**OPINION 6** 

SPIRIT OF VOLUNTARISM

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# BJP committed to fighting | RBI presses surprise pause graft, dynasty politics: PM

#### Modi raps Opp for 'baadshahi mindset' that insults poor

PNS NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted the BJP is committed to effectively fighting and countering corruption and dynasty politics, and slammed people with "baadshahi" mindset, alleging they have been insulting the poor, backwards and deprived since 2014.

Addressing BJP MPs and over 10 lakh BJP workers across the country on the party's 44th foundation day that coincided with "Hanuman Jayanti". Modi expressed confidence that the party was sure to win 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Modi said the party has waged war against "corruption, nepotism and crime just the way Lord Hanuman fought against demons."

"Selfless service to the nation, a virtue of Lord Hanuman, is the inspiration for BJP cadres," he said

The PM said that "many people believe that no one can defeat the BJP in 2024", and

"this is true as well", he said. "But we have to go beyond a win and ensure we also win every person's heart in the country," Modi said, adding while "victories should be cel-

**CAPSULE** 

AQSA MOSQUE VIOLENCE; INDIA CALLS FOR CALM

backdrop of violent scenes at al-

Jerusalem, India on Thursday

According to reports, Israeli

Wednesday and clashed with

2 SMUGGLERS HELD WITH ₹70 CR HEROIN

Srinagar: Two cross-border

drug smugglers were arrested in Srinagar on Thursday and

crore recovered from their

possession, police said.

fresh Covid cases — the

data shared by the city

government's Health

department.

over 11 kgs of heroin worth ₹70

COVID: 606 NEW CASES IN DELHI, +VITY 16.98% New Delhi: Delhi logged 606

highest since last August - on

Thursday with a positivity rate

of 16.98 per cent, according to

dozens of Palestinians inside it's

urged all sides to maintain calm

New Delhi: Against the

Agsa mosque in East



Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addresses party leaders and workers on the occasion of BJP 'Sthapna Diwas (Foundation Day) in New Delhi on Thursday

ebrated, we should be preparing for the next goal... We have to fight every poll with the same hard work that we have put in since the time of Jana

Modi said 2014 has brought a major shift in the politics and since the country was reclaiming its ancient culture and heritage.

"The Opposition parties never imagined that Article 370 would be history one day and they cannot digest the work BJP is doing," he said.

Without referring to various allegations levelled by these parties against his government, the PM said they have been battling an existential crisis and resorting to levelling allegations and conspiracies against the ruling party. They are full of hate and frustration,

so desperate that they have openly started saying 'Modi teri kabar khudegi," he said and asserted that the support of the poor, tribals, backwards, Dalits and women among others would continue to protect "lotus" (BJP's symbol) and help

it bloom. Taking a swipe at the Opposition, the PM said the identity of the Congress is dynasty, nepotism and corruption, whereas BJP's political culture is inclusive.

"Unlike Opposition parties, who used the slogan of social justice for political gains, BJP strives for social justice and employment of all segments and the free ration to 80 crore is a living example as it is being given without any discrimination, he said.

"Parties fighting their exisraid. tential crisis will keep conspir-"Today, they have become ing against us. The poor,

deprived, Dalits and tribals are protecting the lotus," said the PM.

Earlier in the day, BJP national president JP Nadda hoisted the saffron party flag at the party headquarters. "Under PM Modi's leadership, BJP has made groundbreaking achievements. We got the inspiration from 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat' under the PM's leadership," Nadda said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar echoed Modi's remarks and said India discovered its strength in 2014 the same way Lord Hanuman discovered his and went on to achieve infinite feats. "The way Lord Hanuman discovered his strength and then performed infinite feats, I think we discovered our strength in 2014 and have kept discovering it

since then," he told ANI Continued on Page 2

#### Interest rate unchanged; bankers hail move; RBI ups growth forecast to 6.5% from 6.4%

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) surprised all by keeping the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent on Thursday, after hiking interest rate by a cumulative 250 basis points in the past 11 months. The RBI unexpectedly kept benchmark rate unchanged as global banking woes added uncertainty to the economic outlook. The RBI move has found support from the banker

community.
RBI Governor Shaktikanta
Das, however, pledged to hike the interest rate again if needed, saying the decision to pause was "for this meeting only".

RBI's six-member Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously to keep the repurchase or repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent. Most analysts had expected one final hike of 25 basis points in RBI's current tightening cycle before hitting a pause. MPC also decided to retain a policy stance focused on "withdrawal of accommodation" to "ensure that inflation progressively aligns with the target, while supporting growth." That had been its approach since it started tightening in May 2022.

"MPC unanimously decided to keep rates unchanged in this meeting with readiness to act if the situation so warrants, Das said while announcing the decisions of the committee "MPC will not hesitate to take further action as may be required in its future meetings.

He said that MPC is ready to act if necessary as the decision to keep the rate unchanged is "a pause, not a pivot."



Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das with Deputy Governor M.K. Jain during a press conference in Mumbai on Thursday

Reacting to the decision, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "RBI has taken a good call, I think."

Interest rates have been effectively tightened by 290 basis points in the past year --- a 250 bps increase in the repo rate and a 40 bps increase when the SDF was introduced. RBI remained cautious about the inflation outlook and rela-

The central bank margin ally upped its forecast of India's

tively upbeat on growth.

GDP growth in the current fiscal year starting April 1 to 6.5 per cent from 6.4 per cent projected earlier. This compares with an expected 7 per cent growth in 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023) fiscal

The central bank lowered its inflation forecast to 5.2 per

Temple vandalised again

in Canada, India protests

cent for 2023-24 from 5.3 per cent, with Das saying "war against inflation has to continue". He said it was necessary to evaluate the cumulative impact of past interest rate hikes.

The surprise pause comes even as core inflation stayed above 6 per cent for 17 straight months. "Our job is not yet finished and the war against inflation has to continue until we see a durable decline in inflation closer to the target," he

The RBI move also found support from the banker community. Industry lobby Indian Banks Association chairman AK Goel, who is also the chief executive of Punjab National Bank, said it is a welcome pause which could surprise the market. "Focus of RBI in this policy is to support growth as it wants to evaluate the effects of the previous rate actions to fully get transmitted into the economy," he said.

SBI chairman Dinesh Khara termed it a "pleasant surprise" given the market talks of one more final rate hike. "With uncertainty looming large, this decision was perfectly timed". Continued on Page 2

#### **Revoke visa freeze** on two journalists, **India urges China**

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/

Days after two Indian journalists posted in China by their respective organisations were told not to return to Beijing, India on Thursday said it has taken up the issue with the authorities there and hoped Chinese authorities will facilitate continued presence of the journalists there.

Asked why China resorted to the suspension of visas of the two Indian journalists, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told the media on Tuesday that "for a long-time iournalists received unfair and discriminatory treatment in India. In 2017. India shortened the visa for Chinese journalists from three months to one month. In 2020, India refused to approve applications from Chinese

journalists to go to India." Continued on Page 2

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES NEW

India on Thursday condemned an incident of vandalism targeting a Hindu temple in Canada and said it has taken up the issue with the authorities there. The spate of vandalism against Hindu tem-

> ples continues in Canada with the latest incident taking place in Windsor province of Ontario. The police termed it as "hate-motivated" and said it was looking for two suspects.

> Khalistan supporters carried out the attack late on Tuesday night. The country has seen five such acts since July last year and no arrests have, so far, taken place.

> "We condemn this, it is a very unfortunate incident. We have taken this up with the



Spokesperson Arnidam Bagchi said here on Thursday. He also said Canada was urged to bring the perpetrators of the incident The target this time was the

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir as perpetrators spray painted it with anti-India graffiti. Slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi were also splashed on the walls of the temple compound.

Continued on Page 2

# **CBSE Board exams** reforms: More MCQs

#### Revised X-XII exams pattern from next year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

Thursday announced a revision of the Board exams pattern for Class 10 and 12 from 2024. The CBSE, which has the largest number of affiliated schools and examinees across the country, stated in its new guidelines that students will get more multiple choice questions, (MCQs) for the Board exams next year.

Based on the National Curriculum Framework



The Central Board of (NCF), the move is aimed at Secondary Education progressively aligning assessprogressively aligning assessment with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

The idea of MCQs is to reduce weightage for questions requiring short or long

However, this is not the first attempt at reforming Board exams.

The Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) method was introduced for Class 10 in 2009 but was

Probe Oxfam

India's FCRA

violations:

PNS NEW DELHI

MHA to CBI

Earlier, a survey operation

by the Income Tax Department

had exposed its role as a likely

The Board exams for Class 10 and 12 were also split into two terms during the pandemic as a one-time measure but the old format of year-end examination was resumed for the crucial exams this year.

A CBSE official said the change, however, might be limited to the 2023-24 academic session only, as the Board exams are likely to be revised next year again with the intro-

duction of the new NCF. "The NEP, 2020, has affirmed the need to move from rote learning to learning more focused on developing the creative and critical thinking capacities of students to meet the challenges of the 21st century proactively.

Continued on Page 2

#### **Jain may tamper** with evidence, bail denied: HC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court (HC) Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain in the money laundering case in which he had been in custody since May 30, 2022.

The bail of co-accused Vaibhav Jain and Ankush Jain was also denied. The court said that all of the three accused failed to meet and pass the two conditions specified for bail under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Meanwhile, the Delhi HC

on Thursday issued a notice to the CBI on the bail plea of former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in connection with the alleged irregularities in the liquor excise policy.

Continued on Page 2



## **AK Antony's son joins BJP,** ex-Def Minister 'pained'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anil K Antony, the son of veteran Congress leader and former defence minister AK Antony, on Thursday joined the BJP in the presence of Union Ministers Piyush

Goyal and V Muraleedharan. Expressing his unconditional loyalty to the "Nehru-Gandhi family", the former Defence Minister said, "I am deeply pained by Anil's decision to join the BJP."

Continued on Page 2



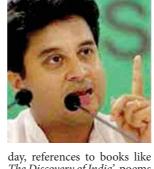
Devotees celebrate 'Hanuman Jayanti' amid high security at Jahangirpuri in New Delhi on Thursday

## Scindia-Ramesh spat on royals' history has Twitterati in stitches

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Twitterati on Thursday made a refresher course on "historical facts" and claims pertaining to the Marathas, the Holkars, the British and Rani Ihansi, when Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh engaged in a war of words over the histori-cal role of the Scindias

While both took swipes at each other over their politics



The Discovery of India', poems by Subhadra Kumari Chauhan caught the attention of people on the micro-blogging site



In the poem, the Scindias are referred to as the friends of the British. Hitting back at

the Rani of Jhansi.

Ramesh, Scindia said, "Read history more, rather than poet-Scindia said such state-

scathing criticism of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and the Congress at a BJP press con-

with a "traitor" barb and asked the Minister if he had forgot-

Ramesh hit back at Scindia

Subhadra Kumari Chauhan's immortal poem on

ference on Wednesday.

Scindia said.

# Now, Delhiites can list property at any sub-registrar office

Country's first Online Complaint Information System soon in Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

People will soon register their property from any-where as the national Capital is to be considered a single district for this purpose. The move will help thousands visiting sub-registrar offices at different locations, apart from curbing corruption and harass-In a review meeting on

Wednesday, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena directed officials to consider declaring Delhi a single district for the purpose of registration of properties to curb corrup-



at sub-registrar offices across

similar step was taken by Andhra Pradesh in 2015. "This would enable any person to get the property registered from any sub-registrar office in the Capital rather than going to a specific office. This move is expected to put an effective check over malpractices," sources said.

Dubbing Oxfam India as a probable instrument of foreign policy of foreign organisations which have funded it liberally over the years, the Union Home Ministry on Thursday recommended a CBI probe against the entity for probe against the entity for alleged forex violation under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

According to officials, a

instrument of foreign policy, sources said. The move comes after the MHA found that Oxfam India continued to transfer foreign contributions to various entities even after coming into force of the FCRA, 2020, which prohibits such Continued on Page 2

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY APRIL 7, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3 the pioneer mirates

**WORLD 8** 

IRAN, SAUDI AGREE

ON JOINT PLAN

Continued on Page 2 | and ideology throughout the

witterati on Thursday had

with Twitterati doing a Google "search" to post, share and lash out at the leaders and their

It all started with Scindia's ments clearly show how much

dignity and ideology is left in the Congress. "You are devot-

ed to yourself anyway; your

politics is alive on this. Me and

my family have always been

answerable to the public,"

Scindia was in the Congress for a long time and was considered a close associ-ate of the Gandhis. He quit the party and joined the BJP in 2020 following differences with

its leadership, especially in his home State Madhya Pradesh, leading to the fall of the Kamal Nath-led Government. Continued on Page 2

# **Centre OK's Space Policy** with more pvt participation

The Government Thursday approved the Indian Space Policy 2023 that seeks to institutionalise the private sector participation in the space sector, with ISRO focusing on research and devel-opment of advanced space technologies.

The Indian Space Policy-2023, approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also delineated the roles and responsibilities of ISRO, space sector PSU NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) and Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe).

"In brief, the Indian Space Policy will offer clarity in the role of the components set up (in the recent past)," Union minister Jitendra Singh told reporters here. Singh said the



policy will allow the private sector to take part in end-toend space activities that include building satellites, rockets and launch vehicles, data collection and dissemination.

He said strategic activities related to the space sector will be carried out by NSIL, a public sector undertaking under the Department of Space, which will work in demanddriven mode. When contacted, ISRO Chairman S Somanath told PTI that the focus of the Space Policy would

of the private players in the space sector. The INSPACe, created recently, will be the interface between Indian Space Research Organisation and non-governmental entities, Somanath said.

He said the policy also spells out the framework for the private sector to use ISRO facilities for a small charge and also encourages them to invest in creating new infrastructure for the sector.

Somanath said ISRO will not do any operational and production work for the space sector and focus its energies on developing new technologies, new systems and research and development.

The operational part of ISRO's missions will be moved to the NewSpace India Limited, a public sector undertaking under the Department of Space. Somanath said India's

omy was less than two per cent at present and the space policy will help it increase substantially to 10 per cent in the future. This is a historic moment as the cabinet has approved the Indian Space Policy 2023.

#### ISRO successfully finishes human-rated hot test for engine

Bengaluru: ISRO on Thursday said it had completed the final long-duration hot test of human-rated L110-G Vikas engine for the planned qualification duration of 240 seconds, marking a major milestone in the journey towards the launch of the Gaganyaan human spaceflight programme. PTI

# Over 5,500 new Covid cases reported: Min

There has been no let up in the Covid cases in the last few days with the new infection in India zooming past 5,000 for the first time this year as over 5,500 incidents were reported on Thursday 8 am as per the Union Health Ministry data. This is the highest single day rise since September 23.

Alert at this uptick which is over 20 per cent over the previous day and some States reporting high positivity rate, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandivaya is planning a a review meeting on Friday to take stock of the Covid situation across the

Active cases went up by 2,496 and recoveries by 2,826. The total active cases in the country stood at 25,587 Among states, Kerala had 8,229 active cases, Delhi 1,795 and Maharashtra 3,874. The death toll increased by 13 - two each

Maharashtra, one each from Kerala and Punjab, and seven reconciled by Kerala, the data updated at 8 am stated. The daily positivity rate has been recorded at 3.32 per cent while weekly positivity rate has been pegged at 2.89 per cent, said statement from Ministry.

Among the states, Kerala saw a rise of 1,404 in daily active cases, after taking the recoveries into account. Himachal Pradesh reported 212 rise in daily active cases and Tamil Nadu 130. According to ministry's website, 220.66 crore doses of Covid vaccine have been administered so far under the nationwide vaccination drive. The Omicron variant XBB.1.16 is believed to be behind sudden surge of covid cases in India. World Health Organization is closely tracking covid subvariant XBB.1.16, It had on March 22 added XBB.1.16 to its list of variants under monitoring.

#### Maha man kills sister-in-law, 2 kids over affair suspicion

TN RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

In a ghastly incident, a 30-year-old man strangulated his sister-in-law and her two children to death and later set them on fire at Kondhwa locality late on Wednesday, after suspecting that she had an extra-marital affair while her husband was away. The police arrested the accused Vaibhay Rupsen Waghmare, who hails from Lahota village in Ausa taluka in Latur district in

Marathwada region. Police said that Vaibhav had an altercation with his sister-in-law Amarpali (25) over her alleged illicit affair with some men. Later, in a fit of rage, Vaibhav strangulated Amarpali and her two children Roshni (6) and Aditya (4).

He allegedly carried their bodies to a nearby shed where he set them on fire to destroy evidence. However, the neighbours found the burning bodies and called the police.

#### AK Antony's son joins BJP, ex-Def Minister 'pained'

From Page1

Anil, who headed the Digital Media cell of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee, attacked the Congress leadership for working for a "single family" instead of working for the country.

He had quit the Congress after criticising the party's stand on the controversial documentary film of the BBC on Prime Minister Narendra

Welcoming Anil in the BJP, Goyal described him as a 'very grounded political worker", who was convinced that the BJP cares for the country and shared the prime minister's vision of sustainable growth.

"This is not about personalities, this is about differences of opinion and ideas. I strongly believe that I have taken the right step. My respect for my father will remain the same," Anil said when asked whether he had consulted his father before joining the BJP.

#### Probe Oxfam India's FCRA violations: MHA to CBI

#### From Page1

The amendment came into force on September 29, 2020. Oxfam India transferred funds to other NGOs, violating provisions of the FCRA, 2010 sources said.

During a survey carried out by the Income Tax department, multiple emails were found which revealed that Oxfam India was allegedly planning to circumvent provisions of the FCRA by routing funds to other FCRA-registered associations or through the for-profit consultancy route, they said.

Oxfam India, which is registered to undertake "social" activities, allegedly routed funds to the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) through its associates and employees in the form of commission.

The same is also reflected from the TDS data of the Oxfam India which shows payment of Rs 12,71,188 to the CPR in the financial year 2019-20 under section 194I, the sources said. The registration certificate of Oxfam India was valid up to December 31, 2021. | cial stability issues to the fore-

Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-1395

Name of work with

Address of the office

App. Cost of the work (₹)

Earnest Money Deposit(₹)

Date & Time for upload the

tender / closing of tender

Website particular & notice board location where

complete details of the

ender can be seen etc

Submission Period

E-Tender Bid Submission

complete details of tende

ocuments can be seen

End Date & E-Tender

Open Date & Time

## RBI presses surprise...

"Simultaneously, the bouquet of regulatory initiatives like linking UPI to credit and developing the onshore market will spur innovations in product offerings," Khara said. Bank of Baroda economist Sonal Badhan said given the baseline assumptions, RBI is not expected to hike rates any further this year. Anu Aggarwal, president of Corporate Banking at Kotak Mahindra Bank, said, leaving the policy rates unchanged is a very welcoming news, especially considering the nervousness that had built up post the OPEC+ production

Das said the global economic scenario has undergone a dramatic shift -- from improving supply conditions, resilient economic activity and financial markets exuding greater optimism at the start of 2023 to the global economy now witnessing a renewed phase of turbulence with fresh headwinds from the banking sector turmoil in some advanced economies.

"Bank failures and contagion risk have brought finan-

Construction of LHS on L-Xing No 65, 198, 209, 219,

85, 86 & 89 on DLI-BTI section of Delhi Division

Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM office,

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Dated: 05.04.2023

front," he said. "Given the stubbornness in inflation, central banks continue to tighten monetary policy, although at a

reduced pace? Explaining the rationale behind MPC's decision to pause rate hike, he said while the recent high frequency indicators suggest some improvement in global economic activity, the outlook is now tempered by additional downside risks from financial stability concerns. Headline inflation is moderating but remains well above the targets of central

The sudden announcement of an output cut by OPEC+ a few days ago and the resultant jump in crude oil prices is yet another evidence of this volatility, he said.

"When we started the rate cut cycle in February 2019 to provide support to growth, the CPI inflation was around 2 per cent and the policy repo rate was 6.50 per cent. Now, the policy rate is 6.50 per cent but inflation is 6.4 per cent (February 2023)," he said.

Looking ahead, the expectation of a record rabi harvest bodes well for easing of food price pressures, he said. Other measures announced include allowing pre-sanctioned credit lines via the unified payments interface and a web multiple banks for possible unclaimed deposits.



CHANGE OF NAME

I, Shalini Agarwal, W/o Deepak Agarwal, R/o A-603, Garden Estate Apptt., Plot

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04.05.2023 (15.00 hrs.)

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KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD., PLOT NO.7 INSTITUTIONAL AREA SECTOR-125 NOIDA NEAR DELL CAMPUS NOIDA (U.P) UP-201313 OR CONTACT : RAJESH ANTII

1054/23

# BJP committed to fighting...

From Page1
In the past, Jaishankar had

said that Lord Krishna and Hanuam were the "world's greatest diplomats." The BJP president launched the 'ek baar phir se Modi sarkar' wall-writing campaign across the country from the national Capital.

The BJP has asked all its workers to organise seminars and discussions on the history of the party and the achieve-

ments of the Central government. The BJP was founded on April 6, 1980, in Mumbai when leaders of the erstwhile Jana Sangh quit the Janata Party to launch a new party. The BJP will also observe

'social justice week', beginning Thursday to the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, one of the framers of the Indian Constitution and a dalit icon, on April 14.

#### Temple vandalised...

From Page1

The local police in a statement said late on Wednesday that it has launched an investigation into the incident and was looking for two suspects.

The High Commission of India in Ottawa, Canada has strongly condemned the act of vandalism. "We have taken up with the Canadian authorities the hateful act of putting anti-India graffiti on the walls of the BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Windsor. We strongly condemn this act of vandalism," the Mission said in a tweet.

The Windsor Police Service said officers were dispatched to the temple in the 1700 block of the Northway Avenue following a report of hate-motivated vandalism on Wednesday. Officers discovgraffiti sprayed in black on an exterior wall of the building," the police said in a statement.

Through investigation, officers obtained a video that shows two suspects in the area just after 12 A.M. In the video, one suspect appears to commit the vandalism on the wall of the building while the other keeps watch, it said.

At the time of the incident, one suspect wore a black sweater, black pants with a small white logo on the left leg, and black and white high-top running shoes. The second suspect wore black pants, a sweatshirt, black shoes, and white socks. Police asked residents in the immediate vicinity of the temple to check their home surveillance or dashcam video footage for evidence of the suspects. A spokesperson for the

BAPS organisation reportedly said they were "very shocked by the anti-Indian graffiti on our mandir walls." In an email to members of the Hindu Federation in Canada, a representative of the BAPS organisation said the "incident was reported to the local police for their immediate necessary action."Images attached to the email showed slogans against India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is the fifth such incident where a temple has been defaced with such graffiti since July last year. On Shri Ram Mandir in the town of Mississauga in the GTA.

Slogans spray-painted included those attacking India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and describing the founder of the separatist Khalistan movement, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, as a "martyr." On January 30, the Gauri Shankar Mandir in Brampton was similarly desecrated. Before that, a statue of Mahatma Gandhi, located at the Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill, was defaced in July last year.

CBSE Board...

From Page1

The Board is initiating changes in the examination and assessment practices for the academic session 2023-24 to align assessment Competency Focused Education," said Joseph Emanuel, Director, CBSE that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has (Academics). "Therefore, in the forth-

coming session a greater number of Competency Based Questions or questions that assess application of concepts in real-life situations will be part of the question paper," he added. In Class 10, 50 per cent ques-

tions will be competency-based in the form of MCQs, casebased questions, source-based integrated questions or any other type. The weightage for such questions in the last academic session was 40 per cent. The objective questions will now necessarily be MCQs with 20 per cent weightage.

questions has been reduced to

30 per cent from 40 per cent last

year. Similarly, in Class 12, 40

per cent of the questions will be

of MCQs, case-cased questions, source-based integrated questions or any other type. The weightage for such questions in the last academic session was 30 per cent. In Class 12, too, the objective questions will now necessarily be MCQs with 20 per cent weightage. The weightage for short answer and long answer type questions has been reduced to 40 per cent from 50 per cent last year. The NCF, which is being drafted according to the NEP, also proposes doing away with the current practice of dividing streams into science, arts or humanities and commerce for Class 11 According to Education

Ministry officials, the draft which is in the final stages will be put in public domain soon was last revised in 2005.

drafted according to the new answer and long answer type NEP, also notes there are two major aspects that cause fear of mathematics -- the nature of the subject and how it is being taught and how it is being percompetency focused in the form ceived in society.

# Revoke visa freeze on two...

From Page1

The Hindu newspaper's representative

ties. From that perspective, we don't see any difficulties in doing reporting (by the Chinese journalists)."

"With regard to Indian journalists working in China, we would hope that Chinese authorities would facilitate their continued presence and reporting from China," Bagchi said. 'We are in touch with

Chinese authorities in this regard," he said. The Chinese action was reported on Tuesday and sources said China took this step after India reportedly asked a Chinese journalist to leave the country.

The move followed the

Jain may tamper

with evidence,

bail denied: HC

From Page1

Justice Dinesh Kumar

Sharma directed the investi-

gating agency to file its

response within two weeks on

Sisodia's plea which claimed he

is "totally innocent" and a "vic-

tim of a political witch-hunt",

and asked the agency to state its

stand. The High Court will

next take up Sisodia's appeal on

Kumar Sharma held that he is

an influential person and can-

not be said to have satisfied the

twin conditions for bail under

PMLA. "The simple fact is the

CBI has filed a case of

Disproportionate Assets (DA).

The present court cannot go

into validity of these proceed-

ings. Facts show that certain

prima facie case. The broad

probabilities indicate that the

companies associated to him

are controlled and managed by

The court has to see the

DAs were masked.

In Jain's case Justice Dinesh

April 20.

China has sought reciprocal measures from India for the

Ananth Krishnan and Anupam Mishra of Prasar Bharti were visiting India for personal reasons when they were informed by Chinese officials not to return there as their visas were frozen.

Reacting to the development, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Arindam Bagchi said here on Thursday, 'There are Chinese journalists who have valid Indian visas to undertake journalistic activi-

Indian side informing a New Delhi-based correspondent of State-run Xinhua news agency last month that his Indian visa would not be renewed. The Xinhua correspondent was March 31 and has since gone back, sources said. Meanwhile,

facilitation of its journalists even as it defended its recent move to freeze the visas of the two Indian correspondents.

Different reasons were given for the decision to ask the Xinhua correspondent to return to China, with some people saying it was done because he had been in India for too long - having done a stint of about six years - and others saying it was because he had indulged in activities beyond his journalistic brief. The two remaining Indian

journalists in Beijing – KJM Varma of Press Trust of India (PTI) and Sutirtho Patranobis of The Hindustan Times were told by officials of China's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday that they could stay on for now. It was also learnt the remaining Indian journalists were not expected to be allowed back into China if they leave the country.

Reports indicated there were complaints from both sides about the handling of issues related to journalists. Sources said it was "factually incorrect" to suggest that India's actions triggered a response from Chinese authorities. To be sure, Indian journalists posted in China have managed to extend their visas after meeting cials before the process.

The Hindu's correspon-

dent was stopped at the airport and questioned by Chinese authorities for almost 30 minutes while he was returning to India on March 31, the people added.

A few years ago, there were six Indian journalists working in Beijing but this number subsequently came down to four. Over the past few years, a handful of Indian journalists have also been given fellowships by Chinese authorities that allowed them to live in China and report for their

media organisations. The number of Chinese journalists in India, all working for State-run organisations, was at a high of 14 about seven years ago. In July 2016, India expelled three journalists from Xinhua, including the organisation's bureau chiefs in New Delhi and Mumbai, after they came under the "adverse attention of security agencies" for allegedly indulging in activities beyond their journalistic

Since then, the number of Chinese journalists in India has continued to come down. The visa of another Chinese journalist working in India was not renewed in 2021.

Several of them left India during the Covid-19 pandemic and their organisations did not post anyone to replace only one Chinese journalist is

#### Scindia-Ramesh spat... Now, Delhiites...

From Page1 Scindia also posted excerpts from Jawaharlal Nehru's "Glimpses of World History" which read, "Thus they (Marathas) had practically inherited the Delhi Empire. The Marathas remained to

challenge British supremacy. But the Maratha power went to pieces after the death of Mahadji Scindia."

"The Marathas defeated the British in the South in 1782. In the north, Scindia of Gwalior was dominant and controlled the poor hapless Emperor of Delhi," another excerpt cited by Scindia read.

Tagging his tweets, Ramesh retorted, "Pick up any history book and all historians are unanimous on the issue of betraval of Rani Jhansi in 1857." 'Your new god Savarkar has also mentioned Scindia's betrayal of Rani Laxmibai, Tatya Tope and others in his book," he said, asking Scindia to "read history". Ramesh also tagged a tweet

which showed an old video of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in which he had said that the Scindias had helped the British and betrayed Rani Slamming Ramesh, Scindia

said, "Ever read the book 'Operation Red Lotus' written by Parag Tope, a descendant of the brave martyr Tatya Tope of 1857: It will be known how we Marathas - Scindia, Peshwa and Newalkar of Jhansi were together against the British. Marathas are still one. Please stop this 'divisive' politics."

The LG also directed officials to bring the entire area in all sub-registrar offices under the surveillance of CCTV cameras, the feed of which will be brought directly to the Central

Command & Control Centre.

From Page1

Sources in the Revenue Department said that the new technology will interconnect all 22 sub-registrar offices. The entire data will be available online and residents can take appointments at any of these offices or just walk in according to their convenience to get their work done.

A sub-registrar office on an average takes care of registrations of around 32 different documents, including the sale deeds, rent agreements, wills, and power of attorney. Further, the issuance of NOCs by the Revenue Department regarding status of a particular land will also be made online in a faceless module, thereby eliminating any human interface.

According to officials, the national Capital is also going to have the country's first Online Complaint Information Management System (OCIMS), which would enable Delhiites to lodge complaints of corruption electronically. Officials informed the LG that, as per his direction, the OCIMS is being developed by NIC for the first time in country.

The portal will allow complainants to upload photographs, videos, audio clips as evidence. Once the online system is ready, no physical complaints will be accepted, they

The learned Special Judge's for feedback from stakeholders order (rejecting bail to Jain) Laxmibai. and the new system will be does not have any perversity. implemented from the 2024 Order is well reasoned," the High Court said. academic session. The NCF Jain is accused of having The NCF, which is being laundered money through four The weightage for short

him.

companies allegedly linked to him. Jain has been behind bars since May 2022 when he was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The trial court had rejected his bail plea on November 17, 2022.

added..

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# DELHI CELEBRATES HANUMAN JAYANTI WITH FERVOUR







**HC** issues notice to CBI on Sisodia's bail plea

The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued notice to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the bail plea of former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia in connection with the alleged irregularities in framing and implementing the now-scrapped 2021-22 Delhi liquor excise policy. Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma directed the investigating agency to file its response within two weeks on Sisodia's plea which claimed he is "totally innocent" and a "victim of political witch-hunt", and asked the agency to state its stand. The high court will next take up Sisodia's appeal on

April 20.
"Issue notice. Let reply be filed positively within two weeks. Copy to be given to the other side as well," the Court ordered.

Before the high court, senior advocates Dayan Krishnan and Mohit Mathur, appearing for Sisodia, challenged the trial court's decision and pointed out the other accused in the case were either not arrested or have been granted bail. "This is a plea for



me is granted bail," Krishnan submitted. Lawyer Anupam S Sharma appeared for the CBI and sought time from the court to file a reply.

The court granted two weeks to the probe agency to file its response. In his plea filed before the court, Sisodia said there is no material to show his involvement in the offences alleged in the FIR and he has never received or ever gained any undue advantage.

gained any undue advantage.

"The Applicant is totally innocent, who is a highly respected citizen and he has highest respect for the law. The Applicant is a victim of political witch-hunt, which has led to his arrest by the Respondent on account of ulterior motive. on account of ulterior motive ments of Gov to drag the reputation of the Delhi," it said.

Applicant through the mud," said the plea.

The petition said the excise policy was the "collective responsibility" of the Cabinet and it was implemented after being drafted by the excise department. It was duly approved and Sisodia cannot be held criminally liable for the collective decision of the Cabinet, the excise department, finance department, planning department, the law department and the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

The GoM was only tasked with giving its report and suggestion to the cabinet and the policy had to be ultimately accepted by the Cabinet and various departments of Govt. Of NCT of

## Gautam Buddh Nagar admin to crack down on defaulting real estate firms

The Gautam Buddh Nagar district administration has said it will launch a crackdown on real estate defaulters from Friday, noting that over Rs 500 crore are to be recovered from developers against whom the Uttar Pradesh real estate authority has issued notices.
District Magistrate Manish

Kumar Verma, who took charge last month, said "munaadi" (beat of drum) will be carried out against the builders over the next two days for the recovery of dues towards the Uttar Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority (UP RERA).

After this, the defaulters would be further "named and shamed" and coercive action including attachment and auction of their properties -will follow in accordance with the law, Verma told reporters.

According to officials, the total amount of dues for which recovery certificates (RCs) have been issued is over Rs 1,700 crore but the "recoverable" amount is Rs 503 crore since seven to eight builders have gone for insolvency through the National Company Law Tribunal (NOLT) Tribunal (NCLT).

There are over 1,700 RCs and the amount of recoverable

dues is more than Rs 500 crore. We are currently not working on the RCs which are under litigation or have been stayed by some court. We have details of all defaulter builders and take

He said the administration has already taken action in some cases, sealed properties of defaulters and will now investigate their cases afresh, attach the properties and auction their assets to recover the dues. "Our ultimate objective is to swiftly bring back the hard-earned money of the common man which has been stuck with the builder. This whole plan of action is to increase pressure on the defaulters and they return the money of the common man soon," the IAS

action for recovery, starting

with 'munaadi' against them,"

officer said. He said there are over 100 builders who are defaulters - 28 in Sadar tehsil and 73 in Dadri tehsil. In a stern message to defaulters, DM Verma said, 'The UP RERA has issued the RCs after due hearings and there is no way to escape it. The district administration appeals the defaulters to return the

money of common man or else

we are going to take strict action in future." Additional DM (finance and revenue) Vandita Srivastava said these RCs are from UP RERA only and not the local Noida Authority or the Greater Noida Authority. "Ever since the RERA was formed in May 2018, the district administration has been getting 150 to 200 RCs on an average every month. Till date, the total number of RCs received are 4,571, totaling around Rs 1,728 crore,"

#### Kejriwal directs MCD to form landfill management action plan within 15 days



**STAFF REPORTER** NEW DELHI

Directing the civic body to form an action plan on landfill management within 15 days, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday issued strict instructions to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to expedite the progress of clearing landfills in the city. Kejriwal reviewed the education system in MCD schools on Thursday and said they will be upgraded on the lines of Delhi government schools in the next five years.

During the reviewing of the status of the Okhla, Bhalswa, and Ghazipur landfills, Kejriwal expressed concern over the slow pace of progress. The meeting was attended by Delhi PWD Minister Atishi, Urban Development Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj, MCD Mayor Dr

Shelly Oberoi, MCD Dy Mayor Aaley Mohd Iqbal, MCD Leader of the House Mukesh Goyal, MCD Commissioner and other concerned officials.

During the meeting, the officials apprised the CM about the real-time status of all three landfills. While the garbage processing target for the Okhla Landfill was to be increased to 10,000 MT per day by April 1, the MCD has fallen short of it due to various factors. The officials said that due to the unseasonal rain spells and the delay in operationalization of the construction and demolition (C&D) waste plant, the MCD has failed to meet its target at Okhla and is processing 5000-6000 MT of waste. The CM also noted that about 1,000 MT of construction waste reaches the landfill every day, however, it has no capacity to treat

#### DU students hold rally for | House SC/ST welfare panel justice for IP College harassment victims

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

 $S^{\rm everal\,Delhi\,University\,stu-}_{\rm dents\,\,held\,\,a\,\,rally\,\,at\,\,the}$ north campus on Thursday demanding justice for victims of alleged harassment during a cultural festival at the Indraprastha College for Women last week. The rally was called by the Left-backed All India Students Association (AISA). Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS) activists also participated in the Rally.

The protesting students demanded the resignation of the Indraprastha College for Women principal Poonam Kumria. They said the rally was taken out to protest the "apathetic" IPCW and DU administrations which have "collud-



ed to repress the movement of women students instead of taking immediate action in the matter".

"AISA along with more than 300 students marched the length of north campus demanding justice to IPCW," said Delhi\_AISA President Abhigyan. The protesting students submitted a memoran-dum to the DU Vice-Chancellor demanding the dismissal of the IPCW principal.

# requests LG to fill 2K reserved vacancies in Delhi Police

STAFF REPORTER

The Delhi Assembly's L Committee on Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has requested Lt Governor VK Saxena to take immediate steps to fill over 2,000 backlog vacancies reserved for these communities in the Delhi Police.

Vishesh Ravi, the chairman of the panel, said in a letter to Saxena that a total 2,078 posts reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Delhi Police have been lying vacant for a long time. "This is not only against the principles of equality and social justice enshrined in our Constitution, but it also undermines efforts for inclusive and diverse representation in our law enforcement agencies," Ravi wrote.

The Committee on Welfare of SC/STs requested data from the Delhi Police regarding backlogs of SC/ST vacancies.

The data provided by the Delhi Police revealed a total of 2078 vacant positions across various categories: 151 Sub-Inspector positions, 22 Assistant Sub-Inspector positions, 383 Head Constable positions, 1452 Constable positions, and 70 Multi-Tasking Staff positions. This backlog has led to qualified SC/ST candidates being deprived of job opportunities that they deserve

# against schoolteachers' foreign training

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has moved the Supreme Court challenging the decision of Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) VK Saxena to prohibit Government schoolteachers from receiving foreign training in the future.

The plea was mentioned before a Bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud by Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi and is listed for hearing on April 14. The issue triggered a war of words between the LG's office and the Government, with the AAP dispensation accusing Saxena of "interfering" in the government's work.



Singhvi, appearing for the AAP Government, mentioned the matter before a Bench headed by Chandrachud seeking an urgent hearing.

This is concerning the teacher training program," said Dr Singhvi, and sought urgent hearing in the matter.
"We will hear this on

April 14, 2023," the CJI Chandrachud said.

Since October last year, the LG and the AAP Government have been involved in a tussle regarding the training of government schoolteachers in foreign coun-As per the Delhi Government, the LG was halt-

Delhi Govt moves SC challenging LG's call

ing the process of sending teachers for training by not replying to the proposal. On January 16, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had

led Ministers, MLAs and workers of AAP to the LG's residence demanding immediate approval of the Government's proposal to send 30 teachers to Finland for training.

On March 4, 2023, the the LG finally approved the proposal. The L-G recently had

names for the Finland programme but mandated against such exercises in future. The LG, in its decision, has increased the number of primary in-charges, who were to proceed to Finland for training, from 52 to 87, to ensure equal representation of primary in-charges from all 29 administrative zones of the education

department. "Considering that there are about 450 schools of the Directorate of Education having primary classes, it will only be in the fitness of things that the benefits of the learning from the training are extended, to all the students of primary classes simultaneously," the LG's directions said.

## HC upholds man's conviction, one year sentence for voyeurism

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has I observed that if a man peeps inside the washroom when a woman is taking bath, it will amount to invasion of her privacy and also attract the offence of voyeurism. The high court said the man's act of peeping inside the bathroom with sexual intent whenever the victim used to take bath, and to pass vulgar remarks, comments and gestures against her were not trivial and ill-mannered behaviour but amounted to breach of privacy of the woman and will attract criminality as envisaged under Section 354C (voyeurism) of the Indian Penal

Code (IPC). Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma upheld the man's conviction and one year sentence for the offence of voyeurism but acquitted him under the



Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), noting that the woman was not a minor at the time of the incident in 2014. Justice Sharma said that taking bath in a bathroom by any person, whether a male or a female, is essentially a "private act" as it is taking place inside the four walls of the bathroom.

"It cannot be denied that a woman taking bath inside a closed bathroom will reasonably expect that her privacy was not invaded and she was not being seen or watched by any-

walls behind a curtain. The act of a perpetrator peeping inside the said bathroom will certainly be regarded as invasion of her privacy," the court said in its 18 pages order. The high court said the man's act of peeping inside the bathroom with sexual intent whenever the victim used to take bath, and to pass vulgar remarks, comments and gestures against her were not trivial and ill-mannered behaviour but amounted to breach of privacy of the woman and will

attract criminality as envis-

(voyeurism) of the Indian Penal

The objective behind introducing the present offence (voyeurism) was to curb sexual crime against women and to protect their privacy and sexual integrity. The law has to ensure that all citizens are able to enjoy a peaceful life with peace of mind having assurance that their privacy is respected and such kind of trespass and mischief will attract the criminality of voyeuristic behavior of the perpetrator of the crime. "The sexual integrity of every person has to be respected and any violation of the same should be dealt with a stern hand," the judge said.

The high court said the argument of the man's counsel that the act of taking bath by the victim in the present case, instead of being a 'private act'

became a 'public act' is "totally meritless'

"Merely because a structure which is being used as bathroom by a woman does not have a door but only a curtain and temporary walls and it is situated outside her house does not make it a public place and the contention that the act of taking bath by the victim became a 'public act' instead of being a 'private act' for the said reason has to be outrightly rejected," the high court said. The court underlined it will be irrational to say that a woman taking a bath in a washroom inside her house is a private act and bathing in a covered bathroom outside her house is a public act. "This court therefore holds that the bathroom in question in this case was not a public place and the act of taking bath therein was a 'private

The high court's order came on an appeal filed by the man challenging his conviction and sentence in a case in which the woman lodged an FIR that he used to look at her with sexual intent and whenever she used to take bath, he would peep inside the bathroom which was built outside her

The man's counsel argued the bathroom used by the victim being situated at a common public place cannot be termed as a 'private area' but a 'public place and so the act of bathing at such 'public place' cannot be called a 'private act'. He argued in case the court held a contrary view, several thousands of people can be prosecuted merely for their presence at public places such as water parks, swimming pools, lakes, ponds or even while taking bath in rivers at religious places.

#### **Delhi to have 100 EV** charging stations at lowest cost in world

STAFF REPORTER ■



Delhi will soon have 100 worldclass EV charging

stations which will provide the charging facility to consumers at the lowest rate in the world. Delhi Power Minister Atishi on Thursday reviewed the project along with the power department officials

During the meeting, Atishi directed the officials of the power department and Delhi Transco Limited to proactively address the issues occurring in the installation of EV charging stations and ensure that 50 of them are ready by the end of April and 100 by the end of July. She directed the officials to expedite the work and com-

She further said that the efforts of the Kejriwal government have made

direction, the government is establishing 100 EV charging stations across the city to strengthen Delhi's EV charging infrastructure. "With this project, there would be an excellent and convenient EV charging infra-

Delhi emerge as the electric vehicle (EV) capital of the

country in recent years. In this

structure in every part of the city, where the cost of charging per unit will be the lowest not only in the country but also in the world. People will have to spend less than Rs 3 per unit

# **Opp parties take out Tiranga yatra, blames Centre for Parl washout**

Opposition parties, including the Congress, TMC, BRS and Samajwadi Party, came together in a show of unity on Thursday and accused the Modi Government of getting the second half of the budget session washed out, while asserting that if this attitude continues, the country will move towards "dictatorship". With Tricolours in their

hands, several Opposition MPs marched from Parliament to Vijay Chowk and then representatives of 19 parties held a Press conference at the Constitution Club where Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and other leaders resolved to take the Opposition unity further.

Kharge accused the Narendra Modi government of not walking the talk on democratic principles and causing disruptions in Parliament to divert attention from the Opposition's demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the Adani issue.

In a boost to Opposition unity, the Trinamool Congress, Bharat Rashtra Samithi, the Aam Aadmi Party and the Samajwadi Party, which had been blowing hot and cold on sharing stage with the Congress on earlier occasions, participated in the march and the presser to give a joint call against the government on issues such as the Adani matter, price rise and alleged attack on democracy. Leaders of parties such as

the CPI, CPI(M), RJD, IUML,



Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge with fellow Opposition MPs takes out a 'Tiranga March' towards Vijay Chowk, on the last day of the Budget Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Thursday.

JD(U), among others attended the march and the press con-

The budget of Rs 50-lakh crore was passed in just 12 minutes, but they (BJP) always alleged that the opposition parties have no interest and they kept disturbing the House. The disturbance was created by the ruling party.
"Whenever we made a

demand or gave a notice, we were not allowed to speak. This has happened for the first time in my public life of 52 years and never has such a thing happened earlier," Kharge said in a Press conference joined by all the Opposition parties represnetatives.

Asked if Rahul Gandhi was the prime challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, DMK's T R Baalu

and after the Bharat Jodo Yatra it is afraid of Rahul Gandhi. "It was because of the government's hegemonic attitude they disrupted the House. First time treasury benches disrupted

proceedings," he said, adding

that all issues would be dis-

cussed going forward and Opposition strengthened. BRS MP K Keshava Rao said the parties on the podium had "distance and differences" between them but were now

coming together. "You have right before you all the Opposition parties who maintained some distance and had differences but today you are seeing how it is evolving. We are becoming so strong that all the efforts to divide us have

We are today united right

before you on the ground," he

"What happens tomorrow please let us leave it because we are working to see how we come together," he said.

To a query on the Opposition's leadership issue, Rao said, "Why are you are always obsessed with the leadership issue, a nation will certainly be led by a person, led by a combination of ideologies

and the programmes. "What we are trying to do is to see that kind of programme is on the board that we are all on the same page."

AAP's Sanjay Singh said the message behind Rahul Gandhi's disqualification was clear that one can attack the Centre but not Adani "for whom the government was

# RS adjourned sine die amid Cong-Dhankhar spat on Patil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

The Rajya Sabha was adjourned sine die on Thursday, ending the four-week-long disruption-ridden second leg of the Budget Session where Treasury and Opposition members locked horns over Rahul Gandhi's "democracy under attack" remark and the Adani issue. The was adjourned but

not before yet another round of differences between the Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Congress led Opposition over the extension of suspension of Congress MP Rajani Ashokrao Patil. Patil was suspended for filming proceedings

Dhankhar said after taking inputs from the privileges committee which is investigating the matter, the committee has sought an extension of time till the first week of the Monsoon session to complete the inves-

Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge raised the issue of Patil calling it "gross parliamentary misdemeanour" and a "blatant violation" of the rules of procedure. Criticising the extension of suspension in a letter to Dhankhar, Kharge said meting out such a "disgraceful treatment" to Patil is a "gross insult" to a devoted woman parlia-

"In such a situation, I cannot help myself but to place on

record in strongest possible terms my grave displeasure and anguish, which is shared by my party colleagues as well as my other colleagues of 19 like minded opposition parties in both Houses of Parliament, over this gross parliamentary misdemeanour," Kharge said in his second letter to Dhankar for the consecutive day. A day earlier he had expressed his dismay over a ruling by the Chairman on his point order pertaining to Rahul Gandhi

Before that, the DMK's Tiruchi Siva and the Congress' Shaktisinh Gohil sought clarity over the implications of Dhankhar's Wednesday decision to reject Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge's objection to Rajya Sabha discussing a statement of Rahul Gandhi.

Amid protest by opposition members over the suspension issue. Dhankhar read out his valedictory remarks, stating that the 259th session of Rajya

monetary policy, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta

Das said the expectation of a

record rabi harvest bodes well

for easing of food price pres-

dence of a correction in wheat

prices in March on supply

side interventions by the

Government. The impact of

the recent unseasonal rains in

some parts of the country,

however, needs to be

watched," the Governor said.

inclement weather in the last

two weeks, there has been

some damage to the wheat

crop. But the production loss

will be minimal. We are hope-

ful of achieving the overall

production target of 112.2 million tonne," Chopra said.

There are reports of crop

damage in 16 districts of

Punjab and some parts of Haryana, but a final estimate

on the extent of damage has

not been worked out yet.

However, a marginal produc-

tion loss is being anticipated,

production loss in Punjab

and Haryana, there is a like-

lihood that particular loss

will be offset by the yield gain

in late-sown varieties to be

achieved because of lower

temperature in Uttar Pradesh

and Bihar, he said.

While there may be some

"Because of the

"There is already evi-

Sabha was closing "albeit on a note of concern". He said it was worrisome and alarming that the "paramountcy of debate, dialogue, deliberation and discussion in Parliament has yielded to disruption and distur-

The productivity of the first part of the Budget Session was 56.3 per cent. For the second part it plummeted to an abysmal 6.4 per cent, Dhankhar

"Cumulatively, the House

productivity was only 24.4 per cent," he said adding, Disruptions claimed 103 hours and 30 minutes of its time." In the forenoon, the House was adjourned following uproarious scenes with the opposition demanding a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into the Adani issue, while BJP members demanded Rahul Gandhi's apology for his democracy remarks made abroad and said they would not allow "Bharat mata" to be

#### LS session ends even as Opp continues to press for JPC on Adani share issue

The Lok Sabha's Budget Session – the second leg ended as scheduled on Thursday with Speaker Om Birla announcing that the House had been adjourned sine die (for an indefinite period) as Opposition MPs kept up their protest for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani share manipulation issue.

The second-part of the Budget Session was marred from the beginning with Opposition parties, particularly the Congress, and the ruling BJP running on the confrontation path, leading to the constant derailment of the proceedings. For days together, the House was adjourned without transacting any key business.

While the Opposition had been unrelenting in its demand for a JPC, the Treasury Benches were demanding an apology from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his democracy is under attack remarks in London.

Congress member Rahul Gandhi was disqualified from the House during the session after he was convicted by a court in Gujarat in a criminal



Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die amidst continuing 'black-dress protest' by the and other Opposition members. The protest began as soon as the House met for the day and proceedings were adjourned in six minutes.

Opposition members from the Congress and the DMK came to the well raising slogans and carrying placards with their demand for a JPC probe into allegations of fraud

against the Adani Group.
"You have lowered the dignity of the House. This behaviour is not good for parliamentary system and the country," the speaker told the opposition MPs.

This House is always for high level of debate and discussions. But you systematically disrupt the proceedings

which is not good," he added. Such behaviour, he said, is against the parliamentary system and not good for the House or the country.

"Dignity of the House has to be maintained... The House is for debate and discussions. I always give you enough opportunities to speak," he

Congress and DMK MPs, mostly dressed in black, ignored the speaker's pleas and continued their protests. After completing his customary valedictory speech, Birla announced the adjournment of the House sine die.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several ministers, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, were present in the House. Most BJP members were wearing saffron scarves to coincide with the foundation day of the party.

#### SC asks Fin Min to reply to plea on mechanism for unclaimed money in a/cs PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Finance Ministry to file its response in three weeks to a PIL seeking directions to create a centralised database providing information about bank accounts, Insurance, deposits, post office funds lying in accounts held by those who are no longer alive. The PIL, filed by noted journalist Sucheta Dalal, also sought a direction to set up a mechanism to inform the legal heirs of deceased depositors about the unclaimed deposits lying dormant in bank accounts.

"While the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has filed its counter affidavit, the counsel for the Union of India submits that the Ministry of Finance may be granted some time to file its counter affidavit. The counter affidavit (response) be filed within three weeks," a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala said. The top court then listed the PIL for further hearing on April

The court had earlier issued notices to the two union ministries, market regulator SEBI (Securities and Exchange

Board of India) and the RBI (Reserve Bank of India). The plea has also sought a direction to establish a procedure that eliminates unnecessary litigation while dealing with claims of legal heirs qua bank deposits, insurance, post office

The plea said that the Depositors' Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF) had Rs 39,264.25 crore at the end of March 2021, up from Rs 33,114 crore on 31 March, 2020 and a sharp rise from Rs 18,381 crore at the end of March 2019. Further the amount lying with the Investor Education Protection Fund, started at Rs 400 crore in 1999, was 10 times higher at Rs 4,100 crore at the end of March 2020, the plea said.

The petition stated there is an urgent need to develop a centralised online database under the control of RBI that will provide information about the deceased account holder including such details as the name, address and last date of transaction by the deceased account holder. Further, it should be mandatory for banks to inform the RBI about the inoperative or dormant bank accounts. This exercise should be repeated after an interval of 9-12 months.

## **Centre to take call on relaxing quality norms** | High levels of PM 2.5 lowers antibody response to Covid jabs for wheat from Punjab, Hry post crop loss



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Modi Government is hopeful of achieving a wheat procurement target of 34.2 million tonne as India likely to harvest a record wheat output. The Centre is expected to take a call soon on relaxing quality norms for buying in Punjab and Haryana in view of crop damage due to untimely rains.

According to reports, wheat quality impacted due to inclement weather. Addressing a press conference, Union Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said the Government is hopeful of a record wheat output of 112.2 million tonne in 2022-23 crop year ending June, despite inclement weather conditions in some parts of the country affecting grain quality. The likely production loss due to unseasonal rains in Punjab and Haryana will be offset by yield gains expected in other wheat producing States because of lower tempera-ture, he said. Chopra said the Centre has already relaxed quality norms for wheat procurement in Madhya Pradesh to ensure that farmers do not suffer because of vagaries of weather and they get mini-

mum support price (MSP). Earlier in the day while

## 'Import of milk products will hit dairy sector revival'

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president and for-mer Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on Thursday opposed any Government plan to import milk products such as butter and ghee, contending that it would impede the revival of the dairy sector. In a letter to Parshottam Rupala, the Minister for

Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Pawar referred to media reports about the government's "intention" to import dairy products such as butter and ghee. After 2011, India is mulling to import dairy products amid shortage of milk production.

Meanwhile, the ministry in a statement said that to meet the growing demand and considering the fact that the supply of milk in the ensuing summer season being a lean season may be less, there were demands from several dairy cooperatives for import of conserved dairy commodities - milk fat and powder. "In case the situation warrants, the import may be done to help ease out the situation for the dairy coopera-tives to meet the summer demands. However, in that case also it will be ensured that it is routed only through National Dairy Board's Development Board's (NDDB) and the needy Unions may be given the stocks at the market price after proper assessment. This

will ensure that the market is

not distorted and interests of

our dairy farmer is protected,

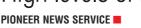


which is paramount and central to any decision taken by the Government," the ministry said.

In the letter, Pawar said that any decision by the central government in this regard will be totally unacceptable because the import of these products will directly affect the income of the domestic milk producers.

He said the dairy farmers have recently come out of the unprecedented Covid crisis and such a decision will severely impede the sector's revival process. "My concern may please be heeded. I shall be happy if the matter is looked into and the ministry deters itself from taking any decision to import the milk products," Pawar said.

However, there has been some demand and supply gap observed in the dairy sectorprimarily due to increased demand for nutritious, safe and hygienic milk and milk products post Covid pan-demic. With this background, NDDB along with the Government has been mon-itoring the demand-supply situation Since the process of situation. Since the process of import takes time, the necessary back end processes are being put in place to manage the situation in case of any eventuality, the Ministry said.



Air pollution for long has been linked to adverse health outcomes, including lung cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and diabetes. Now, a study has linked higher levels of toxic particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and black carbon to lower antibody responses to Covid-19 vaccines.

The findings are published in the journal 'Environmental Health Perspectives'. Giving details, the researchers of the study said that exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and blank carbon (BC) was associ-



ated with about a 10 per cent fall in IgM and IgG antibody responses in people without prior infection.

ISGlobal researcher Manolis Kogevinas and his team showed an association between pre-pandemic exposure to air pollution and a higher risk of developing severe Covid-19. "Air pollutants have

responses," says Kogevinas, "so in this study we wished to determine whether air pollution also affects antibody

Kogevinas and his colleagues had analysed data from 927 participants of the GCAT Genomes for Life cohort (aged

responses to COVID-19 vac-

40 to 65 years), who answered questionnaires and gave blood samples in the summer of 2020 (right after the first lockdown) and in the spring of 2021 (after the start of Covid-19 vaccina-

All had received one or two doses of the main COVID-19 vaccines administered in Spain (made by AstraZeneca, Pfizer or Moderna). The research team measured IgM, IgG and IgA antibodies to five viral antigens (three of them on the Spike protein contained in the vaccine). Exposure to fine particulate matter, black carbon, nitrogen dioxide and ozone was estimated for each participant based on his or her address before the pandemic.

#### India shares Japan's vision for free, open, rules-based Indo-Pacific, says Rajnath



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

India shares Japan's vision for a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Thursday and stressed that both the countries must continue to expand the scope of their bilateral cooperation.

This message was conveyed by him during a meeting with Japan's Vice Minister

of Defence for International Affairs Oka Masami. He is currently on a visit to India primarily to attend the seventh Defence Policy Dialogue.

The dialogue took place on Wednesday over two weeks after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited India during which he described the country as an "indispensable partner" of Japan to achieve the ambitious goal of peace, pros-perity and stability in the Indo-

Pacific region.

#### 'Talks on UN instrument on sustainable use of marine diversity over'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

Minister for External Affairs S Jaishankar said here on Thursday the fifth United Nations(ÚN) intergovernmental conference on legally binding instrument on sustainable use of marine biological diversity under the global body's convention on law of the sea has concluded its negotiations.

Giving this information in the Rajya Sabha while replying to a question, he said the primary intent of the agreement is conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity occurring in the high seas. There have been growing concerns by many countries over China's illegal fishing in the

high seas.

The new instrument has legal provisions to significantly enhance the conservation and sustainable use of the high seas



Intergovernmental Conference

in June, Jaishankar said, adding

it will enter into force 120 days

after the 60th instrument of rat-

ification is received.

"The 5th UN Intergovernmental Conference on the international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity under the UN Convention on Law of the Sea has concluded the negotiations on March 4," Jaishankar said.

BENGAL OPP SEEKS CENTRAL FORCES FOR RURAL POLLS AFTER COPS FAIL TO CONTROL RAM NAVAMI CLASHES

# Hanuman Jayanti passes off peacefully

Enthused by peaceful Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in presence of paramilitary forces, Bengal Opposition parties have demanded deployment of central forces in the coming panchayat elections.

"While the State police was used to control the Ramnavami processions we saw massive communal violence in Howrah, Rishra and Dalkhola in North Bengal ... but all the mischief mongers evaporated in thin air when central forces were deployed following Calcutta High Court orders ... this goes on to buttress our argument for central forces in the panchayat elections," State BJP leader Samik Bhattacharya said.

His views were seconded by Left leaders like Sujan Chakrabarty who cited the large scale violence in 2018 rural elections that left as many as a hun-



Devotees offer prayers to Lord Hanuman on the occasion of 'Hanuman Jayanti', in

his demand for central forces. "The scam-tainted Trinamool Congress has no chance of winning the elections save for a few areas ... the entire population including the youth of the State have made up their mind to throw out a corrupt party like the TMC ... but they will have to tolerate this regime for another three years ... till then they can at least give vent their wishes in panchayat polls and the general elections.
"The only thing is that they

large majority of rural Bengal will have to be given chance to vote ... and for that there is supreme need of paramilitary forces," Chakrabarty said.

The rural polls are likely to be declared in a few weeks time. Bengal has about 65,000 voting centres requiring more than 1.25 lakh police men and about 3 lakh polling personnel. This in addition to about 50,000 armed men for the quick response teams. In that case the

Bengal Government can requisition security forces from the neighouring states or it can request the Centre for deployment of paramilitary forces. "An irresponsible opposi-

tion — marked by an unholy alliance of BJP, Left and the Congress — which is out to malign the government is now trying to take advantage of the situations created by the central agencies by bringing in central "But the name of our leader

is Mamata Banerjee who has fought her way up and will continue to do so with the help of the common people of Bengal who love her no end," said Riju Dutta a State TMC spokesperson adding, the State Government had adequate number of police personnel and if the State Election Commission asked for security forces then the Government will have no problem providing them. Meanwhile, the

Hanuman Jayanti was celebrated in several parts of Bengal with much fanfare but with no violence when reports last came

Though there was some agitation at Bansberia in Hooghly district when the police stopped BJP MP Locket Chatteriee from visiting the place. Chatterjee resorted to an hour-long sit-in demonstration against alleged police excesses before withdrawing. Elsewhere State Opposition

Leader Suvendu Adhikari took part in Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in East Midnapore and Howrah where he congratulated the people for taking part in celebrations.

Earlier, in the wake of communal disturbances at Shibpur in Howrah and Rishra in Hooghly district the Calcutta High Court had directed State Government to deploy central forces and clamp prohibitory

chikungunya which can leave

its impact on the patients for

"It can cause lifelong dis-

Stating that the WHO

warning should come as a

wakeup call, Dr Kavita Singh,

Director, Drugs for Neglected

Diseases initiative (DNDi

South Asia) lamented that com-

pared to the funds and research

carried out on Covid-19 during

the past two years, only a frac-

tion of that has been invested

to develop dengue vaccine and

drugs, despite the disease being

around for decades and wreak-

ing havoc every year across

months and even years.

ability," Alvarez warned.

# Anil joining BJP a painful, wrong move, says dad AK Antony

The decision of Anil Antony The decision of Anil Antony to join the BJP was a painful and wrong move, according to A K Antony, former's father and the senior most Congress leader in the country. "This is my first and last reaction to Anil joining the BJP I do not have any role in BJP. I do not have any role in his decision.

He has made the biggest mistake in his life and I will not answer any queries regarding his action," said Antony while speaking to reporters at Thiruvananthapuram on

Antony charged that the BJP is a threat to the unity and diversity of India as the party was working to destroy the plurality of India. "My loyalty and obeisance is always with the Nehru-Gandhi family.

CBI conducts searches

This family was always in the forefront in upholding the Constitutional values of the country. Ill continue my servility with the Nehru-Gandhi family and die as a Congressman," said the 82year-old leader.

He made it unambiguously clear that Anil was on his own and the forner does not have anything to do with him. Elsewhere in the State senior Congress leaders came out in the open condemning Anil Antony's move to cast his lot with the BJP.

"Anil's move to join the BJP would not make any impact in Kerala politics. Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not know the ground realities in Kerala. People of the State would give a befitting lesson to the Prime Minister in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll," said Ramesh Chennithala.

# Kurmi tribe continues rail, road blockade in Bengal

85 trains cancelled, hundreds of vehicles stranded amid protest for ST status

**PTI** JHARGRAM

Eighty-five trains were cancles remained stranded as different organisations of the Kurmi tribe continued their rail and road blockade in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district on Thursday, demanding ST status, officials said.

The protest started at 6 am on Tuesday with the blockade of the old National Highway 6, which connects Kolkata to Mumbai, at Khemasuli in Kharagpur Local police station area by Kudmi Samaj West Bengal, they said.

Another organisation of the community, Adivasi Kudmi Samaj, joined the protest on Wednesday, blocking the rail-way tracks at Khemasuli station in Kharagpur-Tatanagar section, and Kustaur station in Adra-Chandil section in Purulia district, they added.

Among the trains cancelled on Thursday were Howrah-Pune Duranto Express, Howrah-Jagdalpur Express, Howrah-Pune Azad Hind Express, Howrah-Ahmedabad Express, Bhubaneswar-New Howrah-Ranchi Express, Express, Howrah-Mumbai CSMT Mail



Santragachi-Rani Kamlapati Humsafar Express, the South Eastern Railway said in a statement.

Puri-New Delhi Express, Mumbai-CSMT-Howrah Duranto Express and Jagdalpur-Howrah Express were also cancelled, it said. "As a result of the agitation, a total of 158 trains have been cancelled since Wednesday," it added, Six trains were short-terminated, and Anand Vihar-Bhubaneswar Express scheduled for Friday and Yog Nagari Rishikesh-Puri Express scheduled for Sunday were also cancelled.

On Wednesday, 46 express and passenger trains were cancelled owing to the agitation. stranded on NH 6, triggering massive traffic snarls even on the adjoining roads in Paschim

Medinipur and Jhargram districts. Some of the vehicles were being diverted through Balibhasha in Jhargram to bypass the blockade, officials said.Drivers of the stranded vehicles said they were facing scarcity of food and water.

The organisation of the Kudmi community, which is classified as OBC at present, are protesting in different districts of the state, including Dakshin Dinajpur, Purulia, Jhargram and Paschim Medinipur.

Officials of the Paschim Medinipur district administration held a meeting with agitating organisations on Wednesday but failed to reach a settlement. "The blockade are met," said Tapas Mahato, a leader of Kudmi Samaj West

## Climate change helps aedes take virus to uncharted areas

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid fear of resurgence of the Covid-19 infections in various pockets of the world, the WHO has sounded the alarm that arboviruses carried by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes is spreading its wings into new territories causing spurt in cases of dengue and chikun-gunya with zika epidemics looming large.

"Climate change has played a key role in facilitating the spread of the vector mosquitoes," said Raman Velayudhan, who coordinates WHO's dengue and arbovirus initiative.

He and colleague Diana Rojas Alvarez, WHO's technical lead on chikungunya and zika, stressed the need for urgent action to rein in the spread of the mosquitos, amid fears of larger outbreaks in new areas.

Painting a scary picture where pathogens are expected to take the large number of people in its grip, the global health agency cautioned that about half of the world's population is now at risk of dengue with an estimated 100-400 million infections occurring each

Chikungunya countries have reported transWhile Zika virus disease has declined globally, to date, 89 countries have current or previous spread of Zika virus.

These diseases, that spread from mosquitoes to people, are causing an increasing number of outbreaks worldwide, with climate change, deforestation and urbanisation being some of the major risk factors, that allow mosquitoes to adapt better to new environments and spread the risk of infection geographically further, including to the European region.

'We are really at the right time to scale up the advocacy for the threat of arboviruses globally," Dr Raman Velayudhan said at a media briefing session recently.

Velayudhan said around 129 countries are at risk of dengue and it is endemic in over 100 countries. From about half a million cases in 2000, it has exponentially grown to 5.2 million in 2019.

The number of people at risk of dengue is predicted to reach 60% of the world's population by 2080 as a result of climate change, rapid urbanization and population growth. With dengue, which comes in four closely related serotypes,

people who are reinfected with severe disease. This "can lead to organ fail-

ure and death", Velayudhan

#### against customs officers warned while Rojas Alvarez talked about the ill-effects of

The CBI on Thursday said it has conducted searches against certain Customs officials, including then Superintendents and then Inspector among others in several districts of West Bengal in an on-going investigation of a case relating to cattle smuggling through Indo Bangladesh bor-

The CBI searches were conducted in Kolkata, Murshidabad, Barrackpore, Sonarpur, Nadia, South and North 24 Parganas, the CBI said. During searches, several incriminating items/documents were recovered, the agency said. This said case was registered on September



Border Security Force (BSF) and private persons on the allegations of their involvement in multi-crore scam of illegal cross-border trade of cattle. Further investigation is

## Train arson suspect brought to Kerala by road; undergoing medical examination

PTI KANNUR/KOZHIKODE

The man suspected of starting a fire onboard a train in Kerala which led to the death of three, including a toddler, was brought to the caught in Ratnagiri in

Presently he is being examined by a team of doctors at the Kozhikode Medical College, Kerala Police Chief Anil Kant told reporters. Kant said doctors from all disciplines, Thursday morning after being general medicine, and forensics are examining him. "We have Maharashtra on the previous not started questioning him.

We will begin questioning him once he is cleared for it by the medical team," he said.

Kant also said which provisions of law, including UÂPA, should be invoked against the suspect — Shahrukh Saifi behind the fire incident, would be decided after he was ques-

Date of Demand Name

दितया, दिनांक - 21.03.2023

#### DGHS asks med fraternity to avoid booze in seminars

**ARCHANA JYOTI** ■ NEW DELHI

The Director General of Health Services (DGHS), under the Union Health Ministry has advised the doctors to say 'no' to alcohol at medical conference/ workshop/ seminar/CME, apparently sending a message to the medical fraternity that it should practice what it preaches to their patients as far as consumption of liquor is concerned which is cause for rising NCDs related to heart and kidney among others in the country. In a nutshell, it asked the doctors to set an example of good habits that others can

In a circular issued to all the Medical Associations across the country, DGHS Prof. (Dr.) Atul Goel said that being health professionals, "we should follow the healthy lifestyle and it may be advised that alcohol in any form may be avoided in Medical Conference/ Workshop/ Seminar/ CME to set an example of a good habit which can be emulated by oth-

The DGHS' suggestions comes days after the National Medical Commission in a new set of guidelines said that medical students should avoid alcohol, tobacco and other substances of abuse and also refrain from indiscriminately posting patients-related information on social media. The guidelines prepared by NMC's Medical and Registration Board (EMRB) on 'professional responsibilities of medical students' state that the learners are expected to



seek treatment and counselling in case of substance abuse. The DGHS pointed out that such advice of abstaining from alcohol was given by the Union Health Ministry while referring to the fact that Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are estimated to account for 63% of all deaths in Among these, cardiovas-

cular diseases lead with 27% overall mortality cause followed by chronic respiratory diseases (11%), cancers (9%). diabetes (3%) and others (13%) as per the WHO-NCD India profile - 2018.

Referring to this, the DGHS pointed out that the rise of NCDs are driven primarily by four major risk factors including tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets.

"Alcohol use is linked to many diseases and injury conditions including liver cirrhosis, several cancers (liver larvngeal, esophageal and oropharyngeal cancers), injuries and haemorrhagic strokes. 5.1% of the global burden of disease and injury was attributable to alcohol as measured in disability adjusted life years (DALYs)," DGHS said in the

#### No 'clean chit' to police in cases of firing at accused trying to flee custody: Assam Govt

he Assam Government on ■ Thursday said that a "clean chit" has not been given to the police in cases in which the accused were killed or injured in firing while trying to escape from police custody.

However, it maintained that no one has been killed in "encounters", though there have been casualties and injuries in "police action". Responding to a question on deaths in "police encounters", Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika said in the Assembly,

police encounters. The government has repeatedly made this statement in the House. Why should we time and again put our police personnel to questioning?'

Replying on behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who also holds the Home portfolio in the State, Hazarika said, "Police can fire in selfdefence. They have not killed any

innocent person, only hard-

core criminals have been killed

in police action". The police, he

said, had to fire at the accused

when they tried to snatch weapons or escape from custody. Altogether 138 cases of such police action have been registered in Assam from May 2021 to February 2023, in which 26 persons have been killed and 120 injured. During the same period, action against 16 police personnel was initiated for lapses in these cases, the minister said.

"There could be lacunae in some cases. Clean chit has not been given to the police either. That is why we have taken action against them", Hazarika

# Day after HC order, jumbo scares Idukki

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Ari Komban, the wild tusker, who is holding the residents in Idukki district's Chinnakanal settlement colony on tender hooks for the last three months returned on Thursday to terrorise them. On Wednesday, the Chinnakanal area wore a look of festivity as the Kerala High Court on Tuesday had ordered that the pachyderm be tranquilized and translocated to Parambikulam Reserve Forest.

But by Thursday Ari Komban accompanied by a group of female elephants struck back and demolished house of George, a resident who was in the forefront of agitation demanding former's translocation. Fortunately for George, he and family members had gone to the hospital. In the melee, Ari Komban and



the roof of the house and took away the food the women in the family had cooked for The gang made a quick

retreat as forest guards and the locals turned up in big numbers bursting crackers and beating heavy drums. We just want to get rid of this public nuisance from this place," M M Mani, local MLA and former minister for power told reporters. Meanwhile the residents of Parambikulam suburbs, especially CPI-M activists

to transport the tusker to their locality. "There is no guarantee that this elephant would not attack people here.

Let them take him to some captive camp and train him," said K Babu, MLA representing Nenmara assembly constituency under which comes Parambikulam reserve. He said there were more than 3,000 people staying in the suburb of Parambikulam.

"This include tribals as well as workers of the Parambikulam-Aliyar Project, a river water sgaring system between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. We do not want to put their lives in risk," said Babu of the CPI-M in his letter to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The mission to translocate angry young elephant is all set to begin after Easter Sunday.

#### PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the belowmentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

	No.		Date of Physical Possession	Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	of Branch
		Vibhore Kumar/ Anuradha Jasuja/ LBGUR00004983636	Unit No G-68, Ground Floor, Spaze Palazo Sector 69, Village Fazilpur Jharsa, Haryana Gurgaon/ April 03, 2023	March 25, 2021 Rs. 71,12,615/-	Delhi/ NCR
		Pavik Life Style Pvt Ltd/ Vikram Hada/ Pooja Hada/ LBNOD00002354684	Unit No. C6-002, Ground Floor, Ireo The Corridors, Sector 67A, Gurgaon/April 03, 2023	October 30, 2017 Rs. 79,95,631/-	Delhi/ NCR
	The	above-mentioned borrowers(s)/guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else			

the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : April 06, 2023 Place : Delhi/ NCR

#### कार्यालय अधिष्ठाता

शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय, दितया (म.प्र.)

क्रमांक -1971/स्था./राज/द.चि.म./2023 // विज्ञप्ति सूचना //

मध्यप्रदेश शासन, चिकित्सा शिक्षा विभाग, मंत्रालय भोपाल के ज्ञाप क्रमांक एफ 2-53/2017/1/55 दिनांक 12.01.2018 द्वारा म.प्र. स्वशासी चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय शैक्षणिक आदर्श सेवा नियम 2018 के अंतर्गत एवं अवर सचिव मध्यप्रदेश शासन, चिकित्सा शिक्षा, विभाग मंत्रालय भोपाल द्वारा जारी आदेश क्रमांक एफ 2-15/2022/1/55 भोपाल दिनांक 04.03.2022 के परिपालन में एवं एन.एम.सी/एम.सी.आई के मापदण्ड अनुसार Recognition के प्रतिपूर्ति के क्रय में शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय दितया में पदोन्नित के रिक्त पदों की पूर्ति हेतु चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय दितया के लिये इच्छुक एवं पात्र चिकित्सा शिक्षकों के आवेदन सीधी भर्ती हेतु आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं।

आवेदन पत्र निर्धारित प्रपत्र में दिनांक 24.04.2023 साय: 5:00 तक अधिष्ठाता कार्यालय में आमंत्रित किये जाते है। उपरोक्त जानकारी शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय दतिया की वेबसाईट <u>www.datiamedicalcollege.com</u> पर उपलब्ध है।

आवेदन पत्र डॉक द्वारा अथवा व्यक्तिगत रूप से कार्यालय शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय दितया, म.प्र. में जमा कराये जा सकते हैं।

आवेदन पत्र के लिफाफे पर स्पष्ट रूप से शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय दितया म.प्र. में शैक्षणिक संवर्ग हेतु आवेदन एवं विषय ......तथा आवेदित पद का नाम ......और अनारक्षित/आरक्षित श्रेणी .....का उल्लेख किया जाना अनिवार्य है। किसी भी परिस्थिति निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय उपरांत प्राप्त होने वाले आवेदनों पर विचार नहीं

अंतिम तिथि तक प्राप्त होने वाले अभ्यार्थियों के आवेदन पत्र में से पात्र अभ्यार्थियों के मूल दस्तावेजो के परीक्षण की तिथि

एवं साक्षात्कार की तिथि पृथक से महाविद्यालय के नोटिस बोर्ड एवं अधिकृत वेबसाईट के माध्यम से प्रकाशित की जावेगी। मुख्य कार्यापालन अधिकारी एवं अधिष्ठाता

> शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय, दतिया मध्यप्रदेश

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

# No special treatment

The top court is against fresh guidelines governing the arrest and remand of Opposition leaders

y refusing to entertain a plea filed by 14 parties seeking fresh guidelines gov-Berning the arrest and remand of Opposition leaders, the Supreme Court has simply asserted the cardinal principle of democracy: all are equal before the law. A Bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala correctly said that "laying down general guidelines without having relation to facts of a case will be dangerous." Representing the petitioners, led by the Congress, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi argued that mass arrests are a threat to democracy and a sign of authoritarianism. Chandrachud's response to this was reasonable and sagacious: "When you say that space for opposition has shrunk, the remedy is in that space, the political space. Not [in] the court." This is a message that not just the Opposition



but also the Government should learn. Why don't Opposition leaders engage with the Government as much as they should? Why do they disrupt proceedings in Parliament and Assemblies? Why don't they allow ministers to make statements? It is not that in recent times Bharatiya Janata Party leaders have been setting new, commendable norms by their conduct within and outside legislature buildings, but that doesn't give Opposition leaders the licence to lower the standards of political debate in the country. As we have always emphasised—and it's a universal truth—two wrongs don't make a right.

Owing to vociferous, and sometimes vituperative, political debate and perverted public discourse,

our leaders seek solutions to their problems elsewhere. Like in courts. Hence the 14 parties' petition in the apex court. They themselves can't resolve their own issues, and then seek a judicial resolution (And if this results in greater powers and importance of the Supreme Court and high courts, they also grumble about 'judicial activism' and 'judicial overreach,' but that's another story). This is cutting across party lines. Opposition parties now seek relief from the apex court. The BJP wants the judiciary to kill, or at least tame, the beast called populism. So, a few months ago, a BJP leader, Ashwini Upadhyay, petitioned the Supreme Court, seeking restrictions on parties on distributing "irrational freebies" before elections. It is another matter that the BJP's own conduct is little better than other parties. In the matter of legal action against Opposition leaders, the apex court, while not accepting the Opposition parties' plea seeking special guidelines, has offered an olive branch to them. The Bench said, "You please come back to us when you have an individual criminal case or group of cases." That's fair enough. Besides, there are special courts for expeditious trials of criminal cases involving MP/MLAs. The Central Government set up these courts as directed by the Supreme Court. Importantly, the SC also monitors their performance. In a nutshell, there are enough safeguards to shield Opposition leaders.



The Tamang community people offer prayers at Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal

# Spirit of voluntarism in Salt Satyagraha



The relevance of a voluntary movement in India and abroad, inspired by the Gandhian framework, is crucial for establishing a non-violent world order

■t had been 13 days since the march for Salt Satyagraha had already begun under the leadership of a 61-yearold Mahatma Gandhi from Sabarmati. Deciding to embark on a 240-mile foot march to Dandi to break salt at Dandi, he involved the entire country in this act of defiance.

On the morning of March 25, the Satyagrahis (thousands of volunteers) started from Samni for Tralsa. While going to Tralsa, Gandhiji and his companions walked through water and deep mud. Here, they were given a warm welcome. Kasturba Gandhi, his wife, and Kakasaheb Kalelkar came here to meet Gandhiji. The Salt March had gathered momentum. It was on the previous night (March 24) at Samni village where Gandhiji emphasised the breach of the Salt Act, and wearing and making khadi.

Dandi March and volunteerism

The spirit of volunteerism and nonviolent protest has been a crucial aspect of India's history. The Gandhian era saw this in full glory during the Salt Satyagraha, which showcased the power of nonviolent protest in achieving social and political change through nonviolent protest, even when Satyagrahis were met with severest brutality by the British authorities.

One of the significant aspects of the movement was the participation of volunteers — ranging from students, farmers, labourers and women, who participated in the protest despite the risk of arrest, imprisonment and violence from the British. This (Gandhian) concept of volunteerism is based on the idea of selfless service or Seva, which involves giving one's time, skills and resources for the greater good of society without expecting anything in return. The movement sparked a wave of protests and civil disobedience and led to the release of thousands of political prisoners. The volunteers not only ensured the success of the protest, but helped collect funds, arrange food and accommodation for the marchers and provide medical aid to those injured during the protest.

Beyond the protest, the volunteers continued to work towards building a sustainable

economy based on cottage industries and promoting the use of khadi (hand-spun cloth), which the Mahatma had time and again emphasised upon.

Gandhiji had felt the nation's pulse. He knew of the springing of emotions and excitement and was cautious too. On March 28, after reaching Ramya, Mahatma Gandhi said, "I feel it is difficult to leave any of the districts of Gujarat. I feel like staying in every district and starting manufacturing salt here, but we cannot do everything we like. We do whatever is appropriate, therefore, we should reach Dandi." Impact on India & the world

The spirit of volunteerism in the Salt Satyagraha serves as an inspiration for people around the world and highlights the power of collective action towards a common goal. The principles of nonviolent protest that were championed by the Mahatma continue to be used in various movements worldwide, from the Civil Rights Movement in the US to the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar.

The voluntary movement inspired by Gandhian leadership has been instrumental in bringing about social and political change in India Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, self-reliance and service to others has inspired generations of Indians to work

towards building a better society. Gandhi's emphasis on self-reliance and service to others also played a crucial role in inspiring the voluntary movement in India. Gandhi believed that every individual had a responsibility towards society and that voluntary action was a way of fulfilling that responsibility.

Gandhi's influence on the voluntary movement in India can be seen in various fields. Many organisations and individuals have been inspired by Gandhi's philosophy of service and have worked towards building a better society through voluntaryism.

One of the most successful examples of a voluntary movement is the Chipko Movement, which was inspired by Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence and environmental conservation. Started in the 1970s, it was aimed at protecting forests and promoting sustainable development. It inspired similar movements across India and around the world as it helped raise awareness about the importance of environmental conservation and the role of voluntary

Another example is Barefoot College, a voluntary organisation established by Bunker

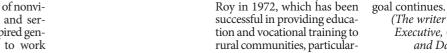
ly women. Similarly, the Aravind Eye Care System in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, another voluntary organisation, has been successful in providing high-quality eye care to millions of people.

Though there have been limitations and criticisms of many voluntary organisations in India for their lack of transparency and accountability and sustainability, it cannot be denied that the relevance of the voluntary movement in India and the world is crucial for the establishment of a non-violent world order with service to others, and collective action as its key principles.

This is important from a world perspective for peaceful and sustainable social change. One such example is the Black Lives Matter Movement in the US, which has drawn inspiration from the Gandhian framework, with many activists emphasising the importance of nonviolence and community service.

Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, self-reliance and service to others has inspired generations of Indians and people across the world to work towards building a better society through voluntary action. This power of collective

> (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti)



**LETTERS** TO THE EDITOR

THE SPIRIT OF

PROTEST HAS

**ASPECT OF** 

**VOLUNTEERISM** 

AND NONVIOLENT

BEEN A CRUCIAL

INDIA'S HISTORY

# Four most important existential questions



We all have free will, which allows us to think and achieve big. Of course, our honest endeavours should be aided by the divine

e all have many questions. I feel that four questions definitely need answers. These are: why have we been made so small, I mean as souls; why is materialism discouraged; why is the creation God-centric; and what are the criteria for pleasing God?

Let me begin with the smallness of souls. Our material bodies may be big in our eyes, but intrinsically we are really quite small. Because the prime mover or the motive power comes from the soul only. Once the soul leaves the body, the body dies. With the chip revolution, we have learnt not to underestimate smallness. In any case, smallness is a comparative measurement, and we are really very small as compared to God, who is immeasurable. Even with such smallness, we are capable of doing lots of mischief. Due to our smallness, the creation exists and does so for millions of years. We are forced to cooperate due to our inherent smallness. The Cosmic Design is perfect. Our smallness is not a handicap. We all have free will,

We are capable of doing big tasks aided by divine authorities and others.

As for materialism, why is it discouraged? There are two basic ways to view the universe – the spiritual and the materialistic. In material consciousness, one feels that there is no God or any divine arrangement. Consequently, there is no 'Karmaphala' phenomenon. What does such consciousness do? It keeps us at lower levels. Not only do we make mistakes, not fearing retribution, but also deny ourselves what God can do for us. And God can do a lot

Now the next question is about why the creation is which allows us to think big. God-centric. What else could

it be? With so many of us in this universe itself, God had to be unimaginably big, and He is absolutely incomprehensible so that He could manage vast creation. Otherwise, how can good people survive when demons outnumber good persons by far? Lord Krishna has given a little hint about God's fathomless qualities when He stated, "whatever there is opulent, effulgent or even energetic, all that you should know as produced from a fragment of My splendour." (10.41) God has to be what He is in order to maintain order in this world. As God owns everything, He doesn't need anything from anyone. Is He not best placed to judge our actions? God even incarnates to re-establish dharma. (4.7) God is kind towards devotees because they are assets to the creation. The current model of creation works because God ensures it. The last question has to

be about ways to please God. Let us be guided by God Himself. Lord Krishna instructs, "You should always do your duty. Because action is superior to inaction. Maintenance of the body will not be possible through inac-

tion." (3.8) Would you believe that even a newly born has a duty? He must cry to attract attention if he is hungry, wet or unwell. Time, place, and circumstances determine duties for all of us without exception. The next important instruction is to take God's shelter, because we are severely incomplete, even though we may lull ourselves to think that we are self-sufficient. This creation is entirely interdependent; we must serve others and they must do likewise. However, this serving mentality goes only this far when one goes beyond self-interest; one must go beyond and do public welfare. (6.40) For a higher quality of life, one must take shelter in God, because God alone has the power to grant peace, bliss and security. We do realise it at some point when we may be utterly helpless. Only very fortunate souls have this realisation in time and do something about it; otherwise, this precious life is wasted. Wise persons make every effort to blease God. The way to do so is just as Arjuna understood:

"I´will do as you say." (18.73) (The author is a spiritual teacher)

#### **RENAMING OF ARUNACHAL'S AREAS**

Sir — China's 'renaming' of areas in Arunachal Pradesh is a deceitful endeavour and a game of dirty tricks, aiming to provoke India. The dispute over Arunachal Pradesh has been long-standing between the countries, resulting in military standoffs and diplomatic tensions that remained frosty ("India raps China: Inventing names doesn't alter fact", April 5, 2023).

The renaming of areas in Arunachal Pradesh is a deliberate ploy by China to create confusion and commotion for its long-term sinister design in the international community. There will be no takers in Arunachal Pradesh for these kinds of insular approaches by China. History is a living witness to show that Arunachal Pradesh was never a part of China at any

given point in time. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

#### **SEERS SHOULD BE APOLITICAL**

Sir — Seers should be above politics and they should be a symbol of sacrifice. Of late, the involvement of seers in politics through the back door is increasing. Some seers want their community candidate to be the Chief Minister. Some seers have been fighting for reservation and increased reservation in favour of candidates hailing from their community. The Sringeri seer, Udupi seer and many others have set good examples in not interfering with government policies and programmes. Praying for the good of the people and the good of the nation should be their motto. Many seers have entered into healthy competition in churning out good disciples

The attempted suicide bid by a Banjara community seer in Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's constituency has been foiled. Attempted suicide is an offence in the Indian Penal Code. It is for the law to take its course in dealing with the situation. Banjara community members have been protesting against the recent classification of reservations. Residents of Lambani tandas or hamlets have announced that they would boycott the

# **Development of smart cities**



ndia is lagging in the development of smart cities as per a new report and we are compelled to think about whether the Indian smart cities are really smart. It is to be noted here that we have just successfully repackaged citizens' essential needs into a new project called 'smart cities'. The index was published by the Smart City Observatory, which is part of the Swiss business school, Institute for Management Development It ranks 141 cities based on how they use technology to address the challenges its citizens face to achieve a higher quality of life. Singapore is Asia's smartest city and the seventh smartest city in the world; Zurich is the world's smart city. This is the third time Singapore has been seventh on the list. The top 10 cities are a mix of European,

Australian and Asian destinations: Zurich, Switzerland, Oslo, Norway, Canberra, Australia, Copenhagen, Denmark, Lausanne, Switzerland, London, the UK, Singapore, Helsinki, Finland, Geneva, Switzerland, Stockholm and Sweden.

The Index takes into account input from cities residents on how technology has improved their lives. It combines both survey responses as well as hard data, to understand (and represent) the extent to which technology has helped achieve a higher quality of life for a city's residents. The data has been collected from over 20.000 citizens, who were surveyed on about 15 aspects of living in these cities. Some of the questions included those on affordable housing, road congestion, green spaces, fulfilling employment needs structures and technologies built to address their concerns and how comfortable the respondents were with technologies such as face recognition and sharing personal data to improve traffic. It is worth mentioning that only four cities Delhi, Mumbai Bangalore and Hyderabad are included in the ranking and their ranking is below 100. The Government should, therefore, take necessary steps so that the world ranking can improve.

Yash Pal Ralhan I Jalandhar

mania has been taking alarming proportions. Another seer Revana Siddaiah Shrishallayya of Honyal gives ₹1 lakh cash to the Kalyana Rajya Pragathi Paksha candidate. This is so at a time when the code of conduct is in force. The netizens are angry with the Raibag taluk administration for not taking any action against the seer. Unfortunately, some people donning the robe of seers are playing politics. The seers should preach and practice selflessness. KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

#### **BANKING ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

Sir — Canara Bank is a pioneer in banking services in India and now it is peaking after its amalgamation with Syndicate Bank in 2020. In these three years, we hear Canara Bank doing great guns and now hit-Assembly polls in Karnataka. Reservation ting top headlines in the banking indus-

try. The bank has introduced a "Premium Payroll Package" for salary account holders with competitive features. The product has been designed to meet all banking requirements of salaried customers. The features such as free term life insurance, insta overdraft, free personal & air accident insurance coverage, and premium cards are some of the unique features of the product. The account is designed in terms of the whole 360-degree requirement of the salaried class. The clients are being given a big boost by introducing the 400-day new tenure of Canara Bank FD. Senior citizens will earn 7.65 per cent on the same

Jayanthi S Maniam | Mumbai

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# **FIRST COLUMN**

#### THE US, CHINA BLOCS **AIM AT HIVING POWER**

America is trying to neutralise China's attempts to influence market access



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

n the shifting sands of geopolitics, several changes in the past few weeks would make agile diplomacy the key instrument of foreign affairs for any country. First up is the difficult, India-US-Russia tightrope trick. Russia last week announced their new foreign policy, which emphasises the deepening of ties with strategic allies India and China. The Russian NSA and his Indian counterpart also got into a huddle on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, NSA-level meeting, to discuss expanding the bilateral defence partnership. It now emerges that the two sides could have discussed expanding the partnership for joint research and manufacturing of next-generation supersonic Brahmos missile systems.

Russia seems to have greater technological know-how for the development of this high-speed (at least five times faster than the speed of sound with higher degrees of manoeuvrability) missiles, ahead of both China and US. Meanwhile, India is all set to enhance its naval capabilities including its ability for defending its sea frontiers, from the recent acquisition of superior technology helicopters, missiles and torpedoes capable of taking down submarines, from the US. The initial reluctance from the US to have India as a strategic defence partner in the Indo-Pacific region now seems to have given way to a pragmatic approach, keeping in mind India's strategic defence needs, and its centrality to the Indo-Pacific



The Indo-Pacific region, at one point in time, relegated to appendix sections of Washington's foreign policy books, has found complete bipartisan support from opposite ends of the political spectrum in US politics. The imminent threat is the rising heft of China in the region, which has assumed the role of being the biggest bully, having clawed into some of the most influential national economies in the region. Most of the influence China wields in the Indo-Pacific rides on its opaque infrastructure funding policies, which have forced many of these growth-hungry economies to fall into a fatal debt trap. These economic blunders in turn give China the upper hand to start influencing the nation's domestic politics, which goes well with the dragon's expansionist agenda.

However, the US has taken note and brokered a peace truce between Japan and South Korea, the two technology-aided Asian giants. These two countries, even though not too warm to each other due to historical reasons, are joined in the common threat of an aggressive China in their backyard. The US knows that any future dominance in the global world order would be defined by technological advancements, and the ability to integrate technology into their defence equipment. Every breakthrough, every new use case and standard set, for emerging technology such as Artificial Intelligence would be critical for the race to the top.

It has already operationalised the US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging technologies, to expand the existing defence industrial partnership and strategic technology partnership to a wider set of stakeholders. Meanwhile, discussions regarding supply chain resilience, expansion and cooperation, on new technology form the pillars for all QUAD discussions, which has the US, India, Japan and Australia, as its members. The US is also aggressively pushing countries in South and South-Southeast Asia into a like-minded bloc of partners through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework initiative, where India is also a founding member. China meanwhile has also managed to stitch together one of the largest free trade agreements in the world, through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, giving it market access to most of the economies in the region. India chose to sit out of RCEP, citing the unfair advantage accrued to China.

Against this backdrop, the guns are still blazing in eastern provinces of Ukraine. Many expect China and India to play the silent backroom boys role to broker peace between Ukraine and Russia. It is going to be volatile situations ahead for every country.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)

# Mess in Delhi's power distribution business



The problem can be eradicated only if the State Government liberates the three discoms from its controls and gives them the much-needed freedom



n 2018, the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) issued an order requiring the Delhi Government to give subsidies to its preferred consumers, primarily households, 'directly' by crediting it to their bank account using the direct benefit transfer (DBT) mechanism instead of routing it through the three power distribution companies (discoms) namely BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL), discom for South & West Delhi; BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) — discom for Central & East Delhi; and North Delhi Power Limited (NDPL) — discom for North Delhi which is the existing practice. The order was never implemented and is now reported to have been withdrawn quietly.

Under the Electricity Act, of 2003, the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) are mandated to fix tariffs chargeable from different categories of consumers besides ensuring compliance with various provisions of the Act. Now, if a directive issued by the SERC (in this case, DERC) is not complied with and even forced to withdraw, it speaks volumes about the prevailing mess in the electricity distriution dusiness in the National Capital

At the outset, let us highlight a few basic facts regarding how discoms arrange electricity for supplying to consumers, their tariff-setting process and how the subsidy comes into play.

Under the extant arrangements, the discoms purchase power from the public sector undertakings (PSUs) such as the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), etc., and independent power producers (IPPs), under power purchase agreements (PPAs) which are mostly longterm contracts up to 25 years. A tiny fraction of the demand, not more than 5 per cent is purchased from the electricity exchange.

The discoms are expected to sell electricity to the consumers at tariffs -duly approved by the regulatory commission that are set in a manner such that the revenue generated from sale at these tariffs fully cover the power purchase cost plus the cost of wheeling, and distribution. This is necessary to ensure that they maintain their financial viability and remain in robust

health. The requirement is mandatory under the Electricity Act, of The SERCs rarely follow this

cardinal principle while approving tariffs which are invariably set at levels that fail to generate revenue sufficient to cover discoms' power purchase and distribution costs. They recognize that the gap exists but don't do anything meaningful to plug it on a sustainable basis. Far from that, they allow the discoms to book this gap as receivable in their balance sheet - giving it a fancy name Regulatory Assets (RA). It is an act of legitimizing a high-

ly irresponsible act. No wonder, this has led to a proliferation of RAs over the years. As on June 30, 2022, these were Rs 88,720 crore. This could be much higher even exceeding Rs 100,000 crore if claims bogged down in legal disputes at the appeal level or in higher courts are also included. In Delhi, the current RAs are around Rs 20,000 crore.

Why does a gap between the cost

This has to do with the top political brass in the State establishment directing discoms to sell a major slice of electricity to households (HHs) (besides farmers in several states), either at a fraction of the cost of supply or even free. This results in under-recovery on such sales which is aggravated by aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses - most of it is plain theft. In a bid to offset the losses, discoms charge high tariffs on supplies to industries/businesses (in Delhi, this is Rs 16 per unit). Yet, overall they incur a loss.

When discoms give power to the target group free or an artificially low tariff under orders from the State government, the latter is obliged to reimburse the former shortfall in realization from sale vis-à-vis the cost of supplying it. But, most states don't reimburse or do it partially. Even when they do, this is after considerable delay.

As a result, discoms are trapped in a vicious cycle of increasing losses and ballooning RAs. This has even prompted the SERCs to often take recourse to ad-hoc and arbitrary measures to boost revenue; for instance, in Delhi, there is an eight per cent surcharge. Even as this exacerbates the burden on paying customers, the problem remains.

The problem can be eradicated from its root if only the State governments liberate the discoms from state controls and give them the much-needed freedom to set a tariff on supplies to 'all' consumers based on the cost of purchase and distribution. As for the subsidy, they can give 'directly' to the target beneficiaries under DBT.

With this, discoms will be able to recover their full cost on sales to HHs and farmers. With no underrecovery on such sales, they need not charge more from industries and businesses thereby making power affordable to them. Unsnackied from state control, they would also be able to rein in power theft. RAs and losses will be a thing of the past even as discoms turn into financially viable entities.

Under DBT, it will be easier to make way for the de-licensing of the electricity distribution business, breaking the monopoly of a few players and injecting competition leading to more choices and resultantly lower tariffs for consumers.

Imagine the gains the Indian economy would have reaped if only all SERCs had ensured the implementation of DBT in the respective states. But, ALAS! none has done it. DERC issued an order to this effect but that has remained

In Delhi, all consumers other than those who are the beneficiaries of largesse granted by Kejriwal dispensation (read: no charge from HHs consuming up to 200 units a month and Rs 800 from HHs con-

suming between 200 and 400 units) could be staring at a steep hike in tariff of up to 100 per cent as in a recent order, the Supreme Court (SC) has directed the DERC to let discoms recover their RAs. DERC has decided to contest the order but for now, Delhiites face a real threat.

The non-compliance with the 2018 order of DERC, could point towards something more serious. The order essentially meant that discoms would charge beneficiaries/ consumers the full amount as per the cost of supply, hence, the Delhi government didn't need to reimburse them. But, the order wasn't implemented.

This meant that discoms continued to supply power to the ben-eficiaries free of charge/subsidized tariff. But, it would appear that the Delhi government didn't reimburse them for the shortfall in realization vis-à-vis the cost. Could it be that this 'uncompensated' amount since 2018 is sitting as RAs in their balance sheets?

Alternatively, even if discoms get full reimbursement of the shortfall from the government, yet they have huge RAs, this too is preposterous. The state of affairs points towards serious irregularities in the handling of power subsidies. This requires a thorough investigation into the accounts of both discoms and the Delhi government and required action taken to deal with the RAs instead of making consumers pay for them.

Delhi is not alone when it comes to messing in the discoms. The malady is gripping most of the states. At the core of it is their uncompromising stance to give free/heavily subsidized electricity and routing the same through discoms. Unless this serious flaw in approach is addressed by adopting the DBT mode for giving subsidies both in the letter and spirit, the discoms will remain in dire straits per-

(The writer is a policy

THIS MEANT

CONTINUED

TO SUPPLY

FREE OF

**TARIFF** 

THAT DISCOMS

POWER TO THE

**BENEFICIARIES** 

CHARGE/ ON

SUBSIDISED

# The dream of universal health care can be realised

On the occasion of World Health Day today, we must renew our pledge for 'Health For All' and find the missing link to 'good health'

orld Health Day, 7th April, is celebrated as the World Health Organisation (WHO) was established on this day 75 years ago. Among its many public health achievements is the eradication of Smallpox, eradication of Polio, Cervical cancer vaccine, malaria vaccine and helping global community tackle newer health problems and pandemics like SARS, Swine flu, Ebola, Covid-19 and others with 'Science,

Solution and Solidarity'. The theme for this year's World health day is 'Health for All'. Universal health care (UHC) means everyone must have access to health care when they need it, where they need it and without financial hardship. Health emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic,



SUDHA SHARMA

College, Jhansi)

climatic crises, economic constraints and wars have made action for UHC an urgent need. Is this an achievable dream, given that 30% of the global population does not have access to essential services and more than 2 billion people are facing catastrophic health expenditure?

According to WHO, primary health care approach to give essential services is the most cost-effective approach. Our country has a strong infrastructure of District level hospitals to CHCs, PHCs and sub centres. These sub centres have been upgraded to HWCs- Health and Wellness centres. All facilities are trained to give promotive, preventive and curative services for all groups of diseases infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases. Along with the Government sector, the Private sector, NGOs, charitable institutions and public-private partnership ventures shoulder the responsibility of providing quality healthcare to the community. But we are still facing so many diseases!!

Where is the missing link? Life has become EASIER but not HEALTHIER. Amid these diseases threatening us, the show stoppers are Noncommunicable diseases like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stroke..the socalled lifestyle diseases and COPD and cancers. These are the cause of 61.8% of deaths in our country. We are the diabetes capital of the world. Other alarming figures point to the fact that a lot needs to be done at the individual and

community levels. In all types of diseases, there is a 'host -agent-environment interaction' required to produce disease. So the good news is, agents alone cannot cause diseases. Changes in the host, the person(us), and the domestic environment can modify these risk factors and can benefit us in many ways. Living a healthy 'life in style' can not only protect, prevent and control NCDs but also set an example for others to follow...So, what are these steps that can make our homes a wellness centre?

Like all the best things in life, these too are very simple and inexpensive. As recommended by WHO, the best buys for reducing NCDs are having a balanced nutritious diet with fresh fruits and veg-

etables, giving up tobacco, giving up alcohol, daily physical activity, salt restriction, reduction of refined sugar consumption. To the list, one could add curtailing fat consumption especially trans fats, and regulating excessive use of mobile phones.

Don't underestimate the power of these simple interventions:

They can create wonders for you if followed regularly. Another paradigm shift we need is to assess the '\*health affordability\* ' of our choices, not the financial affordability.

A last word of advice for those suffering: Regular medications and lifestyle changes will keep complications at bay and significantly improve your quality of life. Investing in strong health systems is criti-

cal for a prosperous society but there needs to be a major shift from economies driven by profit and pollution to economies driven by fairness and well-being and economies driven by sustainable and need-based development.

Universal health coverage is a political and social choice. We need strong political leadership and public demand. This public demand should be towards the Governments for services, legislations and insurance schemes but our role to change ourselves and our environments to transform our lives should not be ignored. So, the next time you have to choose between driving your children to the mall or cycling

to a nearby park. Make a wise healthy choice: Let us pause on this world

health day and check which roadblocks are preventing aur progress on this road to health. And you would find that there are many which would require a simple change of habits and thought patterns. Like in all aspects of life, in health too, there are two solutions to any problem. We can either wait for others like Governments (by banning fast food and cold drinks) and friends and family to make healthy choices for us, or we can use our self-determination and willpower to make healthy choices and be role models for others. Our active participation will be a game changer in realizing the dream of universal health coverage. Let us on this day promise Good health to ourselves and pledge to ensure 'Health For All'.

(The writer is a health expert, MD in Community Medicine, MLB. Medical

# Iran, Saudi agree on joint plan

TO REOPEN **EMBASSIES** EASE TRAVEL

**AP** ■ BEIJING

Iran and Saudia Arabia have agreed to jointly pursue economic stability, the Iranian foreign minister said Thursday, as well as reopen missions in their respective countries as the regional rivals stepped toward reconciliation after seven years of tension

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian made the announcement in a tweet after talks with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, in Beijing.

The ministers also agreed on Thursday to reopen embassies in the countries' respective capitals and representative offices in two other The rapprochement not

only lowers the chance of armed conflict between the Mideast rivals - both directly



Farhan Al Saud, right, and Chineses counterpart Qin Gang in Beijing on Thursday

and in proxy conflicts around the region – but also represents a major diplomatic victory for the Chinese as Gulf Arab states perceive the United States slowly withdrawing from the wider region. It comes as diplomats have been trying to end a long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply entrenched. Amirabdollahian's tweet

came after Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said foreign ministers from both nations had signed a joint statement and expressed their determination to improve ties in line with their talks in Beijing last month.

The official Iranian news agency, IRNA, said that as part of Thursday's agreement, the two longtime regional rivals would reopen representative offices in their respective capitals and in two other major cities - Mashhad in Iran and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. The report said both sides

also agreed to study the prospects of resuming flights and official and private visits between the two nations, in addition to how to facilitate the visa process for their people.

Ekhbariya TV showed the Iranian and Saudi ministers shaking hands and sitting sideby-side. It was the first formal meeting of senior diplomats from the two nations since 2016, when the kingdom broke ties with Iran after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts Saudi Arabia had executed

a prominent Shiite cleric with 46 others days earlier, triggering the demonstrations. The warming of ties shows

that "regional countries have the will and ability to take the lead" in maintaining peace, Mao said at the briefing. She said China is ready to

support both sides in fostering good relations, urging the international community to help the Middle Eastern countries resolve their differences.

"The colonial hegemonic tactics of stirring up contradictions, creating estrangement and division should be rejected by the people all over the

#### Pak parliament rejects apex court verdict on Punjab polls

#### **Confrontation over issue intensifies**

PTI ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's parliament on Thursday passed a resolution rejecting the Supreme Court's decision about the Punjab elections delay case and demanded a full court to decide this issue as the row between the judiciary and the government deepened in the country

A three-member bench of the apex court led by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial on Tuesday fixed May 14 as the new date for elections to the Punjab Assembly, as it quashed the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to extend the polls date from April 10 to October 8.

The coalition government reacted angrily to the judgment and rejected it, while the ECP issued a revised schedule to hold the election as per the ver-

the National Assembly or the lower house passed a resolution to reject the decision of the apex court.

The resolution was moved by lawmaker Khalid Magsi of Balochistan Awami Party which is part of the ruling coalition and it was adopted by the lower house.

It called upon the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet not to implement this judgment as it is contrary to the constitution.

It said that the House "considers the conduct of general elections simultaneously across the country as the panacea to all the problems" but this should be done in accordance with the procedure laid down in the law and constitution for political and economic stabil-

The House expressed concern over "interference in political matters", saying the judgements of the "minority" are creating anarchy in the country and paving the way for division in the federating units.

The resolution also voiced concerns over the "wrong interpretation" of the Constitution and demanded formation of a full court of the Supreme Court

to review it.

The resolution came after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing the cabinet meeting on Wednesday described the court decision as a "mockery of the Constitution and law" and added that it could not be implemented.

His idea was supported by the National Assembly, showing the bitter divide over the date of election in Punjab where the assembly was dissolved on January 13 and the polls should be held within 90 days. The government asserts that it has powers to delay the polls and hold it with the general elections in the country

#### Japanese army helicopter with 10 crew missing

Tokyo (AP): Japan's coast guard says it is searching for an army helicopter carrying 10 crew members that went missing off a southern Japanese island.

The coast guard said it received information that a Ground Self-Defence Force UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter disappeared from radar on a mission on Thursday evening in an area north of Miyako island. It said four patrol ships are participating in the search but have not found any traces of the missing aircraft. Prime Minister Fumio

Kishida said the Defence Ministry is investigating and "We will do our utmost to save their lives.

NHK public television said the helicopter, participating in a land survey, disappeared from radar about an hour after it departed from a base on Miyako island and about half an hour before its scheduled

#### Pak secures Saudi approval for \$2b funding to support IMF bailout

PTI ISLAMABAD

Cash-strapped Pakistan has received the nod for funding of up to USD 2 billion from Saudi Arabia, a move that will help the country secure the much-required bailout from the IMF, according to a media report on Thursday.

International Monetary Fund has imposed the condition on Pakistan that it should secure USD 3 billion from other countries for the revival of its USD 6.5 billion bailout package.

The assistance from Riyadh comes at a crucial time as the IMF programme, signed in 2019, will expire on June 30, 2023, and under the set guidelines, the programme cannot be extended beyond the deadline, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Last month, Pakistan received a rollover loan of USD 2 billion from its "allweather" ally China.

According to the report, the finance ministry sources said the IMF was still insisting on its demand for a further increase in the interest rate according to inflation and opposing the annual subsidy of Rs 900 billion.

The Washington-based lobal lender was unwilling to budge from its demand for Pakistan to collect Rs 850 billion in terms of the petroleum development levy (PDL), the Pakistan, currently in the

throes of a major economic crisis, is grappling with high external debt, a weak local currency and dwindling foreign exchange reserves, enough to shore up for barely one month's imports.

The IMF said the cashstarved country had a few more tasks before it could unlock a USD 6.5 billion loan to avoid a default, putting pressure on the government to secure assurances from coun-

tries that have promised financing support.

Esther Perez Ruiz, the IMF's resident representative for Pakistan, said a staff-level agreement would follow once the few remaining points were closed, the report added. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar

is also said to meet the leader-

ship of the UAE before leaving for the US on April 10 to attend the upcoming Annual Spring Meeting of the Bretton Wood Institutions (BWIs) known as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, from April 10 to 16. Last month, the IMF said

Pakistan had made "substantial progress" toward meeting policy commitments needed to unlock loans the country needs to avoid default. Pakistan has taken tough

measures including increasing taxes and energy prices, and allowing its currency to weaken to restart the USD 6.5 billion IMF loan package, it said.

#### **Court orders security for Imran as former PM** Khan's interim bail in eight cases extended

PTI ISLAMABAD

Ahigh court here on Thursday ruled that former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan should be provided security according to his status as an ex-premier. The Islamabad High Court

heard the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief's plea regarding being provided adequate security after Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah allegedly threatened him. Meanwhile, a Pakistani

high court on Thursday extended the interim bail of former prime minister Imran Khan in eight cases, including last month's judicial complex riot case, till April 18. A two-member bench of

the Islamabad High Court, headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, heard the bail pleas by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief, who was not present at the hearing. The court accepted an

exemption request from



Thursday's attendance in all the cases filed by the PTI chief's In March, Sanaullah, who

is very close to former premier and London-based PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, said when the ruling party feels that its existence is under threat, it will go to any extent against its chief political rival.

"The country's politics has been brought to the level where the existence of only one of the two (PTI and PML-N) is possible," he said, apparently targeting Khan.

During the hearing on Thursday, the court inquired about the current security rules, as well as how much security 72-year-old Khan was being given, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. Khan's lawyer told the

court that the former prime minister, who survived an assassination attempt in November last year, could not appear before the court, to which Chief Justice Aamer Farooq said that Khan did not need to come to court in this case as it was only about the provision of security.

The high court chief justice questioned what the law stated about security for a former prime minister.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) Munawar Iqbal Duggal told the court that adequate security would be provided. The AAG maintained that the law stated that the security notification for a former premier should be issued through

Lanka delays new Anti-Terror

a special gazette.

Justice Farooq inquired if any security had been provided to Khan. The AAG stated that the former cricketerturned-politician was given a bulletproof vehicle. He continued that after the 18th Amendment provision of security was a provincial matter.

A representative of the interior ministry said that lifetime security was supposed to be given, but the notification detailing it had not been issued. "As long as Khan was in

Islamabad, he was given foolproof security," he said. On the chief justice's inquiry into the current situa-

tion, the ministry representative reiterated that security had been provided to Khan. Khan's lawyer stated the

Wazirabad incident where Khan was shot in an assassination attempt.

The chief justice remarked that the law was the law, and security should be provided according to what it stated.

# Braverman wins party seat selection

 $\begin{array}{lll} B^{\text{ritain's Indian-origin Home}} \\ B^{\text{secretary,}} & \text{Suella} \\ B^{\text{raverman, has won a key}} \end{array}$ Conservative Party member of Parliament to be selected as the candidate for her redrawn constituency. The 43-year-old senior

Cabinet minister, of Goan and Tamil heritage, had a face-off with fellow Tory MP Flick Drummond in an internal party vote on Wednesday over who gets to contest from a new proposed constituency of Fareham and Waterlooville in Hampshire in the next general election - expected in 2024. Under the Boundary

Commission of England's changes, Braverman's original seat of Fareham in south-east England is being re-carved and Drummond's Meon Valley is being scrapped under the new parliamentary boundaries.

"I am honoured and humbled to have been adopted by Conservatives members to be their Parliamentary Candidate



for the new Fareham and Waterlooville constituency," Braverman tweeted soon after the vote - which she reportedly won 77 to 54.

"I thank my Parliamentary colleague Flick Drummond MP for her excellent work for the people of Meon Valley," she The fight had been labelled

by media commentators here as the "Battle of Waterlooville", after the town in Hampshire at the heart of the redrawn boundaries.

Drummond said she was "incredibly disappointed" by the election result but said she

would "continue to be Meon Valley MP" until the next election, a position she has held

The selection vote comes as changes have been proposed across England as part of the 2023 Boundary Review, the final recommendations of which are due to be presented to the UK Parliament by July 1 to be adopted ahead of the next general election. The Boundary Commission for England says it has closed its "final consultation" and that it is analysing the feedback received.

Braverman's victory came soon after the UK Home Office announced that it would be using a barge, or a docked vessel at Portland Port in Dorset, south-west England, to accommodate illegal migrants and asylum seekers in the UK.

The move is aimed at reducing the reliance on "expensive hotels" and to deliver what the government says would be a "more orderly, cost effective and sustainable asylum accommodation system".

#### **UK plans to hire hundreds** of nurses from India

PTI LONDON

planning to hire around 900 nurses from overseas over the next four years to plug its workforce shortages, with many of these nurses coming from Kerala.

According to BBC's 'Local Democracy Reporting Service, Swansea Bay University Health Board of the state-funded National Health Service Wales will get a total of 350 overseas nurses in the current financial year subject to approval by chief executive Mark Hackett. It is expected to cost about 4.7 million pounds to employ 350 overseas nurses in 2023-24, which would save 1.5 million pounds in agency and nursing bank costs.

Gareth Howells, director of nursing and patient experience at Swansea Bay health board, said overseas recruitment provided an "immediacy of really experienced staff".

According to the report, overseas nurses are offered a  $\Delta$  local health board in Wales Band 5 contract, with a startinitially receive a Band 4 lower wage until they complete their UK registration.

> the health board, which covers Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas of Wales, and the Welsh government to train and retain more homegrown staff. The health board employs nearly 4,200 nurses and mid-

wives, with the report saying it had "1,322 nurses and midwives currently over the age of 51 that could retire very soon or over the next few years". The health board told the 'Local Democracy Reporting Service' that besides India, it recruited from the Philippines, Africa and the Caribbean. The

overseas category also includes

nurses from the European

Union (EU), but the health

few" EU applications.

A board meeting was told that efforts were being made by

On April 1. Prime Minister

board said it received "very or early May.

#### Bill amid fresh opposition PTA with a new legislation society\_groups objected to the called the Anti Terrorism Act new ATA saying it targets the

PTI ■ COLOMBO

**O**Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe on Thursday announced that the presentation of the new antiterrorism Bill that would replace a draconian counterterrorism law in parliament would be delayed further, a day after a powerful body of lawyers said it would not hesitate to challenge any legislation that would undermine the rule of law and the liberty of the cit-

The new Anti Terrorism Act (ATA) will replace the much maligned Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) of 1979.

Dinesh Gunawardena told reporters that the new counter terrorism law will be introduced later this month. However, the justice minister on Thursday said the bill would be delayed to either late April

Sri Lanka is replacing the

roundly condemned for its draconian nature where people were allowed to be detained without being charged for indefinite periods of time.

Sri Lanka faced international calls to repeal the PTA which was enacted in 1979 as a temporary measure to counter the rising Tamil separatist militancy. President Ranil Wickremesinghe earlier said that the new ATA would be presented by June.

Today's announcement came as the lawyers' body Bar Association of Sri Lanka on Wednesday asked for delaying its presentation claiming there had been no consultation of stake holders in preparing the draft bill

On March 17, the new Anti Terrorism Act (ATA) of 97 pages was published in the government gazette.

The opposition and civil

took place mid last year over the then government's failure in handling the on going econom-

The European Union since 2016 has been urging the government to repeal the PTA and bring in a new counter terrorism legislation in line with international standards. The EU has linked its GSP+ export tariff concessions to Sri Lanka modifying its counter terrorism Act. The main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa had slammed the bill as "undemo-

cratic and authoritarian". The opposition and rights group fear that anyone expressing democratic opposition to the government could be targeted using the ATA. Sri Lanka, which currently is reeling under its worst economic crisis, has witnessed several activities that have threatened its national security.

#### UK criticised for Windrush immigration scandal failure

London (AP): A civil rights group urged UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Thursday to follow through on promises made to thousands of people of Caribbean descent who were wrongly targeted as illegal migrants in the so-called Windrush scandal that emerged five years ago. The Black Equity Organisation submitted a petition signed by more than 50,000 people that criticised the "painfully slow" response by the government and the decision by Home Secretary Suella Braverman to scrap several recommendations for immigration agency improvements that her predecessor accepted. "We urge your government to stick to the promises made — there is still an opportunity to show that you and your ministers are serious about righting past

clear message that the suffering of the Windrush generation was in vain and the hostile environment still exists.'

Ship that brought the first 500 Caribbean migrants to British shores in 1948 to help rebuild after World War II. Tens of thousands of migrants from the region who arrived legally in the UK until 1973 later found themselves facing a government crackdown on illegal immigrants. Scores lost jobs, homes and the right to free medical care because they didn't have the paperwork to prove their status. Some were detained and others deported.

The statement was the first After British news media uncovered the scandal in 2018, on Wednesday.

#### Berlusconi has leukemia: Docs

**AP** ■ ROME

 $F^{\text{ormer Italian Premier Silvio}}_{\text{Berlusconi is being treated}}$ for a lung infection that is a result of chronic leukemia, his doctors said Thursday, revealing the latest of string of health setbacks for the 86year-old media mogul.

Berlusconi's personal physician, Alberto Zangrillo, signed off on a medical bulletin that said Berlusconi has had leukemia "for some time" but that the cancer of the blood cells was in a "persistent chronic phase.

official word from doctors since Berlusconi was admitted

# Protests hit France again

 $P^{\text{rotesters disrupted vehicle}}_{\text{traffic at Paris' main airport}}$ and police fired clouds of tear gas in other French cities in the latest round of strikes and demonstrations on Thursday against President Emmanuel Macron's contested pension Macron's drive to raise the

national retirement age from 62 to 64 has ignited a months-long firestorm of public anger. Talks between trade union leaders and Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne broke up

Wednesday without a break-

through, setting the stage for protesters' return to the streets. However, the number of strikers has fallen, particular-



Youths protect behind umbrellas during clashes as part of a protest on Thursday On Thursday, the Paris idential election that he went

Metro ran almost normally, in on to win. stark contrast to previous days Parts of the façade of the chic venue were vandalised. of action. Less than 8% of Officers dispersed violent teachers were on strike, according to the Education Ministry. protesters, who were in the However, the sizeable TotalEnergies oil refinery in minority, with tear gas after they smashed up a branch of

#### Thousands flee to Thailand amid unrest in Myanmar Bangkok (AP): More than posed of militias of ethnic

5,000 people have fled from eastern Myanmar into Thailand in recent days as fighting between Myanmar's army and armed resistance groups has intensified in the border area, Thai media and officials said Thursday.

including more than 800 children, crossed the border by Wednesday night from Myanmar's Myawaddy district to seek refuge in Thailand's Tak province, public broadcaster Thai PBS reported, citing an unidentified security official.

At least 5,428 civilians,

It said they fled as ethnic rebels from the Karen minority, allied with guerrillas of the pro-democracy People's Defence Force, attacked two Myanmar government out-

minority groups allied to the military government. Myanmar's ethnic minori-

ties have been fighting for

greater autonomy for decades,

but armed conflict in the country escalated sharply after Myanmar's army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. Widespread opposition to the takeover shifted to armed resistance in many parts of the country as pro-democracy forces joined hands with sever-

al armed ethnic minority

Clashes and air strikes along the border have triggered a sporadic exodus of Myanmar villagers into Thailand's border provinces, where they are often offered temporary refuge

before being sent back home. India has also seen streams of refugees from western

the government apologised to Milan's San Raffaele Hospital ly in the transportation sector, Gonfreville-l'Orcher remained Credit Agricole bank. and offered compensation, since protests began in January. closed. Experts say violence seen In Paris, police were pelt-Dr Fabio Ciceri, who is About 400,000 people but the group said payments in the nationwide protests, joined the protest in Paris ed by projectiles when the are inadequate for the harm head of hematology, bone marwith dozens of demonstrators posts near the border. protest reached La Rotonde, a The army's regular soldiers done and the process is row transplation and blood Thursday, down from 450,000 and police hurt, has turned off wrongs," a letter to Sunak said. "bureaucratic and overly comcancer at the hospital, cothe week before, said the powrestaurant patronised by less activist parts of the popuare assisted by members of the "To do anything less sends a erful CGT union. Macron during the 2017 pres-Border Guard Force, com-

# Bring Russia to its senses, Macron urges Xi

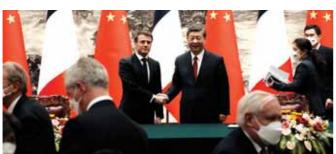
 $F^{\text{rench President Emmanuel}}_{\text{Macron appealed on Thursday}}$ to Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who received an effusive welcome from Vladimir Putin in Moscow last month, to "bring Russia to its senses" and help make "lasting peace" in Ukraine.

Macron pointed to Chinese support for the United Nations Charter, which calls for respect of a country's territorial integrity, and for nuclear agreements. He said peace and stability based on those were threatened by the Russian president's invasion of Ukraine.

"I know I can count on you, under the two principles I just mentioned, to bring Russia to its senses and bring everyone back to the negotiating table," Macron

"We need to find a lasting peace," Macron said. "I believe that this is also an important issue for China, as much as it is for France and for Europe."

Xi didn't mention Ukraine or Russia but said he welcomed relations with France. He said Beijing and Paris are "staunch promoters of multipolarization of the world,"



Chinese President Xi Jinping, centre right, shakes hands with France's President Emmanuel Macron at the end of a joint press conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday

a reference to reducing U.S. dominance in economic and political affairs. Xi's government sees Russia as a source of energy and as a partner in opposing what they say is US aggression and unfair criticism of their human rights records.

China is the biggest buyer of Russian oil and gas, which helps prop up the Kremlin's revenue in the face of Western sanctions. That increases Chinese influence, but Xi appears reluctant to jeopardise that partnership by pressuring Putin.

"China has always adhered to an objective and fair position on the issue of the Ukraine crisis," said a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning. "We have been an advocate of a political solution to the crisis and a promoter of peace

Earlier, Macron said during a meeting with the ruling Communist Party's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang, that France wants to "build a common path" in dealing with "all the major conflicts" in addition to Ukraine. Li said there was likely to be

"broad consensus" between Macron and Xi but gave no indication whether Beijing might be willing to lobby Moscow to make

The meeting will "send posi-

China, France and Europe to maintain world peace and stabil-

Macron was accompanied to Beijing by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in a show of European unity. Last week, von der Leyen

warned that the European Union must be prepared to develop measures to protect trade and investment that China might exploit for security and military purposes.

Meanwhile, NATO's 31 mem-

ber countries warned Wednesday of "severe consequences" should China start sending weapons and ammunition to Russia.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said giving lethal aid would be a "historic mistake." He warned there would be "severe consequences" but declined to give details.

Mao, the Chinese spokesperson, rejected NATO criticism.

"When it comes to responsibility in Ukraine, I think the United States and military blocs such as NATO should take responsibility," Mao said. "NATO is in no position to accuse or pres-

#### China calls for Ukraine peace talks to resume

**AP** ■ BEIJING

Chinese leader Xi Jinping called Thursday for peace talks over Ukraine after French President Emmanuel Macron appealed to him to "bring Russia to its senses," but Xi gave no indication Beijing would use its leverage as Vladimir Putin's diplomatic partner to press for a settlement.

Xi gave no sign China, which declared it had a "no limits friendship" with Moscow before last year's attack, had changed its stance since calling for peace talks in February. But he added his personal authority by repeating the appeal at a joint event with Macron in front of reporters.

"Peace talks should resume as soon as possible," Xi said.

Beijing, which sees Moscow as a partner in opposing US domination of global affairs, has tried to appear neutral in the conflict but has given Putin diplomatic support and repeated Russian justifications for the February 2022 attack.

Xi received an effusive welcome from Putin when he visited Moscow last month, giving the isolated Russian president a political boost.

The Chinese leader said "legitimate security concerns of all parties" should be considered, a reference to Moscow's argument that its invasion of Ukraine was justified because of the eastward expansion of NATO, the US-European military

#### Greece to send more arms to Ukraine

Greece has pledged military assistance to Ukraine for "as long as it takes" but officials cautioned that the country needs to keep much of its Russian-made weaponry for its own defensive needs.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov visited Athens Thursday as part of regular meetings with officials from NATO countries. He was promised more artillery and small arms ammunition shipments, access to Greek hospitals for wounded military personnel and additional Sovietera BMP infantry fighting vehicles. Greece "will provide every support to Ukraine at this very important, crucial stage of the war," Greek Defence Minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos said during a joint appearance with Reznikov. "We will continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes - that's a very clear position that we have taken from the outset."

Military officials said Greece has also provided train-

ers for Ukraine's special forces and tank operators, as a contribution to the massive military assistance effort led by the United States and its allies.

Russia, which had traditionally close ties with Greece before the war in Ukraine, for decades had been a supplier of arms to the NATO member, including the S-300 air defence missile system. Moscow has singled out Athens for criticism over its support for Ukraine.

Panagiotopoulos, speaking in Parliament on the eve of Reznikov's visit, said Greece would not provide any military assistance that could compromise its own defence, and stressed that major arms procurement plans remain unchanged despite a recent thaw in tension with neighbour and fellow NATO member Turkiye. German-made Leopard tanks, the minister said, could not be provided.

"The rumours are running rampant: That we will send fighter jets, and S-300s, and this and that. For goodness' sake,"

# China aircraft carriers sail near Taiwan

hina and the US flexed their naval might by deploying aircraft carriers in a rare showdown in the Taiwan Strait, the narrow channel that separates the Chinese mainland from Taiwan, as Beijing fumed over US House Speaker's meeting with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen in Washington.

The Taiwanese defence ministry said a Chinese naval fleet led by the Shandong aircraft carrier passed through the Bashi Channel - which runs between the island and the Philippines - before reaching waters southeast of

The carrier was heading to its first manoeuvres in the western Pacific, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Thursday.

Taiwan's Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng said the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier was positioned some 400 nautical miles (740.8km) off eastern

"We can't say for sure if (the Nimitz) was there because of the Shandong, but it could be something related to the way it was there," the Post reported.

Tsai's meeting with US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy — the third most senior official in the US — on Thursday took place against the backdrop of repeated warnings from Beijing to Washington that it should not go ahead. It was the second high-profile meeting between an American official and the

China, which claims Taiwan as part of its mainland, mobilised a large naval fleet in Taiwan Strait and fired missiles

over the island when then US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, ignoring Beijing's warnings of crossing the redline eight months ago.

China again braced for a similar

showdown to highlight its resentment of Pelosi's successor Kevin McCarthy's meeting with Tsai this time in Washington.

China for its part is hosting Taiwan's former president Ma Ying-jeou, who is a pro-Beijing politician.

Ma, who was President of Taiwan from 2008 to 2016, on Wednesday visited a deep water port in Shanghai on the last leg of his mainland trip, as the Chinese navy launched patrols near the self-ruled island.

The Chinese foreign ministry for its part denounced the Tsai-McCarthy meeting, accusing the US of "providing a podium for Taiwan separatists to carry out official exchanges between US and Taiwan and enhance ties between the US and Taiwan".

The foreign ministry statement said Taiwan issues were "the first red line in China-US relations which must not be crossed" and Taiwan independence would "come to a dead end".

The Chinese defence ministry too weighed in saying the PLA "maintains a high level of vigilance at all times, resolutely defends national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and resolutely maintains peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait".

Taiwan's Defence Minister Chiu said the Shandong was detected some 200 nautical miles (370.4km) off Olanpi in southern Taiwan and was on a "training

Letter No.: 1599(I)/ Nivida-01/2022-23

#### Nepal to bolster bilateral cooperation with China "During the meeting, matters related to

Nepal Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal called on China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing on Thursday to discuss matters relating to strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries.

Paudyal is the first Nepali official to meet Qin, China's newly-appointed Foreign Minister.

He is currently in China, along with other members of the Nepalese delegations, to participate in the 15th meeting of the Bilateral Diplomatic Consultation Mechanism between the foreign ministers of the two countries, scheduled on Friday.

strengthening the longstanding bilateral relations and cooperation between Nepal and China were discussed," according to a press release issued by Nepal's Foreign

Nepal's Ambassador to China, Bishnu Pukar Shrestha, Joint Secretary at the MoFA Lok Bahadur Thapa and other senior officials from the Nepalese and Chinese Foreign Ministries were also present on the

China, which is also one of the key development partners and immediate neighbours of Nepal, has invested heavily in the country's infrastructure projects including

Dated: 06/04/2023

Govt./ Any state

Govt./ Any Govt.

Undertaking

Class "B" &

Higher in Road

work in Central

Govt./ Any state

Govt./ Anv Govt.

Undertaking

Class "B" &

Higher in Road

work in Central

Govt./ Any state

Govt./ Any Govt.

Undertaking

## Cash App founder killed in San Francisco stabbing

San Franciso (AP): Bob Lee, a technology executive who created Cash App and was currently chief product officer of MobileCoin, was fatally stabbed in San Francisco early Tuesday, according to the cryptocurrency platform and police.

The San Francisco Police Department said in a press release that officers responded to a report of a stabbing on Main Street

**AP** ■ JERUSALEM

Palestinian militants fired a

Thursday, setting off air raid

sirens in southern Israel, as

violence erupted for the second

day in a row during a sensitive

period of overlapping holidays.

seven rockets launched from

the Gaza Strip all exploded in

midair. No group claimed

responsibility for the barrage.

another tense night at

Jerusalem's most sensitive holy

site, the Al-Aqsa Mosque,

where Israeli police clashed

with Muslim worshippers

attempting to stay overnight.

March 22, scores of Muslims

have repeatedly tried to stay

overnight in the mosque, a

practice that is typically per-

mitted only during the last 10

days of the monthlong holiday.

nightly to evict the worshipers,

Israeli police have entered

Since Ramadan began

The Israeli military said

The barrage came after

barrage of rockets early on

at 2:35 a.m. Tuesday and found a 43-yearold man suffering from apparent stab wounds. The victim died at a hospital.

Police did not identify the victim but MobileCoin confirmed Lee's death in response to an email from The Associated Press on Wednesday. "Our dear friend and colleague, Bob Lee passed away yesterday at the age of 43, survived by a loving family and

Jews began the week-long

Passover holiday, hundreds of

Christians in the Old City

gathered for Holy Thursday at

the Holy Sepulcher to mark the

Last Supper, and Muslims

marked the Ramadan holy

est site in Islam and stands on

a hilltop known to Jews as the

Temple Mount, which is the

holiest site in Judaism.

Conflicting claims over it have

spilled into violence before,

including a bloody 11-day war

two years ago between Israel and Hamas, the Islamic mili-

the Middle East criticised the

Tayyip Erdogan, whose coun-

try recently reconciled with

Israel and restored full diplo-

matic ties, condemned the

violence in a television inter-

"Interventions and threats

view late Wednesday

Muslim leaders around

Turkish President Recep

tant group that rules Gaza.

Israeli actions in Al-Aqsa.

Al-Aqsa is the third-holi-

Gaza rockets raise tension

as Passover begins in Israel

but on Tuesday the scene

and firecrackers at police, who

responded with beatings that

left dozens bloody and the

police made no arrests but did

detain and question some

Palestinians, a spokesperson

said. The Palestinian Red

Crescent said it was not

allowed into the compound

Wednesday, but dozens were

injured from from beatings,

rubber bullets and stun

grenades, including an ambu-

lance driver. Israeli newspaper

Haaretz said protests on Wednesday night drew hun-

dreds in communities across

Israel's north, home to many of

Israel's Palestinian citizens,

who make up one-fifth of its

9.6 million people. Police said

they arrested five protesters in

the large town of Um al-Fahm.

of a wider conflagration as

The rocket fire raised fears

Worshippers threw stones

On Wednesday, the Israeli

erupted in violence.

arrest of hundreds.

collection of close friends and collaborators," MobileCoin CEO Josh Goldbard said in a statement. Lee was "made for the new world," Goldbard wrote. "From large contributions to Android at google, to being the first CTO of Square, in that time creating CashApp, and working with us here at Mobilecoin, Bob surely had an impact that will last far beyond his short time on earth," he said.

#### NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering) **E-TENDER NOTICE**

Office of the Superintending Engineer 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora

Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com

The Superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 12/04/2023 & onwards on website <a href="http://www.uktenders.gov.in">http://www.uktenders.gov.in</a>

#### SI. Name of Work Cost of Earnest Validity Contractor's Cost of Time of Category of No. Tender of Completion Registration (Rupee (Rupee Tender In lakh) for tendering Provincial Division PWD Class "B" & 12 Months Rs. Higher in Road (including Damarikaran 120 212.09 5000.00 Rs. 4.24 work in Central Raining/ Okhalson Band to Khabdoli Govt./ Any state Lakh Days Lakh with + 18% motor road under State Winter Govt./ Any Govt. **GST** GST Sector in District Bageshwar. Season) Undertaking (Length-3.00Km) **Provincial Division PWD** Class "B" & 12 Months Bageshwar Higher in Road Rs. (including Improvement 120 work in Central 5000.00 226.00 Rs. 4.52 Constructrion work in Km 1 Raining/

+ 18%

GST

Rs.

5000.00

+ 18%

GST

Rs.

5000.00

+ 18%

GST

Lakh

Rs. 3.85

Lakh

Rs. 4.76

Lakh

Days

120

Days

120

Days

120

Days

Winter

Season)

12 Months

(including

Raining/

Winter

Season)

12 Months

(including

Raining/

Winter

Season)

15 Months

(including

Lakh with

**GST** 

Rs.

192.46

∟akh with

**GST** 

Rs.

238.03

GST

\_akh with

Motor Road in Bageshwar Constituency block Garur Distt- Bageshwar under S.C.S.P. (Length-3.700Km)

to 4 of Kajyuli-Kotfulwari

**Provincial Division PWD** BageshwarImprovement / Re-Constructrion work in Km 2 to 5 of Machhibagar-

Gwalde Motor Road in Bageshwar Constituency block Garur Distt-Bageshwar under S.C.S.P (Length-3.500Km)

**Provincial Division PWD Bageshwar** Damarikaran work in Km 29.100 to 33.00 of Gurna to Nainiudiyar motor road under State Sector in District

Bageshwar. (Length-

3.900Km) **Provincial Division PWD** Bageshwar Improvement Re-

Constructrion work in Km 3 to 7 of Chanoli to Jainkaras Motor Road in Bageshwar Constituency block Bageshwar Distt-Bageshwar under State Sector (Length-5.00Km)

**Construction Division PWD** Ranikhet Improvement work in Km.

0.00 to 4.00 of Kukuchina -Ratkhal Motor Road in **Dwarahat Constituency Distt-**Almora Under State Sector.

Rs. 315.00 5000.00 Rs. 6.30 + 18% Days Lakh with Lakh GST GST

5000.00

+ 18%

**GST** 

Rs. 338.30

Lakh with

GST

Rs.

Rs. 6.77

Lakh

Raining/ Winter Season)

15 Months

(including

Raining/

Winter

Season)

Class "A" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking

Class "A" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking

# Cobra in cockpit, pilot lands plane safely

Pilots are normally trained for a number of worst-case scenarios, but certainly not for dealing with a snake in the cockpit. But South African pilot Rudolf Erasmus has

Erasmus has been lauded by flight experts

for a safe emergency landing after a highly venomous Cape cobra reared its head in the cockpit mid-flight. Erasmus, who has been flying for the past five years, maintained his nerve as the cobra slid back under his seat as soon as he saw it. He was flying a small Beachcraft plane with four passengers on Monday morning, from Worcester to Nelspruit. Erasmus explained his dilemma to the website TimesLive.

"When we did the preflight (procedure) on Monday morning, the people at Worcester airfield told us they had seen a Cape cobra lying underneath the wing on Sunday afternoon. They tried to catch it themselves but unfortunately it sought refuge inside the engine cowlings. The group opened the cowlings but the snake was not there so they assumed it had slithered away," he said.

"I usually travel with a water bottle that I

side wall of the aircraft. When I felt this cold sensation where my love handles are, I thought my bottle was dripping. As I turned to my left and looked down, I saw the cobra putting its head back underneath my seat,"," Erasmus said. He said that for a moment he was stunned

silent. "I had a moment of stunned silence, not sure if I should tell the passengers because I didn't want to cause a panic. But obviously they needed to know at some point what was going on," he said. "I just said, 'listen, there's a problem. The

snake is inside the aircraft. I've got a feeling it's under my seat so we are going to have to get the plane on the ground as soon as possible," he said. "We were cruising at 11,000 feet in the air when I felt something cold against my hip," Rudolph Erasmus said. The flight was close to the airport at

Welkom, so Erasmus declared an emergency with the control tower in Johannesburg. "I told them I had an unwelcomed passen-

ger. As soon as the aircraft came to a stop, we started getting out. The three passengers in the back came out first and then the one sitting in front with me," Erasmus said

General public is hereby informed that Mr. Basant Singh and Mr. Sant Singh was the owner of the property Plot of area measuring 100 Sq. Yards. ie. 83.61 Sq. Mirs. out of Khasra No. 89 situated in Willage Bhangel Begmapur. Fhesil Dadri. District Gautam Bugh Nagar, Ultra Pradesh, by writue of Sale Deed dated 24.12.2004. regol. at doe. No. 7446, and the same is to be inanced & mortgaged with my client i.e. Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Uld and the legal heirs of Late Sant Singh namely Mrs. Norash, Mr. Jitendra Bhait, have no

If any person(s) have any objection(s) or claim in this property, then contact the undersigned within 7 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which it will be assumed that there are no claims or issues in

nne arbresaid property. Raghav Tiwari, Advocate Ch. 830, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi – 110001 Mob.: +91-8076188328

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the general public at large that M/s. Golden Traval Services R/o 139 A TAIMOOR NAGAR, New Delhi. Delhi-110025 is availing loan from Aditya Birta finance Ltd. (STSL+) in respect of Entire Second Floor Without root rights Property No. 139-A, 108 sty. yts., Isimoor Nagar, New Delhi-110055. 'said property. Naresh Kumar Albesh Kumar & Mir Ramesh Kumar Ss/o Mr. Chander, are the owners of said property by virtue of Sale Deed dated \$2.12.2021 executed by Mohammad Dishad Qurashi, Hari Bebu & Qaisar Hayat in their favour duly registered as Doc no 516 Book No. 1 Vol No. 1824 Page no. \$1.1.001 in SRO-V(1) New Delhi. Further Aditya Birta Finance Ltd. (STSL+) is intending to create a registered/ equitable mortgage over the said property. In case if any person/Financial Institute/Bank /Authority/Board or any other entity have any objection/chingentor vested interest over the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 7 days of this publication. It may be further noed that after large of aforesaid period no claim in any manner shall be entertained and same will be considered as waived or abandoned.

(I)/382/5/2014/0 Office: Gadi & Associates

D.148 LEE Saketh New Delhi 10107 x =0.1.9873662181 **PUBLIC NOTICE** 

 Vew Delhi 07.04.2023
 Suparna Sinha Advocate

 (D/3825/2014) Office: Gadi & Associates

 D-148, LGF, Saket New Delhi-110017 +91-9873663181

PUBLIC NOTICE This is to inform public in general

that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has organized an auction in below mention respect of Vehicles. VEHICLES FOR SALE 1) VOLVO EICHER - 10 59

REG. NO. DL1LAD0702-YOM -2020 2) MAHINDRA - CB\_SUPRO\_MINI TRUCK REG. NO. UP37AT5565 YOM 2021 3) TATA 1512

| REG. NO. DL1GE0402-YOM -2021 4) SML SMLSARTAJ REG. NO. UP15FT8645-YOM -2022 5) TATA ACE REG. NO. DL1LAE6767-YOM-2021

6) TATA ACE

7) CB\_TATA\_ACE\_GOLD REG. NO.UP12BT8869-YOM -2022 UNDER HYPOTHECATION WITH M/S KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK IS UNDER SALE IN ITS

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INTERESTED PARTIES CAN GIVE

THEIR QUOTATIONS WITH In

REG.NO. DL1LAE9457-YOM -2021

BRANCH ADDRESS: KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK 3RD FLOOR, PLOT NO 7, SECTOR 125, NOIDA-201313 OR CONTACT: ABHINAV LAL KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD. CONTACT NO. 7798988481 EMAIL-abhinav.lal@kotak.com

# It's a pause, not a pivot: RBI **Guv on interest rate decision**

 $R^{ ext{BI Governor Shaktikanta}}_{ ext{Das on Thursday said "it's}}$ a pause and not a pivot" about the Reserve Bank of India's surprise decision to hold the key policy rate at 6.50 per cent after hiking the rate six times since May last year.

Cumulatively since last May, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has increased the interest rate by 250 basis points to tackle inflation and the Monetary Policy Committee's decision on Thursday to leave the repo rate unchanged came

RBÎ Deputy Governor Michael Patra, who heads the monetary policy department at the central bank, said, "this pause is valid till 10 am on June 8, 2023 when the Governor will announce the next policy review". While leaving the key rate unchanged, MPC members were unanimous in their view that it is time they reviewed the outcome of the past six consecutive rate hikes since May last year.

"If I have to characterise today's monetary policy in just



one line, it would be it's a pause and not a pivot," Das told reporters at the customary post-policy presser.

The surprise move also comes against the backdrop of inflation still remaining high amid rising external risks, including concerns over the health of the global financial

"We've said that MPC stands ready to act should the situation so warrant in the future meetings. So, I think banks and anybody else can draw their own inferences but I think, it will be desirable that

they sort of take our word seriously. And I think they do take our words seriously and act accordingly in pricing their future actions," Das said.

According to him, there has been an effective rate increase of 290 basis points since May last, including the 40 bps increase in the SDF Standing Deposit Facility).

He said these hikes have translated to a monetary policy transmission by way of the increase in the overnight call rates, which have soared by 320 bps between March 2022 and for 5th day in a row Financial shares advance on RBI policy decision PTI MUMBAI Renchmark indices Sensex

Dand Nifty continued their

winning run for the fifth day on

Thursday as RBI's surprise pol-

icy move to pause rate hikes

boosted buying in interest rate-

Industries helped offset losses

in IT, Power and FMCG stocks

fall, the 30-share BSE Sensex

rose by 143.66 points or 0.24

per cent to settle at 59,832.97.

During the day, it advanced

260.75 points or 0.43 per cent

gained 42.10 points or 0.24 per

cent to finish at 17,599.15 after

falling in initial trade.

The broader NSE Nifty

After raising interest rate

Bouncing back from early

amid weak global trends.

Gains in index majors

sensitive stocks.

to 59,950.06.

HDFC twins and Reliance points in 11 months, the RBI unexpectedly kept benchmark rate unchanged as global banking woes added uncertainty to

Sensex, Nifty rise

the economic outlook. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das however pledged to hike interest rate again if needed, saying the decision to pause was "for this meeting only".

Most analysts had expected one final hike of 25 basis points in RBI's current tightening cycle before hitting a

"RBI's pause is like Sachin stroke on a tricky pitch but with eyes set in and having the lux-ury of hitting the ball where ever he wanted. RBI had the option of a rate hike or a pause. The pause was not entirely unexpected.

"RBI will watch develop-ments and data before taking the next call. The market expects RBI to fetch maximum run and win the match on inflation and growth, no matter which direction they hit the ball," said Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mahindra Asset management Company Ltd.

Among the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance emerged as the biggest gainer by climbing 2.95 per cent. Tata Motors, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Sun Mahindra Pharma, Mahindra, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, HDFC, HDFC Bank, Maruti, Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel were the other major winners.

HCL Technologies, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra and Titan were among the laggards.

#### Confident of achieving wheat procurement target on likely bumper crop: Food Secretary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With India likely to harvest a record wheat output, the Centre on Thursday said it is confident of achieving wheat procurement target of 34.2 million tonne and will soon take a call on relaxing quality norms for buying in Punjab and Haryana in view of crop damage due to untimely rains.

Earlier in the day while announcing the bi-monthly monetary policy, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said the expectation of a record rabi harvest bodes well for easing of food price pressure. "There is already evidence

of a correction in wheat prices in March on supply side interventions by the government. The impact of the recent unseasonal rains in some parts of the country, however, needs to be watched," the Governor said.

Addressing a press conference, Union Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said the government is hopeful of a record wheat output of 112.2 million tonne in 2022-23 crop year ending June, despite inclement weather conditions in some



parts of the country affecting

grain quality.

The likely production loss due to unseasonal rains in Punjab and Haryana will be offset by yield gains expected in other wheat producing states because of lower temperature,

Chopra said the Centre has already relaxed quality norms for wheat procurement n Madhya Pradesh to ensure that farmers do not suffer because of vagaries of weather and they get minimum support

"Because of the inclement weather in the last two weeks, there has been some damage to the wheat crop. But the production loss will be minimal. We are hopeful of achieving the overall production target of 112.2 million tonne," Chopra

#### Nothing innovative presented by NUE applicants, says RBI

PTI MUMBAI

 $S^{\mathrm{ix}}$  New Umbrella Entity (NUE) hopefuls, including Facebook, Google and Amazon, have failed to present any innovative solution due to which efforts to build an alternative to the NPCI have not moved ahead, the RBI said on Thursday.

A total of six consortiums which had the global tech majors teaming up with local entities including Axis Bank and ICICI Bank had applied in 2021 for the NUE licence.

"Of the proposals that we have received, we did not quite see any innovative or infrastructural solution that had come up," Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar told reporters when asked about progress on

He said the RBI has had a look at the applications, and reminded that the central bank's objective was to get some innovations into the dig-



already functioning well with efforts like Unified Payments

"We wanted to bring in new ideas. We did not want something which is either incremental or a substitute of existing ideas or technologies," Sankar added.

Meanwhile, the RBI brass reiterated that the Indian banking system continues to be sound and healthy, seeking to allay any concerns about the impact of the global contagions which started with the failure of Silicon Valley Bank in the

#### 'Pre-sanctioned credit lines to come under UPI ambit'

**PTI** MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Thursday proposed to The Reserve Bank on expand the scope of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) by including pre-sanctioned credit lines at banks within the ambit of the popular payment UPI is a robust payment

platform supporting an array of features. Presently it handles 75 per cent of the retail digital payments volume in India. The UPI system has been

leveraged to develop products and features aligned to India's payments digitisation goals, said RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das while announcing the bimonthlymonetary

In other words, UPI network will facilitate payments financed by credit from banks. This can reduce the cost of such offerings and help in the development of unique products for Indian markets.

tions are enabled between deposit accounts at banks, sometimes intermediated by pre-paid instruments including The central bank will soon

issue detailed instructions in this regard.

Recently, RuPay credit cards were permitted to be linked to UPI.

Commenting on the announcement, A K Goel, Chairman of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA), said expanding the scope of UPI to include pre-sanctioned credit lines at banks is aimed at increasing the coverage of UPI and also increasing the access to institutional credit as UPI is quite popular among the pub-

Anand Kumar Bajaj, Founder, MD & CEO, PayNearby said the fast pace evolution of technology is playing a huge role in presenting a great opportunity to solve the broken pieces, fill the gaps

#### **Gold plunges ₹370**; silver jumps ₹260



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price plunged ₹370 to ₹60,370 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a fall in the precious metal prices in the overseas market, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had closed at ₹60,740 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver, however, jumped

₹260 to ₹74,040 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the
Delhi markets traded at ₹60,370 per 10 grams, weakened by ₹370 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international market, gold was trading lower at \$2,015 per ounce while silver

#### Rupee slips 2 paise to 81.92 against US dollar post-RBI policy decision

L es and settled 2 paise lower at 81.92 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday after the RBI decided to keep the key benchmark policy rate at 6.5 per cent. Forex traders said the

The rupee pared initial loss-

Indian rupee witnessed volatility after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) surprised the market by pausing the rate hike. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit

opened weak at 81.95 against the dollar, and finally ended the day at 81.92 (provisional), 2 paise lower from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee gained 42 paise to close at 81.90 against the US dollar.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday decided to keep the key benchmark policy rate at 6.5 per cent even as inflation is trending above its tolerance level. The rate hike has been paused after six consecutive rate increases aggre-



On the rupee, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said the Indian Rupee has moved in an orderly manner in the calendar year 2022 and continues to be so in 2023 also. This is reflective of the

strength of domestic macro-

economic fundamentals and the resilience of the Indian economy to global spillovers. RBI remains watchful and

focused on maintaining the stability of the Indian rupee, he added.

According to Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, the local unit initially declined but strengthened following recovery in the domestic equities backed by foreign fund inflows, Parmar

#### sales climb 22% annually in Jan-Mar'

PTI NEW DELHI

**'Housing** 

Housing sales and new supply increased 22 per cent and 86 per cent, respectively, during January-March this year on better demand, according to residential brokerage firm PropTiger.Com.

REA India, a full-stack real estate technology platform, owns Housing.Com, PropTiger.Com Makaan.Com. In its report

titled Real Insight Residential January-March 2023, PropTiger.Com said that housing sales rose to 85,850 units across eight cities in January-March 2023 from 70,630 units in the year-ago period. New launches grew 86 per cent to 1,47,780 units —highest in a quarter — from 79,530 units.

Reports of other property consultants have also reported an increase in housing sales during the January-March quarter despite a rise in mort-

# gage rates in the last

#### **HLL Infra Tech** Services reports 58% jump in profit in FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

HLL Infra Tech Services Ltd (HITES) has reported a 58 per cent jump in net profit to ₹27.76 crore in 2022-23 compared to ₹17.6 crore in FY22 on higher revenue from the infrastructure division, the Health Ministry said on Thursday The total turnover of the central public sector undertaking under the Health Ministry jumped by 19 per cent to ₹361.38 crores in 2022-23 against ₹303.40 crores in 2021-22.

These significantly positive results were achieved largely due to the infrastructure development business.

# 'ONDC framing mechanism to ensure compliance of its rules'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

¬overnment-promoted Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is framing a mechanism to ensure compliance with its rules by entities involved in online retail trading, a senior official said on Thursday.

The ONDC aims to promote an open platform for all aspects of e-commerce retail. It would help small retailers expand their business through e-commerce medium and reduce dominance of giants in the sector.

"If we see that any player is not following our rules, we would take action. We are in the process of finalising things.



Law of land should be followed. We are in the process of making that mechanism," Joint Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Sanjiv told reporters here.

A set of rules on protection of personal information and setting up of grievance resolution mechanisms would be part of the comprehensive ONDC network policy.

According to a consultation paper released by ONDC last year, one of the chapters of the policy on grievance man-agement would frame mechanisms for the participants to manage and resolve grievances filed against them by buyers and sellers.

ONDC, a non-profit company, formulates a set of standards for voluntary adoption by sellers or logistics providers or payments gateway operators.
The ONDC will require an

undertaking from each partic-

ipant at the time of onboarding

that it will comply with the pol-

Sebi clarifies on shareholders' approval for

## tractor models under new OJA brand

Mahindra to bring 40

PTI NEW DELHI

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd on Thursday said its tractor division will bring 40 new models under a new brand OJA, built on a lightweight global platform.

The Mahindra OJA tractors will focus on both domestic and international markets including the US, Japan and South-East Asia, the company said in a statement.

It will have four sub-tractor platforms — the sub-compact, compact, small utility and large utility — tractor categories, covering 40 models across various multiple HP points, it added.



range of tractors has been developed under the global tractor programme, K2 through close cooperation between the engineering teams of Mitsubishi Mahindra Agriculture Machinery, Japan, and Mahindra Research Valley, India, the R&D centre for Mahindra's Auto and Farm sector, the company said.

#### **BUSINESS BRIEF** THDCIL CMD GETS ADDITIONAL CHARGE AS NHPC CMD

New Delhi: Rajeev Kumar Vishnoi, Chairman and Managing Director of THDCIL, has received the additional charge of NHPC, according to an official statement. "Ministry of Power ... Has conveyed the approval of the Competent Authority to extend the additional charge of the post of the Chairman and Managing Director, NHPC Limited already entrusted to Rajeev Kumar Vishnoi, CMD, THDCIL," NHPC said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. The additional charge has been assigned for a period of two months effective March 1, 2023 or till a regular incumbent joins the post or until further orders, whichever is

**DESI GAMING APP CLOCKS 2 CRORE USERS** 

Bengaluru: Bengaluru based livestreaming and social gaming app, Eloelo, on Wednesday announced that it has clocked 20 million users on the platform, making it the fastest growing live and social gaming app in the country. The company aims to cross 50 million users by

## Crisil Ratings upgrades outlook on Jindal Stainless to positive

PTI NEW DELHI

Tindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) on Thursday said Crisil Ratings has revised its outlook on the stainless steelmaker's long-term bank facilities and debt programme to 'AA' with a positive outlook.

The rating agency has revised its outlook in view of the company's improved business risk profile, an expected uptick in scale and forward integration with capacity expansion and acquisitions, JSL said in a statement.

"JSL has earned an outlook upgrade of Positive from Stable from the CRISIL Ratings on the long-term bank facilities and debt programme, and a reaffirmed rating at CRISIL AA-. Meanwhile, the rating on the short-term bank facilities has been reaffirmed at CRISIL



that CRISIL Ratings took note

of in order to elevate the outlook include the completion of the merger process of Jindal Stainless Hisar Limited (JSHL) with the company, the healthy financial risk profile of the company led by strong liquidity, its strategic acquisitions, an agile business model, and its ongoing capacity expansion project to 2.9 million tonnes

## RBI imposes penalty on Mahindra & Mahindra Fin Services, Indian Bank

he Reserve Bank has imposed a penalty of ₹6.77 crore on Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services Ltd, Mumbai, for non-compliance with norms related to disclosure of interest rates to borrowers at the time of sanction of loans, a release said on Thursday.

In another release, the RBI said a ₹55 lakh penalty has been imposed on Indian Bank for contravention of certain Know Your Customer (KYC))

A penalty of ₹10.50 lakh on Muthoot Money Limited, Ernakulam for non-compliance with certain provisions of the 'Monitoring of Frauds in NBFCs (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2016, has also been imposed. The RBI said the penalties

are based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered

#### Listed public sector compa-nies, including banks, will

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

be required to take shareholders' approval for any appointment or reappointment to the board of directors in the immediate next general meeting, capital markets regulator Sebi has clarified.

In case shareholders do not clear resolution for the appointment, such a person would cease to be a director, it Providing informal guid-

ance to state-owned Bank of

Baroda, the Securities and

Exchange Board of India (Sebi)

differ on a case-to-case basis. The clarification came after

indicated that its views might

Bank of Baroda sought informal guidance in relation to amendments made in LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) rules

pertaining to shareholders' requirement for appointment on the board. The bank has sought clar-

ification on the status of government-appointed directors in a scenario where resolutions put for appointment are reject-

Responding to the query, Sebi said that LODR regulation would be applicable to the

that there is no restriction on voting by the Government of India on a resolution put up for consideration of the shareholders to approve an appointment or re-appointment.

#### directors appointment on listed PSUs boards ed by shareholders and whether the government can participate in such a resolution.

bank and consequently, the approval of shareholders for the appointment or reappointment of a person on the board of directors is mandatorily required to be taken at the next general meeting of the bank.

In addition, Sebi clarified

# REAL SMASH BARCA TO REACH COPA FINAL

**y**arim Benzema struck a hat-trick as Real Madrid hat-trick as item in hammered Barcelona 4-0 at Camp Nou to reach the Copa del Rey final on Wednesday, progressing 4-1 on aggregate.

Vinicius Junior opened the scoring just before the break as Carlo Ancelotti's side mounted a spectacular comeback from their one-goal semi-final first leg

second-half treble.

After netting three at the weekend against Real Valladolid in La Liga, Benzema repeated the trick to humiliate Barcelona on a painful night for coach Xavi Hernandez in front of almost 95,000 distraught fans.

Los Blancos trail their archrivals by 12 points in La Liga and were beaten by Barca in the Spanish Super Cup final in

reach the Copa final for the first time since 2014, where they will

"It was a complete game when you play a complete game, you win 4-0 like that," said Ancelotti. "This is the most important moment of the season and when we're at the right temperature (like this), we're good."

Madrid turfed out the record 31-time cup winners with spiky night in Barcelona, where they also ended a demoralising run of three consecutive Clasico Barcelona's Sergi Roberto

said letting in Vinicius' goal on the stroke of half-time was a huge blow.

"Their goal at the end of the first half killed us, we didn't deserve to let in that goal. I think we were better in the first half," the midfielder told RTVE. "We created more chances

that we didn't put away, and that goal hurt our morale. In the second half they scored the second and we couldn't play our game." The Catalan said defeat

would not damage Barcelona's title bid in the final weeks of the "Now we have a considerable points distance, it will not

affect us, we have to continue and go for the league," he added.

**LETHAL MADRID** Xavi was without injured quartet Ousmane Dembele, Pedri, Frenkie de Jong and Andreas Christensen, and evenous pace and intensity, both teams keen to reach the final, but absolutely desperate not to be knocked out by the other.

Barca coach Xavi was booked for protesting a foul as tempers boiled over, while Gavi and Vinicius were also issued yellow cards as they scrapped.

Thousands of Barcelona fans chanted Lionel Messi's name in the 10th minute, amid speculation he could leave Paris Saint-Germain, and they would have dearly loved some of the Argentine's magic. Los Blancos took the lead in

stoppage time at the end of the first half, when they showed their prowess on the counter-

Thibaut Courtois made a fine save to deny Robert Lewandowski and exactly 20 seconds later, Vinicius struck at the other end.

Rodrygo cut the ball back to the forward, who squeezed a shot home despite Jules Kounde's best attempt at a goalline clearance. Benzema was on hand to make sure, but Vinicius's effort had already

The French forward soon was able to pounce though, finishing lethally from the edge of the box in an ocean of space after Luka Modric easily skipped away from Sergi Roberto.

Barcelona collapsed after that — Benzema slotted home his second from the penalty spot before the hour mark, sending Marc-Andre ter Stegen the wrong way after Franck Kessie clumsily fouled Vinicius.

Ter Stegen denied Marco Asensio and then Benzema completed his hat-trick with a cool finish after a fine dribble and pass by Vinicius.

Congratulations to Real Madrid, they had a great second half and compete very well," said

"If you let Madrid off the hook, they don't forgive you. It's not by chance they have won the Champions League -- they have a great team."

Madrid have lifted the Copa del Rey on 19 occasions, while their opponents Osasuna have never won it, securing passage to their second final after beating Athletic Bilbao on Tuesday.

Nantes down Lyon to enter French Cup final PSG suffered a second straight

Nantes reached a second straight French Cup final as Ludovic Blas' brilliant goal Nantes started brightly on

their bid for a fifth French Cup. Jean-Charles Castelletto Antoine Kombouare's side was denied an opening goal in booked a place in the April 29 just the second minute by showpiece at the Stade de Lyon goalkeeper Anthony France against either Toulouse

Lyon are still waiting for a first appearance in the final since winning the competition in 2012, after failing to back up last weekend's Ligue 1 victory over Paris Saint-Germain. ruled out for offside.

Nantes, whose Cup triumph last season was their first major trophy since winning the league in 2001, have a golden chance of a successful defence.

"These are rare, exceptional moments," said Nantes coach Kombouare.

victory over Lyon on Wednes-

or second-tier Annecy.

"When you experience a season like last year, you tell yourself that it doesn't only happen once in a lifetime, and then here we are again."

Record 14-time winners

early exit in the last 16 to Marseille, who were then dumped out by Annecy.

gave the holders a 1-0 last-four Wednesday as they continued

> Lopes, who also saved from Blas 20 minutes later. Samuel Moutoussamy thought he had broken the deadlock just after the halfhour mark but his effort was

Nantes striker Mostafa Mohamed missed good chances either side of half-time, calling Lopes into action again before blazing wide.

Blas made no such mistake in the 57th minute, though, controlling Fabien Centonze's long ball on his chest before slamming a left-footed volley past Lopes.

Bradley Barcola went close to a late equaliser as Lyon belatedly woke up, but Nantes held on for a deserved victory.

## Barca fans chant Messi's name amid PSG exit talk

Several thousand Barcelona fans at Camp Nou chanted Lionel Messi's name in the 10th minute of the Copa del Rey semi-final Clasico on Wednesday. The Barcelona club legend

and all-time top goalscorer, currently at Paris Saint-Germain, is likely to leave the French side at the end of his contract in June, a club source said on Tuesday.

Some fans sung Messi's



name outside the stadium before the clash with Real Madrid and many joined in after 10 minutes of the match, representing the Argentine's shirt number at Barca.

"Messi is living history at Barcelona, he's the best player in the history of football," said sporting director Mateu Alemany before the Clasico on Wednesday.
"He's at PSG fighting for

titles and we are fighting for ours. In the future we'll see what

World Cup winner Messi who will turn 36 in June, joined PSG in 2021 on a two-year deal which expires at the end of this

## **Dutch to probe Feyenoord-Ajax violence**

**AP** MANCHESTER

Marcus Rashford sent Manchester United back into the Premier League top four with the winner as the Red Devils beat Brentford 1-0 on Wednesday, while Newcastle won 5-1 at West Ham to stay third.

Callum Wilson and Joelinton each scored twice for the Magpies, who remain above United on goal difference. Both sides now have a three-

point lead over Tottenham and race for a place in next season's Champions League. United had slipped to fifth

after a run of three league games without a win and cup commitments that meant they had not registered a Premier League win since mid-February. Erik ten Hag's men also had

a score to settle with the Bees after a humiliating 4-0 defeat when the sides last met in August.

The Dutch coach was stinging in his criticism of his players' attitude and desire in losing 2-0 to Newcastle on Sunday and got the response he was looking Rashford started through

the middle as Ten Hag's patience with Wout Weghorst finally ran out and that decision bore fruit when the England international was perfectly placed to sidefoot home Marcel Sabitzer's knockdown for his 28th goal of the season.

Brentford had lost just one of their previous 16 Premier League games to rise to ninth in

Thomas Frank's men had offered barely anything of an



Joelinton doubled the Magpies lead inside 13 minutes as the Brazilian latched onto Fabian Schar's ball over the top and coolly rounded Lukasz Fabianski before slotting into an empty net.

Kurt Zouma's header just before half-time briefly gave West Ham hope.

But within seconds of the second-half kick off, Nayef Aguerd was dispossessed inside his own box by Jacob Murphy, who squared for Wilson to have Another West Ham gift

allowed Isak to make it four as

Fabianski cleared the ball into

the Swede's path before Joelinton delivered the final blow. David Moyes looked on aghast at his side's defending it could the final nail in the coffin for the Scot as he faces becom-

ing the 13th Premier League

manager sacked this season. Defeat leaves the Hammers still out of the relegation zone only on goal difference.

**AP** ■ THE HAGUE

The Dutch government pledged a top-level investigation on Thursday after Ajax's Dutch Cup semi-final at Feyenoord was halted when a player was injured by an object thrown from the stands.

The game was stopped for almost 30 minutes after Ajax midfielder Davy Klaassen suffered a head standard than fered a head wound, and there was also crowd trouble with fireworks and anti-semitic chants. Dutch Justice Minister

Dylan Yesilgoz said the incident highest level.' She and Sports Minister Conny Helder will hold talks

with the Dutch Football

Federation, clubs, municipalities

and the police to find out what happened.
"If you continue like this, you will get a situation where even home supporters will be banned," Yesilgoz told the ANP

news agency. Games between the bitter Amsterdam and Rotterdam



rivals are often flashpoints but there has been a rising incidence of football violence in the Netherlands.

Fifa President Gianni Infantino urged Dutch author-

There is absolutely no place for violence in football, on or off the field," Infantino said on his Instagram account.

'Such events... have no place

in our sport or in society all players have to be safe and secure to play the game, and I call on the relevant authorities to ensure that this is respected at all lev-

The Dutch Football Federation KNVB also condemned the incident.

"Dutch football has sunk to a new low", the KNVB said in a statement.

Thousands of people go to the stadium to watch the players play football. Then it is insane that they are apparently

not safe on the field." Allard Li stopped the game in the 63rd minute for almost half an hour after a lighter thrown from the stands hit Klaassen, who was left

with a bleeding head wound. Ajax eventually won 2-1 to qualify for the final where they will play PSV Eindhoven.

Klaassen, who scored his team's second goal in the 51st minute, tried to continue after the restart but left the pitch a few minutes afterwards, holding his

# LAMPARD RETURNS TO CHELSEA AS CARETAKER BOSS

**AP** ■ LONDON

hour but were nearly gifted an equaliser when Ivan Toney

charged down David de Gea's

clearance and the ball flew inch-

only other clear sight of goal.

Wilson was restored to the

starting line-up by Howe in

place of Alexander Isak and

rewarded his manager's trust by

heading home the opener after

the first time in 20 years

es wide.

De Gea made amends when he spread himself to block from  $F^{\mathrm{rank}}$  Lampard insisted it was an "easy decision" to make his surprise return to Kevin Schade with Brentford's Chelsea as caretaker manager Elsewhere, a fourth consecuntil the end of the season on utive win edged Newcastle clos-Thursday, just over two years er to the Champions League for after he was sacked by the Premier League club.

Lampard, Chelsea's record goalscorer, previously managed the Blues from July 2019 until January 2021, when he was replaced by Thomas

The 44-year-old's unexpected move back to Stamford Bridge came after Tuchel's successor Graham Potter was dismissed on Sunday with the club in the bottom half of the Premier League.
"We are delighted to wel-

come Frank back to Stamford Bridge," Chelsea co-controlling owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali said in a state-

"Frank is a Premier League



Hall of Famer and a legend at this club.

"As we continue our thorough and exhaustive process for a permanent head coach, we want to provide the club and our fans with a clear and stable plan for the remainder of the season."

Former England midfield er Lampard had been out of a job since January when he was sacked by relegation-threatened Everton after less than a year in charge.



#### 6 WC stadiums to be used for Asian Cup

**AP** ■ DOHA

Six of Qatar's eight World Cup stadiums will be used for the Asian Cup to be staged in the Gulf state next January, the AFC has announced.

But the Lusail stadium used for the World Cup final and the iconic 974 stadium made from containers will not be part of the 24-nation tournament to run from January 12 to February 10.

in China but was switched and delayed because of the country's coronavirus restrictions.

be "a true spectacle never before experienced in Asian football 'We have every faith that

they will showcase their unrivalled hosting capabilities, stateof-the-art infrastructure and warm hospitality," he added in comments made when the Kuala Lumpur-based AFC released the dates late on Wednesday.

Qatar will use the Al Janoub

stadium, Al Bayt stadium, Ahmed Bin Ali stadium, Al Thumama stadium, Education City stadium and Khalifa International stadium which were all part of the multi-billion dollar infrastructure laid on for the World Cup. The smaller Jassim bin Hamad stadium and Abdullah bin Khalifa stadium will also be used, the AFC said.

# Werner takes Leipzig to German Cup semis

Holders RB Leipzig kept their hopes of a second straight German Cup

title alive, winning 2-0 against Borussia Dortmund to reach the semi-finals on Wednesday. The home side started fast against a poor Dortmund, taking the lead mid-way through the first half when a ram-

paging Mohamed Simakan found Timo Werner on the break to tap home from close range. Defender Willi Orban scored on the counter deep into injury time to send

Leipzig through to the semis for the fourth time in five seasons. After the game, Orban toasted "a beautiful ending for us" after an "emo-

tional match, from both sides.' Dortmund captain Marco Reus

told German TV "in the first half, Leipzig ate us up".

"We did not deserve to win that

game," he added. Dortmund midfielder Julian Brandt said his side were "extremely lucky to

have survived the opening stages only

conceding one goal.

The two most recent Cup winners faced off in what has become an increasingly bitter rivalry between the sides most likely to challenge Bayern Munich for major trophies in Germany.

With Bayern eliminated by Freiburg on Tuesday, both sides knew a win would place them in pole position for the Cup. Leipzig came into the match having

lost four of their past five matches but showed fluency and aggression in attack, peppering a shellshocked Dortmund defence.



Dortmund, who opened 2023 with 10 straight wins in all competitions, have now lost three of their past five. Sitting two points behind Bayern in

the league, Dortmund will need to arrest

the slide at home against third-placed

Union Berlin on Saturday. STUTTGART PROGRESS Earlier on Wednesday, Enzo Millot scored late to send Stuttgart into the last four with a 1-0 win at Nuremberg.

With the match heading towards extra time, Millot latched onto a Hiroki Ito pass and chipped home goalkeeper Peter Vindahl, giving Stuttgart coach Sebastian Hoeness a win 48 hours after he replaced the sacked Bruno Labbadia

Stuttgart and Leipzig joined Freiburg and Eintracht Frankfurt in the semis.

#### reach top of FIFA rankings **AP** ■ ZURICH

Argentina

World Cup winner Argentina topped the FIFA rankings on Thursday for the first time in six years. Argentina's two wins in friendlies last month ended the one-year run at the top for Brazil, which lost at Morocco 2-1 and fell to No. 3.

en finalist, followed Argentina in rising one place, to No. 2. France won back-to-back European Championship qualifiers against No. 6 the Netherlands and Ireland. Belgium stayed at No. 4, with England next after two wins including beating No. 8 Italy.

The Asian Cup was originally meant to be held this year France, the World Cup beat-

> Asian Football Confederation president Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa said that based on Qatar's hosting of the World Cup last year the Asian Cup will

# SHARDUL, SPINNERS STAR IN KOLKATA'S WIN

hardul Thakur smashed a counter-attacking half-century before the spinners played their part to perfection as Kolkata Knight Riders made a memorable homecoming with an 81-run win over Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023 match here at the Eden Gardens on Thursday

Kolkata Knight Riders found themselves tottering for 89/5 before Thakur led a superb recovery with his 29-ball 68 to power his team to 204/7 after RCB opted to bowl.

Coming in at No 7, Thakur hammered the joint-fastest fifty of the season off 20 balls and shared an entertaining 103-run wicket partnership off 47 balls with Rinku Singh (46

In reply, Royal Challengers Bangalore failed to last the distance and folded up for 123 in 17.4 overs with the trio of Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine and debutant Suyash Sharma sharing eight wickets between themselves.

It was Kolkata Knight Riders 's first win of the season.

Thakur also took one wicket in his all-round show in KKR's first home match after almost four years.

Royal Challengers Bangalore were going great guns at 44 no loss in 25 balls in pursuit of the big chase before the Sunil Narine triggered the

with a beauty in his 150th IPL

Chakravarthy then gave a double blow dismissing Glenn Maxwell (5) and Harshal Patel (0) in three balls before ending with splendid figures of 3.4-0-15-4.

Thereafter, it was 19-year-old leg-spinner Suyash Sharma (4-0-30-3) who made a dream debut after being included as an impact player in place of Venkatesh Iver.

The long-haired mystery spinner got two wickets in one over to have Kolkata Knight Riders reeling at

Suyash got his maiden wicket when he deceived Anju Rawat (1) with a tossed up delivery and in space of three balls, he grabbed the prizedscalp of Dinesh Karthik (9) with a fuller delivery.

Fresh from his 82 not out against Mumbai Indians, Kohli teed off in style, scoring a boundary off the first ball of the innings against Umesh

At 42 for no loss, the RCB opening duo looked set for another easy chase when Narine triggered the collapse, cleaning up Kohli with a beau-

The star Indian completely missed the line as the ball sharply turned in to knock his stumps.

Earlier, David Willey (4-1-16-2) and Karn Sharma (3-0-26-2) took wickets off successive deliveries in

powerplay and middle overs respectively to give RCB the initial edge.

Willey exposed KKR's fragile top-order, when the England leftarm pacer knocked over Venkatesh Iyer (3) and Mandeep Singh (0) off successive deliveries.

But RCB frittered away the start with Rahmanullah Gurbaz first taking the charge against a wayward

Akash Deep en route to his 44-ball 57, his maiden IPL fifty.

It turned from bad to worse for

KKR when a reverse-sweeping Nitish Rana (1) got out following a good review from RCB in the very first ball after powerplay.

KKR looked in trouble at 47/3

but Gurbaz led the charge against the 'local' Bengal pacer Akash Deep,

pulling him for a six before collecting back-to-back boundaries.

Gurbaz took a review to overturn an LBW decision on 30 and raced to a 38-ball fifty with a powerful sweep over long leg boundary.
But RCB again seized the mom-

entum when the legspinner Sharma had Gurbaz and Russell off back-toback deliveries in the 12th over.

Williamson to undergo surgery, likely to miss OD

Mumbai Indians on Thursday named Riley Meredith as a replacement for injured fast bowler Jhye Richardson. Richardson is suffering from a hamstring injury and was ear-lier ruled out of the Indian Premier His replacement, Australian fast

bowler, Riley Meredith has played 5 T20 Internationals, picking up eight The 26-year-old has previously

represented the Punjab Kings and Mumbai Indians in the IPL.

"He joins MI for Rs 1.5 Crore," read an ÍPL advisory.

#### **TOPLEY OUT OF IPL**

England pacer Reece Topley was on Thursday ruled out of the Indian Premier League due to a dislocated Topley had suffered the injury in

Royal Challengers Bangalore's opening home game at the Chinnaswamy Stadium against Mumbai Indians. Topley has been ruled out of the

IPL and has flown back home. His replacement will be named soon," RCB head coach Sanjay Bangar said on air during the game against Kolkata Knight Riders here.

He also informed that star spinner Wanindu Hasaranga is expected to join the squad on April 10 and Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood, who could not play the Test series in India due to injury, on April 14.

#### SRH look for inspiration from new skipper

PTI LUCKNOW

Jolted by a crushing defeat in their campaign opener, Sunrisers Hyderabad will be bolstered by the return of their South African recruits, including new skipper Aiden Markram, when they play Lucknow match here on Friday.

In the absence of Markram, Bhuvneshwar Kumar led SRH in their opening game, which they lost by a huge 72-run margin against Rajasthan Royals.

But in a big boost to the team, Markram and two fellow South Africans — Marco Jansen and Heinrich Klaasen - have joined the side after completing their national duty.

SRH finished last in 2021 and eighth among 10 teams last year and they will bank on Markram's leadership skills to deliver results this season. However, if the opening

game is anything to go by, SRH cut a sorry figure as they struggled against RR, who dominated both the powerplays — racking up 85 for 1 first and then conceding just 30 for 2 in the first six overs while defending 203 for 5.

Coached by the legendary Brain Lara, SRH will look to put up a much better show, especially in the powerplay on Friday.

The arrival of the South African players came as a big

relief for SRH as Markram, apart from his tactical acumen, can provide solidity to the batting line-up and Jansen can add teeth to their pace department.

Save T Natarajan (2/23), none of the seamers could put up a fight against RR. While Afghanistan's Fazalhaq Farooqi up conceding 41 runs in four overs, while Bhuvneshwar, despite all his experience, was not good enough.

Umran Malik claimed a wicket but he too was expensive, bleeding 32 in 3 overs.

In the spin department, Washington Sundar and Adil Rashid had an ordinary day and they will have to buck up if SRH want to put the opponent batters under pressure.

For LSG, skipper KL Rahul's form is cause of concern as he failed to capitalise on his starts but Kyle Mayers produced some extraordinary hitting during his two blistering fifties in the last two matches. Even though the batters failed to take LSG home against Chennai Super Kings, overall they have chipped in when required.

Among bowlers, Ravi Bishnoi has been impressive with five wickets so far, while England pacer Mark Wood blew away Delhi Capitals with a fivewicket haul in their opening match and also accounted for three scalps in their last game.

**PTI** WELLINGTON

 $K^{\text{ane Williamson is likely to miss the}}_{\text{ODI World Cup in India later this}}$ year as the New Zealand skipper is set to undergo a surgery for the treatment of his right knee which he injured while playing for Gujarat Giants in the ongoing IPL.

Following the injury, Williamson returned to New Zealand and the scans have confirmed that he has ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) of his right knee. Williamson suffered the injury

while fielding for the holders against Chennai Super Kings in Ahmedabad. According to New Zealand Cricket

statement, the right-handed batter will go under the knife within the next

On receiving the news, Williamson

acknowledged the support he had received from his franchise and NZC following the injury.

"I've received great support over the past few days and want to thank both the Gujarat Titans and New Zealand Cricket for that," he said. "Naturally it's disappointing to get

such an injury, but my focus now is on having the surgery and starting rehab. 'It's going to take some time, but I'll be doing everything I can to get back

on the field as soon as possible," he According to the standard rehabilitation period for such an injury, Williamson is unlikely to be fit and

available for World Cup which is scheduled to be held in October-"I look forward to doing what I can

to support Gary (Stead) and the team



over the next few months, Williamson said.

New Zealand coach Stead too feels it would be very difficult for Williamson to be fit before the World

Cup.
"You take Kane the player for a start, but then Kane the leader and the person he is within our group as well, it's a huge spanner in the works for

"We haven't given up hope that he might be right but at this stage it does look unlikely. Our first thoughts are with Kane at the moment, it's a tough time for him, it's not an injury you expect...it hits you pretty hard." Williamson had quit Test captain-

cy in December 2022 but leads the Black Caps in the limited overs format. He has played 161 ODIs, scoring 6554 runs at an average of 47.83.

## Wood wants to prove he's among best in business in IPL

ngland and Lucknow Super Giants pacer Mark in the business in the IPL after his disappointing debut in the cash-rich T20 league five years ago.

Wood bowled four wicketless overs for Chennai Super Kings, conceding 49 runs, back in 2018 in his only IPL match before this season. He is now looking for redemption, having taken eight wickets in LSG's first two matches so far.

"I felt like I had a bit of unfinished business, in terms of trying to come here and prove myself on a big stage," Wood said ahead of LSG's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday.

"I've played for Éngland in World Ćup finals (50-over and T20 both) but I hadn't cracked in IPL. So this time, I'm trying my best to prove that I can be in the mix in IPL, with the best players. "(I will) try to prove a point, that I'm up to this standard.

Wood took 5 for 14 against Delhi Capitals and then 3 for 49 in Monday night's defeat to Chennai Super Kings

"I don't think I was really prepared for CSK at that time. I played one match and I got smashed," Wood said about his first IPL experience in 2018.

He was signed by Lucknow Super Giants for Rs 7.5 crore in the 2022 auction, and was then retained for 2023. He missed the last season of IPL due to an elbow injury which also ruled him out of England's home international summer.

'I'm here this year, trying my best to contribute for Lucknow, trying to repay the faith that they've shown in me, sticking by me and picking me "It's great to get the wickets. That's role was going to be, coming to LSG."



again," said the 33-year-old.

"So far, I've absolutely loved it. KL Rahul has been brilliant with me. The management have been excellent, keeping my role clear, what they

He said he has been using the experience of captain KL Rahul to good effect.

"He's someone from India, he knows the pitches well, (and) he's a vastly experienced player in these conditions. So (I will) use him and my own knowledge, and try and come up with the best plan on the field for these wickets.

It's great to get the wickets. That's what my

## **Buttler likely to miss RR's** next match against DC

Thakur then took Akash Deep to

Apart from Willey (4-1-16-2),

cleaners in his knock studded with

none of the RCB bowlers failed to

impress and Akash Deep conceded

30 runs from his two overs. Siraj also

looked wayward and returned with

1/44 from his four overs. They also

nine fours and three sixes.

leaked 23 runs in extras.

**p** ajasthan Royals' batting mainstay stitches on the little finger of his left hand during team's IPL game against Punjab Kings and could miss his team's next game against Delhi Capitals on April 8.

Royals lost the game by five runs. Ravichandran Ashwin was promoted as an opener as Buttler, who injured his little finger while taking a catch to dismiss PBKS batter Shahrukh Khan, was getting stitches on his finger.

Buttler ran from deep and took a sliding catch off Jason Holder's bowling in the last over but immediately looked in pain as he left the field with a couple of balls still remaining.

"Jos was not fit. He was getting stitches for his finger after the catch," skipper Sanju Samson said during post-match presentation ceremony.
In fact, Buttler, who got a spon-

sor's award for the best catch, came to collect his cheque with a distinct white strapping on his little finger.

The finger will certainly be sore and fielding could be an issue and hence Royals medical staff might just want to give him rest for a game or two with next match to be played within 72 hours.



#### We're just one hit away from win: Samson

**PTI** ■ GUWAHATI

R ajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson has blamed the dip in momentum in the middle overs during their stiff chase as the reason behind the five-run loss against Punjab Kings in the IPL here. Chasing a tricky 198-run target on Wednesday, RR could manage 192 for 7 in the end.
"We started off really well, we finished the powerplay real-

ly well. In the middle overs, we were expecting to get the boundaries here and there but they bowled really well. That's where I think the momentum went a bit down," Samson said.

"We did well to get so close also after the fall in our run rate. We just fell short of a six, just one ball hit away." Meanwhile, Punjab Kings' batting coach Wasim Jaffer praised young Prabhsimran Singh, who made 60 off 34 balls while opening the batting along side captain Shikhar

## Orleans Masters: Rajawat stuns Nishimoto to enter quarterfinals

**PTI** ■ ORLEANS

India's Priyanshu Rajawat notched up a stunning straight-game win over top seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan to progress to the men's singles quarterfinals of the Orleans Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on Thursday.

World number 58 Rajawat showed immaculate skills and tactical acumen en route a 21-8, 21-16 win over world No. 12 Nishimoto, who had claimed the Madrid Spain Masters title on last Sunday. In another men's singles match, Mithun Manjunath lost to Chi Yu Jen 15-21, 19-21 in the round of 16. In women's singles, Tanya



17-21 defeat to Natsuki Nidaira Japan in round of 16. The mixed doubles pair of

Sai Pratheek and Tanisha Crasto

went down fighting against seventh-seeded Malaysian duo of Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei 23-21, 17-21, 21-23 in the prequarterfinals.

Debutant Lorcan Tucker became only the second Irishman to hit a Test century, ably assisted by Andy McBrine's unbeaten 71, to lead a tenacious fightback against Bangladesh in Dhaka on Thursday. Ireland reached 286-8 at stumps on the third day to lead the hosts by 131 runs

one-off Test. Tucker made 108 off 162 balls before falling to the bowling of Ebadot Hossain, with Shoriful Islam taking the catch at

after resuming on a precarious 27-4 in the

The wicketkeeper-batsman hit 14 fours and a six during his time at the crease and was brilliantly assisted by Harry Tector and McBrine in partnerships of 72 and 111 to put the pressure back on

Tector resumed overnight for a 28run partnership with Peter Moor before left-arm pacer Shoriful gave the hosts their first breakthrough of the day.



Tucker's debut hundred leads Ireland fightback Tucker staved off further damage with

Tector departed after he was found leg before wicket off Taijul Islam, but his 56 made him the first Írish cricketer to hit half-centuries in both innings of a Test

Tucker brought up his century with a cover drive for four off left-arm spinner Taijul, raising his bat after hugging McBrine. Mark Adair was next to bat, accom-

panying McBrine in a 31-run stand before he was removed by Taijul, the most successful Bangladesh bowler of the innings with 4-86. Kevin O'Brien is the only other

Irishman to hit a Test century, scoring 118 against Pakistan during Ireland's 2018 maiden Test in Dublin. Ireland have lost all three of their pre-

vious Tests since becoming a full member of the International Cricket Council