

WORLD 5
TRUMP RAISES
OVER \$4M IN 24 HOURS

MONEY 6
MARCH GST AT ₹1.60 L CR;
2ND HIGHEST EVER

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Supari given for 'Modi teri kabar khudegi': PM

PNS ■ BHOPAL

In a veiled attack on the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said some people are hell-bent to sully his image and they have given a "supari" (contract) for this purpose colluding with certain people sitting in India and also outside the country. Modi said such people have taken a pledge that "Modi Teri Kabar Khudegi".



They are colluding with some abroad, but they don't know that common Indians are my 'Suraksha Kavach'
— PM NARENDRA MODI

Modi's comment has come amid a slugfest between the Congress and the BJP over Rahul Gandhi's "democracy under brutal attack in India" remarks in the UK and Germany taking note of Rahul's disqualification from the Lok Sabha. The BJP has accused the Congress of "inviting foreign powers" for interfering in India's internal matters.

attention to the development of the country and pay attention to building the nation, he said. Slamming the Congress without taking its name, Modi said previous governments were busy with vote bank appeasement whereas his government is busy satisfying people. "They (the previous governments) considered one family (a reference to the Gandhis) as the first family of the country. They ignored the poor and middle class, and the Railway is a living example of this (ignorance)," he said.

Georgia 1st US state to pass resolution against Hinduphobia

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Georgia Assembly has passed a resolution condemning Hinduphobia, making it the first American State to take such a legislative step. Condemning Hinduphobia and anti-Hindu bigotry, the resolution said Hinduism is one of the world's largest and oldest religions with over 1.2 billion adherents in over 100 countries and encompasses an array of diverse traditions and belief systems with values of acceptance, mutual respect and peace.

and Indian-American diaspora communities in Georgia. The resolution observed that the American-Hindu community has been a major contributor to diverse sectors such as medicine, science and engineering, information technology, hospitality, finance, academia, manufacturing, energy, retail trade, among others. Stating that there have been documented instances of hate crimes against Hindu-Americans over the last few decades in many parts of the country, the resolution said Hinduphobia is exacerbated and institutionalised by some in academia who support the dismantling of Hinduism and accuse its sacred texts and cultural practices of violence.

CAPSULE

INDIA LOGS 2,994 COVID-19 CASES
New Delhi: India on Saturday recorded 2,994 new Covid-19 infections, while the number of active cases increased to 16,354, according to Union Health Ministry data. With the fresh infections, India's Covid-19 tally stands at 4.47 crore (4,47,18,781). The death toll climbed to 5,30,876, with nine deaths.

MODERATE INTENSITY QUAKE HITS NEPAL
Kathmandu: A moderate intensity earthquake was recorded with its epicentre at Suri in the Dolakha district of Nepal on Saturday morning. The earthquake of 5.2 magnitude was recorded at 11.27 am in Dolakha, 180 km east of Kathmandu, according to the National Seismological Centre here.

'JUVENILITY PLEA CAN BE RAISED AFTER 22 YEARS'
Lucknow: In an important judgment, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court has held that a person can raise a plea of juvenility even after passage of 22 years during trial.

Freed from jail, Sidhu raps Centre, Punjab Govt

PNS ■ PATIALA

Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu walked free on Saturday after spending nearly 10 months in Patiala Central Jail in a 1988 road rage death case. Soon after walking out of the jail, Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu slammed the Centre, alleging that democracy is in chains and institutions have turned slaves. Sidhu described Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann as "akhbari mukhmantri" and criticised his Government over law and order and debt issues. The 59-year-old's supporters had assembled since morning outside the prison to accord him a grand welcome upon his release and they could be heard chanting "Navjot Sidhu zindabad". Several Congress leaders, including Amritsar MP Gurjit Aujla, were waiting for the return of Sidhu.

After cold comfort, mercury to shoot above normal in summer

IMD prediction

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After unseasonal rainfall, several parts of India are to witness hotter-than-usual weather from April, May and June, raising the risk of more strain on the power sector as people turn to air conditioners to cool themselves. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted that most of India, barring parts of north-west and peninsular region, is expected to experience above-normal maximum temperatures in April, May and June. "A significantly higher number of heatwave days are predicted over most parts of Central India, East India and Northwest India during the hot weather season during April, May and June. "Above normal heatwave days are likely over many parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, East Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Gangetic



West Bengal, north Chhattisgarh, western part of Maharashtra, Gujarat and some parts of West Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana during April," IMD director general Mrutyunjay Mahapatra said in a virtual Press conference. A heatwave is declared if the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, at least 37 degrees Celsius in

Defence export soars by ten-fold in last six years

Make-in-India paying dividends, asserts PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has achieved an all-time high defence equipment export worth ₹15,920 crore in 2022-23 and it is a ten-fold jump in last six years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded this development after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday made the announcement. "Indian defence exports reached an all-time high of ₹15,920 crores in FY 2022-23. It is a remarkable achievement for the country," Rajnath said in a tweet. He also said defence exports will continue to grow exponentially under the inspiring leadership of Modi. The Prime Minister lauded India's defence export under Make in India and said it indicates the reforms in this sector over the last few years are yielding good results. "Excellent! A clear manifestation of India's talent and the enthusiasm towards 'Make in India.' It also shows the reforms in this sector over the last few years are delivering good results. Our Government will keep supporting efforts to make India a defence production hub," the PM wrote on Twitter



Defence exports were ₹1,521 crore in 2016-17, ₹4,682 crore in 2017-18, ₹10,745 crore in 2018-19, ₹9,115 crore in 2019-20, ₹8,434 crore in 2020-21, and ₹12,814 crore in 2021-22. India exports missiles, the advanced light helicopter (ALH), offshore patrol vessels, personal protective gear, surveillance systems and a variety of radars to around 85 countries. Talks are on with potential customers for light combat aircraft Tejas, different types of helicopters, artillery guns, Astra beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles, Akash surface-to-air missile systems, tanks, sonars and radars. Egypt and Argentina have evinced interest in procuring 20 and 15 Tejas jets respectively. Moreover, India may export ALH to the Philippines. Last year, BrahMos Aerospace and the Philippines signed a deal worth almost \$375 million for the Philippine Marines to buy three batteries of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, and Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited won an export order worth \$155.5 million for supplying 155mm artillery guns, the first such order for an Indian firm. In 2020, the Union Cabinet gave its go-ahead to the export of Akash missile systems and also created a high-powered panel for swifter export approvals. The Government has given a major boost to self reliance over the last few years and inked deals worth over ₹36,000 crores on Thursday including warships, supersonic missiles for the navy, and surface-to-air missiles and weapon locating radars for the army. In fact, the last financial year ending Friday saw the defence ministry placing orders with domestic manufacturers worth ₹53,000 crores including basic trainer aircraft, a satellite for the army, training ships, medium-power radars, radar warning receivers, air defence systems, and Dornier aircraft.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students on Bhopal-Delhi Vande Bharat Express train after flagging off the semi-high speed train in Bhopal on Saturday. The train will run on all days except Saturday. It will depart from Rani Kamalapati station at 5.40am and reach Hazrat Nizamuddin station at 1.10pm. The Delhi-Bhopal leg of the train will start at 2.40pm and reach Bhopal at 10.10pm, officials said. The train is scheduled to halt at Gwalior and Agra enroute

Edgy calm day after Ram Navami clashes; Shah on Bihar visit

'Not natural, disturbing', Nitish blames vested interest for violence

PNS ■ PATNA/HOWRAH

A day after communal celebrations in six States, situation remained peaceful but tense on Saturday. However, the prohibitory order Section 144 was still in force in the affected areas Howrah, a police officer said. Meanwhile Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday asserted communal tensions during Ram Navami festivities at Sasaram and Bihar Sharif towns were triggered by some people indulging in "gadbad" (mischief) and rejected the BJP's charge of poor law and order situation in the State. And on the day when the BJP and Kumar's JD(U) traded charges over communal disturbances which caused Union Home Minister Amit Shah to cancel one of the programmes scheduled on April 2, the Union Home Minister reached Bihar on Saturday. Taking over investigations into the clashes, Bengal CID collected samples and spoke to local people as well as police personnel who were deployed there during Thursday's clash, the officer said.

In Patna, while interacting with media persons here on Saturday, Kumar also made light of Shah canceling his tour of Sasaram in view of riots, remarking, "I don't know why he was coming and I don't understand why he decided not to come". "Communal tensions during Ram Navami festivities at Sasaram and Bihar Sharif are disturbing. Such incidents happened for the first time in the area. It's not natural... We know that some people are indulging in "gadbad" (mischief) and are trying to disrupt communal harmony in the state. We will not allow this to happen," the Chief Minister said. He said police officials have been instructed to identify those who are indulging in mischief and to "take strict action against them". Normalcy has been restored in both the places though senior officers are camping in the affected areas by way of caution and security forces have been deployed in the area, Kumar said. The State police have so far arrested 45 people in connection with communal riots at Sasaram and Bihar Sharif that erupted during the Ram Navami festivities. Vehicles, houses and shops were torched and several people injured in communal flare-ups reported in both towns.



MP is continuously writing the story of development: PM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that Madhya Pradesh is writing stories of continuous development. The state is leading in many fields like agriculture, industry, houses for the poor, tap water supply to every house, wheat production etc. Earlier the state known as Bimaru is doing commendable work in every field today. We have to further increase the role of Madhya Pradesh in developed India. The new Vande Bharat train is a part of this resolution.

Prime Minister Modi said that a new system, a new tradition is taking shape in modern India. Vande Bharat train is a symbol of enthusiasm and wave of new India. This is India's most modern train,

which I have had the privilege of inaugurating. Modi said that this is the first time in the history of Railways that a Prime Minister has come again for a program at a railway station in such a short interval. I had earlier come for the inauguration of Rani Kamalapati station and today I am flagging off the Vande Bharat train.

screened on the Vande Bharat Express train. During this, public representatives, eminent citizens, district administration and railway officers and a large number of common people were present.

Prime Minister Modi said that earlier governments used to follow the policy of vote bank appeasement. We are paying attention to the satisfaction of the countrymen. The previous government believed in one family and did not pay attention to poor and middle class families. Our government is working for the welfare and satisfaction of every Indian family.

Prime Minister Modi said that Indian Railways is the pride of an ordinary Indian family. Due to political interest, the old governments did not modernize the railways. North

East Railway was not connected till the year 2014. After our government came, we connected it with the railways and rejuvenated the railways. Today India's rail network is the best network in the world. Earlier there were thousands of unmanned gates, where accidents used to happen every day. Today the entire broad gauge is unmanned gate free. We have equipped the rail passenger facility with Made in India armor system. Grievances have been resolved using technology.

The Prime Minister said that we have opened more than 600 outlets at railway stations all over India for the sale of artisans' clothes, artworks, paintings, utensils, etc. with the "One Station-One Product" scheme, the benefits of which are being taken by

lakhs of people today. Railway stations have been modernised, 6,000 railway stations have WiFi and CCTV work has been completed at 900 railway stations. Vande Bharat trains are becoming a super hit all over India and demands are pouring in from every corner.

Prime Minister Modi said that a record increase is being made in the budget of the Railways. Before the year 2014, the average railway budget of Madhya Pradesh used to be Rs.600 crores, which has now increased to Rs.13000 crores. 100 percent electrification of railway tracks has been achieved in 11 states of the country including Madhya Pradesh. The speed of electrification was 600 km per year before 2014, now it has increased to 6000 km per year.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off the Vande Bharat Express between Bhopal and New Delhi, in Bhopal on Saturday. Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan are also seen in pic. Pioneer photo

Congress vice president kept under surveillance

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In view of the apprehension of protests during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhopal, the police took the Vice President of the media department of Madhya Pradesh Congress Sangeeta Sharma under surveillance. Police have monitored Congress leader Sharma on the basis of inputs received from the Intelligence Department.

According to experts, the police had received input that after flagging off the Vande Bharat train at Rani Kamalapati railway station, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi would go to the helipad built at the Barkatullah University ground. Sangeeta could create disturbance with the supporters. At the same

Police had received input that Congress leader Sangeeta Sharma could create disturbance with the supporters at Barkatullah University campus

time, Congress workers have opposed the police surveillance of Sangeeta Sharma.

Kamal Nath's media advisor Piyush Babele told that on Saturday morning, Sangeeta Sharma called and informed that she had gone out for morning walk, then suddenly Bhopal police reached her house. Due to this she was not able

to go home. After this she went to the house of a relative living in the neighborhood. Where a large number of police reached. Has he been detained by the police from there? or arrested? This police is not clearing. We have reached Misrod police station to get information about Sangeeta Sharma.

Media Advisor Piyush Babele told that Congress State President and former Chief Minister Kamal Nath had given instructions to the media department to contact Sangeeta Sharma and talk to her. For this reason they have reached Misrod police station. Sangeeta Sharma had not announced any kind of protest during the Prime Minister's visit to Bhopal on Friday. For this reason, it is not understood why Sangeeta Sharma has been

detained in a constitutional manner.

Madhya Pradesh Congress media advisor Piyush Babele reached Misrod police station to get information about Sangeeta Sharma, vice president of media department of Congress.

Police have been guarded at the 6 no stop office of Congress counselor Guddu Chauhan. Police have taken this action in view of the apprehension of corporator Chauhan showing black flags to Prime Minister Modi between Kushabhau Convention Center and Rani Kamalapati Railway Station. It is notable that PM Modi will go from Kushabhau Convention Center to Rani Kamalapati Railway Station via 6 no stop. Congress counselor Guddu Chauhan's office is on this route.

Rajwar is a wonderful combination of architecture

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Under the construction workshop by Indira Gandhi rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya Bhopal 10 Rajwar (male and female) artists extensively repaired and maintained this traditional dwelling type with the help of mud, stone, and bhusha.

Regarding this construction workshop Bhuvan Vikram, director of the museum said that the housing type of the Rajwar community living in Surguja district of Chhattisgarh state was compiled by the museum in the year 1994 and installed in the tribal habitat open-air exhibition. It is an important artisan group, Agriculture is the mainstay of the Rajwar economy. Rajwar starts building his house on Monday.

The site/area is clearly marked and the wall is raised from the soil foundation and parallel beams are fixed on it to



prepare the outline of the roof structure. For the roof of the house, handmade Kavelu with the shape of various wild birds and animals are used. Common in the Rajwar society artistic nets and wall paintings of animals and birds, gods and goddesses are done by the women of the house only.

The Rajwar women keep the houses very clean and smear

them with white clay. A piece of cotton cloth is dipped in the solution of clay and wiped on the wall, and then stripes are drawn on it with the fingers of the hand. Before plastering, some figures are engraved on the wall with cow-dung mortar. In Surguja, even in kutcha houses, simple nets are made for windows or skylights, here they are called Jhinjhri. First, the

frame is prepared by tying bamboo stilts and thin flexible branches of a tree with a thin rope.

To make a circular net, each match has to be tied in a circle. For this it is necessary to pre-conceive the entire grid. There is a wonderful coordination of architecture and sculpture in the art of Rajwar community. <

In his thinking, the architecture of the house and the sculptures made for its decoration complement each other. From the very beginning, Rajwar people used white color from white soil and brown color from ochre, black color from kajal, yellow color from yellow soil and green color from green leaf. Colors currently available in the market are being used.

Artists like Pandit Ram have made the clay art prevalent in the Rajwar community immortal in the art world.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with defence staff and officials during Combined Commanders' Conference-2023 at Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Center in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

After less heat witnessed in March, temp returning to normal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The weather conditions are attaining normal weather conditions, compared to the last 10 years in Madhya Pradesh, this time there was less heat in the month of March. Generally, there is intense heat in the last week of March, but this time it did not happen.

Except Khargone, Khandwa and Rajgarh, the day's mercury could not cross 35 degrees anywhere. At the same time, in the big cities of Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior, the temperature remained between 32.8 and 31.7 degrees Celsius, while the maximum temperature in the last 10 years has reached close to 42 degrees. Bhopal experienced the lowest heat in two years.

On the last day of March, the day temperature in Bhopal was 32.3, Indore 31.7,



Gwalior 30.8 and Jabalpur 31.4 degree Celsius. However, the nights remained warm. The night temperature in Jabalpur reached 22.8 degree Celsius. Once this month in Bhopal, on March 28, the maximum temperature reached 36.9 degrees. The temperature remained within 36 degrees in Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior.

Met said that in the last week of March, the temperature was lower than in 10 years. On March 31, the temperature remained below 32 degrees.

On Friday, there was rain and hailstorm in many areas of the state. It was cloudy throughout the day in Bhopal. Drizzle occurred in the Kolar area at 10 am. Cold winds also

blew. Apart from this, heavy rains occurred in Neemuch, Mandasaur, Bhand, Morena, Panna, Shivpuri, Mandasaur, Sheopur, Harda, Vidisha, Satna and Raisen districts.

Apart from this, hail fell with rain in Singrauli, Vidisha and Anuppur. One person died due to lightning in Anuppur's Pushprajgarh. Chaos spread due to rain and storm in Chief Minister's Kanyadan marriage ceremony in Shahdol. Here the tent fell down due to strong storms and rain. The family members including the bride and groom were also seen here and there avoiding the rain.

Meteorologist said that the weather will change again in the month of April. Two Western Disturbances are becoming active on 2nd and 4th April. Due to this, there will be clouds in the entire state.

After 16 years, Sujan Singh regains eyesight, thanks Sewa Sadan

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Sujan Singh of village Rajukhedhi in Sehore district had lost sight in both eyes around 16 years back. He felt life was a burden. He sought treatment first in a government hospital and then at other medial centres, but to no avail.

By chance an acquaintance of him informed him about Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital. He advised him to contact cornea specialist Dr. Prerna Upadhyay there. Dr. Prerna checked his eyes to find that his right eye had been rendered totally useless. However, there was a possibility of restoring eyesight in his left eye through eye transplantation. She successfully conducted Keratoplasty procedure 16 years back in his one eye.

Gradually eyesight began to return in his one eye and he started doing his day to day works smoothly. Meanwhile his wife abandoned him. His parents also died. He has four sisters and three brothers, but none helped him. He



has 1.25 acre of land that he got as share of ancestral property.

Sujan Singh gave this piece of land on share cropping basis. He gets enough food grain and money to last him whole year. When asked about the experience of Sewa Sadan Hospital he expressed gratitude for Dr. Prerna Upadhyaya as well as the Sadan.

Then asked about his family he remained silent. Asked whether the family members helped him or left him one by one. He remained silent. But his silence said yes, they abandoned parted one by one.

AIIMS Bhopal organises its first alumni meet

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

AIIMS Bhopal initiated the formation of an alumni networking platform in the form of the AIIMS Bhopal Alumni Council by holding its first alumni event on Saturday on the theme "RISE - Reconnect, Inspire, Share & Enrich: Sharing expertise, shaping the future: A national level symposium for AIIMS Bhopal alumni".

Attendees were all alumni of AIIMS Bhopal which included undergraduate (MBBS, BSc Nursing) and postgraduate (MD/MS, DM /MCh, MSc Nursing) students who have passed out from the institute along with former senior residents who worked in various departments of AIIMS Bhopal. The event was graced by the presence of the prominent office bearers and heads of departments of the institute as well. Prof John Santoshi, Chairman, Alumni Coordination Committee gave an update on the efforts undertaken and response received from the alumni for the creation of this alumni body. More than 800 registrations were received for the alumni council from different parts of the country and abroad.

Advanced stage cancer of the esophagus operated at AIIMS

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 48 years old male patient was operated in Surgical Oncology on March 28 for a foodpipe cancer. The disease was in an advanced stage of food pipe and was inoperable in the beginning.

The patient was not able to drink even liquid. The patient was given chemotherapy and responded very well to treatment. Slowly the patient started eating first liquid then solid food. He was advised for a daily five km walk and spirometry exercise.

After four courses of chemotherapy a surgery was planned. In this three field surgery first chest was opened and patient kept on single lung for breathing and food pipe taken out from behind heart and then his stomach was opened for an artificial food pipe creation from stomach. In the third stage the neck was opened and the artificial food pipe joined in the neck with the original one. The procedure took only four hour. The patient was kept in ICU for one day and on the next day he was shifted in the ward and feeding was started.

This complex and curative procedure needs support from Thoracic surgeon for opening chest Gastro surgeon for opening

abdomen and ENT surgeon for neck and an oncologist for all treatment planning and surgery. A medical gastroenterologist is required for endoscopy before and during surgery. The patient is planned for further additional treatment in form of Radiotherapy to eradicate the disease from root.

Dr Molly and Dr Seema and Dr Saurabh managed patient beautifully on single lung during anesthesia and kept him pain free after surgery. The patient could eat and walk after 1 day of the surgery and was shifted in ward and now stable and recovery fast and would be back to work in next week.

This multiple team involvement procedure is now possible in the Department of Surgical Oncology AIIMS Bhopal which may now become state of art centre for various complex and advanced cancer surgery for the people of Madhya Pradesh and whole of the country. With the further addition of endoscopy services under guidance and leadership of our visionary and committed Executive Director of the Institute, a new surgical facility of esophageal cancer surgery could be started in the Department of Surgical Oncology AIIMS Bhopal.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students during the flagging off ceremony of Vande Bharat Express train at Rani Kamalapati Railway station in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Dr Bharti to be chief guest of Second Convocation

Bhopal: Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Bharti Pravin Pawar is visiting Bhopal on 2nd April. Dr. Bharti Pravin Pawar will be the chief guest of the second convocation ceremony on April 2 at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Auditorium of All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhopal. Madhya Pradesh Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang will be the special guest in the programme.

Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Prof. (Dr.) Yogendra Kumar Gupta, President of All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhopal and Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhopal will be present in the programme.

Addressing the reporters from various electronic and print media in a program today, the Executive Director of AIIMS

Bhopal said that a procession would also be taken out on the occasion, in which the deans and professors of the institute would participate in formal robes. Minister will confer degrees to MBBS, MSc Nursing, MD/MS, PDCC, DM/MCH students.

Apart from this, gold medals will be awarded to the toppers of various streams and sessions. A total of 64 gold medals will be awarded in which 40 are for MBBS and 24 for B.Sc Nursing course.

Delhi govt managed to gross revenue of Rs 5548.48 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government managed to gross "the highest ever" excise revenue of Rs 5,548.48 crore in 2022-23. According to Delhi government's excise department officials, with the daily average sale of 17 lakh bottles, the average revenue was Rs 19.71 crore, pushing the total revenue over that in 2021-22. The government returned back to old excise regime from September 1, 2022 under which its four undertakings carried out liquor trade in the city.

The Delhi government had implemented a new, reform oriented excise policy on November 17, 2021, that was later marred in allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

The policy under which private vendors had opened liquor stores across the city was withdrawn by the Delhi government last year following a recommendation of CBI probe into alleged irregularities in its implementation by the LG VK Saxena.

The government returned back to old excise regime from September 1, 2022 under which its four undertakings carried out liquor trade in the city. The current excise policy has been extended till September this year.

Excise officials said

The government returned back to old excise regime from September 1, 2022 under which its four undertakings carried out liquor trade

around 1000 brands have been registered through 117 wholesalers in the market and 573 government retail outlets, including 10 shops in malls (L10) have been opened since September last year. A total of 930 hotels, clubs and restaurants are also serving retail customers in the city.

"This was achieved despite mid year policy tran-

sition, ongoing investigations into new excise policy and government taking over the retail liquor sale through its corporations- DCCWS, DTTDC, DSIIDC and DSCSC- which have registered a profit of Rs 300 crore from Sept 1, 2022 till date," the officer said.

The policy being implemented from September 1, 2022, has been extended for another six months as the excise department is working on a fresh policy.

The Excise department is looking to increase brand availability, improve quality of government shops to be more customer friendly and focus on enforcement through active involvement of revenue department and police to check entry of illicit liquor in Delhi, added the officer.

The Delhi government had done away with its Excise Policy 2021-22 and withdrew it on August 31, 2022. The excise policy came under the radar after the Delhi lieutenant governor recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities in the implementation of the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. The LG also suspended 11 excise department officials.

There were allegations of the Delhi government favouring certain dealers while granting liquor licenses in lieu of bribes. Given the gravity of these allegations, the L-G recommended a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe, after which the Enforcement Directorate (ED) registered a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).



People visit Fauji Mela organised by the Indian Army at MVM Ground in Bhopal on Saturday.

Pioneer photo



A view of closed Ahata after the State Government's order to close down all the ahatas beside liquor shops all over the State from Apr 1, in Bhopal on Saturday.

New electricity tariff applicable from April 03

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In Madhya Pradesh, the new rates of electricity, which will be applicable from April 3, have been implemented from today. Under this, the MP Electricity Regulatory Commission has increased the average electricity rate by 1.65 percent. In such a situation, the bill of the consumer with monthly consumption of 50 units has been increased by Rs 5 and the bill of the consumer with monthly consumption of 300 units has been increased by Rs 38.

It may be noted that the power company had proposed a price hike of 3.20 per cent for the difference of Rs 1535 crore, in response to which only half of the demand has been approved

by the commission to meet the difference of Rs 795 crore. In such a situation, experts believe that due to the election year, this time the rate of electricity has been increased less.

For the financial year 2023-24, approval has been given for revenue of Rs 48993 crore from the MP Power Management Company. At the same time, the domestic consumer has been given exemption in minimum charges in this tariff. Till now the consumer had to pay the minimum electricity bill even without using the electricity. Apart from this, there has been no increase in electricity rates for low pressure industrial consumers and low pressure non-domestic consumers.

Consumers can use elec-

tricity from Green Energy by paying additional Rs 0.97 per unit. Its current rate is Rs 1.13. Now this rate has been reduced by 16 paise per unit. At the same time, consumers will not be charged any metering charges as before. Even though this rate is still high in proportion to the general electricity and is used by very few consumers. But many big companies also work to promote green energy.

It is being informed by the MP Power Management Company that due to the effect of the subsidy being given by the government at present, there is no effect of this rate increase on the electricity bills of domestic consumers and flat rate agricultural consumers consuming up to 100 units in the state.

Protest against liquor shop at Karond

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The trend of opposing liquor shops after former CM Uma Bharati started a protest has been on the rise, locals came out on the road to protest against the opening of a liquor shop at Karond Square in Bhopal.

They staged a protest demanding shifting of the shop away from the residential area, which lasted for 3 hours. He said that the shop was to be shifted from April 1, but it opened on the side. They left after the assurance of the officers in the evening.

The protest against the liquor shop was going on since morning, but at half past one in the afternoon many people sat in protest near the shop itself. They claimed that the shop at Karond Square is being opened in the residential area.

In the past, there was a protest regarding this, which was to be shifted from April 1 but it was shifted to the side near the square.

During the protest, BJP leader Krishna Pachori said that the shop which has been opened is next to the earlier one. Because of this, the women of Panchavati Karond will also face difficulties in coming out. The employees of the shop also misbehaved with the residents regarding this. In the evening, the officers assured to shift the shop to another place. After that they left.

Country shocked over court verdict: Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the Gujarat High Court slammed Chief Minister Kejriwal and imposed a fine of Rs 25000 for misusing the provisions of the RTI Act on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's degree, the Delhi Chief Minister on Saturday said that the entire country was shocked to hear the court verdict.

"Only one question in front of the nation — doesn't 21st Century India need a well-educated Prime Minister. Why is it essential for the PM to be educated? Because he has to take decisions across fields on a daily basis. If he is not educated, government officials will come and make him sign anything. If he was educated, he would not have taken the decision to implement demonetisation, the GST would have been implemented better," said Kejriwal

addressing a press conference on Saturday.

Highlighting the Centre's decision to implement the GST structure, the Chief Minister said that although it was a good concept, the manner in which it was brought, it ruined the lives of traders in the country. He added that if the PM was educated then the implementation of GST would have been very different.

Highlighting how PM Modi brought in the three farm laws despite the farmer community pleading against it, Kejriwal pointed out that it eventually had to be repealed after a year.

He said that if the PM has actually received a degree from Gujarat University and Delhi University as it is being claimed, then why is it not being revealed to the nation. "There are two reasons why the degree may not be revealed. The first is because of the ego of the PM. He might be think-

ing who are these people to ask me for my own degree," he said.

He also said that the other reason for not revealing the degree may be that it is fake. "If the PM has indeed studied from Gujarat University and Delhi University, then these institutions should be so proud that the PM of India has studied in their institution, and they should reveal this information to the public," he said.

"Should the PM of 21st Century India not be well educated? Does India need an educated PM? This is the question I ask to the citizens of the country.

When a person hires a manager even to run a single company, they require the applicant to have certain qualifications like an MBA. So, should the person who is mandated to 'manage' a nation like India not be educated?," the AAP National Convenor asked.

CM gets the forms of Ladli Bahna Yojana filled in Bhim Nagar

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan got the forms of two sisters filled under Mukhya Mantri Ladli Bahna Yojana in Bhim Nagar ward located near Mantralaya this evening. Many sisters had gathered in the camp to fill out the forms of the scheme. During the interaction with Chief Minister Chouhan, the sisters described the scheme as multi-useful.

Chouhan got the forms of Seema Rathore and Yasmin completed. He also informed the sisters about the eligibility of the scheme. During the form filling, the Chief Minister also clarified those points due to which the sisters are ineligible to take advantage of the scheme. During the dialogue with the sisters, it was

revealed that most women of Bhim Nagar have the necessary information regarding the scheme.

During this, Chouhan said in a discussion with TV channel representatives that from June 10, the sisters will start getting funds under the scheme. If the work of filling the forms is not completed in the month of April, then this date can also be extended. Getting Rs 1000 per month will also help the sisters to meet the nutritional needs of the children.

Chief Minister Chouhan informed the sisters that from today, the system of Ahatas near liquor shops has been abolished in the state. This decision has been taken with the aim that there should be no problems in the lives of sisters due to the consumption of liquor by men.

Congress holds election manifesto committee meet

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Political parties including BJP and Congress have stepped up preparations for the Madhya Pradesh assembly elections. Under this, the Congress held a meeting of the election manifesto committee on Friday.

The meeting was chaired by former CM and PCC chief Kamal Nath. In the meeting, opinion was taken from the office bearers on making the election manifesto for the assembly elections 2023. In this, apart from giving Rs 1500 per month unconditionally to women, it was decided to give cylinders for Rs 500.

Apart from this, issues like loan waiver of farmers, electricity for Rs.100, unemployment allowance, training for employment

In the meeting, opinion was taken from the office bearers on making the election manifesto for the assembly elections 2023. It was decided to give cylinders for Rs 500

will also be included.

Former minister Bala Bachchan told that there was a meeting regarding which points to be taken for which class. He said that PCC Chief Kamal Nath will announce all the points of the election manifesto.

Announcements made in the meeting like giving Rs 1500 to women, giving gas cylinders for Rs 500,

implementation of old pension scheme, loan waiver of farmers have been finalised. Earlier, BJP had taken a dig at the meeting of the election manifesto committee of the Congress.

The Chief Minister is constantly questioning former CM Kamal Nath about not fulfilling the promises made in the promissory note. There is an election in the state in November. For this, the ruling party BJP is also making new promises to the public.

State in-charge Jayprakash Agarwal, Leader of Opposition Dr. Govind Singh, President of the promissory note committee Rajendra Singh Suresh Pachauri, Sajjan Singh Verma, Vijayalakshmi Sadho Bala Bachchan were present in the meeting of Congress promissory note committee.

BJP criticises Delhi govt for issuing notice to Delhi Haj Committee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at the Kejriwal government for issuing notice for vacation of its office to Delhi Haj Committee at Haj Manzil, Turkman Gate for non-payment of licence fee and interest during the Ramzan, Delhi BJP on Saturday condemned the Delhi government and have urged the Delhi Government to withdraw the notice. Delhi Haj Committee chairperson Kausar Jahan also met Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena seeking his intervention regarding a notice received by it for vacating its premises rented from the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). The Haj committee is controlled by the BJP.

In a joint press conference by BJP national spokesperson Shazia Ilmi, President of Delhi Haj Committee Kausar Jahan and state unit Minority Morcha president Mohd. Haroon accused the Kejriwal government saying the DUSIB had sent a notice to the committee asking it to vacate its premises at Haj Manzil at Turkman Gate over dues, including licence fee and interest, amounting to over Rs 1 lakh as it is controlled by the BJP. Ilmi said the notice by the Delhi government agency was shameful as it was a religious body looking after pilgrimage of Muslims.

"The office of the Haj Committee was established in 1995 by the then Chief Minister of Delhi Madan Lal Khurana in the building located at Turkman Gate and it has been serving the Haj pilgrims

since almost three decades. The then senior BJP leaders Sikandar Bakht, Mohammad Ismail, Begum Khurshida Kidwai and Babu Chiraguddin Qureshi had a big role in getting this allotment done. The AAP has not paid the rent of this building and in almost a decade a rent of Rs 1 crore 31 lakh has got accumulated," Ilmi said.

Speaking on the occasion, Jahan said that she was elected as the Chairperson of the Delhi Haj Committee on February 16 and from that day till today the two members of the Haj Committee, who are associated with the AAP that are M.L.As Haji Yunus and Abdul Rehman have not attended even one meeting of the Committee. Neither do they keep any contact with us.

Jahan said that two days back suddenly the Kejriwal government has given us a notice to vacate the Delhi Haj Committee office, due to which today not only of Delhi but the Muslim society of the country is shocked. Until a few months ago, we used to hear that the Kejriwal government wants to build its own office building for Delhi Haj Committee in Dwarka, but today after losing an election, leave aside the talk of a new building, the government has resorted to the petty politics of closing the office due to the Delhi Haj Committee.

Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor alleged that the DUSIB notice was an act of vendetta by the AAP government since Kausar Jahan, a BJP leader, was elected chairperson of the Haj committee.



People offer thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the flagging off ceremony of the Vande Bharat Express train in between Bhopal to New Delhi, at Rani Kamalapati Railway station in Bhopal on Saturday.

Pioneer photo

25-year-old youth killed in road accident

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 25-year-old youth died after his motorbike was hit by a speeding unknown vehicle at Lalariya police check post on Friday; errant driver and vehicle remained unidentified.

Police said that the injured was taken to hospital with the help of locals who informed police and ambulance where the bike rider was declared dead while the errant driver remained unknown as he managed to escape with the vehicle.

The deceased was identified as Hari alais Golu Singh who was on his way to Berasia when his bike was hit by a speeding truck

The injured was taken to hospital with the help of locals who informed police and ambulance

After the preliminary investigation the body was sent for the post mortem. The police have registered a case and started further investigation. The police have booked the errant driver under section 174 of the CrPC and started searching for the accused.

The locals informed the police and on the receipt of the information police team rushed

to the spot and started investigation. Further details are under investigation, said police.

The deceased used to work as driver for the borewell machine vehicle and in the evening he was on his way for work but met with an accident near Lalariya.

Meanwhile a 42-year-old mechanic died after he was accidentally hit by a harvester machine in Parwalia on Friday; the deceased asked helper to start the machine which proved fatal. Ganesh Thakur was checking the harvester machine and asked the helper of the vehicle to start the vehicle during which he got injured and was taken to hospital.

Farmers protest before Arvind Kejriwal's residence

New Delhi: Scores of farmers on Saturday staged a sit-in outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence in Delhi, demanding compensation for crop damage due to unseasonal rains and against Power Minister Atishi's false claim of providing unlimited free power to farmer. The Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri led the protest under the banner of BJP Kisan Morcha. Protesting farmers raised slogans against power minister Atishi and chief min-

ister Arvind Kejriwal. Bidhuri said that if farmers are being given unlimited free electricity, then the Chief Minister should announce it. The BJP leader said that the injustice and oppression done by the Kejriwal government on the farmers in Delhi has not happened in any part of the country.

The recent unseasonal rains have ruined the farmers of Delhi. Their crop has been destroyed by rain and hail-storm, but no compensation has been announced by the

Delhi government so far. Farmers' crops have been destroyed in 200 villages in Delhi. He said that farmers should be given compensation at the rate of at least one lakh rupees per acre.

Bidhuri said that compensation should not be announced only on paper, but its order should also be implemented. Last year also, the Delhi government announced compensation for the crop failure of the farmers, but not a single farmer got this compensation.

Tender Document for DIGITAL DISPLAY BOARD with accessories
Reference : Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) :
POLICE TELECOMMUNICATION HEADQUARTER, M.P.,
Bhadbhada Road, Bhopal-462003
Fax No. 0755-2443674, E-Mail :- ssp_radio@mppolice.gov.in
NIT No. PDM/Pur/Dial-100/Digital Display Board/D-5867/2023, Bhopal, Dated 29/03/2023
-:: Fifth Call ::-
e-TENDER NOTICE
e-Tenders/Sealed tenders are invited by Senior Superintendent of Police (Radio) MP Bhopal on behalf of DGP MP Bhopal for the following items :-

S. No.	ITEM NAME	QTY	Required EMD Rs.	Tender Fee Rs.
1	Digital Display Board with accessories & Installation commissioning (as per specification)	03	90,000/-	3,000/-

1. Cost of tender document (Tender Fee) is non refundable and cannot be exempted in any condition.
2. The Tender should be submitted online on website <https://mptenders.gov.in> in favour of SSP (Radio) MP, Bhopal within scheduled date and time. Tender fees and EMD should be deposited online through the website.
3. The document are also available on the website of MP Police (www.mppolice.gov.in) for ready reference.
4. This is a turn-key project.
5. Schedule :-

Document Download/Sale Start Date	29/03/2023 from 1800 Hrs.
Bid Submission Start Date	03/04/2023 from 1800 Hrs.
Bid Submission End Date	20/04/2023 upto 1700 Hrs.
Opening of bid Date	21/04/2023 at 1720 Hrs.

Sr. Superintendent of Police (Radio)
Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal

G-11005/23

PM reviews op readiness of Armed Forces

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked the three Services to stay ready to deal with these new and emerging threats, emphasising that all steps are being taken to equip the Armed Forces with necessary weapons and technologies.

He made these assertions during the Combined Commanders' Conference in Bhopal which began on March 30. He also reviewed the security situation and operational readiness of the Armed Forces during the valedictory session of Combined Commanders' Conference.

He was also updated about the steps underway for the creation of Theatre Commands



in an effort to fight the modern day war with perfect synergy between the three Services namely army, navy and air force, sources said. During the conference, deliberations were held over a spectrum of issues pertaining to national security, including jointness and theaterisation in the armed forces.

Giving details here, officials said the Prime Minister was briefed by Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan about the various



Will not entertain any rebellion, says HDK after JD(S) faces 'Bhavani challenge'

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Amid the family feud over Hassan Assembly seat in poll-bound Karnataka, former chief minister H D Kumaraswamy on Saturday said he will not entertain any 'rebellion'.

He also said the second list of candidates will be released on Monday including for the Hassan seat.

The Hassan seat has become a big headache for the Janata Dal (Secular), which is witnessing a rebellion within the first family of the party. The party which was among the first to release its list of candidates has not been able to finalise a name for Hassan constituency yet.

The reason being that the former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's daughter-in-law and H D Revanna's wife Bhavani Revanna is adamant about contesting the election from Hassan, which is a JD(S) stronghold.

It is now learnt that the Bhavani has warned that she would contest the election as an independent candidate if she is denied a ticket. Her two sons - Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna and MLC Suraj Revanna too have backed their mother. "I will not entertain any rebel-

lion. I have already said this several times that we will respond to the sentiments of the party workers. Even if there is pressure it will not work because the final decision will be left to the wishes of the workers," Kumaraswamy told reporters.

According to sources in the JD(S), Kumaraswamy is keen on fielding H S Prakash's son H P Swaroop. H S Prakash was a four-time MLA from this constituency who lost the 2018 Assembly election to BJP's Preetham Gowda. Six months after losing the Assembly election, Prakash passed away.

The JD(S) second-in-command wanted to field Swaroop keeping in view the large support base and sympathy he enjoys among voters, the sources said.

They added that 89-year old Deve Gowda, who is not keeping well, called the leaders from Hassan to discuss the issue at his Bengaluru residence. With the Hassan conundrum growing to enormous proportions, senior party leaders reached Bengaluru on Saturday to find a way out. "Some of our leaders have arrived here with regard to Hassan constituency and they too made an appeal.

Can't ignore Savarkar's sacrifice in India's freedom struggle: Pawar

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Nobody can ignore late Hindutva ideologue VD Savarkar's sacrifice for the country's independence struggle but disagreements over him cannot be made a national issue today as there are many pressing matters to focus on, said Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar on Saturday.

Defending Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is being targeted by the Bharatiya Janata Party for speaking about issues in India on foreign soil, he said this is not the first time an Indian has spoken about issues in the country while abroad. Pawar was speaking at the Press Club in Nagpur, where he also visited Union minister Nitin Gadkari's home.

To a query on whether he spoke to Rahul Gandhi about Savarkar and if the Congress leader would slow down in his criticism of the late Hindutva ideologue, Pawar said leaders of 18-20 political parties recently sat and discussed major issues before the country.

The BJP has accused Gandhi of repeatedly "insulting" Savarkar. It is also organising Savarkar Gaurav Yatra in his honour. "I suggested that there is a need for us to deliberate on the way the country is being run by those in power,"

he said. Pawar said, "Today, Savarkar is not a national issue, it is an old thing. We had said a few things about Savarkar but it was not personal. It was against Hindu Maha Sabha.

But there is another side to it as well. We cannot ignore the sacrifice made by Savarkar for the independence of the country." About 32 years ago, Pawar said, he had spoken in Parliament about Savarkar's progressive views.

He said Savarkar built a house in Ratnagiri and also constructed a small temple in front of it. "He deputed a person from the Valmiki community to perform puja in the temple. I think this was a very progressive thing," said Pawar.

The NCP leader said there is no need to thrust Savarkar into the national narrative especially because there are many other major issues concerning the common public.

On the BJP's criticism of Gandhi, Pawar said the Congress leader also has the freedom to put his opinion like everyone else.

Asked if it is proper for a leader to speak about issues concerning India on foreign soil, Pawar said one should not give much importance to it as this has not been done for the first time. The NCP leader criticised the government in the past as well.

Raut gets death threat from Bishnoi, 1 held

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Less than 24 hours after Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and MP Sanjay Raut received a threat message on his WhatsApp on alleged behalf of mafia leader Lawrence Bishnoi that he would be shot dead in New Delhi, the Maharashtra police on Saturday detained one person for questioning in Pune for questioning.

Identifying the person detained as one Rahul Talekar who works at a hotel in Pune, the police said that he had been handed over to the Mumbai police for further investigations. Raut had received a WhatsApp message late on Friday evening warning that he would be shot dead with an AK-47 in New Delhi along the lines of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala who was eliminated last year.

Raut got a threat in a WhatsApp message on Friday evening warning that he would be shot dead with an AK-47 in New Delhi, with reference to the killing of the Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala last year. The threat received by Raut read thus: "Anti-Hindu, I will kill you. Meet me in Delhi, will finish you off with an AK47. Like Moosewala. Treat this as a message from Lawrence Bishnoi," with a reference to Salman Khan. Immediately after he received



the threatening message, Raut had complained to the Mumbai Police Commissioner about it. Raut's MLA-brother Sunil Raut lodged a formal complaint with the Kanjurmarg police on Saturday morning.

Based on the technical evidence gathered by the Mumbai police that the person who had sent the WhatsApp message to Raut was in Pune, the crime branch sleuths of the Pune detained Talekar, a resident of Wadgaon Sheri, from a hotel at Kharadi Chandannagar in Pune.

While it is not known immediately as to the motive behind Talekar handing a death threat to Raut, the detained person has told the police that he had sent a threat message to the Sena (UBT) MP under the influence of alcohol. He reportedly told the police that he had telephoned Raut many times, but the latter had not taken his call. Preliminary investigations have revealed that Talekar had no political affiliation nor were there any criminal antecedents. Soon

afterwards, Raut complained to Mumbai Police Commissioner, and a probe was initiated, leading to the detention of the suspect in Pune. The Mumbai police are questioning him on his links with the Bishnoi gang and also the recent email threats issued to Bollywood actor Salman Khan.

Reacting to the latest death threat, Raut - whose security was beefed up immediately after he received the WhatsApp threat message - said: "I have been targeted in a similar manner in the past as well. But, I will not be cowed down by such threats".

"My security as well as the security covers of several Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders' security have been withdrawn and deployed for the 'gaddars' (traitors)... What has the government done about this?" Raut asked. Alluding to similar threats issued to prominent NCP leader of Thane Jitendra Ahwad, Raut accused the state government of ignoring such threats faced by opposition leaders.

Leaders of Opposition in the State Assembly Ajit Pawar and his counterpart from Upper House Ambadas Danve, NCP MP Supriya Sule and Congress leaders expressed serious concerns over threats and urged government to take matter seriously.

Now India, Malaysia can trade in ₹



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Trade between India and Malaysia can now be settled in Indian Rupee (INR) in addition to the current modes of settlement in other currencies. This follows the decision by the Reserve Bank of India in July 2022 to allow settlement of international trade in Indian Rupee (INR), the ministry of external affairs (MEA) said here on Saturday.

This initiative by the RBI is aimed at facilitating the growth of global trade and to support the interests of the global trading community in Indian Rupee (INR).

India International Bank of Malaysia (IIBM), based in Kuala Lumpur, has operationalised this mechanism by opening a Special Rupee Vostro Account through its Corresponding Bank in India i.e. Union Bank of India, MEA said.

Bhutan King's 3-day India visit starts from Monday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk will visit India for three days starting Monday at the invitation of President Droupadi Murmu. He will be accompanied by Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and senior officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

The visit is in keeping with the long standing tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries, the ministry of external affairs said here on Saturday. During the visit, King of Bhutan will meet with the President and the Prime Minister.

The External Affairs Minister and senior officials will call on the King of Bhutan. India and Bhutan enjoy unique ties of friendship and cooperation, which are characterized by understanding and mutual trust.

The visit would provide an opportunity to both sides to review entire gamut of bilateral cooperation and to further advance the close bilateral partnership, including economic and development cooperation.

States responsible for implementing schemes related to menstrual health: Centre to SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has told the Supreme Court that it is dedicated to improve access to menstrual hygiene for young and adolescent girls but the responsibility of providing healthcare services lies with the respective state governments as public health is a state subject.

In an affidavit filed before the top court, the Health ministry said it has undertaken awareness and training programmes and made necessary resources available to girls across the country.

"It is submitted that public health is a state subject and the responsibility of providing healthcare services is that of respective state governments.

"The Central government and its agencies are not the implementing bodies for schemes relating to menstrual health; and it is in fact the states and their agencies which are at the forefront of enforcement of the policies," the ministry said.

It submitted that the Central government is committed to improving menstrual hygiene for young and adolescent girls and to make necessary resources accessible to them.

The affidavit was filed in response to a PIL by Congress leader Jaya Thakur seeking issuance of directions for providing free sanitary pads to girls studying in classes 6 to 12 in government schools across the country.

The ministry stated that menstruation and menstrual practices are clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions for women as well as adolescent girls in India which is combined with limited access to products of sanitary hygiene and lack of safe sanitary facilities.

"Moreover, traditionally, there have been practices of using old clothes as pads by recycling them, use of ash or straw, which not affect menstrual hygiene but also have long term implications for reproductive health.

"The government is dedicated to increase awareness among adolescent girls on menstrual hygiene, build self-esteem and empower girls for better socialisation. The government is also working towards increasing access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins for girls in rural areas," the ministry said.

Thakur in her plea said serious difficulties are faced by adolescent females between the ages of 11 and 18 years who come from poor backgrounds, in receiving education on account of lack of access to education, a constitutional right under Article 21A of the Constitution. "These are ado-



lescent females who are not equipped with and are also not educated by their parents about menstruation and menstrual hygiene. The deprived economic status and illiteracy leads to prevalence of unhygienic and unhealthy practices which has serious health consequences, increase obstinacy and leads to eventual dropping out from schools," the plea said.

The plea, filed through advocate Varun Thakur, said to achieve gender equality, it is crucial that girls are able to actualize their educational potential.

Referring to a 2018 order of the Delhi High Court, the plea said it had mandated the Delhi government to provide free or subsidized access to menstrual hygiene products in schools and to make arrangements for education on menstruation and menstrual hygiene.

"The Government of India has deliberated for several years with regard to the inclusion of the right to education as a fundamental right. The Saikia Committee of 1997 had been appointed to examine the economic viability proposal as to whether the right to free elementary education up to 14 years of age could be made a fundamental right," it said.

The plea said the Right to Education Act, 2009, was enacted and took effect from August 26, 2009 with the objective of providing free and compulsory education in the age group of six to 14 years.

It added the apex court's 2019 verdict in the Sabarimala temple case addressed menstrual taboos and the associated stigma and ruled that the discriminatory emphasis placed on biological differences constituted a violation of Article 14 -- the right to equality -- and emphasized that the social exclusion of women based on menstrual status is a form of untouchability.

"Prevalent myths about menstruation force millions of girls to drop out of school early or be ostracized for the duration of their menstrual cycle every month. They also affect the hiring of female workers, as it is felt that the menstruation hampers their productivity capabilities. Unfortunately, it continues to be treated as a taboo in many societies, shrouded in a culture of silence and shame," the plea said.

Trader cheats SBI of ₹95 cr, arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Kaushik Kumar Nath, a Kolkata based businessman in a money laundering case linked to defrauding the public sector lender State Bank of India (SBI) to the tune of Rs 95 crore.

The ED said Nath availed various credit facilities from the State Bank of India by submitting forged and fabricated documents. The funds received in the guise of credit facilities were withdrawn in cash and used for purposes other than for which it was sanctioned.

The SBI has been cheated and defrauded to the tune of Rs 95 crore, it said. The ED has initiated the investigation under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on the basis of four different FIRs/charge sheets registered/filed by CBI, Kolkata.

During investigation by ED, another case registered by the Crime Branch, Mumbai Police also came to the notice of the agency. "Kaushik Kumar Nath is frequently changing his identity and defrauding the banks. Recently, he had shifted his base to Mumbai and engaged in such type of criminal activities there," the ED said in a statement.

ED has identified several immovable properties acquired by the accused from the 'Proceeds of Crime'. Out of the said properties, four properties worth Rs 3.68 crore are already attached by the ED.

Nath was produced before the Special Court, Kolkata on Friday. The Court has granted him to ED custody for 10 days till April 10. Further investigation in the case is in progress, it added.

The Cochin Shipyard Limited has signed a contract for building six Next Generation Missile Vessels (NGMV) for the Indian Navy at a cost of Rs 9,805 crore with the delivery of ships set to begin from 2027.

The state-run shipyard said the contract marks its entry into advanced weapon intense platforms. "The primary role of the ships would be to provide offensive capability against enemy warship, merchantmen and land targets," Cochin Shipyard said in a release. It said the delivery of ships is scheduled to commence from

March 2027. "The NGMVs would be heavily armed war vessels incorporating stealth, high speed and offensive capability. These ships will be capable of conducting maritime strike operations, anti-surface warfare operations and would

be a potent instrument of sea denial for enemy ships especially at choke points," the release said. The shipyard said these ships would be employed for local naval defence operations and seaward defence of offshore development area.

Cochin Shipyard Limited CMD Madhu S Nair said the shipyard was keen to take up the construction of NGMVs after successfully delivering the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant.

In addition to the above, the state-run entity is also building eight Anti Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Crafts for the Navy and these vessels are under various stages of construction at the yard.



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NIA detains 2 in 27-K kg explosive recovery case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two accused persons from Raniganj and Kolkata, both in West Bengal, in connection with a 2022 case relating to recovery of 27,000 kg ammonium nitrate explosive.

The arrested duo is alleged to be illegal suppliers of explosives, detonators and gelatin sticks. In June 2022, a Tata Sumo car, which was found transporting around 81,000 electric detonators was intercepted by Special Task Force (STF) Kolkata.

The cache of detonators was seized and Ashis Keora, the driver of Tata Sumo was arrested. Ashis led the police to a stash of illegally stored explosives, including 27,000 kgs of ammonium nitrate, 1,625 kg of gelatine sticks and 2,325 more elec-

tric detonators. After the NIA took over the case, initially registered at Police Station Md. Bazar in Birbhum, in September 2022, the agency made its first arrest in January 2023 with the apprehension of Rintu Sk. The NIA on Friday arrested another two accused from Raniganj and Kolkata, who have been identified as Merazuddin Ali Khan of Bokaro and Mir Md. Nuruzzaman of Birbhum, the NIA said in a statement.

While Mir Md. Nuruzzaman had supplied 27,000 kg of ammonium nitrate to Rintu Sk, Merazuddin Ali Khan had supplied electric detonators and gelatine sticks to Rintu Sk, it said. Further investigations to establish the sources of pilferage of the explosives and other bomb making materials, including detonators and gelatine sticks are in progress, it added.

Contract inked for building 6 next gen missile vessels at cost of ₹ 9,805 cr

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/KOCHI

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6 German Shepherds to take on wildlife thugs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Six German Shepherds, ranging between six and nine months old, and their 12 handlers have joined the forest departments of Karnataka (4), Bihar (1), and Madhya Pradesh (1), to take on the wildlife criminals and protect flora and fauna in their respective states.

This takes the total number of wildlife sniffer dogs trained under TRAFFIC and WWF-India's programme in India to 94, said Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO WWF-India.

The canines had received seven-month-long training at basic training Centre, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force



(BTC-ITBP) camp in Panchkula, Haryana from September 2022. The dogs have been trained to detect tiger and leopard skins, bones and other body parts, bear

bile, red sanders, and other illegal wildlife products. BTC-ITBP had organised a passing out ceremony to felicitate the dogs and their handlers in their successful completion of the training course recently. Singh said, "Dogs are not just man's best friend. Once trained as wildlife sniffer dogs, they play a crucial role in protecting our wildlife from crime and illegal trade. This is also true for the 94 wildlife sniffer dogs trained by WWF-India and TRAFFIC over the years"

Dr Merwyn Fernandes, Coordinator of TRAFFIC's India Office, said, "Illegal wildlife trade is a serious threat to the conservation of species in the wild. Wildlife law enforcement practices are crit-

ical in containing this threat, and the use of wildlife sniffer dogs for wildlife crime prevention and detection is crucial." "We hope at least four to five wildlife sniffer dogs are deployed in each state and at trans-border areas, working with law enforcement agencies to protect our wildlife."

Dr Dipankar Ghose, Director & HoD, Wildlife & Habitats Division, WWF-India, and Interim In-Charge, TRAFFIC's India office added, "Detecting smuggled wildlife is an ongoing challenge for law enforcement agencies. TRAFFIC and WWF-India support initiatives that bring in new tools and technology for wildlife crime detection and prevention.

Indictment scrubs 'Teflon Don' of invincibility

AP ■ NEW YORK

When Donald Trump steps before a judge next week to be arraigned in a New York court, it will not only mark the first time a former US president has faced criminal charges. It will also represent a reckoning for a man long nicknamed "Teflon Don," who until now has managed to skirt serious legal jeopardy despite 40 years of legal scrutiny.

Trump, who is the early frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, is expected to turn himself in Tuesday. He faces charges including at least one felony offense related to hush money payments to women during his 2016 campaign. Like any other person facing trial, he will be booked, fingerprinted and photographed before being given the chance to enter a plea.

The spectacle that is sure to unfold will mark an unprecedented moment in American history that will demonstrate once again how dramatically Trump — who already held the

distinction of being the first president to be impeached twice — has upended democratic norms. But on a personal level, the indictment pierces the cloak of invincibility that seemed to follow Trump through his decades in business and in politics, as he faced allegations of fraud, collusion and sexual misconduct.

"Boy, after all this time it's a bit of a shock," Trump biographer Michael D'Antonio said of the indictment. "You know I always thought of him as the Gingerbread Man, shouting, 'You can't catch me!' as he ran away."

"Given his track record," he said, "I had trouble imagining he would ever be held accountable."

"These are not things that Donald Trump ever thought in his entire life, nor I, for that matter, that he would ever be confronted with," Michael Cohen, Trump's longtime fixer and a key witness in the case who served jail time for the payments, told CNN.

Of course, some of the celebration by Trump's detrac-



tors may be premature. The former president could seek to have a judge quickly dismiss the case. And even if it moves forward, there's no guarantee of conviction. Intensifying investigations in Atlanta and Washington are seen as potentially more serious legal threats.

Still, Trump and his team were caught by surprise when word of the New York indictment broke Thursday evening, following news reports that the grand jury hearing the case was set for a weeks-long hiatus. As the deliberations dragged on, some in Trump's

orbit had become convinced that the case had stalled and that charges might never be brought. That included Trump attorney Joe Tacopina, who said Friday morning he had hoped the "rule of law would prevail."

Trump, he said on the "Today" show, was "initially shocked" by news of the charges, but quickly pivoted to his usual pushback playbook.

"After he got over that," he said, Trump "put a notch on his belt and he decided we have to fight now. And he got into a typical Donald Trump pos-

ture where he's ready to be combative on something that he believes is an injustice. ... I think he's now in the posture that he's ready to fight this."

In the meantime, Trump and his team have tried to use the news to his advantage, hoping to energize his loyal base by painting the investigation as part of a larger plot to derail his candidacy.

Trump ally Rep. Jim Banks, R-Indi, who formally endorsed the former president Friday, said Trump "doesn't back down" and was going to "fight back," telling a local radio show it was "yet another chapter where Donald Trump is going to come back on top in the end."

The media maelstrom has catapulted the former president back into the spotlight he craves, at least temporarily limiting attention being paid to his rivals, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is widely expected to challenge Trump for the nomination, and has been holding events across the county to promote his book.

Former president raises over \$4m in 24 hours

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump raised over USD 4 million towards his 2024 presidential run in 24 hours after a Manhattan grand jury indicted the former US president on charges related to paying off a porn star, his office has said.

According to the former president's campaign, over 25 per cent of donations came from first-time donors to the Trump Campaign, further solidifying his status as the clear frontrunner in the Republican primary.

"This incredible surge of grassroots contributions confirms that the American people see the indictment of President Trump as a disgraceful weaponisation of our justice system by a Soros-funded prosecutor," it said in a statement on Friday. "With an average contribution of only USD 34, Trump's 2024 campaign is funded by an unmatched coalition of hardworking patriots who are fed up with special interest donors like Soros spending billions of dollars to influence our elections," it said.

Americans from across all 50 states donated to President Trump's campaign within the first five hours of the "sham indictment", the

statement said.

On Thursday, within minutes of Trump's indictment, the Trump campaign fired off a fundraising email soliciting contributions toward the 76-year-old's 2024 campaign.

It was the first of more than half a dozen fundraising emails sent out by the Trump campaign after the indictment.

The White House has refused to comment on the indictment of the former president.

"I have no comment on that," President Joe Biden told reporters on Friday.

Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters in Zambia: "I am not going to comment on an ongoing criminal case as it relates to the former president."

Trump is currently the front-runner among all declared and potential contenders for the 2024 Republican White House nomination. There is nothing in US law that prevents a candidate who is found guilty of a crime from campaigning for and serving as president - even from prison.

Trump was twice impeached by the House of Representatives. He was acquitted by the Senate both times.

Indians among eight found dead near Canada-US border

PTI ■ TORONTO

Canadian police have recovered the bodies of two more migrants, including that of an Indian woman, who drowned in a river while two families of Indian and Romanian descent were attempting to enter the US from Canada illegally, taking the death toll to eight.

The bodies were found on Friday in a marsh on the riverbank near Akwesasne, a community which straddles Quebec, Ontario and New York state. One other person is still missing.

The two more bodies recovered included one infant, who was a Canadian citizen of Romanian descent. The second was of a woman who was an Indian national, CTV news reported.

Police say the deceased — believed to be two families of Indian and Romanian descent — were trying to cross the St

Lawrence River into the United States from Canada. Among them were two children under the age of three, both Canadian citizens. "Unfortunately, these situations happen. It's not something new," Akwesasne Mohawk Police chief Shawn Dulude said of people trying to cross.

"We've seen it happen in the past, and hopefully as we move forward ... it's something we can one day eliminate," the officer was quoted as saying by the Montreal Gazette newspaper.

Akwesasne police are working with Immigration Canada to assist with identifying the victims and notifying the next of kin. They are also increasing surveillance on the river, it said.

Authorities located the first body in the marsh around 5 pm on Thursday during an aerial search conducted at the request of the Canadian Coast Guard.

Throughout the day on

Friday, search crews could be seen wading through a marshy area near the local marina with the help of a light aircraft. A helicopter also scanned the river. The last two bodies were retrieved from the water during the day.

Police recovered two more bodies from the river on Friday, after discovering six bodies and an overturned boat during a missing person search Thursday afternoon, CBC News reported.

They are believed to have been an Indian family and a Romanian family who were attempting to cross into the US, police said, adding that an Akwesasne resident remains missing. The bodies were discovered as the result of a search for another missing person, Casey Oakes, that also started Thursday. He was last seen Wednesday boarding a small, light blue vessel departing from the east end of Cornwall Island, in St. Lawrence.

US museum to return 15 smuggled sculptures to India

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art will return 15 sculptures to India after it was learnt that the antiquities were illegally removed from the country and sold by disgraced dealer Subhash Kapoor.

In a statement Thursday, the Met said it will transfer the 15 sculptures for return to the government of India. The works range in date from the 1st century BCE to the 11th century CE, and include terracotta, copper and stone.

All of the works were sold at one point by Kapoor, who is currently serving a prison sentence in India.

"The Museum is committed to the responsible acquisition of archaeological art and applies rigorous provenance standards both to new acquisitions and to works long in its collection. The Museum is actively reviewing the history of antiquities from suspect dealers. The Museum values highly its long-standing relationships with the government of India and is pleased to resolve this matter," the Met said in the statement. The museum contacted Homeland Security about its works from Kapoor in 2015 and is "pleased to be acting on this matter today as a result of the criminal investigation into Subhash Kapoor" by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, it said.

Through this cooperative partnership, the museum received new information from the Manhattan DA's office about 15 works of art that made it clear that the works should be transferred, resulting in a constructive resolution, the statement said.

In addition, in cooperation with the DA office's criminal investigation into Turkish sites Bubon and Perge, the museum recently removed from display from its Greek and Roman galleries three pieces from Turkey — two of which were loans and a third is part of the Met's collection, it said.

Pak inflation woes not over yet

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The cash-strapped Pakistan government has warned of more inflation coupled with a slowdown of the economy, blaming the delay in linking the crucial deal with the IMF for the worsening economic crisis, according to a media report on Saturday.

In its monthly outlook report issued on Friday, the Finance Ministry also said that political instability has started feeding the strong inflationary expectations. The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Holding back its inflation forecast figure for the outgoing month, the Finance Ministry painted a gloomy outlook of the economy, saying that the Monthly Economic Indicator, a tool to predict the economic growth rate based on past and current indicators, has further slowed.

"Inflation in March may remain in the upper bound as observed in February when it was 31.5 per cent," the ministry stated. Although it did not give

a figure this time, the market expects inflation to shoot up to 36 per cent due to a host of negative measures, the report said.

A conservative internal assessment of the Finance Ministry suggested around 34 per cent inflation rate in March. The ministry said that a "potential reason for rising price level is political and economic uncertainty."

The ministry also noted that the delay in finalising the USD 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme was causing further economic distress.

"The economic distress resulting from delay of the stabilisation programme has exacerbated the economic uncertainty due to which inflationary expectations have remained strong," the report said.

Pakistan has been struggling hard to revive the USD 6.5 billion derailed IMF bailout package that the Washington-based global lender approved in 2019. Although, its missteps, like the petrol subsidy and attempts to

borrow directly from commercial banks, have further complicated the matters for the cash-starved country.

The Finance Ministry said that even the contractionary monetary policies of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) were not helping contain the inflation.

"Despite the SBP's contractionary monetary policy, the inflationary expectations are not settling down," the ministry said, showing dissatisfaction with the central bank's tight monetary policy.

The SBP increased the policy rate by 3 per cent to 20 per cent in the last Monetary Policy decision held this month.

The monthly outlook report stated that bulk buying during Ramadan may cause a demand-supply gap, resulting in an escalation of the prices of essential items.

Due to the lagged effect of last year's floods, production losses, especially of significant crops, have not yet been fully recovered. Consequently, the shortage of essential items has emerged and persisted.

As a result, "inflation is expected to stay at elevated levels owing to market frictions caused by relative demand and supply gap of essential items, exchange rate depreciation and recent upward adjustment of administered prices of petrol and diesel," the report added.

The Finance Ministry stated that the average Monthly Economic Indicator (MEI) during the first eight months of the current fiscal year indicates a further slowdown in domestic economic activities.

The slowdown seems to be driven by a lack of industrial dynamism, accelerating inflation, which erodes the purchasing power of consumers and investors and is also illustrated by negative growth in exports and imports.

The indicator was already in negative territory since the start of the fiscal year. The Finance Ministry's latest assessment indicates that there may not be any growth during the current fiscal year if no improvement is witnessed in the remainder period.

Lanka to bring counter-terrorism Bill in parliament this month: PM

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena on Saturday said a new counter terrorism draft bill to replace the much maligned Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) of 1979 is to be introduced in the parliament later in April.

Sri Lanka is replacing the PTA with a new legislation called the Anti Terrorism Act (ATA) after the former law was roundly condemned for its draconian nature where people were allowed to be detained without being charged for indefinite periods of time.

Sri Lanka faced international calls to repeal the PTA which was enacted in 1979 as a temporary measure to counter the rising Tamil separatist militancy.

"The new bill will be presented in parliament in the third week of April. It will replace the PTA," Gunawardena said.

On March 17, the 97-page ATA was published in the government gazette.

It aimed to replace the PTA which is often being criticised as a tool used by the successive governments to crush dissent.

The European Union since 2016 has been urging the Sri Lankan government to repeal the PTA and bring in a new counter terrorism legislation in line with international standards. The EU has linked its GSP+ export tariff concessions to Sri Lanka modifying its counter terrorism Act.

The opposition and rights groups have already objected to the ATA, saying that it does not differ much from the PTA.

They hold that ATA could be used to crush democratic protests and political opposition while the security forces being conferred powers to crackdown with judicial procedure to brand any dissent as terrorism.

Sajith Premadasa, the main opposition leader, told reporters: "We see this as undemocratic and authoritarian because it targets political opponents, trade unions and the public."

Mano Ganesan, a minority Tamil political leader, questioned the need for a new counter terrorism law when the country is currently free of any acts of terrorism.

Critics charge that the ATA would be more harmful than the PTA. Sri Lanka, which currently is reeling under its worst economic crisis, has witnessed several activities that have threatened its national security.

The nation saw the end of Tamil insurgency in 2009 after the killing of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. A fresh security threat dented the country's security after the Easter suicide attacks in 2019 that killed 290 people.

Through this cooperative partnership, the museum received new information from the Manhattan DA's office about 15 works of art that made it clear that the works should be transferred, resulting in a constructive resolution, the statement said.

In addition, in cooperation with the DA office's criminal investigation into Turkish sites Bubon and Perge, the museum recently removed from display from its Greek and Roman galleries three pieces from Turkey — two of which were loans and a third is part of the Met's collection, it said.

Pakistan-China border trade to resume next week after 3 years

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

After a three-year hiatus, Pakistan and China are set to resume trade from Monday through the Khunjerab Pass - the only land route between the two all-weather allies, a media report said on Saturday.

The Khunjerab Pass was closed in November 2019 to contain the transmission of the COVID-19 virus between the two countries.

The arrangements to reopen the border point for bilateral trade and other activities under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have been finalised by both sides, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The USD 60 billion CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambitious

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The CPEC is a network of roads, railways, pipelines, and ports in Pakistan connecting China to the Arabian Sea.

Gilgit-Baltistan Home Secretary Rana Mohammad Saleem Afzal said that officials on both sides agreed to reopen Khunjerab Pass for trade and travel activities from April 3. He added that the process of issuing border passes would start soon, the report said.

"Most important aspect is that it's a CPEC route. CPEC consignments will enter Pakistan through Khunjerab Pass from China," he said.

Under an agreement, trade and travel activities between the two countries through the Khunjerab Pass start annually on April 1 and close on November 30. Daily bus service also plies from the Sost Valley of the Gilgit-Baltistan region to the Xinjiang province of China, the report said.

The first trade activity between China and Pakistan under the CPEC started via the Karakoram Highway in November 2016.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar, said that the federal government had been working to revive CPEC activities, the report said. She added that all hurdles in the bilateral trade's way would be removed.

The prolonged closure of the Khunjerab Pass caused immense financial hardships to the local business community, and thousands of workers became jobless, the report said, quoting officials.

During the last three years, the Pass was occasionally opened for emergency cargo transportation from China to Pakistan on specific days.

The volume of trade between the two countries would increase after the reopening of the Khunjerab

Pass, Gilgit-Baltistan Collector of Customs Syed Fawad Ali Shah was quoted as saying in the report.

He said all required arrangements had been finalised for normal trade at the Sost dry port. Shah added that he met traders, the port management and other stakeholders, who were all happy and assured the administration of their cooperation in smooth trade activities at the dry port.

Haji Liaquat of the Gilgit-Baltistan Importers and Exporters Association said that the people affiliated with trade between the two countries were optimistic about the revival of economic activities in the region, according to the report.

He added that the people of the region and the government exchequer suffered losses worth billions of rupees owing to the prolonged halt of trade at the Sost dry port.

Israeli cops shoot man in Jerusalem

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli police shot and killed a man who they alleged tried to snatch an officer's gun at an entrance to a Jerusalem holy site early Saturday, raising fears of further violence during a time of heightened tensions at the flashpoint compound.

The police said the slain man was 26-year-old Mohammed Alasibi from Hura, a Bedouin Arab village in southern Israel.

Palestinian worshippers at the entrance to the site on Saturday morning had a different account, saying that

police shot the man at least 10 times after he tried to prevent them from harassing a woman who was on her way to the holy compound.

Hours after the incident, the muddy stone alleyway leading to the compound was still stained with blood.

Authorities said that officers detained the man for questioning outside the sacred compound home to Al-Aqsa Mosque in the heart of Jerusalem's Old City — the third holiest shrine in Islam. The compound, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, is also the most sacred site in Judaism.

Pope leaves hospital, to preside over Easter mass

AP ■ ROME

Chipper-sounding Pope Francis was discharged Saturday from the Rome hospital where he was treated for bronchitis, quipping to journalists before being driven away that he's "still alive."

Francis, 86, was hospitalised at Gemelli Polyclinic on Wednesday following his weekly public audience in St Peter's Square after reportedly experiencing breathing difficulties. The pontiff received antibiotics administered intravenously during his stay, the Vatican said. In a sign of his improved health, the Vatican released details of Francis' Holy Week schedule. It said he would preside at this weekend's Palm

Sunday Mass and at Easter Mass on April 9, both held in St. Peter's Square and expected to draw tens of thousands of faithful. A Vatican cardinal will be at the altar to celebrate both Masses, a recent practice due to the pontiff having a troublesome knee issue.

But Francis is scheduled to celebrate Holy Thursday Mass, which this year will be held in a juvenile prison in Rome. Still unclear was whether he would attend the late-night, torch-lit Way of the Cross procession at Rome's Colosseum to mark Good Friday. Before departing Gemelli Polyclinic late Saturday morning, Francis comforted a Rome couple whose 5-year-old daughter died Friday night at the Catholic hospital. Outside,



Serena Subania, mother of Angelica, sobbed as she pressed her head into the chest of the pope, who held her close and

whispered words of comfort. Francis seemed eager to linger with well-wishers. When a boy showed him his arm cast,

the pope made a gesture as if to ask "Do you have a pen?" Three papal aides whipped out theirs. Francis took one of the pens and

added his signature to the child's already well-autographed cast.

The pontiff answered in a low voice that was close to a whisper when reporters peppered him with questions, indicating he had felt unwell — "I felt sick," he said, pointing to his mid-section — a symptom that convinced his medical staff to take him to the hospital Wednesday. Asked how he felt now, Francis joked, "Still alive, you know." He gave a thumbs-up sign. Francis exited the hospital from a side entrance, but his car stopped in front of the main entrance, where a gaggle of journalists waited. He opened the car door himself and got out from the front passenger seat. Francis had a cane ready to lean on.

March GST at ₹1.60 L cr; 2nd highest ever

FY-2023 gross collection up 22%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST collections in March grew 13 per cent to the second highest ever at ₹1.60 lakh crore, taking the growth rate of revenue mop-up for full 2022-23 fiscal to 22 per cent. March also saw over 91 per cent of the GST registered businesses filing returns and paying taxes — reflecting greater compliance and improving economic activity.

Gross GST revenue collected in March 2023 is ₹1,60,122 crore, of which Central GST is ₹29,546 crore, State GST is ₹37,314 crore, Integrated GST is ₹82,907 crore (including ₹42,503 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹10,355 crore, the finance ministry said in a statement.

In April 2022, GST collection had touched a record high of close to ₹1.68 lakh crore. The second highest mop-up was recorded in March 2023, at a little over ₹1.60 lakh crore.

For full 2022-23 fiscal year, gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) mop-up grew 22 per cent to ₹18.10 lakh crore. The



average gross monthly collection for the full year is ₹1.51 lakh crore.

March is the fourth time in the just gone by financial year that the monthly gross GST collection has crossed ₹1.5 lakh crore-mark. Last month also witnessed the highest IGST collection ever, the ministry said.

Revenue for the month of March 2023 is 13 per cent higher than the GST revenue in the same month last year, the ministry said. During the month, revenue from import of goods was 8 per cent

higher and revenue from domestic transaction (including import of services) is 14 per cent higher than the revenue from these sources during the same month last year.

The ministry said return filing during March 2023 has been the highest ever. 93.2 per cent of statement of invoices (in GSTR-1) and 91.4 per cent of returns (in GSTR-3B) of February were filed till March 2023 as compared to 83.1 per cent and 84.7 per cent, respectively a year ago. KPMG in India Partner Indirect Tax

Abhishek Jain said the monthly and yearly GST collection point towards the growing trajectory of the Indian economy.

"Another cheer point is the highest ever compliance rate with 91.4 per cent of returns being filed in the month of March, indicating success of revenue authorities and businesses in ensuring tax compliance and preventing tax evasion," Jain said.

Deloitte India, Partner, Leader - Indirect Tax, Mahesh Jaising said with the growth in economic activity and increased focus on GST analytics based audits, the trend should see upward trajectory in the coming months.

"Also, with the new FTP being rolled out from today, we have to wait and watch the impact on the import-export which is expected to have a role in GST collections too," Jaising said.

Tax Connect Advisory Partner Vivek Jalan said businesses are also understanding that robust compliance is the way forward under GST and a significant boost in GST return filing taking the compliance ratio to more than 90 per cent from early 80 per cent shows that Indian businesses are fast moving into the mainstream. This would enhance the Income Tax revenues also and lead to overall GDP growth, Jalan added.

FinMin launches 3-month campaign to boost micro-insurance schemes at Panchayat level

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To achieve saturation under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), the Finance Ministry on Saturday launched a three-month campaign.

"A special 3 months campaign has been launched by DFS at Gram Panchayat Level covering all districts in the country to saturate all eligible persons under the PMJJBY and PMSBY w.e.f 1st April 2023 to the 30th June 2023," Department of Financial Services (DFS) said in a tweet.

Under the campaign, camps are going to be organised at the Gram Panchayat level across all districts in the country by the banks with active participation of the State administration and other Ministries of Government of India to ensure that benefits of the two Jan Suraksha schemes reach the masses.

Chief Secretaries of States/



UTs, Chairman/ MD and CEOs of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have been advised to extend full support during the campaign, an official statement said.

Lead District Managers (LDMs) will lead the campaign in consultation with State/ UT Level Bankers Committees of the States/ UTs and District Magistrates/ Collectors of the Districts. Line Ministries of Government of India have been

advised to utilise their field functionaries for identification and mobilisation of the Scheme beneficiaries for enrolment, it said.

All Nodal Officers from DFS have been instructed to participate in the special SLBC/UTLBC meetings and to undertake field visits for monitoring the Gram Panchayat level saturation campaign, it added.

The PMJJBY offers life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh in case of death due to any reason to people in the age group of 18-50 years having a bank or post office account, who give their consent to join or enable auto-debit of premium.

On the other hand, the PMSBY offers insurance cover of ₹2 lakh for accidental death or total permanent disability and ₹1 lakh for partial permanent disability to people in the age group of 18-70 years with a bank or post office account, who give their consent to join or enable auto-debit of premium.



UltraTech Cement FY23 production up 12.4% to 105.7mn tn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading cement maker UltraTech's consolidated sales rose by 12.4 per cent to 105.7 million tonnes (MT) in FY2022-23, Aditya Birla group firm said in a regulatory filing on Saturday.

The company produced 94 MT of cement in FY22.

Its total sales volume in the domestic market also crossed 100 MT for the financial year that ended on March 31, 2023.

UltraTech's total sales volume for the India market in FY23 was at 101.7 MT, up 13.63 per cent compared to 89.5 MT a year ago.

"We are pleased to inform the company has achieved 100 million tonnes of production, despatches and sales in FY23," it said.

Its grey cement production

in the domestic market was at 100.1 MT in FY23, reporting 13.75 per cent growth while its white cement production was 1.5 MT, up 11 per cent.

UltraTech's overseas production, mainly grey cement was 4.4 MT in FY23. For the fourth quarter that ended on March 31, 2023, UltraTech's total consolidated sales volume was at 31.7 MT and its India volume was at 30.5 MT.

UltraTech has a consolidated capacity of 132.35 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of grey cement. It has 23 integrated manufacturing units, 29 grinding units, one clinkerisation unit and eight Bulk Packaging Terminals.

It is the third largest cement producer in the world, excluding China.

Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata Motors report best-ever wholesales in FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors reported their highest-ever dispatches to dealers last fiscal, enabling the domestic passenger vehicle industry to log in best-ever performance to date.

The country's largest car-maker Maruti Suzuki India reported its highest wholesales to date at 19,66,164 units, up 19 per cent from 16,52,653 units in 2021-22.

Its domestic dispatches rose to 17,06,831 units in 2022-23, up 21 per cent from 14,14,277 units in 2021-22 fiscal.

Hyundai Motor India said its overall wholesales last fiscal were the highest ever since commencing operations in the country.

The automaker dispatched 7,20,565 units to dealers last fiscal, up 18 per cent from 6,10,760 units in 2021-22. Its domestic dispatches rose to 5,67,546 units last fiscal, up 18 per cent from 4,81,500 units in the 2021-22 financial year.

The country's second-largest carmaker said it was its best performance to date in terms of sales volume in the domestic market in a financial year.

Tata Motors also reported the best-ever passenger vehicle dispatches in the domestic market last fiscal at 5,38,640 units, up 45 per cent from 3,70,372 units FY22.

Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Officer, Marketing and Sales, Shashank Srivastava said the company reported its highest-ever sales in a financial year despite chip shortage con-



tinuing to impact the production activity. He noted that the overall industry sales last fiscal rose to 38.89 lakh units, an increase of 27 per cent from 30.69 lakh units in 2021-22. "Both wholesales and retail were the highest for the industry last fiscal," Srivastava said.

The industry sales were expected to rise to 4.05-4.10 million in the current fiscal, he added.

"We expect the industry growth to be in the range of 5-7 per cent this fiscal and the company would like to perform better than the industry," Srivastava said.

He noted that with models like Jimny and Fronx in its kitty, the company expects to corner 25 per cent of the SUV market in the current fiscal. MSI ended the last fiscal with a market share of 12.6 per cent in the SUV segment with sales of 2,02,800 units.

The company, which has discontinued its entry-level model Alto 800 citing affordability factor, said the SUV segment continues to outpace others

with a contribution of 43 per cent in the overall domestic passenger vehicle industry.

Srivastava noted that the contribution of the hatchback segment has come down to 35 per cent last fiscal from 46 per cent in 2016-17.

"Affordability has been hit and it has affected the uptake in this segment. If the income levels go up, we can hope for it to make a comeback. Even now the top best-selling cars in the country are hatchbacks," he said.

Srivastava noted that the chip shortage would continue to impact the industry for the next few quarters. MSI's total order backlog stood at around 3.8 lakh units, with Ertiga leading in terms of pending bookings, he added.

Srivastava confirmed that the company would have a certain production loss in the fourth quarter due to supply constraints. The company had a production loss of around 46,000 units in the third quarter.

Replying to a query, Srivas-

tava noted that the company has taken a price hike of around 0.8 per cent from April.

Hyundai reported domestic dispatches of 5,67,546 units last fiscal, up 18 per cent from 4,81,500 units in the 2021-22 financial year.

Exports rose 18 per cent year on year to 1,53,019 units.

"FY 22-23 has been a phenomenal year for the company, as we introduced seven segment-defining products like the all-new Hyundai Tucson, new Venue, Venue N Line, all electric IONIQ 5, new Grand i10 NIOS, new AURA and the all-new Verna catering to different segments thus giving a strong push to brand Hyundai amongst new-age Indian customers," Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg said in a statement.

Despite global headwinds, the company sees momentum in the Indian auto industry to continue, he added.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Managing Director Shailesh Chandra stated noted that the steep growth witnessed

by the industry was driven by post-Covid pent-up demand in the early part of the year, the launch of several new vehicles and easing of the semiconductor shortage.

While SUVs and EVs led this growth, customers' rising preference for safe vehicles and smart technology features was equally pronounced, he added.

Tata Motors scaled a new sales peak by posting its highest-ever annual domestic sales of 5,38,640 units, achieving a robust 46 per cent sales growth over FY22 and registering its third successive year of industry-beating growth, Chandra said.

"Looking ahead, we expect the demand for personal vehicles to remain robust with the trend of electrification further strengthening as more options are made available to customers plus support from a rapidly growing and improving ecosystem," he said.

However, the growth rate of the passenger vehicle industry may moderate due to a strong base effect as well as macro factors including hardening interest rates, rising inflation, and the cost impact from progressive regulatory norms, he added.

"We continue to stay agile, carefully monitoring the supply situation, particularly semiconductor and any potential waves of Covid," Chandra said.

Kia India said its sales stood at 2,69,229 units last fiscal, a growth of 44 per cent over 1,86,787 units in 2021-22. The company reported its highest-ever market share of 7.4 per cent in Q4 of FY23.

Honda reports 2% growth in domestic wholesales

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Cars India on Saturday said its domestic sales increased by 2 per cent to 6,692 units in March. The company had dispatched 6,589 units to dealers in March 2022, the automaker said in a statement.

Exports stood at 3,189 units last month as compared with 2,243 units in March 2022, it added. The company said its domestic wholesales rose 7 per cent to 91,418 units last fiscal, as compared with 85,609 units in FY22. The automaker exported a total of 22,722 units during 2022-23 as compared with 19,401 units in 2021-22, registering 17 per cent growth, it added.

"The company has achieved a domestic sales growth of 7 per cent, driven by the strong and positive sales momentum of our models, specifically the Amaze and City," Honda Cars India Director, Marketing and Sales Yuichi Murata said.

Despite the persistent challenges posed by the global chip shortage and its impact on production volumes, the Indian automobile industry has had one of its strongest years in terms of sales, he noted.

"We believe that India holds significant potential and anticipate even greater demand in the years ahead," Murata said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform general public that Sh. Ramesh Shyam has acquired the Property bearing No. 51-A area measuring 96 Sq. Yds., Out of Mustafi No. 81, Killa No. 7, Situated at Vaka Moja Ballabgarh (Gang Colony) Tehsil Ballabgarh Dist. Faridkot Haryana vide two separate Transfer Deeds dated 25.08.2018, Doc. No. 30/98 and dated 24.02.2023, Doc. No. 8788 and Now, Sh. Harsh Shrivastava and Sh. Ramesh Shyam are mortgaging the above said property with Industrial Bank Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Munesh Dhanani/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas North, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD.H.T. Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066770172/9818228636 (M).

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1. Rahu Sahgal S/o Satish Kumar Sahgal, the absolute legal owner and in possession of Built up Third Floor with terrace rights with area of 83 sq. yds., built on Property having Municipal No. 2640, Lambi, Gali, Basti Punjabiyan, Subzi Mard, Delhi-110007, by virtue of a Sale Deed reg. with doc no. 1581 on 10.02.2023, intends to mortgage the said property in favor of Bajaj Housing Finance Limited and thus, invites any and/or all objections, claims, rights, interest and information on encumbrances, mortgages, charges etc. in respect of the past and/or present title to the above property within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Notified that anybody claiming any right, title, interest or lien over the aforesaid flat may file such claim or objection to the undersigned within a period of 15 days from the date of Publication of this notice. Otherwise, it will be presumed that the said flat is free from all encumbrances, charges and/or lien, etc. and my client is free to purchase the said flat from the above named seller.
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'Small tea growers made India self-reliant in production'
PTI ■ KOLKATA

Emergence of small tea growers (STGs) has made the country self-reliant in the production of the beverage and to meet domestic requirements and exports, Tea Board said. STGs have also helped local economic conditions and livelihood of the people, the Tea Board said in a statement.

India annually produces nearly 1400 million kg of tea, out of which the contribution of STGs is more than 50 per cent, it said. Tea exports from India in value terms is close to \$800 million. It attained a positive growth of 15 per cent in volume of around 220 million kg in 2022, the board said.

The country is now the second largest producer of the beverage after China and tea industry is one of the largest employers.

India is also the fourth largest exporter after China, Kenya and Sri Lanka, it said. According to the Tea Board, the agency has helped in the development of the industry in terms of area under cultivation, production, productivity and domestic consumption.

Sebi bans 3 individuals from securities mkt for 2 yrs, fines ₹90 lakh in ZEEL insider trading case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred three individuals from the securities market for two years and imposed penalty totalling Rs 90 lakh on them in a case pertaining to insider trading activities in the scrip of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL).

The three individuals banned by the regulator — Bijal Shah, Gopal Ritolia and Jatin Chawla — have also been directed to pay the fine within 45 days.

In addition, Ritolia and Chawla have been directed to

disgorge illegal gains to the tune of Rs 7.52 crore and Rs 2.09 crore respectively along with interest, the regulator said in its 152-page final order on Friday.

The case relates to insider trading activities by certain entities in the scrip of ZEEL, while in possession of unpublished price sensitive information (UPSI) pertaining to audited financial results of the media company for the quarter ended June 30, 2020 as well as launch of ZEEPLEX by the company on September 1, 2020.

Bijal Shah, who was head of



the financial planning and analysis, strategy and investor relations at ZEEL during the relation time, had access to this unpublished price sensitive information. He in turn, communicated

the information to Ritolia and Chawla, who traded on the basis of this information and earned profits to the tune of Rs 7.52 crore and Rs 2.09 crore respectively, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said.

According to the regulator, Shah is not liable for insider trading, he has played the primary role in disclosing the unpublished Price sensitive information to Ritolia and Chawla, which resulted in the violation of the provisions of insider trading rules.

MCL reaches new high in coal production

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) on Saturday said the company has registered a record 193.3 million tons of coal production during the 2022-23 financial year.

The MCL also posted the highest ever 192.7 million ton coal despatch to consumers, Chairman cum-Managing Director Om Prakash Singh, said while addressing the AGM here.

"The MCL registered a growth of 15 per cent for the financial year 2023-23, while coal despatch showed nine per cent growth over the previous financial year 2021-22," Singh said. The company has achieved all its tar-

gets much ahead of schedule and has helped Coal India surpass its target of 700 million tons set for the financial year 2022-23, the CMD said.

He said 97 per cent of total production of MCL was through eco-friendly equipment surface miners. He said that the coal despatch to the power sector also increased from 127.12 million tons 2,922 to 148.8 million tons in 2022-23 with a growth of 17 per cent.

Strengthening its business activities, the company made Capital Expenditure (CapEx) of Rs 3,850 crore during the financial year 2022-23, he said adding that MCL enjoys being the top company in Odisha contributing under CSR.

Godrej Properties buys four acre in Pune for housing project; eyes ₹1K cr revenue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Godrej Properties has acquired a R4-acre land parcel in Pune to build a luxury housing project with an estimated revenue potential of ₹1,000 crore. In a regulatory filing on Saturday, Godrej Properties informed that it has acquired around 4-acre land parcel near Korgaon Park in Pune. The development on this land will primarily be a luxury housing project.

"The project will have a developable potential of approximately 7.5 lakh square feet with an estimated revenue potential of approximately ₹1,000 crore," the company said.

The company, however, did not disclose the financial details of the transaction. Gaurav Pandey, the MD and CEO of Godrej Properties, said the demand for luxury homes has remained strong over the past few years.

AFTER IMPRESSING AT WORLDS, PREETI EYES BERTH IN ASIAN GAMES-BOUND CONTINGENT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After impressing in her maiden Women's World Boxing Championships, the prodigiously talented Preeti Pawar is eager to put to test the learnings from the tournament at the first Olympic qualifiers - the Asian Games this year - provided she secures a spot in the Indian contingent.

The 19-year-old put up a fearless display across all her three bouts in the marquee event here as she notched an RSC win before topping the top seed and last edition's silver medalist Lacramioara Perjoc of Romania.

She made a pre-quarterfinal exit after losing a fiercely-contested bout to two-time medalist, Thailand's Jitpong Jutamas, earning plaudits from everyone.

"Junior and youth level is mostly about who attacks more but once you are at the senior level, you have to play with your mind and be more technical," Preeti told PTI.

"I feel I need to modify my game, I should not be attacking all the time, I need to counter more. I am working on improv-



ing my strength and tweaking techniques.

"If I qualify for the Asian Games that will be great. So, I want to be prepared for the Olympic qualifying event," added Preeti, who competes in

the 54kg class, an Olympic category.

The Asian Games from September 23 to October 8 in Hangzhou, China are the first Paris Olympics qualifying event for boxers from the continent.

For someone, who was averse to the idea of taking up boxing a few years back, the Bhiwani pugilist has made a name for herself quickly in the sport.

"I never thought I'd come

into sports and choose boxing as my career. I wasn't interested in sports. I was focussed on my studies.

"One day, my uncle and father came and said to me that I have to do boxing."

The then 14-year-old's immediate reaction was "Main nahi karungi, boxing toh bilkul bhi nahi (I will never take up boxing)."

But Preeti, whose father is an assistant sub-inspector in Haryana Police, reluctantly started training at her uncle and former national medalist boxer Vinod Sai Pawar's, boxing academy.

"In the beginning boxing was forced on me, I used to go for training but after coming back I used to cry, kabhi pair dard hota tha kabhi haath (sometimes my feet would hurt, other times my hands)."

"It went on for 6-7 months. When I started playing, competitions I developed interest. Then when I won medals, the confidence and interest increased."

At her uncle's boxing club, there weren't many girls, so Preeti regularly sparred with

boys, much to the dislike of her mother.

"Mummy was scared that I'll get punched. Once during training, I got hit and passed out. I had to be taken to a doctor," recalls Preeti.

The Haryana-based boxer clinched the silver medal at the Youth Asian Championships in 2021. She also joined the Inspire Institute of Sports, which has sponsored her since then.

Making her transition to the senior level, Preeti won bronze in her maiden event - the 2022 Asian Championships at Jordan. She lost to the Tokyo Olympics featherweight champion Sena Irie of Japan in the semifinal.

"When I boxed in my first senior competition, I felt this where real boxing starts. I lost to the Tokyo Olympics champion but I got a lot of confidence from that bout."

The teenager is a little low on experience but believes there is no substitute to hard work.

"I don't think anyone has been able to achieve what I have in a such a short time. So, time doesn't matter how long you have been there, it is the hard work that counts."



ITF Mysuru Open: Mukund-Vishnu pair bags doubles title

PTI ■ MYSURU

India's Mukund Sasikumara and Vishnu Vardhan bagged the doubles title at the ITF Mysuru Open as the duo showed admirable endurance against compatriots B Ritvik Choudhary and Nikki Poonacha here on Saturday.

The two defeated top seeds Choudhary and Poonacha 6-3, 6-4 in 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Mukund and Vishnu warded off seven break points in the match while they converted two opportunities to break their opponents to ease their way to the title.

"I am very happy to return to Mysore Tennis Club. I was here as a 12-year-old and I was also the winner of the first International tournament here in 2012. Now, I am very happy to win the doubles title, so I think I partially defended my title," Vardhan said after the match.

"When I came here with my mom in 2012 I was reconsidering playing tennis professionally and from that point to be in Grand Slam ranking and India No 1, it has been a remarkable journey," said Mukund after the match.

"During the pandemic, my life had hit the rock bottom again but I was decided that irrespective of how this week had gone, this will be a new start to an unforgettable journey this year and I hope to return here soon but hopefully you will see me in bigger tournaments."

In fact, it was the second match of the day for Mukund and Vishnu and they showed great powers of concentration to stay focused on the task.

They also won more than 80 percent of points on both first and second serves, indicating the consistency in their game.

Earlier in the day, Mukund and Vishnu romped into the doubles final upsetting second seeded Australia-Ukraine pair of Blake Ellis and Vladyslav Orlov 6-4, 7-5.

The USD 25,000 event is being hosted by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA).

In the singles, India's campaign ended when Mysuru lad S D Prajwal Dev went down fighting to George Loffhagen of Britain 5-7, 4-6 in a tight semifinal match that lasted precisely two hours.

Loffhagen will face eighth seeded Australian Blake Ellis, who shocked second seeded American Oliver Crawford 7-5, 6-3 in the other last four clash. The final will be played on Sunday.

Results (Singles, semifinals)

George Loffhagen (GBR) beat SD Prajwal Dev (IND) 7-5, 6-4 (8) Ellis Blake (AUS) beat (2) Oliver Crawford (USA) 7-5, 6-3

Doubles, Final: Mukund Sasikumara (IND) / Vishnu Vardhan (IND) beat Ritvik Choudhary (IND) and Nikki Poonacha (IND) 6-3, 6-4.

Maini bags maiden F2 podium at Melbourne

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Indian driver Kush Maini of Campos Racing fought off a strong challenge from Arthur Leclerc of DAMS in a rain-interrupted race to claim his first-ever Formula 2 podium with a third-place finish at the Albert Park, here on Saturday.

Maini started from P3 on the grid on prime tyres and held on to his position for several laps while Arthur Leclerc was right behind him putting pressure on the softer tyres.

Leclerc got past Maini but the Indian fought back and made a last second dive onto the inside and got back P3.

Leclerc kept the pressure on through the safety car restarts as well but Maini held on to a well-deserved maiden podium in F2.

"I have been waiting on the doorstep of getting onto a podium and narrowly missed it at Bahrain," the 22-year-old said.

"It was great to get my first podium on a new track as a rookie. It is most important to keep consistent as it's a very long series. We have had a good start to the season so far with consistency in qualifying always in the top 8."

Dennis Hauger (MP Motorsport) and Jak Crawford (Hitech Pulse-Eight) took the top-two finishes.

Haaland misses Man City match vs Liverpool due to injury

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester, Apr 1 (AP) — Prolific striker Erling Haaland was not part of Manchester City's squad to play Liverpool on Saturday after failing to recover from a groin injury.

The Norway international, who has scored 42 goals in all competitions this season, had to withdraw from his country's European Championship qualifiers against Spain and Georgia last week because of the problem.

"He is not fit. He doesn't feel proper," City manager



Pep Guardiola said ahead of the game.

"It is not a big issue but today he was not right."

Haaland leads the Premier League scoring charts with 28 goals and has hit nine in his last three games in all competi-

tions.

The game was important for both teams, with City eight points behind first-place Arsenal in a game in hand, and Liverpool fighting to secure a top-four spot for Champions League qualification.

Guardiola earlier this week said the 22-year-old Haaland would be given the chance to prove his fitness during the team's training session on Friday. Haaland's father, Alf-Inge, was quoted by Norwegian TV during the week saying his son had traveled to Barcelona for treatment.

NBA, players reach deal for new labour agreement



AP ■ NEW YORK

The NBA will have labor peace for years to come. The league and its players came to an agreement early Saturday on a new seven-year collective bargaining agreement, the NBA announced. It is still pending ratification, though that process is almost certainly no more than a formality.

The deal will begin this summer and will last at least through the 2028-29 season. Either side can opt out then; otherwise, it will last through 2029-30.

Among the details, per a person familiar with the negotiations who spoke to The Associated Press: the in-sea-

son tournament that Commissioner Adam Silver has wanted for years will become reality, and players will have to appear in at least 65 games in order to be eligible for the top individual awards such as Most Valuable Player. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because neither the league nor the National Basketball Players Association released specifics publicly.

Another new part of the CBA will be a second luxury tax level that, when reached, will keep teams from using their midlevel exception to sign players. That was a clear compromise, given how some teams wanted the so-called "upper spending limit" that

would have essentially installed an absolute ceiling on what can be spent each season and help balance the playing field between the teams that are willing to pay enormous tax bills and those who aren't.

Not in the CBA is a change to the policy that would allow high school players to enter the NBA draft. It was discussed and has been an agenda item for months, but it won't be changing anytime soon - probably not for at least the term of the next CBA.

"We also appreciate that there is a lot of benefit to really having veterans who can bring those 18-year-olds along," NBPA executive director Tamika Tremaglio said in February during an NBPA news conference at All-Star weekend.

"And so, certainly anything that we would even consider, to be quite honest, would have to include a component that would allow veterans to be a part of it as well."

Silver said Wednesday, at the conclusion of a two-day Board of Governors meeting, that he was hopeful of getting a deal done by the weekend. He also said there had been no consideration - at least on the league's part - of pushing the opt-out date back for a third time.



Marseille held 1-1 at home by Montpellier in French league

AP ■ MARSEILLES (FRANCE)

Marseille missed the chance to put pressure on French league leader Paris Saint-Germain after being held at home by in-form Montpellier to 1-1. Matteo Guendouzi's first-half penalty was all Marseille had to show for dominating possession and chances as the visitors stayed unbeaten in the seventh game since coach Michel Der Zakarian returned last month.

Marseille's draw means PSG can move nine points clear on Sunday with a win at home over Lyon. The visitors made a better start and Arnaud Nordin fired Montpellier ahead in the 12th minute, though he had to wait for a VAR check to celebrate after he was initially flagged offside. Wahbi Khazri made a fine turn to elude Guendouzi and set off on a run that sucked in four Marseille defenders before he played the ball to Elye Wahi, who sent it straight on to Nordin for the French forward's fifth league goal.

Verstappen takes pole position at F1 Australian Grand Prix

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Max Verstappen will have his best chance of claiming an inaugural Australian Grand Prix title after taking pole position in his Red Bull for Sunday's third race of the Formula One season on the Albert Park circuit.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton is among rivals sharing renewed hope after the dominance Red Bull has had over its rivals was diminished during Saturday's qualifying session.

Verstappen, a two-time world champion, was not pleased with the performance of his RB19 despite setting a track record around the circuit on Saturday.

After setting a lap record during practice earlier on Saturday, the drivers' championship leader set a benchmark of 1 minute, 16.732 seconds in the final session of qualifying.

"I have been on the podium once, but I want to be on a different step this time," Verstappen said after claiming his first pole position in Australia. His teammate Sergio Perez, who sits just one point behind the Dutch driver in the championship, will start from the back of the grid after



enduring a horrible day in Melbourne.

After declaring Red Bull would win every race this season after their supremacy in Bahrain, Mercedes driver George Hamilton shared the front row of the starting grid after recording a time 0.236 seconds slower than Verstappen.

Hamilton will start in third position on what was an encouraging day for Mercedes, with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso qualifying fourth.

"This is totally unexpected. For us to be up in the two front rows is a dream," Hamilton said. "To be this

close to Red Bull is incredible. I think this gives everyone in the team a boost and a glimpse of hope. This will spur everyone on. It will inspire everyone to continue to push."

Verstappen, who won the season-opening race in Bahrain, was progressively faster on Saturday but raised concerns about his car on the lap prior to setting the new mark.

"Downshifts are getting worse as well," Verstappen said.

Verstappen said he has confidence in the Red Bull's reliability. But he was surprised by how close the Mercedes pair finished.

Gender equality coming to Formula One racing team soon?

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Taking a break in the paddock after watching Max Verstappen set a lap record in practice at the Australian Grand Prix, Melbourne teenager Kaitlyn Bourne was loving her day at the track.

The 17-year-old Bourne, who was wearing a clear plastic poncho over a Red Bull sweater on a wintry day at Albert Park, is a massive fan of Australian Formula One driver Daniel Ricciardo, who is sitting out this season.

But Bourne, who comes from a motorsport-loving family and watches every Grand Prix race, hopes that one day she will have the chance to support a female F1 driver.

"It is still a very male dominated sport, so it would be good to bring in more females. I think it could happen," she said.

There has not been a woman driver in a Formula 1 race for more than 40 years. But with estimates suggesting that 40% of current Formula 1 fans are female, the motorsport industry is making a concerted effort to ensure that changes.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said this week in Melbourne he believes gender equality in the sport is inevitable.

"I think it is fantastic to see the amount of girls, females, that are showing interest in Formula One now and we're seeing it at all levels," he said.

"I think the interest is growing. It is appealing to more women to get involved in the sport, whether that is from an engineering basis, or across all aspects of the organization."

"As the sport does become more accessible, and we are pushing to make it more accessible, I think that is something that will naturally happen anyway."

Sinner stuns top-ranked Alcaraz in Miami Open semifinals

AP ■ MIAMI GARDENS (FLORIDA)

Tenth-seeded Jannik Sinner of Italy stunned top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz in the Miami Open semifinals, rallying from a set down to beat the defending champion, 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-2 in a three-hour thriller.

Sinner ended Alcaraz's winning streak at 10 matches on Friday night. Sinner's powerfully steady baseline game wore down Alcaraz, who appeared to be cramping early in the decisive third set while

he also dealt with an apparent finger injury. He will lose the No. 1 ranking to Novak Djokovic.

Sinner, the 21-year-old who made the Miami Open final last year but hasn't been past the quarterfinals of a major, will face fourth-seeded Daniil Medvedev of Russia in the championship match Sunday. Medvedev has beaten Sinner in all five meetings.

Alcaraz had been so dominant recently, he hadn't lost a set since February before Sinner's rally in the Miami

humidity. The Alcaraz hype train has been so breakaway NBA stars Luka Doncic and Jimmy Butler showed up to watch the Spanish star from the teal seats.

Alcaraz also fought Sinner in Indian Wells in the semifinals, and it was a taut match but not quite like this. These two young guns are poised for a long and spectacular rivalry. Sinner's victory ended Alcaraz's hope of becoming the first man since Roger Federer in 2017 to win the Sunshine Double of Indian Wells and Miami.



Medvedev beat fellow Russian Karen Khachanov 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-3 on the same day Wimbledon announced Russians will be allowed back.

Medvedev has won 23 of 24 matches - the lone loss to Alcaraz - and is in his fifth straight final.

Also Friday, No. 15 seed Petra Kvitova beat unseeded Sorana Cirstea 7-5, 6-3 in the second women's semifinal. Kvitova will face Elena Rybakina in the final.

Alcaraz prevailed in the first set in a tiebreaker but that took a lot out of Alcaraz's 19-

year-old legs. Between points in the third set, Alcaraz was stretching noticeably during the third set, trying to stave off cramps and waved to the crowd for support.

Despite Alcaraz getting the second set back on serve, Sinner stunned Alcaraz in the ninth game, breaking him at love to go up 5-4 and then closing it out. Alcaraz had won 21 straight sets.

An ATP trainer came out to attend to Alcaraz midway through the second set, examining one of his fingers before the cramps set in.



Mayers 73 propels Lucknow to massive 193/6 vs Delhi

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Kyle Mayers made a grand entry on IPL stage with a scintillating 38-ball-73 to lead Lucknow Super Giants to an imposing 193/6 against Delhi Capitals in their season-opener, here on Saturday.

The left-hander from Barbados, who was included in absence of South African opener Quinton De Kock, made Capitals pay a heavy price for dropping him on 14, by blazing his way to a 28-ball fifty as his knock had as many as seven sixes.

Deepak Hooda (17, 18b) at the other end was a mere spectator to Mayers' fury as they stitched 79 runs in 42 balls to accelerate the run-rate in the middle overs.

The duo departed in the space of one ball, while Marcus Stoinis (12) got out cheaply in the middle overs.

But LSG maintained the momentum with Nicholas Pooran (36; 21b) and Krunal Pandya (15 not out; 13b) taking the charge, before Ayush Badoni's mini assault (18; 7b, 1x4, 2x6) and a last ball six from 'Impact Substitute' Krishnappa Gowtham yielded 22 runs from the 20th over bowled by Chetan Sakariya (2/53).



The last five overs produced 66 runs, primarily due to Pooran and Badoni using long handles to good effect. Playing their first-ever home game since joining IPL last year, LSG were in a spot of bother with DC bowlers making full use of the

two-paced tricky Ekana wicket after opting to bowl. It took LSG openers, KL Rahul and Mayers, 16 balls to get going and hit their first boundary. They were reduced to 19/1 inside four overs when left-arm

pacer Sakariya prolonged Rahul's lean patch by dismissing the Indian opener with a slower one. It was Sakariya's third dismissal of Rahul in four IPL match-ups. But things soon tilted in the home team's favour after Khaleel

Ahmed grassed a sitter off Mayers in the last over the Powerplay. Mayers unleashed his fury against debutant Mukesh Kumar, crunching him for two massive sixes in the very next over.



There was no stopping Mayers as he continued his assault on their frontline spinners Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav in his knock studded with seven sixes and two fours.

Patel however had the last laugh when he cleaned up Mayers with a ball that turned almost square from an imaginary fifth stump line.

Thereafter, it was his West Indies teammate Nicholas Pooran who seized the momentum in his 21-ball 36 (2X4, 3X6) as he along with Krunal Pandya kept the run flow.

Delhi were also let down by their ground fielding. For them, Khaleel was the pick of the bowler as he made a fine comeback from injury to return 2/30 with wickets of Stoinis and Pooran, latter caught smartly by Prithvi Shaw.



Rohit, Archer both fit for MI's opener: Coach Boucher

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Mumbai Indians head coach Mark Boucher confirmed that skipper Rohit Sharma and pacer Jofra Archer are fit for their IPL opener against Royal Challengers Bangalore on Sunday. There were speculations that Rohit might not be available for the opening game as he had missed the captains' photo shoot in Ahmedabad. But Boucher dispelled all rumours.

"Yes, Rohit is fit. He has trained the last two days and is 100 per cent ready to go. I think he didn't feel particularly well that morning and just as a precaution, we told him to stay at home," Boucher said at the pre-match press conference on Saturday.

"There are a lot of photo shoots the boys have had to do. He's not had a lot of time to himself so we thought it was better," he added. In Jasprit

Bumrah's absence, England pacer Jofra Archer, who himself is coming off a long injury lay off, will lead the MI pace attack.

"Jofra is good, he is 100 per cent ready for tomorrow. He didn't train today, it was an optional training session. He felt that he was ready to put the spikes on tomorrow. We are very happy with his progression since he has been with us. He'll be playing tomorrow."

The five-time champions had a poor last season where they finished 10th but Boucher doesn't want to look back as he wasn't in charge back then.

"I can't comment too much about last year. I wasn't there. But we have spoken about it, some new talents in the team, new energy, some guys who have done really well in the previous IPLs. They understand that last year we didn't have a good season but things can change very quickly, energies have been good, we are in a good space."



Punjab Kings beat KKR via DLS method in rain-hit IPL season-opener

PTI ■ MOHALI

Punjab Kings' costliest recruit Sam Curran dismissed the dangerous Andre Russell at the nick of time to ensure a seven-run victory over Kolkata Knight Riders via Duckworth-Lewis method in a rain-hit afternoon encounter of Indian Premier League, here on Saturday.

Chasing a target of 192, KKR were left stranded at 146 for 7 after 16 overs when heavy downpour put spinner on their hardwork. The DLS par score at that time was 153. Had KKR not lost Russell (35 off 19 balls), who was looking to walk away with the game and then Venkatesh Iyer to Arshdeep Singh in the next over, the par score would have been lower before heavens opened up.

The two wickets in the 15th and 16th over proved to be decisive as KKR needed 46 off 24 balls at that stage with Shardul Thakur (8 not out) and Sunil Narine (7 not out) were at the crease. Kolkata needed 62 from 32 balls when Curran dismissed an on-song Russell and Arshdeep removed the 'Impact Substitute' Venkatesh Iyer (34) which proved to be turning point. Russell was holed at deep mid-wicket and Iyer was snapped at point.

The burly West Indian Russell had ignited KKR's hopes of a turnaround with three fours and two sixes, while Iyer made the first real impact with in his 28 ball knock that had three fours and a six.

KKR had a poor start as they were reduced to 29/3 inside the first five overs but a 46-run stand for the fourth wicket between Iyer and skipper Nitish Rana (24) brought them back in contest. Then a 50-run partnership between Iyer and Russell put them on course for a possible chase. But KKR just did not have enough firepower in them on the day and Arshdeep's brilliant figures of 3/19 in 3 overs was a game-changer for the 'Red Devils'.

Floodlights malfunction leads to near-30 minute delay in KKR's chase vs PBKS

PTI ■ MOHALI

Kolkata Knight Riders' chase against Punjab Kings in their IPL match on Saturday was delayed by almost half an hour due to floodlight malfunction. The PCA-IS Bindra Stadium here has a total of six floodlights at a comparatively lower height.

Floodlight malfunction is common at Indian stadiums and on the day, once KKR came out to bat, a lot of bulbs in multiple towers didn't turn on and it became a frustrating wait for the players, who then went inside the dressing room.

The onus on stadium maintenance lies with Punjab Cricket Association and the inordinate delay was certainly an embarrassment for the local

unit. As of now, the cause of malfunction hasn't been known but it is a given that PCA brass will get a rap on the knuckles from the BCCI bigwigs. The delay also causes problems for the broadcasters — two this season as the match will now end well after 7:30 pm, the time when the next game starts.

In the second match of the IPL season here, Punjab Kings lost momentum in the second half of their innings after being asked to bat, adding just 91 runs for four wickets to finish at a total of 191 for five in their 20 overs. Bhanuka Rajapaksa top scored for Punjab Kings with 50 from 32 balls with five fours and two sixes while their new captain Shikhar Dhawan scored 40 from 29 balls with the help of six fours.

Arshdeep bowled an eventful second over, striking the first ball to have Mandip Singh (2) caught at deep mid-wicket by Curran. After Anukul Roy hit him for a four, the India pacer had the left-handed batter caught at short mid-wicket. Earlier in the first half, Bhanuka Rajapaksa slammed a quickfire 50 to guide Punjab Kings to a challenging 191 for five against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Rajapaksa added 86 runs for the second wicket with captain Shikhar Dhawan (40) to lay a strong platform, with Sam Curran (26 not out) providing late flurry on a batting friendly wicket. Punjab dominated the first half of the innings with aggressive batting and looked primed to cross 200, but KKR managed to pull things back in control with regular wickets after a sturdy 86-run association between Rajapaksa and Dhawan.

The left-handed Sri Lankan Rajapaksa made the most of wrong lines bowled to him by KKR bowlers, racing to the first half-century for PBKS this season. Riding on the momentum provided by Prabhsimran Singh (23) at the top, Rajapaksa ensured Punjab maintained the domination while Dhawan played the second fiddle throughout his stay.

They went about their job with precision to score nearly 10 runs an over, adding 86 runs from just 55 balls for the second wicket. The Sri Lankan batter toyed with the KKR bowling, finding gaps and clearing the ropes at will and perished only after scoring 50 from 32 balls with five fours and two sixes. Jitesh Sharma hit a couple of sixes to score a quickfire 21 from 11 balls while playing his first IPL match, Raza scored 16 from 13 balls with a six and a four each.

Gaikwad's sixes clean, pure timing: Kumble

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Former India captain Anil Kumble was mighty impressed with Chennai Super Kings opener Ruturaj Gaikwad's six-hitting prowess during his 92-run knock in the IPL opener against Gujarat Titans, saying all his hits over the fence were "clean" and results of "pure timing".

However, Gaikwad's show, featuring four boundaries and nine sixes from 50 balls, was overshadowed by the Titans' all-round performance. Shubman Gill struck 63 off 36 balls to help the defending champions Titans chase down the 179-run target in 19.2 overs.

"We don't associate him (Gaikwad) with six hitting but to hit nine sixes in an inning is really amazing. Clean, it looked really clean. It was not like he was going out of shape and trying to muscle it, just pure timing," said Kumble in a release from the official IPL broadcasters.

Former India wicketkeeper Parthiv

Patel also praised Gaikwad, one of the players retained by CSK during the mega auction last year ahead of IPL 2022, for his dazzling knock.

"It seemed like Ruturaj Gaikwad was batting on a different wicket compared to the other batsmen. The approach he used is extremely praiseworthy," said Parthiv, a JioCinema IPL expert.

Gaikwad's form during IPL 2021 — he scored 635 runs in 16 games, including a century — was instrumental in CSK winning their fourth IPL title. His dip in form coincided with the Chennai outfit finishing ninth among 10 teams last year.

He has a special liking for Titans bowling attack, as in the three innings he has played against Hardik Pandya's side, he has scored 218 runs, including a half-century in every game.

Patel felt that CSK's score of 178 was not competitive enough to unnervethe Titans.

"On this wicket, the target was



below par, so a strong start is essential. I think the Gujarat Titans got that and kept the momentum. The way the Titans started their chase, Wriddhiman Saha got the license to use the first six overs to his advantage as much as he could," said the former India wicketkeeper-batter.

Patel predicted that from the way Gill

was batting on Friday, he could score 600 runs this season.

"Shubman Gill did what we know Shubman Gill can do and carried over his international form into the IPL. We may get to see a 600-run season from Shubman Gill."

Gill's performance also came in for praise from Kumble, who hailed the youngster's attitude.

"Right at the end, he (Gill) said that 'I was not happy with the way I got out,' which means that he wants to improve and if he's in that situation in the next game, he wants to finish the game for his team. That's a very good sign for a young player."

"We spoke about it on the pre-match show on how he's improved from getting 40s and 50s to 100s in one-dayers and 200. Now, I am sure that this is a good sign for Indian cricket and Shubman Gill to start out on such a wonderful note," said Kumble.

Right knee injury may cut short NZ batter Williamson's IPL stint

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson's continuation in the ongoing IPL season has been put under doubt after suffering a right knee injury during his team's winning effort against Chennai Super Kings here.

The 32-year-old got injured following a nasty fall while fielding on the boundary during the CSK innings. He had limped off the field in the 13th over on Friday. The extent of his injury is not yet known, but going by what was seen on Friday night, it did not seem a minor injury.

Williamson, who was making his Gujarat Titans debut, intercepted a ball headed for a



possible six off CSK opener Ruturaj Gaikwad's bat.

He managed to palm the ball into the field of play before it bounced onto the boundary ropes. But he fell awkwardly on the ground and clutched his right knee in pain.

He was taken off after receiving on-field treatment and did not come back to bat with B Sai Sudharsan coming in as a substitute fielder first and later he took Williamson's place in the Titans' playing XI under the

Impact Player rule.

Titans captain Hardik Pandya had said at the post-match press conference that he did not know how serious was the injury.

"It is knee (injury) for sure but I don't have any update about what exactly has happened. I don't know how serious the injury is and how much time it will take (to heal). Right now there is no time frame," Pandya said.

"I had just messaged him. He (Williamson) has gone for the scans, once he comes back after the scans and doctors check (on him), then only we will be able to know what exactly it is."

Archer to go straight to Ashes after IPL stint: County club coach

PTI ■ LONDON

England pacer Jofra Archer will continue to prepare for the Ashes while playing in the IPL. The IPL final is scheduled for May 28.

"I think their plan is that between IPL games he'll bowl some longer spells to get his overs up and make sure that he is match-ready.

"That's the nature of international franchise cricket these days. I know there'll be a lot of people saying 'he should play at least two four-day games to be ready for a Test match', but the preparation and the work that the medical teams do around these players is exceptional," added Farbrace. Archer returned to the England white-ball setup in January this year after spending 17 agonising months recovering from the elbow and back injuries. He has taken 42 wickets in 13 Tests for England, but he last played the longest format in February 2021.



think all things being equal, he (Archer) will go straight into the Ashes off the back of the IPL," Farbrace was quoted as saying by 'BBC Sport'.

Since Archer is unlikely to play any red-ball cricket before the Ashes due to his IPL commitment, the 27-year-old doesn't want to waste the opportunity to fine tune his Test bowling ahead of the oldest cricketing rivalry in the world.

Archer could play a Test against Ireland at Lord's from

If Ruturaj continues way he is batting, he will do wonders for Indian cricket: Hardik

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Chennai Super Kings batter Ruturaj Gaikwad's dazzling knock of 92 went in vain in the IPL opener against Gujarat Titans but opposition captain Hardik Pandya was all praise of him, saying that he will do wonders for Indian cricket.

Gaikwad's classy knock off just 50 balls from which he struck four boundaries and nine sixes took CSK to 178 for 7. The Titans, however, chased down the target with four balls to spare, riding on Shubman Gill's 63 off 36 balls on Friday.

"Some of the shots he (Gaikwad) played was nothing to do with the bowling. There were some tremendous shots. Full credit to him the way he batted, and if he continues to do so he is going to do wonders for Indian cricket," Pandya told reporters at the post-match conference.

"He has the game and when the time comes I am sure the Indian cricket team will back him enough," he said.

The 26-year-old Gaikwad has played nine T20Is after making his debut in July 2021, scoring 135 runs at a modest average of 16.87. He had also played one ODI in 2022.

Pandya said the way Gaikwad was batting on Friday, it was getting difficult to bowl at him.

"Obviously, we all know what kind of a player he (Gaikwad) is. It looked like at one time CSK would score 220-230. We were finding it difficult on what area we should bowl at him. I had genuinely felt that we would not get him out at all," the Titans captain said.

"He is all-round cricketer, some of the shots he played were not bad balls, actually good



balls and that makes a lot of difference. As a bowling unit and as a captain, that made my job more difficult," he said.

Analysing his side's win in the last over, Pandya said, "A couple of shots from myself and Shubman put us in a difficult situation but again Rahul (Tewatia) getting the best out of his ability and Rashid coming in and showing what he can do.

"So overall we are quite happy but in a way, a lot of things we can learn from this victory. Even (if) we had lost we would have learnt a lot of things."

The Titans needed 41 off the last five overs but CSK managed to take the game down to the wire. It needed a cameo from Rashid Khan (10 not out off 3 balls) to settle the nerves in the Titans dressing room.

"It's very good to start with a win. What Rashid did, we expected that from him, we showed a lot of trust and confidence in his batting, which he had shown again and again. When we lost Kane (injured while fielding during CSK innings) that put us a little back.

"Reflecting on where I came from helps me to appreciate and balance what I have now"
— Meghan Markle



Trump has become the first former president to be indicted in a criminal case after a grand jury investigation into hush money payments made on his behalf during the 2016 presidential campaign, write ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MEG KINNARD

TRUMP INDICTMENT & INVESTIGATION



Donald Trump's unprecedented indictment comes as the Republican faces other legal investigations and launches a bid to return to the White House in 2024.

The indictment will test the Republican Party already divided over whether to support Trump next year, in part due to his efforts to undermine his 2020 election loss.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing and accuses prosecutors of engaging in a politically motivated "witch hunt" to damage his campaign.

Here's a look at the hush money case, the grand jury investigation and possible ramifications for Trump's presidential campaign:

WHAT'S THIS CASE ABOUT?

The grand jury spent weeks meeting in secret to probe Trump's involvement in a \$130,000 payment made in 2016 to the porn actor Stormy Daniels to keep her from going public about a sexual encounter she said she had with him years earlier. Trump lawyer Michael Cohen paid Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, through a shell company before being reimbursed by Trump, whose company, the Trump Organisation, logged the reimbursements as legal expenses.

Earlier in 2016, Cohen also arranged for former Playboy model Karen McDougal to be paid \$150,000 by the publisher of the supermarket tabloid *The National Enquirer*, which then squelched her story in a journalistically dubious practice known as "catch and kill."

Trump denies having sex with either woman.

Trump's company "grossed up" Cohen's reimbursement for the Daniels payment to defray tax payments, according to federal prosecutors who filed criminal charges against the lawyer in connection with the payments in 2018. In all, Cohen got \$360,000 plus a \$60,000 bonus, for a total of \$420,000.

Cohen pleaded guilty to violating federal campaign finance law in connection with the payments. Federal prosecutors say the payments amounted to illegal, unreported assistance to Trump's campaign. But they declined to file charges against Trump himself.

WHAT ARE THE CHARGES?

The indictment has not yet been unsealed, so it's not totally clear.

Some experts have said they believe Trump could be charged with falsifying business records, which can be a misdemeanor or a felony under New York law. To secure a conviction on the felony charge, prosecutors would have to prove that records were falsified with the intention of committing or concealing a second crime. It's not clear what prosecutors may allege as the second crime.

WHAT HAS TRUMP'S LAWYER SAID?

Trump's lawyer, Joe Tacopina, said Thursday that the former president didn't commit any crime and vowed to "vigorously fight this political prosecution in court."

Tacopina has accused prosecutors of "distorting laws" to try to take down the former president. He has described Trump as a victim of extortion who had to pay the money because the allegations were going to be embarrassing to him "regardless of the campaign."

"He made this with personal funds to prevent something from coming out — false, but embarrassing to himself, his family, his young son. That's not a campaign finance violation, not by any stretch," Tacopina said on ABC's 'Good Morning America' before the indictment.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Law enforcement officials have been making



"THE THUGS AND CRIMINALS WHO ARE CORRUPTING OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM WILL BE DEFEATED, DISCREDITED AND TOTALLY DISGRACED"
— DONALD TRUMP



security preparations for days for the possibility of an indictment and a court appearance by the president.

Trump was expected to surrender to authorities next week, though details were still being worked out, according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss a matter that remained under seal.

WHAT'S THIS GRAND JURY AND WHO TESTIFIED?

A grand jury is made up of people drawn from the community, similar to a trial jury. But unlike juries that hear trials, grand juries don't decide whether someone is guilty or innocent. They only decide whether there is sufficient evidence for someone to be charged.

Proceedings are closed to the public, including the media. New York grand juries have 23 people. At least 16 must be present to hear evidence or deliberate and 12 have to agree there is enough evidence in order to issue an indictment.

David Pecker, a longtime Trump friend and the former chief executive of the parent company of *The National Enquirer*, returned to the courthouse this week where the grand jury was meeting.

Pecker's company, American Media Inc., secretly assisted Trump's campaign by paying \$150,000 to McDougal in August 2016 for the rights to her story about an alleged affair with Trump. The company then suppressed

McDougal's story until after the election.

The grand jury also heard from Cohen, as well as Robert Costello, who was once a legal adviser to Cohen.

The men have since had a falling out, and Costello indicated he has information he believes undercuts Cohen's credibility and contradicts his incriminating statements about Trump. Costello testified at the invitation of prosecutors, presumably as a way to ensure that the grand jury had an opportunity to consider any testimony or evidence that might weaken the case for moving forward with an indictment.

Trump was also invited to testify, but didn't.

WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS FOR TRUMP?

Neither the indictment itself nor a conviction would prevent Trump from running for or winning the presidency in 2024.

Last week in Waco, Texas, Trump took a defiant stance at a rally by disparaging the prosecutors investigating him and predicting his vindication as he rallied supporters in a city made famous by deadly resistance against law enforcement.

"You will be vindicated and proud," Trump said in a speech brimming with resentments and framing the probes as political attacks on himself and his followers. "The thugs and criminals who are corrupting our justice system will be defeated, discredited and totally disgraced."

Before the charges were handed down, many party leaders had also already begun to defend the former president.

During a visit this month to Iowa, former Vice President Mike Pence called the idea of indicting a former president "deeply troubling." Another 2024 Republican prospect, New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, has said there is a sense that the former president is being unfairly attacked.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, a declared candidate who also served as Trump's UN ambassador, has called Bragg's case an attempt at scoring "political points," adding, "You never want to condone any sort of prosecution that's being politicised."

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is considering joining the 2024 Republican field, slammed the investigation as politically motivated. But he also threw one of his first jabs at the former president in a quip likely to intensify their rivalry. DeSantis said he personally doesn't "know what goes into paying hush money to a porn star to secure silence over some kind of alleged affair."

WHAT ABOUT OTHER TRUMP INVESTIGATIONS?

The New York case is just one of many legal woes Trump is facing.

The Justice Department is also investigating his retention of top secret government documents at his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, after leaving the White House. Federal investigators are also still probing the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol and efforts to overturn the 2020 election that Trump falsely claimed was stolen.

In Georgia, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has been investigating whether Trump and his allies illegally meddled in the 2020 election. The foreperson of a special grand jury, which heard from dozens of witnesses, said last month that the panel had recommended that numerous people be indicted, and hinted Trump could be among them. It is ultimately up to Willis to decide whether to move forward.

DIFFERENT, NOT LESS

April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day. This gives us the chance to introspect and act on increasing understanding, acceptance and awareness about autism, about how we can help break the hurdles that stop the community from leading their best lives. THE HEALTH PIONEER presents a macro view of the condition that affects 1 out of 89 children born in India

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a collection of disorders defined by issues such as social interaction and communication difficulties. It is the quickest-expanding developmental disorder in India, affecting one in 125 children between 2-6 years and one out of every 80 kids aged 6-9. As per INCLIN studies, one child out of 89 is generally on the autism spectrum. Boys are four times more likely than girls to have autism. There is no medical cure for autism, but early diagnosis and intervention helps a person to adapt and function better.

Children with Autism frequently exhibit behaviours such as difficulties transitioning from one task to another, a focus on minutiae. It's believed to be caused by environmental and genetic factors. Those with autism find social interactions difficult as well as have repetitive behaviors and focused interests. Autism is also a spectrum disorder, meaning the severity and range of symptoms are different from person to person.

As such, healthcare systems are not only failing to provide appropriate care to autistic adults, but also that these failures may be detrimentally affecting the length and quality of life of autistic individuals.

In India, it is estimated that around 18 million people have autism. Statistics further reveal that the number of children diagnosed with autism in India is increasing. Low awareness, a lack of basic services, and poor diagnosis, among other factors, have all led to the country's astonishing surge in the number of autism cases.

One of the main reasons why many parents keep diseases like autism hidden is a lack of information about mental health. Many individuals are unaware that such illnesses can affect children as early as a few months old. Such individuals exhibit abnormal behaviours, and a lack of public awareness of the disease makes society less compassionate and stigmatizes the disorder. In their growing years, these children are subjected to bullying, filthy remarks, and humiliation, which



FACTFILE

- About 1 in 100 children has autism globally.
- Characteristics may be detected in early childhood, but autism is often not diagnosed until much later.
- The abilities and needs of autistic people vary and can evolve over time. While some people with autism can live independently, others have severe disabilities and require life-long care and support.
- Evidence-based psychosocial interventions can improve communication and social skills, with a positive impact on the well-being and quality of life of both autistic people and their caregivers.
- Care for people with autism needs to be accompanied by actions at community and societal levels for greater accessibility, inclusivity and support.
- More than half (53%) have autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- More than half (51%) have autism and anxiety.
- A quarter (25%) have autism and depression.
- At least 60% of children with autism will have two comorbid conditions (e.g., sleep problems, seizures, intellectual disabilities, or gastrointestinal problems).
- Autism is not a learning disability, but it can affect cognitive function. Some children on the autism spectrum have delays in speech or learning, while others do not. Because it is a spectrum disorder, these delays can range from mild to severe.
- One-third of children with autism were classified as having an intellectual disability (IQ equal to or less than 70).
- There is no cure or medication for autism spectrum disorder. Behavioral therapy is the most effective autism treatment. However, the vast majority (95%) of children with autism have at least one co-occurring condition, which is often treatable.

drives them to seek refuge in their families.

There is no 'cure' for autism. There are, however, ways that can help people with autism learn and perform more effectively. Because there are so many options to select from; individual viewpoints and experiences, as well as diverse research showcasing varying results, deciding on the best intervention for an individual with autism, may be complicated and often overwhelming. Autism patients benefit substantially from cognitive behaviour therapy, behavioural management therapy, occupational therapy, social skills training, and physical therapy. Furthermore, educational and school-based therapy, medication treatment, and nutritious food should be provided to such persons. Parents might also enrol in speech-language therapy.

Dr Deepak Gupta, a child and adolescent psychiatrist and Founder Director of Centre for Child and Adolescent Wellbeing (CCAW), says, "Autism is one of the most misunderstood neurodevelopmental conditions. A peculiar trait of children with Autism is their concern with social communication difficulties.

"This, however, does not mean that they lack abilities to perform

SYMPTOMS

- No babbling or pointing by age 1
- No single words by age 16 months or two-word phrases by age 2
- Impaired ability to make friends with peers
- Impaired ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others
- Repetitive or unusual use of language
- Abnormally intense or focused interest
- Preoccupation with particular objects or subjects
- Inflexible adherence to specific routines or rituals

daily functions in life. On the contrary, some of the children with autism are brilliant and exhibit performance which is sometimes far superior to ones who are not on the Autism spectrum. With understanding and compassion for their special needs, we can surely induct them into the mainstream."

Agrees Dr Alok Kumar Bhuwan, Managing Secretary, Manovikas Charitable Society. While explaining stigma around children who are neurodiverse, he

suggests that the strategy to help and build confidence, self-esteem, motivation and resilience is very important when we think about such kids. "Every autistic child has individual strengths and needs. We can help these kids with the concept of Universal design of learning (UDL) which can benefit them with learning and thinking differences. In fact, UDL uses a variety of teaching strategies to remove barriers to learning especially those with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder."

Autism is the world's third most common developmental disability, a neurological illness that usually manifests by the age of three, says Bhuwan.

K. Nageswara Rao, President, All India Disabled Rights Forum, opines that autism affects early in childhood and needs to be addressed soon. "It varies in type and severity, but therapy can improve the ability of the person the function."

In a nutshell, people with autism can live a better life if they are raised in a happy and healthy environment. Today, the only requirement is that they be accepted totally and that they not be demeaned or discouraged at any cost.

NEWSBRIEFS



DAAJI'S HEARTFULNESS INSTITUTE AND AIIMS DELHI JOIN HANDS

Heartfulness Institute and AIIMS, Delhi have inked a pact to collaborate in education and research activities to bring meditation and sciences into day-to-day life and impact various aspects of human health and well-being.

The MoU was recently signed between 'Daaji' Kamlesh D. Patel, President of Ram Chandra Mission, Founder and Guide of Heartfulness Meditation Worldwide, and Dr M. Srinivas - Director of the premier health research institute. Speaking on the occasion, Daaji (Kamlesh D. Patel) - Founder of Heartfulness Institute and Guide of Heartfulness Meditation Worldwide said, "This MoU will help in collaborative research and education in the sphere of meditation and science at the same time. There is a direct correlation between a healthy spirit and a healthy body. Science has time and again proven that meditation leaves positive impacts on mind and body. We want to delve deeper and make the outcomes beneficial to mankind."

66% PEOPLE HAVE HIGHER THAN NORMAL LEVELS OF HOMOCYSTEINE IN THEIR BLOOD: TATA 1MG LABS SURVEY

Tata 1mg Labs has claimed that a data analysis of about 40,000 homocysteine, (an amino acid) tests conducted across its PAN India lab testing facilities in the last two years, indicates that more than 66 per cent of people in India have higher than-normal levels of homocysteine in their bloodstream, making them vulnerable to heart diseases, such as blood clots, heart attack and stroke.

It said that while 59 per cent of women were found with escalated levels of homocysteine, this figure was much lower for men at 40.1 per cent. The age group of 18-30 years had the lowest incidence at 15.3 per cent but rapidly climbed to the highest in the age bracket of 31-40 years at 30 per cent. This was followed by age groups of 41-50 years (about 19 per cent), above 60 years (18.3 per cent), and 51-60 years (17.3 per cent), as per the survey.



When asked about role of homocysteine levels in individuals, Dr Tarun Kumar, Professor of Cardiology, PGIMER and Dr RML Hospital, Delhi said that homocysteine levels are relevant in cases of young patients with Heart attack or brain stroke. As hyperhomocysteinemia is associated with recurrent cardiac or brain stroke (thrombosis) events, treatment is quite low cost. "Young patients with thrombotic events like vascular thrombosis (DEep venous thrombosis, Pulmonary thromboembolism), Heart attack or brain stroke patients, should go for such tests," he said and advised that one should take vitamin B6, B-12, folic acid supplementation.

Reframe How We Think About Autism

DEVANGANA MISHRA, founder of Brain Bristle, works with children on the autism spectrum. In conversation with THE HEALTH PIONEER, she asserts that society needs to work with autistic children individually at a deeper level to bring out their best abilities. Excerpts:



Why is autism still a subject we don't fully understand?

Autism is a spectrum, ranging from severe to moderate to mild, lack of communication skills, reciprocity, eye contact, stemming and other such behaviours. Growth for each can look different or the same, how we push someone on the spectrum of autism forward is varied and with different ambitions and hopes than what might be possible for them or vice versa- as educators, what is right, what is wrong, what is enough and what has more scope is all so complicated and there's so much trial and error, who knows.

At what point do we give up on intervention for those on the spectrum of autism?

Honestly, I don't know, I do everything I humanly can until a child is 18, then I give up and see what goes on from there on. By

that I mean, I teach them everything that an adult would need or read- the daily news, romance, sex, cinema, dialogues, texts to send, what to wear on a date, how to dance at prom, how to sit while at dinner, what can you do if you can't do math, how to cheat at tests, how to cheat at everything but still be as good as one can possibly be, how to just figure life as smoothly as one can while being on the spectrum - and then I cross my fingers and hope for the best results possible.

Do you think that mental health and autism, how tangled they are.

You can't say one without the other, growth or experimentation for someone on the spectrum of autism can go haywire, then get back on track, then fall all over again, then find a way again, it's so complex- imagine you decide to

run a marathon, you twist your ankle, you have a choice to call for help and be airlifted or wobble back or let it heal while you lie back there then run or walk the marathon path until you can run again. It's all a mix of everything and that's how autism and mental health works for you and me, but even more importantly for someone on the spectrum of autism, as a teacher I could set them up for excellence but then what they do could be a total crash, who knows- it's all a guesswork for us to see.

Why do we historically have such few disruptions like Einstein or Bill Gates or Ramanujan or Hannah Gadsby in the space of autism, why not more such stories?

It's the same, education is so large and expansive and curricular and rule based, and the time from the ages of 3 to 18 is just not

enough to prioritize where to close and where to expand for someone on the spectrum, sometimes educational interventions turn out right or sometimes a child gets an idea because of being caged and they break out and create something grand. It's all a mix of everything. It's almost like why do we have so many scientists yet so few who win the Nobel Prize eventually. But one thing is certain. Autistic children are different for a reason. They can shake up systems if given the right guidance.

What inspired you to take up the cause of people with autism?

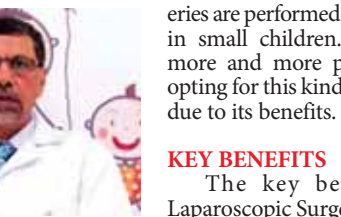
I met my first grown-up with autism when I was 19 and the complete disregard for his giftedness led me to Columbia University, NY to study autism in detail and depth. This is how my journey with the autism spectrum began.

DOCTORSPEAK

Laparoscopic surgery in kids is safe

Laparoscopic intervention has revolutionized the world of surgery with its minimal invasiveness and reduced postoperative pain. While laparoscopic surgery is not new in the field of surgery, it has witnessed enormous progress in the last three decades, and in the field of paediatric surgery as well. The first laparoscopic cholecystectomy was performed on an adult in 1986. Since then, a significant advancement in technology and techniques has taken place in this field resulting in very positive outcome.

Laparoscopic procedures in children, on the other hand, was restricted to diagnostic purposes till the 1980s. Paediatric surgeons in selected centres started performing paediatric laparoscopic procedures around the world. In India, advanced laparoscopic paediatric surgery was started in December 1998 by the author himself by performing the first laparoscopic Pull through surgery for Hirschsprung's disease. It is estimated that over 80% of paediatric surgeons in the USA and many other countries perform laparoscopic surgery in



DR. RASIKLAL SHAH Senior Consultant - Paediatric Surgery, SRCC Children's Hospital, managed by Narayana Health

eries are performed safely even in small children. In India, more and more parents are opting for this kind of surgery due to its benefits. KEY BENEFITS The key benefits of Laparoscopic Surgery in children include less pain, less cut/small incisions that look aesthetically better, less blood loss, less risk of infection, lesser hospitalisation (parents can go back to work sooner), faster recovery, early return to school, less risk of pneumonia and lesser chances of development of adhesive

bowel obstruction. Paediatric Minimally Invasive Surgeries are commonly performed for Hernia repair, Appendicectomy, Undescended testis, Pyeloplasty and Nephrectomy. Pull through surgery for Hirschsprung's disease and anorectal malformation, Cholecystectomy and Choledochal cyst, Diaphragmatic Hernia Repair and Emypeya surgery, F u n d o p l a c i o n , Pyloromyotomy, Malrotation, Abdominal cyst, Ovarian cyst, Mesenteric, and other cysts. Is there any difference between Children and Adult's Laparoscopic Procedures? ● Many surgical conditions in children ARE TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ADULTS ● The laparoscopic hand instruments in children consists of smaller length and diameter ● In children, the inside space to work is less which makes surgery very difficult ● Minimally Invasive surgical team needs to be highly experienced and trained.

Trump at the end of primrose path

The spectacle around Donald Trump's indictment and arraignment in a court will mark an unprecedented moment in American history that will demonstrate once again how dramatically Trump has upended democratic norms. But on a personal level, the indictment pierces the cloak of invincibility that seemed to follow Trump through his decades in business and in politics, as he faced allegations of fraud, collusion and sexual misconduct, writes JILL COLVIN

When Donald Trump steps before a judge next week to be arraigned in a New York courtroom, it will not only mark the first time a former US president has faced criminal charges. It will also represent a reckoning for a man long nicknamed "Teflon Don," who until now has managed to skirt serious legal jeopardy despite 40 years of legal scrutiny.

Trump, who is the early frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, is expected to turn himself in on Tuesday. He faces charges, including at least one felony offence, related to hush money payments to women during his 2016 campaign. Like any other person facing trial, he will be booked, fingerprinted and photographed before being given the chance to enter a plea.

The spectacle that is sure to unfold will mark an unprecedented moment in American history that will demonstrate once again how dramatically Trump - who already held the distinction of being the first president to be impeached twice - has upended democratic norms. But on a personal level, the indictment pierces the cloak of invincibility that seemed to follow Trump through his decades in business and in politics, as he faced allegations of fraud, collusion and sexual misconduct.

"Boy, after all this time it's a bit of a shock," Trump biographer Michael D'Antonio said of the indictment. "You know I always thought of him as the Gingerbread Man, shouting, 'You can't catch me!' as he ran away."

"Given his track record," he said, "I had trouble imagining he would ever be held accountable."

"These are not things that Donald Trump ever thought in

his entire life, nor I, for that matter, that he would ever be confronted with," Michael Cohen, Trump's longtime fixer and a key witness in the case who served jail time for the payments, told CNN.

Of course, some of the celebration by Trump's detractors may be premature. The former president could seek to have a judge quickly dismiss the case. And even if it moves forward, there's no guarantee of conviction. Intensifying investigations in Atlanta and Washington are seen as potentially more serious legal threats.

Still, Trump and his team were caught by surprise when word of the New York indictment broke Thursday evening, following news reports that the grand jury hearing the case was set for a weeks-long hiatus. As the deliberations dragged on, some in Trump's orbit had become convinced that the case had stalled and that charges might never be brought. That included Trump attorney Joe Tacopina, who said on Friday morning he had hoped the "rule of law would prevail."

Trump, he said on the "Today" show, was "initially shocked" by news of the charges, but quickly pivoted to his usual pushback playbook.

"After he got over that," he said, Trump "put a notch on his belt and he decided we have to fight now. And he got into a typical Donald Trump posture where he's ready to be combative on something that he believes is an injustice. ... I think he's now in the posture that he's ready to fight this."

In the meantime, Trump and his team have tried to use the news to his advantage, hoping to energise his loyal base by painting the investigation as part of a larger plot to



derail his candidacy.

Already, the charges have been a boon to his struggling fundraising. The campaign announced Friday evening that it had raised over \$4 million in the 24 hours after the indictment became public, far smashing its previous record after the FBI search of Trump's Mar-a-Lago club.

More than 25 per cent of

donations, according to the campaign, came from first-time donors. The average contribution: \$34.

His campaign also continued to blast out supportive statements from dozens of top Republicans who have rallied behind Trump, including several of his declared and likely challengers, underscoring his continued hold on the party.

Trump has been in contact by phone with key congressional allies, including members of House leadership and top committees, according to people familiar with the conversations, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the response.

Trump ally Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., who formally endorsed the former president on Friday,

said Trump "doesn't back down" and was going to "fight back," telling a local radio show it was "yet another chapter where Donald Trump is going to come back on top in the end."

The media maelstrom has catapulted the former president back into the spotlight he craves, at least temporarily limiting attention being paid to

his rivals, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who is widely expected to challenge Trump for the nomination, and has been holding events across the county to promote his book.

Trump aides have been discussing other ideas to maximise the situation, including the possibility of holding a press event either before or

after the arraignment. Trump is expected to travel from Florida to New York on Monday and stay overnight at Trump Tower in midtown Manhattan before heading to the courthouse early on Tuesday. He will return to Florida after the arraignment.

Trump has long denied that he had a sexual encounter with the porn actor known as Stormy Daniels and has blasted Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg for pursuing the years-old case.

Trump is also facing continued investigations in Georgia, over his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, and in Washington, where a special counsel is probing the events of January 6, 2021, as well as Trump's handling of classified documents at Mar-a-Lago and potential obstruction of the investigation.

But Sam Nunberg, a long-time former aide who broke with Trump years ago, said that while he no longer supports Trump, he believes the Manhattan case is "a waste of time," given the allegations, which remain under seal. And he said he was skeptical it would ultimately matter.

"It doesn't surprise me," he said of the indictment. "What would surprise me is if he actually ended up behind bars in prison and I don't see that happening."

D'Antonio said that sentiment - and a continued belief that Trump will somehow prevail and dodge the charges - continues among the many people who have reached out to him in the last 24 hours, despite the charges.

"They're like, he's going to get away with it," he said. "Somehow, he's going to get it thrown out." AP

PERSPECTIVE

Demystifying philosophical layers of temples

A notion of sacred has held mankind from time immemorial, bestowing meaning on material pursuits. The onslaught of rapid urbanisation and technological progress has intriguingly rendered sacred spaces all the more relevant. With changes unfolding at breakneck speed, such spaces facilitate introspection and self-enquiry. People from the Indian subcontinent would generally be familiar with the sanctifying ethos of a temple, but a few recognise its philosophical and cosmological foundations. Temples pave the way for individual salvation and also stimulate congregational worship. It is precisely at an interface of these two processes that the philosophical moorings of a temple can be located.

For several centuries, Vastu-shastras have functioned as the principal textual manuals for constructing temples. Texts like Manasara and Mayamatam emphasise the need to construct temples or even towns on square grid plans. Shapes like squares, triangles, circles and even points are liberally employed in temple architecture, and they each carry a distinct meaning. In this case, a square represents the manifest territorial world that needs to be transcended. The square grid plans, which in the words of scholar Stella Kramrisch function as "forecasts for temples", are known as vastu-purusha mandalas. Gods associated with each of the squares within the mandala are ritually invoked to pacify the vastu-purusha, and ensure that

peaceful conditions prevail.

Such diagrams also illustrate the underlying impulse of Indian philosophical traditions to collapse all distinctions between man, God and cosmos. The Samkhya philosophy stresses the unity between microcosm and macrocosm, while Advaita Vedanta extends this further in its theory of the union of atman and brahman. To that extent, each part of a temple is considered to represent the cosmos in a microcosmic capsule, and this imparts spiritual meaning to even the most insignificant components of a shrine. The components of a temple are generally named after parts of the human body, illustrating the organic unity underlying temple architecture in the Indian subcontinent.

This metaphysical union can also be most prominently noticed in the image-worshipping traditions that have passed on from time immemorial. If Vedic texts stress the importance of concentrating the mind on a single object, the Puranas and Agamas are known for their pronounced sectarian predisposition. Nonetheless, continuity can be seen in the way these texts extol aniconic traditions such as the worship of bana-lingas and salagramas.

The linga and yoni manifest forces embodied by Shiva and Parvati respectively. In other words, the stone shaft known as the linga represents Shiva as a silent spectator of the world whose existence is contingent upon the creative energies released by Shakti, who resides at the base. This creative



interplay of two opposing forces provides the dynamic equilibrium required for maintaining the cosmic balance.

A regular visit to the temple is also suffused with philosophical import. Before entering the sanctuary, a devotee is greeted by the imposing structure of a temple, which in many ways resembles a mountain. Vastu-shastras frequently liken temples to Mount Meru, which is held in high esteem by Hindus. A devotee then enters

the porch and views several sculptures adorning the walls of any temple. Subsequently, the devotee sets foot into the hallowed precincts of the dimly-lit garbha-griha which - almost like a cave within a mountain - is unadorned and houses the chief deity. Texts suggest that an invisible axis connects this deity with the superstructure of a temple. In fact, it is during the consecration of a temple that the deity's

attributes are manifested by the intervention of priests. This ritual process is called "pranapratishta" and literally suggests instilling prana (life) within the deity.

In other words, the deity is considered to have life just like a human being, and germinates within the womb-chamber (garbha-griha) of a temple. After seeking darsan of the deity, a devotee circumambulates the shrine, and attends to

the subsidiary deities placed on its side walls. This is also a profoundly meaningful exercise as it helps a devotee absorb the energies prevailing within a temple.

The power of visual motifs can also be discerned in the narrative friezes adorning the walls of several temples in India, illustrating stories from epics and Puranas. The Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, which is the only temple in the complex under active worship, contains such friezes and their stories are generally concerned with the restoration of dharma. The Kirat-arjuniya tale is illustrated in several temples of the region. This involves a conflict between Shiva in his incarnation as a hunter (kirata) and Arjuna, who seeks to consolidate his military powers when in exile. Arjuna is put through numerous challenges, before being blessed with the desired armoury. Such stories of perseverance, devotion and truthfulness serve to enhance a devotee's spiritual experience within a temple.

For all these reasons, the structural features of temples are chiefly responsible for making them an integral part of India's spiritual landscape. The vibrant temple culture of Bharat has withstood the ravages of time chiefly because of these empowering philosophical and cosmological concepts that subliminally enrich devotee's experience within a shrine. These need to be acknowledged to foster a society that is rooted to its traditions even as it embraces cosmopolitan ambitions.

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ANIRUDH NAVEEN



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week balance is necessary. Working on balancing your chakras, or your body, mind, and spirit, is very powerful and beneficial. You must pay close attention to all three. Meditation, Pranayam, and walking in nature all work wonders. The rewards greatly outweigh any effort you can make. Professionally, networking with new individuals, particularly those from different countries, will be beneficial. Today is the moment to strike new business arrangements and begin new initiatives and duties. Realize your full potential. The stars are in your favor. The themes of the week include creativity, transformation, and progress. On the personal front, fresh ideas and strategies can undoubtedly help you rejuvenate your relationships with your loved ones. Love is in the air, and you are eager to express your feelings. It's an excellent time to start dating.
Lucky number 1
Lucky colour Golden
Lucky day Sunday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Take some time off for yourself this week, and your health will certainly improve. You're on the right track now; keep up the good work. Read more about old rituals. They will enable you to achieve balance by deepening your spiritual awareness and practice. On the professional front, there will be a lot of activity and getting things done. You could make your colleagues appear bad. You're not tired because being a workaholic is your passion. Maintain control of your behavior; there is a risk of using harsh words that will create a hostile environment around you. Maintaining your calm and maintaining your balance in any scenario can help your career. If you are currently committed, your relationship may soon reach new and greater heights.
Lucky number 5
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

You need a break from daily life this week. There is a need to take a break from the busy pace of work and unwind. Pushing yourself when you are exhausted might lead to sickness and damage. On the professional front, you will profit from your verbal and written communication skills and will receive positive news about your work. Businessmen can obtain a stable financial situation. People in the service will have the support from their superiors and employer this week, which will most likely serve as a stepping stone in their career. Be cautious and keep focused on your goals. A new beginning and stronger aspirations await on the personal front. Now is not the time to put additional effort into your relationship.
Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Monday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

You must strike a balance between your health efforts and your personal and professional obligations. Make sure you take time for yourself, for relaxation and recovery. Your health will suffer if you put yourself last on the priority list. Make sure you're getting enough rest and sleep. Professionally, if you are looking for work, you have the ability and skill to find it. If you already have a job, you can find a better one. If you don't see any possibilities for progress in your current position, consider looking for one that does. If you are devoted to your relationship, don't be afraid to express your feelings to your partner. You take a strong stance and convey your emotions. This will only strengthen your bond.
Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Pastel
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week is going to be stressful for you. You may be suppressing your emotions, which will have a bad influence on your body. You must exercise caution in how, when, and where you express your emotional reactions. Anything that relieves stress is beneficial right now, even a five-minute walk. Think positively. Maintain your cool and stay connected. Anger is a silent killer. Tension is evident in the workplace. Be optimistic; this is only a passing phase. Now is an excellent moment to look for a new career. Having plans isn't enough; you must also follow through on them. You have the potential to get the job. On the personal front, the time is right for soul-searching and exploration of the inner realms. It is an ideal moment for you to strengthen relationships of all kinds.
Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

With great care and attention, pay attention to your body. To lose weight, you are either overeating or starving yourself. These scenarios are hazardous to one's health. Adding balance to your eating habits not only helps you manage your weight, but it also offers you a confident attitude. You're otherwise in good health, so enjoy the rest of the week. Work-related investments made in the past are bearing fruit this week. This can be practical, such as a bank account refund. You will reap the benefits of your efforts. You're in your boss's good graces, and you'll be rewarded shortly. In terms of personal relationships, you favor solitude over love and feelings. Those who are committed must maintain contact with their time to keep the spark alive.
Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

On the health front, you decide to self-validate and believe in yourself and your abilities. Your goal for a healthy, happy family will keep you active. It's time to reflect on how completely different and absolutely great things could be. Professionally, you are upbeat and want to instill love and compassion in your job. You are also quite perceptive. People are surprised to see you in this avatar. Now is the time to concentrate on your goals and objectives. Maintain your resolution and determination. People in business must be harsh when it comes to money. On a personal level, the mind, heart, and emotions are all moving in opposite directions. In love relationships, this is a very emotional moment. Things may quickly turn ugly. Treat your partner as a friend. Don't rush to end or start a relationship.
Lucky number 17
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Wednesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Keep your stress under control this week to stay healthy. Deal with any physical issues that arise; do not try to ignore them. Make sure you get adequate sleep. If you require healing, ask it. Caring, loving, massage, and hugs from close friends will go a long way toward keeping sensitive people healthy. On the professional front, some may resist your fresh ideas or initiatives, but if you believe you're correct, move forward. You are eager, full of energy, and want to give your all, yet others are not impressed. Leave your simplicity behind and be clever and expressive. When you are confident in yourself, your relationship will enter a lighter, simpler, and more balanced phase.
Lucky number 19
Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Saturday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Stress and depression may wear you down and leave you exhausted and vulnerable. Reading, meditation, and gentle activities will provide relief, and adequate sleep will aid to enhance your mental condition. If you have an optimistic and creative mentality, you will be able to overcome life's uncertainties and complexities. On the job, you must make some quick decisions. Make sure your intelligence and rationality are put to good use, and avoid wasting time on disagreements. A remedy to a problem is already available or will be available shortly. On a more intimate level, operate with a calm mind rather than a raging heart. If you are already in a relationship, this might be a critical time. This is the moment to be crystal clear about what you want from your relationships and then take the necessary measures.
Lucky number 22
Lucky colour Blue
Lucky day Sunday



CANCER June 21-July 22

You are easily swayed by anything that you assume is physically wrong with you. Do not ignore what your doctor has told you; instead, consider it carefully. People suffering from serious diseases must be constantly monitored under doctors' supervision. Others require safeguards against seasonal diseases, which can deteriorate if not treated promptly. On the employment front, you may be unsure whether to leave your existing position, start your own firm, or confront some difficult circumstances. Shifting subjects or professions is not always a good idea. Determine your interests and potential. This is the time to stand firm and keep your ears and eyes open. There is hope and happiness on the personal front, as well as a renewed sense of security, protection, and recovery.
Lucky number 3
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week is ideal for taking care of your health and enhancing your appearance. You are upbeat, optimistic, and full of life. You take good care of yourself and the people you care about. It is not wise to compromise on health problems. It is critical to strike a balance between your work and your relationships. On the professional front, be cautious if you have a job; follow the discipline and set rules of the organization you work for, or else you might face displeasure from your superiors. Money transactions should be handled with caution by businesspeople. There will be conflicts and confrontations that will cause you to lose your cool. On the personal front, you may enter a wonderful partnership. You are probably feeling romantic.
Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Friday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week, you are an extremely cheerful, creative, and upbeat person. Your personality reflects this. It's a great moment to show off your charm and embrace the process of personal growth. Your sense of fullness, vigor, and peace of mind will make you an extremely efficient person. You are self-assured and ready to face any challenges in your career. This week, you may win and receive recognition for your efforts. You'll be in your senior's good books. Do not get carried away with your accomplishment. Be cautious in your relationships since there is a possibility of fake love. Investigate before making a final choice. Current relationships should clear up any uncertainties to avoid future misunderstandings.
Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Thursday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331

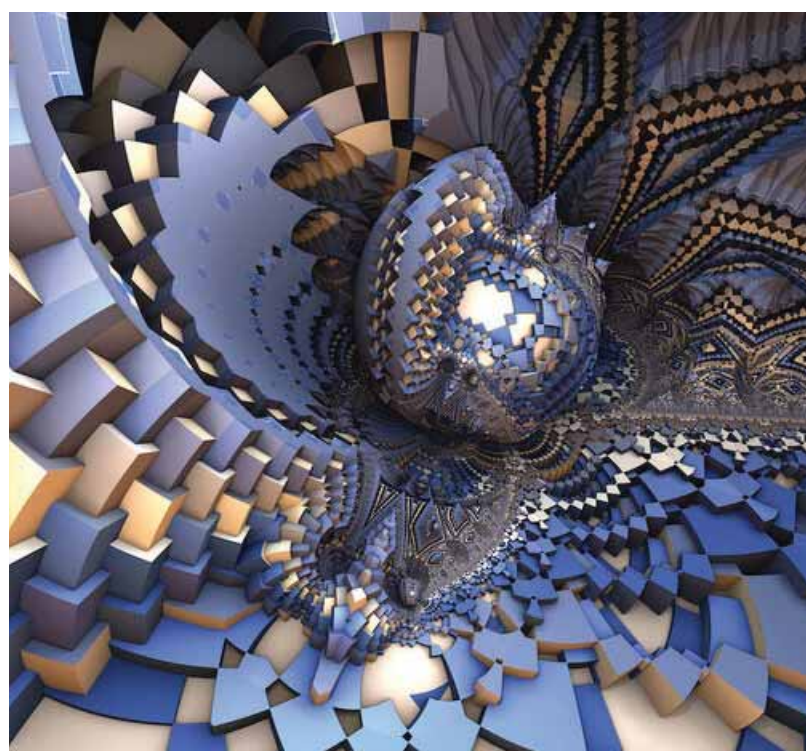


Get over illusionary tendencies of mind and evolve

Given its transitory nature, Indian philosophy views the living world as Maya (illusion). Be that as it may. But all live existences in the world can be physically perceived and are continuously engaged in creative activities. It will, therefore, be unfair to call it unreal, it may not though be an eternal reality. It is, however, again a fact that human mind is by and large illusioned – in terms of perceptions and beliefs. For, invariably all are born ignorant, having a preconditioned mind, coming as it may as Karmic carryover from the past. That limits one's vision and are invariably not open to look beyond for a reality check. They, thus, fail to look at issues in hand in the right perspective due. Consequently, they make inappropriate choices, often inviting failures, pain, and suffering.

A couple of years back a girl used to come looking for her marital prospects. She was looking for someone true to her fanciful dream perception, mostly distanced from ground reality. Carrying a perfectionist streak, she had made a long list of check points. Even if the prospective guy failed on one count, she would

reject him. Consequently, she never got married. I tried my best to make her understand that the world cannot move to one's asking as nobody could be ever born a perfect. The world is purposely designed as such. All carry their individualistic positives and negatives, the positives by and larger on a higher side. Also, we are an inseparable part of a large existence, where none has a reality independent of the whole. That calls for working out ways and means to relate to others overriding all individual differences. To make things further clear, I tried to explain that the whole creation chain began with a disorder (imperfection) at the primordial source, hitherto in an equilibrated state. But immediately thereafter, random mutation of energies emanating from primal source excited a process of harmonisation, which eventually led to the manifest world. As the cause permeates the effect, the imprint of both disorder and harmony are there in human construct. The whole challenge before us is to be in harmony with each other the way nature driven energies join hands to carry on the creative chain, overriding few individual limitations. In



marital relationship, both the partners carry their respective voids, but each complementing the other's. Not simply to together carry on the journey of life, but also evolve. No wonder Gautam Buddha used to say: "Life is a reflection of harmony of the opposites. In fact, even creation is a result of convergence of two opposite characters. So, reconciling dualities of life is called for." This is the premise on which all relationships can get going.

An NRI guy came asking: "Despite sincere efforts we have not been able to find a suitable match. Why so much delay?" In nature's plan, you are being provided with enough of time and space to work upon your illusionary tendencies of mind and become matured enough to handle the subtleties of marital life with relative ease and comfort. Otherwise, it will be difficult to hold on to the marriage. "How come?" He countered.

Cluster of four planets – the Sun, Moon, Mars, and Mercury – are by themselves enough to make out a complex mind. You have a vacillating mind. You suffer from 'I am the only right person syndrome'. You expect from

all others to prove true to your expectation, failing which you become hyper-critical. Sun and Moon both being placed adverse to Saturn, bring in a sense of fear and insecurity towards uncertain future, pessimism, and self-pitying. The Sun, ill-disposed of to mischievous Neptune make you stuck to delusional perceptions and beliefs, distanced from ground realities. Even more, because of inflated ego, coming as it may with both Mars and Sun placed adverse to expansive Jupiter. That further limits your vision, which doesn't allow you to look beyond for a reality check. Also, you are head strong.

Recently, he liked a girl and negotiation seems to be in its final stage. His delusional mind has again come into play with regards to the girl's career prospect. He came asking: "Sir, it will take more than a year for her to qualify getting a job suited to her discipline, and I will have to bear with her burden." My dear, you have yet not understood the meaning of marriage. Come out of your transactional attitude. With this mindset, it will be difficult for you to enjoy a stable and harmonious married life.