

OPINION 6
THE OPPOSITION
DOESN'T MEASURE UP

WORLD 8
OWNING TWITTER PAINFUL BUT
NEEDED TO BE DONE: MUSK

MONEY 10
INDIAN AUTO INDUSTRY PIONEER
KESHUB MAHINDRA DIES AT 99

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

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*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

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the pioneer

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CAPSULE

ATIQ: MY MAFIAGIRI OVER, PLEASE SPARE MY FAMILY

Lucknow: I am totally reduced to dust, but please don't trouble the women and children of my family now," gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad told reporters from inside a police van on Wednesday. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's "mafiaon ko mitti me mila denge" warning probably playing on his mind. "Mafiagiri toh pahle hi samapt ho gyi, ab toh ragda ja raha hai. (Mafia-giri has already ended, I am being hounded now)," Atiq said, when asked about his criminal acts. P5

PATNA COURT SUMMONS RAHUL OVER MODI JIBE

Patna: A court in the Bihar capital has asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to appear before it on April 25 in a defamation suit filed over his purported remark on Modi surname. The defamation case in the MP/MLA court here was lodged by BJP's Rajya Sabha MP and former deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi.

BOMB HOAX: DELHI SCHOOL EVACUATED

New Delhi: A school in South Delhi's Sadiq Nagar was evacuated on Wednesday morning after an e-mail said there were bombs on the premises, creating panic among students and parents. After meticulous searches, police declared it a hoax call. P3

CHRISTIAN PROSECUTION JUST A CANARD: BISHOP

Thrissur: A bishop of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in Kerala said on Wednesday that an "unnecessary propaganda" claiming that the Christian community is persecuted in India has been unleashed internationally by vested interests, and it amounted to insulting a great nation.

4 jawans shot in Bathinda, 2 masked killers at large

Bathinda Military Station firing FIR rules out terror possibility; crime rifle recovered

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

Four Indian Army jawans — belonging to the 80 Medium Regiment and on guard duty in the Officers' Mess — were killed in a firing incident reported inside Bathinda Military Station early on Wednesday. As per preliminary investigations, two "masked" men in kurta-payjama attacked the jawans — all in their twenties — when they were asleep in their barracks at 4.30 am, with an INSAS assault rifle and an axe.

A jawan saw the two unidentified men coming out of the barracks after the firing. The suspected attackers, who were of medium height, went towards a forested area near the barracks on seeing the jawan, according to the FIR.

Subsequently, two Army officers went inside the barracks and found Gunner Sagar Banne (25), Gunner Yogesh Kumar J (24) in a pool of blood. In another room, the bodies of Gunner Santosh M Nagal (25) and Gunner Kamalesh R (24), were found. The bodies bore bullet marks, according to



Soldiers, who returned after leave, wait outside the Bathinda military station after a firing incident took place, in Bathinda on Wednesday morning PTI

the FIR.

Banne and Nagal hailed from Karnataka, while Kamalesh and Yogesh were from Tamil Nadu, police said.

From the spot of the incident, total 19 empty shells of INSAS rifle — believed to be the one went missing from the unit about two days back — were recovered from the spot.

The joint search team, comprising military and Bathinda district police, later located the INSAS assault rifle suspected to be the weapon used in the incident and the ammunition that went missing two days ago. The joint team is scanning the CCTV footage for vital clues.

According to "the information we have gathered so far, it is clear that it is not a terrorist act," a senior police officer said.

Initially, the police suggested that it was an incident of "fratricide". However, officials later said there was no clarity on the incident yet.

Army's South Western command, in a statement, stated, "A search team has located the INSAS rifle along with the magazine. Army and Police joint teams will now be undertaking forensic analysis of the weapon to ascertain further details. The balance number of rounds in the weapon will only be available after forensic

analysis. A joint investigation with Punjab Police is in progress. All possible assistance is being provided. It is reiterated that no individual has been detained or apprehended."

Meanwhile, Army Chief General Manoj Pande on Wednesday briefed Defence Minister Rajnath Singh about the Bathinda military station incident.

The Bathinda military station is the largest military base in Asia and home to the Army's HQs 10 Corps. The pivot "Chetak" corps is responsible for defending India's border with Pakistan in south Punjab and north Rajasthan.

Continued on Page 2

Nitish, Tejashwi meet Rahul for Opp unity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In yet another attempt to forge Opposition unity to take on the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the top leaders of Congress, JD(U) and RJD met on Wednesday, with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar saying they will make all efforts to unite more and more parties in the country against the BJP.

Kumar, along with his deputy Tejashwi Yadav, met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, who described the initiative as "historic". The meeting assumes significance as this is the first major step in forging Opposition unity and taking it forward ahead of the next Lok Sabha polls despite differences among some regional outfits.

The JD(U), the RJD and the Congress are in a coalition Government in Bihar and they are in talks to bring other Opposition parties together on a common platform in their fight against the BJP.

Kumar and Tejashwi also met Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday. Kejriwal lauded Nitish's efforts to bring together Opposition parties and pledged his support.

To take forward unity efforts, leaders have stressed



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav and JD (U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh, addresses the media at Kharge's residence in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

that they should leave their differences apart and should focus on defeating the BJP and that the leadership issue will be decided after the polls.

The leaders, who jointly addressed a Press conference after the meeting, also parried questions on the leadership issue. The Opposition will together protect the Constitution and democracy and unitedly give a new direction to the country, Kharge said

at the media conference.

He also said the Opposition would unite to fight all upcoming elections, including Assembly elections this year and the Lok Sabha polls next year.

Rahul said the Opposition will together develop its vision for the country and present the same before the people as they fight the ongoing ideological battle together.

Continued on Page 2

SC: Sack judge for reading out order's conclusion before preparing verdict

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has ordered the sacking of a trial court judge in Karnataka, holding that a judicial officer cannot pronounce the concluding portion of a judgment in the open court without the entire text of the judgment having been prepared or dictated.

The SC direction came on a plea filed by the Registrar General of the High Court of Karnataka who had challenged the HC's division bench order on the judge's reinstatement by quashing the termination order passed by its full court.

Slamming the Karnataka HC for "white-washing" serious charges, an SC bench of Justices V Ramasubramanian and Pankaj Mishra said the conduct of the judge is unacceptable. "It is true that some of the charges revolve around judicial pronouncements and the judicial decision-making process, and that they cannot per se, without anything more, form the foundation for departmental proceedings."

"Therefore, we are ignoring those charges. But the charges which revolve around gross negligence and callousness on the part of the respondent in not preparing/dictating judgments, but providing a fait accompli, is completely unacceptable and unbecoming of a judicial officer," the bench said.

Continued on Page 2

Modi thanks 'friend' Gehlot for attending Vande Bharat launch amid political crisis



Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually flags off the Vande Bharat Express train connecting Ajmer and Delhi Cantt at Jaipur Junction railway station, from New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

The flagging off of a Vande Bharat Express train between Delhi and Ajmer by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday turned out to be political as Modi called Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot a "friend" and thanked him for attending the launch event even though "he is going through a political tussle in the State".

Modi's remark didn't go down well with Gehlot, who termed the remarks as "unfortunate". Gehlot said his comments were made with an eye on the coming Assembly and general elections.

In an obvious reference to senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot's day-long fast in Jaipur on Tuesday despite a warning by the Congress, Modi said in his speech, "I express my special gratitude to Gehlot ji. During these days of political struggle when he is going through several crises, he took out the time for development work and participated in a railway programme. I welcome him."

During his address at the launch event, Gehlot raised demands related to the railways in Rajasthan, and mentioned that for the first time since independence, the Union Railway Minister is from the State.

Continued on Page 2

27% rise in Covid +vity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Covid cases saw a massive jump on Wednesday, with India recording 7,830 cases and daily positivity rate surging from 2.88 per cent on Tuesday to 3.65 per cent — a rise of 26.73 per cent in a day. At 7,830 fresh cases in the last 24 hours, India recorded the highest number of Covid-19 cases in over seven months, according to the latest Government data.

However, officials in the Union Health Ministry said there's no need to worry as infections are expected to rise for the next 10-12 days and then subside. Though the infection may rise, hospitalisation will remain low, they said.

The XBB.1.16 subvariant of Omicron, which is driving the latest surge, is not a cause of worry and vaccines are effective against it, the officials added. The subvariant's prevalence increased from 21.6 per cent in February to 35.8 per cent in March, but no incident of hospitalisation or death has been reported.

The death toll due to the disease has increased to



A healthcare worker collects a swab sample of a woman for Covid-19 test, amid a rise in coronavirus cases in the country, in Jammu on Wednesday PTI

5,31,016 with 16 new fatalities being reported — two each in Delhi, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, and one each in Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, and five reconciled by Kerala — the data updated at 8 am stated.

The infection is now at the endemic stage. In an endemic stage, an infection is restricted to a particular region whereas in pandemic, the infection spreads to a bigger area or even worldwide, the official explained.

The tally of Covid-19 cases

in the country was recorded at 4.47 crore, it showed. The country had recorded a single-day jump of 7,946 Covid-19 cases on September 1 last year. The count of active cases now comprises 0.09 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has been recorded at 98.72 per cent, according to the Health Ministry website.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has surged to 4,42,04,771, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.19 per cent, the data showed.

Inflation 15-month low; IIP sees uptick

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation in March fell to a 15-month low of 5.66 per cent and came back to the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent, as prices of vegetables and protein-rich items eased, showed government data released on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, India's industrial production growth rose marginally to 5.6 per cent in February from 5.5 per cent in January 2023, mainly due to good performance of the power, mining and manufacturing sectors, according to official data released on Wednesday.

The Reserve Bank has been mandated by the Government to ensure inflation remains within the 4-6 per cent bracket. The CPI was above 6 per cent in January and February. According to the National

Statistical Office (NSO), the year-on-year inflation declined in the vegetable basket by 8.51 per cent, oil and fats by 7.86 per cent and meat and fish by 1.42 per cent in March.

However, the rate of price rise in spices was high at 18.2 per cent in March, followed by 'cereals and products' by 15.27 per cent. Fruits too were expensive.

The overall inflation in the food basket was 4.79 per cent in March against 5.95 per cent in February and 7.68 per cent in the year-ago period. The food basket has a weightage of 54.18 per cent in the overall CPI.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head Research and Outreach, Icria, said unless the feared heatwave leads to a rapid rise in prices of perishables, inflation may report a substantial base-effect led drop to around 5-5.2 per cent in the next two prints, which will reinforce the decision of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to pause key interest rate in April 2023.

Continued on Page 2

Supertech's 25 assets attached under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached 25 immovable properties at Rudrapur, Uttarakhand, and Meerut Mall, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, valued at ₹40.39 crore, belonging to real estate group Supertech group of companies and their directors under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Investigation under the PMLA against Supertech group of companies and others was initiated on the basis of various FIRs registered by the Delhi Police, the Haryana Police and the Uttar Pradesh Police, wherein it was alleged that the

company and its directors indulged in criminal conspiracy to cheat people by collecting funds from buyers as advance against booked flats in their real estate projects.

The FIRs also alleged that the group failed to adhere to its agreed obligations to provide the possession of the flats on time and defrauded the general public.

The PMLA probe revealed that the funds were collected by Supertech Ltd and group companies from homebuyers and also took project specific term loans from banks/ financial institutions for the purpose of construction of projects/flats, the ED said in a statement.

Continued on Page 2

India's first: Metro runs under river

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Creating history, Kolkata Metro rakes ran through a tunnel under the Hooghly river on Wednesday. It is for the first time in the country that a metro rake has run through a underwater tunnel.

This is a "revolutionary step" in providing a modern transport system to the people of Kolkata and its suburbs, officials said.

The Metro rake which had only officials and engineers on board ran from Kolkata to Howrah on the other side of the Hooghly river.

Metro Railway General Manager P Uday Kumar Reddy travelled from Mahakaran station in Kolkata to Howrah Maidan station of the East



Kolkata Metro rake runs through a tunnel under the Hooghly river in Kolkata on Wednesday PTI

West Metro corridor in the rake.

Later, another rake also reached Howrah Maidan station by the same route.

Terming it a 'historic event', the Metro general manager said, "Trial runs between Howrah Maidan and Esplanade station will be conducted for the next seven months, following which regular services on this stretch will begin."

Trial runs on the 4.8 km stretch of the underground section will commence soon, the official said.

After this stretch becomes operational, Howrah Maidan will be the deepest Metro station — 33-metre below the surface — of the country.

Continued on Page 2

Ukraine Prez seeks more Indian aid in letter to Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the Ukraine war continues for more than a year, its President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking more humanitarian assistance, including medicines and medical equipment.

Ukraine's first Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzhaparova handed over the letter from her President to Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture Meenakshi Lekhi during a meeting here.

Continued on Page 2

VD Savarkar's grandson moves court with plaint against Rahul

PTI PUNE

Late Hindutva ideologue VD Savarkar's grandson on Wednesday approached a court here in Maharashtra with a criminal defamation complaint against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accusing him of making false allegations against Savarkar during his address in London.



the case number yet and we will receive it on Saturday," Satyaki Savarkar told PTI.

The grandson, Satyaki Savarkar, said his lawyers have moved the city court with a complaint under sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code.

"Since the concerned court officer was absent today, they asked us to come again on Saturday to get the number of the case. We have not received

five to six friends were beating a Muslim man and he (Savarkar) felt happy.

"Rahul Gandhi, while speaking about this incident, asked if it was not a cowardly act. First of all, this incident, as narrated by Gandhi, is a fictional one. No such incident had taken place in the life of Savarkar who was a man of scientific temperament. He believed in democracy and had advised Muslims to adopt a scientific approach," Satyaki Savarkar said.

He added that Rahul Gandhi's statement about V D Savarkar was false, malicious, and aimed at insulting him. "After this attempt to defame Savarkar, we decided not to sit silent and approached

the court with a criminal defamation case under sections 499 and 500 of IPC against Rahul Gandhi.

"V D Savarkar had not written such things in any book, so let this thing come up in the court as to in which book Rahul Gandhi read this incident," Satyaki Savarkar said.

He claimed a video of Rahul Gandhi making these statements during the interaction is available and will be submitted in court.

BJP releases second list of 23 candidates for K'taka polls

PTI NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday released its second list of 23 candidates for the May 10 Karnataka assembly elections.

The list does not include Jagadish Shettar who met BJP president J P Nadda earlier in the day to stake his claim to contest from his Hubli-Dharwad Central constituency. The party has already named its candidate from the seat.

Delhi's single-day Covid cases count crosses 1,000-mark

PTI NEW DELHI



Delhi's single-day COVID-19 cases count breached the 1,000-mark for the first time in over seven months on Wednesday, while the positivity rate stood at 23.8 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here.

The national capital logged 1,149 fresh cases along with one fatality. However, the department said coronavirus was not the primary cause of death. Wednesday's cases were the highest since August 19 last year. The city had on August 19 last year recorded 1,417 cases, with a reduced positivity rate of 7.53 per cent and three fatalities due to the viral disease.

Delhi logged 980 Covid cases on Tuesday, the highest since August 20, with a positivity rate of 25.98 per cent, along with two fatalities. Delhi on Monday logged 484 single-day COVID-19 cases with a positivity rate of 26.58 per cent along with three deaths. It recorded 699 cases with a positivity rate of 21.15 per cent on Sunday, while four patients had died.

Man stoned to death in Gurugram

PTI GURUGRAM

A 45-year-old employee of a private company was allegedly stoned to death and dumped near the iron bridge on Kapashera border, police said on Wednesday. The accused are yet to be identified, they said.

According to the police, the man identified to be of one Ajit Singh, a native of Jasauli village in Bihar's Siwan district. Singh was living in a rented house in Delhi's Kapashera area along with his family for the past several years and worked at Pearl Global, police said.

He had gone to work Monday morning as usual, but when he did not return home till late night, his family members started looking for him and found his body in the pool of blood near Kapashera border.

On the basis of the complaint filed by his son, Sumit, an FIR was registered under section 302 (murder) of the IPC at Udyog Vihar Police Station Tuesday night, police said.

The investigation is on and we are trying to identify the assailant, said Anil Kumar, SHO, Udyog Vihar Police Station.

Modi thanks 'friend' Gehlot...

From Page 1

The Prime Minister told Gehlot that his trust in him gives strength to their 'friendship'. "I thank you for the trust you have in this friendship," he told the Congress leader. "The work that should have been done immediately after independence had not been done till now.

"But you have so much faith in me that you have given me that task today," Modi said.

Referring to the Railway Minister and the chairman of the Railway Board both being from Rajasthan, the Prime Minister said, "And I want to say Gehlot ji that you have lad- doos in both your hands..."

"The Railway Minister is from Rajasthan and the chairman of the Railway Board is also from Rajasthan." This is the second time in five months that Modi has "praised" Gehlot.

Gehlot said it was not fair to say the development of the national transporter happened only after 2014.

Today, your speech was given completely keeping in view the 2023-24 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections and it was in the form of the election agenda of the BJP. I believe that such comments will not be acceptable to the people of the State and the country," the Rajasthan Chief Minister said.

He said in a statement it was "unfortunate" that the Prime Minister talked about the decisions taken during the tenure of earlier Railway Ministers as being influenced by corruption and political considerations.

4 jawans shot in Bathinda, 2 masked killers at large

From Page 1

The first information report (FIR), filed in the incident by 80 Medium Regiment's Major Ashutosh Shukla, said that the firing was reported at 4.30 am and some unidentified masked men in kurta-pyjama were seen.

The FIR said that one of the men had an INSAS assault rifle, while another carried an axe. They fled towards a jungle near the military station when an Army personnel saw them coming out of the officers' mess, it added.

The police have registered a case against two unknown persons for their links in Bathinda Military Station firing case. Ruling out any terror attack angle to the incident, the police had maintained that it appeared to be an "internal" incident of the Army.

Punjab's additional director general of police (ADGP) Surinder Pal Singh maintained that the shooting incident is not a terror case and a probe is being done on the matter.

The ADGP added that an FIR was lodged two-three days ago regarding the missing rifle and the matter was being investigated. "This is not a terrorist incident. Probe is being done. An FIR was lodged two-three days ago regarding the missing rifle and the matter is being investigated. We are in touch with Army officials," he added.

Notably, an INSAS rifle — allotted in the name of Lance Naik Harish of the unit — had gone missing on April 9, and the same was being investigated by the unit itself.

Army headquarters, South Western Command, in a statement said, "It has been ascertained that in the unfortunate incident, four Army jawans of an artillery unit succumbed to gunshot injuries sustained during the incident. No other injuries to personnel or loss or damage to property have been reported."

SP (Detective), Bathinda, Ajay Gandhi, member of the probing team, told the media that the four jawans were killed while they were asleep. "19 empty shells of INSAS rifle have been recovered," said the SP.

The SP said that eyewitnesses have said that two people in civilian dress fired the shots and that nothing else is known about them. "We are carrying out a joint investigation with the military police," he said, adding that the identity of the killers could not be revealed as the investigation was being carried out jointly with the Army.

It has also been learnt that the Army has also pressed into service hexacopters and drones to locate the assailants who killed the jawans. A cordon and search operation was also conducted at the station.

SC: Sack judge for reading...

From Page 1

The top court said the defence taken by the judge that the lack of experience and the inefficiency on the part of the stenographer has to be blamed was entirely unacceptable.

"But unfortunately, the High Court not only accepted this panchatantra (a false or improbable account) story, but also went to the extent of blaming the administration for not examining the stenographer as a witness. Such an approach is wholly unsustainable.

"If it was the case of the respondent that the entire blame lay upon the stenographer, it was for him to have summoned the stenographer as a witness. The High Court unfortunately reversed the burden of proof," the bench said.

Ukraine Prez seeks more Indian...

From Page 1

The visiting dignitary also conveyed to her Indian interlocutors Kyiv's desire to build a stronger and closer relationship with New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Wednesday.

The MEA said the next round of foreign office consultations between the two sides will be held in Kyiv on a mutually convenient date.

The First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine wrapped up her three-day visit to India on Wednesday. It was the first visit from Ukraine to India after the Russian military action there began on February

24 last year. The MEA said Ukraine requested for additional humanitarian supply, including medicines and medical equipment. In her meeting with Secretary (West) in the MEA, Sanjay Verma, the Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister also proposed that rebuilding infrastructure in Ukraine could be an opportunity for Indian companies.

"Dzhaparova, during her visit, highlighted Ukraine's desire to build a stronger and closer relationship with India," the MEA said in a statement. It said Dzhaparova's visit to India would facilitate cooperation between the two countries.

"Besides holding discussion on a wide range of bilateral and international issues of mutual interest, she handed over a letter from President Zelenskyy, addressed to Prime Minister Modi," the MEA said on the Lekhi-Dzhaparova meeting.

Supertech's 25 assets...

From Page 1

"However, these funds were misappropriated and diverted for purchase of land in the name of other group companies that were again pledged as collateral to borrow funds from banks / financial institutions," it said.

Investigation further revealed that the Supertech Group also defaulted on its payments to the banks/ financial institutions and currently around 1,500 crore of such loans have become non-performing assets (NPA), it said, adding, further investigation is under progress.

Inflation 15-month...

From Page 1

"With reasonably healthy reservoir levels, and the El Nino expected to materialise only in the second half of the monsoon season, kharif sowing may not be impacted. However, any subsequent deficiency in monsoon rainfall could affect yields and food inflation, which along with any further hardening in crude oil prices remains a risk for the inflation trajectory," she opined.

Narinder Wadhwa, National President of Commodity Participants Association of India (CPAI), said the decline in inflation is a positive development for the Indian economy, as it suggests that inflationary pressures are easing, which can be beneficial for consumers and businesses alike.

Nitish, Tejashwi meet Rahul for...

From Page 1

"We held a historic meeting here.

"A lot of issues were discussed and we decided that we will unite all parties and fight the upcoming polls in a united manner. We have made this decision and all of us will work for this," Rahul told reporters while lauding the efforts of Kumar, Yadav and others sitting along with him.

He said the leaders present at the meeting will work on a common line of thought

and asserted that efforts were being made in this regard. "In this battle of ideology, a historic step has been taken today towards the unity of the Opposition. Standing together, we will fight together - for India," Rahul later mentioned in a tweet and shared his picture with other leaders.

The JD(U) tweeted in Hindi, saying, "Nitish will prove to be the architect of Opposition unity in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections."

Asked how many Opposition parties will come

together, Rahul said, "This is a process and we will develop the Opposition's vision for the country and all those parties that will come together with us, we will together fight the ongoing ideological fight in the country. We will unitedly stand against the attack on institutions, the attack on the country."

In his remarks, the Bihar Chief Minister, who broke the alliance with the BJP in August last year, said, "We will make all efforts to unite more and more parties in the coun-

try. We will make all efforts, sit together, and work unitedly, this has been decided. After today's discussions, we will move forward on that basis. All those who agree will sit together and decide the future course of action."

Others present in the meeting over lunch at Kharge's residence were JD(U) president Lalan Singh, Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Congress leader Salman Khurshid and RJD leader Manoj Jha were also present.

Interacting with reporters after a meeting with Kumar at his residence, Kejriwal said, "The country is passing through a very difficult time. This is perhaps the most corrupt Government at the Centre since Independence."

Asked if Kumar is worth being a prime ministerial candidate, Kejriwal told reporters, "You will have many questions in your mind which cannot be answered right now after just one meeting. As we move forward, we will keep answering your questions."

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION BHOPAL

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDRF - Second Call

NIT No. 2020134895/E.E./N.W.D./2022-23 Bhopal. Dated 11.04.2023

Tender for online submission are invited on website https://mptenders.gov.in under "Live Tender" and Department Name "Bhopal Municipal Corporation" for following works. Document can be purchased o website from 11.04.2023 and online submission till 25.04.2023 at 17.30 hrs.

Table with 7 columns: S.No., Details of Work, Qty., Estimated Cost, Earnest Money (EMD), Cost of Tender Document, Completion Period

Executive Engineer Water Works Department, Municipal Corporation, Bhopal

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमंडल, रॉंची पश्चिम, रॉंची।

ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट अति अल्यकालीन निविदा सूचना

जिसका PR No. 285740 (Drinking Water and Sanitaion) 2022-23 है।

Table with 6 columns: S.No., Name of the Work, Cluster Name, Sub Cluster/Group No., Block, Estimate Cost, BOQ cost

- कार्यपालक अभियंता, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमंडल, रॉंची पश्चिम, रॉंची।
कार्यपालक अभियंता, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमंडल, रॉंची पश्चिम, रॉंची।
कार्यपालक अभियंता, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमंडल, रॉंची पश्चिम, रॉंची।

India's first: Metro runs under river

From Page 1

The Metro is expected to cover the 520-metre stretch

under the river Hooghly in 45 seconds, he said, adding that this tunnel under the river is 32 metres below the water surface level.

The East West Metro corridor connecting Howrah Maidan and Sector V, the Information Technology hub in Salt Lake, is partially operational - between Sealdah and Sector V stations.

Completion of the total project has been delayed owing to accidents in Bowbazar area

of central Kolkata.

On August 31, 2019, a tunnel boring machine (TBM) had hit an aquifer leading to severe ground subsidence and the collapse of a number of buildings at Bowbazar.

Several houses were damaged again in May 2022, owing to ground subsidence caused by water seepage during work for joining the tunnels coming from the Sealdah side in the east and the Esplanade side on the western side.

The underground water seepage caused cracks in 12 buildings at Madan Dutta Lane in Bowbazar on October 14, 2022, the last accident there to affect completion of the project.

Out of the 16.6 km length of East West Metro, the underground corridor constitutes 10.8 km between Howrah Maidan and Phoolbagan with the tunnel passing below the Hooghly river, while the rest is elevated corridor, according to a KMRC official.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - 2, CHANDIGARH

ICICI BANK LIMITED Vs HIMANSHU GUPTA

Present : Mr. Sukhwinder Singh, Counsel for the applicant bank Mr. Mandep Singh Kundu, counsel for the defendant Nos. 1 & 2 None for the defendant No.3 Publication service report not filed yet for defendant No.3. Therefore, the applicant bank has requested to reissue notice through publication against defendant No.3 In terms of power conferred by virtue of Rule 23 of Debts Recovery (Procedure) Rules, 1993, request of the applicant bank is allowed. Let the notices be issued and published in two leading newspapers, one in English and one in Vernacular, having wide circulation in the area, where the defendants are residing/situated. The applicant bank is directed to file proof of service. Counsel for defendant No. 1 & 2 has not filed WS and seeks some more time to file WS, however paper book was supplied on 14.11.2022 and defendant counsel has already availed sufficient time to file the WS but the same was not filed, therefore right to file WS may be closed. Let the case be listed before Registrar on 17.07.2023 for further proceedings. RO-2/Registrar I/c DRT-2, Chandigarh

MADHYA PRADESH HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER 2023_MPHIDB_266667 (1ST CALL)

Online percentage rate bids for the following works are invited from registered contractors in centralized system in MP PWD and firms of reputed fulfilling registration criteria :

Table with 6 columns: S. No., System E-Tender No., Name of Work, Probable Amount of Contract, Completion Period, Purchase start Date and End Date

- 1. Interested bidder can view the detailed NIT On website www.mptenders.gov.in. I/C Special Condition and detail of Pre bid meeting, 2. Amendment in NIT if any would be published on website only and not in newspapers. 3. The Affidavit of Rs.100/- in Prescribed format as per Annexure "B" duly notarized & other mandatory documents along with E-EMD Shall be uploaded online along with the tender. 4. The Process on Inviting Tender can be postponed/Cancelled at any stage without informing any reason/cause. Visit us : www.mphousing.in https://www.mptenders.gov.in E-mail : eedn2hbgwl@mp.gov.in M.P. Madhyam/109365/2023

School evacuated after hoax bomb email creates panic

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Indian School in South Delhi's Sadiq Nagar was evacuated on Wednesday morning after the school administration received an email from an unknown sender with a threat about a bomb on the premises. According to police, an email was sent to Indian Public School in Sadiq Nagar at 10:49 am, claiming that a bomb has been planted on its premises. After hours of meticulous searches, police declared it a hoax call.

Earlier in the day, the panicked students and parents of 'The Indian School' gathered outside the school as the bomb squad and other agencies inspected the premises for any explosive substance. "This morning, a bomb threat e-mail was received by the school. Immediately all safety protocols were carried out and all children and staff were safely evacuated," Tania Joshi, principal, The Indian School said. She said the police is investigating the matter to identify the per-



Special Weapon and Tactics Team (SWAT) commandos come out of the Indian School following an inspection after the school received a bomb threat via email, at Sadiq Nagar in New Delhi on Wednesday

petrator. "The threat seems to be a hoax," she added.

Videos from outside the school show a large crowd, mostly parents of the students, assembled at the gate. "We received a message from the school asking us to take our children home," one of the parents said. This is not the first time the school admin received a bomb threat. Last year in

November, the admin received a similar email from an unknown sender. That was a hoax email.

A senior police officer said a person named Brijesh of The Indian School, BRT Road, informed them about the e-mail. The school was evacuated as a precaution, he added.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Chandan

Chowdhary said, "The school received the e-mail regarding the bomb threat at 10.49 am on Wednesday. They then informed the Defence Colony police station following which the security personnel reached the spot and immediately evacuated the school. "We deployed our bomb squads and also informed the Special Cell and the Special Branch. The SWAT team is also conducting searches inside the premises," he said.

Chowdhary further said that the police force has so far conducted two rounds of search and that the third round is underway.

"We are looking for the source of the e-mail. In November last year, the school received a similar mail which was sent via a German server," he said. The DCP, however, said the e-mail threat appears to be a hoax.

Vigyan, a class 5 student, said he along with his classmates was evacuated from the school building and taken to the ground.

Gadkari launches upgraded Dhaula Kuan, IGIA stretch, pledges ₹1,500 cr for roads

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Union Transport and Highway Minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday inaugurated an upgraded, revamped stretch between Dhaula Kuan and Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport and pledged ₹1,500 crore for revamping of roads in Delhi. Accompanied by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, Gadkari inaugurated the 8-km stretch revamped and beautified by the Public Works Department (PWD).

With an estimated cost of ₹22 crore, the project was completed in nine months and the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) funded the project.

Speaking to reporters Gadkari commended the Lieutenant Governor for his "single-minded commitment" to the development of the national capital. The Union Minister also pledged an amount of ₹1,500 crore from the Central Road Fund for improvement of related infrastructure in Delhi, said a statement from the LG office.



Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari with Delhi Governor VK Saxena during the inauguration of revamped road stretch from Dhaula Kuan to IGI Airport, in New Delhi on Wednesday

The fund will be used for projects envisaged by the Delhi Government and supervised by the LG, it said. Saxena thanked Gadkari for his support for the Dhaula Kuan-IGI Airport road beautification project and assured him that more suitable projects will be planned as a massive financial support is being provided.

The beautification program includes upgradation of road side horticulture, Pedestrian amenities, aesthetic improvement of existing features such as FOB and Grills,

adding fountains and sculptures to the horizon and other articles of beauty as benches, coloured lights, scrolling screen on walls and LED screens on road.

Amongst other features, 30 high jet type fountains have been installed between Dhaula Kuan roundabout to NHAI Wall. Similarly, 9 stone fountains, 2 stone carved big and 2 stone carved small fountains have been installed.

Carved stone bull in front of fountain surrounded by geyser fountains have been installed

near NHAI wall. 2 big lions of grey stone of 13 feet height surrounded by geyser fountains have been installed near T-1 Xing. 6 small lions of white marble looking in all directions have been also placed at this Xing. 2 big elephants' sculptures of pink sand stone have been installed near airport entry at Mehram Nagar surrounded by geyser fountains and cascade fountains.

All the sculptures and fountains have been elegantly illuminated. The land surrounding these sculptures and fountains have also been beautified by various (types of plants) Conocarpus, Champa, Ficus, Bamboo etc., (shrubs) Tecoma, Hamelia, Chandni, Hibiscus, Bougainvillea, Narium (Kaner) etc., (ground cover plants), Wadelia, Asparagus, Syngonium, Lantana, Chlorophytum, Inerme etc., (seasonal flowers and grasses) Petunia, Dahlia, Gajenia, Salvia, Nusturrium, Verbina, Calendula etc.

To display patriotism and nationalism, view cutters at Mehram Nagar have been installed with tricolour and Gandhi Ji's Charkha.

Sisodia planted fake e-mails to show public approval for excise policy, ED tells Court

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Wednesday told a Delhi court that the AAP leader Manish Sisodia, arrested in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam, had planted fabricated e-mails to show that there was a public approval for the policy.

The agency made the submissions before Special Judge M K Nagpal while opposing the bail application of the former Delhi deputy chief minister. "We have evidence that Sisodia had e-mails planted. These have been received not only in the official e-mail account of the Excise Department but even in his personal e-mail account. The content of the e-mails was given by Sisodia which suited his agenda," the counsel for the ED told the court.

The directions to send these pre drafted e-mails were given to Zakir Khan, Chairman



of Delhi Minorities' Commission, who then asked his interns to send these e-mails, the ED told the court. "Fabricated e-mails were sent to show that there was a public approval of the policy. This is a sham approval... Illegal ecosystem was created to give benefits to the liquor cartels in lieu of kickbacks," the counsel said.

The ED's special public prosecutor then told the judge that the agency wanted to show him the case diary, at which the defence counsel said that it should not be done so in secrecy. "Sealed cover business should go. If something is used against me to deny me my liberty... If they are relying on something behind my back... It should be put to me as well," the defence counsel said.

ED puts pressure, gets false statements from people in Delhi excise case: Sanjay Singh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Wednesday alleged that the Enforcement Directorate has obtained "false statements" from some people putting them under duress in the Delhi excise policy case and said he will raise the issue before the privilege committee of Parliament. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also took to twitter and said, "The allegations levelled by Sanjay Singh against the ED are very serious."

Addressing a press conference here, Singh alleged that the ED sleuths beat up one Chandan Reddy so badly to obtain his false statement during interrogation that he is facing hearing loss. "Chandan has moved (Telangana) High Court complaining against the ED," Singh said.

The AAP leader also showed purported copies of the petitioner's medical certificate and said he will raise the mat-

ter before the Parliament's privilege committee along with the documents. "These documents prove that ED makes false cases under political pressure, defames governments and levels false allegations... There is no liquor scam," Singh said.

He claimed that alleged liquor scam accused Sameer Mahendru, Arun Pillai and three others have also complained against ED officials, accusing them of having obtained their statements under duress. "I have been given privilege notice for raising abysmally low conviction rate of ED cases...I will now raise this issue before the privilege committee with documents so that ED officials are called and truth about the complaints filed against them be ascertained," Singh added.

He further alleged that some people who are not ED officials have been part of the agency's investigation process. "This is how the ED has



Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh shows a document during a Press conference, at party office in New Delhi on Wednesday

become the enforcer of dictatorship. Even people who are not ED officials were present during Chandan Reddy's interrogation. Who are these goons accompanying ED during their investigation? Arun Pillai, Sameer Mahendru, Bhusar Belgavi, Manaswami Prabhu and Raghav Reddy have even accused the ED of torturing them during interrogation," Singh alleged.

He claimed that former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia's private secretary, Rinku, was also called for interrogation by the ED.

Meanwhile, the AAP workers on Wednesday staged a protest outside the party office here alleging that false cases have been framed against Sisodia. Scores of AAP leaders and workers gathered at DDU Marg and raised slogans against central agencies.

The security outside the AAP office has been beefed up with a large number of police personnel deployed in the area. Barricades have also been put up and water canons kept on standby. AAP national convener Gopal Rai, AAP MLAs Kuldeep Kumar and Jarnail Singh, among others, participated in the protest. "Two kinds of struggle are going on - one in the prison and the other on the streets by us. We stand by Manish Sisodia. All cases against him are fake," Rai said.

New office complex for Ministries opens on Kasturba Gandhi marg

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Wednesday inaugurated an office complex at Kasturba Gandhi Marg which will accommodate the Ministries of labour and employment, power and ports, shipping and waterways which are currently housed in Shram Shakti Bhawan and Transport Bhawan. Offices of these ministries will start shifting to this new building in the next couple of days.

The Government will demolish the Shram Shakti Bhawan and the Transport Bhawan, and build an office complex for MPs there under its ambitious Central Vista redevelopment project. It also envisages a plan to build a tunnel connecting the MPs' chambers with the new Parliament building being built by Tata Projects Limited.

According to the Union Housing and Urban Affairs



Ministry, the new state-of-the-art nine-storied building having a plinth area of 61,454 sqm has the capacity of accommodating three cabinet ministers, four state ministers and three secretaries with 1,315 officials.

It said the other building in the KG Marg office complex, which was also inaugurated by Puri, will have transit accommodation for the National Defence College.

Puri also inaugurated redeveloped general pool residential accommodation at Mohammadpur and Thyagraj Nagar.

DU panel misses deadline to file report on harassment of IP College students

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi University committee formed to probe the harassment incidents in Indraprastha (IP) College has missed the deadline to submit its first report and is yet to meet the students who have been seeking action against the perpetrators. The committee was constituted on April 3 and was supposed to submit its first report within a week.

Headed by Prakash Singh, the South Campus director, the committee since its constitution has only held one meeting, and according to a university official it will meet on Thursday to finalise the guidelines. The members of the committee are yet to hold meetings with or speak to students who have held a series of protests demanding action against the



perpetrators and accountability on the part of the college. A university official confirmed that no report has been submitted so far.

"We held a meeting last week. We are holding the second meeting tomorrow. We have held talks with the principal (Poonam Kumria) warden, and the union advisor. We are preparing a set of guidelines to ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future," said the official, who is also part of the committee.

Asked whether a report has been submitted, the official said: "No, we couldn't submit the report because there were too many holidays last week." The students have alleged that some men climbed the college campus boundary and harassed several women students during a cultural festival on March 28.

Following their protests, the DU formed a committee to look into "the grievances raised by the students" and asked the panel to submit its report in a week. A student who was part of the protests in the college demanding the resignation of the principal said on Wednesday they have not been approached by anyone from the university.

The principal of the college did not respond to texts and calls from PTI seeking a response.

As mercury rises, DoE urges schools to protect students

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the mercury soaring, the Delhi Government's Directorate of Education (DoE) on Wednesday asked schools to take appropriate measures for protection of children from heat-related illness.

The measures include avoiding assembly in schools during afternoon shift, availability of drinking water, extra water breaks during classes and sensitise students to cover their head during direct exposure to sunlight.

"Report any case of heat-related illness to nearby health facility/hospital. All DDEs (deputy directors of education-districts/zones) are requested to ensure the com-

pliance of the same," the DoE circular said.

The Education department further said that temperature in Delhi crosses more than 40 degrees Celsius during the summer and that it is detrimental to the health of children and adolescents studying in schools.

"The rise in temperature in national capital has led to increased instances of heat-related illnesses like exhaustion, dehydration, diarrhea and vomiting among citizens. Since children are one of the most vulnerable groups, all heads of schools under the are directed to adopt measures for circulating awareness and ensure protection of school children," the DoE circular stated.

After women, Delhi Govt mulls free bus pass for city labourers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After women, the Kejriwal Government is exploring the possibility of providing facilities of free bus travel passes to all registered labourers in the national capital. There are 13.4 lakh registered construction workers in Delhi so far. At a review meeting with the labour department, the Kejriwal Government has identified a series of measures aimed at improving the lives and welfare of these workers.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has directed the officers to explore the possibility of providing each worker with a free bus pass, in addition to those who are already availing it. He asked the officials to discuss with the DTC whether the government can pay a standard charge for these passes on



behalf of the workers and they can get to use buses for free. "DTC will earn revenue as well and workers will also get a free bus pass. We can actively persuade these workers to come and collect their bus pass. A lot of people do not even know of the schemes available to them," he said.

Kejriwal, also directed the labour department to reach out to over 13.4 lakh construction workers of Delhi and offer them free bus passes after

proper registration and verification with the Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board.

The Chief Minister has also directed the department to assess the possibility of group life insurance for construction workers, similar to that provided for lawyers. The meeting was also attended by Labour Minister Raaj Kumar Anand and other senior officials of concerned departments. The CM discussed various schemes and their current situation in the meeting with the officers.

The Chief Minister also directed the officials to assess whether a group life insurance can be implemented for construction workers by the government like it does for lawyers. The discussion then moved to Educational Schemes of the department.

Saxena lauds Delhi Police for maintaining peace during Ram Navami, Hanuman Jayanti

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Wednesday lauded the city police for maintaining peace and harmony during Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti this year despite over a threefold increase in the number of processions and public participation in the festivities.

"The number of processions on Ram Navami, celebrated on March 30 in Delhi, increased from 22 in 2022 to 52 in 2023, and the number of

participants increased from 6,100 to 27,500. This year, the number of processions on Hanuman Jayanti on April 6 increased from 17 in 2022 to 51 this year. The processions were attended by 35,500 people as compared to 5,550 processions last year. The increase in the number of participants was noticed particularly in the districts of North West, North East and South East which are communally sensitive and have been affected by communal violence in the past," Raj Niwas said in a statement.

BJP protests against Kejriwal, seeks resignation over corruption charges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP leaders and workers on Wednesday staged a protest near the AAP office on DDU Marg demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over charges of corruption against the ruling party leaders.

In the protest, the protesters marched towards the headquarters of the Aam Aadmi Party, broke police barricades and marched towards AAP Office. Police detained hundreds of workers including Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva, Leader of opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Harsh Malhotra and Jaiveer Rana and took them to I.P. Estate police sta-



tion.

Addressing the protesters, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged that the AAP government was a government of "criminals" and cited names of its former ministers currently in jail over corruption charges.

Referring to AAP convener Kejriwal's remark at an event on

Tuesday to mark its national party status that the party workers miss Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, the Delhi BJP chief said, "I want to assure Kejriwal that he will soon join Sisodia and Jain." "There is a long list of AAP leaders who have been in jail over criminal charges and the BJP will expose the party by reaching out to every household in the city in the next three months," Sachdeva said.

He also claimed that two other Delhi ministers — Gopal Rai and Kailash Gahlot — were also under the scanner of probe agencies on corruption charges.

Speaking at the occasion, Bidhuri said that the end of AAP is fixed, so it is flickering like a lamp which will be extinguished.

2020 riots: Man accused of cop's killing as part of mob gets bail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court has granted bail to a man accused of being a part of the riotous mob that allegedly killed Delhi Police head constable Ratan Lal during the 2020 northeast Delhi riots.

Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya Pramachala was hearing the bail plea of accused Shahid against whom (along with other co-accused persons) the city police had filed a chargesheet under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code, including Sections 302 (murder) and 149 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object).

According to the prosecution, a riotous mob attacked police at Chand



Ratan Lal File photo

Bagh near Peer Baba Dargah on February 24, 2020, resulting in the death of Ratan Lal from a gunshot injury and serious injuries to the then Shahdara DCP Amit Sharma, then ACP Gokulpuri Anuj Kumar and another head constable Chetrapal.

Need robust def finance system: Rajnath

Find creative ways to maximise value of money spent on defence, says Min

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday stressed upon the need to devise innovative methods to maximise the value of money spent on the security needs of the country, terming a robust defence finance system as the backbone of a strong military. Inaugurating the three-day International Conference on Defence Finance and Economics here, he asserted that a legal and procedural defence-finance framework is an integral part of a mature state system, which ensures prudent management of the defence expenditure. Rajnath stated that such a framework, which includes expenditure control as per guidelines, financial advice by professionals, audit and payment authentication mechanism ensures that the defence



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses the inaugural session of the three-day International Conference on Defence Finance & Economics, in New Delhi on Wednesday

spending is well within the allocated budget and the full value of money is realised.

He emphasised that while the Armed Forces require a superstructure of defence ecosystem, involving research and development organisations, industries and soldier welfare organisations, they also need a well-funded system with a robust architecture to ensure the optimum and judicious use of financial resources.

The Defence Minister was of the view that it is difficult to apply the economic concept of full value of money in defence expenditure, as in this sector, there is no visible revenue stream and no easily identifiable beneficiaries.

To maximise the value of money spent, he stressed that the rule of competitive bidding through open tender must be followed in defence procurement.

Rajnath also underscored the importance of comprehensive Blue Books, codifying the rules and procedures of procurement of defence equipment and systems for a fair and transparent system.

He said, with this vision, the Government has formulated Blue books in the form of Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 for capital acquisition; Defence Procurement Manual for revenue procurement and Delegation of Financial Powers to Defence Services.

Rajnath also emphasised on the role of expert financial advice to the Service personnel in day-to-day financial matters. He said, the system of Integrated Financial Advisor (IFA) has been created to provide financial advice to the Competent Financial Authority (CFA) in order to help them in avoiding the wastage of public money.

In this system, the IFA and CFA work as a team towards utilising public money in a prudent manner, he said.

He batted for a fool-proof system of internal and external audit which would tackle the instances of wastages, pilferage and corruption, if any, even after following the principles of

financial prudence and propriety. The role of auditors is that of a watchdog or a sentinel, he said.

The three-day conference, organised by the Ministry of Defence (Finance), will witness the participation of eminent policy makers, academics and government officials from India and abroad, including from USA, UK, Japan, Australia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Kenya.

It will provide a platform to them to share their insights and experiences on Defence Finance and Economics in the context of evolving security challenges and policies globally.

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.

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.

Cong brass to meet over Pilot's attack on Gehlot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

Irked by party senior leader Sachin Pilot's day-long fast 'questioning' its own Government in Rajasthan, the Congress central leadership has convened a meeting of top leaders to initiate action against their State's former Deputy CM. Congress' in-charge of Rajasthan Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa met party president Mallikarjun Kharge in this regard. Pilot also reached Delhi on Wednesday.

Taking strong objection to the call of undertaking a day-long fast by Pilot, Randhawa said that any such protest against its sitting Government would amount to anti-party activity. The party, however, maintained silence when Pilot observed the fast in Jaipur demanding action in cases of alleged corruption under the previous Vasundhara Raje-led BJP Government in Rajasthan.

"I agree with the issue of corruption raised by Sachin Pilot but the way he raised it is not correct. He should have raised it during the Assembly



session. Today discussion with Sachin Pilot happened for half an hour and we will talk tomorrow also. I will analyze all things & prepare a report as to who is at fault. Action should have been taken in the past but was not done but this time action will be taken," Randhawa told *The Pioneer*.

Reacting to the development, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot cited Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) raids on corrupt officers to dismiss his former deputy Sachin Pilot's charge of inaction in cases of corruption during the previous BJP dispensation.

"Do you know the number of raids carried out by the Anti-Corruption Bureau across the country? How many people,

including four-five IAS, IPS (officers), have been caught here? Has this happened anywhere in India?" Gehlot said responding to a question on Pilot's charge.

Pilot at the end of fast said their leader Rahul Gandhi, the Congress and other opposition parties have united over corruption and financial irregularities, and claimed that his fast will speed up this movement.

The former deputy chief minister also claimed that he wrote two letters on this issue to Gehlot last year but received no reply. Gehlot and Pilot have been in a power tussle in the state since the Congress formed the government in December 2018.

Next phase of Indo-US Cope India 23 exercise in Bengal to start today



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The next phase of the Exercise Cope India 23 between air force of India and US will commence at Air Force Station Kalaikunda in West Bengal from Thursday, IAF officials said here on Wednesday.

This segment of the exercise will witness participation of B1B bombers of the United States Air Force (USAF). F-15 fighter aircraft of the USAF will also join the exercise subsequently. The Indian Air Force (IAF) element will include the Su-30 MKI, Rafale, Tejas and Jaguar fighter aircraft. The exercise will be supported by aerial refuellers, Airborne Warning and Control System and Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft of the IAF. The exercise will conclude on April 24.

Like the air mobility component of the Ex Cope-India-23, this phase will also help enhance professional relations

between the two air forces, while sharing the best practices between them. Personnel from the Japanese Air Self Defence Force will also observe the exercise and interact with the two participating air forces.

Exercise Cope India 23, a bilateral Air Exercise between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the United States Air Force (USAF) is being held at Air Force Stations Arjan Singh (Panagarh), Kalaikunda and Agra. The exercise aims to enhance mutual understanding between the two Air Forces and share their best practices.

The first phase of exercise commenced on April 10. This phase of the exercise focused on air mobility and involved transport aircraft and Special Forces assets from both the Air Forces. Both sides fielded the C-130J and C-17 aircraft, with the USAF operating an MC-130J, as well. The exercise also included the presence of Japanese Air Self Defence Force aircrew, who participated in the capacity of observers.

HC upholds GST on autorickshaws booked through Ola, Uber apps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday upheld Government notifications levying Goods and Services Tax (GST) on autorickshaws booked through apps like Uber and Ola. A Division Bench of Justices Manmohan and Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora held that the notifications under challenge do not result in discrimination since the classification of e-commerce operators was recognised by the statute.

"Classification as a class of service providers separate and distinct is recognised in the provisions of the Act. The classification has a rational nexus with the object sought to be achieved", said the bench, adding that Government's notification on GST did not violate fundamental rights.

Uber India challenged the notifications issued in November 2021. It was argued that following these notifications, if an auto-driver registers itself with an app based aggregator and provides transportation of passenger services to passengers identified through such platforms, GST at 5 per cent or 12 per cent will become applicable on the fare collected. Uber argued that the Government is not imposing any such tax on auto rides through offline modes and, therefore, the notifications were in violation of Article 14 of the Constitution.

India meets int'l standards of aviation safety, retains IASA category-1 status

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a boost to the aviation sector's ambitious global network expansion plans, the United States' aviation watchdog, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), has retained the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) in category-1 ranking for safety oversight. The FAA on Wednesday informed DGCA that India meets the international standards for aviation safety oversight of the Chicago Convention "and continues to retain FAA International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) Category-1 status which was last assessed in July 2018. Last year, in the ICAO audit, India's global ranking climbed significantly. The country scored an Effective Implementation (EI) of 85.65 per cent from the previous EI of 69.95 per cent.

In a statement, the DGCA said that based on the positive outcomes of the assessment and follow-ups, India continues



to retain FAA IASA Category-1 status, which was last assessed in July 2018. "FAA has stated that DGCA has demonstrated a commitment towards ensuring an effective safety oversight of India's aviation system and appreciated the positive manner in which DGCA has worked with them," the statement said.

The countries listed under 'Category-1' meet the UN agency International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards for safety oversight of civil aviation.

India's Category-1 determination has come at a time

when the Indian aviation is on a high growth trajectory and air carriers in India have major capacity induction and expansion plans. Air carriers of Category-1 countries are permitted to operate/ expand their services to destinations in US and codeshare with US air carriers.

The FAA of USA, under its International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program, determines whether a country's oversight of its air carriers that operate, or seek to operate, into the U.S., or codeshare with a U.S. air carrier, complies with safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

"The IASA program focuses on a country's ability to adhere to international aviation Safety Standards and Recommended Practices (Personnel Licensing, Operation of Aircraft, and Airworthiness of Aircraft, and International Convention on Civil Aviation "Chicago Convention", said officials.

ED deposes Lalu's daughter Ragini in land-for-jobs case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday recorded the statement of RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav's daughter Ragini Yadav in a money laundering case linked to the land-for-jobs 'scam' in railways.

Ragini Yadav deposed before the agency for questioning and her statement was recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), officials said.

In March, the ED had searched the premises of Ragini Yadav, her sisters Chanda Yadav and Hema Yadav, and former RJD MLA Abu Dojana in Patna, Phulwari Sharif, Delhi-NCR, Ranchi and Mumbai.

On Monday, the agency questioned and recorded the statement of Ragini Yadav's

brother and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav in this case.

On March 25, another daughter of Lalu Prasad Yadav and RJD MP Misa Bharti, was also questioned by the ED in this case, the same day Tejashwi Yadav had deposed before the CBI.

Both the CBI and ED recently initiated action in the case with the former questioning Lalu Prasad Yadav and his wife and former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi and the latter carrying out raids against the RJD chief's family.

After the searches, the ED had said it seized "unaccounted cash" of ₹1 crore and detected 'proceeds of crime' worth ₹600 crore.

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

Just 3 of 300 SPMRM clusters completed

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Launched with much fanfare way back in 2016, the Modi Government's pet project, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission (SPMRM) has ended in a dismal note with just three clusters completed till January 31, this year against the goal of 300 clusters to be developed as rural growth centres having urban amenities and services. The completion deadline date was March 2020.

These three developed clusters are Revapur in Gujarat, Vevaji in Maharashtra and Aibawk in Mizoram.

Stating that the other 270 clusters are at various stages of completion, the Rural

Development Ministry had sought Mission's extension to upto March 2024. But the Union Finance Ministry has refused permission as no allocation has been made in this year's budget.

However, the allocation for 2022-23 was increased from ₹550 crore to ₹988.91 crore under the Mission to ensure that ongoing works at the remaining clusters are completed.

SPMRM was launched by the Prime Minister in February 2016 with a vision to provide amenities to rural areas which are perceived to be urban and have the potential to stimulate local economic development. Such clusters were selected for



well-planned and holistic development.

The Mission was to wrap up by Last fiscal but was given extension a couple of times till March 2023. The Officials from the Rural Development Ministry entrusted with the task of executing the Mission assets told a Parliamentary panel recently that "the reason for zero allocation at BE level to SPMRM for 2023-24 is that the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of

Finance had declared March, 31, 2022 as the closing date for the Mission. permission was granted only for the completion of already committed liability as on March 31, last year through one time permission for the release of funds till March, 15, 2023.

The Committee is not happy with the manner with which the Department of Rural Development is handling such a visionary programme that there is a probability of the vast majority of the clusters remaining incomplete. It seems extremely difficult to complete the pendency within such a short span when the funds are available only till 15th March, 2023, rued the panel headed by

Lok Sabha MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi. The panel recently submitted its report in Parliament.

"It is a matter of concern that the goals for which the Scheme was mooted remain unfulfilled. Thus, the Committee feels that the Department of Rural Development should take concrete steps for the completion of targets. The Committee, therefore, recommended that the Department of Rural Development to act on 'war footing' for the utilisation of funds against SPMRM while also initiating their diplomatic channels for obtaining some extra time for the completion of projects," said the report.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ Loan Account Number & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Pradyuman Modi/ Brij Mohan Modi/ Mohan Lal Agarwal/ Brij Mohan Modi- A-5, Mohan Kunj, Vishwamitra Marg, Shyam Nagar, Jaipur, Rajasthan- 302019	Flat No. T06-03/01, 106 Golf Avenue, sector 106, Gurgaon, Haryana- 122101	March 31, 2017/ Rs. 7,02,098/-	09/12/ 2022

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : April 13, 2023
Place : Gurgaon

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

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

Whereas

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Physical Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Manu Bhardwaj/ Satpal/ LBGUR0002377203	Flat No-B-2/402, Tower B-2, 4th Floor, MVN Athens Sohna Sector 5, Sohna Gurgaon, Haryana/ April 09, 2023	October 31, 2017/ Rs. 7,02,098/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Bafna Health Care Private Limited/ Sunil Sumatilal Muthal/ LBFDB00005418759	Property No S-141, Floor-3, Block-S, Panchsheel Park With Terrace Over And Above, Delhi/ April 10, 2023	June 18, 2022/ Rs. 4,41,00,705/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrower/s/ guarantor/s are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : April 13, 2023
Place : Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

'Cong-led thugbandhan will taste defeat in K'taka, Chhattisgarh, MP polls'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the alliance of the Opposition parties "a 'thugbandhan', BJP leader and Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur on Wednesday asserted that Congress will taste defeat in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

"When parties immersed in the quagmire of corruption come together, a thugbandhan is formed. People know that they have no policy, no intention, no leadership. These gimmicks will not hide their corruption," Thakur said here at a press conference.

The BJP leader's comments came as the opposition parties held meetings and discussions to make a 'common cause' against the BJP-led-National



Democratic Alliance ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, barely 12-months away.

Claiming that India was "touching new heights" under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra, the union minister said "the opposition is gathering on one platform to save their political existence."

"In fact this is not an alliance but a confederacy of corrupt parties. When there is a flaw in the intention, the public never votes and this is what is happening with these parties," said the BJP leader.

Intermittent fasting may affect reproductive health: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Time restricted fasting, a type of intermittent fasting which is fast becoming fad among many as a weight loss strategy can have an adverse impact on the reproductive health of women and men, sometimes even leading to fertility problems, according to a study published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

While intermittent fasting includes all intentional fasting patterns and doesn't distinguish between fasting during day or night, time-restricted eating calls for eating within a limited number of hours during daylight. To understand the effects of time-restricted fasting, researchers at the University of East Anglia in the UK, studied zebrafish (Danio rerio).



The findings showed that time-restricted fasting affects reproduction differently in male and female zebrafish. Once the fish returned to their normal feeding schedule, females increased the number of offspring they produced at the cost of egg quality resulting in reduced quality of offspring.

The quality of male sperm also decreased. The research team said that while the study was conducted in fish, their findings highlight the importance of considering not just the effect of fasting on weight and health, but also on fertility.

"Time-restricted fasting is an eating pattern where people limit their food consumption to certain hours of the day. It's a popular health and fitness trend and people are doing it to lose weight and improve their health," said Prof Alexei Maklakov, from UEA's School of Biological Sciences.

"But the way organisms respond to food shortages can affect the quality of eggs and sperm, and such effects could potentially continue after the end of the fasting period," Maklakov said.

To find out what happens when individuals are exposed to food during and after a period of fasting, the team measured how males and females allocate resources to body maintenance versus production and maintenance of sperm and eggs, and the quality of the resulting offspring.

MVA show of unity in Nagpur on Apr 16

MPCC chief announces rally a day after Uddhav calls on Pawar

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid differences among the three constituents over several issues, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) — comprising Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress — is planning to put up a united face by organising a joint rally in Nagpur on April 16.

Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) president Nana Patole made an announcement about a joint MVA joint rally to be held in Nagpur on Sunday (April 16) a day after Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray called on NCP chief Sharad Pawar to sort out differences between their two parties and he himself dared to know from the Pawar-led party if it wanted to go with the ruling BJP or with his party (Congress) in the APMC polls.

Strangely enough, Patole denied that there were any differences among the MVA constituents and accused the ruling Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena-BJP alliance for trying a wedge among the constituents of the three party Opposition front.

In a statement issued here, Patole said: "The MVA is strong. There are no differences between its allies. Vajramuth rallies of Mahavikas Aghadi are being held across the state. After a successful rally at Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, a rally is now being held in



Nagpur on April 16." "After the Nagpur rally, we plan to hold similar MVA rallies in Mumbai and other places," Patole said.

Alleging that the ruling Shinde Sena-BJP alliance "is scared of the growing popularity of the MVA," Patole said: "That's why the ruling alliance is spreading disinformation about there being differences in the MVA."

Alluding to the meeting held between Uddhav and Sharad Pawar at the latter's "Silver Oak" residence in south Mumbai, Patole said: "There is no need to draw any unwanted conclusions about the meeting between Pawar ji and Uddhavji last night. Leaders in MVA meet each other regularly. If anyone interprets this as a break-up in the alliance, then they are wrong."

"There is harmony in the Mahavikas Aghadi, even today we hold discussions with the leaders of all the parties. The opposition parties are afraid that the Mahavikas Aghadi

is strong, that is why the BJP is opposing the MVA from holding its meeting in Nagpur on April 16 by using one of its MLAs," Patole said.

"But no matter how many obstacles anyone brings, the Vajramuth rallies of the MVA will be held in Nagpur, along with meetings in Amravati, Pune, Kolhapur, Nashik and Mumbai," the Maharashtra Congress chief said.

It may be recalled that amid reports of a possible alliance between the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the ruling BJP for the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) elections in Maharashtra, Patole had himself asked the NCP to decide as to which party it wanted to form an alliance with for the APMC polls.

Indirectly demanding 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, Patole had said on Tuesday: "... 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)."

BJP fields heavyweights against top Cong leaders in K'taka Assembly polls

With 52 new faces in first list saffron party faces rebellion from Shettar, former Deputy CM Laxman Savadi quits party

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the BJP has deployed two of its senior Ministers to take on two of the Congress' chief ministerial aspirants - ex-Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and State president DK Shivakumar - to keep them tied to their respective constituencies in the May 10 Assembly elections in Karnataka, the party is also facing 'rebellion' from some of its veterans who were denied tickets, including a former Chief Minister and a deputy-Chief Minister.

Announcing its first list of 189 candidates on Tuesday, the BJP fielded senior Ministers V Somanna against Siddaramaiah in the Varuna Assembly segment and R Ashoka against Shivakumar in Kanakapura. The



BJP has dropped several sitting MLAs and allotted party tickets to 52 new faces.

"Let him contest, I welcome him...Whoever contests against me, I welcome them," said Siddaramaiah, a former Chief Minister. Shivakumar said, "I wish him (Ashoka) good luck. There should be a fight in politics. It is not new to me as I had fought against HD Deve Gowda in 1985, later against HD Kumaraswamy. My life is a struggle, I will continue to fight."

BJP Minister Somanna belongs to the Lingayat community which has a large presence in Varuna, while Ashoka is seen as BJP's prominent Vokkaliga face, the community to which Shivakumar also belongs.

Somanna will also contest from Chamaranagar, and Ashoka from Padmanabhanagar segment (which he currently represents).

Recalling that he had campaigned for Siddaramaiah dur-

ing the Chamundeswari bypolls when they were in the same party, and had worked with him as Cabinet colleagues, Somanna said the Varuna constituency was not new to him. "I will do my job," Somanna had earlier said he would not contest against Siddaramaiah.

Commenting on him being fielded against Shivakumar, Ashoka said, as a "loyal soldier of the party" he would abide by the dictate of his "commanders" Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Meanwhile, denied a ticket in Karnataka Assembly polls, former Deputy CM Laxman Savadi had quit the party. Sitting MLA Mahesh Kumathalli, who was backed by BJP leader and former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, was given a ticket in Athani in Belagavi district. Savadi may cross over to the rival Congress.

Kumathalli was among the

group of defectors, including Jarkiholi, who facilitated the BJP in bringing down the Congress-JD(S) coalition and form its Government under the leadership of BS Yediyurappa in 2019.

Savadi is a three-time MLA from Athani, but lost in the 2018 elections to Kumathalli (then in the Congress).

Similarly, the former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar and BJP veteran who has been denied a ticket has said he would contest the Assembly polls "at any cost".

Shettar, a Dhalli-Dharwad MLA had won in 2018 Assembly poll by a big margin, collecting 75,794 (51.31 per cent) votes.

Shettar on Wednesday conveyed his wish to contest the Assembly polls in a meeting with party president JP Nadda, after openly expressing his unhappiness for not figuring in the first list of nominees.

After meeting Nadda, Shettar told reporters that he cited his experience, including his six wins in Assembly polls, and was told by the party president that the issue will be discussed with other senior leaders.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi accompanied Shettar in the meeting with Nadda after the BJP leadership called him to the national Capital.

MNREGA funds: TMC threatens bigger stir against Centre

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress continued to attack the Centre for allegedly victimising the people of the State — by non-payment of the wages under the 100-days' work scheme — as they had not voted for the BJP in 2021 Assembly elections.

Slamming the Centre for "playing partisan politics by clearing the dues of all other States save Bengal," TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday told a massive party rally at Onda in Bankura district that his party would intensify the movement against the Centre if it failed to clear the State's dues of account of MNREGA wages.

The TMC has already started the process of collecting one crore letters from Bengal which



it would send to the Union Agriculture Ministry seeking release of the funds.

"I will personally carry the one crore letters to the Agriculture Ministry and sit at its doors to see whether they clear the funds or not... if they still do not clear it then we will intensify our movement," Banerjee who besides being the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is also a Member of Parliament from Diamond Harbour said.

Alleging that the BJP Government had stopped clearing the State's funds because the people of Bengal had rejected them in 2021 Assembly elections Banerjee said "they had come to ask for votes but you did not vote for them... does that mean that they will starve you... even you had not voted for us in 2019 general elections... did we stop the State schemes... no, because we know that it is the right of the people to choose the leaders they want... the BJP is taking revenge on you for not bringing them to power in Bengal," he said.

The Centre has blocked funds in a number of schemes including MNREGA and the Prime Minister housing schemes etc following reports of corruption in their implementation.

TMC slams report on ₹100 cr MDMS scam

Views of State not taken, says Edu Min; this Govt will not spare even children, retorts Adhikari

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A Day Meal scam burst open in West Bengal, the State Government on Wednesday dubbed the Union Ministry of Education panel's finding "serious discrepancies in the information submitted regarding the number of meals served at various levels" as "one-sided" where the views of the State have not been noted and the data "needs to be verified". The Ministry of Education (MoE) had in January constituted the 'joint review mission' (JRM) to review the implementation of Centrally-sponsored scheme PM POSHAN in West Bengal following complaints of irregularities. The panel found that the serving of around 16 crore mid-day meals worth over Rs 100 crore were over-reported by the local administration in West Bengal from April to September last year. The panel also questioned the diversion of funds meant for the scheme to pay compensation to fire victims, misallocation of food grains, cooking of rice, dal and vegetables up to 70 per cent less than "prescribed quantities", and usage of expired packets of condiments.

Reacting to the report, West Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu said that the JRM submitted the report without the



signature of the Project Director of the State-cooked Mid-Day Meal Scheme, who was representative of the State Government.

"What, therefore, is the 'joint' in the joint review committee if the report is not even shared with him for his opinions or views? So it is clear that the views of the State have not been taken into account. We have already written in protest to the chairman of the JRM, to which we have not received any response yet," Basu said in a statement.

Wondering why this 'hide and seek' if there is no malafide intention of the State Government, Basu said the data, which has come out in the media,

the standard of food and lesser allocation of quantity provided to the children.

According to the report "The State used to claim that more than 95 per cent children availed mid-day meals on an average basis. However, in all the schools visited, the number of children availing these meals was between 60 to 85 per cent during the period."

Dwelling on the report, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday said, "I had been raising the issue for long... I said that this is a Government that will not spare even small children... they will devour their food even... now the TMC cannot claim that false allegations have been leveled against them as this report is based on facts... not only they over-reported the number of plates but also the diverted the funds meant for the children."

Alleging that funds meant for the meals had been diverted in purchasing 1.73 lakh blankets to be distributed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a programme in South 24 Parganas, Adhikari added, "mid-day meal funds were also used by the Chief Minister to pay compensation to the family members of Bagtui carnage victims... she could have done so from the CM Relief fund which she did not."

Modi surname remark: Patna court summons Rahul on Apr 25

PTI ■ PATNA

A court in the Bihar capital has asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to appear before it on April 25 in a defamation suit filed over his purported remark on the Modi surname.

The defamation case in the MP/MLA court here was lodged by BJP's Rajya Sabha MP and former Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi. The MP/MLA court of Special Judicial Magistrate Aadi Dev had passed an order on March 18 asking Gandhi to appear before it on April 12.

However, during a hearing on Wednesday, the defence counsel sought another date stating that the entire team was busy with the Surat case, in which Gandhi was sentenced to two years in prison. On this, the judge asked Gandhi's counsel to ensure his physical appearance before the court on the next date of hearing in the case on April 25.

Prosecution lawyer Priya Gupta told reporters that statements from the complainant's side have been recorded and all evidence submitted and now only the statement of Gandhi is to be recorded.

Healthcare workers to be trained to manage blood disorders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to manage Beta Thalassemia and other Hemoglobinopathies—a group of hereditary blood disorders — a three-year long national programme has been launched to equip healthcare workers across the country with the necessary skills to prevent and manage the disorder particularly in remote and underserved regions of the country.

To begin with, under the program, healthcare workers from NHM Madhya Pradesh, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) are being trained with ECHO India, an NGO providing the platform while Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) playing the role of an academic partner. Post Graduate Institute of Child Health (PGICH) Noida, a UP Government-run pediatric hospital will serve as the national

hub for ECHO India's program. Later the initiative will cover other States too.

The World Health Organization recommends one clinical hematologist per 100,000 people in every country to diagnose and treat patients with diseases of the blood and bone marrow. But, India falls well below this target, as per various studies.

Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda, after inaugurating the initiative on Tuesday highlighted the importance of

capacity building to address the challenges posed by these life-threatening conditions. "Today, Beta Thalassemia, Sickle Cell Disease, and other blood disorders are a key challenge facing our country's healthcare system. These life-threatening conditions affect not only the Indian population at large but also children and several tribal communities, making it essential to improve access to quality healthcare facilities, especially in far-flung and underserved regions."

Dr. (Prof.) Arun Kumar Singh, Director of PGICH, said, "This nationwide capacity-building program on beta-thalassemia and hemoglobinopathies, aims to equip healthcare professionals with the latest knowledge and tools to effectively manage this genetic disorder. With Thalassemia being prevalent across the country, it is crucial to upskill healthcare professionals, especially those in remote parts of India, on the disease's prevention, control, and treatment."

I'm reduced to dust, spare my kin, pleads Atiq

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

"I am reduced to dust, but please, don't trouble my family now," gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad told reporters from inside a police van on Wednesday. The former SP MLA, who faces more than 100 cases in UP, was taken from the Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad to a prison in Prayagraj, in connection with Umesh Pal's murder. On the way, he spoke to mediapersons from inside the police van. "I want to tell the Government through you that I am reduced to dust, but please don't trouble the women and children of my family now. Mafia-giri has already ended, now I am being hounded," Ahmad told a news channel.

Basanti shifts from Dhanno to Metro, auto

Hema Malini surprised Mumbaikars by hitching a Mumbai Metro train ride and commuting in an autorickshaw later

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a late in the day date with Mumbaikars, yesteryear Bollywood "dream girl"-turned-politician Hema Malini hopped onto a Mumbai Metro train for a ride, later commuted in an autorickshaw and shared pictures and videos of her "wonderful and pleasurable experience" on social media.

Sporting a pink shirt and creamy-white trousers, 74-year-old Hema Malini took hundreds



of Mumbai suburban commuters by pleasant surprise and boarded a Mumbai Metro from the distant northern suburbs to DN Nagar, from where she headed home to Juhu in an autorickshaw on Tuesday evening.

On her return to her Juhu

residence, the yesteryear "dream girl" took to Instagram to share her photographs, videos and talk about her "Metro experience".

"I must share with all of you my unique, wonderful experience. Drove 2 hours to reach Dahisar by car, so tiring! In the evening (I) decided I would try the Metro and OMG! What a joy it was!", an excited Hema wrote.

"True, we went through tough times during the const, but it was worth it! Clean, fast & ws in Juhu in 1/2 hr," she exulted.

After her finishing Metro journey, Hema - known for playing a memorable Tongawali Basanti's role in 1975 blockbuster "Sholay" — took ordinary Mumbaikars' humble mode of transport — an auto-rickshaw — from DN Nagar right to the doorstep of her home in the upmarket Juhu locality in north-

west Mumbai. "After my metro experience, (I) decided to go by auto from DN Nagar to Juhu & that too was fulfilled. Landed by auto at my house and the dazed security could not believe their eyes! All in all, a wonderful, pleasurable experience for me!" Malini said.

Hema, who is a BJP MP from Mathura, smiled warmly and interacted casually with commuters and even posed for selfies with her fans during her Mumbai Metro ride, and then shot her experiences during an autorickshaw commute to her home.

While posting a video she shot from the autorickshaw she travelled back to her Juhu home, an apparently proud Hema wrote: "This is the video I shot from inside the auto. Enjoyed myself thoroughly!"

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector - 6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) Fresh Tender Work :-

S. No.	Jobs No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1	63/DGM/SM(WC-3)/2022-23	M/o Drain (P/F M.S. Jaal & Repairing of drain Kashiram Colony in sector-45), Noida.	41.09
2	66/DGM/SM(WC-3)/2022-23	D/o Village (Repair & Beautification of Choupal, M.S.Jaal, C.C. Road gali No.12D, Parveen gali, Decent Public School etc. in Village Hoshiyarpur), Noida.	41.35
3	86/DGM/SM(WC-5)/2022-23	M/o Building (Construction of Kitchen Shade and C.C. Pavement in Barat Ghar, Sector-71), Noida	97.32
4	01/DGM/SM(WC-5)/2023-24	M/o Road (Providing and Fixing Sculpture at Khora Tripod and Central Verge between Sector-66 & 71), Noida	40.92

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 26.04.2023 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 27.04.2023 at 11.00 AM.

B) Re Tender Work :-

S. No.	Jobs No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
5	73/DGM/SM(WC-6)/2022-23	D/o Sector-117 (Covering of External Drain along 30 mtr. wide road between sector-117 and 116), Noida	87.48
6	74/DGM/SM(WC-6)/2022-23	Strengthening of Road (Strengthening of 30 mtr. wide road Between Sector-115-116), Noida	73.45
7	77/DGM/SM(WC-6)/2022-23	M/o Road (Construction, Maintenance and Beautification of Vilopit Kooda Ghar in Work Circle-6), Noida	32.77
8	78/DGM/SM(WC-6)/2022-23	M/o Road (In view of Swachhta Sarvekshan 2023 and G-20 Summit P/F And Repairing Direction Board at different locations in WC-6 Area), Noida	41.17
9	42/DGM/SM(WC-2)/2022-23	M/o Drain (Repair & Raising drain & fixing of M.S. Jaal in Village Nithari sector-31), Noida.	35.68

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 19.04.2023 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 20.04.2023 at 11.00 AM.

Dy. General Manager (Civil)
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Petty politicking

The row around Amul in Karnataka underlines the dangers of widespread credulity and sentimentalism

If there is no dirty controversy hogging news headlines, our politicians create one. The one surrounding Amul's entry into Bengaluru's market is an example of such 'creativity.' The history of Amul, a national milk cooperative brand, goes back to the British era. Nandini, on the other hand, is a popular brand of the Karnataka Milk Federation's (KMF). Nandini reportedly has close ties with Kannadiga identity. Karnataka's politicians, essentially those in the Opposition, have found it convenient to unctuously embrace the Nandini brand and, concomitantly, present Amul as an 'invader' which is determined to destroy native dairy products. The fact that Amul is based in Gujarat has helped Congress leaders to conjure up a conspiracy theory that Gujarati leaders (read Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah) are determined to destroy a native brand. Congress state president DK Shivakumar compared Amul and Nandini, and found Nandini as the "better brand." His party colleague and former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah went a step ahead and alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Karnataka was "destroying the state's pride." Unfortunately, politicians are the only people muddying the waters; the Karnataka State Hotels' Association also alleged that an "artificial scarcity" of Nandini products has been created in "favour" of Amul's entry in Karnataka. The fact, however, that scarcity is because of Nandini milk is far cheaper than Amul's, primarily because of the subsidy that the State Government gives to the local federation.

The State government correctly denied the allegations made by the rival Congress and Janata Dal (Secular), and accused them of transforming the matter "into a political issue ahead of elections." Apparently, Opposition leaders in the State have politicised Amit Shah's statement in December that he made at a rally in Mandya, "Together, Amul and Nandini will help set up primary dairies in every village of Karnataka within three years." When Amul announced last week that it would begin to sell milk and curd in Bengaluru, Opposition leaders were able to manufacture a conspiracy theory in which Amul is pitted against Nandini. A couple of points need to be made here. First, credulity has assumed alarming proportions in our country. Opposition leaders are able to peddle the more implausible of ideas in the political arena. Mirages appear real and myths look like well-known facts. Second, the 'ism' all politicians cutting across parties and ideologies believe and practice is sentimentalism. In this case, anti-BJP leaders have been able to further their political agenda by birthing and promoting the fake narrative of Kannadiga Nandini versus Gujarati Amul. It is perhaps the first time that Amul has been portrayed as a Gujarati brand. This is regrettable, for it is a premium Indian brand that has been giving global majors a run for their money. Such are the wages of petty politicking.

PICTALK



People visit Jallianwala Bagh on the eve of 104-years of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, in Amritsar

The Opposition doesn't measure up



PRAFULL GORADIA

At most times, the Opposition has been weak, divided and untrained in governance

The Emergency of June 1975 lasted till the general elections in early 1977. During that year and a half, there was an order without law in the country. That isn't so now and yet the Opposition keeps blaring that "democracy in India is in danger". Hosts on television discussions often say that they feel like second-class citizens these days. (One Dr Shama Mohamed said so on 8 April on NDTV).

The Emergency was imposed mainly in the Hindi-speaking states, with forced sterilization of men. The main targets were Muslim men.

The real problem is with the opposition; since the beginning of Independence. At most times, it has been weak, divided and untrained in governance. The communist parties have retained their Marxist ideologies, quite oblivious that these ideologies perished as long ago as 1991. There is hardly any other political party that has a coherent ideology. A few of them, like the Akali Dal for example, have programmes, which is to retain their control over Sikh institutions. Tamil Nadu's DMK has hung on to its anti-Brahminism; the rest function according to ad hoc and opportunistic causes that come their way. The members of all such parties are more beholden to the street than the assembly halls of legislatures.

Most Indian politicians may never have heard of the concept of a shadow cabinet, which is very useful to the opposition party so that at least some members of the party have a working knowledge of subjects like foreign affairs, finance, defence etc. This would make it easy for the Opposition to oppose the government and not let it get away with an incorrect or inadequate policy. After an election that follows, if the opposition is able to participate in the formation of a cabinet in a new government, it would have several ready-made ministers who would be well-versed in their respective subjects.

This decline began soon after Jawaharlal Nehru's death. One of the prime ministers who came after he declared, "Corruption is



a global phenomenon and it is difficult to name a country that is free of corruption". These utterances turned out to be a signal to India's politicians that politics can be a lucrative business. Come election time, a party begins by selling the application forms of party tickets to an MLA election. Thereafter, when the party is ready to distribute the tickets, each ticket attracts good money. The entire election expense is to be met by the candidate. Win or lose, at the end of the election, every party can hope to make a tidy profit.

As the lure of money shone more and more, the significance of talent, popularity, and political competence began to diminish and gradually disappear. The other consequence of increasing wealth led to parental compulsions of bequeathing one's political party to one's son or daughter. That is how dynastic politics began and has today engulfed many a party, kicking the issue of talent to a distant background. Is it, not a shame such



THIS DECLINE BEGAN SOON AFTER JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S DEATH. ONE OF THE PRIME MINISTERS WHO CAME AFTER HE DECLARED, "CORRUPTION IS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON ..."

our eyes to a universal weakness of democratic politics. Almost all political ideologies are unconnected with the ethos of the countries. They are based on academic theories and less on the soil of the countries practising them. We have seen conservative parties, liberal platforms, socialist organizations, communist groups, fascist movements et al. Not a single one of these has been born on the soil of any country.

The BJP has demonstrated how speedily the people can respond to Hindu nationalism rather than to a socialistic pattern of society, which is alien. The only example of such rapidity of response was the Muslim League, which won Partition in a mere seven years' time. This again can be called an ethnic response. Can Indian democracy throw up ethnic alternatives? It seems difficult if not doubtful. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STORM IN A TEAM CUP

Sir — The election scenario saw both Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot playing petty politics. It appears as though a tsunami struck Rajasthan politics before a storm. Both the seasoned politicians are playing a power game and making the high command dance to their tune. Thus BJP is a watchdog waiting for an opportune moment. From the very day of oath taking power struggle started and now it is a disastrous turn. It is a matter of time before the ship crosses the Plimsoll line and is immersed in water.

C.K.RAMANI | Chennai

THE RISE OF AAM AADMI PARTY

Sir — The rise of the Aam Aadmi Party from a status of small regional party to a National Party within a relatively short period of time, i.e. within a decade is phenomenal. It could make felt its presence in scores of States with its unconventional electoral strategies. Now with this new status, it can dream big in reaching out to people across the country. That TMC, NCP and CPI losing National Party status, and BRS not being able to get the same status will act as dampeners on the enthusiastic aspirations of those parties to play leadership roles on the national stage. Irrespective of status, all parties should improve their standing in the eyes of people by thinking and acting regionally first. Except for BJP, all other four national parties will have to work hard to get Indian status in real terms.

D.V.G.Sankararao | Vizianagaram

IMPACT OF PROJECT TIGER

Sir — The nation's Tiger Census has shown positive results, 50 years after Project Tiger, which was launched to reverse the severe drop in the big cat's population. Alarmingly, there were just 1411 tigers left in the country as of 2006. In the new census of 2022, the number of tigers was discovered to be 3167 after recovering from this terrible scenario. In the previous sixteen years, the population of this threatened wildlife species has expanded by 75 per cent. The fact that Project Tiger, a

Amit Shah on China



Our Home Minister Amit Shah in a loud and emphatic manner told us that not even land equal to "Sui ki noke" (inch of land) can be encroached on by China. He even went to Arunachal Pradesh and challenged China that no one can occupy India's land. Maybe Amit Shah

has roared because of continuous opposition attacks on the Government that China has occupied most of India's land. But in fact, the fact is that in an RTI reply, it was revealed that there is actually no Line of control. While Amit Shah is boasting that nobody has occupied Indian land

China has given Arunachal Pradesh a new name to a village by calling it "Zangam". Last week China announced 11 more places in Arunachal Pradesh which it has claimed as "Southern Tibet". Whereas Minister of State external affairs V. Muraleedharan said that China has occupied 38000 square Kilometers of Indian territory on the Union territory of Ladakh, for the last six decades. Then who is correct - Amit Shah or our Minister of State external affairs? Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

worldwide effort to conserve tigers, was launched fifty years ago gives cause for celebration because, until a few years ago, Sariska's tiger reserve was devoid of even one last tiger. A new campaign to conserve the tigers was started when the uproar subsided, and statistics presently indicate that the campaign was mainly successful.

Despite this achievement, there are still many factors contributing to the tigers' decline, so it would be unwise to become complacent. Second, even if the number of tigers in our nation rises, the issue of where the forest for so many tigers will come from will be raised. Only a third of the forests that were under Project Tiger at its inception are still standing. Human need and greed have mostly resulted in the destruction of forests. If there aren't enough forests in relation to the number of tigers, other issues will start to appear. The adult tiger needs a sizable territory and will not allow another tiger into its domain. It is possible to turn this obstacle into an opening. In the same way that the tiger requires more forest space, it is everyone's best interest to expand the nation's forest cover. The area of forests can be increased despite India's high popula-

tion density provided the land is used in a planned manner. After all, India is no different from other places where people tend to move towards larger cities. More people could live there if the land in cities and towns was utilised appropriately. More space is Project Tiger's most important demand. Poaching, which has not been under control, is the second significant issue.

This calls for enhancing the Forest Department's security system in addition to other factors. The interests of the residents who live close to the tiger reserves must be linked with tiger conservation to achieve this, coupled with enhancing the Forest Department's security system. If they receive a portion of the money generated by tourism, the local population can have the greatest impact on tiger conservation. Man needs this natural cycle of balance just as much as he needs industry and agriculture. India is referred to as the "Gene Bank" of the world because of the country's unique biodiversity.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The community radio needs Govt support

They are doing commendable work by reaching out to communities ignored by mainstream media. Give them more favourable turf to play on



PRABHA GUPTA

Community radio stations (CRS) in India are playing a crucial role in informing, educating and entertaining communities that have limited access to mainstream media. These stations are run and managed by local communities, NGOs, educational institutions, and other grassroots organizations.

They did commendable work during the pandemic by spreading awareness about it and how it could best be avoided. CRS routinely play programs on vaccination, nutrition, menstrual hygiene, and sanitation. They also promote literacy. They have also been instrumental in empowering women by having programs on women's health, education, and entrepreneurship. They provide a platform for women to share their experiences. Besides, they promote local culture and traditions by showcasing local talent and also conducting programs on local festivals and traditions.

But unfortunately, most of them struggle to remain on air due to a severe paucity of funds and resources. As they have to muster their own



resources, they rely heavily on government campaigns and local ads for funds. But of late the government funds are just not there. The proverb 'Beating around the Bush' fits apt to the government's approach to CRS. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has increased the DAVP rate but campaigns have been reduced drastically to just two to three in a year.

The government wants the community Radio Stations to be self-sustained. It is easier said than done. There are so many technical issues that stand in the way. It has a limited range and restricted transmitter power of 0.5 KW that seriously cripples its signals which seriously mars its audio quality thereby dissuading the private parties to give ads to CRS. Community Radio faces a

number of sustainability issues, both financial and operational, that can impact their ability to continue serving their local communities.

However, the CRS would also have to think out of the box to take the movement forward. To address these sustainability issues, community radio stations can take a number of steps. These might include diversifying funding sources, developing a strong volunteer management program, investing in technical infrastructure by procuring loans, and developing partnerships with other local media outlets to increase visibility and build audiences. A strong team is essential for the success of any radio station. CRS should recruit and retain talented and passionate individuals who are committed to the station's mission.

Besides, Community radio stations should adhere to journalistic standards, such as accuracy, fairness, and impartiality. This will help build trust with the community and establish the station as a credible source of news and information. Thus, community radio stations can become a strong medium

that serves the needs of their local communities.

A community radio station needs a sustainable business model to ensure its long-term success. This may involve a combination of funding sources, including grants, sponsorships, donations, and underwriting. Develop a fundraising plan that includes a variety of revenue streams to ensure financial stability. Overall, community radio stations can succeed by offering content that is relevant, engaging, and distinctive, and by leveraging their strengths, such as their local focus, human connection, and credibility, to create a loyal and engaged audience.

A community radio station also needs the support of the community it serves. Involving community members in the planning process, and encouraging them to participate in the station's programming will help ensure that the station meets the needs and interests of the community, and can also help with fundraising and support.

(The writer is a business consultant and development writer)



FIRST COLUMN

ONLY GOD CAN, HIS POWERS ARE UNLIMITED

Why not take God's shelter and gain all kinds of benefits, which only he can grant?



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

A few things only God can do. Yes, it is a fact that all of us should know. The first one is giving 'vardaan'. The English equivalent is a blessing, which is something good that you are thankful for. Boon is another word for it, which means a thing that is helpful or beneficial. Both of these meanings do not fully convey what vardaan is. Vardaan is what only God or His manifestations can give to deserving persons. Our scriptures have many details of vardaans being given by Lord Krishna to different persons.

Similarly, only God can grant liberation. A famous example is that of Lord Rama liberating Jatayu. Such liberated souls are freed from the painful cycle of birth and death. Lord Krishna speaks about this in many verses of the Bhagavad-Geeta. In verse #8.15, He states, "Those great souls, achievers of the supreme perfection, having attained Me, do not take rebirth in this impermanent place of miseries." The Lord also guides us about different ways to qualify for liberation.

Only God can forgive our sins. Arjuna was afraid that he would be guilty of many sins if he participated in the Mahabharat War. Lord Krishna assured him in these words, "I will release you from all sins. Do not worry." (18.66) And we know how knowingly and unknowingly we commit many sins. If we truly take shelter from God, He may forgive our sins. In verse #9.30, Lord Krishna assures, "Even if a person of very bad conduct worships Me with undivided devotion, he should be considered pious only, because he is now engaged properly."



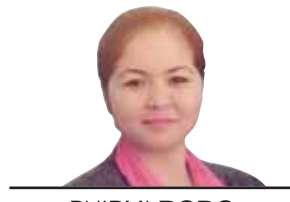
The next power, which only God has, is about a change of our natures in a substantial way, otherwise, we are stuck with whatever we have been programmed with due to our past 'karmas'. For example, someone is very lusty, to begin with; he remains lusty for the rest of his life; our natures are so obstinate. Lord Krishna told Arjuna that he would engage in fighting, even though Arjuna was in denial, which ultimately Arjuna did. (18.59) In an earlier verse, the Lord had emphatically stated that people follow their natures. (3.33) One definitely needs help from God to subdue one's nature. The same is true about the appearance of 'karmaphalas' both good and bad. They are forever coming and going. (2.14) Only God can do something about them. He can, but He doesn't usually prevent them from coming, though we would wish that He stopped the bad ones. What God does is help us negotiate them better by guiding us if we take God's shelter. (18.58) Only God can do this, otherwise, our bad karmas run through their entire course.

If God is especially merciful on us, He even changes people's minds in our favour. This favour only God can do and no one else. I get pleasantly surprised when an apparently inimical person becomes favourable. God even appoints His devotees as His 'nimitta' (instruments) to carry out specific tasks, just as Arjuna was chosen to play a decisive role in the Mahabharat War. This is a very special privilege because it means that God becomes 'kartā' in our lives. When God is the doer then nothing is impossible. That is how miracles happen to surprise us. God and only God can guide perfectly because He alone knows the big picture, which includes the past, present and future in their entirety. Very fortunate souls are blessed thus because then they move in the right direction. When the direction is perfect, one is bound to get the best results in one's life. God surprises me to no end when He informs me about what only He could know about me, about which even I am unaware. Similarly, only God can alert us about impending dangers. God's powers are unlimited. Why not take His shelter and gain all kinds of benefits, which only God can grant?

(The writer is a spiritual educator)

Ambedkar's idea of cultural nationalism

He always insisted on 'spiritual and cultural unity' as the basis of modern nation-state formation



PHIRMI BODO



Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar's work and philosophy were built on the sensibility of India's ethos, a passionate desire for India's Unity and cultural nationalism. He was one of the leading nation-builders of modern India as early as 1916, in his famed paper presented at an anthropology seminar at Columbia University, Dr Ambedkar made an observation that may well become the definition of what is today called "cultural nationalism" in the Indian context:

"It may be granted that there has not been a thorough amalgamation of the various stocks that make up the peoples of India, and to a traveller from within the boundaries of India, the East presents a marked contrast in physique and even in colour to the West, as does the South to the North. But amalgamation can never be the sole criterion of homogeneity as predicated of any people.

Ethnically all people are heterogeneous. It is the unity of culture that is the basis of homogeneity. Taking this for granted, I venture to say that there is no country that can rival the Indian Peninsula with respect to the unity of its culture. It has not only a geographic unity, but it has over and above all a deeper and a much more fundamental unity—the indubitable cultural unity that covers the land from end to end."

Dr Ambedkar always insisted on this "spiritual and cultural unity" as the basis of modern nation-state formation, and he emphasized the Vedic as well as Buddhist contribution to it. He was advocating for the Buddhist-Vedic organic fraternity as part of a greater pan-Indian identity. It is in this context that one could understand how he was extremely appreciative of all genuine reform work done in the country. Dr Ambedkar always took care that he should never allow his people to get denationalized in their quest for justice and liberation. However, this part of Dr Ambedkar has never been highlighted and rather projected as an anti-thesis of the cultural unity of the nation.



WHILE TALKING ABOUT NATIONS, AMBEDKAR ASSERTED THAT THE REALISATION OF THE FACT THAT INDIA WAS NOT A NATION CAN BE CALLED THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS NATION-BUILDING

(The writer is an assistant professor, Centre for Study of Social Systems, JNU)

The Idea of a Nation:

There are innumerable definitions given by various thinkers on Nation. Patterson defines Nation as, 'people, a folk, held together by some or all of such more or less immutable characteristics as common descent, territory, history, language, religion, way of life or other attributes that members of a group have birth on the ward' (Patterson 1975).

However, according to Sri Aurobindo, Nationalism is a religion that has come from God; Nationalism is a creed that you shall have to live. He elevated the demand for national freedom to a religious faith so that the masses could be awakened. His concept of nation was deeply influenced by Bankimchandra. He believed that the nation is not just a piece of land or a mass of human beings. Sri Aurobindo was convinced that imitation of Europe was not at all conducive to India's regeneration. He knew that India would never share the feeling of nationalism if a large number of its citizens remained branded as untouchables

Nation and Nationality:

While talking about Nations, Ambedkar asserted that the realisation of the fact that India was not a nation can be called the first step towards nation-building. According to him, "The sooner we realize that we are not as yet a nation... we shall realize the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think of ways and means of realizing the goal" (Ambedkar 1994: 1217). Taking a clue from Renan who had sighted the case of the union of Northern and Southern France after a struggle of nearly a hundred years, Ambedkar emphasized forgetfulness as a second factor in the creation of a nation (Ambedkar 1990:36)

Ambedkar contends Nationality is "consciousness of a kind, awareness of the existence of that tie of kinship" and nationalism is "the desire for a separate national existence for those who are bound by this tie of kinship". Ambedkar was never against the idea of Nationalism but against the Congress's version of Nationalism which entailed freedom of India from British Colonialism but not from caste hierarchy through which millions of scheduled castes had been yoked for hundreds of years. Ambedkar took up the question from the social below and elevated it to a political high by linking this social question of caste with the political question of democracy and nationalism.

According to Ambedkar "without social union, political unity is difficult to be achieved. If achieved, it would be as precarious as a summer sapling, liable to be uprooted by the gust of hostile wind. With mere political unity, India may be a State. But to be a State is not to be a Nation and a State, which is not a Nation, has small prospects of survival in the struggle for existence". He had faith in the spiritual aspect of Indian texts and codes but not in its ritualistic aspect which had developed in the last 1200 years. He talked about the "Annihilation of Caste not Dharma". He had the option of declaring himself an atheist but his rootedness in Indian ethos compelled him to choose Buddhism.

He emphasizes that Hindus need not "borrow from foreign sources" concepts to build a society on the principle of equality, fraternity and liberty. They "could draw for such principles on the Upanishads". Even in "Riddles in Hinduism" he points out that Hinduism has the potential to

become the spiritual basis of social democracy.

The Constitution of India has abolished Untouchability. But what Dr Ambedkar had visualized, "If social conscious is such that it is prepared to recognize the rights which law chosen to enact, rights will safe and secure. But if the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no law, no parliament, no judiciary can guarantee them in the real sense of the word," appears to be true.

Ambedkar argued that race, language and country do not suffice to create a nation. Quoting Renan, Ambedkar argued that: A nation is a living soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute the soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. One is the common possession of a rich heritage of memories; the other is the actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to preserve worthily the undivided inheritance which has been handed down... (Ambedkar 1990: 35).

On the day when the Constitution of India was to be finally passed, Ambedkar told the Constituent Assembly to have self-inspection. He said: "... my mind is so full of the future of our country... On 26th January 1950, India will be an independent country. What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again?... It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she lose it a second time? What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it through the infidelity and treachery of some of her people. (Ambedkar 1994: 1213-14).

SEBI pulls the plug on financial influencers

The role of social media platforms in abusing markets has been adequately underscored in an order passed by SEBI

Knowledge dissemination & informational symmetry: The new-age freelancer-influencer generation believes in providing simplified, concise and conclusive information. Simultaneously, the new age class of retail investors also wants quick money without having to do hours of market research. Over-simplification is the new complexity and those who capitalize on this ability control the narrative.

This issue surfaced again when SEBI heavily cracked down on YouTube influencers manipulating prices in March 2023. It barred about 44 entities from the Indian securities market via interim orders dated March 2, 2023.

The crux of the regulator's clampdown revolves around



TRISHA SHREYASHI

the collusion of promoters and profit-makers with YouTube creators. The false and misleading content was peddled by the creators as a part of a marketing campaign to trick innocent investors. This helped generate artificial volumes in scrips of Sharpline Broadcast Ltd. and Sadhna Broadcast and book massive profits for certain shareholders.

This incident portrays how social media has democratized financial services at the click of a button. But, it can be misused as an open channel for mass manipulation and perilous ambitions of one man duping thousands of innocents.

The role of social media platforms in enabling market abuse has been adequately underscored in an order passed by SEBI in January

2022 in Re. Stock Recommendations using Social Media Channel (Telegram). It is critical to delve into this case and understand the legal framework governing investor advisory on social media.

Present Legal Framework:

SEBI allows only authorized research analysts and investment advisers to provide financial advice. Such entities are governed under the SEBI (Intermediaries) Regulations 2008, the SEBI (Investment Advisers) Regulations 2013, and the SEBI (Research Analysts) Regulations 2014.

Consequently, any impersonation shall lead to a violation of the aforesaid regulations. Moreover, abusive market practices are prohibited under the provisions of the SEBI Act of 1993 and the SEBI

(Prohibition of Fraudulent & Unfair Trade Practices relating to Securities Market) Regulations 2003 ('PFUTP regulations').

Section 12 A of the SEBI Act 1993 prohibits any such action of commission or omission relating to securities or issues, via any scheme or device amounting to deceptive practices, fraudulent trade practices, unfair trade practices or manipulative trade practices (collectively referred to as 'abusive market practices'). The provision intends to prevent malpractices in the financial market.

Regulation 4 specifies acts amounting to abusive market practices. E.g.: misrepresentation of facts, misinformation inducing the sale or purchase of such securities, market

manipulation triggering fluctuations in prices for wrongful gain, circular trading, reverse trading creating artificial volumes, dubious synchronized trades, false corporate announcements, front running, insider trading, diversion of funds, cornering shares in issues, forged share certificates, misstatement of financials, delayed dematerialization, concealment or non-disclosure of client transactions.

It may be imperative to mention in this regard that SEBI also enhanced its powers to tackle unfair trade practices via amendments made to Regulation 4 (2) (k) in January 2022. It extended the ambit of regulations to reckless dissemination of information likely influencing investment patterns under the ambit of

regulations. While it is permissible to discuss macro stock patterns on public platforms and social media, unsolicited advice on any closed subscription-based channels that are accessible only to limited members is prohibited; especially by SEBI unregistered entities.

In the Telegram Investment Advice case mentioned above, SEBI noted how entities who lack basic minimum qualifications related to securities markets projected themselves as established investment advisors via social media. Such misleading advertisements entailed fake claims of combined experience of over 40 years in securities markets and that they are in process of seeking registration from SEBI.

The tips given on the

channel were repetitively acted on by an increasingly large number of subscribers which created a gradual artificial boom in prices of thinly traded scrips leading to deepened belief in the recommendations. In a fast-paced digital age, social media influencing is an extremely impactful way of marketing and advertising. The securities market in specific is flooded with many fraudsters purporting to SEBI registered research analysts and investment advisors. A consequential issue that the market regulator faces in recent times is difficulty in monitoring the misuse of social media by fraudulent investment advisors. The risk amplifies tremendously when unsolicited advisories come from a celebrity.

China issues warning as US, Philippines stage drills

AP ■ MANILA
China warned on Wednesday that a deepening security alliance between the United States and the Philippines should not harm its security and territorial interests and interfere in long-simmering territorial disputes in the South China Sea. When asked to comment on the combat exercises between American and Filipino forces that started on Tuesday in the Philippines, the Chinese Embassy in Manila on Wednesday issued a statement by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin, who said that such drills "should not target any third party and should be conducive to regional peace and stability."

China backs Macron's remarks against Taiwan policy of US

BEIJING (PTI): China on Wednesday waded into controversy over French President Emmanuel Macron's comments in which he called for greater "European sovereignty" by not following the US policy over China and Taiwan.
"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 the interview after his recent visit to China during which he held extensive talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing and later Guangzhou.
"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 overreaction," Macron said.
The comments were made last Friday before China launched large-scale combat drills around Taiwan that simulated sealing off the island in response to the Taiwanese president's trip to the US last week.
Macron's comments raised questions over the EU's relationship

with both the US and China.
"We have noticed that President Macron's view that Europe should insist on strategic autonomy and avoid getting involved in group confrontations has attracted some criticism, especially from the United States. We are not surprised by this," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told the media here while responding to the controversy over the French President's comments.
"What we want to tell you is that some countries do not want to see other countries become independent, and always want to coerce other countries to obey their will," he said.
"But adhering to strategic autonomy will win more respect and more friends, while coercion and pressure will only result in more resistance and opposition," Wang said.
He said Macron paid a successful visit to China and the two sides reached important consensus, injecting new impetus into deepening China-France and China-EU cooperation.

systems, military transport aircraft and coastal and air defence systems to Philippines over the next five to 10 years under a security assistance roadmap.
This year's Balikatan exercises between the treaty allies are the largest since the two sides started joint military combat-readiness exercises in the early 1990s. They will run until April 28 and involve more than 17,600 American and Filipino personnel and a small Australian contingent. About a dozen countries including Japan and India but not China were sending observers, organizers said.
In a live-fire drill the allies will stage for the first time, US and Filipino forces will sink a ship in Philippine territorial waters off western Zamboanga province on April 26 in a coordinated coastal artillery bombardment and airstrike, Col.

Brazil's Lula visits China

Puts Ukraine peace on his agenda

Rio De Janeiro: Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva flew off to China on Tuesday to strengthen ties with his nation's biggest trade partner and win support for his long shot push for peace in Ukraine.



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva holds the hand of Vice President Geraldo Alckmin as he boards to China in Brasilia, Brazil on Tuesday.

Lula wants Brazil, China and other nations to help mediate the war as part of his nation's return to the world stage, but his proposals to end the conflict have irked Ukraine and some in the West.

Less controversial is the Brazilian and Chinese mutual interest in trade after a rocky period under Lula's predecessor.

China and Brazil are expected to sign at least 20 bilateral agreements during Lula's two-day stay, according to the Brazilian government.

Lula plans to visit Shanghai and Beijing, and meet with his counterpart, Xi Jinping, on Friday. The two leaders are

expected to discuss trade, investment, reindustrialization, energy transition, climate change and peace agreements, the Brazilian government said.

China is Brazil's biggest export market, each year buying tens of billions of dollars worth of soybeans, beef, iron ore, poultry, pulp, sugar cane, cotton and crude oil.

Brazil is the biggest recipient of Chinese investment in Latin America, according to Chinese

state media.

Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and members of his family at times caused friction with Chinese authorities during his 2019-2022 term.

In 2020, when Bolsonaro's lawmaker son Eduardo blamed the COVID-19 pandemic on the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese ambassador to Brazil called his words "an evil insult against China and the Chinese people." **AP**

Trudeau provides more Ukraine aid

Toronto (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced more military aid to support Ukraine in its war with Russia while hosting Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal in Toronto on Tuesday.

The new military assistance includes 21,000 assault rifles, 38 machine guns, and over 2.4 million rounds of ammunition.

"We are preparing for our counteroffensive. We need more ammunition, we need more weaponry, we need more military equipment," Shmyhal said.

Shmyhal thanked Canada for its support since Russian forces invaded in February 2022, which has included billions of dollars in economic and military aid.

Trudeau also said Canada is imposing new sanctions on Russian and Belarusian authorities and organizations in retaliation for the ongoing invasion.
"Ukraine is fighting for the values and the principles that underpin all of our democracies," Trudeau said. "We will continue to do everything necessary to ensure Ukraine prevails." Canada also provided a \$2.4 billion Ca loan to the government of Ukraine to support essential services.

Poland to test quality of Ukraine grain amid farmer protests

Warsaw (AP): Poland's new agriculture minister vowed Wednesday to introduce detailed quality controls on the massive inflow of grain from Ukraine transiting through the country, and to ensure its efficient transport abroad.

The move follows protests by angry Polish farmers, who say they face bankruptcy because of a glut of cheap Ukrainian grain.

Minister Robert Telus faced sharp criticism from lawmakers in parliament, who alleged that trading companies linked to the government were making huge profits from selling cheap, untested Ukrainian produce in Poland, instead of facilitating its transfer to grain-hungry Africa.

Telus replaced the previous agriculture minister, Henryk Kowalczyk, who resigned last week just hours before an official visit by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. During the visit, the Polish and Ukrainian leaders said they had found a rapid resolution to the "grain problem" but provided no details. Amid the Russian invasion, the European Union lifted duties on Ukrainian grain to facilitate its transport to Africa and the Middle East. However, it has flooded markets in Poland, Romania and other EU countries that were only supposed to be transit routes.

'Owning Twitter painful' but needed to be done

London (AP): Billionaire Elon Musk has told the BBC that running Twitter has been "quite painful" but that the social media company is now roughly breaking even after he acquired it late last year.

In an interview also streamed live late Tuesday on Twitter Spaces, Musk discussed his ownership of the online platform, including layoffs, misinformation and his work style.

"It's not been boring. It's quite a rollercoaster," he told the UK broadcaster at Twitter's San Francisco headquarters.

It was a rare chance for a mainstream news outlet to interview Musk, who also owns Tesla and SpaceX.

After buying Twitter for USD 44 billion last year, Musk's changes included eliminating the company's communications department.

Reporters who email the company to seek comment

Russia: Bill to allow electronic conscription notices passes

Moscow (AP): The upper house of Russia's parliament has approved a bill that would allow authorities to issue electronic summons to draftees and reservists amid the fighting in Ukraine.

The Federation Council's vote was the last step needed before the bill goes to President Vladimir Putin, who is now expected to sign it into law.

Lawmakers in Russia's lower house, the State Duma, passed the measure on Tuesday.

The legislation was put on fast track as the Russian military is preparing for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive, which Ukraine and its Western allies say could start within weeks. Russia's current military service rules require the in-person delivery of notices to conscripts and reservists who are called up for duty. In the past, many Russians avoided the draft in the past by staying away from their address of record and the proposed bill would close that loophole. Under the new bill, the notices issued by local military conscription offices will continue to be sent by mail but they would be considered valid from the moment they are put on a state portal for electronic services. Recipients who fail to show up would be prohibited from leaving Russia, have their drivers' licenses suspended and be barred from selling their apartments and other assets.

The legislation fuelled fears of the government initiating another wave of mobilisation following the one that Putin ordered in the fall. The authorities have said that another mobilisation isn't planned. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov emphasized that the proposed bill was needed to streamline the outdated call-up system in view of the flaws that were revealed by last fall's partial mobilisation.

Mexican immigration agency chief to face criminal charges

Mexico City (AP): Mexico's top immigration official will face criminal charges in a fire that killed 40 migrants in Ciudad Juarez last month, with federal prosecutors saying he was remiss in not preventing the disaster despite earlier indications of problems at his agency's detention centres.

The decision to file charges against Francisco Garduño, the head of Mexico's National Immigration Institute, was announced late Tuesday by the federal Attorney General's Office.

It followed repeated calls from within Mexico, and from some Central American nations, not to stop the case at the five low-level officials, guards and a Venezuelan migrant already facing homicide charges in the case. Anger initially focused on two guards who were seen fleeing the March 27 fire, without

unlocking the cell door to allow the migrants to escape.

But President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said earlier Tuesday that they didn't have the keys.

The Attorney General's Office said several other officers of Garduño's agency will also face charges for failing to carry out their duties, the statement said, but prosecutors did not explain what specific charges or identify the officials.

Prosecutors said the case showed a "pattern of irresponsibility." The press office of the immigration agency that Garduño heads did respond to messages and phone calls requesting comment.

Prosecutors said that after a fire at another detention centre in the Gulf coast state of Tabasco killed one person and injured 14 in 2020.

US imposes fresh sanctions on Russian oligarch, Hungary bank

AP ■ WASHINGTON
The Treasury Department on Wednesday announced new sanctions aimed at Russian oligarch Alisher Usmanov, targeting the financial network of one of Russia's wealthiest businessmen.

Usmanov, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, has been subject to US and European Union sanctions since shortly after the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine last year.
The Treasury Department said the new designations, being coordinated with sanctions announced by the British government, aim to reinforce existing penalties and further disrupt Russia's importation of critical technologies used in its war against Ukraine.

The action by the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control involves 25 individuals and 29 entities in 20 jurisdictions.
"As the Kremlin seeks ways around the expansive multilateral sanctions and export controls imposed on Russia for its war against Ukraine, the United States and our allies and partners will continue to disrupt evasion schemes that support Putin on the battlefield," Brian Nelson, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said in a statement. He said the move shows the US is honoring the commitment by the Group of Seven leading industrial nations "to impose severe costs on third-country actors who support Russia's war."
Usmanov was an early tar-

Volcano spews ash cloud for 2nd day on Kamchatka

AP ■ MOSCOW

A volcano spewed out ash for a second day on Wednesday on Russia's far eastern Kamchatka Peninsula, throwing clouds of dust high into the sky and blanketing wide areas.

Shiveluch, one of Kamchatka's most active volcanoes, started erupting early Tuesday, spewing dust over 500 kilometres (more than 300 miles) northwest and engulfing several villages in grey volcanic dust in the largest fallout in nearly 60 years.

The Kamchatka branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences Geophysical Survey said the eruption continued Wednesday, spewing clouds of dust 10 kilometres (more than 6 miles) into the sky.

Since the start of the eruption, the area has been closed to aircraft and residents have been



advised to stay indoors. The villages located about 50 kilometres (some 30 miles) from the volcano, were covered by a 20-centimetre (nearly 8-inch) layer of dust. Residents posted videos showing the ash cloud plunging the area into darkness.
Shiveluch has two parts — the 3,283-metre (10,771-foot) Old Shiveluch, and the smaller, highly active Young Shiveluch. The Kamchatka Peninsula, which extends into the Pacific Ocean about 6,600 kilometres (4,000 miles) east of Moscow, is one of the world's most concentrated areas of geothermal activity, with about 30 active volcanoes.

**UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI
(PHE) DIVISION POONCH**

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER
e-NITNo. 06 of 2023-24 Dated 11.04.2023

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of UT of J&K, Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE)

Division Poonch, invites e-tenders (in 2 covers) from Original pump manufacturers / joint ventures/memorandum of understanding with principal pump manufacturers / their authorized dealers/ registered in DIC / reputed contractors (electromechanical works) of MES/CPWD/Water works corporations of different states on percentage above or below the advertised/analysed rates for electro-mechanical works for below mentioned work at water supply schemes of Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Poonch, of Jammu Province of UT of J&K, under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) on Turnkey basis. The bidding process shall be completed online on www.jktenders.gov.in in two covers viz. Cover I consisting of General Terms and Conditions and Technical Specifications and Cover II consisting of Financial Bid, in the prescribed BOQ.

S.No	Particulars of the works	Estimated cost (lacs)	Tender fee (in Rs.)	Earnest money deposit (Lac)	Bid validity	Time of completion of work (Days)
01	Providing, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of pumping machinery along with Electro Mechanical Components at different (03 No.) water supply schemes of Jal Shakti PHE Division Poonch, UT of J and K under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). The schemes are: 1.WSS Patheen Sadwala Chattri (Part I) 2.WSS Natri Dabrian Thaliyan 3.WSS Katsian Bhainchri (Part I)	213.30	5000/-	2% of estimated cost	90 days	60 days

Position of funds : Approved Under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)
Position of AAA : Accorded
Position of T.S : Sanctioned

The tender inviting authority is Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Poonch.
1. The whole bidding process shall be completed on line on tender portal www.jktenders.gov.in.
2. Bidding document can be accessed & downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in on 11.04.2023 (01:00 PM). Bidding document contains qualifying criteria for bidders, technical specifications, general terms and conditions and other details.
3. The Bids shall be uploaded in electronic format on the website www.jktenders.gov.in from 11.04.2023 (03:00 PM) to 18.04.2023 (2:00 PM)

**Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti (PHE) Division
Poonch**

No: DIP/J-316/23
Date :- 11.04.23

TikTok ban could weaken personal cybersecurity

PTI ■ NEW YORK
TikTok is not the first app to be scrutinised over the potential exposure of US user data, but it is the first widely used app that the US government has proposed banning over privacy and security concerns.
So far, the discussion has focused on whether TikTok should be banned.
There has been little discussion of whether TikTok could be banned, and there has been almost no discussion of the effects on cybersecurity that a TikTok ban could cause, including encouraging users to sidestep built-in security mechanisms to bypass a ban and access the app.
As a cybersecurity researcher, I see potential risks if the US attempts to ban TikTok. The type of risk depends on the type of ban.
Blocking access to TikTok by filtering traffic destined for addresses believed to be owned by TikTok is possible but would be difficult to accomplish.
Server addresses can be changed and a TikTok ban could devolve into a game of cat and mouse. Additionally,

China SC judge sentenced to 12 years for corruption

PTI ■ BEIJING

A supreme court judge in China has been jailed for 12 years for accepting bribes worth 22.7 million yuan (USD 3.3 million) over two decades. Judge Meng Xiang, a former director of the Supreme People's Court's enforcement bureau and member of its trial committee, was also fined two million yuan after he admitted accepting bribes between 2003 and 2020, the intermediate people's court in Zhengzhou city announced on Tuesday.
The court said Meng had used his status and power to accept bribes in exchange for helping others with matters such as court rulings and law enforcement, securing construction contracts for firms and influencing cadre selection, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Wednesday. Meng, 58, was placed under investigation two years ago as part of a "self-rectification" campaign targeting judicial and land enforcement officials, the report said. He had worked in the country's justice system for more than three decades, starting as a clerk in a local district court in Beijing. As he rose through the ranks he held various leadership positions in the judicial system, including the high people's court in Beijing.

Indian-origin executives convicted on fraud charges

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Two Indian-origin executives of a Chicago-based start-up have been convicted by a federal jury in the US of running a USD 1 billion corporate fraud scheme that targeted the company's clients, lenders and investors. Following a 10-week-long trial, jurors on Tuesday found health technology company Outcome Health co-founder and former CEO Rishi Shah guilty on 19 of 22 counts, co-founder and former president Shradha Agarwal guilty on 15 of 17 counts and former chief operating officer Brad Purdy guilty on 13 of 15 counts.

Shah, 37, was convicted of five counts of mail fraud, 10 counts of wire fraud, two counts of bank fraud and two counts of money laundering.

Agarwal, 37, was convicted of five counts of mail fraud, eight counts of wire fraud, and two counts of bank fraud, while Purdy, 33, was convicted of five counts of mail fraud, five counts of wire fraud, two counts of bank fraud, and one count of false statements to a financial institution.

The defendants face a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison for each count of bank fraud and 20-year imprisonment for each count of wire fraud and mail fraud.
Shah faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison for each count of money laundering. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled at a later date.

A statement issued by the Justice Department said on Tuesday that the company installed television screens and tablets in doctors' offices around the US and then sold advertising space on those devices to clients, most of whom were pharmaceutical companies.
According to evidence presented at the trial, Shah, Agarwal, and Purdy sold advertising inventory the company did not have to Outcome's clients, then under-delivered on its advertising campaigns.
Despite these under-deliveries, the company still invoiced its clients as if it had delivered in full.
Shah, Agarwal, and Purdy lied or caused others to lie to conceal the under-deliveries from clients and make it appear as if the company was delivering advertising content to the number of screens in the clients' contracts.
Purdy and others at the company also inflated metrics that purported to show how frequently patients engaged with the company's tablets installed in doctors' offices.
According to the trial evidence, the scheme targeting the company's clients began in 2011, lasted until 2017, and resulted in at least USD 45 million of overbilled advertising services.
Shah, Agarwal, and Purdy were also convicted of defrauding the company's lenders and investors.

Sitharaman, Gita Gopinath meet in US

Discuss debt vulnerabilities, crypto-related challenges

PTI ■ WASHINGTON / COLOMBO
Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF Gita Gopinath met and discussed a range of issues, including debt vulnerabilities and crypto-related challenges.
Sitharaman, who is leading a high-powered Indian delegation to attend the Spring Meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Washington, met Gopinath here on the sidelines of the annual Spring Meetings.

inflation, geo-political fragmentation, and faltering growth in China, as highlighted in World Economic Outlook World Economy Outlook.
Sitharaman acknowledged IMF's support to the G20 Presidency of India in the form of inputs towards developing evidence-based policy guidance, the ministry said.
India assumed the Presidency of the G20 for one year from December 1 last year. The G20 Summit will be held in New Delhi on September 9-10 this year.
The G20 meetings are being held across 56 cities, covering all 28 states and 8 Union Territories of India.
"Gopinath congratulated the finance minister on the fruitful discussions that translated the February consensus on the need for a globally coordinated policy response on Crypto Assets into an agreed set of guiding principles and an action plan on crypto assets," the ministry said in another tweet.
"Had a very good discussion with Finance Minister @nsitharaman at the IMF-



World Bank spring meetings, to discuss the progress being made under India's G20 Presidency on debt issues and crypto related challenges," Gopinath tweeted after the meeting.
"Japan, India, and France on Thursday will hold a press briefing on the margins of the Spring meetings to announce the launch of the debt restructuring negotiations process on Sri Lanka," IMF said on Tuesday, quoting a Japanese Finance Ministry statement.
The three creditor countries have been working closely for a coordinated debt restructuring for Sri Lanka, the statement said.
Japanese finance minister Shunichi Suzuki and France's Director General of the Treasury Emmanuel Moulin will join Sitharaman during the press briefing.
Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe and his state finance minister Shehan Samesinghe will also join in-person live streaming.

Global company can't think about growth without India: FICCI head

Washington (PTI): A series of reforms undertaken by the government coupled with efforts aimed at making it easier to do business has made India a land of opportunities, a top Indian industrialist has said, asserting that no global company can think about growth without India being a part of its plans.
Subhrakant Panda, president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) said India is where it is today because of a couple of factors, including sustained reforms even during the Covid-19 pandemic.
"You cannot think about growth without India being in your plans.
It's as simple as that. But if I were to expand on that a little bit more, where else in the world would you find an opportunity where you not only have a large unified domestic market, but also the resources to produce not just for the domestic market, but use it as an export base," he told PTI on Tuesday.

Poll funds: Pak SC asks officials to appear before it on April 14

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Cash-strapped Pakistan's Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered top officials to appear before it on April 14 with relevant records to show why funds were not released for holding snap elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite clear instructions.
The apex court last week ordered the federal government to provide Rs 21 billion to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) by April 10 to enable it to organise polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It also asked the election body to submit a report about availability of funds on April 11.
However, instead of releasing the funds, the government introduced a bill in the parliament to authorise the release of required funds for the ECP to elections.
It is not clear so far if the government succeeded to implement the court orders regarding provision of finances or if it was just an effort to delay the release of funds to influence the ECP. Elections are due to be held on May 14 in Punjab but the date for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections has not been decided as yet.

Following the instructions, the ECP submitted its report on the specified date, informing the court about the government's reluctance to issue the amount needed for elections.
The court issued notices to the finance secretary, head of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Attorney General and the ECP over the government's failure to disburse the sum and asked the officials to appear in court on April 14.
The SC registrar in the notice stated that the court noted that the ECP had stated that no funds were released and provided to it.
"The failure of the federal government to comply with the order of the court as aforesaid is prima facie disobedience," according to the notice.
"The consequences that can flow from such prima facie defiance of the court are well settled and known... Every person who embarks upon, encourages or instigates disobedience or defiance of the court can be held liable and accountable," the notice pointed out.
"The question of the provision of funds for such a vital constitutional purpose is something that requires immediate attention which takes priority over proceeding against those who may have committed con-

IMF slashes Pak's growth rate to 0.5% for FY23

Islamabad (PTI): The IMF has lowered its forecast for Pakistan's economic growth rate from 2 per cent to just 0.5 per cent for the current fiscal year, amid high inflation and a growing unemployment rate in the cash-strapped country.
This showed an unambiguous deterioration of economic fundamentals over the last six months since October when the IMF forecast the country's gross domestic product to grow by 3.5 per cent against 6 per cent for 2022 ago and inflation at 20 per cent against 12.1 per cent.
The revision in Pakistan's growth prospects is in line with similar 0.4 per cent and 0.6 per cent projected last week by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, respectively. They also projected inflation at 29.5 per cent and 27.5 per cent respectively for the current year, the Dawn newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Biden, Sunak reiterate importance of G20 during bilateral talks

PTI ■ LONDON
British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak met Joe Biden at Belfast in Northern Ireland on Wednesday during the US President's historic visit to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.
During bilateral talks, dubbed by some in the British media as a "bi-latte" alluding to a rather brief discussion in a hotel cafe, Biden and Sunak are said to have covered the range of the "thriving" UK-US relationship. The two leaders also reiterated the importance of working through global forums such as the G20 - the presidency of which is held by India at present.
"They agreed that manipulation of global markets by authoritarian leaders demonstrates, more than ever, the need for like-minded partners to work together to support the economic health and security of our nations," said a Downing Street readout of the talks.
"They looked forward to discussing the issue of econom-



ic security further during the G7 Summit next month and the Prime Minister's visit to Washington DC in June.
They also agreed on the importance of using global forums like the G7 and G20 to challenge economic coercion and market manipulation, and promote the economic well-being of our countries," it said.
Biden's Air Force One was greeted at the tarmac of Belfast

Economic growth in N Ireland is just beginning: US Prez

Belfast (AP): President Joe Biden said a bright future for Northern Ireland is "just beginning," pledging enduring American support as he marked the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.
The US-brokered deal brought peace to this part of the United Kingdom, but a new political crisis has recently tested its strength.
"It's up to us to keep this going," Biden said in a speech at Ulster University.
On his first presidential visit to Northern Ireland, Biden stressed that American investment can help fuel economic growth - especially if the fractious politicians in Belfast resolve a stalemate that has put their government on pause.
"Your history is our history," he said. "And even more important, your future is America's future."
Biden's speech navigated Northern Ireland's complex political currents, referring to his British as well as Irish ancestry,

and noting the contribution to the US of largely Protestant Ulster Scots as well as Irish Catholics like his own forebears.
US involvement was key to negotiating the Good Friday accord, which largely ended decades of sectarian violence that killed 3,600 people.
Biden credited people who were willing to "risk boldly for the future" by reaching the agreement, reminding the audience that "peace was not inevitable."
While that peace has endured, Northern Ireland is currently without a functioning government.
Stormont, the seat of its assembly, has been suspended since the Democratic Unionist Party, which formed half of a power-sharing government, walked out a year ago over a post-Brexit trade dispute. In addition, a top police official was shot and injured in February, an attack that authorities have blamed on Irish Republican Army dissidents opposed to the peace process.

California assembly urges US Cong to recognise 1984 violence as genocide

Washington (PTI): The California state assembly has passed a resolution urging the United States Congress to formally recognise and condemn the 1984 anti-Sikh violence in India as genocide.
The resolution was introduced by assembly Member Jasmeet Kaur Bains, first-ever elected Sikh member of state assembly, on March 22, and was passed unanimously by the state assembly on Monday.
It was co-sponsored by assembly member Carlos Villapudua. Only other Hindu member Ash Kalra also voted in favour.
Noting that the Sikh community in the US has not recovered from the physical and psychological trauma of the riots, the resolution urges the US Congress to formally recognise and condemn the November 1984 anti-Sikh violence as a genocide.

Joe Biden aide, Saudi prince see 'progress' toward Yemen war end

Washington (AP): White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan spoke by phone with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday amid signs that the Saudis and Iran-allied Houthis in Yemen are making "remarkable progress" toward finding a permanent end to their nine-year conflict, according to the Biden administration.
The crown prince, often referred to by his initials MBS, has had a strained relationship with President Joe Biden over human rights and oil production concerns. But the de facto Saudi leader and the president's top national security adviser decided to talk amid encouraging signs on winding down the long and bloody war, a top priority for Biden.
The call came after Saudi diplomat Mohammed bin

Saeed al-Jaber met with Houthi officials in Yemen's capital Sanaa on Sunday for talks that were aimed at accelerating negotiations on ending the war.
The White House said in statement that Sullivan "welcomed Saudi Arabia's extraordinary efforts" to pursue a more comprehensive roadmap for ending the war and offered full US support for those efforts.
A nongovernmental official familiar with the ongoing negotiations said a deal is close at hand and could be reached within the next seven to 10 days. The official was not authorized to comment and requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive private talks.
The White House remains cautiously optimistic about the way ahead.

Taliban say there's no obstacle for UN work in Af

Islamabad (AP): The Taliban's chief spokesman said on Wednesday there are no obstacles for the UN to function in Afghanistan, after they barred Afghan women from working at the global body.
Last week, the country's Taliban rulers took a step further in the restrictive measures they have imposed on women and said that female Afghan staffers employed with the UN mission can no longer report for work.
The ban is being actively enforced by the country's intelligence agency, which reports to the Taliban's leadership in Kandahar.
The UN says it cannot accept the decision, calling it unlawful and an unparalleled violation of women's rights. It says women are crucial for the delivery of life-saving aid to millions of Afghans, and has instructed its national staff, male and female, to stay at home.
Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban-led government's chief spokesman and part of the supreme leader's inner circle, denied authorities were to blame for Afghanistan's many crises.
The decision to bar Afghan women from working at the UN was an internal matter and should be respected by all sides, Mujahid said, as he set out the Taliban's position and demands to the international community. "This decision does not mean there is discrimination here, or that the activities of the United Nations are blocked.

3 Sherpas missing in avalanche at Everest

Kathmandu (PTI): Three Nepalese Sherpa guides went missing on Wednesday after they fell into a deep crevasse on the most dangerous section of Mt. Everest amidst an avalanche, in the season's first accident at the world's tallest peak. The incident occurred between Camp 1 and the base camp of Mt. Everest when the Sherpa guides were carrying expedition logistics, Nepal officials said.
A team of around 25 high-altitude guides were climbing above the Khumbu Icefall early Wednesday when a massive ice sheet of more than 50 metres tumbled down the mountain, below Camp 1 at 5,700 metres, burying the three Sherpa guides underneath, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.
The missing Sherpas were identified as Themwa Tenzing

Sherpa, Lakpa Rita Sherpa and Badure Sherpa.
The possibility of finding the missing climbers alive is "very slim," the Everest base camp coordinator of the Himalayan Rescue Association, Lakpa Norbu Sherpa, was quoted as saying in the report.
They are buried five to six metres underneath," Sherpa said, adding that launching a search mission was not possible due to the risk of further avalanches.
"It's not that they fell into crevasses. They are buried under the ice masses in the Khumbu Icefall, the most dangerous section of Everest," he added.
According to the report, Bigyan Koirala, an official at the Department of Tourism, said rescue efforts are on, and a chopper made three rounds in the area.

Four Indians killed in Nepal car accident

Kathmandu (PTI): Four Indian nationals were killed and another person was seriously injured when their car plunged into a ravine in a remote region in Nepal's Bagmati province, police said on Wednesday.
The accident occurred late Tuesday when the car with the five Indian nationals lost control and plunged some 500 metres off the road in Sindhuli district's Kamala Mai Municipality, along the Banepa Bardibas Highway, police said. All four deceased were males, but their identities are yet to be ascertained.
The car, with a Bihar registration, was heading to Kathmandu from the east, and its fall resulted in the death of three people on the spot, District Police Office's Superintendent Silwal was quoted as saying by The Kathmandu Post newspaper.
at the religious service.
"Buckingham Palace is pleased to confirm that the Duke of Sussex will attend the Coronation Service at Westminster Abbey on 6th May," Buckingham Palace said in a statement.
"The Duchess of Sussex (Meghan Markle) will remain in California with Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet," it said.
The visit follows Harry's controversial revelations of his troubled relationship with Britain's royal family, in a controversial Netflix documentary and autobiography 'Spare'.

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that I, Anirban Chatterjee son of Late Smt. Shripa Chatterjee, R/o House No.156, Rajpur Extension Colony, Maidan Garhi, Chattarpur, Delhi-110074, my mother Late Smt. Shripa Chatterjee had expired on 21.11.2021, she was the owner of the Plot No. 32, Rajpur Extension Colony, PO Maidan Garhi, Delhi-110068. The Original Agreement to Sell, General Power of Attorney, WILL, Payment Receipts, Possession Letter and other related documents etc. pertaining to the said Plot have been lost. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in Delhi. SO No: 430 / 2014 Delhi Police P.S: Crime Branch, Delhi LR No: 251165 / 2023 Date 17/03/2023. Any person(s) or organisation knowing the whereabouts of or having in their possession of original documents may write/contact with the person at address/ Mob. No. 9810756576 mentioned herein within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

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NORTHERN RAILWAY (DELHI DIVISION)
(Reference Clause 62, (1) 12.04.2023)
No.-30-Elect-52-C-2018-19-E3
48 HOUR NOTICE FOR TERMINATION (Without Prejudice)
M/s Atlas Infra Management Services Pvt. Ltd.
H-38/B, Ground Floor, Kalkaji, New Delhi-19
Sub: No progress of work in Tender No.30-Elect-52-T-2018-19-E3 for "Electrical work in connection with provision of additional stabling line at EMU Car Shed, Ghaziabad, improvement to URMU Office at 166 New Delhi P.K. Road Railway Colony by providing les, replacement of roof in conference room with false ceiling and other allied works and upgrade of infrastructure facilities of Diesel Shed at TKD ice. relaying of pit line no.1 (FDB end), pit line no.4 (DLI end) tilling of pits, provision of catwalk at heavy repair section, provision of dro pit table, one additional room, gents and ladies toilets block with water booth in new body section and miscellaneous works and construction of generator room."
1. Above referred work was awarded to your firm on 19.12.2018 with 06 months completion period i.e. 18.06.2019.SSE/PS/GZB has written several letter to start the work. You have neither communicated any message to consignee nor submitted the signage plan and engage any reputed signage consultant as per Tender condition. All these are shown that you are not interested to complete the awarded work.
2. In spite of repeated instructions to you by the subordinate offices as well as by this office through various letters of even no. 30-Elect-52-C-2018-19-E3, dated 19.01.2023, 10.03.2023, 24.02.2023, 17.03.2023, 22.03.2023 & "7 days Notice" dated 29.03.2023; you have failed to start work, failed to show adequate progress and failed to submit detailed program for completing the work.
3. As you have failed to abide by the instructions issued to commence the work and to show adequate progress of work you are hereby given 48 hours' notice in terms of Clause 62 of the Standard General Conditions of Contract to commence works / to make good the progress of works, failing which and on expiry of this period your above contract will be rescinded and the work under this contract will be carried out independently without your participation and your Security Deposit shall be forfeited and Performance Guarantee shall also be encashed and any other consequences which may please be noted.
4. 48 Hours Notice sent to your address but it has come to notice that you have changed your address without intimating to this office. Hence, 48 hours' Notice is being published in Newspaper.
Divisional Electrical Engineer/G
For and on behalf of the President of India
1095/23
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
No. E-226855/396 Date : 11.04.2023
The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, invites bids from registered Class-I, PWD (Bldg.) contractor for building construction in 8 (eight) schools under North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) as per the detailed notice inviting tender which can be downloaded from the website https://www.assamtenders.gov.in.
The last date of submission of tender is 03/05/2023 upto 2:00 PM.

NOTICE
Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, Notice is hereby given that a Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is being convened on Saturday, the 22nd day of April, 2023, to consider and adopt, inter-alia, the Audited Financial Results (Standalone and Consolidated) of the Company for the quarter and year ended on 31st March, 2023.
For OK PLAY INDIA LIMITED
Date : 12.04.2023
Place : New Delhi
Meenu Goswami
Company Secretary

NORTHERN RAILWAY
INVITATION OF TENDERS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM
Tender Notice No. AM/2023-24/NRCH/06 Date:-12.04.2023
Deputy Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway Central Hospital, New Delhi - 110055, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-
S.N. Tender No. Brief Description Qty. Closing Date
1 82231764A Inj Human Rabies Immunoglobulin 300IU per mL in Vial 592 Nos. 10.05.2023
2 82232060A Cap Iron Containing Ferrous Fumarate 150mg atleast with Folic Acid 1.5mg (Livogon or Equivalent) 1591802. 10.05.2023
NOTE -1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.
1096/23

Prince Harry to attend King Charles coronation without Meghan

PTI ■ LONDON
Britain's Prince Harry will attend the coronation of his father King Charles III next month, but his wife Meghan will remain in the United States with the couple's children, Buckingham Palace said on Wednesday.
The 38-year-old fifth in line to the British throne, who stepped back as a frontline royal and is now based in California with Markle and their kids Archie and Lilibet, will join 2,000 guests at the historic ceremony at Westminster Abbey in London on May 6.



NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE
Sh. Samay Singh Meena S/o Babu Lal Meena/ Pointsman / AST (Residential add.- Vill.- Jinsi Ka Pura, Post- Toda Bheem, Tehsil-Toda Bheem, Dist.-Karauli, Rajasthan, Pin- 321611) working as Sr. Pointsman under SS/AST has been absent from duty without any intimation or sanctioned leave since 16.09.2022. Communication has been sent to Sh. Samay Singh Meena/ Pointsman /AST on the address available in records via speed post on 20.12.22, but no response was received in this office till date. Sh. Samay Singh Meena / Pointsman/AST is therefore directed to report within 10 days of publication of this notice, failing which action will be taken against him without any further notice / communication as per extant rules. 1087/2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
INVITATION OF TENDERS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM
Tender Notice No. AM/2023-24/NRCH/06 Date:-12.04.2023
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1096/23

BABA FARID UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
SADIQ ROAD, FARIDKOT - 151203
E-TENDER NOTICE
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following Hospital equipments upto 25/05/2023
1) Automated Hemoglobin Estimation Machine Blood Bank 2) Multifunctional Therapeutic Apheresis for Blood Bank 3) Fully Automated Chemiluminescence Immunoassay System on Reagent Rental Basis 4) Fully Automated Clinical Chemistry Analyser on Reagent Rental Basis 5) Screen Appendectomy audiometer ENT 6) Double Channel Audiometer for ENT department 7) Head light with surgical loop 8) Battery Operated Drill and Saw Attachments 9) 800 mA with IITV 10) High End Ultrasound Machine-Radio diagnosis 11) Portable Ultrasound Machine 12) Green Laser Machine 13) Signing the rate contract for various Sutures 14) Signing the rate contract Medical Oxygen gases and other 15) Anesthesia Work Station 16) High speed Electrical Drill 17) Laparoscopy Set for Surgery.
Note: Pre-bid Meetings shall be held. Please refer tender document for Date, time and venue for Pre-bid meeting.
For Detail Visit http://eproc.punjab.gov.in and www.bfuhs.ac.in
Registrar
NIL/12/85/2023/22982 Dated CHD :- 4/12/2023

Industrial production growth rises marginally to 5.6% in Feb

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India's industrial production growth rose marginally to 5.6 per cent in February from 5.5 per cent in January 2023, mainly due to good performance of the power, mining and manufacturing sectors, according to official data released on Wednesday.
There was an improvement on an annual as well as sequential basis. The factory output growth measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) stood at 1.2 per cent in February 2022.
As per the IIP data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the manufacturing sector's output grew 5.3 per cent in



February 2023 from 0.2 per cent a year ago. Mining output growth remained flat at 4.6 per cent during the month under review compared to the year-ago period.
Power generation surged 8.2 per cent in February 2023 against 4.5 per cent.
As per use-based classifica-

tion, the capital goods segment recorded a growth of 10.5 per cent in February against a growth of 1.3 per cent a year ago.
Consumer durables output during the month declined by four per cent against a contraction of 9.7 per cent a year ago.
Consumer non-durable goods output expanded by 12.1

per cent against a decline of 6.8 per cent earlier.
Infrastructure/construction goods posted a growth of 7.9 per cent compared to an 8.6 per cent expansion in the same period a year ago. The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged 6.8 per cent growth in the month against 4.6 per cent in the year-ago period.
The intermediate goods output in February contracted by 0.3 per cent compared to a growth of 4.1 per cent during the corresponding month last year.
For the first 11 months of fiscal 2022-23 (April-February), the growth in IIP works out to be 5.5 per cent, down from 12.5 per cent in the year-ago period.

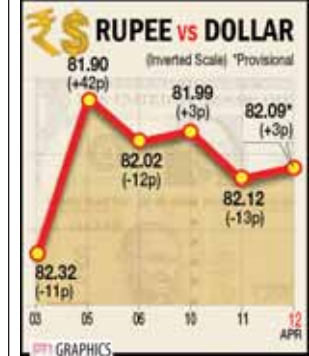
'India likely to have stable debt-to-GDP ratio going forward'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
India is expected to have a stable debt-to-GDP ratio going forward, a senior official from the International Monetary Fund said on Wednesday and recommended rationalization and simplification of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
According to Paolo Mauro, Deputy Director of the IMF Fiscal Affairs Department, there will be a gradual resumption of the rise in the global public debt-to-GDP ratio in the medium-term.
"Our baseline projection is for the global public debt-to-GDP ratio to reach 100 per cent again by 2028. It is going to take a few years, but that seems to be the direction of travel," Mauro told PTI in an interview.
In 2020 there were massive interventions on the part of governments around the world to support people and firms. That implied a lot of spending and a big rise in government debts.
"We reached the peak at the end of 2020 of a 100 per cent when it comes to the ratio of public debt-to-GDP. In subsequent years there was a recovery



and globally at the end of 2022, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 92 per cent.
The situation has changed because at the peak of the pandemic, both central banks and governments were very focused on supporting people, supporting firms, avoiding an economic implosion, avoiding deflation, right now they are in a completely different situation where inflation is high and the economic activity is certainly much more buoyant in that context.
In China the IMF projects a sizable increase in the debt ratio because the pace of economic growth may be a little bit slower than in previous years, partly because of aging of the

population.
Likewise in the United States and to a lesser extent in the United Kingdom in Japan, in France, there is also going to be some increase in debt ratios.
"In countries like India, we project the stable debt ratio going forward. Brazil we see an increase as well. In the case of many, low income countries and smaller advanced economies, we project the decline in the debt ratio and that would include Germany or Italy and others," he said.
Responding to a question on India, Mauro said, this year's Union Budget appropriately reduces the deficit and appropriately emphasizes infrastructure.



Rupee gains 3 paise to close at 82.09 against US dollar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day 3 paise higher at 82.09 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, as participants remained on the sidelines ahead of the release of the retail inflation data.
At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.08 against the US currency and finally closed at 82.09 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 3 paise over its previous close.
During the session, the rupee touched a high of 82.01 and a low of 82.11 against the dollar. On Tuesday, the rupee closed at 82.12 against the US currency. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.15 per cent to 102.04. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures advanced 0.32 per cent to USD 85.88 per barrel.
"The Indian rupee tread water along with the dollar index ahead of the crucial inflation data from the US and India. The rupee consolidates in the narrow range with thin volume and volatility even after stronger domestic equities and foreign fund inflows," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. The market is pricing in for lower inflation readings after last week's RBI surprise rate pause. In the near-term, spot USDINR is expected to trade between 81.70 to 82.50.
On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 235.05 points or 0.39 per cent to end at 60,392.77 and the broader NSE Nifty gained 90.10 points or 0.51 per cent to 17,812.40.

Sebi imposes ₹25 L fine on 5 entities for non-genuine trades

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Sebi on Wednesday imposed fines totalling ₹25 lakh on five entities for indulging in non-genuine trades in the illiquid stock options segment on BSE.
In five separate orders, the watchdog levied a fine of Rs 5 lakh each on Natraj Dealtrade, Queen Tie-Up Pvt Ltd, Octagon

Merchants, Noble Tradelink and Nirmal Kumar Chopra HUF.
The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had observed large scale reversal of trades in the illiquid stock options segment of BSE, leading to creation of artificial volumes on the bourse.
It had conducted an investigation into the trading activities of certain entities engaged in the segment on BSE from April

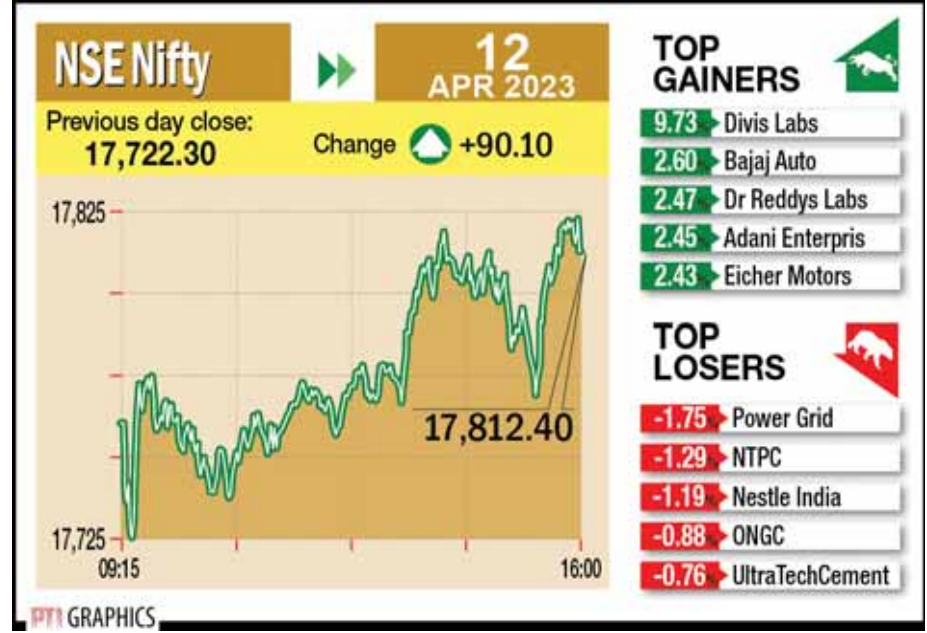
2014 to September 2015.
According to Sebi, the five entities were among those who indulged in the execution of reversal trades.
The reversal trades are alleged to be non-genuine in nature as they are executed in the normal course of trading, which leads to a false or misleading appearance of trading in terms of generating artificial volumes, Sebi said.

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Markets maintain momentum for eighth day; Nifty nears 18k

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty extended rally for the eighth straight session on Wednesday, propelled by intense buying in IT, healthcare and auto stocks amid sustained foreign fund inflows.
A strengthening rupee and positive opening in European markets further bolstered sentiment, traders said.
Industrial Production data for February and March inflation rates are scheduled to be announced post-market hours. TCS will kick start the Q4 earnings season later in the day.
The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 235.05 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 60,392.77, as 17 of its scrips marched higher. During the session, it jumped 279.92 points or 0.46 per cent to 60,437.64.
The broader NSE Nifty gained 90.10 points or 0.51 per

cent to finish at 17,812.40, with 38 of its scrips ending in the green. In eight days, the BSE benchmark jumped 2,779.05 points or 4.82 per cent, while Nifty climbed 860.7 points or 5 per cent.
"Nifty held on to steady gains on April 12 to end higher for the eighth straight day in trade. Investors in India await the CPI and IIP data post-market, which is a key factor to determine the magnitude of rate hikes by the central bank.
"TCS is also expected to report its Q4 numbers in the evening. In the US CPI numbers are due for March. These factors could influence the near-term direction of the market," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.
Among the Sensex firms, Infosys, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Asian Paints, Tech Mahin-



dra, HDFC, Tata Consultancy Services, Sun Pharma and ICICI Bank were the biggest winners.
On the other hand, PowerGrid, NTPC, Nestle, UltraTech Cement, State Bank of India and ITC were among the laggards.
"The domestic market exhibited cautiousness in anticipation of the release of various economic data and the upcoming Q4 earnings season. The IT sector drove the optimism in the market as investors await the earnings releases of sector majors.
"Despite expectations of a cooling down of CPI inflation to below the RBI's upper tolerance level, the persistence of sticky core inflation remains a concern," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.
In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.57

per cent and smallcap index gained 0.41 per cent.
Among sectoral indices, healthcare jumped 2.22 per cent, IT (1.04 per cent), auto (0.88 per cent), teck (0.86 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.74 per cent) and metal (0.51 per cent).
FMCG, utilities, capital goods and oil & gas were the laggards.
"FMCG, PSU Bank and Realty stocks witnessed profit booking and closed in the red. Strong business updates (export data) from Divi's and Laurus led to a rally in the pharma sector. The expectation of healthy Q4 FY23 earning season and FII's being net buyers to the tune of Rs 2,800 crore in month-till-date, helped domestic indices to gain strength," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head — Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.



Revised gas pricing formula to aid demand, profit stability for producers: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The government's decision to limit prices of domestic natural gas from legacy fields to between USD 4-6.5 per million British Thermal Unit (mmbtu) will support margins for city gas distributors, encourage the use of gas, and reduce cash flow volatility for upstream producers, Fitch Ratings said on Wednesday.
"We expect a partial pass-through of the lower administered price mechanism (APM) gas prices, at which domestic upstream producers supply gas to city gas distributors, in the prices of compressed natural gas (CNG) and domestic piped natural gas (PNG) to add to the distributors' margins in the near term," it said in a statement.
City gas retailers like Indraprastha Gas Ltd and Adani Total Gas Ltd last weekend announced Rs 6-8 cut in CNG and PNG prices, reflecting the cut in input gas prices.
The APM price under the new regime was calculated at USD 7.92, but is capped at USD 6.5 for the rest of April, 24 per cent below levels in October 2022-March 2023.
"We expect such price cuts by city gas distributors and the fixing of a price ceiling to add certainty to domes-

tic natural gas' price advantage relative to alternative fuels, supporting gas usage for transportation and households, and overall demand in the medium term," Fitch said.
The revised mechanism dovetails with India's target of increasing natural gas' share in its energy mix.
"We expect the price floor and ceiling to reduce the volatility in cash flows from gas production for Oil India Limited (OIL) and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC). The floor is higher than APM prices over 2015 to 2021 while the ceiling is below current market prices," it said.
Gas sales accounted for 9-11 per cent of OIL's and ONGC's standalone revenues in the financial year ended March 2022 (FY22), and the legacy fields account for the majority of their gas production.
Financial buffers built by OIL and ONGC over the last 18 months, when industry conditions were favourable, will help them to absorb the near-term reduction in APM prices, Fitch said, adding that it expects the cut in gas prices to ease inflationary pressure in the economy, with domestic gas accounting for 55 per cent of India's gas consumption in the first nine months of 2022-23 fiscal.

Sugar selling below cost of production; hike minimum selling price: AISTA to Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Sugar trade body AISTA on Wednesday demanded that the government should increase the minimum selling price of sugar as the sweetener is being sold at lower than the cost of production in the country.
Minimum selling price of sugar has been kept unchanged at Rs 3,100 per quintal since 2019 even though the fair and remunerative price (FRP) of sugarcane has been increased every year.
All India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA) has made a representation in this regard to Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra.
"Sugar was sold as low as Rs 3,100 to 3,200 per quintal in Maharashtra and Karnataka during November-March period of the current 2022-23 season, which is 10 per cent lower than that of cost of production," AISTA Chairman Praful Vithalani said.
The minimum selling price should be more than the cost of production, which



ranges Rs 3,400-3,600 per quintal, he said.
In the representation, AISTA said the government increased the FRP of sugarcane in the last four sugar seasons (October-September), but there has been no corresponding increase in the minimum selling price.

"Therefore, the government may consider increasing the minimum selling price of sugar, which will also encourage farmers to increase sugarcane plantation in the country," it said.
That apart, the trade body has demanded the government to extend the benefit of RODTEP (Remission of Duties, Taxes On Export Products) scheme to sugar.
Under RODTEP scheme, duties and taxes are remitted at a fixed rate on export products under 'free category' only. Since sugar was kept under 'restricted' category, traders are not getting the benefit at present.
AISTA is of the view that the benefits should be extended as sugar was placed under 'restricted category' not because of the shortage but for regulating exports. "Due to technical reasons, the RODTEP benefits to sugar should not be withdrawn," it added.
India is the second largest sugar producer after Brazil in the world. The government has allowed export of 6 million tonnes in the current 2022-23 season.

Govt developing portal to expedite clearances for newly allocated blocks: Coal Secretary Meena

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The government is in the process of developing a portal for monitoring and expediting clearances for newly allocated coal blocks, Coal Secretary Amrit Lal Meena said on Wednesday.
The secretary along with Additional Coal Secretary and Nominated Authority M Nagaraju held an interaction with the representatives of captive and commercial coal block allottees to discuss ways to increase coal production and other issues.
"Timely availability of land and other clearances are of paramount importance in ensuring early production of

coal from newly allocated blocks. The nominated authority in the ministry is in the process of developing a portal for timely monitoring and resolution of issues in this regard," the secretary informed stakeholders.
M Nagaraju highlighted the policy-level initiatives carried out by the ministry to increase coal production and facilitate ease of doing business to make the sector more appealing.
He also underlined the key reforms implemented by the ministry in various tranches of commercial coal mine auctions in order to make the auction regime more appealing and rewarding.

Software exports from MP's four IT SEZs jump 66% to ₹2,926 cr in FY23

PTI ■ INDORE
Software exports from four information technology (IT) Special Economic Zone (SEZs) in Madhya Pradesh's Indore jumped 66 per cent to Rs 2,925.60 crore during FY23, a commerce and industry ministry official said on Wednesday.
The largest share in the overall shipments from the SEZs has been of IT giant TCS with 51.6 per cent.
The official said in the FY22, software worth Rs 1,761.19 crore was exported from these four IT SEZs.
During the financial year ended March 2023, software exports worth Rs 1,509.80 crore were made from TCS SEZ, registering a growth of about 74 per cent.

Domestic aviation industry on recovery path; passenger traffic 60% higher in FY23

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The domestic aviation industry continues to witness recovery with air passenger traffic logging around 60 per cent growth at 13.60 crore in FY23 annually, ICRA said on Wednesday.
Despite this, domestic air passenger traffic remained around 4 per cent below the pre-pandemic (FY20) volume of 14.15 crore, the credit rating agency said. The Indian carriers had flown a total of 8.52 crore passengers on local routes in the year ended March 2022, as per ICRA. Domestic passenger traffic stood at 1.30 crore in March this year, a growth of around 22 per cent from March 2022 volume of 1.06 crore, said Suprio Banerjee, Vice President, ICRA.
In FY23, the overall airlines' capacity deployment was higher by 38 per cent as compared to FY22, he said. The airlines' capacity deployment last month was higher by 14 per cent year-on-year and around 7 per cent more than pre-COVID level of March 2019, ICRA said. The domestic passenger load factor of the airlines industry, according to ICRA is estimated at 89 per cent in March 2023, against 82 per cent in the year-ago period and 87 per cent in March 2019 (pre-COVID levels).
Despite a healthy recovery in passenger traffic, the domestic aviation industry continues to face challenges on account of elevated aviation turbine fuel prices and depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar, both of which have a major bearing on the airlines' cost structure, it added.

Indian auto industry pioneer Keshub Mahindra dies at 99

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Keshub Mahindra, a pioneer of Indian auto industry and Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd Chairman Emeritus, died on Wednesday morning in Mumbai. Mahindra, 99, breathed his last on Wednesday morning at home peacefully, the company confirmed.
"He was a man of principles and led from the front to preserve the legacy of our founders which has ensured that the organisation has remained rooted in ethics, values and good corporate governance," Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra said.
Further, Anand said, "Keshub Mahindra was known for his astute business acumen that helped in transforming Mahindra into a diversified federation of companies. His compassion, and people-centric approach made him a global business icon, who was much loved and respected."



Keshub had led the Mahindra Group for 48 years as Chairman and expanded it from being an automobile manufacturer to other business segments like IT, real estate, financial services and hospitality.
He played key roles in forging business alliances with global majors such as the Willys Corporation, Mitsubishi, International Harvester, United Technologies, British Telecom and many others.
Born on October 9, 1923, in Shimla, Keshub was a graduate from Wharton, University

of Pennsylvania, USA, and joined M&M in 1947 and became the Chairman in 1963.
In 2012, Keshub Mahindra, who remained as one of the directors on Mahindra & Mahindra's board for 64 years overseeing the group's metamorphosis from a steel trading company to a USD 15.4 billion diversified group, handed over the baton to his nephew and the then Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Anand Mahindra.
He had also served on a large number of Boards and Councils in both private and public domain. He was the founder Chairman of HUDCO, and also served on many corporate boards, including SAIL, Tata Steel, Tata Chemicals, Indian Hotels, IFC, ICICI and HDFC.
Besides, he also held the position of President of Employers' Federation of India and the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Man City make mark against Bayern

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Erling Haaland scored his 45th goal of the season as Manchester City took a commanding 3-0 lead over Bayern Munich from their Champions League quarter-final, first leg on Tuesday.

Rodri and Bernardo Silva were also on target for the English champions, who took a giant stride towards finally conquering Europe for the first time. Victory was sweet for City boss Pep Guardiola as he came up against his former club for the first time since leaving Bayern for Manchester in 2016, but he warned that the job is not yet done.

"I've been three years there and I know in Europe this team is special. To knockout these type of teams you have to make two good games not just one," said Guardiola.

"I know exactly what we have to do there, they are capable to score one, two, three goals. We have to do our game with huge personality."

City also partially settled a Champions League score with Bayern boss Thomas Tuchel, who beat Guardiola's men to lift the trophy as Chelsea manager in the 2021 final. Tuchel was appointed less than three weeks ago by the German champions with one eye on this tie and he believed his side deserved more.

"I try to not allow my players to focus on the result because it is not the deserved result, it does not tell the story of this match," said Tuchel.

"I've seen so many good things that I refuse to just focus on the result. You may say 'that's not Bayern' but I was very proud on the sideline, we were courageous and showed the right character."

City fought off interest from Bayern among other European giants to win the race to sign Haaland a year ago for nights like this and the Norwegian played his part in a clinical performance.

Haaland uncharacteristically fluffed his lines with the first big chance of the game when his weak shot was straight at Yann Sommer.

At the other end, City were grateful to a brilliant block from Ruben Dias to prevent Jamal Musiala putting Bayern in front.



Musiala putting Bayern in front.

Rodri then showed the forwards how it is done as the Spaniard took aim from long range on his weaker left foot and curled a sumptuous shot into the top corner on 27 minutes.

CITY TURN THE SCREW

Bayern picked up Sommer in the January window as an emergency measure after Manuel Neuer's season was ended by a skiing accident.

The Swiss international proved the value of that move with a number of vital saves to keep Bayern in the tie, starting with an outstretched leg to deny Ilkay Gundogan.

But Bayern were made to regret not making their bright start to the second period count.

Leroy Sane twice came close to haunting his former club with powerful efforts that were beaten away by Ederson before Matthijs de Ligt and Kingsley Coman had headers from close range blocked by desper-

ate City defending.

Instead, City turned the screw in the final quarter to take a potentially decisive lead to Bavaria next week.

Haaland showed there is more to his game than goals with a perfectly weighted cross for Silva to head in City's second 20 minutes from time.

Sommer then produced a fine stop low to his left to turn Julian Alvarez's shot to safety.

But City were not to be denied

their third and Haaland his goal as he stretched out a telescopic right leg to turn John Stones' knockdown beyond Sommer.

Alvarez fired another effort inches wide and Sommer needed finger tips to turn over Rodri's header as City went in search of a final flourish.

But Bayern will need one of the Champions League's all-time great comebacks in eight days' time if City are to be denied a third consecutive semi-final.

Inter close in on CL semis

AP ■ LISBON

Inter Milan put one foot into the Champions League semi-finals with a comfortable 2-0 win at Benfica on Tuesday, with Nicolò Barella and Romelu Lukaku netting in Lisbon.

The Italians, three-time winners, took a commanding quarter-final first leg lead at the Estadio da Luz, inflicting Benfica's first defeat in the competition.

After an even first half, Barella headed home from Alessandro Bastoni's cross and substitute Romelu Lukaku netted the second from the penalty spot late on.

Roger Schmidt's Benfica, aiming to reach the semi-finals for the first time since 1990, were not able to put a glove on the visitors, who controlled the pace of the game.

Despite Inter's poor form, they conjured a patient, professional display when they needed it most.

Having scored two goals in their previous five games across all competitions, they managed the same tally in Lisbon with clinical finishing.

"It's been one of our best games this season," Inter midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan told British broadcaster BT Sport.

"We were dominating all over the pitch. We were doubling up and were everywhere, helping each other and we got (rewarded) for it. We've done a great job."

"But it's still not over, we still have to face them in a week and we know it's not going to be easy."

Neither side was able to create clear chances in a tight opening period.

The closest Benfica came was Andre Onana blocking a Rafa Silva drive after Federico Dimarco accidentally headed the ball into his path in the box.

The Italians had the opportunity to hit the hosts on the break after half an hour, but Lautaro Martinez played a poor pass which was blocked, with 37-year-old target man Edin Dzeko alone in space.

Alex Grimaldo smashed an effort wide from distance, with Benfica frustrated and unable to get striker Goncalo Ramos involved.

Inter Milan broke the deadlock early in the second half when Barella headed Bastoni's looping cross back across goal and into the bottom cor-



ner. The goal crowned a superb performance from the Italy international, while Inter's defence kept a sixth clean sheet in nine Champions League matches this season.

Schmidt sent on David Neres for midfielder Florentino in search of the equaliser, but Inter doubled their lead with eight minutes remaining.

Joao Mario, one of Benfica's best players this season, handled Denzel Dumfries's cross, gifting his former side a penalty.

Lukaku drilled it beyond the reach of Greek goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos, answering some criticism of his recent form.

The victory gives Inter a fine chance of setting up an all-Italian semi-final against Serie A leaders Napoli or city rivals AC Milan.

Inter, who beat another Portuguese side, Porto, in the last 16, host Benfica on Wednesday April 19 at the San Siro in the second leg.

Turkey only rival to UK and Ireland's Euro 2028 bid

AP ■ LONDON

Turkey is the only rival to UK and Ireland candidacy to host the 2028 European Championship, UEFA announced on Wednesday after receiving final bids from interested countries.

European football's governing body said that Turkey would go up against the joint bid from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to host Euro 2028 and that Turkey is also a candidate to host Euro 2032.

Italy is the only other bidder for the hosting rights to the 2032 tournament.

"In the forthcoming months, the UEFA administration will evaluate each of the bids, with the UEFA Executive Committee to vote on who has won the right to host both editions in October," the body said in a statement.

The British and Irish joint bid for Euro 2028 is the favourite after the countries abandoned plans to run for the 2030 World Cup.

Wembley, the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, Newcastle's St James' Park, Birmingham's Villa Park and Everton's new stadium in Liverpool would host matches in England, as would Manchester City's Etihad Stadium.

The Principality Stadium in Cardiff, Hampden Park in



Glasgow, Dublin's Lansdowne Road and Casement Park in Belfast are the other venues being proposed in the bid.

England and Scotland hosted 12 games during Euro 2020, which took place across Europe in 2021 after a delay caused by the pandemic.

Fan violence marred the Wembley final, won by Italy, but UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has played down fears the disorder would affect England's chances of hosting major events.

Turkey is hoping for success this time after losing out to Germany in the bidding to host Euro 2024.

Istanbul's Ataturk Olympic Stadium will host this year's Champions League final on June 10.

Italy, the reigning European champions, have hosted the Euro twice before, in 1968 and 1980.

Rome's Stadio Olimpico was also used as a venue at Euro 2020.

The 2028 and 2032 tournaments will feature 24 teams.

Russia had initially declared an interest last year in hosting one of the two tournaments but UEFA announced last May that it would not consider any bid from the Russian Football Union.

Rashford to miss a 'few games'

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Marcus Rashford will miss Manchester United's Europa League quarter-final first-leg clash with Sevilla this week after suffering a muscle injury that is likely to keep him out for "a few games", the club announced on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old, who has scored 28 goals for Erik ten Hag's side this season, limped out of the 2-0 Premier League win over Everton on Saturday, holding his groin.

United, targeting a trophy treble, said in a statement that assessment of the injury "suggested that Marcus will be unavailable for a few games, but is expected to be back for the season run-in".

Speaking to reporters an hour after United's update on their top scorer, Ten Hag said he was unable to give further information.

"I can't give more details of it because we don't know," he said.

"We have to see how it develops, the injury. Of course it's a setback and he's disappointed about it."

"But he's not totally broke because he knows he will return quickly, so he's optimistic and he's started straight on his recovery and his rehab so that helps to get back soon."

Rashford will definitely miss Thursday's match against Sevilla, who could come up against a familiar face at Old Trafford as Ten Hag looks for other attacking options.

Anthony Martial spent a disappointing loan stint with the La Liga side in the second half of last sea-



Man Utd bidding process goes to third round

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Rival bidders for Manchester United have been invited to submit a third offer by the end of April, according to reports.

Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jaber Al Thani and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe both submitted a second bid for the Premier League club last month.

Several offers are understood to have been received in recent weeks but Sheikh Jassim and Ratcliffe remain the front runners to buy United should the Glazers give up control of the club they bought in 2005 for £790 million

(\$980 million).

United's unpopular owners announced in November they were conducting a strategic review, with the sale of the club one option being considered.

The Qatari group has reportedly made an offer of about £5 billion for 100 percent ownership of the club while Ratcliffe, a boyhood United fan, wants to buy the combined Glazer shareholding of 69 percent.

The Americans' asking price is believed to be around \$6 billion — a figure that would make the 20-time English champions the most expensive sports club in history.

Djokovic, Tsitsipas advance in Monte Carlo

AP ■ MONTE CARLO

Novak Djokovic made a winning return to competition in the Monte Carlo Masters on Tuesday but was made to work by his 198th-ranked Russian opponent as two-time defending champion Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced when his rival retired injured.

Djokovic is back on court after failing to get a waiver to enter the United States for last month's Indian Wells tournament and Miami Open due to his anti-Covid vaccination stance.

The world number one was in danger of losing the opening set against Russian qualifier Ivan Gakhov before easing through 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 in 1hr 47min.

"I had never seen him play before today, and it's always difficult to face an opponent you don't know," said the Serbian, a winner on clay in Monte Carlo in 2013 and 2015.

Favourite for a third crown in the Principality in the absence of Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz, Djokovic will face either 21st-ranked Lorenzo Musetti or Luca Nardi, 159th, both Italian, for a place in the quarter-finals.

Tsitsipas advanced to the third round after Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi retired with a left wrist issue after just 22 minutes, trailing the Greek 4-1 in the first set.

World number three Tsitsipas next meets either Chilean Nicolas Jarry, ranked 58, or Australian Alexei Popyrin, 94th, for a place in the quarter-finals.

Djokovic is tuning up for a 23rd Grand Slam bid at the French Open. But the game was not as easy as expected with Gakhov taking the first break to lead 4-3.

Djokovic broke back immediately, but could not prevent the tie-break



which he wrapped up on his first set point.

The second set was one-sided even though Gakhov hung on until the end.

"It was probably, if you can call it this way, an ugly tennis win for me today," said Djokovic, who is looking for a record-extending 39th ATP Masters title this week.

"I haven't played my best, particularly in the first set. And I kind of expected that that was going to happen in a way with swirly conditions, a lot of wind today, changing directions."

"It's different practising and then playing an official match on clay."

"But all in all, I'm just pleased with the way I held my nerves I think in the important moments and I managed to clinch the two-set win."

Alejandro Davidovich Fokina fell at the first hurdle.

Fifth-seeded Rublev, recipient of a first-round bye, rallied to beat Spaniard Jaume Munar 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 in their second-round tie.

German Zverev made a hesitant start to his clay-court season before seeing off Kazakh Alexander Bublik 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 in the first round.

Zverev, a two-time Monte Carlo semi-finalist, will next play Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut for a place in the third round.

Spaniard Davidovich Fokina fell 6-2, 6-2 to ninth seed Karen Khachanov. Khachanov took 75 minutes to brush past Davidovich Fokina, who lost the final last year to Tsitsipas.

Italian Lorenzo Sonego saved four match points to beat French qualifier Ugo Humbert 3-6, 7-5, 7-5 and plays third seed Daniil Medvedev in the second round.

Panghal reaches gold medal round

PTI ■ ASTANA

Displaying a brilliant counter-attacking game, young Indian wrestler Antim Panghal breezed into the 53kg title clash, scoring dominant wins over her rivals, whereas Anshu Malik will fight for bronze after struggling to breach the defence of Japan's Sae Nanjo, here on Wednesday. The 18-year-old Panghal, who last year became the first Indian woman wrestler to become U20 world champion, routed the 53kg field, not conceding a single point on the moves of her rivals.

The only point she lost was through a caution received in her semifinal against Uzbekistan's Aktenge Keunimjaeva, whom she outclassed 8-1.

Panghal had begun her campaign with a dominating

'win by fall' against Singaporean Hsiao Ping Alvina Lim and followed up with a 6-0 victory in the quarterfinal against China's Li Deng. She will now fight for gold against the formidable Japanese Akari Fujinami, the 2021 world champion and someone who has hardly lost a bout since she started competing at the senior level in 2020.

In the 57kg competition, much was expected from talented Anshu Malik but the 2021 world championship silver medalist struggled to score against Nanjo, the reigning U23 world champion.

Malik, if fit, will now fight for bronze against Mongolia's Erdenesuvd Bat Erdene. Meanwhile Manisha (65kg), Reetika (72kg) and Sonam Malik (62kg) will fight for bronze medals.

Royals beat CSK in last-ball thriller

PTI ■ CEHNNAI

Mahendra Singh Dhoni gave a glimpse of the good old days of thrilling finishes but unheralded Rajasthan Royals seamer Sandeep Sharma nailed a couple of perfect block-hole deliveries to earn a three-run victory for Rajasthan Royals over Chennai Super Kings in a close IPL encounter, here on Wednesday.

Chasing a target of 176, Dhoni (32 off 17 balls) and Ravindra Jadeja (25 off 15 balls), veterans of many such tantalising finishes were on course as 21 was needed off the last over. CSK's final score was 172 for 6 as Dhoni didn't end his 200th game for CSK in a manner he would have liked in his spiritual home with 30,000 plus spectators rooting for him.

Punjab seamer Sandeep, who played a couple of games for India eight years back, seemed to lose his nerve as he bowled a couple of wides and then Dhoni whipped him over square leg and mid-wicket for a couple of sixes.

Needing 6 off last two deliveries, the medium pacer got a wide yorker to Jadeja and then a perfect block-hole ball to Dhoni as it fetched a couple of singles. However Devon Conway had a scratchy approach on tacky pitch as his 50 off 38 balls didn't provide the momentum with Ravichandran Ashwin (2/25 in 4 overs) and Yuzvendra Chahal (2/27 in 4 overs) bowling exceptionally well.

Earlier, Jos Buttler wasn't exactly devastating in his



approach but yet managed the 18th half-century of his IPL career as Rajasthan Royals posted a decent 175 for 8 after being put into bat first.

While Royals were 135 for 4 after 15 overs, the last five overs weren't as productive as they would have expected with only 40 runs being added and four wickets lost in the process.

Ravindra Jadeja (2/21 in 4 overs) was as usual menacing on a surface that assisted the spinners even as Buttler hit three huge sixes in his 36-ball-52. He

had a good 77-run second-wicket stand with Devdutt Padikkal (38 off 26 balls), who after his struggles against Punjab Kings, was back in his element.

Towards the end, Shimron Hetmyer (30 off 18 balls) was ever impressive as a finisher while Tushar Deshpande (2/37) gave only eight runs in the 20th over. The CSK bowlers, especially Jadeja managed to peg back the Royals batters after the brisk start with the 50 coming in the 6th over.

Royals did struggle between

overs 8-13 as they lost two wickets in the space of three balls with Padikkal and skipper Sanju Samson (0) falling to Jadeja.

The delivery that got Samson, was bowled with high arm speed and it did turn enough along with sufficient bounce to force the batter play a wrong line.

After a phase in which the Royals batters did not score any boundaries for a little over six overs, Ashwin (30, 22 balls, 1x4, 2x6) smacked two successive sixes off debutant left-arm pacer

Akash Singh. He fell even as he was looking to step up the pace, skying one off Akash in the deep.

After skipper MS Dhoni won the toss and opted to bowl, Deshpande struck an early blow for the home team, dismissing the dangerous Yashasvi Jaiswal (10, 8 balls, 2x4), having him caught by Shivam Dube.

Buttler and Padikkal (38, 26 balls, 5x4) add 77 runs in 41 deliveries before the latter fell to Ravindra Jadeja, caught in the deep by Devon Conway. The partnership laid the foundation

for the Royals after Jaiswal was dismissed early.

Dhoni was felicitated prior to the match for captaining CSK for a 200th time in IPL by former BCCI president N Srinivasan in the presence of his wife Chitra Srinivasan and former TNCA president Rupa Gurunath.

'DC WILL TAKE TIME'

A team full of uncapped youngsters takes its own time to blossom into a winning outfit and one needs to give this Delhi Capitals side that requisite duration, feels Director of Cricket Sourav Ganguly.

DC are currently last in 10-team table with four defeats in a row and it does hurt, admitted the former India skipper.

"The loss certainly hurts, especially because of the way this team has played since 2019. But these things happen in sport. It's never easy when you lose. There are so many youngsters in our side and we'll take time to be a good team," said Ganguly.

But Ganguly insisted that the players need to do some soul searching into what has gone wrong.

"It can only be up from here and hopefully, the young boys will turn up on the high-scoring wicket in Bengaluru. You have to find a way to make a comeback. This has happened to everyone," he said.

"When you play for a period of time, you will go through such phases. It's about going back to your rooms, looking at the mirror and asking yourself how can I change."



Titans, PBKS look to arrest slide

PTI ■ MOHALI

Defending champions Gujarat Titans, smarting from Rinku Singh's last-over blitzkrieg, would like to forget that nightmarish night and get back to winning ways when they take on gritty Punjab Kings in an Indian Premier League match here on Thursday.

GT had several heroes on that electrifying night, including young Sai Sudarshan, Vijay Shankar and the hat-trick man from Afghanistan Rashid Khan, who led the side in place of unwell Hardik Pandya.

But Rinku had other ideas.

When the match looked as good as over, the Uttar Pradesh batter pulled the rabbit out of the hat for Kolkata Knight Riders, smashing five maximums in the last over to stun the home team.

That last-ball defeat will hurt GT for years to come but, in the immediate, they would like to forget it and get on with the next game.

GT, currently fourth on the table with four points from three games, still have a great chance to top the chart, but for that they will have to collectively come together against PBKS, who are fast emerging as one of the most difficult sides to surmount.

Going by their current form, PBKS' eight-wicket loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad could just be an aberration, given the form of their captain Shikhar Dhawan and young left-arm bowler Arshdeep Singh.

Dhawan's innings in Hyderabad on April 9 was a testament to the stalwart's resilience and his ability to stay composed as wickets fell like ninepins at the other end.

His 99 in a losing cause was far bigger and better than playing a winning hand in the match against Rajasthan Royals with an unbeaten 86, or a stroke-filled 40 against KKR.

GT would be wary of

Dhawan's form and Hardik would know all too well how the veteran Delhi cricketer would be itching to once again prove himself.

This could well be a contest of one-upmanship between Dhawan and Shubman Gill, with the former still wanting to prove himself and be in contention for a place in the India squad for the ODI World Cup at home later this year.

The way Dhawan and young opening partner Prabhshimran Singh have blasted off in powerplays gives an indication that they are unlikely to alter their strategy against GT, who have bowlers of the calibre of Mohammed Shami, Hardik and Rashid, to name a few.

Lower down, PBKS have the most expensive buy in IPL history, all-rounder Sam Curran besides Liam Livingstone and Jitesh Sharma, while in the bowling department Arshdeep and Nathan Ellis have created quite a few problems for the rivals.

GT though have their own firepower, boasting of the likes of Gill, top-order batter Sudarshan and Shankar — late bloomer at 32 —, who struck an unbeaten 24-ball 63 to guide the side to a 200-plus total in their game against KKR.

Had it not been for Rinku's breathtaking last-over mayhem, Vijay could well have been patting his back for the wonderful effort. Unfortunately, that was not to be and things turned upside-down in the last over bowled by Yash Dayal.

GT would perhaps take a second look at their bowling combination and see how they can rotate their bowlers more efficiently.

With four premier bowlers in Shami, Josh Little, Alzarri Joseph and Rashid in their team, they shouldn't have lost the game after posting 204. But, then, this is IPL and there are one Rinku too many itching to prove themselves.



Morgan backs Stokes, Archer to manage injuries well in IPL 2023

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former skipper Eoin Morgan is confident England mainstays Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer will manage their injuries well, adding that the duo is not preparing only for an IPL season but also the World Cup and the Ashes series later this year.

While Stokes has been sidelined due to a toe injury, Archer is believed to be having trouble with his elbow, on which he has already undergone two separate operations in the past that led to a long injury lay-off. "They are two very experienced players. They know their bodies inside out. Ben has managed his body exceptionally well through all three formats his whole career."

"Jofra is back and bowling well; obviously he had a little bit of setback. But these players know their bodies, they are preparing for the full year not (for) just an IPL season," Morgan said during a virtual interaction on Wednesday.

Stokes has been managing his left knee injury for a while and bowled only one over — against Lucknow Super Giants at Chennai — whereas Archer has not featured for Mumbai Indians

post their season-opener against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

"Ben clearly is not struggling; he went down with an illness (toe injury). (About) Jofra, I am not sure but he has a niggle. If they are not playing in the IPL they would be playing County cricket which is exactly the same risk level. It is actually a bigger risk level because (they would be) bowling more overs and playing four-day cricket. "For me, IPL is the best against the best and it puts you under huge amount of pressure, very similar to international cricket. This year being a World Cup and an Ashes year (there is) added responsibility. "For those two players, you don't have to remind them how much confidence it gives when you perform at the IPL," the World Cup-winning captain said.

Morgan insisted that teams are likely to do well if they stop being over-reliant on big names and find a collective group of players can deliver. "You are not solely reliant on your big performers, which can take a lot of pressure away from any expectations that they have and allow them a little bit longer to get the performances that they need."

First win is always special, says Rohit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma was a relieved man after his team finally registered its first win in this edition of the IPL with a six-wicket victory over Delhi Capitals in a last-ball thriller here on Tuesday.

Five-time champions MI suffered defeats in their first two matches but the Rohit-led side finally pulled off a win after completing a chase of 173 in the last ball.

"Winning the game is the most important. We have been working hard from the first game. We had a camp in Mumbai, getting the result (in our favour) feels good. First win is always special," said Rohit, who was adjudged the Player of the Match for his 45-ball 65, at the post-match presentation.

Piyush Chawla snapped three wickets and Rohit, who introduced spinner Hrithik Shokeen in the fourth over,



credited the slow bowlers for performing their job.

"We played a Test match here recently, the pitch looked different. Getting a slow bowler was important on this pitch. The

spinners kept us in the game." The India skipper said as a batting unit his side wanted to make the most of the powerplay.

"We needed to bat well to chase the total. I thought every-

one put their hand up. We had to make it count for the team. I needed to make use of the powerplay, I knew we had to keep attacking and take our chances," he said.

"I tried to create a partnership, had a good communication with Tilak. It was important for us to have a good partnership."

For DC, it was their fourth defeat in as many matches — the second worst start to a season for them after six straight losses in 2013. "You look at the last three IPL games, amazing. Wrong end of it today, but the guys were fantastic. Two balls were wrong and that's the game. We did well to bring it back in," DC skipper David Warner said.

Defending five runs in the last over, Anrich Nortje dished out a masterclass in death bowling to almost pull off a win.

"Nortje is world-class and that's what we expect from the big fella. Mustafiz too (did well)," he said.

Warner is trying but it's just not happening for him: Axar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals vice-captain David Warner is trying his best to lead from the front, but things are not falling in place for the veteran Australian opener.

DC slumped to their fourth consecutive loss in the ongoing IPL after being outplayed by Mumbai Indians by six wickets here on Tuesday night. They are languishing at the bottom of the table without any points.

Delhi Capitals scored 172 on the Ferozeshah Kotla pitch, which was chased down by the five-time IPL champions on the last ball, with skipper Rohit Sharma playing a captain's knock of 65.

Even though Warner has been among the runs, scoring 209 in four innings, Axar feels the Australian is not able to close out

the games for the side.

"If you talk about the last two-three games, he is trying, but it's just not happening for him. I don't know what he is thinking as a batter at that time," said Axar during the post-match press conference.

Axar also indicated that the Australian stalwart was getting confused over when to drop anchor and when to attack the bowling.

Warner has been criticised for his inordinately slow batting in powerplays, with the 36-year-old opener scoring his half-century at a strike rate of just 108.51 in Tuesday's game. Though the Australia has scored three half-tens in four games, they have been painfully slow, and one of the reasons for the Delhi franchise's poor run this season.

Warner scored a 55-ball 65 at



a strike rate of 118 against Rajasthan Royals, while against Lucknow Super Giants, the stalwart hit a 48-ball 56 at a strike rate of 116.

"When Prithvi (Shaw) is batting with him, he (Warner) tries to play the anchor role. (And) when wickets are falling from one end, it's not good (for Warner) to try and keep attacking from the other end as well."

"Even when he is trying, it's not coming off. Everyone spoke to him — (head coach) Ricky (Ponting), (Shane) Watson, Dada (Sourav Ganguly). The conversation about his strike rate also came up. They looked at his videos and he's working on it," added Axar.

Axar, however, feels it is not lost for DC and they need to keep a positive frame of mind to give themselves a chance to qualify for

the play-offs.

"After four losses, there are two ways to think — one is you sit back thinking that you've lost four games, the run-rate is poor and the qualification is at stake, there is nothing good that's going to come out of it," he said.

"On the other hand, if you have a positive attitude, and think about what you're going to do in the next match, you will be able to bring the performance that you want to bring. It's important to remain positive and that's what we keep talking about."

On his improved batting technique, Axar said, "If you are playing for India across the three formats, then that boosts your confidence. Senior players like Virat (Kohli) and Rohit (Sharma), Hardik told me a few things about getting the mindset right."

Some players have become permanent residents of NCA, can't play four games on trot: Shastri

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri has hit out at the injury management of some of country's premier bowlers, saying they seem to have become "permanent residents" of the National Cricket Academy (NCA) while undergoing rehabilitation.

While Shastri didn't take any name, his obvious reference was Chennai Super Kings seamer Deepak Chahar, who has broken down at least thrice in match situations in the last eight months after being

declared fit by Nitin Patel-headed Sports Science & Medical team at NCA.

"Let's put it this way: there are quite a few in the last three or four years who are permanent residents of the NCA. Soon, they'll get a resident permit there to walk in any time they want, which is not a good thing at all. It's unreal," Shastri said sarcastically on ESPN Cricinfo's digital video.

The BCCI-run NCA in Bengaluru has a dedicated sports science and medical team that helps the centrally-contracted cricketers in getting treat-

ment for their injuries.

Chahar is struggling due to recurrence of his left hamstring injury while tearaway quicks Jasprit Bumrah and Prasad Krishna have undergone surgeries in New Zealand for lower back stress fracture.

Shastri, who was India's head coach, as recently as October, 2021, is surprised that some of these bowlers don't even play all formats but are yet not fit enough to bowl four overs across four T20 games on the trot.

"Come on, you're not playing that much cricket to be



injured again and again," Shastri said.

"I mean, you can't play four matches on the trot. What are you going to the NCA for? If you are going to come back and then three matches (later) you're back there (NCA)," he questioned.

He urged the players going for rehabilitation to at least try to be fit enough so that no one is wasting their time and money.

"So, you make sure you get fit and come once and for all because it's damn frustrating. Not just for the team, the players, the BCCI, the captains of

the various [IPL] franchises. It's annoying, to say the least."

His next comment was a direct reference to Chahar, who had a couple of months back claimed that he is "fully fit."

"I can understand a serious injury, but every four games when someone touches his hamstring or someone touches his groin, you start thinking what are these guys... what are they training, what's going on? "And some of them don't play any other cricket in the year. It's just four overs [in the IPL], man, three hours. The game is over."

SKY leads T20I rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

He might be going through a lean patch in the ongoing IPL 2023 but Suryakumar Yadav continued to top the ICC Men's T20I Batter Rankings released on Wednesday.

Suryakumar is leading the chart with 906 rating points ahead of Pakistan duo of Mohammed Rizwan (811 points) and skipper Babar Azam (755), South Africa's Aiden Markram (748) and Devon Conway of New Zealand (745).

Virat Kohli remained static at the 15th spot.

Suryakumar is not having the best of IPL, registering scores of 15, 1 and 0 in Mumbai Indians' first three games.

Babar, who moved up to

third, will get further opportunity to make gains on Suryakumar when Pakistan commence their five-game T20I series against New Zealand on Saturday.

A host of New Zealand and Sri Lanka stars who did feature in the recently-completed T20I series were rewarded for their performances, with young spinner Maheesh Theekshana the biggest eye-catcher as the 22-year-old rose to a career-high rating and equal fifth-place on the rankings for bowlers.

Afghan spinner Rashid Khan is leading the T20 bowlers chart ahead of compatriot Fazalhaq Farooqi, Australian Josh Hazlewood and Wanindu Hasaranga of Sri Lanka.