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NEW DELHI, SATURDAY APRIL 15, 2023; PAGES 12 3

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NADAL OUT OF BARCELONA TOURNAMENT
11 SPORT



Seva Bhaav our motto: Modi

PM launches N-E's first AIIMS, three medical colleges; watches world record-making Bihu

PNS/PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asserted that his Government "work with 'Seva Bhaav' (spirit of service) and 'samarpan' (dedication) for the people", and the efforts paid dividends as North-East has joined the national mainstream. Lashing out at the Opposition, Modi said, "Those who came before us were credit hungry and credit hungry people destroy the nation."

In what many analysts saw as an energetic early start to next year's general elections, the PM made attacking speeches and attended programmes and cultural galas — North-East's first AIIMS in Guwahati; three medical colleges at Nalbari, Nagaon and Kokrajhar; Platinum Jubilee celebrations of Gauhati High Court; Guinness World Record making Bihu dance performance — Modi claimed in the last nine years since his government came to power, the definition of connectivity had been changed



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Assam CM Himanta Bishwa Sharma during the mega Bihu dance programme at Sarusajai Sports Complex in Guwahati on Friday

bringing the northeast nearer to the rest of the country.

The PM claimed that the N-E had "suffered for decades under family-controlled politics, regionalism, corruption and insecurity" during which development was not possible

and the region paid a "huge price" for this. He added, "We work with 'Seva Bhaav' (spirit of service) and 'samarpan' (dedication) for the people."

He also stressed that his government had worked hard to ensure dramatic improve-

ment in social and physical infrastructure in the N-E over the last 9 years. "The Northeast was distant for earlier governments... We have served with dedication to bring it near," the PM said.

Modi said in the past few

years, youth from the region "have left violence and moved on the path to peace." "The atmosphere of mistrust is disappearing from the North East, the distance between hearts is disappearing... We need to move further closer," he added.

Besides dedicating North-East's first AIIMS at Guwahati, the PM also virtually inaugurated three medical colleges at Nalbari, Nagaon and Kokrajhar. The 500-bed tertiary care teaching hospitals with 24 UG departments in the three medical colleges will start with 100 annual MBBS student intake, taking the total MBBS student intake to 1,500 in Assam.

The PM also launched the distribution of 1.1 crore Ayushman cards to beneficiaries who will be able to avail cashless healthcare medical treatment benefits up to ₹5 lakh with these cards.

Later in the day, while speaking at the concluding ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of Gauhati High Court, Modi stressed that technology needs to be brought into play to speed up the justice delivery system, especially in remote areas such as in N-E. "Technology can help bring justice to remote areas such as in N-E," he said.

Continued on Page 2

CBI summons Kejriwal on Sunday in liquor case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has summoned Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning in connection with the excise policy case on Sunday. Last month, the CBI arrested former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the case.

According to the notice issued by the CBI, Kejriwal has been called to appear at the agency headquarters at 11 am on Sunday to depose as a witness in the case, officials said.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) dubbed the CBI move a conspiracy and confirmed that Kejriwal will appear before the agency on Sunday. The AAP alleged that the BJP was conspiring to arrest Kejriwal in the "fabricated" excise policy case,



and stressed that their fight against corruption won't be hampered.

Addressing a Press conference, AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh described the summons as a desperate attempt by the BJP to silence their opposition and said these summons will only strengthen Kejriwal's anti-corruption crusade.

"The fact remains that the Centre is tainted with accusa-

tions of wide-scale corruption and nothing can change that. "Kejriwal swore to expose the reality of the PM in the Assembly that day. But now, this expose will stir up a storm across the nation," he said.

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Channi quizzed for 7 hours by Vigilance Bureau in Punjab

Chandigarh: Former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Friday appeared before Vigilance Bureau in connection with a disproportionate assets matter and was questioned by the officials for nearly seven hours. Channi described the investigation as "totally political."

PNS

Gangster Bishnoi's aide killed in Tihar Jail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Bloodshed inside Tihar Jail was reported on Friday with an associate of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi being stabbed to death in an attack by rival gang members, according to officials. The deceased Prince Tewatia (30) was lodged in central jail number 3, they said.

"Around 5.30 pm today, an inmate, Tewatia, had a dispute with another inmate, Attatur Rehman, who is from a rival gang," a jail official said.

Tewatia attacked the other inmate with an improvised weapon and members of both the gangs joined the fight that left four people injured. Three of them are stated to be stable while Tewatia was taken to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital where he was declared dead," the official said.

A case was registered and an enquiry by the chief judicial magistrate has been initiated, the official said.

According to officials, Tewatia was previously involved in 16 criminal cases, including murder and attempt to murder.

BJP will win 35 LS seats in WB, oust Didi: Shah



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses during a public meeting at Suri in Birbhum district on Friday

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday blew the election bugle for 2024 general elections from Birbhum asserting if the BJP got 35 parliamentary seats in Bengal then the Mamata Banerjee Government would not complete its full term — and that would entail a new political order where the Ram Navami rallies would never again be attacked by rioters.

Shah — who was on a two-day trip of Bengal where apart from attending public rallies he was likely to set out a road map for the State saffron leaders ahead of 2024 — told a massive rally at Birbhum that the only way to end corruption, cow smuggling and recruit-

ment scams in Bengal was by ending the misrule perpetrated by Mamata Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

"Today Bengal is a hub of corruption, appeasement, bomb blasts, infiltration, cow smuggling and if you want to end this misrule then Didi's government has to be brought down... the only way to free Bengal of the corrupt and tyrannical rule of the Bua-Bhatija (aunt and nephew) duo then the BJP must get 35 (out of 42) MP seats from Bengal then only the rule of terror will end here," Shah said insisting "once the BJP gets 35 seats from Bengal then the TMC government will not have to continue beyond 2025. It will crumble well before 2025."

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Death row convicts exploiting undue mercy-plea delay: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Death-row convicts are taking advantage of an inordinate delay in deciding mercy petitions, the Supreme Court has said while directing the State Governments and authorities concerned to see such pleas are decided and disposed of at the earliest.

A bench of Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar said even after the final conclusion by the top court, there is an inordinate delay in not deciding the mercy petition, the object and purpose of the death sentence would be frustrated.

"Therefore, as such, all efforts shall be made by the State Government and/or the concerned authorities to see that mercy petitions are decided and disposed of at the earliest, so that even the accused can also know his fate and even justice is also done to the victim,"

the bench said.

The observations came on a petition filed by the Maharashtra government challenging an order of the Bombay High Court which commuted the death sentence awarded to a woman and her sister.

The high court commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment on grounds that there was an inordinate and unexplained delay on the part of the State/Governor of the State in not deciding the mercy petitions preferred by the accused which was kept pending for about seven years and 10 months.

A local court had awarded the death sentence to them in 2001 for kidnapping 13 children and killing nine in Kolhapur, which was confirmed by the high court in 2004.

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Cong deposes Nath for Raj firefighting

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and one of the most seasoned Congress leaders Kamal Nath has been roped in by the party to play the role of a mediator in resolving the situation arising in the party's Rajasthan unit after Sachin Pilot's day-long fast put pressure on the Ashok Gehlot Government for action against the alleged



corruption under the previous Vasundhara Raje-led BJP Government. Nath, along with Congress general secretary in-charge organisation KC Venugopal, met Pilot to discuss his side of arguments and the former Rajasthan deputy CM conveyed to him that his fast was only directed at action against corruption under Vasundhara

Government and was not "anti-party" at all. Congress Rajasthan in-charge Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa met party chief Mallikarjun Kharge for the second time in two days to discuss the Rajasthan issue. He had also met Rahul Gandhi at his residence to discuss the matter.

Leaders close to Pilot claimed the Congress has been raising the corruption plank in the Adani matter and in Karnataka polls and Pilot's action was in line with that.

As far as the issue of "indiscipline" is concerned, the Pilot side has also raised questions as to why no action has been taken against Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot loyalists who had defied party's directive for holding a legislature party meeting last year.

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CAPSULE

TRIBUTE TO AMBEDKAR ON BIRTH ANNIVERSARY



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary celebrations, at Parliament house complex, in New Delhi, on Friday

AMARNATH YATRA TO BEGIN ON JULY 1

Jammu: The annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath shrine, located at a height of 3,880 metres in south Kashmir Himalayas, will begin on July 1 and continue till August 31, authorities said on Friday. Registration for the pilgrimage will start on April 17.

RECOVER AID IF RAPE VICTIMS TURN HOSTILE DURING TRIAL: HC TO UP

Lucknow: The Allahabad High Court has directed the Uttar Pradesh Government to recover the compensation paid to rape victims if they turn hostile during trial proceedings. The Lucknow bench of the high court has told the State government to issue necessary directions to the officers concerned in the matter.

Rahul begins shifting from MP bungalow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has started shifting his belongings from his 12, Tughlaq Lane residence as he was asked to vacate the Government house by April 22 following his disqualification from the Lok Sabha.

Two trucks were seen parked outside the house and the belongings were later shifted to his mother's 10, Janpath residence. Sources said Rahul is likely to soon vacate the official bungalow allotted to him. While Rahul has seen a number of houses, he may also opt to stay with his mother and Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

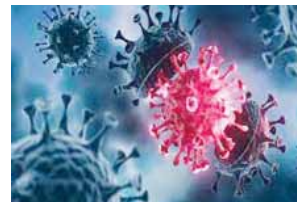
Arcturus behind Covid surge; 11K cases, 29 deaths in a day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new coronavirus strain dubbed Arcturus appears to be driving a surge in Covid-19 infections in India which saw cases breaching 11,000 mark in the country on Friday, a biggest jump in a year. The death toll climbed to 5,31,064 with 29 deaths in a day.

At least 11,109 cases were reported in the last 24 hours, as per the Health Ministry data. This is the fifth consecutive day when a rise in Covid-19 cases was reported this week.

According to experts, the XBB.1.16 strain, a sub-variant of Omicron, has been found in



22 countries, including Singapore, Australia, the UK and the US. Research indicates Arcturus could be 1.2 times more infectious than the last major sub-variant, making it likely to become the dominant strain.

The spread of the strain, first detected in late January in India, is worrying experts, as it seems to exhibit unique

symptoms in children, one of which is conjunctivitis.

The symptoms of the variant include high fever, cough, and "itchy" conjunctivitis or pinkeye, according to a tweet by Vipin Vashishtha, a paediatrician and former head of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Immunisation.

He tweeted that he has started getting pediatric Covid cases once again after a gap of 6 months! An infantile phenotype seems emerging-treated infants with high fever, cold & cough, & non-purulent, itchy conjunctivitis with sticky eyes, not seen in earlier waves, he said.

Continued on Page 2

Asad's uncle to collect body for his last rites in Prayagraj

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The body Asad, the son of gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad — who was killed along with his accomplice Ghulam, both wanted in the Umesh Pal murder case, in an encounter — will be collected by his uncle from Jhansi, a family advocate said on Friday.

Asad's maternal uncle has gone to Jhansi to take the body, advocate Manish Khanna said. He is expected to be buried at a graveyard in the Dhoomanganj area here.

A police official said a large number of policemen will be deployed during the last rites of Asad to avoid any untoward incident.

Sources also said that the police is ready to arrest Asad's fugitive mother Shaista Parveen if she attends her son's last rites.

Asad was the third of five sons of Atiq Ahmad and was absconding since the Umesh Pal murder case.

Asad was caught on CCTV when Umesh Pal was killed and had been on the run for the past about 50 days, police said.

Raut backs Yogi's bid to end mafia raj

Mumbai: Backing Yogi Adityanath over the encounter of gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad's son Asad, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Friday said if the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister wants to end mafia raj then there should be no question of caste and religion.

Criminals and terrorists have no caste or religion, he said, adding that those who have suspicions on such police action can always approach courts for remedial measures.

Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye! runs out of luck

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The real-life inspiration behind Bollywood comedy "Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!", Davinder Singh, alias Bunty Chor, a highly-skilled thief, has been arrested by the Delhi Police from Kanpur.

"Bunty Chor," infamous for committing robberies at houses in high-profile and posh locations, had over 500 cases of burglaries filed against him till 2012 alone, police said. However, only after Abhay

Deol-starrer "Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!" hit the silver screen in 2008, the real Bunty Chor gained notoriety.

In the past, Bunty Chor gave police from several States the slip.

A few years later, Davinder made a cameo appearance as a contestant in the popular reality show "Big Boss Season 4" in 2010, but was evicted after he misbehaved with host Salman Khan.

Nicknamed "super thief", 53-year-old Davinder was

arrested from Uttar Pradesh in connection with two recently executed thefts in the national Capital. Davinder started committing robberies since he was 14 years old.

The arrest was made after a case was registered based on the complaint of a GK-II resident regarding theft of three expensive mobile phones, purse, two laptops, branded shoes, wrist watch and Baleno car on the intervening night of April 12-13, police said. On the same day, a second theft was



reported by another resident of GK-II, they added. Deputy Commissioner of

Police (South) Chandhan Choudhary said CCTV camera footage of the area and the place of incident revealed that a middle aged suspect wearing a cap was involved in both the incidents.

"The team started looking at the CCTV footage of the suspect and followed the route of the stolen car which revealed that it was going towards Noida via Alaknanda in CR Park," the official said.

The registration number of the car was also ascertained

through the footage, police said. "During the course of investigation, police teams of CR Park followed the footage and tracked the car till Kalindi Kunj.

"Meanwhile, the team checked the locations of stolen mobile phones and found one of them switched on following which its location was traced near Agra.

"The team instantly moved towards the location which was about 150 km away from them," she said.

The fastag number of the stolen mobile phone was kept on surveillance. Fastag deductions at various toll booths were monitored, police said. The team spotted the stolen car on the highway near Etawah in UP.

The team later managed to intercept the car at a toll booth in the UP's Kanpur Dehat but the accused tried to escape. However, the glass window of the car was broken and the accused was apprehended, she added.

Continued on Page 2

Vigilance Bureau grills Punjab ex-CM Channi

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Friday appeared before the Vigilance Bureau in connection with a disproportionate assets matter and was questioned by the officials for seven hours. Channi described the probe as "totally political". Emerging out from Vigilance Bureau's Mohali office in the evening, Channi again slammed the AAP Government, alleging that "this government is treating worse than even the Mughals. They want to use every way to humiliate and defame." "In democracy, this is not the way. That without any basis they try to build up a case. I stand by what I said earlier in the morning at my press conference, they may do whatever they have to," Channi said. "I always worked with honesty and will continue to do so," he said. Ahead of entering the bureau's Mohali office around 11 am, the Congress leader had slammed the state's Aam



Admi Party (AAP) Government over his date of appearance being advanced and claimed that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's regime was indulging in "vendetta politics". The bureau had initially asked Channi to appear for questioning on April 12. He, however, requested for another date to join the investigation, which the bureau allowed, asking him to appear on April 20. Later, the Vigilance Bureau advanced it to Friday. The bureau has been inquiring into allegations of Channi amassing assets disproportionate to his known source of income. Last month, the bureau had issued a look-out circular against the former chief minister. Asked about being questioned in the matter before he

India hosts first joint working group meet on Chabahar port

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

At their first joint working group meeting on the Chabahar port, India and the central Asian nations reaffirmed that connectivity initiatives should comply with global norms, transparency, local priorities, financial sustainability and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. The comments, mentioned in a joint statement released on Friday following the meeting hosted by India in Mumbai on April 12 and 13, came amid growing global criticism of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The statement said the participants at the meeting noted that further development of regional connectivity is essential for enhancing trade and commerce between India and the central Asian countries in the context of their land-locked nature and lack of overland connectivity with India. The mention of "lack of overland connectivity with India" is being seen as an indirect reference to Pakistan's reluctance to grant New Delhi transit access to Afghanistan



and beyond. India has been pushing for the Chabahar port project to boost regional trade, especially for its connectivity to Afghanistan. At the meeting, the country representative for the UN World Food Programme (UNWFP) made a presentation on the ongoing cooperation between India and the UNWFP in Afghanistan for the delivery of wheat assistance. The statement said the consul general of Afghanistan emphasised the significance of the Chabahar port for the delivery of humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people and providing economic opportunities for Afghan businessmen and traders.

Cong deputed Nath for...

From Page 1 They have also raised questions as to why Randhawa's statement called the fast anti-party even before it took place. Sources close to Pilot said there has been no physical meeting between him and Randhawa. The Congress leadership is caught in a peculiar situation and wants to find a middle path to the issue, party sources said. Pilot reached Delhi on Wednesday, a day after he observed a fast in Jaipur. Both Gehlot and Pilot were keen on the Chief Minister's post when the party won in the State Assembly elections in 2018.

IN-BRIEF

PC MEENA GMDA'S NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Gurugram: Senior IAS officer PC Meena on Wednesday assumed charge as the Chief Executive Officer of Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA), which is in addition to his role of Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG). Soon after taking office, the CEO GMDA held a meeting with senior officers of all the departments of the authority to take stock of the ongoing and future projects of GMDA.

3 IRANIANS HELD FOR DUPING YEMENI NATIONAL
Gurugram: Gurugram Police arrested three Iranian nationals who allegedly were posing as police and duped a Yemeni national who visited India for his wife's medical treatment in Gurugram, police said on Monday. The accused, who came to India on valid visas, were held from Delhi on April 5 and were taken on remand, police said. The Iranian nationals have been identified as Hossein Rezaeifard, Marammad Hussain Peerfalak and Abdol Salam.

BJP will win 35 LS...

From Page 1 Asking whether the people of Bengal wanted an end in infiltration, cow-smuggling, recruitment scams and general corruption then only the BJP was the way. Once the BJP comes to power in Bengal then there would be no riots and more importantly "no one will dare to disturb the Ram Navami processions in Bengal," Shah said referring to the recent communal disturbances at Shibpur in Howrah and Rishra in Hooghly districts. Alleging that Banerjee was day-dreaming of making her nephew Abhishek the next Chief Minister of the State, the BJP leader said, "Mamata didi, you might be dreaming that your nephew will become the Chief Minister after you... but from here in Birbhum, I declare that the next Chief Minister of Bengal is going to be from BJP and the trailer of that has to be shown in 2024 when we will 35 seats." Curiously the Home Minister would not for once talk on the more immediate context that is the panchayat elections. Asserting that Narendra Modi will once again become the Prime Minister after 2024 Shah said listed a whole range of reforms and schemes brought about by the central government that would make the people choose him to lead the government for the third consecutive term.

Amarnath Yatra to begin from July 1, end on Aug 31

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The 62-day long Amarnath Yatra will commence on July 1 this year and it will culminate on August 31. Further, the registration through online and offline modes for Amarnath Yatra will start from April 17. The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha while announcing the dates for holy pilgrimage and registration Friday said the administration is committed to ensure smooth and hassle free pilgrimage. "Hassle-free pilgrimage is top priority of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. The administration will provide best-in-class healthcare and other essential facilities to all the visiting devotees and service providers. Telecom services will be made operational prior to the commencement of



Pilgrimage. All the stakeholder departments are working in coordination to ensure facilities for lodging, power, water, security and other arrangements for the smooth conduct of Yatra," the Lt Governor said. The Yatra would commence simultaneously from both the routes - the Pahalgam track in Anantnag district and Baltal in Ganderbal district. The Lt Governor also directed the officials to ensure high levels of cleanliness and to take necessary intervention for sanitation and waste management.

'SP may form Opp alliance to take on BJP in 2024, Cong must stand with regional parties'

PTI ■ INDORE

Samajwadi Party president Akhlesh Yadav on Friday said SP is hopeful of forming an alliance of Opposition parties to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party in next year's Lok Sabha polls and that the Congress should join regional parties in their bastions to fight the BJP. "I am hopeful that chief ministers like K Chandrasekhar Rao, Mamata Banerjee and Nitish Kumar and the way we are trying, some alliance or front will be formed which will take on the BJP (in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls)," Yadav told reporters at the Indore Press Club. Earlier, the SP chief also paid tribute to Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar on his 132nd birth anniversary at the Dalit icon's memorial in Mhow. Replying to a question on opposition unity against the BJP, he said the Congress is a national party and it has to decide its own role in this regard. "The Congress has got an opportunity to stand with regional parties in places where the latter are strong to take on the BJP," he said.



SP claims gangsters belonging to CM Yogi's caste active in UP, tweets list of 'criminals'

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party on Friday came up with a list of alleged criminals 'running gangs' as they all belong to the same caste as Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath. The SP 'list' comes a day after gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad's son Asad, accused in the Umesh Pal murder case, was gunned down with aide. The list includes names of Kuldeep Singh Sengar (Unnao, 28 cases), Brijesh Singh (Varanasi, 106 cases), Dhananjay Singh (Jaunpur, 46 cases), Raja Bhaiyya (Raghuraj Pratap Singh) (Pratapgarh, 31 cases), among others.

Oye...

From Page 1

Stolen items, including three mobile phones, two laptops, five LED TVs with set top boxes, iron, printer and other ID Cards and purse of the complainants were also recovered from the car, police said. The accused was arrested and the case property was seized, the DCP said. Singh dropped out of school after Class 9 and commenced his robbery activities in 1993. Following his first detention in New Delhi, he managed to flee from police custody.

Arcturus...

From Page 1

While three deaths each were reported from Delhi and Rajasthan, two each were from Chhattisgarh and Punjab and one each from Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh besides nine conciliated by Kerala, the data updated at 8 am stated. Medical experts maintained that there is no need to panic and people should follow

Death row convicts...

From Page 1

Even the Supreme Court upheld the high court order in 2006. Later, their mercy petitions were rejected by the Governor in 2013 and subsequently by the president in 2014. Refusing to interfere with the high court order, the top court said the gravity of the offence can be a relevant consideration while commuting the death sentence to life imprisonment. However, inordinate delay in disposal of the mercy petitions can also be said to be a relevant consideration while commuting the death sentence to life imprisonment. "In view of the above, the impugned judgment and order passed by the high court commuting the death sentence to life imprisonment is not required to be interfered with," it said. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing on behalf of the Union of India, submitted that looking at the seriousness and gravity of the offence committed by the accused, the high court ought to have passed an order to commute the death sentence to life imprisonment for natural life without any remission. Noting her submissions, the apex court modified the sentence and directed that the accused undergo life imprisonment for natural life and without any remission.

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that: Om Prakash Singh S/O Late Sh. KR Singh R/O Flat Number 404, 4th Floor, Saral Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. Plot No. 15, Sector-10, Dwaraka, New Delhi-110075. I am the owner of Flat Number 404, 4th Floor, Saral Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. Plot No. 15, Sector-10, Dwaraka, New Delhi-110075. The original documents via Share Certificate has been lost of the said property. An information report of this effect has been lodged in Police Station Crime Branch Delhi vide SO No: 430 / 2014 Delhi Police P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi LR No: 211981/2023. Any person(s) any right, interest having No objection or found in possession of the original document, may write/contact with the above person at the address/ phone number 9434000633 within 15 days of the publication of this notice. The person claiming right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy Director, GH or Director GH, C-Block, 2nd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is Publically notified that the Residential property Bearing Plot No. 125, Block-B, Sec-55, Noida, Distt. G.B. Nagar U.P., allottee of Sh. K.G. Chawla S/O Sh. Jagannath Chawla R/O R-12-13, Pratap Market, Jungpura, Bhogal, New Delhi, had sold on the basis of General Power of Attorney to the following persons: The G.P.A. was registered on dt. 08.04.1991 in the name of Sh. Keshav Dutt Nalwai S/O Sh. T.R. Nalwai R/O A-91, Sec-22, Noida, Distt. G.B. Nagar U.P. If some one has any objection he/she file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority with witness within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.
Keshav Dutt Nalwai

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल
पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)
॥ सर्व संबंधित को सूचना ॥
भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स महावीर कोल वॉशरीज प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, ग्राम- खराहनी- पथर, तहसील-कोटा, जिला- बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) द्वारा कुल क्षेत्रफल - 11.62 हेक्टेयर (28.72 एकड़) में कोल वॉशरी क्षमता - 0.96 मिलियन टन / वर्ष से बढ़ाकर 2.48 मिलियन टन प्रतिवर्ष वेट टाईप के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृत हेतु लोक सुनवाई बाबत छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त प्रस्तावित परियोजना के संबंध में आपत्ति/सुझाव/टीका-टिप्पणी इस अधिसूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के अंदर क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छ.ग. पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, बिलासपुर के कार्यालय में मौखिक अथवा लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजना के लिए पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 17/05/2023 को प्रातः 11:00 बजे ग्राम-पथर के ग्राम पंचायत भवन के पास स्थित मैदान में नियत की गई है। यह भी सूचित हो कि लोक सुनवाई के दौरान भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली के ऑफिस मेमोरैंडम F No. 22-25/2000-IA, III दिनांक 14.09.2020 तथा कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी सम्स्त दिशानिदेशों का अक्षरशः पालन कराय जाना अनिवार्य होगा।
ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथासंशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार डाक्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालकसार की प्रति (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसकी सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन / पठन हेतु कार्यालय कलेक्टर बिलासपुर, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, कार्यालय जिला पंचायत बिलासपुर, अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कार्यालय अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कोटा, जिला- बिलासपुर, महाप्रबंधक कार्यालय जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र बिलासपुर, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यापार विहार, पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय पार्क के पास, बिलासपुर, सरपंच / सचिव कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- खराहनी, पथर, खराहना, पीपरतई, खुरदुर, छेरकाबाड़ा, भराही, गोकुलपुर, कलमीटार, तहसील- कोटा, जिला- बिलासपुर (छ.ग.), डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन, मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, वायु विंग, जोरबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, मुख्य वन संरक्षक, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, अरण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।
सदस्य सचिव
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

CBI summons Kejriwal on...

From Page 1

There are allegations that money raised from tweaking the policy in favour of certain liquor dealers and the South lobby was suspected to be pumped in for election purposes by the AAP, which is under investigation, agency sources said, adding, Kejriwal's questioning could help in establishing the money trail. The process of policy formulation and influence of South lobby, besides changes in the draft stages, was in the knowledge of the Chief Minister, which makes it necessary to put questions to him, they said. The sources further said Kejriwal is likely to quizzed about an "untraceable" file containing details of the expert committee report and public comments when the policy

was at a nascent stage of formulation and referral of the issue to Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by Sisodia; besides his possible conversation with suspects in the case. The final role of Kejriwal in the case, whether as a witness or an accused, will be decided while filing a charge sheet in the case after considering multiple factors like evidence and statements of other accused in the case. As of now, Kejriwal will be questioned as a witness, they said. The CBI is bracing for an elaborate security arrangement around its headquarters and fixed Sunday for questioning as the offices, mostly Government ones, in the vicinity remain closed. The agency had adopted the same strategy when Sisodia was called at the agency headquarters, where he was grilled for eight hours before being taken into custody. The case relates to allegations against the Delhi government's excise policy for

2021-22 which was abused for granting licences to liquor traders who had allegedly paid bribes for it. Subsequently, the policy was scrapped. "It was further alleged that irregularities were committed, including modifications in excise policy, extending undue favours to the licensees, waiver/reduction in license fee, the extension of L-1 licence without approval, etc.," said a CBI spokesperson after the FIR was filed on August 17, 2022. The CBI had filed its charge sheet against seven accused on November 25 last year, but it had kept investigation open against prime accused in the FIR then Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. The CBI has alleged in the charge sheet that the Delhi Government's excise policy for 2021-22 was framed in a manner to promote cartelisation and monopoly at the wholesale level.

सार्वजनिक सूचना

में, SUNWORLD RESIDENCY PVT LTD. व्यक्तिगत कारणों से उ०प्र० रेरा में पंजीकृत परियोजनाओं Sunworld Arista (संख्या UPRERAPRJ6444) एवं Sunworld Arista (PH-2 T-5,7,8,9), Club (संख्या UPRERAPRJ11625) को सरेन्डर/कैन्सिलेशन/निरस्तीकरण करा रहा हूँ। किसी व्यक्ति/संस्था आदि द्वारा इस परियोजना में यदि कोई बुकिंग कारायी गई हो तो कृपया अपना क्लेम/दावा प्रस्तुत करें। उक्त क्लेम/दावा को विवरण सहित 15 दिनों के अन्दर यूपी रेरा की ईमेल आईडी contactuprera@up-rera.in पर भी भेजा जाए तथा क्लेम/दावा विवरण को सचिव उ०प्र० रेरा मुख्यालय, नवीन भवन, राज्य नियोजन संस्थान, कालाकांकर हाउस, पुराना हैदराबाद, लखनऊ-226007 को प्रेषित किया जाए।

the Supreme Court's e-committee in this regard, he mentioned that budgetary allocation has been made for phase 3 of the e-court mission. Referring to global efforts to use AI in the judicial system to bring efficiency, Modi said, "We should also try to increase efforts to improve the ease of justice for the common citizen through AI." Indicating how lack of clarity in property ownership has proven to be a burden on the judiciary, he gave an example of how drones have been used to bring a solution by mapping properties in over 1 lakh villages under the PM Swamitva Yojana. "Property card distribution to lakhs of citizens have already been accomplished, which will result in a decline in property-related cases and ease the lives of citizens," the PM added. He also said, "Alternative dispute resolution systems are vital. The North East has rich traditions in this regard" lauding the Gauhati High Court for recently coming out with six books on customary laws of the region.

Amid tussle, LG clears Kejriwal Govt's power subsidy scheme

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing tussle over power subsidy, Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena cleared the Arvind Kejriwal Government's electricity subsidy scheme. Earlier, Delhi Power Minister Atishi on Friday declared an end to all such subsidies effective from the coming week because the L-G's office had not cleared a proposal sent by her office.

Lambasting the Power Minister for making false and misleading statement on power subsidy, the Raj Niwas on Friday said that the file related to continuing power subsidy

was signed by Thursday late and sent to Chief Minister on Friday, during her Press Conference. Subsidised electricity bills are a trademark of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party - similar measures are in place in Punjab, the other state it rules, and promises were made ahead of elections in Goa and other states last year.

"They are trying to save face, having obviously been caught on a very very embarrassing and wrong foot. The Power Minister is advised to refrain from unnecessary politicking and baseless false allegations against LG. She should stop misleading people with



false statements," Raj Niwas said in a statement soon after Atishi held a press conference, alleging that power subsidy to nearly 46 lakh people in the city will cease from Friday onwards

people of Delhi as to why was a decision in this regard kept pending till 4th April when the deadline was 15th April? Why was the file sent to LG on 11th April? And What was the need for a drama on 13th April by writing a letter and the Press Conference today, after the LG had already approved the file?" reads the statement.

In what could emerge as the latest flashpoint between the city government and the Lt Governor office, the minister said she has sought a meeting with Saxena over the issue but there has been no response. "The subsidy we give to 46 lakh people will stop from today.

From Monday onwards, people will get inflated bills without subsidy," she said in a press conference here.

The minister said the Delhi Cabinet has approved the extension of power subsidy for the year 2023-24 but the file is still pending in the LG office.

"Till the file is approved we can't give subsidy. I even sought time from the LG office to discuss the matter but it's been more than 24 hours and I have not been given time. The file has also not come back yet," she alleged. Atishi said that the file was sent a few days back and a response is still awaited. "The budget for this sub-

sidy has been passed by the Vidhan Sabha. The government has money for subsidy but we cannot spend it" she said.

On Thursday, the minister also claimed she had sought a five-minute meeting with Saxena but had "not gotten time..."

"It is deeply disappointing that despite the urgency of the issue, I have not gotten time..." She tweeted a photo of a letter she said had sent to Saxena's office and held the LG responsible for delaying clearance despite the AAP government having approved subsidies for another year.

The AAP government in Delhi provides free electricity to consumers with 200 units of monthly consumption. Those having 201 to 400 units of consumption per month get a 50 per cent subsidy capped at Rs 850. Last year, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that a power subsidy would be provided to only those consumers who apply for it. According to official figures, over 48 lakh among more than 58 lakh domestic consumers have applied for power subsidy. The AAP has government allocated Rs 3,250 crore for power subsidy in its budget for 2023-24.

LG OK's AAP Govt's proposal for review by CAG enlisted auditors of power subsidy to discoms

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Friday approved a proposal of the Kejriwal Government allowing a special audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) empanelled external auditors on power subsidy amount disbursed to the private distribution companies (discoms) since 2016-17.

In a note to the chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, L-G Saxena also slammed the AAP Government for avoiding audit of subsidies amounting to Rs.13,549 crore, given to private DISCOMs for more than 6 years, between 2016 to 2022.

The L-G has reiterated his stand that power subsidy should be provided to the poor, pointing that amounts being given to discoms be audited to ensure non-pilferage. He has also asked the Kejriwal government to expedite its appeal in the Supreme Court against a High Court order quashing CAG audit of discoms, that has been pending for more than seven years, officials said.

The L-G and the AAP led Arvind Kejriwal government are engaged in a tussle over power subsidy in Delhi, with the latter alleging Saxena of trying to stop the subsidy through a conspiracy with the BJP. There are several private discoms in Delhi which supplies



electricity include BSES Rajdani Power Limited (BRPL), BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL), Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL), New Delhi Municipal Council and MES power station.

Saxena in his note has underlined that audit by the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General) empanelled auditors cannot and should not be considered as substitute to CAG audit. Repeating his consent and commitment to power subsidy for the poor, Saxena has iterated that such subsidies are public funds collected as revenue from the people of Delhi and it is the prime responsibility of the government to ensure that benefits reach the targeted population rather than getting pilfered for the gain of vested interests.

Allowing the proposal of the government to conduct

audit through auditors empanelled with CAG, the LG has underlined that audit of huge amounts of public money should be conducted by the CAG. The AAP government had been perfunctorily asking the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) to conduct the audit since 2015, though it could have invoked Section 108 of the Electricity Act, 2003 and given binding directions to the DERC for the same, said the LG note.

However, the DERC did not conduct any audit, upon which the Power department through the Chief Secretary moved a file for asking the DERC to compulsorily carry out audit invoking the Act in December, 2022, which was turned down by the then Dy. Chief Minister and Power Minister Manish Sisodia on January 27, 2023, officials said.

The LG in his file noting to the chief minister has written, "What is even more astounding is the fact that even after the proposal to get special audit done by the DERC by invoking Section 108 of the Electricity Act, 2003 was much belatedly put forward by the department in December, 2022, the same was turned down by the then Dy Chief Minister on January 27, 2023".

Expressing surprise, the LG said "Public funds to the tune of Rs 13,549 crore have not been audited for the past six years and have been passed on to private discoms without any substantive scrutiny as to whether the subsidies meant for the poor are reaching the targeted population or not."

"It has further surprised me that it has taken the government six years to finally invoke its power under section 108 of the Electricity Act, 2003 to issue directions to the DERC to conduct special audit, instead of perfunctorily taking Cabinet decisions to this effect for the last six years and conveying it to the DERC, but to no avail," Saxena further noted. The amount of Rs 13,549 crore was disbursed to the discoms from 2016-17 to 2021-22.

The government provides free electricity to people having monthly consumption of 200 units. Those using 201-400 units per month get 50 per cent subsidy capped at Rs 850.

Excise case: Sanjay, Kejriwal accuse ED of misleading court



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his party's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Friday accused the Enforcement Directorate (ED) of "misleading" the court with false evidence in the excise policy case.

Kejriwal was talking to reporters after attending the Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations at the Delhi Assembly while Singh addressed a press conference.

"The ED is taking false statements by torturing people and pressuring them. Even in the case of Sanjay Singh, it has come to the fore that the accused gave a different statement and the ED has written something else in the charge sheet," Kejriwal said, replying to a question about the ED's charge that his former deputy Manish Sisodia destroyed his mobile phones.

The chief minister said that the ED has claimed that

Sisodia has broken his phones but many of those phones are in agency's custody. "The ED is misleading the court with false evidence, torturing people, taking false statements. There is nothing in this whole matter, the whole matter is fabricated and is based on false evidence. This is not a good thing," he said. Kejriwal also said his government was following the footsteps of B R Ambedkar by giving utmost importance to education. "Today is the birthday of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the biggest shining star in the history of India, who got higher education after a lot of struggle and finally wrote the Constitution of India," he said.

"Babasaheb gave the biggest message in his life that everyone should get good education. And following his path, we too are giving utmost importance to education. Whether it is the child of the poor or the child of the rich, everyone should get good education," he added.

'Ansal must be tried for defrauding pvt firm in Statesman House deal'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court has ordered that real estate tycoon Gopal Ansal should stand trial for allegedly cheating and defrauding a private company and its promoters in the name of investment in a building at Connaught Place here in 1991. Metropolitan Magistrate Yashdeep Chahal ordered framing of charges against Ansal for the alleged offence, including cheating, forgery and criminal conspiracy.

The court, however, discharged Sushil Ansal, who was a director of the accused company, Ansal Properties which was developing the Statesman House here, saying the materials on record were "grossly insufficient." "Apart from a bare statement that the fraud was not possible without the involvement of all the directors, there is nothing on record to implicate him," the judge noted in an order passed on April 4.

The court adjourned the matter for June 1 for formally framing of the charges against the accused. According to the complaint, the complainant, Sachdeva & Sons Industries Pvt. Ltd. had in 1991 invested in Statesman House, which was being developed by Ansal Properties at Connaught Place, New Delhi through one



Krishan Bakshi, now deceased, who was working at the complainant company and was known to co-accused Gopal Ansal.

However, later the complainants learned that the receipts were issued only in the name of Bakshi and that too towards the payment of a single flat in the project. The accused persons conspired to deceive the complainant in order to extract money from them and diverted that amount for booking a flat solely in the name of Bakshi, the complaint alleged.

During investigation it appeared that Bakshi had booked a flat at Statesman House in January 1992 with Ansal Properties, the court noted. The investigation also reveals that the entire amount received from the complainant for booking a property in Statesman House was found to be diverted in favour of the individual booking of Bakshi for a flat, it noted.

DU panel suggests ways to augment security at colleges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Installing CCTV cameras, restricting entry of outsiders, hiring private security and increasing the height of boundary walls — these were among the measures suggested by a Delhi University (DU) panel to augment security in the wake of the IP College harassment incident. According to a committee member, the guidelines have been prepared by the DU in collaboration with Delhi Police. This is expected to be notified on Monday, the official added.

"We have prepared the guidelines after holding several meetings and analysing the incident at IPCW College. We do not want the such incident be repeated in the future. The guidelines were prepared. However, there were some

inputs from the Delhi Police, we are including those as well. It will be notified on Monday," the official said. The guidelines were prepared in the wake of several all-women colleges witnessing such harassment incidents during cultural festivals. The recent incident took place at Indraprastha College for Women (IPCW), where on March 28, students alleged that they were harassed by 'unknown' men during a fest.

The students staged several protests, demanding principal Poonam Kumria's resignation and accountability on the part of the college. Following their protests, the DU formed a committee on April 3 to look into "the grievances raised by the students" and asked the panel to submit its report in a week.

Hold Ambedkar in high regard for his firm resolve in face of adversity: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said some "anti-national" people in the country sent Manish Sisodia to jail because they do not want quality education for Dalit and underprivileged children. Kejriwal also said he holds B R Ambedkar in higher regard than Mahatma Gandhi because of his unshakable resolve in the face of adversities in pursuit of education. Addressing an event to mark Ambedkar Jayanti, Kejriwal said Ambedkar dreamt of quality education for all in government schools, but "these people ruined government schools in the last 75 years and private schools mushroomed in the country." "God sent a man named Manish Sisodia to correct this wrong. He would go on a round of Delhi schools starting at 6 am. He turned things around within five years. We



can say Ambedkar's dream is being realized in Delhi.

"But some anti-national powers don't want the country to progress. Who are these people who do not want Dalit students to get good education. All these people together sent Sisodia to jail. These people are enemies of the country," he alleged. He added that those who dared to revolutionize the education sector in the past

Congress only party honouring Ambedkar's legacy, says MLA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Delhi Congress leader Sand former MLA from Sultanpur Majra, Jai Kishan on Friday placed floral tributes at the statue of social reformer, economist and jurist Dr BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary at the party's headquarters. The Congress leader accused the BJP-led Centre and the Arvind Kejriwal Government of attacking and weakening the Constitution and paying only lip service to its architect, BR Ambedkar. He said the Congress is committed towards ensuring social justice for the oppressed communities.

Jai Kishan said that the Congress is the only party which is honouring Baba Saheb



Ambedkar's legacy. The Congress leader said Ambedkar was the architect of the Indian Constitution and contributed to promoting social harmony and equality. He saw education as a potent tool that could equally empower every citizen to build an egalitarian society and worked throughout his life for the welfare and rights of the backward

sections of society and the poor, he added.

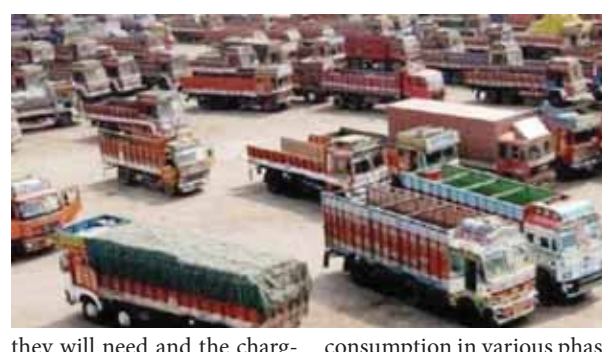
"We all greatly respect him as the Architect of India's Constitution. He was instrumental in establishing a large number of robust institutions and made several important interventions to end caste discrimination, gender inequality and divisive politics," the Congress leader said.

Transport Dept to start study on converting Govt trucks to EVs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The transport department will soon start a study to examine the feasibility of converting Government trucks into Electric Vehicles to reduce pollution levels in Delhi. The study, to be conducted by the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), will commence next week and the recommendations will be submitted in a couple of months.

Explaining the idea behind the study, Amit Bhatt, ICCT managing director (India), told PTI, "We are trying to see if we can electrify the government trucks like garbage disposal trucks, water tankers, horticulture trucks. In order to do that, we will see their energy consumption so that in future, when they are electrified, we will know what kind of battery



they will need and the charging infrastructure that will be needed." Bhatt said trucks cause a lot of emission and their electrification is needed.

"We have finalised the data collection method and will start the study soon," he added. As part of the study, an on-board device will be installed in the vehicle that will capture data related to its mobility profile and energy

consumption in various phases, he said.

"The data will be simulated on our software and it will be studied how much benefit will be derived from its electrification. It will be assessed how big a battery will be needed since the cost of the battery is the main thing. Charging infrastructure will also be needed. We will install these devices in 10-15 vehicles," he said.

Constable threatens, thrashes woman ASI in Gurugram

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

In a dispute, a constable allegedly thrashed a woman assistant sub-inspector (ASI) and also threatened to kill her inside the premises of Sector 37 police station, police said.

Following the incident, the woman Station House Officer (SHO) of Sector 37 police station was transferred with immediate effect by the Police Commissioner. Sources said that the Constable will also be suspended soon.

According to the police the incident took place inside the Sector 37 police station on Wednesday night when verbal arguments started between Constable Parvesh and ASI Poonam when the ASI asked the Constable to not interfere in her work.



Soon after, a fight broke out between them and the duo started fighting each other. Later other cops intervened and separated both of them.

At that time Inspector Sunita, SHO, was not present at the police station and later she reached the police station and sorted out the matter. On Thursday, ASI Sunita filed a complaint against Constable

Parvesh and accused him of beating and threatening to kill her.

Following her complaint, an FIR was registered against the Constable under various Sections of the IPC at Sector 10 A police station. A senior police officer requesting anonymity confirms that SHO Inspector Sunita has been transferred to the police line.

Man climbs power tower for release of arrested Bihar YouTuber; booked

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 34-year-old man has been booked for mischief after he climbed up an electricity tower here with overhead transmission lines, to demand the release of a controversial YouTuber arrested by the Bihar police, officials said on Friday.

The drama unfolded at the tower near the Jaypee flyover in Sector 128 on Thursday evening, prompting immediate deployment of police and fire brigade personnel who used a hydraulic crane to bring down the person safely after almost three hours, they said.

However, the police on Friday booked the person, identified as Karan Thakur, a resident of Siwan in Bihar, on charges of public mischief, attempt to provoke breach of

peace and assault on government officials to deter them from carrying out their duties. A police officer said the incident started around 7.30 pm in the Sector 126 police station area.

"The person who had climbed up the electricity tower was demanding the release of YouTuber Manish Kashyap and that charges imposed under the National Security Act against him be revoked," the officer said.

"Police officials from the ground urged him to come down but to no avail. Then a hydraulic crane was brought in using which Chief Fire Officer Pradeep Choubey and ACP (Noida 1) Rajneesh Verma went up the tower, pacified and convinced the man to come down with them," the officer added.

1st divyang sports centre to open in June

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The first-of-its-kind national sports centre equipped with the state-of-the-art training facilities of global standards for Divyang (persons with special needs) players at Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior is all set to become functional by June 2023. The construction work at the Rs 170 crore project is moving at the fast pace, said an official from the Union Social, Justice and Empowerment Ministry. He said that the training facilities will be at par with the latest in the world so as to enable the sports persons from the sector to effectively compete and win medals in Paralympics, Deaflympics, Special Olympics and other International events for sports persons with disabilities. The Cabinet had approved



the project in 2019 even though the late Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had announced the setting up of such a facility in his 2014-15 Budget speech.

The official said that, "at present, no specialized sports training facilities for Divyang exist in the coun-

try. This centre proposes to fill the void by setting up sports infrastructure so that these persons can undergo rigorous and specialized training in the Centre."

"At the macro level, the proposal is expected to help build up confidence and develop a sense of belonging in

Divyangjan to facilitate their integration in society."

Giving details about the facilities, he said that the Centre will be equipped with an outdoor athletic stadium, indoor sports complex, an aquatic centre with a covered and an outdoor pool among others like research, spectator galleries suitable for holding national/international events.

Talking about the sport disciplines, the official said, these include badminton, basketball, table tennis, volleyball, judo, taekwondo, fencing and rugby boccia, goalball, football 5 a side, para dance sport and para powerlifting, athletics, archery, football 7 a side, tennis and swimming.

Though so far there has been no central run sports centres for the sector, a few NGOs like the Aditya Mehta Foundation which aids people

with disabilities to pursue sports, has come forward to launch 'Infinity Para-Sports Academy & Rehab Center,' in Hyderabad.

"The national sports centre at Gwalior is in line with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 which requires the government to take steps to ensure effective participation of disabled persons in sports activities by creating appropriate infrastructure," said Suvarna Raj, a polio stricken well-known para-athlete in powerlifting, table tennis, and now athletics. She said that such initiatives go a long way in boosting morale as well as empowering the sector also.

"The sector is brimming with talent including in sports streams. They just need a helping hand," noted Raj who is also keen to start an academy for disabled children.



Dr Virendra Kumar and GK Reddy flag off Baba Saheb Ambedkar Yatra by Bharat Gaurav Train at Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway station on Friday. Ranjan Dimri

'PM working for vikas of all sections'

Modi trying to fulfil Baba Saheb's dream of prosperity of all, says Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trying to 'further integrate' socially-backwards sections in its fold across the States, the BJP on Friday paid rich tribute to Bhim Rao Ambedkar saying that the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi were aimed at providing economic and social justice to the "weakest in the social ladder". The BJP said the Central Government has also announced five historical places associated with Ambedkar as 'Panchtirth' (five pilgrim sites).

In his message on the birth anniversary of Ambedkar, the Prime Minister described the late leader as a social reformer, economist, jurist and the architect of India's Constitution.

In a tweet, Modi termed Ambedkar as someone who "dedicated his life to the empowerment of the deprived and the exploited sections of society". The BJP has organised events and functions across all the States to celebrate Ambedkar's birth anniversary with its leaders making con-



tacts with the social deprived sections of the society, said the party.

BJP president JP Nadda said Prime Minister Modi is working to fulfil the dream of Bhimrao Ambedkar by working for the development and prosperity of all sections of the society. In his remarks after paying tributes to the architect of the Constitution on his birth anniversary, Nadda said the Modi government has accorded the due respect and honour on Ambedkar and noted that for the first time his 125th birth anniversary was celebrated in the United Nations.

The government announced five historical places associated with Ambedkar as 'Panchtirth' (five pilgrim sites) and developed them to inform people about his life and contributions, he said. Modi took the decision to celebrate April 14 as "Samrasta Divas" in the memory of

Ambedkar and special memorial coins were also released on his 125th birth anniversary, he said. A national memorial in Ambedkar's honour was dedicated to the nation in 2018, Nadda said.

The BJP president said the real tributes to Ambedkar would be to follow the path shown by him and work for the weaker sections of our society and asserted that the ruling party has been following his ideals and principles.

This reflects in all policies and programmes implemented by the government at the Centre and in the states ruled by the BJP, he said.

The BJP president said all the programmes, projects and policies which are being implemented under Modi's leadership are all aimed at the upliftment, empowerment, economic development and social justice of the poorest of the poor.

BJP Govt is weakening Constitution, paying lip service to Ambedkar: Cong

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress accused the BJP-led Centre on Friday of attacking and weakening the Constitution and paying only lip service to its architect, BR Ambedkar.

On Ambedkar's birth anniversary, senior Congress leader Kumari Selja alleged that incidents of atrocities against the members of the Scheduled Caste (SC) and tribal communities have gone up under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime, and accused the ruling party of weakening the social security of the SCs, Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

She said the Congress is committed towards ensuring social justice for the oppressed communities and promised that it will set up a national council of social justice, introduce a socio-economic caste census and bring a "Rohith Vemula Act" to protect SC, ST and OBC students in educational institutions across the country.

"Although the prime minister, the BJP and the RSS pay lip service to Babasaheb



Ambedkar, they are destroying everything he worked to achieve in his life and are attacking the Constitution, weakening the economic position and social security of Dalits and backward classes, and spreading hatred," Selja told reporters here.

"The Congress is strongly committed to social justice for all communities. In our Raipur resolution, we have committed to systematic efforts, reversing the (Narendra) Modi government's attack on social justice through measures, including creating a new national council of social justice, conducting a socio-economic caste census along with the census every decade, passing a Rohith Vemula Act to protect SC, ST and OBC students in educational institutions and ensuring an effective implementation of the SC-ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act," she added.

Cong seeks clarification from Google if Rahul's YouTube videos suppressed

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress has written to Google parent company Alphabet seeking clarification whether there has been "suppression" of YouTube videos of or related to their leader Rahul Gandhi.

Along with the letter to Google the grand old party has shared its own research claiming video viewership on Rahul Gandhi's YouTube channel fell to 3 million per week after his Adani controversy speech in the Parliament, from 6 million previously.

AICC sources said the request for enquiry has been sent last week to Alphabet's CEO Sundar Pichai. The grand old party last month had urged YouTube's chief product officer Neal Mohan demanding the crucial piece of information on their former party chief's popularity and reach is assumed to be augmented during the Bharat Jodo Yatra by over 10 million per week.

In the letter to Pichai, AICC data analytics chief Praveen Chakravarty, claimed that Rahul Gandhi's YouTube channel "experienced a sudden and mysterious drop in viewership" after his Adani controversy speech in the Parliament which however stands expunged from the Parliament record as well.



Rahul is now stands disqualified as MP in Lok Sabha after being convicted by a Surat court last month. His appeal in this regard is to be heard on April 20 though the Gandhi scion started the process of vacating his Lutyness Bungalow on Friday.

"What explains such volatility? Surely, the sudden drop in viewership post a critical speech is not coincidence but suppression?" This is a troubling pattern, especially when seemingly neutral social media platforms remain the lone outlets for opposition voices," Chakravarty mentioned in his letter to Pichai.

This is not the first time Congress has raised issues pertaining to its social media alleged irregularities issues with other platforms including Facebook and microblogging website twitter.

In its last month communication to Neal Mohan as mentioned above, the party

raised issues following which Google is understood to have conveyed to look into the matter. Congress mentioned that at one point of time the news content related to Rahul Gandhi and party reached to 11 million per week.

"Now almost like a switch was turned back on again. This is a troubling pattern, especially when seemingly neutral social media platforms remain the lone outlets for Opposition voices, Chakravarty wrote.

A senior Congress leader said that it is not a good sign if an independent international social media platform also gets under influence of a government or any institution/political party.

"When the national media was not giving us due coverage of the historic 4000 kms long Kanniyakumari to Kashmir Rahul Gandhi led Bharta Jodo Yatra for over four months then party took to social media platforms and there was immense support from the citizens and that continued until the famous Adani speech by our leader. Ever since then views dipped and it's a concern as this is the only platform helping us to reach every nook and corner of the country. We hope Google look into such allegations by one of the worlds oldest political party," expressed the leader to *The Pioneer*.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the FOLIO No. V0004588 Share Certificate(s) Nos. 5091218 for 4505 Equity Shares bearing Distinctive Nos. 59028314 - 59028735 in FINOLEX INDUSTRIES LIMITED having its Registered Office at Gat No-399, Urse, Taluka Maval, Dist. Pune - 411056 standing in the name(s) of VIJAY KUMAR BANSAL has/have been lost and that an application for the issue of duplicate(s) in lieu thereof has been made to the Registrars. Kfin Technologies Pvt. Ltd. Add: Selenium Tower-B, Plot-31 & 32, Gachibowli, Financial District, Nanakramguda, Hyderabad - 500032, to whom objections, if any, should be made within 15 days from the date of this publication. The public are cautioned against dealing in any way with these shares.

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To be known to all that I, N K Jain Sr/o Late Sh U S Jan Rio S-37, Venus Apts, Sec-9, Rohini, Delhi-85 has applied for conversion of the above flat from Leasehold to Freehold in DDA. The original allotment and possession letter of the above flat has been lost. An NCR to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi, vide No. 832663/2020 Dated: 22/12/2020. Any person (s) claiming any right/interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone no 9810832620 immediately after the publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (GH), Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client, HERO HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED is mortgaging one Property Bearing No. 27/1083A & New No. 797, Plot No. 32, Kharsa No. 40/43/22/47/48 village, Chandrawali alias Shahdara, Prem Block, Jwalala Nagar, Ilaqa Shahdara, Delhi-32, lastly owned by Deceased Ashok Kumar Sharma through sale deed document no. 48 dated 02.01.2008 at SR-VIII, Delhi. After his demise his legal heirs namely Smt Kamini Sharma now became owner through registered WILL No. 164 dated 01.08.2013 at SR-IVB, Delhi. Any Person/Bank/Financial Institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the Undersigned Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/D within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived.

Opp parties to set aside differences to take on BJP in 2024: Ex-Union Min

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Rashtrata Samithi have not clearly spelt out their views on contesting the next Lok Sabha elections in alliance with the Congress and other like-minded parties.

A suggestion for a common minimum programme of the opposition alliance was also discussed during the meetings chaired by Kharge. Rahul Gandhi's strident criticism of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar had created unease among the opposition camp with Shiv Sena (Thackeray faction) saying that hurling such insults at the freedom fighter will not help the Congress. "By insulting Savarkar, the sympathy for Rahul Gandhi will go down. In fact, it will be difficult for the Congress leadership in the state to face the public as Savarkar is present in every nook and corner of the state," read an editorial in Shiv Sena (UBT) mouthpiece 'Saamana' last month.

Another issue is also the Congress' constant targeting of the Adani Group. Pavar's remarks about the Adani Group being targeted by "little known" financial research groups and the NCP leader favouring a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the group instead of a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) was seen as a divergent view from that of Congress.

Coast Guard rescues critically-ill fisherman off Mumbai coast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard rescued a critically-ill fisherman off Mumbai coast on Thursday and evacuated him to the hospital for further treatment.

The patient was identified as Mahesh Savlaram Pavaris, 50. He was suffering from paralysis attack.

Giving details here on Friday, officials said the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), Mumbai received information from owner of IFB Parvati Nandan Ganesh regarding Indian fisherman Mahesh Savlaram Pavaris. Considering the criticality of the patient, nearest



Search and Rescue Unit of the Indian Coast Guard Ship Arush on patrol was diverted. ICG Ship carried out safe medical evacuation of critical patient at 50 nautical miles west of Mumbai.

The patient was provided

with Oxygen and intravenous medication.

The patient was thereafter transferred safely for further medical management at Bombay Hospital, Mumbai with assistance of fishing boat owner.

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल
पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.)
// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //
भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि (1) मेसर्स गुरुश्री मिनरल्स प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, (छितापडरिया डोलोमाईट क्वारी डायरेक्टर- श्री मुकुंश बंसल), पार्ट ऑफ खसरा क्रमांक- 30/5, रकबा- 3.036 हेक्टेयर, उखनन क्षमता- 1,50,537 टन प्रतिवर्ष (2) मेसर्स गुरुश्री मिनरल्स प्राइवेट लिमिटेड (छितापडरिया डोलोमाईट क्वारी डायरेक्टर- श्री मनमोहन शर्मा), पार्ट ऑफ खसरा क्रमांक- 30/4 एवं 30/5 भाग, 4.068 हेक्टेयर, उखनन क्षमता- 1,50,672 टन प्रतिवर्ष (3) मेसर्स गुरुश्री मिनरल्स प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, (छितापडरिया डोलोमाईट क्वारी डायरेक्टर- श्री मनमोहन शर्मा), पार्ट ऑफ खसरा क्रमांक- 5/2, एवं 5/20, 4.162 हेक्टेयर, उखनन क्षमता- 2,50,647 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम- छितापडरिया, वल्लरडर डोलोमाईट, तहसील- जैजैपुर, जिला-सक्ती (छ.ग.) में स्थित कुल 03 डोलोमाईट खदानों (मौज खनिज) के द्वारा पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई बाबत छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त प्रस्तावित परियोजना के संबंध में आपत्ति / सुझाव / टीका-निष्पत्ती इस अधिसूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के भीतर क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छ.ग. पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, बिलासपुर में मौखिक अथवा लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजना के लिए संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 15/05/2023, दिन सोमवार, समय 11:00 बजे, स्थान- शा.उ.भा. शाला छितापडरिया, तहसील- जैजैपुर, जिला-सक्ती (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। सूचित हो कि लोक सुनवाई के दौरान भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली के ऑफिस मेमोरेडम F No. 22-25/2000-IA, III दिनांक 14.09.2020 तथा कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन कराय जाना अनिवार्य होगा।
ई.आई.ई. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथासंशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार झारखंड, ई.आई.ई. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालकसार को प्रति (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसके सी.डी. (साफ्टकोपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन / पठन हेतु कार्यालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला दण्डाधिकारी, जिला-सक्ती, मुख्य कार्यालय अधिकारी, कार्यालय जिला पंचायत जांजीर-चांपा, अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कार्यालय अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.) सक्ती, जिला-सक्ती, कार्यालय मद्राप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र चांपा, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यापार विहार पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय पार्क के पास, बिलासपुर, सरपंच / सचिव कार्यालय, छितापडरिया, डुमरपारा, डेरगाड, लवसरा, रायपुर, तादुलडीह, लोहरा कोट, खम्हरिया, भोथिया, दरभाला, बस्ती बाराद्वार, तहसील- जैजैपुर, जिला-सक्ती (छ.ग.), डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन, मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, वायु विंग, जोरबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, मुख्य वन संरक्षक, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, अरण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.) एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर 19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।
सदस्य सचिव
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,
नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

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E-1108 TLV026-3344
G-904 TLV428-5656
G-1105 TLV811-7060
B-605 TLV326-5701
B-608 TLV862-5491
B-701 TLV114-5823
B-907 TLV265-10116
C-806 TLV673-4926
E-501 TLV036-5568
F-601 TLV249-5023
Note: (1) All payments should be made in favour of "IRIS PLAZA PVT LTD"
(2) Please mention your Unit No, Form No, Name & Mobile Number on the back of cheque/DD. Cheque should be payable at: PZ.
(3) All payments should be made at Group Facility, Plot No-190, Phase-IV, Udyog Vihar, Sector-18, Gurugram-122015 (HARYANA).
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For all queries please contact:
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Three-day global meet on Defence finance ICDFE-2023 concludes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The three-day International Conference on Defence Finance and Economics (ICDFE-2023) concluded in New Delhi on Friday. Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari was the Chief Guest at the valedictory session of the conference.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had inaugurated the conference on April 12. Organised by Ministry of Defence (Finance), it witnessed participation of over 350 eminent policy makers, academics and government officials from within the country and abroad. Delegates from USA, UK, Japan, Australia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Kenya attended the con-



ference, across eight business sessions, officials said here on Friday. Discussions ranged from international perspective on strategic allocation of defence budget, the importance of human resource management in Defence and the significance of defence spending for a state's national security.

The panelists also discussed the defence finance perspective, including the significance of defence procurement and timely payments including the implementation of a faceless bill processing and payment system that the Defence Accounts Department is currently implementing.

1 dead, 62 hurt as FOB collapses in Udhampur

Overbridge gave way under huge Baisakhi rush

PNS ■ JAMMU

A nine-year-old girl died and 61 people, including several children, were injured on Friday when a footbridge collapsed due to overloading as people swarmed it during Baisakhi celebrations in Jammu & Kashmir's Udhampur district, Beni Sangam in the Bain village of Chenani block around 2 pm, officials said. The government has ordered a probe led by Deputy Commissioner Udhampur into the collapse.

Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur Kritika Jyotsana said that a total 62 people were injured out of which 25 were shifted to District Hospital Udhampur. Out of 25, 6 critically



People gather after a foot over bridge collapsed during the Baisakhi celebration at Beni Sangam, in Udhampur on Friday PTI

injured were referred to GMC & H Jammu. A large number of women, children and senior citizens were injured in the foot bridge collapse. Initially, local villagers along with policemen rushed the injured to a nearby community health centre in Chenani.

The rescue teams were also rushed from the district headquarters to evacuate the injured people assembled in the Bain village to attend Baisakhi celebrations. SSP Udhampur Vinod Kumar said, the local police teams along with CRPF men were deployed in the area.

Former K'taka Dy CM joins Cong

Savadi quit BJP after being denied ticket for May 10 Assembly poll

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Former Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi, who announced his decision to resign from the primary membership of the BJP after being denied a ticket to contest in the May 10 Assembly elections, joined the Congress on Friday.

He would now be the grand old party's candidate in Athani in Belagavi district, Congress leaders said.

Savadi, a Lingayat leader in Belagavi, on Friday resigned from the Legislative Council and the BJP before heading to the office of the Congress, his new political home.

"From today onwards, I have no connection with the BJP... I will be a devoted and loyal worker of Congress just as I was in the BJP for 20 to 25 years," Savadi said at a press conference after joining the party.

He was flanked by Congress state president D K Shivakumar, Congress national



Former Karnataka Deputy CM Laxman Savadi with Congress Karnataka president DK Shivakumar, AICC general secretary Randeep Surjewala and Congress leader MB Patil during a Press conference after Savadi joined the Congress party ahead of Karnataka Assembly polls, at the KPCC office in Bengaluru on Friday PTI

general secretary and Karnataka in charge Randeep Singh Surjewala and Election Campaign Committee Congress and MLA M B Patil.

Savadi said he had helped BJP candidates Shrimant Patil in Kagwad and Mahesh Kumathalli in Athani to win the 2019 bypolls following the disqualification of 17 MLAs, which led to the fall of the H D Kumaraswamy-led Congress-JD(S) coalition government.

"I was also instrumental in the BJP's victory in 13 constituencies due to which I was made the deputy chief minister. The BJP had promised that I would contest the 2023 assembly election but they backtracked," Savadi said.

Savadi said the BJP leadership had promised to give tickets to all the 17 people who helped BJP form the government in 2019 but R Shankar was "dumped".

JD(S) releases second list of 49 names, overlooks Gowda's daughter-in-law Bhavani

PTI ■ BENGALURU

JD(S) on Friday announced its second list of 49 candidates for the May 10 Assembly elections in Karnataka.

Ending the suspense about the Hassan seat, the party has fielded HP Swaroop, overlooking JD(S) patriarch and former PM H D Deve Gowda's daughter-in-law Bhavani Revanna, who had been firm on contesting from there.

The Hassan seat had become a major bone of contention as Bhavani Revanna, who had thrown her hat in the ring, refused to relent till the last minute, despite her brother-in-law and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy repeatedly making it clear that she would

not be fielded, and instead a "loyal party worker" would be made to contest.

Bhavani Revanna, a former Hassan zilla panchayat member is the wife of Kumaraswamy's elder brother H D Revanna.

Announcing Swaroop's name as Hassan candidate, Kumaraswamy flanked by his brother Revanna said, "The name has been finalised with the consent of Revanna and Bhavani, and the blessings of H D Deve Gowda."

Among other names that find mention in the list are sitting MLAs H D Revanna (Holenarasipura), K S Lingesh (Belur), H K Kumaraswamy (Sakleshpur), and C N B a l a k r i s h n a (Shravanabelagola).

Those who vote for BJP in 2024 will bring destruction: Nitish

PTI ■ PATNA

Launching a veiled attack on the BJP-led NDA, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday said those who vote for them in the next year's Lok Sabha elections will bring "destruction" on themselves.

Kumar, who dumped the BJP in August last year and formed the Mahagathbandhan government, claimed that he has been working to forge opposition unity.

"I am working towards forging opposition unity... But I am not a claimant for the prime minister's post. All opposition parties are united over forming an alliance against the BJP-led Government at the Centre before the 2024 general elections," the JD(U) supremo said.

He was addressing party workers at a JD(U) office here



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with Janta Dal United national president Lalan Singh during Bhim Chaupal program to mark the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, at the JDU office, in Patna on Friday PTI

on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Bhim Rao Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution.

"I must tell one thing that

those who will vote for them (BJP) in the coming general elections will bring destruction on themselves and the country ...and those who will vote for

us will ensure the well-being of themselves, the country and the State," Kumar said.

The Chief Minister claimed that his only goal was to work for "unifying the opposition to unseat the BJP from power".

On several occasions in the past, Kumar said he was looking forward to play a "positive" role in forging opposition unity against the ruling NDA at the Centre. "I met several opposition leaders, including the Congress and the Left parties, in Delhi. We had very positive and constructive meetings... Now I will talk to other non-BJP parties and will go on a visit across the country," the CM said.

During his two-day visit to Delhi earlier this week, Kumar and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav met AICC president Mallikarjun

Kharge and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Kumar also held discussions with several other opposition leaders, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Accusing the BJP of indulging in dividing society into religious lines, Kumar said that the "BJP is desperate to rewrite history and people know what they did during the freedom struggle".

"They had no contribution in the fight for the country's freedom. They are simply trying to spread hatred. They need to be wiped out from the entire country. People should remain alert about such forces," Kumar claimed.

The JD(U) leader also alleged that the "BJP-led Government at the Centre has done nothing for the country or Bihar, other than propaganda".



Devotees light lamps at the illuminated Golden Temple on the occasion of the 'Baisakhi' festival, in Amritsar on Friday. PTI

Rahul must apologise for Savarkar remarks before entering Maha: BJP chief

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi must apologise and withdraw his remarks against late Hindutva ideologue V D Savarkar before entering Maharashtra, State BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule said here on Friday. It evoked a sharp reaction from Bawankule's Congress counterpart Nana Patole who said that Gandhi did not need the Bharatiya Janata Party's permission to visit the State. Speaking in Nagpur, Bawankule was responding to reporters' questions about talk of Rahul Gandhi's imminent visit to Mumbai to meet former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray.

The Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and Congress along with the Nationalist Congress Party constitute the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance in Maharashtra. The BJP has accused Gandhi of repeatedly "insulting" Savarkar, while the latter has time and again referred to the late freedom fighter's 'apology' to British rulers when he was incarcerated in Andaman's Cellular Jail.

"We do not have any objection if Rahul Gandhi visits 'Matoshree' (Thackeray's home in Mumbai). But Rahul Gandhi had repeatedly and purposely targeted Savarkar. Therefore, before coming to Maharashtra, he must apologise first and take back his remarks against Savarkar," said Bawankule.

BRS will form Govt at Centre after 2024 general elections, says KCR

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Exuding confidence that BRS would form the Government at the Centre after the 2024 Lok Sabha Polls, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao on Friday said that the Dalit Bandhu scheme would be implemented across the country after the party came to power.

The Dalit Bandhu scheme, launched in 2021 offers '10 lakh to Scheduled Caste families as a 100 per cent grant to start a business. The funds given under the direct benefit transfer scheme need not be repaid.



Addressing a public meeting after unveiling a 125 ft-tall statue of B R Ambedkar here, KCR said the BRS party was getting a tremendous response from Maharashtra and was expecting a similar reaction from West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh.

"I will tell you certain things. In this 2024 Parliament

elections, the next government is ours, ours, and ours. Some of our enemies may not be able to digest this. But one spark is enough to light," he said.

Unveiling the Ambedkar statue here on a grand scale on Friday, the birth anniversary of the architect of the Constitution, he said even after 70 years after the Constitution came into effect, Dalits were still the poorest in the country, which was shameful.

Pitching for change in the country, Rao said political parties may win or lose, but the people of the country should win.

TN BJP chief releases 'DMK Files', alleges corruption; ruling party vows legal action

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai on Friday alleged that "kickbacks of ₹200 crore" had been channelled by a multinational company through two shell firms to "Chief Minister M K Stalin for DMK's 2011 election fund". He said he would lodge a complaint with the CBI, seeking a probe into what he called "DMK Files".

The ruling DMK dismissed the allegation as "laughable, baseless and unfounded" and said legal action would be initiated against Annamalai. Top



DMK leader Duraimurugan dismissed the allegations as a mere political stunt.

Annamalai, referring to the DMK rule between 2006 and 2011, alleged that payments were received by the party as kickbacks from a com-

pany that won a bid related to the execution of Chennai Metro Rail Phase I project.

The BJP leader told reporters at the state party headquarters here that the Central Government had notified a policy on May 5, 2010 stipulating norms for evaluation of bids submitted by foreign companies.

Days before the closure of bids for the project, an addendum was brought in and a "second firm" came up to the "first position", which won the bid, Annamalai alleged. The specific change made was withdrawn later.



Hundreds embrace Buddhism at Ambedkar Jayanti in Gandhinagar

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Organisers of an event in Gujarat claimed "hundreds of people" belonging to Dalit and tribal communities embraced Buddhism on the occasion of the 132nd birth anniversary of social reformer BR Ambedkar on Friday.

The event was preceded by a mega rally organised by an outfit called Swayam Sainik Dal (SSD) in Gujarat's capital

Gandhinagar, which saw participation from thousands of people, mostly Dalits and tribals.

The rally was organised to mark Ambedkar's birth anniversary. Participants from across the State gathered at Adalaj town in Gandhinagar district and then reached an open ground in Sector 11 in the State capital.

At the ground, rally organisers claimed "hundreds of

people" belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism by taking 'Dhamma Diksha' (ritual of conversion).

The initiation ceremony was presided over by Buddhist monk Bhante Pragyaratna. The organisers, however, did not provide the exact number of people who converted to Buddhism at the venue. Notably, Ambedkar, along with



his thousands of followers, embraced Buddhism on October 14, 1956, at Nagpur.

Those who embraced Buddhism at the Gandhinagar

gathering took 22 vows which the chief architect of the Constitution took while embracing Buddhism more than 66 years ago.

These 22 pledges essentially ask the person embracing Buddhism to shun religious beliefs related to Hinduism. "While lakhs of people attended the rally, hundreds embraced Buddhism at our gathering.

While some of them have

already submitted applications to respective district collector office to legalise their conversion, the others will do the same soon," said Ashvin Parmar, a media convener of SSD, a Dalit organisation which has no specific leadership or hierarchy.

On the occasion, several speakers claimed Dalits and tribals are forced to leave Hinduism because of caste-based discrimination.

1st-ever National Legislators' Conference Bharat to be organised in June in Mumbai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 3,000 lawmakers from every State and Union Territory are expected to gather for the first-ever National Legislators' Conference Bharat (NLC Bharat) to be held in Mumbai in June this year.

The three-day conference will see MLAs and MLCs discuss case studies such as Uttarakhnad's initiatives of bringing its unemployment figures from the highest down to the lowest in the country, Kerala's Covid management pandemic and the story of an MLA from Nagaland who came up with an elaborate



plan to provide training and gainful employment to over one lakh youth.

The NLC Bharat, supported by various state legislatures, will be held from June 15-17. MIT School of Governance, Atulya Bharat Nirman Foundation and Bhartiya Chhatra Sansad are jointly

organising the conference.

"NLC Bharat will enable legislators to engage in meaningful interactions and knowledge-sharing opportunities. Several plenary sessions and discussions would include excellent legislative debates, welfare schemes, the best utilization of MLA local area development funds, and use of technology for the economic welfare of constituencies," a statement from the organisers said.

The non-partisan platform will unite MLAs and MLCs to showcase their commendable practices and exchange innovative ideas, it said.

PM to flag off Vande Bharat from Kerala on April 25

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala's Vishu festivities got a shot in the arm on Friday as the Vande Bharat Express connecting Thiruvananthapuram with Kannur in six hours, reached the State on Friday. This will be the train service with highest speed plying in the State.

Though the Vande Bharat Express could touch a maximum speed of 150 km per hour, it may take couple of years for the train to reach that level because of the unique topography of Kerala and the sharp curves in the rail route, according to senior officials of Southern Railway based in the

State. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to flag off the high speed train from Thiruvananthapuram on April 25.

The State wore a festive look on Friday itself, though the Vishu, the main festival of Kerala falls on Saturday. But Friday was the new year day for the Malayalis as it was the first of the Malayalam month Medam.

"The Vande Bharat Express starts plying without displacing a single family from the route," said K Gopalakrishnan, a lawyer in Thrissur practising in the Kerala High Court. He pointed out that the K Rail, thye much hyped project spon-



sored by the Kerala Government remains a non-starter because of resistance by

the people who would be displaced by the 550 km long rail. The Railways is yet to

announce the fare for the service though official sources said that a ticket between Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur would be on the higher side of ₹1000.

Warm reception was accorded to the Vande Bharat Express at Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Kottayam as the train was being taken to Thiruvananthapuram on Friday as a prelude to the trial run scheduled for next week.

The ruling CPI-M said in a statement that the Vande Bharat Express was a pale shadow of what was promised by the Centre as it could not travel at its peak speed anywhere in the stretch.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Looking forward

Vandalisation of the HC building in London strained bilateral ties, but Modi-Sunak talk cleared the air

By urging strong action against anti-India elements, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphatically stated his position to his British counterpart, Rishi Sunak. This was the first interaction between the two heads of government after the vandalism of the Indian High Commission in London. The tele-conversation underlines two points. First, our Government is extremely concerned about the attempted resurgence of Khalistani militancy. It is a well-known fact that the nefarious attempt to revive the militancy is meticulously planned by the forces inimical to our national interest; these include a microscopic minority of Sikhs who want the wounds of the 1980s and early 1990s to fester and Pakistan's deep state. It may be recalled that Khalistanis have much wider support in the UK and Canada than in India. Therefore, it is imperative for New Delhi to convince London and Ottawa that these elements are not handled with kid gloves, especially when they indulge in violent activities. Like the vandalism of the Indian High Commission in London. And the bombing of Air India Flight 182, named after Emperor Kanishka, on June 23, 1985, in which all 329 people aboard were killed. They included 268 Canadian citizens, 27 British citizens, and 24 Indian citizens. Sunak reportedly conveyed to Modi that the UK considers the attack on the Indian High Commission "totally unacceptable." He also assured Modi of the security of the Indian Mission and its personnel. This brings to the second point: security of the Indian High Commission—indeed even



of our national interest—was not very high on the agenda of the British Government. Otherwise, Sunak would not have stated the obvious: it is the responsibility of every nation to ensure security of embassies and high commissions of other nations.

It looks like India's decision to go slow on the talks on a free trade agreement (FTA) with the UK did wake up the authorities in London. It was a mature reaction from the Ministry of External Affairs (though all reactions from the Indian side were not, certainly not the decision by the local authorities in New Delhi to build a public toilet near the British High Commissioner's residence. The UK government opposed this on security grounds). The two Prime Ministers also reviewed the progress on several bilateral issues as part of the India-UK Roadmap 2030, particularly in trade and economic sectors. They were satisfied with the ongoing exchanges between officials and growing cooperation. Hopefully, these will gather momentum. On the Indian side, the Government should ensure that there are no flare-ups in sentimentalist, phony demands like apology for Jallianwala Bagh massacre, return of Kohinoor diamond, and reparations for the colonial look. The past is dead; let it remain buried. India and the UK must look at the future and at the possibilities of bilateral cooperation that it holds for both nations.

PICTALK



Devotees walk on burning coals on the occasion of Pana Sankranti festival in Khorha, Odisha

We need to be more culturally tolerant



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Since social mores are not universal but deeply ingrained in local traditions, judging others by our norms is being unfair to them

The episode of the 87-year-old His Holiness the Dalai Lama kissing a young child at an event with the M3M Foundation – the philanthropic arm of Indian real estate company M3M Group, at the Tsuglagkhang temple in Dharamshala, where the Dalai Lama lives in permanent exile – is in news for many reasons. One primary being that people never expected the spiritual leader to ask a child to 'suck his tongue', even in the best of his 'innocent and playful way', even though sticking out one's tongue is considered a sign of respect or agreement and used as a greeting in traditional Tibetan culture, as pointed by the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

One of the world's best-known Buddhist living figures, the Dalai Lama has hurt many sentiments, with his act receiving widespread criticism, describing this as inappropriate and disturbing. The Dalai Lama immediately regretted the incident in a statement and apologised to the boy and his family, as well as his many friends across the world, 'for the hurt his words may have caused'.

This brings me to the whole question of social decorum that governs humankind per se. While social decorum and rules and norms that come along with it are important and provide structure and predictability to our interactions with others, it can also present challenges when those rules conflict with our individual desires or values, leaving many feeling constrained or burdened.

The second point here is the whole debate of exchanging greetings with one another. While 'greeting' is considered a vital part and first point of social interactions and reflects the culture and tradition of a society, the act of greeting is a universal custom that is deeply ingrained in every culture around the world. It is a way of showing respect, friendliness, and politeness towards others. The way in which people greet each other can vary widely across different countries and cultures, with each society having its own unique customs and traditions. Here are some examples:

In India, people greet each



other by saying "Namaste" with their hands folded, showing respect for the other person's inner self or soul. People also touch the feet of their elders as a sign of respect. In Japan, people bow. The depth of the bow depends on the social status of the person they are greeting. A deeper bow is given to a superior or an elder person, whereas a shallower bow is given to an equal or a younger person. Japanese people also have a custom of exchanging business cards, which is considered a formal way of greeting.

Talking about Europe, in France, people greet each other by kissing both cheeks. The number of kisses can vary depending on the region, but two kisses are the most common. It is a way of showing friendship and warmth towards the other person in our neighbourhood in China, people greet each other by saying "Ni hao" or "Hello" in English. Handshakes are becoming increasingly common, especially in business settings. The Chinese people don't hug or touch during such greetings. Whereas in the Middle East,

people greet each other with a series of three kisses on the cheeks. It is a way of showing respect and hospitality towards the other person. It is also common for men to do the same.

Even handshakes are different in different parts of the world. The most common greeting in the United Kingdom is a handshake, particularly in a formal setting. Exchanging pleasantries is another form of greeting. A hug or a kiss on the cheek is what is more acceptable in an informal setting while in Russia, people greet each other by shaking hands, which is firm and vigorous, as compared to Western countries. Russian people also have a custom of greeting their friends and family members with a kiss on the cheek.

The controversy over the Dalai Lama's tongue-sucking tradition has sparked a debate on ethics and morality too, not to deny that tongue sticking, as a sign of greeting and respect, is deeply ingrained in Tibetan culture. However, it is also important to recognize that cultural traditions and practices are not static and can

change over time. As societies evolve and become more interconnected, cultural practices and traditions may adapt or disappear altogether. Nevertheless, cultural traditions are an essential part of a society's identity and heritage and they should be preserved and celebrated.

As Canadian writer and anthropologist, Wade Davis once said: "The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit."

We must embrace cultural diversity and recognize the value of each culture's traditions and practices and avoid judging cultural traditions based on incomplete or inaccurate facts but rather seek to understand their full context and significance. It is crucial to approach cultural traditions with an open mind, curiosity, and willingness to learn and appreciate the diversity of our world. Do we need to be more culturally diversified?

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

THE DALAI LAMA IMMEDIATELY REGRETTED THE INCIDENT IN A STATEMENT AND APOLOGISED TO THE BOY AND HIS FAMILY, AS WELL AS HIS MANY FRIENDS ACROSS THE WORLD, 'FOR THE HURT HIS WORDS MAY HAVE CAUSED'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A SETBACK FOR CONGRESS IN RAJASTHAN

Sir — With assembly elections in Rajasthan around the corner, the ruling Congress has received yet another body blow as its stalwart leader and Rajasthan's Dy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot on Tuesday staged a day-long sit-in and kept fast as well as Shaheed Smarak in Jaipur in protest against his, bete noire Ashok Gehlot-led, own government pressing his demand for action against alleged corruption during the previous BJP rule under former CM Vasundhara Raje, and thereby created a catch-22 situation for the Congress leadership given that any action taken against the disgruntled leader will have an adverse bearing on the party's electoral prospects in the upcoming assembly polls as also in the next year's Lok Sabha polls, or otherwise, it would be underscoring the party's Achilles heel and in both situations, Mr Pilot serves as an albatross round the Congress' neck. On the face of it, the grand old party cannot afford to bear Sachin Pilot's desertion in the present political scenario nor can it ignore his incalculable lieutenant's shenanigans either—a real challenge for the new Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as well!

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

ADIEU KESHUB MAHINDRA

Sir — Keshub Mahindra, a legendary Indian businessman and philanthropist, passed away on 12 April 2023, at the age of 99. He was born in Shimla in 1923, and he graduated from Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in the US. Keshub Mahindra joined the Mahindra & Mahindra group in 1947, the company that his father and uncle had co-founded, and he led it as chairman from 1963 until his retirement in August 2012. He was succeeded by his nephew, Anand Mahindra.

During his tenure, Keshub Mahindra played a pivotal role in the growth and expansion of the Mahindra Group. From its humble beginnings as an agency for Willy's Jeeps in the 1940s, the group diversified into various sectors such as automo-

ChatGPT, the new sensation



The generative AI Chat Box, called ChatGPT is turning into the new sensation of the time. Although it is a futuristic technology, many people are using this technology as an element of entertainment by making ChatGPT solve JEE Mains or even UPSC CSE question papers. The idea is to compare whether ChatGPT is by any

chance smarter than the human brain or not.

There are many other experiments going on the way simultaneously, where people are applying this generative AI Tool to solve routine problems. There is no doubt that the strong algorithms it is based on are allowing ChatGPT to become an original generator of data by learning. Which will change the way we incline towards the future. Humans are now no more the source of anything original. Now that ChatGPT can do the same as well by learning.

We need to be extremely cautious about the future application of such technologies. Since technology is far more advanced and will impact the way we live. We, humans, must adhere to the lessons of AI Ethics at the very nip of the technology bud stage.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

biles, financial services, logistics, real estate, hospitality, and defence equipment, to name a few.

Aside from his contributions to the business world, Keshub Mahindra was also known for his philanthropic work. Keshub Mahindra's contribution to the Indian business landscape cannot be overstated. He was a visionary leader and a philanthropist who believed in doing the right thing, even when it was difficult. He will be remembered as a true giant of Indian business and a beacon of inspiration for generations to come.

Amarjeet kumar | Hazaribag

RELIGIOUS SENSITIVITY

Sir — It was a daylong religious function organised at the Santhagiri Ashram in Kozhikode Kerala with the imam of a mosque and a few other dignitaries following Islam in attendance. As the Kerala Opposition leader VD Satheesan took the mike; he realised that for some of the guests, it was time for their evening prayers. Without any prodding from anybody, Satheesan vacates the podium after intimating that he would start his presiden-

tial address only after the imam and the others had broken their fast! This is called sensitivity and humanity at its divine best!

Soon after a Muslim gentleman takes the mike and sounds the azan, the audience (irrespective of religious faith) stands up in respect coincidentally the temple bells start ringing for evening Aradhana! The ashram hurriedly arranges food and water enabling the imam and his co-religionists to break the fast with none other than Satheesan joining them! And all spontaneously, without any planning!

What a contrast to those party leaders/ organisations in other states who render threats to beat up and chase the Christians or issue diktat not to sell properties to Muslims! Though the social environment of the country is increasingly getting communally vitiated; the consolation remains that we still have VD Satheesans, Kerala and several outright secular humanitarians in our midst.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The statesman of Indian industry

Keshub Mahindra was one of the last generation of entrepreneurs known for holding on to their values

Keshub Mahindra, 99, uncle of Anand Mahindra and Chairman Emeritus of the Mahindra Group passed away on Wednesday. Considered widely the statesman of Indian industry, Keshub Mahindra was one of the few and last generation of industrialists and businessmen known for following value systems in everyday business. These distinguished stalwarts set the benchmark for the Indian industry and established a very high degree of ethical standards and quality business practices for the next generation to emulate and follow. Keshub Mahindra was a shining example of integrity, and ethics in business.

Born in 1923 in Shimla and graduated from Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in the US, Keshub looked up to JRD Tata and Nanaji Deshmukh as his mentors. This probably helped chisel his legendary leadership qualities which in turn reflected in how the Mahindra group made progress in leaps and bounds. The unwavering trust and respect shown by him in his team and the empowerment



provided resulted in the Mahindra team working with full creativity and making amazing product innovations in relatively less period of time and becoming a force to reckon with in the Indian automobile industry. This pristine culture of treating all as colleagues made the M&M group a highly efficient team that was well poised to fully leverage the opportunities, especially the various service businesses after the liberalisation of the economy.

He instinctively knew which loss-making businesses to steer clear of. It was also this acumen and leadership that enabled the Mahindra group to evolve from an agency for Willy's Jeeps in India in the 1940s to helming a \$12-billion conglomerate with automobiles, financial services, logistics, real estate,

hospitality and defence equipment under its portfolio. But perhaps the most recognition Keshub Mahindra received was as a person who began the true SUV vehicle segment in India whose products are unmatched in their durability, innovation and quality even today. The journey from a humble Willy's Jeep to the state-of-the-art XUV 700 SUV is a testament to the distance covered by the Mahindra group.

At a time when resources were sparse and government assistance was sporadic at best, Keshub Mahindra through sheer grit prioritised the manufacturing sector. He visualised that a strong national economy must have robust industries and institutions that are effective, and competitive. KM encouraged liberalisation, deregulation and opening of the economy and was unafraid of competition whether domestic or international. This business attitude became integral to the Mahindra group and helped weather the onslaught of global auto giants in India.

The oldest billionaire in India was also the most down-to-earth person.



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Though Keshub Mahindra was at the helm of one of India's best-known companies for five decades, he chose to always remain out of the limelight. As a steadfast philanthropist, he never allowed his work to be publicised and ensured that his philanthropy was always discreet. KM's generosity was legendary and so was his commitment to social causes as part of the same he maintained a strong connection to the KC Mahindra Education Trust which grants scholarships across categories.

Apart from being the manufacturing pioneer of India and a philanthropist par excellence, Keshub Mahindra was a simple human being who also enjoyed cooking continental food.

He transformed the Indian industrial scenario with his great vision and his passing is indeed a great loss. Anand Mahindra aptly summarised the spirit of KM when he paid rich tributes to his uncle on Twitter, "Travel well, Uncle Keshub. I know you must be exploring new, off-road trails wherever you are."

(The writer is an educator)



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S SCO AND G20 PRESIDENCY

India will have to strike a balance to make an impact



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Much has been written in the past few months on the going meetings as part of India's G20 presidency, where she is trying to showcase her rich cultural and deep democratic historical foundation, to an international audience. Some critics may find India's pitch to showcase its glorious cultural, living history, by hosting more than 200 meetings across nearly 50 key centres of socio-cultural importance in India, as an avoidable, extravaganza at the worst, or a political pitch for nationalist voices in the run-up to the general elections, at its best. However, quietly in the background India has been holding and hosting the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) leaders, whose presidency, it holds till the middle of this year.

The SCO is a group of eight countries representing the living bridge between Central Asia, South Asia and Eurasia. The grouping founded in 2001, consisting of only five members, has now grown to eight, with four more interested in full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and six "Dialogue Partners" (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey). SCO countries according to India's Press Information Bureau statistics, represent, 42% of the world population and 25% of the GDP. It may be argued that a significant contribution to the index numbers comes from China, India and Russia who are permanent members of the SCO, however, the geo-strategic clout of the Eurasian and Central Asian nations can't be ruled out.



India pitched for tourism development to be the key theme for the year 2023 under its presidency. It was well thought balancing act given the historical and cultural linkages between India and most of the other permanent members (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), while having, deep-rooted geopolitical conflicts with few members, such as Pakistan and China. As part of its presidency, India managed to nominate Varanasi as the first "cultural and tourism capital" of the SCO region, another strategic move. Varanasi, one of the oldest and continuously inhabited cities in the world, is home to several of the world's most practised religions including Buddhism, and Jainism, besides, having key historical cultural significance for Hindus and Muslims. India took on the mantle of SCO presidency at a time when the Russia-Ukraine conflict had entered the sixth month and the world had started congregating under power blocs, similar to the cold war groupings. India, facing one of the worst military aggressions from China, threatening to alter India's sovereign boundaries, is not sure if it can, have any meaningful dialogue with Chinese counterparts on multilateral platforms such as SCO. Meanwhile, Pakistan, another permanent member of SCO, and having historical differences with India, continues to remain a threat.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated the situation, with Russia. China has doubled down in its support towards Russia, with President Xi Jinping making the first-ever state-level visit to Russia a few days back, taking the no-limits friendship between the two, a few notches higher. China and Russia are both members of G20, whose presidency India holds in 2023 and who, are trying to pool resources for a non-western/US-dominated world order. India has in the past two decades or so, shrugged off its cold war reluctance to distance itself from the US-led world order, and, moved into being a long-term strategic partner with shared values in democratic systems and processes with America. US and India's partnership has moved beyond a strategic defence level to critical, emerging technology, trade and economic cooperation, as well as being key players in the Indo-Pacific region to balance out an aggressive China. Meanwhile, historical defence cooperation between Russia and India continues, even as Russia due to the sanctions imposed, by the West has emerged as one of the largest suppliers of critical hydrocarbons for India. In the complex rubric of changing geopolitical strategies and interests, India will have to maintain a fine balance between its SCO and G 20 presidency if she intends to make any meaningful impact.

(The writer is a policy analyst)

New Education Policy a catalyst

It will promote new innovations, multi-disciplinary studies and academic collaboration



SUDHIR HINDWAN

Motivation and Encouragement are the two keywords that are prerequisite to a successful education system. A competent education system has to have an inner web of strength that can have myriad strategies to meet unforeseen challenges.

Fostering the latest skills along with subtle ways of transmitting new moral codes and cognitive thinking are the main areas of National Education Policy. Our education system is known for embracing values and approaches that can shape the creative urge of students and academicians. However, there are increasing challenges posed by the transitional phase. The National Educational Policy (NEP) is a sincere effort to fill the gap in the existing realms of knowledge about the contemporary importance of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies. The new input of the NEP will certainly make each discipline richer in content and varied in ideas. Even science students will be exposed to the nuances of international, national, socio-political and economic issues through multidisciplinary practices. One cannot but admire the ingenious display of pure genius of this approach to Government.

The recent attempt of UGC to invite feedback from academicians on making the institution a high-learning multidisciplinary institution is a great move towards a transparent and pragmatic approach. Earlier the invitation of draft suggestions for making effective online learning programmes already received positive feedback from all the stakeholders. Another major change that the NEP envisages is the provision for granting autonomy to the colleges and a common test for a four-year BA degree. The huge jump in the literacy rate from 12 per cent at the time of independence to whooping over 74 per cent as of 2021 is a major achievement of the government.

These policies will work as catalysts towards new innovations and provide academic collaboration between multiple disciplines and cooperation between the institutions of higher learning. During the last few years or so, there has been a period of substantial change in the contents and nature of various disciplines and a focused approach of adding real-life experiments of democracy, the environment, globalisation and governance into the framework of the new education system. There's a need to show how new ways of higher education will drive change and instil confidence among the masses and explain how the latest research and happenings in the field of education across the globe can be disseminated so as to upgrade research and teaching accordingly. The strength of the higher education system lies in creating its internal dynamism by ensuring inclusive growth.

As India needs to diversify its strategies to counter the challenges it faces from Pakistan and China, strategic knowledge and anticipating the move and motive would be helpful in nipping the problems in the bud. The NEP has a number of features that are quite useful for enhancing the level of strategic studies wherein young pupils can have a vast canvas to identify their choice of disciplines. It would help them realise the inner strength, resilience, intellect and accuracy of thinking and excellent coordination between mind and body among the youth, particularly from lesser-known areas, for serving the nation with all integrity and conviction. This is not only



THE RECENT ATTEMPT OF UGC TO INVITE FEEDBACK FROM ACADEMICIANS ON MAKING THE INSTITUTION OF HIGH LEARNING MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND IS A GREAT MOVE TOWARDS A TRANSPARENT AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH

(The writer is a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award and is a professor and an expert on strategic affairs)



an attempt to bring them to the mainstream but a major step towards fulfilling the inner penchant for equity and social justice.

The procedure of accountability and disclosure was anxiously awaited and would make the system foolproof. The NEP involving a more practical-based approach at the tertiary level would help catch and identify the inclination among the new generation towards strengthening the country's forces.

The new attention and scope for innovation would attract talent and enlighten them to seek career opportunities in Defence services. The NEP has provided a new gateway to the problem-solving mechanism and a huge platform for the education sector in India. Undoubtedly tremendous efforts have been made towards creating an environment that generates smooth, easily understandable yet cognitive, constructive and analytical skills among the harbingers of the future.

The provision of a single regulator and numerous entry and exit options with regard to formal degrees have been some of the salient features of the NEP which deserve all the appreciation as a new beginning to understanding the core security problems which can be comprehended in a brighter manner with an option of choosing Defence and security as one of the important subjects of the larger discipline either at the undergraduate or postgraduate levels. The research on such issues would invite tremendous receptiveness on the part of higher education since the ongoing low-intensity insurgency perpetuated by Pakistan and the expansionist mission of China have reaffirmed the obnoxious conspiracy to hit India where it matters the most by

creating a socio-religious and security quagmire.

Besides, it will send out a loud and clear message that India cannot reciprocate in the same manner as it has certain firm convictions and policies towards ensuring peace through the defensive mechanism. This has carried forward the question of re-establishing the credibility and confidence among people that India is not a soft state but it wants to avoid war and conflict as much as possible. The new learning of socio-political aspects of the problem of insurgency, terrorism and Naxal violence would help security personnel get well-versed in the psychology of terrorists and criminals.

The attempt to sensitise about exploring our domestic underpinnings with a renewed focus on the role of addressing the multiple shades such as gender sensitisation and concern of marginalised communities by way of the creation of Special Education Zones through community-based social democratic ideas and values in the process deserves all the appreciation. Besides, it would help in understanding social responsibility. In addition to this, a new approach can also provide a clear way forward for students interested in Defence studies by getting them to learn new techniques. The latest opportunities would open up a fresh outlook and generate an introspective discourse to seek multiple options and viewpoints to see one's right place according to one's interest.

There are numerous provisions under NEP that can ensure a collaborative creation of ideas and provide tips to comprehend even tedious and complex issues. As far as education at the tertiary level is con-

cerned, NEP's approach appears to set out a very clear way forward by getting the mentors fully involved in new techniques and developing challenging strategies to meet the needs of all categories of students.

Hence, in order to enhance the standard of students it would be imperative to develop self-academic orientation and excellence to deliver and provide problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities with which students can further formulate and test their ideas, draw conclusions and inferences, and pool and convey their knowledge in a collaborative learning environment. An introduction of a new syllabus would provide a vivid and deeper insight into the problem of terrorism and its causes and thereby may lead to a road map towards a foolproof countering strategy. This combating strategy will have to look into the basis of the funding for terrorism, and the nexus among arms dealers, drug traffickers, smugglers and terrorists. Proper knowledge about the nexus between organised crime and terrorism can be of immense use.

The vision of the NEP is bound to make India the most competitive in the field of strategic education and would have many takers. The new facilities in security and Defence areas would enthral the new generation and provide a new perspective to all the aspiring academicians and students who are shortly going to step out into the world of competition much beyond a regulated framework. Creativity and constant potential for innovation are integral parts of NEP that help in new idea generation. It helps in harnessing the prowess of new expressions and creative ways of problem-solving.

Strengthen primary health care to build resilient system

Community Health Centres are the backbone of the rural health care system of India. The shortfall of doctors in these centres is a serious issue

According to the recent Rural Health Statistics Report, released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, there is a shortage of 83.2% of surgeons, 74.2% of obstetricians and gynaecologists, 79.1% of physicians and 81.6% of paediatricians. Less than half the PHC (45%) function on a 24x7 basis. Of the 5,480 functioning CHCs, only 541 have all four specialists. The requirement of physicians in the CHCS is 5,183. However, there is a shortfall of 4,087. This has grown from a 3,881 shortfall in 2019. The shortfall has increased by 27.7% in one year. Under the category of Surgeons, the five states with a maximum shortfall of physicians in CHC are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha and Madhya



SUNIL GOYAL



DIMPLE KHOKHAR

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Pradesh. Under the category of Gynaecologists, the five states with a maximum shortfall of physicians in CHC are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

The number of doctors required in Primary Health Centres in rural areas is 24,918. And Chhattisgarh positions are vacant. The shortfall of doctors in PHCS was the highest in Odisha, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. The shortfall in the posts of health workers was 2%. SC, PHC and CHC facilities are overburdened across the board. Community Health Centres are considered the backbone of the rural health care system of India. These Centres should have at least thirty beds. They should cover



at least four primary health centres with specialized services. Every Community Health Centre should be manned by four medical specialists: a physician, a surgeon, a gynaecologist and a

paediatrician. The RHS estimates as of 31 March 2022, have revealed that each Community Health Center (CHC) caters to 164027 people, against a norm of 80,000-1,20,000. The Primary

Health Centre should consist of four to six beds and 14 subordinate paramedical staff. The RHS estimates as of 31 March 2022, have revealed that each Primary Health Centre (PHC) caters to 36049 people, against a norm of 20,000-30,000. Sub Centres are the most peripheral contact point between the primary health care system and the community. It should consist of one HW (Female) or ANM and one HW (male). HW is Health Worker and ANM is Auxiliary Nurse Midwife. The RHS estimates as of 31 March 2022, have revealed that each sub-centre (SC) catered to an average of 5691 people, against a norm of 3,000-5,000. This, coupled with a human resource shortage (like auxiliary nurse midwives - ANM), pla-

gues access to adequate and quality healthcare.

The shortage was most pronounced in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Uttarakhand. SCs, PHCs and CHCs had more staff in 2021, at the height of the deadly second wave of COVID-19, as compared to now. CHCs are 30-bed block-level health facilities that are supposed to provide basic care related to surgery, gynaecology, paediatrics, and general medicine.

There are 6,064 CHCs across India, and the Health Ministry has been unsuccessful in meeting the requirement for specialist doctors in most of these centres. Apart from specialist doctors, there is also a shortage of female health workers and auxiliary nursing

midwives, with up to 14.4% of these posts lying vacant in PHCs and SCs. There has been an over 50% rise in the number of allopathy doctors in primary health centres since the launch of the National Rural Health Mission in 2005. The number of allopathic doctors at PHCs has increased from 20,308 in 2005 to 30,640 in 2022.

NRHM's focus on expanding institutional deliveries did lead to a significant increase in the share of deliveries in health facilities. The Quality of delivery services in the public sector remains a concern, including difficulties in handling birth complications, shortfalls in emergency obstetric care facilities, shortages of key essential medicines, diagnostics, etc.

Guardsman accused in records leak to remain in jail for now

AP ■ BOSTON

A Massachusetts Air National Guardsman arrested in the leak of highly classified military documents has been ordered to remain behind bars pending a hearing next week.

Jack Teixeira, 21, appeared in federal court on Boston on Friday, one day after his arrest. A federal magistrate judge ordered him jailed until at least a detention hearing set for next Wednesday.

Jack Teixeira was arrested by heavily armed tactical agents on Thursday following a week-long criminal investigation into the disclosure of highly sensitive government records, an alarming breach that exposed to the world unvarnished secret assessments on the war in Ukraine, the capabilities and geopolitical interests of other nations and other top national security issues.

Justice Department prosecutors are expected to reveal

new details about the allegations while unsealing a criminal complaint in Boston charging Teixeira under an Espionage Act provision that makes it a crime to remove, retain or transmit national defense information.

Teixeira arrived in court, handcuffed and in tan jail clothes, ahead of his initial appearance. He sat at the defense table next to his lawyer.

Investigators believe Teixeira was the leader of an online private chat group where the documents were shared. Though prosecutors have not revealed a possible motive, accounts of those in the chat group have depicted Teixeira as motivated more by bravado than ideology.

The Biden administration has scrambled to contain the potential diplomatic and military fallout from the leaks since they were first reported last week, moving to assure allies and assess the scope of damage.

The classified documents — which have not been individually authenticated by U.S. officials — range from briefing slides mapping out Ukrainian military positions to assessments of international support for Ukraine and other sensitive topics, including under what circumstances Russian President Vladimir Putin might use nuclear weapons.

The leak is believed to have started on a site called Discord, a social media platform popular with people playing online games and where Teixeira is believed to have posted for years about guns, games and his favorite memes — and, according to some chatting with him, closely guarded US secrets. Discord has said it was cooperating with the investigation.

In previous Associated Press stories, the leaker was identified as “the O.G.” by a member of the online chat group. Known as Thug Shaker Central, the group drew rough-

ly two dozen enthusiasts who talked about their favorite types of guns and also shared memes and jokes, some of them racist. The group also held a running discussion on wars that included talk of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

In that discussion, “the O.G.” would for months post material that he said was classified — originally typing it out with his own notations, then a few months ago switching to posting images of folded-up papers because he felt his writings weren’t being taken seriously, said the member, who declined to share his name with AP. It was not immediately clear how Teixeira would have had access to the records, but a Defense Department official told The AP on Thursday that as an IT specialist responsible for military communications networks, the young Guardsman would have had a higher level of security clearance

Donald Trump answers questions for 7 hours in NY fraud lawsuit

AP ■ NEW YORK

Former President Donald Trump answered questions for nearly seven hours Thursday during his second deposition in a legal battle with New York’s attorney general over his company’s business practices, reversing an earlier decision to invoke his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination and remain silent.

The Republican met all day with lawyers for Attorney General Letitia James, who sued Trump last year. Her lawsuit claims Trump and his family misled banks and business associates by giving them false information about his net worth and the value of assets such as hotels and golf courses.

Shortly after Trump entered the Manhattan skyscraper that houses James’ offices, his attorney, Alina Habba, said he was “not only willing but also eager to testify.”

After the deposition was finished, a lawyer for Trump’s businesses, Christopher Kise, said the former president had spent nearly seven hours “describing in detail his extraordinary business success.”

“The transactions at the center of this case were wildly profitable for the banks and for the Trump entities,” Kise said.



“When the facts of this success, and not politically engineered soundbites, are out in the open, everyone will scoff at the notion any fraud took place.”

The lawsuit is unrelated to the felony criminal charges filed against Trump by the Manhattan district attorney, which led last week to his historic arraignment, the first for a former president.

James declined to answer a question about the deposition at a news conference on an unrelated matter Wednesday.

Trump previously met with James’

lawyers Aug. 10, but refused to answer all but a few procedural questions, invoking his Fifth Amendment rights more than 400 times. At the time, James had not yet brought her lawsuit and it was unclear whether questions about the way Trump valued his company would become the basis of a criminal case.

“Anyone in my position not taking the Fifth Amendment would be a fool, an absolute fool,” he said in that deposition, which was recorded on video and later released publicly. Trump predicted a “renegade” prosecutor would try to make a criminal case out of his answers, if he gave them.

“One statement or answer that is ever so slightly off, just ever so slightly, by accident, by mistake, such as it was a sunny, beautiful day, when actually it was slightly overcast, would be met by law enforcement at a level seldom seen in this country, because I’ve experienced it,” he said.

Circumstances since then have changed.

The criminal charges brought by the Manhattan district attorney focused on how the company accounted internally for payments to a lawyer, Michael Cohen, for his work paying off people not to go public with stories about extramarital sexual encounters Trump said never happened.

Welcomed in Ireland, ‘Cousin Joe’ Biden jokes of staying

AP ■ DOUBLIN

In Ireland this week, well-wishers have lined the streets to catch a mere glimpse of President Joe Biden. Photos of his smiling face are plastered on shop windows, and one admirer held a sign reading, “2024 — Make Joe President Again.”

No wonder Biden keeps joking about sticking around. Back home, Biden’s approval rating is near the lowest point of his presidency. And even some fellow Democrats have suggested he shouldn’t run for reelection. On trips within the US to discuss his economic and social policies, Biden often gets a smattering of admirers waving as he drives by, and friendly crowds applaud his speeches. But the reception doesn’t compare with the overwhelming adoration he’s getting here in the old sod.



Expect more of the same on Friday, when Biden wraps up his visit to Ireland by spending a day in County Mayo in western Ireland, where his great-great-grandfather Patrick Blewitt lived until he left for the United States in 1850.

The locals have been abuzz for weeks with preparation for Biden’s visit, giving buildings a new coat of paint and hanging American flags from shopfronts. It’s a dynamic that most of

Biden’s predecessors also have faced: The world abroad tends to love American presidents. Back home, not always. Not so much.

“With the greatest of respect, Mr. President, I must say, you sure can draw a crowd,” Ceanann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghail, speaker of the lower chamber of Ireland’s parliament, said as he introduced Biden’s joint address to lawmakers on Thursday.

Orban calls US a ‘friend’ despite sanction on bank

AP ■ BUDAPEST

Hungary’s prime minister sought to bring down the temperature on spiralling tensions between his government and the United States, declaring on Friday that the US is Hungary’s “friend” despite sanctions Washington imposed on a Budapest-based Russian bank.

In an interview on state radio, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that the International Investment Bank, a Russian-controlled financial institution which US officials have argued could serve as a conduit for Russian espionage, “could have played a serious role in developing Central European economies.”

While the war in Ukraine had limited the bank’s effectiveness, Orban said, the US sanctions against IIB and three of its top officials had “ruined it.”

Top court asked to preserve abortion pill access rules

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration and a drug manufacturer asked the Supreme Court on Friday to preserve access to an abortion drug free from restrictions imposed by lower court rulings, while a legal fight continues.

The Justice Department and Danco Laboratories filed their emergency requests with the high court less than two days after an appeals court ruling in a case from Texas that had the effect of tightening the rules under which the drug, mifepristone, can be prescribed and dispensed.

The new limits would take effect Saturday unless the court acts before then.

The fight over mifepristone lands at the Supreme Court less than a year after conservative justices reversed Roe v. Wade and allowed more than a

dozen states to effectively ban abortion outright. The justices are being asked for a temporary order to keep in place Food and Drug Administration regulations governing mifepristone. Such an order would give them time to more fully consider each side’s arguments without the pressure of a deadline.

A ruling from the 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals late Wednesday would prevent the pill, used in the most common abortion method, from being mailed or prescribed without an in-person visit to a doctor.

It also would withdraw the Food and Drug Administration’s approval of mifepristone for use beyond the seventh week of pregnancy. The FDA says it’s safe through 10 weeks.

Still, the appeals court did not entirely withdraw FDA approval of mifepristone while the fight over it continues. The

5th circuit narrowed an April 7 ruling by US District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, whose far-reaching and virtually unprecedented order would have blocked FDA approval of the pill. He gave the administration a week to appeal.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said Thursday that the 5th circuit did not go far enough to “protect Americans’ access to safe and effective reproductive care.”

Mifepristone was approved by the FDA more than two decades ago and is used in combination with a second drug, misoprostol. Adding to the uncertainty, a separate federal judge in Washington on Thursday clarified his own order from last week to make clear that the FDA is not to do anything that might block mifepristone’s availability in 17 Democrat-led states suing to keep it on the market.

Prachanda requests SC to scrap petition against him

Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal’s Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” has requested the Supreme Court to scrap the writ petition filed against him for allegedly taking moral responsibility for the killing of about 5,000 persons during the decade-long Maoist insurgency.

On March 10 the Supreme Court, responding to writ petitions seeking the court’s order for an investigation against “Prachanda” for his controversial statement, asked the prime minister to furnish a written clarification explaining why an order should not be issued against him as demanded by the petitioners.

Prachanda on Thursday in his 13-point written response sent to the apex court stated that the petition should be scrapped since it has no constitutional ground and reason, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

The PM said his statement was an exercise of fundamental rights of freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 17 (2) of the Constitution of Nepal and that all citizens could exercise the right in an equal manner.

Prachanda said taking moral responsibility for all deaths that took place in the time of conflict by the rebel side was against the spirit of the comprehensive peace accord and the Constitution of Nepal, and that his statement was solely a political expression and be considered an expression beyond the judicial process.

The Prime Minister also said that he was committed to addressing the issues of war-era cases through a timely amendment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons Act, MyRepublica newspaper reported. The CPN (Maoist Centre) chair also added that he had never taken responsibility for 5,000 insurgency-era killings, and the petitions demanding an investigation against him be scrapped.

Imran Khan gets protective bail

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan’s ousted prime minister Imran Khan on Friday appeared before the Lahore High Court (LHC) and secured protective bail till April 26 in a case related to using “inappropriate language” against senior Army officers. Islamabad police had booked Khan, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief, on April 6 for making a speech in which he allegedly used “inappropriate language against the senior military (Inter-Services Intelligence) officers” and put the lives of their families at risk.

The Lahore High Court (LHC) provided 70-year-old Khan with a protective bail and directed him to approach the relevant court in Islamabad for a bail extension.

The former premier appeared before the LHC amid high security.

“LHC Justice Ali Baqir Najfi granted protective bail to Imran Khan on his request that he wants to join the investigation in a ‘frivolous’ case against him registered by the Islamabad police,” a court official told PTI. “The judge granted him protective bail till April 26 and



directed him to move to the relevant court in Islamabad for an extension to bail,” the official added.

Talking to reporters at the LHC premises, Khan said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led coalition federal government’s open defiance of the Supreme Court orders, especially about holding elections in Punjab, earned a bad name for the country.

“Through such acts, Pakistan’s image in the world is being portrayed as ‘Banana Republic,’ the former prime minister said.

The federal coalition does not want the elections to prolong its rule,” he said, adding that under the Constitution, elections cannot be delayed for more than 90 days after

the dissolution of an assembly.

Khan also lambasted what he called the “fascist government” of all times installed by “handlers” (referring to the country’s powerful military establishment).

“So far, more than 3,000 workers of PTI have been picked up by this fascist government and their human rights are being trampled upon,” the cricketer-turned-politician said.

On Thursday, a Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) extended Khan’s pre-arrest bail till May 4 in three terrorism cases.

Intense clashes erupted outside the Islamabad judicial complex on March 18 when Khan arrived from Lahore to attend a much-awaited hearing in the Toshakhana corruption case.

During the confrontation between PTI workers and police, over 25 security personnel were injured, prompting the Lahore police to book Khan and hundreds of his party workers in three terrorism cases.

One of the cases in which Khan has been booked for attempted murder pertains to the killing of a PTI worker.

Dar: UAE approves additional \$1-billion funding to Pakistan

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan’s Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday announced that the UAE has approved USD 1 billion in financial support, taking the cash-strapped nation a step closer to unlocking the crucial IMF bailout.

Pakistan is tackling a major economic crisis as it awaits a much-needed USD 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the Washington-based International Monetary Fund, part of a USD 6.5 billion bailout package the IMF approved in 2019.

Finance Minister Dar said the Gulf nation has confirmed its commitment to the International Monetary Fund, paying way for the staff-level agreement to unlock a USD 1.1 billion loan by the global lender.

“UAE authorities have confirmed to IMF for their bilateral support of USD 1 billion to Pakistan,” Dar said in a tweet, adding that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) was now “engaged for needful documentation for taking the said deposit from UAE authorities.”

The UAE rolled over its deposits of USD 2 billion in January this year too, providing critical support to cash-starved Pakistan’s depleting foreign exchange reserves.

In another tweet, Dar announced that the apex bank is getting the third and last disbursement from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), worth USD 300 million, out of its USD 1.3 billion loan.

China, Pak press Afghanistan Taliban admin to intensify crackdown on terror groups

PTI ■ BEIJING

Terrorism in Afghanistan has gone from “bad to worse” after the withdrawal of the US troops, China has said and asked the country’s Taliban rulers to deliver on its pledge to rein in terrorist groups which pose problems for neighbouring countries, especially its close ally Pakistan. Pakistan is reeling under frequent terrorist attacks by the militant group TPP, which Islamabad alleges is based on Afghan soil.

“The terrorism went from bad to worse in Afghanistan. The number of Afghan terror groups has increased to more than 20 today,” Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang said after presiding over the Afghan neighbouring states conference attended by his counterparts from Russia, Pakistan and Iran in Samarkand in Uzbekistan on Thursday. This is the fourth meeting of the Foreign

Ministers convened by China, whose Uyghur Muslim majority Xinjiang province shared borders with Afghanistan.

Beijing is also seeking to enhance its role in Afghanistan by backing the Taliban interim administration, prodding it to crack down on the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a separatist militant outfit in Xinjiang which allegedly has links with radical outfits like Al Qaeda and Islamic State.

But more significantly Pakistan which helped the Taliban for decades faced major problems from the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), as it caused havoc in the country by carrying out numerous terrorist attacks. A joint statement issued at end of the Samarkand meeting said the militant groups based in Afghanistan posed serious problems for neighbouring countries.

Japan to open first casino

Tokyo (AP): Japan’s government on Friday approved a controversial plan to open the country’s first casino in the city of Osaka as it seeks to lure more foreign tourists. The casino resort is to include conference facilities, an exhibition hall, a hotel and a theater and is expected to open as early as autumn 2029, four years after Osaka hosts a World Expo.

“It is expected to contribute to the local economy and the economic growth of all of Japan after the Osaka-Kansai Expo and become a tourism hub for transmitting the charms of Japan,” Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said at a meeting of the government’s IR, or integrated resort, promotion panel.

The panel said the plan meets the government’s requirements, including financial stability, contribution to the local economy and consideration of anti-addiction measures.

Iranians mark Jerusalem Day to support Palestinians

Tehran (AP): Tens of thousands of Iranians, some chanting “Death to America” and “Death to Israel,” marched in the capital of Tehran on Friday to mark Jerusalem Day, an annual show of support for the Palestinians.

Senior Iranian officials attended the rally, including President Ebrahim Raisi. Since Iran’s Islamic Revolution in 1979, the rallies marking what is also known as al-Quds Day have typically been held typically on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Al-Quds is the Arabic name for Jerusalem, the contested city at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed it



to its capital. The Palestinians seek the eastern part of Jerusalem as a future capital. Jerusalem is the home of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest shrine in Islam. The compound, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, is also the most sacred site in Judaism.

Raisi said that Friday’s rallies show the “liberation of al-Quds is very close, closer than expected,” the official IRNA news agency reported. They also show

Palestinian militant groups fighting Israel that “they are not alone,” Raisi added. He slammed the normalisation of ties between Israel and some Gulf Arab states, saying it would not bring security to the region or Israel.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Qalibaf told demonstrators that Israel is the “root” of problems in the region and that Palestinian militants are hindering Israel’s plans.

The rally was the first al-Quds Day demonstration since Iran was shaken by months of anti-government protests. Waves of protests erupted after the September death of a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman who was detained by the morality police for allegedly violating Iran’s strict Islamic dress code.

Ilsa lashes Australia’s northwest coast

Canberra (AP): Australia’s most powerful tropical cyclone in eight years lashed its northwest coast with winds gusting to an apparent record of 289 kilometres (180 miles) per hour Friday but skirted larger population centres and resulted in no immediate reports of injuries.

Cyclone Ilsa crossed the Pilbara coast of Western Australia state as a Category 5 storm, the most severe, but weakened to Category 2 as it moved inland, Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology said.

Damage was still being assessed in the path of Ilsa, which made landfall in the early hours 150 kilometres (93 miles) northeast of the iron ore export town of Port Hedland in the rural area of Pardoo. Pardoo had a population of 47 in the latest census and the Pardoo

Roadhouse and Tavern was destroyed.

The two owners stayed throughout the storm and were unharmed, emergency officials said.

“They’ve had a pretty uncomfortable, challenging night,” Department of Fire and Emergency Services Superintendent Peter McCarthy said.

Beyond Pardoo, Acting Emergency Services Minister Sue Ellery described the storm damage as “fairly minimal.”

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm said he was relieved that Ilsa had shifted toward Pardoo after tracking from the Indian Ocean toward Port Hedland, the world’s largest bulk export port that sends Australian iron ore around the globe.



Houthi prisoners cheer as they arrive to Sanaa airport on Friday. An exchange of more than 800 prisoners linked to Yemen’s long-running war with them began Friday, the International Committee for the Red Cross said. The three-day operations will see flights transport prisoners between Saudi Arabia and Yemen’s capital, Sanaa, long held by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. AP/PTI

China vows not to sell arms to any party in Ukraine war

AP ■ BEIJING

China won't sell weapons to either side in the war in Ukraine, the country's foreign minister said on Friday, responding to Western concerns that Beijing could provide military assistance to Russia.

China has maintained that it is neutral in the conflict, while backing Russia politically, rhetorically and economically at a time when Western nations have imposed punishing sanctions and sought to isolate Moscow for its invasion of its neighbour.

Qin Gang is the highest-level Chinese official to make such an explicit statement about arms sales to Russia. He added that China would also regulate the export of items with dual civilian and military use.

"Regarding the export of military items, China adopts a prudent and responsible attitude," Qin said at a news conference alongside visiting German counterpart Annalena Baerbock.

"China will not provide weapons to relevant parties of the conflict, and manage and control the exports of dual-use items in accordance with laws and regulations."

The minister also reiterated China's willingness to help

Li Shangfu to meet Shoigu in Moscow

Beijing (AP): Chinese Defence Minister Gen Li Shangfu will visit Russia next week for meetings with counterpart Sergei Shoigu and other military officials, China's Defence Ministry said on Friday. Li's visit underscores China's strengthening engagement with Russia, with which it has largely aligned its foreign policy in an attempt to reshape the world order to diminish the influence of the United States and other Western democracies.

China has refused to criticise Russia's invasion of Ukraine and blamed the US and NATO for provoking Moscow. During a 2022 visit to Beijing, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping issued a joint statement declaring a "no lim-

its" relationship between the two countries. Li will also visit Russia's military academy during his April 16-19 trip, Defence Ministry spokesperson Col. Tan Kefei said.

The trip follows an official visit to Moscow last month by Xi that emphasized how China is increasingly becoming the senior partner in the relationship as it provides Russia with political cover and an economic lifeline during its war on Ukraine. While Moscow and Beijing have said they would increase contacts between their militaries and stage more joint sea and air patrols and drills, the Chinese foreign minister said on Friday that China would not be helping Russia with weapons, as the US and other Western allies have feared.

find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

At the same news conference, Qin also blamed Taiwan's government for heightened regional tensions after Beijing held large-scale military drills

Russia — and warned that such involvement in the Kremlin's war effort would be a "serious problem."

In recent days, European leaders have issued similar warnings, even as they visited China, and the European Union's foreign policy chief lashed out at Beijing, saying its support of Russia during the invasion was "a blatant violation" of its United Nations commitments.

In her remarks, Baerbock also referred to China's role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, saying it bore a special responsibility for helping end the conflict.

"But I have to wonder why the Chinese positioning so far does not include a call for the aggressor, Russia, to stop the war," she said.

"We all know that President (Vladimir) Putin would have the opportunity to do so at any time, and the people in Ukraine would like nothing more than to finally be able to live in peace again."

A visit to Moscow last month by Chinese leader Xi Jinping underscored how Beijing is increasingly becoming the senior partner in the relationship as it provides Russia with an economic lifeline and political cover.

Russian Pacific Fleet on alert

AP ■ MOSCOW

The entire Russian Pacific Fleet was put on high alert on Friday for snap drills that will involve practice missile launches in a massive show of force amid the tensions with the West over the fighting in Ukraine.

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said the goal of the war games was to test the capability of Russia's armed forces to mount a response to aggression.

Along with the missile launches, the drills will also involve nuclear-capable strategic bombers and other warplanes besides ones from the Pacific Fleet's air arm, Shoigu said.

The Russian military has concentrated the bulk of its forces on the front lines in Ukraine, but also continued conducting regular drills across Russia to train its forces and demonstrate their readiness.

Shoigu said the scenario for Friday's maneuvers envisages a response to an adversary's attempt to make a landing on Sakhalin Island and the southern Kuril Islands.

Japan asserts territorial rights to the Kuril Islands, which it calls the Northern Territories. The Soviet Union took them in the final days of World War II, and the dispute has kept the countries from signing a peace treaty formally ending their hostilities.

Battle for Bakhmut heats up

Kyiv (AP): The battle for Bakhmut is heating up again, analysts and Russian officials said Friday, as Ukrainian defenders of the devastated city resisted a coordinated three-pronged attack by the Kremlin's forces and efforts to stop supplies from reaching them.

"Russia has re-energised its assault" on Bakhmut, the UK Ministry of Defence said of recent developments in the eastern Ukraine city, which for eight and a half months has been the stage for the war's longest and bloodiest fight.

"The Ukrainian defence still holds the western districts of the town but has been subjected to particularly intense Russian artillery fire over the previous 48 hours," the ministry's assessment said.

Until recently, a notorious private Russian military contractor, the Wagner Group, spearheaded the campaign to

take Bakhmut, making slow, grinding progress at the cost of thousands of lives on both sides. Now, regular Russian units have joined the thrust.

Military analysts have said that seizing Bakhmut would have public relations and tactical military value for Moscow though was unlikely to prove decisive in the war's outcome.

The Russian Defence Ministry also noted the stepped-up fighting in western parts of the city Friday.

"Wagner assault detachments are engaged in high-intensity combat operations to capture areas of western Bakhmut with airborne forces supporting on the flanks," the ministry said in a statement.

It added: "The units of the airborne forces operating on the flanks are providing support to the assault squads and stop the enemy's attempts to deliver ammunition to the city and bring in reserves."

The Pacific Fleet drills started days before a planned trip to Moscow by Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Li Shangfu.

A three-day visit to Moscow by Chinese President Xi Jinping last month demonstrated the two nations' partnership in the face of Western efforts to isolate Russia over Ukraine.

Russia trained Belarusian pilots in use of nukes

Moscow (AP): Belarusian air force crews have completed their training for using tactical nuclear weapons as part of Russia's plan to deploy the weapons to its ally Belarus amid the fighting in neighbouring Ukraine, the Russian Defence Ministry said on Friday.

The ministry released a video in which a Belarusian pilot said that the training course in Russia had given the crews of the Belarusian air force's Su-25 ground attack jets the necessary skills for using the weapons.

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared last month that Moscow planned to put some of its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. It was another attempt by the Kremlin leader to dangle the nuclear threat to discourage the West from supporting Ukraine.

Russia has a union agreement with Belarus that envisions close political, economic and military ties. Russian troops used Belarusian territory to roll into Ukraine from the north in February 2022 and have maintained a presence in Belarus.

The deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus would put them closer to potential targets in Ukraine and NATO members in Eastern and Central Europe. Belarus shares a 1,250-kilometer (778-mile) border with NATO members Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

Such weapons are intended to destroy enemy troops on the battlefield. They have a relatively short range and much less power compared with nuclear warheads fitted to long-range strategic missiles, which are capable of obliterating whole cities. Putin said that construction of storage facilities for tactical nuclear weapons would be completed in Belarus by July 1. Russia also has helped modernise Belarusian warplanes to adapt them to carrying nuclear weapons and provided the country with Iskander short-range missiles that could be fitted with a nuclear warhead.

Putin has emphasised that Russia would retain control over any nuclear weapons deployed to Belarus, just as the US controls its tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of its NATO allies. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine had Soviet nuclear weapons stationed in their territory, but handed them over to Russia after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

Norwegians say expelled Russian envoys are spies

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

A senior Norwegian spy agency officer said Friday that "the intelligence threat from Russia is not gone, but significantly reduced" after Norway expelled 15 Russian diplomats on suspicion of spying.

"We are sure that they are intelligence officers," said Inger Haugland, head of the counter-intelligence unit with the Norwegian Police Security Service, known as the PST. "We believe that the measure taken yesterday was a good and important measure."

On Thursday, Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt said the diplomats were suspected of spying while working at the Russian Embassy in Oslo.

Haugland said most of the 15 diplomats were working either as spy handlers or intercepting telephone and data traffic.

She said they were employed either by Russia's civilian spy agency, the FSB (Federal Security Service) or by the GRU, which runs military intelligence.

Haugland described them as "specialists" but declined to give further details or say whether they had left the Scandinavian country.

"Russian intelligence will continue to operate in Norway because Norway is important to Russia," she said.

Dag Rohjell, a senior officer with the PST, declined to comment specifically on how long the Norwegian authorities had known about the alleged activities of the 15 diplomats, but pointed at two sectors of special interest to Russia: defence and oil.

"It is about what Norway



contributes to Ukrainian defence capability and energy supply to Europe," Rohjell told reporters. "We will contact businesses that we know the 15 intelligence officers have had contact with."

Norway, a NATO member, has a 198 kilometre-long (123-mile) border with Russia in the Arctic.

In neighbouring Sweden, a person was arrested at the largest refinery company in the country on suspicion of corporate espionage, the prosecution authority said Friday. Swedish media said the suspect was a Russian woman. The case was shrouded in secrecy.

Dani Backteg, a spokesman for Preemraaff, an oil refinery in Goteborg, western Sweden, told The Associated Press that the person arrested Thursday afternoon, was an employee of one of our subcontractors." He referred to the police for further comment.

Sweden's security service also said it was a police matter. Police gave no comment.

Preem is the largest oil refinery in Sweden, with two plants on the west coast. It accounts for 80 per cent of the country's refinery capacity.

'Many Indian proposals backed by G20 countries'

Washington (PTI): Many of India's proposals have been well supported by the G20 bloc and there has been an active engagement, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said after a series of meetings with her counterparts from the influential grouping here.

India assumed the year-long presidency of the G20 in December last year and aims to host a leaders' summit in New Delhi in early September. The G20 is an important forum of the world's 20 major developed and developing economies.

Sitharaman met her counterparts from the G20 nations on the sidelines of the annual spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington on Thursday.

"We were very happy to see that most of India's proposals have been well supported and there has been an active engagement," she said.

The minister said discussions at the second meeting of G20 finance ministers and cen-

tral bank governors under India's presidency spread over three sessions - the global economy, international financial architecture, sustainable finance, financial sector, financial inclusion, and international taxation.

She said the discussions were very intense with a lot of substantive inputs coming from the members. The meetings saw the participation of around 350 delegates with 13 invitee countries and various international and regional organisations, she said. Sitharaman said there were six takeaways from the G20 meetings. First, successful discussion on the debt restructuring and debt vulnerabilities with the hosting of the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable, she said.

Second is the issue of reforming multilateral development banks, an Indian initiative, which has been very well received, she said. The acceptance of an expert group where we have two co-conveners, strengthening the multilateral



development bank's issue has received a lot of warmth, she said. "This expert group is going about its work and hopefully by July, we should have something on the table for the members to discuss it," Sitharaman said.

The third is climate finance and sustainable financing of climate and climate-related matters, she added.

"Bringing in private finance and ensuring Sustainable Development Goals are also

met up. This discussion on climate finance is also moving in a very positive direction.

Not just the current flow, but also the quantum that is required for meeting current climate challenges and also looking at transitional costs, the technology that is so required," she said.

The fourth takeaway was the global partnership for financial inclusion where digital public infrastructure has found a lot of traction. "We've had dis-

cussions in Bengaluru, we are having discussions here as well. Leveraging DPI, which is the digital public infrastructure for achieving global financial inclusion, is a subject which every country has taken a keen interest in and people are looking at how best they can catch up with bringing inclusion through the use of technology," she said. Sitharaman said she was very grateful to Singapore for having reconnected the fact that both countries are now in agreement with the cross-border payments.

She said cross-border payment per se has the strength of being one of the very important instruments which can find a good buy-in from all the countries.

"The fifth one I would put as of today a possible takeaway is the international taxation issue, which was earlier discussed so that we achieve a fair sustainable and modern international tax system that was also discussed among members today," the minister said.

N Korea tests new solid-fuel long-range missile

Seoul (South Korea): North Korea said on Friday it flight-tested a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time, a possible breakthrough in its efforts to acquire a more powerful, harder-to-detect weapon targeting the continental United States.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency issued the report a day after the country's neighbours detected a launch of a long-range missile from near Pyongyang, which extended a run of weapons displays involving more than 100 missiles fired into the sea since the start of 2022.

Thursday's test did not appear to demonstrate the weapon's full capacity, and it remains unclear how far North Korea has come in mastering technologies to

ensure the warhead would withstand atmospheric reentry and accurately strike targets.

Still, analysts said the test was likely a meaningful advance in North Korea's goal to build a nuclear arsenal that could directly threaten the United States.

KCNA said the launch was supervised on site by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who described the missile — named Hwasong-18 — as the most powerful weapon of his nuclear forces that would enhance counter-attack abilities in the face of external threats created by the military activities of the United States and its regional allies.

Kim pledged to further expand his nuclear arsenal to "constantly strike extreme uneasiness and horror" in his

enemies and make them feel regret for their wrong choices.

North Korea has justified its weapons demonstrations as a response to the expanding military exercises between the United States and South Korea, which the North condemns as invasion rehearsals while using them as a pretext to push further its own weapons development.

Kim added that the Hwasong-18 would rapidly advance North Korea's nuclear response posture and further support an aggressive military strategy that vows to maintain "frontal confrontation" against its rivals. North Korea has tested various intercontinental missiles since 2017 that demonstrated the potential range to reach the US mainland, but the others use liquid fuel that must be added rela-

tively close to the launch and they cannot remain fuelled for prolonged periods.

An ICBM with built-in solid propellants would be easier to move and hide and fired quickly, reducing the opportunities for opponents to detect and counter the launch. It's not immediately clear how close the North is to having a functional solid-fuel ICBM capable of striking the US mainland.

South Korea's Defense Ministry in a statement described Hwasong-18's flight as a "mid-phase test" and said North Korea would need more time and effort to complete the system.

It maintains that North Korea's technologies haven't reached the point where it can protect its ICBM warheads from the harsh conditions of atmospheric reentry. AP

France awaits ruling on higher retirement age

Pairs (AP): France's top constitutional body was expected to rule Friday on whether President Emmanuel Macron's contested plan to raise the retirement age passes muster, a decision that could calm or further enrage opponents of the measure.

All eyes were on the heavily guarded Constitutional Council, which can nix all or parts of a complex pension reform plan that Macron pushed through without a vote by the lower house of parliament. Security forces stood behind a metal fence erected in front of the edifice where the decision was being made.

Spontaneous demonstrations were likely around France ahead of the nine-member council's ruling. Opponents of the pension reform blockaded

entry points into some cities, including Rouen in the west or Marseille in the south, slowing or stopping traffic.

French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne was interrupted while visiting a supermarket outside Paris by a group of people chanting "We don't want it," referring to the way she skirted the vote by lawmakers to advance the pension reform.

The government's decision to get around a parliamentary vote in March by using special constitutional powers heightened the fury of the measure's opponents, as well as their determination. Another group awaited Borne in the parking lot.

"We're in a democracy, so everyone can express themselves," the prime minister told news station BFM TV.

US energy secretary says G7 can lead global emissions cuts

AP ■ OTARU (JAPAN)

Wealthy nations can lead by example in cutting carbon emissions, though much faster action is needed to stem global warming, US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said on Friday in an interview with The Associated Press.

Granholm and other senior energy and environment officials from the Group of Seven advanced economies are in Hokkaido in northern Japan this week for meetings on climate change, energy security and related issues.

"That's what we hope to do is lead by example," Granholm said after touring the world's first and only liquefied hydrogen carrier, a ship that showcases Japanese efforts to transform

heavily polluting coal into emissions-free hydrogen power.

At the G-7 summit in May last year, member nations set a common goal of achieving a fully or predominantly decarbonised electricity supply by 2035. The fact that carbon emissions are continuing to rise despite massive investments in cleaner energy is "very disappointing," Granholm said.

But she noted that 90 per cent of the new generating capacity that came online globally last year is from renewable sources.

"So this is happening. The tectonic plates are shifting, and it has to happen more quickly," she said, pointing to US efforts to curb emissions in transportation and power generation



U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, center, arrives to tour a liquefied hydrogen carrier at a pier in Otaru, northern Japan on Friday. AP/PTI

and other steps toward "decarbonisation" of many industries.

Still, the approval of major fossil fuel projects such as the Willow project on Alaska's petroleum-rich North Slope has drawn criticism that it runs counter to President Joe Biden's pledges to cut carbon emissions and move to clean energy. There are also objections to the project's environmental impact.

Environmentalists say Japan's strategy of relying on fossil fuels such as coal, even with technologies like carbon capture that prevent emissions from escaping into the atmosphere, and failure to more fully embrace renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power, fails to set a persuasive example for other major pol-

luters such as China and India.

Granholm said that moves toward embracing renewable, clean energy sources, including hydrogen, nonetheless "give hope to others to be able to do it as the technology lowers the cost." The Suiso Frontier, the ship Granholm toured Friday as it was docked in the port of Otaru, is the world's only liquefied hydrogen marine carrier. Built by Japanese ship maker Kawasaki Heavy Industries, it carries hydrogen cooled to minus 253 degrees Celsius (minus 423 degrees Fahrenheit) in a liquid form that occupies one eighth hundredth of the volume it would occupy as a gas.

The 8,000-ton ship was built to carry hydrogen produced at a coal gasification

facility in Australia to Japan for power generation and to fuel vehicles, among other uses.

The Biden administration is turning to hydrogen as an energy source for vehicles, manufacturing and generating electricity.

It's offering USD 8 billion to entice the nation's industries, engineers and planners to figure out how to produce and deliver clean hydrogen.

"We're interested in taking this to the next level in making sure that it can be derived from clean sources," Granholm said while standing on the bridge of the vessel, whose home port is Kobe. American companies made final pitches earlier this month in bidding for a new program that will create regional networks, or "hubs," of

hydrogen producers, consumers and infrastructure.

The aim is to accelerate the availability and use of the colorless, odorless gas that already powers some vehicles and trains.

The Department of Energy is required to fund at least four hydrogen hubs by 2026.

The hubs are to demonstrate various ways of producing hydrogen, including fossil fuels, nuclear power and renewable energy sources.

The challenge is to ensure such projects are commercially feasible, that there is adequate demand from industries for the hydrogen.

India's forex reserves rise to \$584.75 bn



PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves increased by USD 6.306 billion to USD 584.755 billion for the week ended April 7, the RBI said on Friday.

In the last reporting week, the forex kitty snapped a two-week rising trend to decline by USD 329 million to 578.45 billion.

It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused by global developments.

For the week ended April 7, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the

reserves, increased by USD 4.74 billion to USD 514.431 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI on Friday.

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

Gold reserves rose by USD 1.496 billion to USD 46.696 billion, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 58 million to USD 18.45 billion, the apex bank said.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was up by USD 13 million to USD 5.178 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

FinMin plans ₹3K cr additional capital infusion in PSU general insurance companies in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry is planning an additional capital infusion of Rs 3,000 crore this fiscal in the three loss-making public sector general insurance companies to improve their health, according to sources.

The government in FY22 provided Rs 5,000 crore capital to three insurers — National Insurance Company Limited, Oriental Insurance Company Limited and United India Insurance Company.

Kolkata-based National Insurance Company Limited was given the highest Rs 3,700 crore, followed by Delhi-based Oriental Insurance Company Limited Rs 1,200 crore and Chennai-based United India Insurance Company Rs 100 crore.

According to the sources these companies have been asked to improve their solvency ratio and meet the regulatory requirement of 150 per cent.

The solvency ratio is a measure of capital adequacy. A higher ratio reflects better financial health and the ability of the company to pay claims and meet future contingencies and business growth plans.

Barring the solvency ratio of New India Assurance, this key indicator of the three Public sector general insurance companies stood below the regulatory requirement of 150 per cent in 2021-22.

For example, the solvency ratio of National Insurance



Company Limited was 63 per cent, Oriental Insurance Company Limited 15 per cent and United India Insurance Company 51 per cent.

The solvency margin is the extra capital the companies must hold over and above the claim amounts they are likely to incur. It acts as a financial backup in extreme situations, enabling the company to settle all claims.

Each of these companies has been asked to pursue a profitable growth path, the sources said, adding further capital infusion would depend on their performance indicators being met.

During 2019-20, the government infused Rs 2,500 crore in these three companies. It increased substantially to Rs 9,950 crore in the following year and Rs 5,000 crore in 2021-22.

Public sector general insurance companies are undergoing organisational restructuring, product rationalisation, cost rationalisation and digitalisa-

Gold jumps ₹480 to record high of ₹61,780; silver climbs ₹410



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The gold price jumped Rs 480 to touch a lifetime high of Rs 61,780 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid a strong global trend, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal ended at Rs 61,300 per 10 grams.

Silver also climbed Rs 410 to Rs 77,580 per kg.

Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 61,780 per 10 grams, up Rs 480 per 10 grams, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas market, both gold and silver were trading higher at USD 2,041 per ounce and USD 25.88 per ounce, respectively.

Gold prices traded higher in Asian trading hours on Friday.

Comex spot gold prices surged to a 13-month high as bullish sentiment was boosted by a decline in the dollar index and yields, Gandhi said.



'Modest downgrading of India's growth due to slowness of domestic consumption, data revisions'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India's growth rate has been modestly downgraded from 6.1 per cent to 5.9 per cent for the current fiscal mainly because of the slowness of domestic consumption and data revision, according to a top IMF official.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday lowered India's economic growth projection for the current fiscal to 5.9 per cent from 6.1 per cent earlier. Yet India will continue to be the fastest-growing economy in the world.

In its annual World Economic Outlook, IMF also lowered the forecast for 2024-25 fiscal (April 2024 to March 2025) to 6.3 per cent from the 6.8 per cent it had predicted in January this year.

Krishna Srinivasan, Director of the Asia and Pacific Department, IMF, said the revisions to India's growth have been very modest from 6.1 per cent to 5.9 per cent and probably reflects two factors.

"One is that domestic consumption growth is starting to slow, albeit modestly. The other factor is data revisions in 2019 to 2020, which suggests the economic position of India. Before the pandemic was better. The impact of the pandemic was more limited than we thought, and recovery has been stronger," he said.

All those point to the fact that output gaps are closing, he told reporters at a news conference here on Thursday.

"That explains how we see the revisions to the forecast. Now, in terms of what are the risks, again, the external risks, which are the same across the region in terms of what happens to partner country growth with slowing growth in the US and Europe.

"How does that affect India and market turbulence? All these are factors which are external risks to the growth forecast," Srinivasan said.

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

The government is yet to release full-year GDP numbers

for 2022-23. Despite a significant drop in growth rate projections from 6.8 per cent in 2022 to 5.9 per cent, India continues to be the fastest-growing economy in the world, the World Economic Outlook figures revealed.

Domestically, the government is placing a lot of emphasis on capital spending, Srinivasan said, adding if that comes below what is expected, that could also weigh on growth prediction.

In response to a question on RBI pausing the monetary policy, he said that it is in line with the IMF's baseline projection. "Basically, at the current policy rate 6.5 per cent, which is such as a broadly neutral policy stance, which is consistent with how we see economic conditions in India and available information on expectations of inflation one year out, which are pretty much well anchored," he said.

"So, again, we expect inflation to come below target this year. And in fact, in the most recent print, which came out I think yesterday or day before, inflation has fallen to 5.7 per cent, which is within the tolerance band. So, our assessment is broadly along the lines of what we had said before. And so we are fine with what the RBI has done," said the IMF official.

Srinivasan said growth in 2023 will be driven primarily by the recovery in China and the resilient growth in India.

These two economies alone will account for about half of the global growth this year. Growth in most of the economies is expected to bottom out in 2023 in line with other regions, he said.

In Japan, growth is expected to pick up slightly to 1.3 per cent in 2023, supported by expansion in the monetary and fiscal policy stance.

The downgrade related to last October reflects weaker demand in investment and carryover from disappointing growth in the last quarter of 2022, he said.

"In India, growth momentum will begin to slow, as softening domestic demand offsets strong external services demand. Growth is expected to moderate slightly from 6.8 per cent in 2022 to 5.9 per cent this year," he said.



NCLT grants 90 days extension to Future Retail for concluding insolvency

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The NCLT has granted Future Retail Ltd (FRL) an extension of 90 days for concluding the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) of the company.

Allowing FRLs plea the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has extended the deadline to July 15, 2023, for concluding the CIRP of FRL.

"... NCLT on April 13, 2023, heard the application and granted the said exclusion of 90 days from CIRP of FRL and consequent extension for completion of CIRP till July 15, 2023," said a regulatory filing from the company.

This order was pronounced orally by NCLT on April 13, 2023, and a "written order is awaited," FRL added.

The CIRP was initiated against FRL by NCLT on July 20, 2022, following loan default.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) time frame for resolution is 330 days, inclusive of the time taken for litigation.

As per Section 12(1) of the Code, the CIRP shall be completed within a period of 180 days from the date of initiation. However, NCLT may grant a one-time extension of 90 days. The maximum time within which CIRP must be mandatorily completed, including any extension or litigation period, is 330 days.

Last week, FRL informed that they have received an Expression of Interest (EoI) from 49 players, including Reliance Retail, Jindal Power Ltd and Adani Group for acquiring the assets of FRL.

On March 23, 2023, the resolution professional (RP) of FRL invited new expressions of interest, where prospective buyers can bid for the debt-ridden firm "as a going concern or individual cluster or a combination of clusters of its assets," as it failed to attract a resolution plan in over four months.

Y20 consultations kicks off at KIIT DU

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Y20 Consultations, the two-day event organised under the aegis of G20, began at KIIT DU on Friday. Policymakers from around the world gathered to highlight the pivotal role of youth in building a prosperous and peaceful society.

The event was inaugurated by Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and Environment, Forest and Climate Change, who encouraged the younger generation to emulate the life and principles of Swami Vivekananda and strive to make India a leading nation in the 21st century.

Choubey emphasized, "Youths hold the future of this great nation. They have a crucial role to play in the development process that will bring peace and prosperity to society." He also applauded the accomplishments of KIIT and its students in various sectors.

The participants were welcomed and felicitated by Dr. Achyuta Samanta, the Founder of KIIT and KISS.

The Y20 Consultations brought together students, educators, business leaders, and spiritual leaders from India and G20 countries. The forum provided a platform for youths to raise awareness of global issues, exchange ideas, share innovative thoughts, engage in discussions, and negotiations, and reach a consensus. The outcomes of the deliberations will be presented at the G20 meeting later this year, presided over by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

later this year. Tusharkanti Behera, Minister of State for Home, Sports, and Youth Services, Government of Odisha, highlighted the importance of the theme of the Y20 Consultations, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the world is one family), and emphasized the need for youths to come together and work towards preserving cultural heritage and promoting national integrity.

Behera also lauded the sporting achievements of Odisha's youths, mentioning that three out of six students have been selected from the state to participate in the NASA Rover Challenge 2023 in the USA.



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Wonderchef expects 30% sales growth to ₹725 cr this fiscal

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Kitchenware brand Wonderchef is expecting to clock a Rs 725 crore revenue this fiscal on the back of retail expansion and greater penetration into e-commerce.

The company, founded by celebrity chef Sanjeev Kapoor and food entrepreneur Ravi Saxena in 2009, has closed FY23 with a Rs 560 crore revenue, lower than the target of Rs 600 crore, due to the lower-than-expected sales, which grew only 22 per cent.

Sales were a tepid 7 per cent in the third quarter, and so was the March quarter, offsetting the better traction in the first half, thus leading to an overall lower growth of 22 per cent as against the planned 30 per cent, Saxena told PTI in an interaction.

However, the company is confident of about 30 per cent growth this fiscal on the back of retail expansion and the fast-

growing new categories like coffee machines, he added.

Currently, online trade fetches a third of its total sales, and traditional and modern trade get around 20 per cent each, while direct sales fetch about 8 per cent, and the rest from exports, he said.

The company is present in about 10,000 general trade stores and over 1,200 modern trade stores, and in the next two years, it is planning to expand its presence to 25,000 general trade stores and 2,500 modern trade stores, which should prop overall volumes, Saxena said.

He said this fiscal they are eyeing a 10 per cent sales to come in from the direct-to-home channel, where about 75,000 women from across 1,000 towns are associated with it. Further, he said over the next two years, the company will be investing around Rs 100 crore to expand its teams and ramp up marketing efforts.

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Credgenics turns operationally profitable, eyes ₹240 cr revenue this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Digital loan management platform Credgenics has become operationally profitable in the fourth year of business and expects to grow more than two folds in the current fiscal to around Rs 240 crore, a senior official of the company said.

WestBridge Capital-backed Credgenics co-founder and chief product and technology officer Anand Agrawal said that the company raised around Rs 202 crore till 2021 and it has about two-third of the fund still in the account.

"We have been able to achieve our set target in the financial year 2023. We have clocked about Rs 100 crore in FY23. This year revenue will be around Rs 230-40 crore. This includes revenue from the international market as well," he said.

The company provides digital collection solutions like messages to remind customers through email, WhatsApp, dialers etc. To make payments along with the strategy and execution for the recovery of loans.

"Lending depends on the collection. Every lender has been trying to solve it on their own using multiple platforms, outsourcing models. We have tried to solve it by bringing in a lot of technological aspects to it," Agrawal said.

The company has built a pan-India marketplace of lawyers and connects them with

lending institutions for the loan recovery.

"Since the last fundraiser our revenue has grown 7 times, customers have grown 5 times to 100," Agrawal said.

He said that the company is engaged with almost all private banks and non-banking financial companies, including IIFL Finance, Mahindra Finance, Hero Fincorp and TVS Credit.

"We are very actively working with fintechs as they are going to be future lenders," Agrawal said.

Credgenics has started operations in India and is now planning to expand to other South East Asian countries.

Agrawal said the company is looking to acquire peers in South East Asian countries to expedite business growth.

Twitter introduces 10K character long tweets amid fight with Substack

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Before deleting all legacy Blue tweets marks on April 20, Twitter on Friday introduced a feature that allows posts with 10,000 characters for paid Blue subscribers.

Twitter now supports tweets up to 10,000 characters in length, "with bold and italic text formatting," the company informed.

In February, the micro-blogging platform introduced 4,000-character-long tweets for Blue subscribers.

"Sign up for Twitter Blue to access these new features, and apply to enable Subscriptions on your account to earn income directly on Twitter. Tap on 'Monetization' in settings," said the Elon Musk-run company.

Musk on Thursday announced that 'Subscriptions' are now enabled on the platform — a way for people's most engaged followers to help them earn money from Twitter for their contributions on the platform.

"We're firing up creator subscriptions bigtime! Works for longform text, pics or video," Musk posted.

CIL coking coal output grows 17% to 56.6 MT in FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The production of coking coal by Coal India Ltd (CIL) rose by 17.2 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to 54.6 million tonnes (MT) in 2022-23.

The state-owned miner had produced 46.6 MT coking coal during the preceding 2021-22 fiscal, it said in a statement.

"The quantum leap was a whopping 8 MT. This assumes significance at a time when the Ministry of Coal has asked CIL to elevate the output of this category of coal to 105 MT by 2030 in a bid to reduce its imports and forex outgo," it said

Subsidiary companies Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCCL) and Central Coal Fields (CCL) together accounted for almost the entire output of 54.3 MT in 2022-23.

While BCCCL produced nearly 33.7 MT during FY23, CCL contributed 20.6 MT.

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Hyundai to launch entry level SUV Exter in second half of 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India Ltd on Friday said it plans to launch its new entry level SUV Exter in the second half of this year.

The new model will join the company's line-up of existing SUVs that include Venue, Venue N Line, Creta, Alcazar, Kona Electric, Tucson and IONIQ 5, Hyundai Motor India Ltd said in a statement.

The Exter will be positioned below the Venue, which is currently the company's entry level SUV. It will be launched in the second half of the year.

"Hyundai Exter is the 8th model in our line-up with a SUV body style and we are confident that this new member to our family will provide further fillip to our growth in SUV sales," Hyundai Motor India Ltd COO Tarun Garg said.

This all-new SUV will enable customers with smart mobility experiences, targeting Gen Z customers, the company said.

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Highest sovereign defaults in 2022, two in 2023: Moody's

IANS ■ CHENNAI

Global credit rating agency Moody's Investors Service on Friday said that 2022 saw a spike in the annual sovereign bond defaults with seven countries defaulting on repayments.

In 2023, there were two sovereign defaults - Argentina and Mozambique.

In a report, Moody's said the year 2022 saw the highest number of defaults since 1983.

"Seven sovereigns defaulted during the year, namely Mali (Caa2 stable), Russia (rating withdrawn), Sri Lanka (Ca stable), Belarus (Ca negative), El Salvador (Caa3 stable), Ukraine (Ca stable) and Ghana (Ca stable)," the report states.

"The annual sovereign bond default rate jumped to nearly 5 per cent in 2022, more than five times the average default rate in 1983-2022. There have been two defaults, by the governments of Argentina (Ca stable) and Mozambique (Caa2 positive), in 2023 to date," Moody's said.

OWN GOALS HURT MAN UTD

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Two late own goals left Manchester United work to do to reach the Europa League semi-finals as Sevilla salvaged a 2-2 draw from the first leg of their quarter-final tie at Old Trafford on Thursday.

United appeared to be cruising to victory through two goals from Marcel Sabitzer inside the opening 21 minutes.

But the loss of centre-backs Raphael Varane and Lisandro Martinez to injury proved costly as Tyrrell Malacia and Harry Maguire deflected balls into their own net in the final six minutes plus stoppage time.

United will also have to cope without Bruno Fernandes for the second leg on April 20 after he picked up a yellow card that leads to a suspension.

The home side were without 28-goal top scorer Marcus Rashford due to injury, but still made light work of the Spaniards before half-time as Sabitzer struck twice. Anthony Martial's return for injury is a timely boost for Ten Hag with Rashford set to be sidelined for a few weeks.

The Frenchman has been a peripheral figure since the Dutchman took charge, but Ten Hag said on the eve of the game that his side play their best football with Martial up front.

So it proved as Martial's hold-up play eventually saw the ball worked to Fernandes, who fired a ball into Sabitzer's feet and the on-loan Bayern Munich midfielder coolly slotted past Bono.



Just a few moments later Sabitzer, who had scored only once for United in 12 previous appearances, netted his second. Martial was this time the creator with a perfect pass through for Sabitzer to again leave Bono in the Sevilla goal with no chance.

Casemiro's first appearance for nearly a month due to a four-game Premier League ban

added authority to the United midfield and the Brazilian should have marked the occasion with a goal after more good approach play by Martial. Sevilla are fighting a relegation battle in La Liga and it showed until a late flurry as they only briefly threatened to bring the tie to life.

Tanguy Nianzou's powerful header in first-half stoppage time was saved by David De

Gea before Varane completed the clearance off the line.

Antony came closest to adding to United's lead in the second half when the winger struck the inside of the post with Fernandes begging for a pass in a better position.

Ten Hag showed his thoughts were already turning to a trip to Nottingham Forest in the Premier League on

Sunday as Fernandes and Martial made way in the final half-hour.

That decision proved costly as Malacia dallied to allow Jesus Navas to pounce inside the United box, the former Manchester City winger's cross deflecting off the Dutch left-back to wrong-foot De Gea.

Martinez then pulled up with a what looked like a con-

cerning Achilles injury and had to be helped from the field by fellow Argentine World Cup winners Marcos Acuna and Gonzalo Montiel. United had already made their five substitutions so ended the game with 10 men and could not hold on.

De Gea produced a brilliant save to deny Youssef En-Nesyri an equaliser.

But United's reprieve only lasted seconds as another En-Nesyri header cannoned off Maguire and into the net in the 92nd minute.

Feyenoord eye semis after beating AS Roma

AP ■ ROTTERDAM

Feyenoord took a step towards the Europa League semi-finals on Thursday with a 1-0 win over Roma in the first leg of the two teams' last eight clash. Netherlands midfielder Mats Wieffer gave Eredivisie leaders Feyenoord a slender lead to take to Rome with a sumptuous volley nine minutes after the break at Rotterdam's De Kuip stadium.

The 23-year-old's third goal of the season was just enough for the Dutch outfit to see off Roma in a rematch of last season's Conference League final which was won by the Italians.

Roma, who sit third in Serie A, will have the chance to overturn the deficit when the teams meet again in the Italian capital next Thursday.

They might have to be without forwards Tammy Abraham and Paulo Dybala.

Gatti earns Juve slim first leg lead



AP ■ TURIN

Federico Gatti's first ever Juventus goal gave the Italian side a 1-0 win over Sporting Lisbon on Thursday and a solid chance of reaching the Europa League semi-finals.

Joyous Gatti tapped in the only goal of a tight game in the 73rd minute at the Allianz Stadium in Turin to give Juve a slender lead to defend in Portugal next week.

The 24-year-old defender was on hand to poke home after Antonio Adan flapped at a deep cross and Dusan Vlahovic had his resulting header cleared off the line.

Scoring for Juve is the latest step up for Gatti, who has risen from being an amateur footballer and bricklayer to playing for Italy's biggest club and the national team.

"I can't even say how I feel right now, it's impossible to explain," said Gatti to Sky Sport. "The more you play the more comfortable you become with everything, and my teammates make things so much easier for me."

The win was a positive end to a night in which Juve had to watch in worry as goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny was checked over by medical staff following chest pain. Poland international Szczesny was replaced by Mattia Perin late in the first half, leaving the pitch in tears after breathing problems and heart palpitations.

"The reality is that I'd seen Mattia was doing really well in training and I was tired," joked Szczesny, who then spoke of his tearful exit from the match.

"It was fear, it was something that had never happened to me before. I was struggling to breathe so I was worried and scared."

Perin proved a handy replacement for Szczesny, who Juve said didn't have any serious health issues after early tests.



Klopp says Liverpool can't afford 'Ferrari' signings

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Jurgen Klopp admits Liverpool cannot blow their transfer budget on glamorous "Ferrari" signings, with the Reds apparently priced out of the race for Borussia Dortmund star Jude Bellingham.

Liverpool had been strongly linked with a close-season move for the England midfielder but are now believed to have switched their attention elsewhere.

With Real Madrid, Manchester City, Manchester United and Chelsea also reportedly interested in the 19-year-old, competition for his signature is likely to be fierce, driving up his price.

Klopp's preference is to spend Liverpool's funds on several players to improve an ageing squad that has badly underperformed this season.

In a pointed message to fans, the German made it clear the club have to look at the bigger picture rather than chasing a marquee signing.

"It is not about Jude Bellingham, my answer now, but I never understood why we talk about things we theoretically cannot have," Klopp told reporters on Friday.

"We cannot have six players in a summer, everyone for £100 million (\$125 million). Everyone would say that is clear."

He added: "You have to realise what you can do and then

work with it. That is your job. We are not children.

"When you ask a five-year-old what they want for Christmas and they tell you, 'I don't know, a Ferrari', you wouldn't say 'that's a good idea' — you would say 'that is too expensive and anyway you cannot drive it'.

"If this kid then was really unhappy because he didn't get a Ferrari, it would be a really sad life."

Klopp publicly praised Bellingham in December, describing him as "exceptional" after he impressed at the World Cup in Qatar.

The teenage midfielder, who previously played in England for second-tier side Birmingham, is close to international teammates Trent Alexander-Arnold and Jordan Henderson, raising hopes among Liverpool supporters that one of Europe's hottest prospects could be coming to Anfield.

"You look what you can do, and you work with that. That is always how I worked," Klopp said.

"What we need and what we want, we try everything to try to get, but there are moments where we have to accept and step aside and do different things."

The Liverpool boss will welcome back Luis Diaz for the trip to Eiland Road, with the Colombia forward available for the first time since suffering a knee injury in October.

Haaland targets more records for Man City

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Is any record safe with Manchester City hotshot Erling Haaland around?

The 22-year-old Norwegian could overhaul Mohamed Salah's record of 32 goals in a 38-game Premier League season this weekend, with relegation-threatened Leicester the fearful visitors.

The overall single-season record of 34 goals in the Premier League era — set in the days of 42 games per side by Andrew Cole and Alan Shearer — will surely be next to fall.

Haaland's goal in Manchester City's 3-0 demolition of Bayern Munich this week — his 11th in the Champions League this season — was his 45th for the club in all competitions in an incredible debut campaign for Pep Guardiola's team. That broke the all competitions goal record by a Premier

League player since the rebranded top-flight was founded in 1992, with the previous highest total set 20 years ago by Manchester United's Ruud van Nistelrooy and matched in 2017/18 by Liverpool's Salah.

Van Nistelrooy and Salah both took 52 games to score those 44 goals. Haaland has played just 39 games so far.

There are a maximum of 15 games remaining for treble-chasing City this season — nine in the league, the second leg of the Champions League semi-final against Bayern followed by a likely semi-final over two legs and a possible final.

There is also an FA Cup semi-final against Championship side Sheffield United, with City favourites to progress to the final.

Haaland is averaging more than a goal per game but he has hit a purple



patch, netting 11 goals in his past four games, including five in City's 7-0 home win against RB Leipzig.

The striker hit the ground running at the Etihad after two-and-a-half free-scoring seasons at Borussia Dortmund.

And the records have been falling regularly for the powerful forward, who became City's leading scorer in a single campaign in March, overtaking Tommy Johnson's haul of 38 goals, which had stood since 1929.

Haaland's haul of 45 goals also breaks his previous best goalscoring season.

In 2019/20 he netted a total of 44 goals, 28 for Salzburg and 16 for Dortmund.

Haaland's statistics for City show his potent all-round threat — he has 28 goals with his favoured left foot, 10 with his right and seven with his head.

Forty of his 45 strikes have come with his first touch — underlining his potency in and around the penalty box.

And just one of his goals in all competitions has been scored from outside the area.

Nadal out of Barcelona in fresh French Open blow



AP ■ BARCELONA

Rafael Nadal's preparation for a tilt at a record-extending 15th French Open title suffered a further blow when on Friday he announced his withdrawal from the ATP Barcelona tournament.

The 36-year-old Spaniard said he had still not recovered full fitness from the hip flexor injury he sustained in the Australian Open in January and which saw him miss this week's Monte Carlo Open.

"I am still not ready and so

I continue my preparation process for the return to competition," he tweeted.

The Barcelona tournament starts on Saturday and the French Open on May 28.

Nadal said it hurt him to miss Barcelona.

"Barcelona is a special tournament for me because it is my club by adoption and because playing at home is always a unique feeling," he said.

The 22-time Grand Slam

singles champion — he shares the record with Novak Djokovic — had originally thought he would be out for up to two months.

He pulled out of hard-court tournaments at Indian Wells and Miami, with his sights set on a return at the start of the clay court season.

His fitness problems have become an increasing issue since he won his 14th French Open crown last year.

He eased to victory against Casper Ruud despite having his troublesome left foot anaesthetised to counter the pain — he was diagnosed with Müller-Weiss syndrome aged 18.

He subsequently withdrew from his Wimbledon semi-final due to an abdominal injury.

His long absence from the circuit this time round has seen him drop out of the top 10 for the first time since April 2005 — he is presently ranked 15th.

USA set sights on qualifying spot for BJK Cup Finals

AP ■ PARIS

A strong United States team led by top-10 players Jessica Pegula and Coco Gauff will target one of nine qualifying spots this weekend for the Billie Jean King Cup Finals. Record 18-time champions of the competition formerly known as the Fed Cup, the USA will be heavily fancied to overcome Austria in Delray Beach, Gauff's Florida home town where she trains.

"We're not taking this lightly," said US captain Kathy Rinaldi, who can also call upon 2017 US Open runner-up Madison Keys and last year's Australian Open finalist Danielle Collins. "We're going in prepared. We're going to prepare like we prepare for any other tie, not be overconfident."

Julia Grabher, the world number 78, is Austria's highest-ranked player, but the Americans will be on guard against an upset having lost their past two encounters with their upcoming opponents.

"I have great memories, of course, because it was a big surprise," said Austria skipper Marion Maruska, who was part of the team that beat the US in the first round of the 2002 event. "The Austrians, the press, nobody came because everybody thought we were going to lose."

Defending champions Switzerland and 2022 runners-up Australia received direct entrance to the November 7-12 finals, which will feature four groups of three. A wild card nation will complete the line-up along with the nine qualifiers.

Ukraine are without Anhelina Kalinina but can turn to Marta Kostyuk — who won her first WTA title last month — and Dayana Yastremska as they play the Czech Republic on neutral ground in Turkey.

The Czechs won six titles between 2011 and 2018, and have former world number two and



2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejickova headlining another talented squad.

Britain, who reached the semi-finals last year, are again missing Emma Raducanu for their clash with France in Coventry, leaving 138th-ranked Harriet Dart as their top singles player.

World number one Caroline Garcia and Kristina Mladenovic, who both helped France hoist the trophy in 2019, are part of the visitors' quartet alongside Alize Cornet and youngster Clara Burel. Poland are without three-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek against Kazakhstan as the world number one continues her recovery from a rib injury and infection that forced her out of Miami.

Bianca Andreescu and Leylah Fernandez will line up for Canada against an understrength Belgium, while Romania will hope to overcome the absence of key players for their tie in Slovenia.



Galtier 'deeply shocked' by racism accusations

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain coach Christophe Galtier said on Friday he was "deeply shocked" by accusations that he made racist remarks about players when he was coaching Ligue 1 club Nice last season.

"I am deeply shocked by the remarks attributed to me and which have been relayed by some in an irresponsible way, which hurt me deeply," Galtier said at a press conference.

The 56-year-old has denied making racist and Islamophobic remarks following allegations which surfaced in an email apparently sent by the former Nice sporting director Julien Fournier and which have been reported by various French media. The message was reportedly sent by Fournier to Dave Brailsford, the former head of British Cycling and now Director of Sport at chemicals giant Ineos, the owners of Nice.

"I was brought up on a state housing estate and in a multicultural environment with shared values and respect for other people, whatever their origins, colour or religion," Galtier added. "I cannot accept having my name tarnished in this way. I have therefore decided to take legal action against anyone who tries to damage my reputation."

Galtier was speaking shortly after the public prosecutor in the southern French city of Nice announced that a preliminary investigation had been opened into possible "racial or religious discrimination".

Assistant referee to face no further action for Robertson elbow

AP ■ LONDON

Assistant referee Constantine Hatzidakis will face no further action from the English Football Association (FA) despite an elbow on Liverpool defender Andy Robertson. The incident occurred just after the half-time whistle had been blown during the Reds' 2-2 Premier League draw with Arsenal on Sunday. Hatzidakis was stood down during the FA investigation but has now been cleared of any wrongdoing and is free to continue officiating.

"We have thoroughly reviewed all of the evidence in relation to the recent incident



at Anfield involving the Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson and match official Constantine Hatzidakis, and we will be taking no further action," the FA said in a statement.

"Our comprehensive process involved reviewing detailed statements from Liverpool and PGMOL (Professional Game Match Officials Ltd), as well as multiple angles of video footage, in relation to both the incident and its surrounding circumstances."

An irate Robertson was shown a yellow card in the aftermath as he had to be led away by teammates.

In a statement issued by PGMOL, Hatzidakis said: "I fully assisted the FA with their investigation and have discussed the matter directly with Andy Robertson during an open and positive conversation."

BROOK'S 100 SEALS SRH'S WIN

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Brook, who was roped in after England's new batting sensation Harry Brook brought a high-flying Kolkata Knight Riders down to earth with a sensational 55-ball century as Sunrisers Hyderabad cantered to its second victory by 23 runs in an IPL match, here on Saturday.

Young Brook finally managed to crack the IPL code in style with SRH managing a massive 228 for 4 in their stipulated 20 overs on a batting beauty. Their bowlers despite some hammering from home skipper Nitish Rana and Rinku Singh were restricted to 205 for 7 in 20 overs.

Brook, who was roped in after his exploits in Pakistan, finally announced his arrival in style, when he smashed four fours and two sixes inside first three overs to give SRH the best start of the season.

Bought by SRH for a whopping Rs 13.25 crore, Brook had managed only 29 in first three games but found his rhythm with a 55-ball-100 as he smashed 12 fours and three sixes. This was 16th edition's first century.

In reply, it was always going to be difficult for KKR to maintain a run-rate of 11 plus per over but skipper Rana (75 off 41 balls) did launch into SRH bowlers with half a dozen sixes and had 'Man of the Moment' Rinku Singh (58 not out off 31 balls) for company in their 69-run stand off only 6.2 overs. This was after KR were reduced to 96 for 5 within first 10 overs.

Once T Natarajan got rid of Rana, it was left to Rinku to pull



off yet another heist as 57 were needed off last three overs.

But Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/29 in 4 overs) gave 10 in the 18th over while Natarajan (1/54 in 4 overs) went for 16 in the penultimate over.

With Rinku on strike and 32 needed off last over, Umran Malik (1/36 in 2 overs) came back well to dismiss Shardul Thakur with the first delivery and effectively sealing the game as the southpaw was stranded at

the other end for first two deliveries. Rinku face four balls but Umran bowled fast and full to keep him under check with only eight runs being conceded.

BROOK 'BONDS'
 Earlier, having got a reprieve on 45, when he was dropped by rookie leg-spinner Suyash Sharma an easy chance off his own bowling, Brook got to his 50 off 32 balls.

Brook also overturned a

caught-behind decision off Lockie Ferguson when on 61, as he hammered the Kiwi fiery pacer in the same over five fours, en route to the first century of the season, which came off a single off Umesh Yadav in the final over.

Opted to bowl, KKR fielding was also a big letdown as Skipper Aiden Markram also played an impactful innings in the middle when he raced to a 26-ball fifty as the duo stitched

together 72 runs from 47 balls.

After Markram's departure, young left-handed batter Abhishek Sharma (32; 17b) gave a fine support as the duo also added 72 runs (33b) to pile on KKR's misery.

Heinrich Klaasen then played a cameo of 16 not out in six balls as SRH dished out a superlative batting display after KKR opted to bowl.

Barring Caribbeans, Sunil Narine (4-0-28-0) and Andre

Russell (2.1-0-22-3) who pulled a muscle and could not complete his overs, none of the KKR bowlers failed to impress.

The day fully belonged to the English batter, who carried his bat replicating his success in Pakistan Super League (PSL), where he had scored 264 runs for Lahore Qalandars in eight innings, which included a century, at a strike rate of 171.4 in 2022 edition.

Brook also has eye-popping numbers in Tests and has scored 809 runs with four centuries and three fifties in 10 innings. KKR may have missed the trick by giving him some easy pace fodder to begin with as Brook was happy to take Yadav to cleaners, while the fiery Ferguson was wayward, both conceding 14 runs in their opening overs.

From 43 for no loss in three overs, Sunil Narine managed to drag them in a tidy fourth over that perfectly set it up for Andre Russell to inflict a double blow.

Bowling for the first time this season, the Jamaican dismissed Mayank Agarwal (9; 13b) straightaway before pulling a muscle. Russell however managed to finish the over and took the wicket of in-form Rahul Tripathi in the last-ball to give KKR the vital opening.

But Brook and skipper Markram batted sensibly, especially against Narine and raced to quick fifties to keep their run-rate near the 10-run mark.

The SRH skipper gave Brook a fine support and negotiated the middle overs well in an entertaining 72-run partnership that came off just 47 balls.



Virat test for winless DC

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Winless in the tournament so far, Delhi Capitals need to fire as a unit if they have to effect a turnaround as they gear up to clash with Royal Challengers Bangalore in their IPL match here on Saturday.

The Capitals are enduring a poor start to the season as they have lost all their four games to remain pointless in the tournament so far. Nothing is going right for the David Warner-led side and the team's think-tank is struggling to stem the rot that has set in. Warner and his deputy Axar Patel have carried the team's batting attack with all others failing miserably.

Axar's comes have been the only silver lining for Delhi this season. Warner is second in the leading run getters' list but his strike rate of 114.83 is a concern. He has been struggling to score runs at rapid rate and DC losing wickets in heaps has only made the Australian's task harder.

Prithvi Shaw's technical pro-

blems against top-quality pace attacks have come to the fore, which is something that can't be fixed quickly. Manish Pandey, who came in place of Sarfaraz Khan, has also failed to contribute. Handed a debut Yash Dhull lasted just four balls against MI.

Delhi's pacers have been taken to the cleaners although Anrich Nortje and Mustafizur Rahman did well against MI albeit in a losing cause. But more will be expected of them at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, which is a better of a track.

Spinners Axar and Kuldeep Yadav are also yet to churn out match-winning performances.

RCB, on the other hand, will look to get back to winning ways. After making a winning start, RCB lost their way, falling to back-to-back defeats.

The likes of Virat Kohli and Faf du Plessis have contributed with the bat and would be eyeing another good show come Saturday. Glenn Maxwell being back amongst runs is also a good sign for the hosts.



Gill will dominate world cricket for next decade: Hayden

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With a penchant for making big scores, the supremely gifted Shubman Gill is set to dominate world cricket for the next decade, feels legendary Australian opener Matthew Hayden.

The 23-year-old Gill, who has already scored two hundreds in Tests, four in ODIs and one in T20s, once again showed his class en route to a sublime 67 off 49 balls in Gujarat Titans' six-wicket win over Punjab Kings in the IPL here on Thursday.

Hayden is one of the many to have been impressed by Gill's ability to control the proceedings.

Speaking to Star Sports, Hayden said, "Gujarat Titans needed someone to take responsibility and bat deep in this run chase against a quality Punjab Kings bowling attack, and Shubman Gill did just that.

"Some of the shots that he played were pleasing to the eyes. He's such a class player and he's going to dominate world cricket for the next decade or so."

For the young opener Gill, it was his second fifty of IPL 2023.

HARDIK FINED

Gujarat Titans skipper Hardik Pandya has been fined Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over rate during their IPL match against Punjab Kings.

The IPL aims for matches to finish in three hours and 20 minutes, but slow over rate is proving to be an issue with several games stretching past the four-hour mark.

"As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Mr. Pandya was fined Rs. 12 lakh," an IPL media advisory said on Friday.

PBKS look to fix batting woes, LSG eye top spot

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Let down by below-par batting in their recent twin defeats, Punjab Kings will want their batters to improve their dot-ball count when they take on a rampaging Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL here on Saturday. After a flying start to the new season with two wins, Punjab endured two back-to-back losses following their failure to post good totals on the board.

If skipper Shikhar Dhawan was left to carry the team on his shoulders against Sunrisers Hyderabad, the day he failed the other batters could only manage 153 for 8 against Gujarat Titans, mainly because of Shikhar Khan's nine-ball 22.

The main reason behind PBKS's underwhelming total

was their failure to push the scoring in the middle overs between 10 and 15. They ended up playing 56 dot balls, an area where the team will have to get better.

With scores of 40, 86 not out and 99 not out in his first three innings, Dhawan remains undoubtedly Punjab's most impactful player but it is the inconsistency of the other batters that is a reason for worry.

Young opening partner Prabhsimran Singh exploded in the opening match but has failed since, whereas the other batters -- Matthew Short and Jitesh Sharma, have not been able to consolidate on their starts.

While the batters disappointed, the bowling unit, led by young Arshdeep Singh, has looked in fine fettle.



It was Arshdeep and England's Sam Curran, who took the game to the last ball while defending a modest total on a better of a wicket before Rahul Tewatia intervened on Thursday.

Among spinners, Harpreet Brar has used his resources well, while Rahul Chahar remains a wily customer but to be fair to the bowlers, they just didn't have enough runs to play with.

The Super Giants, on the other hand, have won their last two games, and another win on Saturday will take them to the top spot in the IPL standing.

While skipper KL Rahul has struggled with his strike-rate so far, the Super Giants have found new heroes to take the team home.

If Krunal Pandya produced an all-round show against

Sunrisers, West Indian Nicholas Pooran's breath-taking 19-ball 62 helped them to chase down a difficult 212 against Royal Challengers Bangalore in their last match.

LSG has a balanced batting line-up with opener Kyle Mayers producing the goods in the first two matches, while the lower middle order comprising Marcus Stoinis, Pooran and Ayush Badoni has shown the other day they can win crunch games.

However, Deepak Hooda has failed so far.

Among bowlers, they have a good mix of pace and spin. While Mark Wood and Avesh Khan have looked good, leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi, veteran leggie Amit Mishra and Krunal Pandya have also shone in their respective roles.

You can't go any lower than this: Tewatia to Dayal after 5 sixes

PTI ■ MOHALI

Dropped from the game against Punjab Kings, beleaguered seamer Yash Dayal was provided with enough support but no sympathy by his IPL franchise, Gujarat Titans, after conceding five successive sixes in last outing, his teammate Rahul Tewatia said.

Needing 29 to win in the last over, Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh smashed Dayal for five sixes on the trot to claim a sensational win against defending champions GT in front of their home crowd in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

However, GT came back strongly with a six-wicket victory over Punjab Kings here on Thursday, with 'iceman' Tewatia hitting the winning runs.



At the post-match press conference, Tewatia spoke about how the team backed the beleaguered seamer, who contributed to the team's title triumph last season.

"This is the worst, you can't go any lower

than this," is what Tewatia told Dayal after his forgettable outing.

"He was one of our main bowlers. We became champion last season and he played a massive role in it. He bowled well with the new ball as well in the death last year," Tewatia said. "One match cannot change the fact of what he has done for us. I don't think anyone in the team has given him any sympathy," he said at the post-match press conference.

"I told him, 'One match has gone bad. If you want to go down then only you can hit the rock bottom otherwise at GT no one will ever make you feel bad about it. Keep practising and execute what didn't happen that day and wait for your chance. 'This is the worst, you can't go any lower than this,' added the 29-year-old of his chat with Dayal.

ECB probing McCullum's betting advertisements

PTI ■ LONDON

England head coach Brendon McCullum's appearance in online betting advertisements has landed him in a fix with the country's cricket board (ECB) probing if it is in breach of the governing body's anti-corruption rules.

The former New Zealand captain had appeared in online advertisements after joining betting organisation '22Bet' as an ambassador in January. He had shared a video on his Facebook page on March 27 promoting 22Bet's markets on the IPL.

"We are exploring the matter and are in discussions with Brendon around his relationship

with 22Bet," the ECB was quoted as saying by the BBC. "We have rules in place around gambling and will always seek to ensure these are followed."

The ECB, however, clarified that McCullum is not currently under any investigation. New Zealand's Problem Gambling Foundation had complained to the ECB about the adverts last week. According to ECB's anti-discrimination code "directly or indirectly soliciting, inducing, enticing, instructing, persuading, encouraging, facilitating or authorising any other party to enter into a bet in relation to the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of any match or competition" is an offence.

Mulling possibility of holding next WPL in Diwali window: Shah

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Women's Premier League (WPL) will be played in the home-away format from the next edition onwards with a bigger window, most likely during Diwali, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Friday.

The inaugural edition of the tournament was held here from March 4-26 across two venues in Mumbai.

"We are mulling the possibility of scheduling the WPL, in the home and away format, in the Diwali window; not two seasons in a year but just a different time window," Shah said during an interaction with mediapersons.

"Women's cricket now has a dedicated audience base and this number will only keep growing as we expect an encouraging turnout at the next WPL."

ASIA CUP VENUE

While Shah had earlier made it clear that India will not travel to Pakistan to play the Asia Cup, he also said that feedback from other nations have been sought on a possible replacement venue.

"We are awaiting feedback from other nations to finalise the venue for the 2023 Asia Cup and clarity on the India-Pakistan match," Shah added.

Under Shah's leadership, the Asian Cricket Council has earned USD 26.2 million.

"We have achieved a historic milestone of generating additional revenue for the ACC, creating new avenues of income such as NFT, Hybrid Graphics, and Pathway Tournament rights.

"This has resulted in a record-breaking 26.2 million USD earned. This incredible milestone was achieved by cre-



ating, exploring, and monetizing new opportunities. This goes to show that the ACC is doing a great job of innovating and expanding its reach in the global market," Shah added.

On the World Cup fixture, Shah said that all existing infrastructure will be upgraded before the World Cup.

"All existing infrastructure in the country will be upgraded before the World Cup."

On the proposed new NCA, Shah said: "I will be travelling to NCA Bangalore to take stock of progress of the National Centre of Excellence."

The new NCA will have about 40 pitches with 20 having floodlight facility, a 16,000 square feet gymnasium and a host of other world-class facilities including a residential block to ensure all-round holistic development.

The Board has already secured land on lease from KIADB for a period of 99 years. The new NCA will be a Centre of Excellence which will be ready in July-August 2024.

"Another major development has been the approval of a third international cricket stadium set to be built in Uttar Pradesh (Varanasi)," Shah said.

He also informed that refurbished NCA's infrastructure will be all inclusive and will ensure access for the specially-abled.

The ICC is confident that the ace India fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah, out of action due to a back injury, will be fit in time for the World Cup 2023. India will host the 50-over tournament later this year in October-November and the schedule is expected to be declared soon.