

OPINION 6
PARTISANSHIP KILLS
INSTITUTIONS

WORLD 9
TRUMP HUSH MONEY CASE
RAISES THORNY LEGAL ISSUES

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY RALLY
NEARLY 1%

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY APRIL 6, 2023; PAGES 12 & 3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



**LIVERPOOL AND
CHELSEA PLAY
0-0 DRAW IN PL
11 SPORT**

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 33 Issue 94
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

CAPSULE

SC ASKS CENTRE TO REPLY TO RELIGIOUS ACT PLEAS
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to file its reply to a batch of PILs challenging the validity of certain provisions of a 1991 law that prohibit filing of a lawsuit to reclaim a place of worship or seek a change in its character from what prevailed on August 15, 1947.

PRESIDENT TO TAKE SORTIE IN SU-30 MKI ON APRIL 8
New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, will undertake a sortie in the frontline fighter jet SU-30 MKI on April 8.

NIA FILES CHARGESHEET IN TERROR FUNDING CASE
New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday filed a chargesheet in the Al Huda Educational Trust (AHET) terror funding case, linked to the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI), which had set up the Trust to mobilise funds to further its anti-India agenda even after it was banned.

CHEATING WOMEN VIA MATRIMONIALS: 3 HELD
Gurugram: Three men were arrested for running a gang that duped women from different States after befriending them through matrimonial sites. A Nigerian national who is reportedly the kingpin of the gang is absconding.

No spl immunity to politicians, says SC

Court rejects plea by 14 parties against alleged misuse of Central agencies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a petition filed by 14 political parties led by the Congress alleging arbitrary use of Central probe agencies against Opposition leaders, asserting that laying down guidelines without facts of a criminal case will be a "very dangerous" proposition. Observing that politicians do not have "higher immunity", a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala expressed disinclination to entertain the petition, saying courts are always there for taking up the grievances of political leaders as they do for common citizens. "Political leaders do not enjoy any immunity higher

than the common citizens... Once we accept that political leaders are absolutely on the same footing as common citizens with no higher immunity, then how can we say there can be no arrests unless there is a three pronged test which is satisfied," the bench said. "Take a case which does not involve the threat of bodily harm. Day-in and day-out, we get cases of financial scams. Somebody takes away 10 thousand crores, five thousand crores from retired pensioners or from ordinary middle class people and does not refund the amount... No payments are made. Complaints are filed. Usually, the FIRs are filed and then a case is filed for clubbing of the FIRs. We deal with it," the CJ said. "You please come back to us when you have an individual criminal case or group of cases. Laying down general guidelines without having relation to facts of a case will be dangerous," the bench said. Sensing the disinclination from the apex court, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the political parties, sought permission to withdraw the petition which was granted. During the argument, Singhvi referred to statistics while trying to drive home the point that Opposition leaders

have been targeted by federal investigative agencies from 2014 to 2022 and that there has been a 600 per cent increase in CBI and ED cases. "Between 2014 and 2022, 121 political leaders have been probed by the Enforcement Directorate, out of whom 95 per cent are from Opposition parties," he claimed. The CBI has probed 124 political leaders and out of these, 108 are from Opposition political parties, said Singhvi. The bench said even the media, under Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) of the Constitution, does not have higher powers and "the political persons are also citizens and as a citizen they are subject to similar rules". The senior lawyer said he was not seeking any particular relief in a particular case and the parties, which represent 42 per cent of the electorate in the country, wanted prospective guidelines of pre and post-arrest procedures to be adopted by the central probe agencies.

Continued on Page 2



Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav receives from President Droupadi Murmu Padma Vibhushan award bestowed on veteran socialist leader and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister late Mulayam Singh Yadav in New Delhi on Wednesday. Medical professional Dilip Mahalanabis, known globally for his work on Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), was another recipient of the Padma Vibhushan. A total of 52 awardees were given the honour — two Padma Vibhushan, five Padma Bhushan and 45 Padma Shri

China at it again; US slams its bid to lay claim to Arunachal

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/BEIJING, WASHINGTON



China has again raked up the Arunachal Pradesh issue claiming its "sovereignty" over it even after India rejected Beijing's recent exercise to rename 11 places in the eastern State. Meanwhile, the United States said it "strongly opposes" China's attempts to advance a claim over Indian territory, Arunachal Pradesh by renaming localities. Asserting her country's claim, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning late on Tuesday said, "Zangnan (Arunachal Pradesh) is part of China's territory. In accordance with relevant stipulations of the administration of geographical names of the State Council, competent authorities of the Chinese Government have standardised the names of some parts of Zangnan. This is within China's sovereign rights."

Reacting to China renaming places, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, "This is another attempt by the Chinese claim on an Indian territory. So the United States, as you know, has recognised that territory for a long time and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance a territory claim by renaming localities. And so, again, this is something that we have long stood by a few things." Ministry of External Affairs official Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi on Tuesday asserted that Arunachal Pradesh will always be an integral part of India. Bagchi issued the statement after China's Ministry of Civil Affairs came up with the names of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh, which it referred to as "Zangnan, the southern part of Tibet."

He said, "We have seen such reports. This is not the first time China has made such an attempt. We reject this outright." Bagchi also said, "Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. Attempts to assign invented names will not alter this reality." The first batch of the standardised names of six places in Arunachal Pradesh was released in 2017 and the second batch of 15 places was issued in 2021. China's renaming of the places in Arunachal Pradesh came in the midst of the lingering eastern Ladakh border standoff that began in May 2020.

Cong seeks all-party meeting on China border situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday demanded that the Government convene an all-party meeting on the Sino-India border situation and take the entire Opposition into confidence. Congress leader and senior spokesperson Manish Tewari told a Press conference that it has been three years since the standoff with China began at the Line of Actual Control in May 2020 but the government has maintained silence on the issue and has not allowed any discussion on it in Parliament.

Covid 163-day high; 4,435 cases, 15 deaths in 24 hours



13-fold rise in daily positive cases in just three weeks. Health experts said coronavirus infections in India are doubling every 4-5 days, indicating that the pandemic is still far from being under control despite the return of near-normalcy across society and the economy. The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium identifies Omicron subvariant XBB.1.16 as the leading variant in India, making up 60 per cent of cases. The World Health Organization (WHO) too has sounded an alarm in this direction warning that the sub-variant is the virus 'one need to watch' in India. Though the Health Ministry has advised people not to lower their guard it also at the same time said that Omicron's sub-variant which is circulating in the country has not led to the increase in hospitalisations and there is no need to worry.

SC quashes telecast ban on MediaOne

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Expressing displeasure over sealed-cover submissions, and stressing the importance of freedom of the press, the Supreme Court on Wednesday quashed the Centre's telecast ban on Malayalam news channel MediaOne, and pulled up the Home Ministry for raising national security claims from "thin air" without facts. Observing that the State can't impose unreasonable restrictions on the press as it would have a chilling effect on press freedom, a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud set aside the Kerala High Court order which had upheld the Centre's decision to ban the channel's telecast on security grounds. Saying that critical views of the channel against government policies cannot be termed as anti-establishment as an independent press is necessary for a robust democracy, the SC said, "Press has a duty to speak truth to power and present citizens with hard facts enabling them to make choices that propel democracy in the right direction. The restriction on freedom of press compels citizens to think along the same tangent. Homogenised views on issues that range from socio-economic polity to political ideologies would pose great dangers to democracy." The court added non-renewal of licence of a channel

is a restriction on the right to freedom of speech. The top court said the alleged link of the channel's shareholders to Jamaat-e-Islami Hind is not a legitimate ground to restrict the rights of the channel. The bench pointed out that the outfit is not at all a banned organisation. The court said the State is using national security as a tool to deny citizens remedies that are provided under the law. "National security claims cannot be made out of thin air, there must be material facts backing it," the bench said. Non-disclosure of reasons for denial of security reasons and disclosure only to court in sealed cover has violated principles of natural justice, the bench, also comprising Justice Hima Kohli, said. "Sealed cover procedure cannot be introduced to cover harms that cannot be remedied by public immunity proceedings," the bench said. The apex court said courts should appoint an amicus curiae to assess the claims of confidentiality and assist the court in coming out with a reasoned order.

Continued on Page 2

Commando dies as even backup parachute fails

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Marine Commando (MARCOS) of the Indian Navy died on Wednesday morning during free-fall parachute training in West Bengal during a training exercise. The 31-year-old Petty Officer carried out a para-jump from a military transport aircraft in Panagarh when the accident took place as the parachute reportedly failed to open. His emergency or the backup parachute also reportedly did not function properly. The Navy has ordered a mandatory enquiry to ascertain the cause of the accident. The deceased was identified as Chandaka Govind, a native of Andhra Pradesh. He was attached to INS Karna, a MARCOS base in Visakhapatnam. "Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar and all personnel of Indian Navy pay tribute to Chandaka Govind, Petty Officer who lost his life whilst undergoing training exercise at Panagarh on 05 Apr 23 and extend heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family," a Navy tweet said. The commando reportedly jumped out of a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft during a routine exercise. These planes stationed at Air Force base Arjan Singh, Panagarh, are used for training of the Special Forces commando units of the Army, Navy and IAF.

Continued on Page 2

Ensure peace on Hanuman Jayanti, MHA tells States; HC orders CAPF in Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday directed the West Bengal Government to requisition Central forces for assisting the State police in maintaining peace during Hanuman Jayanti celebrations. Meanwhile, the Centre on Wednesday asked all States to ensure law and order during Hanuman Jayanti on April 6 and monitor any factor that could disturb peace and harmony in society. Close on the heels of communal violence in West Bengal and Bihar during Ram Navami, the Home Ministry's advisory to all States and Union Territories aimed at sensitising law enforcement agencies following the communal violence last week. The court said in view of events in the recent past, the order was being given to assure the general public that they are safe and will not be affected by any disturbance. Clashes had taken place at some places in Howrah and Hooghly districts between two groups during and after Ram Navami processions last week. Observing that prevention is better than cure, a division bench presided by Acting Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam directed the West Bengal Government to requisition Central forces to avoid any breach of peace when



Hanuman Jayanti rallies are taken out on Thursday. The court also directed the Centre to make swift arrangements for such deployment on receipt of requisition from the State. The order came on a PIL filed by Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly Suwendu Adhikari. It also asked the State to file an action taken report on the next date of hearing. "The intelligence wing of the State police shall be strengthened and all steps be taken to avert any such pre-planned attacks or violence," the bench directed. "The MHA has issued an advisory to all States in preparation for Hanuman Jayanti. The governments are encouraged to ensure the maintenance of law and order, peaceful observance of the festival, and monitoring of any factors that could disturb communal harmony in society," the Home Minister's Office tweeted.

Continued on Page 2

Shaheen Bagh's lad held for Kerala train arson; motive unknown

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI/KOCHI

A quiet street in the famous Shaheen Bagh of South-East Delhi was abuzz with activities on Wednesday morning. TV journalists with camera crews jostled to interview Shaheeruddin Saifi's father, Fakhruddin Ali, after his son was arrested by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), with the help of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), at a railway station in Ratnagiri late on Tuesday in Sunday night's train arson case in Kozhikode. The arrest was made in connection with the incident on a moving train which happened on Sunday night when the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express train reached

the Korapuzha railway bridge. Shaheeruddin had reportedly boarded the train and poured an inflammable liquid on fellow passengers in the moving train and set them on fire. The deceased have been identified as Mattannur natives M Rahmath (44), Sehra Bathool (2) and Noufeeq (38). Police believe they fell off the train or jumped out of the train to escape the fire. At least nine people are said to be injured. The police did not rule out a terror angle as they recovered a bag from the tracks that had another bottle of petrol and two mobile phones. Though the Kerala Police had released the images of the prime suspect, it does not have any resemblance with Shaheeruddin, who was arrested in Ratnagiri. An ATS officer said



the accused was handed over to the Kerala Police. Though the ATS has claimed that Shaheeruddin confessed to his crime, the motive remains unknown. Shaheeruddin has been working as a casual labourer in a construction site in Kozhikode, police said. However, his father in Delhi claimed Shaheeruddin had never been to Kerala. Tracking the case, the police zeroed in on the 30-year-old Shaheeruddin and reached his house in Shaheen Bagh on Wednesday. According to officials, a police team visited Shaheeruddin's house and questioned his father and two brothers. The brothers were instructed to appear for questioning the previous night. After Shaheeruddin's arrest, the police team also took his father for questioning.

Shaheeruddin's family, who settled in Shaheen Bagh years ago, are natives of Gautam Buddha Nagar in Uttar Pradesh. Shaheeruddin studied till Class XII. After that, he worked with his father as a carpenter. A team from Kerala Police on Wednesday visited Shaheeruddin's home in Shaheen Bagh. His father told the police he was last seen on March 31 and the family had filed a missing complaint. "Searches were conducted at Shaheeruddin's home but nothing was found. His father was questioned. He said his son left the house saying he was going to work but didn't return. The family tried calling him but his phone was switched off. Later, they lodged a missing persons report on April 2. The agencies have arrested Shaheeruddin. His

parents said they don't know anything about the case," said an officer who wished to remain anonymous. Locals said Shaheeruddin kept to himself and they expressed shock over a local boy being accused of such a gory crime. "Shaheeruddin can communicate in English. He took several books and other stuff from home. He doesn't have any mental health issues. He used to do carpentry with me," said Fakhruddin, adding that if Shaheeruddin is guilty he should be given strict punishment. He said Shaheeruddin may have been brainwashed. On Monday, the Uttar Pradesh ATS caught his namesake from the Bulandshahr's Siana. He too is a carpenter. He was questioned for hours and later released.

NCR-PULSE

PREPARED TO DEAL WITH COVID SURGE: OBEROI
New Delhi: Amid a rise in Covid-19 cases, Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi on Wednesday said all civic-run hospitals are "fully prepared" to deal with the coronavirus situation and appealed to people not to panic.

AIIMS TO LAUNCH 'MISSION RECRUITMENT' BY SEPT 2023
New Delhi: AIIMS will launch 'Mission Recruitment' to achieve near-zero vacancies by September 2023. Director of AIIMS-Delhi Dr M Srinivas, in an office memorandum, said it is noted that a few sanctioned posts at the premium institute are currently vacant.

SELECTED BY IVY LEAGUE UNIVERSITIES
New Delhi: Dhruv Bhargava, a student of Class XII of Amity International School, Sector-46, Gurugram, has been selected by three prestigious Ivy League Universities of the world - University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia USA, Columbia University, New York, USA and Brown University, Rhode Island, USA.

HC ORDER ON JAIN'S BAIL PLEA LIKELY TODAY
New Delhi: The Delhi High Court is likely to pronounce on Thursday its order on the bail plea of jailed former AAP minister Satyendar Jain in a money laundering case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

ATISHI INTERACTS WITH GOVT SCHOOL SAB MEMBERS
New Delhi: Delhi Education Minister Atishi on Wednesday interacted with members of the Student Advisory Boards (SABs) across various Delhi government schools on Wednesday.

MIN PRESENTS CORONA WARRIOR'S FAMILY WITH ₹1 CR
New Delhi: Delhi's Social Welfare Minister, Raaj Kumar Anand, met with the family of a corona warrior who lost his life while on duty due to COVID-19 and presented them with a cheque of Rs 1 crore on behalf of the Delhi Government.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Suraj Prakash Sethi S/o Sh. Kunj Lal Sethi R/o D-36, MIG DDA Flats, Motia Khan, Pahar Ganj, Swami Ram Tirth Nagar, Delhi-110055. Herby declare that I have changed my name from Suraj Parkash Sethi to Suraj Prakash Sethi for all future purposes.

PD(004)C I, Sonia D/o Sh. Suraj Prakash Sethi R/o 1/16, Second Floor, Single Storey Ramesh Nagar Delhi-110015. Herby declare that I have changed my name from Sonia Sethi to Sonia for all future purposes.

PD(005)C I, hitherto known as Megha Chandani D/o Sh. Prem Kumar Chandani R/o BB-88B, East Shalimar Bagh, Delhi -110088 have married with Mr. Deepak Chhabra and changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Kyra Chhabra for all future purpose.

PD(006)A

52 tigers died this year till April 4

ARCHANA JYOTI NEW DELHI

At least 52 tigers have died this year till April 4, highest in the last three years during the period with maximum number of deaths at 15 reported from Madhya Pradesh where most of the officials from the forests departments are engaged in keeping the imported Cheetahs within their home range in Kuno Palpur sanctuary.

Of these 52 mortalities, four occurred in the last four days itself. These included a cub and a female.

However, a senior official at the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) under the Union Environment Ministry said this is no sign of concern as the mortality should be compared with tiger numbers. In



a bid to draw home his point, a senior official said that "no tiger, no death. Less tiger, low death and more tigers more death, average age in the wild is 10-12 years."

In the wild several factors like old age, diseases,

internecine fights, high infant mortality, electrocution, snaring, drowning, road/rail hits etc. account for a majority of tiger deaths, shared another official.

According to the 2018 census report, India had 2,967

tigers. The much-awaited all-India tiger census report will be released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mysuru on April 9, on the occasion to mark 50 years of Project Tiger. According to the officials, there has been an upward trend in tiger numbers over the last five years. They claimed that the regions which had no tigers were showing a good presence.

As per the data available from the NTCA, of 52 tigers

who died during over the first quarter of the year, maximum were from Madhya Pradesh, followed by Maharashtra. Sources said that Madhya Pradesh may lose the status of home of the highest number of tigers in the country.

An analysis of the data shows that in the last four days from 1 April to 4 April, one tiger each has died. In Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve

an adult and a cub died in separate incidents, one death was reported from Kerala's Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and in Maharashtra big cat died outside the village Pataguda.

Last year i.e. in 2022, a total 121 tigers died against 127 the previous year. In the last three years, tiger mortality has crossed the 100 mark annually in the country. In 2019, the country reported 96 tiger deaths.

Oban, Asha back in national park after venturing out

PNS NEW DELHI

Much to the relief of the wildlife officials, both the Cheetah—Oban and Asha who had ventured out from the Kuno Palpur Sanctuary in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh are now back in the national park. Oban and Asha, who were released in the wild at Kuno, had kept the State officials on their toes after straying out of the protected area.

A senior official from the NTCA called their venturing out from the park to the villages on the periphery a routine affair as "they are exploring the area." One male is in the fringe area, keeps on moving in and out, he said.

5 Rajouri cops suspended in bizarre Malkhana theft case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE JAMMU

Five police personnel were placed under suspension by the Superintendent of Police, Rajouri district on Wednesday in a bizarre incident of theft reported from inside the high security seizure room (Malkhana) of the district court complex, Rajouri.

According to official sources, the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajouri Amritpal Singh has placed under suspension Guard Incharge and other officials for dereliction of duties while a departmental enquiry has also been initiated, which will be conducted by Deputy SP DAR Parupkar Singh.



The investigation is going on and a breakthrough is expected very soon, police said. A case under FIR number 143/2023 under section 457/380 IPC has been registered and investigation has been started.

During the initial phase, police said, special teams have analysed the crime scene with the assistance of FSL team.

complex, Rajouri. According to official sources, the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajouri Amritpal Singh has placed under suspension Guard Incharge and other officials for dereliction of duties while a departmental enquiry has also been initiated, which will be conducted by Deputy SP DAR Parupkar Singh.

Pvt TV news group receives email threat to assassinate Modi, Yogi

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

A private television news group has informed the Noida Police that it has received an email from an unknown sender who threatened to assassinate Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a senior officer said on Wednesday.

Police said they have lodged an FIR and launched an investigation into the matter after a representative of the TV channel, located in Sector 16A Film City, approached them Tuesday evening.

"This is to bring to your kind attention about the email received by our CFO on April 3 at around 10:23 pm from one



Mr. Kartik Singh with an email id "mailto: singhkartik78107@gmail.com" singhkartik78107@gmail.com. As can be seen from this email, the sender has threatened to assassinate the honourable chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and also the honourable prime minister," Vijay Kumar, manager (administration) at ABP Network, stated in the complaint.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Noida) Rajneesh Verma said on the basis of the complaint, police have launched an investigation with two teams working on the case.

"News channels and media houses often inform us of getting such emails which are usually not taken seriously but this time since it mentioned a threat to the prime minister and the chief minister, we are extremely vigilant and will track the email sender soon," Verma said.

The FIR has been lodged against "unknown" at the Sector 20 Police Station under different sections of IPC.

Newborn girl, boy killed in separate incidents

Durg/Surajpur: A woman allegedly killed her 6-month-old son by throwing him in a pond in Chhattisgarh's Durg district apparently because she was upset over her husband's addiction to alcohol and facing financial crisis, police said on Wednesday.

In a similar incident, a newborn girl was killed allegedly by her grandmother, who threw her in a well, in Surajpur district. PTI

China at it again...

Following the standoff, India bolstered its overall military preparedness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Arunachal Pradesh sector as well. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a nearly three-year-long confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement of troops from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

No spl immunity to...

I am asking for the guidelines for the future. This is a remarkable convergence of 14 parties against the misuse of the agencies, both CBI and ED," Singhvi had said, and claimed that 95 per cent cases of the CBI and the ED are against the

leaders of Opposition parties. He pointed out that the rise in the number of cases filed by the CBI and the ED after the Modi-led NDA Government came to power in 2014. "Second statistics, pre-2014 and post-2014: there is a humongous jump in cases. The rate of conviction is four to five per cent. We are asking for pre-arrest guidelines and post-arrest bail guidelines," said Singhvi. Besides the Congress, the parties to the petition included the DMK, RJD, BRS, Trinamool Congress, AAP, NCP, Shiv Sena (UBT), JMM, JD(U), CPI(M), CPI, Samajwadi Party and the J&K National Conference.

Man kills son on being asked why he gobbled up chicken curry leaving nothing for him

A 32-year-old man died after his enraged father allegedly hit him with a wooden club for quarrelling over not getting to taste a dish made at home in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka, police said on Wednesday.

The incident happened at Guttigar in Sullia taluk of the district on Tuesday, they said.

The victim has been identified as Shivaram, who was killed during a verbal duel with his father, Sheena, over the issue of getting to eat homemade chicken curry.

Sources said the chicken curry prepared in the house was gobbled up by Shivaram's father by the time he returned



home. The son picked up a quarrel with his father, who in a fit of rage, hit Shivaram with a wooden club, resulting in his death.

Subrahmanya police, who rushed to the spot, arrested the accused. The deceased is survived by his wife and two children.

Delhi records 509 fresh Covid cases

PTI NEW DELHI

Delhi's COVID-19 positivity rate breached the 25 per cent mark on Wednesday as the city recorded 509 fresh cases in a single day.

The positivity rate stood at 26.54 per cent, while no new fatalities were logged.

Delhi had recorded 521 cases on Tuesday, the highest single-day rise since August 27 last year, and one fatality, according to data shared by the city health department.

The positivity rate stood at 15.64 per cent. The city had recorded 573 positive cases on August 27 last year with a positivity rate of 3.62 per cent along with five deaths.

The city's COVID-19 death toll remains at 26,533.

Ensure peace on Hanuman Jayanti, MHA tells States...

On Tuesday, the Union Home Ministry also sought a detailed report from the West Bengal government on the communal violence. Communal violence took place in Bihar's Sasaram and Biharsharif towns too on and after Ram Navami following which over 170 people were arrested by the police.

Commando dies as even backup parachute...

The body was reportedly found outside a factory in Barjora, Bankura district. It is about 50 kms from Panagarh. In a free-fall parachute jump, the commando jumps from the aircraft ranging from 15,000 to 30,000 feet and opens the parachute very late. The para drops take place far away from the target or the drop zone and the commando deploys the parachute when closing in, source said. These drills are undertaken to

SC quashes telecast ban on news channel MediaOne

The top court had on March 15, in an interim order, stayed until further directions the January 31 directive of the Centre revoking the licence of the news channel and banning its telecast on security grounds. It had said the news and current affairs channel would continue its operations as it was operating prior to the ban of

Man kills son on being asked why he gobbled up chicken curry leaving nothing for him

hone the skills of the Special Forces to land at the designated place after the free-fall, they added. The MARCOS is the elite Special Forces of the Indian Navy and some of its highly trained commandos are also deployed in regions like Jammu and Kashmir. These commandos are trained in parachute jumping, deep sea diving and other related skills required for these kinds of high risk operations behind enemy lines.

Commando dies as even backup parachute...

The body was reportedly found outside a factory in Barjora, Bankura district. It is about 50 kms from Panagarh. In a free-fall parachute jump, the commando jumps from the aircraft ranging from 15,000 to 30,000 feet and opens the parachute very late. The para drops take place far away from the target or the drop zone and the commando deploys the parachute when closing in, source said. These drills are undertaken to

SC quashes telecast ban on news channel MediaOne

The top court had on March 15, in an interim order, stayed until further directions the January 31 directive of the Centre revoking the licence of the news channel and banning its telecast on security grounds. It had said the news and current affairs channel would continue its operations as it was operating prior to the ban of

'Boxer' sent to 8-day police remand

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deepak Pahal alias Deepak Boxer, one of the most-wanted gangsters in Delhi, was brought to the city from Mexico on Wednesday and remanded to eight days' custody. The Delhi Police had sought his custody for 14 days but the court agreed to eight days.

The gangster was produced before the Patiala House Courts, directly from the lock-up due to security reasons. Boxer had fled India to Mexico on a forged passport. Earlier, a two-member team of the Delhi Police's Special Cell landed with Deepak at Terminal 3 of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport from Mexico via Istanbul at around 6 AM on Wednesday.

Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) HGS Dhaliwal said the gangster had taken multiple routes and stops to reach Mexico on his way to the US ("donkey" method). But he landed in their net laid



with the help of the office of the Legal Attache, US Embassy, New Delhi. The gangster, a winner of a national-level boxing championship, was trying to enter the US illegally via Mexico and planning to run his organised crime gang in Delhi and neighbouring States from there. "Boxer got a passport made in Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) and took a flight from Kolkata.

He changed flights to reach Mexico. His aim was to cross into the US. The US' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Mexico Police really helped a lot," Dhaliwal said.

This is a "big success" for the Special Cell as this was a coordinated effort of all teams, he said and added that Deepak's cousin Sandeep is currently in California but no detention has been made. "There is an elaborate drug syndicate and even human trafficking is common, but in the case of Deepak, a Pakistani national Ali's involvement is being investigated," the officer said.

"It is very early to say about the involvement of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang in his leaving the country but this is clear that he was always aligned towards the gang," Dhaliwal

said, adding that police have information on other gangsters and "work is on". Deepak's interrogation will help in gathering more information, the senior officer said. His Gogi gang is allegedly linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, according to police.

"We received inputs in January that Deepak got a fake passport made in the name of Ravi Antil from Bareilly to flee the country. He took a flight from Kolkata to Dubai. Then from Dubai, he went to Almaty, Kazakhstan, and reached Turkey. He then headed for Spain. After taking multiple routes, he finally reached Mexico," Dhaliwal said.

"Our teams were constantly tracking his routes," he said at a press conference held on Tuesday. He said Delhi Police zeroed in on the gangster's location in Cancun, a city notorious for human traffickers and the narcotics mafia, after interrogating several of his aides and using technical inputs. "His intention behind

reaching Mexico was to reach America, with the help of human traffickers, where he would join his other associates. From there, he had planned to run his organised crime group in Delhi and neighbouring states," Dhaliwal added. Now that he has been brought to India, he will be interrogated in the cases he has been involved including the murder of a builder in Delhi's Civil Lines area.

It was the first time that Delhi Police arrested a gangster in an operation outside the country. Police had announced a reward of Rs 3 lakh on information leading to the arrest of Deepak, who led the Gogi gang, which is allegedly linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

According to police, notorious gangster Boxer, a resident of Haryana's Sonapat, was wanted in 10 criminal cases including murder, attempted murder, and under the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), among others.

VHP denied nod to hold Hanuman Jayanti processions in Jahangirpuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police denied permission to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and another group to hold processions in the Jahangirpuri locality on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti on April 6. The police conducted a flag march in Jahangirpuri on Wednesday ahead of the forthcoming Hanuman Jayanti celebrations.

The VHP and the other groups had sought permission to conduct processions for Hanuman Jayanti, but due to concerns regarding the law and order situation, the organisers were not given permission.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued an advisory to all states and Union Territories ahead of Hanuman Jayanti, urging them to ensure peaceful celebrations and keep a check on any factors that could disrupt communal



harmony. The video shared on social media shows Delhi police and paramilitary forces conducting a march in Jahangirpuri to promote communal harmony ahead of Hanuman Jayanti, which is being celebrated on Thursday. The police have also made extensive security arrangements in the area for the occasion.

Although permission was not granted for the Shree Ram Bhagwan Pratima Yatra and Ramzan prayers in the area before Ram Navami celebrations on March 30. Ahead of the Hanuman Jayanti festival on April 6, the MHA on

Wednesday asked States to ensure law and order and monitor factors "that could disturb communal harmony in society".

The advisory comes in the wake of a series of incidents of communal violence reported on the occasion of Ram Navami on March 30-April 1 from Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand. The ministry in a tweet said, "The MHA has issued an advisory to all states in preparation for Hanuman Jayanti. The governments are encouraged to ensure the maintenance of law and order, peaceful observance of the festival, and monitoring of any factors that could disturb communal harmony in society." Last year on April 16, clashes had erupted between two communities during a procession on Hanuman Jayanti in the same area. The violence had injured eight police personnel and a local resident.

Sisodia moves Delhi HC seeking bail in excise case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday moved the Delhi High Court seeking bail in the excise policy case being probed by the CBI. Sisodia's bail plea is listed for hearing before Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma on Thursday.

Earlier, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday told a Delhi court the investigation in the money laundering probe against Sisodia in the excise case is at a "crucial" stage and it has found fresh evidence of his complicity.

The agency made the submissions while seeking time to argue on the bail application of the former Delhi deputy chief minister. Special Judge M K Nagpal adjourned for April 12 the arguments on the application. Meanwhile, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) organised



a protest on Wednesday outside the BJP headquarters seeking immediate release of former Sisodia. Amidst the protest, AAP councillors and workers raised slogans against the BJP-ruled central government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi

During the hearing on Wednesday, the judge also extended till April 17 the judicial custody of Sisodia after he was produced before the court and the agency sought an extension of custody. During the arguments, the Enforcement Directorate coun-

sel said the agency was "in process of gathering fresh evidence that has come to light." "We need time...Requesting court to grant time to advance arguments," the counsel said after a brief argument. The counsel appearing for Sisodia, meanwhile, claimed before the court the ED does not have evidence to prove the charge that he had indulged in money laundering.

"There's no basis (for the charge). They've probed and examined everything, raided my residence etc. But found nothing. The (excise) policy was approved by various authorities concerned, including the LG. Now you're blaming Sisodia solely. Also, this (the probe) is not under the preview of the ED," the counsel said.

He asserted the central anti-money laundering agency cannot make the vague allegation that he will tamper with evidence if enlarged on bail.

Why has DJB debt soared to ₹71K cr: BJP demands CBI probe into Delhi Jal Board finances

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Wednesday opened another front against the ruling AAP Government in the national capital alleging that the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has been turned bankrupt during eight years of the Arvind Kejriwal Government and demanded a CBI probe into it.

At a press conference, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said that Chief Minister Kejriwal who had announced that he will himself look after the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) should answer why its debt has soared to Rs 71,000 crore.

No immediate reaction was available from the DJB or the Delhi government over the BJP's claims. "The Kejriwal government has made Delhi Jal Board a bankrupt institution in eight years. There should be an enquiry by the Central Bureau



of Investigation (CBI) into the scam involving DJB and Yamuna cleaning," Sachdeva charged in a press conference. The Kejriwal government has turned the holy Yamuna river into a drain despite spending Rs 6,800 crore in the name of cleaning it in the last five years, the Delhi BJP president alleged. "Kejriwal, who had promised to ensure cleaning of

the river by 2025 so that people can take a dip in it, should answer why three ammonia treatment and 22 sewage treatment plants are yet to be set up along the Yamuna," he said. Questioning the intent of the government, Sachdeva said the Delhi LG's initiatives to clean the Najafgarh drain have started showing results while Kejriwal is only making

promises to clean the river. He said that people of the city under the banner of Lok Sansad have decided to create awareness about the pathetic situation of Yamuna due to the apathy of the government, by forming a human chain along the riverbank from Wajirabad Barrage to Kalindi Kunj on June 4.

The BJP supports the initiatives and appeals to everyone to join it, he said. Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that the Jal Board is completely under the control of the Delhi government and all its operations are done by the Delhi government.

Earlier in January this year, then Delhi Jal Board Vice-Chairman Saurabh Bhardwaj, who is currently minister in the Arvind Kejriwal government had admitted that several contractors have left due to non payment in DJB.

Notification of financial aid to HIV patients approved



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor DVK Saxena has approved a proposal for issuance of notification of financial assistance for people living with HIV/AIDS and children/orphan/destitute children infected by HIV/AIDS, through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Scheme to ensure targeted delivery of the financial aid to the beneficiaries.

"For beneficiaries availing Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART), the cost of transportation for accessing ART Centres and nutritional supplements, etc. will now be getting the amount for the same directly transferred to their accounts". "This, apart from ensuring transparency, will also ensure effective monitoring and follow up of patients in the course of their treatment.

"Aadhar authentication will also result in targeted dovetailing of various other programs like skill training and employment etc. for effective delivery to the beneficiaries," the Raj Niwas officials said.

The notification comes following the guidelines issued by the Central Government in 2019, which said that the State Government could mandate the use of Aadhar authentication for the beneficiaries u/s 7 of the Aadhar Act, 2016, in those schemes which are funded out of the consolidated fund of the State.

"However, in order to do so, the State Governments will need to issue notification u/s 7 of Aadhar Act, 2016 in respect of the specific schemes, similar to the ones as published by the Central Government Ministries / Departments," the notification said.

Awareness will boost clean Yamuna drive

LG's office to rope in priests to stop people from throwing religious waste into the river

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The efforts to clean the Yamuna will be boosted through wide ranging awareness campaigns, including involving priests to discourage people from throwing waste generated during religious ceremonies into the river.

According to Delhi Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat, the plan is to approach the priests of major temples as well as those located along the banks of the Yamuna and get their help in urging people not to throw



waste items like clothes, old idols, calendar, posters, flowers among others in the river, an official said.

In view of extreme importance of public participation in the Yamuna rejuvenation efforts, it has been decided to undertake wide ranging awareness generation and motivational IEC (information, education and communication) campaigns on various media platforms. "In this direction, priests will be involved and

sensitized to deter people from throwing religious waste into the river," said a statement from the LG office. The recent efforts by Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena towards cleaning and rejuvenation of the Yamuna have begun to show visible and concrete results, it said. "Even as critical steps to clean the Najafgarh Drain and restore the Yamuna floodplains have been going on in the right earnest, efforts at preventing disposal of physical

waste into the river have started bearing results," it said. Personnel of the Territorial Army deployed on the banks of Yamuna at the initiative of the LG prevented waste generated during religious ceremonies from being thrown into the river and collecting the same for disposal in an eco-friendly manner after Ram Navami. Territorial Army personnel also recently stopped washing of packaging polybags and sacks in the Najafgarh drain near the Inderlok metro station. The Irrigation and Flood Control department has issued challan to the owner of packaging material, said the statement.

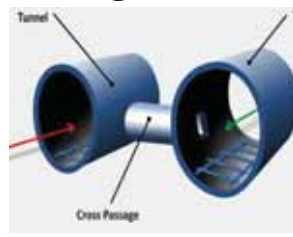
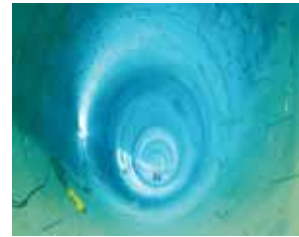
Various macro and micro-level steps have been taken by a high level committee chaired by the LG, formed at the direction of National Green Tribunal, that have begun showing results in the shape of relatively improved pollution levels in the Yamuna where the Najafgarh drain empties into the river, it said.

Passages parallel to underground sec of Del-G'zb RRTS being built

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) on Wednesday said that cross passages are being constructed parallel to the underground section of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor to ensure safety of the commuters. Cross-passage is a part between the two tunnels which enables movement of people from one tunnel to another in case of necessity or emergency. These cross passages are being constructed to connect both the tunnels based on New Australian Tunneling Method (NATM) technology.

According to NCRTC, two parallel tunnels are being made for the movement of trains on each route. Also, provision of one cross passage has been made in these tunnels at a distance of every 250 metres. These cross passages are help-



ful in the operation of trains and the safety of passengers in case of emergency in the underground section. In case of an emergency, if train operations in one tunnel stop due to any unforeseen reasons, then through these cross passages' commuters can be evacuated from the other tunnel.

A total of 6 tunnels are being made in Meerut on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor, in which a total of 9 cross-passages will be constructed. A total of 6 cross passages in 2 km long parallel tunnels being constructed between Bhainsali to Meerut Central, a total of 2 cross passages in 1 km

long parallel tunnels between Bhainsali to Begumpal and 1 cross-passage between about 700 m long parallel tunnels between Gandhi Bagh to Begumpal. A total of 4 tunnels are also to be constructed on the RRTS corridor in Delhi, in which a total of 12 cross-passages will be constructed. A total of 8 cross-passages will be constructed in both the 3 km long parallel tunnels under construction between New Ashok Nagar to Anand Vihar and a total of 4 cross-passages will be constructed in the 2 km long parallel tunnels being made between Anand Vihar to Sahibabad.

Property prices set to rise in G'gram

There has been 10% to 30% hike in circle rates for residential, farm, commercial properties

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

With a new circle rate, property rates are set to go up in Gurugram as the district administration has hiked the circle rates in the entire district by up to 30 per cent. "There has been a 10 per cent to 30 per cent hike in rates for residential, agricultural and commercial properties in all the tehsils and sub-tehsils in the district — Sohna, Pataudi, Farrukhnagar, Manesar, Wazirabad, Farrukhnagar, Manesar, Wazirabad, Badshahpur, Kadipur and Harsaru," read the orders issued by Gurugram administration. The new circle rates will be effective from April 1, the order said. Likewise, all the tehsils and



subtehsils in the district — Sohna, Pataudi, Farrukhnagar, Manesar, Wazirabad, Badshahpur, Qadipur and Harsaru — saw an increase in circle rates ranging from 10% to 30% on the prevalent rates. Circle rate is the minimum price at which a property is registered with the revenue department when being transferred. The stamp duty levied

on such properties is a major revenue for the state government. Market rate is the rate at which a property transaction takes place and its price is determined by market forces, while circle rates are fixed yearly or twice a year by the district administration.

As per the new rates notified by the government, the circle rates of a housing project on Golf Course Road have been increased and now a home-buyer will have to pay higher taxes.

Circle rates have been increased by Rs 2,500 per square foot. The rate of flats in group housing projects in a majority of sectors along Sohna Road had been increased from Rs5,500 per square foot to Rs

7,100 per square foot. The rates of floors in colonies and licensed colonies of HSVP [Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran] in Badshahpur tehsil have been increased from Rs6,500 per square to Rs 7,150 per square foot.

The rate of plots in Bajghera near Palam Vihar has increased from Rs 15,000 square yard to Rs 18,000 per square yard. In upscale Civil Lines, the rate has been increased from 52,800 per square yard to Rs 70,000 per square yard. "The rates have been revised by an average of 10-30% in the district. These rates have been uploaded on the government and department website and can be accessed easily."

IP College counselling its traumatised students

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi University's Indraprastha College for Women (IPCW) has started counselling sessions for students who have claimed to have experienced trauma due to the alleged harassment during its annual fest. In her second statement in the last two days, IP college principal Poonam Kumria said Indraprastha College for Women is concerned over the inconvenience experienced by some of the students during the festival and requested the students to avail the services of the counsellor.

More than 1,100 people, including former teachers and students of DU's IPCW, have expressed deep concern over the recent incident of alleged harassment at a fest and demanded an apology from



Principal Poonam Kumria. They have also raised a host of questions regarding the incident questioning the management's action and reaction in a letter signed by all of them. The letter comes a week after some "unknown" men allegedly trespassed, shouted slogans and harassed women students during the annual 'Shruti' festival at the Indraprastha

College for Women (IPCW). The authors of the letters are former teachers of the college, parents and concerned citizens. "The undersigned consist of students since the early 1960s. IPCW has never seen times worse than what we are witnessing now. We, members of the academia and civil society, are deeply concerned with what is happening and strong-

ly feel that the College needs to proactively protect its girls rather than further harass them," the letter signed by 1,108 individuals read. "Why is the College threatening students with dire consequences if they continue their protests, calling parents of the already traumatised students and creating an atmosphere of fear through punitive measures?" they asked. On March 28, some "unknown" men allegedly trespassed, shouted slogans and harassed women students during the annual 'Shruti' festival at the college.

A host of protests were organised against the principal following the incident, wherein the students also alleged attempts to "saffronise" college, claimed increased surveillance and curtailment of freedom of speech at the hands of the newly-appointed principal.

India mulling import of dairy products: Official

Supply constraint as milk production remained stagnant last fiscal year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India may import dairy products if needed as there is a supply constraint for such items due to milk production remaining stagnant in the last fiscal year. This has led to an increase in milk prices over the last few months that has been 14 to 15 per cent, much more than the inflation.

According to a top official of the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairy, the Government will intervene to import dairy products like butter and ghee, if required, after assessing the stock position of milk in Southern states, where the flushing (peak production) season has started now. Milk output in the country stood at 221 million tonne in 2021-22, up 6.25 per cent from 208 million tonne in the previous year, as per the official data.

Addressing a press conference, Animal Husbandry and Dairy Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said the country's milk production remained stagnant



in the 2022-23 fiscal year due to lumpy skin disease in cattle, while the domestic demand grew by 8-10 per cent in the same period because of a rebound in the post-pandemic demand. "There is no constraint in milk supply as such in the country... There is an adequate inventory of skimmed milk powder (SMP). But in the case of dairy products, especially fats, butter and ghee etc, the stocks are lower than the previous year," he said.

The government will intervene to import dairy products like butter and ghee, if required, after assessing the stock position of milk in Southern states, where the flushing (peak production) season has started now, he said. Singh, however, observed that the imports may

not be beneficial at this point in time as international prices in recent months are ruling firm. "If global prices are high, there is no point in importing. We will assess the flush season in the rest of the country and then take a call," he said. The shortage will be less in north India where the lean season has been postponed with temperature cooling down due to untimely rains in the last 20 days, he added.

According to the secretary, the country's milk output remained stagnant due to the impact of lumpy skin disease that killed 1.89 lakh cattle last year and the post-pandemic rebound in milk demand.

"The impact of lumpy skin disease on cattle can be felt to the extent that the total milk production is a little stagnant. Normally, milk production has been growing at 6 per cent annually. However this year (2022-23), it will be either stagnant or grow at 1-2 per cent," Singh said. Since the government takes into account the milk production data of the

cooperative sector and not the entire private and unorganised sector, "we assume it will be stagnant," Singh said. It is a true rise in fodder prices that has led to milk inflation. There is a problem in fodder supply as the fodder crop area has remained stagnant in the last four years, while the dairy sector has been growing annually at 6 per cent, he added.

According to experts, the spike is linked to rising input costs, the disruption caused by the pandemic, and global prices. Demand for milk dried up during the covid-19 lockdown in 2020 as hotels, sweetshops, and canteens closed down and weddings and other public functions got cancelled or curtailed. Prices of milk, cheese, butter, and skimmed milk powder, also crashed.

This compelled dairy farmers to hold limited livestock. Even the calves and dry cattle they were left with were mostly underfed. Those calves are now the milk producers but their produce is of low quality and quantity.

Furore in House over nixing of 'Point of order'

Kharge says Govt not letting Opp to speak as Dhankhar disallows discussion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Till now issues like the demand for Rahul Gandhi's apology, a JPC probe in the Adani Group controversy, alleged Chinese intrusions, were among a range of issues that had led to acrimonious exchanges between the Treasury and Opposition Benches in Parliament, resulting in the stalling of the entire Budget Session.

However, a ruling on 'Point of order' by Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday drew further protests and sloganeering between the two sides both in and out of Parliament.

Amid a logjam over Rahul Gandhi's remarks on democracy, Dhankhar rejected Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge's 'Point of order', saying there can be no issue or individual beyond the purview of discussion in the Upper House of Parliament.

Dhankhar declined the 'Point of order' raised by

Kharge on March 13 in which he objected to a call by the Leader of the House, Piyush Goyal for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to come to the Rajya Sabha and apologise for 'insulting' the Parliament. The Congress said presiding officers in legislatures are expected to be fair, even-handed and non-partisan, and cannot display their biases or their loyalty to the ruling party.

In a letter to Dhankhar, Kharge said "as regards your ruling vis-a-vis my 'Point of order' with due humility, I must confess that I find it surprising. A simple reference to the content referred to by Piyush Goyal would have answered that question."

Union Minister Piyush Goyal accused the Congress leaders of insulting Rajya Sabha while Kharge charged the Government with not allowing the Opposition to speak as trading of barbs and protests by the two sides led to a washout

of one more day of proceedings. Goyal, without naming Rahul Gandhi, had demanded an apology on March 13 for "the shameless way by which a senior leader of the Opposition in a foreign country has attacked the democracy of India, insulted the Parliament of India."

Reading out his decision in the midst of slogan shouting by Opposition members during the post-lunch session, the Chairman said, "Constitutional 'privilege' of 'freedom of expression' and 'immunity' from any civil or criminal action to Members of Parliament, calls for a high degree of care, caution and accountability."

"This unique freedom privilege comes with heavy obligations. Breach of this privilege by engaging in reckless trading of allegations or free fall of information, invectives and innuendos or setting afoot pernicious narratives entail serious consequences, Dhankhar added. "The sanctity of the temple of democracy cannot be permitted to be outraged as the privilege does not extend to engaging in demeaning parliament, making disparaging observations tarnishing constitutional institutions or set afloat narratives premised on reckless allegations of untenable fact premise," Dhankhar said.

"After due consideration on the matter I am of the firm view that there can be no issue or individual beyond the purview of discussion in the Rajya Sabha and the same is exclusively subject to regulation by the House and the Chairman," Dhankhar said.

Kharge had cited a ruling given by late V V Giri on June 19, 1967 that "a member of one House should not use the freedom of speech on the floor of the House to make allegations or charge against the members of the other House."

The other one was made on March 17, 1983 by the then Vice-Chairman in favour of L K Advani that stated: "Before referring to a member of the other House, one has to exercise a lot of care and caution..."

Dhankhar said the authenticated record made available by Goyal, "bears out that his demand of apology on the overseas statements made by a senior leader of the opposition is factually premised and does not graduate to making 'allegation of a defamatory or incriminatory nature'."

"In view of categorical and firm constitutional prescriptions, I cannot persuade myself to sustain the point of order raised by the Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition Shri Mallikarjun Kharge and the same is hereby declined," the Chairman said. In response, the Opposition members intensified their sloganeering.

Cong left with no ideology, just works against country: Scindia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Making a sharp attack on Rahul Gandhi and his party, BJP leader and Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Wednesday accused the Congress of according a "special treatment" to the Gandhi scion and alleged that it had been left with no ideology except the one of a "traitor" which works against the country by "insulting backward classes and armed forces."

Scindia joined the rising number of senior BJP leaders taking on Rahul and called out Congress for according Rahul Gandhi a "special treatment" following his conviction in a defamation case and also accused the party of pressuring the judiciary, and doing everything possible to stay relevant.

Scindia was in the Congress for long but quit the party and joined the BJP in 2020 for better political prospects and repositioning



himself in the Madhya Pradesh politics. He was later made civil aviation minister at the centre by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a direct attack on Rahul, the BJP leader said "Congress has insulted backward classes, sought proof of our armed forces' bravery and "spoken about our soldiers being beaten up by China".

"The Congress has been left with no ideology. This Congress has been now left with only one ideology which is of a traitor, an ideology which works against the coun-

try," he told newsmen. The minister said the Congress is projecting the "personal legal battle" of Gandhi as a fight for democracy. It is leaving no stone unturned to play with democracy and hitting new lows, he said, accusing the party of trying to pressure and intimidate the judiciary by taking its army of leaders and supporters to Surat when Rahul filed appeal in a court there in a criminal defamation case.

Parliament is not being allowed to function and its leaders are wearing black clothes, he said, questioning the rationale as he noted that several other leaders have previously been disqualified as well.

Is this the philosophy of "Gandhivada", why so much is being done for one person, he asked. Some people are "first class citizens" for the Congress, Scindia said, noting that a Congress leader had claimed that normal legal process should not be applied on the Gandhis, said Scindia.

True character revealed, Cong slams Scindia, Azad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Wednesday clashed out at its former members Ghulam Nabi Azad and Jyotiraditya Scindia, saying they have been huge beneficiaries of the party's system but with every passing day, they give powerful evidence that this generosity to them was "undeserved" as they reveal their "true character".

The grand old party's attack on Scindia and Azad came after they criticised it and its leadership separately in the media. Scindia, a Union minister and a BJP leader, launched a sharp attack on Rahul Gandhi and the Congress, alleging that the party has been left with no

ideology except the one of a "traitor" which works against the country. While Azad has slammed the Congress leadership and the party in several interviews ahead of launch of his book. In one of the interview Azad said he believes the Congress is still run by "remote control" and alleges that a "new coterie of inexperienced sycophants" manage its affairs.

Reacting to the scathing criticism by the two former Congress leaders, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said both Ghulam Nabi Azad and Jyotiraditya Scindia have been huge beneficiaries of the Congress system and its leadership in past. "With every passing day, they give powerful evidence that this

generosity to them was undeserved. They reveal their true character which they kept hidden for so long," Ramesh said, slamming Scindia and Azad, both of them who served the Congress in various capacities including as Cabinet Ministers.

Talking to reporters at the AICC headquarters, Congress' media department head Pawan Khara slammed Azad, saying he is following the ideology which he had opposed for 50 years. "Now when he sings paean to the king, it is laughable. The one who was considered God by our workers has turned out not even to be a clay idol," he said. The party that gave him so much, he is now cursing that very party, Khara said of Azad.

Envoy Garcetti will make effort to deepen cooperation with India: White House

New Delhi/Washington: The US will look to further strengthen its ties with India including defence and economic sectors during newly appointed ambassador to New Delhi Eric Garcetti's tenure, the White House has said.

"Ambassador Garcetti will be leading an ambitious effort to deepen our cooperation with India in critical and emerging technologies, expand our defense cooperation, and strengthen our economic and people-to-people ties," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said late Tuesday in Washington. She also said "The president has said, when we look at relationship with India, it's one of most consequential relationships that America has in world. That still stands," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters. "So, it's an important

relationship that president sees," Jean-Pierre added. Garcetti, the former Mayor of Los Angeles, was officially sworn in as US Ambassador to India on March 24 by Vice President Kamala Harris during a ceremonial event here.

The US Senate confirmed 52-year-old Garcetti's nomination earlier last month, ending a protracted hiatus of over two years to fill key diplomatic position. Garcetti's nomination was pending before US Congress since July 2021 when he was nominated by President Joe Biden. Garcetti, who is now headed to New Delhi this month, was not confirmed by the Senate in President Biden's first two years in office amid concerns by some lawmakers that he had not adequately handled allegations of sexual assault and harassment against a former senior adviser. PNS

SC asks Centre to reply to PILs challenging validity of provisions of Places of Worship Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to file its reply to a series of PILs challenging the validity of certain provisions of Places of Worship Act of 1991. The apex court was hearing petitions filed by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy and advocate Ashwani Upadhyay and other petitions opposing the pleas.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala said matter will be heard by a three-judge bench in July. "The pleas shall be listed before a three-judge bench in July 2023 and the Centre may file a reply by then," it said.

The petitions filed by Right Wingers opposing the Places of Worship Act of 1991 demanded the quashing or partial changing of the Act, which ensures character of place of worship from what prevailed on August 15, 1947, except Ayodhya's RamMandir.

There were many petitions opposing these petitions seeking status quo as per Act. Many times, the top court has sought Central Government's view on this petitions and Advocate Vrinda Grover pointed out that the Government has not filed its reply.

Animal pandemic preparedness to be showcased at G20 event

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India will showcase two new initiatives, including Animal Pandemic Preparedness Initiative (APPI), at a side event of the G-20 Health Working Group meeting to be held on April 20 in Goa under India's G20 Presidency.

The side event, to be organised by the Asian Development Bank and UN Environment Programme in collaboration with the Health Ministry, will have participation from the World Health Organisation and World Animal Health Organisation. Briefing media Animal Husbandry and Dairying Secretary Rajendra Kumar Singh said that at the side-

event, his department will showcase two initiatives — the Animal Pandemic Preparedness Initiative (APPI) and the World Bank-funded Animal Health System Support for One Health (AHSSOH).

APPI seeks to bring inter-ministerial coordination for 'One Health Mission'. It aims to track animal diseases through large-scale digital surveillance, bring synergies in advances in the human vaccine in animal vaccine development and institutionalise targeted early response animal health emergencies in sync with human health, he said.

APPI also aims to coordinate with critical partners to ensure successful and timely development of vaccine development. The Rs 1,228 crore

AHSSOH project, with 50 per cent funding from the World Bank, will initially be implemented in five states -- Assam, Odisha, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The secretary said AHSSOH aims to strengthen 75 district laboratories, provide 100 mobile veterinary units in remote locations and high-risk areas, and upgrade 300 dispensaries and hospitals besides training 5,500 veterinarians as well as 9,000 private diagnostic professionals.

Both APPI and AHSSOH, which will be formally launched on April 14, have been conceptualised to approach 'One Health', recognising animal health, human health and the environment are inextricably connected.



Union Minister Anurag Thakur with actor Varun Dhawan at an event organised at the National Media Centre in New Delhi on Wednesday

India, Bhutan agree to work closely for dev in region

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bhutan have agreed to work more closely for progress and development in the region and recognised that their long-standing development partnership is reflective of strong ties of cooperation and friendship based on trust and mutual understanding.

These points were highlighted in a joint statement released here on Wednesday a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Wangchuck held talks here on Tuesday. They reviewed the entire spectrum of ties between the two countries.

The talks between Modi and the King came days after Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering said China has an equal say in resolving the border dispute relating to Doklam tri-junction.

Tshering's comments were seen by many in New Delhi as an attempt by the Himalayan nation to cosy up to Beijing though Bhutan maintained that there is no change in its stance on the border dispute involving the tri-junction. Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in a 73-day stand off in the region in 2017 after China tried to build a road in the Doklam plateau and India objected.

Bhutan claims the plateau is part of its territory. "India and Bhutan share an exemplary bilateral relationship characterised by trust, goodwill and mutual understanding at all levels, strong bonds of friendship and close people-to-people contacts," the joint statement said.

NIA files chargesheet in Al Huda terror funding case

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday filed a chargesheet in Al Huda Educational Trust (AHET) terror funding case, linked to the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jei), which had set up the Trust to mobilise funds to further its anti-India agenda even after it was banned.

Pakistan-based Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) terrorist, Mushtaq Ahmed Mir alias Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, is among the four individuals/entities named in the chargesheet. Zargar was released in the aftermath of the Indian Airlines flight 814 hijacking in 1999. Jei, Jammu and Kashmir

was declared an Unlawful Association under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in 2019. The NIA, which was subsequently mandated to investigate the continued suspicious activities of the banned terror outfit, had registered a case against Jei in September 2022.

The agency filed the chargesheet before the NIA Special Court, Jammu and Kashmir, after extensive investigations and multiple raids in the Valley, the agency said. "A Pakistan-based Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) terrorist, Mushtaq Ahmed Mir alias Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, is among the four individuals /

entities named in chargesheet. Others charged in the case are AHET, Md. Amir Shamshi, a 'rukun' (primary member) and chairperson of AHET, and Abdul Hamid Ganai alias Abdul Hamid Fayaz of Shopian. All four have been charged under various sections of UA (P) Act and Indian Penal Code (IPC)," it said.

Investigations have revealed that Md. Amir Shamshi was responsible for the day to day working of AHET, which was formed by Jei with the explicit purpose of mobilising funds to carry on its secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, the agency said in its chargesheet.

India, Japan agree to diversify cooperation in defence, space

New Delhi: India and Japan on Wednesday reviewed their defence ties and agreed to diversify cooperation in new fields like defence, space and cyber during the seventh India-Japan Defence Policy Dialogue here.

It was co-chaired by Defence Secretary Girdhar Aramane and Vice Minister of Defence for International Affairs Oka Masami. Giving details of the talks, officials said a wide range of issues, including Service-level exercises and engagements, regional security issues and cooperation in defence equipment and technology, were discussed. The Japanese Vice

Minister also presented policy updates from their recently released National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.

Both the countries appreciated the growing cooperation between the Services through Staff talks and exercises. They welcomed conduct of inaugural fighter exercise 'Veer Guardian' between Indian Air Force and Japanese Air Self Defence Force in January this year in Japan. The Defence Secretary emphasised that both the countries should aim to deepen collaboration between the respective defence industries. He also invited Japanese

defence industries to look at investment opportunities in India under 'Make in India' initiative. Both sides agreed to diversify cooperation in new and emerging domains like defence space and cyber.

India and Japan reiterated their commitment towards a strong defence partnership and agreed to find opportunities to further enhance bilateral cooperation. Both sides also agreed to hold next Defence Policy Dialogue at mutually convenient dates. The Defence Policy Dialogue is an institutionalized mechanism between India and Japan to discuss bilateral defence cooperation. PNS

TMC MPs at Centre's door for State's dues



TMC MPs gather outside Krishi Bhavan to meet Union Minister Giriraj Singh demanding the release of MGNREGA funds for workers in West Bengal, in New Delhi, Wednesday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Plagued by fund crunch and unable to pay off the wages under the 100-days' work scheme and other social projects ahead of the panchayat elections, a delegation of the ruling Trinamool Congress MPs led by party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday met senior Rural Development Ministry officials in Delhi.

The Bengal MPs had to return after meeting some senior officials as minister in charge Giriraj Singh was unavailable in his office, sources said.

"We will not let 17 lakh families of Bengal be deprived by the BJP. We will continue to raise our voices until MGNREGA funds are released. Without an assurance, we will not leave. We're not here for tea and snacks," Banerjee told reporters.

The TMC have been claiming that the Centre had held back more than Rs 1 lakh crore that legitimately belonged to the State.

"In the new GST regime the

Centre collects the taxes and takes it away but refuses to give back the State's share," Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged from a rally accusing the BJP of "starving the poor people of Bengal."

Abhishek Banerjee who is also the nephew of the Chief Minister said that though the Minister had asked his party leaders to come on Wednesday for a meeting he had himself absented from the scene.

"We will wait for him for hours and even days... and if he does not meet us and if the Centre does not give us our demands then we will descend on the streets to extract our demands... there is no person more efficient than Mamata Banerjee who can extract her demands through movements," he said warning of a bigger agitation.

Having failed to meet the Minister the TMC leaders submitted a memorandum that also referred to earlier letters written by the Chief Minister to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking clearance of the State's dues.

"We regret to inform you that despite repeated appeals, the outstanding dues to Bengal have still not been cleared," the memorandum said referring to the dues relating to the schemes like MGNREGA, PMGSY, PMAY (G), and NSAP etc. The approximate dues it claimed stood at Rs 12,300 crores," it said.

Referring to the invoking of Section 27 of the MNREGA Act by the Centre it said, "We urge you to take immediate action to revoke Section 27 of the MGNREGA Act and release the amount owed to Bengal."

BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh however refuted the charges leveled by the TMC leaders.

He said, "The Centre was the custodian of public money and would never allow it to go to the pockets of the corrupt TMC leaders who have embezzled thousands of crores that were earlier sent to the State... the Centre is only asking the State to submit the accounts for the funds sent earlier and then get the present demands cleared... but these thieves are not doing so."

Padma awards conferred on MSY, Keeravani

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran socialist leader and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Late Mulayam Singh Yadav, and medical professional Dilip Mahalanabis, known globally for his work on Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), were among those conferred the Padma Vibhushan award by President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday.

Author and philanthropist Sudha Murty, physicist Deepak Dhar, who is known for his long-standing research career in statistical physics, novelist S L Bhyrappa and Vedic scholar Tridandi Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji were given the Padma Bhushan at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan here. Yadav, who was also India's defence minister and long-time parliamentarian, and Mahalanabis, who returned from the US to serve in the 1971 Bangladesh war refugee camps, were given the honour



President Droupadi Murmu confers Padma Shri on music composer MM Keeravani and Bollywood actor Raveena Tandon during the Padma Awards 2023 ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan, in New Delhi, on Wednesday.



PTI

posthumously. Yadav's son, former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav, received the award on his behalf, while Mahalanabis' award was received by his nephew. Music director M M Keeravani, who bagged India's first Oscar for an original song for the 'RRR' song 'Naatu Naatu' and Bollywood actor

Raveena Tandon were among those who received the Padma Shri. The other distinguished personalities were given the awards on March 22. Padma awards are conferred in three categories — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. India's top civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, has not been given to anyone since 2019.

States, UTs keen to computerise PACS

24 States, 4 UTs seek funds for 58,383 entities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

States are lapping up the Centre's scheme launched last year for the computerisation of the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with at least 24 States and four Union Territories seeking funds for 58,383 such entities to go the way in a big way. The aim is to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in their operations as envisaged under the project that proposes computerization of about 63,000 functional PACS over a period of 5 years with a total budget outlay of Rs. 2516 crore. The Central Government's share will be Rs. 1528 crore.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that the centrally sponsored project for the computerisation of 63,000 functional PACS and Large Area Multipurpose Society (LAMPS) across the country with a total



financial outlay of Rs 2,516 crore is under implementation." PACS account for 41 per cent (3.01 crore farmers) of the KCC (Kisan Credit Cards) loans given by all entities in the country and 95 per cent of these KCC loans (2.95 crore farmers) through PACS are given to the small and marginal farmers. PACS constitute the lowest tier of the three-tier Short Term Cooperative Credit (STCC) structure in the country comprising about 13 crore farmers as its members, which is crucial for the development of the rural economy.

The project entails bringing all the functional PACS onto ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) based common soft-

ware, linking them with NABARD through State Cooperative Banks (StCBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs).

As per the Union Cooperation Minister, around Rs 11.28 crore has been released to Uttar Pradesh for the computerisation of 1,539 PACS. "The Project Monitoring Units (PMUs) have been set up at Central and State Levels by NABARD," said the Minister, adding "development of software has been started by the National Level Project Software Vendor (NLPVS) selected by NABARD."

"The expected benefit of the computerisation of the PACS project, inter alia, are - increasing efficiency of their operations, ensuring speedy disbursement of loans, lowering of transaction costs, reducing imbalances in payments, seamless accounting with DCCBs and StCBs and increasing transparency," he said. "Implementation of a Common Accounting System (CAS) and Management Information System (MIS) would enable PACS to carry out their operations online and obtain refinance and loans for their various activities from NABARD through DCCBs and StCBs," Shah further stated.

Kerala HC orders tusker to be moved to reserve forest in Parambikulam

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The face-off between Ari Komban, a wild tusker, and the residents of a suburb in Idukki district's reserve forest area has come to a temporary truce as the Kerala High Court ordered on Wednesday that the elephant be translocated to Parambikulam Reserve Forest. Judges Jayasankaran Nambiar and P Gopinath chose to accept the report submitted by the Court-appointed expert panel that the pachyderm be shifted to Parambikulam Reserve Forest in Palakkad district but urged restraint and caution during the operation.

The Court-appointed team of experts felt that the only option as of now was to send the elephant to the safety of Parambikulam which is far away from human settlement and is a well stocked with food and water. The shortage of fodder and water in its current dwelling place forced Ari Komban to trespass into human settlements, as The Pioneer had reported the



other day. The judges asked the Forest department officials to observe maximum restraint while tranquilizing the elephant and transporting it to its new "home". The Court directed the officials not to make the mission a media event and asked no selfies should be allowed during the operation.

The process of relocating Ari Komban (named because of his weakness for fresh rice stored in the houses and fair price shops in the region) will begin only after Easter holidays as the Radio Collar meant to be tied around the tusker's neck has to be brought from Assam.

ITBP officer leading LAC patrol dies after falling into Ladakh gorge



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an unfortunate incident, a 33-year-old Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) officer, who was leading a patrol along the India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, was killed after falling into a deep gorge.

The ITBP braveheart Assistant Commandant Tikam Singh Negi died in the line of duty in the Ladakh sector of the LAC on April 2.

"ITBP salutes the braveheart AC (Assistant Commandant/GD (General Duty) Tikam Singh Negi, 24th Battalion ITBP who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty in Ladakh on April 2, 2023," the ITBP posted on its official Twitter handle.

The officer was posted at this frontier since 2021.

The decorated officer was "exceptionally motivated" towards duty. He was a good

mountaineer and was awarded the 'sword of honour' in 2014, that is given to the best cadet during training, officials said.

Negi was leading a long range patrol of his troops when he fell into the gorge while negotiating the treacherous LAC terrain in Ladakh, they said.

The mortal remains of the officer were consigned to flames at his home town in Uttarakhand on Tuesday.

The Northern Command of the Army also paid tributes to the officer, saying it "stands with the bereaved family in this hour of grief."

The Northern Command of the Army said in a Twitter post, "#LtGenUpendraDivedi, #ArmyCdrNC and all ranks of #NorthernCommand express condolences on the sad demise of AC/GD Tikam Singh Negi, #ITBP, who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty in Ladakh. #IndianArmy stands firm with the bereaved family in this hour of grief."

The ITBP has a personnel strength of 90,000 and was raised in the aftermath of the 1962 Chinese aggression. The Force secures the 3,488-km-long LAC on India's eastern flank.

The ITBP is working along with the Army at this frontier even as the militaries of India and China are engaged in a standoff at Ladakh since May 2020.

'Re-elect Modi' will be writing on the wall across India from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP will write on over 10 lakh 72 thousand walls 'Ek baar phir se, Modi Sarkar' starting from Thursday, the party's foundation day, initiating campaign for Narendra Modi's re-election as Prime Minister for the third-time. The BJP's foundation day event would be addressed by the Prime Minister.

The programme of wall-writing across the country during the day will be initiated first by BJP president JP Nadda.

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh told reporters that party members will write slogans "Ek Baar Phir Se Modi Sarkar" and "Ek Baar Phir Se Bhajpa Sarkar" on walls in over 10.72 lakh places after its president J P Nadda launches the exercise from the national capital at 12 noon.

Chugh also briefed reporters on the details of the "social justice week" the party will observe from its foundation day to the birth anniversary of Bhim Rao Ambedkar on April 14. The BJP will observe nationwide programmes to commemorate Ambedkar, a freedom fighter, social reformer, economist, architect of India's constitution and an icon especially for Dalits.

Party members will also mark the birth anniversary of social reformer Jyotiba Phule on April 11, Chugh said.

BJP, Mahagathbandhan blame each other for Bihar clashes

Riots orchestrated, culprits will be exposed soon: Nitish

PTI ■ PATNA



Both Opposition BJP and ruling 'Mahagathbandhan' accused each other for the communal clashes in Sasaram and Bihar Sharif in Nalanda district during Ramnavami celebrations on the last day of the Budget Session here on Wednesday.

Opposition BJP MLAs demonstrated both inside and outside the Assembly and one of its legislators Jibesh Kumar Mishra had to be marshaled out after he resorted to sloganeering against the Government and disrupted the Question Hour.

As soon as the proceedings of the House began, BJP MLAs entered the Well and raised slogans against the Government, accusing it of not handling the communal clashes effectively. Leader of Opposition, Vijay Kumar Sinha, also accused the Nitish Kumar-led Bihar Government, of targeting peo-

ple belonging to a particular community in the name of handling communal clashes.

Amid the chaos, Speaker Awadh Bihari Chaudhary, allowed State Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Vijay Kumar Choudhary, to make a statement on the issue. BJP members went back to their seats. However, BJP's Jibesh Kumar Mishra once again entered the Well of the House and started shouting slogans against the Government. Finally, Mishra was marshaled out for his alleged unruly behaviour.

The allegations and counter allegations turned sour with both sides accusing each other over communal clashes in several parts of the state during Ramnavami celebrations. The Speaker adjourned the House till 2 PM.

'Sars-Cov-2 adds to agony of dementia patients'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Caretakers of patients with dementia, beware. A study published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease Reports has cautioned that infection with Sars-Cov-2 adds to the agony of the people suffering with the neurodegenerative conditions.

Lead investigators Souvik Dubey, from the Department of Neuromedicine, Bangur Institute of Neurosciences (BIN), Kolkata, West Bengal, and Julián Benito-León, from the Department of Neurology, University Hospital "12 de Octubre," Madrid, Spain, explained: "We speculated there must have been some deleterious effect of Covid-19 in patients with preexisting dementia extrapolating our understanding from the cogni-

tive impact of this viral infection in patients without dementia. However, post-Covid-19 evaluation of cognitive impairments in patients with preexisting dementia is difficult due to multiple confounders and biases."

Dubey further said that "as the ageing population and dementia are increasing globally, we believe pattern recognition of Covid-19-associated cognitive deficits is urgently needed to distinguish between Covid-19-associated cognitive impairments per se and other types of dementia."

In addition to finding that all subtypes of dementia, irrespective of patients' previous dementia types, behaved like rapidly progressive dementia following COVID-19, the team of investigators found that the line of demarcation between different



types of dementia became remarkably blurry post-Covid-19.

Co-investigator Ritwik Ghosh, Department of General Medicine, Burdwan Medical College and Hospital, Burdwan, West Bengal, India, expressed his concern about dementia subtyping. "It is more difficult in the post-Covid-19 era, where the history of this viral infection plays the most important role.

Few patients with a history of Covid-19 without preexisting dementia have phenotypically and imaging-wise similar brain changes mimicking other dementias."

Researchers also found that the characteristics of a particular type of dementia changed following Covid-19, and both degenerative and vascular dementia started behaving like

mixed dementia both clinically and radiologically. A rapidly and aggressively deteriorating course was observed in patients having insidious onset, slowly progressive dementia, and who were previously cognitively stable. According to studies, the estimated dementia prevalence for adults ages 60 plus in India is 7.4%. About 8.8 million Indians older than 60 years live with dementia. Dementia is more prevalent among females than males and in rural than urban areas. Significant cross-state variation exists in dementia prevalence.

By 2050, 11.44 million people in India are expected to be living with dementia, which is up from 3.84 million in 2019, according to the Global Burden of Disease study published in the Lancet Public Health last year.

OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER- II
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

PROCLAMATION OF SALE
NOTICE UNDER RULE 38 OF THE SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961 READ WITH SECTION 25(A) THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS DUE TO BANKS & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ACT, 1993.
R.C. No. 321/2019 Dated: 07.03.2023

In the matter of : ICICI Bank Ltd. Vs. Mr. Romit Manchanda

To:
CD Mr. Romit Manchanda (Borrower)
S/o. Shri Rajinder Kumar Manchanda, R/o. C-193, Vivek Vihar-I, Delhi- 110095

Whereas per Recovery Certificate No. 321/2019 dated 08.07.2019 drawn by the Hon'ble Presiding Officer, DRT-II, Delhi mentioning a sum of Rs. 14,62,787.51 (RUPEES FOURTEEN LACS SIXTY TWO THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED EIGHTY SEVEN AND PAISE FIFTY ONE ONLY) has become due to you as per the said Recovery Certificate drawn up in O.A. No. 996/2017 by the Hon'ble Presiding Officer, Debt Recovery Tribunal-II Delhi. The applicant is entitled to recover the sum of Rs. 14,45,787.51 (Rupees Fourteen Lacs Forty Five Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty Seven and Paise Fifty One Only) along with interest at the contractual rate of 14.01% per annum simple from the date of filing of the O.A., i.e. 14.09.2017 till realization from the CD.

2. And whereas the undersigned has ordered the sale of the hypothecated vehicle mentioned in scheduled property for satisfaction of the said Recovery Certificate.

3. Notice is hereby given that in the absence of any order of postponement, the said hypothecated vehicle (mentioned under the schedule of property below) shall be sold through e-auction through <https://auctions.cardekho.com/auctions@cardekho.com>, by e-auction at 11.00 AM on 03.05.2023.

4. The CH bank shall ensure that prospective bidders are allowed inspection of the said hypothecated vehicle (mentioned under the schedule of property below) before day of auction for which interested individuals may contact the concerned officer of CH Sh. Rajeev Ranjan (Mob: 8584874809).

5. The sale shall be of the movable property of the above named Certificate Defaulters (CD), subject to the liabilities and claims attaching to the said hypothecated vehicle, if any.

6. The sale shall be stopped if, before lot is knocked down, the arrears mentioned in the said certificate, interest costs (including cost of sale) are tendered to the officer conducting the sale or proof is given to his satisfaction that the amount of such certificate alongwith the interest and costs has been paid to the undersigned.

7. At the sale the public generally are invited to bid either personally or by duly authorized agent. No officer or other person, having any duty to perform in connection with this sale shall, however, either directly or indirectly bid for, acquire or attempt to acquire any interest in the property sold.

8. The property is being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS" BASIS and "AS IS WHAT IS" BASIS. The sale shall be subject to the conditions prescribed in the Second Schedule to the Income- Tax Act, 1961 and the rules made thereunder and to the following further conditions:

9. The particulars specified in the Schedule have been stated to the best of the information of the undersigned, but the undersigned shall not be answerable for any error, mis-statement or omission in this proclamation.

10. The Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) be fixed as follows:-

Details of property	Reserve Price (in Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (in Rs.)
Hypothecated vehicle namely make "PAJERO/2 8 GL" having the registration No. UP-14DT-0022	2,25,000/-	22,500/-

11. The amount by which the biddings are to be increased shall be determined by the Officer conducting the sale. In the event of any dispute arising as to the amount of bid, or as to the bidder, the lot shall on ce be again put to auction.

12. Intending bidders shall be required to pay Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) by way of pay order/demand draft payable at New Delhi and in favour of Recovery Officer-I, DRT-II, Delhi before the start of bidding and identity proofs, address proofs etc. The said deposit shall be adjusted in the case of successful bidders; and in the case of unsuccessful bidders the same shall be refunded without interest, on the date of sale.

13. Successful highest bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale proceeds by way of pay order/demand draft favoring the Recovery Officer-I, DRT-II, Delhi, within 24 hours (next working day) by way of bank draft, after adjusting the EMD stated above, failing which the EMD shall be forfeited.

14. The purchaser shall deposit the balance 75% of the sale proceeds alongwith poundage fee @ 2% upto Rupees 1,000/- @ 1% of the sale price exceeding Rupees 1,000/- within 15 days from the date of auction. The Poundage fees shall be deposited through a demand draft payable in favor of the Registrar, DRT-II, Delhi.

15. In case of default, the amount earlier deposited by the bidder, if the undersigned considers fit, after defraying the expenses of the sale shall be forfeited and the property shall be resold, and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part thereof or of any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.

16. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids if found unreasonable or postpone the auction at any time without assigning any reason.

Schedule of Property

No. of lots	Description of property to be sold with names of co-owners where the property belongs to the defaulter and any other persons is co-owners	Revenue assessed upon the property or any part thereof	Details of any encumbrances to which the property is liable	Claims, if any, which have been put forward to the property and other known particulars bearing on its nature and value.
1.	Hypothecated vehicle namely make "PAJERO/2 8 GL" having the registration No. UP-14DT-0022	No information	No information	No information

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal at New Delhi on this 07.03.2023.

(Uttam Negi)
Recovery Officer-I
DRT-II, Delhi



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Justice trumped

Donald Trump is in trouble because he is a patriot, and the Left-liberals can't forgive him for this sin

Former US President Donald Trump, after pleading not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in a New York court, rightly said, "I never thought anything like this could happen in America. The only crime I have committed to fearlessly defend our nation." At the heart of his arraignment is a \$130,000 payment that his team made to porn star Stormy Daniels to keep quiet and a non-disclosure agreement about her interactions with Trump in 2016. There is nothing illegal about a non-disclosure agreement. There is no charge of rape or sexual assault against Trump; it is not even alleged that he or his team benefited at the expense of the public exchequer, or that any of his family or friends gained a contract when he was in office. At worst, there was a minor financial misdemeanour; his political rivals magnified it into a million times, making it appear like a capital crime; they eagerly grabbed that hint of an opportunity to launch a witch-hunt against him. Worse, they are aided and abetted by many sections of the mainstream media, some of whom have disgraced themselves with a shamelessly partisan stand. While Trump is being prosecuted, pilloried, and denounced for a 'crime' none other than his wife should have complained about, US President Joe Biden is treated with kid gloves despite a mountain of evidence to suggest his brother Frank and son Hunter benefited immensely because of high office. It's unlikely that Trump has heard of Akbar Allahabadi, but the Urdu poet perfectly summed up the ex-president's plight:



Ham aah bhii karte hai.n to ho jaate hai.n badnaam/Vo qatl bhii karte hai.n to char-
chaa nahi.n hotaa (We are condemned even if when we sigh/They get scot-free even
after murder).

This could happen in America because its thought leaders have been corrupted by the pernicious postmodern or New Left doctrines that have infected academics, the media, and other opinion making apparatuses. Then there are the gods of destruction revel in chaos. Like George Soros, the billionaire 'philanthropist.' The 'philanthropy' he believes in and spends his billions for is violent anarchy in which the ideals, values, and norms of civilisation are subverted and replaced with Leftist ideas which have been historically discredited. One of Soros' creations is Alvin Bragg, Manhattan's first Black District Attorney, a doctrinaire radical Leftist from the Democratic Party. He has great faith in the anti-America critical race theory and the anti-civilisation defund police movement. Just days after taking charge, Bragg made it clear that he would not prosecute prostitution, trespassing, resisting arrest and most misdemeanors. Since his becoming DA, violent crime has zoomed in his jurisdiction as he is soft on violent criminals and tough on law-abiding citizens. And especially tough on those who are ideologically opposed to him. Like Trump.

PICTALK



Devotees with their mouths pierced participate in a procession to celebrate 'Panguni Uthiram', in Chikmagalur. PTI

Trends in real estate are encouraging

Thanks to various factors like implementation of RERA, speeding up of urbanisation, rising incomes, real estate is growing at rapid pace

The Indian real estate market is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy and is a key driver of economic growth in the country. The market has been growing rapidly over the past few years, driven by factors such as increasing urbanization, rising incomes, and a growing middle class.

The real estate market is diverse and comprises various segments such as residential, commercial, retail, and industrial properties. The market is highly fragmented, with a large number of small and medium-sized developers operating in different parts of the country. The real estate sector in India has witnessed significant regulatory reforms in recent years, including the introduction of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, of 2016 (RERA) and the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The current real estate trends are:

Demand for big homes: The pandemic has prompted many people to re-evaluate their living spaces, and the trend towards larger homes with more open spaces is



expected to continue into 2023.

High demand for affordable housing: The Indian government's "Housing for All" initiative has led to the development of more affordable housing projects, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. These projects are aimed at providing housing to lower-income groups and are eligible for government subsidies. In 2023, we can expect to see more efforts to build affordable homes that meet the needs of low and middle-income buyers.

Demand in suburban and rural areas: As remote work becomes more common, many people are moving away from urban centres into suburban and rural areas since they offer more space, privacy, and affordability.

Focus on sustainability: There is growing awareness and interest in sustainable and green housing in India and this trend is expected to continue into 2023 with developers and homebuyers, seeking eco-friendly and energy-efficient homes. Developers are increasingly incorporating eco-friendly features into their projects.

Adoption of technology: The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of technology in many aspects of life, including real estate. In 2023, we can expect to see more smart homes, virtual tours, and digital transactions. With the advancements in technology, there is a growing trend of smart homes in India.

The trend of co-living spaces: With the rise of young professionals and students

living away from home, co-living spaces have emerged as a popular housing option. These spaces provide affordable housing solutions with shared facilities such as kitchens and common areas.

Work from Home: With the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a growing trend of working from home. This has led to an increased demand for homes with dedicated workspaces, high-speed internet connectivity, and better infrastructure.

RERA factor: With the implementation of The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA), there has been increased transparency and accountability in the real estate sector. Despite these reforms, the Indian real estate market still faces challenges such as high inventory levels, sluggish demand, and liquidity issues. It is important for developers to understand the needs and preferences of their target audience. Offering flexible payment options like easy EMI can further lead to an influx in demand.

(The writer is the CEO and Founder of Legend Siroya Realtors)



SHRENIK SIROYA

living away from home, co-living spaces have emerged as a popular housing option. These spaces provide affordable housing solutions with shared facilities such as kitchens and common areas.

Work from Home: With the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a growing trend of working from home. This has led to an increased demand for homes with dedicated workspaces, high-speed internet connectivity, and better infrastructure.

RERA factor: With the implementation of The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA), there has been increased transparency and accountability in the real estate sector. Despite these reforms, the Indian real estate market still faces challenges such as high inventory levels, sluggish demand, and liquidity issues. It is important for developers to understand the needs and preferences of their target audience. Offering flexible payment options like easy EMI can further lead to an influx in demand.

(The writer is the CEO and Founder of Legend Siroya Realtors)

Partisanship kills institutions

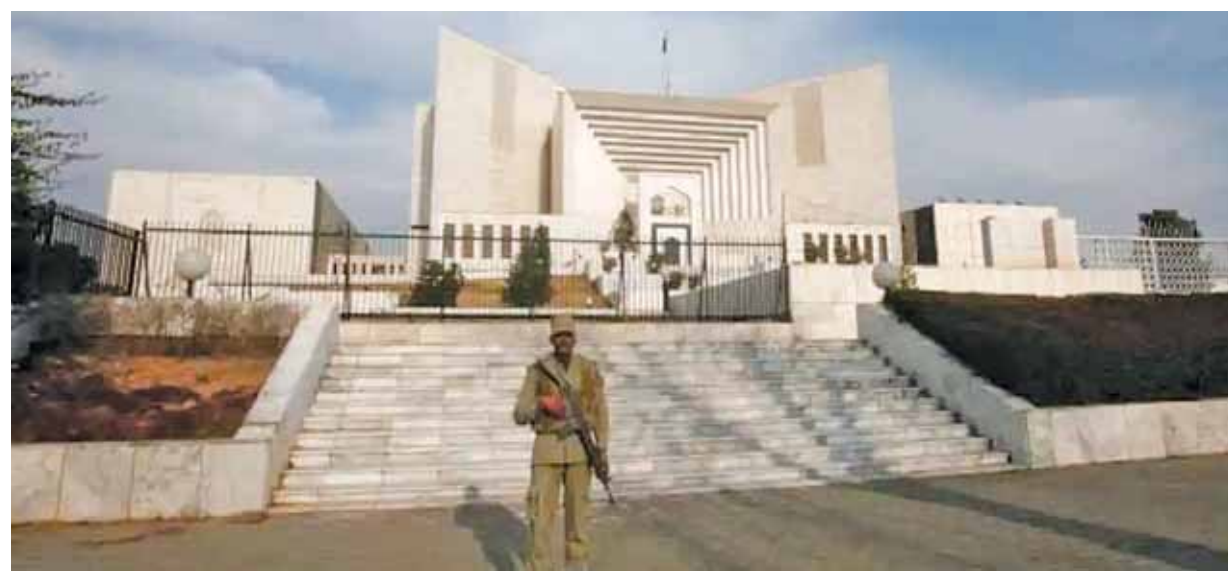
Once partisanship seeps into a system, it starts eating an institution from within; capitulation is rapid and guaranteed



BHOPINDER SINGH

Diminishment of institutions towards partisan preferences has severe consequences of backsliding in a vibrant democracy and stifling the air of diversity. Partisanship disallows facts and superimposes 'opinions', that are rarely based on facts. The media landscape is a good reflection of the extent of partisanship that has been inflicted on the organs of democracy. The age-old maxim that media should serve to inform and not influence the public can be readily surrendered at the altar of expediency and favour. Partisanship is a slippery slope full of blind spots, hatred, and unfounded loyalty - the consequences of which were famously made by LK Advani to the Indian media after it had surrendered all pretences of questioning abilities during the Emergency, when he chastised, "You were asked only to bend, but you crawled". India in the 70s was poorer for its media's inability to ask hard questions to the government, as some within the fraternity had thrown in the proverbial towel, and soon the domino effect started. Once the seeds of 'divide' and partisanship are sowed and they start asserting themselves within any institution, capitulation is rapid and guaranteed.

Neighbouring Pakistan is witnessing a similar and unprecedented 'divide' and partisanship in almost all institutions of governance, which ought to be apolitical. Never a thriving democracy and given to its manipulations, intrigues, and regressions - yet the current virus of partisanship and impulsive 'divide' within its vital organs, has perhaps never been more blatant. Even the so-called 'establishment' (read, Pakistani Military) is increasingly mocked for its purported 'neutrality'. The implosion started within the now divided 'Uniformed' fraternity itself. It has reached a situation where a just-retired Pakistani Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Qamar Bajwa, openly talked about his predecessor, General Raheel Sharif, insisting on a three-year term extension on the pretext of the security situation, thereby compromising on the hallowed duty of silence on institutional



matters with 'brother-officer' that warrants rectitude. But an unhinged General Qamar Bajwa who 'selected' Imran Khan in 2018 (instead of getting elected) and then fell foul with him to such an extent that he joined hands with political forces that he had once ousted, speaks volumes of shifting partisan preferences that beset Pakistan, today.

A similar 'divide' within yet another institution that had remained relatively apolitical earlier, is the Pakistani Judiciary. The days of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry's valiant struggle against various political forces that once led to a transformative civil disorder is a forgotten memory. Justice Chaudhry's activism (or 'overreach' as claimed by detractors) was said to have, "repurposed a once supine judiciary as a fiercely independent force". But today his successor, Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial who was ranked amongst the 100 most influential people by Time magazine (2022), must face the ignominy of partisanship and 'divide' within the Judicial institution that has been latched on by politicians to curb the institution. Time had noted about the CJ, "As other institutions lock horns in a battle for advantage ahead of impending elections, the court looms large as the final arbiter. Widely respected for his



NEIGHBOURING PAKISTAN IS WITNESSING A SIMILAR AND UNPRECEDENTED 'DIVIDE' AND PARTISANSHIP IN ALMOST ALL INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNANCE, WHICH OUGHT TO BE APOLITICAL

integrity, the Columbia- and Cambridge-educated jurist bears the heavy mantle of not just delivering justice but also being seen to do so.

But such apolitical independence, assertion, and scholarship to 'question' the dispensation of the day by an individual can often be embarrassingly irritating to the politicians who would rather have the wings of such a person clipped. Recently two judges of the Supreme Court challenged the Chief Justice's power to form a bench or take suo motu notices, affording the invaluable opportunity to politicians to jump into the fray and take sides to the detriment of the Chief Justice. A bill to address the supposed 'one-man show' of the CJI by the ruling politics i.e., Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023 was hastily passed, and yet another institution of checks-and-balances 'was immediately compromised, de-fanged and diluted in its ability to question the government. The dissenting Judges who had instigated the dissent against 'own brother' was a throwback to the similar diminishment of the Pakistani Judiciary, as meted to former CJP Sajjad Ali Shah in the late 90s. While there might have genuine and very pertinent demands to reform the overburdened, inefficacious, and faltering Judicial system,

this 'reform' move was not aimed at improving the same, as much as safeguarding itself from probing stances, suo moto activism and questioning, that the government rather not face.

The timing was ominous as the Pakistani Federal Minister for Law and Justice conceded that, "there is a right time for everything" and that they waited patiently, "until a voice came from within the courts" and they swooped in immediately. For once, the Pakistani Minister could not have been more honest - it is the presidential or more likely than not the instigated 'divide' within the Judicial ranks (for obvious reasons) that opened the opportunity for insecure politicians to adorn a sanctimonious posture and 'reform' the Judiciary. One after the other, the so-called 'reforms' within various realms like Media, Military or Judiciary will be made that effectively benefit certain partisan persuasions as opposed to the institution, or the nation. The lesson for all institutions is to evolve and reform with time and disallow the politicians to 'reform' to their benefit, by infusing partisanship and politics.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A WELCOME STEP

Sir - I welcome the decision of the Reserve Bank of Australia, which decided at its meeting on 5 April 2023 that it will now conduct a firm check before raising interest rates further, on whether all previous increases have really reduced inflation. Is there a shortage? Because all the central banks around the world have only one weapon to reduce inflation. Increase the interest rate of loans given by banks so that the common man, industrialists and businessmen who take loans from banks have to pay more interest.

Now, due to the high interest, the business itself becomes slow. The businessman refrains from setting up or expanding a new business. In such a situation, how inflation is reduced by this policy is a big mystery. Because in Australia, the interest rate was increased by 300 basis points from May 2022 to March 2023, but the inflation rate, which was 7.8% in May 2022, has come down to 6.8% in March 2023 by only 1%. That is, economists all over the world will have to reconsider whether the increase in bank rates is the only way to control inflation.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

SC BLASTS LOWER JUDICIARY

Sir - The Supreme Court has come down heavily and shows very serious concern for the lower judiciary regarding the dismissal of bail applications in bulk despite their merits. It is a grave violation of the golden rule of criminal jurisprudence that "Bail is the rule and jail is the exception" and Supreme Court's past verdicts. Petitioner ultimately has to approach the Supreme Court of India for the bail that he or she deserves to get from the magistrate court of the first instance.

The very recent and strange arrest of politician Pawan Khara from an aircraft ready to take off is a prime example. It is highly unfortunate that a common man who cannot afford the high-cost expenses of SC lawyers and litigation has to perforce to approach the court.

Muzakkir Khan | Mumbai

Pakistan judiciary



ed time, there was an unprecedented divide among the judges hearing the matter. There has been an open revolt against the chief justice of the Supreme Court who is heading a three-judge bench.

His fellow judges were not in favour of the said bench headed by the chief justice to hear the matter. The general opinion is for a full court hearing which the chief justice has outrightly dismissed; he has described the entire imbroglio as a political tool to subvert the judiciary. The Pakistan government has readied a strange law to withdraw the right of the chief justice from constituting a bench. When the executive or legislature starts to encroach upon the judiciary, then it would be the death knell for the judiciary. But in a country like Pakistan that has bitterly compromised every organ of its administration, and the governments have been the puppets of the army, nothing much can be expected.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

PM ON CORRUPTION

Sir - Addressing a gathering at the diamond jubilee celebrations of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi said corruption was the biggest roadblock before democracy and justice and that the investigative agency's key responsibility was to free India from it. He also hit out at the Opposition saying "bhai-bhatjivaad" (nepotism) and "parivarvaad" thrived in an environment of corruption and this ultimately hindered the nation's growth. Aam Aadmi is not only laughing but wondering that this PM Modi and his colleagues were happy when the Supreme Court said CBI is a caged parrot. You've been in power for 9 years now. When will you free the CBI? A simple suggestion: why can't you make CBI autonomous, and they are given power with accountability, detach it from Modi-Shah dual controls, and then see what happens? It's not your duty to tell them to not spare anyone (surely not for Himant Biswa Sarma, Subhendu Adhikari, and many others who have joined

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to avoid prosecution).

How many corrupts who went abroad as Fugitive Economic Offenders have been brought back to India? PM Modi should not forget that only the opposition leaders are corrupt, but it's his party where most of the MPs and MLAs are corrupt. Around 36% of BJP-elected lawmakers have criminal background

For example, just take Karnataka where elections are due! What did the BJP do there? Chief Minister (CM) Bommai & Co earned the public name of 40% commission government! PM Modi should put a hand to his heart and say BSY, Vasundhara Raje, Shivraj Singh Chauhan, and even some senior ministers in BJP are not corrupt or nepotistic! Under such circumstances, PM Modi diminishes his stock every day by continuously throwing stones at other party leaders.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN HIGHWAY OF GROWTH

Delhi-Mumbai Expressway to boost growth, real estate in Delhi-NCR



SUNIL SISODIYA

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is a 1350 km-long spectacular engineering marvel that seamlessly connects Delhi to Mumbai, extending across 1500 hectares. It is the longest expressway in India and one of the most advanced roadway projects.

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway stretches across regions such as Gurugram, Sohna, Alwar, Kota, Ratlam, Vadodara, and Surat, among others. Apart from reducing travel time between the financial capital and the national capital, the expressway is also expected to strengthen the economy of its regions. Industry experts have anticipated that the real estate sector will capitalise on this opportunity, and the market may see the realty sector as a rising star.

A Strong Push to the Real Estate Business

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will offer concrete growth to the real estate market by providing a designated landscape for developing warehousing, logistic space, residential, and commercial projects.



The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway region has become a lucrative opportunity for the real estate sector due to the growing demand for properties with strong social infrastructure. This is unfolding an exciting chapter of realty businesses. The expressway project will pave a groundbreaking path backed by strong, accessible, and sustainable infrastructure in the regions it comprises. Most of these regions are mostly tier-2 and tier-3 cities such as Sohna, Alwar, Ratlam, and others. The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway region will see a pool of investment opportunities in developing business clusters, residential properties, retail, malls, hospitals and educational institutes.

The Rise of the Hospitality Sector with the Real Estate Sector

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway has covered a lot of tourist spots including Ranthambore, Keoladeo, and Sariska national parks as well as historic cities such as Ajmer and Jaipur. This is an opportunity for the hospitality and tourism industry to grow. The rise of the hospitality industry will be backed by the real estate sector. Building unparalleled and sustainable structures to meet the needs and demands of visitors, the interlinking of the two different sectors will bring economic growth to the region.

The Emergence of Smart Cities in tier-2 & 3 Cities

The development of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway has provided leverage to the tier-2 and tier-3 cities. The Expressway region will see the rise of smart cities as these cities offer palpable ground to attract investors, businesses, and residents. The major reason is the smooth connectivity and accessibility to metro cities like Delhi-NCR, and Mumbai due to the expressway project. Additionally, the region offers ample open space, greenery, and a sustainable environment, providing a healthy lifestyle for its residents. The development of infrastructure and smooth transportation will improve the overall landscape of business and living conditions, driving growth for the real estate industry.

Sohna, Gurugram — the next-big realty hub

The Gurugram region has recently become a focal point for the development of new expressways. Sohna, located in Gurugram, serves as the entry point of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. This strategic location lends Sohna more pivotal ground and marks it as a prominent city in the region.

There has been an increase in demand for mid-segment, luxury, and ultra-luxury residential projects in Sohna. The region is expected to soon become comparable to the Cyber hub and Golf Course of Gurugram, in terms of development and infrastructure. To Sum Up, The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway has become a hot spot for the real estate sector, and there are various key points where real estate can capitalize on the opportunity. The Delhi-NCR and Gurugram region is expected to become the next big realty hub with new business and residential properties. In tier-2 and tier-3 cities, demand for warehouses for retail and e-commerce is projected to grow. The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is expected to provide a boost to the real estate sector and foster economic development in the region.

(The writer is the Founder, of Geetanjali Homestate)

There is no such thing as hate speech



RAVI SHANKER KAPOOR

If the fictitious concept of hate speech is accepted as real and valid, we may end up banning most books, including classics



A phony concept is haunting India, the concept of 'hate speech.' Phony because there are no objective and universal standards that can define hate speech. Politicians and other public figures all over the world are often accused of making hate speeches. In general, if someone doesn't like a nasty comment—actually, any remark—they often dub it as 'hate speech.' Demands are made to criminalise it.

Before proceeding to establish my assertion—that hate speech is a phony concept—I would like to discuss the concept of hate crime. Merriam-Webster defines 'hate crime' as "any of various crimes (as assault or defacement of property) when motivated by hostility to the victim as a member of a group (as one based on colour, creed, gender, or sexual orientation)." The US Congress describes a hate crime as "a criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnic origin or sexual orientation."

Hate itself, however, is not a crime—and the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the US is mindful of protecting freedom of speech and other civil liberties, says the FBI website.

Two points need to be made here. First, hate speech should not be confused with hate crime; the former, however offensive and repulsive, is still speech, a form of expression, and any form of expression is and should be protected in a liberal democracy. Hate crime, by definition, is a crime, and should be dealt with accordingly.

Second, hate is not and cannot be a crime in a democracy. On the face of it, this sounds paradoxical. For doesn't the Preamble of the Constitution of India, the world's largest democracy, talk about the resolve "to secure"—apart from justice, liberty, and equality—fraternity? How can fraternity be secured without rooting out, or at least checking, hate?

But this line of thinking is fallacious and fraught with the possibility of bolstering totalitarian tendencies; for hate, like love, lies within an individual's heart and mind; and any move to regulate the hearts and minds of citizens is tantamount to thought control—the defining feature of totalitari-



HATE SPEECH SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH HATE CRIME; THE FORMER, HOWEVER OFFENSIVE AND REPULSIVE, IS STILL SPEECH, A FORM OF EXPRESSION, AND ANY FORM OF EXPRESSION IS AND SHOULD BE PROTECTED. HATE CRIME, BY DEFINITION, IS A CRIME

Ravi Shanker Kapoor is Resident Editor, The Pioneer, Delhi, is the author of There Is No Such Thing As Hate Speech, Bloomsbury (2017)

anism. The purpose of legislation in a liberal polity is to legislate between individuals, to regulate inter-individual conduct and not intra-individual dynamics. Criminalising hate would amount to defining thought crime—another totalitarian tendency.

Thankfully, the anti-totalitarian streak is implicit in the Preamble, in as much as it describes fraternity as "assuring the dignity of the individual." It is obvious, then, that the dignity of the individual will be destroyed if the State decides to indulge in thought control, an endeavour that would necessitate intrusion into the most sacred spaces of the individual. Such fundamental rights as freedom of speech and expression (Article 19) and freedom of conscience (Article 25), enshrined in the Constitution, shield these spaces.

Unfortunately, even the top judicial experts in India have failed to realise that hate speech is a phony concept. Consequently, they keep debating over the need to curb it. But as the very concept of hate speech is phony, fictitious, and phantasmagoric, it can be grasped in any possible manner.

So, the Supreme Court judges, who are incensed by the falling standards of political debate, hold hate speech responsible for the fall. Last week, a Bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna said, "Hate speeches are like a vicious circle. One person will make it and then another will make it. When our Constitution was founded, there were no such speeches. Now cracks are coming up in the idea of fraternity. There has to be some restraint. Some sort of mechanism needs to be developed by the state so that we can curb these kinds of statements."

The apex court's intentions are laudable but its diagnosis of the problem of the perverted political discourse is not very accurate.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta uses the concept of hate speech to defend the Government's position, arguing that such speeches are made not just against Muslims and Christians but also against Hindus. But he also highlighted something important. He quoted "a spokesperson of DMK" who said "whatever Periyar says should have been done... If you want equality, you must butcher all Brahmins."

Evidently, this led to some acrimony, with Justice Joseph reportedly asking if the Solicitor General knew who Periyar was. Mehta said he knew who Periyar was, and that hate speech cannot be justified just because someone great said it.

This brings us to the most important point: a lot of great men and women have said things that would be regarded as hate speech, blasphemous, derogatory, anti-poor, etc. Let's begin with the beginning. For Plato, slavery was a natural state of affairs, something which never bothered the great philosopher. He wrote, "...nature herself intimates that it is just for the better to have more than the worse, the more powerful than the weaker; and in many ways she shows, among men as well as among animals, and indeed among whole cities and races, that justice consists in the superior ruling over and having more than the inferior."

His disciple and another great philosopher, Aristotle, justified slavery. According to him, "But is there any one thus intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature? There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule."

Should the books by Plato and

Aristotle be banned?

Then there was the enfant terrible of Western philosophy, Nietzsche. Here are some of his gems: "Thou goest to woman? Do not forget thy whip!" "Man should be educated for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior; all else is folly." "Let woman be a plaything." "Everything about woman has one solution: pregnancy."

Another great German philosopher, Schopenhauer, whom Nietzsche considered as his teacher, also made many unedifying comments on fair sex.

Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina could also be accused of glamorizing, if not promoting, adultery. *Gone With the Wind*, both the novel and the movie, is open to the criticism that it portrays slavery as practiced in the American South in soft focus. Dante's *Divine Comedy* depicts the Prophet Mohammad in a bad light.

In India too, great authors have expressed uncharitable views about women. Tulsidas famously said that they, along with others, were fit to be beaten at will. Indian literary works can face charges of exalting ideals and values that would harm any society. Agney's *Shekhar: Ek Jiwani* has shades of an incestuous relationship. Premchand's *Nirmala* also has a similar implication. Bimal Mitra's *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam*, on which a great Hindi film was also made, is all about the decadence of feudalism, complete with mentions of debauchery and profligacy. UR Anantha Murthy's Kannada novel, *Samskara*, exposes the hollowness of Hindu traditions. Bankim Chandra's *Anandmath* does not have a very charitable mention of Muslims.

The list of great authors who have said politically incorrect things is long. If the fictitious concept of hate speech is accepted as real and valid, we may end up banning most books, including classics.

Edtech made education accessible in Covid but not for all

Edtech should be developed in such a way that students belonging to disadvantaged groups can get access to it without any hassle

During Covid-19, it was the internet and edtech that allowed teaching to continue around the world. At the same time, its unavailability, and inaccessibility, has deprived several children of education. After Covid-19, with more investment in edtech, children from disadvantaged, underserved communities have been left behind.



MALA KUMARI

In this fast-paced, edtech world, many first-generation learners find it difficult to operate internet-based video conferencing platforms like Zoom and attend classes. Furthermore, the lack of multiple smartphones in these lower-income families creates another barrier for children to benefit equally from online education. Jyoti, an adolescent girl

(The writer is a recipient of the Sanjay Ghose Media Awards 2022. Charkha Features)

from Uttam Nagar in Delhi, has four siblings and only one smartphone in her family. Recalling the struggle she faced during Covid-19, she explained, "It was very difficult for all of us to take online classes at the same time."

In India, the internet is accessible to only half the population, and 320 million students have been affected as schools went digital, according to the Save The Children Fund report. Mohan, an 18-year-old boy from Uttam Nagar, was one of those who could not adequately prepare for their Class 12 examination due to a lack of a digital device and internet connection. "I do not come from a financially stable background; my family and I faced great difficulties during the lockdown. There was no



food for us; thinking about the internet and a digital device was not our priority. This, however, impacted my education and I couldn't prepare well for such an important exam of my life," said Mohan.

As schools and colleges started conducting classes in

the online mode, some underprivileged parents opted to take loans to buy smartphones for their children. Uma, a factory worker, and the mother of a school-going child, said, "I wanted my child not to remain illiterate like me. I borrowed money to buy him a mobile

phone and ensure that he is able to complete his education. I want him to get a decent job."

Teachers believe that online education hinders the social and practical development of children. A recent survey states that around 43 per

cent of teachers were not satisfied with online teaching during the pandemic. While the low attention span of students is considered one of the major drawbacks of online education, Akanksha Jain, a teacher from Uttam Nagar, identified absenteeism as another challenge. "Due to the non-availability of digital equipment, absenteeism was also quite common," Akanksha said.

While students residing in the capital of the country struggled to cope with the online classes, one can only imagine the level of challenges students in rural areas would have faced. Virtual classes are considered beneficial and convenient with the assumption that every student has access to the internet. In reality, howev-

er, only 600 million are connected to the internet out of India's 1.3-billion population. Besides, not every child in a household is given equal access to the internet and phones, especially girls. Thus, it indicates the level of discrimination children faced to access education, leading to the digital divide.

Although edtech has served as an essential teaching aid and increased the availability of resources for students, it has failed to become inclusive. It should be developed in such a way that students belonging to disadvantaged groups can get access to it without any hassle. Further, the applications used for receiving education should be made available in every language across different social groups.

As Finland joins its ranks, NATO ponders Ukraine's prospects

AP ■ BRUSSELS

As Finland joined NATO this week, casting aside a history of military nonalignment, a small but noisy group of Ukraine supporters outside the security fence at the alliance's headquarters used a loudspeaker system to chant "Ukraine needs NATO," "Ukraine in NATO," and "Ukraine needs fighter jets." Russia's war on Ukraine has driven Finland into NATO's ranks to benefit from its security guarantee that an attack on any one of the now-31 member countries will be met with a response from them all. Sweden, Bosnia, Georgia and — most urgently — Ukraine, want in, too.

At their summit in Lithuania on July 11-12, US President Joe Biden and his counterparts want to offer Ukraine something more, something stronger, in line with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's expectations more than a year into a war that has killed tens of thousands and

driven millions from their homes. The question, NATO diplomats say, is: What, exactly? The problem is simple. Most of NATO's bigger member nations believe that a country should not be brought into the fold while it is fighting a war. What Ukraine would join? What would its borders look like? Would Zelenskyy agree to join without the occupied Crimea and Donbas? Some countries, closer to Russia's borders and all too aware of their own troubled histories with their giant neighbour, would back Ukraine's membership application now. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who walks a wobbly plank as he attempts to speak for 31 allies with diverse positions that only take decisions unanimously, says the equation is simple: There is no point in talking about joining if Russia takes Ukraine. "Ukraine will become a member of the alliance," Stoltenberg told reporters on Tuesday.

"At the same time, we all realise that to make any mean-

ingful progress on this issue, the first step is to ensure that Ukraine prevails as a sovereign, independent nation." According to the organization's estimates, NATO and its allies have delivered close to 150 billion euros (USD 164 billion) in support to Ukraine since Russia invaded in February 2022.

That ranges from financial backing to field assistance including generators, fuel, tents and medical aid.

Some of the members, bilaterally or in groups, have supplied around 65 billion euros (USD 71 billion) worth of military equipment: air defence systems, anti-tank weapons, artillery shells and tanks. Poland and Slovakia have even agreed to send Soviet-era jets that Ukrainian pilots are trained on. NATO, as an organisation, does not provide weapons to Ukraine. It's a line the 31 allies refuse to cross together. They are wary of being drawn into a wider war with nuclear-armed Russia. Instead, they defend NATO's

own borders, to dissuade President Vladimir Putin from expanding his war.

The latest thinking is to better use a "comprehensive assistance package" set up for Ukraine in 2016, years before the war, to help the country provide for its own security and, according to the official description, "to implement wide-ranging reforms based on NATO standards, Euro-Atlantic principles and best practices." The idea is to create a fund that could, according to diplomats, total around 500 million euros (USD 548 million) and would run for about 10 years.

Almost 200 million euros is believed to have been pledged so far. The amount seems small in comparison with other support, but it specifically targets reforms to help Ukraine help itself. Stoltenberg has been hesitant about publicly stating a figure or a time frame. Doing so could create expectations in Kyiv that the allies might not ultimately be able to meet.

Zelenskyy visits Poland to thank ally

AP ■ WARSAW

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his wife arrived in Poland Wednesday for a state visit that is meant as a gesture of thanks to the neighbouring nation for its crucial support in Ukraine's defense against Russia's invasion. The visit is a rare foray for Zelenskyy out of Ukraine since Russia unleashed the war in February 2022. While it follows visits to the United States, Britain, France and Belgium, it stands out from the others because it was announced in advance without the secrecy of past visits. It is also unusual that the president is joined by the first lady, Olena Zelenska. Marcin Przydacz, the head of Polish President Andrzej Duda's foreign policy office, described it as Zelenskyy's first visit of this kind since the war began. He



Poland's President Andrzej Duda, left, welcomes Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as they meet at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, Poland on Wednesday. AP/PTI

said that Zelenskyy had already crossed the Polish border ahead of a morning meeting with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki in the afternoon, and he is due to meet some of the Ukrainians who have found refuge in Poland.

Man in Brazil kills 4 children, injures 3 at daycare centre

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

A man who invaded a daycare centre with a hatchet killed four children and injured at least three others on Wednesday in southern Brazil, authorities said. Santa Catarina state's Gov. Jorginho Mello confirmed the killings in the city of Blumenau on his Twitter account, and wrote that the killer has been arrested. The state's firefighters corps confirmed the man attacked with a hatchet and that three children were taken to the hospital.

Images broadcast on television showed weeping parents outside the private daycare centre, named Cantinho do Bom Pastor. Local media reported the attacker scaled a wall to enter the daycare centre wielding a hatchet.

Neither the state's military



police nor its security secretariat immediately responded to Associated Press requests for more information. School attacks in Brazil had been uncommon, but have begun happening with greater frequency in recent years. Last week, a student in Sao Paulo stabbed a teacher, killing her, and also wounded several others in Sao Paulo. "May God comfort the hearts of all families in this moment of deep pain," Gov. Mello wrote on Twitter. Blumenau, a city of 366,000 people, is famous for its annual Oktoberfest festival.

Cargo ship sinks off Turkish coast, 9 crew missing

AP ■ ANKARA

A Guinea-Bissau flagged cargo ship with 14 crew members on board sank off Turkey's Mediterranean coast on Wednesday, Turkish officials said. Five crew members were rescued while efforts to find nine others were underway. The Joe 2 sank off the coast of Kumluca, in Antalya province, while heading to Iskenderun, the Turkish port of Iskenderun, the state-run Anadolu Agency quoted Gov. Ersin Yazici as saying. The cause of the ship sinking was not immediately clear.

The Turkish Coast Guard Command said it received a distress call at 3.47 am and dispatched a vessel, several boats and two helicopters.

Two crew members were rescued by the coast guard helicopters while three others were saved by other vessels in the area, it said.

Husband of ex-Scottish leader arrested: Report

London (AP): The husband of former Scottish first minister and Scottish National Party leader Nicola Sturgeon has been arrested in a party finance probe, British media reported Wednesday. Police in Scotland did not identify Peter Murrell as the 58-year old man arrested Wednesday "in connection with the ongoing investigation into the funding and finances of the Scottish National Party." However, Britain's Press Association, the BBC and others reported it was Murrell.

"Clearly it would not be appropriate to comment on any live police investigation but the SNP have been cooperating fully with this investigation and will continue to do so," the party said in a statement released after the arrest. Sturgeon, 52, announced her resignation in February after eight years as party leader and first minister of Scotland's semi-autonomous government. Sturgeon said at that time that

serving well was knowing when to make way for someone else.

"In my head and in my heart I know that time is now," she said. "That it's right for me, for my party and my country." Sturgeon, had led Scotland since 2014, when Scots narrowly voted to remain part of the United Kingdom. While the referendum was billed as a once-in-a-generation decision on independence, Sturgeon and her Scottish National Party had pushed for a new vote, arguing that Britain's departure from the European Union had changed the ground rules.

The Scottish government wants to hold a referendum next October with the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?" The UK government in London refuses to approve a vote, saying the question was settled in a 2014 referendum that saw Scottish voters reject independence by a margin of 55 per cent to 45 per cent.

Russia invites children's official sought by ICC to brief UN

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Russia's commissioner for children's rights, who is being sought for war crimes, will brief a controversial UN meeting on Wednesday that Russia called to counter what it claims is disinformation by Western officials and media about Ukrainian children taken to Russia. Russia's UN Mission confirmed Tuesday that Maria Lvova-Belova will be the lead speaker, by video link, to an informal meeting of the Security Council that has sparked opposition from Ukraine's supporters.

The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants last month for her and President Vladimir Putin over the abductions.

The United Kingdom said it has blocked outside broadcast of the meeting in protest and will not send an ambassador, and the US Mission said it won't send its ambassador

either. "The fact that they are inviting someone indicted by the ICC speaks for itself," UK deputy ambassador James Kariuki said. Later, the UK Mission added in a statement: "If she wants to give an account of her actions she can do so in The Hague," the Netherlands city where the ICC has its headquarters.

The Associated Press reported on Lvova-Belova's involvement in the abduction of Ukrainian orphans in October, in the first investigation to follow the abduction process all the way to Russia, relying on dozens of interviews and documents. It found that the open effort to put Ukrainian children up for adoption in Russia was well underway. Ukrainian officials claimed at the time that nearly 8,000 children had been deported to Russia, but the exact number was difficult to determine. When it announced the warrants on March 17, the ICC alleged that Putin and

Lvova-Belova were responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine into Russia. Their chances of facing a trial are remote as Moscow does not recognise the court's jurisdiction.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov at the time called the ICC action "legally void" and "outrageous and unacceptable." Other speakers expected to address the informal Security Council meeting are the adviser on humanitarian programs in Lvova-Belova's office and the commissioners for human rights and children's rights in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, which is partly Russian occupied. Russia's UN Mission said on Wednesday's meeting is aimed at providing "objective information" about children in conflict areas in eastern Donbas, which includes Donetsk, and Russian measures to evacuate them from danger.

Trudeau: Probe needed to get answers on migrants death

Toronto (PTI): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said a proper investigation is needed to get answers on the tragedy on the US-Canada border that resulted in the death of eight people from two families of Indian and Romanian descent and cautioned against speculating on what could have contributed to it.

The members of the two families drowned last week in the St Lawrence River while they were attempting to enter the US from Canada illegally. Bodies of eight persons were recovered later from the marsh on the riverbank near Akwesasne, a community which straddles Quebec, Ontario and New York state. The Indian victims have been identified by their kin in India as Pravin Chaudhary (50), Dakshaben Chaudhary (45), their daughter Vidhi (23), and son Met (20). It is too soon



to draw connections between the tragedy in Akwesasne and the recent closing of the illegal border crossing at Roxham Road, Prime Minister Trudeau and Quebec Premier Francois Legault said on Tuesday. Some refugee and immigration defence groups have said stricter border policies — recently announced by the federal government under pressure from Quebec and the other provinces — could be a factor pushing new arrivals to

seek yet more ways to travel under the radar.

"There is not just dismay, there is heartbreak at what happened to these families," The Montreal Gazette newspaper quoted Trudeau as telling reporters. "It is something that as governments and as Canadians we need to continue to do everything we can to keep people safe, and particularly the most vulnerable. There are lots of questions about what exactly happened in the tragedy, he said. "That's why those questions are being answered and we need to make sure there's a proper investigation to confirm what we know before we speculate on what could have contributed or what could have prevented this," Trudeau said.

"We need to ground it in real facts and a proper investigation, and that's what we're going to be doing.

Missouri kills multiple people, sows destruction

Des Moines (US): A tornado that tore through southeastern Missouri on Wednesday caused widespread destruction and killed and injured multiple people, authorities said. The tornado moved through a rural area of Bollinger County, about 50 miles (80 kilometres) south of St. Louis, between 3:30 and 4 a.m., said Sgt. Clark Parrott of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. He said it caused "multiple injuries and multiple deaths," but he didn't say how many or precisely where they occurred.

"The damage is pretty widespread. It's just heartbreaking to see it," Parrott said. He said a search and rescue operation is underway that involves multiple agencies. Crews are having to use chainsaws to cutback trees and brush to reach homes. (AP)

Camilla makes debut as Queen in King Charles III's Coronation invitations

PTI ■ LONDON

King Charles III's wife Camilla, so far known as Queen Consort, has made her debut as Queen Camilla's Buckingham Palace unveiled the royal invitations for their Coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey on May 6, featuring a floral and leafy pattern to be printed on recycled paper. The invitations mark the first time that 75-year-old Camilla has been referred as the Queen, indicating that her title of Queen Consort will eventually give way to the shorter prefix.

Royal insider indicated that this was in line with tradition for the partner of a monarch to be referred to as Queen and that Queen Consort had been used in the aftermath of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II to smooth that transition.

Charles and Camilla will be formally crowned King and Queen next month, with an invitation to the grand ceremony likely to also be extended to President Droupadi Murmu, as one of the Commonwealth Heads of States speculated to be on the guestlist for the Coronation.

The White House has already confirmed that First Lady Jill Biden would



be representing President Joe Biden at the ceremony. "The original artwork for the invitation was hand-painted in water colour and

gouache, and the design, which recalls the Coronation Emblem, will be reproduced and printed on recycled card, with gold-foil detailing," Buckingham Palace said on Tuesday.

"Central to the design is the motive of the Green Man, an ancient figure from British folklore, symbolic of spring and rebirth, to celebrate the new reign. The shape of the Green Man crowned in natural foliage is formed of leaves of oak, ivy and hawthorn, and the emblematic flowers of the United Kingdom," the palace statement said. The invitation for the ceremony next month of orrnally crown the 74-year-old Charles as monarch has been designed by heraldic artist and manuscript illuminator Andrew Jamieson. He is a Brother of the Art Workers' Guild, of which King Charles is an Honorary Member. The British wild flower meadow bordering the invitation design features lily of the valley, cornflowers, wild strawberries, dog roses, bluebells, and a sprig of rosemary for remembrance, together with wildlife including a bee, a butterfly, a ladybird, a wren, a robin. Flowers appearing groupings of three, signifying the King becoming the third British monarch of his name.

Italian ex-leader Silvio Berlusconi hospitalised

Rome (AP): Former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi was hospitalised on Wednesday in intensive care because of a problem related to a previous infection, but was alert and speaking, Italy's foreign minister said. The 86-year-old three-time premier was in the ICU at Milan's San Raffaele hospital, the clinic where he routinely receives care, said Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, who is also a leader of Berlusconi's Forza Italia party.

Speaking from Brussels, Tajani said Berlusconi was admitted because of an "unresolved problem" related to a previous infection. Berlusconi has had a series of health problems in recent years, most significantly recovering from COVID-19 in 2020. He told reporters after being discharged from a 10-day hospital stay then that disease had been "insidious" and was the most danger-

ous challenge he had ever faced. He has had a pacemaker for years, underwent heart surgery to replace an aortic valve in 2016 and has overcome prostate cancer. In January 2022 he was admitted for a reported urinary tract infection. Berlusconi had been to San Raffaele, where his personal physician works, for a regular checkup for several days just last week. In a March 31 tweet after he returned home, Berlusconi thanked "all those who wanted to send a thought or sign of affection in these days." He said he was already back at work "ready and determined to commit myself as I've always done to the country I love." Berlusconi, a media mogul-turned politician, made his latest political comeback in September general elections, winning a Senate seat a decade after being banned from holding public office over a tax fraud conviction.



Veterinarians from the global animal welfare group, Four Paws, lift up an elephant named "Noor Jehan" for her medical check-up at Karachi Zoo, in Karachi, Pakistan on Wednesday. Foreign veterinarians visited the sickly elephant at the southern Pakistani zoo amid widespread concern over her well-being and living conditions. AP/PTI

South Korea to test sewage samples for COVID-19

SEOUL: South Korea this month will begin weekly tests of sewage produced by its major cities and towns to track the spread of COVID-19 and identify future waves. Officials at the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said on Wednesday that wastewater surveillance will potentially provide a cheaper and more sustainable tool in the country's pandemic response.

They say it could also improve the detection of other outbreaks, such as influenza, norovirus or drug-resistant bacteria. According to the plans, health workers will conduct tests on sewage samples collected from 64 wastewater facilities nationwide at least once a week and regularly release analyses of the test results on its website.

KDCA said its recent trial runs with cities and provincial

governments showed that the levels of pathogens found in sewage samples largely aligned with infection trends in those areas, confirming the value of testing water released from faucets, toilets and bathtubs. Similar tests have also been adopted in the United States.

South Korea had maintained a stringent COVID-19 response based on aggressive testing, contact tracing and quarantines during the earlier part of the pandemic, but has eased most of its virus controls since last year as the omicron variant's surge rendered those containment strategies irrelevant.

Government officials are also eager to revive a devastated service sector economy and attract more tourists. Their plans for wastewater testing are also an extension of their bend-

but-not-break approach with COVID-19 that tolerates the coronavirus' spread among the broader population while concentrating medical resources to protect priority groups.

Lee Sang-won, KDCA's director of epidemiologic research, said wastewater surveillance could help the country's transition toward a more affordable virus monitoring regime.

South Korea's current system is still aimed at tracking every COVID-19 case by requiring hospitals to report all positive tests, an approach Lee described as expensive and laborious. He said health officials are considering an eventual switch to "sample-based surveillance," like they do with influenza monitoring, where only a certain number of designated hospitals register their cases. AP

Sensex, Nifty rally nearly 1%

Key indices rise for fourth straight session

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sensex and Nifty rallied nearly 1 per cent on Wednesday as the benchmark indices closed in positive territory for the fourth straight trading session on the back of gains in IT and financial shares.

A day ahead of the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy review, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 582.87 points or 0.99 per cent to settle at the nearly four-week high of 59,689.31. As many as 21 stocks in the index ended in the green and nine in the red.

After a gap-up opening, the index touched a high of 59,747.12 points during the session. The broader NSE Nifty jumped 159 points or 0.91 per cent to close above the 17,550 level at 17,557.05. A total of 37 Nifty shares gained while 13 declined.

In the four-session gaining streak, Sensex spurted by 2,075



points or 3.5 per cent while Nifty rose by nearly 4 per cent or 605 points.

Among the Sensex stocks, Larsen & Toubro rose the most by 3.96 per cent after the company announced a major project win in the Middle East.

HDFC, HDFC Bank, Sun Pharma, ITC, HUL, Titan, TCS, HCL Tech, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance, Infosys and Tata Steel were among the major gainers.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank fell the most by 1.26 per cent, followed by Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, SBI and Maruti.

Vinod Nair, Head of

Research at Geojit Financial Services, said the domestic market is displaying resilience, unaffected by the weaker global peers, thanks to strong banks and NBFCs' quarterly numbers, and the windfall tax cut.

The RBI is expected to announce a 25 basis points rate hike in its policy announcement on Thursday before taking a pause, which will be a positive for the market, he added.

In the broader market, the BSE Midcap gained 0.11 per cent while BSE Smallcap rose by 0.95 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Capital Goods jumped over

2 per cent. BSE IT, Industrials and FMCG also gained over 1 per cent. Auto, power and PSU bank indices dropped due to profit booking.

Investors are waiting for the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy decision on Thursday amid inflation remaining relatively high.

Also, India's services sector remained in the expansion zone even as growth moderated in March after hitting a 12-year high in February.

The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Services PMI Business Activity Index eased from 59.4 in February to 57.8 in March, indicating a slower rate of expansion.

Global markets were mixed as Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 1.7 per cent, while South Korea's Kospi rose 0.6 per cent. Markets in Hong Kong and Shanghai were closed for a holiday.

In Europe, Germany's DAX dipped 0.3 per cent, France's CAC 40 shed 0.2 per cent while the UK's FTSE 100 marginally rose 0.3 per cent in the afternoon trade.

In the domestic market, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers on Monday as they purchased shares worth Rs 321.93 crore.

Investment bankers get USD 261.5 mln in Q1 despite fall in deal making activities: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Despite a massive fall in deal making in the March quarter, deal makers laughed their way to the bank with USD 261.5 million in investment banking fees during the same period, according to a report.

The amount is 2 per cent higher compared to the year-ago period.

In the three months ended March, deal-making activities declined for the third consecutive quarter, making it the slowest start to a year since 2016 amid multiple headwinds.

Geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, rising interest hikes and global recession fears continue to dampen boardroom confidence and investor sentiment, Refinitiv, which is an LSEG business unit and among the world's largest providers of financial markets data and infrastructure, said in the report.

Equity Capital Market (ECM) underwriting fees rose 15 per cent to USD 50 million — the highest first quarter fees since 2021 while debt capital market underwriting fees totalled USD 71.4 million. The latter is a 22 per cent increase compared to the year-ago period.

Syndicated lending fees soared 86 per cent on-year generating USD 59.6 million in the first quarter of 2023.

However, completed M&A advisory fees fell 35 per cent on-year and totalled USD 80.5 million.

Wall Street investment banker Goldman Sachs took the top position for overall investment banking fees walking away with USD 20.2 million, accounting for 7.7 per cent of the wallet share in the investment banking fee pool, the report said.

Jefferies took the lead in ECM underwriting with USD 1.87 billion in related proceeds and 35.5 per cent market share. AK Capital Services topped the bond underwriting, with proceeds of USD 3.5 billion and accounted for 14.6 per cent market share.

The ECM market raised USD 5.3 billion in the first quarter, which is 42.4 per cent more than a year ago, making it the highest first quarter period by proceeds since the start of 2021. Number of ECM offerings grew 50.9 per cent.

Out of the total, IPO raised USD 142.8 million, down 86.7 per cent from a year ago, but the number of IPOs saw a 35.7 per cent increase year-on-year.

Follow-on offerings nearly doubled, raising



USD 5.1 billion, driven by the share sale of four Adani group companies which totalled USD 1.9 billion.

M&As fell to a seven-year low to USD 10.8 billion, down 68.3 per cent as the number of announced deals dropped 3.3 per cent. Target India M&As reached USD 8.5 billion, down 70.4 per cent, making it the lowest first quarter by value since 2016.

Domestic M&As totalled USD 4.9 billion, down 67.3 per cent. Out of them, inbound M&As plunged 73.9 per cent to USD 3.6 billion and outbound M&As reached USD 2.1 billion, down 58.8 per cent with the US taking as much as 39.2 per cent market share.

Majority of the deal making activity involving India were in the industrials sector which totalled USD 2.3 billion, up 1.1 per cent and captured 21.5 per cent market share.

Financials totalled USD 1.9 billion, down 55.2 per cent with 17.8 per cent market share. Energy & power captured 11.8 per cent market share with USD 1.3 billion deals, which was up 123.6 per cent more than the year-ago period.

High technology sector, which saw the greatest number of deals in the March quarter accounted for 7.4 per cent market share with USD 801 million, down 90.9 per cent in value from a year ago.

Private equity-backed M&As amounted to USD 2.6 billion, down 76.6 per cent, making it the lowest first quarter period since 2020.



'Sales of residential flats up 20% across 7 cities in Jan-Mar'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Real estate consultant JLL India on Wednesday said sales of apartments in January-March across seven major cities rose 20 per cent to 62,040 units, the highest quarterly sales in the last 15 years.

The data includes sales of only apartments. Rowhouses, villas and plotted developments are excluded from this analysis.

"The Indian residential market saw significant growth in Q1 2023 due to a combination of factors, such as government policies, infrastructure growth and robust launches," the company said in a statement. Across the top 7 cities of India, sales of residential units in January-March went up by 15 per cent compared to the previous quarter and 20 per cent against the same quarter last year, with over 62,000 units sold.

"This marks the highest quarterly sales in the last 15 years, indicating increased consumer confidence," JLL said. Bengaluru is currently leading the market in terms of quarterly sales, with a 21 per cent share, closely followed by Mumbai with a 20.9 per cent share. Pune is not far behind as it contributed 19.4 per cent of the quarterly sales.

Delhi-NCR has also posted impressive sales numbers, primarily due to the robust launches by established developers, particularly in Gurugram.



Consumer demand steady in March quarter, expect double-digit volume growth: GCPL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer demand remained "steady" through the March quarter and the FMCG sector is expected to witness a gradual recovery in growth rates, said Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) on Wednesday.

The performance of the Godrej group FMCG arm in the Indian market has "exceeded expectations, especially on the volume front."

"We expect to deliver double-digit volume and value growth. Our domestic branded business growth was very strong registering volume and value growth in teens," GCPL said in its latest quarterly updates.

Overall, the growth was broad-based and led by double-digit volume and value growth in both Home Care and Personal Care, it added.

"This is in line with our strategy of volume-driven category development," it added.

Reliance Retail enters beauty segment with Tira, opens first store in Mumbai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Retail on Wednesday entered into the beauty space with the launch of Tira, an omnichannel beauty retail platform. The country's leading retailer will now compete with the brands like HUL's Lakme, Nykka, Tata and LVMH's Sephora in India's growing beauty and personal care marketplace.

Reliance Retail announced the launch of Tira, an omnichannel beauty retail platform. Along with the Tira app and website, it also opened its flagship Tira store at Jio World Drive in Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai.

Tira has the potential to scale up its stores across cities, said industry sources.

According to the online market and consumer data platform Statista, the Indian Beauty and Personal Care market amounts to USD 27.23 billion in 2023 and 12.7 per cent of the total revenue will be generated through online sales.

Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd Executive Director Isha Ambani said, "We are excited to bring the Tira experience to our Indian customers. With Tira, we aim to break down barriers in the beauty space and democratise beauty for consumers across

segments."

"Our vision for Tira is to be the leading beauty destination for accessible yet aspirational beauty, one that is inclusive and one that harbours the mission of becoming the most loved beauty retailer in India."

Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL) is the holding company of Reliance Retail.

Tira, which is an omnichannel retail concept, offers a curated assortment of the best global and home-grown brands.

Besides, Tira stores will be a destination with a focus on curated services and the consumer experience provided by beauty advisors.

"The unique store experience will feature the latest beauty tech tools, such as virtual try-on to create customised looks



and a skin analyser that will personalise and assist consumers to make purchasing decisions basis their needs. In addition, Tira stores will have dedicated gifting stations to personalise purchases," the retailer said.

Tira will also be the first speciality beauty retailer in India to launch The Fragrance Finder, which helps consumers match fragrances closest to their preferences.

The Tira store at Jio World Drive is spread across 4,300 square feet and has been designed by London-headquartered innovation studio Dalziel & Pow.

RRVL is the holding company of all the retail companies of billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd group.



Cyient DLM, Healthvista India, Zagle Prepaid get Sebi's go-ahead to launch IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Three companies — Cyient DLM, Healthvista India and Zagle Prepaid Ocean Services — have received Sebi's go-ahead to raise funds through initial public offering (IPO).

The three companies, which filed their preliminary IPO papers with the regulator between July 2022 and January 2023, obtained its observation during March 29-31, an update with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed on Wednesday.

In Sebi's parlance, its observation implies its go-ahead to launch the initial share-sale.

Going by the draft papers, electronic manufacturing services firm Cyient DLM's IPO is purely a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 740 crore with no offer for sale (OFS) component.

Healthvista India's IPO comprises fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 200 crore and an OFS of up to 56,252,644 shares by selling shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The company is an out-of-hospital healthcare provider with brand Portea.

Under the OFS, Accel Growth III Holdings (Mauritius) Ltd; Accel India III (Mauritius) Ltd; Ventureast Life Fund III LLC; MEMG CDC Ventures; Qualcomm Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, Accel India V (Mauritius) and Sabre Partners Trust will offload shares.

Funds raised through the IPO would be utilised for funding incremental capital requirements, capital expenditure, debt payment, achieving inorganic growth through acquisitions as well as general corporate purposes.

Healthvista India's IPO comprises fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 200 crore and an OFS of up to 56,252,644 shares by selling shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The company is an out-of-hospital healthcare provider with brand Portea.

Under the OFS, Accel Growth III Holdings (Mauritius) Ltd; Accel India III (Mauritius) Ltd; Ventureast Life Fund III LLC; MEMG CDC Ventures; Qualcomm Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, Accel India V (Mauritius) and Sabre Partners Trust will offload shares.

Small & medium IT cos hit by high attrition rate after lockdown, says survey

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Small and medium IT companies are yet to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 induced lockdown because of the high attrition rate of their employees after upskilling, according to a survey.

According to the survey by Micro Small and Medium Enterprises-Export Promotion Council (MSME-EPC), the highest attrition rate of 35 per cent is being seen in small and medium sector technology companies after the lockdown, in which skilled employees leave their companies for higher wages.

After this, the attrition rate is 27 per cent in the services sector. Due to this, the hopes of returning to normalcy after the epidemic in these areas have been hit.

Releasing the report of this survey of 700 IT units on Wednesday, D S Rawat, Chairman, MSME-EPC, said that a large number of employees in MSME sector companies are going to other companies for higher salaries after learning the work.

Due to this, these companies are still not able to recover



from the shock of the lockdown. Companies in the technology sector spend a lot of time and resources to train their employees, but after training, the employees move to other companies for higher wages.

He said that there is a need to open more and more capacity building centers in the public and private sector to check the high attrition rate.

This will increase efficient manpower, due to which the process of leaving one company and going to other companies will also reduce.

Rawat said that the rate of attrition in the industrial sector is low, but companies in the technology sector are still struggling to retain their employees. Apart from this, the attrition rate is 20 per cent in the manufacturing sector, 27 per cent in the service sector especially the financial sector, 26 per cent in the e-commerce sector and 25 per cent in the pharma sector.

Honda Motor announces top management changes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese auto major Honda Motor Co Ltd on Wednesday announced top management changes in its Indian two-wheeler arm with the appointment of Tsutsumu Otani as the President, CEO & Managing Director of Honda Motorcycle & Scooter

India. Otani, also a Vice President at Honda Motor Co., Japan, will succeed Atsushi Ogata, who returns to Shanghai, China as the Executive General Manager at Shanghai Branch, Honda Motor (China) Investment Co., Ltd with effect from April 1, 2023, the company said in a statement.



Gold jumps ₹1,025 to touch life-time high level; silver zooms ₹1,810

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rallied Rs 1,025 to touch a life-time high of Rs 61,080 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at Rs 60,055 per 10 grams. Silver also zoomed Rs 1,810 to Rs 73,950 per kilogramme. "Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 61,080 per 10 grams, up Rs 1,025 per 10 grams."

"In domestic market gold prices crossed the Rs 61,000 level per 10 grams to a fresh life-time high," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst — Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas market, both gold and silver were quoting higher at USD 2,027 per ounce and USD 24.04 per ounce, respectively.

Comex gold prices rallied in Asian trading hours on Wednesday and have surged more than 1.80 per cent since March 2022 amid data showing lower than estimated US jobs openings.



Gold price rallied Rs 1,025 to touch a life-time high of Rs 61,080 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA, SRM TO ESTABLISH JOINT CENTRE OF EMINENCE

KATTANKULATHUR: SRM Institute of Science and Technology and La Trobe University, Australia, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a joint Centre of Eminence to pave the way for collaboration in digital technologies and engineering. The MoU, signed at SRM IST at Kattankulathur on Tuesday, April 04, will also open opportunities for the design, development, incubation, and nurturing of ideas as business models or proof of concepts.



SANSERA TO MAKE NEXT GEN RADARS

New Delhi: Sansera has entered into a definitive agreement for a strategic investment in MMRFC Technology Private Limited ("MMRFC"). MMRFC is a Research, Design and Manufacturing entity, building sub-systems for next generation Radars by leveraging machine learning with artificial intelligence and, mm-Wave Sensors with hybrid beam forming capabilities.

HOT 30I IS SET TO EXCEED ALL EXPECTATIONS

Delhi: Gone are the days when Budget-conscious buyers had to sacrifice quality, storage capacity or aesthetics when purchasing a smartphone. Infinix's newest addition to their feature-packed HOT series, the HOT 30i, is set to exceed all expectations. This game-changing device by Infinix is anticipated to be the top choice for multi-tasking, boasting double the memory and an impressive appearance.

Reliance, Jio raise \$5bn in largest syndicated loan in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries Ltd and its telecom arm Jio Infocomm have raised a total of USD 5 billion in back-to-back foreign currency loans, the largest syndicated loan in India's corporate history, sources said.

Reliance last week raised USD 3 billion from 55 banks and Reliance Jio Infocomm secured additional credit of USD 2 billion from 18 banks, sources aware of the development said.

The USD 3 billion financing closed on March 31 and the add-on facility of USD 2 billion was secured on Tuesday, they said.

Reliance will mainly deploy the funds raised towards its capital expenditure, while



The USD 3 billion financing closed on March 31 and the add-on facility of USD 2 billion was secured on Tuesday, they said.

Reliance will mainly deploy the funds raised towards its capital expenditure, while

Jio would put the money to finance its nationwide 5G network rollout.

The USD 2 billion add-on will be split equally between Reliance and Jio and is likely to be wrapped up by the end of April, they said.

The primary syndication of USD 3 billion involved around 55 lenders, including nearly two dozen Taiwanese banks as well as global giants such as Bank of America, HSBC, MUFG, Citi, SMBC, Mizuho, and Credit Agricole.

Adani Ports ends FY23 with 9% growth, largest port cargo volume ever

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) on Wednesday reported 9 per cent growth in cargo handling at seaports it operates for fiscal year ended March 31.

At 339 million tonne, this is the largest port cargo ever, APSEZ said in a statement.

The firm handled about 32 million tonne of total cargo in March, up 9.5 per cent year-on-year.

This is the first time since July 2022 that the volumes crossed the 30-million tonne mark.

"With 339 million tonne in FY23 (April 2022 to March 2023), APSEZ recorded its largest port cargo volumes ever,



which is a good 9 per cent year-on-year growth," it said.

"Adani Ports has been continuously increasing its market share for the past years, outperforming all of India's cargo volume growth."

The nation's largest port operator, which operates six ports on the west coast and five on the east, continues to add ports to its portfolio.

CHELSEA, LIVERPOOL PLAY GOALLESS DRAW

AP ■ LONDON
Chelsea wasted a host of chances to beat Liverpool as the troubled Blues were held to a 0-0 draw on Tuesday in their first Premier League match since Graham Potter's sacking.

Potter was axed on Sunday after the former Brighton manager's disastrous reign climaxed with a wretched home defeat against Aston Villa.

Chelsea are seeking their third permanent manager of the campaign, with Potter hired in September following Thomas Tuchel's shock dismissal.

In the meantime, Bruno Saltor, a member of Potter's backroom staff, made his managerial debut as Chelsea interim boss. Bruno managed to coax a lively performance from Chelsea, but — as was so often the case under Potter — they paid the price for a lack of cutting edge.

Chelsea remain 11th, leaving them with an uncertain future despite the massive investment in new signings made by Chelsea owner Todd Boehly since he took over last year.

"These have been emotional days and the players have been able to keep focused. It's a difficult season for them. To come back from what we have had in the last few days is incredible," Bruno said.

"I have asked the players to play with their hearts and I think we saw that on the pitch. We create chances and I think we deserved to win."

Liverpool hardly looked much better as a third successive league game without a win



damaged their faint hopes of finishing in the top four.

Eighth-placed Liverpool are seven points behind fourth-placed Tottenham in the race to qualify for the Champions League.

"I saw a lot of great challenges, people flying into tackles and that's what we need," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said.

"That's what we have to build on. If things don't go your way you have to fight through this and make steps. Sometimes smaller ones, sometimes bigger ones. This was a smaller one."

In response to Liverpool's dismal 4-1 defeat at Manchester City on Saturday, Klopp dropped Mohamed Salah and Trent Alexander-Arnold as the Reds

boss made six changes.

It was Chelsea who made the stronger start of the two troubled teams and Mateo Kovacic's shot was blocked on the line by Ibrahim Konate.

Reece James saw his fierce finish disallowed for offside against Enzo Fernandez, while Wesley Fofana was narrowly off target with a headed chance.

Chelsea's Kai Havertz

dragged a good chance wide from N'Golo Kante's pass.

LEICESTER WOE

Darwin Nunez and Joe Gomez forced good saves from Kepa Arrizabalaga as Liverpool finally threatened just before half-time. Kovacic blazed a glorious chance over soon after the interval, while Havertz's effort was disallowed for handball

Mitrovic handed 8-game ban for pushing referee

AP ■ LONDON

Fulham striker Aleksandar Mitrovic has been handed an eight-game ban after he barged a referee during his side's FA Cup quarter-final defeat to Manchester United last month.

The Serbian international was shown a straight red card for pushing Chris Kavanagh after the official awarded a penalty and dismissed Fulham's Willian for deliberate handball on the line.

Fulham manager Marco Silva was also shown a red card at the time and will serve a two-game ban.

Silva's men were leading 1-



0 at the time of the red cards, but went on to lose 3-1 at Old Trafford.

On top of an automatic

three-match ban, Mitrovic was handed another three games for violent conduct towards a match official and further two for using language that was "improper, abusive, insulting and threatening".

The 28-year-old accepted the latter charge, which also came with a £75,000 (\$93,000) fine.

Mitrovic said last week that he regretted his actions and had spoken to Kavanagh to apologise.

He served the first match of his ban in Fulham's 2-1 defeat to Bournemouth and will remain unavailable until the Cottagers face Southampton on May 13.

when the German's shot hit Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker and rebounded into the net off his arm.

Leicester's first game since Brendan Rodgers' departure on Sunday ended in a 2-1 defeat against Aston Villa at the King Power Stadium.

The Foxes, led by caretaker bosses Mike Stowell and Adam Sadler after Rodgers' exit by "mutual agreement", have now gone seven league games without a win and sit second bottom of the table.

Ollie Watkins put Villa ahead in the 24th minute and although Harvey Barnes

equalised after 35 minutes, Leicester's Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall was sent off in the 70th minute for a second booking.

Bertrand Traore's 87th-minute curler, his first goal for Villa since 2021, piled on the misery for Leicester.

Leeds climbed out of the relegation zone with a 2-1 win against fellow strugglers Nottingham Forest at Elland Road. Orel Mangala bagged his first goal in English football to fire Forest ahead.

But Jack Harrison equalised eight minutes later with a close-range finish after Kaylor Navas spilled Marc Roca's shot.

Luis Sinisterra put Leeds in front in first-half stoppage time, cutting inside and curling his shot into the far corner.

Leeds are two points clear of the relegation zone, while Forest are outside the bottom three on goal difference.

Third-bottom Bournemouth remain in deep trouble after a 2-0 home defeat against Brighton.

Albion took the lead in the 28th minute through teenage forward Evan Ferguson's audacious backheel, with Julio Enciso's first goal for the club wrapping up the points in injury time.



Lukaku snatches late draw for Inter

AP ■ TURIN

Romelu Lukaku netted a last-gasp leveller in Inter Milan's dramatic 1-1 draw at Juventus on Tuesday which left their Italian Cup semi-final all square after the first leg.

Belgium striker Lukaku rolled in from the penalty spot deep in stoppage time to keep both teams level ahead of the second leg in Milan later this month, before then being sent off following his celebrations in front of the home fans.

Lukaku, who was already on a booking for a late foul on Federico Gatti, put his finger in front of his mouth and told the crowd to "shut up" as his joyous teammates swamped him.

Reports that the 29-year-old had been racially abused by some home supporters as he prepared to take his penalty were not confirmed by either Inter coach Simone Inzaghi or his Juve counterpart Massimiliano Allegri.

Juan Cuadrado thought he had given Juventus a lead to take to the San Siro in the 83rd minute of an intense match between bitter rivals in Turin

which featured few goalscoring chances and ended with both teams at each other's throats.

Cuadrado and Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic were both sent off following the final whistle after a scuffle which continued as the teams went into the tunnel at the Allianz Stadium.

"What happened was that Lukaku's celebrations were misunderstood, as he always celebrates like that," said Inzaghi to Mediaset.

"We were on top without being able to score, but I can't criticise my players, it was a good performance."

Lukaku's spot-kick is good news for Inzaghi who is under pressure after a poor run of results which has led to them dropping to fourth in Serie A.

"I don't know what happened, I went into the tunnel after the final whistle," said Allegri.

"It's nothing, just a bit of chaos at the end of an even game."

On Wednesday struggling Cremonese try to secure what would be a shock cup final spot when they host in-form Fiorentina.

Osasuna stun Athletic in extra-time to reach Copa final

AP ■ BILBAO

Pablo Ibanez's superb volley helped Osasuna stun Athletic Bilbao in extra-time to reach the Copa del Rey final with a 1-1 draw on Tuesday, progressing 2-1 on aggregate.

Athletic dominated throughout and only a sensational display from Osasuna goalkeeper Sergio Herrera and profligate finishing forced the match to extra-time.

Inaki Williams struck in the 33rd minute to cancel out Ez Abde's first-leg strike for Osasuna, but Athletic could not find a winner, and Ibanez stroked home from the edge of the box with four minutes remaining to shock San Mames.

Ibanez's effort helped Osasuna reach the Copa del Rey final for the first time in 18 years, and only for the second time in their history, with the club yet to lift the trophy.

Jagoba Arrasate's side beat Real Betis and Sevilla on their spectacular cup run and will face either record winners Barcelona or Spanish and European champions Real Madrid in the final on May 6.

"Right now, I have no words, we were suffering like dogs all through the game," Ibanez told Movistar.

"(This goal) is for all those fans up there shouting, it's something that can't be explained.

"We knew that it could happen, that they could score against us. We suffered, we kept working and in the end we got our reward."



"Now that we are here we have to dream and go for it. I don't care if it's Madrid or Barca, we'll keep dreaming."

Both of their previous cup games went to extra-time, along with their round of 32 clash with Gimnastic, in which Ibanez was sent off.

Athletic have reached the semi-finals four seasons in a row, but have not lifted the trophy since 1984. They have lost six finals since their last triumph.

"We had so many chances for the result to go our way, but in football sometimes these things happen," said Inaki Williams.

"We're very sad, messed up, we will try and pick our heads up and come back."

Serie A condemns racism after Juve fans abuse Lukaku

AP ■ TURIN

Serie A condemned on Wednesday "all instances of racism" in Italian football after Romelu Lukaku was abused during Inter Milan's cup semi-final clash at Juventus.

The Belgium striker held his finger to his mouth and told supporters to "shut up" after scoring, but reports of monkey chants were only confirmed late on Tuesday by his representatives Roc Nation after neither Inter nor Juve made any mention of them post-match.

"Serie A strongly condemns all instances of racism and any form of discrimination," Italy's top division said in a statement.

"A few people in the stands can't ruin football and don't represent all the fans at the stadium... Serie A clubs will, as they always have, be able to find the individuals responsible and ban them for life from their grounds."

"I would like to thank you from the bottom of

Ceferin re-elected UEFA president until 2027

AP ■ LISBON



Aleksander Ceferin was re-elected unopposed for a third term of four years as president of UEFA at a meeting of European football's governing body in Lisbon on Wednesday.

The 55-year-old Slovenian lawyer, first elected in 2016 following the downfall of Frenchman Michel Platini, will now remain in the role until 2027.

"I would like to thank you from the bottom of

my heart for your unanimous support. It really means a lot to me," Ceferin told delegates at the UEFA Congress in the Portuguese capital.

"It is a great honour but mainly it is a great, great responsibility, towards you and towards football."

The UEFA Congress came just a few weeks after Gianni Infantino was re-elected as president of the sport's world governing body FIFA, also unopposed.

Ceferin recently successfully opposed proposals by Infantino to hold the World Cup every two years, and his re-election by acclamation comes after he also fought off the breakaway European Super League project during his second term.

However, the Super League is not dead yet, with Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus continuing to pursue the project.

He will now oversee the introduction of a new format for the Champions League starting next year.

The new Champions League format will be introduced from the 2024/25 season, with the number of clubs involved in the group stage increasing from 32 to 36 teams all playing in one pool using what is known as the Swiss system.

The new format will see all participants play eight matches against eight different opponents.

Currently the group stage is divided into eight sections of four teams playing each other home and away.



'I don't know how many more I have in me': Tiger on Masters

AP ■ AUGUSTA

Tiger Woods admitted on Tuesday he wonders each time he plays the Masters if it's his last competing at Augusta National, where he has won five of his 15 major titles.

"I don't know how many more I have in me," Woods said. "So just (have) to be able to appreciate the time I have here and cherish the memories."

Woods still struggles with walking after suffering severe leg injuries in a 2021 car crash and the undulating layout of Augusta National offers a stern stroll under the Georgia pines.

Woods made his competitive comeback at last year's Masters, when he shared 47th but achieved a major feat simply by finishing 72 holes.

"For me to be able to come back and play was a small victory in itself," Woods said.

"Last year, I didn't know if I was going to play again at that time. For some reason everything kind of came together and I pushed it a little bit and I was able to make the cut, which was nice."

Woods withdrew after three

rounds of last year's PGA Championship with leg pain, skipped the US Open and missed the cut at the British Open. Former world number one Woods, now ranked 1,001, showed his skills at Riviera in February, sharing 45th in his PGA return, and has impressed in practice rounds this week.

"My game is better than it was last year," Woods said. "I think my endurance is better. But it aches a little bit more than it did last year just because I really had not pushed it that often."

"I just have to be cognizant of how much I can push it. The difficulty for me is going to be the walking going forward."

The 47-year-old US legend has won 82 PGA Tour titles, level with Sam Snead for the all-time record.

After Jack Nicklaus said last month that Woods plans on playing in the 50-and-over Champions Tour — where players are allowed to use carts — Woods spoke of the prospect of joining pal Fred Couples there.

"I've got three more years until I get the little buggy and be out there with Fred," Woods said. "But until then, no buggy."

Freiburg knock Bayern out of German Cup

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich crashed out of the German Cup on Tuesday after Lucas Hoeler scored an injury-time penalty to earn Freiburg a 2-1 win and a place in the semi-finals.

Nicolas Hoeler cancelled out Dayot Upamecano's opening goal for Bayern before Hoeler converted from the spot late on after Jamal Musiala handled in the box.

Freiburg lost last year's final on penalties to RB Leipzig but Hoeler was nerveless, smashing home his kick to send his side through to the semis for the second year in a row.

Bayern, the record 20-time German Cup winners, have failed to reach the last four for the third consecutive year, while Freiburg hope to lift the trophy for the first time.

An "angry" Bayern captain Thomas Mueller said "that certain

something was missing... it's very bitter."

In his second game in charge, Bayern manager Thomas Tuchel said the team needed to take responsibility for the loss.

"I'm mega disappointed, but why should I be mad? It's our own fault, we know that."

A typically calm Freiburg coach Christian Streich barely cracked a smile after his team won away to Bayern for the first time in club history.

"We defended passionately and we defended well," he said.

"It's a nice evening, but you don't need to overstate it either."

Bayern took the lead midway through the first half when France defender Upamecano rose highest to head in a Joshua Kimmich corner.

The hosts continued to press



but Freiburg would be next to score.

A scuffed clearance from Bayern winger Kingsley Coman fell to Hoeler, who unleashed a screamer from outside the box to level the scores.

"Such a shot, in Munich, in such a game — it's the goal of my career," Hoeler told German TV.

As the clock wound down, Freiburg continued to sit deep under pressure, managing only the occasional foray into Bayern's half.

However with extra time looming, Musiala's attempt to block a shot saw the ball bounce off his arm and the referee point immediately to the spot.

Freiburg forward Hoeler stepped up and whacked the ball into the top of the net, giving Yann Sommer no chance.

Bayern will at least have the

opportunity for immediate revenge when they head to Freiburg in the league on Saturday.

Earlier on Tuesday, a quick-fire double from France striker Randal Kolo Muani sent Eintracht Frankfurt through to the semi-finals with a 2-0 home win over Union Berlin.

Kolo Muani scored two goals in two minutes early in the first half, both assisted by Mario Goetze, and Frankfurt held on despite a late Union assault.

The win kept the Europa League holders on track for what would be a sixth German Cup win, and a first since 2018.

Freiburg and Frankfurt will be joined in the last four by the winners of Wednesday's quarter-finals, where holders RB Leipzig host Borussia Dortmund and Stuttgart travel to second-division Nuremberg.

OPENERS SHINE IN PBKS WIN

PTI ■ GUWAHATI
 Young Prabhsimran Singh (60) and veteran skipper Shikhar Dhawan (86 not out) pummelled the Rajasthan Royals attack to propel Punjab Kings to a challenging 197 for 4 in the IPL, here on Wednesday.
 Prabhsimran, who hit seven fours and three sixes, mercilessly punished the Rajasthan bowlers during the first 10 overs to bring up his IPL maiden fifty off 28 balls as Punjab was off to a rollicking start. He and Dhawan added 90 runs for the opening stand off just 61 balls. On the other hand, Dhawan, switched gears effortlessly as he was 30 off 30 balls at one stage playing second fiddle to Prabhsimran. Once his opening partner was dismissed, Dhawan upped the ante as he scored 56 off next 26 balls that he faced.
 The Punjab Kings skipper was dropped on 50 and made most of his reprieve as he played the role of sheet anchor, ensuring his team had enough runs on the board with dew setting in. His innings was studded with nine fours and three maximums that came in the second half.
 Prabhsimran started by smacking Trent Boult for lacerating drive in the first over, making his intentions clear. He followed that up by slapping a six over backward square off KM Asif in the second over. Dhawan joined the party briefly with back-to-back fours in the next over. But the young opener was brutal on Asif, whom he hammered for three fours and a six in the fourth over. He also didn't spare Boult and



Ravichandran Ashwin.
 The 22-year-old first smacked a length ball over mid off before cutting one behind point for a second boundary. He followed that up with a short-arm pull over the midwicket region for a maximum.
 The introduction of spin didn't bother Prabhsimran either as he continued his boundary hitting spree, hitting Ashwin to two consecutive fours as Punjab raced to 63/0 in the Powerplay.
 With a half-century in his kitty, Prabhsimran welcomed back Boult for his second spell with a flat-batted six down the ground.
 His fabulous innings came to an end, courtesy Jason Holder and Jos Buttler, who took a sensational catch, diving forward from long on.
 Punjab were handed another blow as Dhawan's powerful drive hit the big-hitting Bhanuka Rajapaksa in his right arm, forcing the Sri Lankan to retire hurt on 1. A spectator for most part of Prabhsimran's innings, Dhawan upped the ante as he played some well-timed shots to get to his half century in 36 balls.
 Jitesh Sharma showcased his batting prowess in his 15-ball 27 that included in 89m monstrous six off Boult.
 Spinners Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal were able to stem the run flow momentarily as they picked the wickets of Jitesh and Sikandra Raza in quick succession.
 Holder (2/29) then took a wicket and conceded just seven runs to restrict Punjab under the 200-run mark.



KKR seek home comfort against RCB

PTI ■ KOLKATA
 The excitement will be at an all-time high for both teams, with crowd-puller Virat Kohli in the visitors' dug out.
 KKR looked a shadow of their past in their season-opener, which was interrupted by a floodlight glitch before the skies opened up.
 Iyer's absence has made the batting feeble. A quick-fire fifty-run partnership between Andre Russell and Venkatesh Iyer, who was promoted to No. 4, was the highlight of their batting against Punjab.
 KKR also can take positives from a cracking start by Afghan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who smashed a flurry of boundaries and a 101-metre six before perishing for 22.
 KKR had blamed the power failure in the innings break for their drop in momentum, but the truth is they will have to raise the bar.
 On the bowling front, the likes of Tim Southee and Sunil Narine leaked runs, something they will have to address.
 Narine looked to have lost his mystery ball as the Punjab batters took him to the cleaners.
 KKR's attack will be put to test against the likes of Faf du Plessis and Virat Kohli, who looked in imperious touch in an unbeaten 82 in their eight-wicket win over Mumbai Indians.
 RCB's pace trio of Mohammed Siraj, Harshal Patel and Akash Deep will also look to make it count on a seaming-friendly Eden. But they are likely to miss English pacer Reece Topley, who suffered a shoulder dislocation. David Willey is expected to replace him.

KKR rope in Roy for ₹2.8 crore

PTI ■ KOLKATA
 England opener Jason Roy was on Wednesday roped in by Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) to give the side a boost following injury to regular captain Shreyas Iyer and the pullout of Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan.
 Roy will miss KKR's home game against Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) on Thursday but will be available for selection for the team's next match against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad on April 9.
 The two-time IPL champions were dealt a huge injury blow when Iyer was ruled out for the entire season due to a back injury, while Shakib pulled out citing personal and national commit-



ments.
 "Kolkata Knight Riders have signed England's Jason Roy for ₹2.8 crore for the TATA IPL 2023 from his base price of ₹1.5 crore," KKR said in a statement.
 Roy, who first featured in the 2017 edition of the IPL for Gujarat Lions, last played in the 2021 season for Sunrisers Hyderabad.
 In 2021, he played five games, scoring 150 runs, including a half-century.
 The 32-year-old has played 64 T20s for England, scoring 1,522 runs at a strike-rate of 137.61 with eight fifties.
 Roy is likely to replace Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who opened in their match against Punjab Kings and scored 22 from 16 balls. The purple brigade already have N Jagadeesan to don the gloves.

PBKS sign Gurnoor as Bawa's replacement

PTI ■ MOHALI
 Punjab Kings on Wednesday announced signing young all-rounder Gurnoor Singh Brar as a replacement for the injured Raj Angad Bawa in the IPL.
 Brar was picked up PBKS for ₹20 lakh, said a statement issued by the IPL.
 Bawa, who played two games for PBKS last season, has been ruled out of the ongoing IPL due to a left shoulder injury.
 A left-handed batting all-rounder, Brar made his first-class debut for Punjab in December last year.
 The 22-year-old has featured in five first-class matches and scored 107 runs at a strike rate of 120.22 and picked up seven wickets at an economy rate of 3.80.



Saina makes 1st round exit from Orleans Masters

PTI ■ ORLEANS
 London Olympic bronze medalist Saina Nehwal crashed out of the Orleans Masters badminton tournament with a straight-game first round loss to Turkey's Neslihan Yigit, here on Wednesday.
 Mithun Manjunath, Priyanshu Rajawat, Aakarshi Kashyap and Tanya Hemanth progressed to the second round.
 Returning to the court after missing a few tournaments, the celebrated Indian shuttler tamedly went down 16-21, 14-21 to Turkish qualifier Yigit in 39 minutes.
 Saina, who missed the All England Championships and has dropped to 32 in the BWF Rankings, had her right knee heavily strapped.
 She looked sluggish and was slow off the blocks as she trailed Yigit 4-11. Saina, however, fought back to narrow down the deficit to 13-15 but the gap was eventually too much as the Turkish shuttler took the first game.
 A rusty Saina was down against in the second game, trailing 6-11 at the mid-game interval and eventually losing the tie in straight games.
 Sameer Verma, on the other hand, squandered a game lead

Gill reaches career-best 4th spot in ODI rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI
 India opener Shubman Gill has climbed a spot to career-best fourth position among batters in the latest ICC ODI Player Rankings released on Wednesday.
 Apart from Gill, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma too features in the top 10.
 While Kohli also moved a spot to seventh, Rohit remained static at eighth in the list led by Pakistan skipper Babar Azam.
 Pacer Mohammed Siraj continues to be the only Indian bowler in the top 10 as he held on to his number three spot, behind Australian quick Josh Hazlewood and New Zealand's Trent Boult.
 South Africa's Aiden Markram gained 13 spots to reach 41st position in the batting chart and 16 places to 32nd in the all-rounders' list, another career-best feat in both the departments as South Africa beat the Dutch 2-0 in their three-match series in Johannesburg.
 They edged closer to automatic qualification for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in India later this year.



Other gains were made by New Zealand's Henry Nicholls, who climbed two spots to 69 in the batting rankings and his teammate Will Young, who leaped 60 spots to a personal best 143rd following their 2-0 series victory over Sri Lanka.
SKY AT 1 IN T20IS
 In T20I Player Rankings, Suryakumar Yadav retained his top position among batters, while Hardik Pandya remained static on second in the all-rounders' list.
 Bangladesh's Litton Das rose one spot to reach 21st position, his highest career ranking so far, sharing the spot with New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell, who climbed five places from 26.
 This is also Mitchell's career-best ranking while his previous best was 25th.
 Sri Lanka's Kariyawasa Asalanka is tied with Scotland's George Munsey for 23rd place after jumping 12 spots.
 In the bowling rankings, Maheesh Theekshana has risen three spots to 10th while Bangladesh's Taskin Ahmed has gone up three places to 36th.

NZ beat SL in 2nd T20I, level series



AP ■ DUNEDIN
 Fast bowler Adam Milne took 5-26 as New Zealand bowled out Sri Lanka for 141 on Wednesday and went on to win the second T20I by nine wickets.
 Milne became only the third New Zealander to claim a five-wicket haul in a T20I after Tim Southee (5-18 vs Pakistan) and Lockie Ferguson (5-21 vs West Indies), helping the Black Caps bowl out Sri Lanka in exactly 19 overs.
 Opener Tim Seifert then hit

Madushanka.
 "Any time you get a five-for it's very nice and after the last game with the Super Over it's nice to come back and put in a good performance," Milne said.
 Sri Lanka made 196-5 in the first match and looked on course to another high score when it reached 50-2 in the powerplay on Wednesday and 83-2 in the first 10 overs, led by Perera and Dhanjaya de Silva, who made 37 from 26 balls. The pair put on 62 for the third wicket.
 But after Milne removed Perera, de Silva fell to the spinner Rachin Ravindra and Sri Lanka's innings lost some of its momentum. The pitch at the University Oval was slow but the boundaries were short and inviting and the visiting batters found it hard to resist the temptation of the big shot. New Zealand used the slower ball to good effect and a succession of batters fell to catches in the deep.
 "I think the spinners did really well through the middle there to tie them up," Milne said.
 "I think compared to the last game we were able to take a few quick wickets in the middle and that allowed us to attack a bit more."

Mushfiqur ton puts Bangladesh in control of Ireland Test

AP ■ DHAKA
 Mushfiqur Rahim's 126 runs salvaged early wobbles from Bangladesh to put them in control of their one-off Test against Ireland on Wednesday, the hosts reaching 369 all out in the final session of day two.
 Bangladesh led by 155 runs at the change, with off-spinner Andy McBrine's 6-118 putting the brakes on a further blowout in Dhaka.
 Mushfiqur's 10th Test century was ably assisted by skipper Shakib Hasan's 87, while Mehidy Hasan was the last man dismissed on 55.
 Bangladesh had resumed on



34-2 and lost Mominul Haque, bowled round his legs for 17, in the third over of the morning after adding just six more runs with Mushfiqur.
 But Shakib and Mushfiqur turned up the aggression to quickly claw back the deficit with a 159-run partnership for the fourth wicket.
 Shakib was at his mercurial best until he chased a ball from McBrine wide outside the off stump to get a feather touch on the bat.
 He was caught behind after an impressive 14 fours from his 94-ball knock.
 Liton Das joined Mushfiqur to continue on the front foot, adding 87 runs for the fifth wicket.
 Mushfiqur finished his hundred off 135 balls with a four off Adair before Ben White dismissed Liton for 43 runs.
 McBrine finally dispatched Mushfiqur — with Murray Commins taking a fine diving catch at long-on — and cut short the tail with three wickets in three consecutive overs.
 It was McBrine's maiden Test five-wicket haul and only the second from the Irish team.
 Ireland have lost all three of their previous Tests since becoming a full member of the International Cricket Council in 2017.