

## OPINION 6

CHECKMATE BY THE  
'NEUTRALS' IN PAK

## WORLD 9

RUSSIAN ROCKETS HIT  
EASTERN UKRAINIAN TOWN

## MONEY 10

'INDIA'S ECONOMY SEEN  
GROWING 9.2 % IN FY22'

BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY MAY 26, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹4

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12 SPORT

# Yasin awarded life for terror funding

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi Special court on Wednesday awarded life imprisonment to Kashmiri terrorist Yasin Malik in a terror funding case.

Special Judge Praveen Singh also awarded varying jail terms for various offences under the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The court also imposed a fine of over ₹10 lakh on Malik.

The life term was awarded for two offences — Section 121 (waging war against the Government of India) of the IPC and section 17 (raising funds for the terrorist act) of the UAPA. All the sentences will run concurrently.

Earlier in the day, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) during the argument on quantum of sentence demanded death sentence for Malik, highlighting crimes and terrorism he committed in Kashmir for the past three decades. "Let's not go into all this. Stick to the facts. This is a terror funding case," said Judge Singh, who delivered the judgment by 6.15 pm.

"However, in my opinion, there was no reformation of this convict. It may be correct

that the convict may have given up the gun in 1994, but he had never expressed any regret for the violence he had committed prior to 1994.

"It is noticed that, when he claimed to have given up the path of violence after 1994, the Government of India took it upon its face value and gave him an opportunity to reform and in good faith tried to engage in a meaningful dialogue with him and as admitted by him, gave him every platform to express his opinion.

"However, as discussed in the order on charge, the convict did not desist from violence. Rather, betraying the good intentions of the Government he took a different path to orchestrate violence in the guise of political struggle. The convict has claimed that he had followed Gandhian principle of non-violence and was spearheading a peaceful non violent struggle.

"However, the evidence on the basis of which charges were framed and to which convict has pleaded guilty, speaks otherwise.

"The entire movement was planned to be a violent movement and large-scale violence ensured is a matter of fact," said the judgment convicting Malik to life imprisonment.



Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik being produced at Patiala House court in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

Court also imposes a ₹10 lakh fine on Malik

## Malik's past catches up with him

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Life has come a full circle for chief of the banned Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Yasin Malik, who graduated from being a Pakistan-trained terrorist to a separatist force in the Kashmir valley during his anti-India career spanning over three decades.

On Wednesday, Malik, 56, was sentenced to a life term by a designated NIA court.

He has been in and out of jail several times dating back to his student activism days before the onset of militancy in J&K in 1990.

In his bid to mainstream himself, he "renounced" violence and donned the political cloak in 1994. Malik —

married to a Pakistani artist — had announced Gandhian way of protest after his release and sought to project himself as a moderate voice in separatist camp.

Malik was arrested in early 2019 in connection with a 2017 terror-funding case registered by National Investigation Agency (NIA).

# Teen massacres 19 kids in Texas school

2 teachers among dead, attacker killed by police

PTI ■ HOUSTON

In one of the worst school shootings in the US, an 18-year-old gunman in body armour massacred at least 21 people, including 19 children and two adults inside one classroom at a Texas elementary school, prompting President Joe Biden to issue an emotional appeal to lawmakers to "turn this pain into action" to enact tougher gun laws to curb such recurring tragedies.

The youth opened fire at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde town, Texas, 134 km from San Antonio, on Tuesday morning before he was killed by law enforcement officers.

All fatalities and injuries took place inside one classroom Uvalde, according to Lt Chris Olivarez, spokesperson for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

The shooter barricaded himself in one room, killing two teachers and 19 children, he told CNN.

"Just goes to show you the complete evil from this shooter," Olivarez said, just 10 days since 10 people were killed in a mass shooting in New York.

All the victims have been removed, identified and their



Law enforcement personnel walk outside Uvalde High School after shooting a was reported earlier in the day at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas

AP

families have been notified, the lieutenant said. Multiple children were wounded inside the classroom, according to Olivarez, but there is no exact number as to how many at this time.

"It's a small classroom, you can have anywhere from 25 to 30 students in there, plus there were two teachers in there. ... So don't have exact number of how many students were in that classroom," Olivarez said.

When asked if the school was a target, Olivarez said there are still "a lot of unanswered questions."

Investigators say the suspect was armed with a handgun, an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle and high-capacity

magazines.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott identified the killer as Salvador Ramos, a resident of the area where the school was located. The shooter's motive remains unclear. The teenager is suspected of shooting his grandmother at the start of the rampage, US media reports said.

Chief of Police, Uvalde, Pete Arredondo said the "mass casualty event occurred at Robb Elementary School at about 11:32 this morning". He said the killer acted as a lone wolf — who was shot dead in a police exchange.

The deceased children are in the second, third and fourth grades — aged between 7 years and 10 years, he said.

# Kalinga Ghat: 6 WB tourists die, 42 injured

Modi, Naveen, Mamata express grief

PNS ■ PHULBANI / BRAHMAPUR

At least six passengers died and 42 others were injured after a bus carrying tourists overturned near Kalinga Ghat on the Ganjam-Kandhamal border late Tuesday night.

The deceased were identified as Supriya Denre, Sanjeet Patra, Rima Denre, Mausumi Denra, Barnali Manna and a cook.

Local residents along with police and Fire Service teams rescued the injured tourists from the bus. Several of them were initially admitted to the

Bhanjanagar hospital.

However, as many as 14 injured tourists were shifted to the MKCG Medical College Hospital in Brahmapur due to worsening health conditions. As per MKCG authorities, all of them have been put under critical care treatment and they are responding to it well.

The tourists from Udaynarayanpur in Howrah of West Bengal had come to visit Daringbadi. The bus carrying around 77 passengers including 40 men, 30 women and some children was returning from Phulbani to Visakhapatnam when the vehicles brakes failed near Kalinga ghat. The driver failed to steer the bus through the sharp turns in the ghat and it



hit an electric pole before overturning into a gorge.

Teams from Bhanjanagar and G Udayagiri police rushed to the spot and started the rescue operation. Later fire service personnel were also pressed into action. The rescue operation continued till Wednesday morning.

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi condoled the loss of lives in the road mishap.

Modi in a tweet said, "I am deeply pained by the loss of lives due to a tragic accident that took place in Odisha. In this tragic hour, my thoughts are with the bereaved families. I pray that those injured recover at the very earliest."

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also expressed grief over the death of tourists in the fatal road mishap and expressed speedy recovery of the injured.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banarjee said, "Our administration is coordinating with Odisha officials for speedy postmortem of the dead, treatment for the injured, and their return."

# 'Don't turn Puri into a pleasure centre'

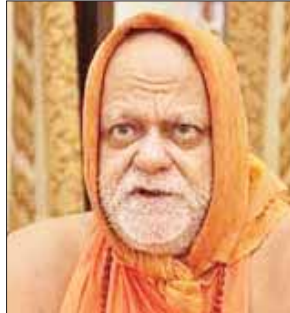
Shankaracharya slams Heritage Corridor Project Urges attention of PM, CM to the issue

PNS ■ PURI

Puri Gobardhan Peeth Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati on Wednesday came down heavily on the Odisha Government over its ongoing Shreemandir Parikrama Project in Puri.

The seer said the Heritage Corridor Project is destroying the ideals of the sacred land of Puri, which shouldn't be turned into a "picnic spot" in the name of the beautification project. The "Tapa Bhumi" (scared place) of Puri must not be converted into a "Bhoga Bhumi" (centre of indulging in pleasure).

"It is the responsibility of the



administration not to allow conversion of the shrine into a place of recreation. We support development, but we are not in favour of elimination of existence of heritage sites in the name of development," he said.

"The administration razed mutts for widening of road. The idols of the deities were also evicted and the process is still underway. It will invite the ire of the deities," the Shankaracharya said.

"A secular administration can only extend cooperation in affairs relating to religious places but can't take

## Wait for Govt decision: Min

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In response to the Shankaracharya's opposition to the Shreemandir Parikrama Project, Minister of Public Enterprise, Science & Technology and Social Justice & Empowerment Ashok Chandra Panda admitted that a controversy is snowballing over the Government's move for beautification of the surroundings of the Jagannath

Temple. But everyone should wait for a "decision" of the Government in this regard, he told the media.

A seemingly defensive Panda, however, mentioned that the decision would be taken by "them", meaning thereby the competent quarters in the administration.

Panda's cryptic statement raised speculation whether the Government would make changes in the project.


and execute decisions. India's Prime Minister and the Odisha Chief Minister should pay attention towards the fact that Puri is being "distorted" and "debased" on the plea of development," he remarked.

An obviously angry Shankaracharya said "a political party" (the BJD) has got popular mandate to rule, but

the situation can also change.

He even appealed to the people to think over what the regime elected by them is doing to the "religious capital" Puri.

Notably, on Tuesday, the seer had invited a cross section of people's representatives, including political leaders, and discussed the Parikrama Project with them.



Spices should be consumed in moderation but always choose the best quality

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# Cyber cops book Anubhav on Varsha's plaint

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ CUTTACK  
The Cyber police here on Wednesday booked Kendrapada MP and actor Anubhav Mohanty under Section 509 of IPC and Section 67 of IT Act on the basis of a complaint filed by his estranged wife and actress Varsha Priyadarshini.

Varsha in her complaint alleged that her husband is repeatedly engaged in tarnishing her image on social media. She had made a similar complaint at a local police station last week.

Married in 2014, the star

couple had been engaged in a fierce legal tussle for the last two years, ever since Anubhav moved to a Delhi court seeking a divorce from Varsha in 2019. Several cases of domestic violence, restitution of marriage, maintenance, alimony, accommodation, and income filed by the alienated couple are pending in several courts in the city now. But things started escalating last week when Anubhav uploaded some videos on his YouTube channel.

In one video, Anubhav has



that Varsha had been using different surnames in obtaining Aadhar card, PAN card and Passport and filing income tax returns. "Her surnames mismatch in each of her educational certificates," Anubhav has alleged in the video. Taking strong exceptions to such attempts being made to defame her in the public, Varsha in her protest complaint has sought police interventions to restrain her estranged husband from using social media in tarnishing her image and status in the public.

## Balangir med student death NHRC seeks report from Chief Secy

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Odisha Chief Secretary and the Sambalpur University Vice-Chancellor to submit a report within four weeks on the alleged death of an MBBS student at the Bhima Bhoi Medical College Hospital in Balangir. The NHRC passed the order taking cognisance of a petition filed by human rights activist Akhand.

In the petition, Akhand alleged that Nihant Kumar, a first year MBBS student of Bhima Bhoi Medical College

Hospital, died by suicide by jumping from the roof of the building on April 22.

Kumar, a native of Haryana was forced to take the extreme step when the ragging done by seniors became intolerable for him. The human rights activist also stat that the WhatsApp chat of Kumar with the fellow students revealed that he was subjected to ragging by the seniors.

The Balangir police are investigating into the matter based on an FIR filed b Kumar's father of the victim after registering a case under Section 306 and 34 of the IPC.

# CM awards 9 banks for priority sector lending

**Rs 1.03 lakh-cr credit disbursed in 2021-22**

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday awarded nine banks for their outstanding performances in priority sector lending, such as agriculture, Mission Shakti and MSMEs.

Odisha is the only State in the country that is encouraging banks with awards for priority sector lending.

The Chief Minister said all banks together have disbursed



credit to the tune of Rs 1.03 lakh crore and achieved more than 93 percent of the Annual Credit Plan for 2021-22 despite the Covid-19

pandemic. The Odisha State Cooperative Bank received award for maximum lending in agriculture sector, State Bank of India for maximum

lending to MSMEs and Odisha Gramya Bank received award for maximum lending to Mission Shakti Groups.

The Chief Minister said for the current financial year, the State has fixed an ambitious annual credit target of Rs 1.34 lakh crore keeping in view the higher demand for credit.

Patnaik underlined that the bankers need to focus on increasing the average size of loan for Mission Shakti Groups. It has recently been decided to provide credit support to Mission Shakti Groups to the tune of Rs 50,000 crore in next five years, he added.

## Man hacks brother over property

**In police presence**

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

A man hacked his elder brother with a sharp weapon in broad daylight at Rath Road in the Old Town area under the Lingaraj police station in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday.

Dipuna attacked his brother over a property feud in the presence of police.

The injured was rushed to a

hospital in a critical condition. Some eyewitnesses shot the incident with their mobile phones and posted the video on social media, which later went viral. Sources said Dipuna has four other brothers and they are residents of Badu Sahi in Old Town. Their family owns some property in the area, over which the siblings are embroiled in a dispute.

The Lingaraj police began investigation into the incident.

## 'Reintroduce self-financing courses'



**AISF submits memo to Governor**

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

The All India Students' Federation (AISF) on Tuesday urged Governor and Chancellor of universities Prof Ganeshi Lal to ensure reintroduction of self-financing courses as regular ones in all the three Government-run universities.

A delegation of the organisation submitted a memorandum to Prof Lal highlighting that higher education and technical education have vast potentials and it is the responsibility of the State Government to provide free education to aspiring students. But no concrete step has been taken in this regard and whatever

facilities the universities have are being stopped.

AISF leaders said that as the Chancellor's office has asked to stop the self-financing courses, the aspiring students are shocked as for them it was the only option to get higher education in some specific fields. AISF State President Sanghamitra Jena said that by the decision of the Government, future of poor and middleclass students is shattered. Prof Lal reportedly promised the delegation that he would definitely look into the grievances of the students as he is committed to qualitative education.

The delegation included AISF State joint secretary Bibeka Krushna, Shiksha Banchao Odisha Banchao advisor Jayant Das and other student leaders Manoj Kumar Kar and Soumya Ranjan Prusty.

## Detailed guidelines issued

**TATHYA** ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has issued detailed guidelines for timely spending of the budgetary grants out of the Vote on Account Budget for the financial year 2022-23.

Principal Secretary, Finance, Vishal Dev has issued the guidelines for spending on the interim budget through implementation of Cash Management System (CMS) in the selected departments through Quarterly Expenditure Allocation (QEA) for the first quarter and Monthly Expenditure Plan (MEP) till July, 2022.

In March this year, Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari had presented the Vote on Account of Rs 1,06,498 crore for the first four months of 2022 23 fiscal and announced a total budget outlay of Rs 2 lakh crore for the current

financial year.

The Cash Management System was initially adopted in respect of the 10 Demand for Grants administered by large spending departments during the financial year 2010-11. Thereafter, it has been extended to 10 more departments from 2011-12 to 2017-18. All these 20 departments will also continue to remain under the purview of Cash Management System in 2022-23.

The departments are Works, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare, School & Mass Education, ST and SC Development, Health and Family Welfare, Housing and Urban Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Industries, Water Resources, Forest, Environment and Climate Change, Agriculture amd Farmers' Empowerment, Rural Development, Energy, Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts, Fisheries and

Animal Resources Development, Women and Child Development, Higher Education, Skill Development and Technical Education, MSME, Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.

These departments have been asked to work out a monthly expenditure plan (MEP) on the basis of the QEA. The Finance Department has also provided an online platform to the departments to update their QEA and MEP in the Budget Execution Technique Automation (BETA) system for the year 2021-22 so as to ensure effective monitoring of monthly and quarterly expenditure patterns.

The departments were also directed to update their QEA for the first quarter and MEP for the month from April to July in the online system.

"The limit of expenditure indicated for the first quarter and for the month of July is

the minimum; however, the Administrative Departments are free to enhance the MEP and QEA for their respective departments within the overall limit indicated in the Voted, Charged, Revenue and Capital section of the Vote on Account and in line with the broad principles outlined by the Finance Department," Dev said in the circular.

However, the QEA for the first quarter and MEP for the month of July should not be modified by the Administrative Departments without prior approval of the Finance Department.

Dev made it clear that the expenditure for the continuing Central Sector Schemes/ Centrally Sponsored Schemes out of the Vote on Account, 2022-23, only should be considered in accordance with the QEA for the first quarter and MEP for the month of July, 2022, subject to the limit of Vote on Account and receipt of Central assistance.

## Nalco posts record net profit, op revenue

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Aluminium Company Limited (Nalco) has surpassed several milestones in its journey of business excellence during the Financial Year 2021-22.

Showing robust performance across all its business units, the company has posted its best-ever annual production and sales, registering the highest-ever revenue from operations and the highest-ever net profit (PAT) of Rs 14,181 crore and Rs 2,952 crore, respectively. The net profit jumped by 227% over the preceding

financial year.

In FY 21-22, the company achieved bauxite production of 75.11 lakh tonnes and produced aluminium at its name plate capacity of 4.60 lakh tonnes for the first time since inception, surpassing all previous records.

Nalco CMD Sridhar Patra said the results were driven by strong operational performance coupled with effective raw material procurement and sales strategy, cost saving measures, supported by positive business outlook, favourable LME price and uptick in global aluminium demand.

## 'Paperman India' makes it to Book of Records



**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

'Paperman India' Shashanka Sekhar Dash successfully earned a place in Guinness Book of World Records. Monday Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal handed over the GWR certificate to him in a programme at the Raj Bhavan. With this achievement he left behind Italy's Sergio Bodini's 1,444 newspapers collection record. Till date Shanshanka has collected more than 10,000 newspapers of 5,100 different titles from 153 countries and 94 languages.

Earlier, Shashanka's name was featured three times with the Limca Book of Records,

once each with the India Book of Records and Credence Book of World Records. He has also placed his name in OMG Book of Records. He has started a newspaper museum in his village Arangabad of Bari block of Jajpur district in his father's name to preserve the newspapers. His Dolagobinda newspaper museum and research centre is a hub of newspapers as well as history and heritage.

Recently, Shashanka had requested Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to establish a newspaper museum in the State and he was ready to donate all his collections to it, which will be the first its kind in India.

## Many in BJD in race for Rajya Sabha berths

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the issuance of formal notification for election to three Rajya Sabha seats from Odisha on Tuesday, hectic lobby has begun in the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) as the regional party is all set to win all three seats without any hurdle. The election will take place on June 10.

Senior BJD leaders including those who have not got any position for a long time, those who lost the election and those who have recently joined the party are lobbying hard to get a party ticket for the election. There is buzz within the party that

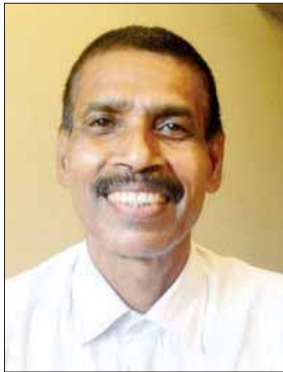
party supremo Naveen Patnaik might pick at least one woman candidate for the election. Names of many leaders, including Sasmit Patra, Pradeep Majhi, Sulata Deo, Shrimayee Mishra, Prasanna Patsani, Santosh Amat, Susmita Bagchi and Manas Mangaraj are doing the rounds.

However, Naveen Patnaik, who always takes surprise moves by picking up a candidate at the grassroots level, may also repeat the same in this poll. Notably, the tenure of Rajya Sabha members Prasanna Acharya, N Bhaskar Rao and Sasmit Patra will end on July 1.

# HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

# Sidhu case: Supreme Court restores judiciary dignity

At least 87 crore people of India between 15 and 65 years of age began reposing faith in the judiciary the day the Supreme Court sent Navjot Singh Sidhu to jail for homicide committed 34 years ago. Patiala native Siddhu, an adored Indian celebrity for having been a great cricket batsman, television anchor-artist and a maverick-grade politician across decades, had killed an elderly man in a fit of arrogant fury over a trivial issue. The Patiala boy got into first class international cricket in 1981. Incidentally, seven illustrious years into the game, on December 27, 1988, he and a close friend were seated in a car parked quite onto the passage space near the Sheranwala Gate Crossing in Patiala. A 65-year old Gurnam Singh, hurriedly on way to a bank, asked Sidhu to make way. Sidhu didn't like the manner of being told to get aside; and a road rage incident ensued. Gurnam was beaten up by Sidhu to death. Naturally, being a



**BISWARAJ PATNAIK**

big celebrity, he was marked by people committing the crime and was duly charged for murder but h eld 'not guilty' by the trial court in September 1999. Horrifically dissatisfied with the verdict, the victim's nephew Jaswinder Singh, by way of an eyewitness to the crime, appealed to the Punjab and Haryana High Court which reversed the verdict of the trial court and held both the accused guilty of

culpable homicide not amounting to murder. Sidhu and Sandhu were sent to jail for three years. In 2007, both appealed to the Supreme Court, which suspended the sentence and granted bail rather mindlessly. The suspended sentence enabled Sidhu to contest the Lok Sabha by-poll from Amritsar. Eventually, in 2018, a Bench headed by Justices Chaleswar and Sanjay Kishan Kaul let the two off with a meagre fine of 1,000 rupees without any jail term, saying 'there was no evidence to prove that the death was caused by the single blow' dealt by Sidhu. The court further made clear that Sidhu did not use any weapon; so, he was not a murderer; the incident was only an accident. The complainants were shocked at the judgment and lost no time in filing a review plea. As if God descended on the shoulders of the adjudicating Justices AM Khanwilkar and SK Kaul; the court ruled conclusively that 'the hand can also be used as a

weapon by itself when it belonged to a boxer, wrestler, cricketer or an extremely physically fit person inflicting a blow.' More significantly, the victim was a frail 65-year old defenceless person. So, Sidhu cannot say he did not know the effect of the blow and plead ignorance. In the given circumstances, if tempers were lost, the consequences of the loss of temper must also be borne. Thus, Sidhu was found guilty of the offence under Section 323 of the IPC for voluntarily causing extreme hurt. The apex court sentenced him to one-year rigorous imprisonment.

For the first time in many years, a truly guilty creature who escaped even the Supreme Court with a 'not guilty' kind of a verdict with only a miserably insignificant 1000-rupee fine for a grievous crime got nabbed down. The humane judges with penetrating minds went deep into the matter to give justice irrespective of the grandeur of status

of the guilty. Upholders of the Constitution are rejoicing over the divine verdict. Celebrations are still on among the righteous communities in the legal world.

For the judiciary to be independent and impartial to serve the Constitutional goals, the judges need to act fairly, reasonably, free of any fear and favour. The judiciary stands between the citizen and the State as a rampart against misuse or abuse of power by the executive. The judiciary is essentially the interpreter of the Constitution, which is the mother book to show the way to all the functional domains of any sovereign state with a real good executive and legislature. The ultimate right to interpret and clarify the Constitution has been given to the Supreme Court, which thus is the sole protector of the will of the state. It is the guardian of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people. To perform this

particularly sensitive role, it exercises the power of judicial review. The Supreme Court has the power to determine the Constitutional validity of all laws. It can reject any such law which is held to be unconstitutional. The High Courts too are Constitutional courts with similar power.

The Indian judiciary acts as the guardian of fundamental rights and freedoms of the people. The people have the Right to Constitutional Remedies, under which they can seek the protection of courts for preventing a violation or for meeting any threat to their rights. The Supreme Court and the High Courts have the power to issue writs for this purpose. The judicial administration in India is organised and run in accordance with the rules and orders of the Supreme Court. The courts are absolutely free to conduct open trials. The accused is also given full opportunity to defend himself. The state provides free legal aid to the accused for defence if he

is poor and needy.

Under Public Interest Litigation system, the courts of law can initiate and enforce action for securing any significant public or general interest being adversely affected or likely to be affected by the action of any agency, public or private. Any citizen or group or voluntary organisation or even a court itself can bring to notice any case demanding action for protecting and satisfying a public interest. It provides for an easy, simple, speedier and less expensive system of providing judicial relief to the aggrieved public.

Justices Khanwilkar and Kaul will be occupying golden pages in chronicles of history for being truly judicious about a case initiated 34 years ago and buried as having been disposed of lawfully. Justices Khanwilkar and Kaul have not only made India proud but also have restored the eroded image of the judiciary. The people of India are heaving a sigh of relief.



In Puri

# Servitor hurt in firing dies; 1 held, gun seized

Another youth stabbed; 3 detained

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PURI

The servitor, who had been shot at the busy Kakudi Khai Square near the Emar Mutt here on Tuesday evening, succumbed to the injuries at night.

The deceased was identified as Shivaram Patra of Harachandi Taluchha Sahi in the pilgrim town.

As per reports, two bike-

borne miscreants fired two rounds at Pata, just 10 metre away from the Lions' Gate of the Shree Jagannath Temple.

Eyewitnesses said Patra was on his way towards Bada Danda through Kakudi Khai road by his motorcycle when he was fired upon near the Emar Mutt.

The Singhadwar police shifted the wounded Patra to the District Headquarters Hospital where he was declared dead.

Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh who reached the spot to assess

the situation said the prime accused in the murder named Chandan Barik was detained in connection with the incident. The weapon used in the crime was also seized.

The SP further said personal enmity is the prime motive behind the crime. Further investigation is ongoing to unearth more information.

However, hours of the firing incident, another youth was stabbed by miscreants near Mausai Maa Temple in the pilgrim town.

The injured identified as Suryanarayan Tripathy was shifted to the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack in a critical condition.

Sources informed that past enmity was suspected to be the motive behind the crime. Police have launched a probe into the case and detained three persons.

The firing and stabbing incidents have triggered shockwaves in the holy town and residents have demanded the police to curb the surging crime rate.

## Workshop on child sexual abuse held

PNS ■ PHULBANI

The People's Cultural Centre (PECUC) Kandhamal unit organised a district-level media workshop on prevention and reporting of child sexual abuse and exploitation at the District Press Club here in support of World Vision India, World Vision Germany, BMZ and Sahara organisation.

Senior journalist Dr Arup Jena attended as chief guest. District Press Club president Sunil Pattnaik, Biren Digal, Sukant Nayak and Biswajit Sahu joined as guests of honour while senior advocate

Bijayakrushna Pattnaik attended as chief speaker.

"Media should know what to do and what not to do keeping in mind the best interest of the child, promote a positive attitude towards the victim, before filling a story, consult resource persons and organisations in the area. The mediapersons should be aware of various legal provisions, laws and regulations with regard to child rights and should not disclose the identity of the victim or the victim's family. They should not treat the child as a sexual object and glorify the crime or the offence," the speakers said.

In Baleswar

# Girl hangs self after ditched by lover

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A minor girl of Maitali village in the Nilgiri area in Baleswar district allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself following failure in a love relationship.

Police began investigation into the matter based on a complaint filed by the deceased's brother. The cops have seized a suicide note in which the girl alleged that her lover exploited her under the pretext of marriage.

Later, he betrayed her by

refusing to marry her. Unable to bear the mental agony and humiliation, she decided to take the extreme step and end her life, the suicide note stated.

In another incident, an abandoned newborn was rescued from the Soro are by some locals and handed over to the Childline. Reports said the newborn was found dumped underneath the over-bridge on the National Highway-16 in the scorching heat. The locals after hearing his cries rescued the child, reports said.

# 67-yr-old Ganjam school has no HM

Many teacher posts vacant

PNS ■ CHHATRAPUR

A 67-year-old educational institution, Bharati Vidyapeeth, in Ganjam NAC is now reeling under acute shortage of teaching staff. For quite a long time, the school has not a permanent headmaster also.

It is one of the oldest high schools of the locality, established in the year 1955.

The NCC wing of the school was withdrawn some years back. At present the school has only 12 teachers for about 200 students.

In the year 2011, the school had celebrated the Golden Jubilee. The then Governor of Odisha was the chief guest on the occasion. Though the various problems of the school were brought to the attention of the authorities, nothing concrete came out during the last two years, said a guardian.

In Mayurbhanj

# WB cattle trader shot dead; Rs 20L looted

PNS ■ BARIPADA

Unidentified miscreants shot dead a cattle trader from West Bengal and decamped with Rs 20 lakh at Hatbadra village under the Rural police station in Rairangpur block of Mayurbhanj district on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Jamus Alli of Kambali police station in West Bengal.

Sources said some traders from the neighbouring State came to Hatbadra to buy

cattle. At around 7 am, four miscreants came and fired three rounds at two traders at the cattle market. They later decamped with the cash from their possession.

Alli, who collapsed on the ground after the firing, was later declared dead by doctors at Rairangpur hospital. A bullet is suspected to have hit him on the chest, sources said.

Meanwhile, the Rural police have registered a case, sent the body for postmortem and began an investigation.

# CJM, JMFC Courts demanded in Paradip

PNS ■ PARADIP

The NOC Foundation has demanded for establishment of Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) and Judicial Magistrate of First Class (JMFC) Courts in Paradip for the benefit of common people.

In this connection, a delegation led by NOC Foundation State coordinator Sailendra Senapati on Tuesday submitted a memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister through the ADM's office in Paradip seeking the establishment of the courts.

According to Major Ports Act of India, every port in the country must have a



Chief Judicial Magistrate Court to produce the accused of prohibited area of the port. But accused persons arrested within prohibited area of the

Paradip Port area being produced at the CJM court situated at Jagatsinghpur 60 km away from Paradip. Five police stations are there at

Paradip and the accused persons of the police stations are being forwarded to JMFC (P) Kujang, which is 30 km far from Paradip.

# Bargarh's Santosh wins gold in Delhi games

PNS ■ BARGARH

Santosh Kumar Padhan, who works for the Bargarh Police Department, represented Odisha in the second Khello India National Master Game Competition which was held at the New Delhi.

He scored first position in long jump, triple jump and 100 mt hurdles and was named the best player in the game. So he secured gold.

Ravi Kant (IPS) of the RC Commission in Delhi felicitated him at the Delhi.

From May 11 to 15, the first



Pan India National Masters Championship was held at the Dravid Paduken Stadium in Bangalore. In the competition Pradhan also brought glory for the State and district by bringing three gold medals in the long jump, double jump and 100-meter hurdles respectively and silver in high jump.

After reaching at the Bargarh police station, the SP felicitated Padhan on Sunday. It is learned that Padhan will represent India at the upcoming World Master Games in Japan and he is preparing himself for it.

# JSL signs MoU with SCTEVT

To train stainless steel professionals

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (SCTEVT) has signed an MoU with the Jindal Stainless to promote technical education in the field of

stainless steel and its various applications.

Under the MoU, stainless steel courses will be introduced in all the polytechnic colleges in Odisha from June 2022. The MoU was signed by Vice Chairman, SCTE&VT, Reghu G and Unit Head, Jindal Stainless Limited (JSL), Deepak Agrawal. Dignitaries

present at the ceremony included Chairman, SCTE&VT and Principal Secretary to Government, Skill Development and Technical Education (SDTE) and Industries Departments, Hemant Sharma; Additional Secretary, SDTE, Government of Odisha, Tapan Satpathy; Resident Director, JSL, SS Upadhyay

and General Manager, Sales and Distribution, Ranit Rana. Commending the development, Chairman, SCTEVT&T and Principal Secretary to Government, SDTE and Industries Departments, Sharma said, "The collaboration with Jindal Stainless will enhance the learning experience for students and faculty both."

Company-cops nexus in S'garh

# 'Locals barred from project public hearing'

Environmentalists urge SPCB to declare meet void

BIJAY MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR

A company-police nexus has successfully prevented hundreds of villagers to a public hearing site at Badapurunapani in Sundargarh district for environment clearance (EC) of a green field project of Kai International Limited at Kapanda, alleged Lok Shakti Abhiyan president and environmentalist Prafulla Samantara.

The administration conducted the public hearing with a few company supporters preventing more than 500 affected villagers who are opposing the most polluted



project, he said.

At the outside gate of the venue, police force did not allow them to participate in the public hearing and on the way many were also held up by the police. Many including women were taken in police vehicles to unknown places, while some of them were kept in Gurundia police station, he told.

In a letter to The Member Secretary, State Pollution

Control Board, Samantaray demanded to declare the unfair and undemocratic public hearing as void.

The KAI International proposes for installation of an Iron Ore Beneficiation Plant of 1.5 MTPA throughput (1.16 MTPA High Grade Ore), an Iron Ore Pelletization Plant of 1.2 MTPA and Producer Gas Plant 27,000 Nm<sup>3</sup>/hr at Kapanda. The public hearing was held on May 24.

# Dairy, fish and poultry farms script success

JSpur DM assures support for further growth

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

Jagatsinghpur Collector Parul Patwari on Monday visited some dairy, fish and poultry farms under Tirtol block in the district and discussed with the farm owners their success stories and problems and assured providing them necessary assistance.

Patwari went to the Tirtol dairy plant at Jaipur and inspected its infrastructures and production capacity. As many as 520 milk cooperative societies with 44,565 members have been supplying 80,000 litres of milk to this plant per



day. The Collector planned for the plant's modernisation and instructed to increase its capacity to 1,30,000 litres.

Then, she visited a pig farm operated by woman entrepreneur Rojalin Mohanty in Tarajanga panchayat. Rojalin, who has been awarded by the State Government for her

entrepreneurship, informed that about 600 pigs under species of Large White Work Shire are in the farm, which has been supplying pigs to northern States, mainly Assam and West Bengal, regularly and there is a plan to enhance the farm's capacity.

The Collector then visited

## INBRIEF

### SENIOR ICRISAT OFFICIALS MEET CS

Bhubaneswar: Director General Dr Aravind Kumar Deputy and Director Country Relations Dr AK Padhee of International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) made a courtesy call on Odisha Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra at the Lokseva Bhavan here on Tuesday. They presented ICRISAT kits to Mahapatra and discussed about recent technologies relating to science-led agriculture.



### K'MAL PROJECT ASSOCIATE HELD TAKING BRIBE

Phulbani: The Vigilance police on Wednesday caught Nagendra Swain, Project Associate of Project Implementing Agency Office, Tumidibandha in Kandhamal district, red-handed while taking a bribe of Rs 50,000 from a person for processing the bills towards payment for execution of farm ponds of four beneficiaries. After the seizure of the money Swain was arrested. Further investigation was in progress against the accused.



### U SAMMILANI REMEMBERS PARALA MAHARAJA

Bhubaneswar: Rich tributes were paid to architect of modern Odisha, former president of Utkal Sammilani and first Prime Minister of Odisha Parala Maharaj Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev on his death anniversary here on Wednesday. Members of the Sammilani Mancheswar Industrial Estate branch led by unit president Dillip Dashsharma garlanded the statue of Maharaja and recalled his great contributions for the formation of a separate Odisha State. He said the Maharaja was very vocal in favour of women's education. Vice-president Sheetal Mohanty, secretary Govinda Subudhi, joint secretary Sidhartha Garanayak, Members Maheswar Biswal, Prasanna Rath and Samar Mohanty joined the programme.



### SIBAKRUPA BOSE PASSES AWAY

Cuttack: Ex-Ravenshawian Sibakrupa Bose, who was Chief Mentor and Life Coach at the Centurion University of Technology and Management, passed away at his Cuttack Bangali Sahi house on Wednesday. Sibakrupa, who was "Gopal" for his friends and "Gopalda" for his juniors, had a magnetic personality. Though he was the son of famous freedom fighter and Congress leader late Raja Krushna Bose, he maintained a low profile throughout his student career and after.



### MP VISITS GANJAM BLOCK, REVIEWS DEV WORKS

Brahmapur: Brahmapur MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu along with Chhatrapur MLA Subash Chandra Behera, Zilla Parishad Member Rashmita Nahak, BJD Ganjam block president Pravasi Pradhan on Tuesday visited Raghunathpur and interacted with villagers and also participated in the Nrusingha Puja. Later, they attended a meeting of Ganjam Panchayat Samiti and reviewed the ongoing developmental works. Sahu also inaugurated an ultramodern videoconferencing room in the block premises.



### GANJAM DANCER SHIVANI WINS IN TV PROG

BRAHMAPUR: Ganjam's wooden foot dancer Shivani Swain has brought glory for his family and the district by winning a talent show 'Pratibhara Dadagiri'. The award-winning Odishi dancer, who performed with Sameer in the Sarthakar TV show, was felicitated by noted Ollywood actor Siddhant Mohapatra. District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange and District Culture Officer Jiten Parida greeted her for the success.





# 2K registered unrecognised parties to face EC action

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) has decided to act against over 2,000 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) whose numbers saw a 300 per cent increase in the last two decades with most coming into existence just before Lok Sabha or Assembly elections. Saying it is placing the facts in public domain so that the citizens know the affairs of the political parties, the EC said in 2019, of the 2354 RUPPs only 623 contested even as 87 RUPPs were found to be non-existent on ground. Many RUPPS do not comply to the statutory requirements. Alarmingly, the RUPPs combined claimed Income Tax exemption in the range of 100 crore to 608 crore.

This is the first time that the poll body has decided to act against RUPPs for flouting rules, including failure to furnish a contribution report and communicate any change in its name, head office, office bearers and address to the poll panel. The EC said that it has been reported that income tax

exemptions have been taken to the tune of Rs 445 crores in 2018-19 by 199 RUPPs and Rs 608 crores in 2019-20 by 219 RUPPs. Of these, 66 RUPPS have claimed income tax exemption without submitting contribution reports in Form 24A as mandated under section 29C of the Act.

In view of the fact that there are 2174 RUPPs, which have not submitted contribution reports, the list shall be sent to the Department of Revenue for taking all consequential action as per the RP Act 1951 read with the relevant provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961 and other statutory/regulatory regime including not granting exemption / withdrawing exemption, if already granted/ examining liability of wrongly claiming exemption as the case may be.

The poll body has directed chief electoral officials of state and union territories to put this order on their websites for compliance and for affording an opportunity to anyone aggrieved by above action. "Action to be initiated against those receiving donations without due statutory compliances.

Action initiated against three registered unrecognized political parties (RUPPs) reported to be involved in Serious financial impropriety," the EC said in a statement.

There are 87 RUPPs, whose address of communication, was statutorily required as registration requirement under section 29A(4). Any change in address was required to be communicated to the EC under section 29A(9), which they have not complied. "These RUPPs have been found to be non-existent after a physical verification carried out by the respective Chief Electoral Officers. The names of such non-existent RUPPs shall be deleted from the list and benefits under the Symbols Order (1968) withdrawn" the EC said.

As per data shared by the poll body, of the 2354 RUPPs over 92 per cent have not filed their Contribution Report in 2019 to the poll body.

The data showed that nearly 2056 RUPPs, which have failed to furnish Annual Audit Account of the (5) concerned financial year, are indicative of gaps in vital financial information including bank

account, PAN, authorized signatories pertaining to those RUPPs, statement of assets and liabilities, contributions received, details of donors and expenditure.

"Any RUPP aggrieved by any action may approach concerned CEO with full facts within 30 days of the issue of this direction with all evidences inter-alia including proof of existence, other legal and regulatory compliances made till now such as submission of year wise annual audited accounts, contribution report, expenditure report, if any, updation of office bearers including authorized signatories for financial transactions including bank account) and operations under the Symbols Order 1968," the EC said.

The poll body further said that 100 RUPPs, which have failed to furnish Election Expenditure Statements after the contest of election(s), have violated the directions of Election Commission. They may approach concerned CEO with full facts within 30 days of the issue of this direction for remedial action, if any, to avoid any consequential action.

# MP Karti booked in visa-for-bribery scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a money laundering case against Congress MP Karti Chidambaram and others in connection with the visas-for-bribery scam entailing irregular issuance of visas to 263 Chinese nationals in 2011 when his father P Chidambaram was the Union Home Minister.

The ED has filed the case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) taking cognisance of a recent CBI case related to the scam.

The case pertains to allegations of Rs 50 lakh being paid as kickbacks to Karti and his close associate and Chartered Accountant S Bhaskararaman by a top executive of Vedanta Group company Talwandi Sabo Power Ltd. (TSPL), which was setting up a power plant in Punjab, according to the CBI FIR. The CBI had raided the premises of the Chidambaram family and arrested Bhaskararaman last week, even as Karti is likely to depose before it on Thursday.

This is the third money laundering case against Karti with the INX Media and



Aircel-Maxis cases being probed by the agency for the last few years.

The ED will probe the possible "proceeds of crime" that could have been generated due to the alleged illegal activity in the visa case and once prima facie evidence is gathered, it can attach those assets, they said. The accused persons in the case will be questioned as part of the investigation, they further said.

Karti, 50, has denied all the allegations. In a statement posted on his Twitter handle on Tuesday, he said "if this is not harassment, not a witch hunt, then what is." Meanwhile, Karti has been summoned by the CBI for questioning on Thursday in connection with visa scam. He has been asked to join the probe within 16 hours after he returned from Britain.

# Honcho held under PMLA for causing ₹155 cr loss to bank



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Ashok Kumar Mittal, Director of Karnal-based Mahesh Timber Pvt. Ltd. in a bank fraud case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for diverting funds to Singapore through fake imports, causing a loss of Rs 155 crore to the bank.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by the CBI here for criminal conspiracy, cheating, forgery and criminal misconduct of a public servant against the accused firm, its directors and others.

"Ashok Kumar Mittal is the key director of Mahesh

Timber Pvt. Ltd. who allegedly connived with the bank officials and fraudulently got Letter of Credit limits enhanced from Rs 21 crore to Rs 195 crore, which were diverted to his Singapore based entities on account of fake imports. The accused firm and its directors caused overall wrongful loss to the bank to the tune of Rs 155 crore and wrongful gains to themselves in this manner," the ED said in a statement.

Mittal was non-cooperative during the investigation and withheld relevant information apart from misleading the investigation. After the arrest, he was produced before the Special Court, Panchkula, Haryana on Tuesday and has been remanded to ED custody for four days, the agency added.

# Indian-Bangladeshi Navy bilateral exercise underway

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to further strengthen ties in the maritime domain, the four-day third edition of Indian Navy-Bangladesh Navy bilateral exercise "Bongosagar" is now on in Bangladesh.

Giving details of the exercise, navy officials said here on Wednesday, the drill commenced at Port Mongla, Bangladesh on Tuesday. The harbour phase of exercise is scheduled for two days followed by a sea phase in the northern Bay of Bengal from Thursday.

Exercise 'Bongosagar' is aimed at developing a high degree of interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a wide spectrum of maritime exercises and operations between the two navies.

Indian naval ships Kora, an indigenously built guided missile corvette, and Sumedha, an indigenously built offshore patrol vessel, are participating in the Exercise. The Bangladesh Navy is being represented by Abu Ubaidah and Ali Haider, both guided missile frigates.

The harbour phase of the exercise includes professional and social interac-



tions, and friendly sporting fixtures, in addition to the tactical level planning discussions on the conduct of the exercises at sea.

The sea phase of the exercise would

facilitate ships from both the navies to participate in intensive surface warfare drills, weapon firing drills, seamanship evolutions and coordinated air operations in a tactical scenario.

# CJI-chaired panel deliberated upon issue of tenure of 23 NCLT members: Centre to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that a committee chaired by the Chief Justice of India had held a meeting on April 20 in which the question regarding the tenure of 23 members of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has been deliberated upon. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told a vacation bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Bela M Trivedi that the committee, which also comprises apex court judge Justice Surya Kant and Secretary of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, is seized of the issue and the next meeting is likely to be held within a week or 10 days.

Mehta said the committee had considered all aspects of the matter, including verifica-



tion reports of character and antecedents, which are considered to be one of the important factors for the assessment of the suitability of the 23 members for extension of their term of office keeping in view the sen-



stive nature of their duties.

"Now, I am given to understand that the next meeting is scheduled in a week or 10 days," he said while requesting the top court to hear the matter on June 15. Mehta said the next retirement of one of the NCLT members is on June 20. The bench was hearing a plea that has raised issues about the tenure of the members of the tribunal.

The apex court noted the submissions of senior advocate

Maninder Singh, who appeared for the petitioner and submitted that term of all the members of the 2019 batch would come to an end on July 3, 2022, though the term should legitimately be for a period of five years.

"List the proceedings on June 15, 2022," the bench said, adding, "We request the Solicitor General to appraise the court of the developments which have taken place in the meantime."

# Delhi HC seeks Centre stand on plea to regulate online gaming

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought the stand of the Central Government on a petition to regulate online gaming and stop the games that are not games of skills but chance.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Sachin Datta issued notice on the petition by lawyer Atul Batra who said in his plea that his concern was that online games of chance are promoted as games of skill and that online gambling is as bad as any substance addiction. Noting that betting and gambling is a State subject, the court asked the

petitioner to implead the Delhi Government as a party to the petition. Central government counsel said that various ministries are deliberating on the issue, which concerns a State subject, and the Centre, therefore, cannot legislate upon it without the consent of the State. In the petition, the petitioner stated that if online gambling and betting are not regulated, it is likely to cause immense damage to the society at large as youngsters with impressionable minds can fall prey to such games, which will have an adverse effect on their personal and professional life.

The petitioner sought appropriate action against an entity offering an online crick-



et game involving money on its website and prima facie promoting a game of chance.

The petitioner said that under the Information and Technology Act, the Centre is

empowered to issue appropriate instructions to ban the operation of illegal gambling online websites. The matter would be heard next on November 16.

# Captain Abhilasha becomes first woman officer to join Aviation Corps as combat pilot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Captain Abhilasha Barak has become the first woman officer to join the Army Aviation Corps as a Combat Aviator or pilot. Fifteen women officers had expressed their desire to join Army Aviation Corps but only two officers were selected after Pilot Aptitude Battery Test and Medical examination.

Giving details of the momentous achievement, the Additional Directorate General of Public Information, defence ministry on Wednesday described it as a "Golden Letter Day" in the history of the Indian Army Aviation Corps.

It flies Chetak, Cheetah and Dhruv helicopters and forms the life line for troops guarding the Siachen glacier and other inaccessible forward posts along the Indian borders. The helicopters are used for reconnaissance besides medical evacuation and disaster relief.

Upon successful completion of her training, Captain Barak was awarded the Coveted Wings along with 36 Army pilots, the directorate post said. The post, shared on Instagram, also features a set of pictures from the ceremony.

It said "Golden letter day in the history of Indian Army aviation. Captain Abhilasha Barak becomes the first woman officer to join Army Aviation Corps as Combat Aviator after successful completion of training."

"Captain Abhilasha Barak has been awarded the Coveted Wings along with 36 Army Pilots by Director General and Colonel Commandant Army Aviation. Young Aviators are now ready to spread their wings in Combat Aviation Squadrons," it read. The Army Aviation wing of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in India came into being took place in 1942. In August 1947 the first Indian Air Observation Post-flight was raised.

The present day Army Aviation Corps was established on November 1, 1986. It was "immediately inducted into Operation Pawan," which has been described as a "crucial test" for the Corps that had been newly formed. It was the first major participation by the Corps in the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) operations in Sri Lanka.

At present, women are given the responsibility of air traffic control and ground duty in the Aviation Department. Now Barak will take over the responsibility of the pilot. The Corps candidates are trained at the Combat Army Aviation Training School, Nashik. In June, last year, for the first time, two women officers were selected for helicopter pilot training.

The IAF already has started inducting women officers as fighter pilots and in 2018, Flying Officer Avani Chaturvedi became the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft.

# Some antivirals may shorten monkeypox symptoms: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Some antiviral medications might have the potential to shorten symptoms of monkeypox and reduce the amount of time a patient is contagious, according to a study of seven patients diagnosed with the rare viral disease in the UK between 2018 and 2021.

The cases analysed in the study, published on Tuesday in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal, represent the first instances of in-hospital transmission and household transmission outside of Africa.

The research also reported the patient response to the first off-label use of two different antiviral medications -- brincidofovir and tecovirimat

-- to treat the disease.

The study found little evidence that brincidofovir was of clinical benefit but concluded that further research into the potential of tecovirimat would be warranted.

The researchers also report detection of monkeypox virus in blood and throat swabs.

As optimum infection control and treatment strategies for this disease are not yet established, data from the study could help inform global efforts to further understand the clinical features of the disease as well as transmission dynamics, they said.

"As public health officials are trying to understand what is causing the May 2022 monkeypox outbreaks in Europe and North America -- which



have affected several patients who reported neither travel nor an identified link to a previously known case -- our study offers some of the first insights into the use of antivirals for the treatment of monkeypox in humans," said Hugh Adler of the Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, UK.

"Although this latest outbreak has affected more

patients than we had previously encountered in the UK, historically monkeypox has not transmitted very efficiently between people, and overall the risk to public health is low," Adler, lead author on the paper, said. With international travel returning to pre-pandemic levels, public health officials and healthcare workers around the world must remain vigilant to the possibility of new cases

of monkeypox, said Nick Price of Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, senior author on the paper.

Of the seven UK monkeypox cases analysed in the study, four were imported from West Africa with three further cases occurring due to human-to-human transmission within the case clusters.

Monkeypox, a close relative of the smallpox virus, is a rare disease classified as a High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) by the UK Health Security Agency.

There are currently no licensed treatments for monkeypox and there is limited data on the duration of its contagiousness, with the incubation period ranging from five to 21 days.

# Financial support to rare disease patients increased from ₹20L to ₹50L under RAN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Following a demand from activists, the Union Health Ministry has increased the financial support from 20 lakh to 50 lakh for treatment of patients suffering from rare diseases under the umbrella scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN).

"Beneficiaries for such financial assistance would not be limited to BPL families, but extended to about 40% of the population, who are eligible as per norms of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, their treatment in Government tertiary hospitals only," as per the official state-

ment of the Health Ministry.

The RAN was set up to provide financial assistance to patients, living below the poverty line and who are suffering from major life threatening diseases, to receive medical treatment at any of the super speciality Hospitals/Institutes or other Government hospitals.

The financial assistance to such patients is released in the form of a 'one-time grant', which is released to the Medical Superintendent of the Hospital in which the treatment has been received.

The Government had in May last year approved the National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021, aiming to

lower the high cost of treating rare diseases in India..

Activists like Saurabh Singh, co-founder-director of Rare Disease India Foundation (RDIF), have been pointing out the need for higher funds for the sector.

He had been urging the Government to address the gaps in providing life-saving treatment to those requiring it. Singh has suggested that the annual budgetary allocation of Rs. 25 crore under the RAN for 2021-22 that has not been spent could be immediately used to treat patients with diseases under Group (3) such as Gaucher, Pompe, Fabry disease and MPS I and MPS II.

# Gyanvapi row: Fresh plea on ban on Muslims’ entry to be heard

PNS ■ VARANASI

A fresh petition in the Shringar Gauri-Gyanvapi Mosque complex lawsuit seeking a ban on the entry of Muslims in Gyanvapi complex was on Wednesday transferred to the court of civil judge (senior division/fast track) from the court of civil judge, senior division.

The fast track court will hear the petition on May 30.

International general secretary of Vishwa Vedic Sanatan Sangh, Kiran Singh, on Tuesday last had filed a fresh petition in the court of Civil Judge (Senior Division) Ravi Kumar Diwakar in the Shringar Gauri temple-Gyanvapi complex matter seeking a ban on the entry of Muslims in the Gyanvapi complex in which the Gyanvapi mosque is located.

The petitioner also demanded that the entire Gyanvapi complex be handed over to Hindus and sought permission for worship of 'Shivling' claimed by the Hindu side to have been found in the wuzu khana of the Gyanvapi



complex. The civil judge (senior division) had accepted the petition.

District Judge Dr Ajay Kumar Vishvesha on Wednesday transferred the petition to the court of Civil Judge (Senior Division/ Fast Track) Mahendra Kumar Pandey. The fact track court posted the hearing for May 30.

It is learnt that the court of the district judge will hear the maintainability of the Shringar Gauri-Gyanvapi mosque com-

plex lawsuit on Thursday. The five women filed a petition in the court of Civil Judge (Senior Division) Ravi Kumar Diwakar seeking permission to worship in the Shringar Gauri temple and preservation of the idols located in the Gyanvapi mosque complex.

The defendants, including the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, which looks after the management of the Gyanvapi mosque, had moved an application in the Supreme

Court under Order 7, Rule 11 of the Civil Procedure Code (CrPC), raising question on the maintainability of the suit. The apex court on May 20 had transferred the petition to the court of the district judge from the court of the civil judge, senior division and directed him to hear the application moved by the defendants on priority basis. The court of district judge on Tuesday posted the hearing on the maintainability of the suit first on May 26.

# TN BJP leader hacked to death in Chennai in broad daylight

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi was to make an official visit to Chennai to dedicate to the nation Rs 31,400 crore worth infrastructure works built as centrally-sponsored projects, a popular BJP leader in the State was murdered in front of hundreds of onlookers at Chintadripet, a city suburb on Tuesday evening at 7.50.

Two motorcycle borne gangs hacked to death K Balachander (30), Chennai Central District Secretary of the BJP's Scheduled Caste Wing in front of a crowd who ran for their lives after watching the gruesome murder.

Balachander who was accompanied by a security guard was on his way to a tea shop while the gangs of unidentified persons struck him, killing him on the spot and withdrew from the scene as fast as they made their appearance.

Hours before the incident, C Sylendra Kumar, director general of police (law and order), Tamil Nadu Police had told reporters at Avadi, another



BJP leader K Balachander

city suburb that law and order was under control in the State and there were no reports of any unpleasant happenings. "Tamil Nadu is a very peaceful State. No instance of caste or communal clash in Tamil Nadu or firing or deaths due to spurious liquor has been reported in the State," Babu had told reporters at Avadi Police Commissionerate.

K Annamalai, BJP State chief took to the social media within hours and said that nobody was safe in Tamil Nadu. He asked the Police to

arrest all the accused in the murder of the party functionary. Karu Nagarajan, senior BJP leader who staged a sit-in in front of the Government hospital where Balachander's body was taken for autopsy asked reporters whether Chennai was the political capital of Tamil Nadu or murder capital.

In an embarrassment to the M K Stalin-led Government, a popular TV channel friendly to the DMK, aired a news on Wednesday stating that Chennai has seen 18 murders in the last 20 days. The report contained the details of the murders with date, time and information about the victims.

But Shankar Jiwai, Commissioner, Chennai City Police, described the news as wrong. "There has been a 25 per cent reduction in the number of murders," said Jiwai while speaking to reporters.

No arrests have been made in the Balachander murder case at the time of going to Press though hectic combing operations are underway across the city. This is Prime Minister's first visit to Tamil Nadu after the change of Government in the State in last May.

# Tripura CM calls on President, Shah, Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The new Chief Minister of the poll-bound Tripura Dr Manik Saha, who had this month replaced Biplab Kumar Deb, called on President Ram Nath Kovind, Home Minister Amit Shah and defence Minister Rajnath Singh here on Wednesday.

The change in the north East state was affected by the BJP central leadership as elections to the Tripura assembly are about Year away and the change is aimed at reducing the anti-incumbency of four year-rule of Deb as CM.

It was Saha's first visit to the national Capital since taking charge as the chief minister of the northeastern state on May 15.

Saha said he met the home minister and sought his continuous guidance for all-round development of Tripura.

"Delighted to meet the Union Home Minister Hon'ble Shri @AmitShah ji. Requested him for his continuous guidance so that I can devote myself to the all round development of Tripura as Chief Minister of the state," Saha tweeted.

## SSC RECRUITMENT SCAM MAY GO BEYOND ₹15K CR

# CBI grills senior Bengal Minister for 8 hrs as more scams surface

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation probing the School Service Commission recruitment scam following a Calcutta High Court order on Wednesday subjected Bengal Industries Minister and former Trinamool Congress secretary general Partho Chatterjee to intensive 8-hour grilling.

Chatterjee, was the State Education Minister when the large-scale recruitment scam that saw junior Education Minister Paresh Adhikari's daughter Ankita landing a teacher's job by-passing empanelled candidates took place. The said teacher has since been dismissed from service following a court order.

According to sources Chatterjee was asked a whole range of "uncomfortable" questions that he either circumvented or replied in a round-about manner. Chatterjee had

created a five-member screening panel comprising among others his own personal assistant and officer on special duty in order to advice the SSC which is presumed to be an autonomous body responsible for appointments in school level.

A judicial committee appointed by the High Court by Justice RJ Bag had indicted not only the minister but the aforementioned panel and even recommended criminal proceedings against the offenders saying the formation of the screening committee was an illegal act.

When asked as to why he went out of the way to appoint the screening panel or under whose supervision it worked, Chatterjee reportedly said that he had no control over the committee. When asked as to who controlled the committee or for that matter if any outsider was controlling it he

allegedly feigned ignorance, sources said adding he also failed to answer why he did not take action when reports of irregularities were coming in.

Sources in the CBI which has been grilling five senior State government officials who were in the screening committee and through whom the scam was operated said "Chatterjee's statements and the statements given by the five officials were not matching." They even said that the statements given by Chatterjee and his former Deputy Paresh Adhikari too contradicted at places."

The senior minister who has been asked to furnish his income details was on Wednesday asked to reduce his statements in writing for perusal.

While CBI sources said that the Minister could be summoned again they claimed that information regarding an

alleged newly constructed international school in West Midnapore and multiple apartments and hotels were also being collected.

While prima facie at least one thousand people were illegally given jobs by passing the empanelled candidates the High Court has directed the CBI to find out the total number of illegal appointments — which the petitioners' lawyers Firdous Shamim said could run into thousands — and money trail if any behind such recruitments.

Saying that it was a "multi-layered scam equivalent to Vyapam scam or chit fund" Shamim said illegal appointments took place in Group D, Group C, Primary, upper Primary, secondary and higher secondary level involving thousands of teachers.

"The rate for illegal appointments hovered anywhere between Rs 5 lakh for

the Group D level to Rs 20 or Rs 25 lakh for Higher Secondary level," he said adding "roughly it could involve a total scam of Rs 15,000 crores — and this is by the lower side."

Already about 600 people have been identified and lost their jobs and many more hundreds or even thousands could face a similar fate, sources said.

Meanwhile, there were more recruitment scams reported in other departments too, sources said. Protests were staged in front of the Calcutta University by aspiring professors who complained of a massive scam in the recruitment process of college teachers by the College Service Commission. CSC chairman Dipak Sarkar however denied such allegations. Similar scams were reported in the Health Department with the aspiring nurses staging protests outside the health ministry for the past two days.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress is likely to get 11 Rajya Sabha seats in the upcoming election cycle with some of its top leaders, including P Chidambaram and Jairam Ramesh, eyeing another term. This will also help the Congress strengthen its party position in the Upper House of Parliament from the current 29 to 33 members.

Some other top Congress leaders, including Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Mukul Wasnik, Randeep Surjewala, Ajay Maken and Rajeev Shukla, are waiting in the wings to get a Rajya Sabha nomination. Of the 55 vacancies arising in the Rajya Sabha in the next two months, seven Congress members — Chidambaram (Maharashtra), Ramesh (Karnataka), Ambika Soni (Punjab), Vivek Tankha (Madhya Pradesh), Pradeep Tamta (Uttarakhand), Kapil Sibal

(Uttar Pradesh) and Chhaya Verma (Chhattisgarh) — will be completing their terms.

The Congress will be gaining three to four seats in the Upper House if it manages to get all the three seats that are falling vacant in Rajasthan. While the party will get two seats in Chhattisgarh, where it is in power, it will get one seat each in Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Maharashtra, where it shares power with other like-minded parties.

The Congress is also likely to get one seat each in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka on the strength of its MLAs in these states. Sources said while Chidambaram and Ramesh are hopeful that the party leadership would give a nod to them for another term, there are a host of other leaders who are waiting for a Rajya Sabha berth for some time now.

Chidambaram is eyeing

the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Tamil Nadu. He has already met Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader M K Stalin. However, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's team is pushing for a young face in Praveen Chakravarty, the head of the party's Data Analytics department, for the seat.

Three-time Rajya Sabha member Ramesh will get a fourth term if his name is cleared for the lone seat in Karnataka, from where Surjewala is also a contender.

In Haryana, Surjewala, Kumari Selja and Kuldeep Bishnoi are vying for the lone seat, but former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda is pushing for the nomination of Anand Sharma. The former Union minister is a prominent member of the "Group of 23" and is considered close to Hooda, who is also a member of the grouping.

# After Nitish, Pawar raises ‘caste-based’ census issue

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Making a strong case for the reservations for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Wednesday roared strongly for the conduct of a 'caste-based' census by the Centre to determine the quantum of reservations for OBCs in the country.

Addressing a state convention on reservations organised by the NCP's OBC Cell at the YB Chavan Centre here, Pawar slammed the Narendra Modi-government at the Centre and the RSS that supports the government, for opposing the caste-based census in the country.

"The OBCs are not asking for anything free. They are merely demanding reservations as their right. The reservations cannot happen unless there is a caste-based national census. The SC and ST communities benefited by way of reservations made in the Constitution, We should make

similar reservations to the OBCs," the NCP chief said.

"For the purpose of providing reservations to the OBCs, we need to ascertain their exact population. Only way to ascertain the OBC population in the country is to conduct a caste-based national census. Once the caste-based national census is done, we will know what exactly is the OBC population in the country. The reservations for them can be decided on the basis of their population," Pawar said.

At the convention attended by the OBC leaders from across the state, north Maharashtra representative Umesh Nemade moved a resolution demanding a "caste-based" national census so as to pave the way for reservations for the OBCs living across the country.

Coming down heavily on the Modi government at the Centre for resisting a "caste-based" census in the country, Pawar said: "Yesterday, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar

once again raised the issue of caste-based census. But till the Modi-led BJP is in power at the Centre, I don't think caste-based census will happen in the country. This is because the mindset of the BJP and its ideological allies is different".

Pawar said that RSS joint secretary Bhyaji Joshi had gone on record that his organisation was totally opposed to the caste-based census on the assumption that it would vitiate the atmosphere in the country. "I would like to know from him: how will the atmosphere get vitiated? When there is an imbalance in the society, we need to do something. The NCP is prepared to do whatever it takes to create awareness in the society," he said.

When he targeted the BJP and RSS for their resistance to "caste-based" census, the NCP chief was apparently alluding to an affidavit filed by the Centre before the Supreme Court on September 23 last year that a "caste-census", stating that a caste

census in 2021 "would not be feasible" and that it had taken a "conscious policy decision" to not to seek information regarding any other caste, except SCs and STs.

The Centre had filed an affidavit to this effect in the apex court in response to the Maharashtra government's plea to count Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the upcoming census.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and former Bihar CM Jitan Ram Manjhi too have for some time been mounting pressure on the Modi government to get a clear count on OBCs. Even Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale is in favour of the caste-based census.

Pawar said that the ruling MVA in Maharashtra — comprising Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress — would go in for the upcoming civic polls only after the resolution of the OBCs reservations issue.



NCC cadets perform a routine drill during their annual Army Training Camp, at Nagrota on the outskirts of Jammu.

Photo | PTI

# NAS report on school education system in country released

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Education Ministry on Wednesday released the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021 report which assesses the health of school education system in the country by conducting comprehensive evaluation survey of children's learning competencies at classes III, V, VIII and X with a cycle period of three years. It reflects the overall assessment of school education system. The last NAS was held in 2017.

The NAS 2021 was held on 12.11.2021 at all India level and covered Government Schools (Central Government and State Government); Government Aided Schools; and Private Unaided Schools. Subjects covered are Language, Mathematics & EVS for class 3 & 5; Language,

Mathematics, Science & Social Science for class 8 and Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Science and English for class 10.

According to the Department of School Education and Literacy, about 34 lakh students of 1.18 lakh schools in 720 districts from both rural and urban areas have participated in NAS 2021. The National Report Card has been released and placed in the public domain on nas.gov.in. It will enable analysis of results and remedial action at the appropriate levels. The objective of NAS 2021 is to evaluate children's progress and learning competencies as an indicator of the efficiency of the education system, so as to take appropriate steps for remedial actions at different levels. It will help to unravel the gaps in learning and will support state/UT governments

in developing long term, mid-term and short-term interventions to improve learning levels and orient on differential planning based on NAS 2021 data.

The report is based on the performance in all subjects through disaggregation by gender (female, male), Area (Rural and Urban), Management of schools (Government, Government aided and Private unaided) and Social Groups (Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST), Other Backward Communities (OBC) and General. This nation-wide survey was administered by the CBSE in one single day at the same time. The survey was managed through the technology platform designed and developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC).

# UP Finance Minister to present budget today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna will present the first budget of the second term of the Yogi Adityanath-led Bharatiya Janata Party Government on Thursday.

The budget for the next fiscal 2022-23 is expected to be the biggest ever and is likely to be over Rs 6 lakh crore. The size of the 2021-22 budgets was Rs 5, 50 Lakh crore.

Official sources said the budget would be paperless and inclusive and would cater to the aspiration of all sections of society.

The Uttar Pradesh government had on December 16, 2021 presented an interim budget for 2022-23 in the state

legislature, proposing an expenditure of Rs 5,45,370.69 crore and estimated receipts of Rs 5,44,836.56 crore. This left a deficit of Rs 534.13 crore.

The budget is likely to accommodate the promises made by the BJP in its election manifesto ahead of the 2022 UP assembly elections. The budget is likely to be focused on the agriculture sector. The BJP had promised free power to farmers in its election manifesto. Free power to farmers is likely to entail additional expenditure of Rs 1,800 crore on the state's finances.

The government is also likely to announce the creation of a stabilisation fund for ensuring remunerative prices for the crops of tomato, onion and potato.

# BJP starts week-long campaign to strengthen party for 2024 elections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday started a week-long campaign to strengthen the organisation and boost outreach activities in around 74,000 electoral booths across the country where it is relatively weak. The move is keeping the next Lok Sabha elections in mind. BJP president J P Nadda addressed a 'Booth Empowerment Campaign' event at the party headquarters here, the party said in a tweet. The meeting was attended by several Union ministers and leaders from across the country. The campaign will continue till May 31.

The BJP has formed a committee chaired by party vice president Bajjayant Panda

and including vice president Dilip Ghosh, general secretary CT Ravi, and the party's Scheduled Caste (SC) Morcha head Lal Singh Arya as its members.

The party has identified around 74,000 booths across the country that are to be strengthened under the campaign. All party MPs have been asked to strengthen 100 weak booths in their respective constituencies and a 30-member team will be formed for the purpose, party sources said.

Similarly, party MLAs have been given the task of strengthening 10 weaker booths in their constituencies, sources said adding the BJP's Rajya Sabha MPs have been given the responsibility of strengthen-

ing polling booths in those Lok Sabha constituencies where the party lost.

The weaker booths have been identified on the basis of the results of the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and state assembly polls, they said adding these booths have been divided into various categories on the basis of demography, organisational strength and other aspects.

A similar exercise was initiated by the BJP in 2016 and the party had identified around 115 constituencies in six states — Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala — and the Northeast. The party had never been able to win these constituencies till that time.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Cost of 'service'

The Govt is set to discuss the contentious issue of applying 'service charge' to restaurant bills

Tipping is not just about slipping some money to a waiter. Ideological battles were fought over it in the past. Today, the Governments square off with restaurateurs over it, pitting the customer's right of choice against the waiter's fruits of labour. On June 2, the Department of Consumer Affairs and the National Restaurants Association of India will meet to thrash out a contentious issue: Are eateries collecting service charge — tipping in legalese — by default even though it is voluntary. The question is, do restaurants 'force' them to pay the service charge? At least that is the allegation against the eateries. The other is that the service charge is fixed arbitrarily. Eateries are also accused of misleading customers about the legality of the service charge. The service charge is a transaction between the customer and the waiting or serving employees. It involves the staff offering the service of serving the customers and the latter, if happy, tipping the staff. When the tip is part of the bill in the form of a charge, it is called a service charge. Restaurants are not involved in this transaction at all, except by facilitating the voluntary collection of the service charge from customers instead of individual tipping. Why then is the Government inviting only the restaurants' bodies for the talks and not the employees' unions? Many customers are truly ignorant about service charge; many are still confused between service tax and service charge.



Many cannot be sure that the restaurant has calculated the service charge before charging GST and other taxes. The restaurants argue they have done their duty by mentioning the service charge on the menu card and the bill. For that matter, the Government is still not clear whether the service charge is taxable. The logic of the Goods and Services Tax is that all services are taxable. Even service charge, apart from service tax? The Government's service charge guidelines of 2017 are only advisory. No legislation backs them. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, does not refer to tipping or service charge. Against this backdrop, what will the June 2 meeting achieve other than issuing "advice" to the restaurateurs' body? In the meanwhile, who will protect the interests of the waiting staff? A tip attests to the waiter's abilities. The best waiters corner the maximum tips. It is they who, apart from food and ambience, contribute to a restaurant's popularity. The service charge, on the other hand, is a level playing field for all waiters. They receive an equal share of the charge irrespective of their efficiency levels. For all waiters, however, tips represent extra income that makes a major difference in their lives. There may be cases where the employers are keeping a portion of the service charge with themselves. Why not bring in legislation that protects the interests of these waiters by legalising tipping if the service charge system is so complicated? That is the real issue.

## PICTALK



Tourists ride a horsecart as clouds hover in the sky at Dadar beach, in Mumbai

PTI

## Warming warning

The unusual and unseasonal prolonged spells of high temperatures are here to stay, reveal studies

If alarm bells on deteriorating weather conditions in India are not ringing just about yet, it's better to double-check the power supply. In a bad omen for our planet, it has been found that climate change made the extreme temperatures that baked north-west India and Pakistan in April and May over 100 times more likely and also increased the chances that such heat waves will occur more frequently by the end of the century. To put it in simpler terms, without accounting for climate change, a heat wave exceeding 2010's average temperature could happen once in every 312 years, according to an attribution study published recently. Taking climate change into account, however, the probabilities increased to once in every 3.1 years in the current climate, and to once in every 1.15 years by the end of the century. Climate change is already making extreme weather events such as heatwaves more intense and more frequent, and will continue to do so in future. India and Pakistan's heatwave is also extraordinary in its duration — extremely high temperatures started as early as in March.



In another surprising revelation, a study has found that, contrary to popular perception, biomass emissions (stubble burning and increased heating requirements) rather than bursting of fireworks drive the poor air quality in the Capital during the days immediately succeeding Diwali. The study, conducted by IIT-D researchers before, during and after Diwali, threw light on the pollution sources impacting the ambient air quality in the Capital. The team discovered that biomass burning-related emissions rose steeply in the days following Diwali, with the average levels rising almost twice as compared to the pre-Diwali concentration. Also, the organic PM2.5 indicated a significant rise in both primary and secondary organic pollutants in the days following Diwali. Shockingly, the study discovered that the metal content in PM2.5 levels rose by 1,100 per cent ... and the fireworks alone accounted for 95 per cent of the metal PM2.5 during the Festival of Lights. However, the impact of the fireworks was noticed to plummet within around 12 hours after the day of the festival. What makes these studies important is the result which provides crucial insights into a topic of long-standing debate and concerns between air quality experts and the policymakers. Hopefully, this newfound knowledge will help alleviate the problems emanating from the extreme air pollution events in the Delhi-NCR areas.

# Checkmate by the 'Neutrals' in Pak

No one in Pakistan has any doubt over the long, deep and dirty hands of the Pakistani military, called the 'establishment', in all sovereign decisions

The Pakistani Army's complicated relationship with democracy started with its first native chief, Gen Ayub Khan. Ayub's selection baptised the 'institution' with the political culture of out-of-turn nomination to the Chief of Pakistani Army Staff for posterity (Ayub was the junior-most Maj Gen in the Pakistani Army and his name was not even in the first consideration list). Soon the ambitious General took over the formal reins from the civilian politicians and promulgated the creatively deceptive concept of 'Basic Democracy' — a farcical system legitimising his iron-fisted dictatorship whilst providing a semblance of democracy. A similarly out-of-turn and ostensibly pliant General Zia-ul-Haq was to repeat the Ayub feat by deposing the civilian Government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The even more unhinged dictator in General Zia immediately promised a restoration to democracy after taking over, "My sole aim is to organise free and fair elections", and within months shifted his stance to 'retribution first, elections later' — he stayed on for the next 11 years till he died in a mysterious plane crash. In 1999, yet another out-of-turn and supposedly 'safe' Gen Pervez Musharraf grabbed power in a *coup d'état* and promised 'true democracy' which he claimed wouldn't be the "evil of sham democracy" but he, too, hung around for another nine years!

Much wisdom has dawned on the subsequent Pakistani Army Chiefs like Pervez Kayani, Raheel Sharif and, most recently, Qamar Javed Bajwa. All of them have preferred a more discreet, 'democratic' and highly effective way of running the show, without attracting international opprobrium. They have effectively 'chosen' civilian Governments as per their topical interests, extended their terms unilaterally to six-year terms (Pervez Kayani and Qamar Bajwa) or, like Gen Raheel Sharif, managed to twist



legislations towards securing their own interests in plum post-retirement roles (currently heading the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition).

No one in Pakistan has any doubts of the 'establishment's' (Pakistani military's) long and deep hands in all sovereign decisions. The once out-of-favour with the Pakistani military, Nawaz Sharif, had called the Generals as '*Khalai Mukhloq*' (aliens or the invisible hand) as the 'establishment's' hand in elevating Imran Khan to power in 2018 was undeniable. Obviously, as the beneficiary of the Pakistani military's favour, Imran had dissed all murmurs about the military's extra-constitutional abilities as he probably assumed that he'd be able to defang the Generals over time — he tried but failed miserably.

Ultimately, a desperately struggling Imran struggled to nuance the military's claimed apolitical and neutral stand when the tables turned, and he had become an outsized nuisance for the Generals. Facing a no-confidence vote, Imran had invoked a stinging appeal for support by saying, "Allah did not allow us to be

ULTIMATELY, A DESPERATE IMRAN STRUGGLED TO NUANCE THE MILITARY'S CLAIMED APOLITICAL AND NEUTRAL STAND WHEN THE TABLES TURNED, AND HE HAD BECOME AN OUTSIZED NUISANCE FOR THE GENERALS

neutrals as only animals are neutrals!" Clearly, the Generals were not amused and they remained 'neutral' to Imran's extreme discomfiture. Soon the dejected and ejected Imran was left lamenting, "Neutrals weren't actually neutral." Today, as the vainglorious Imran replots his journey back to political relevance, he is left hoping in sarcasm, "I also say to my Army that you said you are neutral, so now remain neutral." Deep down, Imran would know better of the shift in tide and circumstances of his equation with these so-called 'neutrals'.

Meanwhile, in a curious closing of the loop, it is the Sharif family (deposed and hounded out of Pakistan in the 1999 military *coup d'état*) that is singing hosanas of the Pakistani military's 'neutrality'!

Tellingly, no Pakistani Prime Minister has ever completed his/her tenure and almost all were tripped through extra-constitutional or judicial intervention that invariably could be traced back to the shadowy Generals at the Rawalpindi Military General Headquarters (GHQ). Only three Prime Ministers were able to go



BHOPINDER SINGH

beyond the four-year mark. The fissures in each case were triggered by political efforts to undermine or diminish the Pakistani Military — in Imran's case, his grandstanding in delaying the transfer of his preferred spy chief ie, then DG of ISI, General Faiz Hameed, was tantamount to crossing the traditional 'red lines' of non-interference in certain matters. Imran could no longer be trusted to walk the line of the 'establishment's' formula for Pakistani governance, and thus had to be removed.

Today, the Pakistani military has further denied any imminent threat to national security or the alarmist 'international conspiracy'. Making it worse for Imran is the careful recalibration of the Sharif-Bhutto combine towards the Generals, and the deliberate assertion by the Pakistani military spokesperson that General Bajwa seeks no further extension == both moves deflate Imran's expected aspersions and stridency against the 'neutrals'. Somewhere along the line, Imran had managed to create a dangerous divide within the ironclad 'establishment' with purported factionalism between a General Bajwa and a possible faction led by Imran's politically beholden/preferred, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed. This was unprecedentedly and unexpectedly brazen interference into the insular affairs of the Pakistani military, even by the standards of the hugely egotistical Imran. For now, the possible succession of Lt Gen Faiz Hameed as the Pakistani military chief has been checkmated, as has been the possibilities of a civilian dispensation attempting to usurp the powers of the incorrigible Generals.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INDIA MUST CONSOLIDATE GAINS

Sir — While India has joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), a forum to enhance cooperation among 13 countries in areas such as clean energy, supply chain resilience, decarbonisation, digital trade and infrastructure, it is seen as a counter to the RCEP, from which India has stayed away. At a time when every country is trying to secure its own economic interests, India must be wary that all IPEF members except India and the US are part of the China-backed trading agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and yet have chosen to be a part of the US-led initiative.

The dream of a win-win situation for all members can only be realised if this framework provides a level playing field. Otherwise, it will become only a tool for the assertion of America's hegemony considering the fact that the latter's previous initiatives like Blue Dot Network and Build Back Better Initiatives had made little headway towards changing the region's infrastructural needs. India has a favourable balance of trade with the US, about \$33 billion of trade surplus from January to December 2021, the exports to America were valued at more than \$73 billion, way above imports worth around \$40 billion.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

### STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Sir — The Union Government's decision to reduce the taxes on petrol and diesel to curtail the inflation rate is strategic in nature. The cost of movement of goods and people directly adds to the cost escalation of every product and it has come to a point where the "consumption" factor goes a hit and demand automatically gets for a nosedive under compulsion. It, therefore, leads to excess supply pushing the graph further down to hit the bottom of the line, drastically affecting the economy in the long run. This price reduction and correction process was supposed

## America and its gun culture



Salvador Ramos, an 18-year-old gunman, opened fire at a Texas Robb Elementary School, killing at least 19 children, two adults (including a teacher) as he went from classroom to classroom. It was the deadliest school shooting since the 2012 massacre in Newtown, Conn. The US Constitution gives all its citizens the right to own a gun, and guns are as easy to find in stores across America as grocery shopping in any country. Hence no one

is surprised that how much untrue it is that America has launched a decisive fight against terrorism, and calls itself the 'big brother' of humanity. It may declare itself the champion of democracy in the world, but it has never been able to do anything to stop the prevailing gun culture there.

As a result, in the last five decades, more than 1.4 million people have died due to America's gun culture. Interestingly, hours after the attack, US President Joe Biden who was in Japan appeared ready for a fight in an address to the nation. "As a nation, we have to ask when in God's name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby?" Biden asked. "Why are we willing to live with this carnage?" It remains to be seen whether Biden will take specific action to control the powerful gun lobby.

Bidyut K Chatterjee | Faridabad

to be taken up much earlier by the Government.

Taxing corporations and companies drives them away to another country, resulting in more job losses, reduction in IT revenues, more NPAs from failed businesses, and so on. While the rich must be taxed more heavily than they are now, middle income groups need to pay up their fair share. The cess collected by the Union Government is used to pay back the loans borrowed by State Governments on account of the GST revenue deficit to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. When people didn't have objection to collecting doles, they shouldn't object to paying their taxes either.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

### COURTS SHOULD DISMISS SUCH CLAIMS

Sir — The current situation of disgruntled communal elements trying to dig and explore mosques like Gyanvapi Masjid, saying Hindu temples existed under such structures, encouraged by politically-affiliated religious groups, has stemmed from the manner in which the Babri

Masjid was allowed to be demolished and the Supreme Court's verdict to hand over the disputed site in Ayodhya to the Hindu claimants. It is also a blunder and flagrant violation of the law by the honourable courts by repeatedly entertaining such claims which are in contravention to the 'Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991'.

It is an open secret that such moves are encouraged by the powers that be with a motive to reap political benefits. It is time the Supreme Court intervened, put an end to this menace and upheld the spirit of the Places of Worship Act and preserve communal peace. If this is not done urgently, India will have to lose its great name as a land of great values and heritage. Further, any more demolitions similar to that of the Babri Masjid would confirm that we too are a bunch of barbarians, like those who are said to have demolished other religious structures.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUNDBITE

I'm absolutely sure the India-US friendship will continue to be a force for good.

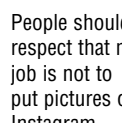


Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



I'm committed to making the US-India partnership among the closest we have on earth.

US President — Joe Biden



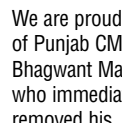
People should respect that my job is not to put pictures on Instagram... It's to make good films.

Actor — Amit Sadh



Thank you Roland Garros. Thank you, Mister Tennis. I love you (on retiring)!

French tennis professional — Jo-Wilfried Tsonga



We are proud of Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann who immediately removed his Minister found involved in corruption.



AAP's national convener — Arvind Kejriwal



FIRST COLUMN


SOME BRANDS ARE AGGRESSIVELY CAPITALISING ON CANCEL CULTURE

A new public sphere in a network society



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY     G REJIKUMAR

Understanding cancel culture and a new public sphere are becoming imminent. Constructing and deconstructing the suitability of such culture is largely contextualized and is heavily relied on the cultural context. It has invariably attempted to redefine Jürgen Habermas' public sphere, especially the future of the public sphere in a network society. In the digital arena, the argumentative discussions on the public sphere are increasingly relevant and yet problematic. There is a little denial that public sphere is subjected to dramatic change and re-change. Reasons and passion in the public sphere are many and it has been increasingly interdisciplinary in approach. Over the years, cancel culture is getting more apparent from comedy to cricket. A product of internet culture, it has spread its wings across the globe including India. Several celebrities have faced severe backlash for their alleged deeds or narratives which were deemed offensive and inappropriate in the public. The butterfly effect of social media is adding to the cancel culture. The dark holes of disinformation are becoming rampant. The pandemic situation across the globe had added to the woes of the public. On the other hand, it has different implications in brand communication. Some brands are aggressively capitalizing on this culture and using this trend as branding. Of course, this needs to be handled with utmost care. Whether cancel culture actually works or not, it remains debatable. Cancel cul-



ture has become a common phenomenon in our society. To be precise, cancel culture means a practice of withdrawing support for public figures or companies or even against an individual after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive. It is generally discussed in the social media in the form of group shaming.

Cancel culture attempts to enforce some degree of accountability on an individual even though it demands a series of arguments and deliberations on the topics or individuals or institutions. This culture surfaced across nations when the #MeToo movement gained traction in 2016 in the US where people resorted to social media to cancel or boycott public personalities of repute. Last year #BanNetflix was getting viral for alleged inappropriate content. Cancel culture as a medium of showing disbelief towards a person or any organization or thought is nothing new in India. In the year 2019, the former US President Obama appealed to discard the cancel culture. The actor and activist Jameela Jamil claimed that cancel culture as pointless and is a waste of time. The names of JK Rowling and Harry Potter rose to some extent. Cancel culture has shared some common space in the pandemic and online trolling. According to reports, online hate speech rose 20% during the pandemic. However, it was often normalized in most of the circumstances.

Cancel culture has its own implications on brands and brand communication. The trolling in the Internet has become a common phenomenon. It has caused a stir in the recent times. One of the renowned jewelry apps had to face the wrath of the consumers for one of their promotional advertisements. A popular TV show anchor is being alleged trolled for not providing promotional space for a film. Cancel culture has encroached into the space of marketing and advertising. Usually, brands are politically non-partisans However, in apolarisedworld, brands are slowly taking political patronage. Boycotting has become a mainstream consumer reaction. Consumers are increasingly demanding the brands to take a stand on any social or political issue. Consumers are also aware of the fact that several brands use societal issues as a marketing ploy to sell more of their product. Cancel culture is thus negotiating its space in the public sphere.

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# Pak oppression stoking Baloch ‘azadi’ fires



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

Balochs say the CPRC ignores them and is Punjab-centric. The Gwadar-Karachi route goes through developed areas of Punjab and Sind while bypassing Balochistan districts


Balochistan is Pakistan's biggest occupied province, making about 44% of the country's total land area. With a coastline of 770 kilometres, Balochistan also shares borders with Iran and Afghanistan, and 40% of the world's oil travels via Gwadar port, located near the opening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Pakistan's display of unified nationalism is met with ethno-nationalist opposition from Balochs, Pashtuns and Sindhis, who have been protesting against their political and economic marginalisation since the formation of Pakistan. The Punjab-centric planning and implementation of projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have worsened the conflict between the state and the Azadi-seeking forces. A takeover of Gwadar port and subsequent exclusion of the Baloch firms, workers and fishermen from Gwadar-linked CPEC projects, and various developmental policies apart from exploiting its natural resources have exacerbated pre-existing secessionist sentiments in Balochistan. Furthermore, the Eastern route or alignment of the Chinese Project connects Gwadar and Karachi through the developed portions of Punjab and Sind while leaving behind several districts of Balochistan. The Baloch mainstream parties have thus opposed the project entirely and have called for complete freedom.

Further, political discrimination against the Shia Hazara community in Quetta has also been a human rights issue. Shia Hazaras are considered Iranian spies by Sunni sectarians. Restrictive practices in Rawalpindi are evident in the massacre of Shia Hazaras and their lack of mention in the national media. Nevertheless, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) was the only region to achieve liberation from all forms of tyranny.

Today, the unification of various Baloch rebel groups- Baloch Republican Army (BRA), United Baloch Army, Baloch Raji Ajoi Sangar (BRAS) to form a Baloch National Army (BNA) or the 'Azadi brigade' might result in the establishment of a Baloch territory carved out from Pakistan. If Rawalpindi increases its atrocities, the Balochs might retaliate further by calling all the Balochs in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan to unite and form a 'Greater Balochistan'. The recent suicide bombing of Shari Baloch calls for the attention of the intensification of the freedom struggle in Baluchistan. Several disgruntled Pakistani factions have hailed Shari Baloch's decision to oppose the CPEC and Rawalpindi. On social media sites like Twitter, Sindhi separatists have expressed their admiration for her bravery. It is an indication that the Baloch National Army would expand to include Sindhi factions in the future.

Until now, the Baloch rebel groups' classic modus operandi used improvised explosive devices and hit-and-run attacks apart from the protests. Suicide bombing by Shari Baloch has commonalities with the



PAKISTAN'S MAJOR FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY FLAW HAS PRIMARILY BEEN AN ANTI-INDIA APPROACH. VIEWING THE MUSHROOMING OF JIHADIST ORGANISATION FROM THIS LENS, IT HAS ONLY AIMED TO RECEIVE AID FROM EITHER OF THE POWERS WHILE TRYING TO DESTABILISE INDIA

*(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)*



sophisticated nature of the attacks carried out by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates. The TTP aims to establish an Islamic Emirate of Pakistan, very similar to what the Taliban did in Afghanistan. TTP recruits are primarily from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and thus it has sympathies with the BLA. However, a catch is that the TTP swears its allegiance to the Afghan Taliban and is backed by Al Qaeda. This makes TTP a dicey player between BLA and the Pakistan forces.

Interestingly, it is possible that TTP's leader Noor Wali Mehsud has allied with the Baloch rebels? Till now, independent acts have been carried out by TTP (North-West of Pakistan) and BLA (South of Pakistan). However, that might not be the case any longer. From a Pakistani perspective, the Afghan Taliban's takeover might have driven out the US and posed severe issues for its allies, yet, the Taliban's aspirations and capabilities to function independently of Rawalpindi cannot be ruled out. There have been statements from the Taliban "ministers" seeking an independent role in its 'national' and regional affairs. Moreover, the Taliban might have the revenge objectives of post 9/11 developments wherein Pakistan cleverly helped the U.S. crush the Taliban. One might assume that the Taliban has been going slow to oppress TTP's rearming and a resurgence for the reasons mentioned above, apart from forging alliances with Baloch rebels.

If one can recall, in the early 2010s, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Balochistan (TTB) emerged on TTP lines. TTB aspired for the complete exit of foreigners from Baluchistan apart from fighting the Pakistani security forces and law enforcement agencies to convert Pakistan into a battlefield. The organisation recruited indigenous fighting units and foreign fighters primarily of the Afghan-Pashtun tribes. However, the Baloch are traditionalists and not fundamentalists, and hence the assumptions and possibilities of TTP and BLA finding convergences for their operational synergies is a strong possibility. The 'Azadi Brigade' can also be joined by the ISKP (Islamic State - Khorasan Province), proving further detrimental to Pakistan's interests.

Although the intensity and the number of attacks against the Pakistani military establishments increased after the US exit from Afghanistan, the recent extension of the ceasefire between TTP and Pakistan, mediated through the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, reminds us of 2020 when in a surprising move the truce and subsequent mergers between TTP with its splinter groups and rivals moderated by the Al-Qaida. Important groups which merged with TTP were a faction of the sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and the splinter groups of TTP- Hakimullah Mehsud faction, Jamaatul-Ahrar (JuA), and its sub-splinter Hizbul-Ahrar (HuA). The mergers gave a predominant position to the TTP, which equalled the Afghan Taliban's position in Kabul. Despite ideational and strategic divergences, the ceasefire raises essential questions. Rawalpindi might be trying to establish another regional Sunni proxy terror alliance in Balochistan with Jaish ul-Adl, first to suppress the Baloch movement and second to revive the Iranian Jundullah organisation while creating instability in Sistan and Balochistan province. Pakistan would want the

'destructive forces' to be diverted elsewhere.

Whether the BLA fights along with the TTP or Pakistan and finally succeeds in creating instabilities, the Chinese CPEC is bound to be in the doldrums for violence plays an essential role in the region. A pertinent question is whether Pakistan is playing the same game with China as it played with the U.S. in Afghanistan? By attracting the Chinese money and infrastructure to Balochistan and Iran; encouraging Iran to remain isolated while simultaneously attempting to bring the extremist group under a single umbrella to launch offensive actions against Baloch citizens, groups, as well as Iranian Baluchistan, does it not hint at the same methodology as it adopted in the last decade for ousting the US? If the violence between factions intensifies, the Chinese Projects and its citizens will be affected. In an extreme case, would not the Chinese be forced to abandon their projects the same way the U.S. and the NATO forces were forced to leave their airbases?

Pakistan's major foreign and security policy flaw has primarily been an anti-India approach. Viewing the mushrooming of the Jihadist organisation from this lens, it has only aimed to receive aid from either of the powers while simultaneously trying to destabilise India. Soon, Islamabad would be a victim of its homegrown terror and might enlist as a nation that dug its own grave. Joseph Nye once stated, "Important political leaders never just followed their interests - they were concerned about the interests of their people". Islamabad has never produced a leader of that kind. With more chaos, terror, external loans and inflation, it would not be wrong to predict that 'Azad Balochistan' would see the light of the day very soon.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

UTTAR PRADESH IS ON TOP IF WE LOOK AT THE STATISTICS ON CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN. THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS NOT SERIOUS. — SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV



ANY KIND OF CRIME IS UNFORGIVABLE. THE GOVT IS TAKING STRICT ACTION... ESPECIALLY THOSE COMMITTING CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN. — CHIEF MINISTER YOGI ADITYANATH


# Messed up post-COVID job statistics in India

## MGNREGA job demand was less in 2021-22, meaning people who migrated to villages after COVID got their jobs back in urban areas

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) says that though the GDP has bounced back post-Covid, its biggest impact has been on employment. Employment reached only 40.18 crores in 2021-22 as against 40.89 crores in 2019-20. Unemployment which was 3.29 crore in 2019-20 reached 3.33 crore in 2021-22 — an increase of only 4 lakhs.

The CMIE concludes that though the decrease in employment has been nearly 7 million i.e. 70 lakh, the increase of unemployment is only 4 lakh, indicating that the people who got unemployed during this period have given up hope of employment and they are now out of the race for employment.

It's notable that for some time, due to some reasons, the employment related data in the




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country is not being published by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). It is natural that in the absence of official figures, the figures of institutions like CMIE get space in the media. However, their credibility is questionable.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) guarantees at least 100 days of employment in every financial year to every rural unemployed. So, when people are unemployed, they are entitled to get 100 days of employment under MGNREGA. In such a situation, even if a person is getting casual employment anywhere and if he remains unemployed for 100 or less days, then he can seek employment under 'MGNREGA'.

This logically means that if



unemployment rises, the demand for MGNREGA will also increase. For example, in 2020-21 due to lockdown in cities and decline in economic activities, employment decreased and people migrated to villages, then in those days the number of 'MGNREGA' beneficiaries increased to 7 crores from

merely 5 crores before the lockdown.

Interestingly, the period (2021-22) for which the CMIE report is talking about a rise in unemployment, demand for MGNREGA employment was actually 6.55 percent less than the previous year. That is, it can be said that during the Corona period, people who had migrated to the villages had got employment back in the urban areas. In this sequence, if we look at the figures of April 2022, it is found that in April 2021, 2.62 crore people had sought work under 'MGNREGA', whereas in April 2022, only 2.33 crore people sought work under MGNREGA, that is, a decline of 11.15 percent. Analysts believe that the fall in demand for employment under MGNREGA is due to increased employ-

ment in urban areas. This figure is in stark contrast to the report published by CMIE, which says that people have moved out of the labour force, giving up the hope of employment due to the loss of employment opportunities. Instead of giving its own value judgement about unemployment, CMIE should have taken note of the MGNREGA figures to arrive at a conclusion.

The CMIE report states that even if 7.5 percent GDP growth is achieved in 2022-23, the unemployment rate will increase rather than going down. For this they talk of employment elasticity with respect to GDP. But we have to understand that the recovery after Covid in the economy is not a normal recovery. This recovery accompanies some fundamental changes in the Indian economy. All indicators of the economy are pointing towards these changes.

Significantly, in the last quarter of the last financial year (2021-22), the monthly average of GST collection was 1.42 lakh crore. The unprecedented GST collection of ₹1.68 lakh crore in the first month of this financial year (April 2022), is definitely pointing towards an upsurge in the economy. In March 2022, 7.7 crore e-way bills were generated, 13 per cent more than 6.8 crore e-way bills generated in February 2022. This clearly shows a sharp recovery in the economy.

Significantly, due to the shortage of semiconductors in the country, many of our industries including automobile, electronics, telecom have been

affected. Despite that, rising GST revenue is indicating an uptick in manufacturing in the economy. It is true that imports have also increased during this period, due to which the revenue of GST has increased, but where the revenue of GST has reached ₹1.68 lakh crore, the share of import GST in this revenue is ₹36705 crore, which is greater than import GST of March 2021 by 5608 crores only. It's notable that import GST in March 2021 was ₹31097 crore. This implies that domestic businesses have definitely grown during this period, resulting into this huge increase in GST.

The Government should soon publish robust official NSSO data and present the correct picture of employment in the country.







# Russian rockets hit eastern Ukrainian town of Pokrovsk

AP ■ POKROVSK (UKRAINE)

The Russian rocket strikes came early in the morning in the eastern Ukrainian town of Pokrovsk on Wednesday, shaking buildings, jolting people out of bed and sending chunks of concrete and jagged pieces of metal flying through the air.

One of the two rockets left a crater at least three metres deep, remnants of the projectile still smoldering as nearby residents picked through the debris of their homes, trying to salvage whatever they could.

A row of low terraced houses nearby suffered significant damage, with roofing tiles blown off, door frames ripped from the walls and pieces of brick, concrete and asphalt scattered on the ground. Four civilians were wounded,

said Pavlo Kyrilenko, head of the Donetsk military administration. At least one of them suffered a head wound and was ferried to the local hospital by ambulance, blood seeping through the bandages and trickling down the side of his neck.

The strikes in Pokrovsk were among several over the past two days that have hit towns and villages as Russia pressed forward in its offensive in the Donbas, Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland.

"There's no place left to live in, everything is smashed," said Viktoriya Kurbonova, a mother-of-two who lived in one of the terraced houses.

The windows had been blown out by an earlier strike about a month ago, and they had replaced them with plastic sheeting. That, she said, probably saved their lives as at least there was no glass flying around.

She had been asleep when the strike hit, just metres from her house. "There was a really big flash and a lot of dust," Kurbonova said, standing outside her home still in her pajamas, her legs and arms blackened by soot.



Her four-year-old son wandered around, clutching a toy train, while her two-year-old daughter smiled in a stroller nearby.

"I was reaching for my child and I couldn't find him in the dust," she said. The boy had been sleeping in the same room as her, while her daughter had been in the next room with Kurbonova's mother. They were all shaken, but none were hurt.

Kyrilenko said Russian strikes killed 12 civilians the previous day in the Donetsk region, and wounded another 10. Another strike on the city of Kramatorsk, northeast of Pokrovsk, hit a multi-story building under construction, damaging it and blowing out windows in nearby buildings but causing no casualties.

"Russians continue hitting the cities that are away from the front line," Kyrilenko said on his Telegram channel. "They would like to kill as many civilians as possible and cause panic. That is why the only good choice is evacuation. Evacuation saves lives."

The governor of the neighbouring Luhansk region, Serhiy Haidai, said at least six civilians had been killed and eight wounded over the past 24 hours in shelling in the town of Sievierodonetsk, at the heart of the Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine.

Russian forces have been attempting to encircle Sievierodonetsk and cut off

Ukrainian forces there. Haidai accused the Russians of deliberately targeting shelters where civilians were hiding.

Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the Donbas for eight years and hold large swaths of territory. Sievierodonetsk and neighbouring cities are the only part of the Donbas' Luhansk region still under Ukrainian government control.

# EU seeks more clout against sanctioned Russian oligarchs

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union's executive arm entered sensitive legal territory on Wednesday with a proposal to confiscate the frozen assets of oligarchs who try to violate the bloc's sanctions over Russia's war in Ukraine.

The European Commission proposed two EU laws that would require the 27 member states to cede a degree of jealously guarded national sovereignty over

criminal matters.

One piece of draft legislation seeks new European rules on freezing and confiscating the assets of people blacklisted by the EU.

The second legislative proposal aims to expand the list of acts deemed to be "EU crimes" by including breaches of European sanctions.

Both initiatives need the approval of EU governments in a scrutiny process that usually takes many months and can even last for years.

The bloc's heads of government are due to discuss options for using the frozen assets of sanctioned Russian oligarchs to support the reconstruction of Ukraine during a two-day summit next week.

"There is no time to lose," Margaritis Schinas, a European Commission vice-president in charge of security matters, told reporters in Brussels. "Many times we see assets recovery and confiscation of the small fry, whereas the big sharks find ways to

evade."

While the EU has spent decades crafting common rules on various areas of criminal law, European sanctions against Russian leaders and oligarchs over the past three months have added impetus to calls for a stronger European framework.

The EU has imposed asset freezes and travel bans on more than 1,000 people, including over 30 oligarchs, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is publically notified that PLOT No. A-438, SECTOR 151, NOIDA, DISTT. GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH allottee of SHRI VIKRAM SINGH RANA S/O LATEJAGAN SINGH R/O C-415 SECTOR-22, NOIDA, DISTT. GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH shall be mutated on the basis of Will Deed to the following person:  
The Will Deed was registered by SHRI VIKRAM SINGH RANA S/O LATE JAGAN SINGH R/O C-415 SECTOR-22, NOIDA, DISTT. GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH in favour of SHRI JOGINDER SINGH RANA & SHRI DHARMENDRA CHAUHAN BOTH S/O LATE VIKRAM SINGH RANA R/O C-415 SECTOR-22, NOIDA, DISTT. GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH.  
Because Will Deed is registered, so it is Publically Notfy that the mutation application of the aforesaid property is going to apply through Will Deed in the name of SHRI JOGINDER SINGH RANA & SHRI DHARMENDRA CHAUHAN BOTH S/O LATE VIKRAM SINGH RANA R/O C-415 SECTOR 22, NOIDA, DISTT. GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH. If someone has/have any objection he/ she move our objection with proof within 30 days from this notice in the Residential Plot Department, Noida Authority.  
Mr. Joginder Singh Rana and Mr. Dharmendra Chauhan, sons of Late Vikram Singh Rana, resident of C-415, Sector-22, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
RAMAN VIHAR COOP. GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY LTD. Plot No.5A, Sector-11, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075  
In pursuance to rule 19(2) of DCS rules, 2007, applications are invited from general public of Delhi who fulfill the conditions laid down in rule-19 & 20 of DCS Rules, 2007 for filling up one vacancy in Raman Vihar CGHS Ltd. (Regd. No. 872(GH) for proposed three bedroom flat (Tentative cost of flat 87.31,610/-) (having area approximate 1750 Sq. Feet), which has arisen due to resignation of member. Interested persons can collect the application form in person from society office ie Plot No.5A, Sector-11, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 between 10.00 am to 4.30 pm free of cost and the same have to deposited along with the amount of Rs. 87,31,610/- which includes Share money, admission fee, land & Construction money and Equalization money through Pay order/ Demand Draft within 15 days of issue of this notice in favour of Raman Vihar Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd.  
**Secretary-Raman Vihar CGHS Ltd.**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is publically notified that the Plot/Property No. 79, Block-A, Sector-30, Noida, has been allotted in the name of Suren Kumar S/o Shri Kashmiri Lal Rao 283/53A, Vishnu Garden, New Delhi presently residing at 1/265, Subash Nagar (Opp. Ajanta Cinema), New Delhi, had sold/transfer the said property, on the basis of GPA to the following persons:-  
The GPA of the above said property has been executed by the original allottee in favour of Gurcharan Ahuja S/o Shri Sant Lal Ahuja R/o House No. 370, First Floor, Chandi Wali Gali, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110055 which is registered in the office of Sub Registrar Noida Vide Block No. ....Volume No. .... on pages..... to..... at Document No..... dated 16.11.1987 and the Agreement to Sell of the above said property was executed by the original allottee in favour of Shri Sant Lal Ahuja S/o Late Shri Gurdass Mal Ahuja & Smt. Raj Kumari Ahuja W/o Shri Sant Lal Ahuja both R/o House No. 927, Sector-28, Noida registered in the office of Sub Registrar Noida Vide Block No. ....Volume No. .... on pages..... to..... at Document No..... dated 16.11.1987. At present the agreement to sell holders Shri Sant Lal Ahuja expired on 22.04.2019 & Smt. Raj Kumari Ahuja expired on 09.02.1998.  
Now the above said property is going to be transferred in favour of Pramod Ahuja & Sunil Ahuja both S/o Late Shri Sant Lal Ahuja Both R/o A-79, Sector-30, Noida, Distt. Gautam Buddh Nagar, U.P. through the GPA, if any one has/have any objection he/she may submit his/her, objection in the Residential Plot Department of Noida Authority along-with sufficient proofs within 30 days of the publication this notice.  
Gurcharan Ahuja

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform public in general that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has organized an auction in below mention respect of Vehicles.  
**VEHICLES FOR SALE**  
1) M&M SCORPIO REG. NO. DL8CAC1371-YOM -2014  
2) FORCEFORCETFB REG. NO. HR38Z3433-YOM -2019  
3) CB\_AL\_ECOMET\_1412\_ASHOK\_LEYLAND LIMITED\_ REG. NO. UP14HT8964-YOM -2019  
4) TATA ACE\_ REG. NO. UP15ET9861-YOM -2021  
5) SUPRO MINI ENGNN0. LHM6K24141-YOM -2021  
6) TATA MOTOR ULTRA 1518 REG. NO. UP14HT4779 YOM 2018  
7) EICHER 10.49 REG. NO. DL1LAB4102 -YOM -2018  
8) CB\_TATA LPT 1109 FULLY BUILT REG. NO. UP16ET4703-YOM-2017  
UNDER HYPOTECAUTION WITH M/S KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK IS IN ORDER SALE IN ITS "AS IS WHERE IS CONDITION" INTERESTED PARTIES CAN GIVE THEIR QUOTATIONS WITH IN 3 DAYS AT  
BRANCH ADDRESS: KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD., 3RD FLOOR, PLOT NO 7, SECTOR 125, NOIDA-201313 OR CONTACT: ABHINAV LAL / RAJESH ANTIL KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD. Cont.No.7798988481/9711173320 E Mail - abhinav.lal@kotak.com

**Union Territory of JAMMU & KASHMIR**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**SPECIAL SUB DIVISION GUREZ**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**Fresh e-NIT No (39) EE/SSDG/1391-1401 2022-23 Dated:-21-05-2022**  
For and on behalf of lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, e-tenders are invited in two cover system with 50 meters depth from registered Water Well Drillers/Contractors as per the details given in tender document.  
**Sr.No 1. Particulars of the work :-** Laying and fitting of GI pipes including replacement /improvements of damaged / wornout pipes and Construction of Intake Chamber near head site, 0.10 lac gallon SR, Protection work at head site, Sluice Chamber, Cattle Trough, Anchor/Saddle block, Chain Link fencing around structures for Retrofitting of WSS Agnikoot Baduab for 100% coverage of FHTCs "Under JJM".  
**Estimated Cost (Lacs):-** Rs. 36.74  
**Tender fee (in Rs) :-** Rs. 1100/-  
**Earnest money Deposit :-** Rs. 73840/-  
**Time of Completion of work (days) :-** 60 Days  
**Class of Contract :-** AAY/BEE  
**Sr.No 2. Particulars of the work :-** Laying and fitting of GI pipes including Construction of protection works/ head works at head site, Intake Chamber near head site, 0.02 lac gallon SR, Sluice Chamber, supporting pillars for RWM at spots, cattle trough for Retrofitting of WSS Check Bayant Tulail for 100% coverage of FHTCs "Under JJM".  
**Estimated Cost (Lacs):-** Rs. 19.98  
**Tender fee (in Rs) :-** Rs. 800/-  
**Earnest money Deposit :-** Rs. 39960/-  
**Time of Completion of work (days) :-** 60 Days  
**Class of Contract :-** AAY/BEE/CEE  
**Sr.No 3. Particulars of the work :-** Laying and fitting of GI pipes including Construction of protection works/ head works at head site, Intake Chamber near head site, 0.05 lac gallon SR, Sluice Chamber, supporting pillars for RWM at spots, Chain Link fencing around structures, cattle trough for Retrofitting of WSS Dangithal Tulail for 100% coverage of FHTCs "Under JJM".  
**Estimated Cost (Lacs):-** Rs. 32.71  
**Tender fee (in Rs) :-** Rs. 1100/-  
**Earnest money Deposit :-** Rs. 65420/-  
**Time of Completion of work (days) :-** 60 Days  
**Class of Contract :-** AAY/BEE  
**Sr.No 4. Particulars of the work :-** Laying and fitting of GI pipes including Construction of protection works, Intake Chamber near head site, 0.25 lac gallon SR, Sluice Chamber, supporting pillars for RWM at spots, Crate work, Chain Link fencing around structures, Cattle troughs, PST near head site for Retrofitting of WSS Gulshanpora for 100% coverage of FHTCs "Under JJM".  
**Estimated Cost (Lacs):-** Rs. 35.02  
**Tender fee (in Rs) :-** Rs. 1100/-  
**Earnest money Deposit :-** Rs. 70040/-  
**Time of Completion of work (days) :-** 60 Days  
**Class of Contract :-** AAY/BEE  
**Sr.No 5. Particulars of the work :-** Laying and fitting of GI pipes including Construction of protection works/ head works at head site, crate protection work at sports, Intake Chamber near head site, 0.06 lac gallon SR, Sluice Chamber, supporting pillars for RWM at spots, Chain Link fencing around structures, cattle trough for Retrofitting of WSS Javdara 1st for 100% coverage of FHTCs "Under JJM".  
**Estimated Cost (Lacs):-** Rs. 61.02  
**Tender fee (in Rs) :-** Rs. 1600/-  
**Earnest money Deposit :-** Rs. 122040/-  
**Time of Completion of work (days) :-** 60 Days  
**Class of Contract :-** AAY  
**Position off under : Approved Under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**  
**The tender inviting authority is Executive Engineer, Special Sub Division Gurez. The awarding authority is District Jal Jeevan Mission (DJJM).**  
**Critical Dates:**  
**I) Publish Date :-** 23-05-2022 at 9.00 AM  
**II) Document Download Start Date :-** 23-05-2022 at 9.00 AM  
**III) Clarification Start date :-** 23-05-2022 from 10: A.M  
**IV) Clarification End date :-** 30-05-2022 up to 6: P.M  
**V) Bid submission Start date :-** 23-05-2022 from 10: A.M  
**VI) Bid submission End date :-** 31-05-2022 at 4:00 P.M  
**VII) Date of Bid opening :-** 31-05-2022 at 5.00 P.M  
1. Bid documents can be accessed and downloaded from the website **www.jktenders.gov.in**  
2. The whole bidding process shall be completed online on tender portal **www.jktenders.gov.in**. The intending bidders can download the bid document from the tender portal and can submit their bids by uploading the month e tender portal.  
3. The valid bids received shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Special Sub Division Gurez Bids must be accompanied by bid security and cost of Tender Document as specified in column 4 & 5 of the table and shall be payable at Srinagar.  
**a. The cost of tender documents should be in form of DD/TR/e challan in favour of Executive Engineer Special Sub division Gurez.**  
4. The hard copies of cost of tender document in shape of TR/e-challan, Earnest money in shape of CDR/FDR/BG and other relevant documents shall be obtained from the bidder who is declared as L1 after opening of financial cover.  
5. The bid shall remain valid for a period of 90 days from the last date of submission of bids. If any bidder withdraws his bid before the said period or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid, the same shall be considered to be in violation of bid security declaration and shall be dealt with accordingly and the bid shall be declared non-responsive.  
6. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents from the website **www.jktenders.gov.in**.  
7. Queries by email if any should be made at. **Sd/- Executive Engineer Special Sub Division Gurez**  
**No. DIPK-2591/22**  
**Dated: 24-05-2022**

**IST LIMITED**  
CIN: L33301HR1976PLC008316  
Regd. Office: Dharuhera Industrial Complex, Delhi- Jaipur Highway No.8, Kapriwas, Dharuhera, Rewari (Haryana)-123106  
Head Office: A-23, New Office Complex, 2nd Floor, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024  
Phone No.: 011-41044511-14; Fax: 011-24625694; Email: istgroup.no@gmail.com; Website: www.istindia.com  
**EXTRACT OF FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH, 2022**  
(Fig. in Lacs unless otherwise stated)

Sl No	Particulars	Standalone					Consolidated					
		Quarter Ended		Year Ended			Quarter Ended		Year Ended			
		31.03.2022 Audited	31.12.2021 Unaudited	31.03.2021 Audited	31.03.2022 Audited	31.03.2021 Audited	31.03.2022 Audited	31.12.2021 Unaudited	31.03.2021 Audited	31.03.2022 Audited	31.03.2021 Audited	31.03.2021 Audited
1	Total Income	963.54	1031.16	1712.39	4388.52	3917.78	4554.16	4606.35	5264.83	18363.19	17771.85	
2	Net Profit before exceptional items and tax	24.39	365.39	342.27	1202.04	969.39	2253.54	3349.33	3645.15	12771.24	13221.92	
3	Net Profit after exceptional items before tax	24.39	365.39	342.27	1202.04	969.39	2253.54	3349.33	3645.15	12771.24	13221.92	
4	Net Profit after tax	(32.05)	291.68	270.34	932.79	813.63	1562.43	2518.47	2653.56	9597.07	9518.26	
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Net of Tax)	(33.77)	293.63	276.14	936.92	821.43	2226.47	1679.55	3036.29	10896.28	12037.58	
6	Equity Share Capital (Face Value Rs. 5/- per share)	584.68	584.68	584.68	584.68	584.68	584.68	584.68	584.68	584.68	584.68	
7	Other Equity	-	-	-	20121.37	19184.45	-	-	-	102670.86	91774.58	
8	Earning Per Share (Face Value Rs. 5/- per share)											
	Basic (Rs.)	(0.27)	2.50	2.32	8.00	6.98	13.40	21.53	22.85	82.79	82.07	
	Diluted (Rs.)	(0.27)	2.50	2.32	8.00	6.98	13.40	21.53	22.85	82.79	82.07	

**NOTE:**  
The above is an extract of the detailed format of the Standalone and Consolidated Financial Results for the Quarter and Year ended 31st March, 2022 filed with the Stock Exchange (BSE Ltd.) under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Standalone and Consolidated Financial Results is available on the Stock Exchange website (www.bseindia.com) and the company's website www.istindia.com.  
**Place : New Delhi**  
**Date : 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2022**  
**By Order of the Board**  
**Sd/-**  
**(S.C. Jain)**  
**Executive Director**  
**DIN: 00902079**

## Saving the children: War closes in on eastern Ukrainian town



AP ■ BAKHMUT (UKRAINE)

Chunks of thick, twisted metal and wood splinters lie among the swings and slides in the playground outside a bombed-out school. Some streets away, a yellow bathtub dangles over the void left when part of an apartment building collapsed in a bombing.

The eastern Ukrainian town of Bakhmut has been coming under increasing bombardment in Russia's war, particularly over the last week, local officials and residents say, as Russian forces try to press forward in an effort to encircle and capture the key city of Sievierodonetsk to the north-east.

Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the Donbas for eight years and hold large swaths of territory. Sievierodonetsk and neighboring cities are the only part of the Donbas' Luhansk region still under Ukrainian government control.

Most of Bakhmut's population has already fled, and more are leaving every day. Evacuation minibuses run mainly by volunteers shuttle back and forth, sometimes even during bombardments, to get people out.

"Now it's a question of saving the children," said Olga Hordiyenko, 51, as she stood in a playground on Tuesday near her apartment building. "The Russians are shelling us,

so there's this burning issue to get the children out of here."

Ignoring the repeated background sounds of shelling, her three grandchildren, girls ages 7, 9 and 11, focused on learning dance moves from a video on their mother's mobile phone.

Hordiyenko and her daughter Anna Dyachenko, 28, wanted to leave on Tuesday but there was no room on the bus for them, they said. Instead, they would be leaving on Wednesday, heading to western Ukraine initially and then abroad to relatives.

"People say it's time to go, and we're happy to leave," Dyachenko said. But they still fear they will have nothing to come home to once the war is over.

"Here we have our apartment, our house," she said. "Everything will be smashed and destroyed."

With a pre-war population of around 85,000, there are now around 30,000 people left, Bakhmut City Council Secretary Ganna Petrieyenko-Poluhina said. While authorities are encouraging more people to leave, some are hesitant, she said.

"Life is the most important thing for a person. But people are tied to their homes, to what they remember," Petrieyenko-Poluhina said. "Every day we see that shelling happens more often, and people leave. We would like that more people leave."



# 'India's economy seen growing 9.2 % in FY22'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy is expected to have grown at 9.2 per cent in the fiscal ended March 2022, after having contracted by 7.3 per cent in the previous financial year, aided by resilience in the rural economy, uptick in bank credit and rising GST collections, a note by Bank of Baroda said.

As per government's advance estimates, the gross domestic product (GDP) in FY22 is projected to grow by 8.9 per cent. The National Statistical Office (NSO) will release the final GDP growth figures for FY22 on May 31.

Bank of Baroda (BoB), in a note on GDP expectations by its Economic Research Department, said it expects the economy to post higher growth in the last quarter ended March as mobility improved, allowing opening up of economy with much lower COVID-19 cases across states.

Contact-intensive sectors are expected to make stronger recovery, and the economy is projected to grow by 5.5 per cent in Q4 FY22 against 5.4 per cent in Q3, it said. A much needed pick up will be visible

in services sector, with travel and hospitality contributing significantly. Construction is also likely to edge upwards.

However, agriculture growth might be a tad slow as compared to government expectations (3.3 per cent against government estimate of 3.5 per cent) owing to lower yield of wheat crops, conflict between Russia-Ukraine and heat wave conditions, as per the research note.

BoB said these might pose downside risks to its projections. Industrial growth might be adversely impacted too. It said India's economy is poised to recover in FY22 after contracting by 7.3 per cent in FY21.

The main factors contributing to this kind of growth are -- resilience shown by the rural sector with normal monsoon and higher production of foodgrains; uptick in bank credit growth to push financial services and improvement in services sector with passenger traffic (-62 per cent to 59 per cent), rail freight (2 per cent to 15 per cent) and port cargo (-4.6 per cent to 7 per cent) leading the race.

Higher GST collections have also provided much needed support. "Against this backdrop, we expect GDP growth at

9.2 per cent in FY22," Bank of Baroda said. However, there are downside risks emanating from the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, soaring of commodity prices and acceleration in global inflation going ahead, it added. Further, aggravating heat wave conditions have curbed wheat output and added some pressure to industrial growth.

A mix of both monetary (RBI frontloading with rate hike) and fiscal policy (reduction in excise duties) at play is expected to boost growth prospects, it contended.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects India's economy to grow by 9 per cent in FY22, while Asian Development Bank (ADB) has projected India's growth at 7.5 per cent. "However, we expect the economy to do much better sequentially specially on the back of base effect and normalisation of economic activity.

"The overall impact of Omicron variant which resulted in the 3rd wave of COVID-19 seems to be relatively muted than was initially anticipated.

Further, rapid pick up in pace of vaccination programme is also expected to support growth," as per research note by the public sector lender.



## Sensex tumbles over 300 points in volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices wiped out early gains as volatility yet again ruled the markets, with the Sensex extending its decline to the third day running on Wednesday, falling over 300 points amid a sell-off in IT stocks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 303.35 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 53,749.26. During the day, the benchmark hit a low of 53,683.16 and a high of 54,379.59. The broader NSE Nifty declined 99.35 points or 0.62 per cent to end at 16,025.80. From the Sensex pack, Asian Paints, TCS,

Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, State Bank of India, HCL Technologies and M&M were among the biggest laggards. In contrast, NTPC, Bharti Airtel, HDFC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Nestle, ICICI Bank and ITC were the prominent gainers.

Asian markets in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Seoul ended with gains, while Tokyo was marginally lower.

Exchanges in Europe were trading in the green in the afternoon trade. Stock markets in the US had mostly ended lower on Tuesday. International oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.37 per cent to USD

115.1 per barrel. Continuing their selling spree, foreign institutional investors offloaded shares worth a net Rs 2,393.45 crore on Tuesday, as per stock exchange data.

"Domestic indices wavered tracking mixed sentiments from global markets as investors assessed the possibility of a recession in the US followed by the Fed policy tightening.

"Global markets are awaiting the release of the Fed minutes, which will be evaluated for details on the path of the upcoming rate hikes," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

## Rupee edges up 3 paise to close at 77.54 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee recovered 3 paise to settle at 77.54 (provisional) against the US currency in a restricted trade on Wednesday as interventions by banks supported the local unit while a stronger dollar in overseas markets restricted the gains.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened higher at 77.54 against the greenback and moved in a range of 77.44 to 77.57 in the day trade. The rupee finally ended at 77.54, higher by 3 paise over its previous close of 77.57 against the American currency.

"Rupee traded with pendulum swing on a range fight between hedgers as participants from banks tried to support rupee whereas remittance

takers of dollar equally bought keeping rupee ranged between 77.47-77.60. The US Fed statement minutes later in the night might give some trend to the USDINR pair in futures," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 303.35 points or 0.56 per cent lower at 53,749.26, while the broader NSE Nifty fell 99.35 points or 0.62 per cent to 16,025.80.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.36 per cent to 102.22. Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market on Tuesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,393.45 crore, as per stock exchange data.



## 'Inflationary concerns may delay GST rate rationalisation'



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A GST tax rate rationalisation is likely to be delayed due to elevated inflation, sources said on Wednesday.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime taxes goods and services in four tax slabs of 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent.

It was being considered to reduce these tax slabs possibly to 3, an exercise which would have involved raising taxes in some items and a reduction in others. But with inflation rate ruling at all-time high, such an exercise is likely to be delayed, sources said.

## Govt's 29.5% stake sale in Hindustan Zinc Limited OK'd

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday cleared the Government's 29.5 per cent stake sale in Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL), which could fetch around Rs 38,000 crore to the exchequer. The decision would give a push to the Government's disinvestment drive in the current fiscal.

The government has budgeted Rs 65,000 crore from PSU disinvestment and strategic sale. The sale of 29.5 per cent stake representing over 124.96 crore shares would fetch around Rs 38,000 crore to the exchequer at current market prices, said officials.

Shares of HZL closed at Rs 305.05, up 3.14 per cent on the BSE. During the day, the scrip touched a high of Rs 317.30 a share. Hindustan Zinc was a Government-owned company

till 2002. In April 2002, the Government offloaded a 26 per cent stake in HZL to Sterlite Opportunities and Ventures Ltd (SOVL) for Rs 445 crore—thereby giving Vedanta group management control in HZL.

Vedanta group later bought 20 per cent from the market and another 18.92 per cent from the government in November 2003, raising its ownership in Hindustan Zinc to 64.92 per cent. This 20 per cent sale became a controversy and recently Supreme Court directed CBI to probe into the price variations between the first offloading and second offloading of shares happened during the Vajpayee Government.

Vedanta, led by mining magnate Anil Agarwal, recently said the company can buy just 5 per cent additional stake in the HZL considering the price of the shares on offer.

## RBI issues norms for import of gold by qualified jewellers

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Wednesday came up with norms for facilitating physical import of gold through India International Bullion Exchange IFSC (IIBX) or similar authorised exchange by Qualified Jewellers in India.

In addition to agencies nominated by the RBI and by DGFT, Qualified Jewellers (QJ) as approved by International Financial Services Centers Authority (IFSCA) were permitted to import gold in January.

The RBI issued the guidelines in order to enable resident Qualified Jewellers to import gold through IIBX or any other exchange approved by IFSCA and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

As per the guidelines, banks may allow Qualified Jewellers to remit advance payments for 11 days for import of gold through IIBX in compliance to the extant Foreign

Trade Policy and regulations issued under IFSC Act. "The advance remittance for import of Gold should not be leveraged in what-so-ever form for importing gold worth more than the advance remittance made," the Reserve Bank of India said.

In case the import of gold through IFSCA authorised exchange, for which advance remittance has been made, does not materialise, or the advance remittance made for the purpose is more than the amount required, the unutilised advance remittance shall be remitted back to the same bank within the specified time limit of 11 days.

RBI also said all payments by qualified jewellers for imports of gold through IIBX, shall be made through exchange mechanism as approved by IFSCA. Gold imports dipped by about 72 per cent to USD 1.72 billion during April, from USD 6.23 billion in the year-ago month.

## Paper exports from India jumps 80% to all-time high of ₹13,963 cr in FY22: IPMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Exports of paper and paperboard from India jumped nearly 80 per cent in FY 2021-22, touching a record Rs 13,963 crore, according to industry body IPMA.

The export growth has straddled across different grades of paper, said a statement from Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) while citing data released by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S).

"In value terms, exports of coated paper and paperboard increased by 100 per cent, uncoated writing and printing paper by 98 per cent, tissue paper by 75 per cent and kraft paper by 37 per cent," said IPMA.

Paper exports from India have been on an uptrend since the last five years. India is

exporting papers to - UAE, China, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. "In volume terms, paper exports from India have gone up four times from 0.66 million tonnes in FY17 to 2.85 million tonnes in FY22.

Similarly in value terms, the figures for corresponding years rose from Rs 3,041 crore to Rs 13,963 crore," it said.

"Exports have been rising in the last few years due to capacity expansion and technological upgradation undertaken by Indian paper mills, leading to better product quality which has found wider acceptance globally," said Rohit Pandit, Secretary General, IPMA.

In the last five to seven years, paper mills in India have invested over Rs 25,000 crore to create new capacities and induction of clean and green technologies, he said.

## Crude oil futures gain on spot demand



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Crude oil prices on Wednesday rose by ₹102 to ₹8,614 per barrel as participants widened positions on a firm spot demand.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for June delivery traded higher by ₹102 or 1.2 per cent at ₹8,614 per barrel in 6,907 lots. Analysts said the raising of bets by participants kept crude oil prices higher in futures trade.

Globally, West Texas Intermediate crude oil was up by 1.03 per cent at \$110.90 per barrel, while Brent crude traded 1.03 per cent higher at \$114.73 per barrel in New York.

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

**BEST AGROLIFE FY22 NET PROFIT JUMPS TO ₹104.76CR**  
Agrochemical firm Best Agrolife Ltd has reported a nearly three-fold jump in its net profit at Rs 104.76 crore in FY 2022. Its net profit stood at Rs 37.08 crore in the 2020-21 financial year, Best Agrolife Ltd (BAL) said in a statement. The company posted a 34 per cent increase in its revenue at Rs 1,210.79 crore in the period under review as against Rs 905.45 crore in the previous fiscal. "Our performance this year boosts our confidence and confirms that we are on track to achieve our strategic and financial objectives.

**MANGO FESTIVAL FROM MAY 23**  
**New Delhi:** To refresh your taste-buds with ripe, sweet and delectable mangoes in this sweltering heat, Barista, a leading coffee chain, is starting a mango festival. The festival will be on in all Barista cafes in Delhi NCR, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata from May 23. "The mango affair is very refreshing, natural and replenishes your body's lost minerals while battling out in the sun. We expect to have a great response to the festival," said Rajat Agrawal, COO, Barista Coffee Company.

**EMPYREAN CASHEWS GROWS 101%**  
**Mumbai:** The revenue of Emphyrean Cashews Limited, a leading firm engaged in processing raw cashew nuts, grew by 101 per cent touching Rs 12.41 cr for Q4FY22 and Rs 52.2cr for FY22. The firm is planning to set up 4 COCO outlets in Goa in Q2 FY23. Emphyrean Cashew Ltd went public in March 2022.

## Sebi to auction properties of Golden Life Agro India, Sunshine Agro Infra on June 16

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To recover investors' money, Sebi on Wednesday said it will auction a total of five properties of Golden Life Agro India Ltd and Sunshine Agro Infra Ltd for a reserve price of Rs 11.5 crore on June 16.

The two companies raised funds from investors without complying with regulatory norms.

The properties put on the block include land parcels and a double storied building situated across West Bengal, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice.

Inviting bids for the sale of recovery proceedings against Golden Life Agro India and Sunshine Agro Infra and their directors, Sebi said auction of

properties will be conducted through online mode on June 16, 2022 during 10.30 am to 11.30 am. Out of the five properties being put on the block, three belong to Golden Life Agro India and remaining two relate to Sunshine Agro Infra.

Total reserve price of these properties is pegged at Rs 11.53 crore, as per notice. Quirk Realty has been appointed as e-auction service provider.

The regulator said bidders should make their own independent enquiries regarding encumbrances, title of properties put on auction and claims, among others, prior to submitting their bids.

## Repos Energy partners Mahindra for doorstep fuel delivery

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Ratan Tata-backed energy distribution startup Repos Energy has partnered with Mahindra for doorstep fuel delivery through the automaker's Furio trucks, a release said on Wednesday.

The Pune-based firm Repos is currently present across over 220 cities through its over 1,500 partners and more than 2,500 mobile petrol pumps.

The doorstep fuel delivery model has grown rapidly across the country and scaled up even faster in the post-Covid era, owing to many factors, such as structural constraints of the existing distribution model, changing buying behaviour of consumers and technological disruptions, according to the

release. Nagpur-based startup Navankur Infranergy has recently launched a mobile fuel station for the doorstep diesel delivery to various customers across Nagpur.

The mobile station, built on a Mahindra Furio 11 truck, with a double dispensing Alpha mobile pump, has been supplied by Repos Energy, according to the release.

Repos Energy has tied up with Mahindra to cater to doorstep fuel delivery demand through their Furio trucks, said the release.

"Mahindra's range of light and the intermediate commercial vehicle come with their inherent advantages to make it a perfect fit for fuel Bowser operation and ensure profitability," said Jalaj Gupta, Business Head for commercial

vehicles at Mahindra & Mahindra Limited. A major proportion of the diesel goes into fuelling industries, where it is often required in bulk.

These industries resort to procuring diesel from fuel pumps using improper receptacles like barrels and bowlers, which cause great losses in the form of spillage, pilferage, dead mileage, and manpower costs, he stated.

"Combining with the expertise of Repos Energy in fuel bowser business solution, we are introducing a compelling product offering to cater to the emerging need of industries," Gupta added. Doorstep diesel delivery in India has eased the way fuel is being delivered in the country, according to Chetan Walunj, co-founder of Repos Energy.

## RBI cancels registration of 5 NBFCs due to irregular lending practices

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday said it has cancelled Certificate of Registration (CoR) of five NBFCs for violation of norms related to outsourcing and fair practices code in their digital lending operations.

Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) whose CoR stands cancelled are: UMB Securities Ltd, Anashri Finvest, Chadha Finance, Alexcy Traccon, and Jhuria Financial Services.

"The CoR of the (five) NBFCs have been cancelled on account of violation of RBI guidelines on outsourcing and



Fair Practices Code in their digital lending operations undertaken through third party apps which was considered detrimental to public interest," the RBI said.

It further said these companies were also not complying with extant regulations pertaining to charging of excessive interest and resorted to undue harassment of customers for loan recovery purposes.

## Standard Chartered Bank settles case with Sebi in CG Power case, pays ₹4.97 cr



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Standard Chartered Bank has settled with markets regulator Sebi a case pertaining to alleged violations of regulatory norms in the matter of CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd after paying Rs 4.97 crore towards settlement charges. The order came after Standard

Chartered Bank (SCB) approached Sebi proposing to settle case pertaining to alleged violations of PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) rules "without admitting or denying findings of fact and conclusions of law", through a settlement order. "Pending enforcement proceedings for alleged defaults ... Are settled qua applicant," Sebi said in its settlement order passed on Wednesday.

The regulator further said it will not initiate other enforcement actions against the applicant for the defaults. Sebi had initiated proceedings through a show cause notice issued to

the bank in May 2021 for the alleged violations of PFUTP rules. In the show cause notice, Standard Chartered Bank was alleged to have benefitted a private limited company controlled by the promoter group companies, at the expense of a listed company (CG Power) to the detriment of the interest of the minority shareholders of CG Power.

As per the order, Avantha International Asset BV (AIABV), an entity related to the promoter group of CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd or CG Power, had taken a loan from SCB. In October 2017, SCB disbursed a loan of

Euro 44 million to CG International BV (CGIBV) which was transferred to AIABV on the same day to repay its earlier loan from SCB. The funds were later frozen by SCB at AIABV.

In February 2018, SCB disbursed another loan of Euro 44 million to CG Industrial Holdings Singapore Pte Ltd (CG Singapore) which was transferred to AIABV on the same day. On the same day, AIABV returned the funds received from CGIBV which were frozen and CGIBV utilized these funds for repayment of the loan taken from SCB in October 2017.





the pioneer

# INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2022

11

A lot of people counted David Miller out. But for us, he's always a match-winner from the time we bought him at the auctions. We always knew what he's capable of

— **HARDIK PANDYA**

## Patidar 112\* helps RCB post 207-4 vs LSG

Bangalore's No. 3 remained unbeaten and scored 12 fours, 7 sixes during his 54-ball knock in IPL 2022 eliminator

PTI ■ KOLKATA

**L**ittle-known domestic bulwark Rajat Patidar found his hour of fame as his magnificent 49-ball hundred propelled Royal Challengers Bangalore to an imposing 207 for 4 against Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL Eliminator on Wednesday.

Courtesy Patidar's 54-ball-112 not out which had 12 fours and seven huge sixes, RCB literally knocked the stuffing out of LSG attack with Mohsin Khan's superb 1 for 25 proving to be only saving grace.

On a day their famed batting duo trio of Faf du Plessis (0), Glenn Maxwell (9) and Virat Kohli (25) failed to enthrall a capacity Eden crowd, RCB's No. 3 played out of his skin as 90 runs came in fours and sixes off just 19 balls.

While most of the star-studded RCB batters struggled for timing, the 28-year-old looked effortless with his slices, punches, counter-punches and drives to tower over the rest.

And to make Patidar's story more interesting, he wasn't picked from auction this season and joined the team after start when a player called Luvnith Sisodia was injured.

Had Sisodia been alright, RCB

wouldn't have required services of Patidar, who made 65,000 at Eden Gardens stand on their feet.

He along with Dinesh Karthik (37 not out from 23 balls) put on a match-turning unbroken partnership of 92 runs from 41 balls as RCB scored 84 runs in the last five overs to prop up the total.

First, he showed the glimpses of his stroke-making skills to slam Krunal Pandya for three boundaries and one six inside the power-play to overshadow Kohli in a 66-run partnership from 46 balls.

Having cruised to his half-century in 28 balls, he took another 21 balls to reach his maiden hundred in T20s.

He got to the landmark pulling Mohsin Khan over square leg with a sweet-timing of the bat that summed up his effortless stay at the crease.

RCB lost three key wickets of a well-set Kohli, Maxwell and Mahipal Lomror in the middle overs to see their run-rate drop.

In-form Dinesh Karthik, who has played the role of a finisher to perfection for RCB this season, also survived some anxious moments against Ravi Bishnoi to start with.

But Patidar turned it around in the last over Bishnoi when he smacked the 'googly-man' for three



### HISTORY MAKER RAJAT PATIDAR

■ Rajat Patidar is the first uncapped player to score a century in the play-offs/knockouts of the IPL. The previous highest score by an uncapped was the 94 off 50 balls that Manish Pandey scored for Kolkata Knight Riders in the final of the 2014 IPL.

■ He scored his century in 49 balls, which is the joint fastest ton scored by any played in the playoffs or knockouts of the IPL. Patidar equalled the record set by Wriddhiman Saha, who scored 115 off 55 balls for Kings XI Punjab in

the 2014 IPL final.

■ Patidar's 112 not out has helped him go past a player who was recently inducted in RCB's hall of fame. He has surpassed the 89 off 47 balls that Chris Gayle scored against Mumbai Indians in 2011.

■ This is the third-highest score by an uncapped player in the IPL. Patidar crossed the unbeaten 101 that Devdutt Padikkal scored for RCB against Rajasthan Royals last season. Manish Pandey is second

while Paul Valthaty tops the list.

■ It is also the fifth instance of a player scoring a century in the playoffs/knockouts of an IPL tournament. Patidar's 112 not out is also the fourth highest score ever in the playoffs.

■ Meanwhile, Patidar and Karthik's onslaught in the final overs helped RCB take as many as 88 runs in the death overs. That is the most scored by any team in this period of a match in the 2022 season.

sixes and two fours in succession in an over that read 1 6 4 6 4 6.

A sloppy LSG also helped his cause as Patidar, who got reprieves on 59, 72 and 93. After a 40-minute delayed start due to bad weather, Lucknow got off to a superb start when Mohsin got RCB skipper Faf du Plessis for a golden duck in the first over.

Having lost their skipper early, it was about bidding time as Kohli and Patidar opted for a wait-and-watch policy before the latter broke loose

against Krunal Pandya in the last over of the power-play.

Patidar slammed Krunal for three boundaries and one six in an over that yielded 20 runs to make it up for their slow start and cruise to 52/1 in six overs.

#### SACHIN, VIRU IMPRESSED

Patidar's binder earned him a lot of praise of social media and taking to Twitter, Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar and legendary Indian opener Virender Sehwag hailed him

for playing a match-changing knock for the Faf du Plessis-led side.

"Serious hitting by Rajat Patidar and nicely supported by @DineshKarthik. It's a great total but given how the surface is playing and the fast outfield, I feel it'll be a close game. Well played by @rcbtweets in the first half," Tendulkar said in his tweet. Tendulkar's former Team India teammate Sehwag also shared a special tweet for the middle-order batter of the Bangalore-based franchise.

## You've got to swallow your ego sometimes and hang in there: Buttler

PTI ■ KOLKATA

**R**ajasthan Royals opener Jos Buttler had no qualms in admitting that he struggled to get going initially against Gujarat Titans in the first qualifier, saying sometimes you have to "swallow your ego" and hang in there without panicking.

This season's Orange Cap holder Buttler, who now has 718 runs in 15 games, initially failed to time the ball and was 39 off his first 38 balls.

But the opener shifted gears in style and smacked another 50 off his next 18 deliveries faced to lift RR's total to a challenging 188/6.

"I was determined to hang in there. It was a big game for us and we wanted to make sure to put a big score," Buttler said at the post-match press conference after RR's seven-wicket loss to GT on Tuesday.

"Sometimes you got to swallow your ego, if you are finding it hard, you are finding it hard. I don't try to force too much, don't panic.

"The opposition would prefer me to panic and get out, just try to hang in there. I knew at some point I would get away. I trusted myself. Today, it came late in the innings," he added.

Buttler also had plenty of luck go his way as he got two reprieves in the middle in his 89 off 56 balls.

It was Sanju Samson who gave RR a fiery start with his 47 off 26 and Buttler said the Royals skipper took some pressure off him.

"Yes I was finding it tough to start with and then Sanju came in and played well from



ball one. He took a lot of pressure off me. I wouldn't say it was my most fluent innings but I just tried to hang in there and managed to get a little bit away in the end."

The 189-run target proved insufficient for the Royals as David Miller and Hardik Pandya shared a 106-run unbroken partnership for the fourth wicket to seal a win and take GT to the final in their maiden IPL season. "We just could not break that partnership, if we managed to take a wicket and found a way to break that partnership, it would have been crucial for us. The deeper they took, the harder it became for us.

"But we are still alive in the tournament after finishing in the

top-two, we still got a chance. We're disappointed today, but still in the tournament," he added.

The Purple Cap-holder Yuzvendra Chahal and India senior off-spinner R Ashwin, who have a combined tally of 37 wickets this season, were wicketless and leaked 72 runs against the Titans. "Those two guys have been outstanding for us this season. It's a tough place for bowlers — spin or pace bowling.

"It's a small ground with a fast outfield. A lot of boundaries are available on this particular ground. So it is always going to be tough. There was a bit of dew also in the second innings," he said, throwing his support to the spin duo.

## Hardik says his name 'always sells, no problem with it'

PTI ■ KOLKATA

**I**n his short international career, Hardik Pandya has seen it all — highs and lows, injuries, surgery, being embroiled in controversies — but he says he faces them with a smiling face.

Putting behind all these, Pandya has shone not just as an all-rounder but as a leader, taking an under-rated Gujarat Titans to the final in a dream IPL debut season.

"People always talk, that's their job. I can't help," Pandya said after Titans win.

"The name 'Hardik Pandya' always sells. I've no problem with it, I just take it easy with a smiling face."

After making his international debut in 2016 following his success with Mumbai Indians, expectations skyrocketed with Pandya as he was compared with the legendary World Cup-winning India skipper Kapil Dev.

In 2019, Pandya was suspended for his loose talk on women on 'Koffee with Karan'. He later apologised to the inquiry



committee of the BCCI.

The 28-year-old star all-rounder made his last appearance for India against Namibia in the T20 World Cup in Dubai on November 8 and then struggled to manage his bowling workload

post his back surgery. Released by Mumbai Indians, Hardik was picked by Gujarat's for ₹15 crore ahead of this IPL season. Questions were raised when he was handed captaincy for a team making its debut, but Pandya has delivered,

be it with the bat, ball or in his 'Captain Cool' demeanour, much like his mentor MS Dhoni.

"Obviously Mahi bhai has played a big role in my life. He's a dear brother, a dear friend, and family to me," Pandya said. "...I've learnt a lot of good things from him. For me, it was more about being individually strong which I'm really proud of myself as well how I was able to manage all the parts."

Mostly coming at number four, Pandya is at the fifth spot in the chart for most prolific batters this season, with 453 runs at a 45-plus average and a healthy strike rate of 132.84.

Pandya has also come handy with the ball, giving crucial breakthroughs for his team. He has bowled 26.3 overs so far and taken five wickets with an economy of 7.73. "Before the captaincy as well, I always made sure that I approached all the situations in a cool-headed way. Generally, you make better decisions that way," he said about his recipe for success in this IPL.

## Test rankings: Kohli, Rohit, Ashwin maintain their top-10 positions

PTI ■ DUBAI

**B**angladesh's Liton Das and Sri Lankan veteran Angelo Mathews have made valuable gains in the ICC Men's Test Rankings after fine performances in the drawn first match while there has been no movement in latest top-10 list issued by the world body.

In the batter's list, Marnus Labuschagne maintained his pole position while India captain Rohit Sharma and his predecessor

Virat Kohli remained static at eighth and 10th place respectively. Similarly in bowling, Pat Cummins (901 points) has a 51-point lead over his nearest rival Ravichandran Ashwin, who is followed by countryman Jasprit Bumrah. India's Ravindra Jadeja also remained on top of the all-rounders' table.

With only Sri Lanka and Bangladesh engaged in a WTC series, it was inevitable that players from those two nations earned points.

AGENCIES ■ KOLKATA

**A**fter helping Gujarat Titans to seal a spot in the final of the ongoing Indian Premier League 2022 on Tuesday, star batter David Miller said continued backing from the team has played a big role in improving his game in this season.

Miller was the chief creator of GT's brilliant great seven-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals. David Miller played a ballistic knock of 68 from 38 balls and captain Hardik Pandya's 40 off 27 balls guided debutants Gujarat Titans to a

## Gill feels he doesn't have to prove anything to anyone

**KOLKATA:** Chasing a challenging 189-run target, Shubman Gill along with Matthew Wade laid a solid foundation striking a 72-run partnership for the second wicket to pave way for a seven-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals here at the Eden Gardens Stadium on Tuesday to enter the final of the IPL. The GT opener scored 35 off 21 balls hitting five fours and one six. "Kolkata has always been nice to me, fortunately, it was one of those nights where we were on the winning side, happy we are in the final. After Saha got out, we got off to a good start in the powerplay, batting in the Eden Gardens is always fun," said Shubman.

Talking about the batting surface and his team, he said "We expected the surface to be better, but the ball was holding a bit and spinners were getting a bit of grip on this wicket. It's a new team but the way the support staff and players have come together has been tremendous to watch, we are all really enjoying our cricket."

Shubman further added that he played well for Gujarat and had a good season.

"There hasn't been any added pressure on me, I was picked (in the draft) because I have done well for my earlier franchises, I don't have to prove anything to anyone, I just had to contribute to my team and play well for them. It was nice to watch (from sidelines), a semi-final and your teammates are doing the job, it was amazing," he added. **PTI**

as Gujarat Titans became the 3rd team to reach the final in their debut season.

"It was a new team so there are a few butterflies here and there. From the first win, everything sort of aligned. You have to control what you can, can't think too much ahead. Concentrate on your breathing, and if it's in your area, you have to capitalise. We've got a few days off. There's a bus trip back, we'll have a few drinks and celebrate," said Miller.

Gujarat Titans will now wait to see who among Lucknow Super Giants, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Rajasthan Royals meet them in the title clash in Ahmedabad on May 29.

## Mathews, de Silva keep Sri Lanka alive



AP ■ DHAKA

**A**ngelo Mathews and Dhananjaya de Silva each hit a fifty and put on a 102-run partnership to keep

Sri Lanka going strong in the rain-hit second Test against Bangladesh on Wednesday.

Mathews remained unbeaten on 58 after de Silva went out with the same score to take Sri Lanka to 282-

5 at stumps on the third day, still trailing Bangladesh by 83 runs.

Rain washed out entire post-lunch session but the duo stepped up their scoring rate to make up for lost time, with de Silva striking nine fours before Shakib Al Hasan got his wicket.

The right-hander, who faced 95 balls, was initially given not out on a caught-behind appeal before Bangladesh successfully reviewed.

Mathews, who smashed four fours and a six, was batting with Dinesh Chandimal on 10 at stumps.

Bangladesh made early inroads after Sri Lanka resumed on 143-2, Ebadot Hossain bowling nightwatchman Kasun Rajitha for a duck with the second ball of the day.

A gem of a delivery from Shakib dismissed Dimuth Karunaratne for 80 soon afterwards, with the Sri Lankan skipper adding 10 to his overnight score.

Shakib tossed the ball up on off-stump and Karunaratne went for a drive but saw the flighted delivery dip and turn between bat and pad before crashing into his stumps.

Karunaratne, who was dropped on 37, struck nine boundaries in his 15th Test fifty.

De Silva hit Ebadot for three fours in one over just before the break after he and Mathews survived a difficult spell from the right-arm pace bowler and Shakib.

Shakib, the most successful bowler for Bangladesh so far, has claimed 3-59.



seven-wicket win over the inaugural champions Rajasthan Royals at the Eden Gardens.

"I think opportunity, firstly (what's changed?). I've been given a role, I felt extremely backed from the outset. My personal game - I'm enjoying my role, I've been playing for many years now. Understanding my game a lot better. In high-pressure situations, you tend to go away from your game plan but I feel like I'm trying to keep everything together close to the game plan," said David Miller in a post-match presentation.

David Miller further said that the plus point of IPL is that you play for different teams in it.

"There has been a lot of going wide to me on the off-side, so I decided actually for the first time to step across. Backed me and went with it. The rest I tried to hit as hard as possible. That's the joys of IPL - you play for different teams, and get to meet different players," he added.

Miller struck five sixes, including three in the final over when 16 runs were needed in a thrilling chase of 189



# Kerber, Azarenka win; Emma out

AP ■ PARIS

Former Grand Slam champions Angelique Kerber and Victoria Azarenka advanced to the third round of the French Open on Wednesday.

Kerber, who won her first clay title in six years on the eve of the French Open, defeated French wildcard and 2020 junior champion Elsa Jacquemot 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) as she seeks the only Grand Slam missing from her collection.

The German 21st seed next plays Aliaksandra Sasnovich, the Belarusian who knocked out US Open champion Emma Raducanu 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

"I think the last week was really important for me to get the title," former number one Kerber said of her Strasbourg triumph. "I had a lot of confidence. It's great to be back here and I hope I can still play a few more matches."

"When you achieve everything you want, you play for the love of the game. I just love the sport. Let's see how long I can keep playing at a high level."

Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open winner, beat 2014 Roland Garros semi-finalist Andrea Petkovic 6-1, 7-6 (7/3). She meets Swiss 23rd seed Jil Teichmann for a place in the fourth round.

## SAKKARI OUT

Greek fourth seed Maria Sakkari crashed out in the French Open second round, going down 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4) to Czech world number 81 Karolina Muchova.

Sakkari, a 2021 Roland Garros semi-finalist, is the fifth women's top-10 seed to lose in the first four days at Roland Garros.

Muchova has matched her run to the third round from 12 months ago and will next play 27th seed Amanda Anisimova, who reached the last four in Paris three years ago.

"It's very special, she's an amazing player. It was a big fight, a little bit of a test and challenge for me



and I'm happy I took it the way I did," said Muchova.

The 25-year-old reached the semi-finals at last year's Australian Open and the last eight for the second time at Wimbledon, but is playing just her fourth tournament since the US Open after struggling with an abdominal injury. "It's an amazing feeling I can play again fully."

Sasnovich also said she "respects" the controversial decision of the ATP and WTA to strip Wimbledon of ranking points.

That move has prompted a number of players, including former world number one and four-time Grand Slam title winner

Naomi Osaka, to consider withdrawing from Wimbledon which starts on June 27.

Wimbledon chiefs said the ATP and WTA decision was "disproportionate".

Russian men's star Andrey Rublev said the atmosphere in the sport is currently "toxic" while French player Benoit Paire believes "99%" of players want a Wimbledon without points.

"I'm sorry for Russia and Russians, but they are the ones causing all the trouble," he said.

Sasnovich said she talks to Ukrainian players in the locker room.

"I ask them how they feel. We

## Wimbledon 'will never be an exhibition': Murray

AP ■ PARIS

Two-time former Wimbledon champion Andy Murray of Britain on Wednesday said that the tournament "will never feel like an exhibition" despite it being stripped of ranking points over the ban on Russian and Belarusian players.

The decision by the ATP and WTA to remove the sport's most prestigious tournament of ranking points has prompted some

players to say they may skip Wimbledon, the year's third Grand Slam.

"I'd hazard a guess that most people watching on centre court Wimbledon in a few weeks' time wouldn't know or care about how many ranking points a player gets for winning a 3rd round match," tweeted Murray.

"But I guarantee they will remember who wins. Wimbledon will never be an exhibition and will never feel like an exhibition."

talk about the war a little bit," added the world number 47 from Minsk.

"They have families there. It's a very bad situation for them. We try to live our lives and find the positives. These are tough times."

"I would have no problem if I had to play against a player from Ukraine."

On Wednesday, Sasnovich made the third round of the French Open for the first time by stunning US Open champion and 12th seed Emma Raducanu 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

## 'AGAINST THE WAR'

Belarus tennis star Aliaksandra Sasnovich may be banned from Wimbledon but she insisted Wednesday that she opposed the ongoing war in Ukraine and supports players from the embattled country "100%".

Belarusian players such as Sasnovich, compatriot and former world number one Victoria Azarenka, as well as a host of Russians including men's world number two Daniil Medvedev, were declared persona non grata by Wimbledon in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

"I wanted to play Wimbledon so much, it's one of my favourite tournaments but I respect the decision," the 28-year-old said.

"Normally, I speak with some of the Ukraine players. We are not

friends, we are just colleagues but I support them 100%."

"I want the war to finish as soon as possible. I don't support the war and am against the violence. I just want peace."

## 1ST SLAM MAIN DRAW WIN

Indian tennis player Ramkumar Ramanathan cherished his first ever main draw win at a Grand Slam as he combined with American Hunter Reese to beat the German team of Daniel Altmaier and Oscar Otte in the men's doubles event of the French Open, here on Wednesday.

Ramkumar, who has made umpteen attempts to crack a singles main draw of a Grand Slam without success, and Reese beat their rivals 7-6(4) 6-3 in their opening round of the clay court major.

The 27-year-old Indian had broken into the doubles top-100 early this year, following his maiden ATP Tour title win with compatriot Rohan Bopanna in Adelaide and at home in Pune, competing in the Tata Open Maharashtra.

Rohan Bopanna and his Dutch partner Matwe Middelkoop had progressed to the second round with 6-4, 6-1 win over local wild cards Sascha Gueymard Wayenburg and Luca Van Assche, on Tuesday.

## India will put up fantastic show in U-17 WC: Aditi

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Star India women's football team goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan feels that the under-17 team is not short on preparation for the upcoming World Cup despite the absence of senior nationals in the country since 2019.

India organised its last U-17 National Championships in April 2019 before the coronavirus outbreak upset all plans. But Aditi feels the Indian team is on the right track and would be one of the sides to watch out for in the U-17 Women's World Cup.

"This group has been preparing for this moment for quite some time," Chauhan said in an interview.

"They've been getting regular match time and training regularly and hopefully, they'll be able to gain more exposure and play more friendlies before the World Cup."

"I am confident that they will put on a fantastic performance in front of their home crowd at the World Cup." India under coach Thomas Dennerby has already named 33 probables who are currently training in Jamshedpur. There have been questions about the selection policies without a national tournament.

"I think India has a lot of potential in their U-17 squad and I have been lucky to play with a few of them."

"The young girls have shown their fighting spirit in their last SAFF Cup where they were the champions."

"The players have been practicing together for a long time and I am sure India will be one of the teams to watch out for," she said.

The tournament is slated from October 17-30 in the five cities of Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Guwahati, Ahmedabad and Navi Mumbai.

"The U-17 World Cup is going to be a huge opportunity for our girls to play and compete against the best in the world."

"It is important that we put on a good display because all eyes will be on our team from across the world."

"We can demonstrate that women's football in India is progressing on the right path by doing better here," she added.

In April last year, Aditi became the second Indian woman player after Bala Devi to ply her trade outside India, when she signed a one-year deal with Iceland's third division club Hamar Hveragerði women's team.

"We've also witnessed the standard of football in other nations by playing against them on a regular basis, and it's fair to say we're not that far behind."

"Of course we need to improve our game, but the differences are little. We have some extremely good players in our ranks, and I'm sure we'll see a lot of Indian players playing in foreign leagues in the coming years," the star goalkeeper from Tamil Nadu added.

## Chelsea sale gets green light from UK Government

AP ■ LONDON

The UK government on Wednesday announced it had given the green light to Todd Boehly's proposed takeover of Chelsea football club from the sanctioned Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Nadine Dorries said she had issued a licence permitting the deal late on Tuesday, shortly after it won approval from the Premier League.

"We are satisfied the proceeds of the sale will not benefit Roman Abramovich or other sanctioned individuals," Dorries tweeted.

"Given the sanctions we placed on those linked to (Vladimir) Putin and the bloody invasion of Ukraine, the long-term future of the club can only be secured under a new owner," she said.

A consortium led by Boehly, a co-owner of baseball's Los Angeles Dodgers, had already agreed a record £4.25 billion deal to buy the Premier League club from Abramovich on May 7.

The Premier League said its approval hinged on the government sale licence "and the satis-



factory completion of the final stages of the transaction".

Officials wanted everything completed on Tuesday so Chelsea could meet all registration deadlines for next season's football competitions.

Abramovich put Chelsea on the market in early March, just before he was sanctioned by Britain following Russia's inva-

sion of Ukraine.

Completing the purchase has been a lengthy process due to government concerns over the potential for Abramovich to profit from the sale.

The total value of the deal smashes the previous record for the sale of a sports team — \$2.4 billion for the New York Mets baseball franchise in 2020.

## India need luck, big win against Indonesia

PTI ■ JAKARTA

Defending champions India need to beat hosts Indonesia by a huge margin and hope Japan defeat Pakistan in the other Pool A match for advancing to the knockout stage of the Asia Cup men's hockey tournament here on Thursday.

India's fate is not in their own hands anymore as even a win against lowly Indonesia will not guarantee them a knock-out berth. Japan will have to beat Pakistan to keep India's faint hopes alive.

With a draw and a loss, India are placed third in Pool A behind Japan (6 points) and Pakistan (4 points).

Under the guidance of Sardar Singh, India fielded a young team in the tournament alongside a handful of seniors like Birendra Lakra and SV Sunil, who came out of retirements. But the senior duo

looked well past their prime if their performances in the two matches so far are to go by.

India conceded a last minute goal to draw 1-1 against Pakistan in their tournament opener before being thrashed by Japan 2-5.

But now, a "next to impossible" task awaits the Indians as they not only have to score big against Indonesia but also hope that Japan beat Pakistan in the other Pool A match on Thursday if they are to progress to the Super 4 stage.

India have a goal difference of minus three as against Pakistan's plus 13. If Pakistan lose to Japan, India will have to beat Indonesia by a huge margin to go past their western neighbours in goal difference and advance further in the tournament.

Inexperience was the major reason behind India's below-par performances as the young play-



ers, mainly drafted from the last Junior World Cup squad, are finding it difficult to get a measure of the level of international hockey.

In the two matches so far, the Indians lacked cohesion in the three departments — defence, midfield and forward-line. The Indians lacked a quality playmaker in the midfield,

which was evident from their constant efforts of building attacks from the centre instead of using both the flanks more frequently. Lakra looked a pale shadow of himself in the backline, which has crumbled big time when put under relentless pressure. The forwardline has been wasteful with the likes of Tokyo Olympian Simranjeet

Singh and youngster Uttam Singh not having the best of outings. The lanky and strongly built Pawan Rajbhar is the only player who have impressed with his commitment and stick work in the two matches, creating chances and also scoring a goal.

## Liverpool's Klopp named PL manager of the year

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp has been named the League Managers' Association Premier League Manager of the Year, it was announced on Tuesday.

The Reds won both the English League Cup and FA Cup, beating Chelsea in penalty shoot-outs at Wembley on both occasions.

But Liverpool lost out on the Premier League title to Manchester City by just a point after both Klopp's men and Pep Guardiola's side won their respective matches on Sunday's final day of a thrilling campaign.

Klopp, collecting his accolade at the LMA Awards dinner in London on Tuesday, said: "It is a great honour and it was an insane season."

"The last matchday when only two games were meaningless and in the rest, we all played for absolutely everything."

"It was not the best outcome for us, but we are already over it."

The German, paying tribute to his backroom team, added: "When you win a prize like this you are either a genius or you have the best coaching staff in the world — and I am here with all of my coaching staff, they know how much I appreciate them."

Klopp also collected the Sir Alex Ferguson Trophy, named in honour of the celebrated former Manchester United boss, which is voted for by the full membership of managers across all the divisions in English senior football.

"This being voted for by my colleagues



is obviously the most important prize you can get," Klopp said.

"I don't believe in individual prizes in football generally, it is a team sport and I would be nothing without these boys there."

"It is all about what we can do together and what we did together."

Liverpool may have been denied an unprecedented quadruple by City, but they will now try to add the Champions League to their impressive trophy haul this season when they face Real Madrid in a Paris final on Saturday.

## EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. MCSW-Fur-NonAC-22-23-03  
Name of the work: FURNISHING OF NON-AC BG COACHES AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR FOR A PERIOD OF 24 (TWENTY FOUR) MONTHS.  
Advertised Value: ₹1,95,79,388.88, EMD: ₹2,47,900/-, Completion Period : 24 Months.  
Bidding Start Date : 30.05.2022, Date & time of Tender Closing: 13.06.2022, 1200 hrs.  
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.  
Complete information including e-Tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.irops.gov.in>  
Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer(POH), Carriage Repair Workshop, Mancheswar  
PR-129/N/22-23