

## OPINION 6

THE MISSING CHIEF  
OF DEFENCE STAFF

## WORLD 9

POPE OFFERS TO MEET PUTIN,  
STILL WAITING TO HEAR BACK

## MONEY 10

EXPORTS UP 24% TO  
\$38 BN IN APRIL

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY MAY 4, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

CHENNAI  
TO FACE  
RCB IN IPL  
12 SPORTModi calls for diplomacy,  
talks to end Ukraine warDenmark PM asks  
India to nudge  
Russia to stop warPIONEER NEWS  
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■  
NEW DELHI/COPENHAGEN

As conflict rages in Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called for dialogue and diplomacy to end the war while Denmark Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen urged India to talk to Russia for an immediate ceasefire.

This was the main outcome of bilateral talks between Modi and Frederiksen in Copenhagen with both the leaders also reviewing the situation in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region and India-European Union relations.

Incidentally, Modi in his talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin on Monday had said “no one will be the victorious party” in this war. His visit to three nations in the region comes at a time when many European nations are against Russian military action, while India, so far, has refrained from criticising Russia. Modi is on a visit to Germany, Denmark and France from Monday.

Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen welcomes Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi upon his arrival at Copenhagen Airport, Denmark, on Tuesday  
AP/PTI

During his talks with his Danish counterpart, Modi said, “We made an appeal to take the path of dialogues and strategy for an immediate ceasefire and solution to the problem in Ukraine.”

In her remarks after the talks, the Danish Prime Minister said, “Denmark and

the entire European Union strongly condemn Russia's unlawful and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. My message is very clear — Putin has to stop this war and end the killings. I hope that India will influence Russia also in this discussion.”

Giving details of the talks, she said the two sides discussed

consequences of “horrible crimes committed against civilians and serious humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The reports on killings of civilians in Bucha are deeply shocking. We have condemned these killings and we stress the need for an independent investigation.”

Continued on Page 2



Children play after offering Eid-ul-Fitr prayers at Jama Masjid in Old Delhi on Tuesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

## Communal tensions in Jodhpur; mobile Net suspended

PTI ■ JODHPUR/JAIPUR

Communal tensions gripped Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's hometown Jodhpur hours before Eid on Tuesday, prompting the authorities to suspend mobile internet services and impose a curfew in 10 police stations areas of the city.

The CM has appealed to people to maintain peace and harmony.

The Jodhpur deputy commissioner of police issued orders imposing a curfew till May 4 midnight besides sus-

pending mobile internet services to check the spread of rumours. Tensions broke out past midnight over putting up of Islamic flags on the Jalori gate circle, which led to stone pelting in which five policemen were injured.

The situation was brought under control in the early hours on Tuesday with heavy deployment of police but tensions escalated again in the morning after prayers at an Eidgah. Shops, vehicles and houses were pelted with stones near the Jalori gate area.

Members of the minority

community were installing Eid flags and they put up a flag on a roundabout alongside the statue of freedom fighter Balmukund Bissa.

This led to a confrontation as members of the other community alleged that a saffron flag, which they had put up there ahead of Parshuram Jayanti, had gone missing.

The issue snowballed into stone-pelting and clashes, officials said.

Police rushed to the spot to control the situation during which five policemen were injured, the police control

room said.

Police had to lob tear gas shells to disperse the mob. Mobile internet services were suspended in the area to check the spread of rumours, the officials said.

Gehlot in a tweet urged people to maintain peace and called the incident unfortunate. “While respecting the tradition of love and brotherhood of Jodhpur, Marwar, I make a touching appeal to all parties to maintain peace and cooperate in restoring law and order,” he said.

Continued on Page 2

BJP, Cong sling mud  
over Rahul's partying  
at Nepal nightclubPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

A viral video of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi “partying” at a nightclub in neighbouring Nepal has triggered a war of words between the leaders of Congress and the BJP.

It got murkier during the day with the Congress posting photographs of senior leaders, including late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and incumbent Narendra Modi, portraying them in a bad light.

While the Congress defended Rahul saying he was in Kathmandu to attend a wedding of a friend, the BJP said Rahul was a non-serious politician who loved to enjoy party.

Union Minister Mukhtar

Abbas Naqvi called him a “full-time tourist and a part-time politician, who is filled with hypocrisy”.

Congress IT hit back by posting images of Vajpayee sharing a toast, former Union Minister Prakash Javadekar celebrating with champagne, and several other BJP dignitaries partying.

BJP IT Cell head Amit Malviya who posted the video that went viral wrote, “Rahul Gandhi was at a nightclub when Mumbai was under seize. He is at a nightclub at a time when his party is exploding. He is consistent. Interestingly, soon after the Congress refused to outsource their presidency, hit jobs have begun on their Prime Ministerial candidate...”

Continued on Page 2

French submarine  
maker backs out  
of India projectPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

French submarine manufacturing company Naval Group has pulled out of the race for the ₹45,000 crore project for six conventional submarines for India. The company said it is unable to meet the terms and conditions related to the air-independent propulsion (AIP) system. The development came ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on Wednesday.

India had floated a global tender or Request for Proposal (RFP) for the manufacturing of six submarines in the country in collaboration with Indian companies. The project called

P-75 I is part of the Strategic Partnership programme.

The Defence Ministry in June last year selected Larsen and Toubro and state-run Mazagaon Docks Limited, Mumbai as the Indian partners. They have to tie up with one of the five shortlisted foreign companies, including ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (Germany), Navantia (Spain), Naval Group (France), Daewoo (South Korea) and Rosoboronexport (Russia).

The French company on Tuesday said it is unable to participate in Centre's P-751 project due to conditions mentioned in the request for proposal (RFP) or tender related to air-independent propulsion (AIP) system.

Continued on Page 2

## CAPSULE

DELHI COVID SPIKE IS NOT  
NEW WAVE, BUT BE ALERT

New Delhi: The spurt in Covid cases and test positivity rate in Delhi over the last few weeks does not suggest the onset of a new wave, but people should keep basic mitigation measures in place to prevent the spread of the infection, experts said on Tuesday.

8-MONTH-OLD FOUND  
DEAD IN WATER TANK

New Delhi: An eight-month-old baby drowned in a rooftop water tank of his house in east Delhi's Dallupura area on Tuesday, police said. The mother of the child had gone outside her house leaving her three kids in the room which was latched from outside. When she returned, she did not find the youngest child in the room.

LANKA OPP SUBMITS  
NO-TRUST MOTIONS

Colombo: Sri Lanka's main Opposition party SJB on Tuesday handed over to the parliamentary Speaker motions of no-confidence against the SLPP coalition government and embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

P9

India has joined likes  
of US and Israel to  
secure border: Shah

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Comparing India with the US and Israel on securing border by hitting back at perpetrators, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday pointed out at the surgical strikes carried out in the wake of the terrorist attack in Pulwama.

Shah criticised the previous Congress Governments for its lax security measures. He said India used to issue statements whenever terror attacks were carried out by the Pakistan-backed extremists but things have improved after Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister.

“Earlier only two nations, the US and Israel, used to retaliate whenever someone meddled with their borders and military. Now due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, our great nation India has joined that group,” Shah said after

inaugurating various projects, including the Nrupathunga University, its academic block and various other projects.

After Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister, terrorist attacks took place in Uri in 2016 and Pulwama in 2019, we carried out surgical strikes and air strikes within 10 days inside Pakistan, Shah told the crowd.

“Some people question how it (surgical strike and air strike) had any effect. I tell them that it (counter attack) has a huge impact. Now the entire world knows that no one can meddle with Indian border, otherwise befitting reply will be given,” he said.

He said there were many issues such as abrogation of Article 370, 35-A, which gave special powers to J&K and the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act were sorted out in no time.

Continued on Page 2

Putin to undergo  
cancer treatment,  
hand over power:  
US media report

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin might undergo cancer surgery while temporarily handing over power to the secretary of the country's Security Council Nikolai Patrushev, an unverified report by the New York Post has claimed.

Putin has reportedly been told by doctors that he must undergo an operation, the New York Post reported citing a Telegram channel purportedly run by a former Russian Foreign Intelligence Service lieutenant general, reported news agency ANI.

The anticipated surgery and recovery are expected to incapacitate Putin for “a short time,” the report said.

Referring to Putin's supposedly “sickly appearance and uncharacteristically fidgety behaviour in public” in recent times, the report said Putin has been rumoured to suffer from cancer and a host of other serious maladies, including Parkinson's disease.

Continued on Page 2

## Kesh Kanti

### Herbal Hair Expert Oil

**Corona, stress and unhealthy lifestyle has caused hair problems for millions of Indians**

**Patanjali has created a scientific & effective solution that stops hair fall and promotes growth of new hair**

**Before** **After**

**Satyam**  
(Village Ghongsa, Dist. Lakhisarai, Bihar)

**is a CRPF Jawan who lost most of the hair on his head. He applied Kesh Kanti Herbal Hair Expert Oil for two months to grow new hair on the bald patch.**

- Repairs damaged hair within a week and grows new hair in 1-2 months
- Stops hair fall and prevents premature greying of hair
- Makes scalp dandruff free
- 30 precious herbs improve the growth and health of the hair

**Each individual's hair has a different nature hence one should use a variant of Kesh Kanti Oil and Kesh Kanti Shampoo as per their hair type.**

Shop Online- [www.patanjaliayurved.net](http://www.patanjaliayurved.net) | Customer Care Number - 18001804108 | Email ID - [feedback@patanjaliayurved.org](mailto:feedback@patanjaliayurved.org) | Website - [www.patanjaliayurved.org](http://www.patanjaliayurved.org)



# Suppression of info doesn't mean employer can terminate staff: SC



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mere suppression of material or false information in a given case does not mean that the employer can arbitrarily discharge/terminate the employee from service, the Supreme Court has said.

A bench of Justices Ajay Rastogi and Sanjiv Khanna said a candidate who intends to participate in the selection process is always required to furnish correct information relating to his character and antecedents in the verifica-

tion/attestation form before and after induction into service.

"Mere suppression of material/false information regardless of the fact whether there is a conviction or acquittal has been recorded, the employee/recruit is not to be discharged/terminated axiomatically from service just by a stroke of the pen.

"At the same time, the effect of suppression of material/false information involving in a criminal case, if any, is left for the employer to consider all the relevant facts and circum-

stances available as to antecedents and keeping in view the objective criteria and the relevant service rules into consideration while taking appropriate decision regarding continuance/suitability of the employee into service," the bench said.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Pawan Kumar who was selected for the post of constable in the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

While he was undergoing training, he came to be discharged by an order on the ground that he did not disclose that an FIR was registered against him.

The top court said that the person who has suppressed the material information or has made a false declaration has no unfettered right of seeking appointment or continuity in service, but at least has a right not to be dealt with arbitrarily.

The apex court said at the

time of the attestation form filled by the appellant, the criminal case was already registered against him but it may be noticed that at the very threshold, the complainant filed his affidavit that the complaint on which FIR came to be registered was due to misunderstanding.

"The criminal case indeed was of trivial nature and the nature of post and nature of duties to be discharged by the recruit has never been looked into by the competent authority while examining the overall suitability of the incumbent to become a member of the force.

"In our considered view the order of discharge passed by the competent authority dated 24th April 2015 is not sustainable and in sequel thereto the judgement passed by the Division Bench of High Court of Delhi does not hold good and deserves to be set aside," the bench said.

# Must bring greater synergy between DTC, DMRC: Delhi Chief Secy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to promote the use of public transport and provide more ease to commuters, the Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar on Tuesday pitched for bringing "greater synergy" in operations of the DMRC and DTC, said with the expansion of the mass rapid transit network this synergy is needed.

On the occasion of the 28th foundation day of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), Kumar while addressing a gathering, also stressed that full implementation of a common mobility card across the network was essential in achieving that synergy. Kumar, who recently took charge as the new chief secretary of Delhi, said, several years ago, he had suggested to the city government to "integrate Delhi Metro and DTC" but somehow that has not been considered.



Kumar said, "If we cannot integrate the two, we can surely bring in greater synergy in operations of the metro and the buses, and synergy in scheduling services. With the advancement in technology, use of public transport has to be enhanced."

Addressing the people, Manoj Joshi, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), in his address described DMRC as an "island of excellence in Delhi", and also emphasised on the need for working in synergy.

"Earlier there was a vacu-

um and one could operate that way, but now if we work separately and not in an integrated way, then everyone will suffer loss, and we won't be able to leverage the benefit of synergy," he said. There is a need for a greater integration among the networks of metro, Indian Railways, and the new Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) that is coming up, to provide greater ease to commuters, he said, adding, the recently-inaugurated foot-over-bridge connecting New Delhi metro station with New Delhi railway station was a welcome

integration step, and has provided ease to people.

He also said the entry from Ring Roadside to the multimodal transport complex coming up at Sarai Kale Khan, also needs to be looked into and properly planned.

DMRC's Managing Director Vikas Kumar later told reporters that DMRC and DTC have been endeavouring to have an integration in operation, and the chief secretary essentially emphasised on bring greater synergy in operations, between the two agencies.

"So, let's say, if a person is getting off at a metro station, he or she would know the timing of the buses that can be taken from the nearest place," he said. At present, DMRC is handling operations and maintenance of over 390 km of network, comprising 286 metro stations, including Rapid Metro in Gurugram and Aqua Line in Greater Noida, and is ranked amongst one of the world's largest metro networks.

# 32-year-old man arrested for raping, killing Narela minor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a 32-year-old man on Tuesday for allegedly raping and killing a 14-year-old girl in north Delhi's Narela area.

The accused has been identified as Sunil, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Hardoi district.

According to Brijendra Kumar Yadav, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer north district, a case of kidnapping had been registered on February 15 after receiving a complaint from the girl's father, a resident of a village in Narela.

On February 19, a man named Rahul Rai, who runs a business of making covers of

nail polish bottles in the same village, told the police that after coming back from Jhansi, when he opened his shop, foul smell was coming from inside it. A labourer named Sunil who used to work with him was also missing, Rai told the police.

"The police team searched the shop where the partially decomposed body of the girl was found under a heap of cow dung cakes kept in gunny bags," said the DCP.

"During investigation, a man named Ram Sacche alias Sachin was arrested from the outskirts of the village on February 20 while trying to escape to Mumbai," said the DCP. Interrogation revealed that he along with Sunil consumed alcohol on February 12

at Metro Vihar and planned to call the teenage girl. The accused called the girl, raped her and then strangled her to death," said the DCP.

"The police team later received specific inputs that Sunil would come to meet someone and accordingly laid a trap. On Tuesday, after spotting the accused, the police asked him to stop but he kept running. The police asked him to surrender but the accused took out a pistol and fired at the police, the DCP said.

"The police also fired and one bullet hit on his leg, following which he was nabbed. The accused has confessed that he along Sacche had raped and murdered the girl and dumped the body in the shop," said the DCP.



New Delhi: A woman tries jewellery at a showroom on the occasion of 'Akshay Tritiya', in New Delhi, Tuesday, May 3, 2022. (PTI Photo/Vijay Verma)

# Group beats driver to death over ₹1.5L

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In a gruesome incident, a group of 10 to 15 people allegedly beat a 22-year-old tempo driver to death with a blunt object in Gurugram on Monday night. The incident reportedly took place due to a monetary dispute over Rs 1.50 lakh with the deceased's elder brother, the police said.

According to the police the incident took place on Monday night around 9.00 pm inside the premises of Sector-9 community centre where the marriage was being held. The accused and the culprits had been invited to a marriage function.

The deceased was identified as Sumit Solanki, a resident

of Ravi Nagar in Gurugram.

Following a complaint given by the deceased's elder brother Rohit Solanki the police have registered a by name FIR against Vishal alias Vishu, Rahul Thakur, Aakash a resident of Ravi Nagar, Anshul and Vicky Gujjar of Devilal Nagar and Anubhav alias Guddu and Sonu of Gandhi Nagar.

Rohit said on Monday night he was present at his friend's marriage function organised at a Sector-9 community centre when the prime accused Vishal took him behind a tent and started beating him along with his friend but somehow he managed to flee the spot but they caught hold his brother who was also present in the function and beat him with blunt objects and killed him.

# Yogi praises people as UP celebrates three festivals with 'Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb'

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

With UP celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr, Akshay Tritiya and Parshuram Jayanti amid the State's "Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb" peacefully on Tuesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath lauded people for "not organising" religious events on roads.

Adityanath praised the people as officials said it was for the first time that Eid namaz was not offered on roads.

For example, in Loni and Hapur, owing to a shortage of space in mosques, the namaz was offered in shifts, they said.

Officials also said till last year around 50,000 to one lakh people used to offer namaz on roads and other places.

Chief Minister Adityanath praised the people shortly after Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar too thanked UP's religious leaders for peacefully celebrating the festivals.

Kumar thanked them saying the state celebrated the festivals amid its "traditional Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb", which would be on display in future festivals as well.

Chief Minister Adityanath took to Twitter to praise the people. "Today, a number of religious events were successfully held in Uttar Pradesh. The

people of the state have taken a good initiative by not organising them on roads," he tweeted in Hindi.

"For a healthy and harmonious society, it is necessary that along with respect for the faith, there should also be a rule of law. This will become the foundation for the development of the state and self-reliance of citizens," Adityanath said.

ADG (Law and Order) Kumar earlier told PTI that Eid was peacefully celebrated in the state. "The festival of Eid was celebrated peacefully and namaz was offered at around 32,000 mosques and Eidgah maidans in the state. No untoward incident of any kind took place anywhere in the state and people celebrated Eid with traditional fervour and gaiety," Kumar said.

Akshay Tritiya and Parshuram Jayanti too were celebrated on Tuesday, he said and added, "Offering namaz at public places like roads and parks was not allowed."

"Arrangements were made so to ensure that no untoward incident takes place," he said, adding in addition to the civil police, 46 PAC companies, seven of CAPF along with gazetted officers were deployed. He said foolproof arrangements for namaz at the identified places were made with consultations with religious leaders. He thanked religious leaders for their cooperation and said "with Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb on display, such participation will be seen in upcoming festivals" too.

In Lucknow, under the directives of Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Piyush Mordia, officials along with the police force made regular rounds in the city and the Eid namaz at Eidgah in Aishbagh and Tiley Waale Masjid were held peacefully, he added.

# Modi calls for diplomacy, talks to end...

**From Page 1**

She said India and Denmark share many values. "We are two democratic nations, we both believe in a rule-based international system. In times such as these, we need to build an even stronger bridge between us. As close partners, we also discussed war in Ukraine," Frederiksen said.

On the issues covered during the summit, Modi said it was his first visit to Denmark adding the Danish Prime Minister had come to India last year.

He said both the nations share values of democracy, freedom of expression, and the rule of law and "together we both have many complementary strengths."

During the India-Denmark Virtual Summit in October 2020, "we gave the status of Green Strategic Partnership to our relations," Modi said. The

two Prime Ministers on Tuesday reviewed the joint work-plan of Green Strategic Partnership.

Modi said significant progress has been made in various sectors, especially in the areas of renewable energy, health, ports, shipping, circular economy and water management.

There are more than 200 Danish companies operating in India in various sectors - such as wind power, shipping, consultancy, food processing, engineering. They are getting the benefit of the increasing 'ease of doing business' in India and our macroeconomic reforms. There are many investment opportunities for Danish Companies and Danish Pension Funds in India's infrastructure sector and green industries, he noted.

He also said the two leaders also discussed many regional and global issues including

India-EU relations, Indo-Pacific and Ukraine. "We hope that the negotiations on the India-EU Free Trade Agreement will be concluded at the earliest, he said.

In the backdrop of China adopting an aggressive posture in the Indo-Pacific, Modi said India and Denmark emphasized on ensuring a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.

The two leaders discussed cooperation in the field of climate. India is also committed to fulfilling the resolutions taken at Glasgow COP-26. We have agreed to explore more opportunities for cooperation in the Arctic region, the Prime Minister said.

The Danish Prime Minister said the two nations are moving fast in transforming Green Strategic Partnership into some concrete results. The Indian government has high ambitions for the green transition.

"I am proud that Danish solutions play a key role in realising these important ambitions," she said.

Earlier, she personally received the Indian Prime Minister at the airport. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) later tweeted the moment with "a special start to a special visit" caption. Modi thanked Frederiksen for the warm welcome on his arrival in Copenhagen.

Modi will attend the 2nd India-Nordic Summit in Copenhagen.

The Summit will focus on subjects like post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, innovation and technology, renewable energy, the evolving global security scenario and India-Nordic cooperation in the Arctic region. His counterparts from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark will participate in the conclave.

# French submarine...

**From Page 1**

The AIP system allows a conventional submarine to stay submerged in water at higher speeds for a longer period of time and reduces the noise of the diesel engines powering the submarine.

The ₹45,000 crore contract will be awarded by the Defence Ministry following a detailed evaluation of the responses sent by the two strategic partners.

In a statement on Tuesday, Laurent Videau, Country and Managing Director, Naval Group India, said, "Due to certain conditions in the RFP, the two strategic partners could not forward the request to us and a few other FOEMs (foreign original equipment manufacturers) and thus we have not been able to place an official bid for the project."

Naval Group has always been ready to offer the best in class and adapted solution for Indian Navy's P751 project,

being fully in line with AatmaNirbhar Bharat principle, he said.

"However, the present RFP requires that the fuel cell AIP (air independent propulsion) be sea proven, which is not the case for us yet since the French Navy does not use such propulsion system," he mentioned. Nevertheless, Naval Group strengthens its existing commitments and looks forward to closer association with India, he said.

"Our focus and efforts are towards continuation of our collaboration with Indian industry in realising the vision of Government of India by supporting Indian Navy for other future developments and projects (maintenance, high tech tools, indigenous AIP, incremental improvements in Scorpene designed submarine, heavy weight torpedoes, larger ships etc)," he mentioned.

# India has joined likes of US and...

**From Page 1**

"August 5, 2019 will be written in Indian history with golden letters. People were saying that if Article 370 is abolished then it will lead to a bloodbath but no one could even dare to throw a pebble, let alone bloodbath. Prime Minister Modi annexed Kashmir with rest of India by abolishing Article 370," Shah said. Speaking about various measures taken to improve the education system in the country, he said six new central universities, seven Indian Institutes of Management, seven Indian Institutes of Technology, 209 medical colleges, 320 universities and 5,709 new colleges came into being during the Modi regime.

Along with it, the country also set up 410 rural universities and many professional universities including forensic university, the Home Minister said.

Congratulating the

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai after it was the first state to implement the new National Education Policy (NEP), the Union Home Minister said the policy aims to make India a great nation, which offers opportunities to people and provides a platform to youth to compete with the world. He added that the NEP also emphasises on strengthening Indian culture, awareness and develop India as a knowledge superpower.

# Communal tensions in...

**From Page 1**

The CM said instructions had been issued to the administration to maintain peace and order. He said leaders of all political parties should ask their workers to maintain peace and they all should remain united.

Gehlot also chaired a high-level meeting at the Chief Minister's office to review the situation. He asked ministers Rajendra Yadav and Subhash Garg, and two officers to go to Jodhpur by helicopter. The CM directed officials to take stern action against those responsible for it.

On the other hand, the BJP targeted the state government over law and order. Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat claimed that police are working under pressure.

Shekhawat threatened that he, along with other party leaders, will sit on a dharna at

the Jalori gate circle if the rioters are not arrested. "One man was stabbed and is struggling for life in hospital. The miscreants also insulted women and broke the leg of a girl. They also tried to damage a temple in the Sunaro Ka Baas area," he alleged.

BJP MLA Suryakanta Vyas in Jodhpur raised an objection to the installation of a Eid flag alongside the freedom fighter's statue. She had gone to the spot last night as soon as the incident occurred.

"They did (put up the flag) at (the statue of) Bissa ji and we have a strong objection to this. We will not forget this," Vyas said. BJP state president Satish Poonia said, "Putting up an Islamic flag on the statue of freedom fighter Balmukund Bissa by anti-social elements and removing saffron flags put up on Parshuram Jayanti is condemnable."

# BJP, Cong...

**From Page 1**

The video surfaced at a time when Union Minister Smriti Irani was paying a visit to Wayanad in Kerala which is the Lok Sabha Constituency of Rahul.

Congress said Rahul was in Nepal to attend a private wedding ceremony of a journalist friend, and, unlike Prime Minister Narendra Modi who made a famous stop at then Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif's birthday some years ago, Rahul did not go uninvited.

"Rahul Gandhi has not gone as an uninvited guest like Prime Minister Modi went to Pakistan to celebrate the birthday and cut cakes for the then Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif. Rahul Gandhi has gone to a friendly country Nepal to participate in a private marriage function of a friend," said Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala at AICC press conference.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Sale Deed / Conveyance Deed Agreement & Handover certificate Lost between Builder (ANSAL PROPERTIES & INFRASTRUCTURE LTD) and SMT. RACHNA THAKUR Notice is hereby given to the Public that the Agreement for Sale deed/conveyance deed dated 25/03/2008 and Handover certificate dated 28/04/2008 between M/S ANSAL PROPERTIES & INFRASTRUCTURE LTD (formerly known as Ansal Properties & Industries Ltd.) IN FAVOUR OF SMT. RACHNA THAKUR WHO NAVNEET THAKUR R/O 51 SAINIK VIHAR, DELHI-110034, VIDEO DOCUMENT NO 10392 BOOK NO 1. Dated 26/3/2008. FOR PLOT NO. A-375, SUSHANT CITY, KUNDLI, HARYANA have both been misplaced. All the persons are hereby informed that not to carry on any transaction on the basis of said missing documents. I, Rachna Thakur hereby invite claims or objections. If any, for the transfer of said plot. In case of any claims/objections kindly intimate me along with the relevant documents to support your claims/objections within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice. In absence of any claim within stipulated period, it shall be deemed that the property has no claim by virtue of lost agreement.



# Parents seek respite for kids as mercury soars

Want school timings to be revised or summer holidays pre-poned

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Owing to the severe heat-wave conditions in the national Capital, parents have urged the Delhi Government to either revise the school timings or advance the summer holidays. Parents claim that current school timings are not appropriate for students to step out in the sun in view of the sweltering heat and increase in Covid cases.

The Haryana Government on Monday announced that due to the intense heatwave prevalent throughout the State, the timings of all schools -- Government and private -- will be from 7 A.M. to 12 P.M. for classes 1 to 12 with effect from May 4. Meanwhile, the West Bengal Government has

announced an early summer vacation this year. Aparajitha Gautam, president, Delhi Parents Association said that: "The Centre has advised people not to go out in the sun, especially between 12 noon and 3 P.M. But in Delhi, most of the schools are held between 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. That means that during peak summer hours, students are out in the sun, which is really dangerous.

We request the Delhi Government to either revise the school timings like other States are doing or pre-poned the summer holidays.

Amid the intense heatwave across the country, the Centre had last week urged States and Union Territories to review their health facility preparedness for availability of



adequate quantities of essential medicines and necessary equipments while ensuring sufficient drinking water and con-

tinued functioning of cooling appliances in critical areas. The Centre had also advised people to avoid strenuous activ-

ities outside between 12 noon and 3 P.M., avoid alcohol, tea, coffee, or drinks with large amounts of sugar, stating these

may lead to loss of more body fluids or cause stomach cramps. The Centre had also advised people to avoid high protein food and stale food and not leave children or pets in parked vehicles due to the high temperatures. Nidhi Vaishnav, a parent said previously, whenever the temperature used to rise the schools used to pre-poned summer vacations but that is not an option this year considering schools have reopened after a long time due to Covid.

"However, the heat is extreme this year and at least the schools can revise the timings for children to be less exposed," she said. A torrid heatwave has sent the mercury soaring across large swathes of the country with the temperature in Delhi rising up to 46 degrees Celsius. Delhi also recorded its second-hottest April in 72 years with a monthly average maximum temperature of 40.2 degrees Celsius.

# Humidity rises due to western disturbance.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the national Capital got a bit of respite from the intense heatwave, the city saw an increase in humidity. While the relative humidity recorded on Monday morning was 61 per cent and 38 per cent at 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday morning it was 60 per cent and 43 per cent in the evening.

Due to the oppressive heat, Delhi's peak power demand touched 6,247 MW on Monday night, which is the highest in the first week of May, till date.

On Tuesday the maximum temperature in Delhi settled at 38.5 degrees Celsius which is normal for this time of the year, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The minimum temperature recorded at the Safdarjung Observatory was 28.4 degrees Celsius, which is four notches warmer than the normal temperature for this season, the IMD said.

According to the head of National Weather Forecasting, IMD, K Sathi Devi, the relative humidity in the weather is increasing, due to the western

disturbance.

The maximum temperature has seen a dip due to the cloudy weather, because of which the moisture induction in the atmosphere is surging. The weather stations at the Ridge, Ayanagar, Mungeshpur, Najafgarh, Pitampura, Palam and Lodhi Road recorded maximum temperatures of 39.2 degrees Celsius, 39 degrees Celsius, 40.1 degrees Celsius, 40.3 degrees Celsius, 30.7 degrees Celsius, 39.2 degrees Celsius and 38.6 degrees Celsius respectively, stated the IMD data.

The IMD on Tuesday predicted a respite from the intense heatwave for northwest, central, and east India during the next four-five days.

The IMD said that under the influence of southwesterly winds from the Bay of Bengal over east and northeast India in lower tropospheric levels, light to moderate rainfall is very likely over Northeast India and West Bengal-Sikkim during the next five days with an isolated thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds (speed reaching 40-50 kmph) over the region during next two days.

# 'Nearly half of Covid+ cases went unreported in April'

42% of Delhi-NCR residents opted for home antigen testing: Local Circles survey

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly half of Covid positive cases went unreported in April as many people opted for home antigen testing. The survey, conducted by LocalCircles claimed that 42 per cent of Delhi-NCR residents who had symptoms and took a Covid test in the last 30 days, only took the rapid antigen self test.

Only one in three respondents covered in the survey from Delhi-NCR took an RT-PCR test in the last 30 days, while the majority opted for at-home antigen testing, pointing to a sizable undercounting of daily case loads, the survey contended.



ily, friends are just opting for the at-home antigen test and not even taking the RT-PCR test anymore," it said.

"Positives from these at-home tests are not reported anywhere and the Government data do not count them in official case figures," LocalCircles claimed. The survey asked, "In the last one month when you or family members had some

symptoms and needed a Covid test (non-travel), what type of test did you undertake?" In response, seven per cent said "RT-PCR several times", another seven per cent said "RT-PCR once/twice".

The survey said at least 11 per cent said "Rapid Antigen Test multiple times", and seven per cent said "Rapid Antigen Test once/twice" while 57 per

cent of the respondents, or 9,608, said they did not take any test in last one month. Data from the 7,248 individuals who confirmed taking the Covid test showed that 17 per cent of them took "RT-PCR several times", and 16 per cent took "RT-PCR once/twice".

The survey further said that 26 per cent took "Rapid Antigen Test multiple times", and 16 per cent took "Rapid Antigen Test once/twice". Around 16 per cent took "Mainly Rapid Antigen Test and RT-PCR test once/twice", while nine per cent couldn't say which test was taken by them.

"With the 42 per cent Delhi-NCR residents who took the at-home rapid antigen test post-symptoms not being in the official numbers, they are clearly understated by that much," LocalCircles claimed.

## '1,414 fresh Covid cases with one death reported'

NEW DELHI: The national Capital on Tuesday reported 1,414 Covid-19 cases with one death, while the positivity rate stood at 5.97 per cent, according to data shared by the health department.

With these new cases, the national capital's overall tally has increased to 18,87,050 while the death toll stands at 26,176. Delhi on Monday reported 1,076 COVID-19 cases with no death, while the positivity rate stood at 6.42 per cent Delhi had on Sunday recorded 1,485 cases and no death due to the disease, while the positivity rate stood at 4.89

per cent. On Saturday, it had recorded 1,520 cases and one death, with the positivity rate at 5.10 per cent.

On Friday, it saw 1,607 COVID-19 cases and two deaths, while the positivity rate was recorded at 5.28 per cent. The national capital had logged 1,490 cases and two deaths on Thursday, and the positivity rate stood at 4.62 per cent.

The Delhi government has increased the number of beds dedicated to Covid patients at two of its facilities, including an 80 percent escalation in its count at the Lok Nayak (LNJP) Hospital. SF



Security personnel enjoy Eid-al-Fitr sweets in violence-hit Jahangirpuri area in New Delhi on Tuesday

RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

# Rise in Covid cases doesn't mean a new wave: Experts

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Experts on Tuesday said that the rise in Covid cases over the last few weeks does not suggest the onset of a new wave in the national Capital. They advised people to keep basic mitigation measures in place to prevent the spread of the infection.

According to eminent epidemiologist Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, the test positivity rate is stagnant and it means the infection is spreading at the same rate and there is no wave.

"There is a subtle change in the hospitalisation rate which also proves that there is no wave. Absolute numbers have

no meaning. The number of cases will be more if you do more tests. Therefore, we should not worry too much about the test positivity rate and the absolute number of cases, the main parameter is the hospitalisation rate and the mortality rate," said Dr Lahariya.

Dr Rajeev Jayadevan, co-chairman of the Indian Medical Association's National Task Force on Coronavirus, said the test positivity rate not going up suggests it is not like the tsunami sparked by the Delta variant. "Keep a mask on when you enter any indoor space, there is no exception to that. The infection is spreading,

it is here and we must continue taking all primary precautionary measures," Dr Jayadevan said. Since April 20, the number of Covid cases in Delhi has been oscillating between 1,000 and 1,600. The test positivity rate has remained between four per cent and seven per cent since April 16.

# Delhi BJP chief asks Kejriwal to remove loudspeakers in city

AAP says BJP is playing with people's faith

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday said it will oppose any move to remove loudspeakers from religious places in the national Capital and accused the BJP of playing with people's faith. AAP leader Atishi said loudspeakers are played during various religious occasions across the country and cited Ramilala as well as recitation of Hanuman Chalisa and Sunderkand path as examples.

"We will definitely oppose it," Atishi told reporters when asked if her party would oppose any move to remove loudspeakers from religious places in Delhi. "Be it Ramilala or Sunderkand recitation, people's faith is attached to them.

I want to ask what is their problem with the religious faith of people?" On Monday, he had written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in this connection, hours after BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma made a similar request to Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal and the commissioners of the municipal corporations in the national Capital.

Verma apprised Bajjal that the Uttar Pradesh Government had cracked the whip on loudspeakers and sought to nudge the Delhi Government to follow suit.

The Supreme Court in 2005 banned the use of loudspeakers and music systems in public places between 10 pm and 6 am, except in cases of public emergency, citing the serious effects of noise pollution on health of local residents. In his letter to Kejriwal, Gupta stated that noise pollution in Delhi had turned out to be a major issue. As per Supreme Court's order, loudspeakers installed at religious and other places should be removed.

# MoHUA sent demolition notices to four temples, alleges Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday claimed that the BJP-led Central Government had pasted demolition notices on the walls of four temples in the national Capital.

AAP leader and MLA from Kalkaji Atishi has alleged that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has sent demolition notices to four temples including Prachin Shiv Mandir, Sai Mandir in H-block, and Shani Mandir in J-block in Sarojini Nagar.

"A few days ago the BJP government gave the order to run bulldozers on the Neelkanth Mahadev temple in Delhi's Srinivasपुरi locality," she said during a press conference. "The move was intended to extort money," she further alleged. The AAP leader also



shared a copy of the notice that was purportedly issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. "These are being pasted on the gate of the temples," she added, sharing a photo. A notice, she alleged, had been pasted on a historical Shiva temple in Sarojini Nagar.

Alongside, notices have also been pasted on a Sai temple in the 'H Block' area as well as a Shani temple in the 'J Block' area. "In 1991, the then

Lieutenant Governor had laid down clear and direct orders which specified that if and when the demolition of a religious establishment is to take place, the final decision on the matter lies in the hands of the Religious Affairs Committee," said Atishi.

"On the other hand, none of the cases of the temples which have been threatened with demolition by the BJP had been taken to any religious affairs committee whatsoever. These temples were hence issued demolition notices without any due process, simply for the BJP to meet its money-minded ends, and to continue its hooliganism and loot across the state," said Atishi.

"The Prachin Shiv Mandir and Sai Mandir in Sarojini Nagar are all at least over three decades old, and are the abode for the faith of many locals.

# DMRC ops need just 2.5% of power supplied to Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the Delhi Government warned of power cuts due to coal shortage, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Tuesday said that the Metro operation needs account for only 2.5 per cent of the total power requirement of the city.

"DMRC receives around 2 MU (million unit) electricity from power distribution companies of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Around 0.9 MU power is received from the on-site solar power plant through open access. Further, 0.1 MU is

drawn from the rooftop solar power plants installed on Delhi Metro's stations and depots," said a DMRC spokesperson.

"Also, in case there is a total breakdown and all grids fail, we have back-up arrangements, like batteries, inverters, DG sets to provide power to system, to evacuate passengers out of trains and stations, but trains won't operate in that condition," he told the reporters.

Another senior official said Delhi Metro's requirement on an average, per day, is about 200 MW, out of which 99 MW is received from solar power system in Rewa, and another 50

MW from DMRC's solar power system on rooftops of its buildings, and rest from discoms. "Solar power can be used only during daytime or in sunny weather, and for after dark, our operational requirements need to be supplemented," he said. Also, the DMRC has about 28-29 substations, so even if one substation fails, there are other options, the official said.

"Generally a long Metro line has four substations. Even if one of those reports failure, power supply will be made from other substations," the spokesperson said.

# Rohini jail official held for helping conman

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested an assistant superintendent of Delhi's Rohini jail for allegedly helping conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar in the prison. The accused has been identified as 57 year-old Prakash Chand. Police said that Chand was arrested on Sunday for his alleged role in the case.

Sukesh Chandrasekhar was arrested earlier after the lodging of an FIR by the Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police for offences of cheating and extortion allegedly committed by him. In First Information Report (FIR), Chandrasekhar was accused of

cheating and extorting money from Aditi Singh, the wife of Religare Enterprises' former promoter Shivinder Mohan Singh. Shivinder was arrested in a case related to alleged misappropriation of funds at Religare Finvest Ltd in 2019. Along with Shivinder, another Religare promoter, Malvinder Singh, was also arrested.

The matter came into light when Aditi Singh told police on August 7, 2021 that she gave crores of rupees to Sukesh Chandrasekhar, who posed as an officer from ministry of law. "I was assured that central government would be interested to work with my husband after making him an 'industry advisor' on Covid-related com-

mittees; he asked me to contribute to the 'party fund' and assured to set up a meeting either with the former law minister or the home minister," Aditi Singh mentioned in her FIR.

During his prison stay, Chandrasekhar, posing as a central government official, allegedly made spoof calls from jail to persuade Aditi Singh to transfer money. Conman Chandrasekhar also claimed that he was in a relationship with Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez in a letter from prison. He said that Jacqueline was not involved in money laundering and asked public to stop projecting her in a bad light.

# Hindus, Muslims celebrate Eid together at Jahangirpuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the communal clashes at northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri area, Hindu and Muslim communities together celebrated Eid on Tuesday. The both communities exchanged sweets, hugs at the Kushal Chowk to give a message of peace and harmony in the area. The locals also treated the security personnel deployed there to sweets.

Meanwhile, shops in and around Kushal Chowk, where the clashes took place on April 16, except for the main lane in Block C where a mosque is located were reopened. Hawkers and customers have also returned for business. Police said they had ensured adequate security arrangements on the occasion of Eid. According to Usha Ranganani, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), northwest dis-

trict, police had adequate security and law arrangements put in place across the district.

"Aman Committee meetings have been conducted as always to maintain peace and tranquillity in all the areas," said the DCP.

"Last month was quite tough for the people of Jahangirpuri. Today, on the occasion of Eid, we gathered at Kushal Chowk. We exchanged sweets and hugged each other and sent a message of harmony and peace.

This shows people in Jahangirpuri live in harmony and respect each other's religions," a representative from Muslim community Tabrez Khan said. Khan expressed hope that full normalcy will return in the area soon. "The situation is improving. Normalcy has returned to a large extent and we are expecting complete normalcy in the coming days," he said.



# Paramilitary forces to conduct departmental competitive exam

LDCE will be for promotion to post of Assistant Commandant

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Central paramilitary forces CRPF, BSE, ITBP have decided to conduct Limited Departmental Competitive Examination (LDCE) for vacancy years 2018-2022 in a single test for promotion of serving other ranks to the post of Assistant Commandant.

The LDCE that is being conducted after a gap of six years. Applications are being accepted from eligible and willing candidates from these Forces from April 29 to May 30. The application eligibility requirements include service certificate/vigilance clearance, latest Shape-1 medical category certificate, domicile certificate for those seeking relaxations and annual confidential report (ACR)/Annual Performance Assessment Report (APAR) for the preceding five years among others, according to an official order.

The vacancy position for 2018 in the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is four, followed by 25 in Central Reserve Police Force

(CRPF) and one in Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). For 2019, the total vacancy is 24, including 22 in SSB and two in CRPF. Likewise, for 2020, the vacancy is to the tune of 40 posts including 11 in SSB, one each in CRPF and ITBP besides 27 in Border Security Force (BSF). Similarly, there are 17 vacancies for 2021 which includes one post each in SSB and CRPF, three in ITBP and 17 in BSF.

For the ongoing 2022 vacancy year, as many as 65 posts of Assistant Commandants will be filled including 23 from SSB, 20 from ITBP and 22 from BSF.

The selection of candidates from ITBP for vacancy year 2022 is subject to the outcome of a pending writ petition before the

Delhi High Court. The upper age limit for promotion to the Assistant Commandant from the ranks has been set at 35 years as on August 1 of the vacancy year which means August 1, 2018 for that year and in a similar manner for every vacancy year, August 1 has been set as the cut-off date for deciding the age criteria of the candidates.

The candidates will also be required to have graduation as educational qualification which is the requisite norm for selection of Assistant Commandants recruited by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) through direct entry.

The recruitment is expected to be a morale booster for subordinate officers.

# ‘No cluster of XE variant found in India’



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian SARS-CoV2 Genomics Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG) has said that one confirmed case of the XE Covid variant has been detected in India.

However, the location of this variant was not identified in the bulletin for April 25

released a day ago. The INSACOG also said that there is no cause of panic as no cluster of XE variants has been found so far.

“As compared to the previous week, 12 States have shown an increase in cases, while 19 States have shown a decline,” the bulletin from INSACOG said. The

INSACOG in the bulletin added that the suspected recombinant sequences are under further analysis. “BA.2.10 and BA.2.12 are BA.2 sub-lineages that have been detected and many old BA.2 sequences have been reclassified into these new sub-lineages.

So far these sub-lineages are not reported to be associated with increased severity of disease,” the bulletin said, adding that so far there are no reports of XE clusters across India.

The INSACOG had also in its April 18 bulletin mentioned one XE variant case in the country.

The INSACOG reports genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 across the country through sequencing of samples from Sentinel sites and International passengers arriving in India.

As per the latest bulletin, INSACOG has sequenced total 2,43,957 samples. The XE variant of coronavirus is a sub-variant of Omicron, which caused the third wave of Covid-19 in India in January 2022. Covid’s XE variant is a cross between two strains of the Omicron variant, namely BA.1, which is the original strain, and BA.2, which is the more infectious strain.

As of April 12, 2022, cases of Covid’s XE variant have been detected in India’s Gujarat and Maharashtra. Apart from India and the UK, Japan has also reported cases of the XE variant.

According to the World Health Organization, the XE variant was first detected on January 19, 2022, in the UK, and till March-end, more than 600 cases of the variant were reported and confirmed.

# LIC shares undervalued: Cong raps Centre



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the mega LIC IPO, the Congress on Tuesday questioned the pricing of shares, alleging they are undervalued and being offered at throwaway prices at the cost of the trust of 30 crore policyholders.

Congress’ chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asked why did the Government reduce LIC valuation from ₹12-14 lakh crore in February to ₹6 lakh crore in just two months. He said the

Government had in February this year targeted to get ₹70,000 crore by selling five per cent stake in the public sector undertaking, but it has now been reduced to ₹21,000 crore and 3.5 per cent stake sale.

“Why is the Government trying to sell LIC when domestic and global financial markets are in turmoil on account of the Russia-Ukraine war and a host of factors leading to economic downturn,” he asked.

“The Secretary in charge of public sector divestment has said that the government will

not sell its stake in PSUs if market conditions are not favourable. Why is LIC’s IPO an exception to this policy? India seeks answers,” he said.

Surjewala said that while filing the prospectus in February 2022 for this mega IPO, the LIC disinvestment was aimed at 2.5 times the embedded value (EV), but now the valuation of the IPO is about 1.1 times the embedded value.

Comparably, HDFC Life Insurance is trading at 3.9 times EV, and SBI Life & ICICI Prudential Life trade at 3.2 times and 2.5 times their embedded value respectively, he said.

He also claimed that since January-February 2022, the share price band of LIC has been paired down by the Modi government from ₹1100 per share to the current price band of ₹902-949 per share and some experts feel that the state exchequer will lose ₹30,000 crore by this reduction in embedded value and the pairing down the price band.

“Why did the Modi Government suddenly reduce the valuation of LIC and the issue size after roadshows in India and abroad,” he asked, claiming that in February 2022, the government conducted formal roadshows for big tick-

et investors, Pension Funds, Mutual Funds, Investment Corporations with a target to get ₹70,000 crore by selling of five per cent stake.

He sought answers from the government for the reason for a “change of heart” after roadshows abroad to revise the valuation and also reduce the stake sale from five per cent to 3.5% “which remains unexplained”.

The reason for the government undermining these key determinants is unknown to every market watcher or financial expert, he said.

The Congress leader claimed that the LIC has 30 crore policyholders and its total assets are to the tune of ₹39,60,000 crores (USD 526 Billion) as of September 2021 and a stock portfolio of ₹52,000 crore.

The company has income from its investments to the tune ₹3.35 lakh crore in the April-September 2021 period and directly employs 13.94 lakh families (12.80 Lakh agents plus 1.14 lakh employees) through its 3,542 offices across the country.

He said the company issues three crore policies per year, which amounts to about one lakh policies per day and is declared as the world’s 10th largest insurance brand.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurates the National Intelligence Grid's Bengaluru campus on Tuesday. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi, Nishith Pramanik and Home Secretary AK Bhalla are also seen

# Sign language interpreters at press briefings: SC seeks Govt’s response

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has sought response from the Centre and others on a plea seeking directions to provide sign language interpreters during official press briefings conducted by the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, and others.

A Bench of Justices S A Nazeer and Vikram Nath issued notices to Centre and others. The top court was hearing a plea filed by advocate M Karpagam that disabled people have an equal right to information and communication.

Karpagam has also sought directions to have an in-frame sign language interpreter in all official press briefings conducted by prime minister, other ministers of Union Government, chief ministers, and ministers in state governments, in accordance with Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016. The plea said Act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities that includes providing meaningful access to public benefits, programmes, or services. For persons with

hearing impairment, access to sign language is key to breaking down communication barriers and participating in society just like anyone else, the plea said.

**Declare ‘Talaq-e-Hasan’ void, unconstitutional: Petitioner**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking to declare ‘Talaq-e-Hasan’ and all other forms of ‘unilateral extra-judicial talaq’ as void and unconstitutional, claiming they were arbitrary, irrational, and violated fundamental rights.

The petition, filed by Ghaziabad resident Benazeer Heena, who claimed to be a victim of “unilateral extra-judicial Talaq-E-Hasan, also sought a direction to the Centre to frame guidelines for neutral and uniform grounds of divorce and procedure for all citizens. In Talaq-e-Hasan, talaq is pronounced once a month, over a period of three months. If cohabitation is not resumed during this period, divorce gets formalised after the third utterance in the third month. However, if cohabitation resumes after the first or second utterance of talaq, the parties are assumed to have reconciled.

The first/second utterances of talaq are deemed invalid. The petitioner, who claimed to have been given such a divorce, contended that the police and authorities told her that Talaq-e-Hasan is permitted under Sharia.

“The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, conveys a wrong impression that the law sanctions Talaq-E-Hasan and all other forms of unilateral extra-judicial talaq, which is grossly injurious to the fundamental rights of married Muslim women and offends Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25 of the Constitution of India and the international conventions on civil and human rights,” the petition, filed by advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, submitted.

The petitioner said that many Islamic nations have restricted such a practice. After Supreme Court has banned Instant Triple Talaq, many Muslim women had approached the apex court for banning ‘Nikah Halala too.

# CSS officers’ association to go on strike from today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Secretariat Service officers’ association has threatened a “non-cooperation movement” from Wednesday over delay in their promotion, claiming it was causing irreparable financial loss to them.

The CSS Forum, an association of CSS officers, has written a letter to Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) informing about their proposed movement and demanding promotion orders in respect of eligible employees before May 15, 2022.

It has been unanimously decided in a meeting held on April 30 that “all Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officers are now left with only one

resort i.E. Non-cooperation movement, which is going to be started from 4th May, 2022,” the letter said. “CSS officers will now follow the slow and lackluster attitude of our CCA i.E. CS-I Division DoPT & will observe the old, customary, slow, procedural working pattern of nodal department, however, same may be against the dynamic working principles laid down by present dispensation under Hon’ble MoS & Hon’ble Prime Minister who always inspires us to have out-of-box thinking and innovative ideas to improve the administrative system,” it said. CSS officers who generally do late sitting on daily basis for betterment of our country, will not work after normal office hours, that is, after 5:30 pm, the letter said.

# Navy chief to give away gallantry, distinguished service awards



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar will on Wednesday give away gallantry and distinguished service awards at this year’s Naval Investiture Ceremony at Kerala’s Kochi.

In an official statement issued on Tuesday, the force said 31 awards including six Nao Sena Medals (gallantry),

eight Nao Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty), 17 Vishisht Seva Medals will be presented to awardees. “In addition, Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak, Lt VK Jain Memorial Gold Medal, Capt Ravi Dhir Memorial Gold Medal, CNS Trophy for best Green Practice and Unit Citations will also be presented,” it noted.

The ceremony will be witnessed by the spouses and families of awardees as well as by senior dignitaries of the Indian Navy, it said.

“The Naval Investiture Ceremony - 2022 to felicitate Naval personnel who have demonstrated gallant acts, leadership, professional achievements and distinguished service of high order will be held at Naval Base, Kochi on May 4,” it stated.

# Smokers at higher risk of dementia, Alzheimer’s: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Everyone knows smoking is bad for the heart and lungs. But now a study has said that it damages the brain also. Overall, current smokers are 30 per cent more likely to develop dementia and 40 per cent more likely to develop Alzheimer’s disease, according to a 2015 analysis of 37 different studies published in the journal PLOS ONE.

“We know that smoking harms every organ of the human body,” said Adrienne Johnson, an assistant scientist at the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention in Madison. “The brain is no exception.”

Smokers are at significantly higher risk for dementia and dementia-related death. The World Health Organization estimated in 2014 that 14 per cent of dementia cases worldwide may be caused by smoking. Overall, current smokers are 30 per cent more likely to develop dementia and 40 per cent more likely to develop Alzheimer’s

Deal led a study that found smokers’ increased risk for dementia decreased over time when they quit, eventually reaching a point after nine years when it was no higher than those who never smoked.

“The message coming out of our research is that earlier is better,” Deal said. “Quitting in midlife is better than later in life. But quitting at any time is beneficial.”

Unfortunately, people are less likely to quit the older they get, said Johnson, whose research focuses on finding the most effective ways to help adults 50 and older stop smoking. Roughly 17% of 45- to 65-year-olds smoke, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is higher than the national average of 14% for all adults 18 and older.

And older smokers are more likely to smoke daily and less likely to try to quit than younger smokers. “Doctors are less likely to advise them to quit smoking,” Johnson said. When they do, they are less likely to offer them evidence-based cessation options, such as nicotine patches, medications and other products shown to double or triple a person’s chances for successfully quitting. People with mental illness also are more likely to smoke and to have a tougher time quitting without assistance, Johnson said.

Smoking rates among people with mood, anxiety and attention-deficit/hyperactivity and other disorders are two to five times higher than that of the general population, and research suggests smoking may even impact the course of these illnesses.

Roughly 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. has some kind of behavioral health condition. Collectively, this group smokes nearly 40% of all cigarettes consumed by adults in this country, according to CDC.

“People with mental illnesses, such as depression or bipolar disorder, are more prone to have cravings when quitting,” Johnson said, “so they need medications to minimize cravings and counseling to help them cope with them.”

Deal led a study that found smokers’ increased risk for dementia decreased over time when they quit, eventually reaching a point after nine years when it was no higher than those who never smoked.

“The message coming out of our research is that earlier is better,” Deal said. “Quitting in midlife is better than later in life. But quitting at any time is beneficial.”

Unfortunately, people are less likely to quit the older they get, said Johnson, whose research focuses on finding the most effective ways to help adults 50 and older stop smoking. Roughly 17% of 45- to 65-year-olds smoke, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is higher than the national average of 14% for all adults 18 and older.

And older smokers are more likely to smoke daily and less likely to try to quit than younger smokers. “Doctors are less likely to advise them to quit smoking,” Johnson said. When they do, they are less likely to offer them evidence-based ces-

# Lack of western disturbances led to April heat: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has attributed the frequent and prolonged spell of heatwave in April to absence of active western disturbances (WD) during the month.

According to the IMD, the absence of active WDs in April over north India caused highly subdued rain and very less thunderstorm activities over northwest and central parts, leading to frequent and prolonged spell of heat wave to severe heat wave days and higher-than-normal temperature over these areas on most days.

West Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, south Haryana-Delhi, west Madhya Pradesh and western parts of Uttar Pradesh experienced higher number of heat wave days and east Uttar Pradesh, east-central India reported lower number of heat wave days.

Overall, the month recorded six WDs (April 1-4, 7-9, 13-15, 20-22, 23-25 and 28-29). However, most of them were feeble and dry and moved across higher ridges of Himalayas. Only last three systems caused gusty winds and dust-raising winds and dry



Women cover themselves with stoles to avoid the scorching heat on a hot summer day, in Amritsar, PTI Photo

thunderstorms in some places in northwest, it said. Over Northwest India during April, the average maximum temperature was highest with 38.04 degrees Celsius in the last 122 years for period 1901-2022 against earliest record of 37.75 degrees Celsius in 1973.

Similarly, the average mean temperature was in April 2022 highest with 31.35 degrees Celsius for period 1901-2022 and it broke earlier highest record of 31.10 degrees Celsius in 2010. The average minimum temperature was highest in April 2022 with 24.66 degrees Celsius and it broke the earlier

record of 24.52 degrees Celsius in 2010. The monthly average minimum temperature over East & Northeast India for month of April over East & Northeast India was third highest with 21.94 degrees Celsius since 1901.

West Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, south Haryana-Delhi, west Madhya Pradesh, and western parts of Uttar Pradesh experienced higher number of heat wave days and East Uttar Pradesh, east-central India reported lower number of heat wave days.

record of 24.52 degrees Celsius in 2010. The monthly average minimum temperature over East & Northeast India for month of April over East & Northeast India was third highest with 21.94 degrees Celsius since 1901.

West Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, south Haryana-Delhi, west Madhya Pradesh, and western parts of Uttar Pradesh experienced higher number of heat wave days and East Uttar Pradesh, east-central India reported lower number of heat wave days.



# NBW, police case against MNS chief over loudspeakers

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The law began to catch up with MNS chief Raj Thackeray over his inflammatory speeches and the recent call for removal of loudspeakers from mosques on Tuesday, as the Aurangabad police registered a case against him and others for his utterances at a public rally on May 1 and a court in Sangli district of western Maharashtra issued a Non Bailable Warrant (NBW) against him in a 2008 inflammatory speech case.

A day ahead of the expiry of an extended deadline for removal of loudspeakers from mosques, the MNS chief faced a triple whammy of sorts, the Aurangabad and Mumbai appeared to be tightening their screws on the MNS chief in connection with the 2008 inflammatory speech case, his objectionable utterances at his public rally at Aurangabad on May 1 and the issuance of notices to more than 100 MNS activists, including their leaders Nitin Sardesai and Bala Nandgaonkar.

On a day when State Home

Minister Dilip Walse-Patil held meetings with Director-General of Police Rajnish Seth, Mumbkrai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pande and followed it up meeting with confabulations with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Walse-Patil, the Maharashtra police top brass indicated that it was prepared to take the MNS chief head on his threat to organise recitation of “Hanuman Chalisa” in front of mosques where loudspeakers continue to play aazan after his extended deadline of May 4.

The MNS chief’s arrest appeared to be in the realm of possibility in connection with the NBW issued against him by a Magistrate’s court at Shirala in Sangli district in connection with offences registered him under sections 109 and 117 (abetment of offence) of the IPC for allegedly making inflammatory speeches. Though Shirala court had on



April 6 directed the Mumbai police Commissioner and the Khrewadi police station to arrest Raj and produce him before it, the Mumbai police officials have not yet executed the NBW.

However, in the current situation where Raj is apparently trying to precipitate the situation over the mosque loudspeaker issue, the Mumbai police may use the NBW to arrest and try to take wind out of his sails in his impending plans to organise organise recitation of “Hanuman

Chalisa” in front of mosques where loudspeakers continue to play aazan after his extended deadline of May 4.

Similarly, in the May 1 public rally speech case, the Aurangabad police have booked Raj under section 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot), 116 (abetment of offence punishable with imprisonment if offence be not committed and 117 (abetting commission of offence by the public or by more than 10 persons and under the provisions of the

Maharashtra Police Act over his call to Hindus to play “Hanuman Chalisa” in front of loudspeakers were not removed there.

Talking to media persons in Mumbai, State Director-General of Police (DGP) Rajnish Seth said the police were prepared to deal with any law and order situation arising due to the loudspeaker row.

“We are capable of tackling any law and order problem and we are well prepared for handling any situation. All leaves of police personnel have been cancelled. We have taken preventive action against 15,000 anti-social elements to ensure they do not create any law and order situation. We have served notices to 13,000 other people,” Seth said.

Meanwhile, as many as 87 companies of the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) have been mobilised while more than 30,000 home guards have been deployed across the State to deal with any eventuality arising out of the MNS chief’s threat to embark upon the “Hanuman Chalisa” recitation campaign.

## Raj Thackeray urges Hindus to make Muslims hear ‘Hanuman Chalisa’

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Taking an aggressive but a calibrated stand on the contentious issue of removal of loudspeakers from mosques, MNS chief Thackeray on Tuesday appealed to the Hindus to make Muslims hear “Hanuman Chalisa” and asked them undertake signature campaign against playing of loudspeakers at mosques and lodge complaints with the police on the issue every day.

Less than 24 hours to go for the expiry of his call to the Muslims and the State Government to remove loudspeakers from mosques, the MNS chief reminded Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray that late Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray had stated that “all loudspeakers need to be silenced”. “Are you going to listen to this (late Balsaheb’s words)? Or are you going to follow the non-

religious Sharad Pawar who is responsible to keep you in power?. Let the people of Maharashtra witness what is going to follow,” he asked his cousin and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray.

“Our country does not have so many jails that can arrest the Hindus of our country. This very fact should be recognised by all the government. My dear Hindu brothers, sisters and mothers come together, be one in bringing down loudspeakers,” the MNS chief said.

In his slightly reworked stand, the MNS chief appealed to all the Hindus: “Tomorrow, the 4th of May, if you hear loudspeakers blaring Azan, in those very places, play the Hanuman Chalisa on the loudspeakers! That’s when they will realise the hindrance of these loudspeakers”.

Raj also appealed to the police force to show that this

is governed by law and order. They should maintain and follow the law. The unauthorised masjids, loudspeakers and the prayers being held in the middle of roads, need to be addressed duly by law”.

“The Hindu festivals are restricted by silent zones under the facade of schools and hospitals being around. However, masjids are exempt from such restrictions. Which part of the Constitution states this?,” he asked.

The MNS chief went onto appeal to all the Hindus to make Muslims hear “Hanuman Chalisa” and asked them to undertake signature undertake campaign against playing of loudspeakers at mosques and lodge complaints with the police on the issue every day.

He welcomed these mosques who had already used loudspeakers and asked the “Hindu brothers” not to disturb them.

## SIA files chargesheet against 3 Hizbul terrorists

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Unearthing the dubious network of students visiting Pakistan for coordinating terrorist and secessionist activities against India, the State Investigation Agency (SIA) has filed chargesheet against three Hizb-ul-Mujahideen terrorists before the TADA/POTA/NIA Special Court in Jammu on Monday. The Hizbul terrorists included father son duo Asif Shabir Naik, a resident of Kashitgarh in Doda, his father Shabir Hussain Naik @ Khalid Shabir son of Gh. Mohd Naik currently operating from Pakistan and Safdar Hussain @ Ehsan of village Marmat of Doda who too is based in Pakistan. According to a spokesman of the SIA, “The investigation started on 7 November 2021 and conducted over last about six months assumes importance in the context of the government’s strategy

to identify J & K residents who are hiding in Pakistan and coordinating terrorist and secessionist activities behind the scene from across the border”.

Asif Shabir Naik was intercepted in Pakistan airport while trying to escape back to Pakistan on the basis of intelligence inputs that he had been visiting Pakistan posing that he’s a student studying there. But he has actually been visiting terrorist and separatist training facilities, suggested the intelligence input.

Investigations revealed, “the terrorist outfit HM with the blessings of Pakistani agencies gave the cover of studentship to Asif but used his stay in Pakistan to meet his father a senior HM figure and also undergo training in sabotage and subversion”.

According to a spokesman of the SIA, “The forensics of the phone devices of Asif showed that he had videographed army installations along the Baramulla

Srinagar road. He had also photographed the access road to the airport and security features adjacent to it”.

It further said, “While the visa on Asif’s passport showed that he’s a visitor, immigration records indicated he was a student. Interrogation of Asif in the context of digital evidence revealed that Pakistan had arranged his admission in International Islamic university in Islamabad in a mass communication programme as cover and simultaneously facilitated his internship in the media cell of HM run by his father”.

Investigation also revealed that Asif had completely concealed that his father was in Pakistan and a senior figure in HM and close to the leader Syed Sallauddin. He had falsely mentioned that he was visiting Pakistan to meet a relative.

While Asif Shabir Naik arrested in the instant case is in judicial custody, the other two accused especially the mastermind Shabir

Hussain Naik and his associate Safdar Hussain hiding in Pakistan have been Challenged U/S 299 CrPC as Absconders.

The SIA spokesman in a statement said, “Investigation conducted in one such case has resulted in unearthing of a story of a father who escaped to Pakistan illegally and climbed the ladder of seniority in the Hizbul Mujahideen led by Syed Sallauddin and came to be the media advisor looking after the propaganda cell of the terror outfit”. Registered at Police Station JIC Jammu, the investigation revealed how Pakistani agencies have been brazenly and egregiously misusing not only the travel between the two countries on the basis of valid travel documents but also the Indian students going to Pakistan for higher studies. The objective of Asif’s admission, as a student in a mass media course in Pakistan is suspected and he was to return to India as a respected journalist

and clandestinely get embedded in the system and receive instructions from across in planning, coordinating and executing not only propaganda operations but separatist and even violent terrorist actions. But for the videos in his cell phone the latter part of the adversary agenda would not have surfaced.

The SIA spokesman also claimed, “The accused Asif Shabir Naik stayed in Pakistan for almost 3 years along with Shabir Hussain Naik and Safdar Hussain in HM camps”.

Moreover, the major part of the investigation pertains to Pakistan. Even when its is comprehended that Pakistan authorities would not cooperate in assisting this legally mandated investigation, it was thought prudent and legally warranted to use the tool of LETTER ROGATORY and request the Pakistani court of law seeking information of the activities of the accused Asif Shabir Naik while in Pakistan,” he said.



Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Anurag Singh Thakur, Chief Minister of Karnataka Basavaraj Bommai, Minister for State Youth Affairs and Sports and Home Affairs Nisith Pramanik, at the star-studded closing ceremony of Khelo India games in Bengaluru Photo | Pioneer

## Hindus should have more children: Narasimhanand

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

Mahamandaleshwar Yati Narasimhanand Saraswati, the national convener of Akhil Bharatiya Sant Parishad and associated with Juna Akhada, said that Hindus should produce more children to prevent the country from becoming Hindu devoid and to protect Sanatan Dharma. He said that his mathematical calculations show that after 2029, there will be a non-Hindu Chief Minister in the state and a non-Hindu Prime Minister in the country.

He said that not only Hindus but entire humanity has come under threat due to terrorist jihadis. In India, the population of a particular class is being increased in a planned manner. This is a big threat to the democracy of the country. He was speaking at the Sanatan Sant Sammelan organized under the banner of Sanatan Hindu Seva Sansthan at Ramlila ground, Achal Tal, Aligarh UP. Here the speakers called for building a Vedic Hindu nation and appealed to the Hindus to unite.

In the program, Yati

Narasimhanand gave a statement that we are losing everything without fighting. Hindus need to unite to save their existence and protect sister and daughters. He said that if we do not warn in time, then even Yogi-Modi, who became the face of Hindutva, cannot do anything. They are targets of fundamentalists. He said that being weak in religion is considered a sin.

If you want to live with dignity, then produce more children and if you do not want to live, then it is your choice. He said that Sanatan Dharma is towards complete destruction. To avoid this devastating calamity, today some people will have to stand open in front of the bullets of jihadis, so that the world can know their reality and be ready to fight them. If by his sacrifice the followers of Sanatan Dharma wake up and stand up to eradicate Jihad, then it will be a matter of good fortune.

National President of Rashtriya Hindu Mahasabha, Munna Lal Sharma said that Muslim rulers and Britishers have ruled the country. They have done the work of forcibly

converting people on the strength of power. He alleged that saints are being implicated in false cases. Mahamandaleshwar Dr. Annupurna Bharti (Dr. Pooja Shakun Pandey) said that her campaign to save Hinduism would continue till her last breath. Amritananda, Gyanananda, Satyadeva Nand, Ashutoshanand etc. presiding also expressed their views. Geeta and sword were presented to the saints and guests in the conference. City MLA Mukta Raja, former MLA Sanjeev Raja were also present in the conference. The operation was conducted by the National Secretary of Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. Ashok Pandey.

**Country needs to become a Hindu nation: Kalicharan Maharaj**

Kalicharan Maharaj, who came into the limelight by making controversial remarks on Mahatma Gandhi, said that Sanatan Dharma is immortal, it has no end. There is only Sanatan Dharma in India, there is no religion other than this, people belonging to other religions claim themselves to be

associated with their religion. He said that in the Middle Ages five lakh temples were destroyed in the country. If it doesn’t work out now, it will happen again. For this it is very important for the country to become a Hindu Rashtra. He was addressing the people in the Sanatan Sant Sammelan organized at Ramlila ground.

He said that countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Tibet were separated from Hindu nation India. The scope of Mother India is decreasing. He said that some people are doing the work of treason by staying in the country. Fireworks are used in support of Pakistan on India’s defeat in cricket match.

We should take a lesson by watching The Kashmir Files movie. He said that if a Hindu makes any statement, then action is taken against him by calling it hate statement. He said that apart from religion, caste and provincialism, we have to unite and support Yogi, Modi for Hindu Rashtra. He demanded that the cow progeny law should be passed in the country.

## Congress to field Uma, widow of party leader Thomas, for bypoll

**The bypoll was necessitated by the demise of PT Thomas**

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Congress in Kerala sprang a surprise on Tuesday by announcing that Uma Thomas, the widow of P T Thomas who had represented the Thrikkakkara assembly constituency would be the party’s candidate for the May 31 bye-election. The Election Commission of India had announced last Friday that the bye-poll necessitated by the demise of P T Thomas would be held on May 31 and the result would be announced on June 3.

The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee which met at Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday unanimously

decided to field Uma Thomas as the candidate for the election. “There was only one name in the panel and that was of Uma Thomas. The leadership unanimously decided to forward the name to the Congress High Command,” said K Sudhakaran, MP and KPCC chief.

V D Satheeshan, Leader of the Opposition, said that the Congress would romp home easily because of a number of reasons. “Uma Thomas belongs to this constituency and she is known by all the votes here. P T Thomas was held in high respect by the electorate because of his accessibility and simplicity. The voters see in Uma the same qualities that had made Thomas dear to them,” said Satheesh.

Thrikkakkara constituency which was formed in 2011 has been a stronghold of the Congress. The 2011 assembly election saw Benny Behannan winning the seat easily. Thomas won the seat in 2016 and 2021

with a good majority. Mohammed Shiyaz, the DCC chief, told The Pioneer that this was the first time the Congress declared the name of a party candidate earlier than other parties. “There is no doubt about the victory of Uma Thomas, herself a KSU and Congress activist from her student days,” said Shiyaz.

The ruling CPI(M) is leaving no stones unturned to wrest the seat from the Congress. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and CPI(M) state chief Kodiyyeri Balakrishnan, both undergoing medical treatment in United States of America, issued a directive to party leaders to ensure the victory of the party in the bye-election so that the Left Democratic Front would touch the three-figure mark of 100. The LDF has a total strength of 99 in the House. By wresting the Thrikkakkara seat, the Front would reach the magic figure of 100 in the House which has an effective strength of 140,” said P Rajeev,

minister for Industries and Law.

E P Jayarajan, the convener of the LDF has been appointed as the coordinator for the Thrikkakkara bye-poll. “We are inviting the people of the constituency to join as in this march to development and progress,” said Jayarajan. He pointed out that Thrikkakkara is one of the 11 stations in the proposed K-Rail (Silver Line Semi high Speed Rail) connecting Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod.

The CPI(M) is likely to announce the name of the party candidate in the next couple of days. Sabu Thomas, founder of the 20-Twenty party said that his outfit would forge an alliance with AAP and field a joint candidate. The BJP, though not a relevant force in the constituency too, would have its candidate, said A N Radhakrishnan, a state level leader of the party who has expressed his desire to enter the arena.

## India is witnessing politics of division: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In an apparent attack directed at the BJP, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said that India was experiencing a “Jhutha Acchhe din (fake good days)” a promise that was made by the saffron outfit and Prime Minister Narendra Modi before coming to power for the first time in 2014. Delivering a short speech during the prayer of Eid at the iconic Red Road in Kolkata Banerjee said that “the situation is not right in India” which was being ruled by politics of “divide and rule” and promised she would continue to fight such political illis till she was around.

“What we are seeing is not good, what is happening is not good, a policy of divide and rule is being practiced which is not right for our country ... the politics of isolation that is taking place is not desirable and

we should all stand for unity and not division ... because we have a right to live together ... we have a right to peace,” the Chief Minister said stopping short of naming the BJP that the promise of Acchhe din was in fact a fake promise.

There was a promise of “Acchhe din (good days) ... but this is a jhutha (fake) acchhe din ... because acchhe din should come with sacchhe din (truthful days) that should include all and not some,” Banerjee said promising a fight for unity in the coming days.

The Chief Minister who later in the day visited the house of Rizwanur Rehman — a youth out of whose mysterious death in 2007 Banerjee had made a big political issue to win the sympathy of the minorities — along with her nephew and MP Abhishek Banerjee called upon the people to put up a united fight against the divisive

forces.

“In the days to come we will have to stand together and fight these forces which are trying to divide India ... we are sure we will uproot them,” Banerjee said adding those (read BJP) who were disturbing Bengal were jealous of its peaceful atmosphere and unity. “Our unity is unparalleled in India. The unity we have in Bengal makes many jealous ... so they are trying to disturb us and abuse me ... But I am not afraid of their attacks and I know how to fight this out with your help,” the Chief Minister said adding she would fight for every person “be it a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian.”

Iterating that she had dedicated her life to the cause of unity, humanity, peace and justice she said that she was “ready to sacrifice my life for that cause instead of bowing down” to the divisive forces.

## TMC names Abhishek as Didi successor; Opp frowns

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In a sudden development that the Opposition parties called a ploy to divert the people’s attention from deteriorating law and order situation and frequent High Court orders directing CBI investigation into recruitment scams the Trinamool Congress has floated the name of party general secretary and MP Abhishek Banerjee as the successor of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Celebrating the anniversary of the party’s third consecutive win in the last year’s Assembly elections TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that Abhishek who is also the nephew of the Chief Minister would succeed her in the year 2036.

Speaking about the 35-year-old junior Banerjee Ghosh wrote in a media post, “being

a Trinamool Congress soldier, I can say that Mamata Banerjee will be the Chief Minister of Bengal till 2036. And in 2036, Abhishek Banerjee will become the Chief Minister in a programme where she will remain present as his guardian.”

He also said that “Mamata Banerjee will set a precedent in India by breaking Jyoti Basu’s record as Chief Minister,” adding however that Abhishek’s coronation could be brought forward “should Mamata Banerjee has to leave to discharge bigger responsibilities.”

While Ghosh said this on Monday, his party colleague and MP Aparupa Poddar said that Abhishek Banerjee would become the Chief Minister as early as in 2024 “when Mamata Banerjee is selected to become the Prime Minister of the country with the ouster of the BJP from power.”

She said “why to wait for so



long for Abhishek da to become the Chief Minister ... why cannot he become the Chief Minister as early as when Mamata didi becomes the Prime Minister.”

Even as the Opposition BJP saw in the tweets a design to divert the attention of the

State from deteriorating law and order situation and CBI investigations into recruitment scams ahead of the next year’s panchayat elections, Left leadership said that the statements proved diminishing power of the old guards in the ruling TMC.

“It proves that Abhishek Banerjee lobby cannot wait for long ... they are trying to shove the Chief Minister and her old guards out soon ... we are waiting to see a circus,” said CPI(M)’s Sujan Chakrabarty.

BJP State president Sukanto Majumdar however said that junior Banerjee could well become the Chief Minister if his party wins and “if he comes out scot free from the cattle and coal smuggling charges.”

The Congress on the other hand said that the TMC statement was a device to convince the minorities that Mamata Banerjee indeed had a hope in Delhi and that they should vote for her in 2024. This, at a time when the TMC was expecting erosion in its minority vote bank which might move towards the Left and the Congress in the years to come.








FIRST COLUMN

MECHANICS OF LEARNING  
IN JOURNEY OF LIFE

One can learn from everywhere  
so long as one is open-minded



**SUDHEESH VENKATESH**

While exploring taglines that communicate the promise of our university, someone suggested ‘Learning for Life.’ This made me reflect on when we learn and who we learn from in the journey of life, not just in school, college or university. I have worked in Human Resources for the better part of my career. One of the rewards of working in HR has been the breadth of people I got to meet and the opportunity to listen to their life stories. Travel, interviews and inquiry are integral to the role and invariably create opportunities for human interactions and appreciating how people learn from life. I once had the privilege of interacting with the nonagenarian Dr TV Venkatachala Sastry, a renowned linguist and scholar. I asked him about Prof. Sheldon Pollock, Professor Emeritus of South Asian Studies at



Columbia University, who had spent several months in Mysuru learning Kannada from Sastry. With praise that good teachers often reserve for only the very best students, Sastry told me that Pollock became his pupil when he was in his late sixties. He was also a Padma Shri by then. Pollock felt that he needed to learn more to do justice to his role as the director of the Murty Classical Library of India — that of presenting the greatest literary works in Indian languages to a larger audience by translating them to English. An undergraduate Indian student at Princeton Molecular Biology programme was puzzled to see an elderly gentleman attending the classes, often sitting in the last row, listening to the lectures and making notes as the course progressed. A few discreet inquiries later she learned that it was Eric F Wieschaus, the Nobel laureate in Physiology. Wieschaus was 67 at the time. A recent tweet — ‘You don’t stop learning because you get old, instead you become old because you stop learning’ — hit this point home.

Sir Terry Leahy, the celebrated CEO of Tesco and arguably the greatest retailer of his generation, once told us that ‘our people have the answers if only we care to listen to them’. He was the CEO of a 100-billion-dollar firm, with over four lakh employees across 12 countries and I would watch him listening to employees and customers, becoming one among them and never judging what was said. His longevity as a successful CEO was in no small measure due to his humility, having his ears to the ground and gathering direct insights. During my travels, I invariably chat with cab drivers — which direction are the political winds blowing, what inspires them to keep at their job, how they manage money and so on. While they may not be articulate in the conventional sense or carry the punditry we get to see on TV, these conversations have led to many ‘penny drop’ moments. Business leaders who run their companies to the ground by over-leveraging assets would do well to learn from such earthy wisdom. In a story attributed to a disciple of Buddha, he is asked from whom he learns. He says I learn from everywhere. The point is we can learn from everywhere, if only we stay open-minded. When leaders stop being open-minded, they stop learning. This happens to many unknowingly. Past success creates patterns and formulae in the minds of people, and they think that what has worked for them in the past is the only right way. Some suffer from selective listening. Some create echo chambers, either through their force of personality or unconscious biases, and they do not hear what they ought to hear. These, too, are impediments to learning. The magic perhaps happens outside our comfort zone.

*(The writer is Chief Communications Officer, Azim Premji Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Our heritage: Stories behind our temples

Temples have also been centres of commerce, art, culture, education and pivot of social life. Everything in the community revolved around the local temple

India is a land of temples. Every village, every town, every habitation has a temple dedicated to one deity or the other. Going to a temple is not just a ritual for an average Indian; it is a basic necessity.

Temples in India have never been just that. Even from ancient times, they have been centres of commerce, art, culture, education and pivot of social life. Everything in the community revolved around the local temple. This is where prayers were made to Gods and Goddesses for health, for wealth, for progeny or for a specific obstacle to be removed or even for acquiring something valuable. This is where people met each other, exchanged news, exchanged views, exchanged gossip, shared their stories, their difficulties, solicited each other’s advice and planned their daily lives.

In the modern era, much of how we live has changed. But our attachment to the temples has not changed as much. We still go to temples; we still believe in the power of the deity there; we still solicit the peace and comfort we get from going to a temple. At least most of us. Why do we go to a temple? What is so special about a temple? Is it the deity there? Or is it the miracles which the deity is supposed to have performed? Or is it that there is something more there? Some unsaid, untold, inexplicable feeling which permeates the place making it sacred?

All religions and faiths have pilgrimage as one of the most defining elements. Think about it; travelling to Jerusalem to walk the earth which the Lord walked, is something any good Christian would live for. Going to Mecca and completing the Hajj is something which every practicing Muslim aspires to, once in his/her life time. Buddhist and Jain monks come from all over the world to visit the places where Lord Mahavira and Gautama Buddha lived and preached. While in exile and before formation of Israel, Jews from all over the world would live on the slender hope of going back to their Blessed Land.

What does all this mean? Humans from times immemorial seek to get meaning for their existence. Visiting a temple or a church or a monastery brings the human close to the divine. That experience is of the heart. Of the mind. Of human existence.

Every year, thousands of Indians traverse the length and breadth of the country in their journey to visit a temple or more. Something in that temple draws the devotee in as much as something draws the tourist in. There are traditions, legends and myths behind these temples. These stories make them what they are. It is what makes them special and sacred. Without that legend or myth, that temple is just another building with four walls. The myth and the story is what gives the temple its soul.

It is a truly humbling experience to understand the power of these stories. In the modern world of writing and visual



THE STORIES OF THESE TEMPLES HAVE REMARKABLY SURVIVED OVER SEVERAL CENTURIES AND SEVERAL GENERATIONS. YET MORE REMARKABLE IS THAT THESE STORIES ARE SIMILAR ACROSS GEOGRAPHIES, WITH MINOR VARIATIONS

*(The writer is Director General, Archaeological Survey of India. The views expressed are personal.)*



communication, we have forgotten the power of shared words. The stories of these temples have remarkably survived over several centuries and several generations. Yet more remarkable is that these stories are similar across geographies, with minor variations. The ability to hold the baton of knowledge and information which our ancestors had, is something most of us seem to little appreciate. At another level, we have also forgotten the power of human memory. As Lesley Hazelton put it succinctly “it seems ironic that the more literate we become, the more memory fades”. Writing has not complemented memory; it has replaced it. That is when we seem to have lost the treasure of our spiritual heritage. Stories and legends which were passed down from one generation to the next, suddenly seem to have lost their relevance. They are consigned to fantasy and books for children.

When we go back to the earlier times, this was their world. Imagine yourself in village in any part of India. It is late evening and the children are huddled around the lamp (for warmth and light). There is no other distraction - no books to read, you don’t play games in the night and of course none of what we think are necessities today. The elders narrate stories from the Puranas - about Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva and the Goddess. The chil-

dren absorb these stories with rapt attention. This is their world to explore and experience. Those of us who have heard stories in our childhood vividly remember the story teller not the story writer. That is the power of narration. And this narration of the stories of each of our temples come from collective memory. These stories continue to live in the heart and mouth of each listener. And they pass on to the next, binding us together as a collective organism seeking the meaning of life.

The legends and myths of our temples open a fascinating world. When I started to research and collect these legends, a fascinating new world opened before me. Stories started popping out from every corner. Puranas, epics, local folklore, customs and traditions, sthala puranas - all of them mention about several temples and their importance in the enriching the Hindu way of life. It is a very humble beginning to the stupendous amount of work waiting to be done in the field.

Some people may brush away the subject of legend and myth stating that they are in any case not true. Legend is a story yes, but it is not just a story. It is a powerful narrative describing the place. It is immaterial whether a particular incident happened there or not. Rather it is the belief that something like that happened, which makes the place special. World

over, across centuries, this is how pilgrims went to holy places. This is communion with the Divine. When one looks at these legends and stories, one feature is striking. These stories both humanize the divine and divinize the human. For example, Lord Shiva is prone to anger and Andal is elevated to the status of deity in her own right. This is extraordinary; it demonstrates that ‘divinity’ is about a person’s character and behavior. At one level, it shows that no one in the universe is infallible. At another level, by implication, it also shows that each of us can be Divine. This, to me, has been the most important learning from these stories. The multiplicity of deities is a manifestation of the Singularity of the Divine, who is within each one of us. I look at awe at how comprehensive our stories and beliefs are, when I try to comprehend how seamless is the integration of the One and the plurality of deities.

Last but not the least is the lesson of Hope which are there in these stories and legends. That at the end of every trial and tribulation, there is a positive outcome awaiting us. Every story and every legend stands testimony to this lesson of hope. As humans we need to have faith. And that is what sustains us and holds us together. Without these legends and stories of hope and miracles, many of us would find ourselves floundering.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

“MY QUEST TO BE A MEANINGFUL PARTICIPANT IN DEMOCRACY...SHURUAT BIHAR SE (STARTING FROM BIHAR).”  
— POLL STRATEGIST PRASHANT KISHOR



“THERE IS NO SCOPE FOR A REGIONAL OR A NATIONAL OUTFIT TO THE NITISH MODEL OF GOVERNANCE IN THE STATE.”  
— JD(U) GENERAL SECRETARY K C TYAGI



# Governors and CMs must end their public spat

The continuing disharmony between the First Citizen and head of Government of a State raises questions about the relevance of the post of governor

Once again, the role of the Governors has come to the fore after the Tamil Nadu state Assembly last week passed two bills clipping the powers of the Governor in the appointment of vice-chancellors. The harmony between the chief ministers and governors of non-BJP ruled states has been disturbed for some time now, raising questions about governors’ relevance and role in a democracy.

The bitterness has been usually about the invitation of the single largest party to form the Government, fixing deadlines for proving the majority in the House, delaying or stopping the bills, and public criticism of the chief ministers, and so on. Tamil Nadu chief minister late J. Jayalalitha was not on talking terms with the then Tamil



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

Nadu Governor, Dr. M. Chenna Reddy.

The Stalin-led DMK Government is closely following the developments in West Bengal and Kerala (where, again, the role of the governors has come under question). It is also mobilising national attention towards the debate on the role and relevance of the office of Governor in state politics. It would like to discuss the issue in the forthcoming non-BJP chief ministers’ conclave in Mumbai.

Speaking in Assembly, Chief Minister M K Stalin recalled that the Punchhi Commission on Centre-State relations dealt with V.C. appointments. He noted that the Commission said “there would be a clash of functions and powers” if the choice were authori-



ty to choose the top academician to be chosen wrested with the Governor.” Stalin and Governor R N Ravi have an increasing confrontation. Earlier, while appealing for the House’s support for the government’s initiative, Stalin said Gujarat was the first State to clip its Governor’s wings in 2011. Other states like Telangana, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh had also cut

the powers of the governors. Last year in December, the Maharashtra government had also initiated a similar move. Rajasthan has undertaken a similar process by forming a high-level committee of experts.

There is friction between governors and chief ministers in West Bengal, Telangana, Maharashtra, Kerala and even Delhi.

The Pinarayi Vijayan government in Kerala has demanded that the Centre empower state legislatures to remove Governors from their posts if they fail to uphold constitutional values and thwart criminal prosecution measures.

But this kind of conflict is not new. The role of Governors in toppling one government and installing another is not new either: There have been

some bizarre incidents. The first was in 1959 when the Nehru Government at the Centre dismissed the Namboodripad government coming under pressure from Indira Gandhi. Since then, there have been other instances of the Centre dismissing various governments using the Governors. In 1967, West Bengal Governor Dharma Vira dismissed the Ajoy Mukherjee government and installed a Congress-supported the P C Ghosh government. Ram Lal dismissing N.T.Rama Rao’s government in the united Andhra Pradesh was a classic case of how politics played. In 1989, P Venkatasubbaiah’s dismissal of S. R Bommai’s government triggered a legal battle, and the 1994 verdict of the Supreme Court is a landmark ruling.

In April 1994, Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh summarily dismissed D’Souza without consulting the Centre and went on to install the controversial former chief minister, Ravi Naik, in his place.

As for the role of governors, the Constituent Assembly was sharply divided. Ambedkar described one role that he had to retain the Ministry in office. “The second duty which the Governor has, and must have, is to advise the Ministry, warn the Ministry, suggest an alternative, and ask for a reconsideration.” The most considerable discomfort of the state governments is that a Governor is not elected but an ‘integral’ part of the State.

Both President of India and Governors are not answerable to the courts for any commission

or omissions while discharging their official duties. They are also not responsible to the people’s court. Suppose they choose an unfit person as varsity head; they can’t even be held accountable. Elected chief ministers demand that a uniform policy be adopted to do away with the power of governors to appoint vice-chancellors.

Sarkaria Commission had recommended consultation with chief ministers of the respective states. It is not done more often.

In any case, public criticism of each other holding top positions in the states is not desirable. The same goes for non-BJP chief ministers criticising Prime Minister who is democratically elected. It is time that there should be a stop to this kind of public spat.



# Johnson addresses Ukraine Parliament

UK PM pledges GBP 300 million of more military support

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday became the first world leader to address the Ukrainian Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, when he hailed the country's "finest hour" in the conflict with Russia.

Setting out details of GBP 300 million in extra military support, Johnson invoked the spirit of Britain's war-time Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in his address via video-link.

The additional military support will cover radars to pinpoint the artillery, heavy lift drones to carry crucial supplies to isolated forces and thousands of night vision devices as the UK leader pledged to continue to support Ukraine with "weapons, funding and humanitarian aid".

"This is Ukraine's finest hour, that will be remembered and recounted for generations to come," said Johnson. "Your children and grandchildren will say that Ukrainians taught the world that the brute force of an aggressor counts for nothing against the moral force of a people determined to be free," he said.

"In the coming weeks, we in the UK will send you Brimstone anti-ship missiles and Stormer anti-aircraft systems. We are providing



armoured vehicles to evacuate civilians from areas under attack and protect officials - what Volodymyr mentioned to me in our most recent call - while they maintain critical infrastructure," he added.

The address follows a similar virtual address by Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky to the Parliament in March, during which the Ukrainian leader had also invoked a Churchillian spirit. Johnson told parliamentarians that the UK Parliament met throughout World War II, just as Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada has done through the conflict with Russia.

He concluded: "It is about Ukrainian democracy against Putin's tyranny. It is about freedom versus oppression. It is about right versus wrong. It is about good versus evil.

"And that is why Ukraine must win; and when we look at the heroism of the Ukrainian people and the bravery of your

leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy - we know that Ukraine will win. And we in the UK will do everything we can to restore a free sovereign and independent Ukraine."

Downing Street said the UK would send 13 specialised Toyota Land Cruisers to protect civilians officials at command posts and help security authorities rebuild railways in eastern Ukraine, where Russian forces are now concentrated.

UK Foreign secretary Liz Truss said the steel-plated vehicles, which were requested by the Ukrainian government, would also help evacuate civilians fleeing Russian shelling on the frontline.

"They will arrive there in the coming days," said Truss.

Meanwhile, official data claims a total of 86,000 UK visas have been issued to Ukrainians fleeing the war zone and around 27,000 refugees have arrived in the UK.

# Russia plans to annex parts of eastern Ukraine: US official

AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

A senior US official warned that Russia plans to annex large portions of eastern Ukraine later this month, and the Mariupol steel mill that has become the city's last stronghold of resistance came under renewed assault a day after the first evacuation of civilians from the plant.

Michael Carpenter, US ambassador to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said Monday that the US believes the Kremlin also plans to recognise the southern city of Kherson as an independent republic. Neither move would be recognised by the United States or its allies, he said.

Carpenter cited information that Russia is planning to hold sham referendums in the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics that would "try to add a veneer of democratic or electoral legitimacy" and attach the entities to Russia. He also said there were signs that Russia would engineer an independence vote in Kherson.

He noted that mayors and local legislators there have been abducted, that internet and cellphone service has been severed and that a Russian school curriculum is soon to be imposed. Ukraine's government has said Russia also has introduced the ruble as currency there.

In bombed-out Mariupol,



more than 100 people - including elderly women and mothers with small children - left the rubble-strewn Azovstal steelworks on Sunday and set out in buses and ambulances for the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, about 140 miles (230 kilometers) to the northwest, according to authorities and video released by the two sides.

Mariupol Deputy Mayor Sergei Orlov told the BBC that the evacuees were making slow progress. Authorities gave no explanation for the delay.

At least some of the civilians were apparently taken to a village controlled by Russia-backed separatists. The Russian military said some chose to stay in separatist areas, while dozens left for Ukrainian-held territory.

In the past, Ukraine has accused Moscow's troops of taking civilians against their will to Russia or Russian-controlled areas. The Kremlin has denied it.

The Russian bombardment

of the sprawling plant by air, tank and ship picked up again after the partial evacuation, Ukraine's Azov Battalion, which is helping to defend the mill, said on the Telegram messaging app.

Orlov said high-level negotiations were underway among Ukraine, Russia and international organizations on evacuating more people.

The steel-plant evacuation, if successful, would represent rare progress in easing the human cost of the almost 10-week war, which has caused particular suffering in Mariupol. Previous attempts to open safe corridors out of the southern port city and other places have broken down, with Ukrainian officials accusing Russian forces of shooting and shelling along agreed-on evacuation routes.

Before the weekend evacuation, overseen by the United Nations and the Red Cross, about 1,000 civilians were believed to be in the plant along with an estimated 2,000

Ukrainian defenders. Russia has demanded that the fighters surrender; they have refused.

As many as 100,000 people overall may still be in Mariupol, which had a prewar population of more than 400,000. Russian forces have pounded much of the city into rubble, trapping civilians with little food, water, heat or medicine.

Some Mariupol residents got out of the city on their own, often in damaged private cars.

As sunset approached, Mariupol resident Yaroslav Dmytryshyn rattled up to a reception center in Zaporizhzhia in a car with a back seat full of youngsters and two signs taped to the back window: "Children" and "Little ones."

"I can't believe we survived," he said, looking worn but in good spirits after two days on the road.

"There is no Mariupol whatsoever," he said. "Someone needs to rebuild it, and it will take millions of tons of gold." He said they lived just across the railroad tracks from the steel plant. "Ruined," he said. "The factory is gone completely."

Anastasiia Dembytska, who took advantage of the cease-fire to leave with her daughter, nephew and dog, said she could see the steelworks from her window, when she dared to look out.

"We could see the rockets flying" and clouds of smoke over the plant, she said.

# Pope offers to meet Putin, still waiting to hear back

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis has told an Italian newspaper that he has offered to travel to Moscow to meet with President Vladimir Putin to try to end Russia's war in Ukraine, but that he hasn't yet heard back. Francis said he made the offer about three weeks into Russia's invasion, via the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

Popes for decades have sought to visit Moscow as part of the longstanding effort to heal relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, which split with Rome more than 1,000 years ago.

But an invitation has never been forthcoming.

"Of course, it would be necessary for the leader of the Kremlin to make available some window of opportunity. But we still have not had a response and we are still pushing, even if I fear that Putin cannot and does not want to have this meeting at this moment," Francis was quoted as saying by the Corriere della Sera newspaper. Francis recalled that he spoke in March with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, for 40 minutes by videoconference and for the first half "with paper in hand, he read all of the justifications for the war."

# Aid workers prep stretchers, toys for Mariupol evacuees

AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

Aid workers prepared hot food, wheelchairs and toys Tuesday for civilians slowly making their way to relative safety from the pulverized remnants of a steel plant in the city of Mariupol, besieged for months by Russian forces.

The plant is the last hold-out of Ukrainian resistance in a city that is otherwise controlled by Moscow's forces and key to their campaign in Ukraine's east. A senior U.S. Official warned that Russia is planning to annex much of the country's east later this month.

At a reception center, stretchers and wheelchairs were lined up, tiny children's shoes dangled from a shopping cart and a pile of toys waited

for the first convoy of civilians whose evacuation is being overseen by the United Nations and Red Cross.

Their arrival would represent a rare glimmer of good news in the nearly 10-week war sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine that has killed thousands, forced millions to flee the country, laid waste to towns and cities, and shifted the post-Cold War balance of power in eastern Europe.

More than 100 people - including elderly women and mothers with small children - left Mariupol's rubble-strewn Azovstal steelworks over the weekend and set out in buses and ambulances.

At least some were apparently taken to a village controlled by Russia-backed sep-

arartists. The Russian military said some chose to stay in separatist areas. In the past, Ukraine has accused Moscow's troops of taking civilians against their will to Russia or Russian-controlled areas - something the Kremlin has denied.

Others left for the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, some 140 miles (230 kilometers) northwest of Mariupol. It was not clear why the evacuees' journey was taking so long, but the convoy likely had to pass through heavily contested areas and many checkpoints.

Mariupol has come to symbolize the human misery inflicted by the war. A Russian siege has trapped civilians with little access to food, water and

electricity, as Moscow's forces pounded the city to rubble. The plant - where about 1,000 civilians sought shelter along with some 2,000 fighters who have refused to surrender - has particularly transfixed the outside world.

Mariupol Deputy Mayor Sergei Orlov told the BBC that high-level negotiations were underway among Ukraine, Russia and international organizations on evacuating more people. But Russia resumed its bombardment of the sprawling plant by air, tank and ship after the partial evacuation, Ukraine's Azov Battalion, whose fighters are holed up in the mill, said Monday on the Telegram messaging app.

After failing to take Kyiv in

the early weeks of the war, Russia withdrew some of its forces and switched its focus to Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas. Mariupol lies in the region, and its capture would deprive Ukraine of a vital port, allow Russia to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and free up troops for fighting elsewhere in the Donbas.

Michael Carpenter, U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said Monday that the U.S. Believes the Kremlin plans to annex much of eastern Ukraine and recognize the southern city of Kherson as an independent republic.

Neither move would be recognized by the United States or its allies, he said.

Russia is planning to hold sham referendums in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the Donbas that would "try to add a veneer of democratic or electoral legitimacy" and attach the entities to Russia, Carpenter said.

He also said there were signs that Russia would engineer an independence vote in Kherson.

Mayors and local legislators there have been abducted, internet and cellphone service has been severed and a Russian school curriculum will soon be imposed, Carpenter said. Ukraine's government says Russia has introduced its ruble as currency there.

# German opposition leader visits Kyiv, Scholz refuses to go

AP ■ BERLIN

Germany's conservative opposition leader was expected to arrive in Kyiv on Tuesday for meetings with Ukrainian officials, as Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he would not be visiting Ukraine any time soon.

Scholz has traded barbs with Ukrainian officials in recent weeks because of Kyiv's refusal to invite Germany's head of state, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, whom Ukraine accuses of cozying up to Russia during his time as foreign minister.

"It can't work that a country that provides so much military aid, so much financial aid... You then say that the president can't

come," Scholz told public broadcaster ZDF late Monday.

Ukraine's ambassador in Berlin, Andriy Melnyk, responded Tuesday by calling Scholz's refusal to visit "not very statesmanlike." "This is about the most brutal war of extermination since the Nazi invasion of Ukraine, it's not kindergarten," he said. Opposition leader Friedrich Merz, who heads former Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right Union bloc, was expected to meet Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, the chairman of Ukraine's unicameral parliament, Ruslan Stefanchuk, and other senior politicians in Kyiv. A meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was not expected.

# UK: Russian military 'significantly weaker'

AP ■ LVIV

The British military says it believes the Russian military is now "significantly weaker" after suffering losses in its war on Ukraine.

The British Defence Ministry made the comment Tuesday in its daily statement on Twitter regarding the war.

It said: "Russia's military is now significantly weaker, both materially and conceptually, as a result of its invasion of Ukraine. Recovery from this

will be exacerbated by sanctions. This will have a lasting impact on Russia's ability to deploy conventional military force." The ministry added while Russia's defense budget has doubled from 2005 to 2018, the modernization program it undertook "has not enabled Russia to dominate Ukraine."

"Failures both in strategic planning and operational execution have left it unable to translate numerical strength into decisive advantage," the ministry said.

# Ukrainian refugees at camp in Mexico City await US action

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

On a dusty field on the east side of Mexico's sprawling capital, some 500 Ukrainian refugees are waiting in large tents under a searing sun for the United States government to tell them they can come.

The camp has only been open a week and 50 to 100 people are arriving every day. Some have already been to the U.S. Border in Tijuana where they were told they would no longer be admitted. Others arrived at airports in Mexico City or Cancun, anywhere they could find a ticket from Europe.

"We are asking the U.S. Government to process faster," said Anastasiya Polo, co-founder of United with Ukraine, a nongovernmental organization, that collaborated with the Mexican government to establish the camp.

She said that after a week's time none of the refugees there "are even close to the end of the program."

The program, Uniting for Ukraine, was announced by the U.S. Government April 21. Four days later, Ukrainians showing up at the U.S.-Mexico border were no longer exempted from a pandemic-related

rule that has been used to quickly expel migrants without an opportunity to seek asylum for the past two years.

Instead, they would have to apply from Europe or other countries such as Mexico. To qualify people must have been in Ukraine as of Feb. 11; have a sponsor, which could be family or an organization; meet vaccination and other public health requirements; and pass background checks.

Polo said U.S. Government officials had told her it should take a week to process people, but it appeared like it was just beginning. Some of the first

arrivals had received emails from the U.S. Government acknowledging they received their documents and the documents of their sponsors, but she had heard of no sponsors being approved yet.

"These people cannot stay in this camp, because it is temporary," Polo said. More than 100 of the camp's residents are children.

Nearly 5.5 million Ukrainians, mostly women and children, have fled Ukraine since Russia invaded its smaller neighbour on Feb. 24, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Giorgi Mikaberidze, 19, is among the waiting. He arrived in Tijuana April 25 and found the U.S. Border closed. He complained that the U.S. Government had given so little notice, because many people like himself were already in transit. He went from being just yards from the United States to some 600 miles (966 kilometers) now. When the U.S. Government announced in late March that it would accept up to 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, hundreds entered Mexico daily as tourists in Mexico City or Cancun and flew to Tijuana to wait for a few days - eventually

only a few hours - to be admitted to the U.S. At a San Diego border crossing on humanitarian parole.

Appointments at U.S. Consulates in Europe were scarce, and refugee resettlement takes time, making Mexico the best option.

Traveling through Mexico was circuitous, but a loose-knit group of volunteers, largely from Slavic churches in the western United States, greeted refugees at the Tijuana airport and shuttled them to a recreation center that the city of Tijuana made available for several thousand to wait.

# Civilians rescued from Mariupol steel plant head for safety



AP ■ ZAPORIZHZHIA

Russia resumed pulverizing the Mariupol steel mill that has become the last stronghold of resistance in the bombed-out city, Ukrainian fighters said Monday, after a brief cease-fire over the weekend allowed the first evacuation of civilians from the plant.

Meanwhile, a senior U.S. Official warned that Russia is planning to annex large por-

tions of eastern Ukraine this month and recognize the southern city of Kherson as an independent republic.

Michael Carpenter, U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said that those suspected actions are "straight out of the Kremlin's playbook" and will not be recognized by the United States or its allies.

In Mariupol, more than

100 people - including elderly women and mothers with small children - left the rubble-strewn Azovstal steelworks on Sunday and set out in buses and ambulances for the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, about 140 miles (230 kilometers) to the northwest, according to authorities and video released by the two sides.

Mariupol Deputy Mayor Sergei Orlov told the BBC that the evacuees were making slow progress and would probably not arrive in Zaporizhzhia on Monday as hoped. Authorities gave no explanation for the delay.

At least some of the civilians were apparently taken to a village controlled by Russia-backed separatists. The Russian military said some chose to stay in separatist areas, while dozens left for Ukrainian-held territory.

In the past, Ukraine has accused Moscow's troops of taking civilians against their

will to Russia or Russian-controlled areas. The Kremlin has denied it.

The Russian bombardment of the sprawling plant by air, tank and ship picked up again after the partial evacuation, Ukraine's Azov Battalion, which is helping to defend the mill, said on the Telegram messaging app.

Orlov said high-level negotiations were underway among Ukraine, Russia and international organizations on evacuating more people.

The steel-plant evacuation, if successful, would represent rare progress in easing the human cost of the almost 10-week war, which has caused particular suffering in Mariupol. Previous attempts to open safe corridors out of the southern port city and other places have broken down, with Ukrainian officials accusing Russian forces of shooting and shelling along agreed-on evacuation routes.

Before the weekend evac-

uation, overseen by the United Nations and the Red Cross, about 1,000 civilians were believed to be in the plant along with an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian defenders. Russia has demanded that the fighters surrender; they have refused.

As many as 100,000 people overall may still be in Mariupol, which had a prewar population of more than 400,000. Russian forces have pounded much of the city into rubble, trapping civilians with little food, water, heat or medicine.

Some Mariupol residents got out of the city on their own, often in damaged private cars.

As sunset approached, Mariupol resident Yaroslav Dmytryshyn rattled up to a reception center in Zaporizhzhia in a car with a back seat full of youngsters and two signs taped to the back window: "Children" and "Little ones.""I can't believe we survived," he said, looking worn but in good spirits after two days on the road.

"There is no Mariupol whatsoever," he said. "Someone needs to rebuild it, and it will take millions of tons of gold." He said they lived just across the railroad tracks from the steel plant. "Ruined," he said. "The factory is gone completely."

Anastasiia Dembytska, who took advantage of the cease-fire to leave with her daughter, nephew and dog, said she could see the steelworks from her window, when she dared to look out. "We could see the rockets flying" and clouds of smoke over the plant, she said. With most of Mariupol in ruins, a majority of the dozen Russian battalion tactical groups that had been around the city have moved north to other battlefronts in eastern Ukraine, according to a senior U.S. Defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the Pentagon's assessment. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had said

he hoped more people would be able to leave Mariupol in an organized evacuation on Monday. The city council told residents wanting to leave to gather at a shopping mall to wait for buses.

Zelenskyy told Greek state television that remaining civilians in the steel plant were afraid to board buses because they feared they would be taken to Russia. He said he had been assured by the U.N. that they would be allowed to go to areas his government controls.

Also Monday, Zelenskyy said that at least 220 Ukrainian children have been killed by the Russian army since the war began, and 1,570 educational institutions have been destroyed or damaged.

In other developments, European Union energy ministers met Monday to discuss new sanctions against the Kremlin, which could include restrictions on Russian oil. Some Russia-dependent members of the 27-nation bloc,

including Hungary and Slovakia, are wary of taking tough action.

Thwarted in his bid to seize Kyiv, the capital, Russian President Vladimir Putin has shifted his focus to the Donbas, Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, where Moscow-backed separatists have been battling Ukrainian forces since 2014. Carpenter, the U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE, cited information that Russia is planning "sham referenda" in the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics" that would attach the entities to Russia. He also said there were signs that Russia would engineer an independence vote in Kherson.

He noted that local mayors and legislators there have been abducted, that internet and cellphone service had been severed and that a Russian school curriculum is soon to be imposed. Ukraine's government has said Russia also has introduced the ruble as currency there.



# Lanka Opp submits no-trust motions against Prez, Govt

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's main Opposition Sparty SJB on Tuesday handed over to the parliamentary Speaker motions of no-confidence against the SLPP coalition government and embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, even as the government announced the appointment of a Cabinet sub-committee to look into the proposal for a new Constitution.

"We met the Speaker at his residence and handed over two no-trust motions, the first one against the President under Article 42 of the Constitution and the other against the government," Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) General Secretary Ranjith Madduma Bandara said.

Article 42 stipulates that the President is responsible to Parliament for the exercise, performance and discharge of his functions.

Madduma Bandara said the party wants the motion to be taken quickly. The Parliament meets tomorrow for the first of eight sittings this

month.

The SJB said they would field a candidate for the post of Deputy Speaker of Parliament. The position has fallen vacant with the resignation of the incumbent Ranjith Siyamabalapitiya. Siyamabalapitiya is part of the SLFP of the former President Maithripala Sirisena which had split from the SLPP coalition.

The main Tamil party along with the former prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's United National Party's (UNP) are to jointly move a no trust motion against the president, which would imply that the House had lost confidence in the President.

Experts said if the government would be defeated in the SJB motion, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and the Cabinet would have to resign. The TNA/UNP motion has no legal binding for the President to resign.

The TNA/UNP motion against the President has no legal binding on him to resign. "This problem can only be

solved if either the President or the Prime Minister resigned. It is up to them to make a decision," former prime minister Wickremesinghe said.

Under the Article 38 of the Constitution, a president can be removed only if he/she volunteered to resign or through the long process of impeachment.

Over the weekend a flurry of political meetings took place as Mahinda Rajapaksa declined to resign in order to make way for a unity government for an interim period. The powerful Buddhist clergy also demanded Rajapaksa's resignation to make way for an interim government.

On Tuesday, the government announced the appointment of a Cabinet sub-committee to look at the proposal for a brand new Constitution.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa had proposed to amend the Constitution to create an accountable administration that met the people's aspirations, amid large scale protests against the government over its handling of the economy.

# Somalia's al-Shabab rebels attack African Union base

AP ■ MOGADISHU (SOMALIA)

Somalia's al-Shabab Islamic extremist rebels have attacked a military base of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia, witnesses told The Associated Press.

The attack started early Tuesday when a vehicle rammed into the fence surrounding the base and exploded in El-Baraf, a strategic town 150 km (93 miles) northeast of the capital Mogadishu in the Middle Shabelle region, residents said.

Residents said they heard massive explosions at the base followed by gunfire.

"While we were preparing to perform the dawn prayer, we heard two loud explosions that hit the base...Followed by a heavy exchange of gunfire between the militants and Burundi troops that lasted for



almost an hour," Abshir Ali, a resident of El-Baraf said by phone.

Somalia's state media confirmed the attack and said the Burundi soldiers at the base repulsed it. Officials have not given an estimate of the numbers killed in the battle.

Plumes of smoke rose from the camp during the fierce gun battle that forced some residents to flee the town, said residents. Helicopters from the African Union force were used to help the Burundi soldiers maintain control of the camp, they said.

Somalia's al-Shabab Islamic extremist rebels claimed responsibility for the attack.

# Finland, Sweden not decided on joining NATO

AP ■ BERLIN

The leaders of Finland and Sweden have indicated that their governments haven't yet decided whether to join NATO, but stressed close security cooperation with other European countries in the face of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Speaking Tuesday after a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz near Berlin, Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin said "Russia's attack on Ukraine has changed our security environment completely" and there was "no going back."

"We have to decide on whether to apply for NATO membership or continue on our current path," she said. "That is the discussion we are having now in our national parliament."

Her Swedish counterpart, Magdalena Andersson, said the Nordic nation's parliament is conducting a security review that will be presented on May 13.

"The analysis includes future international defense partnerships for Sweden,

including a discussion on NATO, and all options are on the table," she said.

"While our respective security arrangements are of course decided nationally, we coordinate very closely with Finland," Andersson added.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg has said both countries would be welcomed if they decide to join the 30-nation military organization and could become members quite quickly.

The foreign ministers of NATO's member countries are scheduled to meet in Berlin on May 14-15.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

— US official says Russia plans to annex parts of eastern Ukraine

— Civilians rescued from Mariupol steel plant head for safety

— Push to arm Ukraine putting strain on US weapons stockpile

— UEFA removes more Russian soccer teams from its competitions

Follow all AP stories on

Russia's war on Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

## OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia — A group of 20 children from an orphanage in Luhansk, eastern Ukraine has arrived in Slovenia where they will stay until the end of the war.

Officials said Wednesday that the children are mostly toddlers who travelled together with orphanage staff, doctors, nurses and their families.

The group will be staying near the western town of Postojna and will be granted temporary protection status in the small European Union country. Local civil protection commander Sandi Curk says "the arrival was quite emotional." Curk says there have been no problems along the route and that the trip lasted for 24 hours.

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia — Slovakia's energy minister says the country is not ready to join a European Union embargo on imports of Russian oil as part of a new package of sanctions to be imposed on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

# DC reaches \$750K settlement in Trump inaugural lawsuit

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The District of Columbia attorney general said Tuesday that his office had reached a USD750,000 settlement to resolve a lawsuit that alleged former President Donald Trump's inaugural committee overpaid for events at the Trump International Hotel to enrich the former president's family in the process.

Attorney General Karl Racine announced the settlement agreement in the case against the Presidential Inaugural Committee, the Trump Organization and the Trump International Hotel in Washington in a tweet on Tuesday. The document had not yet been signed by a judge.

The agreement says the case is being resolved "to avoid the cost, burden, and risks of further litigation" and that the organizations "dispute these

allegations on numerous grounds and deny having engaged in any wrongdoing or unlawful conduct."

As part of the agreement, the defendants will pay the District of Columbia a total of USD750,000, which will be used to benefit three nonprofit organizations, the settlement paperwork says.

"We're resolving our lawsuit and sending the message that if you violate DC nonprofit law—no matter how powerful you are—you'll pay," Racine said in a tweet.

Racine has said the committee misused nonprofit funds and coordinated with the hotel's management and members of the Trump family to arrange the events. He said one of the event's planners raised concerns about pricing with Trump, the president's daughter Ivanka Trump and Rick Gates, a top campaign official at the time.

# Wildfire burning in New Mexico pine forests keeps growing

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

The fire burning pine forests about 10 miles (16 kilometers) away from Priscilla Crespin's home is the largest wildfire in the U.S. And the first to force the 81-year-old to leave the small northeastern New Mexico community where she has spent nearly all her life.

Crespin left her home in Las Vegas, New Mexico in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains on Monday because smoke from the fire wasn't good for her asthma, her children were growing concerned and other family members who live nearby were making plans to leave.

On Tuesday, wind gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) were predicted to fan the blaze, making for extremely dangerous conditions and tough work for firefighters that is expected to last through the weekend.

"We are very concerned about very significant fire growth today," said David Craft,

a National Weather Service fire meteorologist in Albuquerque.

When Crespin's daughter showed up to take her to Albuquerque, fire crews were conducting fire prevention measures to try to make Crespin's home safer if flames approach it — cutting down trees, raking pine needles and spraying water on properties in the area near her home. She grabbed clothes, photos and essential documents.

"It's awful. It scares you," Crespin said as she was driven away from her hometown. "You don't know when it's going to get to the houses."

Even though no evacuations were ordered for the town of 13,000 people, the blaze that has charred 228 square miles (590 square kilometers) in New Mexico's pine-covered mountainsides and burned at least 172 homes has prompted some residents to flee.

# Met Gala 2022: Kim Kardashian slips into Marilyn Monroe's dress, Alicia Keys celebrates NY skyline

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Stars impersonating stars, New York City architecture and names of historic women embroidered on designer gowns... This year's Met Gala was all about that and more.

The theme of the Met Gala 2022 was 'In America: An Anthology of Fashion', the second part of the Costume Institute's exhibition, which opened on September 18.

The first part of the exhibition was reflected in last year's theme, 'In America: A Lexicon of Fashion', which was in celebration of all things American Fashion.

The colour palette was ruled by dresses and suits in classic black and white, with a few sprinkles of red, pink, blue, and metallic gold and silver. Kim Kardashian attended the Met Gala in one of Marilyn Monroe's most iconic dresses as the reality TV personality appeared on the red carpet with actor-comic boyfriend Pete Davidson.

Kardashian was dressed in Monroe's nude gold-beaded body hugger, designed by Jean Louis, that the late cinema icon wore when she sang happy birthday to President John F. Kennedy 60 years ago. Channelling her inner Marilyn, "The Kardashians" star also dyed her hair blonde.

Actor Blake Lively posed for the shutterbugs in an Atelier Versace gown, with actor-husband Ryan Reynolds who was dressed in a brown velvet suit from Ralph Lauren. For her look, Lively drew inspiration from the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building and the blue ceiling of Grand Central Station.

Decked up in a black Ralph Lauren design, singer-songwriter Alicia Keys paid homage to her native New York City with a cape etched with small hand-placed crystals showcasing the city's skyline. She was accompanied by her husband, record producer Swizz Beatz, also a fellow New Yorker, who wore a New York sports jacket.

# British Army investigates breach by intruder at Queen's barracks

PTI ■ LONDON

The British Army is investigating a security breach by an intruder posing as a priest at the barracks for guards who are stationed to protect the Queen at Windsor Castle in south-east England.

Reports of the breach last week emerged in 'The Sun' on Tuesday, which said the police were alerted last Wednesday morning after an unknown man spent time at Victoria Barracks in Sheet Street, Windsor, while Queen Elizabeth II was at Sandringham Estate for her 96th birthday break.

The barracks are home to "The Coldstream Guards",

recognised by their red jackets and black bearskin hats and who have a ceremonial role as protectors of Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace.

The man allegedly spent the previous night eating and drinking with senior officers before being offered a bed for the night, despite showing no identification or credentials.

"This is just an extraordinary breach of security," the newspaper quoted a source as saying.

"The guy turned up at the gate in the evening and said his name was Father Cruise and claimed to be a friend of the battalion's Padre Rev Matt Coles. He was invited in and

offered something to eat in the Officer's Mess," the source said.

"Within a couple of hours, he was drinking with the officers in the bar and telling them stories of how he had served in Iraq.

He was telling lots of tall stories and the lads were enjoying his banter and having a few drinks," the source added. A spokesperson for the British Army said a thorough investigation has been launched into the incident.

"The Army takes this breach of security extremely seriously and it will be thoroughly investigated as a matter of priority," the spokesperson said.

# China aircraft carrier on combat training in Western Pacific

AP ■ BEIJING

China's Liaoning aircraft carrier group has embarked on a "realistic combat" training mission in the Western Pacific, the Chinese navy said Tuesday.

In a posting on its social media site, the navy said the mission is routine, adheres to all international laws and practices and is "not directed at any third parties." However, the mission underscores the growing role of China's naval forces as Beijing seeks to supplant the U.S. As the preeminent military power in Asia.

China operates the world's largest navy by number of ships, while the U.S. Maintains

an edge in aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines as well as in numbers of bases and allies in the region, where the competition is focused on the strategically vital South China Sea. The Liaoning was originally purchased as a hulk from Ukraine and entirely refurbished.

China has since added a second entirely home-built carrier, the Shandong, and is believed to be at work on at least two more.

Exercising under realistic wartime conditions has become a focus of China's military in recent years, in apparent recognition of its lack of combat experience going back four decades.

# Biden blasts 'radical' draft, warns other rights threatened

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden on Tuesday blasted what he called a "radical" leaked draft opinion suggesting the Supreme Court is poised to overturn the landmark 1973 Roe v Wade case that legalised abortion nationwide, warning that a "whole range of rights" are in jeopardy if it holds. Speaking to reporters before boarding Air Force One, Biden said he hoped the draft wouldn't be finalised by justices, contending it reflects a "fundamental shift in American jurisprudence" that threatens "other basic rights" like privacy and marriage.

# Jeff Daniels to star in Netflix series 'A Man in Full'

PTI ■ LOS ANGELES

Veteran actor Jeff Daniels is set to play the lead role in Netflix's upcoming series "A Man in Full", to be directed by Regina King.

According to Variety, the drama is based on the Tom Wolfe novel of the same name.

In the series, when Atlanta real estate mogul Charlie Croker faces sudden bankruptcy, political and business interests collide as he defends his empire from those attempting to capitalise on his fall from grace.

The show, written by David E Kelly, had received a straight-to-series order at the streamer in November last year.

# Brain impact of severe Covid akin to 20 years of ageing, UK study finds

PTI ■ LONDON

The lasting impact of a severe COVID-19 infection on the brain in areas such as memory, attention, or problem solving may be equivalent to 20 years of ageing, a UK study reports on Tuesday.

The new research, led by a team of scientists from the University of Cambridge and Imperial College London, suggests that cognitive impairment as a result of severe COVID-19 is similar to that sustained between 50 and 70 years of age and is the equivalent to losing 10 IQ points.

"Cognitive impairment is common to a wide range of neurological disorders, including dementia, and even routine ageing, but the patterns we saw — the cognitive 'fingerprint' of COVID-19 — was distinct from

all of these," said Professor David Menon, from the Division of Anaesthesia at the University of Cambridge, the study's senior author.

The research, published in the journal 'eClinicalMedicine', indicates the effects are still detectable more than six months after acute illness and that any recovery is very gradual.

"Tens of thousands of people have been through intensive care with COVID-19 in England alone and many more will have been very sick, but not admitted to hospital," said Professor Adam Hampshire, from the Department of Brain Sciences at Imperial College London.

"This means there are a large number of people out there still experiencing problems with cognition many months later. We urgently need

to look at what can be done to help these people," he said.

According to the researchers, this is the first time that such rigorous assessment and comparison has been carried out in relation to the after-effects of severe COVID-19. There have been growing reports that COVID-19 can cause lasting cognitive and mental health problems, with recovered patients reporting symptoms including fatigue, "brain fog", problems recalling words, sleep disturbances, anxiety and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) months after infection.

The researchers behind the latest study analysed data from 46 people who received in-hospital care, on the ward or intensive care unit, for COVID-19, 16 of whom were put on mechanical ventilation during their stay in hospital.

# Muslims being targeted with violence around the world: Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Around the world, Muslims are being targeted with violence, US President Joe Biden said on Monday asserting that Muslims make America stronger every single day even as they still face real challenges and threats in the society that they live in.

At a White House reception to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, Biden said he has appointed the first Muslim to serve as Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.

"It's especially important because today, around the world, we're seeing so many Muslims being targeted with violence. No one, no one should discriminate against oppressed or be oppressed for their religious beliefs," he said

to applause from the select gathering at the White House.

Arooj Aftab, a Pakistani vocalist and composer, was one of the speakers at the event along with First Lady Jill Biden and Dr. Talib M. Shareef, Imam of Masjid Muhammad, known as 'The Nation's Mosque' in Washington, DC.

"Today, we also remember all those who are not able to celebrate this holy day, including Uyghurs and Rohingya and all those who are facing famine, violence, conflict, and disease," Biden said.

"And honour the signs of hope and progress toward the world we want to see, including the ceasefire, which allowed the people in Yemen to honour Ramadan and celebrate Eid in peace for the first time in six years," he added.

**DELHI INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY**  
VILLAGE KAKRA, POST MURADNAGAR, TEHSIL MODINAGAR, DISTT. GHAZIABAD, U.P.  
Mob: 9215094151, 7015215001 Email: dimatkakra@gmail.com  
**REQUIRED**  
• B.Ed. Course:-(a) Principal-01, (b) Assistant Professors:-Education.  
Pedagogy subject:- Mathematics, Biological/Life Science, Physical Science, Home Science, Computer Science, Social Science, History, Geography, Economics, Commerce, Education Languages (Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Punjabi), Health & Physical Education, Fine Arts/Performing Arts (Music, Dance, Theater)  
Qualification:-As per latest NCTE/Affiliating University Norms.Apply with All Attested testimonials within 07 days and send a copy to Dean of Colleges, CCSU, MEERUT  
**CHAIRMAN**

**MAHARISHI MARKANDESHWAR**  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)  
Mullana-Ambala, Haryana  
(Established under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)  
(Accredited by NAAC with Grade A\*\*)

**25+**  
YEARS  
OF ACADEMIC  
EXCELLENCE

**ADMISSION NOTICE - MD/MS (2021-22)**  
Applications are invited for admission to **MD/MS** course stray vacancy round **2021-22** in M.M. Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, a constituent institute of M.M. (Deemed to be University), Mullana, Ambala from all eligible candidates out of the list of candidates as per DGHS, Govt. of India.  
Application forms with details are available on the website [www.mmumullana.org](http://www.mmumullana.org). Last date of receiving duly filled in application with non-refundable Registration fees of **Rs. 20000/-** through Demand Draft in favour of M.M. (Deemed to be University) payable at Ambala is **04-05-2022** upto **3 P.M.** positively in MM(DU) office. Physical counselling shall be held on **05.05.2022** at **9:30 AM.** in the MM(DU) Campus.  
**REGISTRAR**  
Ph. : 01731- 274475-78 | Fax : 274375  
Website: [www.mmumullana.org](http://www.mmumullana.org) | Email : [info@mmumullana.org](mailto:info@mmumullana.org)

**MAHARISHI MARKANDESHWAR**  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)  
Mullana-Ambala, Haryana  
(Established under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)  
(Accredited by NAAC with Grade A\*\*)

**25+**  
YEARS  
OF ACADEMIC  
EXCELLENCE

**ADMISSION NOTICE - MD/MS (NRI Seats) (2021-22)**  
Applications are invited for admission to **MD/MS** course stray vacancy round (NRI Seats) **2021-22** in M.M. Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, a constituent institute of M.M. (Deemed to be University), Mullana, Ambala from NRI eligible candidates as per the Guidelines of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (C) No. 689/2017 dated 22/08/2017; out of the list of candidates as per DGHS, Govt. Of India and the list of eligible NRI candidates as per DGHS.  
Application forms with details are available on the website [www.mmumullana.org](http://www.mmumullana.org). Last date of receiving duly filled in application with non-refundable registration **Fees of Rs. 20000/-** through Demand Draft in favour of M.M. (Deemed to be University) payable at Ambala is **04-05-2022** upto **3 P.M.** positively in MM(DU) office. Physical counselling shall be held on **05.05.2022** at **9:00 AM.** in the MM(DU) Campus.  
**REGISTRAR**  
Ph. : 01731- 274475-78 | Fax : 274375  
Website: [www.mmumullana.org](http://www.mmumullana.org) | Email : [info@mmumullana.org](mailto:info@mmumullana.org)



# Exports up 24% to USD 38 bn in April

## Trade deficit widens to USD 20 bn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Exports rose by 24.22 per cent to a monthly record high of USD 38.19 billion in April on account of healthy performance by sectors like petroleum products, electronic goods and chemicals, even as trade deficit widened to USD 20 billion during the month, the commerce ministry said on Tuesday.

Imports during the month under review grew by 26.55 per cent to USD 58.26 billion. The trade deficit in April 2021 was at USD 15.29 billion.

Oil imports during the month rose by 81.21 per cent to USD 19.5 billion. Coal, Coke and Briquettes imports jumped to USD 4.8 billion as against USD 2 billion in April 2021.

Gold imports, however, dipped to USD 1.68 billion during the month under review from USD 6.23 billion in April 2021.

Engineering goods exports increased by 15.38 per cent to USD 9.2 billion while petroleum products exports soared 113.21 per cent to USD 7.73 billion.

However, gems and jewellery exports dipped by 2.11 per cent to USD 3.3 billion.

Commenting on exports, FIEO President A Sakthivel said that the "highest-ever exports" of over USD 38 billion, during the first month of the fiscal, shows the continuous impressive performance of the exports sector.

"The benefits of the newly signed FTAs and the PLI Scheme will further help us in building on the milestones achieved during the previous fiscal," he said.

# Experts sceptical about CMIE's unemployment data

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Economists on Tuesday are not convinced about the latest monthly unemployment data released by the Centre for Monitoring India Economy (CMIE), particularly about the statistics of the rural areas.

They asserted that it is difficult to get the real picture of unemployment from the methodology used by the CMIE to get the data.

The overall unemployment rate in India has increased to 7.83 per cent in April 2022 as compared to 7.60 per cent in the previous month, CMIE said in its report.

The unemployment rate in urban areas was higher at 9.22 per cent compared to 8.28 per cent in March. In rural

areas, the unemployment rate was at 7.18 per cent in April compared to 7.29 per cent in the previous month, the data released on Monday showed.

Economist Ajitava Roychowdhury said that CMIE conducts monthly surveys of more than 44,000 households in urban and rural India.

"If someone says on the day of the survey that he is doing something, for example, mobile hawking or rag picking, this person is considered as employed," he said.

But, the professor of economics at Jadavpur University said, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has said that only those who are doing "decent" jobs should be marked as employed.

According to the ILO, decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives.

It involves, among other things, opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, and better prospects for personal development and social integration.

"The CMIE does not differentiate between those who are in decent jobs and those who are not. If the ILO criteria of decent jobs are applied, the unemployment rate will be much higher," Roychowdhury said.

It is difficult to get the true picture from the CMIE data, he said.

A source in the CMIE,

however, said that the methodology followed by the agency is very stringent and surveys are conducted daily from early morning to evening.

Those who are not sure of getting an occupation during the day are asked whether they had got one the previous day. If the answer is no, they are categorised as unemployed, the source said.

Commenting on the CMIE data, economist Abhirup Sarkar said these fluctuations show that there is still uncertainty in the economy.

"These fluctuations are normal in a matured economy. There is also an element of statistical error. So, it is very difficult to come to a conclusion on the real picture of the economy," Sarkar said.

## Tata Steel Q4 net jumps 37 pc to ₹ 9,835 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Steel on Tuesday posted a 37 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 9,835.12 crore for the quarter ended March 2022, mainly on account of higher income.

The steel major had reported a net profit of Rs 7,161.91 crore in the year-ago quarter, it said in a BSE filing.

During January-March 2022, Tata Steel's total income jumped to Rs 69,615.70 crore from Rs 50,300.55 crore earlier.

Total expenses rose to Rs 57,635.79 crore from Rs 40,102.97 crore in the January-March period of 2020-21.

# Akshaya Tritiya begins on positive note; jewellers expect biz of up to 30 tonne

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The auspicious day of Akshaya Tritiya has begun on a strong note as jewellers are witnessing good footfalls and being a public holiday on Tuesday, consumers are flocking to the stores early before the temperature soars.

"Jewellers across the country have opened their stores early across the country and there is a strong momentum in footfalls since morning. There has been positive sentiment in the market since the last 10-15 days and we expect it to continue on the day of Akshaya Tritiya. We expect to do 25-30 tonne business on this auspicious day," All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council Vice Chairman Shyam Mehra told PTI.

Asked if the high prices will become a hurdle on sales on this Akshaya Tritiya, he said, gold prices have come down to around Rs 50,500 per 10 gram from Rs 55,000-58,000 per 10 gram, giving boost to consumer sentiment.

"It usually takes around 10-15 days for people to accept price movement. And since the

prices have come down, there is generally a positive sentiment in the market, which is expecting gold prices to rise going forward. This will also help boost sales," he added.

Echoing similar views, PNG Jewellers managing director and CEO Saurabh Gadgil said footfalls are strong and are expected to grow as the day progresses for the next 1-2 hours.

"We are expecting a good number of people before it becomes too hot in the afternoon. This will again pick up in the evening as the temperature cools down. Being a bank holiday, footfalls are not restricted to office hours and people are coming to the stores at their ease," he added.

Kalyan Jewellers Executive Director Ramesh Kalyanaraman said gold-buying as a tradition has been an integral part of Akshaya Tritiya and this coupled with the ongoing wedding season, has created a positive market sentiment. "Though earlier Akshaya Tritiya was more of a South and East centric occasion, we are now seeing it being celebrated



at a pan-India level. After two years of lockdown or partial lockdown, this year 100 per cent of our showrooms are operational. Offline purchases still account for a significant majority of sales for the jewellery industry, and we are expecting robust customer footfalls across our showrooms," he added.

This Akshaya Tritiya will be fruitful for the industry, setting new milestones with respect to demand for gold jewellery, he added.

CaratLane COO and co-founder Avnish Anand, on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, said with the consumer sentiment improving with each passing day, the purchasing

capacity of the Indian market has increased this year due to the pent-up demand for the season.

CaratLane is definitely expecting a significant growth in terms of traffic, footfalls and conversions this Akshaya Tritiya owing to not just the pent-up demand but also due to its digital first omnichannel strategy, which increases the efficiency of the consumers both online and offline, he said.

"Additionally, the traffic is expected to grow by 11 per cent and average selling price (ASP) has grown by 23 per cent since February 2022, which was another good season for us," he added.

# LIC raises ₹5,627 crore from anchor investors led by domestic institutions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Insurance behemoth LIC on Tuesday said it has garnered a little over Rs 5,627 crore from anchor investors led primarily by domestic institutions ahead of its mega initial public offering (IPO).

Anchor Investors' (AIs) portion (5,92,96,853 equity shares) was subscribed at Rs 949 per equity share, the insurer said in an early morning filing to exchanges.

Out of the allocation of about 5.9 crore shares to AIs, 4.2 crore shares (71.12 per cent) were allocated to 15 domestic mutual funds through 99 schemes, the filing said.

Besides, investment was made by some domestic insurance companies and pension funds. Some of the prominent names in this category included ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, SBI Life Insurance, Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance, PNB Metlife Insurance, SBI Pension Fund and UTI

LIC was formed by merging and nationalising as many as 245 private life insurance companies on September 1, 1956, with an initial capital of Rs 5 crore

Retirement Solutions Pension Fund Scheme.

Foreign participation included Government of Singapore, Monetary Authority of Singapore, Government Pension Fund Global and BNP Investment LLP.

As per the prospectus, out of the 22.13 crore shares offered for sale, 5.93 crore shares were reserved for anchor investors.

The government by diluting 3.5 per cent stake in LIC would raise Rs 21,000 crore, the biggest ever IPO in the Indian market. The previous such high fundraising was seen in the IPO of Paytm in 2021 at Rs 18,300 crore and Coal India in 2010 at Rs 15,200 crore.

The price band for LIC

IPO is Rs 902-949 per equity share.

Policyholders will get a discount of Rs 60 per equity share, while retail investors and employees will get a discount of Rs 45 on each share.

Of the total shares on offer, over 9.88 crore shares are reserved for qualified institutional buyers and over 2.96 crore shares for non-institutional buyers. Up to 15,81,249 shares and 2,21,37,492 shares are reserved for employees and policyholders.

LIC would get listed and start trading on the stock exchanges on May 17.

LIC's embedded value, which is a measure of the consolidated shareholders' value in an insurance company, was pegged at about Rs 5.4 lakh

crore as of September 30, 2021, by international actuarial firm Milliman Advisors.

Based on investor feedback, the market value of government-owned LIC has been pegged at 1.1 times its embedded value or Rs 6 lakh crore.

LIC was formed by merging and nationalizing as many as 245 private life insurance companies on September 1, 1956, with an initial capital of Rs 5 crore. Its product portfolio comprises 32 individual products (16 participating products and 16 non-participating products) and seven individual optional rider benefits. The insurer's group product portfolio comprises 11 group products.

As of December 2021, LIC had a market share of 61.6 per cent in terms of premiums or GWP, 61.4 per cent in terms of new business premium, 71.8 per cent in terms of the number of individual policies issued, and 88.8 per cent in terms of the number of group policies issued.

## AC sales hit record high of 17.5 lakh units in April; to touch 90 lakh in 2022: CEMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Driven by the early arrival of summer and intense heat wave, residential air conditioner makers are looking forward to a record sales of around 90 lakh units this year, said Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association on Tuesday.

Already, in April the industry has clocked the sale of around 17.5 lakh units, which is also an all-time high for the month.

However, the availability of certain products could be an issue in the next couple of months as manufacturers may not be in a position to supply their entire range of models to meet market demand, especially the energy-efficient 5-star range, due to high demand and supply constraints of components such as controllers and compressors, said Eric Braganza, president of CEAMA (Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association).

"At an industry level, the estimated sales of residential ACs (Air Conditioners) in the month of April 2022 is around 1.75 million units. The sales are double compared to April 2021 and 30-35 per cent over April 2019 figures," Braganza told PTI.

This displays a "staggering growth" as compared to the pre-pandemic levels, he added.

"The growth can be attributed to the opening up of markets along with the sweltering heat wave across the country, and going by the trend, the demand for air conditioners will be good even in May and June as well," Braganza added.

About expectations for 2022, he said, "Based on the severe summer and the sales trends in the first four months, the AC market this year is expected to be between 8.5 million and 9 million units. It will be the highest ever."

Braganza, however, cautioned that the availability of

certain products could be an issue in the next couple of months and the industry could experience shortages, as there are supply issues of controllers and compressors especially from China, while the demand for more energy-efficient ACs are very high.

"...Manufacturers may not be in a position to supply their entire range of models to meet market demand, especially the energy-efficient 5-star range," he said.

Besides, the CEAMA president also said there could be a price hike of around 4-5 per cent to protect margins as input costs have increased substantially. "In the last 18-20 months, the consumer appliance/durable goods industry has seen a price increase of up to 15 per cent. With the continued rise in raw material, crude oil and global freight rates, many manufacturers will increase their pricing in the range of 2-4 per cent in the coming months," he said.

Association).

"At an industry level, the estimated sales of residential ACs (Air Conditioners) in the month of April 2022 is around 1.75 million units. The sales are double compared to April 2021 and 30-35 per cent over April 2019 figures," Braganza told PTI.

This displays a "staggering growth" as compared to the pre-pandemic levels, he added.

"The growth can be attributed to the opening up of markets along with the sweltering heat wave across the country, and going by the trend, the demand for air conditioners will be good even in May and June as well," Braganza added.

About expectations for 2022, he said, "Based on the severe summer and the sales trends in the first four months, the AC market this year is expected to be between 8.5 million and 9 million units. It will be the highest ever."

Braganza, however, cautioned that the availability of

## Advertising push to help print media revenue grow 25% in FY23

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A jump in advertising could lead to an increase of up to 25 per cent in print media revenues in FY23, but pressure from higher newsprint costs because of Russia's Ukraine invasion will dent profitability, a report said on Tuesday.

The operating profit margins for print media players can narrow by up to 3 percentage points in FY23, the report by India Ratings and Research said.

The agency said about 60 per cent of the newsprint used in FY21 was imported and added that since the invasion began in late February, imported newsprint prices have jumped by up to 80 per cent, and could soar further in the next six months due to the absence of imports.

A gradual increase in the supply from domestic sources, in an extended period of absence of imports, should keep the prices under check, it

said, adding that in the first ten months of FY22, prior to the war, imports accounted for about 52 per cent of the overall newsprint consumed, which was lowest in a decade.

In FY21, Russia accounted for the highest share of this at 38 per cent, followed by 26 per cent from Canada.

During FY21, newsprint requirement nearly halved to about 1.1 million tonnes, following the decline in the circulation volumes and low pagination post the COVID-19 outbreak, the agency said, estimating that the same has increased marginally in FY22.

"While a recovery of circulation volumes and higher advertisement volumes shall lead to an increase in the newsprint consumption during FY23, it is unlikely to revert to the levels of about 2.1 million tonnes (FY20), given the substantial drop in the circulation volumes during FY21 and slower recovery in FY22," it added.

However, on the positive side, there are factors which will be helping narrow the impact on profit margins as well, the agency said, pointing to increase in advertisement revenue, stock-up of imported newsprint at a lower cost in the recent past and cost optimisations.

It said print media players derive about two-thirds of their overall revenue from advertisement income, while circulation revenue and other operating income account for the balance one-third. Hence, advertisement revenue is directly linked to economic activities and growth.

On the back of overall growth in economic activities and an increase in the ad spends from key sectors, advertisement revenue is estimated to increase 25-30 per cent in FY23, while circulation revenue will grow by up to 12 per cent, it said, adding that this will translate into an overall revenue growth of 20-25 per cent.

## AGEL gets shareholders' nod for ₹3,850 cr investment by Green Energy Investment Holding RSC

The current principal shareholder of Green Energy Investment Holding RSC Ltd is IHC Capital Holding LLC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) has received the approval of shareholders for the issuance of over two crore shares worth around Rs 3,850 crore on a preferential basis to Green Energy Investment Holding RSC Ltd.

The current principal shareholder of Green Energy Investment Holding RSC Ltd is IHC Capital Holding LLC.

At the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) convened on Tuesday, shareholders approved the issuance of equity shares on preferential basis to Green Energy Investment Holding RSC Ltd, according to a regulatory filing.

In a separate filing, the company said it has executed a Share Subscription Agreement (SSA) on Monday with Green Energy Investment Holding RSC Ltd for the issuance and allotment of 2,00,18,198 equity shares of face value of Rs 10 each of the company to the investor on preferential basis.

The 2,00,18,198 equity shares will be issued at a price of Rs 1,923.25 each (at a premium of Rs 1,913.25 per equity share), the filing said.

The total issue size works out to be around Rs 3,850 crore.

The deal is a part of the 7.3 billion dirhams (USD 2 billion) investment to be made by the UAE's International Holding Company (IHC) in three Adani Group companies.

IHC will invest Rs 3,850 crore in AGEL, Rs 3,850 crore in Adani Transmission Ltd (ATL), and Rs 7,700 crore in Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL).

## Titan net profit falls 7 pc to ₹527 crore in Q4, sales dip 1.14 pc to ₹7,267 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata group firm Titan Company Ltd on Tuesday reported a 7.21 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at Rs 527 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2022.

It had posted a net profit of Rs 568 crore in the January-March quarter of FY21, Titan Company said in a regulatory filing.

Its total income was up 4.25 per cent to Rs 7,872 crore during the period under review as against Rs 7,551 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding fiscal.

The company's revenue from sales of products was down 1.14 per cent to Rs 7,267 crore in the fourth quar-

ter of FY22 as against Rs 7,351 crore a year ago.

Titan's total expenses were at Rs 7,165 crore in Q4 of FY22, up 5.04 per cent from Rs 6,821 crore a year ago.

"Q4 FY22 ended with a satisfactory performance despite partial lockdowns, volatility in gold prices and uncertainty in a fragile geopolitical situation," said Titan, adding, "Excluding bullion sale, revenue declined by 2 per cent compared to Q4 FY21."

Titan's revenue from jewellery segment stood at Rs 6,843 crore in the January-March quarter of FY22, up 2.47 per cent against Rs 6,678 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago.

Revenue from watches and wearables also increased

11.8 per cent to Rs 625 crore against Rs 559 crore in the same period of previous fiscal.

Eyecare revenue was at Rs 134 crore, up 5.51 per cent against Rs 127 crore in Q4 FY21.

The company also reported a 63.57 per cent increase in its revenue from others segment in the January-March quarter at Rs 229 crore as against Rs 140 crore a year ago.

For the entire fiscal year ended March 2022, Titan's consolidated net profit stood at Rs 2,198 crore. This was up over two-fold from Rs 974 crore, the reported net profit of financial year 2020-21.

The company's total income was at Rs 29,033 crore

in 2021-22. This was 32.99 per cent higher than Rs 21,830 crore in the year-ago period.

Titan managing director C K Venkataraman said: "Despite frequent disruptions in the quarter owing to Covid wave 3 and other geo-political factors, the quarter has been satisfactory in terms of growth and profitability."

The company is well prepared and looking forward to an exciting Q1 with all its stores ramped up for a much-awaited Akshaya Tritiya festival this year.

"With the international expansion in GCC markets and the first Tanishq store coming up in the US, we are gearing up to touch new horizons in FY23," he added.

### India's performing arts market to grow to \$7b in 5 years: Kafka Academy study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The world needs more art & more artists. If numbers are anything to go by then India will soon turn into a performing arts powerhouse as indicated by a study by Kafka Academy.

The study found that India's performing arts market is worth as much as \$3.8bn and has an addressable market size of 26 million users in the 8-25 age range alone, a 7 per cent penetration of the population with significant scope for growth. Comparatively, in the US, penetration of dance learning alone stands at 7.4 per cent. The market is also expected to grow to \$7 billion by 2027.

## Affordable housing finance cos loan book to grow 17-20% in FY23: Study

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Affordable housing finance companies' (AHFCs) loan book is likely to expand by 17-20 per cent in the current financial year, supported by the government's higher focus on housing and a favourable tax regime, says a report. As on December 31, 2021, the total loan book of AHFCs stood at Rs 66,221 crore and constituted about 6 per cent of the overall housing finance companies (HFCs) loan book.

"We expect the loan books for affordable housing finance companies (AHFCs) to grow by 17-20 per cent in FY2023, driven by factors like largely under-penetrated market, favourable demographic profile, government trust on housing and a favourable regulatory/tax regime that support the growth outlook,"

rating agency Ibra Ratings said in a recent report. Its Vice President (Financial Sector Ratings) Manushree Saggur said after witnessing a moderation in the loan book growth in Q1 of FY2022, the growth for AHFCs picked up again in Q2 and Q3 FY2022, with their disbursements reaching 85-90 per cent of the peak levels seen in the fourth quarter of FY2021. "As a result, the AHFCs reported a 14 per cent (year-on-year) growth as on December 31, 2021. Overall, while the growth has moderated over the long-term average, it continues to remain higher than the overall housing finance industry average," she said.

The agency said the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic exerted pressure on the asset quality indicators of AHFCs and delinquencies, especially in

the softer buckets (0-30, 30-60 and 60-90 days past due, i.e. Dpd) shot up significantly.

However, with improvement in collection efficiency in Q2 and Q3 FY2022, the delinquencies in the softer buckets moderated, it said.

At the same time, the reported gross NPAs/stage 3 percentage increased as entities aligned their reporting with the clarification issued by the RBI on Income Recognition, Asset Classification and Provisioning (IRACP) norms. The 30 days past due for some AHFCs declined from 9 per cent as on June 30, 2021 to 6.8 per cent as on December 31, 2021 while the reported GNPA/Stage 3 percentage marginally increased from 4.2 per cent as on June 30, 2021 to 4.3 per cent as on December 31, 2021, the report said.





AP ■ MADRID

Carlo Ancelotti admitted on Tuesday that Real Madrid will have to gamble if they are to come from behind to beat Manchester City in the semi-final of the Champions League. Madrid trail 4-3 after a thrilling first leg in Manchester last week as they look to pull off another comeback and reach the club's first Champions League final since 2018. "If we sit deep, we won't concede 99 shots and if we get into their box they are going have a go at us but

sometimes you have to take risks," Ancelotti said in a press conference ahead of the second leg on Wednesday. "In these games we have scored a lot — four against PSG, five against Chelsea, three against City — so we have the quality to take risks." Real Madrid showed resilience and fight to come from behind against both Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 and Chelsea in the quarter-finals, but Ancelotti said they will need more than just character to defeat City.

"You don't get to a final only with your heart," Ancelotti said. "Personality is an important part but you need individual quality, collective commitment — you need all this to reach a final, one of these things won't be enough to get to the final." Luka Modric said the players are convinced they can go through as Real Madrid chase a 14th European Cup. "We are very confident that we can come back, because we know that in the first match we did not play our best game and we still

scored three goals," Modric said. "We have the quality and character and the history of this club, having the most Champions League titles, also makes a big difference." Real Madrid celebrated winning their 35th La Liga title on Saturday, as the players rode an open-top bus to meet thousands of fans at the city's Plaza Cibeles, despite the second leg against City being just four days away. "We really wanted to go to Cibeles because it had been a long time since we could celebrate a title with our fans," Modric said. "We

enjoyed it but as soon as it ended, we were focused on tomorrow's game. "It was a beautiful day and that's it, the season is not over." Ancelotti confirmed that Real Madrid defender David Alaba will miss the game through injury and will be replaced by Nacho Fernandez. But Casemiro is fit again, handing Madrid a significant boost in midfield. "Casemiro will help us," Ancelotti said. "His return reinforces us defensively. I think we are going to see an improvement from the first leg."

## Ancelotti will 'probably' retire after Real job



AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has said that he will "probably" retire when he leaves the La Liga champions, but is prepared to stay at the Santiago Bernabeu for several years. The 62-year-old Italian became on Saturday the first coach in history to win all five of Europe's top leagues this season with Real, who also face Manchester City on Wednesday in their Champions League semi-final second leg. "After Real, yes, I probably stop," Ancelotti told Prime Video in an interview partially broadcast on Tuesday. "But if Real keep me here for 10 years, I'll coach here for 10 years." The Italian is under contract with the Spanish giants until 2024, after rejoining the club for a second

spell in charge last year from Everton. Ancelotti said that he wants to spend more time with his family and travel, but did not rule out potentially leading a national team at the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada. "I would like to spend time with my grandchildren, go on holiday with my wife," he added. "There are so many things that I have neglected and that I would like to do." "Yes, there could be a national team but that's premature for the moment." Ancelotti was the Italy assistant coach during their run to the 1994 World Cup final in the USA, where they lost to Brazil on penalties. He is bidding for a fourth Champions League title this season, after two triumphs with AC Milan in 2003 and 2007 and success during his first stint in Madrid in 2014.

## Fulham seal 2nd-tier Championship title



AP ■ LONDON

Record-breaking Aleksandar Mitrovic reached 43 goals in a season by scoring twice as Fulham clinched English football's second-tier Championship title with a 7-0 thrashing of Luton on Monday. London club Fulham were already assured of promotion to the Premier League after last season's relegation even before they kicked off in their final home

game of the current campaign. And they gave fans at Craven Cottage even more to celebrate against the outclassed Hatters. Fulham captain Tom Cairney opened the scoring with a powerful strike in the 29th minute before Kenny Tete doubled the lead from long range 10 minutes later. Any hopes promotion-chasing Luton had of making a comeback then evaporated during

a cascade of Fulham goals in the second half. Fabio Carvalho made it 3-0 before Mitrovic scored his 42nd league goal of the campaign to equal Portsmouth hero Guy Whittingham's record of most goals in a second-tier campaign, set in the 1992-93 season. Bobby Decordova-Reid and Jean-Michael Seri fired Fulham further ahead before Mitrovic tapped in his second goal of the game. Luton's heaviest defeat of the season dropped them down to sixth position, the last of the play-off places. The top two are guaranteed automatic promotion, with the other Premier League place decided by play-offs involving the teams finishing third to sixth. Victory over Reading in their final game of the season will see Luton into the play-offs but anything less and they could be overhauled by Middlesbrough.

## Ronaldo scores again as Man Utd win

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United took the sting out of their fans' latest protest against the Glazer family as they eased to a 3-0 win against Brentford on Monday. Ahead of a summer of change for troubled United, Ralf Rangnick's side won for just the second time in seven games to keep the atmosphere from turning toxic at Old Trafford. Bruno Fernandes struck early in the first half and Cristiano Ronaldo converted a second half penalty before France defender Raphael Varane bagged his first goal for United. Despite winning their last home game of the season, United remain in sixth place in the Premier League with two games left. They sit five points adrift of the top four with no realistic hope of qualifying for next season's Champions League. "In possession that was one of our best performances



this year. It was the type of performance we wanted to show to our supporters," Rangnick said. Rangnick was in charge of his last home game as United interim manager before the recently-hired Erik ten Hag arrives from Ajax to start his

rebuilding job next season. After such a wretched run, United needed a fast start to lift the gloom a little and they took just nine minutes to go in front. Anthony Elanga beat Brentford's offside trap as he

raced onto Diogo Dalot's pass. He reached the ball just before it went out for a goal-kick and whipped a superb cross towards Fernandes, who volleyed home from six yards for his first league goal since February.

After several listless displays, this was a more energetic effort from United and Juan Mata fired narrowly wide from Ronaldo's flamboyant pass. Ronaldo won a penalty in the 60th minute as he powered past Rico Henry and was crudely barged to the turf by the Brentford defender. Picking himself up, Ronaldo sent David Raya the wrong way from the spot. The Portugal striker has scored nine of United's last 11 league goals, taking his tally for the season to 24 in all competitions. With the United fans' much-hyped walk-out just seconds away, Varane volleyed the third goal from a corner in the 72nd minute. That appeared to take the sting out of the revolt, with Mata and Nemanja Matic -- both likely to leave in the close-season -- departing to standing ovations when they were substituted. It was a rare feelgood moment in a season of strife at Old Trafford.



## Salernitana continue miracle escape act

AP ■ BERGAMO

Salernitana maintained their bold bid for Serie A survival on Monday with a 1-1 draw at Atalanta which pulled them closer to safety. Mario Pasalic's 88th-minute leveller denied Salernitana a fourth straight win after Ederson had poked them ahead just before the half hour but the draw moved them to within two points of Cagliari, who sit just outside the relegation zone. Davide Nicola's team host Cagliari this coming Sunday after playing their game in hand with Venezia on Thursday. Fans packed into the away end applauded their team off the pitch after their long trip to the far north of Italy was rewarded with a spirited performance. Atalanta keeper Juna Musso did well to keep out efforts from Emil Bohinen and Lassana Coulibaly early in the second half but the away side tired and had to hang in the face

of persistent Atalanta attacks. Gian Piero Gasperini's side showed why they have only won four times at home all season and were saved from an embarrassing defeat by Croat Pasalic's low drive. They sit eighth and are struggling for a place in Europe next season after looking like title challengers before the turn of the year. Before their recent unbeaten run Salernitana had been rooted to the bottom of Serie A for almost the entire season, and should Salernitana stay up it would be the second miracle escape act of coach Nicola's career after he saved Crotone five years ago. Under his charge Crotone won six of their last nine matches of the 2016/17 season, losing just one, and climbed out of the drop zone on the final day of the campaign. Now the 49-year-old has a real chance of saving a team which in December looked like it might be kicked out of the league as the club struggled to find a new owner.

## Müller extends Bayern deal

AP ■ MUNICH

Thomas Müller has extended his contract with Bayern Munich until 2024, it was announced on Tuesday, with the Germany international set to spend his entire professional career at the Bundesliga champions, who he joined as a 10-year-old. "The journey we have taken together since I joined the youth team in 2000 has been a fantastic success story so far," said Müller, 32, who won a record 11th league title with the Bavarians this season. "So let's continue it together," added the 2014 World Cup winner, who has made 112 appearances for Germany since his international debut in 2010. Müller as well as top-scorer Robert Lewandowski, Bayern captain Manuel Neuer and winger Serge Gnabry, were due to be out of contract in 2023. He is the first of the quartet to extend their deals amid speculation Lewandowski could leave at the end of the season with Barcelona reportedly a possible destination. Since turning pro with Bayern in 2008,



Müller has made 624 appearances, scoring 226 goals and creating 242 more. He was also part of Bayern squads which won the Champions League title in both 2013 and 2020.



AP ■ PARIS

When she was women's tennis number one and just 25 years old is a "weird one to explain", South African cricket leg-

## ABD hopes grass is greener for golf team-mate Barty

end AB de Villiers said before they team up for a golf event. Three-time Grand Slam winner Barty has already taken one break from tennis, playing cricket instead for Brisbane Heat during the 2015-16 Women's Big Bash.

## Manika achieves career-best position

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian paddlers, including star player Manika Batra, on Tuesday made massive gains in the ITTF world rankings after the sport's governing body approved changes to the points system. Manika attained a career-high singles ranking of 38 with a jump of 10 spots while G Sathiyan was the best placed Indian male at 34 in the latest ITTF rankings. Veteran Sharath Kamal, who last week won his 10th national title, also gained a place to be world No 37 while Sreeja Akula, who won her maiden national title in Shillong, gained as many as 39 places to be ranked 68th. At No 66 is Archana Kamath, who has made a big leap from 92nd position.



While Sharath and Sathiyan are the only two Indian male players in the top-100, there are four Indians in the women's standings. The jump in their rankings come after the ITTF decided to remove "initial points", which were introduced in 2020, to determine the rankings. In the men's doubles, G Sathiyan and Harmeet Desai are

ranked 28th in the while the pair of Sathiyan-Sharath is placed in 35th position. Manika and Archana are ranked fourth in the women's doubles section while Sutirtha Mukherjee and Ayhika Mukherjee are in 29th spot. In the mixed doubles, Manika and Sathiyan are ranked sixth while Manav Thakkar and Archana Kamath are 22nd.

## Gyaneshwari clinches Silver, Rithika wins Bronze in Jr Worlds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gyaneshwari Yadav clinched the Silver medal while compatriot V Rithika finished third to give India a double podium finish in the women's 49kg category at the IWF Junior World Weightlifting Championships in Heraklion, Greece. Chattisgarh lifter Gyaneshwari produced a total effort of 156kg (73kg+83kg) to take home the Silver metal on Monday night. The 18-year-old Rithika, on the other hand, heaved 6 kgs less than her compatriot — 150kg (69kg+81kg) to bag the Bronze medal in a depleted 10-lifter

field. Tokyo Olympics Bronze medallist and strong favourite Windy Cantika Aisah of Indonesia was crowned the champion in the category thanks to her total effort of 185kg (83kg+102kg). The gulf between the Indonesian lifter, who won the Asian and world junior titles last year, and the 19-year-old Gyaneshwari was a whopping 29kg with Aisah even declined to take her final attempt. It is the same weight division in which Mirabai Chanu won a Silver at the Tokyo Olympics, with an effort off 202kg (87kg+115kg).





the pioneer

INDIAN  
PREMIER LEAGUE

2022

12

WITH THE BOWLING AND FIELDING WE SHOWED SOME REAL FIGHT. THE BODY LANGUAGE AND ENERGY WAS AMAZING. I THINK WE COULD HAVE BATTED A BIT BETTER

— SANJU SAMSON

## PBKS INTO TOP HALF



## ► pointstable

Po.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	GT	10	8	2	0	16	0.158
2.	LSG	10	7	3	0	14	0.397
3.	RR	10	6	4	0	12	0.340
4.	SRH	9	5	4	0	10	0.471
5.	PBKS	10	5	5	0	10	-0.229
6.	RCB	10	5	5	0	10	-0.558
7.	DC	9	4	5	0	8	0.587
8.	KKR	10	4	6	0	8	0.060
9.	CSK	9	3	6	0	6	-0.407
10.	MI	9	1	8	0	2	-0.836

## ► boundarymeter

4s 1326

6s 688

and Rajapaksa, ensured Punjab got home comfortably.

Liam Livingstone (30 not out off 10) displayed some brutal hitting towards the end of the chase and smashed premier India pacer Mohammad Shami for four sixes including a monstrous 117m hit over deep square leg. The 16th over going for 30 runs also gave a big boost to PBKS' net run rate.

It was a much-needed win for Punjab, who have struggled for consistency this season with five wins and as many losses.

For Gujarat, who are set to make the play-offs, it was a timely wake-up call to fix their batting issues, especially at the top of the order. They have had somebody or the other to bail them out of tough situations but it was not the case on Tuesday.

Earlier, Sai Sudharsan's unbeaten 65 off 50 balls was the saving grace in Gujarat's innings as Punjab bowlers conceded only 11 fours and two sixes.

## Chennai, RCB square off in important mid-table clash

PTI ■ PUNE

Chennai Super Kings' fragile bowling vis-a-vis Royal Challengers

Bangaluru's struggling batting line-up put the sides on an even keel as the two heavyweights face-off in an important mid-table clash of the IPL here on Wednesday.

In cricket, when two strong and equally performing teams have a match-up, it promises a great contest but when two sides with specific weak-links are pitted against each other it makes the contest all the more exhilarating. Sample this. In 10 games that RCB has played so far, only six half-centuries have been recorded and out of them two belongs to skipper Faf du Plessis, which is a testimony to below-par batting show in the tourney.

In nine games that CSK have played so far, there hasn't been a single bowler (pacers and spinners), who has bowled at an economy rate of less than 7.50 runs an over. The best economy rate is of Mahesh Theeksaana (7.54) while Dwayne Bravo (14 wickets) and Mukesh Choudhary (11 wickets) have had poor economy rates of 8.73 and 9.82 runs per over.

The match also becomes an enticing one as Virat Kohli has finally found some form going his way and Mahendra Singh Dhoni is back in the saddle and would do everything under his control to plot the downfall of India's best batter. Dhoni's return as CSK skipper replacing an out-of-sorts and more so bereft of ideas Ravindra Jadeja, proved beneficial as they outscored a formidable Sunrisers Hyderabad, keeping their campaign alive with six points from nine games.

While RCB are still on fifth place with 10 points from as

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

many games, they seemed to have lost a bit of momentum with three back-to-back defeats primarily due to shoddy batting shows.

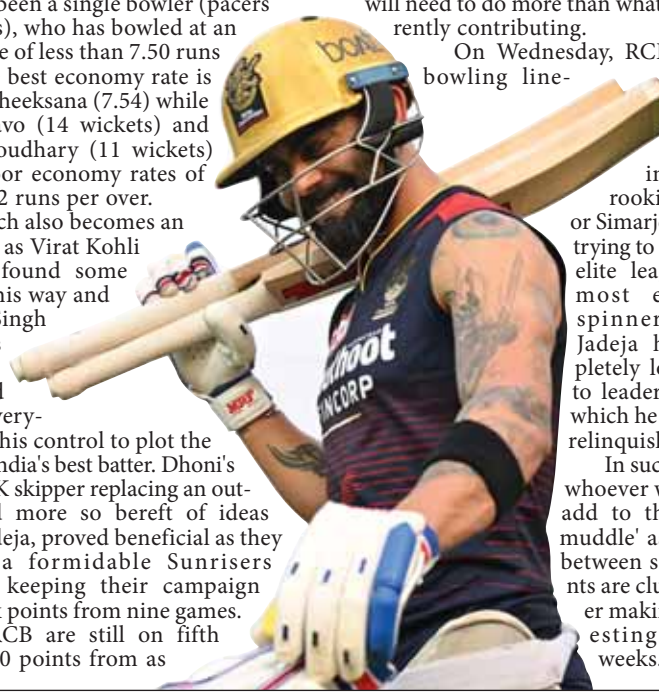
They have been all-out for season's lowest score -- 68 -- and have also failed to chase a modest target of 145 in another game.

Even in their last game versus Gujarat Titans, Kohli's 58 off 53 balls was one of the reasons that RCB failed to score more than 170, which was below-par on a good batting track.

In Kohli (186 runs in 10 games) and skipper Du Plessis (278 from 9 games), RCB have one of the scariest of opening pairs but it hasn't really translated into big performances.

Young Rajat Patidar, after a below-par last season, has shown some spark but the likes of Dinesh Karthik (218 from 10 games) and Glenn Maxwell (157 from 7 games) perhaps will need to do more than what they are currently contributing.

On Wednesday, RCB will face a bowling line-



up which isn't an intimidating one with rookie Choudhary or Simarjeet Singh, still trying to find feet in an elite league and the most experienced spinner Ravindra Jadeja having completely lost form due to leadership burden, which he was forced to relinquish.

In such a backdrop, whoever wins will only add to the 'mid-table muddle' as most teams between six to 10 points are clubbed together making it an interesting next four weeks.

PTI ■ PUNE

Shikhar Dhawan struck a fine half-century as error-prone Punjab Kings finally produced a clinical performance to beat Gujarat Titans by eight wickets and end the IPL table leaders' five-match winning streak here on Tuesday.

Pacer Kagiso Rabada snared four wickets as Punjab Kings restricted formidable Gujarat Titans to a below-par

143 for eight after Hardik Pandya opted to bat first.

Punjab, who made a mess of what should have been a straightforward chase in their last game, learned from their mistakes to pace the innings much better and overcome the target in 16 overs.

Dhawan (62 not out off 53 balls) scored his third half-century of the season and got good support from Sri Lankan Bhanuka Rajapaksa (40 off 28),

who entertained with five fours and a six.

As one of the senior batters in the team, Dhawan took the responsibility of finishing the game for his team and he did that with elan.

Skipper Mayank Agarwal dropped himself down the order to accommodate Jonny Bairstow (1) at the top of the order but the move did not work.

However, the 87-run stand between the left-handers, Dhawan

## IPL 2022 final confirmed in Ahmedabad, Women's T20 Challenge moved to Pune



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The IPL final will be played in Ahmedabad on May 29 while the Women's T20 Challenge exhibition event will be held in Pune from May 23-May 28, the BCCI confirmed on Tuesday.

As PTI reported last month, the IPL Qualifier 1 and

Eliminator will be held in Kolkata on May 24 and 25 respectively while Qualifier 2 and final will be played in Ahmedabad on May 27 and May 29 in front of capacity crowd.

"Qualifier 1 will be held in Eden Gardens, Kolkata on 24th May followed by the Eliminator on 25th May. The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host Qualifier 2 and the TATA IPL final on 27th and 29th May respectively," said the BCCI in a statement.

After the BCCI Apex Council meeting last month, president Sourav Ganguly had said that the Women's T20 Challenge will be held in Lucknow but it has been moved to Pune. Three matches will be played before the final on May 28. The three-team event did not take place last year. The BCCI is planning a five or six team Women's IPL from 2023.

## Trying to perform anchor's role after 7-8 years in IPL: Rana

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Kolkata Knight Riders batter Nitish Rana said having plied his trade in the IPL for considerable number of years, he is now trying to adapt to the role of an anchor, which was on full display against Rajasthan Royals here.

Rana, who hit an unbeaten 48, anchored the 153-run chase on a slow-paced Wankhede wicket to help KKR beat RR by seven wickets on Monday and snap their five-match losing streak.

"A lot of things depend on factors like opponent team and what total we are chasing and what number I am batting. I have been playing IPL for seven-eight years now and trying to perform the anchor or main player.

"I have been successful till date and hope that in the coming matches, I play such innings for the team," Rana said at the



virtual post-match press conference.

"...The role which the team is giving me according to match situation, I am trying to bat like that. Today, I had to play the

anchor's role.

"I knew that if I was there at one end, then things would become easy for us with players like Rinku, Andre Russell, and Anukul (Roy) waiting in the

wings. So we had depth in batting but my role was to play from one end so that we could easily chase the target," he added.

Rana also heaped praise on young Rinku Singh, who played an unbeaten 42-run cameo of 23 balls.

He said his efforts to calm down a "hyper" Rinku yielded rich dividend for KKR.

"I am very happy for the way he (Rinku) batted as I know him for 5-6 years and he has worked a lot, scored in every domestic season. The way he was batting, I knew he would do something big for our team once he gets the chance," said Rana.

"When he walked in to bat, I tried to calm him as I know he is a little-hyper and told him (if) we bat, we can finish the game in any over. I am very happy for him and hopefully he will continue batting the same way for KKR and himself," he added.

## WI appoint Pooran as new white-ball captain



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nicholas Pooran has been named as the replacement of Kieron Pollard, who retired recently, as the new captain of West Indies' ODI and T20I teams. Pooran had already served as Pollard's deputy over the last year and has also been a stand-in captain leading West Indies against Australia in a

T20I series in 2021.

"Shai Hope has been recommended to stand as vice-captain of the ODI team," said a statement from Cricket West Indies (CWI).

Commenting on the appointment, Pooran was quoted as saying, "I am truly honoured to be appointed captain of the West Indies team. I am following the footsteps of several giants of the game who have created an amazing legacy for West Indies cricket. This is indeed a prestigious role, a pivotal position in the West Indian society, as cricket is the force that brings us all West Indians together. To be named captain is indeed the highlight of my career so far and I want to drive the team forward to accomplish great things on the field for our fans and loyal supporters."

Pooran will take over full-time captaincy from West Indies' tour of Netherlands later this month.

## Ben Stokes wants 'selfless' cricketers in Eng Test side

AP ■ LONDON

Ben Stokes says he wants to lead a team of "selfless" cricketers as he plots England's revival after being named as the new Test captain.

The 30-year-old all-rounder was appointed to the role last week after Joe Root stood down following a five-year reign that culminated in a string of painful defeats.

Stokes, who was vice-captain to close friend Root, takes over with England having won just one of their past 17 Tests and the team bottom of the World Test Championship table. Stokes's first match in charge is against reigning world Test champions New Zealand, the land of his birth, at the start of a three-Test series at Lord's on June 2. He accepts turning England's fortunes around will be tough.

"It is a challenge, especially after the last few years," the Durham star told Sky Sports at the northeast county's Riverside headquarters on Tuesday. "There's a lot that needs to change, not only on the field, and those discussions

will be had." Stokes is an aggressive, all-action pace-bowling all-rounder, renowned for his fierce commitment to the team and he appears keen to mould a side in his own image. "I want to have selfless cricketers who make decisions based on what they can do to win a game in that given time," he said. "You're always judged on winning games, and the decisions I make are based around the best thing to do to give us that chance. "I want to have 10 other guys with me who are in that same mindset."

Stokes, for all his on-field success, has known turbulent times in his career as well.

He was arrested after a late-night incident in Bristol in September 2017 and then missed a tour of Australia before being cleared of a charge of affray.

"There's a lot of things that I've gone through since I became a professional cricketer, and those experiences I feel are positive in this new role that I've got," Stokes told the BBC in a separate interview.

"I've been through a lot of goods and have been through a lot of bads and I feel like I can relate to both sides of what this sporting life can throw at you."

## 'Players should be allowed to review wide, high no-balls'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori and South African spinner Imran Tahir reckon that wides and height no-balls should also come under the DRS scanner as umpires' call sparked fresh debate during Rajasthan Royals' IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders here.

Defending 18 runs from the last two overs, Royals skipper Sanju Samson was visibly upset by umpire Nitin Pandit's three wide calls despite considerable movement from the batters — Rinku Singh and Nitish Rana — on a couple of occasions in the penultimate over on Monday.

Samson then went on to ask for a review when the ball was miles away from the bat in his sarcastic way of protest.

It sparked a fresh debate for call of wides and waist height no-balls for review with the Kiwi former all-rounder speaking up on the issue once again.

"I don't think there was any thought of it actually being out... Absolutely (players should be allowed to review wides). The players should be able to decide in such crucial matters," Vettori, a former Royal Challengers Bangalore coach, told ESPNcricinfo.Com.

"Today it is a little bit different where it always looked like KKR are going to win. But we have sat here so many times and seen decisions go against bowlers



that are so close and the umpire has got it wrong. "So therefore the players should have some avenues towards rectifying those mistakes. That's why DRS was brought in: to rectify mistakes. I would like to see that happen. And players are very good judges of that. They get

it right more often than not."

According to the ICC rule 22.4.1 on wides, "The umpire shall not adjudge a delivery as being a Wide, if the striker, by moving, either causes the ball to pass wide of him/her, or brings the ball sufficiently within reach to be able to hit it

by means of a normal cricket stroke."

Rajasthan Royals were involved in yet another controversy -- this time involving a no-ball in their match against Rishabh Pant-led Delhi Capitals.

Chasing a mammoth 223, Delhi needed 36 from the final over and Rovman Powell upped the ante, smashing three sixes in a row.

The third six came off a waist-high full toss but the on-field umpires did not call it a no-ball, nor did they choose to refer it.

It led to unprecedented scenes in the Delhi dugout as Pant started calling back the players and their assistant coach Pravin Amre stepped on the pitch in a blatant violation of the Code of Conduct.

Echoing similar sentiments, former Chennai Super Kings all-rounder Tahir said: "Yeah why not (review)... There is not much for bowlers in the game. When batters are hitting you all over, you don't have much choice than bowling wide yorkers or bowling wide leg breaks. If that becomes a wide, you are in trouble."

"But look, it was a close call. Samson was a little bit frustrated. It was a 50-50 thing. I don't think it should be a big issue. Kolkata played well, and they were going to win it. But yeah there should be a review that a player can go for," he added.

The KKR duo of Rana and Singh scored 17 runs in the penultimate over to seal a seven-wicket win with five balls to spare.