

OPINION 6

BRITAIN NEED NOT APOLOGISE TO INDIA

WORLD 8

NORTH KOREAN LEADER VOWS 'OFFENSIVE' NUCLEAR EXPANSION

MONEY 10

INVESTORS RICHER BY ₹12.6 LAKH CRORE IN 7-DAY RALLY

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY APRIL 12, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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RAJASTHAN TO FACE CSK IN IPL 2023 TODAY
12 SPORT



Pilot defies Cong's diktat, sits on fast against Gehlot

Party summons Raj ex-Dy CM for explanation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

Defying the Congress Central leadership's warning that a sit-in will be considered an anti-party activity, Rajasthan Congress leader and former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot on Tuesday sat on a fast in Jaipur, piling pressure on his own party by targeting the Ashok Gehlot Government for "inaction" in the alleged corruption cases during the Vasundhara Raje-led BJP's term.

The day-long fast has not gone down well with the Congress leadership which has summoned Pilot for explanation. On the other hand, backed by the party high command, Pilot's bete noire Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot released a video on his vision to make Rajasthan the top State by 2030. Gehlot did not make any direct remark on Pilot's fast.

"If there is any issue with his own government, it can be discussed at party forums instead of the media and in



Congress leader Sachin Pilot sits on a hunger strike at Shaheed Smarak in Jaipur on Tuesday

PTI

public. This is clearly anti-party activity. I am in touch with him and I still appeal for dialogue since he is an indisputable asset to the Congress," said Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, Rajasthan in-charge at the AICC.

Sources in the AICC said Pilot is likely to be in Delhi to meet Congress president M

Mallikarjun Kharge and the party's first family members — Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka. So far Pilot's occasional revolt against Gehlot was being contained by Priyanka, but sources said this time the Gandhis did not make any effort. Rahul and Priyanka are in Wayanad, Kerala, the Parliamentary constituency

represented by Rahul until his disqualification last month.

As he left the protest site, Pilot told reporters that Rahul, the Congress and other Opposition parties have united over corruption and financial irregularities, and claimed that his fast will speed up this "movement".

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MEA trashes China objection to Shah's visit to Arunachal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Arunachal Pradesh and China objecting to it claiming the State is its part, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Tuesday said, "We completely reject it."

Making India's position clear, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here, "We completely reject the comments made by the Chinese official spokesperson. Indian leaders routinely travel to the State of Arunachal Pradesh as they do to any other State of India. Arunachal Pradesh was, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India. Objection to such visits does not stand reason and will not change the above reality."

This categorical assertion by Bagchi came in response to media queries regarding Chinese official spokesperson's comments on the recent visit of Home Minister of India to Arunachal Pradesh.

Incidentally, Beijing had renamed some places in the eastern State last week and said "Zangan" is China's territory. China calls Arunachal Pradesh Zangan, the southern



part of Tibet and its spokesperson on Monday said Shah's visit violates China's "sovereignty".

Zangan is China's territory, spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in response to a question on the visit by the Home Minister.

"The Indian official's visit to Zangan violates China's territorial sovereignty, and is not conducive to the peace and tranquility of the border situation," the spokesperson said in Beijing.

"Zangan (China's name for Arunachal Pradesh) is part of China's territory... The activity of the senior Indian official in Zangan violates China's territorial sovereignty and is not conducive to peace and tranquility in the border areas. We are firmly against this," he had said.

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Cross-border weapons supply serious threat, India slams Pak at UN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

With Pakistan continuing to stoke terrorism in India, New Delhi has said the country is facing a "serious challenge" of cross-border supply of illicit weapons using drones, which cannot be possible without active support from State authorities. India also said "certain states with dubious proliferation credentials" that collude with terrorists should be held accountable for their "misdeeds".

This security threat was underlined by New Delhi's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) Ruchira Kamboj in the UN Security Council's open debate on "Threats to International Peace and Security: Risks Stemming from Violations of Agreements Regulating the Exports of Weapons and Military Equipment" late on Monday. The meet was held under Russia's Presidency of the Council for April.

She said "certain states with dubious proliferation credentials" that collude with terrorists should be held accountable for their "misdeeds".

"The export of weapons and military equipment in violation of international law,



exacerbating geo-political tensions, cannot be ignored," Kamboj said.

She said the quantum of these threats multiplies when "certain states with dubious proliferation credentials, in view of their masked proliferation networks and deceptive procurement practices of sensitive goods and technologies, collude with terrorists and other non-state actors".

"For example, the rise in volume and the quality of the small arms acquired by terrorist organisations remind us time and again that they cannot exist without the sponsorship or support of States," Kamboj said.

The envoy said in India's context, "We are facing a serious challenge of cross-border supply of illicit weapons using drones, which cannot be possible without active support from the authorities in control of those territories," an apparent reference to Pakistan.

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CAPSULE

52 NEW FACES IN BJP 1ST LIST OF 189 FOR K'TAKA

New Delhi: The BJP on Tuesday released its first list of 189 candidates, including 52 new faces and eight women, for the May 10 Karnataka Assembly polls, fielding Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai from his traditional Shiggaon. P5

'SONIA'S PIECE CLASSICAL EXAMPLE OF MODI HATRED'

New Delhi: Union Ministers Kiren Rijju and Dharmendra Pradhan took a jibe at Congress leader Sonia Gandhi over her newspaper article on democracy and independence of institutions, saying it was an "illusory" statement of the highest improbity and a "classic example of Modi hatred". P4

MOCK DRILLS AT DELHI HOSPS AMID COVID SURGE

New Delhi: Amid a surge in the Covid-19 cases in the national capital, mock drills were conducted at hospitals to ascertain their preparedness to tackle the disease. The city had reported 700 Covid cases and four deaths on Sunday, an increase of more than 200 infections from the day before.

SC ALLOWS RSS TO HOLD MARCH IN TN

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld Madras High Court orders allowing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to hold "route marches" in various parts of the States with certain conditions and dismissed three appeals of the Tamil Nadu Government in the matter. P5

BJP will win over 300 LS seats: Shah

PNS ■ DIBRUGARH

Exuding confidence that the BJP will win over 300 Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 elections, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the voters will gift the third consecutive term to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Narendra Modi will become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term with the party winning over 300 seats (out of 543 seats) in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections," Shah said during a rally in Dibrugarh, where he laid the foundation stone for the Upper Assam zonal BJP office.

Shah thanked the people of Assam, which was the first State in the N-E to give mandate to the BJP. He expressed confidence that the saffron party will win 12 out of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in the northeastern State.

Launching a scathing attack on the Congress, the senior BJP leader said, "North-east was once considered a fortress of the Congress but despite Rahul Gandhi's yatra, the party failed to perform well in the recent Assembly elections in three States in the region."

Assembly elections were recently held in Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland.

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IAF court for sacking of Grp Capt for 2019 missile hit on copter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An IAF General Court Martial (GCM) has recommended sacking of a Group Captain for the crash of a Mi-17 V5 helicopter in Budgam in Jammu & Kashmir after it was hit by a missile on February 27, 2019, official sources said on Tuesday.

Six IAF personnel on board the helicopter and a civilian on the ground were killed in the crash.

The attack helicopter was struck by the IAF's own surface-to-air missile when the helicopter was on its way back to Srinagar on the day Indian and Pakistani air forces were engaged in an aerial combat, according to a Court of Inquiry.

Sources said the GCM ordered dismissal of Group Captain Suman Roy Chowdhury, who was serving then as the Chief Operations Officer (COO) of the Srinagar Air Force Station.

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Muslims thrive in India: FM in US blasts critical write-ups

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world and those blaming India on minority issues have no clue about the ground realities, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said.

Addressing a Washington DC audience during a fireside chat at the Peterson Institute for International Economics on Monday, Sitharaman said the Muslim population is only growing in numbers in India.

"If there is a perception or in reality, their lives are difficult or made difficult with the sup-



port of the State, which is what is implied in most of these write-ups, I would ask, will the Muslim population be growing

from what it was in 1947... The contrast can be sharper as opposed to Pakistan, which was formed at the same time," said the FM.

She said violence prevails against Muhajirs, Shias and other minority groups in Pakistan, whereas, in India, every strand of the Muslim community is doing its business. "Pakistan declared itself an Islamic country but said minorities will be protected. Every minority has been dwindling in number, or decimated in Pakistan, even some of the Muslim sects," she said.

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Pak expresses 'indignation' at G-20 meet in Srinagar

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD

As ties remain strained between the two countries, Pakistan on Tuesday expressed its "strong indignation" over India's decision to hold the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar on May 22-24. Islamabad also said New Delhi is exploiting its membership of an important international grouping to advance its "self-serving" agenda.

Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Ministry said, "India's irresponsible move is the latest in a series of self-serving measures to perpetuate its illegal occupation of Jammu & Kashmir in sheer disregard of the UN Security Council resolutions, and in violation of the principles of the UN Charter and international law. Pakistan vehemently condemns these moves."

"Pakistan expresses its strong indignation over India's decision to hold the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar on 22-24 May 2023. Scheduling of two other meetings of a consultative forum on youth affairs (Y-20) in Leh and Srinagar... is equally disconcerting," it said.

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Govt relaxes norms for rain-hit wheat purchase

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief to farmers, the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs has relaxed quality norms for wheat procurement in Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, and Rajasthan to prevent distressed sale as well as to protect the interest of farmers in the light of the crop losses due to unseasonal rain and strong winds. The Ministry has also imposed a value cut on such grains.

The main problem in the wheat grain is the lustre loss because of the untimely rain in March and the high velocity

winds that swept through the region in the end of March. The State Governments of Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan had written to the Centre, seeking relaxation in wheat procurement norms.

In a communication to these State Governments, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said that the limit of shrivelled and broken grains is being relaxed up to 18 per cent against the existing limit of 6 per cent under uniform specifications "with 1/4th of one full value cut for every additional relaxation of 2 per cent or part



thereof".

"The State Government has to deduct imposed value cut from the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of wheat i.e. ₹2,125 per quintal, while making payment to the farmers," it said.

The Centre has also exempted value cut on wheat having shrivelled and broken grains up to 6 per cent. Beyond 6 per cent and up to 8 per cent, a value cut of ₹5.31 per quintal will be deducted on wheat.

Similarly, a value cut of ₹10.62 per quintal will be deducted on wheat having shrivelled and broken grains above 8 per cent and up to 10 per cent. Further, a value cut of ₹15.93 per quintal will be deducted on wheat having shrivelled and broken grains above 10 per cent and up to 12 per cent. A value cut of ₹21.25 per quintal will be deducted on

wheat having shrivelled and broken grains above 12 per cent and up to 14 per cent and a value cut of ₹26.56 per quintal will be deducted on wheat having shrivelled and broken grains above 14 per cent and up to 16 per cent. A value cut of ₹31.87 per quintal will be deducted on wheat having shrivelled and broken grains above 16 per cent and up to 18 per cent. The States have been asked to store these grains separately and has been told that any deterioration in quality of these grains purchased during storage will be the responsibility of the State Governments.

IMF: India to grow at 5.9%, to remain fastest-growing

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday lowered India's economic growth projection for the current fiscal to 5.9 per cent from 6.1 per cent earlier. Yet India will continue to be the fastest-growing economy in the world. In its annual World Economic Outlook, IMF also lowered the forecast for 2024-25 fiscal (April 2024 to March 2025) to 6.3 per cent from the 6.8 per cent it had predicted in January this year.

The growth rate of 5.9 per cent in the 2023-24 fiscal compares to an estimated 6.8 per cent in the previous year. IMF growth forecast is

lower than projections by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). RBI sees a 7 per cent GDP growth in 2022-23 and a 6.4 per cent in the current fiscal that started on April 1.

The Government is yet to release full-year GDP numbers for 2022-23.

Despite a significant drop in growth rate projections from 6.8 per cent in 2022 to 5.9 per cent, India continues to be the fastest-growing economy in the world, the World Economic Outlook figures revealed.

China's growth rate is projected to be 5.2 per cent in 2023 and 4.5 per cent in 2024 against its growth rate of three per cent in 2022.

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Normal rain likely this monsoon: IMD

Pvt forecaster on Mon predicted below normal downpour this yr

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Contradicting a private weather forecaster Skymet's prediction of below normal southwest monsoon this year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday claimed the country is likely to witness normal rainfall during the southwest monsoon this year, a big relief to the agriculture sector and hundreds of

millions farmers. Starting 2019, this will be the country's fifth straight year of normal or above normal summer rain that spurs farm and overall economic growth if India gets normal monsoon. The IMD predictions came amid evolving of El Nino which is the warming of the waters in the Pacific Ocean near South America, and is generally associated with the weakening of monsoon winds and dry weather in India.

Addressing a press conference, M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, on Tuesday said, "India to see normal rainfall during the southwest monsoon season (from June to September). It is likely to be 96 per cent (with an error margin



of 5 per cent) of the long-period average of roughly 87 cm."

M Mohapatra, Director General of Meteorology, IMD, who was present at the press conference, noted that there was a "67 per cent probability of normal to above-normal rainfall". "Normal rain is likely in many parts of peninsular

region, adjoining eastern, northeastern regions and some parts of northwest India. Meanwhile, normal to below-normal rainfall is expected over parts of northwest India, west, central and northeast regions," Mohapatra said.

Mohapatra said El Nino conditions are likely to develop during the monsoon season and its impact may be felt in the second half. He, however, added that not all El Nino years are bad monsoon years and that 40 per cent of the El Nino years in the past (1951-2022) received normal to above-normal monsoon rainfall.

Mohapatra, however, added that there have been 15 El Nino years between 1951 and 2022, and six of them logged "normal" to "above nor-

mal" monsoon rainfall.

According to the IMD, rainfall between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of a 50-year average of 87 cm is considered "normal". Studies indicate a stronger inverse relationship between El Nino and rainfall during the second half of the monsoon season.

Hundreds of millions of farmers across India depend on the annual monsoon to nourish their fields. Bountiful rain may boost production of crops like rice, soybeans, corn and sugar cane, lowering food prices and aiding the government's efforts to cool inflation. Monsoon showers are vital for India's agriculture sector which accounts for about 18 per cent of the economy.

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Us or BJP for APMC polls: Cong asks NCP to decide

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid indications of a possible alliance between the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the ruling BJP for the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) elections in Maharashtra, the Congress on Tuesday asked the NCP to decide as to which party it wanted to form an alliance with for the APMC polls.

With relations between the two opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partners having come under strain over Mr Sharad Pawar's serious reservations against the demand for a JPC probe into Hindenburg report on the Adani Group, the Congress indirectly demanded to know from the NCP as to whether the latter was serious to continue its alliance with the Congress or it wanted to go with the BJP in the APMC elections. Talking to media persons, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president Nana Patole alluded to

media reports indicating that the NCP might team up with the ruling BJP in the APMC polls and said: "... it is for the NCP to decide which party it wants to form an alliance with for the market committee elections.

We are fighting against the authoritarian regime of the BJP through MVA, our fight will continue. NCP has supported BJP in Nagaland. We will discuss this issue with the NCP at a joint meeting of the MVA constituents (Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress).

Warning that his party leaders from the Congress against joining hands with the BJP at the local level, Patole said; "If anyone from the Congress joins hands with the BJP at the local level, the party will take action against them".

The Bazar committee elections - as the APMC elections are called in Maharashtra - are crucial in Maharashtra, because it is from the bazar committees derive power to carry on with their political activities.

Set up under the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act to ensure farmers get remunerative price for their produce, the bazar committees help the political parties to keep the farmers across the state in good humour all through the year. Of the total 281 bazar committees, the election process has started in 275 committees and the entire process will be completed by the end of April 2023.

Available pointers suggest that the NCP is trying to cosy up to the ruling BJP at the grass-root level which the Congress is staunchly opposing.

That's why Patole - known for taking tough stands - has sent out a clear message to the Sharad Pawar-led party to come clean its intention on whether it would go with the BJP or will remain with the Congress in the APMC polls.

In a related development, Patole reiterated his party's stand in favour of the JPC

probe into Hindenburg report on the Adani Group. "Funds from LIC, State Bank of India, EPFO have been illegally invested in Adani group.

This is people's hard earned money, people must get an account of it. If the truth about the scam in Adani companies is to be brought out, it can come out only through an inquiry by the joint parliamentary committee. That is why 19 parties in the country including the Congress have demanded a JPC probe in the Adani scam. The Congress is firm on this demand even today," Patole said.

"A JPC was set up in the so-called Bofors case. Another JPC was established to investigate the scam in the stock market and also the soft drink case was investigated through a JPC.

The JPC established in 2003 regarding soft drinks was chaired by Sharad Pawar. If there is no truth in the Adani scam then why is Modi afraid of a JPC inquiry?," Patole asked.

SLINEX-2023: India, Lanka hold joint naval exercise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to enhance their strong defence ties, India and Sri Lanka carried out joint naval drill SLINEX-2023 there with Indian Navy ships INS Kiltan and INS Savitri participating in multifaceted maritime operations with Sri Lanka Navy ships SLNS Samudura and SLNS Vijayabahu from April six to eight, navy officials said here on Tuesday.

The sea phase exercises included tactical manoeuvres, helicopter operations, maritime interdiction operations, joint Special Forces operations, gunnery firing exercises, and a Search and Rescue exercise.

The Sea Phase ended with a customary steam past with the ships bidding farewell to each other, they said adding successful completion of SLINEX-23 further reinforced the deep engagement and strong ties between the two navies.

Supply of weapons by Pak... interested in putting an end to the crisis in Ukraine." They would rather want that the crisis continues, which they do not hesitate to say out loud, he said.

From Page 1
Ambassador Robert Wood of the US, Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs, said at the open debate that the greatest risk of illicit trafficking comes from battlefield capture of weapons by Russia and pro-Russia forces.

"Russia has proposed that it would supply captured weapons to separatists in eastern Ukraine. These statements and actions are dangerous and irresponsible," Wood said. Wood added that Russia has also turned to rogue regimes to try to unlawfully obtain weapons and equipment to support its military operations.

He said in November 2022, North Korea delivered infantry rockets and missiles to Russia for use by the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, and "we know Russia is actively seeking to acquire additional munitions" from North Korea. "Such arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia directly violate Security Council resolutions. These actions, particularly by a permanent member of the Security Council, are deeply disturbing and only fuel Moscow's brutal

war of aggression against Ukraine," he said. Wood noted that Iran has also transferred UAVs to Russia, a fact Iran's foreign minister acknowledged in public statements on November 5.

Kamboj said the illicit transfer and illegal diversion of arms, including conventional arms and ammunitions, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), as well as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), their delivery systems and related materials, equipment, and technology to non-state actors, including armed and terrorist groups, pose serious threats to international peace and security.

"The unravelling of the global disarmament architecture and landmark arms control agreements raise deep concerns about the edifice built over several decades, and the uncertainties that lie on the road ahead," she added. Kamboj stressed that the pursuit of the prevention of unregulated trade in conventional weapons and related dual-use goods and technologies "cannot restrict and should not prejudice the legitimate right of states to engage in arms trade for self-defence and in pursuit of their foreign policy and national security interests."

BJP will...

From Page 1
The BJP formed the government in Tripura, and came in power as alliance partners in the other two States. "Earlier, Assam was known for 'andolan' (agitation) and 'aatankwad' (terrorism) but now there is peace and people are dancing to the beats of Bihu music," Shah said, while referring to a mega event which will be held in Guwahati on April 14 in which over 11,000 dancers will perform in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Shah said that under the BJP rule in Assam, over 41,000 have been given employment, 25,000 hectares of land have been earmarked for Bajra Mission, two lakh hectares for palm oil production and 12 lakh families have been provided with handlooms. He said the BJP Government in Assam has already established 12 medical colleges and 12 more are in the pipeline, while Modi will inaugurate AIIMS in the state on the occasion of Rongali Bihu.

MEA trashes...

From Page 1
Shah on Monday visited Arunachal Pradesh, where he launched the "Vibrant Villages Programme" (VVP) in Kibithoo, a village along the India-China border. In a clear message to China from the border village of Kibithoo in Arunachal Pradesh, Shah on Monday had said no one can dare cast an evil eye on India's territorial integrity and encroach even an "inch of our land". He said the era when anyone could encroach the borderlands of India was over.

"Our policy is clear. We want peace from everybody. But no one can encroach on even an inch of our territory... The protection of borders is the protection of the country, which is why Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi has made border infrastructure a matter of priority," he said.

India had dismissed China's move to rename some places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that State has "always been" and will "always be" an integral part of India.

Pilot defies Cong's diktat...

From Page 1
No ruling party minister or MLA showed up as they were asked by Pilot to keep away. But several other leaders, including former MLAs Santosh Saharan and Ramnarayan Gurjar were present. Rajasthan Tourism Minister Vishvendra Singh's son Anirudh Singh, who recently targeted Rahul for his remarks in the UK, was present at the dharna site. Several workers from Pilot's constituency Tonk and areas in eastern Rajasthan also came.

Gehlot and his former deputy Pilot have been at loggerheads since 2020 when the latter revolted against Gehlot's leadership, leading to a month-long political crisis that ended after assurance by the party leadership, including Priyanka Gandhi to look into the issues.

Gehlot later used terms like "gaddar" (traitor), "nakara" (failure) and "nikamma" (worthless) for Pilot, and accused him of being involved with BJP leaders in a conspiracy to topple the Congress government. Last September, MLAs in the Gehlot camp boycotted a Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting and held a parallel meeting to stall what they felt was an attempt to make Pilot the new chief minister. Gehlot was then being considered for the party president's post.

IAF court for sacking of Grp Capt for 2019 missile hit on copter

From Page 1
They also said the IAF can only act on the GCM's recommendation after a decision on a case relating to the incident by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. According to laid down norms, the Chief of Air Staff has to give an approval on the recommendation of the GCM for sacking of the official.

Sources said the order of the GCM will be put up before the IAF chief after a decision on the case by the court.

The GCM was constituted based on the findings of a Court of Inquiry (COI) into the incident, which found that the Mi-17 V-5 helicopter was hit by a ground-based missile. The probe had found that the "Identification of Friend or Foe" (IFF) system onboard the helicopter was switched off and there were "vital gaps" in communication and coordination between the ground staff and the crew of the chopper.

It also found violations of standard operating procedures. The IFF helps air defence radars identify whether an aircraft or helicopter is friendly or hostile. The helicopter crashed in Budgam around 10 am on February 27 when Indian and Pakistani fighter jets were engaged in fierce aerial combat in Nowshera, a day after India's air strike on a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Balakot in Pakistan.

Normal rain...

From Page 1
Nearly half of India's farmland depends on annual June-September monsoon showers to grow crops. Farmers in India cultivate kharif or summer crops, which account for about 48-50 per cent of India's total agriculture basket, during the June-October monsoon period.

Over this period, major crops such as paddy, cotton, maize, tur, soybean and groundnut are sown. India depends heavily on monsoon rainfall for agriculture production, which offers the highest employment to people.

India received 971.8 mm of rainfall in the monsoon season in 2019; 961.4 mm in 2020; 874.5 mm in 2021 and 924.8 mm in 2022, according to the IMD data.

The country recorded 804.1 mm of precipitation in the season in 2018; 845.9 mm in 2017; 864.4 mm in 2016 and 765.8 mm in 2015. Unseasonal rains and hailstorms in March damaged rabi crops in large parts of country, causing losses to thousands of farmers.

Govt relaxes norms for rain-hit wheat purchase

From Page 1
Currently, wheat procurement is underway in Madhya Pradesh while it has been delayed in some States due to untimely rain and thunderstorms. Unseasonal rain and hailstorms in March damaged rabi crops in large parts of the country, causing losses to thousands of farmers.

Wheat growers in Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are facing difficulties in selling their produce on the minimum support price (MSP) due to high moisture content due to unseasonal rainfall and hailstorm.

The government, however, said wheat production had not been impacted due to unseasonal rain. The government has purchased 13.20 lakh tonnes of wheat till April 10 of the ongoing 2023-24 marketing year (April-March) mostly from Madhya Pradesh.

About 1,000 tonnes of wheat has been procured in Punjab, while 88,000 tonnes in Haryana in the same period, as per the Food Ministry data.

Muslims thrive in India...

From Page 1
She said law and order is a State subject in India and each province has its elected government that takes care of the law and order in those States.

She said the notion that across the board in India, violence against Muslims is happening is a fallacy. "It cannot be so. Each province and its police are different. They are run by the elected governments in those provinces. So, that itself tells you how these reports have no clue of the law and order systems in India," the Finance Minister said.

"To say it's all the blame of the Government of India. I would like to say then, between 2014 and today, has the population dwindled, has the debts been disproportionately high in any one particular community," she said.

"I would rather invite these people who write these reports to come to India. I'll host them, let them come and travel alone to India and prove their point," Sitharaman said.

Around 62 per cent of the world's Muslims live in the Asia-Pacific region (from Turkey to Indonesia), with over one billion adherents. The largest Muslim population in a country is in Indonesia, a country home to 12.7 per cent of the world's Muslims.

HC seeks ASI, Centre's stand on Waqf plea against stopping of namaz in Mughal-era mosque

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought the stand of the Centre and Archeological Survey of India on a plea by the managing committee of the Delhi Waqf Board seeking expeditious disposal of its pending petition against the stopping of offering of prayers in the Mughal mosque in city's Mehrauli area.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri issued notice on an application filed by the petitioner committee to advance the date of hearing in the matter from August 21 in light of an order of the Supreme Court requesting the high court to decide the matter as soon as possible. "This matter is hanging for some time," lawyer M Sufian Siddiqui, appearing for the petitioner, told the court which listed the matter for hearing on April 27.

Siddiqui said there was urgency in the case as the

month of Ramzan is ongoing, which shall soon culminate upon Eid-ul-Fitr, and the worshippers are waiting to offer their prayers in the Mughal Masjid. "Issue notice. List in the end of April," said Justice Ohri.

The petitioner had approached the high court last year with the grievance that the officials of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) completely stopped the offering of namaz in the Mughal mosque on May 13, 2022, in an "absolutely unlawful, arbitrary and precipitous manner", without serving any notice or order.

The petition has sought to restrain the authorities from "causing any obstruction or interference in the performance of 'namaz' at the mosque in question, that is, a waqf property notified as 'Masjid adjacent to Eastern Gate of Qutab Minar, Mehrauli' in Delhi Administration's Gazette Notification.

Pradhan launches digital curriculum for Delhi ITIs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Education and Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday unveiled the digital version of the Employability Skills curriculum for students enrolled in India's industrial training institutes (ITIs) at the Future Skills Forum.

Pradhan also spoke about the transformative power of skilling in boosting employability, shaping India's future and preparing a 21st century workforce. He said that the next quarter of the century when India will be completing its 100 years of independence, India will be the largest economy.

"From digital payments to vaccinations, we are already

ahead in embracing technology in all walks of life and making best-in-class products & services.

In this era of technology where nature of workplace is changing rapidly and where new disruptive technologies is no more limited to a small elite, skill development will be the key to unlocking the true potential of our demography," he added.

The Future Skills Forum - is an initiative of the Future Right Skills Network (FRSN) a collaborative effort by QUEST Alliance, Accenture, Cisco, and J.P. Morgan.

It brings together government skills training institutions, civil society organisations, industry and corporate social responsibility partners to help young people acquire critical skills for the future.

UNICEF India envoy meets UP CM

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

UNICEF India representative Cynthia McCaffrey on Tuesday met Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and discussed the status of the ongoing health, education and nutrition programmes being run in collaboration with the UN agency.

McCaffrey, who met Adityanath at his residence, said that UNICEF-India was taking forward many programmes in the field of social health, education, women and child nutrition in Uttar Pradesh with the support of the state government.

UNICEF is also supporting the local administration in aspirational districts, she said, adding the UN agency was ready to provide technical and academic support to the state government for new programmes in the future. Appreciating the state's efforts in social health, McCaffrey said there has been a significant

decline in the maternal, infant and neonatal mortality rates in the state in the last six years.

Availability of health services increased even in remote villages due to planned efforts while awareness programs are yielding good results, the UNICEF India representative said, adding that this success of Uttar Pradesh is inspiring.

McCaffrey said that Chief Minister Adityanath has adopted a wonderful strategy for the eradication of Japanese Encephalitis. The state government has succeeded in preventing the disease in 38 districts. This is a great achievement, she said.

Referring to the Covid management in different countries, McCaffrey said the way the Uttar Pradesh administration dealt with the high population density and various social challenges is highly commendable. Uttar Pradesh has presented the best model of Covid management, she said.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, AMIT AGARWAL S/o Sh. Manohar Lal Agarwal R/o J-15, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi-110016. Have changed my name for all purposes in future known as Amit Aggarwal.

PD(009)A

IMF: India to grow at 5.9%, to remain fastest-growing

From Page 1
On the surface, the global economy appears to be poised for a gradual recovery from the powerful blows of the pandemic and Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine. China is rebounding strongly following the reopening of its economy. Supply-chain disruptions are unwinding, while the dislocations to energy and food markets caused by the war are receding, said IMF Chief Economist Pierre-Olivier

Gourinchas. "Simultaneously, the massive and synchronous tightening of monetary policy by most central banks should start to bear fruit, with inflation moving back toward its targets.

"In our latest forecast, global growth will bottom out at 2.8 per cent this year before rising modestly to 3.0 per cent in 2024. Global inflation will decrease, although more slowly than initially anticipated, from 8.7 per cent this year and 4.9 per

cent in 2024," he said. According to him, this year's economic slowdown is concentrated in advanced economies, especially the euro area and the United Kingdom, where growth is expected to fall to 0.8 per cent and -0.3 per cent this year before rebounding to 1.4 and 1 per cent, respectively. By contrast, despite a 0.5 percentage point downward revision, many emerging market and developing economies are picking up, with year-end

to year-end growth accelerating to 4.5 per cent in 2023 from 2.8 per cent in 2022, he wrote in a blog post.

Gourinchas has argued that more than ever, policymakers need a steady hand and clear communication. With financial instability contained, monetary policy should remain focused on bringing inflation down, but stand ready to quickly adjust to financial developments. "A silver lining is that the banking turmoil will help

slow aggregate activity as banks curtail lending. In and of itself, this should partially mitigate the need for further monetary tightening to achieve the same policy stance.

"But any expectation that central banks will prematurely surrender the inflation fight would have the opposite effect: lowering yields, supporting activity beyond what is warranted, and ultimately complicating the task of monetary authorities," he said.

National party tag for AAP in 10 yrs miraculous: Kejriwal

AAP's ideology is based on honesty, patriotism, humanity and its aim is to make India number one country in world, says CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the Election Commission (EC) recognised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a national party, Delhi Chief Minister and the party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal said it was a "miraculous and incredible" achievement for the AAP to get the national party status in a short span of 10 years. Kejriwal added that it brings with it a huge responsibility as well and urged people to join the AAP in order to make India the number one country in the world.

Speaking about the recent arrests of Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, the AAP convener said that "all anti-India forces" are currently standing against the party and its leader. The Delhi Chief Minister also told party workers to be ready to go to jail as the party fights against "all-national forces". "All the anti-national forces that want to stop the progress of the country are against the AAP, but the Almighty is with us,"



Ranjan Dimri

Kejriwal said in an address at the party headquarters here.

He said the AAP's ideology is based on the three pillars of die-hard honesty, patriotism and humanity, adding that the party's aim is to make India the number one country in the world. "I congratulate everyone. The Almighty wants us to do something for the country," Kejriwal said.

"The hope of crores of people from the AAP has now turned into faith. People have given us a huge responsibility and with the blessings of God, we will honestly discharge it," he said.

Kejriwal lauded all those who contributed to the AAP's growth and helped it achieve the national party status, and remembered his party colleagues Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain who are currently in jail. He told the AAP volunteers to be prepared to go to prison if need be and said those scared of it should quit the party. "I will be lucky if every drop of my blood is shed for the country," Kejriwal said. Highlighting the AAP's success in bringing about a positive change in the country's politics, he said the party has shown others how to win elec-

tions honestly.

In just 10 years, AAP has become a national party and out of 1,300 parties in the country only three have multiple State Governments, and one of them is the Aam Aadmi Party, Kejriwal asserted and added that the AAP has forced other political parties to promise that they will provide free electricity.

"They have started promising free power, although they are not doing so. We will make them do it as well," the Delhi Chief Minister said. He credited the AAP with doing positive politics in the country and said a successful Government can only be run through honesty.

"People used to say that elections cannot be fought without money, we have shown that we can fight, win and also run the Government honestly," he added. "It is time to remember the AAP's ideology. There are three pillars of the AAP's ideology die-hard honesty, die-hard patriotism and humanity," Kejriwal said.

Tag boosts workers' morale before Assembly polls

Flags, flowers, patriotic songs at AAP HQ; all-India celebration today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP's office in New Delhi wore a vibrant look on Tuesday as the office premises was decked up with flowers and balloons, and party workers danced to beats of drums to celebrate the political outfit's new feat as a national party. Scores of AAP leaders and workers gathered at DDU Marg as the streets were decorated with yellow and blue balloons, party flags and patriotic songs were played. A large number of women workers were also present at the celebrations, while sweets were distributed by others. Senior AAP leader and Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai announced that party workers at all State and district offices across the country would celebrate the AAP's achievement of getting a national party sta-



Ranjan Dimri

tus on April 12. He said that the AAP supporters and workers would take out padyatras across the country and appealed to the citizens to join the party by giving a missed call on 9871010101.

"This is the result of the hard work and dedication of each and every party member. We are proud to be recognised as a national party. All our efforts have paid off," Seema

Arya of AAP's women wing said. Arya, who has been a part of the AAP since 2013, said it is a "matter of pride" that the party, which was formed in November 2012 got the national status in "a short period of 10 years".

The Arvind Kejriwal-led party is currently in power in Delhi and Punjab, and has five MLAs in the Gujarat Assembly and two in the Goa Assembly. "Each and every party worker

has put in efforts. Many of us have worked for the party day and night. There were days when we did not have time for our families," said another AAP's women wing member Dharna Seth. She further said that the tag of national party has boosted the spirit of all the party workers at a time when the AAP is gearing up to contest the Assembly polls in Karnataka next month and in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh later this year. It will also give a boost to the party in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"We are extremely happy and the party workers will be celebrating all day today. The national party tag is a huge achievement for us. We kept working hard without any expectations and today, all those efforts paid off," party worker Madhu Bhatia said.

Woman duped of ₹2cr by social media 'friend' for custom clearance of 'gift'

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A 61-year-old woman here was allegedly duped of Rs 2 crore on the pretext of custom clearance by a man she befriended on social media.

Sunita Kapagunta, in her complaint, alleged that in December 2022 she received a follow request from a person who introduced himself as a British Airways' pilot, police said.

"On December 5, he said he had a surprise package with gift items like i-phone, artificial jewellery, watch, accessories and cash and asked for my address and phone number," she said in her complaint.

The fraudster said that he would send the package to the woman if she paid him Rs 35,000. After Kapagunta paid the money, she received a call from another person posing as an airport authority official and asked to pay a penalty of Rs 1 lakh, police said.

On the fraudster's assur-



against all my jewellery with Muthoot Finance and scammers forced me to transfer that loan amount as well," the woman said. Kapagunta transferred Rs 35 lakh from her account and also sold a plot to arrange for Rs 50 lakh more. She also borrowed Rs 24.5 lakh from her relatives, police said.

"I was asked then for more money so I withdrew money from my joint bank account with my son and when my son was alerted of the withdrawal, he called me to inquire. After that it was revealed that the whole story was a scam and the scammer duped me of almost Rs 2 crore," the complainant said.

An FIR was registered against unidentified fraudsters under sections 419 (cheating by impersonation) and 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code and section 66-D of the IT Act at cyber crime police station, Manesar on Monday and a probe is underway, said Nareesh Kumar, the investigating officer.

ance of getting the penalty money back, she transferred Rs 95,000 and sometime later he again called the woman and asked her to pay another Rs 2 lakh for a certificate required for doing currency exchange from USD to INR and she again got cheated, they said.

The fraudsters did not stop there, on December 9 she received an SMS from another number claiming to be from 'United Nations Anti-Terrorist Department', saying that she had to get a clearance form for the package, for which she had to pay.

"I was forced to take a loan

MCD to repair/demolish 'dangerous' buildings to prevent accidents during monsoon season

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As a pre-monsoon measure, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has begun an exercise to identify "dangerous" buildings in the city to initiate demolition or repair work of such infrastructure to prevent any "mishap" during the monsoon season. The civic body has asked its field staff to initiate the yearly survey of buildings or houses in their areas. Last year, the MCD has classified over 375 homes and buildings as unsafe or under structural stress and undertook exercises for demolition and rehabilitation. According to MCD officials, a circular 'Pre Monsoon Measures', had also been issued on April 6. The MCD underlined that the demolition action should not be "delayed" if a house is found to be in a dangerous condition. The survey is expected to conclude by June 30, the official said.

"The survey of dangerous



buildings or houses in approved colonies is conducted every year before the monsoon season by the field staff to identify dangerous or repairable buildings and houses," official said. "In case of buildings or houses found irreparable or in a dangerous condition, necessary action will be initiated immediately," he added.

Given the ensuing monsoon season, the exercise to identify such dangerous buildings should be completed before June 30 so that appropriate action to demolish, secure or repair such buildings

is taken to "prevent any mishap causing inconvenience to the public at large thus resulting in loss of life and property", according to the circular.

"The department concerned of the zone shall carry out an intensive drive to conduct a survey of the area with due diligence under their respective jurisdiction and also attend to the complaints on priority," the circular mentioned. It should be ensured that in no case demolition action is delayed with regards to the buildings and houses found in a dangerous condition, the MCD asked its officers.

Day 2: Mock drills at city hospitals to ascertain Covid preparedness

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a surge in the Covid-19 cases in the national Capital, mock drills were conducted at hospitals for the second day running, to ascertain their preparedness to tackle the disease in case of a pandemic. The city had reported almost 700 Covid cases and four deaths on Sunday, an increase of more than 200 infections from the previous day when three deaths were also recorded. As many as 484 cases were reported with a positivity rate of 26.58 per cent on Monday.

The mock drill conducted on Tuesday was part of a nationwide exercise to take stock of the hospitals' preparedness to tackle the surge in Covid cases. Officials had already announced that both public and private facilities are expected to participate in the exercise conducted on

April 10 and 11. Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya visited the Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital here on Monday to review the measures taken to combat the disease. At Delhi government-run hospitals, the exercise was undertaken on Tuesday. Suresh Kumar, the medical director of the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital, said more cases are being reported in the city but there is no need to panic.

"Only 10 patients have been admitted to our hospital, while 440 Covid beds are vacant. The objective of the exercise is to ascertain our preparedness in terms of availability of essential medicine, equipment and staff," he said. Talking about the recent Covid-related deaths, Kumar said only those who had severe comorbidities like tuberculosis, cancer, chronic lung diseases etc succumbed to the infection.

BSES discoms facilitate installation of 2,300 EV charging points

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BSES discoms BRPL and BYPL have facilitated the installation of around 2,300 charging points in Delhi for electric vehicles (EVs) and are in the process to set up 900 more in the coming months. The 2300 charging points installed at over 900 locations across south, east, central and west Delhi include 1,123 private ones, 745 public and 419 for captive BSES use, the officials said.

The company is in talks with several partners to expand the charging infrastructure further, they said. "BSES will facilitate the installation of additional 900-plus charging points over the next few months," an official said, adding BSES discoms aim to convert their entire fleet of vehicles to EVs by 2030.

According to officials, the EV charging infrastructure facilitated by BSES includes



over 1123 private charging points, 745 public charging points, and 419 captive charging points for in-house use. This infrastructure will go a long way in promoting the use of EVs and reducing carbon emissions in Delhi.

BSES is also making significant strides in converting its own fleet of vehicles to EVs. Currently, BSES has deployed over 80 EVs for its in-house use, including cars, 3-wheelers, e-rickshaws, 2-wheelers, and even a pick-up truck. Over the next two years, the fleet of EVs in BSES' fleet is expected to increase to around 150.

Decision to sell property, curbs on 'bahu' led to elderly couple's murder



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The woman, who got her parents-in-law killed by her boyfriend in northeast Delhi, has told the police that she had been thinking of eliminating them for months because of restriction they had imposed on her, but their decision to sell a property worth Rs 1.30 crore pushed her to act quickly.

Police said Monika Verma, 30, wanted to sell the property herself and use the money to settle down with her boyfriend Ashish, 29. But her parents-in-

law — Radhey Shyam Verma and his wife Veena — finalised a deal on February 12 to sell a part of the property in Gokalpuri to buy a new house in Dwarka. This decision pushed Monika to hatch a conspiracy with her boyfriend to act quickly, they said.

Monika and Ashish met at a hotel on February 20 to chalk out a plan. They decided to get a couple of new phone numbers and Ashish arranged the SIM cards. He even delivered Monika a new SIM card at her home.

For transparency: LG OK's integrity pact between Govt, vendor in ₹10 cr+ projects

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to ensure transparency in Government projects, Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena has approved a proposal making mandatory an integrity pact between the Delhi Government and a vendor in all contracts exceeding Rs 10 crore.

Besides, independent external monitors will be appointed to check the execution of such contract, the Raj Niwas officials said.

The threshold for the integrity pact which the departments and agencies in Delhi started to follow since 2017 has been lowered from Rs 50 crore to Rs 10 crore to ensure total compliance, they said.

The integrity pact, in respect of a particular con-

tract, will be operative from the date it is signed by both the parties till the completion of contract.

After award of a work, the external monitors will look into any issue relating to execution of contract, if specially referred to them, the officials said.

The LG in a note to the chief secretary of Delhi has directed that the fresh guidelines regarding adoption of integrity pact and appointment of external monitors in every project and procurement above Rs 10 crore should be adhered to in letter and spirit.

"All government projects and procurement exceeding Rs 10 crore will necessitate the Integrity Pact. Violation of the pact by bidders will lead to disqualification and other penal actions," an official said. Under the integrity pact, both



parties (government and contractors) will commit not to resort to any corrupt practices at any stage of the contract. The external monitors will be selected from the panels of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), or the government organisation, the officials said.

The LG also underlined that though provisions for an integrity pact and appointment of external monitors were to be done way back in

2007 as per recommendations of the CVC, the departments and agencies in Delhi started to follow these guidelines from 2017.

"He rued the fact that even after 2017, none of the bigger agencies like PWD and MCD adopted the procedure for integrity pact and external monitors, and those who did it stated that their projects and procurement were not covered under the Rs 50 crore threshold," another Raj Niwas official said.

Any violation of integrity pact would entail disqualification of the bidders and exclusion from future business dealings, as per the existing provisions of general financial rules, 2017, Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and other financial rules and guidelines, the officials said.

Mosque boundary wall broken in anti-encroachment drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A boundary wall of a mosque located in New Delhi's Bengali Market was demolished during an anti-encroachment drive on Tuesday, sources said. A joint encroachment removal drive was conducted by the Land And Development Office (L&DO) and Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). "The mosque was not touched. It was just a boundary wall that was demolished because it was an illegal encroachment," sources added. The drive was conducted in the heavy presence of security.

A joint encroachment removal drive was being conducted at Plot no. 205, Bengali



Ranjan Dimri

Market by L&DO, CPWD and NDMC," said Pranav Tayal, Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) During the drive Advocate Mehmood Paracha was hindering the ongoing work, Tayal added. "He was explained and shown the order by the civil staff to no avail. Thereafter he was removed from the spot and allowed to leave," he added.

Man held for kidnapping, killing neighbour's daughter for money

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The Noida Police on Tuesday said they have arrested a man who is accused of killing his neighbour's two-year-old daughter whose body was found stuffed in a backpack hung behind a door at his rented accommodation.

The accused Raghendra alias Raghav Singh was arrested on Tuesday from a prepaid taxi booth near the Ghaziabad railway station, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central Noida) Rajiv Dixit said. Singh had kidnapped the toddler on April 7 from her home in the Devla

village and wanted to demand ransom for her release after he learnt that her father had made some money recently, he said. A missing person's complaint was lodged at the local police station the next day. While the police had launched an investigation to find the child, her body was found on April 9 from Singh's accommodation after other residents of the building noted a foul smell emanating from it, Dixit said. The accused and the victim's family live as tenants in the same building in the Surajpur police station area, he said. The body was stuffed in a backpack and there was no

one in the house as Singh had fled after strangulating the child to death with a shawl, which has also been recovered upon his arrest on Tuesday, the officer said.

Both the accused and the girl's father are daily wage earners. Singh lived in the rented house with his wife and two children, aged 3 and 9, and all had left home some 20 days ago, according to the police.

"Upon questioning, the accused told the police that he had thought of kidnapping the child with the intention to demand a ransom from her family," Dixit said.

Nitish reaches Delhi to pitch for Opp unity

Bihar CM may meet Kharge, Rahul, Lalu, Kejriwal, Pawar in national Capital

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI



Congress-led Opposition's demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani Group controversy for the sake of Opposition unity. Pawar stated this two days after he had questioned the very motive of "attacking" the Adani Group and that he did not favour a JPC on the controversy. Pawar who said this in Mumbai is likely to be in Delhi on Wednesday.

Sources said Nitish who after changing guard in Bihar has 'projected' himself to be a consensus prime ministerial candidate against Modi, subjected to clarification on the stand of the Congress, is scheduled to meet leaders of non-BJP parties in a bid to forge an alliance to take on the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The senior JDU leader has however several times mentioned that he does not have any ambition to become the Prime Minister.

He is likely to meet RJD boss Lalu Prasad, Congress chief Kharge, former Congress chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi besides his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal, Left parties leaders and the Samajwadi Party leaders and the NCP's Sharad Pawar. During his September visit last year in Delhi, Nitish had met Pawar, Kejriwal, D Raja, Sitaram Yechuri and Akhilesh Yadav.

Nitish Kumar, on several occasions in the past, advised all Opposition parties, including the Congress, to join hands to defeat the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Giving his poll arithmetic, the Bihar CM has remarked a "united front" would be able to reduce the BJP to less than 100 seats.

Kharge, too, has called several political leaders during the last few days to engage for a consensus while Tamil Nadu CM and DMK supremo Stalin conducted one in Chennai last week.

'Use rich experience of ex-servicemen for nation-building'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday urged all stake holders to exploit the rich and practical experience of ex-servicemen to develop the nation and said the Government has provided about Rs 800 crores as financial assistance in the last three years to around 3.16 lakh beneficiaries.

He made these points while presiding over the 31st meeting of Kendriya Sainik Board (KSB) here. The KSB is the apex body of the Central Government and States/Union Territories (UTs) entrusted with the responsibility of the welfare and resettlement of the Ex-Servicemen (ESM). Ways to reach out to the ESM fraternity through policy measures to further ensure their welfare and resettlement were discussed during the meeting.

The defence minister also said about Rs 240 crore were distributed to one lakh beneficiaries in the last financial year. "The budget as required is being provided by the Government," he said.

Delivering the keynote address, Rajnath termed the ex-servicemen as national assets and urged states and Union Territories to devise new ways to utilise their rich and practical



experience for the benefit of the nation. He stated that there is reservation in jobs for ex-servicemen in several states, which needs to be completely followed and monitored.

The Raksha Mantri appreciated the fact that the Centre and States/UTs have always worked together for the welfare of soldiers, describing the works being carried out by KSB as a shining example of cooperative federalism.

With a view to keeping the armed forces young, a large number of soldiers are honorably discharged at the age of 35-40 years.

This results in the addition of about 60,000 soldiers every year to the existing strength of 34 lakh ex-servicemen.

Rajnath voiced the government's unwavering resolve towards the welfare of the Ex-servicemen (ESM) fraternity, listing out a number of measures taken by the Ministry of

Defence to ensure their well-being and development.

The Raksha Mantri added that institutional grants have been given to Paraplegic Rehabilitation Centre, Kirkee; Cheshire Home, Mohali and 36 war memorial hospitals across the country including in Dehradun, Lucknow and Delhi.

He reiterated that the health care of the ESM fraternity is the Government's top-most priority and the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) facilities are being reviewed on a regular basis.

Ministers of various state, Chief of the Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pandey and Secretary (Ex-servicemen Welfare) Shri Vijoy Kumar Singh besides others took part in the deliberations.

Rajnath to inaugurate 3-day international conference on Defence finance & economics

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday will inaugurate here the three-day International Conference on Defence Finance and Economics in New Delhi.

The meet will provide a platform for eminent policy makers, academics and government officials from within the country and abroad to share their insights and experiences on Defence Finance and Economics in the context of evolving security challenges and policies globally, officials said here on Tuesday. Delegates from USA, UK, Japan, Australia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Kenya will participate in the conference, they added.

The conference aims to foster dialogue and collaboration among the participants and contribute to the country's defence readiness with optimum financial resources and effective implementation of the Defence Budget. It aims to participate in global discussions on Defence Finance and Economics and propose a sustainable blueprint on the subject.

The objective behind the conference is to disseminate the best practices, experiences and expertise of various countries and align processes in Indian context with international standards.

It also hopes to facilitate collaborations with foreign governments, international institutions and global leaders in the domain of Defence Finance and Economics to support the Government's ongoing efforts on indigenisation and self-reliance in the Defence sector, and to advance transformative reforms.

The topics of discussion will include current challenges and opportunities in the areas of Defence Finance and Economics, such as how to allocate and use resources efficiently and effectively and how to manage logistics in a cost-conscious way.

Congress will join hands with like-minded parties to defend Constitution: Sonia

In opinion piece, Cong leader says Govt has disdain for democracy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday said with the Narendra Modi Government is bent upon "misusing every power" and with the elections approaching in several key States, her party will take its message directly to people and join hands with all like-minded parties to defend the Constitution.

Sonia also accused Prime Minister Modi and his Government of "systematically dismantling" the legislature, the executive and the judiciary,

saying their actions demonstrate a "deep-rooted disdain" for democracy.

In an article in an English daily, Sonia alleged that the prime minister "ignores" the rising tide of hatred and violence, egged on by BJP and RSS leaders, and has not once called for peace or harmony or acted to reign in the offenders, let alone bring them to justice.

"Religious festivals seem to have become occasions to intimidate and bully others -- a far cry from when they were

occasions for joy and celebration. Instead, there is intimidation and discrimination only on account of their religion, food, caste, gender or language," she said.

Launching a scathing attack on Modi, she said his statements either ignore the most pressing issues of the day or are "platitudes and verbal gymnastics" to distract from these matters. Sonia said despite the prime minister's best efforts, the people of the country cannot and will not be silenced.

Underlining that the next few months will be a crucial test of India's democracy, she said the country is at the crossroads, with the Modi government bent on "misusing every power" and elections approaching in several key states. "The Congress party will make every effort to take its message directly to the people, as it did in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, and will join hands with all like-minded parties to defend the Constitution of India and its ideals," Rahul Gandhi asserted.

Pointing to the just concluded Parliament session, Sonia alleged that the last session saw a government-led strategy to disrupt parliamentary proceedings and prevent the Opposition from raising issues of grave concern before the country and its people, such as unemployment, inflation and social divisions, and

discussing the budget and the "Adani scam", among other vital issues. Faced with a determined Opposition, the government resorted to unprecedented measures -- expunging speeches, preventing discussions, attacking members of Parliament and finally, disqualifying a Congress MP at a "lightning speed", she said, referring to Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha following his conviction by a court in Gujarat's Surat in a criminal defamation case.

Alleging that the media's independence has long been compromised by the political intimidation of the government coupled with the financial might of the BJP's friends, she said evening debates on TV news channels have emerged as slanging matches to shout down and silence those who question the Centre.

Sonia's article illusory and classic example of Modi hatred: Union Mins

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a riposte to an article penned by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi which is sharply critical of the BJP Government at the Centre, Union Ministers Kiren Rijiju and Dharmendra Pradhan likened her "lecture on democracy" and "talk about independence of judiciary" as an "illusory" statement of the highest improbity and a "classic example of Modi hatred".

In an Op-Ed in the English daily 'The Hindu', Gandhi accused Prime Minister Modi and his government of "systematically dismantling" the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, saying their

actions demonstrate a "deep-rooted disdain" for democracy.

Hitting back at Sonia, Law Minister Rijiju tweeted, "Smt Sonia Gandhi is lecturing about Democracy? Congress Party talking about independence of Judiciary is: An illusory statement of the highest improbity."

Education Minister Pradhan described her remarks as a "classic example of Modi hatred, misplaced priorities and overestimation of relevance at the national level."

"It is the Congress which is at the crossroads and not the nation. The days ahead are crucial, but for the grand old party which is on the verge of

a political crisis," he said.

In a series of tweets, Pradhan charged that from Rajasthan to Chhattisgarh and from Madhya Pradesh to Karnataka, the Congress must first take its message to its organisational apparatus which is withering due to lack of internal democracy as well as due to the coterie of sycophants.

"It is not the test of democracy but purely the test of Congress. Congress leadership must come out of their illusion and wake up to the ground reality - India's democracy is flourishing, people know PM Modi's intentions and that is why they believe and bless him," he said.

New data protection Bill addressing privacy concerns ready: Govt to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that a new data protection Bill is ready and will be introduced in the forthcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament. Attorney General R Venkataramani told a Constitution Bench headed by Justice KM Joseph the Bill will address all the concerns raised in the present petitions related to privacy concerns of social media users.

The Bench, also comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy, and CT Ravikumar took note of the submission and said that the matter be placed before Chief Justice DY Chandrachud

so that a new Bench can be constituted as Justice Joseph is set to retire on June 16. The matter has been posted for hearing in the first week of August 2023.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for the petitioners, submitted the court should not link the court hearings to the legislative process as the court was told on three previous occasions that the bill on data protection is likely to be passed. The legislative process is complex and the may be

referred to some committees, he said.

Countering Divan's argument, Venkataramani said consultation is a continuous process and the bill has gone through a "very qualified consultation process." "Don't say we are taking time. We want a good law to come," said the AG.

The apex court said in its order, "We take note of the submission of the Attorney General that a bill which addresses all the concerns will be tabled in the Monsoon session of the Parliament commencing July 2023. Considering the circumstances, we request the Registry to place the matter before the Chief Justice so that a bench can be constituted."

CBI collects Jagdish Tytler's voice sample in '84 anti-Sikh riots case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The CBI on Tuesday collected the voice sample of Congress leader Jagdish Tytler in connection with a 1984 anti-Sikh riots case of Pul Bangash area here in which three persons were killed by a mob.

The CBI has also summoned politician Manjit Singh GK, who had released an alleged sting tape in which a person purported to be Tytler was claiming to have killed Sikhs, officials said.

The CBI, which has filed three closure reports so far, made the move after getting "fresh evidence" in the case, they said.

The agency is likely to compare the voice sample of

at Gurudwara Pul Bangash in North Delhi where three people were killed on November 1, 1984, a day after the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

The families of the victims had filed a protest petition challenging the CBI's closure reports in the case.

In December 2015, the court had directed the CBI to further investigate the matter and said it would monitor the probe every two months to ensure that no aspect is left uninvestigated.

Tytler was accused of inciting a mob that murdered the victims. However, the CBI filed three closure reports which were rejected by the special court.

Earlier, the Nanavati Commission that probed the riots named Tytler in its report. Tytler was a minister in the UPA government.

The case relates to the riots

Post on conspiracy to entrap, convert Muslim women fake, says RSS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The RSS on Tuesday described a social media post as a "completely fake" a circulation in the social media going by the name of the Sangh which claims that it is conspiring to 'entrap' Muslim women in India and engaging in their 'conversion'.

The all India RSS communication head of the RSS Sunil Ambekar took to Twitter to describe as "fake" the material circulated in the social media on a 'letter head' claimed to be that of the RSS.

Bearing the 'letterhead' of the RSS, the circulated letter asked Hindu men to trick Muslim women into their love trap. It also sought to provide

a "15-day training programme" to help teach Hindus to 'pursued Muslim women'.

Ambekar tagged the "letterhead" stamped with bold "FAKE" along with his denial. "Yeh Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh ke naam per social media min chaal raha patrak is completely fake", the RSS leader tweeted.

The two-page 'letter head' also claims to have been sent to 'Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Samaj, Bhajang Dal, Hindu-Sena, Hindu Yuva Vahinini and 'Samast Hindu Samaj'.

People on the twitter reacted by saying that it was a "conspiracy to defame the RSS" and "legal action" be taken.

India, Uganda review relations, avenues for cooperation in EAM-President meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/KAMPALA, UGANDA



India and Uganda have reviewed the entire range of their bilateral ties during a meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni there. They also discussed possible cooperation in the areas of trade, infrastructure, energy and defence after Jaishankar called on President Museveni.

Jaishankar, who arrived in Uganda on Monday, met Museveni at his farm in Rwakitura and conveyed to him the personal greetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Privileged to call on President @KagutaMuseveni of Uganda at his farm in Rwakitura. Conveyed the per-

sonal greetings of PM @narendramodi. Appreciated his guidance on furthering our traditional and long-standing ties," he tweeted on Monday.

"Discussed cooperation in trade & investment, infrastructure, energy, defence, health, digital and agricultural domains. Congratulated Uganda on assuming the

chairship of the NAM and affirmed our strong coordination at multilateral forums including the United Nations," he said.

Jaishankar also launched the 'Tulsi Ghat Restoration Project' of Varanasi during his visit to Uganda on Monday.

Taking to Twitter, he appreciated the initiatives of

Overseas Friends of BJP-Uganda's initiative to contribute to further beautifying the oldest living city in the world. "Living in a land of the Nile, their commitment to a ghat on the Ganga reflects the confluence of our two cultures. The conservation of Varanasi's heritage underlines the cultural revival of India. This has profound global implications," he said.

"Confident that many more members of the Indian community in Uganda will keep visiting Varanasi and continue their efforts for its redevelopment," he added.

Speaking at the launch of the project, Jaishankar said a few months from now, India, which is economically and politically more influential today than before, will be hosting the G20 development ministers' meeting.

ED grills Tejashwi in money laundering case linked to land-for-jobs case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday grilled Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav in connection with a money laundering case linked to the alleged land-for-jobs scam.

Tejashwi, the son of RJD chief and former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, reached the ED's office here in a carcade around 10:45 AM. He was questioned for about 10 hours, sources said.

Last month, he was also questioned by the CBI in this case.

The ED booked a separate case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) based on the CBI FIR and it recorded the statement of Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday, sources said.

Tejashwi's MP sister Misa



Bharti was also questioned by the ED in this case on March 25, the same day he had deposited before the CBI.

Recently, both the central agencies initiated action in the case, with the CBI questioning Lalu Prasad and his wife and former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi and the ED carrying out searches against the RJD chief's family.

The ED, after the searches, said it seized "unaccounted cash" of Rs 1 crore and detected proceeds of crime worth Rs 600 crore.

It said the investigation was underway to unearth more investments made on behalf of Prasad's family and their associates in various sectors, including real estate, at various places.

Tejashwi's questioning revolved around the alleged 'proceeds of crime' generated and invested from the allegedly ill-gotten funds, the sources said.

The alleged scam relates to the period when Prasad was the Railway Minister in the UPA-I government at the Centre.

Making a specific mention about Tejashwi Yadav, the ED had said a property situated at D-1088, New Friends Colony in south Delhi is an independent four-storeyed bungalow registered in the name of A B Exports Private Limited.

This company has been dubbed a "beneficiary firm" in

this case.

The ED had said this company is "owned and controlled" by Tejashwi Yadav and his family and this house was shown to have been acquired at a value of mere Rs 4 lakh while the present market value of which is approximately Rs 150 crore.

"It is suspected that a huge amount of cash/proceeds of crime has been infused in purchasing this property and few Mumbai based entities, dealing in the gems and jewellery sector were used to channel ill-gotten proceeds of crime in this regard," the ED had alleged.

"The property has been though, on paper, declared as an office of A B Exports Private Limited and AK Infosystems Pvt Ltd, it is being exclusively used as residential premises by Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, son of Lalu Prasad Yadav.

52 new faces in BJP first list of 189 for K'taka poll

DEEPAK K UPRETI
NEW DELHI

After considerable delay, "vetting" and dropping of several sitting MLAs, the BJP on Tuesday night announced the first list of 189 candidates for Karnataka Assembly election slated May 10.

There are 52 new faces in the list. Former Chief Minister Jagdish Shettar was denied ticket by the party. There has been a generational change in the selection of nominees for Karnataka. A second list will come soon, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said.

Several MLAs have been dropped and Congress turncoats chosen in the BJP's first list of candidates. Chief Minister Bommai will be contesting from Shiggaon seat, which he has held since 2008.

Former chief minister BS Yediyurappa's son BY Vijayendra is the party's pick from his father's seat Shikaripura. Yediyurappa had earlier hinted that his son may



contest against Siddaramaiah, Congress heavyweight and Leader of the Opposition in Assembly, in Varuna constituency.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP Chief JP Nadda, Chief Minister Bommai and Union Minister Pralhad Joshi attended the BJP election committee meeting here on Monday. Congress and JDS have released lists of their candidates ahead of the BJP. Filing of nomination is to begin on April 13. Former Karnataka

Chief Minister Jagdish Shettar on Tuesday said he has been asked by the BJP central leadership not to contest the May 10 Assembly elections, to which he has informed the party top brass of his displeasure with the decision.

Shettar, a sitting MLA from Hubli-Dharwad Central, said he has told the leadership that he would contest election again, and requested them to give him an opportunity. He told them that their decision was not acceptable to him and urged the party top brass for its reconsideration.

National party tag loss: TMC plans legal action; Cong elated

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as the Trinamool Congress leadership strongly objected to the Election Commission of India's decision to withdraw its national party tag — not ruling out legal options against the ECI order — the Congress apparently rejoiced the TMC's ignominy hurling on Tuesday that "Jaise ko taise mila (serves them right)" jibe at the Bengal ruling outfit.

"Everyone knows how the EC works ... we have our points to make ... the party will take a decision on legal options," senior TMC MP Saugato Roy said, iterating, his party would continue to work as it had always done and would fight its way up. "Trinamool Congress has overcome many obstacles, we will overcome this too. We will continue to do what we have to do, it will not make any difference," he said. Another TMC leader and a minister said, "we don't rule out legal options ... the ECI in present day's India is not unbiased ... the party

will consult with the lawyers and then take a decision." The TMC however would not issue any official reaction.

Losing the national party tag ahead of the rural polls and the next year's general elections could mean a lot for Mamata Banerjee's party, political pundits in Bengal said. State Congress leadership including PCC president Adhir Chowdhury said "there is no short cut to success which Mamata Banerjee had taken ... It had got its national status not by building upon its organizational strength in states like Goa, Tripura, Meghalaya or elsewhere but it had done so by engineering defections in the Congress in order to indirectly help the BJP by dividing the Congress-led opposition votes," Chowdhury said.

"No party can stick to such positions through cunning ... it has to work had which the TMC did not and so it has to face the ignominy of losing the national party status," he said.

Another PCC member Asutosh was sharper in his attack when he accused the

TMC of using all its ill-gotten money from the number of scams in Bengal to purchase Congress MLAs in Goa and Meghalaya and divide the anti-BJP votes there. "The scam money they accumulated here in Bengal was used in other States, to engineer defection in the Congress ... and help the BJP

spread communal practice in Bengal and elsewhere ... but no sin can continue for eternity ... Now their balloon has burst ... soon Mamata Banerjee's party will lose even the State party status in Bengal ... that serves them right," he said. The BJP which is the principal opposition party in Bengal too scoffed at the TMC wondering, "what Mamata Banerjee will do not with her ambitions to pose herself as the alternative face against Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar said that "TMC which runs the most corrupt and autocratic government in the country its fall is imminent ... its losing the national party status is just a prelude to it."

'Not afraid, I will continue to pose tough questions'



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been representing Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency since 2019 till he was disqualified as a member by a court in Gujarat made a passionate speech at Kalpetta on Tuesday assuring the electorate that he would be representing them even if he was not a member of the House. Addressing a mammoth public meeting at Kalpetta in company of his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the former Congress president told the crowd that he was disqualified from the House because the Prime Minister and the BJP were afraid of the questions he was firing at the rulers. "I just asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi about his relation with a businessman by name Gautam Adani. The Prime Minister got scared with the question and that led to me disqualification. But I will not be intimidated by such actions. I'll continue asking questions about the Prime Minister's relations with the businessman and will remain your representative," said Gandhi.

He said the BJP and its leaders are afraid of him. "Though I have been fighting the BJP for the entire political career, they have failed to understand me and are frightened of me. I represent the India which is a democratic, pluralistic and all inclusive one while the Prime Minister and the BJP stand for a single entity where the poor, depressed and oppressed have no place," said Rahul Gandhi.

Priyanka Vadra who spoke before her brother told the people of Wayanad that she and Rahul considered the constituency as an extended family. "Here I am with you and we are really moved by the love and affection of you people," said Vadra. All faction leaders of the Congress had assembled for the meeting barring Shashi Tharoor.

For sake of Opp unity, NCP won't oppose JPC on Adani: Pawar



NCP chief Sharad Pawar

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar on Tuesday softened his stand on the Congress-led Opposition's demand for a probe by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) into the Hindenburg report on the Adani Group, by saying that if the Opposition was all for the JPC probe in the Adani matter, he would not oppose such a demand.

After his stand expressing strong reservations about the Opposition parties' demand for a JPC probe into the Hindenburg report on the Adani Group evoked sharp reactions in the political circles across the country, Pawar appeared to have reneged on his earlier stand on the issue.

"All the Opposition parties have taken a different stand. My effort is to keep all the Opposition parties united. That being case, if the friendly Opposition parties want a JPC probe into Hindenburg report on Adani Group, I will not oppose such a demand by Opposition," Pawar told leading Marathi channel ABP Majha in an interview.

G20 in Srinagar: SSP urges DC to shift PM package staff to safety

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of meeting of G-20 delegates in Kashmir valley between May 22-25, the Union Territory administration is keen on creating a conducive atmosphere and preventing any untoward incident/targeted killing of members belonging to the minority community.

Ensuring safety of PM package employees, deployed across Kashmir valley, figure high on the agenda of entire security grid. In wake of prevailing security situation in Kashmir valley, Senior Superintendent of Police, Ganderbal has shot off a letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Ganderbal to make arrangements for shifting the PM Package employees to safer cluster accommodation within the district headquarters.

According to the letter dated April 5, 2023 SSP, Ganderbal wrote, "To keep a conducive environment for PM package employees it is acclaimed that all PM package employees who are residing in various rented accommodation as tenants may please be

shifted to safer cluster accommodation of this district keeping in view the present security scenario of Kashmir valley". Citing security reasons, a similar letter has been written by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag Dr SM Ashraf directing the District Social Welfare officer, Anantnag to transfer/deploy PM package employees on the basis of recommendations of the police department to the clusters shown in the official communication.

"You are advised to take necessary action as per the recommendations made by the police department discretely and submit the action taken report to my office within the next two days positively", the letter written by the Additional DC stated.

When contacted by this correspondent the Deputy Commissioner, Ganderbal Shyambir told The Pioneer, "during a routine administrative exercise we have sought suggestions from police authorities in order to prioritise allotment of government accommodation to PM Package employees'.

SC upholds Madras HC order allowing RSS rally in TN

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld the Madras High Court orders allowing the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to carry out route marches in State and dismissed the appeals of the Tamil Nadu Government. A bench of Justices V Ramasubramanian and Pankaj Mishra passed the verdict dismissing the DMK led State Government's appeal against the High Court, allowing route march of RSS.

"... it is not possible for us to find fault with the order passed by the learned Judge either in the main writ petitions or in the review applications. Hence all special leave petitions are liable to be dismissed. The Special Leave Petitions are accordingly dismissed. No costs." Senior Advocate Mahesh Jethmalani appeared for the RSS and Mukul Rohatgi appeared for the Tamil Nadu Government.

The RSS had, in October 2022, sought Tamil Nadu Government's permission to carry out its march in State to mark 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' and Gandhi Jayanti. PNS

'Delhi-Srinagar highway will be reality in 2 yrs'

New Delhi: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said once the Delhi-Srinagar highway is completed in two years time there will be a four-fold rise in the footfall of tourists in Kashmir.

Gadkari, minister for road, highways and transport, inspected a 924-metre-long Banihal-Qazigund tunnel, which will bypass a nearly three-km landslide and accident-prone area in Ramban district, and various road projects in the Union territory.

"After completion of this road in the next two years, the tourist arrival (in Jammu and Kashmir) will increase over 4 times. That will increase the number of resorts and restaurants 9 in the Union territory," Gadkari said.

The minister expressed confidence that after the completion of road projects, there will be a huge development, people will get employment and poverty will be eradicated in the Union territory. "The lifeline (highway) will have socio-economic benefits to Jammu and Kashmir. "In Jammu and Kashmir, we are



constructing road projects at a cost of Rs 1.25 lakh crore. There are 20 to 22 proposals of ropeways and cable cars worth Rs 25,000-30,000 crore that we are doing. It will have a 4-fold increase in the tourism of Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir will be self-reliant and prosperous," he said.

Flanked by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Union ministers Jitendra Singh and Gen VK Singh, Gadkari also conducted a breakthrough of Sita Rama Passi Maroog via virtual mode through a controlled blast in the tunnel. The completion of the tunnel will bring much relief to travellers by bypassing a nearly three-km landslide and accident-prone area in Ramban district. PNS

Modi to give away 71K appointment letters to recruits

New Delhi: Continuing with 'Rozgar Mela' drive, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute about 71,000 appointment letters to newly inducted employees on April 13 via video conferencing and also address them on the occasion.

The recruits selected from across the country will join various positions under the central government like train manager, station master, senior commercial-cum-ticket clerk, inspector, sub-inspector, constable, stenographer, junior accountant, postal assistant, income tax inspector, tax assistant, assistant professor, teacher, librarian, nurse, probationary officers, PA and MTS among others.

The programme is part of the 'Rozgar Mela' drive, under which 10 lakh people are expected to be given jobs. The statement said it was a step towards fulfilment of the prime minister's commitment to accord the highest priority to employment generation.

"The Rozgar Mela is expected to act as a catalyst in further employment generation and provide meaningful opportunities to youth for their empowerment and participation in national development," according to Prime Minister's Office (PMO). PNS

In a first, clinical trials of anti-cancer ayurveda drug V2S2 to be conducted

New Delhi: Amid growing demand for evidence-based research in traditional medicine segment, country's premier research institutes — the National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA) under the Union Ayush Ministry, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, Directorate General of Ayush, J&K and Aimil Pharma — have joined hands to conduct clinical trials on anti-cancer ayurveda drug V2S2. This is for the first time that such an initiative is being taken to fight ayurveda way the dreadful disease which is on

rise across the country. Developed by the NIA experts, the formula V2S2 is prepared from hydro-alcoholic extracts of various medicinal plants known for their time-tested effective properties. Its anti-carcinogenic properties have been already confirmed in laboratory tests so far.

It has also been found to be effective in increasing immunity and inhibiting the growth of cancer cells. Now this agreement has been made for its formal in-vivo testing. The trials of medicine on animals

will be started soon, Jaipur-based NIA Vice-Chancellor Dr Sanjeev Sharma said soon after inking the pact recently. "These tests will be conducted at Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai in a period spanning 9-12 months. Depending on the results, trials on humans will be done by NIA and Jammu and Kashmir Ayush Department. The task of manufacturing the drug for the trial has been entrusted to Aimil Pharmaceuticals which will then launch it in the market for public consumption. PNS

India needs to build defensive capabilities in space: CDS

New Delhi: With space getting militarized and a race on to gain dominance there, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Anil Chauhan on Tuesday made a strong pitch for developing dual-use platforms with a special focus on incorporating cutting-edge technology in the space domain.

Inaugurating a three-day Indian DefSpace Symposium organised by Indian Space Association (ISpA), General Chauhan said the steady traffic towards weaponisation of space has led to a possibility of a war in space. "Space is a

domain which is enhancing capabilities of other domains of land, sea, air and even cyber. The military application of space is the dominant discourse from which we cannot remain divorced," he said. The CDS flagged the anti-satellite tests carried out by Russia and China and stressed on the need for India to build offensive and defensive capabilities in the space domain.

"As far as India is concerned, the present and future challenges are that India should transit from space support to a space enhancement. PNS

India's textile hub Tirupur in deep crisis

Export orders dry up; 8L workers face job loss as MSME units shut down

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Tirupur, the textile hub of India is in deep crisis as the export orders it had expected from USA and Europe in the post-Covid pandemic situation did not materialize. Eight lakh workers and their households face an uncertainty as more and more MSME units are pulling down the shutters day by day.



The district, once known and the engine of Tamil Nadu's development, has broken down as the State administration has failed to take note of the seriousness of the situation, according to Arjun Sampath of the Hindu Makkal Katchi. A communique issued by Tiruppur Textile Association

(TEA), portrays a disturbing picture of India's knitwear cluster. Out of the eight lakh textile workers in the district, six lakh are employed directly and out of this 60 per cent are women workers. S Sakthivel, executive secretary, TEA, is disturbed over the fact that since these women are the bread earners of the households, any fall in their monthly income is likely to derail the families. Despite challenges faced by Tirupur in the form of Covid-19 and the resultant economic meltdown, the knitwear capital did commendable job in 2021-22 and earned foreign exchange worth

₹33,525 crore which is 55 per cent of national share. "Ready Made Garment sector is employment intensive sector and with an investment of ₹One Crore in Garment sector, 70 jobs can be generated and it is to be noted that next to agriculture sector, Ready Made Garment sector is providing more employment and contributing a lot to the Tamil Nadu economy," said K M Subramanian, president, TEA.

Both Sakthivel and Subramanian pointed out that the State Government was not forthcoming in its approach to the knitwear export units in Tirupur. There are 1213 knitwear units in the district, out of which majority are in the MSME units. "But the contri-

but ion by the State Government towards these MSME units are absolutely nil. There are no infrastructure facilities to accommodate the workers who land in Tirupur on a daily basis in search of work.

Housing for labor and increasing overtime cap for apparel sector are some of the urgent measures which should be executed only by the State Government.

"Though a project for upskilling 50,000 existing workers have been submitted to State Government, it has evoked no response. Once the capability of these workers are upskilled, they themselves could function as employment providers."

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CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SMD/1	SUPPLY OF 33KV & 66KV OUTDOOR CT & PT WITH VARIOUS RATINGS IN BYPL, DELHI	1.30 Crore	2.60 Lakh	01.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	02.05.2023 16:00 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SMD/2	SURVEY, DESIGN, ENGINEERING, SUPPLY, ERECTION, TESTING, & COMMISSIONING OF NEW 11KV SWITCHGEAR PANELS INCLUDING MINOR CIVIL WORKS AND DISMANTLING OF EXISTING EQUIPMENTS ON TURNKEY BASIS AT VARIOUS GRIDS IN BYPL, DELHI	10.00 Crore	10.00 Lakh	01.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	02.05.2023 16:30 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SMD/3	SURVEY, DESIGN, ENGINEERING, SUPPLY, ERECTION, TESTING, & COMMISSIONING OF NEW 33KV & 66KV CONTROL AND RELAY PANELS INCLUDING MINOR CIVIL WORKS AND DISMANTLING OF EXISTING EQUIPMENTS ON TURNKEY BASIS AT VARIOUS GRIDS IN BYPL, DELHI	4.60 Crore	9.20 Lakh	01.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	02.05.2023 17:00 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SMD/4	SUPPLY OF 33KV & 66KV ISOLATORS IN BYPL, DELHI.	1.32 Crore	2.64 Lakh	01.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	02.05.2023 17:30 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SV/5	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV 1C ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR XLPE INSULATED POWER CABLES OF VARIOUS SIZES	1.90 Crore	3.80 Lakh	09.05.2023 14:00 Hrs	09.05.2023 15:00 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SV/6	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV 2C ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR XLPE INSULATED POWER CABLES OF VARIOUS SIZES	13.50 Crore	13.50 Lakh	09.05.2023 14:00 Hrs	09.05.2023 15:30 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SV/7	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV 4C ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR XLPE INSULATED POWER CABLES OF VARIOUS SIZES	30.00 Crore	30.00 Lakh	09.05.2023 14:00 Hrs	09.05.2023 16:00 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SV/8	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV AERIAL BUNCHED ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR XLPE INSULATED POWER CABLES OF VARIOUS SIZES	4.00 Crore	8.00 Lakh	09.05.2023 14:00 Hrs	09.05.2023 16:30 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SV/9	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 11KV 3C ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR XLPE INSULATED POWER CABLES OF VARIOUS SIZES	19.40 Crore	19.40 Lakh	09.05.2023 14:00 Hrs	09.05.2023 17:00 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/SK/SS/10	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF PACKAGED DRINKING WATER IN VARIOUS OFFICES OF BYPL.	0.89 Crore	1.79 Lakh	01.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	02.05.2023 15:30 Hrs

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Cavalier as ever

Pilot's dharna is the result of Congress leadership's failure to address the issue of rebellion in Rajasthan

Senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot's one-day fast (dharna) on Tuesday against his own party Government in Rajasthan, under Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, is not surprising; for the differences between the two leaders have been in the public domain for a very long time. This suggests something very sad: the grand old party seems to be accelerating in its race to extinction. The high command, led by Rahul Gandhi, is busy in ideological pedantry—assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the apology letter by VD Savarkar, et al. This is not surprising, as Rahul is surrounded by doctrinaire Leftists more concerned about ideological purity and pre-Independence events than about the much-needed political alliances and current affairs. The poor Mallikarjun Kharge: chosen by the family that matters to lead the GOP, he spends a lot of time dousing the fires lit by Rahul's incendiary remarks. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge recently met Opposition leaders, including those from the Trinamool Congress, who were earlier unwilling to be seen with the Congress. But Kharge's congratulatory note was reportedly punctured when outspoken JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh "remarked tartly" that while one Opposition party had joined their ranks, another's sudden absence was conspicuous. The Uddhav Sena, the Congress' ally in Maharashtra, did not join because of Rahul Gandhi's remarks on Savarkar. It is not just Kharge who is trying to forge Opposition unity; Nationalist Congress Party chief and former Union minister



Sharad Pawar is also trying to do the same. But no sooner than unity moves a step forward than Rahul says something damaging, resulting in two steps backwards.

Caprice is not the only illness that afflicts the top Congress leadership; equally, if not more, debilitating is colossal incompetence that has hurt the country's oldest party—and it continues to do so. Pilot's dharna, just a few months before Assembly polls in the state, is a testimony to the ineptitude and cavalierism at the top. For years, the top brass procrastinated, showing little earnestness to resolve the issue between Gehlot and former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Pilot. On Monday night, it warned the latter, saying that the dharna would amount to anti-party activity. But Pilot seemed to have crossed the political Rubicon, so he went ahead with the protest nonetheless. In a tweet by INC Sandesh, All India Congress Committee in-charge of Rajasthan, Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, said, "... If there is any issue with his [Pilot's] own government, it can be discussed in the party forums instead of in the media and public. I have been an AICC in-charge for five months and Pilot ji has never discussed this issue with me..." If Pilot didn't contact Randhawa, shouldn't Randhawa or other senior Congress leaders have initiated talks with the rebel? Did they expect the crisis to blow over without any effort? Unfortunately, that doesn't happen in politics.

PICTALK



A purple sunbird visits a flower, in New Delhi

Britain need not apologise to India

If the UK apologises for Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Muslim countries should also be made to do the same for Timur and Nadir Shah's crimes



RAVI SHANKER KAPOOR

Every year, as April 13 approaches, there are demands in India that Britain should apologise for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar (and, in general, even pay reparations for colonial loot). For it was on that day that Brig-Gen Reginald Dyer carried it out in 1919. The demand, based on a misunderstanding of history, is frivolous at best and fraught with misuse at worst.

A few questions need to be asked: Why do we always demonise and malign the British? Why don't we seek an apology from Iran for the general massacre that Nadir Shah ordered in Delhi in 1739? Or from Afghanistan whose Ahmad Shah Abdali ordered the mass slaughter and enslavement of women after the Third Battle of Panipat (1761)? Or from Uzbekistan, from where Timur came, invaded India in 1398, and in a single day slaughtered one lakh Hindus?

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "A devout Muslim, Timur alleged that his co-religionist Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud of Delhi was being too lenient toward his Hindu subjects... By the time Timur approached Delhi, his army was so encumbered with loot and captured slaves that military efficiency was imperiled. Timur's solution was to order his followers to kill all their slaves—possibly around 100,000 people."

Ahmad Shah Durrani or Ahmad Shah Abdali perpetrated Wadda Ghallughara or the 'Great Massacre or Holocaust or Sikh Genocide' in 1762. According to an Indian Government website, after the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, Abdali looted Delhi and captured thousands of women. "When Ahmad Shah Durrani started his journey to go back to Afghanistan, Sikhs attacked his forces, right from River Sutlej to the River Indus and liberated about 2,000 women prisoners." Abdali retaliated next year, killing thousands of Sikhs.

On March 22, 1739, Nadir Shah of Persia ordered the notorious qatle-am (general massacre) in Delhi. His soldiers slaughtered 20,000 men, women and children in just six hours.

More importantly, all these



mass murderers are heroes in their respective countries—and for many Muslims elsewhere. Pakistan, for instance, has named weapon systems after Abdali, Ghaznavi, and Gauri.

On the other hand, there is no evidence to suggest that Gen Dyer is lionised as a hero in the UK. No Briton in the right frame of mind — certainly not among its ruling and intellectual elites — glorifies him today. And yet we demand an apology from the UK, and not from Muslim countries! This is perhaps because nobody wants to attract the charge of Islamophobia, a weapon of mass deception used against anyone daring to ask politically incorrect questions.

Should India insist on an apology from Uzbekistan, Iran, and Afghanistan? The answer is a big 'no'. For that would give legitimacy to an erroneous concept: intergenerational transference of guilt. No man in any civilised country in the world today can be punished for the crimes his grandfather committed. Similarly, no country should be asked to atone for the sins it committed a century ago.

History of mankind anyway is the story of wars and bloodshed, empires and enslavement, tyranny and opp-



NO MAN IN ANY CIVILISED COUNTRY IN THE WORLD TODAY CAN BE PUNISHED FOR THE CRIMES HIS GRANDFATHER COMMITTED. SIMILARLY, NO COUNTRY SHOULD BE ASKED TO ATONE FOR THE SINS IT COMMITTED A CENTURY AGO

ression, cruelty and oppression, massacres and genocides. Poor understanding of history results in reading it as a morality play and desiring to right the past wrongs. For the past can neither be edited nor rectified; Jallianwala Bagh can't be undone; if we try to do that, the consequences would be deplorable. We should not forget that history is about what was in the past, not what it should have been.

Quite apart from the untenability of the apology business, there is the issue of its dangerous repercussions in India. In a country where identity politics and unctuousness are the defining features of public life, the dangers can scarcely be overemphasised. As it is, a lot of people capitalise on the public sentiments related to communities, languages, regions, etc; states fight each other over rivers, often ignoring Supreme Court rulings. If the apology madness catches up, the consequences will be deplorable.

We should not forget that all nations, communities, etc., have committed crimes in the past. So, we should not be surprised at the birth and growth of some Shiv Sena-type outfit in Odisha, demanding an apology from Bihar, as the great Mauryan King, Ashok, from that state had slaughtered 1

lakh people and displaced one and a half lakh people thousands of years ago.

There may be demands from Hindu bodies for an apology from the Muslims. That several Muslim rulers carried out massacres of Hindus, imposed the discriminatory jizya tax, and generally oppressed them is well-documented, even in the books and accounts of Muslim scholars.

Similarly, the suppression and cruelty that the Shudras suffered at the hands of the so-called high castes is also well-documented. Then there are tribal people, who were exploited by practically everybody else. Therefore, Parliament should pass a resolution seeking the forgiveness of these groups.

This is just a brief list; if the apology mania begins, it will grow by the day; real and imaginary wrongs of various communities and interest groups will proliferate. This will not just further vitiate public discourse but also cast its shadow on the political arena. An orgy of apology demands follow, opening up a Pandora's Box.

(The writer is Resident Editor, The Pioneer, Delhi. He has authored *There Is No Such Thing As Hate Speech*, Bloomsbury (2017))

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MODI'S ADDRESS AT RK MATH

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi must be appreciated for his public pronouncement of the influence of Swami Vivekananda & Ramakrishna Math and Mission on him during his recent visit to Chennai. The Prime Minister was very apt in mentioning the vital role that the city of Chennai & Tamil Nadu played in making Swamiji a global hero and an orator of par excellence as he is revered today even though Swami Vivekananda has delivered his maiden public address in Hyderabad.

Even though Swami Vivekananda is to be credited for shaping the idea of our Secularism he has also made an impregnable mark on various other sectors. Indeed it is the religious farsightedness of Swamiji that has helped the policymakers to re-imagine the idea of India and frame several crucial policies related to Education and Foreign Affairs and thus took India to the world.

Not to ignore, it is the Prime Minister who has put forth several issues of Universal relevance like the International Solar Alliance and the International Day of Yoga in front of the world order. Moreover, both Swami Vivekananda and Prime Minister Narendra Modi visualized the same idea of Hinduism in which the light of knowledge falls more on a Moorkha and a Daridra enabling them to realize their true potential and also helping to contribute their lot for societal development but not the radical Hindutva as has been followed by few sections of the society.

Satish Reddy Kanaganti | Nalgonda

THE IT ACT AND INTERMEDIARIES

Sir — That the amendments notified by the Central Government to the IT Act regarding guidelines for intermediaries are controversial. According to the newer guidelines, a fact check machinery would be created by the government, which vets the cases of fake news against the union government. The intermediaries, popularly known as social media, should take responsibility and can be made liable to face legal action for the violations by third par-

Setback to Opposition unity?



At a time 20-odd Opposition parties, many of them regional rivals, joined forces over the Gautam Adani issue, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) supremo Sharad Pawar's open support for the industrialist has put a question mark on the durability of a non-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) bloc in the run-up to the 2024 parliamentary elections. Though people are shocked but not surprised to hear Sharad Pawar's open-heart support (of the Adani Group and criticised the narrative around

Hindenburg Research's report on the conglomerate. "An individual industrial group of the country was targeted, that is what it seems. If they have done anything wrong, there should be an inquiry" towards embattled Adani.

Because a four-term chief minister, Pawar in the early 1980s had worked to give Maharashtra the status of an industry leader and gave impetus to the industry. Not surprisingly, Pawar has never attacked any industrialist personally. Why only octogenarian Pawar, even his nephew and state Opposition leader Ajit Pawar and daughter and MP Supriya Sule avoid making personal attacks on industrialists? Sharad Pawar and his NCP may have their view but 19 like-minded Opposition parties are convinced that the "PM-linked Adani Group issue" is real and very serious. Now the big question with Pawar striking a discordant note, will this now impact the Opposition's attempt to target the Govt?

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

ties. Till now they enjoy immunity from such harsh action as they are only media to the display of other's ideas or opinions. Now it's feared that the freedom of expression can be stifled by the intervention of authorities. A mild criticism may be dubbed as a misinterpretation of facts and punished. To avoid the likely attraction of wrath from the Government, social media can act overprotective and deny and block rational criticism, which is not good for democracy. So the controversial amendments to the IT Act deserve a study in depth, before being implemented.

DVG Sankararao | Vizianagaram

KARNATAKA ELECTIONS

Sir — The Election Commission has sounded the political bugle for the upcoming Karnataka assembly polls. The stakes are high for the BJP, Congress and the JDS. Karnataka is a mid-level state in terms of Lok Sabha seats, as it sends 28 parliamentarians to the Lok Sabha, and is also important in terms of economy. The ruling dis-

pensation is vying for its second term in the state, while Congress wants to repeat its 2013 performance. Karnataka's politics is caste-based, with the Lingayats and the Vokkaligas being dominant voters. For the past three decades the Lingayats have stood behind the BJP, but with the departure of BSY, it seems the party has to do more to get into power. On the other hand, with the issues of corruption, misgovernance, scams, and latest the state's dairy brand Nandini, the GOP is driving their political campaign. After wresting power from the BJP in Himachal, if it manages to win the southern state, that will surely give a boost to the Congress for the upcoming elections and also in the 2024 LS election. BJP considers Karnataka its gateway to the south and a victory here will guide the path for the upcoming election in Telangana, where the party sees a little ray of hope.

Jayesh Khagiwale | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Positive thinking can make life easy, joyous

Besides, the process of thinking optimistically holds several physical health benefits such as better stress management and longer life



SAKSHI SETHI

The brain is like a velcro for negative experiences and teflon for positive experiences. The modern world that we live in is nonstop and intense. The human brain is complex, i.e. it's a mixture of feelings and emotions that one experiences while struggling to achieve a certain end in life and is likely unknowable in its entirety. However, despite all such emotions, a way to better times ahead is the art of positive thinking.

Positive thinking is an emotional and mental attitude that focuses on the good and expects results that will benefit an individual instead of expecting the worst. It is the optimistic attitude or approach that leads a man on the path of success and prosperity and distinguishes him from a negative thinker who keeps expecting the worst. Several studies show that having a positive approach even in difficult times has resulted in a positive impact on an individual's mental and physical health in comparison to a negative thinker.

The process of positive thinking holds several physical health benefits such as



better physical health, stress management, longer life span, better pain tolerance, more resistance to illnesses, thereby creating an environment full of positivity resulting in a transformation of negative energy to a positive one. A positive mind anticipates happiness, health, joy, and a successful outcome of every situation and action and works wonders like magic. One who thinks that with self-confidence, perseverance, determination and hard work will overcome failure and win.

It is said, fortune favours the brave. Life is a big battleground, and one must fight it fearlessly. Many a time an individual might come across unavoidable circumstances that can make or break them. There will be many setbacks that cannot be ignored but

one must strive to fight them with confidence, positive attitude and determined and concentrated efforts. When an individual goes through challenging situations, it's important to stay positive and try to never give up.

Maintaining good and healthy relationships with family, friends and peers, accepting change as a part of life and adopting it, taking immediate action on problems rather than just hoping they will disappear or someone will resolve them are a few ways that distinguish an optimist. It's the thoughts of an individual that play an important part in an individual's values and beliefs, which influence the quality of personal relationships and how one views the world at large. Also, it's how an individual learns to turn difficult times into opportunities for growth and improvement.

It's the thoughts that affect actions. Actions which in turn, translate into whether one will succeed — in their career, relationships and life or not. One needs to learn to stop gossiping about others, learn to remove negativity and drama from life and

mind, stop waiting for the right opportunity to become the best version of oneself and just start acting it along with happily accepting a few problems that cannot be fixed or have no end to it.

Never forget the self-belief and know that this isn't the end of the road. Learn to let go of what's not serving and start taking control of the circumstances. The only thing in life an individual can control is themselves. A person cannot control every event — but can control their reaction to them. Once a person learns to empower themselves to change that's when they are ready for the power of positive thinking. If negative factors stay around long enough, they need to be disposed of for they bring in anger, depression, high blood pressure, increased chances of heart attacks and negativity in life. Positive thinking is a universal concept of continuous hard work, self-determination, hard work and perseverance and not a one-night affair that can remove negativity and a pessimistic approach thereby making life easy, full of joy and happiness. (The author is an educator)



FIRST COLUMN

DON'T TURN YOUR LIFE INTO A BATTLE TO BE RIGHT

All wars are differences of opinion, a clash of beliefs and emotions



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

One thing that's most common across the world and which we all do every day, which is so natural and which is easiest and most effortless is 'To Talk' or 'Converse'. We all know that making good conversation is an integral part of influencing others and making good relationships. But, since we have been doing this for so long, many times we neglect the need to improve our communication skills, which further affects our relationships very badly. That is why the art of conversation is perhaps the most neglected skill in the world.

Usually, we talk or converse with others in three modes viz: a discussion (that can be healthy or unhealthy), a dialogue and finally an argument. The origins of discussion can be found in ancient Greece where a 'discus' was once a weapon to be thrown with the intention to cut off someone's head leading to the idea that a discussion means to break apart. Fortunately, our modern meaning of discussion is a little less violent based on an exchange of ideas or points of view where both minds are open and receptive. Dialogue on the other hand is a conscious collaboration in which there is a mutual intention to explore and find deeper meaning and, in the process, the creation of a completely new way of seeing and understanding. And finally, an argument is usually a meeting of two closed minds, wherein each person is harbouring some insecurity and the need to be right, or at least righter than the other! Compared to dialogue, where there is more listening than talking and a discussion where there is an equal exchange between friends or colleagues in an argument there is usually...WAR!



We all argue in our day-to-day life, because we have an opinion on almost everything based on our beliefs, more so, when we see the beliefs of others as a personal threat, we either start defending or attacking, creating an environment of fear & aggression. There are many who are always armed with their opinions prepared to defend their beliefs, and ready to go to war. Hence, the best way to avoid an argument with such people is to first support their beliefs positively to make them feel happy from the inside & then after some time make them realize their mistake with utmost love & care.

There are many who come to a conversation armed with their opinions. Their only aim is to prove that they are right and the opposite person is wrong. These kinds of people believe that it's good to have an opinion, isn't it? If we don't have an opinion about important issues, we believe we will be seen as weak. And if we don't stand up and fight for the rightness of our opinion, we may be accused of being soft, and conciliatory, without the courage of our convictions, this is how some people often justify holding an opinion about anything and everything. Such people turn their life into a battle to be right. This is why almost all wars, at their roots, are differences of opinion, a clash of beliefs, and the emotions and actions that follow are violence upon oneself, and then an attempted violation of others. History has shown that at the root of the majority of the wars fought were differences of opinion & clashes of beliefs. Hence, it takes a lot of courage to have a point of view, and yet be receptive to others to the extent that you are prepared to shift your contention! This shows that you are flexible and you acknowledge there are many other ways of looking at a situation, it also says that you have the humility to learn from others' points of view. Those who are spiritually enlightened from within possess this inherent skill to move smoothly from an argument to a discussion to a dialogue, a process that is driven not by the need to be right, but by the intention to understand others and to create a peaceful & harmonious environment. So be wise before getting into an unwanted argument.

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

Moral canvas is critical to democracy

We have a large number of politicians intoxicated with power who swear by the name of Mahatma Gandhi but do not follow in his footsteps



JS RAJPUT



The manner Indian Parliament of India conducted itself in the second half of the Budget session in March 2023, inflicts considerable disquiet amongst all those who revere it as a pious institution that could transform the lives of every Indian, could give dignity and better life to those who deserve support and hand holding because of exclusion and sufferings inflicted for generations due to historical, social and cultural constraints. Could such an assembly of responsible people afford to waste its time for weeks together? They all are — officially — honourable — individuals who are guardians of the Constitution, are policymakers, and are lawmakers of the nation.

The global image of India, its place and role amongst the international community, is changing fast and it is being viewed with considerable interest and high hopes by the international community. The last decade has convinced the powers that be of India emerging as a self-confident nation, no more to be cowed down by its belligerent neighbours. India is no more willing to suffer a thousand cuts and terrorist attacks. The new-found sense of national pride could be seen in practically every home and hearth in India, in its farms and fields, across the high-end research labs bringing out innovations in areas extending from artificial intelligence to space research.

India has enhanced its pace of change with full confidence and self-assurance. It has to make course corrections as well and must recall the Mahatma. 'The Lonely Pilgrim (Gandhiji's Noakhali pilgrimage)', a compilation by Manubhan, contains the essence of how Gandhi had realized that the "National service has nowadays come to mean striving for a big name, according to many now, through which one can get a notice in the papers or is photographed — which is better — or secure ministership as a reward for going to jail. So everyone wants to grab power in order to rise to a ministership in the end. But how can even good ministers do any notable work without the people's support? The country does require, among others, ministers too. But a Minister can adorn his post only



THE GLOBAL IMAGE OF INDIA, ITS PLACE AND ROLE AMONGST THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, IS CHANGING FAST AND IT IS BEING VIEWED WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST AND HIGH HOPES BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

(Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion, and religious amity. The views expressed are personal)

if he deserves it'. He observed, in this very context, the presence of 'selfish stinginess' and reiterated that "We must, therefore, train ourselves to keep national interest always before us." And this was not the first time he was referred to ministers.

On September 18 of 1938, when provincial governments had spent just ten months in 'power', things were not much different! The Mahatma received a letter from a citizen indicating that the main purpose of the 'Congress ministry appears to us to be to worship your idol in public and break it in secret; to worship the symbols of Imperialism in secret and denounce them in public, to play the malefactor towards their opponents when they cannot conquer by truthful and legitimate methods...'

Gandhi had condensed this after 'toning down the bitterest part'. The letter writer had also included a sentence which after 85 years appears prophetic: "The government of a people cannot be run by the common argument of promised boons and by corrupting the electorate with hope." The lesson to be drawn is clear: the mere scent of power coming to ministers made them leave no stone unturned to shake the moral foundation of good government! In this particular instance, the letter-writer found it strange why Gandhi's "Soul should not revolt against such a predatory Ministry for creation of which the moral responsibility is entirely yours".

After over seven decades of independence, India has more ex-ministers than serving ministers. The taste of having savoured power — exceptions apart — has been highly intoxicating. We have 'Lok-Sewaks' who swear by the name of Mahatma Gandhi but have amassed wealth by means that could be beyond the comprehension of the finest of economists. People have seen the growth and display of afflu-

ence that follows politicians becoming elected representatives, ministers and chief ministers. In fact, it has shown the path to 'Panchas and Sarpanchas' of village Panchayats and most of them have proved good learners and skilled management experts in money matters. The issue before the nation is: why are the elected representatives losing credibility amongst those who elect them and put them in the saddle of power?

The manner democracy is being conducted was most crudely exposed in the recent election of the Mayor of Delhi, which presented a shocking spectacle for everyone who feels a sense of pride in Indian democracy.

Entire India witnessed it, the world watched it, and as a citizen, I found it shameful. Sadly enough, one could cite numerous such instances that led to the disaffection between the representative and those represented.

On May 12, 1920, MK Gandhi said: "If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics today encircles us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out no matter how one tries. I wish to wrestle with the snake..."

He did, and created a model of giving people a voice, a non-violent approach that helped not only India but so many other nations to throw away the yoke of imperialism, caste system and apartheid! In one word, he made people trust the moral force.

On September 7, 1920, it was so well-articulated by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore: "We need all the moral force which Mahatma Gandhi represents, and which he alone in the world can represent." It was this moral force that every Indian was supposed to comprehend, internalize and put to practice! Obviously, the representatives of people at every stage were — and are — supposed to be the prime

torchbearers of the legacy of Gandhi. Each one of them needs self-introspection, and must analyse the extent to which his conduct and contributions are contributing to the national cause, strengthening democracy, and helping the amelioration of the miseries from the life of the 'last man in the line'!

The 75+ generation of Indians has seen and observed the downfall of moral, ethical and humanistic values in the political sphere and the consequential widespread credibility deterioration in the public esteem for leaders, elected representatives and those in seats of power.

It adversely impacts the very vitals of democracy, its institutions and above all, the people and their concerns. Ministers are put behind bars, but continue to receive all the perks and privileges of the post and position! It is an unheard-of situation in a democracy! How could India ignore resignations on moral grounds — like those of TT Krishnamachari, KD Malaviya and Lal Bahadur Shastri?

This generation of elderly citizens often recalls MK Gandhi and his in-depth comprehension of a free person and a free nation. He acknowledged that the superficial study of the British parliament had made him think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. It was not so, he himself realized: "The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power independently of the people."

One earnestly hopes that the elected representatives shall realize the source of their power — the people — and ensure not only proper and well-informed debates and discussion in their August Houses. Adherence to the moral canvas could strengthen their role performance and bestow the satisfaction of serving the needy.

Evolution of a party that promised a different type of politics

The AAP's political journey has been dramatic with many twists and turns. The party has grown beyond recognition

When Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal launched his Aam Aadmi party in 2012 and bid for power the following year, no one thought he would find political space and sustain himself. A decade later, today, he has changed from the self-projected role of an angry young man to an 'ambitious young man' with grand plans for himself and his young Party. With two states — Delhi and Punjab — under his belt, Kejriwal wants to lead the Opposition in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. He has three goals:

- Expand his Party to as many states as possible.
- Find a place in the country's political high table.
- Position himself as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pri-



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

mary challenger.

His optimism comes out in his recent prophecy, "Time is very powerful; nothing is permanent in the world. If one thinks that one will remain in power forever, then that's not going to happen. Today we're in power in Delhi, and they're (BJP) in power in Centre; Tomorrow it might happen we'll be in power in Centre."

The AAP's political journey has seen dramatic twists and turns. The Party has grown beyond recognition. Born from the India Against Corruption movement, the AAP decimated Congress and the BJP in the 2013 Delhi Assembly elections. After 49 days, he quit as chief minister, only to return in 2015 and 2021. The AAP has no Lok Sabha MP but boasts 10 mem-

bers in the Rajya Sabha. It is the only Party other than the Congress and the BJP to control power in two states, Delhi and Punjab.

The Party lost miserably in the 2019 parliamentary elections in Delhi. At another level, AAP faced a setback as it could not muster even one per cent of votes in the assembly elections in Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. But the landslide win in Punjab last year brought back cheers.

After last year's Gujarat polls, AAP is again ascending by gaining the national party status. It is the ninth national Party. Compared to AAP, Samajwadi Party, JD(U), Telugu Desam, Rashtriya Janata Dal, and Bharatiya

Rashtra Samithi couldn't move beyond their turf. Parties like NCP, TMC, CPI, and BSP face derecognition.

Like many other Opposition parties, AAP faced pinpricks from the Centre. These have demoralized the Party and created a fear complex. After weighing the pros and cons, the AAP chief has decided to take on the BJP headlong, particularly after the recent arrests of his two ministers, Sisodia and Satyedra Jain. For instance, despite the mutual discomfort between the two rivals - AAP and Congress - Kejriwal blasted BJP after the recent court verdict and the subsequent disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha.

The AAP chief alleged

Modi is the most corrupt Prime Minister. He criticized the Prime Minister for his alleged closeness to industrialist Gautam Adani and joined the Opposition in their demand for a Joint Parliamentary probe last session. He has questioned Modi's educational qualifications and asked if his 'degree is fake'. This came a day after Gujarat High Court fined Kejriwal and ruled that PM's degree details were unnecessary.

Kejriwal went to the Lion's Den Gujarat by talking about his "Delhi model" during the last year's Assembly polls. Modi came to power propagating his Gujarat model. Kejriwal has openly joined other opposition leaders to challenge Modi before the

2024 Lok Sabha polls.

There are many ifs and buts before Kejriwal could achieve his goals. AAP continues to concentrate on bread-and-butter issues and those about the common man. Kejriwal plays a soft Hindutva to attract Hindu voters. He wants to win voters by offering freebies.

To succeed, Kejriwal must build his Party and sell his 'Delhi model' successfully. Several factors influence the voters, including grassroots organization, anti-BJP sentiment, a credible local face, and the potential for implementing the Delhi model. Secondly, Kejriwal needs to build second-line state leaders. The Party's founding members, such as Prashant Bhusan, Yogendra Yadav, Shazia Ilmi,

Kumar Vishwas, and Ashutosh, and civil society members, in the past decade, quit the Party protesting against Kejriwal's highhandedness. Before the 2022 Assembly election, at least 11 MLAs either quit the Party or were disqualified.

Thirdly, he has made a personality cult around himself, and all powers are centred on him. He must learn to share power instead of concentrating entirely on himself. The fourth is to build friendships with opposition leaders and mend fences with Congress. 2023 will be a trial run before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections for all parties, but more so for AAP. Ultimately, win or lose depends on his electoral calculations and voters' reactions.

Aus suspends WTO case against China

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australia suspended a complaint to the World Trade Organization in a bid to reopen the Chinese market to Australian barley for the first time in three years in the new government's latest step toward repairing relations with Beijing. China effectively closed its doors to Australian barley in May 2020 by imposing an 80 per cent tariff after the previous Australian government angered Beijing by calling for an independent inquiry into the origins of and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous conservative government responded by challenging the tariff in the Geneva-based trade body.

On Tuesday, Foreign Minister Penny Wong said her center-left Labor Party government, which was elected in May, had reached an agreement with China that "creates a pathway for the resolution of the dispute over Australian barley." China had agreed to review its

US, Philippines hold largest war drills

Manila (AP): American and Filipino forces on Tuesday launched their largest combat exercises in decades in Philippine waters across the disputed South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, which Washington has repeatedly warned China over its increasingly aggressive actions. The annual drills by the longtime treaty allies called Balikatan — Tagalog for "shoulder-to-shoulder" — will run up to April 28 and involve more than 17,600 military personnel.

It will be the latest display of American firepower in Asia, as the Biden administration strengthens an arc of alliances to better counter China, including in a possible confrontation over

duties on the grain over three or four months, she said, and Australia will temporarily suspend the WTO dispute during that review period.

Taiwan, an island democracy that Beijing claims as its own.

That dovetails with efforts by the Philippines under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to defend its territorial interests in the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety, by boosting joint military exercises with the US and allowing rotating batches of American forces to stay in additional Philippine military camps under a 2014 defence pact.

"The relationships that we have, that we build into these exercises, will make us faster to respond to conflict, crisis, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief," US Marine Maj. Gen. Eric Austin said. About 12,200 US military personnel,

"Obviously, if the duty is not lifted at the end of the review period, we'll resume our dispute in the WTO," Wong said. The Chinese Embassy in Australia

5,400 Filipino forces and 111 Australian counterparts are taking part in the exercises, the largest since Balikatan started three decades ago.

The drills will showcase US warships, fighter jets as well as Patriot missiles, HIMARS rocket launchers and anti-tank Javelins, according to US and Philippine military officials.

In a live-fire drill the allies will stage for the first time, US and Filipino forces will sink a target ship in the Philippine territorial waters off the western province of Zamboanga on April 26, in a coordinated inland and coastal artillery bombardment and airstrike, Col. Michael Logico, a Philippine spokesman for Balikatan, told reporters.

did not immediately respond to a request for comment Tuesday. Wong said the Chinese review offered a "significantly shorter time frame" to resolve the dis-

pute than the WTO offered.

Official and unofficial trade barriers are costing Australian exporters an estimated USD 14 billion a year in products including beef, seafood and wood. Trade Minister Don Farrell said Australia hoped the review would become a template for resolving other trade disputes with China, particularly over wine.

While barley growers have found other markets, Australian wine producers have struggled to find alternative buyers after China imposed trade barriers in late 2020.

Australia has denied China's claims that it was subsidizing wine to export it at artificially low prices.

Grain Producers Australia, which represents barley exporters, welcomed the new agreement.

"This process to reach a resolution would be significantly shorter than if the WTO process continued," Grain Producers Australian chair Barry Large said in a statement.

Leaked US intel: Russia operatives claimed new relations with UAE

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US spies caught Russian intelligence officers boasting that they had convinced the oil-rich United Arab Emirates "to work together against US and UK intelligence agencies," according to a purported American document posted online as part of a major US intelligence breach.

US officials declined to comment on the document, which bore known top-secret markings and was viewed by The Associated Press. The Emirati government on Monday dismissed any accusation that the UAE had deepened ties with Russian intelligence as "categorically false."

But the US has had growing concerns that the UAE was allowing Russia and Russians to thwart sanctions imposed over the invasion of Ukraine. The document viewed by the AP includes an item citing research from March 9 with the title: "Russia/UAE: Intelligence Relationship Deepening." US officials declined to confirm the document's authenticity, which the AP could not independently do. However, it resembled other documents released as part of the recent leak.

The Justice Department has opened an investigation into the possible release of Pentagon documents that were posted on several social media sites. They appear to detail US and NATO aid to Ukraine and US intelligence assessments regarding US allies that could strain ties with those nations. Some of the documents may have been altered or used as part of a misinformation campaign, US officials said. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Monday urged caution, "since we know at least in some cases that information was doc-



Referring to the main successor agency of the Soviet-era KGB, the document seen by the AP says: "In mid-January, FSB officials claimed UAE security service officials and Russia had agreed to work together against US and UK Intelligence agencies, according to newly acquired signals intelligence." Signals intelligence refers to intercepted communications, whether telephone calls or electronic messages.

"The UAE probably views engagement with Russian intelligence as an opportunity to strengthen growing ties between Abu Dhabi and Moscow and diversify intelligence partnerships amid concerns of US disengagement from the region," the assessment concluded, referring to the UAE capital.

It's not clear if there was any such agreement as described in the UAE-Russia document, or whether the alleged FSB claims were intentionally misleading. But American officials are speaking out increasingly about a surge in dealings between the UAE and Russia. A US Treasury official, Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Rosenberg, in March singled out the UAE as a "country of focus."

Joe Biden ends COVID national emergency after Congress acts

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US national emergency to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic ended Monday as President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan congressional resolution to bring it to a close after three years — weeks before it was set to expire alongside a separate public health emergency.

The national emergency allowed the government to take sweeping steps to respond to the virus and support the country's economic, health and welfare systems. Some of the emergency measures have already been successfully wound-down, while others are still being phased out. The public health emergency — it underpins tough immigration restrictions at the US-Mexico border — is set to expire on May 11.

The White House issued a one-line statement Monday saying Biden had signed the measure behind closed doors, after having publicly opposed the resolution though not to the point of issuing a veto. More than 197 Democrats in the House voted against it when the GOP-controlled chamber passed it in February. Last month, as the measure passed the Senate by a 68-23 vote, Biden let lawmakers know he would sign it.

The administration said once it became clear that Congress was moving to speed up the end of the national emergency it worked to expedite agency preparations for a return to normal procedures. Among the changes: The Department of Housing and Urban Development's COVID-19 mortgage forbearance program is set to end at the end of May, and the Department of Veterans Affairs is now returning to a requirement for in-home visits to determine eligibility for caregiver assistance.

Louisville bank employee livestreamed attack

Louisville (AP): Louisville bank employee armed with a rifle opened fire at his workplace on Monday morning, killing five people — including a close friend of Kentucky's governor — while livestreaming the attack on Instagram, authorities said.

Police arrived as shots were still being fired inside Old National Bank and killed the shooter in an exchange of gunfire, Louisville Metro Police Department Chief Jacquelyn Gwinn-Villaroel said. The city's mayor, Craig Greenberg, called the attack "an evil act of targeted violence."

The shooting, the 15th mass killing in the country this year, comes just two weeks after a former student killed three children and three adults

at a Christian elementary school in Nashville, Tennessee, about 160 miles (260 kilometers) to the south. That state's governor and his wife also had friends killed in that shooting.

In Louisville, the chief identified the shooter as 25-year-old Connor Sturgeon, who she said was livestreaming during the attack.

"That's tragic to know that that incident was out there and captured," she said.

Meta, the company that owns Facebook and Instagram, said in a statement that it had "quickly removed the livestream of this tragic incident this morning."

Social media companies have imposed tougher rules over the past few years to prohibit violent and extremist content.

China not being responsible with drills: Taiwan President

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has condemned China's military drills in the Taiwan Strait, saying Tuesday that China did not demonstrate the "responsible" behaviour of a major Asian nation.

China's three-day, large-scale drills that ended Monday were retaliation for Tsai's meeting with United States House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California last week on her tour of Taiwan's official and unofficial allies.

"As the president, I represent our country in the world, whether it's a visit to allied countries or stopping through in the U.S. and interacting with our international friends, and not only has this

been going on for years, it's the Taiwanese people's shared expectation," Tsai said in a statement.

"But China used this as a pretext to start military drills, creating instability in the Taiwan Strait and region. This is not the attitude of a responsible major nation in this region."

China sees such meetings as encouraging Taiwanese voters and politicians who support formal independence for the island, a step China's ruling Communist Party says would lead to war.

The sides split in 1949 after a civil war, and the government says the island is obliged to rejoin the mainland, by force if necessary.

China does not recognise

Taiwan's government institutions, has cut off almost all communication with Tsai's government since shortly after her initial 2016 election and has blocked Taiwan's participation in most international organizations, beginning with the United Nations.

Surveys show a strong majority of Taiwanese back the current state of de facto independence, while Tsai's government says a declaration of formal independence is unnecessary because the island already enjoys the status of a sovereign nation, despite China's attempts to isolate it diplomatically.

China's People's Liberation Army issued a threat as it concluded the exercises.

Macron visits Netherlands after Taiwan comments make waves

Amsterdam (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron is set to deliver a speech outlining his vision for the future of Europe during a two-day state visit to the Netherlands that began Tuesday.

The afternoon speech at a theatre in The Hague comes after Macron raised eyebrows with comments on Taiwan after his recent visit to China.

"The question we need to answer, as Europeans, is the following: Is it in our interest to accelerate (a crisis) on Taiwan? No," Macron was quoted as saying in an interview published Sunday in French newspaper Les Echos and by Politico Europe.

"The worst thing would be to think that we Europeans must become followers on this topic and take our cue from the US agenda and a Chinese over-reaction."

The remarks raised questions about whether Macron's views are in line with the European Union's position and whether the bloc of 27 is able to become the "third super-



French President Emmanuel Macron, center, and Dutch King Willem-Alexander review the guards outside the royal palace on Dam square in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Tuesday, April 11, 2023.

power" that Macron says he hopes to build within "a few years." The interview was Friday, before China launched large-scale combat exercises around Taiwan that simulated sealing off the island in response to the Taiwanese president's trip to the US last week.

Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited Beijing last week for talks and urged Chinese leader Xi Jinping to

"bring Russia to its senses" over its war in Ukraine. He emphasized the concept of "strategic autonomy" for Europe which he has promoted for years. He warned of what he called the "trap" that would lead to the bloc "getting caught up in crises that are not ours." China and Taiwan split in 1949 after a civil war, and the government in Beijing says the island is obliged to rejoin the mainland, by force if necessary.

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year, the United States increased its military presence in Poland — a nation on NATO's eastern flank that borders Ukraine — and has used Poland as a transit country for

Polish leader heads to US to strengthen defence cooperation

Warsaw (AP): Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki flew Tuesday to the United States for meetings aimed at strengthening the economic and defense cooperation of the two nations.

Morawiecki is due to meet with Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday at the White House. He is also scheduled to have meetings with the representatives of American defense companies during his three-day visit. "I am flying to the United States to strengthen the alliance with our most powerful ally, with a country that guarantees security in Europe, that especially guarantees security in our part of Europe," Morawiecki said.

Poland is also a major donor of aid to Ukraine, and has been ordering tanks and other modern military equipment, mostly from U.S. and South Korean producers, to strengthen its own forces and replace some older equipment sent to Ukraine.

As Europe seeks to gain energy independence, Poland is also planning to build nuclear power plants, and has chosen the U.S. government and Westinghouse as its partners for its first plant.



military and humanitarian aid going into Ukraine.

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'WSJ reporter wrongfully detained'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration formally determined Monday that a Wall Street Journal reporter arrested in Russia on espionage charges has been "wrongfully detained." The designation elevates the case of Evan Gershkovich in the US government hierarchy and means that a dedicated State Department office will take the lead on securing his release.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the determination on Monday, saying he condemned the arrest and Russia's repression of independent media. "Today, Secretary Blinken made a determination that Evan Gershkovich is wrongfully detained by Russia," the department said in a statement. "Journalism is not a crime. We condemn the Kremlin's continued repression of independent voices in Russia, and its ongoing war against the truth." Russian authorities arrested Gershkovich, 31, in Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city, on March 29. He is the first US correspondent since the Cold War to be detained for alleged spying.

The Federal Security Service specifically accused Gershkovich of trying to obtain classified information about a Russian arms factory. The Wall Street Journal has denied the accusations.

The State Department said the US government will provide all appropriate support to Gershkovich and his family and again called for Russia to release him as well as another detained American citizen, Paul Whelan. Monday's statement from Blinken was the first public comment on the case since Russian news agencies reported on Friday that Gershkovich had been charged with espionage and had entered a formal denial.

The state news agency Tass and the Interfax news agency said a law enforcement source informed them that the Federal Security Service, known as the FSB, had officially charged the American journalist.

The news outlets didn't say in what form Gershkovich was formally charged or when it happened, but generally suspects are presented a paper outlining the accusations.

In the Russian legal system, the filing of charges and a response from the accused represent the formal start of a criminal probe, initiating what could be a long and secretive Russian judicial process.

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 is considered secret.

The case has caused an international uproar and last Thursday, the US ambassador to Russia and a top Russian diplomat met to discuss the case. In the meeting with US Ambassador Lynne T Tracy, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov stressed "the serious nature of the charges" against Gershkovich, the Russian Foreign Ministry said. The statement repeated earlier Russian claims that the reporter "was caught red-handed while trying to obtain secret information, using his journalistic status as a cover for illegal actions."

French building collapse kills 6, gas explosion suspected

Paris (AP): French investigators are treating the deaths of at least six people who were killed when a building collapsed in the city of Marseille as a possible "involuntary homicide" case, a prosecutor said Tuesday. Prosecutor Dominique Laurens said an investigation was opened on that basis after the first body was found in the building, which collapsed in a fiery explosion early Sunday.

Four of the six victims have been formally identified, Laurens said: a 74-year-old couple and two women, ages 88 and 65, who were neighbours. Rescuers continuing searching Tuesday for two people who remained unaccounted for following the emergency in France's second-largest city. Investigators "are now working on the hypothesis of a gas explosion" as the cause of the building's collapse, Laurens said during a Tuesday news conference.

North Korean leader vows 'offensive' nuclear expansion

Seoul (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to enhance his nuclear arsenal in more "practical and offensive" ways as he met with senior military officials to discuss the country's war preparations in the face of his rivals' "frantic" military exercises, state media said Tuesday.

The meeting of the ruling Workers' Party's Central Military Commission on Monday came amid heightened tensions as the pace of both the North Korean weapons demonstrations and the US-South Korean joint military drills have intensified in recent weeks in a cycle of tit-for-tat.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said the commission's members discussed unspecified issues related to strengthening defence capacities and perfecting war preparations to counter the threat posed by the allies' drills,

which the North portrays as invasion rehearsals.

Kim reviewed the country's frontline attack plans and various combat documents and stressed the need to bolster his nuclear deterrent with "increasing speed on a more practical and offensive" manner, KCNA said. The report did not specify the directions the North intended to take. KCNA also published photos of Kim talking to officials while pointing to certain spots on a blurred map that appeared to be of South Korea.

KCNA said Kim and the military commission members analysed the security situation on the Korean peninsula "in which the US imperialists and the (South) Korean puppet traitors are getting ever more undisciplined in their moves for a war of aggression" and discussed preparation for proposed military actions that their enemy has no way of counteracting.

Trump to return to New York for questioning in AG's fraud lawsuit

New York (AP): Donald Trump is scheduled to return to New York for a deposition on Thursday in a business fraud lawsuit filed against him and his company by the state's attorney general, according to a person familiar with the matter.

It will be the former president's first trip to New York City since his arraignment last week on felony charges in a separate criminal case involving hush-money payments made during the 2016 campaign to bury claims of extramarital sexual encounters that Trump says never happened.

Trump is expected to face questioning at New York Attorney General Letitia James' office in lower Manhattan, according to the person, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter and did so on condition of anonymity.

Trump previously sat for a deposition at James' office last August, just weeks before she



Monday evening about his plans.

James' lawsuit alleges Trump and his company, the Trump Organization, misled banks and others, in part by providing them with annual financial statements that misstated the value of prized assets, including golf courses and hotels bearing his name. James, a Democrat, is seeking \$250 million and a ban on Trump, a Republican, doing business in the state.

The judge in the case, Arthur Engoron, remains committed to a Oct. 2 trial date, but agreed recently to move some pretrial deadlines to allow lawyers more time to review evidence, interview witnesses and file motions. Trump's deposition is part of that process.

Engoron has scheduled a hearing for April 21 to resolve a dispute over the scheduling of a deposition for Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen.

Nepal reports first COVID death in three months

Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal on Tuesday reported the first COVID-19-related death in the last three months and detected 106 new cases of the virus in the past 24 hours, a week after the Himalayan nation confirmed the detection of the new Omicron variant "XBB.1.16".

The country-wide death toll reached 12,021 with the addition of the lone death, The Ministry of Health and Population said during its regular briefing on Tuesday.

The country confirmed 74 positive cases from the 476 Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) tests done in the past 24 hours. The ministry also said that out of the 1,960 Antigen tests conducted, 32 people were infected with SARS-CoV-2.

A total of 48 recoveries were also recorded during the same period. Currently, there are 469 active COVID-19 cases across the country. Nepal on April 3 confirmed the detection of a new Omicron variant of

COVID-19 identified as "XBB.1.16".

The Ministry said it cautioned its citizens after the XBB.1.6 variant's detection, which has been identified and spreading in neighbouring India.

"A new variant of Omicron 'XBB.1.6', spreading in the neighbouring country India, has also been detected in Nepal. So far, 10 of the 24 samples tested by the Health Ministry have been confirmed," Dr Sameer Kumar Adhikari, deputy spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population, said.

According to the ministry, to identify the molecular genetic changes in COVID-19, 24 PCR and antigen-positive samples were collected in March at the National Public Health Laboratory through random sampling.

During its April 3 briefing, the Ministry also urged people to not neglect symptoms of cough, cold, and running nose, and to stay in isolation if these symptoms are observed.

Modi weakened Khalistani movement: Sikh delegation

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The steps taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the interest of the Sikh community including their long-pending demands have resulted in the fizzling out of the separatist Khalistani movement, a delegation of Sikh Americans told the visiting Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday.

Led by its chairman Jasdeep (Jassee) Singh and president Kanwaljit Singh, the delegation felicitated her with traditional Saropa, memento, and flower bouquet.

Applauding the Modi Government for being there for Sikhs and for implementing several demands from the Sikh Community in the past nine years, Jassee Singh also said that due to these actions of the prime minister, Khalistani movement has fizzled out in the USA.

"In all of the USA, there are no more than a handful of Khalistanis who give the entire large Sikh community a bad name," Singh was quoted as saying in a media note issued after the meeting.

The delegation said the Sikhs are nationalists and stand with united India and all Sikh issues will be resolved within the framework and constitution of India.

He requested the Finance Minister to forgive the large debt on Punjab stemming from the militancy years in the state and to declare it an enterprise zone where investments can be done for industries so that youth of Punjab can have a better future for them, the media release said.

During a meeting with a delegation of Overseas Friends of BJP team, headed by its national president Adapa Prasad, Sitharaman spoke

Funding for climate change has not happened: Sitharaman

Washington (PTI): India has been meeting its climate change commitments through its own funding, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said as she slammed the West for not making the promised funding available to countries to achieve their climate objectives.

She said India has come up with very ambitious nationally determined goals in its fight against climate change.

"The commitments which we have given in COP21 earlier and COP26 subsequently are all working together with those parameters, which let's say everybody agreed in the UNFCCC. So all of us will walk the path the way we have nationally determined commitments that have been given. I'm happy to say that India somehow fulfilled its COP21 commitments given in Paris, largely out of its own funds," she said on Monday.

"Funding (for the fight against climate change) is there, but not available. Committed, but not actually disbursed yet. So, the hundred billion that we've been talking about has not happened at all. That could be something which many countries would want to speak about, and I'll put that on my list," she said. Sitharaman said there are real-time worries as to what is

the per capita emission that is being talked about, which actually is hurting some countries. "Is per capita emission going in favour of X, Y, Z countries or is it going against some other country? Isn't there some kind of an element of justice, which is inbuilt when you're talking about per capita emission?" the minister asked.

Even today a very learned view on what exactly is emission and how much is happening from where. And, is it got to be only two days or is it got to be from the time industrial revolution 1.0 happened? So, there are still certain pain points which have to be addressed, Sitharaman said.

"Also, worrying for me, even as we plan our nationally determined commitments to be fulfilled, is the way in compassion but doesn't appear so much in front of your instruments through which tools, through which countries are going to be questioned or bound by certain expectations such as when you're funding development projects," she said.

"For countries like India, where we are proving repeatedly that we are complying with the expectations and the commitments given by us if funding for developmental activities come with inbuilt conditions," she said.

Amrit Kaal of India, it is imperative for the BJP and Modi to win with full majorities in the coming parliamentary elections, the finance minister said.

about how the Modi government transformed India and set the country on a growth path.

In order to maintain this stable growth and fulfil Modi's vision of

EAM meets Jeje, takes stock of ties

PTI ■ KAMPALA

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday met his Ugandan counterpart General Odongo Jeje and took stock of the "close and historical ties" between the two nations, and acknowledged that possibilities of partnerships in trade, investments, energy, defence and air connectivity were being explored.

Jaishankar is on a two-nation visit to Uganda and Mozambique from April 10-15 to bolster India's robust bilateral relations with the two African countries. Jaishankar said he had "comprehensive discussions" with his Ugandan counterpart and thanked him for the warmth of the welcome.

"Took stock of our close and historical ties that have been given greater intensity by our leadership. Possibilities in trade & investments, energy, defence and air connectivity being explored," Jaishankar said in a tweet.

During the meeting, Jaishankar also affirmed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Kampala princi-



ples will be further implemented with a focus on digital, green and health projects.

In 2018, Prime Minister Modi unveiled a set of 10 guiding principles that would dictate India's engagement with Africa.

In his speech at the Ugandan parliament, Prime Minister Modi

outlined a vision for not just a bilateral relationship with Africa but also a partnership at the global level.

The External Affairs Minister also participated in the virtual groundbreaking ceremony of solar-powered piped drinking water supply systems funded by the Exim Bank in Uganda.

"This project will provide safe and sustainable water supply to half a million Ugandans across 20 rural districts," Jaishankar tweeted.

Jaishankar also met Uganda's Minister of Water and Environment Sam Cheptoris, Minister of Trade, Mwebea Francis and Industry & Cooperatives and MoS for Foreign Affairs.

"Noted successful delivery of Indian development partnership projects, which will aim towards empowerment, capacity building and enhancing human resource capacity," Jaishankar said in another tweet.

Earlier in the day, Jaishankar addressed members of the Parliamentary Forum on Indian Affairs in Uganda and said India's G20 presidency is different in the sense that no other chair has made an effort to consult all the countries from the Global South.

Jaishankar said India would like to use the G20 presidency to get the forum focussed on its mandate which is global growth and development and issues important for Uganda.

UK junior doctors begin strike

London (PTI): An Indian-origin medic and co-chair of the medical association's junior doctors panel has called for action from the British government as members across England began a historic four-day strike on Tuesday demanding a substantial pay hike in line with the spiralling inflation.

Dr Vivek Trivedi, the co-chair of the British Medical Association (BMA) Junior Doctors Committee, has been at the forefront of calls for so-called "pay restoration" for an estimated 45,000 junior doctors employed across the state-funded National Health Service (NHS). They claim a 35 per cent increase in their pay would compensate for 15 years of below-inflation wage increases.

UK Health Secretary Steve Barclay had written to the committee to say he was serious about "rapidly settling this dispute" but the government has indicated their pay demand is too high.

"We don't want to go on strike, we don't have to go on strike. We are willing to negotiate but we haven't been offered anything so far," said Trivedi.

The BMA, a professional association and trade union, said the strikes revolve around a 26 per cent erosion in the real-term pay of these doctors over the past 15 years. Fresh advertisements by the union are being rolled out in support of the pay dispute seeking to highlight how little they are paid for specialist roles in surgical procedures.

100 feared killed in Myanmar airstrikes

Bangkok (AP): Airstrikes by Myanmar's military on Tuesday killed as many as 100 people, including many children, who were attending a ceremony held by opponents of army rule, said a witness, a member of a local pro-democracy group and independent media.

The military is increasingly using airstrikes to counter a widespread armed struggle against its rule, which began in February 2021 when it seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

More than 3,000 civilians are estimated to have been killed since then by security forces.

A witness told The Associated Press that a fighter jet dropped bombs directly into a crowd of people who were gathered at 8 a.m. for the opening of a local office of the country's opposition movement outside Pazigy village in Sagaing region's Kanbalu township.

The area is about 110 kilometres (70 miles) north of Mandalay, the country's second largest city.

About half an hour later, a helicopter appeared and fired at

the site, said the witness, who asked not to be identified because he feared punishment by the authorities.

Initial reports put the death toll at around 50, but later tallies reported by independent media raised it to about 100. It was impossible to independently confirm details of the incident because reporting is restricted by the military government.

There were no immediate reports about the attack in state-controlled media. In past cases, the military government has said it does not use disproportionate force.

"I was standing a short distance from the crowd when a friend of mine contacted me on the phone about the approach of a fighter jet," the witness said. "The jet dropped bombs directly on the crowd, and I jumped into a nearby ditch and hid. A few moments later, when I stood up and looked around, I saw people cut to pieces and dead in the smoke. The office building was destroyed by fire. About 30 people were injured. While the wounded were being transported, a helicopter arrived and shot more people.

Russian forces in Crimea brace for possible Ukraine assault

Kyiv (AP): The Moscow-appointed leader of Crimea said on Tuesday the region is on guard for what may be an impending Ukrainian counter-offensive.

Sergei Aksyonov told reporters that Russian forces in Crimea had built "modern, in-depth defences" and had "more than enough" troops and equipment to repel a possible Ukrainian assault after 13 months of war following Russia's full-scale invasion.

"We cannot underestimate the enemy, but we can definitely say that we are ready (for an attack) and that there will be no catastrophe," he said.

His comments came days after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reaffirmed Kyiv's intention to take back the Black Sea peninsula



that Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Aksyonov first announced the beginning of fortification works in Crimea in November, without giving details. In February, at a security meeting chaired by Russian President Vladimir Putin, he said that the works were set to finish by April. Satellite images published last week showed a complex web of trenches and other fortifica-

tions dug near Medvedivka, a small town near a crossing between Crimea and mainland Ukraine, suggesting Russian concerns about a possible Ukrainian attack there. Military analysts expect Kyiv to take advantage of improving weather to seize the battlefield initiative with new batches of Western weapons, including scores of tanks, and fresh troops trained in the West.

UK Opp gears up for polls with ads targeting Sunak

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Opposition Labour Party has been gearing up for the upcoming local elections next month with sharply worded social media advertisements targeting Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's track record, with the latest one on Tuesday alluding to his wife Akshata Murty's past tax status.

The campaign, seen as a precursor to the general election expected next year, has become heated with Labour accusing Sunak and the governing Conservative Party of being responsible for the tough consequences of the cost-of-living crisis on voters.

In an apparent reference to Murty's now-relinquished non-

domicile (non-dom) tax status allowing her to pay taxes on her shares from Infosys - co-founded by her father Narayana Murthy - in India, the latest Labour campaign advert takes aim at the "loophole" which it has committed to abolish if elected. It reads: "Do you think it's right to raise taxes for working people when your family benefitted from a tax loophole? Rishi Sunak does."

"A Labour government would freeze council tax this year, paid for by a proper windfall tax on oil and gas giants. And we'd scrap the Tories' non-dom tax loophole," the Labour Party said in a statement.

The controversial ad campaign began last week, with the first reading: "Do you think adults convicted of sexually

assaulting children should go to prison? Rishi Sunak doesn't."

It cited data from the UK Ministry of Justice showing that 4,500 adults convicted of sex acts on children avoided a prison sentence since the Conservatives came to power in 2010. Despite the ensuing backlash that came from across the political spectrum, Labour issued a second tweet which accused Sunak of being soft on gun crime and a third which suggested he didn't think thieves should be punished.

In a letter to his shadow cabinet, seen by 'Sky News', Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer appears defiant on this poll strategy, which analysts believe indicates the first signs of a bruising general election campaign ahead.

'US has no plans of setting up military base in Sri Lanka'

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie J Chung has said that Washington has no intention of building a military base in Sri Lanka and hailed it as an "important country" in the strategically vital Indo-Pacific region.

Chung's comments came weeks after senior US defence officials arrived here on two special aircraft of the United States Air Force.

The visit in February sparked speculation that the US was planning to set up a military base in Sri Lanka.

Chung put the speculation to rest in an interview with the Daily Mirror newspaper on Monday.

"In terms of the military base, I have said this repeatedly, we have no intention of building a military base (in Sri Lanka)," she said.

Chung also said that Washington has "no intention of reviving or reassessing the SOFA Agreement."

The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was signed in 1995.

These are multilateral or bilateral agreements that establish the framework under which the US military personnel operate in a foreign country and how the domestic laws of the foreign jurisdiction apply towards the US personnel in that country.

Chung hailed Sri Lanka as an important country in the Indo-Pacific region.

Local body polls postponed due to lack of funds: SL EC

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka's election body on Tuesday said the local body polls scheduled to be held on April 25 have now been postponed indefinitely due to an acute shortage of funds.

The Election Commission made the announcement a day after its officials held meetings with Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and members of major political parties.

The Election Commission's director general Suman Sri Ratnayake said that the next date for holding elections would be announced only after the Treasury confirms the disbursement of funds.

The local body polls, which were earlier scheduled on March 9, got postponed to April 25, due to a plethora of reasons linked to Sri Lanka's current economic crisis.

Last month, the Election Commission postponed the postal voting for the local body polls due to the paucity of funds.

In March, Sri Lanka government's printer Gangani Lyanage said the inability to print ballot papers to conduct postal voting from February 21 to 24 caused the Election Commission to postpone the elections.

UN to review presence in Afghanistan following Taliban ban

Islamabad (AP): The United Nations said Tuesday it is reviewing its presence in Afghanistan after the Taliban barred Afghan women from working for the world organisation - a veiled suggestion the U.N. could move to suspend its mission and operations in the embattled country.

Last week, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers took a step further in restrictive measures they have imposed on women and said that Afghan women employed with the U.N. mission could no longer report for work. They did not further comment on the ban. The U.N. said it cannot accept the decision, calling it an unparalleled violation of women's rights. It

was the latest in sweeping restrictions imposed by the Taliban since they seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021 as U.S. and NATO troops were withdrawing from the country after 20 years of war.

The Taliban have banned girls from going to school beyond the sixth grade and women from most public life and work. In December, they banned Afghan women from working at local and non-governmental groups - a measure that at the time did not extend to U.N. offices. Tuesday's statement by the U.N. said its head of mission in Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, has "initiated an operational review period" that would last until May 5.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. MD/SPG-12/2022/456 Date: 06th April 2023
Name of the Work: Supply of 01 No. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) System for Paradip Port Authority including Installation, Commissioning, Certification, Test, Trial and Training for a period of five years (Comprehensive Warranty of 02 Years + Annual Maintenance Contract for 03 Years) including Buy Back Estimated Cost: Rs. 1.36, 15,000/- Plus GST. Last Date and time of submission of tender through on-line bidding is 1600 hours on Dt. 25.05.2023. Technical Bids shall be opened at 1630 hours on Dt.26.05.2023. For further details please logon to the Website: https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.
Sd/- Dy. Conservator, PPA
PPA/PR/01/2023-24 dtd. 11.04.2023

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
WORKSHOP DIVISION
No. EM/MS/TECH-04/2022/568, Dt. 04.04.2023
Corrigendum to e-Tender Call Notice No. EM/MS-02/2023 for the work: "Grant of license for Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation & Maintenance of 03 nos. 100 Ton Capacity HMCs for a period of 05 years."
The last date of bid submission and opening of the bid for the above e-Tender Call Notice are hereby extended as follows: 1. Last date and time of bid submission : 26.04.2023 up to 18:00 Hrs. 2. Opening of technical Bid : 28.04.2023 at 11:00 Hrs.
All Other terms and conditions of the original tender will remain unchanged.
Executive Engineer (M)
Workshop Division-4, PPA.
PPA/PR/02/2023-24, Dt.11.4.23

PUBLIC NOTICE
Known to General public that my client RAM SAGAR is purchasing property i.e. HOUSE NO. NAGAR NIGAM OLD NO-389 NEW NO-381, AREA 137.77 SQ YARDS SITUATED AT MOHILLA KIRTI WALI GANJ BAZARIYA GHAZIABAD TEHSIL AND DISTT. GHAZIABAD, from Sh. Sanjeev Kumar Verma and mortgaging with Aetitya Birra Housing Finance Ltd. And Sh. Sanjeev Kumar Verma don't have original 1/4 Death and Survivor Certificate of Nand Kishore Dhawan and Tiko Balaani Family Settlement deed between Legal Heirs of Tiko Bai And if any person is having any objection, right or claim in respect of the said property in capacity in any manner or said mortgage then he may contact the undersign within 8 days of publication of this notice.
ADREM LEGAL SOLUTIONS
Ch. No. 760, Dawka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
M:-9899013918

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large of Mr. Nadeem Khan who is purchasing the House No. 28571 area measuring 75 Sq. Yds. Situated in Mirzapur Pargana Loni Tehsil and District Ghaziabad, U.P.-201001, from Jaleesh Saifi who had owner through Notarized GPA dated 07.02.2000, and same to be financed & mortgaged by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. If any Person having any type of claim/right/title/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, disputes etc.
Lucem Legal LLP
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2, Noida, U.P. - 201301; Contact # 0120-4269379

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large of Mr. Siya Ram who is purchasing the Plot No. 04, area measuring 25 sq. yards, out of Kharsa no. 297, situated in Vandana Vihar Extension Phase-I, in Village Khoda, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad, (U.P.) from Mr. Anil Soni S/o Mr. Rajaram Soni who was owner of the aforesaid Property after demise of his father i.e. Mr. Rajaram Soni, Vide Sale Deed dated 13.04.2006 (as doc. No. 4641), and same to be financed & mortgaged by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. If any Person having any type of claim/right/title/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, disputes etc.
Lucem Legal LLP
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2, Noida, U.P. - 201301; Contact # 0120-4269379

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to public at large that my client Mr. Vishal Kumar Pal who intends to purchase Plot no. 226, area measuring 57. Sq.yds. of land, 025 Min, situated at area of village Mavai Janil Pargana Loni Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad U.P. from Mr. Rahul Bindal, Mr. Sachin Bindal & Mrs. Reema Aggarwal who inherited the said property after the death of Mrs. Madhubala who was the owner through Sale Deed dated 20/08/1990 which was executed by Mr. Harkesh vide Doc. No. 11143. If any person(s) has/have any objection(s) or claim(s) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property may please contact us within 07 days from the date of this notice on the number & address mentioned herein below, failing which my client(s) shall not be held responsible in any manner whatsoever. Mohd. Khairul Hussain (Advocate)
A-38 Kalash Colony, Khatlani & Khatlani New Delhi-110048, Mob.-9810391672

PUBLIC NOTICE
I Sahil Choudhary S/o Manoj Kumar Choudhary along with 3 other applicants i.e. (Bharti Gera, Aarti Choudhary and Manoj Kumar Choudhary) R/o A-146, Upper Ground Floor, A-Block, Vikaspuri, Delhi-18 intending to purchase the property at Plot No.10, Road No. V-6, DLF City, Phase-II, Gurugram-122010 from Rishi Behki. Please note that the original sale deed No.6167 dated 20.10.89 had been lost by the attorney of the plot Babi Gupta therefore it is not available with Rishi Behki as well who is the present owner. A FIR with No. 2568256/2017 had already been lodged for this on 14/12/2017 when Rishi Behki had purchased the property from Babi Gupta. I am now purchasing this property from Rishi Behki and I am taking a loan for this property from State Bank of India and intending to create a mortgage on the above-mentioned property. If anyone has any claims, demands, rights or concerns against the said property are hereby required to make the same known in writing with documentary proof at the above-mentioned address within 7 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which the claim to such person(s) if any will be considered as waived and the transaction of the said property shall be completed without any reference to such claim(s).

PUBLIC NOTICE
That in continuation of my previous public notice dated 11th July, 2022 I, Mr. Kishan Chand S/o Late Shri Chand R/o 5-B, Hanuman Enclave, Lane Number-3, Delhi-110041 hereby again declare that I have severed all my relations / family connections with my younger son namely Mr. Rajesh and his wife namely Mrs. Pooja Rani due to their bad behaviour and disobediences. He has left me and my wife namely Mrs. Savitri Devi both aged persons on the mercy of God. And did not turn back for long time. I want to submit that my younger son has forcibly taken signature on some plain paper and mention on it that he is the owner of 1/4 portion of the property in 2016 and pretend to be the owner of the said part. It came to my knowledge that he may sell the 1/4 share taken illegally and forcibly out of my part property i.e. 5-B, Hanuman Enclave, Lane Number-3, Delhi-110041 so through Public Notice dated 24th Feb, 2016 I had severed all relations with him and his wife and expelled them from my movable and immovable properties and also mentioned that whoever deals with them will be doing solely at their own risk, cost and consequences. And after it through WLLR dated 24th Feb, 2020, I had made my elder son Mr. Mukesh Kumar the legal owner of my self-acquired said property as he is taking care of me and my wife in very good manner. Finally, through this Public Notice, I want to make aware the general public again that I had made my elder son Mr. Mukesh Kumar the owner of the complete property after my death and also aware the general public not to deal in any manner whatsoever with Mr. Rajesh Kumar and his wife Mrs. Pooja Rani in respect to the 1/4 share of the property. And either I or my legal heir Mr. Mukesh Kumar will not be responsible for any act committed by Mr. Rajesh Kumar and his wife Mrs. Pooja Rani or further authorised by them.
Mr. Kishan Chand
S/o Late Shri Chand
R/o 5-B, Hanuman Enclave,
Lane Number-3, Delhi-110041

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav
E-TENDER NOTICE
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:
1 Name of Work with its location: PART-A Replacement of existing 105 sq.m.m G-Jumper by 160 sq.m.m G-Jumper of 1st Sub-Sector over Delhi Division. PART-B Raising of OHE structure muffs and base painting & writing of OHE structure i.e Rail level, Implantation over DLI Division.
2 Approx. Cost of work: Rs 12734955.36/-
3 Earnest Money Deposit: Rs 213700.00
4 E-Tender Bid Online starting date: 24.04.2023(00.00 hrs.)
5 E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & Time E-Tender Open Date & Time: 08.05.2023(15.00 hrs.)
6 Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in
No.: 03-TRD-NDLS-2023-24 Date: 10.04.2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1080/23

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NT/01/2023-24W-3 Dated:- 10.04.2023
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work.
1 Name of work: Insertion of Thick web Switches & overriding switches, shifting of points (Turnouts) in SSB & DBSI yard in the shadow of NI work in the section of SSE/PWAY/SSB under ADEN/DLI.
2 Approx cost of work: Rs. 2,17,73,240.17/- (Rupees Two Crore Seventeen Lakh Seventy Three Thousand Two Hundred Forty and Seventeen Paise Only)
3 Earnest Money to be deposited: Rs 2,58,900/- (Rupees Two Lakh Fifty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Only)
4 Cost of tender document: Rs. 0.00/-
5 Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender: 02.05.2023 @ 15:00 Hrs.
6 Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in
* The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. * For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. * No manual offers are acceptable. * Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.
1084/23
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल
पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.)
// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //
भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय की ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14/09/2006 (स्था संशोधित) के अंतर्गत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स नाविक स्टील इंड पब्लिक प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, ग्राम - झिरिया एवं त्रिकुली, तहसील व जिला - बेमेतरा (छ.ग.) में Establishment of Greenfield steel plant comprising of Iron ore beneficiation (8,50,000 TPA), Pellet Plant (6,00,000 TPA), Gasifier for Pellet Plant (21,000 Nm³/hr) DRI Kilns (6,27,000 TPA), Induction Furnace with matching LRF & CCM (Billets / Ingots / Hot Billets - 4,62,000 TPA), Rolling Mill (TMT Bars / Structural Steel - 4,62,000 TPA), Gasifier for Reheating Furnace (3570 Nm³/hr), Ferro Alloy Unit (FeSi - 42,000 TPA / FeMn-1,51,200 TPA/SiMn-86,400 TPA/FeCr-90,000 TPA/Pig Iron -60,000 TPA) Briquetting Plant (600Kg/hr), WHRB based Power Plant - 46 MW, FBC based Power Plant - 20MW & Brick manufacturing unit (1,00,000 Bricks/ Day) के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति बन्वत् लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 13.04.2023 को समय प्रातः 11:00 बजे स्थान - त्रिकुली से पटना मुख्य मार्ग पर स्थित ग्राम - झिरिया की भूमि खसरा नम्बर - 334, 333, 336, 337 / 1, 338 / 1, तहसील - बेमेतरा, जिला - बेमेतरा (छ.ग.) में निवृत्त की गई थी। जिसे कार्यालय कलेक्टर, जिला-बेमेतरा के ज्ञान क्रमांक 75/सि.सु./2023 बेमेतरा, दिनांक 06.04.2023 के द्वारा आगामी आदेश तक स्थगित किया गया है।
सदस्य सचिव
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,
नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

Investors richer by ₹12.6 lakh crore in 7-day rally

Sensex jumps 2,544 points

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity investors became richer by over ₹12.56 lakh crore in seven days of market rally as sentiments remained firm amid continuous foreign fund inflows and stable global trends.

In the past seven days, the BSE benchmark Sensex has jumped 2,544 points or 4.41 per cent. Helped by the ongoing rally, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms jumped ₹12,56,510.59 crore to ₹2,64,51,069.93 crore in seven days. Last week, equity markets were closed on Tuesday (April 4) for "Mahavir Jayanti" and on Friday on account of "Good Friday".

Stock markets were closed on March 30 for "Ram Navami". The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 311.21 points or 0.52 per cent to finish at 60,157.72 on Tuesday.

"Strong Asian and



European market cues bolstered the ongoing bullish sentiment and lifted the Sensex above the crucial 60,000-mark. Although the rally seems to be stretched, the feel good factors like interest rate status quo by the RBI, robust GST collections and mixed economic growth numbers are giving investors the ammo to bet on domestic stocks," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail) at Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

On Tuesday, from the Sensex firms, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Steel, ITC, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Maruti,

Mahindra & Mahindra and State Bank of India were the biggest winners.

Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Asian Paints, Wipro and Tata Motors were the biggest laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge rose 0.62 per cent and the midcap index advanced 0.40 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal rallied 1.87 per cent, utilities jumped 1.73 per cent, bankex (1.64 per cent), financial services (1.03 per cent), power (1.03 per cent) and commodities (1 per cent).

NSE Indices launches India's first-ever REITs and InvITs Index

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

NSE Indices Ltd, an arm of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), on Tuesday launched the country's first-ever Real Estate Investment Trusts and Infrastructure Investment Trusts index — Nifty REITs and InvITs Index.

The index aims to track the performance of REITs and InvITs that are publicly listed and traded on the NSE, the exchange said in a statement.

A real estate investment trust (REIT) or an infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) is an investment vehicle that owns revenue-generating real estate or infrastructure assets.

REITs invest in real estate projects, whereas InvITs invest in infrastructure projects with a long gestation period. Through these trusts, investors get exposure to diversified regular income-generating real estate and infrastructure assets.

"REITs and InvITs are recognised as strong alternative financial instruments to raise funds against the cash generating infrastructure and real



estate projects. For investors, these instruments provide exposure to real estate or infrastructure assets and offer diversification of risk from regular asset classes like equity, debt and gold and generate regular income," NSE Indices CEO Mukesh Agarwal said.

The weights of securities within the index will be based on their free-float market capitalisation, subject to a security cap of 33 per cent each, and the aggregate weight of the top three securities is capped at 72 per cent.

The Nifty REITs and InvITs index has a base value of 1,000 and the index will be reviewed and rebalanced on a quarterly basis.

OPEC+ output cut may soar oil prices, push up India's import bill, says IEA

PTI ■ PARIS

The International Energy Agency (IEA) on Tuesday termed the decision of OPEC+ to cut oil production as "risky for the global economy", saying it may push up already high prices, leading to higher import bills for nations like India.

Global oil markets were already set to tighten in the second half of 2023, with the potential for a substantial supply deficit to emerge, said Fatih Birol, head of the Paris-based energy watchdog.

Talking to reporters after a bilateral meeting with India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal here, he said, "The cut of the additional production would mean that we have all the reasons to believe that there could be an upward pressure on the prices".

"At this juncture of time when the global economy is still very fragile and many emerging countries have difficulties with economic performance, I found this decision risky for the global economy," he noted.

Asked if oil prices could go past \$100 per barrel again, he



said, "I think we are all the day but \$ 85 now, and looking at the second half of this year, I have reasons to believe that it can go even higher at current levels".

Higher oil prices will not just translate into inflationary pressure on other commodities but will also lead to a larger import bill for nations like India, which are dependent on overseas supplies to meet their requirements.

"India is an energy important country, oil important

country, a majority of the oil consumed in India is important, such a move could increase India's oil import bill and as such a burden on the Indian economy and Indian consumers," Birol said.

Goyal is here to meet his counterpart and French CEOs to promote trade and investments between the two countries. India is the world's third-largest oil-importing and consuming nation. It meets 85 per cent of oil needs through imports.

Securitisation volumes jump 41% to ₹1.78 lakh cr in FY23: Icra

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Securitisation volumes jumped 41 per cent to ₹1.78 lakh crore in FY23, driven largely by the retail segment, a report said on Tuesday.

The last quarter of the fiscal alone contributed volumes of over ₹61,000 crore, domestic rating agency Icra said.

Securitisation involves pooling of loans and selling them to a special purpose entity, so that a lender gets liquidity upfront on the assets it has originated. The agency seemed to be optimistic about its outlook for securitisation.

"The rising interest rates over the past year have not yet materially dampened the credit demand.

"With the Monetary Policy Committee keeping the repo rate unchanged in the recent meeting, we expect the disbursement trends for NBFCs (Non-Banking Financial Companies) and HFCs (Housing Finance Companies)



to remain healthy over the near term, which will support the growth in securitisation market across all asset classes," its group head for structured finance ratings, Abhishek Dafria said.

In FY23, mortgage-backed securitisation loans formed the biggest chunk of the overall volumes at 33 per cent, followed by vehicle loans at 28 per cent, the agency said.

Microfinance loans have made a huge comeback accounting for 20 per cent of the volumes in FY23, it said.

Apple to open its first retail store in India next week

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Apple will next week open its first retail store in India, in signs of importance the iPhone manufacturer attaches to the world's fastest growing smartphones market.

The company will open its first official store in Mumbai on April 18 and the second in Delhi on April 20.

The company at present sells its products in India through exclusive Apple Premium Reseller (APR) stores, large format retail chains like Reliance Digital, Croma etc, multi-brand retail stores and through e-commerce platforms.



Sebi issues price band formulation for share trading on first day post IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To check irregular movement in stock prices, Sebi on Tuesday came out with a new framework for fixing the price band for trading in shares on the first day of listing after an initial public offering.

The decision has been taken after discussions with stock exchanges and Sebi's Secondary Market Advisory Committee (SMAC), according to a circular.

For trading on the first day pursuant to Initial Public Offering (IPO) or re-listing, Sebi said that call auction sessions would continue to be conducted separately on individual exchanges and orders would be matched by respective exchanges after computation of equilibrium price.

In case the difference in the equilibrium price between exchanges in percentage terms is more than the applicable price band for the scrip, a Common Equilibrium Price (CEP) would be computed by exchanges.



"The CEP would be the volume weighted average of equilibrium prices on individual exchanges as determined by the call auction," the regulator said.

Sebi said the exchanges would set this CEP in their trading systems and apply uniform price bands based on the CEP. Further, only unexecuted pending orders from call auction sessions would be carried forward to the normal market segment.

The move came after Sebi observed that call auction sessions are conducted on multiple stock exchanges and that the discovered price or equilibrium price following such sessions could be different on each exchange.

Gold jumps ₹280; silver climbs ₹470

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price jumped by ₹280 to ₹60,680 per 10 gram in the national capital on Tuesday amid gains in the precious metal's prices internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had ended at ₹60,400 per 10 gram.

Silver also climbed by ₹470 to ₹74,950 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at ₹60,680 per 10 gram, up ₹280 per 10 gram," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, gold and silver were quoting higher at \$ 2,004 per ounce and \$ 25.04 per ounce, respectively.



Rupee falls 13 paise to close at 82.12/\$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 13 paise to close at 82.12 against the US currency on Tuesday as dollar demand from importers weighed on investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 81.96 against the dollar, and finally ended the day at 82.12 (provisional), 13 paise lower from its previous close.

During the day, the rupee witnessed a high of 81.96 and a low of 82.15 against the greenback.

The rupee on Monday rose 3 paise and settled at 81.99 against the US dollar.

Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said the Indian rupee erased Monday's gain following corporate dollar outflows and dollar demand from the importers.

"Local traders will eye tomorrow's inflation and IIP data for a directional move. The



market consensus is expecting lower inflation numbers along with slower output growth," Parmar said.

Spot INR-USD may consolidate between 81.70 to 82.50 in the near-term, he added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the basket's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.46 per cent to 102.10.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.30 per cent to \$ 84.43 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 311.21 points or 0.52 per cent higher at 60,157.72 points.

PE inflows plunge over 75% to \$2.2 bn in Q1

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Private equity inflows plunged 75.4 per cent to \$2.2 billion in the March quarter, making it the sixth consecutive quarter of decline, amid global macroeconomic and geopolitical headwinds, according to a report.

At \$ 2.2 billion of inflows, this is the lowest private equity investment in the country since 2018, when it stood at \$1.7 billion, according to the data tabulated by the financial markets data and insights provider Refinitiv, an LSEG Business unit.

Internet-specific and computer software companies con-



tinued to attract the largest share of private equity capital, the report said. However, its share declined to 58 per cent from 75 per cent in the same period last year, primarily due to fewer deals.

With turbulent market conditions and uncertainty, private equity fundraising activity also fell 41 per cent this year compared to the first quarter of 2022 and saw a 45 per cent decline sequentially.

On a sequential basis, the Q1 decline was 31.9 per cent year-on-year when it was \$ 3.2 billion and 75.4 per cent annualised from \$ 8.83 billion. In volume terms too, there was a fall as the total number of deals fell 19.9 per cent to 282 from 352 in Q4 of 2022 and by 30.9 per cent compared to 408 deals in Q1 of 2022, said Elaine Tan, the senior analyst at the agency.

Computer software and Internet-specific companies continue to attract maximum investor interest with \$ 392.3 million, down 85.2 per cent from 88 deals, and \$ 870.9 million in the reporting period, down 78.3 per cent.

Flipkart's 200 delivery hubs, other investments in TN boost job opportunities

PTI ■ CHENNAI

E-commerce company Flipkart has set up eight supply chain facilities and 200 delivery hubs in Tamil Nadu under its initiative towards creating inclusive job opportunities besides boosting economic growth, the company said on Tuesday.

The company has onboarded 15,000 kirana partners under its Kirana Delivery programme, which enables faster customer shipments and also creates an alternative source of income for the partner kirana stores in the state. Kirana stores refers to small grocery stores that are usually family-owned.



"Flipkart has eight supply chain facilities including fulfilment and sortation centres across Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, Coimbatore and Hosur, which help in connecting sellers to the pan-India consumer base while delivering growth opportunities for the state," the company said in a statement.

DBS Bank to enter affordable home loan segment this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

DBS Bank India on Tuesday said it will enter the affordable home loan segment by the end of this financial year as the lender looks to expand the retail portfolio.

The bank is looking to launch the product during the fourth quarter, DBS Bank India Executive Director (Head-National Distribution) Bharath Mani said here.

"We are targeting mostly customers in Tier II and Tier III cities for this product," he said, adding that the bank will launch proprietary credit cards by June.

The proposed credit card would be targeted at affluent



and super affluent segments, he said.

Currently, the bank has a co-branded credit card with Bajaj Finserv and a customer base of 2,00,000.

Meanwhile, DBS Bank India has announced a partnership with IndiaFilings, a leading platform for startups

and small businesses in India. The partnership will enable the bank to provide end-to-end financial services support to new companies and startups through a co-branded portal.

In a statement, the bank said the partnership reaffirms its commitment to serving startups profitably while finding new ways to deliver value.

A common challenge faced by new businesses in India include the need for more awareness on incorporation, GST registration, setting up of financial management and operations-related infrastructure, building the brand value proposition, and accessing the ecosystem comprising investors and tech partners, it said.

Audi to hike price of Q3 range by 1.6% from May 1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German automaker Audi on Tuesday said it will increase the price of Q3 and Q3 Sportback by up to 1.6 per cent with effect from May 1, in order to offset the impact of increase in customs duty and input costs.

The company has already increased the price of Q8 Celebration, RS5 and S5 by up to 2.4 per cent with effect from April 1.

"At Audi India, we strive to give our customers the best, but



the rise in customs duty and input costs have compelled us to amend our prices upwards," Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said in a statement.

While the company has tried to absorb the impact at various levels, the current situation necessitates an increase in price, he added.

Mercedes-Benz India posts record sales at 4,697 units in March qtr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury car maker Mercedes-Benz on Tuesday reported record sales in India at 4,697 units during the first quarter of 2023, a 17 per cent growth over the year-ago period, with its top end vehicles priced above ₹1 crore seeing accelerated growth.

Mercedes-Benz India, which had sold 4,022 units in the same quarter last year, launched its hybrid AMG GT 63 S E Performance model with price starting at ₹3.3 crore (ex-showroom Delhi) as part of its strategy to accelerate sales of top end vehicles (TEVs).

For the fiscal ended March



31, 2022, the company posted its highest-ever sales at 16,497 units as against 12,071 units in 2021-22, a growth of 37 per cent.

"Overall, our growth story continues with a record quarter and a record fiscal year...Double digit growth continues for us in 2023,"

Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director & CEO Santosh Iyer told PTI.

He said, "When I look at the composition, the top end vehicles (TEVs) actually showed more than 100 per cent growth in quarter one at 107 per cent...So the juggernaut with the top end vehicles con-

tinues also in quarter one." Mercedes-Benz India's TEVs include S-Class Maybach, GLS Maybach, top-end AMGs, S-Class and GLS SUV, which are priced over ₹1 crore (ex-showroom).

The company, which posted record sales in 2022 at 15,822 units, had sold over 3,500 units of TEVs, growing at 69 per cent.

"We as a brand are highly focused in India and worldwide to grow the TEV segment. The India strategy only further resonates," Iyer said, adding that the growth of the company's TEV sales is also a "clear reflection of the changing luxury car market in India."

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India selects IBM for cloud-powered transformation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India, a joint venture between ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel, has selected IT major IBM to drive cloud-powered transformation, a statement said on Tuesday.

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India), the joint venture of the two leading steelmakers, is an integrated flat steel manufacturer with over 600 steel grades and serves multiple industries and key markets through its India, Indonesia, and Dubai business entities.

With capacity expansion plans on a roll, the company



recognised that its core business processes will require the necessary scalability and flexibility to support growth.

Towards this, AM/NS India tapped into IBM Consulting's cloud-powered business transformation capabilities and expertise in the metals and mining industry prevalent in India.

LAMPARD URGES CHELSEA TO EMULATE 2012 HEROICS

AP ■ MADRID

Frank Lampard has urged Chelsea to ignore the turmoil enveloping his struggling side as he invoked the memory of the Blues' incredible run to Champions League glory in 2012.

Lampard is back in charge of Chelsea until the end of the season after replacing the sacked Graham Potter last week.

After watching Chelsea crash to a lacklustre 1-0 defeat at Wolves in his first game in charge on Saturday, Lampard takes them to Real Madrid for a daunting Champions League quarter-final first leg on Wednesday.

Chelsea are languishing in 11th place in the Premier League after a dismal campaign that included Thomas Tuchel being sacked in September and Potter lasting only seven months before his dismissal.

The west Londoners have managed to progress to the last eight in Europe despite their wretched domestic form. Knocking out holders Real would be a major upset, but Lampard knows all about defying the odds in the Champions League.

Lampard captained Chelsea in their unexpected run to Champions League triumph 11 years ago.

The Blues finished sixth during an underwhelming top-flight season, with Roberto Di Matteo replacing the axed Andre Villas-Boas in March.

But in the Champions League they overturned a 3-1 first leg deficit to beat Napoli in the last 16, then recovered from 2-1 down on aggregate in the semi-final second leg to eliminate Lionel Messi's Barcelona despite a red card for John Terry on a memorable night in the Camp Nou.

In the final against Bayern Munich, they needed a last-gasp equaliser from Didier Drogba to set up a penalty shoot-out victory over the Germans in their own Allianz Arena stadium.

Repeating that fairytale success seems beyond Chelsea as they board their flight to Madrid, but Lampard insists anything can happen if his players show enough desire.



'ONE OF THE BEST'

"There's a lot to it. Part of that was we parked the bus at the Nou Camp and managed to hang on for our dear lives! There are so many things, fate in different moments," he said.

"But we did have a huge desire and a big character and a level of talent in the group that have been striving for years to win a Champions League, so that one you remember."

"A team and a group will always go through tough moments to get to great ones."

Chelsea are without a win in their last four games and once again lacked a cutting edge in the Wolves defeat.

If Lampard's men are stunned Real in the Bernabeu, the Blues boss could do with a rare influential display from Raheem Sterling.

The England forward has struggled badly since his move from Manchester City last year.

Lampard recalled Sterling to face Wolves but there was little sign of the pace and trickery that made him such a force during his time at City.

Sterling, who has scored just seven times this term, did grab a crucial goal in the Champions League last 16 second leg win against Borussia Dortmund and Lampard believes he can still have a positive impact on Chelsea's fortunes.

"Raheem has been there and done it and there's history of producing," Lampard said. "He's been one of the best wingers in the world for a long time, at times, maybe in some people's opinion, the best."

"He's risen to games like that before in the past so that's something we'll obviously rely on in terms of this because some elements of the squad are maybe a bit younger."

"This game won't faze him. I can't remember how many times I've told young wingers; 'watch Raheem Sterling and see why he scores 20 goals a season'. I just think he's a top player."



Leicester appoint Dean Smith as manager until end of season

AP ■ LEICESTER

Dean Smith insisted that Leicester can avoid relegation after the Premier League strugglers hired him as their manager until the end of the season on Monday.

Former Aston Villa and Norwich boss Smith replaces Brendan Rodgers, who was sacked on April 2 after his side's slump into relegation trouble.

Smith will take charge for Leicester's last eight games of the campaign as they battle to avoid dropping into the Championship for the first time since 2014.

The Foxes sit second bottom of the table and are two points from safety after Saturday's damaging 1-0 home defeat against fellow strugglers Bournemouth.

"I'm really happy to have the opportunity to lead the team during these final weeks of the season," Smith said.

"The challenge in front of us is clear, but it's one myself and my coaching team have experienced before and, with the quality in this squad and the number of games remaining, it's very much achievable."

"Our first job is to rebuild confidence and instil belief in the team and I'm looking forward to getting to work with the players this week."

Leicester have lost both matches since Rodgers was sacked, with first-team coaches Adam Sadler and Mike Stowell taking charge on an interim basis prior to Smith's appointment.

Smith's backroom staff will include former Chelsea and England captain John Terry, who previously worked for him as an assistant coach at Villa. Craig Shakespeare also returns to the King Power Stadium as Smith's assistant manager.

Shakespeare was part of Claudio Ranieri's coaching team when Leicester stunningly won their fairytale Premier League title in 2016, and also briefly managed the club after the Italian's sacking.

Smith, who was sacked by second-tier Norwich in December, faces a daunting assignment for his first game, a trip to inform champions Manchester City on Saturday.

"Saturday will be a big test, but it's the kind of occasion that reminds us all what it means to be a Premier League club, competing on the biggest stages against the best players in the world," Smith said.

Ancelotti saddened by Blues slump

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said he was sad to see Chelsea's slump this season, ahead of their Champions League quarter-final clash on Wednesday.

The Italian coach led the Blues between 2009-2011, winning a Premier League and FA Cup double in 2010.

Chelsea, 11th in the Premier League, sacked coach Graham Potter at the start of April and hired their former coach Frank Lampard on an interim basis.

"I am sad, yes," Ancelotti told a news conference on Tuesday before the first leg clash at the Santiago Bernabeu.

"I have a fantastic memory of this club, of the people that are still working there."

"I'm a supporter of Chelsea, of course, because I spent two really nice years there."



Ancelotti, who has a year left to run on his contract with Madrid, said he did not see himself returning to Stamford Bridge for a second stint in charge.

"Be back? No, I hope that Lampard is able to do a fantastic job with them," added Ancelotti.

The Real Madrid coach did not think his extra years of experience compared to Lampard, whom he managed at Chelsea, would make the difference in the tie.

"He has 20 years less experience, but that will not change what will happen in the game," continued Ancelotti. "He was a fantastic player, extraordinary, he knows very well what can happen in these games but experience, in these matches, I don't think counts for much."

"He arrived at the club a week ago, with a lot of players that he already knew, I think he'll do well in the time that he's at Chelsea."

Girona hold Barca for goalless draw

AP ■ BARCELONA

Title-chasing Barcelona were held to a 0-0 draw by Girona at Camp Nou on Monday, extending their lead on Real Madrid at the top of La Liga by one point, now sitting 13 clear with 10 games remaining.

Still smarting from their Clasico humiliation by Madrid last week in the Copa del Rey, Barcelona were far from their best in a Catalan derby clash, despite the motivation of seeing the champions lose on Saturday against Villarreal.

Girona, mid-table, were solid and forced Xavi Hernandez's side to drop points at home in La Liga for only the third time this season.

Barcelona secured their 21st clean sheet in the top flight but were not able to fully capitalise on Real Madrid's stumble, as they bid to win La Liga for the first time since 2019.

"As the minutes passed, they started to gain confidence in defence, and we were struggling to make the final pass or take our chances," Barca captain Sergio Busquets told DAZN.

"Our objective remains the same, to win La Liga, and to try to win it as soon as possible. We're 13 points clear, but our objective remains the same."

Xavi, including several key players still under Pedri and Ousmane Dembele, lined up with Ansu Fati and Raphinha alongside La Liga's top scorer Robert Lewandowski up front.

The Polish forward came close to opening the scoring on four minutes after being teed up by Fati, whipping an effort onto the roof of the net.

Barcelona came close again



when Girona defender Santi Bueno almost put through his own net but goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga reacted well to slide in and divert the ball to safety.

The former Tottenham goalkeeper saved well from Raphinha at his near post and then clawed away a Ronald Araujo effort from the resulting corner.

Barcelona appealed that the ball had gone in but with the help of VAR — La Liga does not use goal-line technology — officials decided the ball did not cross the line.

However the best chance of the game fell to the visitors, with Taty Castellanos spurning the opportunity by firing wide when through on goal, with Ivan Martin alongside in support, ready for a tap-in.

Lewandowski had a late backheel deflected wide as Girona clung on for the draw.

The Catalans took a meek step towards their title dream, extending their lead on Madrid by a point.

Lewa hopes to play with Messi next season at Barca

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski would love Lionel Messi to return to the Catalan club from Paris Saint-Germain this summer, he said on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old Argentine World Cup winner left Barca in 2021 when the club could not afford to renew his contract and his PSG deal expires in June.

Amid whistles from PSG supporters who see Messi as a symbol of the club's mistakes in chasing star signings instead of building a competitive team, Barcelona are openly courting the forward.

"Messi belongs to Barca and if he returns it would be something incredible," said Lewandowski. "We know that his place is here, in Barcelona. I don't know what will happen, but I hope that next season we can play together."

Messi is the club's all-time top goalscorer and many consider him the best player in the history of football. The playmaker scored a record 672 goals in 778 matches for Barcelona, winning 35 trophies, after joining the club at 13-years-old and developing at their fated La Masia youth academy.



Ince sacked by struggling Reading

AP ■ LONDON

Reading manager Paul Ince was sacked on Tuesday after his struggling side plunged into the Championship relegation zone. Former Manchester United and Liverpool midfielder Ince paid the price for Reading's woeful run of eight games without a win.

Noel Hunt, a former Reading player, has been placed in charge of the Royals until the end of the season.

"Reading Football Club can confirm that the contract of first-team manager Paul Ince has been terminated with immediate effect. Assistant manager Alex Rae has also departed the club," a Reading statement said.

"Our Under-21s manager and former Royals striker, Noel Hunt, has been installed as interim first-team manager until the end of the season."

Ince was initially hired by Reading on an interim basis in February 2022 before earning the manager's job on a permanent basis. But Ince, who has also managed Blackburn, MK Dons, Notts County and Blackpool, was unable to stop Reading's decline in the second half of this season.

Pioli expects no repeat of Napoli thumping in CL



AP ■ MILAN

Stefano Pioli said on Tuesday that he is not expecting a repeat of his AC Milan team's devastating Serie A display against Napoli when the pair face off in their all-Italian Champions League quarter-final. Milan smashed four goals past Italy's runaway league leaders without reply earlier this month, but Pioli doesn't think there is any chance of Napoli being rocked by that defeat in Wednesday's first leg at the San Siro.

"The match in the league will obviously give us an idea, but there's no way it will be the same match again," said Pioli.

"They're the highest scoring team in this Champions League and after Bayern Munich the team which has won the most matches so they're a really good team with great quality."

"I think both teams have the same chance of going through. I'm expecting two very balanced matches... I think we can expect something different from Napoli so we need to be aware whether we need to make changes from the match in the league."

Latest reports in Italy suggest Napoli will be without star striker Victor Osimhen, who did not take part in team training on Tuesday.

Osimhen, who has scored 25 goals in all competitions this

season, also missed the league encounter with a thigh injury picked up on international duty.

"It doesn't make a difference, Napoli have great players, they're all good," added Milan's France full-back Theo Hernandez.

"Whether he plays or not, whoever is out there tomorrow will play their part."

Napoli will be playing their first ever last-eight tie in the Champions League at a stadium which has seen a raft of memorable European nights.

Milan have been crowned continental kings more times than any other team bar Real Madrid and Pioli believes that playing such a huge game at a packed San Siro will have a positive impact on his team.

Wawrinka, Thiem off the mark in Monte Carlo

AP ■ MONTE CARLO

The 2014 Monte Carlo Masters winner Stan Wawrinka was full of relief on Monday to get past the first round as Russian qualifier Ivan Gakhov secured a date with world number one Novak Djokovic.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Wawrinka has slipped to 90th in the ATP rankings but secured his second-round ticket with a 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 defeat of Tallon Griekspoor.

Also past the first hurdle in this warm-up for the French Open were 2021 Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini and Dominic Thiem. But Andy Murray's participation in the Principality ended prematurely with the Scottish wild card despatched 6-1, 6-3 by Australian 14th seed Alex de Minaur.

Gakhov's reward for edging past American Mackenzie McDonald 7-6 (8/6), 2-6, 6-3 was a Tuesday second-round date with Djokovic, a David and Goliath clash with almost 200 rungs in the rankings between the pair.

The Serb has not hit a shot in anger since losing his semi-final in Dubai at the start of March to Daniil Medvedev.

Forced to miss the American swing in Indian Well and Miami due to his anti-Covid vaccination stance Djokovic said on Sunday he was "motivated" to hit the clay-court season running as he targets a 23rd Grand Slam at Roland Garros. His path to a third Monte Carlo title has been smoothed by the absences due to injury of 11-time champion Rafael Nadal and Spanish teenage star Carlos Alcaraz.

Wawrinka, who next faces Ameri-



can eighth seed Taylor Fritz, said "it's great to be here" after his defeat of Griekspoor. The 38-year-old Wawrinka, who beat Roger Federer to the 2014 title, has failed to make it past the second round since 2017 and after two seasons blighted by injury is keen to make up for lost time.

"Nowadays, each win is important," he said.

"Physically I'm doing well and my form is decent enough. I'm capable of beating lots of players, I've just got to play my game."

As for Berrettini, he was claiming his first win on Monte Carlo's clay at the third attempt after dominating Maxime Cressy 6-4, 6-2.

Thiem knocked out France's top hope Richard Gasquet 6-1, 6-4, with Danish sixth seed Holger Rune waiting

for the 2020 US Open winner in the second round.

ZVEREV, DIMITROV ADVANCE

Alexander Zverev started his clay-court season with a 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 win over Alexander Bublik to reach the second round at the Monte Carlo Masters on Tuesday. The 13th-seeded German was playing on clay for the first time since a right ankle injury forced him to retire in the French Open semifinals against Rafael Nadal last year.

Two-time semifinalist Grigor Dimitrov also advanced by beating American Ben Shelton 6-1, 3-6, 6-3. The 20-year-old Shelton made his debut at Monte Carlo and did not disappoint, testing Dimitrov in a tense contest that lasted more than two hours.

Ankita guides India to 2-1 win over Thailand

PTI ■ TASHKENT

Seasoned Ankita Raina triumphed in the second singles and then combined with Rutuja Bhosale to win the decisive doubles as India went past Thailand 2-1 in the Asia/Oceania Group I competition on the opening day of the Bille Jean King Cup here Tuesday.

In the first match of the tie, Bhosale lost 2-6, 1-6 to Luksika Kumkhum, leaving India trailing 0-1 in the Pool A contest.

The onus to bring India back was on Raina and she did not disappoint, levelling the tie 1-1 after winning her second



singles 5-7, 6-1, 6-3 against Peangtarn Plipuech. In the decisive doubles, Raina and Bhosale came from behind to beat the Thai pairing of Kumkhum and Plipuech 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Once the Indians broke their rivals in the opening game of the second set, they did not look back and closed the match with ease. India will take on hosts Uzbekistan on Wednesday.

MUMBAI SEAL THRILLER AS DELHI REMAIN WINLESS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rohit Sharma was at his vintage best en route to his first IPL half-century in 25 innings before Mumbai Indians overcame some tense moments to pull off a last-ball win over Delhi Capitals here on Monday.

David Warner laboured to 51 off 47 balls before Axar Patel flaunted his much improved batting skills again with an impactful 54 off 25 balls to push Delhi Capitals to a competitive 172 after Mumbai Indians put the hosts in to bat.

With the pitch on the drier side compared to the first game here and finger spinners getting plenty of assistance from it, Mumbai Indians had a tricky task at hand but with his classy 65 off 45 balls, Rohit helped his side record their first win of the season.

With Cameron Green (17* off 8) and Tim David (13* off 11) in the middle, Mumbai needed five runs off the last over but Anrich Nortje bowled brilliantly to take the game down to the very last ball. David got the required two off the final ball for a much needed victory.

Promoted to number three, the in-form Tilak Varma came up with a crucial 41 off 29 balls and forged a 68-run stand with skipper Rohit.

It was a much needed win for Mumbai after back-to-back defeats while the season got worse for Delhi who suffered their fourth loss in as many games.

When Rohit charged down the track to pacer Mukesh Kumar in the first over of the innings to pull him for a six over mid-wicket, one could see a special knock coming.

There is no better puller in the game than Rohit and that was on full display at the Feroz Shah Kotla. His second six was even better as he pulled Anrich Nortje off the front foot over wide long-on. Rohit's biggest six came off a pull shot too as he smashed a short ball from Nortje for a massive hit over deep square leg.

Delhi were able to stem the flow of runs in the middle overs via spinners Lalit Yadav and Axar Patel before Varma produced timely boundaries to keep Mumbai ahead in the game. Needing 30 off the final five overs with nine wickets in hand, Mumbai were on course for a comfortable win before Mukesh dismissed Varma and Suryakumar Yadav (0) off successive balls.

The nerves increased in the Mumbai dressing room when Rohit fell to a moment of brilliance from young keeper Abhishek Porel who dived to his right to take a sensational one handed catch off Mustafizur Rahman.

However, the towering Australian duo David and Green took their team over the line. Earlier, veteran Piyush Chawla, who was commenting in the IPL last season after going unsold, showed he has still got his sublime skills intact with a three-wicket haul for Mumbai Indians.

Prithvi Shaw, who struggled in



the first three games, hit some high quality boundaries in his 10-ball 15 before falling to a sweep shot off spinner Hrithik Shokeen.

Number three Manish Pandey (26 off 18) used his feet brilliantly against the spinners but that also led to his downfall.

Yash Dhull, who made his IPL debut after warming the bench for the whole of last season, could last only four balls.

When Chawla trapped Rovman Powell with a googly in the 11th over, Delhi were staring at a below par total of 86 for four.

However, Axar joined a struggling Warner in the middle and sin-

Faf fined ₹12 lakh for slow over-rate, Avesh reprimanded

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Faf du Plessis was fined ₹12 lakh after his team was found guilty of maintaining slow over-rate during its IPL match against Lucknow Super Giants.

LSG won the match by one wicket off the last ball and their No. 11 batter Avesh Khan, in excitement, flung his helmet after the completion of the winning run, which also invited a reprimand from the match referee.

"The Royal Challengers Bangalore have been fined for maintaining a slow over-rate during their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023

match 15 against the Lucknow Super Giants at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, on Monday," a media release stated.

"As it was the team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, captain Faf du Plessis was fined ₹12 lakhs."

In case of Madhya Pradesh speedster Avesh, there were no financial penalty as a formal warning was deemed to be enough.

"Lucknow Super Giants' Avesh Khan has been reprimanded for breaching the Code of Conduct. Mr Avesh admitted to level 1 offence 2.2 of IPL's Code of Conduct and accepted the sanction."

gle-handedly changed the momentum of Delhi's innings.

Arguably the most improved batter of the Indian team over the last 12 months, Axar made his intentions clear with back-to-back inside out sixes off Shokeen.

Two overs later, it was the turn of left-arm pacer Jason Behrendorff to be at the receiving end of Axar's onslaught. After dispatching him for a six over long-on, Axar targeted the same area again and got lucky as

Suyakumar Yadav missed the catch completely and got hit above his eye with the ball going all the way.

Surya was expectedly taken off the field after that nasty hit.

Axar's fifth and last six was the best of the lot as he smashed Meredith over the latter's head to bring up his half-century. Mumbai put the brakes on the scoring rate by picking four wickets in the 19th over bowled by Behrendorff, who ended with figures of three for 23 in four overs.



Royals face Chepauk 'test' against CSK

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The in-form dynamic opening Rajasthan Royals pair of Jos Buttler and Yashasvi Jaiswal will face a quality 'Spin Test' on a tricky Chepauk pitch when they lock horns with some world-class short-format tweakers in the Chennai Super Kings line-up in an IPL match here on Wednesday.

The England white-ball skipper and his young Indian partner have both scored a couple of half-centuries each and that too at healthy strike-rates — 180.95 for Buttler and 164.47 for Jaiswal.

But in the three games that Royals have played so far, two were in Guwahati, which was the flattest batting deck amongst all the venues. The Hyderabad track was also loaded heavily in favour of batters.

And, suddenly, they come to Chennai where the ball can grip and also get slower as the match progresses. The toss is always an important factor in Chennai as chasing anything above 170 to 175 could be a risky proposition.

Especially when Moeen Ali, Ravindra Jadeja and Mitchell Santner are operating at the Chepauk and might bowl 10, if not 12, overs between them. Matches can be won and lost there.

The three seasoned CSK campaigners have taken 11 wickets between them in three games but, more importantly,

their economy rate has been very impressive.

Moeen has bowled at an economy rate of 6.50 in two games while Jadeja (6.88) and Santner (6.75) have also gone for less than seven runs per over.

Moeen missed the last game due to food poisoning and is expected to play the game in place of Sisanda Magala, while Dwaine Pretorius will fill in as an all-rounder in case Ben Stokes is not fit.

But by no means Royals' spinners could be taken lightly as the wily 'Cricket Scientist' Ravichandran Ashwin has played all his cricket at this very ground and the intelligent Yuzvendra Chahal can outfox any batter on a given day. Add the other Tamil Nadu spinner Murugan Ashwin in the mix and CSK will also have their own set of challenges.

However, CSK will be missing Deepak Chahar, who is expected to be out of the tournament due to recurrence of a left hamstring injury.

On the batting front, the vastly experienced Ajinkya Rahane showed he too could score quickly on his CSK debut as the team turned in a strong performance with spinners Jadeja and Santner doing a fine job.

Add the good run of Ruturaj Gaikwad at the top of the order and CSK do have a formidable batting line-up. But they would be up against an equally well-endowed Royals team.

Hope to win & give it as gift to Dhoni, says Jadeja

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Premier all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is hoping for a victory in talisman Mahendra Singh Dhoni's 200th match as captain of Chennai Super Kings in the IPL on Wednesday.

Four-time IPL champions CSK will host inaugural edition winners Rajasthan Royals at Chepauk.

Asked about his thoughts on this at the pre-match press conference on Tuesday, Jadeja said, "What can I say. He is a legend of not only CSK, he is a legend of Indian cricket. I would like to wish him good luck."

"Hopefully, we will win the game tomorrow and give it as a gift to him on his 200th match as captain. Hope to continue the momentum of how we have played in the last two games."

Both CSK and Royals have quality spinners in their line-ups.

Jadeja feels as a batting unit "we have to apply ourselves".

"Yeah, you can say that. When you come to Chennai you are always hoping that spinners will do the job for you. They have quality spinners, we also have quality spinners. It will be a good battle."

"As a batting unit, we have to apply ourselves and pick those areas where we can hit boundaries. That will be challenging. As a batsman it is not going to be that easy. Batters need to capitalise and pick those gaps," Jadeja said.

He also highlighted the importance of the bowlers sticking to the right line and length. While CSK have Mitchell Santner and Jadeja in their spin department, Royals boast of the wily Ravichandran Ashwin and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal in their ranks.



Asked what he felt was a safe total, a smiling Jadeja said, "Nowadays nothing is safe. Because they are chasing down 212. We have to be very disciplined and have to read the conditions very well."

The four-time winners have faced some issues with injuries with influential England all-rounder Ben Stokes and his compatriot Moeen Ali missing the previous game against Mumbai while pacer Deepak Chahar sustained a hamstring injury in the first over and did not bowl subsequently.

About the status of Stokes, Ali and Chahar, Jadeja said, "I think Moeen Ali is fine, within a day or two, he will be fine. But I don't know about Deepak. I have not met Deepak, I am not sure what injury he had. Ben also will be fine in 4-5 days, is what I feel. But not sure how much time he will take."

Yashasvi eyes best IPL season after strong start

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With 125 runs in three matches at 41.66 including two half-centuries, Rajasthan Royals opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has made his best start yet to the IPL, in the company of England giant Jos Buttler, from whom the youngster is learning more than just cricket.

Jaiswal, who managed totals around 250 each in the last two editions, seems well-placed to have his finest IPL yet with the bat, which follows a successful run in domestic cricket.

The left-handed batter made 315 runs at 45 from five Ranji Trophy games with a highest of 162 and smacked 213 for the Rest of India against Madhya Pradesh in the Irani Cup in early March this year.

Jaiswal said that successful run in domestic cricket has helped him make a strong start to the IPL.

"One hundred per cent, it gives me amazing (amount of) confidence of playing in different conditions and situations. I have been in different situations so many times and I have drawn confidence from it to go out there and express myself," he said.

The presence of Buttler in the RR camp and his relationship with such a senior figure, England's captain in limited-overs cricket, has had a strong impact on the 21-year-old.



"In the powerplay, as Jos bhai always says, we have to have good intent and cricketing shots. I just try and follow that. I keep learning (a lot) from him, different shots and (having) different mindsets which has really helped me to improve my game as a player," he said.

"Also, seeing him outside of the game, how he goes about (in his life), what he does. I learn from all that and put it in my lifestyle too to improve my career," Jaiswal added.

The young batter said RR will try to replicate their actions and processes from last IPL, wherein they made it to the final.

"The best thing was the environment we had. Everyone was aware of their roles and was trying to follow that. We kept backing and supporting each other and giving it our all to achieve one goal. We are trying to do the same this year and try our best (to make the final)," he said.

The ultimate goal for the young player, who is also working on his leg-spin, is to play for India and Jaiswal does not want to restrict himself.

"I have worked on my fitness and skills to improve all my shots and areas. I am also working every day to improve as a leg-spin bowler, but I know it needs a lot of improvement before I get to bowl in the IPL."

"I am aiming for all formats. I am trying to play as much as I can. I am not thinking of one format in particular," he said.

I did the right thing by playing slow: Rahul

PTI ■ BENGALURU

On a day when Lucknow Super Giants' Nicholas Pooran smashed the second-fastest IPL half-century, his captain KL Rahul defended his inexplicable 20-ball-18 stating that he "has done the right thing".

The West Indian left-hand batter's 19-ball 62 — and his 15-ball half-century — played a pivotal role in LSG chasing down a stiff RCB's 212-run total on the last ball at the Chinnaswamy Stadium on Monday night.

However, the innings played by Rahul — who has often been criticised for his unflattering strike rate in T20 cricket and was included in the 2022 World Cup squad despite criticism — stood in stark contrast to the West Indian's hell for leather effort. But Rahul, who lost his Test vice-captaincy midway through the Border-Gavaskar series, recently due to poor form, said post-match that losing wickets in a heap forced him to go slow.

"If I score more runs, the strike-rate will go up. I looked at

the situation and I feel I had done the right thing. Hopefully, with a couple of good knocks the strike rate will go up," Rahul said, following LSG's one-wicket win.

Rahul, in the 72 T20s he has played has scored 2,265 runs at a strike rate of 139.12, and his overall strike rate in the shortest format is just 136.93. His strike-rate is more about making it up towards the end.

In the end, Rahul's stay at the crease only added to the pressure on the likes of Pooran and Ayush Badoni to accelerate the run-rate. In fact, Marcus Stoinis, who came in at No.5, was left with little choice but to go for the big hits from the word go, smashing a 30-ball 65 to infuse some life into the innings.

Rahul, who has played most of his cricket in formative years at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, said, "From the position we were in, we were chasing 210-plus and we knew we had to go hard and attack. But, sometimes, when you do that you lose wickets. Unbelievable, I mean it's the Chinnaswamy. I've grown up here and I think it's the stadium with most last-ball finishes."

Priyanshu jumps to career-best world No. 38

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Riding on his title-winning run at the Orleans Masters Super 300 tournament, India's Priyanshu Rajawat jumped 20 places to achieve a career-best world ranking of 38 in the latest BWF rankings issued on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old from Madhya Pradesh clinched his maiden Super 300 title after beating Denmark's Magnus Johansson 21-15, 19-21, 21-16 in the summit clash to accumulate some valuable ranking points.



a spot to 24th, while Kidambi Srikanth lost two places to slip to world No. 23.

HS Prannoy continues to be the best-ranked men's singles player at No. 8.

In the women's singles, PV Sindhu, who had reached the final of Spain Masters, slipped two rungs to world No.11 once again, while Saina Nehwal moved to world No.31.

The men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty remained static at world No. 6, followed by the combination of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila at 27th.

Chennai, Kolkata could well be Pak's preferred venues for their WC games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Pakistan cricket team would prefer playing bulk of its 2023 ODI World Cup matches in Chennai and Kolkata — the two venues where the team has felt safe during its earlier tours, according to ICC sources.

The World Cup will start tentatively on October 5, with 46 matches, including the final set to be played across 12 Indian cities, including Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Mumbai, Rajkot, Bengaluru, Delhi, Indore, Guwahati and Hyderabad, Dharamasala.

It is understood that discussions are currently on at the ICC level as Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) bigwigs are in talks with a top level ICC executive on the

issue, which still remains a sensitive one.

"A lot will depend on what BCCI and the Indian government decide but given a choice, Pakistan will like to play most of its World Cup matches in Kolkata and Chennai."

"In Kolkata, Pakistan played its T20 World Cup game against India in 2016 and the players were very happy with the security. Similarly, Chennai as a venue remains memorable for Pakistan. It's also about feeling safe at specific venues," a source close to ICC board said.

The board of contention will be the India versus Pakistan game. While Ahmedabad with 1,32,000 capacity gives ICC, the best chance to earn optimum profits but the Narendra Modi



Stadium is already hosting the final, so another venue might host the game.

Each team will play nine games at the league stage which will be held in round-robin format.

The ICC's Events committee, in association with host cricket board BCCI, will chalk out the final itinerary in the next few months so that it allows fans across India and other parts to plan their travel itinerary.

Recently, ICC General Manager Wasim Khan, in his own capacity had told Pakistani media that the team could play its matches in Bangladesh as a part of a 'hybrid model' that could be followed since the Indian team is not travelling to the country for the Asia Cup.

But PCB chairman Najam Sethi, back then had rubbished the idea of playing World Cup games in Bangladesh. More so, ICC had made it clear that no such proposal had come from Pakistan about 'hybrid model' for global tournaments.