

## OPINION 6

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE  
PANGS OF AIADMK

## WORLD 8

US PROUD MEMBER OF  
INDO PACIFIC: KAMALA

## MONEY 9

STOCKS RALLY  
FOR 3RD DAY

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY MARCH 31, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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## Imran loses majority as ally MQM-P ditches PTI

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's embattled Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday effectively lost majority in Parliament after a key partner of the ruling coalition joined the ranks of the Opposition, which has tabled a no-confidence motion against his Government in the National Assembly.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), a key ally of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led coalition Government, with its seven members announced that it has parted ways with the Government during a joint press conference of the Opposition parties here.

Prime Minister Khan needs 172 votes in the lower House of 342 to foil the Opposition's bid to topple him. However, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, chief of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islama Fazl (JUI-F), said the Opposition has the support of 175 lawmakers and the Prime Minister should resign.

It was also announced that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president and Leader of the Opposition Shehbaz Sharif would be next Prime Minister of the country after removal of 69-year-old Khan. "We want to make a new



beginning for politics of tolerance and true democracy," MQM-P chief Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui told reporters. "I announce to support the Opposition in Parliament."

Sharif said it was an important day as all Opposition parties have joined together to address the problems faced by Pakistan. "The premier, even if he is a selected one, should resign to set a new tradition," he said.

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), said the support by the MQM was a big

development and with this the prime minister has lost the majority. "The Prime Minister has no option and he will have to resign," he said.

Bilawal also said Sharif will soon be elected as the next Prime Minister. Another ally of the ruling coalition, the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) with five members in the lower House had announced on Monday that it had "accepted the Opposition's invitation" to vote against Khan.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid said Prime Minister Khan will

address the nation on Wednesday evening and discuss the prevailing political situation. Briefly talking to the media after a Special Session of Cabinet, which was chaired by the premier, Rashid said Khan also shared a "threatening letter" with the Cabinet colleagues, who in return expressed complete trust in him. Addressing a mammoth rally in the national capital on Sunday, Khan had claimed that foreign powers were involved in a conspiracy to topple his coalition Government.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Russian Min arrives today to discuss Ukraine crisis

## Lavrov's India visit concides with arrival of US Dy NSA

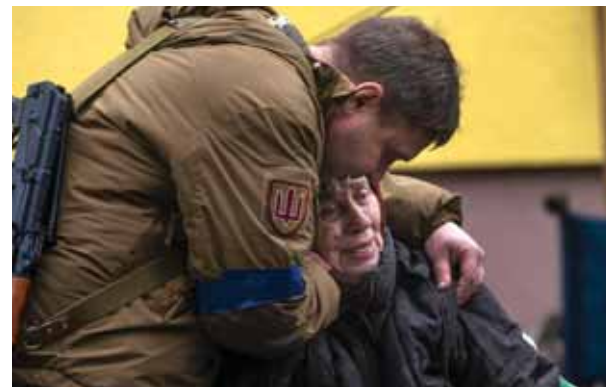
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With India emerging as an important voice in finding ways to end the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will hold talks on the issue here with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar during his two-day visit starting Thursday.

It will be the first visit by a Russian Minister to India since the war began on February 24. Incidentally, Lavrov's visit coincides with high-profile visit by British Foreign Secretary Elizabeth Truss and US Deputy National Security Adviser (NSA) for International Economics Daleep Singh. The US Deputy NSA arrives here on Wednesday for a two-day visit. He is reportedly the main person behind sanctions against Russia.

India has abstained from voting against Russia in the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held phone conversations with Russian President



A soldier comforts Larysa Kolesnyk, 82, after she was evacuated from Irpin, on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine on Wednesday  
AP | PTI

Vladimir Putin on February 24, March 2, and March 7 to express the country's concern on the Ukraine war. Modi had also spoken to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy twice. During his talks with both the Presidents, Modi called for an early cessation of hostilities and favoured dialogue to resolve the issue.

Giving details of Lavrov's tour, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a one-line statement, "Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov will pay an official visit to New Delhi on March 31-April 2022."

Currently, he is in China.

India and Russia are likely to discuss the ongoing war in Ukraine and its global implications. Lavrov is likely to focus on strategic issues result-

ing from the war, as well as specific discussions on purchasing Russian oil, payment mechanisms, and sanctions against Russian banks with Jaishankar. The two sides are also likely to review any possible impact on the unhindered supply of weapons systems. They include the ₹50,000 crore S-400 missile systems and production of AK-203 assault rifles in India. This deal is worth over Rs 7,000 crores.

The Government indicated in Parliament last week that it is considering offers of discounted Russian oil. A special inter-Ministerial group headed by the Finance Ministry is looking into the payments issues for Indian importers and exporters that arise from the war and Western sanctions.

*Continued on Page 2*

## LS OK's MCD Bill to merge 3 Delhi civic bodies into one

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022, which seeks to unify the three municipal corporations of Delhi into one.

Moving the Bill, Home Minister Amit Shah said the trifurcation of the MCD was done in a hurry for political reasons which lead to an imbalance between the income and liabilities of the civic bodies.

"I tried to look for the reasons for the trifurcation, scoured through files but could not find anything on it," said Shah, adding that when there are no reasons it can be assumed that it may have been done due to political reasons.

The analyses from 2012 to 2022 made this Government come to a conclusion that the corporations must be combined into one, Shah said. Delhi MCD was divided into



three municipal corporations during Sheila Dikshit's tenure in 2011.

Shah accused the AAP-led Delhi Government of nurturing a "step-motherly" attitude towards the municipal corporations and due to this they are struggling with inadequate resources to carry out their responsibilities.

Shah first attacked the AAP Government while moving the Bill and in his reply attacked the TMC for political violence against rivals and said the BJP wanted to fight and win polls everywhere on basis of its ideology, programmes, leadership's popularity and performance of the Government.

Asserting that the Delhi municipal corporations were trifurcated in a "hurry", the Home Minister said the three bodies run on different policies, there is no coordination between workers and due to this anomaly, dissatisfaction has also been found among them. "When resources and responsibilities were trifurcated, it was done without much thinking. One corporation will be in surplus while the other two will have less income and more liability," he said. Due to this, problems arise and the elected members face a lot of issues, Shah said.

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## 1st-time drinker in Bihar to pay ₹50K fine or land in jail

After SC rap, Nitish Govt dilutes prohibition law

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facing flak over liquor ban from the Supreme Court, the Nitish Kumar Government on Wednesday passed "The Bihar Prohibition and Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2022", allowing first-time offenders to be let off after they pay penalty prescribed by the State Government. If they don't pay, they will be jailed for a month.

In case of repeat offenders, the State Government may prescribe additional fines or imprisonment, or both. As per the Bill, for the offences related to consumption of liquor, the State Government is empowered to notify the fine for first-time offenders.

Incidentally, the amended law doesn't differentiate between first-time and repeat-

offenders, as there is no system to find out how many times a person has violated the law.

As per the data shared by the Government in the State Assembly, from 2018 to 2020, over 45,000 FIRs were registered under the Act every year. Further, during this period, the number of cases pending trial before courts almost quadrupled. More than 40,000 people were arrested under the Act each year from 2018 to 2020. The data showed that 31,053 cases were pending for trial in 2018; 77822 cases in 2019; and 1,14,057 cases in 2020. The Act was amended in 2018 to make certain penalties less stringent.

According to the Bill, when an offender held by police is required to reveal the name of the person from whom the liquor was received, also a first-time offender is fined a minimum ₹50,000 or 3 months imprisonment in lieu of fine.

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## BJP workers vandalise assets at CM house over Kashmir Files

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the BJP youth wing allegedly vandalised property outside the residence of Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal here during a protest on Wednesday against his remarks on "The Kashmir Files" film, further intensifying the war of words between the two parties. Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday alleged that the BJP wants to "kill" Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal after its poll defeat in Punjab.

He alleged that the BJP youth wing activists damaged CCTV cameras as well as security barricades at the Chief Minister's residence in the presence of Delhi Police personnel. They allegedly threw paint on the main gate of the residence. Sisodia also said they will lodge a formal complaint in this connection.

The BJP accused AAP of scripting a drama and playing



Miscreants vandalise the gate at the residence of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi on Wednesday  
PTI

the "victim card" after the "public anger" against Kejriwal's remarks "mocking" displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

The Delhi Police said that a case has been registered against unidentified persons in connection with the incident.

The protestors, led by BJP Yuva Morcha's national presi-

dent and MP Tejasvi Surya, were holding a demonstration against Kejriwal's remarks on the recently released controversial movie 'The Kashmir Files', which is based on the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley after the outbreak of militancy.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Respond to SIT reports on Ashish bail, SC asks UP

SIT wrote to UP to file appeal against bail in SC in Kheri violence case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Uttar Pradesh Government to respond by April 4 to the two reports of the retired judge monitoring the SIT probe into the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case. The reports sought cancellation of bail to Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra.

A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana said the monitoring judge had written to the State for cancellation of bail granted by the Allahabad High Court to Ashish Mishra



in connection with the case.

"There are two letters sent to the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) of the UP Government by the monitoring judge who had written to the State to file an appeal in SC to cancel bail of main accused Ashish Mishra," said the bench also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli.

Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, appearing for the UP Government, took instructions and informed the apex court that the additional secretary of the Home department has stated that he did not receive the letters.

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## Pak-trained women targeting forces new challenge in J&amp;K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After neutralising a large number of terrorist commanders in a series of anti-terrorist operations across the Kashmir valley, the security forces in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir are now waking up to a new challenge of dealing with women overground workers trained by the terror outfits to target the security forces.

The recent incident involving a woman overground worker (OGW) hurling a petrol bomb at security forces in Sopore, and a journalist-turned terrorist joining the ranks of a Pakistan-based terror outfit has sent alarm bells ringing in the security apparatus.

The local police teams in Sopore have identified the woman OGW who hurled the petrol bomb at CRPF personnel late on Tuesday.

The CCTV footage came



in handy for the security personnel to identify the woman OGW who is absconding.

The CCTV footage, which went viral on various social media platforms, shows a woman, clad in a traditional burqa, stopped near a CRPF picket in the main chowk area of Sopore near an SBI branch and hurled a petrol bomb towards them around 7 pm.

On Wednesday, Inspector

General of Police Vijay Kumar told a national news agency in Srinagar, "The woman who hurled a bomb at the CRPF bunker in Sopore yesterday has been identified". She will be arrested soon, he added.

Last year the security forces faced numerous challenges exposing the terror modules of "hybrid" terrorists. Hybrid terrorist is the term coined for those who have had no previ-

ous record of any involvement in terror crimes.

These "hybrid" terrorists remained at the forefront of targeted strikes on members of the minority community and daily wage labourers from outside the Kashmir valley.

Meanwhile, the security forces on Wednesday morning identified the bodies of two LeT terrorists recovered from the encounter site in the Rainawari area of Srinagar.

According to a police spokesman, one of the terrorists, identified as Rayees Ahmad Bhat, turned out to be a former journalist who ran an online news portal "Valley News Service" in Anantnag.

According to police, Bhat had joined the terrorist ranks of Lashkar-e-Tayyeba in August last year and was placed in "C" category in the terrorists' list of J&K Police.

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## Lankans fret over worst eco crisis

AFP ■ COLOMBO

As Sri Lankans faint in day-long queues for fuel and swelter through stifling evening blackouts by candlelight, anger is mounting over the worst economic crisis in living memory. A critical lack of foreign currency has left the island nation unable to pay for vital imports, leading to dire shortages in everything from life-saving medicines to cement.

Long lines for fuel that start forming before dawn are forums for public grievances, where neighbours complain bitterly about government mismanagement and fret over how to feed their families as food prices skyrocket.

"I've been standing here for the past five hours," Sagayarani, a housewife, told AFP in Colombo while waiting for her share of kerosene, used to fire the cooking stoves.

She said she had seen three

people faint already and was herself supposed to be in hospital for treatment, but with her husband and son at work she had no choice but to wait under the blistering sun.

"I haven't eaten anything, I'm feeling very dizzy and it's very hot, but what can we do? It's a lot of hardship," she said, declining to give her surname.

Trucks at the port are unable to cart food and building materials to other urban centres, or bring back tea from plantations dotted around Sri Lanka's verdant inland hills.

Trucks that normally transport day labourers across the capital sit idle, some hospitals have suspended routine surgeries, and student exams were postponed this month because schools ran out of paper.

"I've been living in Colombo for 60 years and I've never seen anything like this," Vadivu, a domestic held, said.

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# Govt to decide on KV quota after talks with MPs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With members of Parliament divided on the issue of scrapping quota system in admission to the Kendriya Vidyalayas(KV), the Government on Wednesday said it will take a call on the issue after discussing it with the MPs.

This assurance came in the Rajya Sabha after some MPs favoured the scrapping of MPs' quota in the admissions, while others wanted the quota system to be retained.

Under KVS Special Dispensation Admission Scheme (MP Quota), a Member of Parliament (MP) from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha can recommend a maximum of 10 students every academic year for admission in Kendriya Vidyalaya. A District Collector also has the power to recommend 17 sponsoring authority quota in KVs.

Replying to several queries on this issue during the Question Hour in the Upper House,

Minister of State for Education Annpurna Devi said the Government is looking into concerns raised by all MPs on the quota system in KVs.

During the Question Hour, several members cutting across the political parties touched this issue. Sushil Kumar Modi (BJP) wanted to know if the Government will do away with sponsoring authority quota in KVs. But Sanjay Singh (AAP) urged the Government to increase the number of KVs across the country and enhance the MP quota in the central schools. Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Education, oversees the 1,248 KVs that are spread across 25 regions in India.

There are over 14,35,562 students studying in these central Government schools. Among other issues to figure in the Upper House on Wednesday, Deepender Singh Hooda (Congress) sought a uniform financial assistance policy across states for displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

Sanjay Singh (AAP) said the Union Government's announcement to implement central service rules in Chandigarh is an infringement of the rights of the Punjab Government.

# Imran loses majority as ally MQM ditches PTI

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He pulled a document from his pocket to exhibit it for the charged crowd, saying it was the letter sent to threaten him. To a question if Khan would announce his resignation in his speech, Rashid said, "No way. He will fight till the last ball."

The Minister also said Khan himself or Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi may also brief the Parliament in-camera about the threatening letter. Earlier, Prime Minister Khan summoned a special session of the federal Cabinet.

The Cabinet members and those invited to attend the special session were taken into confidence about the threatening document letter that the premier said was proof of a foreign conspiracy to topple his Government.

Pakistan plunged into uncertainty on March 8 after the combined Opposition submitted the motion with the National Assembly, which will convene on Thursday to debate the motion. Earlier in the day, two MQM-P lawmakers, Farogh Naseem and Aminul Haque, serving as Federal Ministers, submitted their resignations to the Prime Minister. The PTI has

155 members in the 342-member National Assembly and needs at least 172 lawmakers to retain power. Khan is also facing a rebellion by his about two dozen lawmakers and allied parties.

No Prime Minister in Pakistan's history has ever been ousted through a no-confidence motion, and Khan is the third premier to face the challenge.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Khan strictly directed his party lawmakers to either abstain or not attend the National Assembly session on the day of voting on the no-confidence motion against him, which is likely to be held in the first week of April. Khan came to power in 2018 with promises to create a 'Naya Pakistan' but miserably failed to address the basic problem of keeping the prices of commodities in control, giving air to the sails of Opposition ships to make war on his Government.

His chances of survival are getting slimmer and the easiest way to end the uncertainty is getting back support of all allies and winning back dissidents within his own party. No Pakistani Prime Minister has ever completed a full five-year term in office.

# Russian Min arrives today to discuss Ukraine crisis

*Continued from Page 1*

The western sanctions on Russia have created difficulties in making payments to that country. Both sides are now looking at the option of a rupee-ruble payment system.

As regards defence ties, Russia is the biggest supplier of weapon systems to India. The ongoing war has led to concerns here about the possible delay in delivery of the S-400 missile system and production of AK-293 assault rifles in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh.

India has also decided to purchase discounted crude oil from Russia, triggering concern among a number of Western powers.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said around two weeks back that India taking the Russian offer of discounted crude oil would not be a violation of the US sanctions

on Moscow but underlined that countries should also think about "where you want to stand" on the Russian action.

As regards the US official's visit, a statement from Washington said, "On March 30 and 31, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economics Daleep Singh will be in New Delhi to continue our ongoing consultations with the Government of India, and advance a range of issues in the U.S.-India economic relationship and strategic partnership."

Believed to be one of the key officials framing the sanctions against Russian President Vladimir Putin and his inner circle, Singh will brief the Indian establishment on the "scale and scope" of the sanctions, sources said here.

The Americans and the Europeans have been asking

the Indian officials to make sure that Russia is not able to circumvent the sanctions and he will be able to convey the urgency of the implementation of sanctions, they said. He will meet officials here to strengthen cooperation to promote inclusive economic growth and prosperity, and a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The US official will consult closely with counterparts on the consequences of Russia's unjustified war against Ukraine and mitigate its impact on the global economy, the statement added.

Singh will also discuss the priorities of the Biden Administration, including the promotion of high-quality infrastructure through Build Back Better World and the development of an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the statement added.

# Lankans fret over worst economic crisis

*Continued from Page 1*

There's nothing to eat, there's nothing to drink," she added. "The politicians are living in luxury and we are begging on the streets." Many among Sri Lanka's 22 million people are no strangers to privation: throughout the global oil crisis of the 1970s, authorities issued ration books for essentials such as sugar.

But the government concedes the present economic calamity is the worst since the South Asian nation's independence in 1948, and a popular local quip now is that the rationing system at least offered some certainty that goods would be available.

A series of misfortunes have pummeled the country -- which emerged from decades of civil war only in 2009 -- in recent years. Farmers were hit by a crippling drought in 2016 and the Easter Sunday Islamist bombings three years later, which killed at least 279 people, led to a wave of cancellations from foreign travellers.

The coronavirus pandemic then decimated a tourism sector already reeling from the attacks and dried up the flow of remittances from Sri Lankans abroad. Both are critical sources of foreign cash needed to pay for

imports and service the nation's ballooning \$51 billion foreign debt.

But a far bigger factor was government "mismanagement", said Murtaza Jafferjee, chairman of the Colombo-based Advocata Institute think tank. He blamed years of chronic budget deficits, ill-advised tax cuts just before the pandemic that sent government revenue into freefall, and subsidies on electricity and other utilities that disproportionately benefited wealthier Sri Lankans. The government has also frittered away public money on white-elephant projects, including a lotus-shaped skyscraper that dominates the Colombo skyline, with a revolving restaurant that now sits dormant. Poor policy decisions have compounded the problems. Last year officials declared Sri Lanka would become the world's first completely organic farming nation and overnight banned imported fertiliser, in an apparent effort to slow down foreign currency outflows. Farmers responded by leaving their fields empty, driving up food prices, and months later the policy was abruptly dropped.

Sri Lanka is now seeking a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, but negotiations could stretch until the end of the year, and people are bracing for even leaner times ahead. "I am expecting it to get

a lot worse," Jafferjee said. "Unfortunately, they are unable to contain it, because the people who created the crisis are still in charge of economic management. By night, as the orange hue of street lights illuminates Colombo's wealthier neighbourhoods, large pockets of the city are in near darkness. Rolling power cuts that stretch for hours each day leave restaurants and corner stores trying to operate under dim candlelight. Other business owners give up and draw down their metal shutters for the evening. Resentment is palpable and frustrations have occasionally boiled over. A motorcyclist was stabbed to death outside a petrol station last week after a dispute sparked by accusations of queue-cutting.

But most indignation is directed upwards to the administration of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, a member of a ruling family once beloved by much of the country's Sinhalese majority for bringing the ethnic civil war against the Tamil Tigers to a brutal end. Support for the Rajapaksa clan has since gone into a tailspin, with an angry crowd this month attempting to storm the president's office. Other demonstrations have for now been more subdued, organised through social media and taking the form of silent candlelight vigils, during blacked-out nights.

# LS OK's MCD Bill to merge 3 Delhi civic bodies into one

*Continued from Page 1*

The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill seeks to unify the three municipal corporations into a single, integrated and well-equipped entity to ensure a robust mechanism for synergised and strategic planning and optimal utilisation of resources, Shah said. The Bill was passed by a voice vote and various amendments moved by the Opposition members were rejected.

"I want to say with responsibility...The Delhi Government is working with a step-motherly attitude towards the municipal corporations.

Step motherly treatment is being meted out because of which the municipal corporations are not finding themselves equipped with adequate resources to carry out their responsibilities," Shah

said. From a strategic and cooperative point of view also, it would be appropriate to have only one municipal corporation taking care of the civic services of Delhi, he asserted.

Shah pointed out that there are also amendments in the bill to ensure that the corporation is run with transparency and efficiency, and it also limits the number of councillors to 250.

Later replying to the debate, Shah targeted the TMC.

"I want to say that on the basis of our programmes, ideology, the popularity of leadership and the performance of our Government, we want to fight polls and win everywhere.

But we don't want to grab power by killing workers of rival parties, carrying out a series of murders, by raping wives and daughters of (rival party) workers. This is not our culture."

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

Notice inviting E-Tender

Letter No. : 1127/14M-A.C/2021      Date : -26-03-2022

1. The Superintending Engineer Agra Circle, U.P.P.W.D. on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved registered Contractors. As The work Comprises of specialized Road work, hence contractors bidding for this work must be registered in Road work with UP PWD. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

Sl. No.	Dist-ri-ct	Name of Work	Estima-ted Cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs.in Lacs)	Cost of Docu-ment (In Rs.)	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Address of Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Address of Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Categ-ory of Contractor
1	Mathura	Special Repair work of Neemgaon to Kunjara road in Distt Mathura	58.00	4.90	Rs. 2000.00 STC=300.00 TC=36.00 GST=2336.00	06 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A,B,C
2	Mathura	Special Repair work of Ranchi Ladpur Gausahla road (ODR) K.M. 1 (100), 2, 3, 4, 5 (400) in Distt Mathura	110.00	7.50	Rs. 2000.00 STC=300.00 TC=36.00 GST=2336.00	03 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A,B
3	Mathura	Special Repair work of Bhuchal to Nainupatti road K.M. 1 (270), 2 (250), 3 (360) in Distt Mathura	71.50	5.58	Rs. 2000.00 STC=300.00 TC=36.00 GST=2336.00	03 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A,B,C
4	Mathura	Special Repair work of Baharna to Tumola road in Distt Mathura	55.00	4.75	Rs. 2000.00 STC=300.00 TC=36.00 GST=2336.00	03 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A,B,C
5	Mathura	New construction work of Mathura Deeg road to Borpa Jhal road on Ading Rajwaha Patni in Distt Mathura	380.00	21.00	Rs. 2000.00 STC=300.00 TC=36.00 GST=2336.00	12 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A
6	Mathura	Special Repair work of Uspar to Tarsi in Distt Mathura	37.00	3.70	Rs. 2000.00 STC=300.00 TC=36.00 GST=2336.00	03 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A,B,C
7	Mathura	Special Repair work of Uspar to Navipur in Distt Mathura	38.00	3.80	Rs. 2000.00 STC=300.00 TC=36.00 GST=2336.00	03 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra	Chief Engineer, Agra Zone, P.W.D, Agra	Class A,B,C

2. Time allowed for completion is including Rainy Season.  
3. Bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> and Prahari (<http://wms.upppwd.gov.in/Prahari>) From 21.04.2022 to 27.04.2022. Bids must be submitted online only at tendering portal of <http://etender.up.nic.in> and Prahari App with all documents as per GO No 14/2020/879(1) 23- 7/2020/176(KO)/06 Dt 25-08-2020 on or before 12:30 Hours Dt. 30.04.2022. Technical Bid received online will be opened on 28.04.2022 at 12:30 Hours.  
4. The prospective bidders who do not possess Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) must get the same issued from approved agencies before submission of bids.  
5. Contractor should Quote their rates without G.S.T. which shall be paid extra as per applicable at the time of payment.  
6. Labour Cess @ 1.00% will be deducted from contractor's bill at the time of payment.  
7. Original MM-11 forms proof of royalty shall have to be produced at time of every running bill in accordance to Principal Secretary, Directorate of geology & mining under Pradesh Letter No- 2146/86-2019-52(KO)/2019 Dt. 30.09.2019, G.O. No- 115(1)/86-2020 dated 15.01.2020 and other relevant Government orders, circulars for all the materials procured from the quarries.  
8. The bidders are required to submit Original receipt of Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account as per G.O. No- 742/78-2-2018-42 I.T./2017 T.C., I.T. & Electronics Section-2 Dated- 03-12-2018 follows as :  
(1) Online Tender Cost towards the cost of bid document (As per Column 6) by Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account (Non Refundable).  
(2) Online Bid security (As per Column 5) in favour of designation of Column 8 by Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account.  
(Sanasvir)      (Anand Kumar)  
Executive Engineer      Superintending Engineer  
Provincial Division, P.W.D., Mathura      Agra Circle, PWD, Agra  
UP- 174356 Date 30.3.2022 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट [www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in) पर चल रहा है।

# BJP workers vandalise assets at CM house over Kashmir Files

*Continued from Page 1*

The BJP, which has been targeting Kejriwal after he took a swipe at the party for promoting the film, demanded an apology from the CM, saying that he has insulted Hindus with his remarks about the movie. Dismissing AAP's outburst after the protest, Surya asserted that the "victims in this issue are Kashmiri Hindus and not the Aam Aadmi Party and Kejriwal".

The party minister's residence is located at 6, Flag Staff Road.

The protest started around 11.30 am on Wednesday. The Delhi Police said proper arrangements were put in place

but some 15-20 protesters managed to reach the Flag Staff road and were immediately removed.

Some of the protesters, at around 1 PM, breached two barricades and reached outside CM House where they created a ruckus and shouted slogans, said DCP Kalsi.

"They were carrying a small box of paint from which they threw paint outside the door. In the melee, a boom barrier arm was also found vandalised as also a CCTV camera. A police team immediately removed them from the spot and detained around 70 persons," he said.

# Pak-trained women targeting forces new challenge in J&K

*Continued from Page 1*

In a statement, the police said two FIRs were already registered against him for terror crimes.

The official Twitter handle of Kashmir Zone Police tweeted, "One of the killed categorized local terrorists of proscribed terror outfit LeT was carrying Identity Card (ID) of media. It indicates a clear case of misuse of media."

Another terrorist killed in the encounter has been identified as Hilal Ahmad Rahm, a resident of Bijbehara. Hilal was also a 'C' category terrorist.

Kumar said that both were involved in several recent terror crimes, including civilian killings.

In another important development, the Jammu & Kashmir Government on Wednesday terminated five Government employees under provision 311(2)(C) of the Constitution for having terror links.

Last year, the UT administration had sent out a stern message to the employees by cracking the whip against those who were found to be hand in glove with the terror outfits.

# Kashmir Valley attracts 3 lakh tourists in past 3 mths

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The tourist 'hot spots' across picturesque Kashmir Valley and the foothills of Mata Vaishno Devi have been witnessing huge footfalls bringing back smiles on the faces of tour operators and all others thriving on the tourism industry to earn their livelihood. Each day the tourist footfall is recording an upward trend raising hopes of the tourism industry already expecting a jam packed summer season ahead.

More than 3 lakh tourists have arrived here in the first three months to enjoy the cool climates and witness winter sports events like skiing, winter sport championships, gandola etc.

More than 90,000 tourists have

already visited Asia's largest Tulip garden in Srinagar in the first week after it was thrown open for visitors. Approximately 1.5 million Tulips of 68 varieties are decked up across the sprawling garden overlooking the world famous Dal Lake.

On Monday, the Srinagar airport alone operated 90 incoming and outgoing flights which ferried more than 15,000 visitors, the largest so far in one single day.

"We handled 45 arriving flights with 7,824 passengers and 45 departing flights with 7,190 passengers on Mar 28th. A total of 90 flights with 15,014 passengers makes it the busiest day in our history. And this is only the beginning of Summer Schedule", the official twitter handle of Srinagar airport

announced.

Ground reports suggested tourists started flocking the Kashmir valley from different parts of the country soon after the restrictions imposed during Covid-19 pandemic were gradually lifted.

To attract more tourists, various tourism development authorities also organised public events to showcase exotic locations and quick getaways.

To instill a sense of security among the visitors elaborate security arrangements have been made and UT administration is hosting a series of events at these locations to welcome the tourists.

New tourist destinations, unseen lakes, meadows, homestay in the high hills, and small treks have been promoted by various



tourism development authorities to attract a rush of visitors.

On the other hand, the pilgrim traffic in the Katra township, base camp of Mata Vaishno Devi, is also witnessing an upward trend.

Other prominent tourist places

in Doda, Kishtwar, Reasi and Udhampur districts of Jammu region are witnessing fresh arrivals from the neighbouring states of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and New Delhi.

On an average 25,000 to 30,000 pilgrims have been offering special prayers inside the sanctum sanctorum on a daily basis.

The cave shrine is already gearing up to host a large rush of pilgrims during the nine day long Navratri festival beginning April 2.

In Kashmir valley, destinations like Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg are also attracting a large number of tourists. The local gardens and other local hot spots are also witnessing huge rush of local visitors even as mercury is heading northwards.



# EDMC fined ₹50L for Ghazipur fire



DPCC report states civic body bypassed all environment protection norms at landfill: Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following a massive fire at Delhi's Ghazipur landfill site two days ago, the Delhi's Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday directed the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to impose a fine of Rs 50 lakh on the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC). The Minister was also ordered action against

officials who were on-duty at the time of the blaze. In a press conference, Rai said that the DPCC submitted a detailed report after examining the incident, and the investigation states that the EDMC bypassed all environment protection norms at the site.

"Only 21 trommel machines out of 25 were found working at the landfill, while the anti-smog guns were also not working. Only 17 out of 24 CCTVs meant for monitoring the landfill were functional. The CPCB had ordered construction of a boundary around the landfill but it has not been built till now," said the Minister. Rai also said that in the DPCC

report it has been discovered that the measures required to be taken by the EDMC for environmental protection were severely lacking. "Significant amount of negligence on the part of the MCD was found in terms of rules and regulations which must be followed to ensure a safe environment around the Ghazipur landfill site. Bio-mining is in process at the site, which can contribute to reducing the possibility of such incidents taking place in future," said Rai.

"The fire had spread over an area of around 400 square metres. Even 48 hours after the spark occurred and after the fire was extinguished, fumes

continued to rise from the area engulfing the surrounding localities," said Rai. "The CPCB has given directions and guidelines to demarcate the boundary of the Ghazipur landfill on all sides, but the construction of this boundary wall has not yet been completed.

This wall is required to prevent any outsider from entering the area and causing such horrific incidents in future," said Rai. "An important joint meeting of the Environment Department along with the Revenue Department, Public Works Department, DDA, MCD, Fire Department, NDMC, DUSIB, and Delhi Cantonment Board is being called on April 4.

This meeting is being organised so that a campaign can be launched to put an end to such instances of fire and burning throughout Delhi, after which we will have a more detailed roadmap on measures to be taken," said Rai.

Meanwhile, the Environment Committee of the Delhi Legislative Assembly has also summoned the EDMC Commissioner on the question of the fire at the Ghazipur landfill. "The committee is chaired by MLA Atishi. The deposition has been scheduled for April 4 and the Commissioner will be asked to explain what steps have been taken to clear the Ghazipur landfill site and prevent fires," said an official.

# BJP, AAP councillors lock horns with each other in EDMC House

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Over an alleged offensive comment made recently against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in context of the issues surrounding the film 'The Kashmir Files', several members of ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) faced off during the proceedings at the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) House on Wednesday.

Many councillors of both the parties 'manhandled' each other, accusing each other of "violating" the code of conduct and the sanctity of the House.

Proceedings of the House began by condoling the death of nonagenarian Ishwari Das Mahajan, a veteran politician and a former chairman of the Standing Committee in the 1970s when there was a unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Now, there are three corporations for the South, North and East Delhi.

According to Beer Singh Panwar, the EDMC Standing Committee Chairman, no sooner had the tribute been paid to Mahajan, members of the AAP started raising their voice and misbehaving with BJP members, including the Leader of the House, Satyapal

Singh, and other party councillors. The AAP councillors were alleging that Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta had recently said something wrong about Kejriwal in the context of the issues surrounding the film 'The Kashmir Files' and the Kashmiri Pandit community, he claimed. But Gupta was "only citing what others had said about him (Kejriwal) and those were not his words", Panwar said.

As AAP members resorted to manhandling, "our councillors also responded in defence," he said. AAP councillor and Leader of Opposition Manoj Kumar Tyagi alleged that BJP members resorted to use of "physical force" and "used unparliamentary language" and "manhandled many AAP members, including women."

"They (BJP) are saying that Adesh did not comment, rather he was quoting other people. Is this how a Delhi BJP chief should behave, and if he is quoting someone, can he tell who said it, or will he make such baseless claims," he said.

Tyagi said alleged offensive comment was made against Chief Minister on stand taken by him on the controversial film 'The Kashmir File' which talks about the struggles of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

# 2 workers die in sewage treatment plant in East Delhi's Kondli area

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after four people died another tragic accident took place in the city. Two workers repairing the motor of a sewage treatment plant in east Delhi's Kondli area died after they fell into the pit on Wednesday evening. The deceased have been identified as Nitesh (25), a resident of Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh and Yashdev (35), a resident of Tigri Rathol.

According to a senior police official, a police control room (PCR) call regarding two persons working in a plant in Dallupura having fallen in a pit was received at around 5 PM following which an Emergency Response Vehicle was dispatched to the spot.

"After reaching the spot, the police team found that two persons had fallen in a sewerage treatment plant in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Kondli. The two were taken out with help of the fire department and sent to hospital but were both declared brought dead," said the senior police official adding that the legal action is being taken.

"Around 8 PM fire department units returned and it is reported that the two men who fell into the pit were lifted out by Delhi Fire Services (DFS) and rushed to hospital where they were declared brought dead by the doctors," said Atul Garg, the Chief Fire Officer.

# Bodies of 4 trapped in SGT Nagar sewer fished out

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following an overnight rescue operation, the bodies of four men, who got trapped inside a sewer in Delhi's Sanjay Gandhi Transport (SGT) Nagar area, were pulled out early on Wednesday morning.

Police said that of the four, three men identified as Bacchu Singh, Pintu and Suraj Kumar Sahni, were private contractual employees who were working on MTNL lines at the time of the incident on Tuesday afternoon.

The fourth, a rickshaw puller identified as Satish (40), was a resident of Sardar Colony in Rohini Sector-16. Satish had tried to save the three workers but also got trapped in the sewer.

The rescue operation started after the Samaypur Badli police station got information about the incident around 6.30 PM on Tuesday. Apart from the police, fire department

officials and a team of the National Disaster Response Force were also part of the rescue efforts. According to the fire department, the operation ended around 4 AM on Wednesday with the four bodies being pulled up from the sewer. Police said a post-mortem examination will be conducted at the Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital.

Officials said, "The rickshaw puller, who tied to save the workers, was a hero. But he also got trapped inside the sewer." There is an iron net beneath the MTNL lines inside the sewer. It was suspected that the four got stuck there, they added.

Toxic gas inside the sewer made the rescue operation difficult even with protective gear. Earth-moving machines were used to widen the mouth of the sewer, police said. Satish, the rickshaw puller, is survived by his wife Neha (35) and three daughters -- Tisha (14), Kritika (8) and Arbi (3).

# Business Blasters must be introduced in varsities too: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said that the Business Blasters programme should also be implemented in universities and colleges so that the entrepreneurial ideas of students don't hit a roadblock after they finish school.

While attending the 14th convocation at the Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU) in the national Capital, he said that education in the country has not seen any significant changes since the time of Macaulay, who introduced a Western-style education system in British India.

"In Delhi, the education sector has undergone many reforms and improvements. The Delhi Government schools, which were in a dilapidated state once, are now prime institutes of education for the poor and the rich alike.

You will now see the children of a rickshaw driver, a judge, an IAS officer etc sitting and studying on the same bench, under the same roof in Delhi Government schools," said the CM.

"A silent revolution is taking place in Delhi's education sector. The mindset of students is being changed, and they are being motivated to grow into the ideas of not simply seeking jobs, but that of giving jobs. Hence, students are being prepared in the direction of becoming entrepreneurs and businesspeople," said Kejriwal.

"For this, we started an initiative called the Business Blasters programme. Under this, seed money of Rs 2,000 per student is given to 11th and 12th graders, and they are then urged to ideate a startup. This leaves the possibility for groups of these students to come together to pool their 2,000 each in order to form strong business teams," he said.

"Government school students have uptill now developed 52,000 business ideas. I think the Business Blasters programme should also be implemented in colleges. This will ensure that their ideas do not hit a roadblock when they enter university. They will be prepared when they step out of college," said Kejriwal.

"The education system just ensures that students pass exams and get degrees. There is a need to work on students and chart their career programme before they leave college. If they want to pursue higher education, it's good. But if they want to work, they should be worked upon. I think a target-oriented approach is needed," he said. Motivating students graduating from GGSIPU to take up challenges faced by society and resolve them, Education Minister Manish Sisodia said graduating students were taking their first step towards the real world.

# NSUI on strike against DU's move to hold offline exams for 'even' semester students



NSUI protest outside Arts Faculty North Campus to demand online examination in New Delhi on Wednesday

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The members of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) sat on an indefinite strike outside the Delhi University's Arts Faculty on Wednesday demanding

online conduct of examinations.

Earlier, the DU had announced that the semester I, III and V or 'odd' semester exams would be conducted in open book exam mode where as exams for 'even' semesters II, IV and VI would be conducted

in physical mode. Delhi NSUI president Kunal Sehrawat accused the DU administration of "partiality". "When 70 per cent of the classes were held online and the colleges have resumed recently, then why exams for 'even' semesters students are being held offline. This is a sheer partiality on the part of administration," he said.

Noting that several students are from different States, he said, "Many students are unable to come to Delhi and the PG rents have skyrocketed. For this semester, the exams should be held online."

NSUI secretary Nitish Gaur said they will continue the strike until their demands are met. "The classes have been held online, so why cannot the exam be taken online. Until the university administration fulfils the demands of the students, the NSUI will continue the strike," he said.

# Vikas Kumar appointed new MD of DMRC

New Delhi: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on Wednesday approved the appointment of Vikas Kumar, a 1988 batch Indian Railway Traffic Service (RTS) officer, as the Managing Director (MD) of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) for five years.

"This has concurrences of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to the proposal of the Government of NCT of Delhi for the appointment of Vikas Kumar as the Managing Director of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Pvt Limited (DMRC) on 30. 3. 2022", read the approval letter by Yogesh Antil, a deputy secretary with the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

The Government of NCT of Delhi is pleased to appoint Vikas Kumar as Managing Director of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. in accordance with terms of Article 130 of the Memorandum and Article of Association of DMRC Ltd. for the period of five years with effect from April 1," said the order.

Throughout his career in the DMRC and the Indian Railways, he has been the recipient of many honours. Once he is appointed the MD, he will be overlooking most of the operations of the Delhi Metro. Mangu Singh, who is the current MD of the Delhi Metro, will be leaving the post as his tenure is set to end on March 31. Singh has been given multiple extensions in the past, but it is expected now that Kumar will be taking the office after him. SR

# Manesar violence creates panic among industrialists



PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

A day after the incident in which employees of a Manesar based company turned violent and set a company bus on fire, the industrialist's body strongly condemned the act. The protesters were demonstrating against the transfer of nine employees to another unit of the company in Bhiwadi (Rajasthan) when things took a violent

turn. The industrialists' body asserted that first, the state 75% reservation bill has impacted the growth of industries and now such incidents have created panic among them and it will also harm the investor segment. "Such actions will never be beneficial for workers. If the employees have any issue with the company's decision they should adopt the proper way of protest and should not revolt. The company must also taken care of the employees'

rights. Such violence will have a negative impact on both the company and the employees which are not good for business aspects," Pawan Yadav, president of IMT Manesar Industrial Association said.

However, In connection with the Manesar incident, the police had arrested 130 employees on Tuesday, who have granted bail. KK Gandhi, president of the Sector-37 Industrial Association said, "Due to the 75% reservation law several companies have already moved out from the city and those still exist here only doing temporary operations and now such incidents will impact operations of the remaining unit it will create a panic atmosphere among the company or factory owners". Furthermore, On Wednesday, workers were protesting from 500 metres away from company to fulfil their demands. "We

came to know the motive behind the Manesar incident for the formation of a union. We don't understand that if any company run its operation without any union then what is the logic behind demanding the formation of any union.

The recent Manesar violence can not be tolerated the state government must take necessary steps to stop such violence in future," Jagat Pal Singh, the General Secretary of the Sector-37 Industrial Association said.

Such violent protests often harmed investment prospects, the industrialists said. "The state government 75% reservation bill already hit business body. Now, this violence will have a huge impact on investor prospects. Government should reconsider its reservation bill for growth of industries across state," Mahesh Vyas, an industrialist said.

# Elderly priest found decapitated in temple in G'gram

Gurugram: An 85-year-old priest was found brutally murdered at a temple in Kadarpur village on Wednesday morning. His decapitated body was found lying in a pool of blood on the premises, the police said. The deceased was identified as Gobind Das. The victim originally hailed from Uttarakhand. He was residing at the temple - locally known as 'Pigeon Wala Mandir' - for the last 34 to 35 years. According to the police, when the villagers visited the temple for puja on Wednesday morning, they found the body of the deceased and immediately informed the police. Soon after receiving the information, a team of Sector-65 police station along with forensic experts rushed to the spot and took custody of the body. SR

# 39-year-old man dies after car-hit in Janpath area

NEW DELHI: A 39-year-old man died on Wednesday morning after being hit by a rashly-driven car in central Delhi Janpath area. The deceased has been identified as Girdhari and he used to work as mason. The video of incident was also circulated on social media. In video, a rashly-driven red car is seen hitting Girdhari while he was crossing the road. According to Amrutha Guguloth, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), New Delhi district, information about accident was received at Parliament Street police station at around 8 AM following which Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) was dispatched for spot.

# Scholarship scheme for sanitation workers, Grp C staff kids: NDMC

NEW DELHI: The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Wednesday announced a special scholarship scheme for the children of its sanitation workers as well as its Group C staff. The decision was taken in a Council meeting held on Wednesday. A senior NDMC official said that during the meeting various other issues like smart-grid infrastructure, including enhancement of existing network in NDMC power distribution area, regularisation of lofts in Shankar Market and issues pertaining to drinking water were also discussed. The council has also approved preparation of a scheme for individual piped

water connection in JJ clusters and remaining unauthorized colonies under Jal Jeevan Mission, the NDMC said in a statement. NDMC vice-chairman, Satish Upadhyay said scholarship scheme will also be applicable to the children of NDMC staff belong to Group category. "We have passed a resolution for smart-grid infrastructure during meeting. We will introduce happiness zones in Mandi House in Central Delhi and it will be extended around other NDMC areas as well," the vice-chairman said. Green 'Happiness areas' were earlier introduced by NDMC in a bid to combat air pollution innational capital.

# Five-day cultural festival ends

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A five-day cultural festival titled 'Azadi Ke Amrit Kaal Ki Shubh Vela: Kalakaron Shilpakaron ka Mela' concluded at the Centre for Cultural Resource and Training (CCRT) in the Capital where 75 CCRT scholarship holders, alumni and fellows gave performances.

CCRT is an autonomous body of the Union Ministry of Culture engaged in seeking out talent in arts, music and culture and awarding scholarships to trainees and trainers.

The event was inaugurated by Minister of State for Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal and

India's rich heritage, art and culture were showcased. At the concluding ceremony, chief guest, Uma Nanduri, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, lauded 'CCRT's efforts in putting up the extravaganza.

"Post the pandemic trauma we thought this spring should bring something special when we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of India's independence which Prime Minister Modi has termed as the 'Amrit Kaal'. Hence we named the festival 'Azadi ke Amrit Kaal Ki Shubh Vela: Kalakaron-Shilpakaron ka Mela.' CCRT Director Rishi Vashist said.

# AAP making baseless allegations: Delhi Cong

NEW DELHI: Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar said that the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Cabinet colleagues were making baseless allegations in the Assembly against the Congress to hide the corruption and malpractices of their Government. Congress Delhi unit president's remarks came after the Delhi CM in the Assembly said that the corrupt should be treated as "traitors". Kumar said that almost 80 per cent of his MLAs and Ministers come under the category "traitors" and they should be put behind the bars but instead they are being protected by the government. Some of the lead-

ers of AAP including Municipal Councillor Geeta Rawat, who was recently caught red-handed by the CBI while accepting Rs 20,000 bribe from a house owner, he said, adding that it was shocking that she was using the office of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia for her corrupt activities and she is still with the party.

Meanwhile, talking about the education sector in the city, Delhi Congress vice president Jai Kishan said on Wednesday that a pragmatic approach by the Delhi government needed to get the education sector back on track which was impacted severely due to Covid in the last two years. SR



# India to give BIMSTEC \$1mn for operational budget

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will provide the Fifth Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) secretariat with \$1 million to expand its operational budget.

Announcing this while addressing the BIMSTEC summit virtually, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the international body to strengthen the grouping. In his intervention, the Prime Minister underscored the importance of enhanced BIMSTEC regional connectivity, cooperation and security, and made several suggestions in this regard.

He called upon fellow leaders to strive to transform Bay of Bengal into a Bridge of Connectivity, Prosperity, and Security among the BIMSTEC-member countries. "It is important to strengthen the capacity of (BIMSTEC) secretariat...I suggest the secretary-gen-

eral create a roadmap for the same," the leader added.

The BIMSTEC is a regional multilateral organisation wherein member states are located along the Bay of Bengal's coastline and neighbouring territories, working toward a regional unity.

The ongoing Summit is being organised by Sri Lanka, the current chair for BIMSTEC. "The recent developments in Europe have raised questions about the stability of the international order.

In this context, it has become a greater priority to have regional cooperation", said the Prime Minister adding "We are adopting the BIMSTEC charter to develop institution architecture for our group." He said the Initiative is aiming to extend and expand the scope of the BIMSTEC scholarship programme offered by the Nalanda International University.

"We are also signing a treaty on mutual legal assis-

tance on criminal matters," he said while declaring, "India will provide the (BIMSTEC) secretariat with 1 million US dollars to increase its operational budget...It is important to strengthen the capacity of the BIMSTEC secretariat...I suggest the Secretary-General create a roadmap for the same," he said.

"The time has come to make the Bay of Bengal the bridge of connectivity, prosperity and security. I call on all BIMSTEC nations to dedicate themselves to working with new enthusiasm to achieve the goals we achieved together in 1997," he said.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand are members of BIMSTEC, a regional multilateral organisation.

The BIMSTEC summit is being held in the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and is of major significance in relation to the global consequence of military

offensives in the eastern European country and a number of economic sanctions against Russia.

Modi along with other leaders also witnessed the signing of three BIMSTEC agreements which represent progress being achieved in ongoing cooperation activities-BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, BIMSTEC Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Cooperation in the field of Diplomatic Training and Memorandum of Association on Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility.

Later, in a tweet, Modi said several important decisions were taken to further the BIMSTEC cooperation agenda. He commended the able leadership of Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and extended his best wishes to the incoming chair Prime Minister of Thailand Prayut Chan-o-cha.

# India test fires 2 Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles successfully

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to validate the systems of the army version of the Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM), the scientists on Wednesday successfully tested two missiles. They achieved direct hits against high speed aerial targets at Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.

The launches were carried out establishing the accuracy and reliability of the weapon system against targets covering the sea skimming and high altitude functionality within the envelope, officials said here.

Performance of all weapon system components including missile, weapon system radar and command post have been validated during these trials.

The flight tests were carried out in the presence of senior officials from Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Army. With the conclusion of flight trials for different ranges and scenarios, the system has completed its development trials.

On March 27, the missile system was successfully flight tested twice against high-speed aerial targets for different ranges as part of the live firing trials.

With a strike range of nearly 100 km, the 4.5-meter long supersonic quick reaction missile weighs around 2.7 ton and can carry a payload of 60 kg.

Each MRSAM unit comprises one command and control system, multi-functional surveillance tracking radar, threat alert radar, mobile launcher, combat management system, mobile power and radar power systems apart from the missile. The air version of the MRSAM system has already been handed over to IAF. The missile is designed to provide point and area air

# Union Govt gives green signal for procurement of 15 LCH choppers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



With the objective of adding potency to helicopters of the Army and IAF in battlefield, the Government on Wednesday gave the nod for procurement of 15 Light Combat Helicopters (LCH). The total deal is worth over ₹3,800 crore. These machines will be made within the country by the public sector aerospace conglomerate Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

Giving details of the contract, officials said here the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the projects here on Wednesday.

They said the apex body gave the go-ahead for procurement of 15 Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Limited Series Production at the cost of ₹3,887 crore along with infrastructure sanctions worth ₹377 Crore.

Light Combat Helicopter Limited Series Production (LSP) is an indigenously designed, developed and manufactured state of the art modern combat helicopter containing approximately 45% indigenous content by value which will progressively increase to more than 55% for Series Production version.

This helicopter is equipped with requisite agility, maneu-

verability, extended range, high altitude performance and around-the-clock, all-weather combat capability to perform roles of Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Destruction of Enemy Air Defence (DEAD) and Counter Insurgency (CI) operations.

It can also bring down slow moving aircraft and Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs), high altitude bunker busting operations, Counter Insurgency operations in jungle and urban environments and support to ground forces. This helicopter will be a potent platform to meet the operational requirements of Indian Air Force and Indian Army.

State of the art technologies and systems compatible with stealth features such as reduced Visual, Aural, Radar and Infrared signatures and crashworthiness features for better survivability have been integrated in the LCH for deployment in combat roles catering to emerging needs for next three to four decades. Several key aviation technologies like Glass Cockpit and

composite airframe structure have been indigenised. The future Series Production version will consist of further modern and indigenous systems. Also, the LCH is the only attack helicopter in the world, which can land and take-off at an altitude of 5000 m (16400 ft) with a considerable load of weapons and fuel meeting the specific requirements of the Indian armed forces.

It is proposed to have 145 more such LCHs in the coming few years with the capacity of manufacturing 30 helicopters every year, sources said. Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, India is continuously growing in its capability to indigenously design, develop and manufacture advanced cutting edge technologies and systems in the defence sector.

The manufacturing of LCH by the HAL will give a further push to Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and boost indigenisation of defence production and the defence industry in the country.

Moreover, production of the LCH will reduce import dependence for Combat helicopters in the country. Light Combat Helicopters are already in the import embargo list. With its versatile features built in for combat missions, the LCH has export capability.

version is a Surface-to-Air Missile developed jointly by the DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Israel for use by the Indian Army. The MRSAM Army weapon system

comprises multi-function radar, mobile launcher system and other vehicles. The flight tests were carried out with the weapon system in deliverable configuration.

## CAPSULE

### PHYSICAL HEARING IN SC FROM APRIL 4

**New Delhi:** Chief Justice of India N V Ramana on Wednesday said Supreme Court will commence physical hearing of cases from April 4. The announcement from CJI came before commencement of proceedings in top court for day. "Monday and Friday we will provide links (for virtual hearing) if advocates want," Ramana said.

### 7 BANKS LOAN ₹1,500 CR TO AMRAPALI

**New Delhi:** A consortium of seven banks will disburse Rs 1,500 crore loans to complete the construction of stalled projects of erstwhile Amrapali group, following a direction by the Supreme Court. NBCC said that an agreement has been signed between ASPIRE and a consortium of seven public sector banks on March 29 for the disbursement of Rs 1,500 crore loan for stalled Amrapali projects in many residential projects in Noida and Greater Noida.

### CAC TO DISCUSS SAFETY MEASURES

**New Delhi:** In the wake of partial collapse of a residential tower in Gurugram, the Central Advisory Council (CAC), constituted under the RERA Act, 2016, will meet on April 12 to discuss measures to ensure structural safety in high-rise buildings and prevent loss of life as well as property, besides considering a proposal to set up a high-level panel to address the issue of stalled projects.

### IONS MARITIME DRILL 22 CONDUCTED AT GOA

**New Delhi:** The maiden edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Maritime Exercise 2022 (IMEX-22) was conducted at Goa and in Arabian Sea for days from March 26 – 30. The aim of exercise was to enhance interoperability in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations among member navies. The drill witnessed participation of 16 out of 25 members of IONS.

### DEF MIN TO START AYURVEDA CENTRES

**New Delhi:** In an effort to provide Indian traditional Ayurveda system medicines, the Ministry of Defence has decided to operationalise Ayurveda Centres at 37 Cantonment Hospitals across the country from May one this year. The decision was taken at a recent high level meeting held between the Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar and the Secretary Ministry of AYUSH, Vaidya Rakesh Kotecha.

### CCRUM GETS INTELLECTUAL RIGHTS FOR 17 MEDICINES

**NEW DELHI:** The Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM) under the Ayush Ministry has so far obtained intellectual property rights for 17 Unani medicines and more are in pipeline. The Council has also obtained NABH accreditation for National Research Institute of Unani Medicine for Skin Disorders (NRIUMSD), Hyderabad and RRIUM, Srinagar and efforts are on for accreditation of our other healthcare facilities, said the Council's Director General Asim

# RS nod to Bill culling Bhogta caste from SC list, adding more to ST list

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha on Wednesday approved a Bill that seeks to remove the Bhogta caste from the list of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and include certain communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) for Jharkhand. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was introduced in the Upper House of Parliament on February 7. It was passed by a voice vote on Wednesday.

The bill also amends the schedule to the Scheduled Tribes order to include the Deshwari, Ganjuh, Dautalbandi (Dwalbandi), Patbandi, Raut, Maajhia, Khairi (Kheri), Tamarina (Tamadia) and Puran communities in the Scheduled Tribes list of Jharkhand.

Replying to the debate of the bill, Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda said, "We will bring such amendments related to more states in the House. We have done (such amendments) for Arunachal Pradesh and Karnataka.

Now, it is being done in case of Uttar Pradesh, Tripura and Jharkhand. We are doing research on Odisha. We have

## Gadkari exchanges light hearted 'banter' with Roopa Ganguly in RS

**New Delhi:** The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday saw light hearted banter when Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, while making references to the norms for new cars, said once a hero or heroine has played a character role it is very difficult for them to go back to becoming lead actors again. "It is very difficult. Once a heroine has been cast as a character actor, it is very difficult to recast a character actor back as heroine," he said, leaving members in splits. It's the same for a hero. Once a hero is cast in a character role, then one does not get back the hero's role," he added. Gadkari was responding to a question by BJP's Roopa Ganguly, who

asked if safety measures available in new cars can also be fitted in old cars. However, apparently mindful of the sensibilities of Ganguly, who shot to fame with her role as Draupadi in the epic serial Mahabharat, Gadkari later clarified, "Actually, my comment was not against anybody. Take it lightly." He said it is difficult to have rules for old cars and the new norms and regulations only for new vehicles. For old vehicles, it is very difficult mechanically to make them competent, Gadkari added. He, nevertheless, noted some of the latest safety features can be made available in 2-3 years old vehicles, too. **PNS**

completed the work in Chhattisgarh, but we are working on some observations given on that by the law ministry." He said the Centre is concerned about the development of tribal people and the aspirational district programme is a step in that direction as the main objective is to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

"Be it Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra or Gujarat, for all the states, the Centre is earnestly and seriously working to address the issues, while also assuring that the government will share the status on the demand for the inclusion of different communities from West Bengal, Goa and Tamil Nadu," the minister said.

# Outside medical officer for paramilitary forces' COI needed, says MHA

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

With a view to bring in more transparency and fair play in the Court of Inquiry proceedings conducted after death, injury and disability in the Central paramilitary forces, the Union Home Ministry has decided to include a medical officer in the Board from outside of the Force conducting enquiry.

A COI is mandatorily conducted to decide admissibility of extraordinary/disability pension and grant of ex gratia compensation. Now onwards, a medical officer from outside (from any other Central Armed Police Force

(CAPF) or paramilitary force) should be nominated by the Force, while constituting the COI. For this, Additional Director General (Medical) may nominate a Medical officer from any other CAPFs, on receiving the request from the concerned Force, reads a recent order issued by the Police-II Division of Resettlement and Welfare Directorate of the Union Home Ministry.

"Medical opinion of the nominated Medical Officer should be incorporated in the recommendations of the COI Board as well as in the final order passed by the Competent Authority thereon," reads Home

Ministry order. These instructions will be applicable subject to the provisions of the notified Act/Rules of the Forces. "Where ever these instructions are repugnant to extant provisions of relevant Act/Rules of Force concerned, the latter shall prevail," said order, adding this has been issued with the approval of Competent Authority.

The copy of order has been sent to CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISE, SSB and Assam Rifles. Officials said the move is expected to usher in more transparency in deciding the admissibility of disability pension and ex gratia compensation payment to the kin of dead me.

# NTAGI to review SII's Covovax for inclusion in Covid vaccination



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A panel of National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) will, this week, review the data of Serum Institute of India's (SII) anti-coronavirus jab Covovax to decide whether it can be included in the national Covid-19 vaccination programme for inoculating those aged 12 years and above or not.

India's drug regulator had approved Covovax for restricted use in emergency situations in adults on December 28 and in the 12 to 17 years age group subject to certain conditions on March 9.

According to the sources in the DCGI, Director (Government and Regulatory Affairs) at SII Prakash Kumar Singh had recently written to the Health Ministry urging it to include Covovax in the national Covid-19 vaccination drive for 12 years and above. Singh stated that the Pune-based firm wants to provide Covovax

to private hospitals at Rs 900 per dose plus GST and is also waiting for directions to supply the vaccine to the Centre but has not mentioned the price.

"The Covid-19 working group of the NTAGI is set to meet on April 1 and review the data of Covovax to decide whether it can be included in the national COVID-19 vaccination programme for inoculating those aged 12 years and above this week," an official source said.

In a letter to Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, Singh was learnt to have said that private companies, educational institutes, social organisations, central government organisations and public sector undertakings are making requests for Covovax to inoculate their staffers, families and children.

"We have developed, manufactured and obtained emergency use authorisation from our national regulatory authority for one more world-class COVID-19 vaccine Covovax for 18 years and above on December 28, and for children in the age group of 12 to 17 years on March 9, 2022," an official source had quoted Singh as having said in letter.

## World Bipolar Day

# Early detection of Bipolar disorder is key: Researchers



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Raising new hope for early intervention, a brain imaging study of young people at high risk of developing bipolar disorder has for first time found evidence of weakening connections between key areas of brain in late adolescence. Bipolar disorder is a mental health condition that causes

extreme mood swings that include emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression). The study spanning two years holds importance in context of India where current prevalence of bipolar disorder is 6.9 percent as compared to other psychiatric illnesses. "If we can get in early, whether that's training in psychological resilience, or

maybe medications, then we may be able to prevent this progression towards major changes in brain," researchers feel. Until now, medical researchers knew that bipolar disorder was associated with reduced communication between brain networks that are involved with emotional processing and thinking, but how these networks developed prior to the condition was a mystery.

The study is published in The American Journal of Psychiatry. Researchers from UNSW Sydney, the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI), the University of Newcastle and international institutions showed evidence of these networks diminishing over time in young adults at

high genetic risk of developing bipolar disorder -- which has important implications for future intervention strategies.

The researchers used diffusion-weighted magnetic imaging (dMRI) technology to scan the brains of 183 individuals over a two-year period. They examined progressive changes in brain scans of people with high genetic risk of developing condition over a two year period, before comparing them with a control group of people with no risk.

People with a parent or sibling who has bipolar disorder are considered high genetic risk, and are 10 times more likely to develop condition than people without close family link. In brain image scans of 97 people with high genetic

risk of bipolar disorder, the researchers noted a decrease in connectivity between regions of brain devoted to emotion processing and cognition during the two years between scans.

But in the control group of 86 people with no family history of mental illness, they observed opposite: strengthening in neural connections between these same regions, when adolescent brain matures to become more adept at cognitive and emotional reasoning required in adulthood. Scientia Professor Philip Mitchell AM, a practising academic psychiatrist with UNSW Medicine & Health, said findings raise new ideas about treatment and intervention in bipolar disorder developing in young people with a higher risk.



# Bengal in grip of mafia led by CM: BJP's team

Mamata slams BJP's Bhirbhum report, alleges personal vendetta



PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The five-member fact-finding committee of the BJP on Birbhum violence which submitted its report to party president JP Nadda on Wednesday, said West Bengal is in the grip of "mafia" led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress and law and order has crashed in the State.

Nadda had constituted the committee to go to the spot and file an 'evidence-based' detailed report.

The BJP's probe committee comprised West Bengal state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar, Rajya Sabha MP and former Uttar Pradesh DGP Brajlal, Lok Sabha MP and former Mumbai Police Commissioner Satya Pal Singh, Rajya Sabha MP and former IPS KC Ramamurty and BJP spokesperson and former IPS Bharati Ghosh.

The report maintained the killings in village Bagtui were the result of "state-sponsored extortion, goonda tax, cut-money and tolabaj", referring to the local term used for bribe-taking by Bengal's ruling party leaders.

The rivalry over bribe amounts between the beneficiaries was another reason,

the report alleged. "Local residents have deserted their homes fearing a threat to their life and property," the report claimed, recommending that bodies like the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women visit the village and set up confidence-building measures to bring the villagers back.

The report said Banerjee decided to visit the village only after the BJP team had already reached Kolkata. Because of the Chief Minister's "forced visit", the team was stopped by Trinamool "goons" bent on assaulting the fact-finding team.

"Not even a single officer or constable" was visible and no one came to the rescue of the fact-finding team when they were attacked," said the panel report, adding that attempts to contact senior police officers failed.

Banerjee "condemned" the BJP team's report and said such reports "interfered with investigations" and derailed them. "These are politically motivated reports. I condemn this attitude of the BJP and the central government. When an investigation is on, there should not be any interference from any party. It is an

absolute misuse of power. This is bad, vindictive and biased attitude. Does BJP think only they will stay in this country," the Chief Minister told reporters.

Majumdar said the committee went to the village in Birbhum where the incident took place. We had to face problems to reach the village due to the ruling Trinamool Congress. He said the report will also be submitted to union home minister Amit Shah for action.

Banerjee further slammed BJP's Birbhum report and alleged personal vendetta. "Why is TMC's Birbhum president's name mentioned in the report? BJP wants to arrest all Opposition netas," said Banerjee.

Meanwhile, the CBI named 21 accused under Section 147, 148, 149 and other Sections in FIR on suspected offence of armed rioting.

Eight people were killed in the Rampurhat area of West Bengal's Birbhum on Tuesday after a mob allegedly set houses on fire following the killing of TMC leader Bhadu Sheikh.

The CBI took over the probe of the Birbhum violence case following the Calcutta High Court order.

# EC bars TMC MLA from holding rallies till April 6

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday prohibited ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA Narendranath Chakraborty from holding any public meetings, rallies, roadshows for seven days from 10 am of March 30 till 8 pm of April 6 after a video went viral and purportedly showed him asking his workers to intimidate Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) voters.

In a separate order, the EC has directed West Bengal chief electoral officer that an FIR be filed against Chakraborty after a report from poll observer citing violation of Section 123(2) of R P Act & Section 171-C and 171-F of Indian Penal Code.

"...the Commission orders to prohibit him from holding any public meetings, public processions, public rallies, roadshows and interviews, public utterances in media in connection with ongoing bye-election for a week from 10 am of March 30 till 8 pm of April 6," EC said in an order. It added Chakraborty's comments violate the provisions of the Representation of the People Act.

Reacting to the ban, BJP Bengal co-incharge Amit Malviya said, "EC's action against TMC MLA Naren Chakraborty for intimidating voters in Asansol is a grim reminder of the evil regime Mamata Banerjee runs. But the people of Bengal will demolish it brick by brick and bury it in some dark place from where it won't be able to rise ever again" Amit Malviya had shared the video on Tuesday of TMC MLA Naren Chakraborty issuing threats to the voters of the saffron party.

In the 41-second viral video, Chakraborty is heard saying: "...ar jara kattor BJP, jader ke bhanganon jabena tader ke chomkate hobe...Bolben



apni jodi vote dite jaan amra dhore nebo BJP ke vote deben. Voter por apni kothay thakben seta apnar nijer risk. (...and those who are die-hard BJP supporters will have to be intimidated...If you go to vote we will consider that you will vote for the BJP. After poll gets over, you will have to live at your own risk)"The video emerged on a day a three-member team led by the state chief electoral officer visited Asansol and held a review meeting with district magistrate Arun Prasad and police commissioner Sudheer Kumar Neelakantam in the run up to the poll.

# Delhi HC allows Shivakumar to visit UAE for event

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday permitted Karnataka Congress leader DK Shivakumar, who is on bail in connection with a money laundering case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate, to travel to the United Arab Emirates to attend an event.

Justice Asha Menon allowed the application filed by Shivakumar, and said, "the applicant is allowed to travel to Dubai and Abu Dhabi between March 31 and April 6".

The judge clarified that the Congress leader shall intimate the investigating officer upon his return.

In the application, Shivakumar, who was represented by lawyer Mayank Jain, said that his presence is required in Dubai for an event organised in which he is the special guest. In October 2019, the High Court had granted bail to Shivakumar, who was arrested by the ED, while imposing the condition that he would not leave the country without the permission of the court concerned.

Shivakumar, PCC President of Karnataka, was booked along with Haumanthaiah -- an employee at Karnataka Bhavan in New Delhi-- and others for under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The case was based on a charge sheet filed by the Income Tax Department against them last year before a special court in Bengaluru on charges of tax evasion and 'hawala' transactions worth crores of rupees.

# Chirag Paswan begins vacating bungalow allotted to Ram Vilas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha MP Chirag Paswan on Wednesday started the process of vacating the bungalow allotted to his late father Ram Vilas Paswan after a government team was sent to execute an eviction order issued to him last year.

The process of moving furniture and household goods from the bungalow in Janpath in Lutyens' Delhi started shortly after a team from the Directorate of Estates, which comes under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, reached the property, official sources said.

Two loaded trucks drove out of the 12 Janpath bungalow,



which was the official address of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), while three more were parked in front.

The bungalow is earmarked for Union ministers and the occupants of the government accommodation have been asked to vacate it, officials said.

The LJP split into two following differences between Chirag Paswan and his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras after the death of former Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Both are locked in a power tussle for the LJP's leadership.

The house was used for holding the party's organisational meetings and other related events.

Ram Vilas Paswan, one of the country's most prominent Dalit leaders, died at the age of 74 in October 2020. He had been a minister in central governments headed by parties of contrasting ideological persuasions, ranging from the Janata Dal to the Congress and the BJP, since 1989.

# LAHDC-Kargil in crisis after BJP withdraws support to National Conference

PTI ■ KARGIL

In a major political development, the BJP on Wednesday withdrew its support to the National Conference in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Kargil. The sudden development ahead of the next year's elections left the chief executive councillor Feroz Ahmad Khan-led hill council in deep crisis.

An official confirming the development said the BJP councillors handed over a letter about their withdrawing support to the National Conference to Deputy Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, LAHDC-Kargil, Santosh Sukhadeve.

"We will wait and see what happens next...National Conference at some point of time had to prove its majority on the floor of the house to remain in power," the official said.

In a press release, BJP Ladakh media secretary Nilza Angmo Hashur said seven BJP members -- three elected councillors and four nominated members -- are withdrawing support to the National Conference in LAHDC-Kargil on the directions of Ladakh unit president Phunchok Stanzin.

"The decision was taken after a thorough discussion with all the stakeholders and BJP executive members and functionaries," Hashur said.

# UP to oragnise event to attract ₹10L crore investment in next 100 days

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

While setting the agenda for the development of Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has once again started preparing to take a big leap to promote industrial investment by organising a grand groundbreaking ceremony in Lucknow in the next 100 days with a target to attract investments of Rs 10 lakh crore.

"Captains of all the major industrial houses will be present in this groundbreaking ceremony," a government spokesman said here on Wednesday.

He said the chief minister had asked the departments concerned to make preparations for this ceremony and had given 100 days' time for holding the event.

It is worth mentioning that providing maximum employment opportunities through industrial investment in Uttar Pradesh has been the top priority of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Taking cognisance of this, three days after taking oath, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a meeting with all the principal secretaries and secretaries of the state government and discussed the promotion of

industrial investment in UP.

The chief minister had organised an Investors' Summit in Lucknow on February 21 and 22, 2018 along with formulating an industry-friendly industrial policy. The first Investors' Summit was attended by eminent industrialists of the country and 1,065 memorandums of undertaking (MoUs) worth Rs 4.65 lakh crore were signed during the event in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In July 2018, the first groundbreaking ceremony was held in which projects worth Rs 60,000 crore were started.

During this summit, the government had prepared a complete roadmap to promote industrial investment in UP. Then the Yogi government had also promoted the One District One Product scheme to promote the traditional industries of every district.

The picture of industrial investment in UP has changed in the last five years due to the Investors' Summit and subsequent groundbreaking ceremony on the initiative of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. It is being said that both these events proved



to be expressways to bring industrial investment in the state.

According to the officials of the Industrial Development department, 1,045 investment proposals worth Rs 4.65 lakh crore were submitted to the government by big investors from abroad during the Investors' Summit out of which 215 investors had established their enterprises by investing Rs 51,240.25 crore while 130 investors were setting up their ventures by investing Rs 37,478.63 crore and 449 investors were taking action to set up their venture by investing Rs 86,842.89 crore.

"Now, preparations are being made to organise a grand groundbreaking cere-

mony in the state as industrial investment is necessary to increase the state's gross domestic product (GDP) and employment opportunities," the spokesman said.

The spokesman said that even during the novel coronavirus crisis, 96 investors took the initiative to invest Rs 66,000 crore in UP. Not only this, the investment of Rs 50,000 crore has been made in the defence manufacturing corridor of UP with a projection of five lakh employment opportunities.

Now due to the defence manufacturing corridor, BrahMos missile will be made in Lucknow and more than Rs 1,245 crore is being invested in Aligarh node of the corridor.

# STF to probe UP paper leak

CM directs officials to invoke NSA against accused, Ballia school inspector suspended

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reacted strongly to the alleged paper leak in the ongoing UP Board examinations and on his directions, the district inspector of schools (DIOS) at Ballia was placed under suspension while the probe into the entire matter was handed over to the Special Task Force (STF).

The chief minister also directed officials to invoke National Security Act (NSA) against all those responsible for the paper leak.

The English paper for the Intermediate class scheduled in the UP Board exams 2022 was cancelled in 24 districts because of paper leak in the second shift in the Ballia district on Wednesday.

Sources said that the STF team, which was already on alert, responded quickly to the SOS and took eight suspects into custody in Ballia and were grilling them in the paper leak case.

Speaking to reporters in Lucknow soon after the paper leak came to fore, Secondary Education Minister Gulabo

Devi said that strict action would be taken against the culprits.

Devi said that the chief minister was keeping an eye on the whole matter. She claimed that fixing the prima facie accountability of the DIOS of Ballia, Brijesh Kumar Mishra, the government had placed him under suspension.

She further said that to take stern action against those involved in the paper leak, the government had handed over the investigation to the UP STF.

She said that the officials of all the 24 districts where the UP Board paper was cancelled were under the purview of the probe.

Meanwhile, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi has sought a detailed report on the entire matter from the district magistrate and superintendent of police of Ballia.

It may be mentioned that the papers were kept in high level security and all the arrangements were made by the government and the Education department to ensure no leakage but still the gang managed to leak the English paper.

The Uttar Pradesh Board exams for Classes 10 and 12 began on March 24 under strict arrangements, with close to three lakh cameras installed at centres to curb cheating. The

feedback from 8,373 centres is being monitored at district-level control rooms.

The state government had earlier warned that the stringent National Security Act (NSA) would be slapped against those found using unfair means during the exams. All exam centres were being monitored closely with help of staff and a total of 2,97,124 CCTV cameras, officials had earlier said.

On the first day of the exams, senior officials had inspected several exam centres and reviewed the arrangements.

He said that the exam was conducted as scheduled in the rest of the districts.

Announcing the cancella-

tion, the Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (UPMSP) said, "Due to a paper leak, the Intermediate English paper scheduled for Wednesday, March 30 at 2pm in 24 districts only has been cancelled."


Earlier, Additional Chief Secretary (Secondary Education) Aradhana Shukla said that the paper of Class 12 English subject series 316 ED and 316 EI was leaked and hence the examination of those 24 districts had been canceled where the papers of this series were sent. She said the date of the canceled exam would be announced later. Sources said that the canceled English paper of Class 12 would be held on April 13.

# Akhilesh flays UP Govt for paper leak

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief and leader of opposition in UP assembly, Akhilesh Yadav, launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party government for leakage of UP Board's English paper for the intermediate on Wednesday that forced the government to cancel the examination in 24 districts.

"UP government is squarely responsible for the leak of the paper as it was a deliberate move by the government to leak the paper so that the examination could not be completed," Akhilesh Yadav said. "It is business as usual. Even in the second term of the BJP government, the business of paper leak goes on unabated. The unemployed youth of UP are saying that the BJP government, having failed to provide employment, does not want any examination to be completed," said Akhilesh Yadav in a tweet.



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SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical/ symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Bank/ Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of its dues due to the Bank/ Secured Creditor from the respective borrower (s) and guarantor (s). The reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties.

SCHEDULE OF THE SECURED ASSETS

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Sr. No.	Name of the Branch Name of the Account Name & address of the borrower/guarantor	Description of the immovable properties mortgaged / Owner's Name (Mortgagor of the property)(ies)	E) Dt. Of Demand Notice u/s 13(2) of SARFESI ACT 2002 F) Outstanding Amount as on G) Nature of Possession Symbolic/Physical/ Constructive	A) Reserve Price (Rs. in Lacs) B) EMD (last date of deposit NA) C) Bid increase amount	Date/ Time of E-Auction	Details of the encumbrances known to the secured creditors
1.	INDUSTRIAL AREA, JALANDHAR Borrower(s): 1. M/s R S International, Plot No. 71, Leather Complex, Kapurthala Road, Jalandhar. 2. M/s Kanti Lodge Pvt. Ltd., 46 Amrit Nagar New Delhi, 3. Smt. Poonam Viraliya W/o Sh. Vinay Kumar, 4. Sh. Khushal Viraliya S/o Vinod Kumar, 5. Sh. Vinod kumar S/o Raghuvir Singh, 6. Sh. Vinay Kumar S/o Sh. Raghuvir Singh, 7. Sh. Raghuvir Singh (252/3A Shivlokpur, Kankar Khara, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh).	Residential Plot no ½ A RTD No 6807 dated 28-05-2011 in the name of M/s Kanti Lodge Private Limited through its Directors Mr Vinay Kumar and Raghuvir Singh situated at Mauza Rithani, Pargana, Old Merrut Delhi National Highway, Tehsil and Distt. Merrut. Bounded as East-Ahata of others, West-rasta aam, North -Property of Others, South - Ahata of others, Land measuring 2365.38 Sq. meters bearing Khasra No. 1034 min, 1035 min, 1037 min. Property ID PUNB0242XRSI	Demand Notice Dt 11.10.2018 Outstanding Amount as on 30.09.2018 is Rs. 4,81,91,668.69 (Rupees Four Crore Eighty One Lakh Ninty One Thousand Six Hundred Sixty Eight And Sixty Nine Paise Only) plus further interest & other charges until payment in full Possession Date u/s 13(4) 24.12.2018, Physical Possession	A) Rs. 3,99,00,000/- (Rupees Three Crore Ninety Nine Lacs Only) B) Rs. 40,00,000/- (Rs. Forty Lacs Only) C) Rs. 10,000/- (Rs. Ten Thousand Only)	21.04.2022 11:00 AM TO 02:00 PM	NIL

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions: 1). The properties are being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS". 2). The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule hereinabove have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, but the Authorised Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation. 3). The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website <https://www.mstcecommerce.com> on 21.04.2022 as per time given above in column No. 6. 4) For detailed term and conditions of the sale, please refer [www.ibapi.in](http://www.ibapi.in), [www.mstcecommerce.com](http://www.mstcecommerce.com)

STATUTORY 15 SALE NOTICE UNDER RULES OF THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002

DATE: 30.03.2022

PLACE: JALANDHAR

AUTHORISED OFFICER (PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK, SECURED CREDITOR)







FIRST COLUMN

OUSTER OF RUSSIA FROM THE WTO

The World Trade Organisation members' demand is easier said than done



PK VASUDEVA

Majority of the 164 members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have requested the multinational organisation to oust Russia from WTO for launching a devastating attack on Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also wants Russia suspended from WTO as that would make it far more difficult for Russian goods and services to compete in the global market. Russia has responded to Ukraine's call for its ouster by saying that WTO members "should refrain from discussing in the WTO issues and events, which are out of the scope of the WTO", and arguing that WTO rules do not permit its suspension. This may become the newest front in the world's unprecedented economic response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. There are precedents, though not within the WTO. Mercosur, the South American trading bloc, suspended Paraguay in 2012 and Venezuela in 2017 - in both cases over



failure to maintain democratic order. The US House of Representatives is exploring legislation that would "take the first step to deny Russia access to the World Trade Organization." But would such a manoeuvre be legal under WTO rules? It's hard to formally expel Russia - but individual WTO members could probably break off preferential trade relations.

The WTO agreements neither include a provision explicitly authorizing expulsion, nor do they establish criteria, such as maintaining democratic order, that might provide grounds for suspension. There is, though, a complex process that might be used to expel Russia from the WTO, according to James Bachus, a former member of the WTO's Appellate Body, as quoted by the western media. Article X of the WTO agreements allows WTO members to adopt amendments that "alter the rights and obligations" of members if they are accepted by two-thirds of the WTO membership (and meet certain other criteria). Initially, these changes apply only to countries that accept them. However, by a three-fourths vote, WTO members can set a time frame for holdout members to accept the amendment, withdraw from the WTO or get the other members' permission to remain. Withholding that permission from a member that refused to accept an amendment would have the same result as expelling that member. This procedure could be used to expel Russia directly - or to establish specific conditions, such as the invasion of another WTO member, under which a member could be expelled or suspended. While theoretically possible, this is unlikely to succeed. To be sure, 141 members of the United Nations voted to condemn the invasion. If that many countries in the 164-member global trading framework voted to expel Russia, it would amount to 86 percent - easily clearing both the two-thirds and three-quarters voting thresholds. But it is unlikely that so many countries would vote to change the rules. Why? Doing so would establish a precedent that a supermajority of the WTO membership can penalize members for policy decisions they dislike, outside of the WTO's usual dispute settlement process. Fears like this explain why WTO members generally make decisions by consensus. Consensus decision-making means that even one objection - say, from Russia - would stop the amendment from passing. Even if WTO members do not act collectively to suspend or expel Russia, they can act individually to effectively remove Russia's WTO privileges. Ukraine and Canada have already done so. The European Union is considering similar measures. In fact, such actions are allowed under the national security exceptions in the WTO Agreements. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) - the main WTO agreement governing trade in goods - allows measures that a WTO member "considers necessary for the protection of its essential security interests taken in time of war or other emergency in international relations."

*(The writer is former Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Spread of undignified terms into politics

How would those who do not have the dignity of speech be able to run the country in general, and the system in particular?

In the past few decades, the use of disparaging words seems to have become an accepted norm in Indian politics. Indecent remarks are often hurled on the basis of caste, religion, and region. Women are often subject to vituperative expressions used by so-called 'honourable' people engaged in amplifying their politics. These politicians are not worried about the impact of these inappropriate comments on the masses in the long run.

Talking about Bihar, after Lalu Yadav came into politics and legitimized the use of indecent language, other leaders also started using derogatory and unparliamentary words without accountability. This malaise has now reached the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies. There is indeed a provision to remove such expression from the "record" but in the age of 24x7 media coverage, the damage is often done before corrective measures are initiated.

On 24 October 2021, Lalu Yadav called Bhakta Charan Das, the Bihar in charge of Congress, as 'Bhakchonhar Das'. Before this as well, he has often courted similar controversies. For example, he used such expression against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the then National President of BJP Amit Shah at a Samajwadi party rally in Rae Bareilly on February 21, 2017, which cannot be discussed in a civilized society.

On January 10, 2017, he said that former BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj should be sent to jail under the Goondas Act, describing him as a 'lafandar'. He called Giriraj Singh a 'mental case'. On December 18, 2016 he compared the demonetization with the sterilization of Congress times. In October 2015, in the Dadri incident, he referred to Hindus as 'beef-eaters'. In January 2017, Anil Vij was referred to as India's 'unworthy son'. In January 2017 itself, he talked about colouring Vinay Katiyar with 'tikuli' and 'Sindoor' (vermilion). On March 26, 2017, when the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath ordered that the CM's residence be washed with Ganga water, Lalu called him out by referring to him as an 'opposer of the backward castes' and 'Anti-Muslim'. Lalu Yadav has made controversial statements on BJP MP Hema Malini as well. The word 'Burbak' always remains on his tongue. Lalu Yadav has maintained this attitude with journalists as well. In June 2017, he used words like "de denge do mukka, nachkegirjaoge" (will punch you twice and you will fall dancing) in response to questions asked by journalists.

Women have also been victims of the inappropriate speeches of these politicians. In this country of 'Yatra Naryastu Pujante, Ramante Tatra Devta', how will these leaders, who use such abusive language towards women, give respect and rights to women? While being the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh,



BY ACCEPTING THESE UNACCEPTABLE AND CONTROVERSIAL SPEECHES OF POLITICIANS, THEIR SUCCESSORS ALSO USE SIMILAR ABUSIVE WORDS ON A DAILY BASIS. SUCH CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENTS REFLECT THE REALITY OF THESE LEADERS. THE LANGUAGE OF A PERSON IS A REFLECTION OF HIS PERSONALITY

*(The writer is the Vice-president of BJP in Bihar and a member of the Bihar legislative council. The views expressed are personal.)*



Mulayam Singh Yadav had said in 2014 on the allegation of rape against youth that 'boys make mistakes, they cannot be hanged for this. In July 2013, Congress leader Digvijay Singh called Meenakshi Natarajan, a woman MP from Mandsaur, 'a hundred takatanchmaal' at a rally in Madhya Pradesh. Senior Congress leader Kamal Nath called cabinet minister Imarti Devi an 'item'. Many such indecent remarks on women tarnish the women's safety and dignity perceived by these leaders.

Apart from Lalu Yadav, the names of Uddhav Thackeray, Mamata Banerjee, Akhilesh Yadav, Mayawati, Digvijay Singh, Kapil Sibal, Kamal Nath, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Shashi Tharoor, Imran Masood, Sonia Gandhi are also notable in these cases. Mani Shankar Aiyar on December 7, 2017, called Modi a 'neechaadami'. Priyanka Gandhi also accused Modi of engaging in 'lowly politics'. During the Gujarat Assembly elections in 2007, Sonia Gandhi even called Modi a 'maut ka saudagar' or a merchant of death. Mamata Banerjee had described Amit Shah and Narendra Modi as 'goons of Delhi' in her rally in Dakshin Dinajpur on April 22, 2021. Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said on July 18, 2018, that 'Hinduism is being Talibanised'. Uddhav Thackeray had also spo-

ken of hitting Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with slippers in 2018. He also called Rahul Gandhi a 'stupid' leader and talked about beating Mani Shankar Aiyar with shoes. In Jammu and Kashmir's National Conference, MLA Javed Rana had insulted the national flag by saying, if the Article 35A was revoked from the State of Jammu and Kashmir and an attempt at removing Article 370 is made, then there would be no sign of the Indian flag in Jammu and Kashmir.

By accepting these unacceptable and controversial speeches of politicians, their successors also use similar abusive words on a daily basis. Such controversial statements reflect the reality of these leaders. It is said, "If you want to know about someone, let them speak." The language of a person is a reflection of his personality. How would those who do not have the dignity of speech be able to run the system?

There have also been such leaders in the country who have always maintained their linguistic dignity, which led the public to hold them in high esteem. Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan launched a nationwide movement in 1974, but he never seemed agitated, he spoke in a very simple and serious manner. Due to this the movement became a massive consequential movement.

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee also used to oppose his opponents with decency. His witty mannerisms are well known. With his own style, he used to answer the opposition. Ram Manohar Lohia, George Fernandes, L.K. Advani were among such politicians who ruled the hearts of the people with their controlled speeches, and the people in turn regarded them with equal respect. Political debates do not require verbal firefights but need to be listened to and answered with restraint.

A good leader is one who works for the progress of the nation with social harmony. It is better to be regarded by the public for work done for the welfare of society, than by becoming the apple of the eyes of a particular class by making controversial remarks. The fame gained by such work is also permanent and hailed through ages.

Politics is not going to survive on the basis of provocative speeches. Advances in technology have made information more accessible. Now the public knows who is going to do the work, who is a talker and who is going to give provocative speeches. People know who their hero is. Therefore, instead of controversial rhetoric, adopting the politics of good deeds and conduct will be beneficial for society and the country.


# Beyond Omicron: Will there be more variants?

There are reasons to believe that India might soon be heading towards an endemic phase unless another variant shows up

After the emergence of the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 infections at the beginning of 2022, the decline in cases, thanks to the mild nature of Omicron, has got everyone asking - what's next and when is the next blow going to arrive?

Ever since the pandemic began in 2020, humans have oscillated between deadly pandemic surges and retreats. If the good news is that cases are going down rapidly with many countries allowing their citizens to step outside with their masks on, there is, however, a caveat, that things might change in the coming days. Here are a few possible scenarios:

It is no rocket science that as long as the SARS-CoV-2 virus is around, it will continue to evolve and a straightfor-



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ward answer to the question is, yes. In the coming days, we could see new variants emerging. However, there is no way to ascertain when a new variant will become dominant. It is also impossible to predict whether a new variant will spread rapidly just like the Alpha and Delta variants or will be mild in nature like Omicron. Researchers around the world have been tracking a host of related sub-variants that are jockeying for dominance and we have to adopt a wait-and-watch policy to know everything.

What was once believed to be a rumour for many has turned out to be real. A potential new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, by the name "Deltacron", is around the corner. In fact, the new combination of the virus has already



been identified in France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and the United States. Interestingly, scientists have found out that this new hybrid variant combines the spike protein from the Omicron variant and the 'body' of the Delta variant.

Can this hybrid virus have the potential to cause severe infection? It is indeed too early to make a presumption. The World Health Organization has also said testing remains criti-

cal to understand the very nature and severity of this hybrid virus.

India is currently witnessing a record dip in daily infections resulting from the Omicron variant. This has brought a huge relief to everyone, from the doctors to the common citizens. India battled a lethal second wave in 2021 caused by the Delta variant, and the third wave occurring from the Omicron variant had also

resulted in a record number of cases as well.

However, many renowned virologists and scientists have claimed that India may not see a possible fourth wave, despite a warning issued by a group of experts at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, that the country could be in the grips of a fourth wave, starting from the month of June. With a record decline in cases and the recovery rate standing at close to 99 percent, there are reasons to believe that India might soon be heading towards an endemic phase unless another variant shows up.

That said, we must not be cavalier in our approach whatsoever. To ensure we are well on track to tackle another wave if there is one, the Three 'Ts' in the form of Testing, Tracking, and

Treating will be extremely crucial in handling any future outbreaks.

It needs no detailed explanation to describe the roles played by vaccines to protect us from this deadly virus. Getting vaccinated against Covid-19 does not only lowers the chances of the rampant spread of this virus that causes disease but also helps in preventing serious illness and death to people. A similar argument can be made in cases of booster doses. The higher antibody levels from the booster doses seem to make the average person unlikely to get sick from the Coronavirus. For instance, the booster shots of mRNA coronavirus vaccines are said to increase antibodies by about 10 times.

A point in case is the equally historic role played by the

Indian Government to ensure millions of citizens remain safe and get access to life-saving vaccines. For instance, the country, thanks to the assiduousness of the government, has registered more than 1.8 billion vaccine doses since its vaccination drive kicked off in January 2021. India being the second-most populated nation on earth, the Indian model of an immensely successful vaccination drive must serve as a perfect example for many developed and developing countries across the world. Similarly, the government has also rolled out booster or precaution doses for fully vaccinated healthcare workers, frontline workers, and senior citizens over the age group of 60+ years. After all, we must remember that vaccines do not save lives, but vaccination does.







Sale Notice		
The under mentioned Assets will be sold through auction on <b>"AS IS WHERE IS BASIS"</b> and <b>"AS IS WHAT IS BASIS"</b> for recovery of dues as per court orders, in the following cases:-		
S. No	Case Details	Asset Details
1.	ICICI BANK LTD VS DHARMENDER, CS (COMM) 52/20	Vehicle No. HR38Z5502 Make and Model- TATA WINGER, Manu Year - 2019
2.	ICICI BANK LTD VS BIJENDER KUMAR SINGH, CIS No. 2404/17	Vehicle No. HR10Y9116, Make & Model- BEAT 1.0 LT OPT, Manu. Year-2015
3.	ICICI BANK LTD VS BHARTI and SUIT No.92-20	Vehicle No. DL-7CQ0817, Make & Model- HYUNDAI 120 VITV SPORTZ, Manu. Year-2017, Reserve Price: Rs. 2,20,000/- EMD Amount Rs. 22,000/-, EMD is to be made in favour of ICICI BANK LIMITED payable at Delhi and Bidder has to bring original EMD at site with KYC
4.	STATE VS. MOHAN LAL and ors. FIR No. 237/2020	Vehicle No. DL-2CAV9811, Make & Model-MARUTI UDYOG LTD ALTO K10 VXI AMT, Manu. Year- 2016
5.	STATE VS. BHUPINDER SINGH and ors. FIR No. 237/2020	Vehicle No-UP16BS3462, Make & Model -MARUTI UDYOG LTD BREZZA ZDI PLUS, Manu. Year-2018
6.	ICICI BANK VS. SARVJEET SINGH CS (COMM) No. 2133/2021	Vehicle No. DLRC8178 Make and Model: MARUTI SUZUKI Swift Manu. Yr. 2018
<b>Auction Date: 8-April-2022 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.</b> <b>Place of Auction:-</b> Godara Yard, Khewat No. 166/1, Near Atul Kataria Chowk, Behind Gyan Devi, School Sec-17, Sukhrali, Gurugram-122022 <b>Contact Person- Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/ Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)</b>		
S.No	Case Details	Asset Details
1.	ICICI BANK LTD VS USMAN ALI , CS No. 854/18	Vehicle No. DL4SCQ1544 Make and Model - TVS MOTORS LTD JUPITER, Manu Year - 2017
2.	ICICI BANK LTD VS SURENDER DUTT, CS No. 506/18	Vehicle No- HR51BE3856, Make & Model- CHEVEROLET BEAT Diesel, Manu Year-2014, Reserve Price: Rs. 75,000/- EMD Amount Rs. 7500/-, EMD is to be made in favour of ICICI BANK LIMITED payable at Delhi and Bidder has to bring original EMD at site with KYC
<b>Auction Date: 18-April-2022 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.</b> <b>Place of Auction:-</b> Godara Yard, Khewat No. 166/1, Near Atul Kataria Chowk, Behind Gyan Devi, School Sec-17, Sukhrali, Gurugram-122022 <b>Contact Person- Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/ Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)</b>		
Terms of Sale		
<p>The particulars of the said asset specified herein above have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participants are therefore requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself / themselves/ itself with regard to the said asset and other relevant details pertaining to it before submitting the bids. All bidders are required to come at auction site with original KYC documents and DD/PO of EMD amount in favor of ICICI bank Limited, payable at Delhi (Wherein applicable) to participate in the auction.</p> <p>Successfully bidder shall have to deposit sale amount (Excluding EMD amount wherein applicable) within 5 days from the auction date by the way of pay order/demand draft/RTGS/NEFT. In case if you fail to make the remaining sale amount within 5 days, your EMD amount will be forfeited.</p> <p>The intending bidders may visit at <b>ICICI Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, SD Tower, Community Center, Plot No-7, Rohini Sector-8 New Delhi - 110085</b> for details and inspection of the said hypothecated vehicles.</p>		



# Stocks rally for 3rd day as Russia Ukraine talks raise hopes of de-escalation of war

**Mumbai:** Extending gains for a third day in a row, benchmark Sensex and Nifty on Wednesday rallied over 1 per cent to end at over six-week high levels on buying in RIL, Infosys, HDFC twins and ICICI Bank following gains in Asian equities amid hopes of a breakthrough in Russia-Ukraine peace talks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex surged by 740.34 points or 1.28 per cent to settle at over six-week high of 58,683.99, a day ahead of the derivatives expiry on Thursday. As many as 21 of Sensex stocks ended in green. During the day, it jumped 784.13 points or 1.35 per cent to 58,727.78.

The broader NSE Nifty climbed 172.95 points or 1 per cent to settle at 17,498.25, the highest closing level since February 10.

In the three-day rally, Sensex has soared 2.29 points or 1321 points while 50-issue Nifty has jumped 2 per cent or 345 points to close near the 17,500 level.

Among Sensex stocks, Bajaj Finserv was the biggest gainer, rising by 3.82 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, HDFC, ICICI Bank, Nestle, Maruti, Reliance Industries Limited were among the lead gainers.

On the other hand, ITC, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel and Titan were



among the laggards.

"High volatility prevailed in the global market, but peace talks between Russia and Ukraine gave hopes of de-escalation of the war, helping the domestic market to trade with confidence. The ease in crude oil and commodity prices supported the market as it will help corporates to reduce their margin pressure," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said.

Mitul Shah, Head of Research at Reliance Securities, also said that Russia-Ukraine peace talks have reinstated optimism among investors.

In the broader market, the

BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.09 per cent and midcap index climbed 0.78 per cent.

"Bulls were back in action ahead of the F&O expiry, which helped Sensex close above the crucial 58,000-mark. Investors cheered the reports that both Russia and Ukraine are engaged in peace talks, which is providing some stability to markets globally," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd said.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Finance rose by 1.71 per cent, BSE realty by 1.49 per cent, BSE Bankex by 1.36 per cent, and industrials by 1.25 per

cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains, while Tokyo ended lower. Stock exchanges in the US ended with gains on Tuesday.

European stock markets traded with losses in mid-day deals due to profit taking after a stellar rally.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 2.25 per cent to USD 112.7 per barrel.

Foreign portfolio investors turned buyers as they bought shares worth Rs 35.47 crore on Tuesday, according to stock exchange data. **PTI**

## Rupee skids 21 paise to 75.94 against USD as crude oil spikes

**Mumbai:** The rupee declined by 21 paise to 75.94 against the US dollar on Wednesday as surging crude oil prices and fuel rate hikes by the oil marketing companies fanned fears of inflation and interest rate hikes.

However, a strong rally in the domestic equities capped the rupee's loss, forex traders said.

Development in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the movement of crude oil prices remain the main focus for forex markets, they added.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened strong at 75.65 against the American dollar but soon entered the negative territory as investors dumped riskier assets. During the session, it swung between a high of 75.62 and a low of 75.97.

The local unit finally settled at 75.94 against the dollar, down 21 paise from the previous close.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, slipped 0.42 per cent to 98.02. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures surged 1.88 per cent to USD 112.30 per barrel. At home, oil marketing companies raised prices of petrol and diesel by 80 paise a litre each on Wednesday, taking the total increase in rates in the last nine days to Rs 5.60 per litre.

This is the ninth increase in prices since the ending of a four-and-half-month long hiatus in rate revision on March 22. Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in the capital market on Tuesday as they bought shares worth Rs 35.47 crore, according to stock exchange data. **PTI**

## Non-linking of PAN with Aadhaar by March 31 to attract ₹500-1,000 penalty

**New Delhi:** Taxpayers not linking PAN with Aadhaar by March 31 would be required to pay a penalty ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000, the income tax department has said.

The last date for linking Permanent Account Number (PAN) with biometric Aadhaar is March 31, 2022. Not adhering to the deadline will lead to PAN becoming inactive.

In a notification, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said delayed intimation of Aadhaar will attract a late fee of Rs 500 in cases where it is linked within the next 3 months or by June 30, 2022.

Thereafter, Rs 1,000 would have to be paid by taxpayers as penalty.

Non-linking of PAN with Aadhaar will lead to PAN becoming inoperative after March 31, 2022. It can be reoperationalised on payment of penalty, said a CBDT notification dated March 29.

AKM Global, Tax Partner, Amit Maheshwari said the government after extending the deadline several times for linking Aadhaar with PAN has finally come up with a late fee notification where Rs 500 penalty would be attracted for the first three months beginning April 1, 2022 and thereafter Rs 1,000.

"Any failure may lead to PAN becoming inoperative, which deems that a person had no PAN for income-tax purposes. It is advisable for taxpayers to check their income tax portal and ensure that Aadhaar and PAN are linked. NRIs may have some concerns since in some cases they do not have Aadhaar," Maheshwari said.



Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Neeraj Agarwala said it is now mandatory to link the Aadhaar number with PAN to complete income tax-related tasks such as filing returns on income.

While PAN is used for various transactions like opening a bank account, purchase of immovable property or proof of identity, inactive PAN will trigger domino effect and individual who have not linked their Aadhaar may face multiple challenges.

"Once your PAN becomes inactive, the person will be restricted from doing financial transactions (where quoting of PAN is mandatory like mutual funds), subjected to TDS at higher rates and penalty under section 272B," Agarwala said.

For those who do not have access to income tax portal, the linking process is made available through SMS also, he added. **PTI**

## Consumers expect to feel bite of rising energy prices; want to shift from fossil fuels: Survey

**New Delhi:** A majority of consumers worldwide expect their overall spending power to be significantly impacted by rising energy prices, while India tops the list where climate change policies have been cited as the main cause of the recent price rises, a global survey showed on Wednesday.

The World Economic Forum-Ipsos survey also showed that an average of eight in ten want their country to shift away from fossil fuels in the next five years, while the ratio was above-average at almost 90 per cent in the case of Indian respondents.

The 30-country survey was conducted between February 18 and March 4 this year among 22,534 adults.

"A majority of consumers worldwide expect their overall spending power to be significantly impacted by further energy price increases, yet only 13 per cent of those surveyed globally blamed climate policies for rising prices, while 84 per cent of respondents stressed the importance of their own country's shift to sustainable

energy sources," the WEF said.

Survey respondents were asked to consider the energy they use for daily expenses -- such as transportation, heating or cooling homes, cooking, powering appliances, etc -- and assess how much energy price increases would affect their overall spending power.

On average, more than half of consumers (55 per cent) across the 30 countries surveyed expect their overall spending power to be significantly impacted by energy price increases.

However, expectations varied widely across countries. More than two-thirds of respondents in South Africa (77 per cent), Japan (69 per cent), and Turkey (69 per cent) said that price rises would affect them "a great deal or fair amount", as opposed to just over one-third in Switzerland (37 per cent) and the Netherlands (37 per cent). Among Indian respondents, 63 per cent said they expect to feel the bite of the ongoing energy price spike. **PTI**

## Cabinet clears ₹6,062 cr World Bank-assisted programme for MSMEs

**New Delhi:** The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a World Bank-assisted Rs 6,062 crore funding programme for the small and medium businesses to help improve their access to market and credit.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Rs 6,062.45 crore or USD 808 million 'Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance' (RAMP) for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), an official release said. RAMP will commence in FY23, it said.

Of the total outlay under the programme, Rs 3,750 crore (USD 500 million) will come from World Bank loan, and the remaining Rs 2,312.45 crore will be funded by the central government.

RAMP will work under the Ministry of MSME (MoMSME) towards resilience and recovery interventions after the coronavirus disease.

"The programme aims at improving access to market and credit, strengthening institu-

tions and governance at the Centre and state, improving Centre-state linkages and partnerships, addressing issues of delayed payments and greening of MSMEs. In addition to building the MoMSME's capacity at the national level, the RAMP programme will seek to scale up implementation capacity and MSME coverage in states," the release said.

The government formulated and proposed RAMP for strengthening MSMEs in line with the recommendations of the UK Sinha committee, KV Kamath committee and the Economic Advisory Council of the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

RAMP programme with impacts across the country will directly or indirectly benefit all 6.3 crore enterprises under the MSME category.

A total of 5,55,000 MSMEs are specifically targeted for enhanced performance. In addition, expansion of target market to include service sectors and increase of about 70,500 women MSMEs is envisaged, the release said. **PTI**

## Reserve Bank's MPC to meet 6 times next fiscal; first meeting scheduled for April 6-8

**Mumbai:** The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will meet six times during the next financial year.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor-headed rate setting panel will be holding its first meeting of the next fiscal from April 6-8.

The MPC announces the bi-monthly monetary policy after deliberations on the prevailing domestic and economic situations.

According to the schedule released by the RBI on Wednesday, the first bi-monthly monetary policy of 2022-23 is scheduled for April 6-8, and next will be held during June 6-8.

The third, fourth and fifth meetings have been scheduled for August 2-4, September 28-30, and December 5-7.

The sixth bi-monthly meeting of the MPC is scheduled to be held on February 6-8, 2023.

Headed by the governor, the committee has two representatives from the central bank and three external members. The central government has tasked the RBI to ensure that inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on the either side. **PTI**

## FII stock ownership plunges to 19.9%, value down to \$582 bn YTD

**Mumbai:** After the record USD 23 billion of additional investments in the domestic equities in FY21, foreign funds have massively slashed their fresh exposure to the country to USD 3.7 billion in FY22, also pairing down their holdings in NSE500 to 19.9 per cent or worth USD 582 billion, down from their peak of 21.4 per cent, shows a brokerage report.

During the current fiscal till early this week, the cumulative FPI outflows touched a record USD 14.6 billion of which March alone saw them taking out as much as USD 5.4 billion, while February saw another record pullout to the tune of USD 4.7 billion, according to an analysis by Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities India.

FPI holdings value stood at USD 582 billion as of March 15, 2022 (down from USD 667 billion in September 2021 peak), of which, IT (15 per cent, up 87 bps), energy (15.5 per cent, up 44 bps), healthcare (4.9 per cent, up 22 bps) saw higher allocation.

On the other hand, allocation to financials was down 107 bps to 31.5 per cent, discretionary down by 49 bps to 9.1 per cent. As against this the domestic funds' holding in the NE universe stood at USD 265 billion only as of February 2022, on the back of USD 13.1 billion fresh allocation.

However, the FPI holding value is massively down from the record USD 667 billion in the first half of FY22, which was an addition of a full USD 112 billion between April 1 and September 30, 2021, according to a previous BofA report.

The value of the FPI holding had stood at USD 555 billion as of March 2021, which was a full USD 105 billion more than the value between September 2020 and March 2021. As of June 2021, the value of FII investment was only USD 592 billion, which means that as the market rallied frenetically, their holding value jumped by USD 38 billion even though their net incremental investment was almost nil between this period. **PTI**

## ONGC OFS: Institutional buyers portion over-subscribed

**New Delhi:** The government's 1.5 per cent stake sale in ONGC witnessed a smooth start on Wednesday, with institutional buyers putting in bids worth Rs 4,854 crore and over-subscribing the portion reserved for them.

The government is selling up to 1.5 per cent of its stake in the country's top oil and gas producer ONGC at a floor price of Rs 159 a share to raise about Rs 3,000 crore through a two-day offer for sale (OFS).

Institutional investors over-subscribed their portion by 3.57 times by putting in bids for over 30.35 crore shares. Over 8.49 crore shares were reserved for them.

At the indicative price of Rs 159.91 a share, the bids by institutional investors are worth Rs 4,854 crore.

Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted that the OFS of government equity in ONGC has received an "enthusiastic response" from non-retail investors. **PTI**

## LS OK's Bill to amend CA, CS, Cost Accountants' institutes

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday approved a bill to revamp the functioning of the Institutes of Chartered Accountants, Cost Accountants and Company Secretaries, with Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asserting that the changes will not impact the autonomy of these bodies. The Chartered Accountants, Cost and Works Accountants and Company Secretaries (Amendment) Bill seeks to appoint non-Chartered Accountant (CA), non-cost accountant and non-company secretary as the presiding officer of the disciplinary committees of the Institutes.

Piloting the bill, the Minister said the amendments will not infringe upon the autonomy of the three Institutes. Instead, it will enhance the quality of audit and improve the country's investment climate, she added. The amendments, she said, "will make the institutes more responsible and accountable" and encourage them to adopt global best practices. All stakeholders should have greater confidence of audit statements, she said.

Many Opposition MPs including Vishnu Prasad (Congress) and NK Premachandran (RSP) said that the appointing MCA officials in the disciplinary boards will



hamper the autonomy of these Institutes. Among other things, the bill provides for setting up of a coordination committee headed by the Secretary of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. It will have representatives from the three institutes.

The Minister said that earlier, the three institutes had signed an MoU to set up a coordination committee but the proposal could not take off. The committee would help in managing the resources of the institutes, she said, adding that IIMs and IITs too have coordination committees. The bill also provides for registration of firms with the institutes and it will help in paving the way for Indian accountancy firms to grow big, she said. It also proposes to enhance the quantum of fines for partners and firms found guilty of misconduct.

Responding to criticism that the amendments would dilute the autonomy of the institutes, Sitharaman said, "there is no proposal or intention to impinge upon the autonomy of the three insti-

tutes... They will continue to perform their functions." Participating in the debate, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that while the Minister referred to the US, UK, South Africa in her reply, the bill failed to abide by their best practices.

"Through this bill, the government is making a subtle and deliberate attempt to consolidate power and to snatch away the independence of institutions by dismantling the autonomous framework of the concerned institutions," he said.

TMC member Saugata Roy asked the Minister what specific steps her Ministry had taken to prevent corruption by chartered accountants.

NCP leader Supriya Sule said that her main concern was about the autonomy of the three accountancy institutes. "You gave the examples of IITs and IIMs. But these institutes are funded by the government while these are not. How can they be compared? Doesn't this take away the autonomy of these institutions?," she asked. **PTI**

## Axis Bank laps up Citigroup's India business for ₹12,325 cr

**New Delhi:** Axis Bank on Wednesday announced the acquisition of Citigroup's India consumer banking business, including credit card, retail banking, consumer loan and wealth management, for Rs 12,325 crore.

Axis Bank will acquire about 30 lakh customers of Citibank India and grow its credit card portfolio by 31 per cent. The deal will give it access to 7 offices, 21 branches and 499 ATMs across 18 cities; and approximately 3,600 in-scope consumer employees of Citibank will be absorbed in Axis Bank, the private sector lender said in a statement. In April 2021, American banking major Citigroup announced its plan to exit from the consumer banking business in India as part of its global strategy. The business comprises credit cards, retail banking, home loans and wealth management. The bank has 35 branches in the country and employs about 4,000 people in the consumer banking business. Citigroup had entered India in 1902 and started the consumer banking business in 1985. Apart from the institutional banking business, Citigroup in India will continue to focus on offshoring or global business support rendered from centres in Mumbai, Pune, Bengaluru, Chennai and Gurugram. **PTI**

## CredAble disburses ₹22,500 cr working capital loans in FY22

**New Delhi:** Working capital loan facilitating platform for small and medium businesses CredAble disbursed record USD 3 billion (Rs 22,500 crore) during the financial year 2021-22, and expects to double the amount in next fiscal on more customer acquisitions and high demand for short-term business loans, co-founder and CEO Nirav Choksi said.

The company said it disbursed a record USD 3 billion working capital loans to 1,50,000 cash-strapped small businesses in the last 12 months.

The credit disbursement comes at a time when the MSME sector, which contributes 40 per cent to India's total exports, continues to find itself in financial distress with only 16 per cent of them being eligible for formal credit, the company said.

"We saw growth coming in primarily from two perspectives. One, we added a lot of new customers, and we also saw several new banks adopting to the platform as a platform of choice. Both of these factors helped significantly ramp up the platform.

"Very importantly, we launched a new platform for upscale focussed around small businesses. We have been seeing a huge amount of new traction and small businesses

requiring working capital also," Choksi said.

Businesses want to ensure adequate access to working capital loan. Such loans range from as small as Rs 5 lakh to as big as Rs 50 crore. So a combination of all these factors led to this kind of growth on CredAble platform, he added.

"We expect to double the disbursement amount in the next fiscal year.

We are experiencing tremendous growth in upscale... We are adding 15,000 new customers every week. Going by this rate, the user base count will also more than double. We will be having about 500,000 users by next fiscal," Choksi said.

The Mumbai-headquartered technology based loan disbursement platform has completed five years into operations this month, and is on a "very rapid" expansion mode by partnering more customers.

"For the next 12 months, we will be focussed on very aggressive growth. Ours is a very short-term working capital loan facilitating platform, based on receivables. The credit risk is very well-managed because we partner with very large banks and vendors," said the co-founder. CredAble provides infrastructure for lending towards short-term loans. **PTI**

## Gold jumps ₹573; silver rallies ₹1,287

**New Delhi:** Gold prices in the national capital on Wednesday jumped Rs 573 to Rs 51,470 per 10 grams in line with recovery in international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal settled at Rs 50,897 per 10 grams.

Silver also rallied Rs 1,287 to Rs 67,257 per kg from Rs 65,970 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was trading higher at USD 1,921 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 24.79 per ounce.

"Gold prices traded steady with spot gold prices at COMEX trading marginally up at USD 1,921 per ounce on Wednesday," said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities), HDFC Securities. **PTI**

### V-Guard on expansion mode; expects 60% revenue from non-southern regions in 5-6 yrs

**New Delhi:** V-Guard Industries plans to expand in northern, eastern and western regions of the country as it aims to garner over 60 per cent revenue from these regions in the next five-six years, a senior company official said on Wednesday.

Currently, these regions contribute around 42 per cent of the business of the company, which is into manufacturing consumer electrical and electronic goods.

The Kerala-based company is also investing in manufacturing and is setting up new plants in Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Hyderabad. It is investing more than Rs 400 crore over a period from 2019 to 2024.

The company is expanding its product portfolio and also enhancing its distribution footprints, Chief Operating officer of V-Guard Industries Ramachandran Venkataraman said. "North, east and west contribute around 42 per cent of our business. Our focus would be to grow around 60 per cent in the next five-six years," Venkataraman said on the sidelines of a conference. V-Guard Industries' revenue for FY21 stood at Rs 2,699 crore. When asked about the current fiscal, Venkataraman said, "YTD (year-to-date) from April to December, we have been growing about 30-31 per cent." **PTI**



# Ronaldo & Lewi in Qatar

Portugal beat North Macedonia and Poland get better of Sweden to confirm WC place



AP ■ LISBON

Portugal beat North Macedonia 2-0 and Poland saw off Sweden by

the same score in play-off finals on Tuesday to book their places in the 2022 World Cup finals in Qatar.

Bruno Fernandes scored both goals for Portugal to over-

come the Balkan nation that had knocked out European champions Italy in a stunning result last week.

Italy's shock exit had North Macedonia dreaming of their



first ever appearance at a World Cup finals but Portugal proved a step too far in Porto.

Fernandes set Portugal on their way at the Estadio do Dragao by finishing off Cristiano Ronaldo's pass in the first half and then put the victory beyond doubt in the second, connecting with a sublime cross from Diogo Jota.

The victory means Portugal extend their run of qualifying for all six of the World Cups since the turn of the century while Manchester United forward Ronaldo is on course for his fifth, aged 37.

Ronaldo's best previous result was reaching the semi-finals in 2006, when Portugal were beaten by Germany.

Robert Lewandowski stroked home a second-half penalty as Poland booked their berth in front of a fervent home crowd in Chorzow.

After the Poland captain converted a spot kick, Piotr Zielinski completed the scoring with a superb second goal for the hosts.

Poland go into Friday's draw for the group stages of the World Cup finals, from November 21 to December 18, after dominating the second half.

The Poles were awarded the crucial penalty just after half-time when midfielder Sebastian Szymanski rolled the ball to substitute Grzegorz Krychowiak,

who was fouled by Jesper Karlstrom.

The referee pointed straight to the spot and Lewandowski casually arced his run, waited for Robin Olsen to move and then slotted the ball to the left of the Swedish goalkeeper.

It was his 75th goal for Poland and arguably one of his most important.

Zielinski put the result beyond doubt when he capitalised on a slip by Sweden defender Marcus Danielson and sprinted clear.

He slotted his shot past Olsen with 18 minutes left to spark wild celebrations from the home crowd.

Only a superb save from Olsen denied Lewandowski a second goal when the Poland striker was allowed a rare late chance in the area by the Swedish defence.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic came on for the final 10 minutes, but the 40-year-old Sweden striker was unable to influence the course of the match and will miss out on a third appearance at a World Cup finals.

Twelve European sides have now clinched a place at the World Cup.

Gareth Bales' Wales will take part in the other playoff final but that is on hold until at least June because the war in Ukraine led to the postponement of the Ukrainians' semi-final away to Scotland.



## Peru book WC play-off spot as Colombia, Chile miss out

AP ■ MONTEVIDEO

Peru booked a World Cup play-off spot against either Australia or the United Arab Emirates with a 2-0 victory over Paraguay on Tuesday, thus dashing the hopes of Colombia and Chile to reach the Qatar extravaganza.

With Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador and Uruguay already qualified, all that was to play for in the final round of South American qualifying was fifth place and an intercontinental play-off. Both Colombia, who won 1-0 away to Venezuela, and Chile, beaten 2-0 at home by Uruguay, could have qualified with victory had Peru slipped up.

But for the second World Cup qualification campaign in a row, Peru head into a play-off.

Last time they beat New Zealand 2-0 over two legs but their task will be harder this time with a one-off clash against either the Socorroos or UAE in Qatar in June.

Italy-born Gianluca Lapadula opened the scoring on five minutes in Lima and although debutant Sebastian Ferreira hit the bar soon after for Paraguay, Peru were largely in control.

Yoshimar Yotun doubled the advantage on 42 minutes, acrobatically converting a cross from Edison Flores.

It could have been more comfortable for Peru but Lapadula was twice denied by the woodwork.

Colombia missed out on the play-off by a single point. Halfway through the qualification campaign they had been in a strong position to qualify but a run of seven straight games without a goal before winning their final two match-

es crushed their hopes.

James Rodriguez scored the only goal deep into first half stoppage time from the penalty spot after Ronald Hernandez was penalised for a foul on Rafael Borre.

Chile struggled throughout the campaign and missed out on the World Cup for the second tournament in a row.

They needed both Peru and Colombia to fail to win while winning themselves to progress.

But spectacular goals from Luis Suarez and Federico Valverde left them heart-broken and lifted Uruguay into third in the group.

Brazil set a new points record for a South American World Cup qualification campaign with a 4-0 win away to Bolivia.

The Selecao's record of 14 wins and three draws -- with a rearranged fixture at home to Argentina still to play -- leaves them with 45 points, two more than Marcelo Bielsa's Argentina managed ahead of the 2002 tournament. In a match between the best attack and worst defence in the competition, Brazil's comfortable victory even without the suspended Neymar was no surprise.

Luca Paqueta opened the scoring on 24 minutes while a double from Richarlison and another from Bruno Guimaraes sealed the drubbing. Argentina stretched their unbeaten run to 31 matches with a 1-1 draw away to Ecuador.

Julian Alvarez opened the scoring for Argentina at the second attempt against the run of play on 24 minutes but Enner Valencia scored in stoppage time, slamming home the rebound after his penalty was saved by goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli.

# Mane sinks Egypt again, Partey sends Ghana to WC

AP ■ DIAMNIADIO

Liverpool star Sadio Mane converted a shoot-out penalty on Tuesday to take African champions Senegal to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar at the expense of Egypt.

Ghana, Morocco and Tunisia also booked their places in the finals on a frantic night of play-off action.

Senegal won the second leg of the African play-off 1-0 in Diamniadio thanks to a fourth-minute goal from Boulaye Dia and the teams finished level at 1-1 on aggregate after extra time.

As was the case in the Africa Cup of Nations final last month, Mane was entrusted with taking the crucial fifth Senegal kick and once again he made no mistake to give his side a 3-1 shoot-out victory.

Among the three Egyptians who failed to score in the shoot-out was Sane's Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah, who uncharacteristically blazed his kick over the crossbar.

Only four of the nine penalty takers were successful with captain Kalidou Koulibaly and Saliou Ciss missing for



Senegal and Salah, 'Zizo' and Mostafa Mohamed for Egypt.

As Senegal celebrated a second straight qualification for the World Cup, Egypt were left to lament another dramatic loss to Senegal this year.

There were no goals in the Cup of Nations final that went to extra time in Yaounde last month, leading to a shoot-out which Senegal won 4-2 with Mane converting the fifth

penalty for his side.

The drama in Diamniadio came soon after Arsenal midfielder Thomas Partey scored the goal that took Ghana to the World Cup as they forced a 1-1 draw in Nigeria to win the play-off on away goals.

Partey struck after 10 minutes in Abuja and although another Premier League star, William Troost-Ekong, levelled from a 22nd-minute

penalty, Nigeria failed to score again. The first leg ended goal-less.

The Black Stars of Ghana are back in the World Cup finals after qualifying in 2006, 2010 and 2014, but missing out four years ago.

The defeat was a massive blow for favourites Nigeria, who were chasing a seventh appearance in eight attempts since debuting at the 1994 World Cup.

Azzedine Ounahi scored twice as Morocco trounced the Democratic Republic of Congo 4-1 in Casablanca to reach the finals for a sixth time.

Tarik Tissoudali and Paris Saint-Germain full-back Achraf Hakimi also netted for the Atlas Lions, who qualified 5-2 on aggregate after the first leg finished 1-1 in Kinshasa.

Tunisia secured their place in Qatar despite being held 0-0 at home by Mali in the second leg of a play-off.

Having built a 1-0 lead in Mali through a Moussa Sissako own-goal, Tunisia were unable to build on their aggregate advantage and only scraped through.

# Eriksen scores on Copenhagen return as England, France, Italy win friendlies

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen scored on Tuesday on his return to the Copenhagen stadium where he suffered a cardiac arrest last year as England and France also won the latest round of pre-World Cup friendlies.

The Dane, wearing the captain's armband, struck in the 57th minute to round off Denmark's 3-0 friendly win against Serbia in the Parken Stadium where he collapsed and nearly died in a European championship match against Finland last June.

"To come back to Parken and score a goal with the welcome I received... is something that gives you goosebumps. It makes me incredibly happy," said Eriksen.

At Wembley, Ollie Watkins scored on his first start for England as Gareth Southgate's rejigged side beat 10-man Ivory Coast 3-0.

A reshuffled France also saw Kylian Mbappe and Olivier Giroud on target for the world champions in a comfortable 5-0 victory over South Africa eight months before the World Cup kicks off in



## Eden Hazard undergoes another ankle operation

AP ■ MADRID

Eden Hazard has undergone another operation on his troublesome right ankle, Real Madrid confirmed on Tuesday.

As part of the surgery doctors removed a metallic plate in Hazard's ankle, which had been installed in March 2020 to help the Belgian put an end to his injury problems in Spain.

Hazard is expected to be out for at least a month after this latest

operation, meaning he will miss Madrid's two Champions League quarter-final matches against his former club Chelsea.

"Our player Eden Hazard underwent a successful operation today at the Sanitas La Zarzuela University Hospital for the removal of an osteosynthesis plate on his right fibula," a club statement read.

Hazard has endured a hugely disappointing three years since Real Madrid paid 160 million euros to sign him from Chelsea in 2019.

Doha. European heavyweights Germany and the Netherlands played out a 1-1 draw in Amsterdam while Italy salvaged some pride days after failing to qualify for a second consecutive World Cup, beating Turkey 3-2 in Konya.

In Copenhagen, taking to the pitch, Eriksen was handed the captain's armband and received a huge wave of applause from the home crowd. "Welcome home

Eriksen" and "Welcome home Christian" banners were unfurled by fans as the players came onto the pitch at the capital's national stadium.

Joakim Maehle opened the scoring for Denmark after quarter of an hour with Jesper Lindstrom adding a second eight minutes after the break.

Eriksen, who has relaunched his club career with Brentford in the Premier League, scored the third with a shot from outside the box for his 38th goal in 111 appearances.

The 30-year-old was substituted after 80 minutes, leaving the field to a standing ovation and was later named man of the match.

# Osaka breezes into last 4 at Miami

AP ■ MIAMI

Naomi Osaka moved into the Miami Open semi-finals with another impressive performance as an out-of-sorts American Danielle Collins was brushed aside at the Hard Rock Stadium on Tuesday.

The clinical Japanese star, yet to drop a set in this tournament, won 6-2, 6-1 and will meet Swiss Olympic Gold medal winner Belinda Bencic in the last four. Collins, who appeared to be struggling with a neck injury and has been suffering with a viral infection, will return to the top 10 when the rankings are released on Monday having briefly been there following her run to the Australian Open final earlier this year. But Osaka, the four-time Grand Slam



champion, has been in fine form in south Florida and on this evidence will take a lot of stopping if she is to be denied the title this weekend. Bencic, the world number 28, who beat Australia's Daria Saville 6-1, 6-2, said: "I have played Osaka before, so I know how it feels to play her.

"I'm really happy I achieved a great result here and everything else is a bonus. I'm going to enjoy and do the best I can."

In Wednesday's remaining WTA quarter-finals, American Jessica Pegula will play Spain's Paula Badosa while Czech Petra Kvitova takes on world number one Iga Swiatek of Poland.

### ZVEREV IN QUARTERS

Alexander Zverev's push to land his first title of the year moved a step closer on Tuesday

after the German moved into the quarter-finals of the Miami Open with a straight-sets win over Thanasi Kokkinakis. World number four Zverev has struggled for consistency in 2022 but the Miami Open finalist from 2018 was too strong in a 6-4, 6-4 win over Kokkinakis who came through qualifying without dropping a set.

Kokkinakis, who along with compatriot Nick Kyrgios won the Australian Open doubles title, was in the fourth round for the first time in south Florida and managed to give the German a few headaches, especially with his serve. Yet the Australian looked to be struggling with a chest injury in the second set and Zverev was able to move through the gears when it mattered to set up an encounter with Norway's Casper Ruud for a place in the semi-finals.

# Ukraine's exhausted Svitolina taking break from tennis

AP ■ PARIS

Former world number three Elina Svitolina of Ukraine announced on Tuesday she was taking a break from tennis because of mental and physical exhaustion.

She said her compatriots' resistance of the Russian invasion of her country had encouraged her to play through back pain, but said "now I can't handle it any more".

"It's been an extremely difficult couple

of months for me not only mentally but also physically," the world number 20 wrote on social media.

"For quite a long time I've been struggling with my back. The pain didn't let me prepare for the tournaments at my best.

"Meanwhile, observing with unbearable pain in my heart what is happening in my homeland Ukraine and with how much bravery and courage our Ukrainian people are defending our

country, this gave me a huge push to continue and fight on court," continued the 27-year-old.

"Now, my body can't handle it anymore and I need to rest. Therefore, I'm sad to announce I'll be missing Fed Cup and few of my favourite tournaments in Europe. But I'm sure I'll see your around soon! Thank you all for your support in the challenging period."

Svitolina, a winner of 16 WTA titles, has struggled for form since her quarter-final defeat in the US Open.

She lost her Indian Wells opener against 122nd ranked Harriet Dart of Britain, and pulled out of the Miami Open which is currently underway.





the pioneer

# INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2022

12

IPL is the best league in the world and with every teammate of yours you get to learn a lot about the game, so I am loving picking the brains of Shikhar Dhawan

— BHANUKA RAJAPAKSA

## RCB beat KKR in thriller



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Royal Challengers Bangalore batters overcame some nervy moments after leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga spun his way to a four-wicket haul to register a three-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in a low-scoring IPL match here on Wednesday.

Hasaranga lived up to his Rs 10.75 crore price tag as his four-wicket burst helped RCB dismiss KKR for 128.

The Sri Lankan was ably supported by the pace trio of Akash Deep (3/45), Harshal Patel (2/11) and Mohammed Siraj (1/25) after RCB won the toss and elected to bowl at DY Patil Stadium here.

In reply, Sherfane Rutherford (28), David Willey (18) and Shahbaz Ahmed (27) played crucial innings as RCB survived some anxious moments before overhauling the target, scoring 132 for 7 in 19.2 overs after Tim Southee

(3/20) and Umesh Yadav (2/16) blew away their top-order.

Yadav and Southee troubled the top-order batters with their pace and bounce, leaving RCB at 17 for 3 at one stage.

While Anuj Rawat (0) got a thick outside edge off Umesh, Faf du Plessis (5) got a leading edge to the point fielder and Virat Kohli (12) paid the price for playing away from the body.

Willey and Rutherford then tried to rebuild the chase with a 45-run stand but Sunil Narine broke the partnership in the 11th over as he had the former caught at midwicket.

Coming to the crease, Shahbaz pulled Andre Russell for two maximums as RCB amassed 15 runs to ease the pressure.

Needing 36 off 30 balls, Shahbaz hit another six off Chakravarthy before being deceived by the bowler as RCB

slumped to 101 for 5.

With pressure mounting, Rutherford went for a slog only to be caught behind off Southee.

Needing 17 off last two overs, Harshal Patel smashed two fours, while Dinesh Karthik (14 not out) blasted a six and a four in the first two balls of the last over to take the team home.

Earlier, KKR batters struggled with the extra bounce and went for shots too many despite losing wickets at regular intervals.

None of the batters could capitalise on the starts as KKR lost six wickets for 57 runs to slip from 44 for 3 to 101 for 9 in 14.3 overs.

Big-hitting West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell was the highest scorer for KKR with a 18-ball 25, while Umesh Yadav (18) and Varun Chakravarthy (10) added 27 runs, the fourth-highest for the 10th wicket in IPL history, to

### ► pointstable

Po.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	RR	1	1	0	0	2	3.050
2.	DC	1	1	0	0	2	0.914
3.	PBKs	1	1	0	0	2	0.697
4.	GT	1	1	0	0	2	0.286
5.	KKR	2	1	1	0	2	0.093
6.	RCB	2	1	1	0	2	-0.048
7.	LSG	1	0	1	0	0	-0.286
8.	CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.639
9.	MI	1	0	1	0	0	-0.914
10.	SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-3.050

### ► boundarymeter

4s	162
6s	90

provide some respectability to the total.

Venkatesh Iyer was the first to be dismissed with Akash Deep striking on his first delivery, while Ajinkya Rahane's shaky start ended when he was holed out in the fifth over off Siraj as KKR slipped to 32 for 2.

Nitish Rana too perished quickly with David Willey producing a stunning catch as KKR slipped to 44 for 3 in the first six overs.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer then paid the price for an irresponsible shot, hitting straight to Du Plessis at long-on for Hasaranga's first wicket.

Despite the match situation, West Indies all-rounder Sunil Narine went for his shots, sending Akash Deep across mid-off before top-edging him for a maximum.

However, Hasaranga came back to strike twice in two balls as KKR slumped to 67 for 6 in 9 overs.

While Narine ended up giving an easy catch to point fielder, Sheldon Jackson was cleaned up with a ripping googly.

## CSK, LSG seek improvement in top-order batting

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Lucknow vs Chennai  
Live from 7:30 pm IST  
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

Chennai Super Kings will welcome the return of star all-rounder Moeen Ali as they eye a much improved batting performance in the IPL clash against Lucknow Super Giants here on Thursday.

Both the teams come into the game after a loss in their respective opening matches. A common factor in their defeats were the failure of the top-order and they would be looking to correct that at the Brabourne Stadium.

It is still very early days in the two-month long IPL but the toss is already playing a significant role in the game's outcome. With the second innings dew in mind, teams are preferring to put the opposition in.

The losses for CSK and LSG came after batting first at the Wankhede. Conditions are not expected to be very different at the nearby CCI ground with heavy dew likely to set in the second half of the game.

Lucknow skipper KL Rahul and star opener Quinton De Kock had a forgettable outing on Monday and they would be keen to get some runs under their belt. Rahul needs to lead from the front with the IPL presenting a big test for his captaincy skills.

Seasoned campaigner Manish Pandey and Evin Lewis, who is a hard-hitting batter, on their day can take any attack to cleaners, had a forgettable outing and the team management would hope that they come to the party.

Lucknow would be pleased that their middle-order comprising

Deepak Hooda, debutant Ayush Badoni and Krunal Pandya clicked when their top-order collapsed and the trio would again need to shoulder the responsibility.

But it was the Lucknow bowling, which would need to quickly forget the hammering they received at the hands of Gujarat. While pacer Dushmantha Chameera was right on the money, co-pacer Avesh Khan leaked 33 runs in 3.4 overs.

Also the role of spin trio of Ravi Bishnoi, Hooda and Krunal, could decide the match's fate.

CSK would also look to put up a much better show with the bat after they managed only 131 in the first game. With Moeen Ali, a pinch-hitter available for selection alongside Dwaine Pretorius, they would indeed heave a sigh of relief.

In the first game, save a vintage Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the other batters faltered - be it Ruturaj Gaikwad, Robin Uthappa, Devon Conway or Ambati Rayudu.

New skipper Ravindra Jadeja would also be keen to get a big score individually and ditto for Shivam Dube, who is racing against time to prove his worth on the IPL stage.

But it remains to be seen who CSK leave out to include Moeen, who can come in at number three.

While all-rounder Dwayne Bravo claimed three wickets against KKR, others leaked runs and all of them would need to fire in unison.



## Injured Marsh to link up with Delhi squad



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Injured all-rounder Mitchell Marsh will link up with his IPL franchise Delhi Capitals and continue his recovery in India after being ruled out of Australia's remaining limited overs series against Pakistan.

The 30-year-old, who was bought for ₹6.5 crore by the Capitals in the IPL auction last month, had injured his hip flexor during a high-intensity fielding drill on Sunday.

He had subsequently missed the first ODI, which Australia won by 88 runs in Lahore on Tuesday.

Marsh will now manage his recovery under the guidance of physiotherapist Patrick Farhart, who has been with the Capitals since the 2020 IPL

season.

"Marsh will travel to India to link with the Delhi Capitals squad where former Australian and current New South Wales physiotherapist Pat Farhart will manage his recovery following an isolation period," Cricket Australia said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Being able to focus on my recovery without the travel and isolation break is the best approach. I am disappointed to miss the Pakistan series but look forward to re-joining the Australian squad for our next tour," Marsh said.

Marsh was originally going to miss the Capitals' first three games as he was a part of the Australian limited overs team for the series against Australia.



## Rohit, Kohli slip; Ashwin rises in Test rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India skipper Rohit Sharma and veteran batter Virat Kohli moved down a rung each to be placed 8th and 10th, respectively, in the latest ICC Test rankings released on Wednesday.

Rohit, who continued to remain the top-ranked Indian in the batters' chart, moved down a place to 8th. He has 754 points, while Kohli, who has 742 rating points moved to the 10th position.

Ravindra Jadeja retained the top position among all-rounders, while Ravichandran Ashwin displaced West Indies' Jason Holder to be second.

Ashwin and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah continued to hold on to their second and fourth positions, respectively, in the bowlers' chart.

In the ODI rankings, Kohli remained static on second while Rohit climbed up a place to fourth.

## Rajapaksa seeks meeting with Kohli to take tips on fitness

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Skills "come first" for Bhanuka Rajapaksa but the Sri Lankan batter has realised that survival in modern-day cricket is not possible without attaining required fitness standards.

Dropped from the national team over fitness issues, Rajapaksa now wants to have a conversation with a supremely-fit Virat Kohli, who he calls the 'Cristiano Ronaldo of cricket'.

Being part of the Indian Premier League (IPL), the 30-year-old Lankan can have that opportunity to meet the former India skipper and hopefully turn the tide having endured a dramatic start to year 2022.

The 30-year-old announced his international retirement this January and withdrew it a week later on the insistence of authorities. However, he still missed the plane to India due to the same fitness issues, last month.

Rajapaksa is sure that the two-month long stint with Punjab Kings would benefit his game immensely and take his fitness to the next level.

"IPL is the best league in the world and with every teammate of yours you get to learn a lot about the game, so I am loving picking the brains of Shikhar Dhawan. I get along very well with Mayank Agarwal as we played U-19 together," Rajapaksa said.

"Outside of the team Virat Kohli is always someone I could speak to and get some advice on fitness. He's at another different level

when it comes to fitness.

"To me, he is the Cristiano Ronaldo of cricket for sure. The work he puts in you can obviously see the results. You can compare him to anyone when it comes fitness or even skills wise. He plays so hard and you can learn a lot by talking to him," he said.

On the 'fitness versus skills' debate, Rajapaksa has a clear view.

"As a player you need your fitness but it could be different from person to person. For me, of course, skill comes first. And then the fitness, but if you are not fit enough you definitely can't perform.

"I'm actually working hard on my fitness. Whenever I get a free day I hit the gym early in the morning. That there are some fitness requirements to represent the country and with fitness, my international career would be longer.

"I'm hoping to play for the next three to four years at least and do the best for the country because after my resignation I had to withdraw it back because I had a couple of conversations with the technical committee and the Sports Minister as well. They wanted me to reconsider my retirement and I decided to withdraw it," he said.

Rajapaksa feels he is now doing "all the right things" as he looks to extend his international career by at least three to four years.



## Healy heroics lead Aussies into World Cup final



AP ■ WELLINGTON

A double-century opening stand carried tournament favourites Australia to a commanding 157-run win over the West Indies on Wednesday and a place in the Women's World Cup final.

Australia dominated their rain-shortened semi-final in Wellington from the outset, built around a 216-run stand — the highest of the tournament — between experienced openers Alyssa Healy and Rachael Haynes.

An imposing score of 305 for three off a reduced 45 overs was never threatened by the West Indies, who succumbed for 148 in the 37th over.

The six-time champions Australia are unbeaten at the 50-over tournament and will face either South Africa or 2017 winners England in the final in Christchurch on Sunday.

Play started nearly two hours late because of misty rain and Healy, in particular, struggled for timing in the early stages after Australia were sent in on a damp Basin Reserve pitch.

She accelerated as the sun came out, posting 129 off 107 balls to register a fourth ODI century and fell four runs short of her career-best score.

The wicketkeeper-batter used her feet to excellent effect against the spin-based

Caribbean attack, smashing 17 fours and a six.

She didn't hit a boundary until the 12th over but said Haynes had reminded her to remain patient.

"I hope I've learned my lesson by now, that it doesn't necessarily have to happen all at once," Healy said. "I love batting with Rach, she's a calming influence."

Haynes compiled 85 off 100 balls while the late runs came via unbeaten knocks from captain Meg Lanning (26) and Beth Mooney (43).

It was a disappointing performance from the sixth-ranked West Indies, who were loose in the field, dropping a handful of chances, and they struggled for momentum with the bat.

Captain Stefanie Taylor was their top scorer with a careful 48, but she lacked support after top-order pair Deandra Dottin and Hayley Matthews both departed for 34.

Their hopes weren't helped by injuries suffered in the field to bowlers Chinelle Henry and Anisa Mohammed, with neither able to bat, meaning Australia needed to take only eight wickets.

The second semi-final pits defending champions England against second-ranked South Africa in Christchurch on Thursday, a repeat of the 2017 last-four thriller that was decided in the final over.

## Celebrities pay tribute to Warne at service

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

An eclectic array of celebrities including singer Elton John, golfing legend Greg Norman and champion surfer Kelly Slater paid tribute on Wednesday to their friend, former Australian cricketer Shane Warne, at a star-studded state memorial service.

More than 50,000 mourners chanted their hero's nickname "Warchie" at the outset of the service at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as they used to do when he took to the pitch for a match.

It was his hometown pitch where he cemented his sporting legend in 2006 by becoming the first bowler in the world to take 700 Test wickets.



made headlines around the world.

The pain was felt far beyond the cricket world. Tributes came from the fields of music, acting, business, golf, politics, surfing, comedy, poker and others.

Elton John dedicated a rendition of "Don't Let the Sun Go

Down on Me" to Warne's children - Brooke, Summer and Jackson - who were among the crowd that included Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

John and fellow British musicians Ed Sheeran, Robbie Williams and Coldplay front-man Chris Martin appeared on

a large screen via video. So too did Australian singers (and sisters) Kylie and Dannii Minogue.

Martin played "Eulogy," a piano piece that he composed for the occasion. In another video, Martin apologised for not attending the memorial in person. Sheeran described Warne as "such a great bloke."

Australian-born former champion golfer Greg Norman recalled Warne's passion, energy and enthusiasm for life.

Some knew Warne as one of the all-time great spin bowlers. Others knew him as the dapper one-time fiancé of glamorous British film star and model Elizabeth Hurley.

"It seems too cruel that all the people who loved him will never have another Lion hug," Hurley posted on social media in a tribute to the former lover she called Lionheart after his

death.

She did not take part in Wednesday's service.

Former English cricket team captain Nasser Hussain and former West Indies team captain Brian Lara also spoke at the service.

Warne's love life and off-field indiscretions were often fodder for tabloid journalists.

But his determination to be his authentic, flawed and irreverent self endeared him to his friends and fans alike.

A statue of Warne outside the cricket ground became a focus of public grief. Tributes left at the statue included beer bottles and cigarette packets.

It was a nod to how Warne once described himself in words repeated at his service by his father, Keith Warne: "I smoked, I drank and I played a little cricket."

## 3BL to expand its Women's League to 12 teams

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeing the overwhelmingly positive response at the recently concluded third season of the Basketball Federation of India (BFI) and International Basketball Federation (FIBA) backed 3x3 Pro Basketball League (3BL), the number of women's teams is all set to double for the next season.

3BL Season 3 was held in Hotel Wyndham Chandigarh Mohali from 8th to 21st March 2022 and witnessed participation from leading national and international men's and women's 3x3 Basketball players.

3BL Season 3, held earlier this month, featured 12 men's teams and 6 women's teams. Former India captain Raspreet Sidhu led Delhi Divas were crowned the champions of the second season of the Women's League.