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BETWEEN TWO ROCKS &
A VERY HARD PLACE

WORLD 8
US DEFENDS TROOP PULLOUT
FROM AFGHANISTAN

MONEY 10
INVESTORS' WEALTH JUMPS
OVER ₹10.43 LAKH CRORE

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY APRIL 8, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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CAPSULE

ACTOR AKANKSHA DEATH: SINGER SAMAR ARRESTED
Ghaziabad: The Uttar Pradesh Police arrested singer Samar Singh from Ghaziabad for allegedly abetting the suicide of popular Bhojpuri actress Akanksha Dubey.

DELHI-DEHRADUN IN JUST 2 HOURS, E-WAY BY DEC
New Delhi: Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari has announced that the Delhi-Dehradun Greenfield Expressway will be completed by the end of December 2023. This 212 km 6-lane expressway, costing ₹12,000 crore, will reduce travel time between Delhi and Dehradun from 6-7 hours to just 2 hours.

ENSURE CLEAN MILK: NO GARBAGE FOR CATTLE: HC
New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has asked the Kejriwal Government to ensure supply of clean and hygienic milk to citizens and see to it that cattle do not feed on garbage as it can have a detrimental effect on the quality of milk and those who consume it.

CENTRE REJECTS FLAK ON PIB'S FACT-CHECK POWER
New Delhi: Under attack over giving powers to the Press Information Bureau (PIB) to fact-check any "fake, or false, or misleading" information, Union Electronics & Information Technology Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Friday dismissed the criticism as "deliberate misinformation".

Cong, not democracy, is under threat: Shah

PNS ■ KAUSHAMBI

Firing a broadside at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his recent remarks in the UK about Indian democracy, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said it's not democracy that is in danger, but the Nehru-Gandhi family and the idea of dynasty politics which are under threat.

Shah accused the Congress of surrounding Indian democracy with three "naasuron" (ulcerous wounds) — casteism, dynasty politics and appeasement. "But Prime Minister Narendra Modi defeated all three and hence you are afraid," he added.

"They say democracy is in danger, brother, democracy is not in danger, your family is in danger. It is not the idea of India, which is in danger, it is the idea of dynasty, your politics of 'parivarvad' (dynasty), which is in danger. It is not the democracy of India, but the autocracy of your family, which is in danger," the senior BJP leader said.

During a visit to the UK last month, Gandhi alleged the structures of Indian democracy were under "brutal attack" and a full-scale assault on the



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses the gathering at Kaushambi Mahotsav in Kaushambi on Friday

country's institutions was underway. His remarks triggered a war of words between the BJP and the Congress. The BJP accused Gandhi of "insulting" the country on foreign soil and demanded an apology, but the Congress leader said his position that India's democracy was under attack "was known" to all.

Shah also hit out at the Congress for not allowing

Parliament to function.

"Yesterday, the Parliament was adjourned. In the history of independent India, it has never happened that the Budget Session ended without a sitting and discussion... What was the reason? Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as Lok Sabha MP," the Union minister said.

On March 18, a Surat court sentenced Rahul for two years in jail in a criminal defamation

'Azamgarh was terror hub during previous govts'

PNS ■ AZAMGARH

Hitting out at the Opposition parties in UP on Friday, Home Minister Amit Shah recalled the terror tag attached to Azamgarh during previous governments.

Speaking after laying the foundation stone of the Harihar music college, Shah said Azamgarh was known for terrorism during SP, BSP and Congress rule, but it is witnessing development under the BJP Government.

Continued on Page 2

case filed over his remark against people with the surname "Modi", but allowed him 30 days to appeal in a higher court. A day later, the Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a notification suspending his Lok Sabha membership.

The Congress accused the BJP of indulging in "vindictive politics" but the ruling party said it was the law.

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Andhra ex-CM Kiran joins BJP; Cong jolted

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In another jolt to the Congress and political gain for the saffron party, Congress leader and last chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh Kiran Kumar Reddy joined the BJP on Friday. He has become the second Congress leader from South India after Anil Antony, the son of senior Congress leader AK Antony, to switch loyalty to the BJP in as many days.

Reddy, who joined the BJP here in the presence of Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, accused the Congress high command of aimlessness and high-handedness by refusing to listen to others in the party. "They believe they are correct and all others, including the people of India, are wrong," he said, accusing the Congress high command of being unable to analyse repeated electoral failures of the party.

"How is a patient going to be fine if he refuses to take prescribed medicines," he said about the Congress.

"They want authority to control but don't want to work hard or take any responsibility... The Congress is getting damaged in all States and its high command does not interact with others or take their opinion," said the four-time for-



Congress leader and former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Kiran Kumar Reddy joins the BJP in the presence of BJP leaders Pralhad Joshi and Arun Singh at the party headquarters in Delhi on Friday

'Cong high command's arrogance damaging party across nation'

mer MLA.

Citing his family's over six-decade-long association with the Congress, Reddy said he never imagined he would leave the party.

Reddy contrasted the rise of the BJP with the decline of the Congress since 1984 and

lauded the ruling party's leaders led by Narendra Modi for their hard work and commitment towards the nation and its development.

The talk of BJP now brings to the fore ideas like nation-building in people's mind, he said. Its leadership has clarity of thought and consistency, and taking courageous decision is the hallmark of the government, he said.

Reddy also lauded Modi's commitment to fighting corruption.

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No written tests for kids up to Class 2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) has said explicit tests and examinations are completely inappropriate assessment tools for children up to Class 2 and written tests should be introduced from Class 3 onwards only. It has recommended that assessment methods should be such that they do not contribute to any additional burden for the child.

The framework which is being developed on the lines of new National Education Policy (NEP) suggests that two important methods of assessment that are appropriate for the foundational stage are observations of the child and analysing artefacts that the



child has produced as part of their learning experience.

The draft notes that explicit tests and examinations are completely inappropriate assessment tools for the foundational stage (preschool to Class 2).

"Assessment should allow for diversity among children and in their learning. Children learn differently and express their learning differently too. There might be many ways to assess the achievement of a learning outcome or compe-

tency. The teacher should have the ability to design different kinds of assessment for the same learning outcome and use each assessment appropriately.

"Assessment should enable recording and documentation. Children's progress should be described and analysed through systematic collection of evidence. Assessment should not contribute to any additional burden for the child. Assessment tools and processes should be designed such that they are a natural extension of the learning experience for the child," it said.

Describing the assessment for preparatory stage (Class 3 to 5), the draft recommends that "written tests should be introduced at this stage".

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Devotees attend a Good Friday service at a Sacred Heart Cathedral Church in New Delhi on Friday

Child rights body backs same-sex marriage in SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) has moved the Supreme Court supporting legalisation of same-sex marriages and conferring adoption and succession rights on the same-sex couples. The DCPCR filed an intervention plea in the case on April 3, which was shifted to a Constitution Bench.

Meanwhile many Christian, Islam and Jain bodies filed petitions objecting the demand for legalisation of the same-sex marriage.

The DCPCR's application underscored that adolescent homosexuals without requisite legal rights at par with heterosexual counterparts can lead to adverse psychological complexes, low self-esteem and



other mental health issues.

"Unless equal rights are accorded to homosexual (persons), their acceptance, assimilation and legitimacy will remain under troubled waters. This again is bound to have its bearing upon adolescents," the application said.

Supporting the adoption and succession rights for same-sex couples, the DCPCR argued that the existing legal framework can be interpreted in a manner so as to accommodate such rights of same-sex couples.

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Amid Cong's Oppunity bid, Pawar backs Adani group

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to unite Opposition parties against the juggernaut of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Congress has proposed a meeting of like-minded party leaders to discuss the prevailing political situation and firm strategy to contest next year's general elections.

The decision to call them under one umbrella, however started with some hiccups between the Congress and its oldest ally NCP, as they are not on the same page over the Adani group controversy.

In an interview to a news channel, NCP chief Sharad Pawar came out in support of the Adani group and criticised the narrative around the Hindenburg Research's report on the conglomerate.

The Congress, however, said the NCP may have its own view but 19 like-minded Opposition parties are convinced that the charges against the conglomerate are real and serious. The Congress also said all 20 Opposition parties,



including the NCP, are united and will be together in saving the Constitution and democracy from the "BJP's assaults".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday reached out to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK chief MK Stalin over the phone and invited him to join the proposed meeting.

The DMK, which is a key ally of the Congress in Tamil Nadu and also at the national level, has extended its support to the Congress's plan for an Opposition meeting.

Earlier this week Stalin had conducted a meeting of the Opposition parties both physical and virtual mode through a session on social justice that came against the backdrop of complete logjam in the Budget session of Parliament.

Refrain from making false statements in HC, LG tells Kejriwal Govt

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In what could further escalate rift between Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the Raj Niwas, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Saxena has asked Kejriwal and his Cabinet colleagues and the officers of the UT Government to refrain from making any false, baseless and non-verified comments that misleads the citizens.

The LG slammed the Kejriwal Government for repeatedly bluffing and making false statements in the Delhi High Court to hide its failures.

Saxena in an office note to



Kejriwal has referred to social media post by the Government functionaries which does not have any truth.

The LG strongly objected to one of the tweets by Education Minister Atishi where she wrote that the LG and the BJP have conspired to stop power subsidy for farmers and advocates.

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States told to ramp up Covid testing, vaccination

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday held a review meeting and advised States to stay alert and be prepared for Covid-19 management amid raising cases.

In the meeting with State Health Ministers and principal and additional chief secretaries held virtually, Mandaviya stressed on identifying emergency hotspots by monitoring trends of influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) cases, ramping up testing and vaccination and ensuring readiness of hospital infrastructure.

Along with enhancing genome sequencing and ramping up whole genome sequenc-



Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya chairs a meeting with States/UTs Health Ministers to review the Covid-19 situation via video conferencing, in New Delhi on Friday

ing of positive samples, he also stressed the need to raise awareness about Covid-appropriate behaviour.

The Centre and the States need to continue working in collaborative spirit as was done during the previous surges for Covid-19 prevention and management, Mandaviya said.

He also urged the State Health Ministers to conduct mock drills of all hospital infrastructure on April 10 and 11 and review the health preparedness with district administrations and health officials on April 8 and 9.

States and Union Territories were further

informed that currently WHO is closely tracking one variant of interest (VOI), XBB.1.5 and six other variants are under monitoring (BQ.1, BA.2.75, CH.1.1, XBB, XBF and XBB.1.16), a Health Ministry statement said.

It was highlighted that while Omicron and its sub-lineages continue to be the predominant variant, most of the assigned variants have little or no significant transmissibility, disease severity or immune escape. The prevalence of XBB.1.16 increased from 21.6 per cent in February to 35.8 per cent in March, 2023.

However, no evidence of an increase in hospitalisation or mortality has been reported, the statement said.

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Centre's aid to help poor undertrials get freedom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In its bid to decongest prisons, the Centre has decided to launch a special scheme to provide financial support to poor undertrials languishing in jails for being unable to afford the bail amount.

"This will enable poor prisoners, the majority of whom belong to socially disadvantaged or marginalised groups with lower education and income level, to get out of prison," the Union Home Ministry said in a

statement on Friday.

The Ministry said the broad contours of the scheme — Support for Poor Prisoners — have been finalised in consultation with stakeholders.

To ensure the benefits of the scheme reach the poor prisoners, technology-driven solutions will be put in place and the e-prisons platform will be reinforced.

District Legal Services Authority will be strengthened and stakeholders will be sensitised besides emphasis on capacity building.



In her Budget speech this year, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced provision of financial support to poor prisoners who are unable to afford their

penalties or bail amounts.

The Home Ministry said the Government is taking various steps to address the issue of undertrials in prisons. Under this, one of the announcements is "Support for Poor Prisoners". Other steps include inserting Section 436A in the Criminal Procedure Code and inserting a new chapter XXIA "Plea Bargaining" in the CrPC.

Free legal aid is being provided to poor prisoners through the Legal Services Authority at various levels, the Ministry said.

"Further to ensure the benefits of the Budget are extended across all intended sections of society, one of the priorities of the Budget, namely the guiding 'Saptarishis' is reaching the last mile," it added.

Prisons are an important part of the criminal justice system and play a significant role in upholding the rule of law and the Home Ministry has been sharing important guidelines with State Governments through various advisories issued from time to time, the Ministry said.

Ensure clean milk; no garbage for cattle, HC tells Delhi Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the city government to ensure supply of clean and hygienic milk to citizens and see to it that cattle do not feed on garbage as it can have a detrimental effect on the quality of milk and those who consume it.

The order by a bench headed by Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma came on a petition by a lawyer seeking directions to the authorities to take all measures for ensuring clean and hygienic milk for the people of Delhi.

The Delhi Government counsel said adequate steps were being taken to ensure supply of clean and hygienic milk to city residents and proper regulations were already in place.

He further said if the petitioner files a representation with the authorities about her grievances, it will be considered in accordance with law.



Observing that "no further orders are required to be passed" in the matter in view of the stand of the government, the court said the petitioner is at liberty to file a representation before the authorities.

"The State Government (GNCTD) shall take appropriate steps to ensure that clean and hygienic milk is provided to the citizens of Delhi and that cattle do not feed on garbage, plastic, papers etc. As this can have a detrimental effect on the

public health" and "book, arrest and proceed according to law in case of dereliction of duty to public safety and security of public health". She also prayed for a direction to the city police chief to make regulations for safety and security, care and protection of cattle under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the penal code.

Lastly, she sought a direction to the Commissioner to "instantly take measures within a week for making provisions for clean drinking water for the cattle from the public funds in the hands of the Public authorities".

During the proceedings, the petitioner, however, said she was only pressing her prayer pertaining to clean drinking water for cattle. The counsel appearing for Commissioner of Police submitted it is not his duty to ensure supply of clean and hygienic milk to the people of Delhi.

3 held for duping 100 with overseas jobs promise

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has arrested three people for allegedly duping more than 100 people with the promise of high paying jobs in leading overseas firms in Turkey and Ethiopia.

Police first arrested a 33-year-old Sohail Nijam and at his instance arrested his other associates — Afroj Alam, 32, and Parvej Alam, 42, police said. According to police, the three men wanted to lead a lavish lifestyle and chose the way of crime by setting up a fake company in the name of 'AR Enterprises'.

They advertised the firm on social media and created a fake website where they placed recruitment ads for foreign jobs that never existed, police said. During interrogation, the accused told police they posted fake details on their website about high paying jobs in leading overseas firms in Turkey and Ethiopia and sent fake job offer letters through WhatsApp to their victims in lieu of payment, said Rajesh Deo, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast). SR

18 of Delhi's East of Kailash Ponzi firm arrested for cheating people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested 18 people from East of Kailash-based call centre, which operated under the guise of a financial company, for allegedly defrauding people after giving them loans at low interest rates through a Chinese mobile application.

According to police, they would first offer short-term loans at "very low" interest rates through Chinese mobile loan application "Diolesce", and after transferring the amount through it, they would increase the rates.

Borrowers were coerced to repay loans at "exorbitant" interest rates and even after repayment, more money was demanded on the threat that they would be defamed through ways such as posting of morphed photos online.

The officials said 17 employees, including women, have been detained while their team leader Amit, a resident of Sarita Vihar, has been arrested.

NCR-PULSE

AIIA TO HOST HOLISTIC HEALTH EVENT TODAY
New Delhi: The All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), an autonomous institute under the Union Ayush Ministry, on Saturday is hosting a walk-through for the "Working Group of C20 on Integrated Holistic Health." A large group of more than 400 delegates are expected to take part in this event where the integrative approach of ayurveda in health care will be showcased, said an official from the AIIA situated at Sarita Vihar, Delhi.

G20 NATIONS ADOPT GREEN TOURISM
New Delhi: With climate change threats looming large on the tourism sector, the members of the second G20 Tourism Working Group meeting unanimously adopted green tourism to be the most important priority for all the participating countries. Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism shared with the reporters here that the working group meeting which was graced by G Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and DONER was attended by 56 delegates from 17 member countries including Australia, Bangladesh, Japan, Singapore, Mexico, Indonesia and Korea among others.

INDIA MOVED TO 40TH RANK IN INNOVATION INDEX22
New Delhi: Union Minister of State for Science & Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday said that India is emerging as the world's major bioeconomy with fast growing Biotech StartUps. "In the Global Innovation Index 2022, India has moved to 40th rank from 81st position. We must now aspire to be in the top 25 in the near term and in the top five by India @ 100. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has provided a huge impetus to innovation by adding 'Jai Anusandhan' to the country's evergreen slogan of 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan'," he added.

Child rights body backs

From Page 1
Further, non-recognition of same-sex marriages can have repercussions on children of homosexual persons, said the petition. "The said person shall be the only de jure parent and guardian of his or her child. While the child may actually be under joint custody and maintenance of two persons consisting of a homosexual couple performing equal duties, only one of the persons would have de jure authority and rights. This could have psychological and emotional consequences not only for the affected de facto guardian but also for the child who may be left with reduced choice in case of a rift or separation between his de facto guardians," the application said.

Legalisation of same-sex marriages is no cause for concern when it comes to adoption and succession rights, said the DCPCR. "It is respectfully submitted that when it comes to questions of adoption and succession, and the rights of children under the existing legal framework, the legalisation of same-sex marriage is no cause for concern; existing legislative language can accommodate same sex marriages, and ensure that the same rights that accrue to children in the context of

heterosexual marriages, also accrue in the context of same-sex marriages," the application said. Previous week, many minority religious groups have written to Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud to cite their religious beliefs to express opposition to same-sex marriage. Sayed Salman Chishty of the Chishty Foundation, Ajmer, has conveyed his "concerns and reservations" to CJI, claiming that any legal validation for same-sex marriage will contradict India's religious, social and moral values, and cause "havoc" with the delicate balance of personal laws and accepted societal values.

The Communion of Churches in India, has echoed similar views in a letter to President Droupadi Murmu and the CJI. Prakash P Thomas of the Communion of Churches in India expressed "shock" at such a plea. According to Christian beliefs, marriage is a divine institution made by God and cannot accept the union of two homosexuals as marriage, he claimed, urging the President to ensure the status quo on marriage.

Jain guru Acharya Lokesh said legal sanction to same-sex marriage will go against the ethos of India's ancient values-based society.

Against a Constitutional Head in the highest Courts of Law and indulging in such perjury," the LG said in the note. The LG has directed the Chief Secretary to file an affidavit in the Delhi High Court against the deliberate false statements made by the Delhi Government to mislead the High Court and apprise the court of the factual status in the case.

Earlier in the matter of Reconstitution of the Animal Welfare Board, the AAP Government had submitted the file to the LG on December 14, 2022, just a day before the Delhi High Court was to hear the matter on December 15, 2022, and alleged in the court that the "file was pending with LG for several days".

"The Chief Minister and his colleagues in the Council of Ministers seem to have developed an unfortunate and deplorable tendency of blatantly misleading on all fora. Be it to the people, the media or even the High Court, substantially baseless and patently false statements and undertakings are furnished by Ministers and the Government through its counsels with impunity, amounting to prima facie, defamation and perjury," Saxena stated in the note.

"Such false statements by the Delhi Government in the High Court amounts to defamation and perjury. It is alarming that the Delhi High Court is repeatedly being misled by the AAP Government. It is unheard of a Government hiding its failures by making false statements in the highest courts of the country and blatantly indulging in perjury," he added.

NIA seizes gold, drugs, arrests suspect in TN

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has seized a huge cache of cash, gold and drugs and arrested a suspect in the Indo-Sri Lankan illegal drugs and hawala case relating to the revival of LTTE.

The suspect was arrested on Thursday in the raids, taking total arrests in the Tamil Nadu case to 14. The searches also yielded gold bars, digital devices (mobile phones, memory cards) and documents, along with other incriminating material.

The searches were conducted at the Chennai residential and business premises of eight suspects in an Indo-Sri Lankan illegal drugs and arms trade racket aimed at revival of LTTE. The agency had initiated investigations into the racket in July 2022.

One person was also arrested following Thursday's searches, taking the total arrests

so far in the case to 14, with 13 having been earlier arrested in December 2022 as part of raids conducted in 21 locations in Tamil Nadu following the registration of the case in July, the NIA said in a statement.

The earlier raids had included the accommodation allotted to nine accused in Special Detention Camp, Trichy. "Investigations into the case have shown that the proceeds of drugs and arms trade in Sri Lanka were received in India through Hawala agents, including one Shahid Ali of Chennai.

It was further found that the Hawala transactions to obtain the process of Drugs and Arms trade were done through hotels and businesses based in Mannady, Chennai," it said.

Thursday's seizure included recovery of Rs 68 lakh Indian currency and 1,000 Singapore Dollars, nine gold biscuits (total 300 gram) from the shop of Shahid Ali.

'Azamgarh was...

From Page 1

"I want to congratulate Yogi ji (CM Yogi Adityanath). In Azamgarh, which was considered the centre of terror across the country, he got the foundation of a music college laid to give respect to its heritage," he said, adding, "Azamgarh was known for Harihar 'gharana' of music, that image was spoiled by SP and BSP".

Shah said Azamgarh used to face law and order problems in the past but the double-engine government of BJP has made it a centre of development. "I was the home minister of Gujarat when there were bomb blasts in Ahmedabad. The police had caught the main 'sutradaar' (culprit) of it from Azamgarh," he said. Recalling his earlier visits to Uttar Pradesh, before the BJP government came to power in the state, he said there was hardly a night when power was available in rural areas.

"Twenty-four-hour power supply was available only during Ramzan," he said. "Now the BJP government has ensured power to entire Uttar Pradesh and heralded a new period of development," Shah said. He also said it was difficult to imagine UP being "riot-free" but the Adityanath government has made it possible.

No written tests for kids up to Class...

From Page 1

The Education Ministry released a "pre-draft" of the NCF for school education on

Thursday and invited suggestions from stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers and scholars. The draft prepared by a panel headed by K Kasturirangan, former ISRO chief, suggests that at the middle stage (Class 6 to 8), the focus of the curriculum should move to conceptual understanding and higher order capacities. In the secondary stage (Class 9 to 12), the panel

has asserted that comprehensive classroom assessments should be effectively practised for facilitating meaningful learning and constructive feedback. Regular summative assessments should be conducted for recording students learning against competencies. According to Ministry officials, the textbooks as per the new NCF will be introduced

from next year. The Education Ministry has designed four NCFs based on the 5+3+3+4 "curricular and pedagogical" structure that NEP 2020 has recommended for school education. The Ministry launched the NCF for foundational stage (NCF-FS) for children between ages 3-8 years in October 2022. In continuation of that policy, the next NCF for school education is being prepared.

States told to ramp up Covid testing, vaccination

From Page 1

During the meeting, it was observed that 23 States and Union Territories had average tests per million below the national average, according to a Health Ministry statement. Mandaviya said irrespective of the new variants, the five-fold strategy of "Test-Track-Treat-Vaccinate and adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour"

of this country will never forgive you," Shah said. Exhorting the people to vote for BJP again in 2024 general election, Shah also slammed the Congress, SP and the BSP for allegedly delaying the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

"All of us wanted Ram Temple in Ayodhya to be built at the birthplace of Lord Ram. The Congress kept it (the issue) hanging, the SP diverted it, and the BSP lingered it. Modi ji laid the foundation stone of the temple, and soon you will see Lord Ram seated in his temple," Shah said. He also said that Uttar Pradesh was moving ahead on the path of development of Parliament. The people

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. In 2014, the people of UP reposed their faith in PM Modi. "In 2017, when I was the BJP chief, the BJP won a record number of 325 seats (in UP) and Modi ji made Yogi ji chief minister. In 2019, the SP, BSP and the Congress got united, but all of them were defeated, and Modi ji once again became the prime minister. After this, in 2022 (UP assembly elections) you made Yogi ji the chief minister again," Shah said. "Modi ji has made the country prosperous and enhanced the pride of the country. And the Congress people say 'Modi teri kabra khudegi' (Modi your grave will be dug). I want to tell these

Congress people that whether it is Sonia ji, Rahul ji or anybody else, whenever abuses are hurled at Modi ji, the public has made the lotus bloom in the mud of these abuses in a strong manner," Shah asserted.

"Rahul Baba, this time again Modi ji's government is to be formed with '300-paar' (over 300 Lok Sabha seats)," he claimed. Meanwhile, SP MLA from Sirathu constituency in Kaushambi district Pallavi Patel claimed she was put under house arrest at her party office and not allowed to welcome the home minister. However, Additional Superintendent of Police Samar Bahadur dismissed Patel's claims.

He has asked the Chief Minister to show any document that establishes that he had suggested withdrawing power subsidy in Delhi. Taking a serious note of the frequent lies and concealing of facts by the Kejriwal Government in the Delhi High Court in the matter of "Transfer of Special Schools for Children with Disability" to the Education Department and earlier.

"The AAP Government inordinately delayed the file and then misled the Delhi High Court on November 18, 2022 and again on February 17, 2023 saying the file was pending with the LG.

As a matter of fact, the file was deliberately kept pending with the Government/Minister and the file was sent to the LG on March 28, 2023 - over four months after the High Court was misled with false assertions on two different occasions.

"It is alarming that the High Court was repeatedly misled and false information was submitted before the High Court. It is unheard of a government trying to hide its failure by making false statements

against a Constitutional Head in the highest Courts of Law and indulging in such perjury," the LG said in the note. The LG has directed the Chief Secretary to file an affidavit in the Delhi High Court against the deliberate false statements made by the Delhi Government to mislead the High Court and apprise the court of the factual status in the case.

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Andhra ex-CM Kiran joins BJP, Cong jolted

From Page 1

Reddy resigned from the Congress in March 2023 over differences with the party leadership. Joshi who welcomed Reddy in the party said the former CM had played Ranji level cricket too and as he now ended his inning in the Congress and began one in the BJP "it is hoped that he would start by hitting sixes". The Congress leader's decision to join the BJP comes ahead of the assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh next year, where the ruling YSR Congress and the main opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) are locked in a bitter contest, comes as a major boost to the BJP which is still trying to find its feet in the state.

Reddy, 62, is a major political catch for the BJP which is trying to take the space of the TDP in the state and building its organizational strength. Hailing from Rayalaseema region, he is expected to strengthen the BJP's presence in the area where he has considerable influence.

Reddy may also be projected as a potential chief ministerial candidate by the BJP in Andhra Pradesh.

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that the General public on behalf of our Client G20 Bank Ltd. that Mr. Rajesh Kakkar is owner and trustee of Residential Flat Unit Bearing No. Q-1102, on 11th Floor, Tower-4, addressing 102, 2nd & 3rd Floor, Sector-15, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110015. Mr. Rajesh Kakkar is hereby informed that above mentioned owner Mr. Rajesh Kakkar want to sell the said property to Mr. Neeraj Jindal on his nominee who is taking care for purchase the said property from G20 Bank Ltd. If anybody has any objection to the sale of the said property, please write to the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 10 days of the date of this notice.

It is hereby brought to the notice of public at large that (1) Original Registered Sale Certificate dated 30.05.2007 executed in favour of NKP Holding Pvt. Ltd. related to land measuring, 19 Biswa out of Khasra no. 1551 (Property No. 12/1), Situated at Village. Aurangpur, Tehsil & Distt. Faizabad, Haryana is lost with present owner, M/s Om Hydromech Pvt. Ltd. The Public at large is hereby informed that owner has availed credit facilities from HDFC Bank Ltd. against security of the aforementioned property. Any person, who comes in knowledge or possession of aforementioned original sale Certificate, may please return the same to above mentioned property addresses or at below mentioned address. Any person or authority dealing with the sale certificate and / or the aforesaid property and/or deriving any benefit by impersonation or claiming any interest in the aforesaid property, on the basis of said sale certificate or in any manner whatsoever, herewith shall do so at his/her/its own cost, expense, liability and risk or may also send his/her/its claims in writing to the undersigned along with documentary evidence in support of the claim.

S.K. Singh (Advocate)
F-10, LGF, Jangpura Ext., New Delhi-110014

Public Notice

No. DUBA/Cons/434/MR/2023-(23)
Dated : 27/03/2023

Mr. Pratase Aggarwal
S/o : Sanjay Aggarwal
Resident of : 7/4 Sahya Nigalan, Delhi Pin : 110021, Delhi, India
Present Address : 36/1, Marina Gate 2, Dubai Marina
And Miss. Priyanka Kashyap
Daughter of : Shyam Sunder Kashyap
Residence of : 72, SPS Marina Enclave,
Near Vasant Vihar PS, Delhi Pin : 110067 Delhi, India
Present Address : 36/1, Marina Gate 2, Dubai Marina
Above mentioned Indian national are presently residing in the UAE. They give notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she should file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the act within forty days from the date of publication of this notice on email : cons2.dubai@mea.gov.in, cons3.dubai@mea.gov.in

(Bijender Singh), (Marriage Officer)
Consulate General of India
P.O.Box : 737, Dubai (UAE)
Email : cons1.dubai@mea.gov.in
cons2.dubai@mea.gov.in

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Corrigendum/Addendum

No. 558-Sig/16/M/Tender/1395
Date: 06.04.2023

Due to technical reasons, Quantity of Schedule Item No. 22, Cost of Work and Bid Security Money are changed in respect of the NIT no. 558-Sig-16/M/Tender/1395 which is scheduled to be opened on 26.04.2023 for the work of "Construction of LHS on L-Xing No. 65, 198, 209, 219, 85, 86 & 89 on DLI-BTI section of Delhi Division" following changes are made:

S. No.	Description	As per NIT drawn	To be read as
1.	Quantity of Schedule Item No. 22	336000 Nos.	40000 Nos.
2.	Cost of Work	Rs. 97,85,657.26	Rs. 71,30,537.26
3.	Cost of Bid Security Money	Rs. 1,95,700/-	Rs. 1,42,600/-

All other terms and condition will remain unchanged.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Don't flout books, uniforms guidelines, pvt schools told

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a serious note of some private schools compelling parents to buy expensive books and uniforms from specific vendors, Delhi Education Minister Atishi has directed the Department of Education to take strict action against these schools.

She said the violation of the Education Department guidelines on books and uniforms by private schools "will not be tolerated" and that strict action will be taken against such schools.

Over the past few days, the Education Minister has been receiving continuous complaints that parents are being forced by private schools to buy expensive books and school uniforms from specific shops or vendors. Recently, some parents have met with the Education Minister and brought the issue to her notice.

"Private schools must either stop forcing parents to buy books and uniforms from specific sellers or be ready to



face severe consequences. Violation of education department guidelines will not be tolerated," Atishi said.

The Education Department had issued instructions to schools on March 17 to comply with the guidelines on sale of books and school uniforms. It said immediate notice must be issued stating the reasons in case of any complaint. And in case of violation, action will be taken under the relevant provisions of the Delhi School Education Act 1973, it added.

"There have been continuous complaints that private

schools are forcing parents to buy expensive books and school uniforms from specific vendors. Recently, some parents also met me and brought this to my notice. Those schools should be identified and strict action should be taken against them," the Education minister said. Atishi

said every parent has the right to obtain proper information about books and uniforms for the upcoming academic session and can arrange them according to their convenience.

"The purpose of education should be to build the future of the country, not to earn money," she added.

Parents being exploited, Govt is to blame: Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at Delhi government's education department, Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said due to the connivance and negligence of the Kejriwal government, the parents of the Capital are being openly exploited. "This year the schools increased the fees without permission, denied admission to the children of EWS quota, included the books of arbitrary publishers in the syllabus, and earned an illegal profit in the sale of books copies. The Delhi government can cancel the recognition of such schools, but the government did not take any action," he said.

Bidhuri said the Delhi government claims that it has stopped the arbitrariness of private schools in the Capital and has not allowed fee hikes, but this is a blatant lie as most of the schools have increased the fee manifold in the last eight years.

City sees 733 Covid cases, highest in 7 months; positivity 19.93%, 2 deaths

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi on Friday logged 733 fresh Covid cases, the highest in more than seven months, with a positivity rate of 19.93 per cent, according to data shared by the city government's health department.

The health bulletin said two more Covid-positive people died in the city. However, "Covid finding was incidental", it added.

More than 3,000 cases of Covid have been recorded in Delhi in the past one week, while the tally of active cases has increased by over 121 per cent in the same period. In the March 30-April 6 period, six fatalities have been recorded, including two deaths on April 3. The positivity rate too has seen a rise in the past one week despite limited number of Covid test.

On Thursday, Delhi logged 606 cases on Thursday, the highest in over seven months, with a positivity rate of 16.98 per cent. The city had recorded 620 cases on August 26.

According to data shared by the Delhi government's



health department, the active cases tally on Thursday stood at 2,060, a jump of over 121 per cent since March 30 when the corresponding figure was 932. According to health department bulletins shared over these days, "Covid finding was incidental" in all the cases. The positivity rate too has seen a rise in the past one week.

On April 5, the city logged a positivity rate of 26.54 per cent, the highest in nearly 15 months, with 509 people testing positive in a single day. In January last year, the positivity rate had touched the 30-per cent mark. Delhi has witnessed a spurt in the number of fresh Covid infections over the last

few days amid a sharp rise in H3N2 influenza cases in the country. The city saw 295 cases on March 30 and zero fatality. The positivity rate stood at 12.48 per cent then.

As on Thursday, the city's Covid death toll stood at 26,534, while its case tally had risen to 20,12,670. The data showed that 3,569 Covid tests were conducted on Wednesday. After March 30, the daily cases count increased to 416 on April 1 and 429 on April 2. The city saw 521 cases on April 4 and 509 on April 5.

The total number of cases logged in the March 30-April 6 period stands at 3,069. The Delhi government has maintained that it is keeping an eye

on the spurt in Covid cases and is "prepared to face any eventuality".

The number of fresh cases had dropped to zero on January 16, the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic. The rise in cases is being reported since the past couple of weeks.

Nearly 120 of the 7,989 beds in dedicated Covid hospitals in the city are occupied while 1,337 patients are in home isolation, the health department said on Thursday. Amid a gradual increase in the number of Covid cases in Delhi, medical experts say the new XBB.1.16 variant of the virus could be driving the surge.

However, they maintained that there is no need to panic and people should follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and get booster shots of the vaccines. They also said this rise in the number of cases could be the result of more people getting themselves tested for Covid as a precaution when they actually get infected with the influenza virus and develop fever and related symptoms.

Govt's 5-point action plan to make Yamuna clean

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To make Yamuna pollution-free, the Arvind Kejriwal government has prepared a five-point action plan including in-situ treatment in Najafgarh-Supplementary and Shahdara drains.

In-situ treatment methods will include floating booms, weirs, aeration devices, and floating wetlands. Apart from this, chemical dosing will be done at strategic locations to reduce the phosphate present in the wastewater.

Delhi Water Minister Sarubh Bharadwaj on Friday said the city government has decided to scale up a project to improve the water quality of major drains through in-situ treatment methods. As part of a pilot project, the Delhi government had installed weirs and aeration systems at some places in Najafgarh, Supplementary and Shahdara



drains. Bharadwaj said the government has decided to scale up the project looking at the positive results.

"Floating booms, weirs, aeration devices, and floating wetlands will be set up for in-situ treatment of drains. Chemical dosing will be done to reduce phosphate present in the wastewater," a statement quoted Bharadwaj as saying.

"Weirs (dams) will be built in the zone of these drains. The purpose of building a dam is that the depth of the water increases, and the fine particles

present in the water sit on the surface of the ground. Clean water overflows from the top of the dam and moves forward".

"Floating booms will be installed for cleaning drains in different zones so that plastic waste can be collected and removed in one place. This will work to make the water cleaner as well as collecting of plastic from drains which will further help in reducing water pollution. Floating wetlands will be installed in different zones, which will absorb the dirt dissolved in the water. These will be made out of low-cost bam-

boo which will last for many years. At the same time, chemical dosing will be done in the drain zone. This will help reduce phosphate from the wastewater".

"With the help of new techniques, we will soon be able to clean the filth of the drains falling in the Yamuna," he said. Samples collected from Rithala sewage treatment plant, and Sectors 11, 15 and 16 in Rohini, all part of the pilot project, have shown a significant decrease in the concentration of total suspended solids (TSS), the statement said.

The results also showed a significant reduction in ammonia concentration in the wastewater, it said. The TSS level came down from 166 mg per litre at Rithala to 49 mg per litre at Rohini Sector 15. The ammonia level dipped from 26 mg per litre at Rithala to 18 mg per litre at Rohini Sector 15, the statement said.

The 22-km stretch of the river between Wazirabad and Okhla in Delhi, which is less than two per cent of the river length, accounts for around 80 per cent of its pollution load, it said. Untapped wastewater from unauthorised colonies and jhuggi-jhopri clusters, and poor quality of treated wastewater discharged from STPs and common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) is the main reason behind high levels of pollution in the river, it said.

The river can be considered fit for bathing if biological oxygen demand is less than 3 mg per litre and dissolved oxygen is greater than 5 mg per litre, the statement said.

The Yamuna Cleaning Cell was formed under the direction of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to ensure better coordination and an integrated approach to achieve the objective of cleaning Yamuna.

House tax half, water tax maaf: AAP's slogan for UP local poll

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which is yet to make an impression in the electoral politics of Uttar Pradesh, will find an opportunity to test its presence in the state when the civic polls are held soon.

AAP has decided to contest the municipal elections in Uttar Pradesh with the slogan 'House tax half, water tax maaf. AAP will contest elections with full strength in 17 municipal corporations and 763 municipalities of UP. In a related development social worker Soumya Bhatt, joined the AAP on Friday.

Addressing a press conference, AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said that AAP has already made it clear that it will contest all mayoral seats, civic body wards and nagar panchayats in the urban local bodies' election in Uttar Pradesh.

"I'll now the names of 270 candidates for wards and the chairman have been almost decided. Within Uttar Pradesh, the AAP will strongly contest elections in 763 municipalities. There are 17 Municipal Corporations in Uttar Pradesh, AAP will contest elections strongly in these



Municipal Corporations also. The AAP has declared its officers in-charge for 763 municipalities," he said.

Singh said after a long dispute over reservations in the municipalities of Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court has given permission to hold elections there.

Now the process of reservation for civic body elections in Uttar Pradesh has been completed. Reservation of seats has also been announced. The date for seeking objections from the people has also been completed. Now it is almost certain that soon the announcement of municipal elections in Uttar Pradesh will be made.

Singer Samar held for abetting suicide of actress Akanksha

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh Police has arrested singer Samar Singh from Ghaziabad for allegedly abetting the suicide of popular Bhojpuri actress Akanksha Dubey.

Samar Singh was hiding in a housing society in the Raj Nagar Extension area, under the Nandgram police station limits, of Ghaziabad — the western Uttar Pradesh district bordering Delhi.

He was held late Thursday in a joint operation by the local police and their visiting counterparts from Varanasi.

A look-out notice had been issued against Samar Singh



and his brother Sanjay Singh after Dubey was found dead in a hotel room in Varanasi's Sarnath area around a fortnight ago. Both were booked under section 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code based on the complaint of the actress's mother.

"A team from the Sarnath police station of the Varanasi Commissionerate had come to Ghaziabad on Thursday night.

"They sought the help of the Ghaziabad police in nabbing Samar Singh from the Charms Castle (housing) society," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ghaziabad City) Nipun Agarwal said. "The accused is being presented in a Ghaziabad court for transit remand by the Varanasi police team," the DCP said on Friday morning.

Later in the afternoon, a local Ghaziabad court granted a 24-hour transit remand of Samar Singh to the Varanasi police.

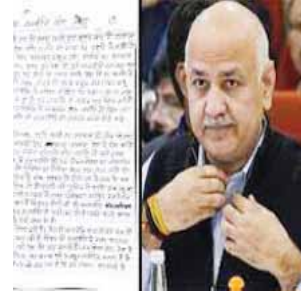
Sisodia targets Modi over his educational qualification

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Jailed AAP leader Manish Sisodia has targeted the Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his educational qualifications through an open letter to people of India and asked should not be biggest manager of country be educated. Sisodia had earlier too written letters from jail.

The BJP was quick to go on the offensive, accusing the AAP MLA of holding "only a diploma" himself and advising him to judge people on the basis of their maturity and wisdom instead of academic degrees.

In the letter which was posted on Twitter by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his former deputy said, "It is very



dangerous for the country if the prime minister is less educated." (Narendra) Modi does not understand science... Modi ji does not understand the importance of education," Sisodia claimed in the letter, alleging that 60,000 schools have been closed in the country in the last few years. It is necessary to have an educated prime minister for the progress

of India," he said.

These remarks come as Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has raised several questions about PM Modi's education.

"We are living in the 21st century today. New innovations in science and technology are taking place all over the world every day.

"The world is talking about Artificial Intelligence... given this, when I hear the PM say that dirty gas funnelled from a drain can be used to make tea or food, my heart sinks," Sisodia, wrote.

"Echoing Sisodia's sentiments, Kejriwal said it is "dangerous" for the country to have an uneducated Prime Minister." Manish Sisodia wrote a letter to the nation from jail.

The Prime Minister being less educated is very dangerous for the country.

"Modi does not understand science. Modi does not understand the importance of education. 60,000 schools have closed in the last few years. It is necessary to have an educated Prime Minister for the progress of India," the Chief Minister tweeted in Hindi.

Hitting back at the AAP leader, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "Before asking about the educational qualification of others, Sisodia should tell what is his own educational qualification." Sachdeva also claimed that Delhi government schools' performance took a plunge when Sisodia was the education minister.

"For eight years Sisodia worked on schools as an event manager and not as the education minister of Delhi.

As a result, now up to 40 per cent of students in government schools either fail in classes 9 and 11 or appear in compartment exams. Class 10 and class 12 students are also in disarray," alleged the Delhi BJP president.

Taking a dig at Sisodia, the Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that a person who is in jail in the excise policy scam, now giving gyan on PM Modi's education qualification. "AAP leaders are diverting the main issue of corruption by raising PM Modi's qualifications. Their two ministers are in jail," said.

Will approach civic body for land, says caretaker of two demolished mazars

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The caretaker of two 'mazars', demolished during an anti-encroachment drive by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), on Friday said he will approach the civic body with a demand for allocation of land nearby to set up the tomb-shrines.

The two mazars, located opposite the Sunehri Bagh mosque near Udyog Bhawan, were demolished in the early hours of Sunday as part of a series of drives being conducted by the NDMC against encroachments on footpaths.

Shahbaz Ahmad, 34, who had been taking care of the shrines since 2020, said that the Waqf Board has already been informed about the removal of the holy shrines and they are looking for a way to set up the structures again.

50 litres of acid seized from public toilet opposite GB Pant Hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Around 50 litres of acid lying in a public toilet opposite GB Pant Hospital in central Delhi has been seized following a surprise inspection led by Delhi Commission for Women chief Swati Maliwal. Maliwal also issued summons to Municipal Corporation of Delhi officials and asked them to be present before the Commission on April 11 with a detailed report regarding the matter.

The inspection was conducted on Thursday night following complaints regarding issues related to public toilets for women and girls in various areas of Delhi. Maliwal shared a video on Twitter in which she can be seen scolding the staff of the public toilet after finding the acid there.

"You will be shocked to see what was found during the toilet inspection in Daryaganj last night. Found 50 litres of



acid lying in the open in a toilet in Central Delhi. "Think how many lives could have been ruined. Police were called and the acid was seized. We are seeking answers from the MCD and action will be taken against the culprits," Maliwal tweeted in Hindi.

The caretaker informed that the acid was being used for cleaning the toilets and is replenished every two months by his seniors. "The Commission has asked for reasons for usage of acid for cleaning public toilets as well as action taken against the author-

ities responsible for acid being used in the public toilets.

"It has fixed the accountability of MCD by asking them the guidelines issued against the use of acid as a cleaning agent in public toilets as well as the steps taken by them for preventing usage of acid for cleaning the toilets," a statement issued by the DCW said. The Commission has asked the MCD to submit a copy of the bills of the acid procured as well as the amount of funds disbursed by the MCD in the upkeep of the said toilet, it said.

Major blow to beer lovers after rise in temperature

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The tick up in temperature has come as a major blow to the beer lovers in the national Capital as most liquor vends in the city seem to be turning them back empty-handed. Shortage of beer in the national Capital is a normal feature during the summers but this year it is more due to less supply.

Beer lovers have raised the issue with vends while the officials concerned refuted the complaints about popular brands missing from the shelves but admitted that tenders have been placed by corporations for refrigerators and chillers and they will be available at the shops soon.

Liquor industry sources said Delhiites gulped down 12-13 million cases of beer last year each containing 24 bottles or cans. The India



Meteorological Department (IMD) has already predicted normal to above normal temperature from April to June.

A consumer outside a liquor store near the DSIIDC office in Connaught Place complained about the unavailability of beer brands. "They are offering brands whose names I am hearing for the first time. None of my two-three favourite ones is available," he said.

Another consumer in Laxmi Nagar complained that the liquor shops were not selling chilled beer. "I used to pick up a couple of bottles and drink them after reaching

home.

Now, they are selling beer at room temperature," he added. People running the vends admitted that refrigerators were unavailable and so a majority of consumers, many of them youngsters, were returning empty-handed.

A senior excise department officer said the complaints of brand unavailability are generic and there was no specific complaint of any brand of beer missing at the shops. He, however, said the corporations have placed tenders and refrigerators will be soon available at the liquor shops.

Under the current excise regime in Delhi, four undertakings of the Delhi government — DSIIDC, DTDC, DSCSC and DCCWS — are engaged in retail liquor sales through more than 550 stores across the city.

No reaction was available from the corporations on the lack of refrigeration facilities at the vends run by them. Vinod Giri, director general of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies, said consumers in Delhi drink nearly 15 crore bottles of beer every year.

The demand is skewed towards the three months of summer which accounts for nearly six crore bottles, he said.

Giri listed several reasons for the shortage of popular beer brands, including the lack of captive production in Delhi and dependence on suppliers located in other States.

BJP makes move to capture Kerala

Party organising tour of Kerala 'intellectuals' to BJP-ruled States

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

With an "undivided political focus" on capturing Kerala in future, the BJP is organising a tour of "intellectuals, workers and scribes" from the State to the BJP-run States, beginning April 27 to give them a "feel of the BJP-model of governance".

The first of such selected batch of people from Kerala is to land in Uttar Pradesh, according to sources.

The group would be taken around UP and visit the "happening city of Ayodhya and the



Ram temple". The UP visit would be from April 27 to April 30 when they would also meet top BJP leaders including Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, sources said.

The visitors would be presented the "contrast" in the "governance and vision" from 'the left-ruled' to the BJP-ruled state. The next state in line for the group from Kerala would be Manohar Lal Khattar-run Haryana and thereafter they would move to Gujarat, the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to sources, similar "interactive-know the governance" tours for Kerala groups are in pipeline for

Madhya Pradesh, Uttararakhand and other BJP states in the North-East for "Intellectuals and workers" from Kerala where BJP is trying hard to enlarge its voting turf. The journalists from Kerala would again be part of these groups.

During the Covid-19 the RSS-BJP had pumped-in maximum number of volunteers in Kerala in comparison to other larger states including Maharashtra which was, otherwise, affected most by the Coronavirus.

The 'sharp political thrust' in Kerala is on and will continue in the run up to the Lok Sabha 2024 and thereafter too, they said.

Govt takes exception to absence of Mins from G-20 meet in Tripura

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has taken a strong exception to the absence of its prominent leaders like Union Minister Protima Bhowmik and Rajya Sabha MP Biplab Deb from the two days G20 meetings held in Agartala, Tripura on April 3-4. Even Tripura Sports Minister Tinku Roy was in Delhi and did not turn up.

Sources in the organising committee coordination team of ongoing G20 meetings across the country said the absence of Bhowmik and Biplab, who served as Chief Minister of the State have been escalated and they may be summoned for explanations.

Sources close to both the leaders however said they had to be in the national Capital as per the directions of the party for the Parliament session. April 4 was Mahavir Jayanti and the Parliament session too had taken a day's break.

Sources also said that both



the BJP MPs were sent invitation at the last moment and thus they could not organize their participation in the event closely monitored by Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally.

There has also been a clear instructions to all the party MPs, leaders to make the ongoing meetings of G20 a huge success. Bhowmik is Union Minister of State for Social welfare and Biplab Deb Burman is now a member of the upper house. "The invitation was received quite late hence could not make it," a close aide of one of the leader told *The Pioneer*.

Around 75 delegates including from US, China and Brazil and nine European nations participated in the sci-

ence conclave titled clean energy for green future' as part of the G20 meetings held at the International Fair Ground at Agartala.

Chief Minister Manik Saha when announced the event had said that earlier it was decided that the conclave will be held in Guwahati but Prime Minister Narendra Modi batted for hoisting such an event at Agartala.

The hosting of G20 was embroiled in another controversy for the dinner reception as the INTACH Tripura chapter condemned the state government's decision to use Durbar Hall of Ujjayanta Palace to host dinner for G20 delegates on April 3.

Hindu gurus in south do much more than missionaries: Bhagwat



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stating that service provided by Hindu spiritual gurus in four southern States is more than that done by missionaries, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday called for making service to the neglected sections a "major movement" in the society and making all parts of society strong.

He said India will become 'Vishwa Guru' when all parts of the society become strong and none lags behind.

PTI quoted Bhagwat giving examples of four southern states where he said social service by Hindu spiritual gurus in the four southern states was several times more than that provided by missionaries, but added that this is not a matter of competition.

He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of a three-day conclave of the 'Rashtriya Sava Sangam' organised by RSS affiliate at 'Keshav Vidhyapeeth' in Jamdoli near Jaipur. Bhagwat said intellectuals in the country generally mention (Christian) missionaries when talking about service to society.

"Missionary organisations run various institutions, schools and hospitals all over the world — everyone knows this. But what is the Hindu seer community doing?" With this thought in mind, a Hindu service fair was held in Chennai, he said.

It was noticed there that the service done by the acharyas, munis and sanyasis in Kannada-speaking, Telugu-speaking, Malayalam-speaking and Tamil-speaking provinces "is many times more than the service done by the missionaries," he said. "But I am not talking about any competition — about more than them, less than them," the RSS chief added.

"This cannot be the measure of service. Service is service, service is not a matter of competition. Service is the natural expression of man's humanity," he said.

Bhagwat said animals too are sensitive but it is a human quality to act on sensitivity, which is called compassion. Emphasising on the need to eradicate backwardness from society, Bhagwat said everyone is equal."

Shinde-led Shiv Sena announces campaign to expand party's reach



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

As part of its celebrations of Hanuman Jayanti, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena has announced a Hindutva-centric innovative 'Apna Abhimaan, Danush-Baan' campaign to expand the party's reach in the national capital and other states.

With the campaign, the party would be launching a massive membership drive. The Election Commission of India had allocated Dhanush-Baan (Bow and Arrow) as symbol of Bala Saheb Thakre's party to the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

"With 'Danush-Baan, we are taking forward the legacy of

Bala Saheb Thakre with regards to Hindutva. We thought here Hanuman Jayanti is the most auspicious occasion to launch the campaign- 'Mera Abhimaan, Danush-Baan,' as it is so closely associated with Lord Rama who destroyed evil with this powerful weapon. A massive membership drive would begin in Delhi and other states soon to expand our reach," said Anandrao Adsl who was also Minister of State during the Atal Bihari Bajpayee-led NDA Government.

He also announced that the party would leverage youth leadership to expand its base in 19 states for which it has formed executive committees from block to state levels.

PIB's fact-check power slammed, Minister calls flak misinformation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India on Friday protested against the new notification by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) empowering Press Information Bureau (PIB) to fact-check any "fake, or false, or misleading" information about

the information about Central Government in social media and direct the social media firms to take down contents.

Meanwhile the CPI(M) on Friday urged the Government to withdraw the amendments to IT Rules.

However, the Union Electronics & Information Technology Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Friday dis-

missed the criticism of the move as "deliberate misinformation".

"The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly disapproves of the amendments to the IT Rules 2021 giving powers to the Press Information Bureau (PIB) to fact check any "fake, or false, or misleading" information about Central government and ask the social

media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Google to take them down.

"Such sweeping powers to the PIB are tantamount to outright censorship affecting all users of these platforms. This is anti-democratic and unacceptable. These amendments to the IT Rules must immediately be withdrawn," said CPI(M) in a statement

FCI to procure 342L tonnes of wheat this year: CMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Buoyant over the various estimates on wheat production and procurement, Food Corporation of India (FCI) CMD Ashok Kumar Meena on Friday said that in view of better than expected wheat production, estimates and government's assurance to support farmers in view of unexpected rains, FCI has already procured 7 lakh metric tonnes of wheat as on date and is well-poised to procure 342

lakh tonnes of wheat in this year.

"It is important for all of us — government and the private sector to work together to ensure that prices of wheat and atta remains stable, despite global headwinds. We have support of higher production estimates too with us," said Meena.

Subodh Kumar Singh, Additional Secretary, Department of Food & Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution,

Government of India said that the estimates of both ministry and private sector are signalling higher wheat production this year, despite impact of unseasonal rains and hailstorm in March-April, 2023.

They were addressing the 1st Extra Ordinary General Meeting and Board of Directors' Meet of Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India, wherein a survey report on "Wheat Crop & Production Estimates for the Crop Year 2022-23" was also unveiled.

The Survey report pre-



pared by Agri Watch on behalf of Federation has predicted the wheat production of 102.89 Lac tons, reduced from 104.24 Lac tons due to unseasonal rains and hail storm faced by wheat producing states towards the end of March, 2023.

The estimates are based on the survey conducted in two

ment to lift the ban on wheat products export on account of higher estimates and sufficient buffer stock.

"Though the unexpected rains and hailstorm have played spoil sport in the record production that we were expecting, however higher acreage and yield is expected to create comfortable situation for the country. Hence, we request the government to consider lifting the ban on wheat export, so that we could support the large Indian diaspora that always prefer Indian wheat atta," he said.

phases across 9 states (80 districts) — Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Speaking on occasion, Pramod Kumar S, President, Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India requested the govern-

Congress urges PM to emulate Raj's Chiranjeevi scheme across country

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Friday claimed the healthcare model of Rajasthan is being studied the world over and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to emulate the state's Chiranjeevi scheme and Right to Health initiative across the country.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera and Rajasthan Health Minister Parsadi Lal Meena said at a press conference at the party headquarters here that the Chiranjeevi scheme helped a large number of people during the COVID-19 period as they did not have to spend even a single penny on their treatment in hospitals.



Khera said there is an atmosphere of celebrations in the state as this scheme has touched so many lives and the "Rajasthan model" is being talked about all over the world and has become a subject of research abroad. He claimed that today the situation is such

that the people of Gujarat are getting their treatment done in Rajasthan.

Rajasthan Health Minister Meena said today people are getting free treatment up to Rs 25 lakh in Rajasthan. He said this has gone up from Rs 10 lakh earlier.

People should protect elephants, says Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said people should protect elephants, conserve their natural habitats and keep elephant corridors free from obstruction.

Inaugurating a two-day 'Gaj Utsav-2023' on Friday at the Kaziranga National Park, she said the human-elephant conflict has been an issue for centuries.

"When we analyze this conflict, it is found that a barrier created in the natural habitat or movement of elephants is the root cause. Therefore, the responsibility of this conflict lies with human society."

Her statement comes amid



concerns that despite India having more than 80 elephant corridors across the country, only one such corridor in Tamil Nadu — Sigur — has been notified.

A second corridor in Odisha (Simlipal) proposed

long ago, is yet to be legally recognised by the State Government.

Notification of elephant corridors is being seen as a major strategy to avoid commercial constructions and human settlements in forested

areas for trouble-free movement of elephants and for lowering human-animal conflict. Every year at least 500 people die while 100 jumbos are dying in man-animal conflict.

The festival aims to raise awareness about elephant conservation, stop conflicts between people and elephants, and protect their corridors and habitat.

Solving the problems related to human-elephant conflict is the aim of project elephant, she said and added that human society will be benefited through elephant conservation and it would also help in addressing the climate change issue.

She said that Kaziranga and Manas National Parks of Assam are an invaluable heritage not only of India but of

the whole world. That is why these have been given the status of 'World Heritage Site' by UNESCO.

Union Environment Minister Bhupinder Yadav said that so far 88 corridors that the jumbos used to move from one part of the country to another have been identified. Survey is being conducted to identify more. In the last three years, 41 elephants were killed by accelerating locomotives

The Minister also said that at least 100 hotspot stretches have been identified where elephants come head-on with the railways.

"Mitigation strategies such as creation of ramps and underpasses are being developed to avoid such conflicts and save the jumbos," he added.

NGT forms panel to revisit environment clearance granted for Great Nicobar Island mega project

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has constituted a high-powered committee to re-examine the environmental clearance granted to Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIDCO) for the multi-component mega project in the Great Nicobar Island.

Along with the development of an international container transshipment terminal, the project also involves the development of a military-civil, dual-use airport, a gas, diesel, and solar-based power plant, and a township.

The NGT was hearing appeals against forest clearance and environmental clearance provided to the project proponent (PP) ANIDCO. Earlier on

January 11, it had sought a response from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the PP.

A bench of chairperson Justice A K Goel along with judicial members Justice Sudhir Agarwal, Justice B Amit Sthalekar and Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi said there was a need for adequate studies on the adverse impact on coral reefs, mangroves, turtle nesting sites, bird nesting sites, other wildlife, of erosion, disaster management and other conservation and mitigation measures.

Besides, the island coastal regulation zone (ICRZ) notification of 2019 had to be complied with and tribal rights and rehabilitation had to be ensured.



The bench, also comprising expert members A Senthil Vel and Afroz Ahmad, said, according to the respondents (ANIDCO and MoEF&CC), such studies had already been undertaken and more were proposed.

"The respondents are com-

mitted to complying with the ICRZ, 2019 and tribal rights. They have also planned compensatory afforestation and mangrove plantations and thus, by and large, the project is compliant and EC does not call for interference," the bench said.

It, however, underlined

some "unanswered deficiencies" such as a threat to 4,518 coral colonies, impact assessment being of only one season as against the mandated three seasons and a part of the project being in the area where a port was prohibited.

"These aspects may call for

revisiting the EC by a high-powered committee (HPC) which we propose to constitute. The same will be headed by Secretary, MoEF&CC," the tribunal said.

Other members of the committee included the Chief Secretary of Andaman and Nicobar, Zoological Survey of India, Botanical Survey of India, Central Pollution Control Board, the Director of Wildlife Institute of India and nominees of Vice Chairman of Niti Aayog and Secretary, Ministry of Shipping.

Asking the MoEF&CC's secretary to appoint a nodal officer, the tribunal directed the committee to meet within two weeks and finalise its proceedings within two months.

"In the light of the report of the committee, the EC or its

conditions may be re-looked into by the competent authority. Till then, further work in pursuance of impugned EC may not proceed except for the work which may not be of irreversible nature," the tribunal said disposing the appeals.

Underlining that the forest cover in the area was more than 75%, the green panel also said that the FC could also not be interfered with.

"There is hardly any development in the area. There is a need not only for economic development but also for national security... There is no conflict of interest as such," it said.

During the proceedings, the tribunal also observed that while its consideration was confined to the material on record, it had noted, without

any comment, some media reports that "the area is located in China's 'string of pearls' strategy and this is sought to be countered by Indian authorities under India's 'Act East' policy."

"The Indian Ocean has emerged as a key intersection zone of Indian and Chinese strategic interests," it said adding, "The project will help bridge the infrastructural gap on the island and promote international trade saving huge amounts on transshipment cargo."

Earlier in January, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways had said the project is expected to be completed with an investment of Rs 41,000 crore (USD 5 billion), including investment from both government and the PPP concessionaire.

Didi running Govt of thieves: BJP

Adhikari accuses Mamata of planning communal riots in Howrah, Rishra to create communal divide

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



Bengal Opposition leader Subendu Adhikari on Friday gave out a no-vote-to-Mamata-Banerjee-call blaming the Bengal Chief Minister for all the ills the State was presently in.

Addressing a massive saffron rally at Burdwan, Adhikari accused Banerjee of planning the communal riots at Howrah and Rishra in order to create a communal divide so as to arrest the steady flight of minority votes from the ruling Trinamool Congress.

"After the comprehensive defeat faced by the TMC in the Sagardighi Assembly by-elections where the minorities accounted for more than 67 per cent votes the Chief Minister has gone mad... this is the reason her party is trying to ignite communal riots at various places and big examples of this plan was Howrah and Rishra where the police working at the behest of the government allowed the communal disturbance to take place.

"These communal riots are

being incited in order not only to polarise the voters but also to divert the attention of the people from the misrule that her Government has perpetrated in Bengal," the BJP leader said reminding "at Sagardighi it is not the question as to who has won... the issue is TMC has been defeated."

Calling Banerjee the source of all anomalies in Bengal Adhikari said, "She is running a Government of thieves... where all kind of corrupt acts are being practiced under the instruction of the queen of the thieves." A Government that had presided over recruitment scams, cattle and coal smuggling, illegal stone and sand

mining rendering most of the rivers of the State flood prone should not be allowed to continue in power, Adhikari said adding, "as the people are getting fed up with a government of thieves the Chief Minister is trying to divert their attention by provoking communal disturbances."

Saying how the State Government allowed riots to happen in Howrah and Rishra on the Ramnavami and how possible communal violence was prevented a few days later on Hanuman Jayanti by simply deploying central forces Adhikari said, "the two instances go on to prove the State Government and the

Trinamool Congress' true intentions to stick to power by hook or by crook." Telling the government personnel, particularly the police force as to how they were being deprived of their rightful Dearness Allowances (DA).

Adhikari said a small example will suffice showing how this thief of a government is polishing off all the funds and depriving the government staff, who have been working hard for its success. "In the present DA regime a Constable is getting RS 18,000 less, an ASI is getting Rs 20,000 less whereas an SI is getting Rs 22,000 less... hence it is for them to decide whether they should continue to help this government," Adhikari said.

Appealing to the farmers he said that in the Mamata Banerjee regime the farmers were starving whereas she was laying the blame at the doors of the Central Government. "They are not only stealing the money and natural resources but they are also stealing the central schemes as a result of which Swacchha Bharat is

becoming Nirmal Bangla, PMAY is becoming Bangla Awas Yojana," he said asking the people to vote the corrupt government and the Chief Minister out of power. Iterating that he was given a task by Prime Minister Narendra Modi the

BJP leader said "Modi ji had told me when I joined the BJP that I must defeat Mamata Banerjee which I successfully did... now there is a second and more important objective which is to oust the TMC from Bengal and that has to be done by the people for which I have given the call 'No Vote to Mamata'

Meanwhile, the agitating State government employees have asked for central forces in the forthcoming panchayat elections. One of their senior leaders leading the DA struggle against the Government said, "all these years we have seen how votes were looted... but this year we will not let that happen and we will demand central forces not only for our safety but also for safety of voters," the leader said.

TMC accuses Shah of 'double standards' on Ram Navami riots

HM had slammed Bihar Govt over Ram Navami clashes, but he is mum on his party leaders' involvement in WB clashes: TMC

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of adopting "double standards" while addressing incidents of violence during Ram Navami in various states.

Ram Navami was celebrated across the country last week with grand processions and special pujas, but the festivities were marred by the deaths of 14 people in separate incidents in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and clashes and arson in some parts of the country.

Prohibitory orders were imposed in West Bengal's Hooghly and Howrah districts, where clashes broke out between two groups when processions were taken out to celebrate Ram Navami.

"HM@AmitShah shows DOUBLE STANDARD in addressing Ram Navami vio-

lence: Goes all ballistic on Opposition-ruled states: West Bengal & Bihar. Takes no actions against @BJP4India& Allies-ruled states: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, & UP. Rules for three but not for me, much?"

The TMC posted on its official Twitter handle. Shah had said that if the BJP comes to power in Bihar, rioters would be hung upside down, a comment that drew sharp retorts from Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee, who accused the BJP of orchestrating the violence.

Senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh had earlier accused the BJP-led Centre of acting according to the instructions of its West Bengal unit.

"Amit Shah had slammed the Bihar government over Ram Navami clashes.

"Then why was he mum on his party leaders being

involved in Ram Navami clashes in West Bengal? This only proves the double standards of the BJP," he had said. The BJP dismissed the TMC's allegations as "baseless". "The allegations of the partisan approach of the Centre and Amit Shah Ji are baseless. The TMC administration failed to maintain law and order during Ram Navami processions.

Its incompetence is out in the open after central forces ensured peaceful Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in the state yesterday.

"So, to hide its failures, it is making such baseless allegations," BJP national vice-president Dilip Ghosh said.

Hanuman Jayanti celebrations passed off peacefully in West Bengal on Thursday as security forces maintained a strict vigil across the state to avoid a rerun of the violence that marked the Ram Navami festival last week.

SIT probe ordered against illegal lease of temple properties in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU



Fulfilling the long pending demand of the exiled Kashmiri Pandit community, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has now ordered a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into illegal lease of temple properties in Valley in order to expose the existing nexus. The Deputy Commissioners (DCs) across Kashmir division have also been directed to furnish the updated inventory of Religious Minority Properties (Temple, Gurudwara and others) within a week.

According to a communication which originated from the office of Assistant Commissioner with the office of Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir a letter has been issued to 10 Deputy Commissioners of Kashmir, wherein they were asked to probe illegal lease of temple. The Lieutenant Governor's secretariat received numerous complaints exposing nexus between defunct temple trusts and senior government

employees allegedly involved in illegally selling or leasing out temple properties in Kashmir.

"I am hereby directed to enclose herewith copy of communication along with its enclosures bearing O.M no. GAD - RMC / 256 / 2022 - LGRMC-GAD dated 20-05-2022 received from Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat References Monitoring Cell, Jammu & Kashmir with the request to ascertain any such instances in your district and take appropriate necessary action under rules with intimation to this office," a letter issued from Divisional Commissioner's office under number DIV.COM/Mig-121/7150795/46-57, reads.

Besides, DCs have been asked to furnish the updated inventory of Religious Minority Properties (Temple, Gurudwara, Others) within a week positively.

Dr Agnishekhar of Panun Kashmir while welcoming decision of SIT probe into illegal lease of Temple properties in Valley said we have been raising issue for past 33 years. We welcome constitution of SIT as it will help in exposing the existing nexus.

Chairperson of JK Peace Forum, Satish Mahaldar in a statement said, for past 33 years no government has taken any initiative to protect temple properties of minorities of Kashmir.

Azad's remark on Kashmiri Pandits' displacement to 'bail out' real culprits: BJP

PTI ■ JAMMU

The Jammu & Kashmir BJP on Friday targeted Democratic Progressive Azad party (DPAP) chairman Gulam Nabi Azad for allegedly hurting the sentiments of Kashmiri Pandits in his autobiography "Azaad".

It said reasons identified by Azad as being responsible for the displacement of the minority community members from the Valley is to "bail out the real culprits".

"We condemn Azad for abusing and hurting the sentiments of Kashmiri Pandit community in his autobiography as reported by the media.

We blame Azad for being equally responsible for the forced displacement of a religious minority of Kashmiri Hindus from the Kashmir Valley in 1989-90," BJP spokesperson and former legislator Girdhari Lal Raina told reporters here.

Blaming Azad for being one of the persons at helm "responsible for the death and

destruction" in Jammu Kashmir, Raina said that his studied silence over gathering storm from 1980 onwards and infiltration and infiltration of terrorists and unilateral attacks on the minority community in Kashmir is "well known".

"Azad was always at important decision-making positions of the Congress party and also in its government. He can in no way escape responsibility for happenings in Jammu Kashmir", he said. Raina said that Azad's description of events leading to the displacement of the Hindu community is a "ploy to shift blame for narrow electoral benefits".

"Azad was in Union government continuously from 1980-1989, the period that saw targeted isolation — othering of religious minorities in Kashmir including violent communal attacks in Anantnag Kashmir in 1986 and also selective killings of minority community of Kashmiri Pandits in 1988-89 much before even elections to the 9th Lok Sabha were held," he added.

Vijayan: Excluding Mughals from textbooks a move to saffronise academic books

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday strongly condemned the dropping of certain chapters and portions from NCERT Class 12 textbooks and alleged that "complete saffronisation" of academic books was the objective behind the move.



Historical facts cannot be denied by just cutting out portions that are inconvenient (to some one) from textbooks, he said in a Facebook post.

Excluding certain portions and chapters from the textbooks with a political motive was not only a negation of history but also a condemnable move. It is evident that the objective behind such actions is the "complete saffronisation of textbooks", the CM added.

In the hard-hitting post, Vijayan said it was clear whose interest was being served by the omission of portions about the assassination of the 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi and the subsequent banning of the RSS, from the political science textbook of class 12. Portions about the Mughal

Empire were also cut down from the history textbook of the same class, he pointed out. "The medieval history of India, excluding the Mughal Empire, is incomplete," he said, alleging that medieval Indian history had always been an area that the Sangh Parivar had twisted and distorted.

The Kerala CM accused the NCERT of "whitewashing the fake history" created by the Sangh Parivar by excluding these portions. The Sangh Parivar, through the textbooks, was trying to inculcate the politics of hatred and division into the minds of children, the Marxist veteran further charged.

Police receive 11-day custody of train fire suspect Kerala CM hands over ₹5L to victims' kin

PTI ■ KOZHIKODE

A court here on Friday granted 11-day police custody of the man who started a fire onboard a train in Kerala that left three people dead and many injured on April 2.

Kozhikode First Class Judicial Magistrate granted 11-day custody of the prime suspect Shahrulkh Saifi, who was discharged from the medical college here after undergoing treatment for the injuries he suffered during an attempt to escape from the moving train.

The 18-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) took custody of the accused, who was produced before the court under heavy police protection, for further interrogation, a senior police official told PTI. Earlier in the day, the Magistrate reached the hospital and remanded the accused for 14 days in judicial custody.

A medical board, which met today concluded that Saifi's injuries were not serious, and discharged him. Meanwhile, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan visited the bereaved families of the three victims and handed over a compensation of Rs five lakh each. Investigating officers, including ADGP (Law and Order), M R Ajith Kumar, and other senior officials today briefed the CM about the progress made in the investigation. Addressing media, Kumar said the accused was nabbed with the cooperation of various investigating agencies.

"This a special case which warranted a combined investigation. The Kerala police and other related agencies worked together to nab the accused. The credit goes to the joint effort taken by Kerala police and other investigating agencies. We are probing all angles in the case," Kumar said. He further said the investigating agencies had received a tip-off that the accused was in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra and a team of police was dispatched to take him into custody.

Idukki settlers lock horns with wild lovers over Ari

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI



A war of words has broken out between the settlers of Chinnakanal settlement in Idukki, residents of Muthalamada and Parambikulam in Palakkad and the elephant lovers of Kodanadu in Ernakulam over Ari Komban, the wild tusker who is giving sleepless nights to persons staying in the suburbs of Western Ghats.

On Good Friday, an all party meeting convened under the auspices of Muthalamada Panchayath decided to observe a dawn to dusk hartal on Tuesday against the move by the Forest Department officials to tranquilize Ari Komban and translocate him to their region. P Mohanan, the Nenmara

MLA of the CPI-M and his comrades have already written to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan against the move to transport the tusker to Parambikulam. "Is it that the bureaucrats want the people of Parambikulam to be at the mercy of this rogue elephant. There is no question of us allowing him anywhere near

our locality," said P Mohanan. The all party meeting which met for more than three hours and concluded with scrumptious meals charted out a strategy to counter the Forest officials' move. "We formed a joint action council and will file a petition in Kerala High Court against dumping this elephant on us," said Mohanan.

But John Peruvantham, noted wild life activist said that commotion over relocating the elephant is unwanted and irrelevant issue. "There is no need to translocate it to Parambikulam. Even if it is shifted to Parambikulam, chances are that it would return to Chinnakanal. It is the encroachers masquerading as settlers who are making a hue and cry to get the tusker shift-

ed from here," said John. The Muthalamada residents have already drafted a petition addressed to the Kerala High Court seeking its urgent intervention to dissuade the Forest officials from shifting the tusker to their locality. John is of the view that the CPI-M, fighting with its back to the wall because of charges of corruption and nepotism needs an issue to divert the attention of the people.

At the time of going to Press, an interesting development has taken place in Kodanadu, a rural township on the banks of River Periyar. Hundreds of elephant lovers in the town that boasts of an elephant kraal staged a demonstration in support of Ari Komban.

Centre's move to auction coal blocks in Cauvery Delta triggers protests

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The Union Government's move to auction coal blocks in Cauvery Delta spread across the districts of Thanjavur, Cuddalore and Ariyalur has led to widespread protests and resentment from farmers, businessmen and industrialists in Tamil Nadu.

The Cauvery Delta region is known as the Rice Bowl of Tamil Nadu and any move to explore, drill or extraction of oil and natural gas incising coal bed methane shale gas would lead to irreparable damage to the environment and ecology, warned Chief Minister M K

Stalin in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Out of the 101 blocks put up for auction across the country, three are in Tamil Nadu. The three blocks fall under the Cauvery Delta region which has been declared as a Protected Agricultural Zone. As per the law enacted by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, no person shall undertake any new project or new activity specified in the second schedule in the PAZ, pointed out Chozha Nachiar Rajasekar, president of Tamil Chamber of Commerce.

"We need to impose a permanent ban on the mining of coal in Thanjavur Vadassery Cauvery Delta Region. There

was a move by Centre to auction nearly 1000 acres of fertile paddy field in Mannargudi for extracting coal bed methane which would have resulted in Thanjavur turning into a desert. This was called off following public pressure," said Rajasekar. He said coal mining itself has become irrelevant across world as most of countries are shifting to renewable energy instead of polluting thermal power stations.

R V Giri, president, Consortium of Indian Farmers Association (CIFA) said he was shocked over the Centre's move to destroy Cauvery Delta region through mining and drilling.

BJP to finalise names for K'taka polls today

Hubballi (K'taka): Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Friday said the BJP's State Election Committee has shortlisted three names per constituency for the May 10 Assembly polls and the Parliamentary Board will meet in New Delhi on April 8 to discuss and finalise the list of candidates.

The Chief Minister is leaving for New Delhi this evening. "Tomorrow our Parliamentary Board meeting is there (in Delhi). After discussions today and tomorrow (on candidates) the Parliamentary Board will meet to finalise," Bommai said. Speaking to reporters here, he said, "Opinions have been gathered from constituency and

district level, after which State Election Committee has discussed and has shortlisted three names (per constituency), it will be discussed and finalised by Parliamentary Board in Delhi." Ticket aspirants are waiting for BJP to announce list of candidates, with election date approaching. Election notification will be issued on April 13, while the last date for filing nominations is April 20.

The Congress has announced candidates for 166 out of total 224 seats, while JD(S) has announced one list of 93 candidates. The BJP that aims to come back to power with absolute majority, has set a target of winning at least 150 of the total 224 seats. PTI



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar at an Iftar party during Ramzan in Patna on Friday

Never thought Scindia, Azad would use such language against Rahul: Raj CM

Jaiapur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has hit back at Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad for targeting Rahul Gandhi, saying no one had thought that they would use such low-level language against the Gandhi scion.

He said the BJP leaders are tired because Gandhi has not shied away from raising voice of the people despite so many attacks.

"That is why a task has been given to these leaders who left Congress. The ideology they had sworn to fight throughout their lives, today they stand with same fascist ideology at behest of BJP leaders," Gehlot said.

Launching a sharp attack on Gandhi and Congress, Scindia alleged party has been left with



no ideology, except that of a "traitor who works against country". He attacked Congress for giving Gandhi "special treatment" following his conviction in a defamation case. He accused party of pressuring the judiciary and doing everything possible to stay relevant.

Scindia, who was once considered close to Gandhi, left the Congress following differences with leadership and joined BJP in 2020. PTI



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Hawkish pause

The RBI's rate pause is premised upon conviction that inflation concerns are being addressed

By keeping the repo rate at 6.5 per cent, the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has surprised capital markets as well as India Inc. Given the fact that retail inflation was 6.44 per cent year-on-year in February, though down from 6.52 per cent in January, 25 bps hike in the key rate was widely expected. The RBI tolerance range for inflation is 4-6 per cent. Yet, the central bank was not deterred by price concerns; all six MPC members, who are mandated to set the policy rate, unanimously decided to keep it unchanged at 6.5 per cent. But this is a "hawkish" pause, in the words of RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das. "With CPI headline inflation ruling persistently above the tolerance band, the MPC decided to remain resolutely focused on aligning inflation with the target. It is essential to rein in the generalisation of price pressures and anchor inflation expectations," the RBI press release said. The policy rate has gone up, in phases, by a total of 250 basis points since May 2022. The RBI has tried to strike a balance between inflation control and the growth imperative, arguing that low and stable prices are essential for the resilience in domestic economic activity on a sustainable basis. The central bank, however, keeps an hawkish eye on prices: "The MPC will continue to keep a strong vigil on the evolving inflation and growth outlook and will not hesitate to take further action as may be required in its future meetings."

The surprise over the pause was also because of a generally good growth rate predicted by various organizations, including the RBI, which upwardly revised growth for the current fiscal from 6.4 per cent to 6.5 per cent. Other estimates are also not much different. The Government's Economic Survey 2022-23 pegged gross domestic product (GDP) expansion at 6.5 per cent for the current fiscal. The Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) estimate about India's GDP growth is actually higher—6.7 per cent for 2023-24. This, the ADB says, will be "driven by private consumption and private investment on the back of government policies to improve transport infrastructure, logistics, and the business ecosystem." The World Bank, though it brought down its GDP forecast for India for the current fiscal to 6.3 per cent from 6.6 per cent, also said recently, "India is still going to be one of the fastest-growing economies in the world." This is quite impressive when the global economy, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva, is expected to grow at less than 3 per cent this year. India and China are expected to contribute half to global growth this calendar year. On its own, India is likely to account for 15 per cent of total global GDP expansion. Apparently, the RBI, which projects inflation in 2023-24 at 5.2 per cent, is of the view that inflation concerns are being systemically addressed. Hopefully, that is true. Otherwise, well, the hawkish stance is there.

PICTALK



A walkathon from Vijay Chowk to Nirman Bhawan to mark the World Health Day, in New Delhi

Between two rocks & a very hard place



DEEPAK SINHA

The Chinese see occupied Tibet as the palm of hand that will only be whole when they control the fingers: Arunachal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Ladakh

Leave aside political affiliations and the flag-waving, slogan-shouting, adrenaline-pumped personas we adopt while watching cricket and ask ourselves a simple question: To what extent are we invested in our country, and what are we willing to sacrifice for its well-being and progress?

Ukraine, for example, has a population of about 43 million. More than a fourth of this, mainly women, children and the aged, have been either internally or externally displaced by the ongoing war. By most estimates, over hundred and fifty thousand are dead or wounded, which includes over 30,000 civilians, and counting. The country's infrastructure is in ruins and despite this, their leadership, wholly supported by the people, fights on resolutely, with no quarter given or asked for. Determined to fight till they succeed in driving the Russians out of their territory, regardless of the time or toll it takes.

In sharp contrast, we are said to have lost over 1000 square kilometres of what we claim as our sovereign territory in Ladakh, without even putting up a semblance of a fight. What is even more shocking is that our Government, for whatever reasons, has yet to publicly acknowledge this loss. Instead, we have had to face the ignominy of the External Affairs Minister, who publicly stated that China is far too powerful for us to confront. What does that say about us?

To be utterly honest, this is not the only Government to have covered in the face of Chinese aggressiveness. Every iteration from Nehru's time has done so, leaving aside Indira Gandhi's first tenure. It was in her time that not only did we give the PLA a bloody nose at Nathu La, but also neutralised them by signing the Indo-Soviet Accord that allowed us freedom of action to liberate Bangladesh in 1971 with no interference. Of course, FM Manekshaw's decision to attack in the winter, with the passes closed, worked to our advantage as well.

Our defeatist mindset is borne out by how we have treated the Tibetan diaspora that took refuge here after the Chinese occupation of their homeland.



Not only did we let them down at every opportunity we got, from the time of the Chinese military occupation, but continue to do so even today, by not standing up for them. All in the hope of pacifying the Chinese leadership so that they leave us alone.

What we have failed to understand or ignore, is the simple geopolitical truth, that Dr Lobsang Sangay, the previous Sikyong, or head of the Central Tibetan Administration, has lucidly explained on numerous occasions. He points out that the Chinese see occupied Tibet as the palm of their hand that will only be whole when they control its five fingers: Arunachal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Ladakh.

Recent events, including the situation in Nepal, Bhutan's discussions with China over Doklam, without involving us, and the name changes in Arunachal announced by the Chinese support his contention. It is the reasons for our complacency and passiveness that are difficult to decipher. Indeed, some academics and researchers do suggest that the Government has little choice given the power differential

and we should continue to downplay tensions as no other country will come to our assistance in case of a conflict.

Not only is that a telling critique of our confused foreign policy choices, but also makes clear that there is little understanding of how militaries operate, or of the factors that play a crucial role in achieving success on the battlefield. It is not just the size of the budget that matters, but the quality of troops, their combat experience and the numbers they can support at the point of decision. Given the topography, the treacherous and long lines of communications, the comparative lack of battlefield experience and the relative strengths both sides can bring to bear, our chances of upsetting Chinese designs should not be underestimated.

The fact of the matter is that the Minister's words do not for a minute convey that there is some ingenious strategy in place to deceive the Chinese and make them complacent, till we are ready to confront them at a time and place of our choosing. Instead, it is exactly what it looks like, just plain cowardice. Words

that also dishonour our gallant men who made the ultimate sacrifice at Galwan and gave reason to the Chinese leadership to pause and reconsider their aggressive designs on our territory.

Our take on history suggests that we were enslaved because of traitors such as Jaichand and Mir Jaffar, who let us down at crucial junctures. But what seems more likely, is the far more unpleasant possibility that we are all no different from those we hold in contempt. The truth is we have produced only a handful of true Bravehearts, like Rana Sangha, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj or Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

As one has repeatedly pointed out, the only facet of governance that we seemed to have learned from our British masters was divide and rule, and that we have now made into an art form that would be the envy of rascals like Warren Hastings and Robert Clive.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and a Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai)



OUR DEFEATIST MINDSET IS BORNE OUT BY HOW WE HAVE TREATED THE TIBETAN DIASPORA THAT TOOK REFUGE HERE AFTER THE CHINESE OCCUPATION OF THEIR HOMELAND

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MAOISTS HAVE BACK TO THE WALL

Sir — In the never-ending battle between the police and Maoists, the former has almost decimated the latter. A fierce battle that culminated in the killing of more than five deadly Maoists in Jharkhand's Chatra near its border with Palamu on Monday is another example. One of the Naxals killed carried a reward of ₹25 lakh and two others carried ₹5 lakh each. The intensity of the combat can be judged by the huge cache of arms and ammunition recovered by the police from the encounter spot. Maoists are adept at taking the police force unawares by sudden ambushes. This time, however, the jawans were too strong for the naxals. A few jawans were injured; hopefully, they will recover.

A couple of top Maoist leaders, including Gautam Paswan, were eliminated. Naxals operate in dense forests, and the knowledge of the forest and hilly terrain separates the highly trained police force from other forces. Field familiarity and rapport with the locals act as weapons for the police in its war against Maoists. Intelligence gathering has been a Maoist forte; but the police have gradually succeeded in beating the opponents at their own game. Over the years, many Naxals have given up their violent ways in several States. A combination of humanitarian touch and taking the fight into the Maoist camp has paid rich dividends to the nation.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

SC BATS FOR MEDIA FREEDOM

Sir — The Supreme Court Order struck a decisive blow for protecting free speech and media freedom by saying critical views on Government policy cannot be construed as anti-establishment. It also set aside the Centre's order revoking the licence of Malayalam news channel Media One.

The court asserted that press freedom, which is protected as a component of Article 19(1) (a), can only be restricted on the grounds stipulated in Article 19 (2) of our Constitution. The fourth pillar of democracy has a duty to speak truth to power and present citizens with hard

Worst Budget session ever?



The worst Budget session of Parliament ended on an acrimonious note on Thursday with the Opposition and BJP levelling charges at each other. The past four weeks saw both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha facing continuous disruptions over the sides' disruption contest. Both the Houses, adjourned *sine die* on Thursday, registered low productivity and waste of precious time and public or taxpayers' money. The session saw Opposition parties coming together to take on the BJP-led Government on the Adani issue. The second half of the session saw the Congress and other Opposition parties consistently raising the demand for a JPC probe into the Hindenburg-Adani row. The BJP members sought an apology from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Many Opposition

leaders termed the second half of the Budget session a washout. They accused the government of causing "disturbances".

The frayed relationship between the Government and the Opposition got further strained after Rahul's disqualification from the Lok Sabha following his conviction by a Surat court in a criminal defamation case. The Opposition resorted to 'black cloth' protests against the Government. The legislative agenda was pushed back amid a ruckus with the Union budget and Finance Bill approved without debate. The decision to extend the suspension of Congress' Rajya Sabha member Rajani Patil till the first week of the monsoon session led to an angry response from Congress which said that the move was against the rules. Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to the Chairman on the issue and raised the point of order. Kharge, who is the Congress chief, said presiding officers cannot display loyalty to the ruling party. The tensions inside Parliament had a reflection outside too with the BJP and Congress leaders targeting each other. Basically, it was the mockery of the functioning of both Houses.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

facts, enabling them to make choices that propel democracy in the right direction.

Padmanabha Suryanarayana | Chennai

PAPER LEAK: PLAYING WITH LIVES

Sir — Question paper leaks or other similar malpractices need to be pondered over with a serious and honest intent. What intrigues both the students and parents is that when nothing of this sort has happened for over nine years since the formation of Telangana, suddenly the occurrence of such an incident needs to be probed. Circumstantially, it may sound political but the Government cannot take shelter under this excuse. There should be constant vigilance in spite of and not because of unruly elements bent upon tarnishing the image of the Government. The role of employees

matters a lot and those with political leanings should never help those who are bent upon projecting the Government in a poor light.

Here, the bigger casualty are the innocent students as their parents are put to unnecessary torment. Teachers and other administrative staff are pivotal in the conduct of fair exams. They should be strict and follow the rule book. At the end of the day, it's teamwork and the staff members need not fear any kind of interference or retribution for their just actions. Their unflinching commitment to duty will always save them, even in the most testing times.

D Nagarjuna | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Work-life balance is the need of the hour

The pressure to stay competitive and productive is resulting in work-life imbalance among employees, which leads to a host of negative impacts

In today's fast-paced world, it has become too easy to get caught up in work and neglect other important aspects of life. Research shows that a healthy work-life balance is essential for not only physical and mental health but also productivity and overall life satisfaction. Over years, society has undergone a significant transformation in different spheres, of which the most prevalent one is none other than 'work'. Undoubtedly, work plays a significant part in every individual's life.

Today, many big companies and business sectors are striving to produce goods and services that are of great value and that is possible only due to strong, motivated and highly dedicated employees. But, at the same time, work helps an individual to shape his identity, structure time and be in contact with others. Today work-life balance is an important aspect of a healthy work environment. Maintaining this balance helps reduce stress and prevent burnout at the workplace.

Today, the increased levels of globalisation, technological advancements, continu-



ous change in economic conditions and social demands have changed the nature of work. Organisations, to accomplish their goals require not only a talented and motivated workforce but also a team full of dedication and energy. Due to the cutting-edge competition, the so-called 9 - 5 work-life culture has now been shifted to a 24x7 cycle, resulting in imbalance, stress, anxiety, burnout and absenteeism. In most cases, individuals working for long hours experience health problems, too.

The growing requirements imposed by companies, businesses and corporations on their employees to stay competitive have caused so much work-life imbalance in a manner that it has started affecting their personal

lives. Working for long hours results in fatigue and negative impacts on relations and even health. Also, people who work long hours consistently are likely to develop unhealthy weight gains, increased neck and muscle discomfort and other ailments. Research even explains that people who work more than 3-4 hours overtime are likely to develop higher risk of heart attacks as compared to those who don't work overtime.

At the core of an effective work-life balance are two key concepts - 'achievement' and 'enjoyment' that are relevant to all of us. They form the front and back of the coin of value in an individual's life. Trying to live a one-sided life is one reason why so many successful people are not nearly as happy as they should be. Employees need to define their arrangements in such a manner that employees live to their fullest potential. It is only then that employees will develop healthy relationships with employers, resulting in better quality and greater volume of production.

Remember work-life balance is not one size that fits all. People have different re-

quirements and needs at different points. For a young learner, the definition of work-life could be a balance between work and quality of life; for a family person it could mean a balance between work and family responsibilities; and for an older person, it could mean a balance between work and health. One needs to experiment with different approaches to find what works best for them. Focusing on the task; prioritising the tasks based on importance and urgency to avoid getting bogged down; learning to say 'NO' to a work that doesn't fall under the job description; asking for help whenever needed; investing in relations; taking breaks regularly; prioritising health and family time are a few steps that can be taken to maintain a healthy balance.

Continuously focusing on progress will result in more productivity, less mental exhaustion and more mindfulness, thereby making an individual concentrated, connected and more energised. The key to a healthy work-life balance is to be intentional about how to spend time.

(The author is an educator)



SAKSHI SETHI



FIRST COLUMN

GIVING MORE, TAKING LESS TO HELP SOCIETY

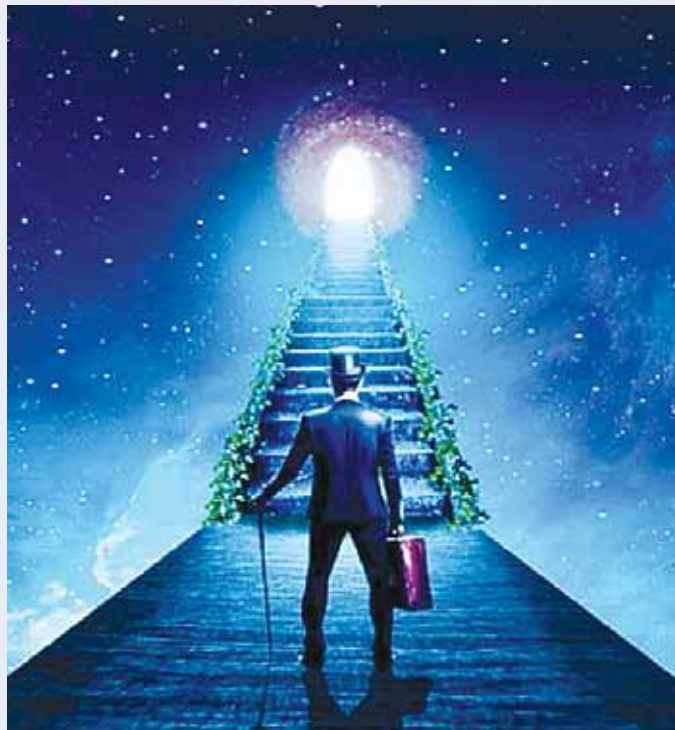
Our actions must be guided by one great law of love, which builds the right relations



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Every day as we open the newspapers or switch on the television, there are reports of violent acts, unrest and dishonesty engendering a sense of fear in the common man's mind. Added to these is the apparent lack of a solution to resolving these crimes which are fast increasing in almost every country across the globe. The kinetic energy of the human race is increasing dramatically as its mental and emotional faculties unfold. Human ingenuity is constantly launching new ideas and initiatives and these all need regulation to ensure that they don't infringe on the rights of others. These rights in turn are constantly being redefined, leading to further new laws, rules and regulations. So, until the higher, spiritual faculties of the human race unfurl and assume control of its thoughts, feelings and actions, complex man-made laws are necessary impositions simply to maintain some semblance of civil order.

Unsurprisingly though, the growing intricacy of law and order is being paralleled by a rebellion against the authority of all kinds. In technologically developed countries, the voice of public opinion is more informed, sure of itself and consequently louder, leading, in most cases, to greater democratization of society. But alongside this, the championing of minor personal rights and gain has contributed to an excessive focus on the letter of the law with its stifling effect on society. As a result, a bewildering number of dos and don'ts are now enshrined in law concerned with relatively minor issues and offences, while the greater crimes often go unpunished due to clever legal manipulations.



As the law grows more complex, so does the potential to challenge one law with another and to defend misdemeanours through clauses, loopholes and confusion. Several centuries ago, English philosopher, jurist, and social reformer Jeremy Bentham observed that "every law is an infraction of liberty". But the only escape from this situation is the realisation that true freedom is only found when it is - actively sought through - service to others. If we are not to crucify the human spirit - through entanglement in the letter of the law, we need to live more by its spirit and to let our thoughts and deeds be on behalf of humanity, and not just ourselves. Our actions must be guided by one great law of love - that attractive principle in the universe through which right relationships at all levels of manifestation are built and sustained. Remember!

Only through the right relationships can the love of God flow unimpeded throughout HIS creation and true freedom be found. Essentially, human laws are or should be a reflection of spiritual principles, a means of safely containing the released potential energy of groups of people, organizing and directing it for the shared benefit of all. However, if individuals try to take more from a group than they put in, others are deprived of an equitable share of the group's energy. Hence, it is in the best interest of society that we make a habit of 'Give More Take Less'.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist for publications across India, Nepal & UK)

The new wave called 'reverse globalisation'



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

Social contracts must be updated to reflect the evolving nature of the workforce, and protection systems modified to fit a dynamic job market

There have been umpteen deliberate attempts to deconstruct the flow of globalisation. It is often done through localization and post-neoliberalism. Now, it is reverse globalization. Recently, the decision by Air India to buy its aircraft from Airbus and Boeing is an illustration of reverse globalisation. Air India recently unveiled deals for a record 470 jets from Airbus and Boeing, accelerating the rebirth of a national emblem under new owners, the Tata Group. Europe and the United States have hailed deepening economic and political ties with New Delhi. It happens when governments are in crisis and giant corporations are on the brink of bankruptcy. There are mass layoffs, sector-wide closures, and even complete closures of some companies.

Reverse globalisation, also known as deglobalisation, is a process that causes the production of goods and services to move closer to the point of consumption. Costs and carbon footprint can be decreased through this process, preserving jobs. What motivates Air India to resort to reverse globalisation? The choice seems to have an economic justification. Air India can anticipate significant cost savings in terms of logistics, labour, and technology transfer by purchasing from Airbus and Boeing.

The fact that Boeing and Airbus will have to transfer technology to build the aircraft has advantages for the Indian aerospace industry as well. This will help increase the capabilities and capacity of Indian aerospace companies, which will result in higher exports.

There are added reasons which resonate with the flow of reverse globalization. Another regional Indian airline, Indigo, placed a \$33 billion order with Airbus for 300 aircraft. This suggests that other Indian businesses might reproduce Air India and benefit from the potential advantages that reverse globalisation may offer. India will gain from the newest technology, job opportunities, and sustainable economic growth thanks to reverse globalisation.

Reverse globalisation has several benefits. The choice has strategic implications as well because it is likely to strengthen ties between India, Europe, and the US. The strong economic ties that are anticipated to emerge as a result of this agreement may one day result in political and diplomatic ties. It is quite apparent that economic growth has been mediocre which is plagued by several factors in Europe. This took place at a time when economies were going through a lot of change. What are the forces driving change, how are they influencing the dynamics of growth, and what do these things mean for policy are the questions to be thoroughly probed for correct answers.

Productivity & investment decline shift

The primary long-term driver of economic growth is productivity. Innovation made possible by technology is the main driver of rising productivity. However, despite the explosive growth of digital technologies, productivity growth has paradoxically slowed. It has generally been less than half the pace of the previous 15 years among advanced economies over the last 15 or so years. Although technologically advanced companies have seen significant productivity gains, these gains have not had a strong impact on productivity, generally. The outcomes of the new technologies have a history of being winner-take-most. Market



REVERSE GLOBALISATION HAS SEVERAL BENEFITS. THE CHOICE HAS STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AS WELL BECAUSE IT IS LIKELY TO STRENGTHEN TIES AMONG INDIA, EUROPE AND THE US

(Chakraborty is HoD, Digital Marketing, and Associate Professor at the School of Management, Presidency University, Bangalore)



structures have become less competitive, dominant firms have increased their market power, and business dynamism has decreased.

Dynamism in labour market

The Labour Market cannot be scot-free when technologies keep on hammering the labour market. The labour markets are being significantly impacted by technology. Labour demand is shifting away from routine low- to middle-level skills towards higher-level and more sophisticated analytical, technical, and managerial skills as a result of automation and digital advancements. On the supply side, workers' access to complementary skills has lagged, which has obstructed the wider diffusion of innovation within economies. The race against technology has vanished with the incorporation of education and training. The issue of an ageing population affects the majority of major economies. To achieve economic growth, these trends place an even greater emphasis on productivity and the technological advancements that support it.

Inequity and the dichotomy

Additionally, growth has become less inclusive and restless. In most developed countries, including the United States, income inequality has been increasing. In some of these countries, the increase has been particularly pronounced. A decline in the income shares of labour and an increase in wage inequality have been attributed to new technologies that favour capital and higher-level skills. They have also been linked to industry structures that are more concentrated and dominant firms' high economic rents. The distribution of both labour and capital income has gotten worse, with income shifting from labour to capital. Political polarisation and social tension have increased as a result of rising inequality and mounting job anxiety. Numerous nations have seen a rise in populism. The onus is on us on how and what we should do and adopt for the betterment.

Narratives in growth pathways

Choosing machines over men has been a vital question. Even though income disparity has increased within many nations, it

has decreased between nations as faster-growing emerging economies close the income gap with advanced economies. New technological challenges are presented by this economic convergence. Emerging economies' comparative advantage in labour-intensive production, based on their sizable pools of low-skill, low-wage workers, has been the dominant driver of convergence. With the automation of low-skill work, this comparative advantage is eroding, necessitating the creation of alternative growth pathways in line with technological change.

The 4IR, robotics and AI

As artificial intelligence, cutting-edge robotics, and cyber-physical systems advance the digital revolution, technological change that is reshaping growth will only accelerate. What has been dubbed the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)' may be just around the corner. Additionally, globalisation is becoming more digital, undergoing a change known as 'Globalisation 4.0' which is analogous to 4IR.

Digital technology advancements have a great deal of potential to accelerate economic growth and productivity while also creating new, better jobs to replace obsolete ones. The new digital technologies may account for as much as two-thirds of the potential productivity growth in major economies over the coming ten years. However, technological change is by its very nature disruptive and involves challenging transitions. Like globalisation, it inevitably produces winners and losers. Policies play a critical role.

New technology, new agenda

Better utilising the potential of new technologies is the central goal of the future policy agenda. Reforms must work to create a more favourable environment for businesses and employees to increase both their access to opportunities brought about by technological advancement and their capacity to meet new challenges.

The institutions and policies that control markets must adapt as technology changes how business is done. To ensure that markets continue to provide open and level playing fields for businesses, maintain strong competition, and restrain the

development of monopolistic structures, competition policies should be updated for the digital age. The digital economy's lifeblood, new regulatory issues involving data, must be addressed. The ability of markets to adapt to disruptions and structural changes brought on by digital transformation will be crucial.

The way forward

The technological innovations should be harmonious and strike a right chord with the passage of development. It must not be a blind rush, leaving other factors aside. The technological frontier should continue to be pushed by the innovation ecosystem, which should also encourage broader economic effects from the new developments. To encourage a wider diffusion of technologies incorporating new knowledge, research and development systems and patent regimes should be improved. It is necessary to strengthen the basis of digital infrastructure and digital literacy. Although there are still wide gaps, the digital divide is closing. Investment in education and training needs to be increased and refocused on emphasising the skills needed for future jobs.

The goal of labour market policies should change from trying to protect current jobs to enhancing workers' flexibility to change jobs. Social protection systems, which have historically been based on formal, long-term relationships between employer and employee, should be modified to fit a more dynamic job market. Social contracts must be updated to reflect the evolving nature of the workforce.

The implications of the changes taking place in business and the workplace, as well as the new dynamics of the income distribution, should be considered when reviewing tax systems in light of the new tax challenges posed by the digital economy. Taxes on capital, labour, and wealth are all included in the possible tax reform agenda. The era of intelligent machines has a lot of potential. Future economic growth could be stronger and more inclusive with the right policies in place. Inclusive is the correct mantra and should be fostered all around.

BJP: Resolving the ideological twilight in India

It is the only Indian political party that's free from ideological slavery and has no qualms about being steadfast on familiar pro-Hindu urges

An undeclared war is going on in India in the name of discussion or narrative, which is purely political. Politics is nothing but a brief reflection of society. In discussion, this reflection can be somewhat small or large according to the subject and time. If we look at the BJP's politics as a social reflection, we get freedom from ideological restrictions, taboos and limitations. From an ideological point of view, BJP is the only Indian political party that is free from ideological slavery. The BJP is steadfast and 'Atal' like Angad on its familiar pro-Hindu urges.

BJP has become an innovative confluence of new and old. RSS has given us a vast and free ideological canvas of politics through BJP. We - India's



PRAVEEN GUGNANI

(The writer is the official language advisor to the Ministry of External Affairs, the Government of India, Raj Bhasha)

political, non-political and even BJP people - are not able to fully express BJP's politics in the right words. This depersonalisation is not because of the BJP's leadership or the critics of the BJP's lack of words or understanding. Non-BJP people are crooked magicians of words. This personalisation is because BJP's goal of 'all-inclusiveness, all-perception and all-pervading' is presented to us with rapid changes in the society.

It is unquestionably accepted by all that in the last three decades, especially in the last decade, India has covered hundreds of years of change. The ideological apparatus of the BJP has become the biggest Indian institutional fertile framework to gently, rapidly and acutely express these social

changes. The BJP gets this gentleness from the Sangh. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's principle of Ekatm Manavwad is the machine to accept this gentleness from the Sangh. BJP has learned very well both to protect its backbone and to stay on its backbone. This is the process of photosynthesis of the banyan tree called BJP.

Broadly speaking, there are four streams of politics in India: BJP, Congress, Left and Socialism. The BJP itself is a stream derived from the RSS Parivar. It did not create any dummies or surrogates of its own. The remaining three political ideas continue to deceive by producing dummies. Like Congress or Trinamool Congress of Mamata Banerji or NCP of Sharad Pawar. Congress,

Leftists and Socialists produced less positive discussions but in negative discussions, these people have become master of masters.

People often say one thing after the BJP has come to power on a large scale; Hey, it's not a "Party with a Difference" anymore. The Opposition may say this for their comfort and enjoyment, but BJP is still a "Party with a Difference"! Crores of workers from various parties have come and joined the BJP, lakhs of office bearers, and thousands of MPs and MLAs have come and joined the BJP; But did the BJP leave Ayodhya? Or Kashmir? Or Common Civil Code? If you check the discussions and narratives developed by all Indian parties in the last one or two decades, you will know

that from the ideological point of view, the rest of the parties have adopted a comfortable zone, but the BJP has not given up its tough ideological insistence. Even today, the BJP is standing steadfast on its Sanghi pole, on Ekatm, on Antyodaya, on Ayodhya, on the Uniform Civil Code and many other uncomfortable subjects. On the other hand, other parties do not want to make their ideological base these days.

They change their views, families and base. Congress has gone bitter by being Communist. Communists are pretending to be Islamists. Don't know what the Communist Socialists are doing. "Abandoning Indianness" is a big word, but I am placing before you some social contexts of the period after Congress

clamped Emergency. Describing tribals as separate from Hindus, making some communities separate religions or minorities, changing the court's decision in the Shah Bano Case, one country two legislations, Arya-Anarya's Issue, describing Ram Mandir as Sangh BJP's office, calling Shriram as imaginary, arrest of Shankaracharya on the night of Diwali, calling Covid vaccine as BJP's vaccine, opposition to vaccine diplomacy, Naxalism, Khalistan, Bodo, Maoism, Article 370, Panditless Kashmir, anti-Hindi politics in the south, separation of northeastern states, India's relations with China, et al.

There are other issues such as tilting towards China in a dispute. On this and many other issues like these, the so-

called intellectual and progressive political elements of India have always behaved contrary to the basic spirit of the nation. These people keep celebrating the sacrifice of 75 CRPF soldiers of CRPF while fighting the Naxalites. After doing all these tricks, when these different political parties try to unite for the attainment of power, then a lot of humour arises.

A pair of snake-mongoose and dog-cat-rat is made and the support of the society is sought. Does society think about whom it should support? Seeing a dog, if you support it, it will eat the cat; if you give it to a cat, it will eat a rat; if you give it to a rat, it will gnaw at the country. The question is really huge and begs serious consideration.

US defends troop pullout from Afghanistan

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Joe Biden's administration has defended its decision to pull American troops out of Afghanistan and blamed former US President Donald Trump for creating conditions that "severely constrained" his successor and led to the chaotic withdrawal from the war-torn country in 2021.

The White House on Thursday released a 12-page document on the conditions that led to US' exit from Afghanistan in 2021 and sent related classified documents to various Congressional committees.

The report places much of the blame on the previous Trump administration, saying President Biden was "severely constrained" by former president Trump's decisions.

"President Biden's choices for how to execute a withdrawal from Afghanistan were severely constrained by conditions created by his predecessor," the report said.

The Trump administration had negotiated a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban that Biden pledged to

honour. But Thursday's report criticised the former Republican president for a lack of planning to carry out the deal.

According to the report, when Biden took office on January 20, 2021, "the Taliban were in the strongest military position that they had been in since 2001, controlling or contesting nearly half of the country."

At the same time, the US had only 2,500 troops on the ground, the lowest since 2001, and President Biden was facing Trump's near-term deadline to withdraw all US forces from Afghanistan by May 2021, or the Taliban would resume its attacks on US and allied troops, it said. It said Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin testified on September 28, 2021, "The intelligence was clear that if we did not leave in accordance with that agreement, the Taliban would recommence attacks on our forces."

John Kirby, White House National Security Coordinator for Strategic Communications, told reporters here that the Biden administration was "proud" of its withdrawal from



Afghanistan.

"The president's very proud of the manner in which the men and women of the military, the Foreign Service, and the intelligence community conducted this withdrawal," he said.

"I've been around operations my entire life, and there's not a single one that ever goes perfectly according to plan," he said.

Kirby said Biden's choice

was stark, either to withdraw all US forces or resume fighting with the Taliban.

"He chose the former, but even in doing so, secured extra time to conduct that withdrawal, stretching it out to August. Despite having his options curtailed, President Biden led a deliberate, rigorous and inclusive decision-making process that was responsive to facts on the ground," he said.

Noting that the administra-

tion focused keenly on the need for proper planning, he said Biden directed his top national security leaders to begin planning for a withdrawal even before he had made the final decision to leave Afghanistan.

He ordered troop reduction plans, plans to turn over bases and equipment to the Afghan government as the previous administration had negotiated, plans to draw down the

diplomatic presence and plans to evacuate both American citizens and Afghan allies alike, Kirby said.

The White House official said the evacuation planning started in the spring of 2021 and the president ordered additional military forces pre-positioned in the region by mid-summer in case they were ever needed.

Throughout, President Biden insisted that his team plan for worst-case scenarios such as the fall of Kabul, even though the intelligence community's assessment when he was making the decision in early 2021, was that Taliban advances would accelerate only after the withdrawal of US forces, Kirby said.

The president repeatedly requested assessments of the trajectory of the conflict from his military and his intelligence professionals, he said.

The long-awaited report also cites intelligence failure in not predicting rapid Taliban victory. Responding to a question on inaccurate intelligence assessment, Kirby said no agency predicted a Taliban takeover in nine days.

Israel hits Gaza, Netanyahu vows more attacks

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The Israeli military struck targets in the Gaza Strip while Palestinian militants fired barrages of rockets rockets into southern Israel early Friday, with the region edging closer toward war following two days of unrest at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site and a rare rocket attack from neighbouring Lebanon.

The fighting comes during a delicate time — when Jews are celebrating the Passover holiday and Muslims are marking the Ramadan holy month. Similar tensions spilled over into an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers in 2021.

The current round of violence began Wednesday after Israeli police twice raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City. That led Thursday to rocket fire from Gaza and, in a significant escalation, an unusual barrage of nearly three dozen rockets from Lebanon into northern Israel.

As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his Security Cabinet late Thursday, the military struck what it said were four sites in Gaza belonging to Hamas.

Following the nearly three-hour meeting, Netanyahu's office put out a short statement saying a series of decisions had been made.

"Israel's response, tonight and beyond, will extract a heavy price from our enemies," Netanyahu said in the statement. It did not elaborate.

But almost immediately, Palestinian militants in Gaza began firing rockets into southern Israel, setting off air raid sirens across the region. Loud explosions could be heard in Gaza from the Israeli strikes, as outgoing rockets whooshed into the skies toward Israel.

The airstrikes came after militants in Lebanon fired some 34 rockets into Israel, forcing people across Israel's northern

frontier into bomb shelters and wounding at least two people.

The Israeli military said the rocket fire on its northern and southern fronts was carried out by Palestinian militants in connection to this week's violence at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, where Israeli police stormed into the building with tear gas and stun grenades to confront Palestinians barricaded inside on two straight days. The violent scenes from the mosque ratcheted up tensions across the region.

There was no immediate Israeli action in Lebanon. The military said some 25 of the rockets were intercepted. But two people were wounded and property was damaged in several communities in northern



Italian UN peacekeeper soldiers inspect a small bridge that was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike, in Maaliya village, south Lebanon on Friday as Israel launched rare strikes in southern Lebanon early Friday.

Israel. The rare attack from Lebanon raised fears of a wider conflagration as Israel's bitter enemy, the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, holds sway over much of southern Lebanon.

In a briefing with reporters, Lt Col Richard Hecht, an Israeli military spokesman, said the army drew a clear connection between the Lebanese rocket fire and the recent unrest in Jerusalem. "It's a Palestinian-oriented event," he said, adding that either the Hamas or Islamic Jihad militant groups, which are based in Gaza but also operate in Lebanon, could be involved. But he said the army believed that Hezbollah and the Lebanese government were aware of what happened and also held responsibility.

Sunak, Akshata speak of pride after Padma Bhushan for Sudha Murty

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty, have spoken of their pride in author and philanthropist Sudha Murty being conferred the Padma Bhushan at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.



and mathematics) to storytelling, but her charitable and volunteering efforts have served as her greatest inspiration to me," Akshata writes.

"Always asking if she can be doing more, she has given back to her community countless times: founding and running a series of philanthropic organisations for 25 years; funding numerous literacy initiatives; and jumping into action to aid those most in need — many in the most remote parts of India — after natural disasters have destroyed their lives," she writes.

"Yesterday I watched with unspeakable pride as my mother received the Padma Bhushan from the President of India," Akshata Murty posted on Twitter on Thursday after her 72-year-old mother got the award.

"On #IWD [International Women's Day] last month, I reflected on my mother's extraordinary journey, from STEM (science, technology, engineering

The First Lady said her mother's example has helped put "volunteering, learning and listening" at the heart of how she hopes to live at 10 Downing Street.

"My mother doesn't live for recognition. The values my parents have instilled in my brother and me — hard work, humility, selflessness — mean she is always on to the next thing. But it was such a moving experience to see her have a moment of recognition yesterday," she added.

Her brother, Rohan Murty, similarly praised his mother as a "positive force" in their lives in his social media post.

In her acceptance speech at the ceremony attended by her family, Sudha Murty thanked the people of India for their unconditional support.

"I owe this award to the people of India. I hope my recognition today inspires the younger generation to take up social welfare as a vocation. It is needed for the continuous development of our great nation. I always feel that the generosity of a few gives hope for a million," she said.

UN: Afghan staff stay home in protest over Taliban ban

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations said the 3,330 Afghan men and women it employs stayed home for a second day Thursday to protest the Taliban's ban on UN female staff working in the country as it continued to press for the decision to be reversed.

The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting on the Taliban's action and pushed its calls for the ban to be overturned.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric reiterated the U.N.'s insistence that all UN staff are needed to deliver life-saving aid to millions and stressed again that "Afghan women will not be replaced by men." He also said the United Nations doesn't want to get into a situation where it replaces Afghan women with international women, who are not banned from working in the country.

He explained that culturally it is always better to have nationals from a country deliv-

ering aid to their local population. The UN has a staff of about 3,900 in Afghanistan, including approximately 3,300 Afghans and 600 international personnel. The total also includes 600 Afghan women and 200 women from other countries.

At the closed UN Security Council meeting on the Taliban ban, members were briefed by the secretary-general's special representative for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, who led talks Wednesday with the Taliban's foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, to call for a reversal of its decision.

Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia, the current council president, told reporters afterward that "everybody was appalled by the decision the Taliban made."

"The question is how to approach it, and we agreed to work on a product by the council ... that would be useful and balanced," he said.

US deputy ambassador Robert Wood said the Biden

administration sees the ban "basically as another effort by the Taliban to erase Afghan women and girls from society."

The United Nations on Wednesday called the ban an "unparalleled" violation of women's rights, unlawful under international law, and unacceptable to the 193-member international organization.

The Taliban decision drew condemnation from the world's most recognized organisations and on Thursday more than a dozen U.N. experts also demanded the immediate reversal of the countrywide ban on Afghan women working with the United Nations, including the UN special investigator on human rights in Afghanistan.

Despite initial promises of a more moderate rule than during its previous stint in power in the 1990s, the Taliban have imposed harsh measures since taking over the country in 2021 as U.S. and NATO forces were pulling out of Afghanistan after two decades of war.

Probe into Pak Army chief's data breach

Islamabad (PTI): A powerful panel of Pakistan's Parliament has sought a criminal investigation against officials of a government agency who allegedly accessed the personal information of Army chief General Asim Munir and his family, a media report said on Friday.

According to the Dawn newspaper, two Pakistani journalists claimed in a vlog earlier this week that in October 2022, personal data and travel records of Gen. Munir's family were allegedly accessed by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) officers in a bid to stop his appointment as the Chief of Army Staff. NADRA also confirmed the news of the personal information of the Army chief's family being accessed and stolen. At a Public Accounts Committee of Parliament (PAC) meeting on Thursday, chaired by Member of the National Assembly Noor Alam Khan, expressed serious concerns over media reports about the breach, the report said.

Khan said that those involved in the data theft should be behind bars, adding that Military Intelligence and Inter-Services Intelligence should be a part of the criminal investigation.

"It should be determined how the family's personal information was stolen," Khan was quoted as saying in the report. Munir was serving as a Lieutenant General at the time of the alleged data breach, in line to be appointed to the top post.

The PAC also summoned the NADRA chairman Tariq Malik, who was absent from the meeting due to other engagements.

UAE rejects S Africa's request to extradite Gupta brothers

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa said Friday that the UAE has turned down its request to extradite two brothers from the wealthy Indian-origin Gupta family to face trial in the country on fraud and corruption charges.

The three Gupta brothers, Ajay, Atul and Rajesh, are wanted in South Africa for their alleged roles in the looting of billions of rands from state enterprises. They are alleged to have used their closeness to former president Jacob Zuma to do this.

The South African government last year submitted a formal extradition application to the United Arab Emirates for Rajesh Gupta and Atul Gupta.

The family fled to Dubai five years ago as the net closed in on them following Zuma's ousting by his own African

National Congress when he refused to step down.

Justice Minister Ronald Lamola says his government is "shocked and dismayed" after the UAE declined the request.

Lamola said he only learnt about the decision after his office enquired with the local UAE embassy, which said that they had received a note verbal stating this.

"We learnt with shock and dismay that the extradition hearing had been concluded in the Dubai courts on February 13, 2023, and our extradition request was unsuccessful," Lamola said.

"The reasons provided are of a technical nature, and fly in the face of (earlier) assurances given by the UAE authorities that our request meets their requirements," he said.

Lamola said the decision would be appealed.

Legal experts however said such an appeal would be to no avail, as the Gupta brothers are believed to now be in Switzerland. Originally from Saharanpur in India, the Guptas built an empire in the IT, media and mining industries after first arriving in the country to start a shoe shop soon after Nelson Mandela was released from 27 years as a political prisoner to become the first democratically-elected president.

"We have complied with every letter of the extradition treaty that we have between ourselves and the UAE authorities. To ensure this compliance, we have even allowed the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to go to the UAE for engagements with their counterparts before the papers were submitted," Lamola said at a media briefing.

Gunmen kill at least 50 in Nigeria village

Abuja (AP): Gunmen have killed at least 50 people during two attacks on a village in north-central Nigeria, authorities said Thursday.

Ruben Bako, chairman of the Otukpo local government where the massacre happened, said that gunmen killed 47 people on Wednesday in Umogidi village in Benue state. A day earlier, three other people had been slain in the same place, he said. Anene Sewuese with Benue state police confirmed that attack and said that the assailants had open fire at a market. However, Sewuese put the death toll at eight people, including a police officer.

The motive of the attacks was not immediately clear, though authorities said they believe both attacks were connected. While there was no claim of responsibility, authorities said suspicion fell on local herdsmen, who have clashed in the past with farmers over land disputes in north-central Nigeria.

The farmers accuse the herders, mostly of Fulani origin, of grazing their livestock on their farms and destroying their produce. The herders insist that the lands are grazing routes that were first backed by law in 1965, five years after the country gained its independence. Benue state, which is referred to as "Nigeria's food basket" because of its bountiful harvests, is one of the hardest hit in the decades-long clashes between agrarian communities and nomadic cattle herders across Nigeria's northwest and central regions.

Colonial-era file sheds light on Indian jewels in UK treasury

PTI ■ LONDON

The discovery of a colonial-era file from the archives of the India Office, the then-British government department responsible for its rule over the Indian subcontinent, has shed light on many precious gems and jewels that came into the possession of the royal family, including many jewels of King Charles III.

As part of a 'Cost of the crown' series, The Guardian newspaper has been chronicling an investigation into Britain's royal wealth and finances in the lead-up to the Coronation of Charles III on May 6.

In one of the reports this week, it references a "remarkable" 46-page file uncovered from the India Office archives that detail an investigation, apparently commissioned by Queen Mary — the grandmother of the late Queen Elizabeth II, into the imper-

ial origins of her jewels.

Among its references is an emerald-encrusted gold girdle used to decorate the horses in the stables of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, which now forms part of King Charles' royal collection.

"The report, from 1912, explains how priceless pieces, including Charles's emerald belt, were extracted from India as trophies of conquest and later given to Queen Victoria," The Guardian investigation reveals.

"The items described are now owned by the monarch as property of the British crown," it notes.

Among the discoveries included a journal recording a tour in 1837 of Punjab by the British society diarist Fanny Eden and her brother George, then Britain's governor general of India, who visited Ranjit Singh — the powerful king who had signed a so-called "treaty of friendship" with the



British at the time.

Dazzled by his kingdom's jewels, Eden wrote: "He puts his very finest jewels on his horses, and the splendour of their harness and housings surpasses anything you can imagine."

"If ever we are allowed to plunder this kingdom, I shall go straight to their stables," Eden wrote.

Later in the 19th century, Ranjit Singh's son and heir, Duleep Singh, was forced to sign Punjab over to the East India Company and according to historical records, the kingdom's stables would have been among the many targets of plunder.

The infamous Koh-i-Noor diamond is said to have come into the possession of Queen Victoria as a result of just such a plunder by East India Company officials.

While modern-day royals avoided a diplomatic row by not choosing the traditional Koh-i-Noor encrusted crown for Queen Camilla's Coronation on May 6, the 'Cost of the crown' has cast a spotlight on the wider extent of colonial-era jewels in royal possession today.

Among the jewels identified in

the document uncovered by The Guardian is a "short necklace of four very large spinel rubies", the largest of which is a 325.5-carat spinel that later came to be identified as the Timur ruby.

However, research by the academic Susan Stronge in 1996 concluded it was probably never owned by the Mongol conqueror and belonged to several kings of Persia and Mughal emperors before Queen Victoria sent it from India.

Another Indian item chronicled is a pearl necklace consisting of 224 large pearls, which is also believed to have come from Ranjit Singh's treasury.

"We have finally entered an era where colonial loot and pillage is being recognised for what it really was, rather than being dressed up as the incidental spoils of some noble 'civilising mission'," Congress MP and

vehicles worldwide from January to March, up from just over 310,000 a year ago.

But the increase fell short of analyst estimates of 432,000 for the quarter, according to FactSet.

A message was left Friday seeking comment from the Austin, Texas-based Tesla on why the prices were cut.

Guidehouse Research e-Mobility Analyst Sam Buelsamid said the company needs to sell more vehicles to keep its factories running at full capacity. Overhead of underutilised plant eats up (profit) margin extremely quickly," he said.

Tesla has added a huge plant near Austin to its U.S. factory footprint, in addition to its original plant in Fremont, California. The company also has built new plants in Shanghai and near Berlin.



ANGRY OVER TAIWAN'S PRESIDENT TSAI'S US TRIP

China sanctions US, Asian organisations

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Friday sanctioned the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and other US- and Asian-based organisations in retaliation to the US House Speaker meeting with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, a day after President Xi Jinping said it is "wishful" thinking to expect Beijing to compromise on its stand on the self-ruled island.

Tsai's meeting with Speaker McCarthy — the third most senior official in the US — on Thursday took place against the backdrop of repeated warnings from Beijing to Washington that the meeting should not happen.

China views any official exchanges between foreign governments and Taiwan as an infringement on Beijing's claims of sovereignty over the island.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, was the site

where Tsai met McCarthy and a bipartisan group of congressional leaders. It was the second high-profile meeting between an American official and Taiwan's president.

China also sanctioned the Hudson Institute, which hosted an event and presented Tsai with its global leadership award on March 30.

The sanctioned groups included Asia-based groups — The Prospect Foundation and the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats for their involvement in promoting Taiwan's independence.

"[The] Taiwan issue is the core of China's core interests. The Chinese government and Chinese people will never agree to anyone making a fuss about the one-China issue," Xi told European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during a meeting in Beijing on Thursday.

It was his first comment after the US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy met Tsai in

Simi Valley, California, which Beijing sharply criticised.

"Anyone who expects China to compromise on the Taiwan question could only be wishful thinking and self-defeating," Xi was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, von der Leyen said the Taiwan issue had been discussed and she had told Xi that "the threat to use force to change the status quo is unacceptable. It is important that some of the tensions that might occur should be resolved through dialogue", Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

On Friday's sanctions, the foreign ministry in Beijing said that both American institutions were banned from having exchanges, cooperation, and other activities with any individuals, universities or institutions in China.

"We want to stress China will take resolute measures to

safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a media briefing.

She also sought to dismiss a question on how Beijing can integrate Taiwan, which follows a multiple-party democratic system with that of China's one-party rule headed by the ruling Communist Party.

The Taiwan question is not about democracy but about China's territorial integrity and reunification and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, Mao said.

"The sovereignty and territory of China have never been divided and will never be divided," she asserted.

"Some countries support Taiwan in the name of democracy and use the Taiwan question to contain China. This move is dangerous and gets nowhere. Taiwan's future lies in the development of cross-strait relations and reunification with the mainland," she added.

S Korea, US, Japan call for ban on N Korea workers

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea, the US and Japan called for stronger international support of efforts to ban North Korea from sending workers abroad and curb the North's cybercrimes as a way to block the country's means to fund its nuclear program.

The top South Korean, US and Japanese nuclear envoys met in Seoul on Friday in their first gathering in four months to discuss how to cope with North Korea's growing nuclear arsenal.

The North's recent weapons tests show it is intent on acquiring more advanced missiles designed to attack the US and its allies, rather than returning to talks.

Despite 11 rounds of UN sanctions and pandemic-related hardships that have worsened its economic and food problems, North Korea still devotes much of its scarce resources to its nuclear and missile programs.

Contributing to financing its weapons program is also likely the North's crypto hacking and other illicit cyber activities and the wages sent by



From left to right, Japanese nuclear envoy Takehiro Funakoshi, chief South Korean nuclear negotiator, Kim Gunn, and Sung Kim, the U.S. special representative to North Korea shake hands before their three-way meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul, South Korea, on Friday.

North Korean workers remaining in China, Russia and elsewhere despite an earlier UN order to repatriate them by the end of 2019, experts say.

In a joint statement, the South Korean, US and Japanese envoys urged the international community to thoroughly abide by UN resolutions on the banning of North Korean workers overseas, according

to Seoul's Foreign Ministry.

The ministry said a large number of North Korean workers remains engaged in economic activities around the world and transmits money that is used in the North's weapons programs.

It said the three envoys tried to call attention to the North Korean workers because the North may further reopen

its international borders as the global COVID-19 situation improves.

It is not known exactly how many North Korean workers remain abroad. But before the 2019 UN deadline passed, the US State Department had estimated there were about 100,000 North Koreans working in factories, construction sites, logging industries and other places worldwide.

Civilian experts had said that those workers brought North Korea an estimated USD 200 million to \$500 million in revenue each year.

"We need to make sure that its provocations never go unpunished. We will effectively counter North Korea's future provocations and cut their revenue streams that fund these illegal activities," Kim Gunn, the South Korean envoy, said in televised comments at the start of the meeting.

Sung Kim, the US envoy, said that with its nuclear and missile programs and "malicious cyber program that targets countries and individuals around the globe," North Korea threatens the security and prosperity of the entire international community.

Pak govt demands 'controversial' Chief Justice's resignation

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A senior Pakistani minister on Friday demanded the resignation of Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial after another judge of the Supreme Court issued a dissenting note on the suo motu notice regarding holding elections in Punjab province, further deepening the faultlines between the judiciary and the government.

Information Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb addressing the media demanded "Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial to resign after his position has become controversial".

On Friday, Justice Athar Minallah, in his dissenting note, maintained that the Supreme Court's suo motu notice was dismissed by a majority 4-3 ruling.

Aurangzeb, who is part of the Pakistan Democratic Movement, in the ruling coalition alliance, said Justice Minallah's decision raised questions about the judicial process.

"Justice Minallah has made a major decision today. Following this decision, the majority of judges have reached a conclusion. The decision

made by him today raises questions about the judicial process," the information minister said.

A three-member bench of the apex court led by Chief Justice 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 decision to extend the polls date from April 10 to October 8. The dissenting note of the judge provided an opportunity for the government to put more pressure on the apex court to accept its demand to set up a full court to decide the election date in Punjab province. The verdict was criticised by the coalition government, which refused to accept it.

"When there was no petition, questions arise as to why the bench was formed and why a decision was made," she said.

Aurangzeb maintained that political parties were not running away from elections but the issues was not limited to elections but had become a matter of "bench fixing".

The minister added that



Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial

the illegal use of powers and arbitrary interpretation of the Constitution cannot be accepted.

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

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 federal government asserts that it has powers to delay the polls and hold it with the general elections in the country after August.

However, former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was pushing for early polls and demanding that instead of delaying the Punjab elections, the national assembly should be dissolved and general elections called in the country.

Separately, an application was filed by lawyer Raja Sibtain Khan in the Supreme Judicial Council, the body having powers to remove a judge of higher judiciary, for the removal of Chief Justice Bandial.

The complainant claims that the Chief Justice "devised groupings within the vagaries of the Supreme Court of Pakistan" and was guilty of misconduct. The latest development widened the gulf between the government and the judiciary and increased the political and economic uncertainty in the cash-strapped country.

Banned Baloch group chief arrested by Pak

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Army on Friday said it has arrested a "high-value target" and the founder of a banned separatist group in the country's restive Balochistan province in a successful intelligence operation.

Gulzar Imam alias Shambay was apprehended in a carefully planned operation that spanned months over various geographical locations, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing, said in a statement.

Resource-rich Balochistan province, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups have previously carried out several daring attacks targeting the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects.

The military said the captured terrorist was a "hardcore militant", as well as the founder and leader of the banned Baloch National Army, which was formed after the merger of the Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and the United Baloch Army (UBA).

Islamabad notifies rules for Hindu Marriage Act after much delay

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Islamabad capital administration has notified the Hindu Marriage Act 2017, more than five years after its passage, a development that could benefit members of the minority community who can now solemnise their marriage in line with established rituals, a media report said on Friday.

The notification titled 'Islamabad Capital Territory Hindu Marriage Rules 2023' will pave the way for the implementation of the marriage act passed in 2017 in the Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan provinces as well, the Dawn newspaper reported.

An Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration official said the notification was forwarded for implementation to all Union Councils of the federal territory.

According to the rules, relevant Union Councils in Islamabad will register a 'Maharaj' to solemnise marriages.

According to the report, a Hindu male with adequate knowledge of Hinduism can become a 'Pundit' or 'Maharaj'.

However, the 'Maharaj' will be appointed only after the submission of a character certificate from the local police and the written approval of at least 10 members of the Hindu community, the report said.

Mehfooz Piracha, district attorney for Islamabad Capital Territory, who drafted the rules, told the newspaper that the notification "is a major step" towards ensuring the rights of the minority community.

He added that the Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces can adopt these rules now.

"Politically and technically, it is easy for provinces to adopt the laws enacted in Islamabad rather than formulating new legislation for each jurisdiction," Piracha was quoted as saying in the report.

Similar to the case of the "registered nikah-khawan" for Muslims, respective Union Councils will issue a "Shaadi Pert" (marriage certificate) to the 'Maharaj' registered with the relevant local government body. All marriages would be registered at the Union Councils as well, the report said.

According to the rules, a

'Maharaj' appointed under the Marriage Act would not take any money for officiating the marriage except for the fees mandated by the government.

According to the report, Section 7 of the rules deals with cases related to the termination of marriages and remarriages.

These rules also allow Hindus living in Islamabad to approach courts under the West Pakistan Family Courts Act 1964 in case of marriage disputes.

The crucial effort for the approval of Hindu marriage rules was made by a group called 'National Lobbying Delegation (NLD) for Minority Rights', according to the report.

Jai Parkash, a member of the group, said that many Hindus permanently settled in Islamabad, and it was "essential" that the ICT administration implement this law retroactively to benefit the local community, the report said.

The Hindu community in Islamabad has grown significantly over the past decade due to migration from Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces owing to security concerns, the report said.

Russia charges WSJ scribe with spying

Moscow (AP): Jailed Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich has been charged with espionage in Russia and has entered his official denial, Russian state news agency Tass reported Friday.

Tass said a law enforcement source informed the news agency that Russia's Federal Security Service officially charged the American journalist with espionage.

Tass did not specify if the action was taken during a court hearing.

In the Russian legal system, the filing of charges means the formal start of a criminal probe.

Tass quoted its source as saying: "The FSB investigation charged Gershkovich with espionage in the interests of his country. He categorically denied all accusations and stated that he was engaged in journalistic activities in Russia."

The source declined further comment because the case was considered secret.

Russian authorities arrested Gershkovich last week and accused him of trying to obtain classified information about a Russian arms factory. The Wall Street Journal has denied the accusations.

West must remove obstacles to grain exports: Russia

AP ■ ANKARA (TURKIYE)

Russia may pull out of a wartime deal that allows the export of Ukrainian grain to global markets if the West fails to remove obstacles to Russian agricultural exports, Moscow's top diplomat suggested Friday.

The deal, which was brokered by the United Nations and Türkiye in July, unblocked shipments that were stuck in Ukraine's blockaded and mined ports, alleviating rising food prices and threat of hunger in some countries.

A separate agreement aimed to facilitate the export of Russian fertilisers and grain. Moscow has repeatedly complained that the deal failed to work for Russian agricultural exports, which have had trouble reaching world markets due to Western sanctions.

Speaking at a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told

reporters that Russia agreed last month to extend the deal for 60 days — instead of the 120 days set under a previous extension — to send a warning signal to the West. "After we extended the deal for 120 days, we saw no indication that those issues could be solved and grew tired of appealing to the conscience of those who determine it," Lavrov said of Moscow's dissatisfaction.

"We made a small escalatory move and offered to extend the deal only for 60 days on the assumption that if there is no change in removing the obstacles to the exports of Russian fertilisers and grain, we would think whether the deal is needed," he said.

Lavrov shrugged off the West's argument that Russian food and fertilisers are not subject to sanctions. He noted that "obstacles related to financing, logistics, transportation and insurance of Russian exports have remained and even have grown tougher."

Domestic issues force Dar to cancel US visit

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has cancelled his visit to the US to attend the spring meetings of the World Bank and the IMF and hold talks with officials to unlock a much-needed USD 1.1 billion IMF bailout, amid deepening domestic political uncertainty and developing judicial crisis, according to a media report on Friday.

During the visit, Dar was to meet the International Monetary Fund management for the removal of bottlenecks in the staff-level agreement on the revival of the stalled bailout package.

Sources said that Dar would not attend the spring meetings of the World Bank and the IMF that will take place from April 10 to 16 in Washington, The Express

Tribune newspaper reported.

"I am not going due to the domestic state of affairs," the newspaper quoted Dar as saying. The deepening political uncertainty and developing judicial crisis were said to be the reasons behind the cancellation of the trip to Washington, the paper said.

Dar had the plan to address the financial and political worlds' concerns regarding the continuity of the Pakistan government, future economic plans and bridging the once again trust deficit with the multilateral lenders.

The sources said that Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq would also not go to the United States due to the prevailing uncertain political conditions.

The economic affairs minister always represented Pakistan at the World Bank

Ayaz is considered very close to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and also handled the political affairs of the allied parties.

The development came amid the widening chasm between the judiciary and the federal government over holding polls in the country's politically crucial Punjab province.

The federal government asserts that it has the power to delay the polls and hold them with the general elections in the country after August this year.

However, former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party has been pushing for early polls and demanding that instead of delaying the elections in the Punjab province, the national assembly should be dissolved and general elections called in the country.

Finance Secretary Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh and Economic

Affairs Secretary Kazim Niazi would now represent the government at the WB-IMF spring meetings.

During the visit, Dar scheduled meetings with the presidents of WB, Asian Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank — the three multilateral creditors that were very crucial for Pakistan's plans to raise USD 6 billion in additional loans to meet the last IMF condition.

Cash-strapped Pakistan is awaiting a much-needed USD 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the Washington-based IMF, which was originally due to be disbursed in November last year.

The funds are part of a USD 6.5 billion bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which analysts say is critical if Pakistan is to avoid defaulting on external debt obligations.

Singaporeans set to savour crickets, grasshoppers, silkworm cocoons

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore will soon allow its citizens to savour different species of edible insects by the end of this year as fried snacks or protein bars, according to a media report on Friday.

Sixteen species of insects, such as crickets, grasshoppers and silkworm cocoons, will receive the green light from the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) for human consumption, reported The Straits Times newspaper.

Consumers here can expect the critters to be served up at eateries directly, or as fried snacks or protein bars, the report said.

The approval of the insects for consumption will be subject to food

safety requirements, including treatment processes to kill pathogens and ensuring that they are packed and stored safely to prevent contamination.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has in recent years been promoting insects for human consumption, in a bid to feed the world's growing population in a more affordable and sustainable way, it said.

The move comes after the agency held a public consultation exercise from October 5 to December 4 last year on the regulation of insects and insect products.

The responses received ranged from scepticism to feedback and concerns from industry players planning

to bring in insect products.

The FAO also said that edible insects provide high-quality nutrition, require less feed and emit fewer greenhouse gases compared with farmed livestock.

Apart from insects, SFA will also be permitting the cocoons of Bombyx mori, better known as silkworms, for human consumption given that these have been consumed in China and Malaysia, among other places.

SFA said that it will also permit fibroin from silkworm cocoons for consumption, as the protein has been approved in South Korea, and Japan, and is "generally recognised as safe" by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

However, industry players remain

divided on the scale of consumer demand, though many are already gearing up for their product launches.

Christopher Leow, chief executive and co-founder of Future Protein Solutions said his company is coming up with a few "exciting concepts" using cricket protein and is thinking of ways to market insect products to entice consumers, the report said.

"A lot more education would be needed to boost public acceptance of the consumption of insects. So, it might take a while before these insects become mainstream at local restaurants," he was quoted as saying.

Globally, both high-end restaurants and casual eateries offering insect dishes like crickets remain

niche, so a lot more needs to be done to normalise insect consumption, Leow noted.

Some Chinese and Korean restaurants in Singapore which were selling silkworms without approval, took these items off the menu following enforcement action taken by SFA, according to media reports.

"While the consumption of insects is no stranger to a number of Asian countries, the direct introduction of whole insects in restaurant menus here may still be challenging due to the generally negative perception of insects", Professor William Chen, director of the Food Science and Technology Programme at Nanyang Technological University said.

Leaky faucets safety issue on Boeing 787s: FAA

Washington (AP): Regulators are worried that faucet leaks in Boeing 787 jets could pose a safety hazard by water seeping into the planes' electronics during flights. The Federal Aviation Administration proposed Friday to order repetitive inspections and, if leaks are found, replacing faucet parts.

The move comes after reports of water from lavatories getting under the cabin floor and into electronic equipment bays.

The FAA said the leaks could damage critical equipment and lead to a "loss of con-

tinued safe flight and landing."

The agency said one airline found wet carpet in the cockpit of a plane and, when it inspected its entire fleet of 787s, found "multiple" planes with leaking faucets. The FAA did not identify the airline.

Boeing advised airlines in November about the issue, which has been traced to an O-ring seal and described as a slow leak — about 8 ounces of water per hour. However, Boeing said the issue was limited to certain 787s while the FAA order would cover all of them.

Investors' wealth jumps over ₹10.43 lakh crore

In last 5 days of market rally

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity investors became richer by over ₹10.43 lakh crore in the past five days, as markets continued their winning momentum helped by foreign fund inflows and stable global trends.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms have surged ₹10,43,216.79 crore to ₹2,62,37,776.13 crore in the last five trading sessions (March 29-April 6).

This week, equity markets were closed on Tuesday (April 4) for "Mahavir Jayanti". Markets are closed on Friday on account of "Good Friday".

Last week, stock markets were closed on Thursday for "Ram Navami".

The 30-share BSE Sensex has jumped 2,219.25 points or 3.85 per cent in the past five trading sessions.

According to market analysts the benchmark indices



have rallied aided by improved overseas fund inflows and positive global cues.

"The Indian equity market saw gains for the second week in a row after a protracted period of underperformance, thanks to stable global cues, FII buying amid valuation comfort, and signs of a worldwide peak

in interest rates," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

On Thursday, the BSE Sensex had climbed 143.66 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at 59,832.97 after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unexpectedly kept the benchmark rate unchanged.

Asian stocks mixed ahead of US job market update

PTI ■ BEIJING

Asian stock markets were mixed on Friday ahead of a United States job market update that traders hope might encourage the Federal Reserve to ease off plans for more interest rate hikes.

Shanghai and Seoul rose while Tokyo declined. Markets in Hong Kong, India and Australia were closed for a holiday.

Traders who worry higher interest rates might tip the global economy into recession looked ahead to US government data that are expected to show the job market is cooling. They hope that might prompt the Fed to decide aggressive rate hikes are no longer needed to extinguish inflation.

Other data have "confirmed a clear trend that a labour market slowdown has begun," said Edward Moya of Oanda in a report.

The Shanghai Composite Index gained 0.4 per cent to 3,324.39 while the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo lost less than 0.1 per



cent to 27,466.88. The Kospi in Seoul rose 1.3 per cent to 2,490.37. Bangkok also gained.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 rose 0.4 per cent on Thursday to 4,105.02 after a US government report showed fewer workers filed for unemployment benefits last week. Economists expect Friday's comprehensive non-farm payrolls report to show the number of jobs added by US employers fell to 240,000 last month from February's 311,000.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average edged up less than 0.1 per cent to 33,485.29. The Nasdaq composite gained 0.8 per cent to 12,087.96.

RBI growth estimate 'too optimistic', will pivot to rate cuts in Oct: Nomura

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Japanese brokerage Nomura on Friday said Reserve Bank's 6.5 per cent real GDP growth estimate for FY24 is "too optimistic", and the central bank will pivot to rate cuts from October.

The brokerage said it agrees with the Reserve Bank's projections on price rise, and said that the worst of headline inflation is behind us.

"However, the revised GDP growth forecast of 6.5 per cent in FY24 appears too optimistic," the brokerage said, adding that it estimates growth to slow down to 5.3 per cent.

A slew of agencies and analysts has cut the FY24 growth forecasts in the recent past, with many of them pegging it under 6 per cent as well.

Nomura said it expects a



downside of over 1 percentage point to the RBI's growth estimate on weaker global growth, high uncertainty and the lagged effects of domestic policy tightening.

The RBI had attributed the upward revision in growth to a dip in crude oil prices to \$ 85 per barrel as against \$ 90 per barrel.

After announcing the policy, Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said that the policy call is a pause on rates, and not a pivot, and made it clear that the RBI will not hesitate to

act if it sees any risks. In the note, the brokerage said the RBI is likely to pause in June as well, saying the central bank will take time to assess the impact of its past rates hikes, where it has raised rates by 2.50 per cent in the last 11 months.

"Beyond June, we expect inflation to marginally under-shoot and a more significant disappointment on growth," the brokerage said.

The risks to its estimate of a rate cut in October appear skewed towards an action earlier than expected, it said.

The brokerage said the six-member Monetary Policy Committee surprised markets by unanimously voting to pause in the April meeting, while retaining its stance at a "withdrawal of accommodation" on Thursday.

India's forex reserves drop by \$329 million to \$578.45 billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves dropped by \$329 million to \$ 578.449 billion for the week ended March 31, on decline in gold reserves, the RBI said on Friday.

The forex kitty had risen handsomely in the previous two reporting weeks, and rose by \$ 5.977 billion to \$ 578.778 billion for the week ended March 24.

For FY23, the overall kitty has dropped by \$ 28.86 billion. It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$ 645 billion.

The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

For the week ended March 31, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$ 36 million to \$ 509.691 billion, according to the Weekly



Statistical Supplement released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves decreased by \$ 279 million to \$ 45.20 billion, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by \$ 27 million to \$ 18.392 billion, the apex bank said.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was up by \$ 14 million to \$ 5.165 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

Wheat crop loss likely to be 1-2 MT due to untimely rain: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Friday said wheat production loss due to recent inclement weather is likely to be in the range of 1-2 million tonnes but overall production will reach a record 112.2 million tonne in the current year on higher acreage and yield.

The government's wheat procurement at minimum support price (MSP) is underway and about 7 lakh tonnes have been purchased so far, higher than 2 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period.

The Centre also asked roller flour millers to directly procure from farmers to meet their requirements instead of seeking stock from state-owned FCI under Open Market Sale Scheme.

The government also ruled out the industry's demand to lift the ban on the export of wheat products considering the bumper output.

Releasing a private wheat crop estimate at an event



organised by the Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India, Subodh Kumar Singh, Additional Secretary in the Food Ministry said there was a difference in wheat production projected by the Government and industry last year.

However this year, there are some commonalities in crop estimates. The first common thing is that there is 3-5 per cent increase in wheat acreage, the second is production loss due to untimely rains and hailstorms would be about 1-2 million tonnes and third, there would be an additional 5-5.5 million tonne production over the last year, he said.

"The production would be

5-5.5 million tonnes higher than the last year's government estimate," he said.

This means the overall wheat production would be touching the record 112.2 million tonne set for 2022-23 crop year (July-June) and even surpass this level.

AgriWatch had initially projected wheat output at 104.24 million tonne for 2022-23, as against 97.7 million tonnes in the previous year. However, it revised the estimate downward to 102.9 million tonnes factoring in the crop loss due to untimely rains.

In 2021-22 crop year (July-June), wheat production had declined by 1.84 million tonnes to 107.74 million tonnes due to heat waves in some parts of the growing states. Consequently, the government's procurement had dropped to 19 million tonnes, as per the government data.

The Additional Secretary further said the surveys are important as commodity prices have gone up across the world.

Godrej Consumer Products to invest ₹100 cr in Early Spring

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FMCG major Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) has announced investing ₹100 crore in Early Spring, a new early consumer fund set up by Spring Marketing Capital (Spring).

Spring is creating a brand-first investment franchise that aims to support founders who are building the brands of tomorrow.

The Godrej group's FMCG arm GCPL will anchor a new ₹300 crore early-stage consumer fund being set up by Spring, in addition to offering its expertise and experience to help founders build strong, sustainable companies.



"Enabling companies to leverage marketing expertise along with capital, Spring's first fund of ₹150 crore continues to invest in companies at Series A and beyond. The Early Spring Fund will be investing ₹5 crore to ₹20 crore in each company, from seed to pre-series A stage," it said.

Commenting on the development, Omar Momin, Head M&A, said this is in sync with GCPL's purpose of bringing the goodness of health and beauty to consumers.

"We intend to leverage our understanding of consumer space and learnings over the last decades to enable early-stage founders focused on building strong offline as well as online presence by offering differentiated products in India," he said.

GCPL ranks among the largest Household Insecticides, Air Care and Hair Care players in emerging markets of India, Indonesia, and Africa. Godrej Consumer Products to invest ₹100cr in Early Spring.

New Gas Pricing Formula: CNG, piped gas prices to be cut but no clarity on deregulation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

CNG and piped cooking gas prices will be cut by 9-11 per cent after the government revised the formula for pricing of natural gas, but there is no clarity on deregulation of the fuel, analysts said.

While the Union Cabinet accepted an expert committee report to price bulk of domestically produced natural gas at 10 per cent of month average import price of crude oil with a floor of \$ 4 per million British thermal unit and a cap of \$ 6.5, tinkering with the panel's suggestions will help the government avoid prices going up right in the middle of general elections next year.

"City gas distributors could reduce prices of compressed



natural gas (CNG), used by vehicles, and piped natural gas (PNG), used by homes, by 9-11 per cent, with the government accepting the key recommendations of the Kirit Parikh Committee," Crisil Ratings said. "Had the previous pricing regime continued, prices would have likely risen."

But the government has not acted on the panel's recommendation to fully deregulate prices in 2027.

Asked about the deregulation of gas prices, Oil Secretary Pankaj Jain, briefing reporters

late on Thursday evening, had stated that the decisions taken by the Cabinet have been communicated.

"We don't know if the deregulation has been postponed or stalled for now," an industry official said.

Also, the government tinkered with the recommendation of a \$ 0.50 per mmBtu annual increase till full deregulation in 2027.

The Cabinet decided that rates will not change for two years and will be increased by \$ 0.25 annually thereafter.

This, analysts said, has helped the government avoid an increase in CNG and piped cooking gas (PNG) prices in April 2024 — when the country would have been in the midst of general elections.

Gas price for Apr at \$7.92 but price for consumers capped at \$6.5: Govt order

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday announced a natural gas price of \$ 7.92 per unit for the remainder of April according to the just approved new pricing formula, but rates for consumers have been capped at \$ 6.5 per unit.

Following the decision, the CNG price in Delhi is likely to be cut from ₹79.56 per kg to ₹73.59 and that of PNG from ₹53.59 per thousand cubic meters to ₹47.59. In Mumbai, CNG may cost ₹79 per kg instead of ₹87 and PNG may cost ₹49 per scm instead of ₹54.

The Government on Thursday accepted several key recommendations made by the Kirit Parikh Committee with respect to the pricing of natural gas produced from APM fields (that are legacy fields and largely held by PSUs like ONGC).

Under the new pricing mechanism, the pricing of gas will be linked to 10 per cent of India's average monthly crude import basket. There would also be a floor price of \$ 4 per mmBtu and a ceiling price of \$ 6.5 per mmBtu.

According to an order of the Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell, the price of natural gas for April 8 to April 30 period comes to \$ 7.92 per million British thermal unit going by the new indexation of pricing it at 10 per cent of imported cost of crude oil.

However, the Union Cabinet had while changing the pricing formula capped the rates at \$ 6.5 per mmBtu for two years ending March 31, 2025.

"For the gas produced by ONGC/OIL from their nomination fields, the price shall be subject to ceiling of \$ 6.5 per mmBtu," the order said.

The capped rates which are

Toyota Kirloskar halts Innova Hycross bookings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Toyota Kirloskar Motor on Friday said it has decided to temporarily halt bookings of top trims of its multi purpose vehicle Innova Hycross from April 8, owing to ongoing supply challenges.

"We deeply regret to announce the temporary halt of bookings for top-end grades of Innova Hycross (ZX and ZX (O) only, with effect from April 8, 2023," the automaker said in a statement.

The bookings of the other grades of Innova Hycross both



the hybrid and gasoline, will continue, it added.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) had launched the Innova Hycross in November last year.

Unauthorised investment advisory services: Sebi bans 4 entities from securities mkts for 6 months

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred four entities from the securities markets for six months for providing unauthorised investment advisory services and directed them to refund investors' money collected through such services within three months.

Those restrained by Sebi are — Course Work Focus of Shashank Hirwani, Capital Research, its proprietor Gopal Gupta, and Rahul Patel (proprietor of Capres).

In two separate orders, Sebi found that these entities were engaged in the business of providing investment advice to their clients, for consideration, without obtaining Sebi's registration.



According to Sebi, Course Work Focus and Hirwani collectively received over ₹96 lakh from investors during March 2018 to July 2020 and Capital Research, Gupta and Patel together collected ₹60.84 lakh between June 2014 and November 2019 by providing such unregistered investment

advisory services.

Through such acts, they violated the provisions of investment adviser (IA) norms, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in its final order passed on Wednesday.

received from the clients or investors as fees in respect of their unregistered investment advisory activities within three months.

Also, they have been prohibited from accessing as well as dealing in the securities market directly or indirectly in any manner for six months or till the expiry of six months from the date of completion of refunds to investors whichever is later.

The orders came after Sebi conducted an examination in relation to the alleged activities of unregistered investment advisory being carried out by Capital Research, Capres and Course Work Focus after receiving complaints against them.

In its order, Sebi directed the entities to refund amount

Klopp calls for Liverpool reaction against Arsenal

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Jürgen Klopp says his struggling Liverpool team must show "reaction after reaction" when they face Premier League leaders Arsenal at Anfield on Sunday.

The Reds are 10 points behind fourth-placed Manchester United and face an uphill task to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Liverpool have taken just one point from their past three games — all away — but have won nine of their 13 league matches at Anfield this season.

"We are at home and still have to show reaction after reaction after reaction — we have to — and improvement," Klopp said on Friday.

"That's what we will absolutely try on Sunday."

A much-changed Liverpool side drew 0-0 at Chelsea in midweek after defeats at Bournemouth and Manchester City.

"We have to change, we have to find a basis we can build on," said Klopp, whose side hammered Manchester United 7-0 in their last home game in early March.

"First step: intensity, desire, passion. Good at Chelsea, really, that was good. The rest, not so much. But it's fine — let's go from there."

Klopp, who admitted his team were low on confidence, said the Anfield factor could be crucial.

"It's no secret that the combination of our people and the ground and then the boys is a pretty good combination, so that's what we have to throw in as well — but not relying on it," he said.

"We have to push the train. In this moment, I have a very good feeling that we can do that."

The German said he remained calm despite a disappointing campaign for Liverpool — who came close to winning an unprecedented quadruple last season.

"I'm really calm in this moment," he said. "You might be surprised but I'm really calm."

"I'm in it, I see everything and I base my decisions on that. And in the end, we will see what the outcome is. I cannot do more. And, again, we have to keep going



and we will."

Klopp said Colombia international winger Luis Diaz, out since October with a knee injury, is expected to be available for the match against Leeds on April 17.

Midfielder Thiago Alcantara, sidelined for two months with a hip problem, could return against Arsenal, while defender Virgil van Dijk is set to be back after illness forced him to miss the Chelsea game.

'TRUST PAYING OFF'

In a season of so many coaching changes in the Premier League, Jürgen Klopp says Arsenal is a good example of what can happen when a club practices patience.

"I know people are always asking for time for managers. I really think Mikel deserved each minute he got there when it was not going perfectly well," Klopp said. "In the beginning, maybe the steps were not big enough for some people and stuff like this and now they are (in first place)."

Chelsea's firing of Graham Potter on Sunday was the 13th managerial departure this season — the most in league history. All but one — Potter's resignation from Brighton — were related to underperformance.

Arteta took charge of Arsenal in December 2019 and guided the team to back-to-back eighth-place finishes.

The start of last season was rough, however. For the first time in club history, Arsenal started a campaign with three losses and no goals scored. The Gunners went into an international break on the back of a 5-0 loss at Manchester City before bouncing back to finish fifth.

Now, Arsenal holds an eight-point lead over City, which plays at bottom club Southampton on Saturday.

"Mikel is building this team for a few years now. Obviously the outcome is pretty impressive," said Klopp, who in his seventh season is currently the league's longest-serving manager. "The way they play is fun to watch. It's super lively, really good football, top players on the pitch, good match plans."

"It's not exactly what you can say about us at the moment."



Haaland 'ready' for Man City return at Southampton

AP ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Premier League.

Erling Haaland is fit to return for Saturday's Premier League trip to Southampton, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola confirmed on Friday.

Haaland, who has scored 42 goals this season, missed City's 4-1 hammering of Liverpool last weekend after pulling out of international duty with Norway due to a groin injury.

His return is a timely boost for City's quest to win a treble of trophies in the final two months of the season.

"He trained the last two days really good," said Guardiola. "He will be ready."

City welcome Bayern Munich to the Etihad for the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final just three days after their trip to St Mary's. But Guardiola said he was fully focused on chasing down Arsenal at the top of the

eight-point lead, but City have a game in hand on Mikel Arteta's men and host Arsenal at the Etihad later this month.

"Bayern is our last thought," said the City boss. "It's Southampton — the Premier League is every day, every week."

Southampton are bottom of the table but shocked City when the sides last met, dumping the English champions out of the League Cup.

City have only won twice in their past five visits to St Mary's and Guardiola is expecting another tough test.

"Now every team is playing for something," he said. "Every game has its own characteristics and you have to be ready, Southampton have always been so tough."

"Always it's been a tough, tough game. Tomorrow won't be an exception."

Ancelotti thinks Benzema, Kroos and Modric will stay at Real



AP ■ MADRID

Carlo Ancelotti believes Karim Benzema, Luka Modric and Toni Kroos will stay at Real Madrid next season, the Los Blancos coach told a news conference Friday.

The trio are out of contract at the end of the current season and Ancelotti confirmed Modric and Kroos are now speaking with the club about their futures.

Benzema joined Real Madrid from Lyon in 2009 and Modric arrived from Tottenham in 2012, the pair winning five Champions Leagues with Real

Madrid among other trophies.

Toni Kroos joined Madrid from Bayern Munich in 2014, winning the Champions League on four occasions with Los Blancos. Asked about Kroos and Modric, Ancelotti said he believed a "solution" would be found.

"There are advances, because they are talking," said Ancelotti. "I think that in the end they will look for a solution, there are advances."

The coach also thought Benzema, who scored a hat-trick in the emphatic 4-0 win over Barcelona on Wednesday in the

Copa del Rey semi-final, would stay. However, the Italian warned that at some point, Madrid would have to move on.

"I think (the three) will stay," said Ancelotti. "But we have to think about the day they stop too, because, for the fact they have something unique, something will have to change."

"We have to look for the club's future along a different line, not the way (we play) with Kroos and Modric."

"We have fantastic young players, (Eduardo) Camavinga, (Aurelien) Tchouameni, (Fede) Valverde and (Dani) Ceballos, who will mark an era at Madrid, but in a different way to Kroos, Modric and Casemiro."

Ancelotti still believes that Benzema, Modric and Kroos are offering Madrid a lot, even if physically they are past their peak.

"We have to evaluate the players not by their age but by what they do," added the coach.

"You can think the three don't have the physical profile or energy of the younger players, but what these three have in terms of game management is unique, you can't buy it on any market in the world."

"This is born with experience — age takes something from you, but it gives you something back as well."

Madrid face Villarreal in La Liga on Saturday, before hosting Chelsea on Wednesday in the Champions League quarter-final first leg.

England beat Brazil on penalties to win Women's Finalissima

AP ■ LONDON

England beat Brazil 4-2 in a dramatic penalty shootout to win the first-ever Women's Finalissima at Wembley on Thursday, with Euro 2022 hero Chloe Kelly scoring the decisive spot-kick after a 1-1 draw.

Sarina Wiegman's European champions were on course for a narrow win after taking the lead in a first half they dominated through a well-worked team goal finished off by Ella Toone.

But Copa America Femenina winners Brazil were transformed after the break and

threatened to spoil the party when Andressa Alves fired home from close range in the 93rd minute.

With no extra time, the game went straight to penalties.

Georgia Stanway, Rachel Daly and Alex Greenwood scored from the spot to put England 3-1 ahead.

Kerolin kept the contest alive but Kelly — who scored the winning goal in the European Championship final at Wembley last year — slotted home coolly to seal the win.

Wiegman said her team, preparing for the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand,



which starts in July, had not had much chance to practise penalties.

"We practised yesterday and before the Euros we practised a lot," she said. "We just repeated it yesterday in case. We knew what to do and we did good."

The Dutch coach — yet to taste defeat as England boss — said she felt "privileged" to reach 30 games unbeaten.

England secured their place in the showpiece match by beating Germany 2-1 in the Euro 2022 final last year while Brazil beat Colombia 1-0 to win their eighth Copa America Femenina title.

Bayern hope Mane can 'find himself' at Freiburg

AP ■ BERLIN

Fresh from knocking Bayern Munich out of the German Cup, Freiburg will hope to again spoil the party against the same opponents on Saturday, this time at home. Bayern lacked firepower in Freiburg's 2-1 win at the Allianz Arena on Tuesday, with their goal coming from centre-back Dayot Upamecano.

Star summer arrival Sadio Mane's drought in front of goal continues to frustrate the German champions. Mane has played seven matches for Bayern since returning from a leg injury which forced him to miss Senegal's World Cup campaign, but has registered only one assist and no goals.



After Tuesday's match, a smiling Mane told reporters "soon, I promise you" after he was asked when he would return to the spectacular form he displayed with Liverpool. Manager Thomas Tuchel, just two games

into his Bayern reign, said he had "no doubt whatsoever about Sadio's quality and what he can bring us", explaining "it's only a matter of time."

Club chief executive Oliver Kahn said that Mane might be struggling because there is "a lot of competition" for starting spots at Bayern. "He doesn't know that (from Liverpool) and is perhaps not used to it." "He's still looking for himself."

Bayern lead with eight league matches to play but Borussia Dortmund, who face Union Berlin are just two points behind. Freiburg have lost just one league match at home this season and sit fourth, on track for what would be a first-ever Champions League qualification.



Pegula rallies to reach Charleston quarters

AP ■ CHARLESTON

Top-seeded Jessica Pegula lost 10 straight games and trailed 4-0 in the final set before rallying to reach the Charleston Open quarterfinals.

Pegula, an American ranked No. 3 in the world, led the top four seeds including No. 4 seed and defending champion Belinda Bencic, into the round of eight in the season's first clay-court tournament.

No match was the equal of Pegula's fight with Irina-Camelia Begu, who was down 4-0 in the second set and two games away from a quick exit until finding her game. Begu, the 15th seed, strung together a 10-game win streak to turn things around.

Pegula dug in to win the final six games and the exhausting match. That was a pretty crazy match," Pegula said. No doubt, Pegula will try to find more consistency against 12th-seeded Paula Badosa, a 6-3, 6-1 winner over Diana Schneider, for a spot in Saturday's semifinals. Others moving on with No. 2 seed Ons

Jabeur, No. 3 seed Daria Kasatkina and Bencic, who topped Jabeur to win last year's event on the Charleston's green clay.

Jabeur topped Caroline Dolehide 6-3, 7-5; Kasatkina defeated Bernarda Pera 6-3, 7-6 (3); and Bencic bounced back after losing to opening set to oust Shelby Rogers 4-6, 7-5, 6-2.

Jabeur will take on Anna Kalinskaya, who defeated two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka 6-4, 7-6 (5).

Jabeur, who reached the finals at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open a season ago, likes where her game early in the run up to Roland Garros next month.

"I'm getting used to the clay more," she said. "And I'm just ... The most important thing (is) I'm enjoying myself on the court and hopefully, it will continue to be better and better."

Kasatkina will next play past Charleston winner, ninth-seeded Madison Keys, who got past No. 8 seed Magda Linette 6-2, 3-6, 6-1. Bencic will face Ekaterina Alexandrova, who defeated Julia Grabher 6-4, 6-2.

Indian hockey teams get new support staff

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Renowned Australian coach Anthony Farry has been appointed as the analytical coach of the Indian women's hockey team while South African Rhett Halkett will perform the same role with the men's team, Hockey India announced on Friday.

The national federation also announced other support staff members for both the teams.

Farry, under whose supervision Canada men's team qualified for the 2016 Rio Olympics and who also helped Japan women win their maiden Asian Games gold medal in 2018, will assist head coach Janneke Schopman in his new role.

Farry also helped Canada U-21 men's team qualify for two consecutive editions of the Junior World Cups and was the head

coach and High Performance Director of USA women's side from August 2020 to April 2022.

Besides Farry and Halkett, Hockey India also announced Australian Alan Tan's appointment as scientific advisor to the national men's team. Both Halkett and Tan will be a part of the coaching set up of the men's team led by newly-appointed chief coach Craig Fulton of South Africa. Rhett earned 155 international caps between 2010 and 2018 for South Africa. In 2020, he was assistant coach of the Netherlands women's side before moving to Scotland, where he coached both the senior as well as the U-21 outfits.

Tan, meanwhile, comes with over 10 years of experience working as the strength and conditioning coach at the New South Wales Institute of Sport.

Chaibi sends Toulouse into French Cup final

AP ■ PARIS

Fares Chaibi scored late as Toulouse beat second-tier Annecy 2-1 on Thursday to reach the French Cup final.

Chaibi, 20, came off the bench and claimed the 85th minute winner to set up a meeting with Nantes, who beat Lyon on Wednesday, on April 29 in Paris. "It will remain as a memory in my head forever," Chaibi told broadcaster beIN Sports.

"It's what the coach expects from the replacements."

"We're happy, we're going to the Stade de France," he added.

The hosts from Ligue 2 had lost three games since their surprise quarter-final victory over Marseille on March 1 and, despite a noisy 13,500 home crowd, were on the back foot early on against Toulouse, promoted this season.

The visitors, owned by US investment firm RedBird Capital Partners, made the most of



their dominance 10 minutes before the break.

Dutch midfielder Branco van den Boomen broke down the right and Morocco's Zakaria Aboukhlal headed home low down near the front post for his fourth goal in as many cup game this season.

Annecy's response came in the fourth minute of first half added time.

Striker Alexy Bosetti was fouled in the box by Gabriel Suazo. The well-travelled 29-year-old converted into the bottom corner from the spot.

Bosetti, who has had spells

LSG BEAT SRH BY 5 WICKETS

Suyash battles through Delhi cricket politics to shine in IPL



PTI ■ LUCKNOW

He stitched 55 runs with Rahul (35) for the third wicket to take the game away from the SRH's reach. By the time, Krunal was out in the 13th over, LSG needed just 22 runs to win. The home side eventually reached 127 for 5 in 16 overs.

Rahul hit four fours during his 31-ball knock while Krunal's innings was studded with four boundaries and one maximum.

Rahul and Romario Shepherd (0) were out off successive deliveries bowled by Adil Rashid (2/23) in the 15th over but that was just delaying the inevitable.

Experienced pacer

Bhuvneshwar Kumar conceded 13 runs in the first over of LSG's run chase, giving away five wides and Rahul hitting a four.

Rahul found the boundaries against Washington Sundar and Aiden Makram but lost his opening partner Kyle Mayers (13) in the fourth over bowled by Fazalhaq Farooqi who came in as SRH's impact player in place of Rahul Tripathi.

Bhuvneshwar made amends of his expensive first over, scalping the wicket of Deepak Hooda (7), caught and bowled, in the last powerplay delivery to reduce LSG to 45 for 2.

Rahul and Krunal denied

SRH any success for 6.2 overs as LSG inched closer to the target. LSG were always far ahead of the asking rate and they needed just 40 runs from the last 10 overs with eight wickets in hand.

Earlier, left-arm spinner Krunal snapped wickets of three top-order batters in a superb spell.

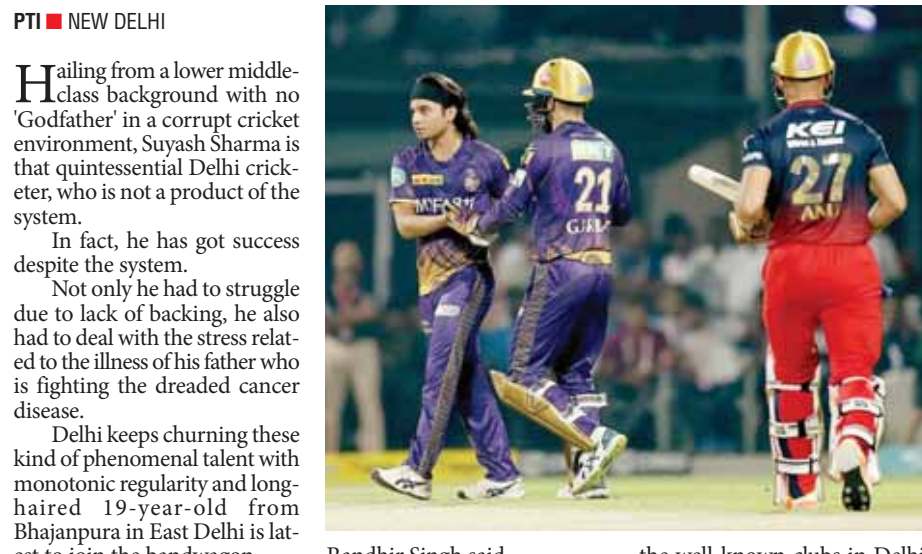
Krunal scalped the wickets of Mayank Agarwal (8), Anmolpreet Singh (31) and captain Makram (0) -- the last two dismissals from successive balls in the eighth over -- to reduce SRH, who opted to bat first, to 50 for 3.

Playing his first match of the

season as well as the first as SRH captain, Markram went for a drive in the first ball he faced but it spun away to disturb his off stump.

Ravi Bishnoi then removed Harry Brook, stumped by Nicholas Pooran, for 3 as SRH were in tatters at 55 for 4 in nine overs. SRH could not recover from there.

Veteran leg-spinner Amit Mishra produced a fine spell of 2/23 later in the innings to restrict SRH to a small total. Mishra was substituted by 'Impact Player' Ayush Badoni with just one over left in the innings.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hailing from a lower middle-class background with no 'Godfather' in a corrupt cricket environment, Suyash Sharma is that quintessential Delhi cricketer, who is not a product of the system.

In fact, he has got success despite the system.

Not only he had to struggle due to lack of backing, he also had to deal with the stress related to the illness of his father who is fighting the dreaded cancer disease.

Delhi keeps churning these kind of phenomenal talent with monotonic regularity and long-haired 19-year-old from Bhajanpura in East Delhi is latest to join the bandwagon.

Making his debut as an 'impact substitute', the unheralded Suyash took 3 for 30 in KKR's 81-run victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore. His scalps included two recognised keeper-batters -- Dinesh Karthik and Anuj Rawat apart from all-rounder Karn Sharma.

The wiry-framed leg-break bowler hardly showed signs of nerves. His arm-speed and ability to bowl leg-break and googly without any distinct change in action has surely caught the imagination of coaches and the fans.

Bhajanpura in Delhi gained notoriety three years back when it was one of the epicentres of city's communal riots.

"It wasn't an easy journey for Suyash. He was former Delhi spinner Suresh Batra's student and used to play for his club. We lost Suyash to COVID-19 and after that he came to me as he wanted match practice. I gave him a chance to play for my Madras Club in DDCA league and Run-Star club in open tournaments," noted Delhi coach

Randhir Singh said.

The last one year had been extremely difficult for Suyash, who doesn't come from a financially well-off family.

"His father was detected with cancer. But I think he will forever be indebted to former Delhi spinner and current MI manager (talent scout) Rahul Sanghvi, who helped him immensely with his father's treatment.

"I told him if any help was needed, we could look at AIIMS but thanks to Rahul, his father got treated in Mumbai. He had also appeared for trials at MI," Randhir said.

Unlike Kolkata, Chennai or Mumbai, Delhi club cricket isn't a lucrative one as none of the clubs pay any money and there aren't any formal contracts either.

"We never paid Suyash anything as in Delhi club cricket, no one gets a penny. Only if you are professional, playing for India and has been requested to play, there may be some financial takings," Randhir explained.

The Madras Club is one of

the well-known clubs in Delhi club circuit and its famous alumni include Virender Sehwag and Yuzvendra Chahal.

"There is something about our club that five spinners have played IPL so far. Pawan Negi, Pradeep Sahu, Tejas Baroka, Chahal and now Suyash. Our boys train at Jesus & Mary College (JMC) ground. It was in DDCA league last year that his fast googlies came into prominence and he got a lot of wickets," Randhir said.

In Delhi cricket, unless one has a strong backing from a club or individual members, who control at least 10-15 votes, getting a chance in age-group teams is a Herculean achievement.

"He got seven wickets in DDCA Challenger Trophy tournament and thus got into Delhi U-25 team for white ball matches. But you know what is funny? He was dropped from red ball games (CK Nayudu Trophy) as he was seen as white ball player. If you don't give someone chance, how would you know," Randhir asked.

MI lock horns with CSK in IPL Clasico

Livingstone to link up with PBKS on April 10



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma will like to get this act together both as a batter as well as skipper, when his star-studded Mumbai Indians take on an astute Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings in what could be safely billed as a Saturday night IPL blockbuster.

Rested well for a week after their crushing loss against RCB in season-opener, Mumbai Indians will certainly be under additional pressure in front of their passionate home fans here at the Wankhede Stadium.

More so, given how ruthlessly they were blown away by Royal Challengers Bangalore in a one-sided game with Virat

Kohli taking the MI attack to cleaners.

But to their advantage, inexperience of Rajvardhan Hangargekar and Tushar Deshpande, both warned by their skipper Dhoni for bowling wides and no-balls, will work in home team's favour as young duo might find the batting-friendly Wankhede track very challenging.

How well spinners Moeen Ali and Mitchell Santner bowl will also decide CSK's fate against the five-time champions. There will be however be a case for Sisanda Magala, who is known to nail wide yorkers for South Africa might replace Santner in the playing XI.

The focus will be a little extra on MI skipper Sharma, who hasn't exactly set the IPL stage on fire for a few seasons. The Indian skipper has had his share of blazing starts but a big knock has eluded him for quite some time now.

In a small ground with short side boundaries, how well Jofra Archer bowls will hold key for MI as the likes of Arshad

MI-CSK IPL rivalry is like Man Utd vs Liverpool: Moeen

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Chennai Super Kings all-rounder Moeen Ali on Friday likened the intense battles between his team and record IPL champions Mumbai Indians to the storied footballing rivalry of Manchester United and Liverpool.

Mumbai Indians have indeed been the most successful team in IPL history with five titles and Chennai Super Kings are a close second with four trophies. However, both the teams have struggled post the mega auction in 2022 having lost core of their players and their rivalry — also termed as the El Clasico of the IPL — is tilted in favour of Mumbai Indians who have 20 wins to show in 34 meetings with CSK.

"This is a game I really look forward to. These are the two most successful franchises and the fan-following is huge and this is one of the biggest games you can play as a cricketer outside of international cricket.

"In football's point of view it is like Manchester United playing Liverpool. These are huge games," Moeen told the media here during CSK's training session on Friday evening at the Wankhede Stadium.

Khan, Cameron Green could be lambs for slaughter for in-form Rituraj Gaikwad or Devon Conway. MI will also be anxious about how their other batting

star Suryakumar Yadav front up against an inexperienced debutant. Young Tilak Verma waged a lone battle to save the blushes against RCB for MI with the bat

Moeen backed CSK's strike bowler Deepak Chahar, who struggled in the opening two matches against Gujarat Titans and Lucknow Super Giants, saying he needs more game time.

"I think the only thing he is lacking is game time. He had a bad injury and is coming back after a long time. Unless you can bowl in a proper game which you need as a bowler, he will get better as the tournament goes on.

"He is a big bowler for us and when he gets it right he gets three or four wickets in the powerplay," Moeen said.

and Punjab lad Nehal Wadhara was also impressive on debut. But the team will look to put up a collective batting effort starting from the top-order.

PTI ■ LONDON

England batter Liam Livingstone is set to get fitness clearance from the ECB by the weekend and will join his IPL team Punjab Kings on April 10.

Livingstone has not played competitive cricket since suffering a knee injury on his Test debut in Pakistan four months ago. He had also endured an ankle injury last year and that flared up in recent weeks to make his rehab tougher.

"He will be arriving on Monday," the source said.

It is certain that he will miss Punjab Kings' third game of the season against Sunrisers Hyderabad on April 9 but could play their fourth game at home on April 13.

On Thursday, Livingstone said he is close to regaining full fitness.

"(I'm) getting there, finally," Livingstone said on LancsTV's coverage of Lancashire's opening County Championship fixture against Surrey.

"It's been a long road: three or four days a week at the gym over the last three or four months. Maybe towards the end of this week, or start of next week, I'll fly out to India and get going again.

"Feeling much better. I had some injections midway last week. It's settled it down a lot, finally been able to get outside and do some running and get back to proper cricket stuff.

"That's probably been about four or five days now, so just trying to build back up to match fitness now."



Bangladesh win one-off Test against Ireland by 7 wickets

AP ■ MIRPUR

Bangladesh wrapped up its one-off Test against Ireland with a seven-wicket win just after lunch on the fourth day on Friday. Bangladesh scored 369 and 138-3 while Ireland made 214 and 292.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who scored 126 in the first innings, sealed victory for Bangladesh with 51 not out, while Mominul Haque was unbeaten on 20.

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan said: "This was a match where we could experiment with a few things. We tried to do that, some things came off and some things didn't.

"I thought we were positive enough and the wicket suited the

way we wanted to bat. That's one area where we are looking to change our approach and that worked in the match. I wouldn't say this was an ideal Test wicket but it was a good batting track."

Liton Das gave Bangladesh a fluent start before he was bowled by paceman Mark Adair for 23. Offspinner Andy McBrine, who registered an Ireland record 6-118 in the first innings, then had Najmul Hossain caught by skipper Andrew Balbirnie for 4.

But Tamim and Mushfiqur put on 62 for the third wicket. Bangladesh earlier took 36 minutes to wrap up Ireland's second innings after the visitors resumed on 286-6.

RCB sign Parnell, Vyshak as Topley and Patidar's replacement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) on Friday named Wayne Parnell and Vyshak Vijay Kumar as replacements for the injured Reece Topley and Rajat Patidar respectively for the remainder of Indian Premier League. Topley suffered a shoulder injury while fielding during RCB's opening match of the season against Mumbai Indians.

Patidar did not feature in RCB's first game due to a heel injury. He is yet to recover and has been ruled out of the 16th edition of the tournament, read a media advisory from the IPL.

Parnell has so far represented South Africa in 56 T20s, in addition to six Tests and 73 ODIs, and has 59 T20I wickets against his name.

The left-arm pacer has played 26 IPL matches and has picked up as many wickets. He joins RCB for Rs 75 lakh.

Patidar's replacement Vyshak Vijay Kumar represents Karnataka in domestic cricket and has played 14 T20s, scalping 22 wickets and joins RCB for Rs 20 lakh.

DC aim for improved batting show against RR

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Battered and bruised by raw pace in back-to-back matches, Delhi Capitals' batting unit is likely to find some breathing space on a featherbed when the side takes on Rajasthan Royals in an afternoon IPL match, here on Saturday.

Mark Wood and Alzarri Joseph have scarred the likes of Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan in DC's line-up in the first two games.

And when these talented but low on confidence willow welders face an attack comprising Trent Boult, KM Asif and Jason Holder, they would have to negotiate speed in mid 130 kmph, which is right up their alley.

However, the guile and artistry of Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal on a hot late afternoon and early evening in Guwahati won't be a pleasant proposition either.

But the pattern of scores at the Barsapara Stadium suggests that batters get value for their shots and one can plonk his front-foot and hit through the line.

Another aspect that might give some relief to DC could be the absence of dangerous Jos Buttler, who has got stitches on the little finger of his left hand after sustaining a bruise while taking a catch in the last game.

The bruised area with stitches is likely to remain sore and soft and it will be difficult to field even though batting with extra padding inside the gloves remain an option. In case Buttler is unable to play, Joe Root could be an option.

DC, on paper, despite Rishabh Pant's absence, looked good but frailties of Shaw and Sarfaraz while facing international bowlers, who are 10 miles quicker than their Indian counterparts, has created a lot of problems, which the side wouldn't have initially comprehended.

There hasn't been too many silver-linings for DC in the two defeats so far and the main drawback of the team is poor

bench-strength in terms of Indian talent, which doesn't inspire confidence.

Even if the coaching staff wants to try other options in place of Sarfaraz, DC, in its Indian batting roster only has Yash Dhull, Ripal Patel and Lalit Yadav to fall back upon and none of them are players who would perhaps score at a strike-rate of 150. For Rajasthan Royals, Yashasvi Jaiswal and skipper Sanju Samson have been in good nick in the first two games and would hope to pose challenge for the likes of Anrich Nortje, Khealeel Ahmed and Kuldeep Yadav.

The two aspects in DC's strategy that will be looked upon with keen interest will be usage of 'Impact Player' and Axar Patel's utility as a bowler with southpaws — Jaiswal and Shimron Hetmyer batting in top six. In case of Axar, skipper David Warner is wary of giving him the ball when left-handers are at the crease due to his poor match-ups in the past.

While Rovman Powell is a big hitter, he has issues while tackling spinners, so there is every chance that Rilee Rossouw will continue.

However RR, despite losing their earlier match, remains favourite to win this one.

