place in the Indian team due to his inability to bowl regularly following a back surgery in 2019, Hardik has a point to prove.

It is still not clear if he would bowl often in the IPL, making his form with the bat all the more crucial. Either way, he will have to come up with something special to resurrect his career and also ensure first timers Gujarat put up a competitive show.

Hardik's close friend K L Rahul will also need to inspire a young unit. Success eluding him as captain, both at India and IPL level, the opener will be eyeing another prolific season with the bat besides leading an exciting bunch of cricketers.



# Was lucky to see how Dhoni's brain works: Faf



PTI ■ MUMBAI

From having Virat Kohli as part of the leadership group to learning from 'captain cool' MS Dhoni during his stint with CSK, Faf du Plessis is all excited to lead Royal Challengers Bangalore in the upcoming IPL.

The former South African skipper, who was bought by the RCB for ₹7 crore in the IPL mega auction earlier this year, was a key member of the Dhoni-led four-time IPL champions since 2012.

"I was lucky enough to play under MS Dhoni for an extremely long time," the 37-year-old said in an interview on the IPL website.

Ahead of their IPL opener against Kolkata Knight Riders, Dhoni on Thursday handed over the CSK reins to talismanic India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja.

Effusive in his praise for the World Cup winning India captain, Du Plessis further said: "I got to see very closely how his brain works. You know how things operate under him which was once again very fortunate for me."

Moving over to RCB, Du Plessis, a three-time IPL winner with CSK, will have his

I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO PLAY UNDER MS DHONI FOR AN EXTREMELY LONG TIME. I GOT TO SEE VERY CLOSELY HOW HIS BRAIN WORKS. YOU KNOW HOW THINGS OPERATE UNDER HIM WHICH WAS ONCE AGAIN VERY FORTUNATE FOR ME.

— FAF DU PLESSIS

task cutout to clinch the elusive title for his new franchise.

## KOHLI, DK & MAXI IN LEADERSHIP GROUP

But Du Plessis is unfazed by the expectations and said he would benefit from his core 'leadership group' that has the likes of Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell and Dinesh Karthik.

"Virat was the captain of this country for an extremely long time. I mean, a very good leader for Indian cricket and for RCB... So that experience and wisdom and knowledge that comes with that is second to none.

"And then the same thing Maxi (Glenn Maxwell). He has captained a lot of games, especially in T20 cricket. So his brain and his ideas are very valuable and the same with Dinesh Karthik.

"I'm very lucky that we've got a great strong leadership group within the team. I'm the kind of leader that relies on a lot of other people. "So I'll be pulling them as close as possible to make sure that they can use all that information to the best of RCB. Every captain has his strengths. I think for me, it's been over my time to just look at these different leaders and see their strengths, but also finding my own way in what's going to be different today.

"It's really important that you are, who you are. And then you can use those things that you've learned from different people. And just add them to your style of captaincy," he added.

RCB will take on Punjab Kings in their IPL opener in Navi Mumbai here on Sunday.

# Oz beat Pak in 3rd Test, win series

AP ■ LAHORE

Australia claimed a historic victory against Pakistan on Friday, taking the three-Test series 1-0 with a 115-run win on the fifth day of the last match in Lahore.

Australia are in Pakistan for the first time since 1998, having previously refused to tour over security fears.

Jubilant crowds of Pakistani cricket lovers have flocked to stadiums in Rawalpindi, Karachi and Lahore throughout the series in full support of both Pakistan and Australia, undeterred by the presence of heavy security.

The victory gives Australia the Benaud-Qadir Trophy, named after former Australian skipper Richie Benaud and Pakistan leg-spinner Abdul Qadir.

Spin king Nathan Lyon finished with 5-83 -- his 19th five wicket haul -- and was ably supported by skipper Pat Cummins (3-23) as Pakistan -- set a challenging target of 351 -- were bowled out for 235 in the last session on the fifth and final day.

Opener Imam-ul-Haq with 70 and skipper Babar Azam on 55 defied the



Australian attack but Pakistan lost their last five wickets for just 22 runs.

The first two Tests ended in draws, the latest after a bold declaration by Cummins on Thursday.

Befittingly, Cummins bowled Naseem Shah for one to wrap up Pakistan's innings an hour after tea to spark celebrations among his teammates. Pakistan were in with a chance

of drawing the Test at lunch with the score on 136-2 with 57 overs left, but Lyon took advantage of a weary fifth day Gaddafi Stadium pitch which offered good spin.

Cummins and Lyon sent three of Pakistan's middle-order batsmen back to the pavilion for the addition of only 25 runs during the second session, turning the series-deciding Test on its

head.

Azam and Sajid Khan shared a 46-run stand for the sixth wicket to delay the inevitable as they cracked four boundaries off the second new ball taken at 191-5.

But Lyon dismissed Azam caught in the slip off a sharp turner to nearly seal the match before Starc dismissed Sajid for 21.

Earlier, Haq resisted the Australian attack during the morning session but Lyon ended his innings on 70 in the second over after lunch. Imam edged the ball onto his pads and the ball lobbed up into the hands of Marnus Labuschagne at silly point.

Cummins then trapped Fawad Alam (11) off a fuller delivery that evaded a defensive push by the left-hander.

Cummins doubled his wickets tally with another furious yorker that trapped wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Rizwan in front of his wickets for zero.

Pakistan lost Abdullah Shafique (27) and Azhar Ali (17) after resuming at 73 without loss in the morning.

The tourists will now play three ODIs on March 29, 31 and April 2, and a T20I on April 5 -- all in Lahore.

# Aus to tour SL for 10 matches in June & July



AP ■ MELBOURNE

Australia will travel to Sri Lanka for a 10-match series in all formats in June and July in its first tour of the south Asian country since 2016, when the hosts won a three-Test series 3-0. The tour will feature three Twenty20 matches, five one-dayers and the two tests from June 7 to July 12. Colombo will host three T20s and three one-dayers with Kandy the venue for two one-dayers.

Galle will host both test matches, from June

AUSTRALIA TOUR OF SRI LANKA			
June 7	1st T20I	Colombo	
June 8	2nd T20I	Colombo	
June 11	3rd T20I	Colombo	
June 14	1st ODI	Kandy	
June 16	2nd ODI	Kandy	
June 19	3rd ODI	Colombo	
June 21	4th ODI	Colombo	
June 24	5th ODI	Colombo	
June 29-July 3	1st Test	Galle	
July 8-12	2nd Test	Galle	

29-July 3 and July 8-12.

"There is no more challenging place to play cricket than on the subcontinent and this tour offers our players invaluable experience and another great opportunity to excel on the world stage," Cricket Australia's chief executive officer Nick Hockley said in a statement on Friday.



# Southern Stars maintain perfect win record

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Favourites Australia beat Bangladesh by five wickets in howling winds in Wellington to maintain their perfect record at the Women's Cricket World Cup on Friday.

The result ends Bangladesh's slim hopes of securing a semi-final berth, although the Tigers pushed the six-time champions hard in a match where innings were reduced to 43 overs because of the weather.

Bangladesh made 135-6 after being put in to bat, with Lata Mondal top-scoring on 33 in a match that was essentially a dead rubber for Australia, who are guaranteed a playoff spot.

The wind was so strong at Wellington's Basin Reserve that the balls would not stay on the stumps and the umpires made the rare decision to play on without them. Players from both teams waited to bat huddled on the sidelines wrapped in blankets, rubbing their hands together to ward off the cold.

Bangladesh's batters made a slow start in the atrocious conditions, reaching 58-2 after 18 overs.

Sharmin Akhtar's departure on 24 made runs even harder to come by, with Bangladesh scoring only eight from the next eight overs as Australia's spinners piled on the pressure.

Mondal showed aggression late in the innings but fell in the final over as Bangladesh finished on 135-6.

Beth Mooney anchored Australia's innings with an unbeaten 66, backed up by Annabel Sutherland's 26 not out, while Salma Khatun took 3-23 for Bangladesh.

Australia remain the only undefeated team at this year's tournament and are overwhelming favourites for a seventh title.

Bangladesh's chances of advancing were always remote and required a string of unlikely results, but they will take heart from a win over Pakistan and close losses to the West Indies and South Africa in their debut World Cup campaign.

# BCCI plans to start women's IPL by 2023

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The BCCI is planning to start the Women's IPL by 2023, Board President Sourav Ganguly said on Friday while four exhibition games make a return this season after a one-year gap.

The BCCI, which has been criticised in the past for not starting the Women's IPL, will need AGM's approval to kick-start the league next season.

The Board is planning to have five or six teams in the inaugural edition.

All the existing 10 men's IPL franchises will be given the first right of refusal to buy the Women's IPL teams.

It is learnt that at least four men's IPL franchises are interested in knowing from the



BCCI what is on the table in case they want to invest in WIPL.

"It (the full-fledged women's IPL) has to be approved by the AGM. We plan to start it by next year

hopefully," BCCI president Sourav Ganguly told reporters after the IPL Governing Council meeting here on Friday.

In an interview to PTI in February, Ganguly had said that Women's IPL will be

launched in 2023.

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel also made it clear that this season there will be four matches for the three women teams around men's IPL play-offs.

"There will be four matches involving three teams around the time of the playoffs," Patel said after the meeting.

With the second half of the IPL being shifted to the UAE due to the pandemic, the exhibitions games were not held last year. However, they were staged in the UAE in 2020 when IPL Trailblazers won the title.

According to Patel, there would be five or six teams in the Women's IPL but again that would need approval of the General Body. The most likely venue for the women's exhibitions games is Pune.

# Proteas batter Zubayr Hamza provisionally suspended by ICC

PTI ■ DUBAI

South African batter Zubayr Hamza was on Friday provisionally suspended by the ICC for failing an out-of-competition dope test.

Hamza's dope sample collected out-of-competition on January 17 this year has been found to contain Furosemide, a prohibited substance under the World Anti-Doping Agency Code.

"The ICC has charged South African batter Zubayr Hamza with an anti-doping rule violation under the ICC Anti-Doping Code," the world body said in a statement.

"Hamza has been charged with the presence and/or use of a prohibited substance follow-



ing the detection of Furosemide in a sample collected out-of-competition on 17 January 2022 and has been provisionally suspended pending the outcome of the disciplinary process."

Furosemide is a Specified Substance contained in Section S5 of the 2022 WADA Prohibited List.