

OPINION 6
PM MODI FIGHTS BACK
CLIMATE CHANGE

WORLD 8
'PAK GOVT SHARES PLAN WITH IMF
TO GET MORE \$3 BN SUPPORT'

MONEY 10
SERVICES EXPORTS MAY REACH
\$400 BN DURING 2023-24: SEPC

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY APRIL 20, 2023; PAGES 12 & 3

Late City Vol.33 Issue 108
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



WARNER FINDS
PLACE IN AUS
ASHES SQUAD
11 SPORT

India world's most populous country

Youth power: 50% population below 25 years, says UN data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has surpassed China (142.57 crore) to become the world's most populous nation with 142.86 crore people, according to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), but the news has come with demographic dividend—about 50 per cent of India's population is below the age of 25 years.

According to the UNFPA's State of World Population (SWP) Report 2023, about 25 per cent of India's population is in the age group of 0-14 years, 18 per cent in the 10 to 19 age group, 26 per cent in the age bracket of 10 to 24 years, 68 per cent in 15 to 64 years age group, and 7 per cent above 65 years, said United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) India representative Andrea Wojnar.

The UN projections estimate that the country's population is expected to grow for the next three decades after which it will begin declining.

The population demographics of India vary from State to State. Kerala and Punjab have an ageing population, while Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have a young population, UN analysis has revealed.

This is the first time that India has topped the UN list of most populous countries since it started collecting population

data in 1950. According to the United Nations' World Population Prospects-2022, India's population was 86.1 crore while China's population was 114.4 crore in 1950.

The report further states that by 2050, India's population is expected to rise to 166.8 crore while China's population would dip to 131.7 crore.

The report also stated that the global population is growing at its slowest rate since 1950, having fallen under one per cent in 2020.

According to the World Population Prospects-2022, India's population last year was 141.2 crore while China's population was 142.6 crore. The report said the global population was projected to reach eight billion on November 15.

According to the UNFPA, the life expectancy at birth for male in India is 71 while for female it is 74 years. The contraceptive prevalence rate of women aged 15-49 as of 2023 is 51 per cent.

UN projections estimate that the country's population is expected to grow for the next three decades after which it will begin declining.

India has achieved the replacement level of fertility but the population will grow due to momentum phenomenon. Replacement level fertility is the level of fertility at which a pop-



ulation exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, as per experts.

According to the UNFPA, the size of elderly population will nearly double to touch 192 million by 2030, largely in southern and western states.

"By 2050, every fifth Indian will be an elderly person, hence planning for this segment also deserves equal attention. The health and economic security of the elderly will need to gain primacy," the UNFPA said.

Wojnar, the UNFPA India representative and the country director for Bhutan, said, "India's 1.4 billion people must be seen as 1.4 billion opportunities."

Wojnar said population anxieties have seeped into large portions of the general public in India but population numbers should not trigger anxiety or create alarm. "Instead, they should be seen as a symbol of progress, development, and aspirations if individual rights and choices are being upheld," she said.

Continued on Page 2

China discounts India's massive new workforce

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Wednesday sought to downplay India overtaking it as the world's most populous nation, saying that it still has a "quality" workforce of close to 900 million people to provide a strong impetus for development.

Asked for his reaction to the report, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here "when assessing a country's demographic dividend, we need to look at not just the size but also the quality of its population."

"Size matters, but what matters more is talent resource. Nearly 900 million out of the 1.4 billion Chinese are of working age and on average have received 10.9 years of education," he said.

Continued on Page 2

Make States party to same-sex marriage call, Centre urges SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Reiterating its stand, the Centre on Wednesday urged the Supreme Court that all States and Union Territories be made parties to the proceedings on the pleas seeking legal validation for same-sex marriages, saying any decision on the issue without obtaining their view would render the present "adversarial exercise incomplete and truncated".

In a fresh affidavit filed by the Centre in the apex court, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the Centre had issued a letter on April 18 to all the States inviting comments and views on the "seminal issue" raised in these petitions.

It said the framers of the Constitution have specifically provided for a separate entry in the Concurrent List, which is a part of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution conferring a constitutional function of legislating with respect to the institution of "marriage", the requisite conditions for a valid marriage, regulations of such institutions like making provi-

sions for divorce, alimony, etc.

Referring to entry 5 of the Concurrent List in the Seventh Schedule, the affidavit said, "It is submitted that every component of entry 5 above is intrinsically interrelated and any change in any one will necessarily have an inevitable cascading effect on others."

"The present matter and issue delineated by this court, even when limited to the Special Marriage Act, 1954, entails the purported judicial creation of a social institution called 'marriage' of a different kind than contemplated under the existing law," it said.

In its affidavit, the Centre has said it is clear that rights of the States, especially the right to legislate on the subject, will be affected by any decision on the issue. "It is submitted that further, various States have already legislated on the subject through delegated legislations, therefore making them a necessary and proper party to be heard in the present case," it told the five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and also comprising Justices SK Kaul,



SR Bhat, Hima Kohli and PS Narasimha.

Apparently agreeing with the submissions of senior advocate AM Singh, appearing for one of the petitioners, the Bench observed, "When something is innate, then it cannot have the class bias. It may be more urban in its manifestations because the people in urban areas are coming out of closed closet. Anyway, no data is forthcoming from the government to indicate that this is urban. No data at all."

The Centre said in such a matter, wherein legislative rights of the States under the Seventh Schedule and the rights of the residents of the States are clearly in question, it was the "bouden duty" of the petitioners to make all of them

a party to this litigation. "It is submitted that despite the same, the States were not made a party to the present batch of petition unlike other occasions wherein for decisions on questions of seminal constitutional importance, especially wherein legislative powers of the states are under the scanner of the court, this court has issued notices to the states and taken their respective stands on record," it said.

The affidavit further said, "It is submitted that any decision on the present issues without making States a party, without specifically obtaining their opinion on the present issue, would render the present adversarial exercise incomplete and truncated."

Opposing the Centre, the petitioners' advocate Mukul Rohatgi sought legal validation of same-sex marriage urging the Supreme Court to use its plenary power, "prestige and moral authority" to push the society to acknowledge such a union which would ensure LGBTQIA persons lead a "dignified" life like heterosexuals.

See Edit: Patience needed

CAPSULE

AILING NEPAL PRESIDENT AIRLIFTED TO DELHI AIMS
Kathmandu: Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel was on Wednesday airlifted to AIIMS-Delhi after he complained of shortness of breath.

CHANNELS CAN'T SHOW SHRADDDHA CHARGESHEET
New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday observed telecast of the recording of narco analysis conducted on Aaftab Amin Poonawala, the sole accused in the Shraddha Walkar murder, will prejudice the case and restrained all news channels from displaying or playing content of the charge sheet filed in the matter.

COOK MEETS PM. SAYS COMMITTED TO INVEST
New Delhi: Apple CEO Tim Cook on Wednesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He tweeted, "Thank you Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the warm welcome... We're committed to growing and investing across the country."

Prove I called up Shah to restore TMC national tag, I will quit: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari claimed that TMC chief Mamata Banerjee had called up Union Home Minister Amit Shah to help the Trinamool Congress get its national party status restored, the Chief Minister rejected his claims saying she would resign if he could prove his claims.

Not naming Adhikari, she said, "I do not want to provide extra importance to some upstart politicians who yesterday (Tuesday) claimed that I had called up his boss Shah in Delhi to get my party's national status restored... I want to deny this as I had never made such calls and I challenge him



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses a press conference at Nabanna on Wednesday PTI

CBI books Oxfam India for FCRA violations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered an FIR against Oxfam India and its office-bearers for alleged violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) based on a complaint from the Union Home Ministry.

Following the registration of the case, the CBI began a search operation on Oxfam India's office premises in the Delhi at 412, 4th Floor, NSIC MDBP Building, Okhla Industrial Area here.

Taking cognizance of the CBI FIR, the Enforcement Directorate is likely to initiate a probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Continued on Page 2

Maoist links: SC annuls Saibaba acquittal, puts issue before new bench

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside a Bombay High Court order that had acquitted former Delhi University Professor GN Saibaba in a Maoist links case, and sent it back to the high court for fresh consideration on merits within four months.

A bench of top court Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar directed the chief justice of the Bombay High Court to place Saibaba's appeal and that of other accused not before the same bench which had discharged them, but another bench.

The apex court said that the question of law, including sanction under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), is to remain open for adjudication by the high court.

More than eight years after his arrest in 2014, the Bombay High Court on October 14 last year acquitted Saibaba and ordered his release from jail, noting that the sanction order issued to prosecute the accused in the case under the stringent provisions of the UAPA was "bad in law and invalid".

The Nagpur bench allowed the appeal filed by Saibaba challenging a 2017 order of the trial court convicting and sentencing him to life imprisonment for offences under provisions of the UAPA and the



IPC. Apart from Saibaba, the Bombay High Court had acquitted Mahesh Kariman Tirkir, Pandu Pora Narote (both farmers), Hem Keshavdatta Mishra (student) and Prashant Sanglikar (journalist), who were sentenced to life imprisonment, and Vijay Tirkir (labourer), who was sentenced to 10 years in jail. Narote died during the pendency of the appeal. Advocate Abhikalp Pratap Singh appeared for the Maharashtra Government and senior advocate R Basant represented Saibaba in the case in the apex court.

Atiq's killers sent to 4-day police custody; don's henchman held

5 cops suspended for negligence

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Even as the three gunmen accused of killing gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Mohammad Ashraf were on Wednesday remanded in 4-day police custody, the Prayagraj police on Wednesday arrested Asad Kaila, a prominent shooter of Atiq gang.

Meanwhile, five police personnel were suspended on Wednesday for negligence in connection with the killing of Atiq and his brother Ashraf. Shahganj police station in-charge Ashwani Kumar Singh was among those suspended.

Lovelesh Tiwari, Mohit and Arun Kumar Maurya were produced in the chief judicial magistrate court amid tight security on Wednesday morning as the police sought a seven-day remand.

Passing the order later, the court sent them to police custody for four days — from 2 pm on Wednesday till 5 pm on April 23 — district government advocate Gulab Chandra Agrahari said.

Atiq Ahmad (60) and his brother Mohammad Ashraf were shot dead at point-blank range by three men posing as journalists in the middle of a media interaction on Saturday night while police personnel were escorting them to a medical college in Prayagraj for a checkup.



Police personnel stand guard as the three assailants who shot dead gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf, are being taken after they were produced at court, in Prayagraj on Wednesday PTI

Will exit Maha Govt if Ajit brings NCP leaders to BJP: Sena leader

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Giving a new twist to the speculation about NCP leader Ajit Pawar's possible switchover, Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Shirsat on Wednesday said if Ajit brings other NCP leaders to the BJP fold, the Eknath Shinde-led Sena will not be part of the Government in Maharashtra.

"Our policy is clear about it. The NCP is a party which betrays. We will not go with the NCP even in power. If the BJP takes NCP with them, Maharashtra will not like it. We decided to move out (of the earlier undivided Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray) because people didn't like us going with the Congress and the NCP," he said.



Shirsat, whose party shares power with the BJP in Maharashtra, said he thinks the NCP will not go with the BJP directly. Shirsat said Ajit has not said anything which means he doesn't want to be in the NCP. "We left the Congress-NCP (which were part of the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi government) because we didn't want to be with them. Ajit Pawar doesn't have a free hand

there. Therefore, if he leaves the NCP, we will welcome him. If he comes along with along with a group of NCP (leaders), we will not be in the government," the Shiv Sena leader said.

He said Ajit's displeasure is because his son Parth Pawar lost election earlier. His displeasure has no connection with the case of a plea seeking disqualification of 16 Shiv Sena MLAs pending before the Supreme Court.

Shirsat was recently appointed spokesperson of the Shiv Sena-led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Parth Pawar was defeated in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll from Maval constituency in Maharashtra.

Continued on Page 2

Exams in local language, part-time jobs new features of edu reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a paradigm shift aimed at boosting regional languages, University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked universities to allow students to write exams in local languages even if the course is offered in English medium. The university watchdog has also asked the universities to promote the use of local language in teaching and learning processes and arrange evaluators, encourage translation of textbooks, etc.

Besides, UGC has also announced an "earn-while-learn" scheme at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to help students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups to earn and support their education. The commission has proposed that HEIs



may provide various part-time engagement opportunities to the enrolled students in any academic departments of the HEIs within the campus.

"Promotion and regular use of Indian languages in education is a crucial area of focus in the new National Education Policy (NEP). It emphasises the importance of teaching and instruction in the mother tongue and local languages. It also lays thrust on the need to optimise communication in all Indian languages for better cognitive attainment and the development of a holistic personality of the learners," UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar said.

Noting that the academic ecosystem continues to be English medium-centric, the UGC chief said once the teaching, learning and assessment are done in local languages, student engagement will gradually increase, leading to an increase in the success rate.

"UGC has requested the universities that students be allowed to write the answers in local languages in examinations even if the programme is offered in English medium, and promote translation of original writing in local languages and use local language in the teaching-learning process at universities," he said.

Asked about how students writing in local languages will be evaluated, he said, "This will

be possible if the evaluators also know the local language and the university can make the effort to find the evaluators who know the local language. The idea is to let the students write the answers in a language that will provide them the opportunity to express easily," Kumar said.

He said that higher education institutions play an important role in preparing textbooks and supporting the teaching-learning process in the mother tongue and local languages.

The commission has stressed that it is necessary to strengthen these efforts and "promote such initiatives as writing textbooks in the mother tongue/local languages and encouraging their use in teaching, including translating standard books from other languages."

Hindu students bullied in classrooms, asked to convert to Islam in UK: London think tank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Muslim students in the United Kingdom ask their Hindu classmates to convert to Islam to escape "threats of hell for disbelievers", said a *Telegraph* report based on a survey conducted by London-based think tank "Henry Jackson Society".

According to the survey, which talked to 988 Hindu parents and covered over 1,000 schools in the United Kingdom, there were "numerous instances of derogatory references made towards Hindus, such as belittling their deities".

Half of Hindu parents surveyed reported that their child had experienced anti-Hindu hate in schools.

Continued on Page 2

AFTAB'S NARCO-TEST ANALYSIS

Wary of bias, Delhi HC stops news channels from airing it

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday observed telecast of the recording of narco analysis conducted on Aaftab Amin Poonawala, the sole accused in the Shradha Walkar murder, will prejudice the case and restrained all news channels from displaying or playing content of the charge sheet filed in the matter. The High Court also directed the Centre to ensure that no news channel displays such material till disposal of the petition filed by the Delhi Police.

The order was passed on a petition by the Delhi Police for restraining media houses from publishing, printing and disseminating confidential information contained in the charge sheet and other such material collected during the course of investigation. "This is really very, very strange. What purpose will be served by showing or telecasting this narco analysis test on television? This will definitely prejudice the case," Justice Rajnish Bhatnagar said orally.

Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad, appearing for police, said it is obviously for TRP (television rat-



Delhi High Court building. A sign in the foreground reads 'दिल्ली उच्च न्यायालय DELHI HIGH COURT'.

ing points) and added that airing of such content may lead to law and order problem. He submitted that Aaj Tak news channel has got access to a video of the narco analysis of the accused and it was restrained by the trial court from showing it or any such content till April 20.

However, he said, an order needs to be passed against all other channels also as the video might have been shared with others and, if telecast, it would prejudice the right of the accused to fair trial. The High Court also issued notices to and sought the response of the Centre, through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Aaj Tak news channel and Poonawala on the Delhi police's petition and listed it for further hearing on August 3.

"No media channel having access to this material shall display or play this material on their channel. In the meanwhile, Union of India shall

ensure that no such material is displayed or played on any channel in whatsoever manner," Justice Bhatnagar said. As the judge sought to know how the video reached the news channel, Prasad said it was leaked and, if the journalist concerned makes copies of the footage and distributes them further, then there will be no control. The prosecutor claimed the video footage was not provided to the journalist either by police or anyone from the side of the accused. He said an FIR needs to be registered to investigate as to how the sensitive content got leaked.

The Delhi Police had earlier filed an application before the trial court seeking direction for restraining Aaj Tak news channel from utilising in any form the material related to the charge sheet. The court had then taken on record an undertaking by the counsel for the news channel stating it will not telecast, publish or disseminate the contents of the Psychological Assessment and Voice layered test, narco analysis and conversation recorded on the App of Dr Practo till April 20. The Delhi police has also sought direction to Aaj Tak to ensure digital evidence procured by it through "unauthorised means" is submitted before the court.

Supertech Group Noida office sealed over dues

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Gautam Buddha Nagar district administration has sealed the office of real estate major Supertech Group in Noida over dues.

The builder group has described the administration's action as "illegal", saying the office belongs to Supertech Limited while the recovery has to be made from Supertech Township.

The district administration had recently initiated action to recover dues from the real estate group's Supertech Township entity. The action was initiated over recovery certificates issued from the UP Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA).

"Yes, the office has been sealed," Additional District Magistrate (Finance/Revenue) Vandita Shrivastav said confirming the development.

According to officials, the process to seal the office had started on Tuesday afternoon under supervision of the tehsildar, Dadri. Meanwhile, the Supertech Group condemned the action of the district administration.

"The illegal action has caused tremendous hardship to the home buyers who need to visit these offices for their various needs," a company executive said.

"The action of the district administration in sealing the offices is illegal as the Company is under Corporate Insolvency Process initiated by the NCLT. In view of the moratorium clause of the IBC, no dues can be coer-



Supertech Group office building in Noida. The building is a modern high-rise structure.

cively recovered by any authority till the resolution process is over," the executive said.

"The action of the district administration in sealing the offices, including that of the Interim Resolution Personnel, appointed by the NCLT, would amount to contempt of court as well," the executive claimed.

Last month, the authorities had sealed the offices of Supertech builder's office on Saturday for failing to pay dues worth crores. The team sealed the office located on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th floors of the Supertech project in Noida's Sector 96.

The IRP has written to the district administration to de-seal the premises immediately, and is also planning to take up the matter with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) or the Supreme Court, the executive added.

In August last year, the twin towers of the Supertech Group were demolished after a Supreme Court direction in August 2021 to raze the illegally built structures to the ground.

DCW issues notice to MCD for cleaning of public toilet with acid

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has issued notice to the Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) over the usage of acid for cleaning purposes at a civic body-run toilet. The notice was issued after the panel found a 50-litre canister containing acid inside a public toilet opposite GB Pant Hospital in Darya Ganj.

The panel was informed by cleaners as well as a staff of the agency given a contract by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) for maintaining and operating the toilet complex that they purchase acid every month to clean the toilets. The corrosive substance was confiscated by Delhi Police and a summons was issued by the commission to MCD officials, asking them to explain its presence in toilets.

Senior officers from the city zone appeared before the commission with a written reply that stated that no guidelines have been issued by the civic body to prevent the usage of acid for the cleaning of its public toilets.

They further informed that agencies clean public facilities as per the terms and conditions imposed upon them by the MCD. They also provided a copy of the contract agreement mentioning the same to the commission.

The MCD, in its reply, to DCW pointed out Rule 36 of the terms and conditions of the contract agreement according to which a penalty of Rs 1,000 per day shall be imposed on the agency in case it does not use acid to clean the toilets on a weekly basis.

The officers verbally informed the commission that most of the agreements that MCD has signed with private agencies for the operation and maintenance of toilets follow the same format as that of the one presently in question.

Noting that this act is in contravention to the directions issued by the Supreme Court on the use of acid in the country, the panel said in imposing such illegal conditions on the agency, MCD has encouraged the agency to do an illegal act and has risked the lives of the women and girls in Delhi.

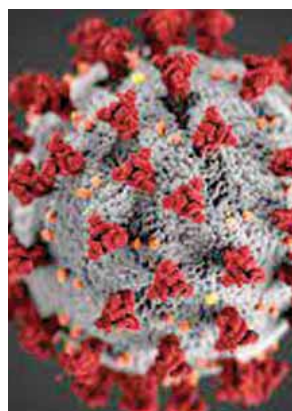
25 hospitals open in Maharashtra amid rising cases of Covid

State logs 1,100 new infections, four deaths

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With no let up in the number of Covid-19 cases, the Maharashtra Government has started 25 dedicated hospitals across the State to treat crucial cases.

On Wednesday day when the state registered 1,100 more fresh infections and four more deaths were reported taking the total number of cases recorded since March 2020 to 81,58,383 and total deaths to 1,48,489, Maharashtra Public Health Minister Girish



Mahajan announced that the state government had started 25 dedicated hospitals to treat critical Covid-10 cases.

Maintaining that the state government was well equipped

to deal with the Covid-19 situation, Mahajan said: "We have more than 5,000 Covid beds, 2,000 ventilators, 62 liquid medical oxygen tanks, 37 PSA Plants, 2,000 jumbo and 6,000 small oxygen cylinders that can be used during any eventuality".

"All our medical colleges have testing facilities with a capacity of over 30,000 per day. I have instructed all hospitals to ensure availability of all requirements to the patients, especially the vulnerable groups, plus arrangements for vaccination," the minister said.

Meanwhile, as many as 1,112 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, taking the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 to 80,03,802. The recovery rate in the state rose marginally from 98.10 per cent from 98.11 per cent.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Apple CEO Tim Cook at a meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday.

India world's...

From Page 1

"As the country with the largest youth cohort — its 254 million youth (15-24 years) — can be a source of innovation, new thinking and lasting solutions."

"The trajectory can leapfrog forward if women and girls, in particular, are equipped with equal educational and skill building opportunities, access to technology and digital innovations, and most importantly with information and power to fully exercise their reproductive rights and choices," she said.

Wojnar said that ensuring gender equality, empowerment and advancing greater bodily autonomy for women and girls are the key determinants for a sustainable future. Individual rights and choices should be respected, and all should be able to decide when to have children, if any, and how many, she said.

Wojnar said global experience has shown that family planning targets can lead to

gender-based discrimination and other harmful practices.

Deleterious effects of such targets include prenatal sex determination leading to sex selective abortion and imbalanced sex ratios, preferential health and nutrition for male children, denial of the paternity of female children, violence against women for giving birth to girl children, and coercion of women to have fewer or greater numbers of children, she said.

With close to 50 per cent of its population below the age of 25, India has a time-bound opportunity to benefit from the demographic dividend, she added.

As the national fertility rate falls below 2.1 (the replacement level), India is at a unique historical opportunity, witnessing a great demographic transition as youthful nation, with a notable demographic diversity across states to convert the potential demographic dividend into economic benefits through additional investments in health, education,

and quality jobs for young people, including targeted investments in women and girls," Wojnar said.

India's demographic dividend can be further secured by incorporating the impact of mega trends such as climate change, urbanization, migration and ageing into policy initiatives, she said.

Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director, Population Foundation of India, said women cannot be the subjects of population targets.

"Whether they wish to have children or not, when to have them, and how many are really their right - nobody else's. Families, governments, and policy-makers or society have no right to take decisions on their behalf. Women's autonomy over their bodies cannot be determined by policies driven by population trends - incentivising women to have more children if the population is declining, or controlling their fertility if the population is rising," she said.

China...

From Page 1

For those who have newly entered the workforce, their average length of education has risen to 14 years, he said.

On the ageing population, he said China has implemented a national strategy to respond to population ageing, including a third-child policy and supporting measures to address demographic changes.

"China's population is over 1.4 billion. Those in the working age is close to 900 million and that group of populations is 10.5 years of education on average," he said.

Wang said China has taken active measures to deal with the ageing population. "As Premier Li Qiang pointed out, China's demographic dividend has not disappeared, and our talent dividend is in the making. The driving force for China's development remains strong," he said.

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल
पर्यायान भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.) 492002

// सर्वसंबंधितों को सूचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधितों को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स अकलसरा डीलोकामाईट माईन (प्रो. गिरकर अग्रवाल) ग्राम- अकलसरा, तहसील- जेजुरी, जिला-सकी के कुल क्षेत्रफल - 4.007 हेक्टर पर प्रस्तावित डोलोमाईट (पीग खनिज) उत्खनन क्षमता - 2,50,000 टन प्रतिवर्ष के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति 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 लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 26/05/2023 को समय प्रातः 11:00 बजे स्थान:- अनुसूचित जनजाति कल्याण छात्रावास, अकलसरा के समीप स्थित मैदान, तहसील- जेजुरी, जिला- सकी (छ.ग.) में निगम की गई है। यह भी सूचित है कि लोक सुनवाई के दौरान भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली के ऑफिस मेमोरंडम F.No. 22-25/2000-IA, III दिनांक 14.09.2020 तथा कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी सख्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन कराया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।

ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथासंशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार प्रकृति, आर्क.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालकवार की प्रति (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसकी सौ. जी. (साइट कोपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन / पढ़ने हेतु कार्यालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला वरिष्ठ अधिकारी, जिला-सकी, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, कार्यालय, जिला पंचायत जांजीरी, जिला- जांजीरी-चांपा, अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कार्यालय, अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.) सकी, जिला-सकी, महाराष्ट्रक, कार्यालय, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र चांपा, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यापार विहार-पू, वीनटव्याल उपपार्क के पास बिलासपुर, सरपंच / सचिव, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत - खन्हरिया, दरभंगा, उदारी, अकलसरा, केकराभाडा, भोथिया, झालरौदा, लोखारोडा, छीतापडरिया, भोखीडीह, बर्ही, तहसील- जेजुरी, जिला- सकी (छ.ग.) जयसंकर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, वायु विंग, जेकराबा रोड, नई दिल्ली, मुख्य वन संरक्षक, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, अण्ड्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यायान भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।

महस्य सचिव
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,
नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to public at large that my client SHRI VIKAS KUMAR S/o Late Shri Om Prakash R/o 18/163, Gali No. 1, East Moti Bagh, Sara Rohilla, New Delhi-110007, have disowned his daughter TAMNNA alias BULBUL from all his movable and immovable estate. My client and his estate shall not be responsible in any manner for any act/deed done by his daughter any person dealing with them shall deal at his/her own risk & cost thereof and further shall be dealt with as per the law

AMIT BATRA (Advocate)
268/1, Desh Bandhu Gupta Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005, Contact No.: 9868066199

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sana Sattar D/o Abdul Sattar R/o S-34/4 Jogabai Extn. Jamia Nagar New Delhi-110025 do hereby Declare that I have changed my name from Sana to Sana Sattar for all future purpose.

PD(017)C

Will exit Maha...

From Page 1

"Ajit Pawar not being reachable is not a new thing. But his displeasure, which is being shown by the media, and our case (pending before the Supreme Court) has no relation. Ajit Pawar is disgruntled since his son Parth Pawar had lost the election," Shirsat said.

"Ajit Pawar was held responsible at dawn in (November 2019 with Devendra Fadnavis). After two-and-a-half years, Sharad Pawar said it was an experiment to revoke President's

rule," he claimed.

Shirsat said Ajit Pawar has not clarified over this till date. The Devendra Fadnavis-Ajit Pawar government formed in a hush-hush ceremony in November 2019 had lasted for three days.

Shirsat said Ajit Pawar is a big leader and he will not tell easily about what is going on in his mind.

He also slammed the Maha Vikas Aghadi's move to hold rallies in parts of the state, as a show of unity and strength.

"We have to search for Ajit Pawar's stand in the ongoing rallies of MVA. He could not speak at the rally in Nagpur. The party which has only 15 MLAs (referring to Uddhav Thac is the key speaker and the one which has 54 MLAs is side-tracked. This is disrespect of Ajit Pawar," he said.

Prove I called up Shah to restore TMC national tag...

From Page 1

"The Chief Minister criticises Amit Shah ji in public but in private she calls him up for favours as she did yesterday (Monday) by calling him up on four occasions --- literally holding his feet over telephone--- requesting him to get the Trinamool Congress' national party status restored," Adhikari had said from a rally at Singur in Hooghly district. According to sources in the TMC, the party would send a legal notice to Adhikari on the

Singur speech. The copy of the notice was also likely to be sent to the Home Minister, sources said.

Lambasting the BJP and apparently targeting the saffron party's national leadership, including Shah, the Chief Minister on Wednesday told party in Hindi and partly in Bengali how a conspiracy was hatched to demote the TMC for ulterior purposes.

"Earlier the system was to review a party's national system every ten years and accordingly our status should have been reviewed in 2026 or 2024 in the least as we got national status in 2016 ... but now suddenly things were changed and the BJP using its power" de-listed the TMC, Mamata said insisting "the name of our party was All India Trinamool Congress and

it will continue to be so."

Mamata, who had a couple of days ago demanded the resignation of Shah for conspiring to "undemocratically and illegally topple an elected Government despite himself holding a constitutional post," on Wednesday renewed her attack on the BJP calling it the "most corrupt party."

She had on Monday demanded Shah's resignation wondering how a Union Minister like Shah could conspire to topple a democratically elected State Government. Shah had earlier told a BJP rally at Birbhum that the TMC would not last its full tenure till 2026 as after getting routed in the 2024 general elections the Bengal ruling party would collapse on its own and would not last its full term till 2026.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Akshay Grover/ Inder Mohan/ LBDEL00001951008/ LBNOD00001953710	Flat No- R- 2, 1st Floor, Back Side, Without Roof Rights, Plot No- Niti Khand- II/458, Indrapuram Ghaziabad/ April 17, 2023	October 27, 2022 Rs. 18,13,173/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Pradeep Sharma/ Indra Pal Sharma/ LBDEL00002676210	Flat No-55A, Ground Floor, Pocket E, Lig, Dilshad Garden, Delhi (Admeasuring An Area of As Per Title Docs)/ April 17, 2023	October 26, 2022 Rs. 15,35,977/-	Delhi/ NCR

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

Date : April 20, 2023
Place : Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Before the President, District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh

Consumer Complaint No. 15/2023-319 Dated: 17/4/2023

In the matter of Sh. Vinod KumarComplainant

VenusOpposite party
Reliance Gen. Ins. Co. Ltd & Ors.Opposite party

Notice to the Opposite party No.3 Mack Insurance Surveyors & Loss Assessors Pvt. Ltd., 14-A Factory Road, D Block Basement, Near Safdarjung Hospital Ring Road, New Delhi

.....Opposite party No. 3

Whereas, the above named Opposite party is evading the service of summonses, and whereas this Commission is satisfied that the service upon the above named Opposite party is not possible is the ordinary course. This proclamation is therefore, issued requiring the attendance of the above named Opposite party in this Commission on the 04th day of May, 2023, at 10:00 AM at Mandi and from day to day until it shall have to appear, and if the above named Opposite party fail to attend on the day and time aforesaid it will be dealt with according to law.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Commission on this 17 day of April, 2023.

Mandi, H.P.
District Consumer Commission, Mandi, President

CBI books Oxfam...

From Page 1

The complaint, which is now part of the FIR, has alleged that though Oxfam India's FCRA registration ceased, it planned to circumvent the law by taking other routes to channelise funds.

"From the email found during an IT survey by the CBDT it appears that Oxfam India is providing funds to the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) through its associates/employees in the form of commission. The same is also reflected from the TDS data of the Oxfam India which shows

payment of '12.71 lakh to the CPR in the FY. 2019-20...', the complaint has alleged.

The complaint by the Foreigners Division of the Union Home Ministry said Oxfam India got FCRA registration to carry out social activities but payment made to CPR through its associates or employees in the form of commission — professional or technical services — is not in line with its stated objectives.

"This is a violation of section 8 & 12(4) of the FCRA 2010," it alleged.

Other alleged violations by Oxfam included receipt of foreign contribution to the tune of '1.5 crore into Foreign Contribution utilisation in the form of foreign contribution in the

FCRA designated bank account.

The case has been registered under various sections of FCRA.

"Email communication found during an IT survey by the CBDT shows that Oxfam India has been planning to pressurise the Indian Government for renewal of FCRA through foreign governments and foreign institutions. Oxfam India has the reach and influence to request multilateral foreign organizations to intervene on its behalf with the Government of India. This exposed Oxfam India as a probable instrument of foreign policy of foreign organizations/entities which have funded Oxfam India liberally over the years.

Hindu students bullied in classrooms, asked to convert to Islam...

From Page 1

"In one instance, a female Hindu pupil had beef thrown at her, and a male student was reported to have to change East London schools three times on account of anti-Hindu bullying. Eight physical assaults were detailed," the study said.

According to the think tank, religious education was "fostering discrimination" against Hindus with inappropriate references to the Indian caste system and misconceptions over the worship of deities which students felt made "a mockery of them".

INBRIEF

DJB VICE-CHAIRMAN INSPECTS CORONATION WWTP
New Delhi: Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Vice Chairman Somnath Bharti inspected the Coronation Pillar Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) on Wednesday with senior board officials. Somnath checked the monitoring room, lab, and section of the WWTP where the wastewater treatment takes place. He showed samples of sewage water coming into the WWTP and the treated water that comes out of the plant to the media, stating that the treated water is being treated according to prescribed parameters. He also declared that the quality of treated water in this plant is almost equivalent to that of drinking water.

GURUGRAM POLICE CONDUCTS SEARCH OPERATION
Gurugram: To curb organised crime and eliminate criminal networks, the Gurugram Police conducted a search operation during the early hours of Wednesday. The search operation was conducted at the locations of relatives and close associates of notorious gangsters of Gurugram on Wednesday morning, police said. According to the police, the campaign was conducted at 19 different places including village Khod, Jat Shahpur, Basunda, Goriyawas, Khandevla, Tirpadi, Bohda Khurd, Tajnagar, Shakti Park Sector-10, Nakhdola, Basai in Pataudi. The operation was led by DCP Crime, DCP West, 07 ACP, and 09 SHO and about 550 police personnel were involved in this search operation.

DR G SATHEESH REDDY VISITS NOIDA AMITY
New Delhi: Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister, Dr G Satheesh Reddy, visited Amity University Noida campus, along with his colleagues, to share his inspirational journey and motivate the students of Amity. Addressing the gathering, Reddy, said the country has made great strides, and the academic strengths and technological capabilities have also developed immensely in the last few years. He also appreciated Amity University for taking a lead in introducing programmes in Defence Technology which is contributing immensely to the development of the country. Dr. Ashok K. Chauhan, Founder President, Amity Global Education and Research Establishments and Dr. V. Selvamurthy, President, Amity Science Technology and Innovation Foundation were amongst the host of dignitaries present on the occasion.

DoE notice to 12 pvt schools for forcing parents to buy uniforms

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

For violating the guidelines of the Directorate of Education, the Delhi Government has issued notices to 12 private schools and an enquiry has been ordered against another six for allegedly coercing parents into buying expensive books and uniforms from specific vendors.

According to the Delhi Government, despite clear guidelines of the Directorate of Education (DoE) on books and uniforms, complaints against many schools forcing parents to buy expensive books and uniforms from specific vendors were being received. Atishi said an investigation is also being carried out by the directorate and action will be taken against the schools that violate the DoE guidelines.

This comes after parents' complaints to the Government about private schools asking them to purchase expensive books and uniforms from specific vendors. If satisfactory answers to notices are not



received from schools, they will have to face action by the education department.

Sharing this matter, Education Minister Atishi said, "Notices have been sent to the concerned schools asking them to explain the reasons for the complaints received from parents. Additionally, an investigation is also being carried out by the Directorate of Education (DoE). If any violations of guidelines are found, action will be taken against these schools under the relevant provisions of the Delhi School

Education Act, 1973".

After receiving the complaints from parents, the minister said that she has instructed the DoE to promptly address every such grievance. The minister said despite the clear guidelines of DoE on books and uniforms, complaints against many schools forcing parents to buy expensive books and uniforms from specific vendors were being received. This is a clear violation of the rules, and to address this, the Education Department is working diligently to resolve every complaint received from parents on a priority basis. For schools where such complaints are coming up, officials are conducting investigations into these complaints, and notices have been issued to explain the reasons for violating the guidelines.

Atishi said, "Guidelines issued by the Education Department give freedom to parents to buy books and uniforms from the vendors of their choice. If any school forces parents to buy expensive books and uniforms from specific ven-

dors, then it is a violation of the rules. This will not be tolerated by the Kejriwal Government and strict action will be taken against schools found guilty of violating these rules." She added that every parent has the right to obtain proper information about books and uniform for the upcoming session before the start of the new academic year so that they can make arrangements according to their convenience, rather than by being forced by schools to purchase these items from specific shops or on their own. The goal of education should be to shape the future of the country, not to earn money.

The guidelines of the Education Department state that private schools must display a class-wise list of books and other study materials on their website before the beginning of the new academic session to inform parents. Additionally, schools must also display at least 5 nearby shops' addresses and phone numbers on their website where parents can purchase books and school uniforms.

Govt axing of sales licences of major liquor brands bad for our business: Restaurants

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi is grappling with a shortage of liquor, and some of the major brands are disappearing from the shelves of liquor vents in the national capital. Restaurateurs have said the Delhi Government's decision to reject the sales licences of French spirits major Pernod Ricard, Indospirits and Brinco has hurt their business as customers now prefer to visit neighbouring Gurugram and Noida for their drinks of choice. Pernod Ricard is the world's second-largest wine and spirits organisation and its portfolio comprises over 200 premium brands, including 100 Pipers, Chivas Regal, The Glenlivet, Absolut, Havana Club and Jacob's Creek. Pernod Ricard also owns Indian brands such as Blenders Pride and Royal Stag.

They said that some of the premium brands of these firms have been unavailable in the national capital since September last year, when the excise policy for 2021-22 came under the scanner of investigation agencies and was scrapped. Their sales licences were cancelled last week.

Manpreet Singh, the treasurer of the National Restaurant Association of India, said, "The decision has hurt the business of restaurants here. There are premium customers who demand these brands and since these brands are not available, that chunk of customers is not coming to restaurants."

"The people of Delhi can easily drive down to Gurugram and Noida for having these brands. Also, since there was a healthy competi-

tion between companies earlier, they would offer us concessions, but that too has ceased now," Singh, who owns Zen Restaurant, said.

Shabad Mehta, another restaurateur, said some of the labels of these brands are very popular. "We are paying all the taxes but due to the disturbance in the supply chain, our business is getting affected," he added.

Official sources had said that the decision to cancel the sales licences of these companies was taken on the ground of ongoing investigation linked to the excise policy case. Vishal Prabhakar, the owner of Limitless and Sky High, said they have suffered a 40 per cent loss in business due to the cancellation of sales licences.

"Owing to the unavailability of these brands, patrons of these premium brands are shifting to cheaper brands, which is of course affecting the business. Customers are also going to neighbouring towns to get these premium brands," he added.

Rahul Singh, Founder and CEO of The Beer Cafe, said, "Customers are suffering as well because of this.... Customers have choices and one cannot expect them to change their preferences overnight." The Delhi government implemented the excise policy on November 17, 2021, but scrapped it after a CBI probe was recommended amid allegations of corruption.

The government went back to its old excise policy, which was operational before November 17, 2021, from September 1, 2022, in which private players in retail liquor sales were replaced by its four corporations.

AAP slams Centre for stalling city recruitments for 9 yrs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

On a day when Delhi L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena gave away appointment letters to 1,500 newly-appointed Government officials at a mega event at Vigyan Bhawan in the national Capital, the ruling Aam Admi Party (AAP) led Delhi Government Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj strongly hit out at the BJP-led Centre for stalling recruitments in the national Capital for the last nine years.

Bhardwaj, pointed out how the L-G had in fact exposed the Centre's conspiracy of keeping Government posts vacant and putting the blame on the Delhi Government.

According to the Raj Niwas officials, the Delhi Education Department or any other Delhi government never ever put demands for filling vacancies



despite huge, glaring and long pending vacancies.

"They always preferred adhocism aimed at favoritism by appointing 1000s of employees on contract, in gross violation of procedures, manuals and court orders. They additionally deployed civil defense volunteers against permanent posts rather than asking for

permanent appointments. They systematically subverted systematic recruitments and deprived the people of Delhi of regular Govt job opportunities. Very characteristically they are now trying to cover their deliberate acts of commission and omission, now that recruitments are being made," said officials. The appointments let-

ter by Saxena included 324 Principals in Education Department. According to a statement issued by L-G office, the Directorate of Education alone accounted for as many as 861 new recruitments, whereas in Delhi Fire Services 500 fresh appointments have been made.

A number of selected candidates are women, Divyans and from other reserved categories. Earlier, speaking at a function organised by the Delhi government's Services Department at the Vigyan Bhawan, Saxena congratulated the new appointees, and said a large number of posts of principals have been lying vacant since 2010-2011 and no action was taken before in this regard. He said the recruitment process to fill up vacancies on a permanent basis will continue to remain his priority and the

remaining posts will be filled up at the earliest.

The fresh permanent recruitment is in line with the prime minister's vision of ending adhocism in government departments and providing opportunities to deserving candidates selected in a fair and transparent manner.

In a counter allegation, Saurabh Bhardwaj, said the Central Government has been exercising unethical and unwarranted control over the Delhi Services Department, resulting in the stalling of all kinds of government recruitment in Delhi.

"The officers of the Services Department have at several occasions straight up refused to place on record the number of vacant posts despite multiple requests by Delhi Vidhan Sabha citing the control of Central Govt on the department," the Services Minister said.

17 yrs after bomb hoax FIR, Capital court acquits man

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Over 17 years after registration of a FIR against him, a court here has acquitted a man accused of making a hoax call to police claiming a bomb threat to the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the Independence Day in 2005.

Metropolitan Magistrate Vipul Sandwar was hearing the case against the man who was charged with the offences under sections 507 (criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication) and 182 (false information, with intent to cause public servant to use his lawful power to the injury of another person) of the Indian Penal Code.

"...The prosecution has not been able to establish beyond reasonable doubt that accused Mahesh has committed offences under sections 182 and 507 of the IPC and is found not guilty in the present



case...," the magistrate said in the judgement passed last week. He said the prime witness in the case, the PCO/STD booth owner Lalit Ahmed, was "unsettled" during his cross-examination and stated that he was not present in his PCO when the call was made.

"Since prosecution witness 2 (Ahmed) was not present at the time when the call was made, anything deposed by him would be in the nature of hearsay and hence, not admissible.

"Accordingly, the prosecution has failed to prove the offence punishable under section 182 of the IPC," the magistrate said.

Judge recuses himself from hearing 2020 riots accused's petition

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Justice Amit Sharma of the Delhi High Court on Wednesday recused himself from hearing a petition filed by northeast Delhi riots accused, Asif Iqbal Tanha, against the alleged leak of his "disclosure statement" in a case pertaining to the "larger conspiracy" behind the communal violence that took place in 2020. "List before another bench subject to the orders of the Chief Justice on April 24," said Justice Sharma.

The petition was listed for hearing before the judge after the recusal of Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani last week. During the proceedings, Justice Sharma asked if the matter arose from the FIR probed by the special cell of Delhi Police under the UAPA.

Lawyer Sowjanya Shankaran, representing the petitioner, said the present

case did not "arise" as such from the Delhi riots FIR but Tanha was an accused in that FIR and his purported disclosure statement was put in public domain by certain media organisations even before the charge sheet was filed and taken cognisance of.

The court was informed by special public prosecutor Amit Prasad that the charge sheet has now been filed in the case which was investigated by special cell. Lawyer Rajat Nair, appearing for the Delhi Police, said an inquiry was carried out into the allegations of leak and a report was submitted before the court.

The court subsequently said the matter has to be sent to another judge. On April 12, Justice Bhambhani had recused himself from hearing the matter, saying a court's act should never have a deleterious impact on the justice system's credibility.

BJP demands audit of power subsidy to Discoms by CAG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The power subsidies to people in Delhi became a latest flashpoint between ruling AAP and the BJP in the national capital as the latter demanded an audit of power subsidy to DISCOMS by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Slamming the Arvind Kejriwal Government, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva along with the Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri questioned why a special audit of power subsidy to Discoms by the CAG empanelled auditors. The BJP leaders said it is a big hoax and the people of Delhi and the BJP will not accept it.

"We do not accept the audit of power subsidy by CAG empanelled audit. The Government and discoms can easily influence such an audit. How it is possible that a private auditor would prepare a fair

audit report of the subsidy scam in which Delhi Government, and private companies are involved," Sachdeva alleged. "Has any private auditor ever given a report against their client in an audit report, Sachdeva asked.

"Kejriwal government has been giving power subsidy to power discoms for last eight years without any audit mechanism. The truth is that the Delhi Government and private companies are equal partners in power discoms and since the revelations of the appointment of AAP leaders in power discom boards the question has been arising whether a part of the subsidy given to power discoms is going back to AAP or some of its leaders. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Kejriwal government had to make this audit recommendation after the Lieutenant Governor started an inquiry," Sachdeva said.

RAPIDX trains to have attendants

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

RAPIDX train services, being implemented by the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) will have a dedicated Train Attendant for the convenience of commuters. RAPIDX is India's first Regional Rail service being constructed between Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut. It has many special features, including a Premium Class coach in every RAPIDX train. NCRTC is soon going to commence operations on the 17-km long Priority Section, between Sahibabad to Duha, of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor, ahead of schedule.

According to a statement issued by NCRTC, the deputied Train Attendant will play an important role in acquainting the commuters with the facilities available in the train and ensuring their safe and secure commute. The train will be driven by a train operator and one train attendant will always be present on the train to assist commuters.

"The RAPIDX train attendant will be stationed in the Premium coach and will impart all the travel-related information to commuters. During the journey, he will also provide information regarding the use of safety equipment



and the desired information related to the journey to the commuters. He will especially assist and tend to the needs of the aged, sick, especially-abled and commuters in need," it said.

Apart from this, the train attendant will also assist the train operator during operations. In case of emergency, the attendant will help commuters, not only of the Premium coach but also the rest of the train. In case of a breakdown or any other emergency, the Train Attendant shall operate the evacuation device fitted on the train as per the instructions of the train operator and assist the commuters to get out of the train by opening the side doors. Moreover, in case the train halts on the viaduct (bridge) due to any technical reason, the train attendant will assist all the on-board commuters to alight on the viaduct from the emergency gate and then will lead them to the nearest emergency evacuation exit to descend from there to the ground level through a safe passage.

Govt to hold round table meet for reduction in Delhi pollution in May

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will hold a crucial roundtable conference next month where the findings of a real-time source apportionment study will be shared with all stakeholders and a strategy will be developed to further reduce pollution in Delhi-NCR. Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said on Wednesday that the conference will be held at the Delhi Secretariat on May 15.

Rai said that representatives from the Commission for Air Quality Management, Central Pollution Control Board, SAFAR, United Nations Environment Programme, India Meteorological Department, World Bank, Centre for Science



and Environment, TERI and NCR (National Capital Region) states will be invited for this conference. "We will share the report of the source-apportionment study with the participants, seek their suggestions and prepare a strategy to further reduce pollution in Delhi-NCR," Rai said.

This comes after a review meeting held by Delhi government environment minister held a review meeting with the teams of DPCC, the Environment Department and

IIT Kanpur at the Delhi Secretariat.

During the meeting, it was decided that in order to thoroughly review the Real Time Source Apportionment study's report "Save Environment" Round Table Conference would be held at the Delhi Secretariat on May 15.

"Representatives from the CAQM, CPCB, Safar, UNEP, IMD, World Bank, CSE, TERI, and states including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Haryana will be invited for this conference. All of the representatives will be taken to the supersite after the round table conference, and a joint action plan will be formed based on recommendations from all institutions, states, and study results."

As Covid cases rise, prisons dept tells inmates not to gather, wash hands

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national capital on Tuesday logged 1,767 fresh COVID-19 cases with a positivity rate of 28 per cent, which is 15 per cent higher than Tuesday.

Five fresh fatalities have pushed the death toll due to the viral disease to 26,572.

On Monday, Delhi recorded 1,017 fresh Covid cases with a positivity rate of 32.25 per cent, the highest in more than 15 months.

In view of rising Covid cases in the national Capital, the Delhi prisons department has instructed jail inmates not to gather at one place and wash hands regularly. A senior official said at present, there are five active Covid cases in Tihar



jail and highlighted that anyone who develops coronavirus symptoms like fever or cold has to undergo a rapid antigen test.

"We have issued general instructions to the inmates. They have been instructed not to gather at a place and wash their hands regularly. The inmates who show the symptoms of fever and cold get tested inside the prisons. If they test positive for Covid, they are kept isolated at the central

hospital in jail number 3 where we admit them for 10 to 12 days," he said.

"We also undertake contact tracing of infected inmates. Security staff who might have come in contact with them as well as their cellmates are also tested," the officer said. The official said the five active Covid cases in Tihar jail tested positive around 10 days ago and were admitted to the central hospital, which comprises 50 beds.

"They are fine and will be discharged soon. Inmates can also be shifted to either DDU or LNJP hospitals," another official said. If a staff member has a fever or cold, but tests negative for Covid, he is asked to use a mask and take precautions, the official said.

INDIAN RAILWAY CATERING AND TOURISM CORPORATION LTD.
(A Government of India Enterprise - Mini Ratna)
CIN - L74899DL1999G0101707

IRCTC invites
Open E-tender CO/NIT/FP-FFU/2023/04 for Setting up, Operation and Management of Food Plazas and Fast Food Units. Last Date for submission of Tender is 15.05.2023 upto 15:00 hrs. and same shall be opened on 15.05.2023 at 15:15 hrs.

Open E-tender CO/NIT/FP-FFU/2023/05 for Setting up, Operation and Management of Food Plazas and Fast Food Units. Last Date for submission of Tender is 16.05.2023 upto 15:00 hrs. and same shall be opened on 16.05.2023 at 15:15 hrs.

Open E-tender for 2023/IRCTC/RYN/HWH Re-Developing, Operating, Maintaining & Transfer (R O M T) of Rail Yatri Niwas at Howrah. Pre Bid meeting: 02.05.2023. Last Date for submission: 18.05.2023 upto 15:00 hrs.

Tender document downloading & participation can be done on website: www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC.

In case of any corrigendum/addendum issued on the above advertisement, it will be published only on IRCTC's website www.irctc.com and www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC.

Office Address: IRCTC, 11th Floor, Statesman House, B-14B, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001; Tel.: 011-23311263-64; Fax: 011-23311259

Plan to create drug-free India by 2047: Shah



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday exhorted the anti-narcotics agencies to be "ruthless" in dealing with drug traffickers and cartels as they are the main culprits, and those consuming the contraband are their "victims".

Citing the ill-effects of drugs on the youth as well as the country's economy and security, the Minister asked all States to work in close coordination and join the battle against the menace with "a whole-of-government" and "Team India" approach, keeping aside their political differences. Addressing the first conference of the Heads of Anti-Narcotics Task Forces of States and Union Territories, Shah

said the Ministry has set a target to create a drug-free India by 2047 when the country attains its 100th year of independence.

"Drug traders are the main culprits as the drug consumers are the victims. We have to take a ruthless approach against the drug traders and the strongest possible action should be taken against them," he said. "Narcotics not only make the young generation hollow, but along with this, there are many bad effects on the country's economy as well. Simultaneously, through narcoterror, through smuggling of narcotics, the security of the country's border can be breached... If the 130 crore Indians fight it together, we will win this battle," he said.

He further said, "If we think about the fight against

narcotics, it seems very difficult, but if we fight it after planning, then the way to victory opens up quickly. And the recent results in this fight against drugs are encouraging." A drug network chart of States and districts must be prepared and that until the chart is ready, it would be not known how widespread the problem is and where focus has to be given.

He said a "top of the bottom and bottom to top" approach has to be taken and when the smallest amount of drug is found, its source has to be found, the drug network has to be probed and then only the fight against narcotics will be successful. Shah said many countries have taken a wrong approach by targeting drug consumers as the real culprits are the drug traffickers.

Govt in talks with UAE, Saudi, US for safety of Indians in Sudan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has ramped up its efforts to ensure safety and security of its nationals in strife-torn Sudan by coordinating closely with various countries, including the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar discussed the situation in violence-hit Sudan with his counterparts from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Government sources on Wednesday described the ground situation in Sudan as "very tense" and movement of people is "very risky" at this stage.

On his phone conversation with foreign minister of the UAE Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Jaishankar said they exchanged views on the situation in Sudan.

"Thank HH @ABZayed, Foreign Minister of UAE, for the exchange of views on the situation in Sudan. Our continuing contacts are helpful," the external affairs minister tweeted.

Referring to his phone talks with Saudi foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan, Jaishankar said both sides will remain in close touch.

"Appreciated his assessment of the Sudan situation. Will remain in close touch," he said on Twitter. The two countries reportedly assured him practical support on the ground for the safety of the Indians in that country.

Sudan has been witnessing deadly fighting between the country's army and a paramilitary group for the last six days that has reportedly left around 200 people dead.

India has been focusing on ensuring the safety of the Indians residing in Sudan. The sources said India's priority has been the safety of movement and well being of Indians wherever they are located and that both the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian embassy in Khartoum are continuously monitoring the situation. At the same time they said "concerns of safety and security constrain us from putting out specific details."

Cabinet nod for ₹6K-Cr National Quantum Mission to enable R&D

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the National Quantum Mission to nurture and scale up scientific and industrial research and development in quantum technology. The mission involves a cost of Rs 6,003.65 crore from 2023-24 to 2030-31.

The National Quantum Mission (NQM), approved at a meeting of the Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will accelerate quantum technology-led economic growth and nurture the ecosystem in the country.

"NQM is going to give India a quantum jump in this arena," Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh told reporters here.

India will be the seventh country to have a dedicated quantum mission after the US, Austria, Finland, France, Canada and China.

"They are also at the R&D stage. None of them has started any applications of it (quantum technology). We are also going to be at par," Singh said.

The new mission targets developing intermediate scale quantum computers with 50-1000 physical qubits in eight years in various platforms like



superconducting and photonic technology," he said.

He said satellite-based secure quantum communications between ground stations over a range of 2000 km within India, long distance secure quantum communications with other countries, intercity quantum key distribution over 2,000 km as well as multi-node quantum network with quantum memories are also some of the deliverables of the mission.

The National Quantum Mission will be headed by a mission director with a dedicated secretariat.

The Governing Body of the National Quantum Mission will be chaired by a renowned scientist or an entrepreneur

from the technology, industry or research sector, I&B Minister Anurag Thakur said. He said the Mission Technology Research Council will be headed by the Principal Scientific Advisor and will be the scientific advisory mechanism for the Governing Body.

Singh said the mission will help develop magnetometers with high sensitivity in atomic systems and atomic clocks for precision timing, communications and navigation.

It will also support design and synthesis of quantum materials such as superconductors, novel semiconductor structures and topological materials for fabrication of quantum devices, Singh said.

Govt making no efforts to bring back fugitive diamantaire Mehta: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday accused the Central Government of making no efforts to bring back absconding diamantaire Jatin Mehta to face the law in India, and asked whether he was being provided "protection" to his relationship with the Adani family.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete alleged that Mehta swindled Rs 7,000 crore from Indian banks and fled the country "from under the nose of" Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "He (Mehta) not just fled the country but also took citizenship of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Caribbean, and a 'No Objection Certificate' was issued by the Indian Government.

"No effort is being made to get him back... To probe him... To make him face the law and the legal system of this country. I want to emphasise on the links that exist between Mr. Jatin Mehta and



Jatin Mehta

the Adani scam, which has now come to the fore," Shrinete alleged.

Mehta is the owner of Winsome Diamonds, Forever Precious Jewellery And Diamonds and Su-Raj diamonds. "Mehta uses exactly the same route that people like Mehul Choksi or Nirav Modi used, which was to import gold on the basis of letters of credit from Indian banks. They made it into jewellery which was then exported to Dubai. It's shocking that the 13 companies to which this jewellery was exported in Dubai were eventually all owned by Jatin Mehta and his family," Shrinete alleged.

Curbing piracy: Cabinet nod to Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2023

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2023, aiming to curb transmission of pirated film content on the Internet. Briefing the media, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said the Bill will be introduced in the upcoming session of Parliament. He said the Bill also has provisions to classify films on the basis of age group, instead of the current practice of 'U', 'A', and 'UA'.

"U" is for unrestricted public exhibition and "A" is restricted to adult audiences, while "UA" is for unrestricted public exhibition subject to parental guidance for children below the age of 12 and "S" for special category audiences such as doctors and scientists. The bill also have amendments seek to add new classification - "UA-7+", "UA-13+" and "UA-16+" in place for 12 years.

Besides improving the

process to certify films by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), the amendments also seek to bring about uniformity in categorisation of films and content across platforms. The amendments are also expected to harmonise the law with executive orders and various Supreme Court judgments. Thakur said wide-ranging consultations were held with stakeholders on the Bill.

"This Bill will live up to the expectations of the industry... This Bill is going to satisfy each and every one without any controversy, the Minister said. He said there were demands from various stakeholders to take action to curb piracy, on age-based film classification and certain redundant provisions in the existing Act. A Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in 2019 and the new draft was based on consultations with the film industry and also incorporates the best practices from across the world, he said.

ED attaches arms dealer Bhandari's assets under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached one immovable property situated at New Delhi valued at Rs 4.50 crore belonging to Sharan Svadha LLP in the case of Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., Switzerland, arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari and others under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The ED initiated the investigation under PMLA against Pilatus Aircraft Ltd. Switzerland, Sanjay Bhandari, Offset India Solutions Pvt. Ltd. (OISPL) and others based on the FIR registered by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for commission of offence punishable under various sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Prevention of Corruption Act.

"During the course of investigation conducted by ED, it is revealed that Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., Switzerland entered into criminal conspiracy with Sanjay Bhandari, his



partner Bimal Sareen and others for obtaining the contract of supply of 75 Basic Trainer Aircrafts to the Indian Air Force, Ministry of Defence, Government of India. In pursuance of this conspiracy, commission / kickbacks (proceeds of crime) of Rs 343 crore from Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., Switzerland were received in the bank accounts of the companies controlled / beneficially owned by Sanjay Bhandari in India and UAE for influencing the process of contract in its favour," the ED said in a statement.

The PMLA probe revealed that part of this commission / kickbacks were transferred to Sharan Svadha LLP, an entity beneficially owned by Bimal Sareen and his wife, for purchasing an immovable property in New Delhi which has been attached, it added.

NIA chargesheets PFI national coordinator for arms training

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday filed a chargesheet against banned terror group Popular Front of India (PFI) national coordinator for arms training.

The agency also invoked additional charges against the PFI as an organisation.

Following further investigations in the case registered against the PFI and its leaders and cadres, the NIA has filed a Charge-sheet against Ibrahim Puthanathani alias Ibrahim M K in New Delhi on Wednesday. This follows the chargesheet filed by NIA on March 18 against the National Executive Council (NEC) members and senior cadres of the PFI.

"Ibrahim was the National Coordinator and he was responsible for the organization and conduct of PFI Arms Training Camps across various States of the country on behalf of the Popular Front of India," the NIA said in a statement.

The NIA probe has revealed that PFI cadres were being systematically trained in use of weapons in the guise of Physical Education (PE) classes in different parts of India and Ibrahim had designed the Syllabus for the Advanced Physical and Arms training courses. He was travelling across the length and breadth of the country to coordinate and supervise such Arms Training Camps, the NIA said.

Ibrahim has been charged under sections Indian Penal Code Sections relating to criminal conspiracy, conspiracy to commit offence, Collecting arms, etc., with intention of waging war against the Government of India, indulgence in wanton vilification or attacks upon the religion, race, place of birth, residence, language etc of any particular group or class or upon the founders and prophets of a religion and relevant provisions of the Unlawful activities (Prevention) Act.

Keep strong vigil along LAC, Rajnath asks Army

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the situation continues to be tense on the border with China, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday asked the Army to maintain strong vigil along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in view of deployment of Chinese troops. Sounding this note of caution while addressing the Army Commanders' Conference here, Rajnath, without making specific references, also called upon the armed forces to take note of geo-political changes around the world, and accordingly mould their planning and strategies, sources said. The Army Commanders' Conference is an apex-level biannual event that is held in April and October every year.

"The situation is tense due to deployment of PLA troops in the northern sector. Our armed forces, especially the Indian Army, will have to continuously keep their vigilance in order to maintain the security of the LAC," he said.

Rajnath's observations came in the backdrop of the nearly three-year old border row in eastern Ladakh and China's attempt to change the status quo of the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh in December last year.

It led to a clash between the troops of the two nations and several soldiers suffered injuries.

He expressed full confidence in the Army for any contingency though, the ongoing



talks for peaceful resolution will continue and disengagement and de-escalation, is the best way forward.

India, Canada discuss defence ties, Indo-Pacific situation over phone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Canada on Wednesday reviewed their bilateral defence ties and the situation in the Indo-Pacific during telephonic talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his counterpart Anita Anand.

Giving details of the talks, defence ministry officials said here the conversation was warm and cordial. Both Ministers discussed ways to develop bilateral defence relations, which shall be reflective of their democratic ethos and a shared interest in the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific. China is flexing its muscle in the region leading to tension.

The Canadian minister

briefed Rajnath about her country's Indo-Pacific Strategy and the importance attached to enhancing engagement with India. Rajnath welcomed increased Canadian naval presence in the Indo-Pacific. Both Ministers discussed potential areas of defence cooperation - from UN peace-keeping training to defence industrial cooperation.

He highlighted that India is an attractive defence manufacturing destination with competitive land and labour costs and two defence industrial corridors. Rajnath invited Canadian defence companies to invest in India and carry out co-production. They would also find value in integrating Indian defence companies in their global supply chains.

India, France review maritime ties, interoperability

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and France have discussed the entire gamut of their bilateral maritime ties and reviewed inter operability to bolster security in the strategically important Indian Ocean region.

Giving details, navy officials said here on Wednesday, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Slaars, Joint Commander of the French Forces Deployed in the Indian Ocean (ALINDIEN), accompanied by a two-member delegation, visited Headquarters, Western Naval Command (HQWNC) at



Mumbai on Tuesday. The ALINDIEN interacted with Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command. During the interaction, growing cooperation between the two navies on the maritime front and enhanced interoperability to bolster maritime security in the region was appreciated by both the sides.

The interaction also highlighted the gains achieved by cooperation between the Indian and the French Navies in strengthening the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) construct.

Both sides agreed that there is an emergent need to enhance navy-to-navy cooperation keeping in line with the strengthening relations between the two maritime nations.

Bilateral cooperation between India and France, especially in the sphere of maritime security, has been growing. Robustness of the naval partnership and cooperation is reflected in steady improvement in interoperability through conduct of regular exercises, long range deployments by ships and mutually beneficial interaction among high-level envoys.

Jaishankar to go on 9-day trip to Latin America

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to further strengthen ties with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will begin a nine-day trip to Guyana, Panama, Colombia and the Dominican Republic starting Friday. The visit will also explore bilateral engagement in new areas.

It will be Jaishankar's first visit as the external affairs minister to these countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The minister will first travel to Guyana where he will hold wide-ranging talks with his counterpart Hugh



Hilton Todd on further expansion of overall ties between the two countries.

During his visit to the country from April 21 to 23, Jaishankar will call on Guyana's leadership and interact with several ministers, the Ministry

of External Affairs (MEA) said on Wednesday.

It said the external affairs minister will visit Panama from April 24 to 25, Colombia from April 25 to 27 and his last destination would be the Dominican Republic.

He will visit the Dominican Republic from April 27 to 29.

"It (the visit) will provide an opportunity to continue high-level contacts with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and explore new areas of cooperation in a whole host of areas, particularly in the post-pandemic scenario," the MEA said in a statement.

Nepal Prez admitted to AIIMS Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/KATHMANDU

Ailing Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel, 78, on Wednesday was airlifted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi for treatment after he was admitted to a hospital in Kathmandu for the second time within a month after he complained of shortness of breath.

Paudel was admitted to TU Teaching Hospital in the Nepalese capital on Tuesday. A preliminary investigation has revealed that he had a chest infection. President Paudel will undergo treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, (AIIMS), New Delhi,

his press aide Kiran Pokharel said. He informed that the President was medevacked to India in an air ambulance around 10.30 am on Wednesday.

He was accompanied by his son Chintan Paudel and others.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Purna Bahadur Khadka, among other leaders, visited him to inquire about his health condition.

Last week, the President complained of pain in his stomach. On April 1, President Paudel was admitted to a hospital here for the first time after complaining of some problem in his stomach.

14 HEATSTROKE DEATHS AT MAHA EVENT

Opp seeks 2-day Assembly session to fix responsibility

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Seeking to corner the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena-BJP alliance Government over the 14 heatstroke deaths that took place at the Maharashtra Bhusan Award ceremony on April 16, the Opposition Congress has demanded convening of a special two-day session of the State Legislature to fix responsibility for the death of innocent people.

In a letter written to Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais, State Congress president Nana Patole described the 14 deaths as "culpable homicide not amounting to murder" and said that in the normal course, the Eknath Shinde Government should have accepted its "moral responsibility" over the incident and stepped out of the office.

"The irresponsibility and mis-management on the part of the state government led to the death of 14 people who had



come for the Maharashtra Bhusan ceremony. The question that begs an answer is whether these deaths were due to heat stroke or stampede. This is an instance of culpable homicide and the Shinde government is hiding the truth from the people," Patole said.

Urging the Governor to convene a two-day special session of Maharashtra Legislature to fix responsibility for the incident and to evolve measures to prevent such incidents in future, Patole said: "The April 16, 2023 incident at Kharghar in Navi Mumbai is very serious and heart-wrench-

ing. Nearly 20 lakh followers of Dr Appasaheb Dharmadhikari (who was bestowed with Maharashtra Bhusan award) had come for the function. The State government, which had organised the event, had spent Rs 13 crore on it."

"Despite spending so much, not even a tent was built for the people who had come for the program. These people were made to sit for hours in the hot sun. These people could not even get drinking water and many members had to be admitted to the hospital due to heatstroke. It is shocking that some media reporters have said that there was a stampede which is more shocking," Patole said.

Charging that the Shinde government was hiding "truth" from the people, Patole said that the Congress would address news conferences in each district of the state on April 24 "to bring the truth behind the incident before the people".

Bomma files nomination for Karnataka polls

Modi, Nadda, Yogi in BJP's list of star campaigners; Sonia, Shettar in Cong's

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the incumbent Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday filed his nomination papers ahead of the high stake Karnataka poll slated May 10, the BJP drew up a list of 40 leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP President J P Nadda, former Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Nirmala Sitharaman and Smiti Irani besides a slew of other Central Ministers who would be the 'star campaigners' for the party across the 224 assembly segments.

The Congress, too, released its list of star campaigners for the forthcoming election including party president Mallikarjun Kharge, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, State chief DK Shivakumar, LoP Siddaramaiah, Jagadish Shettar, Shashi



Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai files his nomination papers for the Karnataka Assembly polls in the presence of BJP national president J P Nadda and Kannada actor Kichcha Sudeep, at Shiggaon in Haveri district on Wednesday

Tharoor, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, his Chhattisgarh counterpart Bhupesh Baghel, Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhinder Singh Sukku and others, to campaign for the party.

The campaigning for

assembly elections in the state has reached a feverish pitch as Chief Minister Bommai filed his nomination papers from his traditional seat of Shiggaon in Haveri district amidst fanfare. Bommai is seeking re-election from Shiggaon, from

where he has been an MLA three times since 2008.

The Chief Minister held a massive road show along with BJP national President J P Nadda and Kannada film star Kichcha Sudeep in his constituency of Shiggaon, ahead of filing nomination for the May 10 Assembly polls.

The last date of filing nominations is April 20

While the ruling BJP is mainly banking on Prime Minister Modi to give the party a winning edge in the tough contest vis-a-vis the main challenger the Congress, the Union ministers including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Smiti Irani, Dharmendra Pradhan, Mansukh Mandaviya and Pralhad Joshi have also been included in the list of the star campaigners released by the party.

Besides Adityanath, Madhya Pradesh and Assam Chief Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Himanta Biswa Sarma, respectively, and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis have been included as the main campaigners for the party. The Karnataka big wigs in the list of star campaigners are Chief Minister Bommai (Lingayat), Karnataka BJP strongman BS Yediyurappa (Lingayat) and former Chief Minister D V Sadananda Gowda (Vokkaliga).

The ruling BJP in Karnataka is pulling out all the stops to retain the state where it is pitted against Congress and the JD(S) in the May 10 elections. Results will be declared on May 13. BJP MP and former Bollywood actress Hema Malini, Ajay Devgan and Akshay Kumar along with Kanadda film actors have also been roped-in to spice-up the poll campaign.

I am a BJP man, will remain in saffron party, says Mukul Roy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Former Railway Minister and often called the modern Chankya of Bengal politics Mukul Roy, who had re-joined the Trinamool Congress soon after Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress roared back to power in 2021 Assembly elections, on Wednesday said that he was a BJP man and would continue to be in the saffron party.

"I have been in the BJP. I am in the BJP and will continue to be in the BJP," he told reporters in Delhi.

When asked as to why he had quit the saffron party in 2021 despite winning the Krishnagar North Assembly seat on BJP ticket he said his rejoining the TMC was a momentary act of inconsistency as he had been suffering from depression on account of the death of a near relative (his wife).

When asked as to whether he had been approached by any senior BJP leader the former BJP national vice-president said, "I am trying to speak to them and I think I will be able to speak to them ... and work according to my party's guidance."

Roy who had mysteriously gone missing from his Kolkata house on Monday evening before surfacing in New Delhi on Tuesday told the media on Wednesday that he had recovered from his physical illness and was fighting fit to continue his political activities.

His son and former TMC MLA Subhrangsu Roy however had told the media in Kolkata that his father was suffering from dementia and Parkinson's disease and was mentally deranged. The junior Roy had also lodged a missing diary in the name of his father.

Guj court to decide on Rahul's fate in defamation case today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi's destiny which could pave the way for his reinstatement as a Member of Parliament in Lok Sabha is likely to be decided on Thursday subject to the pronouncement of order by a Gujarat court on the Congress leader's plea for a stay on his conviction in a criminal defamation case over his "Modi surname" remark.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge RP Mogera had last Thursday reserved its verdict for April 20 on Rahul Gandhi's application for a stay on conviction pending his appeal against a lower court's

order sentencing him to two years in jail in the case. He had earlier submitted that the trial court treated him harshly after being overwhelmingly influenced by his status as an MP.

The Congress leader said that he was sentenced in a manner so as to attract the order of disqualification because the trial court was well aware of his status as a Parliamentarian. The bye-election once held in Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha constituency due to his disqualification cannot be undone if his conviction is not stayed even if the court subsequently acquits him, he said. Such an election will also cause irreparable loss to the state exchequer, he said.

The 52-year-old politician



was elected to the Lok Sabha from Wayanad in Kerala in 2019 but was disqualified a day after a metropolitan magistrate court in Surat on March 23 sentenced him to two years in jail in a case filed by BJP MLA Purnesh Modi under sections 499 and 500 (defamation) of the Indian Penal Code.

Rahul Gandhi had on April 3 moved the sessions court against the lower court's order. His lawyers also filed two appli-

cations, one for a stay on the sentence (or bail till the disposal of his appeal) and another for a stay on conviction till the disposal of the appeal.

While granting bail, the court issued notices to complainant Purnesh Modi and the state government on his plea for a stay on conviction. It heard both parties on Thursday last week and reserved the order for April 20.

MLA Modi had filed a criminal defamation case against Gandhi over his remarks, "How come all thieves have Modi as the common surname?" made during an election rally at Kolar in Karnataka on April 13, 2019.

Arguing for Rahul Gandhi's plea for a stay on con-

viction, his lawyer told the court that the trial in the case was "not fair" and there was no need for maximum punishment in the case. In his submission, Rahul said that if the March 23 judgment of the trial court is not suspended and stayed, it will cause irreparable damage to his reputation.

He said the excessive sentence is contrary to the law on the subject and unwarranted in the present case which has overriding political overtones. Rahul termed his conviction as "erroneous" and "patently perverse" and said the trial court treated him harshly after being overwhelmingly influenced by his status as an MP.

"The appellant has been treated harshly at the stage of

determination of sentence taking into account his position as a Member of Parliament, hence the far-reaching implications would have been in the knowledge of the trial court," he said.

Opposing his plea, MLA Modi had told the court that Gandhi is a repeat offender with several criminal defamatory proceedings against him going on in different courts across the country. He said that the way Rahul Gandhi came to file his appeal shows "extraordinary arrogance" and "a very dirty display of childish arrogance and an immature act of bringing pressure upon the court".

Keep in mind well-being of citizens: Prez to IAAS trainees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SHIMLA/NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday asked IAAS officer trainees to always keep in mind the well-being of the citizens and ensure fairness in their approach. The President was addressing the officer's trainees of the Indian Audit & Accounts Service (IAAS) of 2021 and 2022 batches at the National Academy of Audit and Accounts here.

The role of the supreme audit institution is not just limited to providing oversight but also to providing necessary inputs to informed policy making, Murmu said and added the CAG through the Indian Audit and Accounts Department and its able officers has been effectively pursuing both these objectives.

"It is incumbent upon you to continue to uphold the ideals of the Constitution and work with integrity and commitment towards nation-building," the President said.

The Indian Audit and Accounts Service has an widespread presence across the country, in order to achieve



uniformity in financial reporting, accountability, and providing assurance to the organs of governance about the use of the public resources, she said.

"You should ensure the highest levels of integrity and knowledge both in professional and personal spheres. The primary objective of audit should be to improve the processes and policies rather than to be a fault-finding exercise. Therefore, it is essential to communicate the audit recommendations with clarity and conviction," the President asked the officer trainees.

This, Murmu said will help reform and refine the public services and their delivery for the maximum benefit of the citizens.

"You should always keep in mind the well-being of the citizens of the country and ensure fairness in your

approach. You will be contributing in a big way in India's further ascent and development in Amrit Kaal," she added.

The President said the One Indian Audit & Accounts Department One System (OIOS), a web-enabled IT application with support for multiple languages and a mobile app, is a praiseworthy initiative in line with the vision of Digital India.

"Technologies such as blockchains, data analytics, virtual audit rooms etc. Can be used widely for ensuring transparency and compliance. But technology cannot and should not replace the need for human intervention. "You, the young officers should understand the value of human touch and sensitivity towards issues concerning the nation and its citizens, while taking decisions and implementing policies," she said.

Murmu also urged the officers to contribute positively through constructive criticism and critical thinking towards ensuring improvement and efficiency in the governance system

Probe Assam unit chief's harassment allegation against IYC prez, NCW orders police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has asked the Assam Police to conduct an inquiry into the harassment allegations levelled against Indian Youth Congress president Srinivas B V by its Assam unit chief Angkita Dutta. Srinivas on Tuesday issued a legal notice to Dutta, saying she was defaming him.

The NCW, in a statement, said it has come across a Twitter post enclosing screenshots of posts made by Dutta, alleging harassment, use of derogatory language and discrimination against Srinivas. The NCW claimed that Dutta has posted on her Twitter handle that she even raised her grievance with Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Jammu, but no action was taken on her complaint.

The Commission said it is "appalled and disappointed" and has taken cognizance of the allegations levelled by Dutta against Srinivas. "Therefore, considering the gravity of the



matter, Chairperson Rekha Sharma has written to the Director General of Police, Assam to personally look into it and conduct an inquiry into the allegations levelled by Dr Angkita Dutta in a fair and time bound manner. A detailed report must be apprised to the Commission. Meanwhile, the Commission will also be inquiring into the matter," the NCW said.

Dutta on Tuesday accused Srinivas of being "sexist and chauvinistic", and discriminating against her based on gender. Responding to the allegations with the legal notice that was shared by Srinivas on Twitter, he said, "Whoever is found indulged in propagating/peddling false & defamatory content will be held liable under the relevant laws & will be held accountable for their acts."

Kerala Christian political leaders to meet Modi, seek alliance with NDA

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaches Kerala next Tuesday, a delegation of former leaders from the Kerala Congress (a political entity in the State representing the interests of Churches) will call on him seeking alliance with the National Democratic Alliance led by the BJP. This was disclosed by Johnny Nelloor, a former MLA who has been with the faction of Kerala Congress led by former minister late T M Jacob.

"I am quitting as member of Kerala Congress and leaving the United Democratic Front led by Indian National Congress. The present leader-

ship of the Congress does not show any kind of recognition or sympathy towards me or other leaders," Nelloor said on Wednesday after submitting his resignation. He said that some of the leaders who had quit the Kerala Congress would constitute a "secular" party and form a charter of demands which would focus on the interests of farmers and minority communities. "We will definitely forge alliance with the national parties that support our charter of demands," he said. The Kerala Congress in which he was a leader has been in the sidelines of the State's politics since 2016 and getting suffocated without power and position.

India, Thailand to review defence ties on April 20

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Thailand will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence ties during the 8th Defence Dialogue between the two nations in Bangkok on April 20.

Giving details here on Wednesday, Defence Ministry officials said Special Secretary, Ministry of Defence Nivedita Shukla Verma will co-chair the 8th meeting of India-Thailand Defence Dialogue with Deputy Permanent Secretary for Defence of Ministry of Defence, Thailand General Nuchit Sribunsong.

During the dialogue, the co-chairs will review the defence cooperation between the two countries and explore new initiatives to further strengthen bilateral engagements. Both sides will also exchange views on regional and global issues of shared interest.

As part of her visit, the Special Secretary will also call on Permanent Secretary for Defence of the Ministry of Defence, Thailand General



Sanitchanog Sangkachantra.

India and Thailand share a strategic partnership and defence is a key pillar of this cooperation. The bilateral defence engagements have expanded over a period of time to include wide ranging contacts between the two countries including Defence Dialogue meeting, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity building and training programmes and bilateral exercises.

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय

पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमंडल, राँची पश्चिम, राँची

ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट अति अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना (13th Call)

जिसका PR No. 255948 (Drinking Water and Sanitation) 2021-22 है।

Tender Reference No. - DWSR/RW/SVS-05/2021-22 Date - 18-04-2023

Table with 8 columns: S. No, Name of the Work, Cluster Name, Sub Cluster/Group No., Block, Estimate Cost (in Lac), Earnest money (in Lac), BOQ cost (in Rs.).

- किसी भी प्रकार का बदलाव http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।
• अन्य किसी भी प्रकार की सूचना http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।
• निविदा में प्रकलित राशि घट-बढ़ सकती है, तत्पश्चात अग्रघन की राशि मान्य होगा।

PR 295462 Drinking Water and Sanitation(23-24)#D

झारखण्ड सरकार

ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, मुख्य अभियंता का कार्यालय

102, द्वितीय तल्ला, अभियंत्रण भवन, कवहरी रोड, राँची

ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

ई-निविदा संख्या:- 02/2023-24/RWD/GODDA दिनांक :- 19.04.2023

मुख्य अभियंता, ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, झारखण्ड, राँची द्वारा निम्न विवरण के अनुसार e-procurement पद्धति से पैकेज के रूप में निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

Table with 4 columns: क्रम सं, आर्डीनेट्री फिकेशन संख्या/पैकेज संख्या, कार्य का नाम, प्रकलित राशि (रुपये में) अंक में आहार में, कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि.

- 2. वेबसाइट में निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि:- 02.05.2023
3. ई-निविदा प्रक्रिया की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय:- 12.05.2023 अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक।
4. (क) मुख्य अभियंता कार्यालय, ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, अभियंत्रण भवन, कवहरी, राँची अथवा (ख) जिला नियंत्रण कक्ष, राँची अथवा (ग) जिला नियंत्रण कक्ष, गोंडारहा में से किसी भी कार्यालय में निविदा शुल्क एवं अग्रघन की राशि जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय:- 15.05.2023 अपराह्न 3.30 बजे तक।

विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाइट jharkhandtenders.gov.in में देखा जा सकता है।

PR 295540 Rural Work Department(23-24).D



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Patience needed

Decriminalisation of gay sex was revolutionary enough; legalising same-sex marriage may be hasty

Differences between the Government and the judiciary are not new, so there is nothing unusual about the divergence of opinion over the issue of same-sex marriage. But Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud's observation on Tuesday, that the "notion of a man and a woman is not an absolute based on genitals," was startling. That something as postmodern a concept as gender fluidity could be asserted in a country barely out of the pre-modern era is amusing—and asserted by no less a person than the CJ. On Wednesday too, Chandrachud said that there is no data from the Government that "this [same-sex marriage] is urban or something." This was in response to the Centre's position, expressed earlier in an application, that the petitioners favouring same-sex marriage represented "a mere urban elitist view" and "the competent legislature will have to take into account broader views" of various sections. The Centre's stand is quite reasonable. While the CJ may be justified in maintaining that homosexual marriage is more just an urban phenomenon, heterosexual alliances remain the norm in India. In fact, even in Western countries same-sex marriages are rare.

According to a Gallup study, less than 1 per cent of US adults were married to a same-sex spouse in 2021. Interestingly, only one in 10 LGBT adults—9.6 per cent to be exact—were married to a same-sex spouse. In 2018, the Supreme Court decriminalised homosexuality by invalidating a colonial-era law, known as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

The section categorised gay sex as an "unnatural offence." The apex court said that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a fundamental violation of rights. The BJP, which is socially conservative, grudgingly accepted the verdict. BJP leaders' reactions were confused and ambiguous. Arun Jaitley, however, was outspoken in his criticism of the Supreme Court over its striking down Section 377. The BJP Government grudgingly accepted the verdict; it had the grace of not saying or insinuating against the apex court. On the issue of same-sex marriage, though, it has decided to put its foot down—and rightly so. Saying that States and Union Territories should be heard before deciding petitions seeking legal recognition of same-sex marriages, the Centre has filed a fresh affidavit, informing the Supreme Court that it has begun a consultative process with States and UTs on the subject. It has urged the court to wait till the process is over. The Centre said that "it is clear that the rights of the States, especially the right to legislate on the subject, will be affected by any decision on the subject." It is a valid point. Decriminalisation of gay sex was revolutionary enough; to take a step further within a span of five years smacks of impatience on the part of the petitioners. The Govt is correct in seeking wide-ranging dialogue over the issue.

PICTALK



A crowded fancy Bazaar in Guwahati. India has surpassed China to become the world's most populous nation

PM Modi fights back climate change

India has demonstrated that behavioural changes can make substantial contributions to achieving the global war on the climate change



TARUN CHUGH

Each one of us has an equal stake in protecting the climate. The world is now far more aware of climate change. The episodes of prolonged drought and super floods, which have been seen across the continents, should leave none in doubt about the immediacy of climate change. This is no more knocking at the doors. Climate change has entered our houses, and the time is now for each one of us to fight the demon with all our might.

India has always played a leading role in protecting the environment. The Indian way of life is in sync with the environment. Trees have been worshipped in India for ages. Animals have been part of Indian culture, and they are venerated. The Indian way of life is incomplete without nature. Thus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has very forcefully made the world hear the Indian voice for mitigating climate change is heard with due respect.

Prime Minister Modi in his address to the World Bank's programme on 'Making it personal: How behavioural change can tackle climate change' made forceful arguments to take climate action to the dinner table. This by all accounts is the most logical action in the battle against climate change.

Individual ownership of climate change—which affects all without discriminating on income, caste, creed, religion, nationality and class—is the need of the hour. In fact, the International Energy Agency in a report has stated that 75 individual actions can help cut down almost two billion tonnes of carbon emissions by 2030.

Therefore, PM Modi rightly said that we must eliminate food waste from the dining table. The call is timely, as 15 billion tonnes of food get wasted annually all across the world. Here, Mission LiFE, launched jointly by PM Modi and the UN General Secretary in October 2022, is a timely intervention in effecting the necessary behavioural changes to achieve the nationally committed goals to cut down emissions to help the world bring



down the rising temperature.

There is a greater awareness of the effects of climate change among the people. One-third of Pakistan was ravaged by the super floods last year, which swept away a large number of people, infrastructure, and livestock in its spate. The aftermath of the super floods is still being seen in Pakistan in the form of the food crisis, and the Islamic country had to import wheat from Russia recently. A number of rivers in China and Latin America had died as a consequence of climate change.

In this context, PM Modi has given leadership to the Global South, and the developing nations, and has come to a crucial stage. The developed world must commit to its share of responsibility with adequate funding for climate mitigation efforts in developing and poor countries. With the Indian G20 presidency, the voices of the Global South have gained prominence on critical issues, including climate change.

Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change



INDIA HAS ALWAYS PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT. THE INDIAN WAY OF LIFE IS IN SYNC WITH THE ENVIRONMENT. TREES HAVE BEEN WORSHIPPED IN INDIA FOR AGES

Bhupender Yadav has strongly raised the Indian voice in the global forums where he has highlighted that India has taken several actions in the last few years to demonstrate the actionable agenda for the world. For instance, India has acted with speed in the mass adoption of LED lights for saving energy. India has already distributed 37 crore LED bulbs to the people, which will help in cutting down 3.9 billion tonnes of carbon emissions. India has been making intense efforts in energy conservation, as the effects of the combined efforts will be seen in the saving of 22 billion power units.

Agriculture is a critical sector where modern ways of farming are needed to accelerate climate change goals. Over seven lakh hectares of farmland are now covered under micro-irrigation, made possible by the targeted execution of the Central schemes and the greater awareness among the farmers to adopt the best practices. The Indian farmers have set examples for the world by taking measures that are in sync with the global demand to cut down carbon emis-

sions.

The International Solar Alliance, headquartered in India, is equally playing the role of a catalyst to accelerate the efforts for the energy transition. India is on course to source most of its energy needs from renewable sources. Farmers have also shown greater interest in solar pumping sets, which is also supported by the Central scheme. Additionally, villages are now going solar, and the people in the rural areas are now even making an additional income by selling the surplus solar power in the open market.

India has demonstrated that behavioural changes can make substantial contributions to achieving the global tasks on climate change. The people in India have now shown that they are steps ahead in adapting to climate-appropriate practices for the well-being of the global community. India is truly living the guiding philosophy of 'Vasudheva Kutumbkam (the world is one family)'. (Author is the national general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONCERNING THE TURN OF EVENTS

Sir — Relevant to Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf killing the shooters, two of whom are in their early twenties and the third who is only eighteen years old, have told police that they murdered the Ahmed siblings in order to 'make a name' for themselves in the criminal world. The ease with which they were able to murder the pair indicates serious lapses on the part of the escorting cops. The assailants had an easy time because of police laxity. The killings had an air of inevitability about them; it was just a question of how would they pull the trigger quicker than the UP cops. The state's recent spate of police encounters and extrajudicial killings must be investigated. Police, emboldened by an apparent trigger-happy government, have opened the floodgates to a vicious circle of killings. As a result, gangsters are fiercely competing for 'glory and fame'. This is a concerning turn of events. The judiciary and the Centre must strongly advise the UP & other state governments to change their ways and uphold the rule of law.

Vijaykumar H K | Raichur

BULLY PULPIT

Sir — The use of the "bully pulpit" to lecture other countries on democracy and human rights can indeed undermine America's foreign policy goals in some cases. While the U.S. has a long history of promoting democracy and human rights around the world, it is important to recognize that other countries have their own unique cultural, historical, and political contexts, and may not always be receptive to external pressure or criticism.

Furthermore, relying too heavily on moralistic posturing and lectures can make it harder for the U.S. to build strong alliances and partnerships with other countries, particularly in regions like Asia where there is growing concern about China's rising power and influence. Instead of simply lecturing other countries, the U.S. may be better served by working to build a multilateral coalition of countries that share its values and interests, and that can

KYC concept is a cause of concern



The Know Your Customer (KYC) concept is causing concern for both the banks and the clients and a number of people are being cheated in the name of KYC. KYC means Know Your Customer and sometimes Know Your Client. Banks may refuse to open an account or halt a business relationship if the client fails to meet minimum KYC requirements. KYC check is the

mandatory process of identifying and verifying the client's identity when opening an account and periodically over time. In other words, banks must make sure that their clients are genuinely who they claim to be. GoI and RBI direction to the Banks for KYC updation of their constituents is to comply. Helping Sr Citizens is necessary for this compliance. Sadly the attitude of many functionaries at the branch level leaves much to be desired. The guidelines are tried to be followed in the letter only and not in spirit. Heckling in the name of compliance is not desirable. In India, Electronic Know Your Customer or Electronic Know Your Client or eKYC is a process wherein the customer's identity and address are verified electronically through Aadhaar authentication which is India's national biometric eID scheme.

CK BRAMANIAM | Mumbai

work together to check Chinese expansion in the region.

Of course, promoting democracy and human rights remains an important part of U.S. foreign policy, and there are certainly times when using the bully pulpit to speak out on these issues can be effective. However, it is important to be strategic in how we use this platform and to recognise that there are often competing priorities and considerations that must be taken into account when formulating foreign policy.

Amarjeet kumar | Hazaribagh

OPERATION LOTUS IN BENGAL

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi had claimed that 40 Trinamool Congress MLAs were in touch with him and will lead to fall of TMC after Lotus blooms in the state. PM stooped too low and talked openly about horse trading and toppling the elected Government. Now Amit Shah went ahead and predicted about Mamata Banerjee Government will fall. It is really disgusting that a Home Minister in a rally says "In 24 give us 35 seats. I am telling you, there will be no need for 25, even before

25, Mamata's Government will become Kaada - da - da-whoosh (an expression implying collapse). How can a Union Minister talk about a conspiracy to topple a fully elected State Government? Both Modi and Amit Shah, are always in an election mode. Previously kings used to annex the neighbouring states by indulging in wars. Now the BJP in the same way as kings want to annex opposition-ruled states. This is a dangerous trend in democracy.

PM Modi is yet to answer questions like the Pulwama and Adani controversy. PM is trying to respond to the crisis with his chosen weapon - silence. Amit Shah is a Home minister who never talks about deteriorating law and order in BJP-ruled states. The double-engine sarkar in UP became lawless and encountered Raj. But Amit Shah never uttered a single word about UP in which alleged gangsters were killed by a third party and he is maintaining stoic silence about it.

Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

An ode to personal struggles of young girl

'Rajan ki Mahi' a slim novel by BS Chauhan. It is a tale of survival, a maze of triumphs and defeat, light and darkness



DEEPAK KUMAR JHA

For someone who's spent little over four decades in Indian bureaucracy, B. S. Chauhan is not your typical public servant. As a career bureaucrat, he took up a broad range of roles in his vastly long and illustrious career. It is, however, Chauhan's engagement with Hindi literature that adds a whole new dimension to his personality. As a beguiling observer of contemporary life, he published his debut short stories collection, *Beti ko Talashti Ankhein*, (*Eyes in Search of the Daughter*) way back in 2010, which was described by a fellow writer as a visual treat akin to a "film on paper". Sure, real life can be stranger than fiction, and it is perhaps this projection of reality and spontaneous storytelling in Chauhan's work that engulfs his readers with a sense of déjà vu.



he could recently translate his novel into English himself.

Rajan ki Mahi is a coming-of-age story of a young girl called Mahi who blossoms into womanhood, and despite temporary setbacks, achieves tremendous success in her professional career. These personal achievements became possible not because of her hard work and sense of duty alone, but because she was, by sheer luck, surrounded by a small circle of well-wishers — particularly Rajan, who provided constant mentorship.

Rajan ki Mahi positively demonstrates that mentoring is as critical a component as new opportunities for the youths to be able to take advantage of demographic India. Mahi's feat, for exam-

ple, became possible not because she and her mother have been beneficiaries of state largesse. Rather, the opposite is true. At the tender age of 10, at the behest of Rajan, she was packed off to a private boarding school in Dehradun, where she was introduced to a new world that was far removed from her provincial upbringing.

There are, of course, many dramatic and dark turns of events in the book, interwoven into the main story plot, such as, being sexually abused as a child, her infatuation with her physical education teacher at school, coming to terms with her sexuality, figuring out the different kinds of love and discovering for herself the genuine bonds between adults, as well as, between an adult and a child. This slim and readable novel is an example of real life where things can happen to anyone, a familiar setting we've heard of all the time. This realism at once makes Rajan ki Mahi graphic and evocative. Chauhan's writing style is direct and simple, and he is more interested in getting the points across to the reader with the economy of

words than trying out literary stunts.

At the end of the book, Chauhan contends that the full documentation of Mahi's life is "still incomplete" as if announcing a sequel to this book is in the making. At one point, Mahi contemplates the people who truly held her hand and walked with her on the journey of life. Secularism, Mahi realises, made it possible, and people of all faiths shared her grief and happiness along the way and her life has been a "confluence and convergence of four largest religions of the world".

Rajan ki Mahi is a tale of survival, a maze of triumphs and defeat, trust and deceit, truth and falsehood, light and darkness. In this respect, the novel is an exploration of the real conditions of real people. That, in our humdrum existence, we can still find action, ingenuity and creativity more than what we'd discover in real life, provided we seek out. And the message is direct: to achieve one's dream, one has to remain focused.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer)



FIRST COLUMN

EARTH IS HAVING A FEVER!

Earth's climate is in a mess and we must take a large share of the blame for this



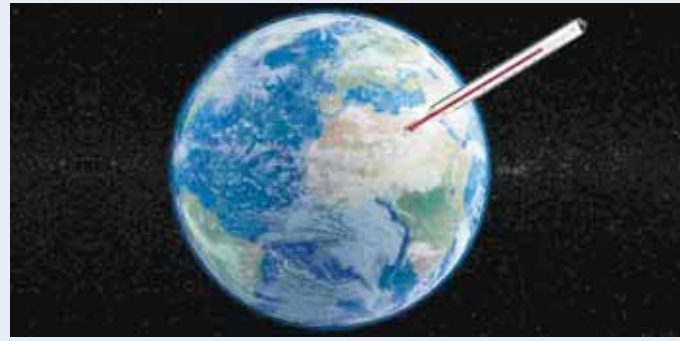
RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

A lot has been talked about Earth's energy imbalance in the last few years. However, with the climate change phenomena in the form of rising temperatures, declining arctic sea ice, extreme weather events, heat waves, floods, droughts, stronger storms and hurricanes and so on.. it can be clearly said that the earth is out of balance. In layman's language, it can be said that Earth is having a fever, but it's not clear how bad the fever is. Like a patient in a hospital, the earth's vital parameters are being closely monitored by climate scientists.

Climate change and global warming are sometimes thought of as things that will happen in the future. But scientists are finding increasing evidence that the planet is changing now — and that people must take a large share of the blame for this phenomenon. They further explain that excessive carbon emissions through industrial, and vehicular pollution, use of CFCs and plundering of forests and natural resources have depleted the ozone layer.

We all are very well aware of the fact that nature in her mother form has served man from the beginning of human life on this planet, hence one cannot imagine human existence without the support of nature. Like a caring mother, nature gives us the food that nourishes and sustains our bodies as also water that cleanses and gives us life. It also provides fresh air to supply us with oxygen, which is vital to keep bodily functions going.

Descriptions made in scriptures about the Golden Age speak of a time when the land yielded food without the peasants having to toil as today. Trees yielded abundant fruits, and crop disease and famine were unheard of. Agriculture at that time did not require heavy investment in terms of labour or inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides etc. Nor was it dependent on irrigation systems, since the soil was fertile and produced bountiful harvests, and all the water required was provided by rains, which never failed.



Even human bodies, which are made of the five elements, were perfect at that age & hence disease, deformity and debility were unknown to humans at that time. So, then what caused the man to descend from such a period of bliss to the present times of natural chaos? When man fell from divine virtues and came under the influence of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego, his relationship with himself, with others and with nature changed. Instead of revering her as an ever-bestowing mother, he started to exploit her to meet his insatiable desires. Now, when she can take no more, nature is revolting through such calamities, causing massive loss of life and property, which is resulting in great human suffering.

Years of research made by environmental scientists have proven that human consciousness plays a very vital role in shaping the environment. The point to be noted here is that human nature influences and creates external nature or the environment. The environmental pollution that we see today is actually seeded in mental pollution. This also means that if humans return to their original nature of peace, purity and love and connect to themselves, each other and nature through it, the environment would automatically get restored to its original harmony. But for this transition to take place, a great cleansing process needs to be set in motion.

Taking a cue from the world scenario, it is high time that humans endeavour to connect themselves to their original nature of purity and peace. This would help them in treating others and the environment with love and dignity and make them obedient to natural laws. However, if humans continue with their present ways, nature will take it upon itself to set things right and restore the planet's ecological balance and bring the earth back to its original, pure and bountiful state, once again ushering in the Golden Age where man and nature will exist in complete harmony. But, do we really need mother nature to turn so furious? Can't we show some affection towards our mother who has given us so much?

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

Monkey business of politicians, activists

Our political and thought leaders talk about saving the planet but can't save citizens from marauding monkeys



RAVI SHANKER KAPOOR



Our politicians love grandiloquence, especially on grand, esoteric subjects like climate change and sustainable development goals. Such subjects offer them opportunities to embark on flights of fancy and indulge in humbug. This helps them look and sound good; this also diverts people's attention from the elephant in the room—or the monkey on the balcony.

Consider the supreme irony: India, the world's largest democracy, is the fastest-growing major economy; it is able to spend Rs 13.5 lakh crore on infrastructure development; it has been able to resist Pakistan's jihadist ventures; it has the gumption to take on the much stronger China by joining hands with the US, Japan, and Australia (Quad); it is a globally recognized IT power which is also making advances in latest technologies; it was able to supply personal protective equipment and vaccines to the entire world during the worst phases of the Covid pandemic.

But it cannot handle the monkey menace.

Not in the North and South Blocks and other buildings which house the most powerful Union ministries, not in the Supreme Court and the High Court, not in or around the residences of the country's most powerful men and women, and certainly not where the lesser mortals live and work.

The monkey menace continues to grow because of three reasons. First and foremost is our political masters' penchant for claptrap, freebies, and sentimentalism. They are convinced that rant and cant, along with fantastic promises, have greater vote-catching potential than good governance. So, why bother about something as tedious as, say, administrative and police reforms when populist promises (however outlandish) can help them enter high office? Why do something substantive to make the environment better and the surroundings of common people safe from wild animals when grandstanding on nebulous and arcane notions like climate change and carbon footprints suffice?

One of the institutions that the Ministry



THE CACOPHONY ON SAVING THE EARTH, CLIMATE CHANGE, ETC., IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO THE RISE IN AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI) IN CITIES, THE TOXICITY OF RIVERS, THE GROWTH OF SLUMS AND UNAUTHORIZED COLONIES, THE ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION OF CITIES AND VILLAGES

(The writer is Resident Editor, The Pioneer, Delhi. He is the author of There Is No Such Thing As Hate Speech, Bloomsbury, 2017)

of Environment, Forest and Climate Change consulted to amend the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, was the True Conservation Alliance Foundation. In its submission, the foundation said, "India is perhaps the only country on earth where farmers are prevented and inhibited from protecting their crops, livelihoods, and property as per the stipulations of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 that has put in place procedures for crop pest management that are illogical, unsustainable, and practically impossible or near impossible for a farmer to use to protect his livelihood."

Further, "it is illegal for a farmer to even chase a wild boar, nilgai or monkey off his land, let alone shoot it, even if it is destroying his crops and livelihood or posing a threat to his life and livestock." The plight of city dwellers has been little better than that of farmers. And the powers that have done nothing to improve the situation.

Even if anything good has been done for people in the Wild Life (Protection, Amendment Act, 2022, it is yet to translate into action.

But why blame only political leaders? This brings us to the second reason: India's thought leaders. Always the first to import postmodern pathologies from glamorous Western universities, they too are more interested in saving the planet than their immediate surroundings. Carbon footprints are sexy; cleaning the Yamuna is not. And banishing monkeys from human habitats is not just unsexy but also, as we shall see, downright blasphemous in the salons where intellectuals lord over.

In short, our political and thought leaders are focused on baloney, events, and posturing. The sharper their focus, the greater the degradation of the environment.

The cacophony on saving the earth, climate change, etc., is directly proportional to the rise in the air quality index (AQI) in cities, the toxicity of rivers, the growth of slums and unauthorized colonies, and the ecological degradation of cities and villages.

The third factor that has transformed the national capital, its satellite towns, and many other parts of the country into the playgrounds of monkeys is animal rights activists; in common parlance, they are referred to as just activists. They have appointed themselves as the saviours of animals whose rights must be protected at any cost—even the human cost. Not a day passes when there is not a report of an attack by monkeys.

The Government stated in Parliament long ago that over 1,900 cases of monkey bites were in 2015—that is, almost five persons get bitten every day. Monkeys have even killed men, women, and children. But when it comes to action against monkeys, activists gang up and stall that. A few years ago, the government decided to arrange for catching monkeys and shifting to the forests identified for the purpose.

Activists torpedoed the project. They offer specious arguments; for example, they blame humans, not monkeys, as being intruders. Monkeys are coming back to their habitats, so there is nothing wrong about it—so goes the argument. This line of thinking is the product and function of the fancy postmodern, anti-humanism theories that infest Western academia, but that's another story.

It is astonishing that few, if any, in the political class have countered this pompous hoax: we, humans, have also intruded into the habitats of lions and tigers, cobras and pythons, so should these animals also be allowed to roam freely in our

cities and towns?

A news portal recently quoted a member of an official expert committee as saying, "The activists are self-proclaimed experts who don't have any scientific knowledge on the subject, but they create a ruckus. They take photos of animal catchers and file frivolous complaints of cruelty against them. So, the catchers don't come. The same kind of pressure is built on the [government] agencies which want to sterilise the monkeys, so they don't participate in the bidding process."

Unsurprisingly, the tyranny of activists continues and people suffer.

Monkeys have been terrorizing Delhi-National Capital Region for decades. In 2007 October, a monkey attacked Surinder Singh Bajwa, deputy mayor, resulting in his fall to death. In that year, the Delhi High Court, responding to a case filed by the New Friends Colony Residents Welfare Association, ordered a ban on feeding monkeys. The three municipal corporations were authorised to find the violators.

A lot of solutions have been suggested, government committees constituted, and court judgments passed—to no avail. The main reason is that those who matter, politicians and bureaucrats, have been apathetic to the plight of common people—in fact, even to their own plight. Monkeys, as we mentioned earlier, terrorise even North Block and South Block.

It is a case of systemic entropy. It manifests in various ways. We cannot tackle black swan events, so oxygen and medical facilities couldn't be provided during the devastating Delta wave of Covid-19. We cannot handle grey rhinos, so deadly smog engulfs north India with the onset of every winter.

We cannot even handle monkeys.

Securing antibiotics for future generations

Antibiotic overuse is a threat to public health. We need to act now to address this issue and prevent a potential public health crisis

Overuse of antibiotics is a major contributor to the rising threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites become resistant to the drugs that were once able to treat them. The overuse of antibiotics is a problem that affects all of us. This is a global issue that affects both developed and developing countries. AMR can have a significant impact on the public and the community in terms of increased risk of infections as well as infections that are difficult to treat with antibiotics, which can lead to increased healthcare costs for individuals, families, and communities.

As the effectiveness of antibiotics decreases, there may be limited treatment



SANGEETA SHARMA

(The writer is a professor, department of Neuropsychopharmacology, Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences (IHBAS), Delhi Government)

options available for common infections, resulting in more severe and longer-lasting illnesses, and in some cases, can even be life-threatening. AMR can result in longer hospital stays, the need for more expensive drugs, and more extensive medical procedures. Again, this can increase healthcare costs. It is important to address this issue because AMR has the potential to cause a global public health crisis. Without effective antibiotics, common infections could become deadly, and medical procedures such as surgery and chemotherapy could become much riskier. The use of antibiotics in agriculture and animal husbandry can contribute to the development of AMR in animals and the environment, which can lead to contaminated food



products and foodborne illness.

One of the factors that promote the misuse of antibiotics by the public is the lack of awareness about the issue. Many people believe that

antibiotics are a cure for all types of illnesses, including viral infections such as the flu and diarrhoea, which antibiotics are ineffective against. This leads to the unnecessary use of antibiotics, which in turn increases the risk of AMR. The dual threat of AMR and COVID-19 is a cause for concern in the healthcare community as it also led to increased use of antibiotics. Another factor is the ease of access to antibiotics and free over-the-counter availability in our country, which means that people can self-medicate without proper medical advice. This can lead to incorrect use of antibiotics, including incorrect dosages and incomplete courses, which can contribute to the development of AMR.

We need to act now to

address this issue and prevent a potential public health crisis, we need to increase awareness about the dangers of overuse of antibiotics and the importance of proper use. Healthcare providers can play a vital role in this by educating their patients about the appropriate use of antibiotics and only prescribing them when necessary. Governments can also implement policies to restrict the availability of antibiotics and promote the development of new antibiotics. Our Society, the Delhi Society for Promotion of Rational Use of Drugs (DSPRUD) has been working at the forefront for the last 25 years to promote the proper use of antibiotics among all stakeholders including doctors, nurses, pharmacists and the public.

We regularly organize campaigns to raise awareness among the public and especially school teachers and students. Among many reasons for irrational prescribing, diagnostic uncertainties are combined with the non-availability or non-utilization of diagnostic services. We have launched the first of its kinds online course for doctors and nurses on diagnostic stewardship. The aims of diagnostic stewardship are to improve patient outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and combat antimicrobial resistance by optimizing diagnostic testing, improving diagnostic accuracy, reducing the risk of false positives, improving communication and collaboration, and educating healthcare providers and patients. More

than 1600 nurses and 380 doctors attended the programme from all over India and neighbouring countries. We are now conducting the 2nd batch of this course from April 10-14, 2023.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on healthcare systems, vulnerable populations, and treatment options, leaving many of us feeling helpless. It is crucial for healthcare providers to use antibiotics judiciously and for policymakers to take action to address both the COVID-19 pandemic and the threat of antimicrobial resistance. By acting now, we can prevent a potential public health crisis in the future. Let us all do our part in using antibiotics wisely to preserve their effectiveness for future generations.

Sunak declares wife's shares

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's register of ministerial interests was published by the UK Cabinet Office on Wednesday, revealing his wife Akshata Murty's shares in a childcare agency which could benefit from a policy in last month's Budget.

The publication of the list came in the wake of a parliamentary watchdog probe opened by the UK's Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards last week to determine if the British Indian leader had been "open and frank" in his obligation under the parliamentary "Code of Conduct".

Now, a full 'List of Ministers' Interests' published online reveals Sunak's reference to his wife's interests as well under a section entitled "Relevant interests of spouse partner or close family member".

"The Prime Minister's wife is a venture capital investor. She owns a venture capital investment company, Catamaran



Ventures UK Limited, and a number of direct shareholdings," reads the register.

As a footnote, it adds: "As the Prime Minister set out in his letter to the Chair of the Liaison Committee on April 4, 2023, this includes the minority shareholding that his wife has in relation to the company, Koru Kids."

Downing Street had maintained that Sunak, 42, followed the rules of ministerial conduct at all times and had declared his wife's interests as a ministerial interest. The publication of the register comes after a gap of 11 months when the last one was

released and follows the Opposition's demands that the government come clean after the watchdog inquiry came to light.

Downing Street sources said the inquiry relates to Murty's interest in Koru Kids Ltd, which is likely to benefit from a new pilot scheme announced in the Spring Budget last month to incentivise people to become childminders.

Murty, the daughter of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy, is listed on the UK's Companies House register as a shareholder in Koru Kids — one of six childminder agencies in

England listed on the government's website with contact details.

The Opposition had flagged this fact last month and called for further explanations at a hearing of the Liaison Committee — made up of all House of Commons committee chairs.

Labour MP Catherine McKinnell had asked Sunak if he had any interest to declare in relation to the new childcare policy.

"No, all my disclosures are declared in the normal way," he responded at the time.

The parliamentary watchdog's investigation is to decide if there has been any breach of the code, which can then be put before MPs sitting on the Committee on Standards — which is responsible for deciding any sanctions.

"We are happy to assist the Commissioner to clarify how this has been transparently declared as a ministerial interest," a Downing Street spokesperson said earlier this week.

Pak govt shares plan with IMF to get more \$3 bn support: Report

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Debt-ridden Pakistan has shared its plan with the IMF to secure an additional USD 3 billion to meet the mandatory financing assurances laid by the global lender for it to release the country's stalled bailout plan, it emerged on Wednesday.

The Washington-based global lender had asked Pakistan to arrange USD 6 billion in external financing but so far only USD 3 billion were arranged after Saudi Arabia agreed to provide USD 2 billion and the UAE pledged USD 1 billion. The USD 6 billion gaps had been worked out on the premise that Pakistan's current account deficit would remain around USD 7 billion in the current fiscal year ending on June 30, The Express Tribune newspaper reported on Wednesday.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led coalition government has informed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about its plan to secure a USD 450 million worth second Resilient Institutions for Sustainable Economy (RISE-II) budget support loan, it said.

The government has also shared its plans to get USD 1 billion from Asian

Authorities urge Pak SC to reconsider its order on Punjab polls

Islamabad (PTI): Citing security and financial reasons, Pakistan's defence authorities and election officials have urged the Supreme Court to reconsider its order to hold elections in the politically crucial Punjab province on May 14.

A three-member panel of the court led by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial on April 4 in its judgment ruled that elections should be held in the largest province on time and asked the government to provide Rs 21 billion to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The government has refused to accept the ruling citing security and financial reasons as the country was facing a resurgence in militancy and a looming threat of default due to an economic meltdown.

As the last deadline to release funds expired on April 17, the judges were briefed by the intelligence chiefs while the ECP furnished its report on the non-availability of funds.

Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and other commercial banks to materialise pledges secured at the Geneva moot.

The Geneva conference held in January this year pledged several billion dollars to help Pakistan combat the challenges of climate change.

The global community of 40 countries committed a sum exceeding USD 10 billion for 2022 devastating floods causing around USD 30 billion in infrastructure and economic damages.

Official sources said that Pakistan asked the fund to give a nod to the agreement to release USD 1.1 billion out of a USD 7 billion bilateral program agreed upon in 2019, to make it easier to raise loans from the global market.

Interestingly, all bilateral and multilateral donors and countries have also refused to provide loans to Islamabad until the IMF approved its agreement.

The IMF has put forward tough conditions during talks held in February and refused to approve a staff-level agreement to release funds. The Shehbaz Sharif government has expressed anguish and frustration at the rough conditions by the fund but has been forced to toe the line due to the fear of default.

SC poised to rule on abortion pill restrictions

Washington (AP): The Supreme Court is deciding whether women will face restrictions in getting a drug used in the most common method of abortion in the United States, while a lawsuit continues. The justices are expected to issue an order on Wednesday in a fast-moving case from Texas in which abortion opponents are seeking to roll back Food and Drug Administration approval of the drug, mifepristone.

The drug first won FDA approval in 2000, and conditions on its use have been loosened in recent years, including making it available by mail in states that allow access.

The Biden administration and New York-based Danco Laboratories, the maker of the drug, want the nation's highest court to reject limits on mifepristone's use imposed by lower courts, at least as long as the legal case makes it way through the courts.

They say women who want the drug and providers who dispense it will face chaos if limits on the drug take effect. Depending on what the justices decide, that could include requiring women to take a higher dosage of the drug than the FDA says is necessary.

Alliance Defending Freedom, representing anti-abortion doctors and medical groups in a challenge to the drug, is defending the rulings in calling on the Supreme Court to let the restrictions take effect now.

The legal fight over abortion comes less than a year after conservative justices reversed Roe v. Wade and allowed more than a dozen states to effectively ban abortion outright.

Even as the abortion landscape changed dramatically in several states, abortion opponents set their sights on medication abortions, which make up more than half of all abortions in the United States.

JLR unveils major investment plans powered by 'Tata family'

PTI ■ LONDON/GAYDON

UK-based Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) luxury carmaker on Wednesday announced a major investment plan of GBP 15 billion over five years, backed up by a Gigafactory planned by Indian parent company Tata Group in Europe.

JLR Chief Executive Adrian Mardell confirmed plans for the company's plant in Halewood, north-west England, to become an all-electric production facility as he reaffirmed the firm's commitment to the Reimagine strategy, which will reposition the luxury car manufacturer as an electric-first company by 2030.

He also revealed that JLR would be the anchor customer of the Tata Group's proposed Gigafactory, an announcement related to which he said is "hopefully imminent".

"JLR will not be building a Gigafactory; that is not within our plans. Tata will be building a Gigafactory. We are clear it's going to be in Europe. A final

destination hasn't yet been chosen," Mardell told reporters at a media event in Gaydon, the company's base in the West Midlands region of England.

"The important thing is our underpinning of [battery] supply is inhouse... we are the anchor customer and absolutely have equity in making sure that the right decisions are made. Wherever it [factory] goes will be an optimised proposal for us," he said.

The company, which utilises the Tata Group's software capabilities in Bengaluru, and has a vehicle and assembly plant in Pune, reiterated its commitment to work closely on its synergies with the parent group.

"We, as an anchor customer [of the Gigafactory], will benefit from frictionless collaborations within our ecosystem in the Tata family. It means that we can explore and develop the latest advanced battery technology in-house," noted Barbara Bergmeier, Executive Director, Industrial Operations, at JLR — a wholly-owned subsidiary of

Tata Motors Limited and part of Tata Sons.

Accelerating its "electrification path" by making one of its UK plants geared towards the next-generation medium-size luxury SUV architecture fully electric and moving towards a net zero carbon target by 2039, the company said it is making strides towards its financial goals of achieving a net cash-positive position by the financial year of 2025.

JLR confirmed it would start inviting applications for client orders for the modern luxury all-electric Range Rover later this year. The first of its next-generation medium-size modern luxury SUVs will be an all-electric model from the Range Rover family, launching in 2025 and built in the UK.

As a next step within the Reimagine strategy, it was revealed that JLR would move to a "House of Brands" approach to amplify the unique character of each of its brands — Range Rover, Defender, Discovery and Jaguar.

2 TTP militants killed in Pak

Lahore (PTI): Pakistani security forces gunned down two members of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in an intelligence-based operation in the country's Punjab province, police said on Wednesday.

The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police said it received information about the presence of five TTP terrorists in the Rajanpur district of Punjab, some 475 km from Lahore, with plans to target security personnel.

"A CTD team, along with Elite Force commandos, surrounded the hideout of the terrorists and asked them to surrender. Instead, the terrorists opened fire on the raiding team which returned the fire and in the shootout, two terrorists were killed while the other three managed to flee, taking advantage of darkness," the CTD said in a statement.

Weapons and hand grenades were recovered from the crime scene. The two terrorists killed were residents of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

US trade representative seeks close economic security ties in Asia

AP ■ TOKYO

The United States hopes to deepen trade ties with Japan as it fortifies cooperation on economic security with its Asian allies and partners, the top US trade envoy said Wednesday. US Trade Representative Katherine Tai's visit to Tokyo follows a trip to the Philippine capital, Manila, that she said highlighted a newly emerging partnership among the three countries as they build both economic and defence ties.

Tai met with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi to discuss making supply chains more resilient and secure, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Tai also reviewed the status of negotiations on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, or IPEF, a new trade pact proposed by Washington, emphasising the importance of cooperation

with Japan, it said. The framework has 13 members, including the US, that account for 40 per cent of global gross domestic product: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Hayashi responded by welcoming more US engagement in the regional economy, saying Japan will proactively discuss the plan with other partners.

Japan and the United States have been promoting multilateral cooperation, most recently with the Philippines as they share common concern over China's growing influence and assertiveness in both security and economic activities.

But the US has stepped up diplomacy across the region, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken stopping over the weekend in Vietnam, which Washington sees as a key com-

ponent of its strategy for the region given the country's traditional rivalry with its much larger neighbour China.

Tai also met Wednesday with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Yasutoshi Nishimura. The trade ministry said the two discussed strengthening supply chains — an issue that gained urgency amid shortages of computer chips and other goods during the pandemic. They also discussed ways to cooperate in the protection of human rights in business, the ministry said.

Japan and the United States have set up a taskforce that aims to eliminate human rights violations in international supply chains and to ban use of materials from suppliers that subject their workers to inhumane conditions.

To highlight such efforts, Tai toured an outlet of outdoor equipment and clothing retailer Patagonia in Tokyo's popular Shibuya shopping and business district.

Fox, Dominion reach USD 87 mn settlement over election claims

Wilmington: Fox News agreed Tuesday to pay Dominion Voting Systems nearly USD 800 million to avert a trial in the voting machine company's lawsuit that would have exposed how the network promoted lies about the 2020 presidential election.

The stunning settlement emerged just as opening statements were supposed to begin, abruptly ending a case that had embarrassed Fox News over several months and raised the possibility that network founder Rupert Murdoch and stars such as Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity would have to testify publicly. "The truth matters. Lies have consequences,"



Davida Brook, left, Justin Nelson, center, and Stephen Shackelford, right, attorneys for Dominion Voting Systems, exit the New Castle County Courthouse. AP/PTI

Dominion lawyer Justin Nelson told reporters outside a Delaware courthouse after Superior Court Judge Eric Davis announced the deal. AP

First Black chief judge for NY state confirmed

Albany: New York's Senate confirmed Rowan Wilson as the state's first Black chief judge Tuesday, two months after lawmakers dealt Governor Kathy Hochul a political defeat by rejecting her initial nominee for the top court post.

Wilson has been an associate judge of the Court of Appeals, New York's highest court, since 2017. Hochul tapped him earlier this month to lead the seven-member high court and oversee the state's judicial system. The confirmation vote comes after months of conflict between Hochul and her fellow Democrats in control of the Senate over the direction of the court.

"Judge Wilson has proven himself to be one of the most thoughtful, well-written and persuasive jurors in the nation, and in the history of the Court of Appeals," state Sen Brad Hoylman-Sigal, chair of the state's Senate Judiciary Committee, said on the floor. AP

US Navy sails first drone through Mideast's Strait of Hormuz

AP ■ DUBAI

The US Navy sailed its first drone boat through the strategic Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, a crucial waterway for global energy supplies where American sailors often face tense encounters with Iranian forces.

The trip by the L3 Harris Arabian Fox MAST-13, a 13-metre (41-foot) speedboat carrying sensors and cameras, drew the attention of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, but took place without incident, said Navy spokesman Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins. Two US Coast Guard cutters, the USCGC Charles Moulthrop and USCGC John Scheuerman, accompanied the drone.

The trip saw the drone safely pass with the accompanying ships through the strait, a busy waterway between Iran and Oman which at its narrowest is just 33 kilometres (21 miles) wide.

A fifth of all oil traded passes through the strait, which connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.

"The Iranians observed the unmanned service vessel transiting the strait in accordance with international law," Hawkins told The Associated Press.

He said an Iranian drone and at least one Houdong-class fast-attack vessel operated by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard observed the MAST-13 drone.

The US Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet patrols Mideast waters, particularly the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, to keep open the waterways for international trade, as well as protect American interests and allies.

However, Iran views the Navy's presence as an affront, comparing it to its forces running patrols in the Gulf of Mexico.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

No. 128-W/260/Tender Notice/GEM/2023/B/3331541 Dated: 18.04.2023
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-IV, Northern Railway, Delhi Division for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender on prescribed form for the following work.

Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

1. Name of work with its location	1. Hiring of Vehicles i.e. Truck MUV Tractor and JCB etc. in the section of ADEN Rohtak.
2. Approx. cost of work	(1) Rs. 89,98,125.44
3. Earnest money	(1) Rs. 1,80,000.00
4. Date and Time of submission of tender and opening of tender	Bidding Start date for work no. Up to 15:00 hrs. on 18.04.2023 opening of e-Tender at 15:30 hrs. on 02.05.2023
5. Website particulars published e-tender, notice location etc complete details of tender can be seen and web site where the tender form can be downloaded	Above tender available on GEM site i.e. www.gem.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1160/23

**कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता,
उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, खटीमा**

ऊधमसिंह नगर

पत्रांक : 485/ई-निविदा/2022-23 दिनांक : 19.04.2023

ई-निविदा सूचना

मुख्य महाप्रबन्धक उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, देहरादून की ओर से अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान/उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम में पंजीकृत फर्म/उपरोक्त से ई-निविदा (दू. बिड सिस्टम) आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा से संबंधित सभी सूचना www.uktenders.gov.in पर दिनांक 20.04.2023 की सायं 05:00 बजे से उपलब्ध होगी।

क्रमांक	विकास खण्ड	कार्य का नाम
1	खटीमा	खटीमा नगरीय पेयजल योजना के अन्तर्गत वार्ड नं०-7 एवं 8 (अमरा) में पेयजल योजना के निर्माण हेतु नलकूप छिद्रण, ऊर्ध्वजलाशय निर्माण, पाइप लाईन एवं त्रसम्बन्धी कार्य।

नोट- उपरोक्त निविदा सूचना में यदि कोई संशोधन किया जाता है तो, संशोधित सूचना www.uktenders.gov.in पर अपलोड की जायेगी, संशोधित सूचना का प्रकाशन समाचार पत्र में नहीं किया जायेगा। अधिशासी अभियन्ता

1 killed, 5 hurt as garage collapses in NYC

New York (AP): A parking garage collapsed Tuesday in lower Manhattan's Financial District, killing one worker, injuring five and crushing cars as concrete floors fell on top of each other like a stack of pancakes, officials said.

Vehicles tumbled into what looked like a frozen stream of sedans and SUVs. People nearby described a fearsome rumbling, followed by screams. "It felt like an earthquake," said Liam Gaeta, a student at nearby Pace University.

"Like the earth opened up inside, like that's how violent it was," said another student, Jadess Speller, who initially thought a bomb had gone off. Other students described seeing cars falling in the building.

One vehicle landed on its end in the garage entrance, a photo posted by Mayor Eric Adams' office showed.

Authorities believed they had accounted for everyone inside the building, but searches continued Tuesday evening to make sure no one was in any of the squashed cars. Fire Department Chief of



Cars are seen piled on top of each other at the scene of a partial collapse of a parking garage in the Financial District of New York, Tuesday in New York. AP/PTI

Operations John Esposito said. One garage employee was rescued via a neighbouring roof after being trapped on an upper floor, he said.

"He was conscious and alert and moving around, calling us. He just couldn't get down," Esposito said. Four of the injured were hospitalised and in stable condition, and the fifth refused medical attention, he said. The garage caved

in around 4 pm, a few blocks from City Hall and the Brooklyn Bridge, and about half a mile (0.8 km) from the New York Stock Exchange. Pace evacuated an adjacent dorm and classroom building, and cancelled all evening classes as it assessed the buildings' safety. School officials sent the displaced students to a student centre while working out other accommodations.

British-Sikh woman jailed for murder freed after 16 years

PTI ■ LONDON

An 86-year-old British-Sikh woman imprisoned for the murder of her daughter-in-law in a so-called "honour killing" 25 years ago has been released from jail after 16 years. Bachan Kaur Athwal was found guilty of ordering the murder of her 27-year-old daughter-in-law, Surjit Kaur Athwal, after being lured to India in 1998.

According to The Sun newspaper, it has only emerged this week that she was freed in August last year.

She was ordered to serve a minimum of 20 years in prison by Judge Giles Forrester but the Parole Board recommended that Athwal, said to have been in poor health, should be released on licence four years earlier, the newspaper said.

Bachan Kaur Athwal was jailed alongside her son Sukhdave in 2007 for organising the murder.

The Parole Board reportedly rejected concerns raised by the UK Ministry of Justice after she allegedly slapped her daughter during a prison visit and assaulted a member of staff in May last year.

In Athwal's appeal, the prison offender manager said that before the

sonset of dementia, she had not been aggressive, the newspaper reported.

Surjit Kaur Athwal had failed to return to her home in Hayes, west London, after a trip to a family wedding in India.

Athwal accompanied her daughter-in-law on the trip in December 1998.

The Old Bailey court in London was told during the trial how Surjit was forced to marry Sukhdave at 16.

She was bullied by the family during her marriage and later murdered due to fears that she was planning on divorcing her husband.

Jailing the mother and son in 2007, Judge Forrester said the murder was "unspeakable".

"This was a heinous crime characterised by great wickedness," he said. "There was no motive worthy of the name. You did it because you thought she had brought shame on your family."

Surjit's sister went on to set up True Honour, a charity to campaign against the issue of honour killings — when family members order the killing of someone from their own family over a perception of them having harmed the family's honour.

UK: Russian hackers aim to attack key infrastructure

AP ■ LONDON

Russian hackers are seeking to "disrupt or destroy" Britain's critical infrastructure and not enough is being done to stop them, UK government officials asserted on Wednesday.

Britain's National Cyber Security Centre issued an official threat notice to operators of Britain's electricity, water and other critical systems, telling them to boost their defences.

"I don't think we are yet doing enough to protect our infrastructure from the cyber threats emerging from Russia-aligning groups," the centre's chief, Lindy Cameron, said.

Cabinet Minister Oliver Dowden said the threat comes from hackers sympathetic to Russia though not necessarily directed by the Russian state. He described them as the cyber equivalent of the Wagner Group, the private Russian company with mercenaries fighting in Ukraine.



He said that while the alleged hackers currently lack the capacity to do widespread damage to UK systems, the threat is growing.

"Disclosing this threat is not something we do lightly," but it's necessary for "companies to understand the current risk they face, and take action to defend themselves and the country," Dowden said

at a cybersecurity conference in Belfast.

"These are the companies in charge of keeping our country running. Of keeping the lights on," he said. "Our shared prosperity depends on them taking their own security seriously."

The National Cyber Security Centre, a branch of UK cyber intelligence agency GCHQ, said cyber attackers could begin to broaden their focus from Ukraine to the wider West as the war drags on.

Cameron also sounded a warning about the "dramatic rise of China as a technology superpower."

"What I'm saying about China is that China is, as we say in the integrated review, an epoch-defining threat," she told British broadcaster Sky News. "The scale and pace of their ambition and technology is something that all of the people here at the conference need to take seriously and think about how it is that we build security into our future technology to keep our people safe."

Russian foreign min visits Venezuela

AP ■ CARACAS

the pressures of the United States Nicolás Maduro, said their coun-

Russia and Venezuela reviewed some of their hundreds of bilateral agreements covering the financial, energy, agricultural and other sectors during discussions between their top diplomats Tuesday in the South American country.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Venezuelan counterpart Yván Gil held a joint press conference in Caracas hours after the former arrived in the country in the second stop of a tour of four Latin American nations. Both men vowed continued support for each other's country and condemned the economic sanctions Washington has imposed on them.

"We fully support the position of our Venezuelan friends," Lavrov said. "It is their country ... and we are going to support it in any way so that the Venezuelan economy becomes an independent economy from



Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov talks during a joint press conference with Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yvan Gil, at the Foreign Ministry in Caracas, Venezuela on Tuesday.

and other western actors."

Lavrov's remarks were translated from Russian to Spanish by a government-provided translator.

Officials reviewed some of the hundreds of agreements between both countries covering the financial, energy, agricultural and other sectors. Gil and Lavrov, who was expected to also meet with Venezuelan President

to circumvent crippling economic sanctions meant to oust Maduro. A global drop in oil prices last decade and government mismanagement pushed Venezuela into the political, social and economic crisis that has marked the entirety of Maduro's presidency. The crisis fueled an opposition movement backed by the US government, which under the Trump administration made forcing Maduro out one of its top foreign policy priorities and used economic sanctions on Venezuela's state-owned energy company to keep the country's oil — its most valuable resource — out of some Western markets.

The Biden administration has lifted some sanctions and has also signaled it is prepared to provide sanctions relief in exchange for concrete steps by Maduro, such as promising not to ban whatever candidate emerges from opposition primaries later this year.

"We have not perceived an

12 arrested for Beijing hospital fire

PTI ■ BEIJING

The death toll from a major fire at a hospital building in the Chinese capital rose to 29, including 26 patients, officials said here on Wednesday, as 12 people have been detained including the medical facility's head and her deputy.

The fire which broke out at the Beijing Changfeng Hospital on Tuesday was extinguished within an hour, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

On Tuesday, the official media reported that 21 people were killed in the incident.

The death toll later rose to 29, Deputy Director of the Beijing Municipal Health Commission Li Ang told the media here.

Court rejects Kremlin critic's appeal against prison term

Tallinn (Estonia):

A Moscow court on Wednesday dismissed a prominent Russian opposition figure's appeal of his 8 1/2-year prison sentence for criticism of Russia's actions in Ukraine. Ilya Yashin was convicted in December of spreading false information about the military, which was made a criminal offence after Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine. The charges against him stemmed from a series of online posts discussing atrocities in Bucha, a town outside Ukraine's capital where dead civilians were found in the streets and a mass grave after Russian troops withdrew.

During his trial last year, Yashin argued that a livestreamed YouTube video in which he talked about Ukrainians being killed in Bucha cited official Russian sources along with Ukrainian statements

to give his audience an objective view.

"I will not renounce the truth behind bars," he said, emphasising that he considered it his duty to tell the truth.

Yashin, one of the few Kremlin critics to have stayed in Russia after Putin launched the military action in Ukraine, participated by video link in Wednesday's Moscow City Court hearing on his ultimately unsuccessful appeal.

International human rights groups have denounced the sentence as a mockery of justice and called for Yashin's immediate release. Before his sentencing, Yashin addressed Putin directly, urging him to immediately stop this madness, recognise that the policy on Ukraine was wrong, pull back troops from its territory and switch to a settlement of the conflict.

'US-made Patriot guided missile systems arrive in Ukraine'

Kyiv: Ukraine's defense minister said Wednesday his country has received US-made Patriot surface-to-air guided missile systems it has long craved and which Kyiv hopes will help shield it from Russian strikes during the war.

"Today, our beautiful Ukrainian sky becomes more secure because Patriot air defense systems have arrived in Ukraine," Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said in a tweet.

Ukrainian officials have previously said the arrival of Patriot systems, which Washington agreed to send last October, would be a major boost and a milestone in the war against Moscow's full-scale invasion.

The Patriot can target aircraft, cruise missiles and shorter-range ballistic missiles.



Russia has used that weaponry to bombard Ukraine, including residential areas and civilian infrastructure, especially the power supply over the winter.

Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said late Tuesday that delivery of the system would be a landmark event, allowing Ukrainians to knock out Russian targets at a greater distance.

Reznikov thanked the peo-

ple of the United States, Germany and the Netherlands, without saying how many systems had been delivered nor when.

Germany's federal government website on Tuesday listed a Patriot system as among the military items delivered within the past week to Ukraine, and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock confirmed that to lawmakers in Berlin on Wednesday. AP

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising commemorated on 80th anniversary

Warsaw (AP): Presidents and Holocaust survivors and their descendants are commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on Wednesday with a poignant sense that the responsibility for carrying on the memory of the Holocaust is passing from the witnesses to younger generations.

The anniversary honours the hundreds of young Jews who took up arms in Warsaw in 1943 against the overwhelming might of the Nazi German army.

There are no surviving fighters still alive. Marek Edelman, the last surviving commander, died in 2009. He remained in Poland and helped keep alive the memory of the revolt in his homeland.

Simcha Rotem, a fighter who smuggled others out of the burning ghetto through sewage tunnels, died in 2018 in Israel, where he settled.



The small number of surviving witnesses today were mostly children at the time of the revolt.

Official commemorations will be attended by presidents Isaac Herzog of Israel, Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany and Andrzej Duda of Poland. The main event will take place in front of the Memorial to the Ghetto Heroes on the hallowed ground where the fighting erupted, with a visit later to Warsaw's Nozyk synagogue and

an evening concert by the Polish-Israeli Youth Symphony Orchestra.

The three leaders represent nations forever shaped by World War II. Israel was founded after the war to give Jews a home where they could finally be safe after centuries of persecution in Europe.

Germany, which inflicted death and destruction across the vast areas that it occupied, is the perpetrator nation that for decades has acknowledged its

crimes and expressed remorse.

And Poland, where Europe's largest prewar Jewish population lived and which was invaded and subjected to mass death and destruction, carries out its responsibility of preserving sites like the ghetto and the Auschwitz death camp, while also honouring the massive losses inflicted on the entire nation.

Some 6 million Polish citizens were killed during the war, about 3 million of them Jews and the others mostly Christian Poles.

Avi Valevski, a professor of psychiatry from Israel whose father, Ryszard Walewski, a doctor who led a group of some 150 warriors in the revolt, visited Warsaw with his wife, describing it as "more than an emotional moment." Valevski, 72, is working to carry on a history that his father rarely spoke to him about but also carries an emotional burden.

'North Korea's 1st spy satellite is ready for launch'

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country has built its first-ever military spy satellite and that he planned to launch it on an undisclosed date, state media reported Wednesday.

Previous missile and rocket tests have demonstrated that North Korea can send satellites into space, but many experts question whether it has cameras sophisticated enough to use for spying from a satellite because only low-resolution images were released after past test launches.

During his visit to the country's aerospace agency Tuesday, Kim said that having an operational military reconnaissance satellite is crucial for North Korea to effectively

ly use its nuclear-capable missiles.

Kim cited what he described as serious security threats posed by "the most hostile rhetoric and explicit action" by the United States and South Korea this year, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. He likely hopes to pressure his rivals on issues including joint military drills and international economic sanctions on North Korea.

Kim said "the military reconnaissance satellite No 1" had already been built and ordered officials to speed up preparations for its launch. He said North Korea must launch several satellites to establish an intelligence-gathering capability, KCNA said. AP

China offers to facilitate Israel-Palestinian peace talks

Beijing (AP): China's foreign minister told his Israeli and Palestinian counterparts that his country is ready to help facilitate peace talks between the two sides, in its latest effort at mediation in the region. In separate phone calls to the two officials on Monday, Qin Gang expressed China's concern over intensifying tensions between Israel and Palestinians and its support for a resumption of peace talks, the Foreign Ministry said in statements issued late Monday.

Last month, Saudi Arabia and Iran reached a deal in China to restore diplomatic ties that were cut off in 2016. It was a dramatic moment of diplomacy for China that Beijing touted as evidence of its ability to be a diplomatic player in the Middle East. Qin stressed in his talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen that Saudi Arabia and Iran have set a good example of overcoming differences through dialogue, a statement about that phone call said. He told Cohen that Beijing encourages Israel and the Palestinians to show political courage and take steps to resume peace talks.

'Urgent action needed for deteriorating air quality in Asian nations'

Kathmandu: Deteriorating air quality and hazardous levels of particulate matter (PM) in several South Asian countries, including India and Nepal, poses a severe risk to human health and must be addressed urgently, a Kathmandu-based intergovernmental knowledge centre warned on Wednesday.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is a knowledge and learning centre working on behalf of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya region and its eight regional member countries — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

culprit for the rising number of patients suffering from respiratory illness, the report said.

Air pollution, known to cause various respiratory illnesses, combined with coronavirus, which primarily affects the lungs, could lead to an increase in hospitalisations and even deaths among the people infected with COVID-19, the statement said, quoting experts.

ICIMOD Senior Air Quality Specialist, Dr Bhupesh Adhikary, said that worldwide, air pollution is responsible for more deaths annually than COVID-19 to date.

"Despite this catastrophic death toll, we aren't tackling this invisible killer with anything like the same energy," Dr Adhikary was quoted as saying in the report. He asserted that it is time to put efforts into improving air quality on a war footing. "The good news is that we know what is causing air pollution in our region and how to make rapid progress in reducing our exposure to pollutants," Dr Adhikary said. PTI

SBFC FINANCE LIMITED
Unit No. 103, First Floor C & B Square, Sangam Complex, 127, Andheri Kurla Road, Village Chakala, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400059 | Telephone: +91 22 67875300 | Fax: +91 22 67875334 | www.sbfc.com | Corporate Identity Number: U67190MH2008PTC178270

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform & notify the Public about the relocation of Rohini Delhi branch of SBFC Finance Ltd. effective from 20.07.2023

From: SBFC Finance Limited
D-14/148 Ayodhya Chowk nearby Gagan Pathology Centre, Rohini, sector - 3, Delhi - 110084. Phone: 011-46539241

To: SBFC Finance Limited
Property No. 1/10 & 1/12, 1st Floor, Lalita Park, Main Vikas Road, Near Laxmi Nagar Metro Station, Opp. Pillar No. 27, Delhi 110092 Ph: 7208856923

For more details, please contact:-
Ph: 8667004673 / 8447983067

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Satender who is owner of the Property bearing No. SH-032, area measuring 248.75 Sq. Mtr in Sector- 63A, situated in the New Okhla Industrial Development area, District Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, vide Mutation Letter dated 15-07-2021, after demise of his father i.e Mr. Mahesh which was the Owner of said property vide Lease deed dated 27-07-2017 and same to be finance & mortgage by Aditya Bala Housing Finance Ltd. If any person having any type of claim/right/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, with his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

Lucem Legal LLP
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2, Noida, UP - 201301. Contact # 0120-4269379

कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबंधक, निर्माण इकाई, उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल संसाधन विकास एवं निर्माण निगम
लोहाघाट (हमपाव) फोन/फैक्स नम्बर, - 05965-297687 E-mail- pmofficechempawal@gmail.com

पत्रांक - 581/निविदा/72 दिनांक 15.04.2023

अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना

आश्रय उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम की ओर से अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा निम्न तालिकासुसार कार्य की मुहरबंद निविदा दिनांक 28.04.2023 को अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबंधक, निर्माण इकाई, उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम, डिग्री कॉलेज रोड, लोहाघाट में आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 27.04.2023 अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबंधक, निर्माण इकाई, उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम, डिग्री कॉलेज रोड, लोहाघाट से प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं। प्राप्त निविदायें दिनांक 28.04.2023 को अपराह्न 3:30 बजे उपस्थित ठेकेदारों अथवा उनके द्वारा नामित प्रतिनिधियों के समक्ष कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबंधक, निर्माण इकाई, उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम, डिग्री कॉलेज रोड, लोहाघाट में खोली जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्रों का विक्रय उक्त कार्यालय में कार्यालय समय में ही किया जायेगा। किसी एक अथवा समस्त निविदा को बिना कारण बताये निरस्त करने का पूर्ण अधिकार अधोहस्ताक्षरी के पास सुरक्षित रहेगा।

क्र. सं.	कार्य का नाम	धरोहर घनराशि (रु. में)	निविदा का मूल्य + G.S.T. @ 18% (रु. में)	निविदा की वैधता	कार्य पूर्ण की अवधि	ठेकेदार की विभाग में बचन निर्माण की श्रेणी
1	जिला शिक्षा एवं प्रशिक्षण संस्थान, लोहाघाट में प्रशासनिक भवन के अवशेष निर्माण कार्य	50000.00	2360/-	30 दिन	03 माह	"डी" एवं उच्चतर

नोट :- नियम एवं शर्तें कार्यालय नोटिस बोर्ड से देखी जा सकती है। परियोजना प्रबंधक

उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उद्योग)
कार्यालय अधीन अभियान विद्युत वितरण मण्डल कर्मप्रयाग
E-Mail: edckarnprayag@gmail.com

ई-निविदा सूचना

विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, कर्मप्रयाग, उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड, के अर्न्तगत ई-निविदा संख्या 01/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24, 02/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24 एवं 03/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24, आमंत्रित की जाती है। उपरोक्त निविदाओं की अधिक जानकारी 'शुद्धि पत्र हेतु' www.uktenders.gov.in पर देखें।

'विद्युत बिलों के 24x7 ऑनलाइन भुगतान हेतु' www.upcl.org पर जायें।

पत्रांक: 340/विद्युतमण्डल/उपकालि दिनांक: 19/04/2023 अधीक्षण अभियन्ता 'राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचायें' टोल फ्री नं 1800-419-0405

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

The Dy. Chief Engineer/TM/CLine, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E-tender under One Packet System for the under noted work:-

- Name of work and location : POH (Periodic Overhaul) of WST-8083 & 8088 1. machines at MR Track Machine Workshop including mechanical, hydraulic, pneumatic, electrical, chain repair and other ancillary works.
- Completion period of the work : 180 days
- Approx. cost of work : Rs. 51,42,463.32
- Earnest Money amount (to be deposited Online) : Rs. 1,02,900.00
- Cost of Tender Document (to be deposited Online) : Rs. Nil

Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender : Tender document remain available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 20.04.2023 up to 15:00 hrs. on 11.05.2023. Tender Bids may be uploaded from 27.04.2023 & up to 15:00 hrs. on 11.05.2023 on IREPS website. The tender will be opened soon after 15:00 hrs. on 11.05.2023.

Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document : The detailed tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in. Above tender document will be available for online submission of offer on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 27.04.2023 to 11.05.2023. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.

No.: 1-W/DyCETM-CL-01-WST-8083-23-24 Dated: 19.04.2023 1162/2023
Serving Customers with a Smile

NORTHERN RAILWAY (Without Prejudice)
Office of the Dy.CSTE/C/PS/NDLS
DRM's office, New Delhi.
Dated: 17.04.2023

No.287-Sig/C/TJK/CCTV/2
To,
M/s. Valiant View Pvt.Ltd,
253, 4th floor, Shahpur Jat,
Sifir, New Delhi-110049,
Phone-01145558091.

Ref:- Quotation No. 287-Sig/C/TJK/CCTV/2.

- "7 days Notice" is being issued to the firm M/s. Valiant View Pvt. Ltd, 253, 4th floor, Shahpur Jat, Sifir, New Delhi-110049 against Quotation No. 287-Sig/C/TJK/CCTV/2 for the work of AMC of CCTV in the campus of CAO/C office, Kashmir Gate, Northern Railway.
- The firm is hereby instructed to report to DyCSTE/C/PS office immediately for the start the work other wise ex-parte decision shall be taken as Standard General Conditions of Contract.

Kindly acknowledge receipt.

AESTE/C/PS/New Delhi.
For & on behalf of the President of India
1163/2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Sensex, Nifty fall for 3rd day on selling in IT, banking shares

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined for a third day on Wednesday dragged by selling in IT and select banking shares amid weak global trends and FII outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 159.21 points or 0.27 per cent at 59,567.80 as 21 of its components ended in the red. During the day, the index fell 274.29 points or 0.45 per cent to 59,452.72.

The broader Nifty dipped 41.40 points or 0.23 per cent to settle at 17,618.75 with 13 of its shares closing with losses.

Analysts said stock markets are in a consolidation phase after a record nine-day winning run to April 13 which saw benchmark Nifty soaring by 5.7 per cent and Sensex by 4.73 per cent.

Sensex and Nifty have corrected by around 1.4 per cent in the three straight sessions of losses to Wednesday following poor commentary by major IT companies.

Among the Sensex firms, HCL Technologies fell the most by 2.4 per cent. Infosys (2.28 per cent), Wipro (1.8 per cent), NTPC (1.71 per cent), Asian Paints (1.7 per cent), Tata Consultancy Services (1.36 per cent), Tech Mahindra (1.03 per cent) and SBI (1 per cent) were among the major laggards.

Axis Bank was the lead Sensex gainer, rising by 1.05 per cent. Bharti Airtel, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finance and Reliance Industries also advanced.

"The dark clouds of weak Q4 numbers are haunting the domestic market leading to a consecutive third fall in the week. IT



stocks continued their selling spree ahead of the release of earnings from other tech majors.

"Tepid cues from the global peers are also creating havoc as the market prices in the possibility of another rate hike by the Fed," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said that markets settled marginally lower in a dull trading session, in continuation to the prevailing consolidation phase.

In the broader market, the BSE small-cap gauge gained 0.12 per cent, while mid-cap index fell marginally by 0.18 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, IT fell by 1.68 per cent, and tech declined by 1.48 per cent, while power (1.13 per cent), utilities (0.97

per cent), capital goods (0.30 per cent) and services (0.29 per cent) also dropped.

Metal, energy, healthcare, oil & gas and realty were among the winners. Global stock markets mostly declined as investors took a wait-and-see stance ahead of earnings reports and possible moves by central banks.

In Asian markets, Japan, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower, while Seoul ended in the green. Equity markets in Europe were trading mostly in negative territory. The US markets had ended mostly lower on Tuesday.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 810.60 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude fell 2.23 per cent to USD 82.88 per barrel.

Services exports likely to reach \$400 bn during 2023-24: SEPC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Boyed by a significant jump in exports during 2022-23, Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) on Wednesday said the healthy growth trend will continue and shipments are expected to reach up to USD 400 billion this fiscal.

During 2022-23, the country's services exports rose by 42 per cent to USD 322.72 billion from USD 254 billion in 2021-22, according to provisional data from the commerce ministry.

"The services sector had targeted USD 300 billion but accomplished USD 322 billion. Subject to the final data we might touch USD 350 billion in 2022-23 and based on the current trend and the continuing growth our estimate is around USD 375 billion to USD 400 billion for 2023-24," SEPC Chairman Sunil H Talati told PTI.

Sectors that contributed to the services exports growth during the last fiscal include travel, transport, medical, and hospitality, he said.

He added that the council has been working tirelessly in collaboration with the government to catapult services sector growth with business delegations, B2B meets, and market specific initiatives.

"Export of IT and IT



enabled services is going strong and is highly likely to maintain the growth momentum. Travel sector is catching up soon. The post-pandemic economic recovery has created increasing demand for goods and services from foreign markets, the stabilization of freight charges and the normalization of supply chains are positive developments for the transport sector," he said.

The business services such as engineering, architecture, legal and accounting services as well as research and management consulting services stand to benefit leveraging the opportunities presented by the government initiatives.

He also said that as for the key export destinations, India's service exports have historically been concentrated in North America and Europe, but there

is also significant potential for growth in emerging markets such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

"Diversification of export destinations can help to reduce dependence on traditional markets and open up new opportunities for service exports," the chairman said.

Talati said that certain incentives are necessary to further push the growth rates.

"For example, Gaming, entertainment can perform very well with the right aid by the government. This can help them be price and delivery competitive and tap into international markets. So the government can think of providing incentives for growth. For various services silos in the services sector. These key steps can help exports reach a wider global audience," he added.



RBI grants AU Small Finance Bank to deal in foreign exchange

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

AU Small Finance Bank on Wednesday said it has received permission from Reserve Bank of India to deal in foreign exchange.

Reserve Bank of India vide its letter dated April 19, 2023 has granted Licence to act as Authorized Dealer Category-I (AD-I) under section 10 of FEMA, 1999 to deal in foreign exchange, AU Small Finance Bank said in a regulatory filing. The permission is subject to compliance of applicable regulations, it said.

Recently, RBI approved re-appointment of Sanjay Agarwal as managing director and CEO of AU Small Finance Bank for a period of three years.

The re-appointment is valid with effect from April 19 till April 18, 2026, AU Small Finance Bank said in a statement. Besides, it said the regulator has also cleared the re-appointment of Uttam Tibrewal as the whole-time director for a period of three years.



Road Ministry to construct 12,500 km of highways in FY24: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has put plans in place to maintain the pace of highway development and construct 12,500 km of highways in the current financial year, a senior official on Wednesday said.

Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary, MoRTH, said Rs 10,000 crore is planned to be raised through Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) mode in FY 2023-24.

"MoRTH has put plans in place to maintain the pace of highway development, with a strong pipeline of projects across the country.

"For 2023-24, MoRTH has taken up targets to award 12,000 km and construct 12,500 km of highways in the country," she told PTI.

The road transport and highways ministry is yet to declare data on the construction and award of highway projects for 2022-23.

The ministry has constructed 10,237 kilometres in 2019-20, 13,327 kilometres in 2020-21 and 10,457 kilometres in 2021-22.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corpo-

ration Ltd (NHIDCL) are primarily responsible for the construction of national highways and expressways in India.

Asked whether the government would raise more money via the InvIT route, Upadhyaya said MoRTH has leveraged various innovative ways of funding its infrastructure projects by involving the private sector in highway construction.

"Till February 28, 2023, Rs 10,200 crore has been raised through InvIT in two phases, for a total length of 635 km, while InvIT III is planned to be awarded in April 2023 for a total of Rs 10,000 crore.

"Additionally, Rs 10,000 crore is planned to be raised through InvIT mode in FY 2023-24," she said.

Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is an instrument on the pattern of mutual funds, designed to pool money from investors and invest in assets that will provide cash flows over a period of time.

Currently, MoRTH monetises its assets under three different modes viz toll-operate-transfer (TOT) model, InvIT and project-based financing, in order to provide all categories of investors an opportunity to invest in assets pertaining to highways and associated infrastructure.

Windfall tax back on oil produced in India; levy on diesel export cut to zero

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has brought back the windfall profit tax on domestically produced crude oil after international prices firmed up while the levy on export of diesel has been cut to nil, according to an official order.

The levy on crude oil produced by companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is now Rs 6,400 per tonne with effect from Wednesday, the order dated April 18 said.

At the last revision on April 4, windfall tax on domestically produced crude oil was cut to nil as international oil prices dipped below USD 75 per barrel.

However, oil prices have shot up this month following a surprise cut in production announced by the producers' cartel OPEC and its allies like



Russia.

Alongside, the government cut the tax on the export of diesel to nil from Rs 0.50 per litre. The same on overseas shipments of ATF remains at nil.

Commenting on the move, Prashant Vasisht, vice president and co-group Head - corporate ratings, ICRA Ltd, said, "There was a moderation in crude oil prices in March 2023; hence, the special additional excise duty (SAED) was reduced to nil on April 04, 2023."

"However, the crude oil prices jumped by 9 per cent to around USD 85 per barrel post OPEC+ announcement of additional production cuts of 1.16 million barrels per day on April 02, 2023."

Accordingly, the SAED on crude production has been increased from nil to Rs 6,400 per tonne (USD 10.6 per barrel).

ICRA expects government collections from the same to be around Rs 15,000 crore for FY24 (April 2023 to March 2024).

The tax rates are reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks.

The government's collection from the SAED, imposed on the production of crude oil and the export of petroleum products from July 1, 2022, is estimated at around Rs 40,000 crore in FY2023.

Fintech platform Tide aims to on-board 10L SMEs by Dec '24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

London-based fintech platform Tide is planning to get 10 lakh small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on-board in India by December, 2024.

Tide, the UK's leading SME-focused business financial platform, has onboarded 50,000 SMEs since its entry in India in December 2022, a company statement said.

With the quick platform adoption and the market potential in India, Tide is confident that 10 lakh SMEs will join its platform and benefit from its digital business banking suite by the end of the year 2024.

Tide also crossed 2.25 lakh app downloads on Google Play Store in March, since its launch, the statement added.

With a compliance-first approach to its India market strategy, Tide has onboarded and issued RuPay Cards to all the member SMEs (cus-



tomers) on its platform only after a video Know Your Customer (v-KYC), it stated.

The Reserve Bank of India mandated compliances will aid in preventing unauthorized users from accessing the platform and prevent bad actors from taking advantage of the platform.

The process in turn supports the inclusion of SMEs in the formal economy, deepens the penetration of Digital India initiatives, and boosts credit access for the underserved segments.

Tide has also issued 50,000 fully KYC RuPay cards for its members, it stated.

The company's current member-base in India reveals Gen Z and millennials display a strong entrepreneurial drive with 90 per cent members in the sub-40 age group, it stated.

Early adoption of Tide's business banking services is being seen across Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Rajasthan.



Tesla cuts US prices again ahead of 1Q earnings release

AP ■ DETROIT

Tesla dropped the starting prices for its two top-selling models overnight, the company's fourth price cut in the US this year.

The company lopped USD 3,000, or about 6 per cent, off the starting prices for all three versions of the Model Y small SUV, Tesla's top-seller. It also cut USD 2,000, or about 5 per cent, from the starting price of a version of the Model 3 small sedan.

Tesla could have cut the Model 3 prices to make more cars loaded with options eligible for the U.S. Government's USD 7,500 electric vehicle tax credit. With options, some Model 3s would exceed the government's USD 55,000 price limit for cars to be eligible for the credit.

But some industry analysts say demand may be slowing for the company's vehicles as more competition enters the market. Others say Tesla is using its high profit margins to take market share from competitors.

A message was left Wednesday morning seeking comment from Austin, Texas-based Tesla.

The cuts follow price drops earlier this week overseas, with analysts reporting cuts in Europe, Israel and Singapore.

They come just ahead of Tesla's first-quarter earnings release scheduled for after the closing bell on Wednesday.

Mutual funds' SIP collection rises 25% to ₹1.56 lakh crore in FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Inflows in the mutual fund industry through systematic investment plans or SIPs reached Rs 1.56 lakh crore in 2022-23, up 25 per cent from the preceding fiscal, suggesting retail investors' trust in the route despite volatility in the markets.

In comparison, an inflow of Rs 1.24 lakh crore through the route was registered in 2021-22 and Rs 96,080 crore in 2020-2021, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

Moreover, mutual fund SIP contribution has seen over three-fold rise during the last seven years. It was at Rs 43,921 crore during 2016-2017.

Additionally, SIP book has also grown consistently from Rs 12,328 crore in March 2022 to an all-time high of Rs 14,276 crore in March 2023, indicating a growth of 16 per cent.

During the financial year, SIP inflows averaged nearly Rs 13,000 crore flows per month, helping investors to stay in the stock market and benefit from rupee cost averaging. The steady inflow suggests resilience in domestic market which have been a strong counterbalance to FPIs (Foreign Portfolio Investors) selling.

Investors continue to believe in the long-term growth story and continue to add investments through SIPs and lump sum, Manish Mehta, National Head and Sales, Marketing and Digital Business, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company, said.

"SIP inflows for FY23 stood at Rs 1.56 lakh crore, a growth of 25.2 per cent on a year-on-year basis, with the highest-ever inflow in March at Rs 14,276 crore. With benchmark indices remaining volatile and flat for the year, investors choose mutu-



al funds as the preferred route for investments, reposing faith in the Indian stock market," Gopal Kavalireddi, Head of Research at Fyers, said.

The inflow came despite the volatility in the stock markets primarily on account of global geopolitical reasons and inflation.

Further, SIPs' assets under management rose 18 per cent to Rs 6.83 lakh crore at the end of March this year from Rs 5.76 lakh crore in March-end 2022.

Industry experts believe that a staggered investment approach (via SIP or STP) in equity markets seems the ultimate solution to ride the wave of uncertainty as corrections would bring down the average cost of total investments or in case the bull run continues, investors would not lose out on opportunity cost.

SIP is an investment methodology offered by mutual funds wherein an individual saver can invest a fixed amount in a chosen scheme periodically at fixed intervals — say once a month, instead of making a lump sum investment. The SIP instalment amount can be as small as Rs 500 per month.

According to Amfi, SIPs have been gaining popularity among Indian savers, as it helps in rupee cost averaging and investing in a disciplined manner without worrying about market volatility or timing the market.

IndusInd inks \$100 mn pact with JBIC to help Indian cos buy Japanese construction equipment

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Private sector lender IndusInd Bank on Wednesday said it has entered into a USD 100 million long-term loan agreement with JBIC to facilitate Indian entities interested in buying Japanese construction equipment.

The finance is being done through a special agreement signed with Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) by the lender's branch in the Gift City, as per an official statement.

The lender has entered into a USD 100 million long-term loan agreement with JBIC and the funds thus raised will be used by IndusInd Bank to foster the growth of Japanese construction equipment companies in India through need-based credit facilities, it said.

Japan's Mizuho Bank, Shizuoka Bank, Singapore, and Jyo Bank of Japan will also cofinance in this facility, it said.

IndusInd Bank will provide credit facilities to companies that comprise the supply chain of the Japanese original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in India, it added.



The programme will cover the component suppliers and dealers of the selected Japanese OEMs and the final buyers of the construction machinery manufactured by those companies, it specified.

The bank's managing director and chief executive Sumant Kathpalia said its commercial vehicles finance division is one of the largest financiers of Japanese OEMs in India at present, and the bank is aiming to increase its market share through the tie-up.

The fund raised will be used for financing companies, which are engaged in strengthening infrastructure.

Audi India reports over two-fold jump in sales in Jan-March quarter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Luxury carmaker Audi India on Wednesday said its sales witnessed over two-fold jump at 1,950 units in the January-March quarter this year as compared with the same period last year. The company had sold 862 units in the first quarter of 2022. "Our product line-up boasts of sixteen models and we currently have the strongest ever SUV portfolio contributing to over 60 per cent of our total sales," Audi India head Balbir Singh Dhillon said in a statement.

The newly launched Q3 and Q3 Sportback are witnessing strong demand from across the country, he added.

Go First open for partnerships; Wadias not exiting aviation biz: Airline source

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Wadia Group-owned Go First is open for partnerships but its promoters are not looking to exit from the loss-making aviation business, according to an airline source. The no-frills airline, beset with engine woes, is estimated to have incurred a loss of Rs 1,800 crore in 2022-23, and expects around Rs 600 crore fund infusion in the coming weeks, according to the source closely involved in the management of the carrier.

The airline, which was cornering an 8-10 per cent market share for many months, saw it slipping to 6.9 per cent in March as a good chunk of its aircraft fleet remains grounded.

"We can obviously evaluate a good partnership but it does not mean that we are out to sell ... Indian aviation is getting a lot of traction, and there are some reports that some airlines, some entrepreneurs are look-



ing at (investing in the airline segment), that is why we are happy to look at (any investment proposal)," the source told PTI.

"But if somebody asks us whether we are open for partnerships, that we can evaluate when it comes to us. But it does not mean that we are on the bloc," he said.

Earlier domestic aviation was constrained because of various factors including Covid-19 and fuel prices, among others, but after October last year things are much better with a better yield and load factor, he added.

"The promoters, in fact, are adding more equity. As much as Rs 300 crore are

being infused from their side and funds to the tune of Rs 300 crore have to come from the banks, which have been sanctioned to us under the Emergency Credit Guarantee Line Scheme. So the airline should be able to get the entire Rs 600 crore amount in the next 3-4 weeks," the source said. The capital infusion in the airline from time to time has ensured that the airline is not only up and running but it expands the fleet as well. The airline is operating only with 36-37 aircraft at present as 25 of its Airbus A320Neo aircraft are grounded, the source said, adding that 180 GTF-powered aircraft of various airlines are grounded globally, awaiting engines.

"We have got 18 engines-17 in December (which made the airline recover eight aircraft) and one in March. We are expecting two more engines in April. We are still awaiting the final picture and the balance supply of March is0 expected to be delivered to us in May," he said.

REAL KNOCK CHELSEA OUT

AP ■ LONDON

Real Madrid cruised into the Champions League semi-finals with a 2-0 win against Chelsea on Tuesday that wrapped up an emphatic 4-0 aggregate triumph, effectively ending the struggling London club's season.

The home team, with Frank Lampard back in the dugout for a second spell, came into the match at Stamford Bridge with form and history against them. They started brightly, playing enterprising football, but rued two huge missed chances in the first half that would have heaped pressure on the defending champions.

The Spanish giants made Chelsea pay for their profligacy when Rodrygo scored in the 58th minute and he doubled his tally with 10 minutes to go. Chelsea, the 2021 European champions, have now lost all four of their matches since Lampard returned to the club as caretaker boss earlier this month in place of the sacked Graham Potter.

Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti stuck with the same team that won the first leg 2-0 last week while Chelsea caretaker boss Lampard restored Reece James, Mateo Kovacic and N'Golo Kante to his line-up.

Roared on by an expectant crowd despite their current woes, the home side made a bright start against the 14-time winners.

They had a glorious chance to take the lead but Kante skewed his left-foot shot wide from about 12 yards.

The visitors, content to bide their time, looked sharp on the break.

Midway through the opening period Rodrygo created space for himself and thumped an effort against the outside of the post from an acute angle, though goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga may have had it covered.

Luka Modric tested Kepa with a shot from an angle and five minutes before half-time Vinicius Junior skewed a shot wide from close range after a cross from the Croatia midfielder.

But Chelsea should have been ahead on the stroke of half-time when Reece James fizzed a ball across the box from the right and it fell to Marc Cucurella at the back post.

The defender took a touch and shot but Thibaut Courtois came flying out of his goal to save. Kante had another golden opportunity to take the lead early in the second half but his close-range effort hit Eder Militao and deflected away to safety.

Real took the wind out of Chelsea's sails with just over half an hour to go, when Rodrygo scored from close range after an assist by Vinicius.

Lampard made a number of attacking substitutions, bringing on Raheem Sterling, Joao Felix and Mykhailo Mudryk in a desperate bid to get back into the match.

But Rodrygo found the net again in the 80th minute, tapping home after a clever assist from Federico Valverde. Real Madrid will likely play Manchester City in the semi-finals, with Pep Guardiola's team 3-0 up against Bayern Munich after the first leg of their last-eight tie.



Thiago Silva demands 'strategy' to fix Chelsea crisis

AP ■ LONDON

Thiago Silva has urged Chelsea to come up with a "strategy" to prevent the club's slump stretching into next season after Real Madrid ended their Champions League campaign.

The Blues' final hope of salvaging a disastrous season was snuffed out on Tuesday as the Spanish side wrapped up an emphatic 4-0 aggregate win in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Brazil defender Silva admitted the season had been tough for the club and said Chelsea's bloated squad ensured there were always unhappy

players. Silva, speaking after Tuesday's 2-0 home defeat to champions Real in the second leg of their quarter-final, said it was important to assess what had gone wrong rather than apportioning blame.

"It is not enough to look at the coach, say it's this person's fault, it's that person's fault if we don't assume our responsibilities," he said.

He added: "We have to stop and have a strategy to not repeat the same mistakes next year."

Silva, 38, said the club had been forced to increase the size of the changing room to accommodate their huge squad, with eight new signings in January alone.

"I think it is a difficult time for the club, with a lack of definition at the beginning, a change in owner, many players arriving — they even had to increase the size of the dressing room because there was not enough room for all the players," he said.

"A positive point is that there are great players in the team but a negative point is that someone is going to get upset, because not everyone can play and the coach has to pick 11 players and there are 30-something."



Giroud takes Milan to semis

AP ■ NAPLES

AC Milan reached the semi-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday after Olivier Giroud struck the crucial goal in a 1-1 draw at Napoli which completed a 2-1 aggregate victory over their fellow Italians.

Giroud tapped in what turned out to be the decisive goal two minutes before the break after a blistering run from Rafael Leao, who was once again key as Milan beat Napoli for the third time this month.

The France striker's 13th goal of the season saved his blushes after he missed a penalty midway through the first half.

Stefano Pioli's side now have the prospect of a local derby in the last four as Inter Milan hold a two-goal lead ahead of their second leg with Benfica on Wednesday night.

"I'm very proud of this team, with that spirit we can dream of anything," said Giroud to Mediaset.

"In the next round there will be another hard match whether it's against Inter or Benfica, but if we keep this spirit we can go anywhere."

After the match Mediaset showed Leao a video of Ruud Gullit setting up a goal with an almost identical run at Napoli in 1988.

"It's the same," said a shocked Leao. "It's what I try to do, go at players, it's how I can make difference. If I can't score I look for my teammates. I saw Giroud there."

Milan have not contested a Champions League semi-final since they were crowned kings of Europe for the seventh and most recent time in 2007.

Victor Osimhen scored in stoppage time but it was not enough for Napoli who are creeping as they come towards the end of what has been a phenomenal season.

Luciano Spalletti's once freewheeling team are struggling for goals and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia also had a penalty saved with 10 minutes remaining, a miss which condemned his team to defeat.

Napoli are on the verge of their first league title since 1990, but after being placed on the easier side of the draw Tuesday's exit was an underwhelming end to their European adventure.

Napoli had scored at least three goals in all of their previous Champions League home games this season but looked short on ideas against a well-organised Milan defence which kept a tight lid on Osimhen.

And as the hosts pushed to level the scores on aggregate, Milan pounced at the end of the first half. Leao scooped up the ball after Tanguy Ndombele's sloppy control and charged from deep his own half, breezed past three Napoli players and rolled an unmissable chance across to Giroud, who fell to his knees in a mixture of joy and relief.

Napoli were again on the front foot after the break but struggled to create much, with Mathias Olivera's header wide from a 64th-minute corner the best chance until Fikayo Tomori handled Giovanni Di Lorenzo's low cross as he put in a challenge in the penalty area.

Kvaratskhelia fluffed his own spot-kick just like Giroud, meaning Osimhen's bullet header in the 93rd minute meant nothing for Napoli who will wonder what might have been after wasting so many chances in the first leg.



Rashford return to training

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Marcus Rashford has returned to training for Manchester United, giving the club a major boost ahead of the second leg of their Europa League quarter-final against Sevilla on Thursday.

The England international, who has scored a career-high 28 goals this season, suffered a groin strain in a 2-0 win over Everton on April 8. United said last week that Rashford would likely be absent for a "few games" but he could make a timely return in Spain, with Erik ten Hag's men in the hunt for a treble of cup competitions.

The tie is finely balanced at 2-2 after two late own goals conceded by United in the first leg at Old Trafford.

Luke Shaw and Marcel Sabitzer also took part in training on Wednesday to ease the Red Devils' injury crisis.

First-choice centre-backs Lisandro Martinez and Raphael Varane are unavailable after picking up injuries in the first leg.

Bruno Fernandes is suspended, while Donny van de Beek and Alejandro Garnacho also remain sidelined by injury.

United, who lifted the League Cup earlier this season to end a six-year trophy drought, face Brighton on Sunday in the FA Cup semi-finals.

India names squad for U-17 AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers

NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday named a 23-member squad for the Women's U-17 AFC Asian Cup Qualifier Round 1 to be played in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic from April 24. India are in Group F which also has hosts Kyrgyz Republic and Myanmar. The Young Tigresses will play their opening game against the hosts on April 26 and against Myanmar on April 28.

The Indian team was last seen in action at the SAFF U-17 Women's Championship in Dhaka, where they had finished third. Since then they have been camping in Indore.

GKs: Sarangthem Khambi Chanu, Anisha Oraon, Khushi Kumari. **Defenders:** Yendrembam Thoi Thoi Devi, Toijam Thoibisana Chanu, Heena Khatun, Vikshit Bara, Juhi Singh, Akhila Rajan, Arya Anilkumar, Irom Sonibha Devi. **Midfielders:** Nongmeikapam Shibani Devi, Lourebam Menaka Devi, Shivani Toppo, Babita Kumari, Cindy Remruat-puii Colney, Shveta Rani, Sulanjana Raul, Remi Thokchom, Lalita Boypai.

Out-of-form Warner makes Australia's Ashes squad

AP ■ SYDNEY

Under-pressure David Warner was Wednesday spared the axe and included in Australia's squad for the first two Ashes Tests and the World Test Championship final, while all-rounder Mitchell Marsh earned a recall.

Veteran opener Warner is fighting to save his career after a lean run with the bat that had some questioning whether his time was up.

But the 36-year-old will head to England as part of a 17-man squad that also includes Josh Inglis as cover for wicket-keeper Alex Carey, and Marcus Harris and Matthew Renshaw as back-up batters.

There was no room for batsman Peter Handscomb, who featured on the recent Test tour of India and is currently playing county cricket in England.

Chairman of selectors George Bailey all but confirmed Warner — on his fourth Ashes tour — would play the World Test Championship final against India at The Oval from June 7.

But he would not guarantee Warner's place for the first Ashes Test at Edgbaston in mid-June.



"Not specifically to Dave, but I think we'll get through that Test championship and then start to have a look at what it looks like," he said when pressed on Warner's longer-term place in the team.

"Different opposition, different surface. We'll work through that."

Should Warner be overlooked, Harris or Renshaw would step in to partner Usman Khawaja at the top of the order.

In the bowling department, spinners Ashton Agar, Mitchell Swepson and Matt Kuhnemann, who went to India, were overlooked with Todd Murphy getting the nod as second spinner to Nathan Lyon.

"The UK is a very different assignment from our most recent tour of India and some of the changes are based upon the conditions we are anticipating," said Bailey.

Big-hitting Marsh, who has long battled injuries, returns as a back-up for first-choice all-rounder Cameron Green.

Marsh has not played a Test since the 2019 Ashes tour but is a mainstay of Australia's white-ball teams and Bailey said he deserved another chance in the red-ball format.

"It's great to have Mitch back, he hasn't really had the opportunity to be bowling in longer-format cricket for some time and the (ankle) operation he had just prior to Christmas has worked really well," he said.

"Mitch has performed well in the UK in the past and we

think he can add some real value," Bailey added.

After the World Test Championship final, Australia play five Ashes Tests at Edgbaston, Lord's, Headingley, Old Trafford and The Oval.

Bailey said selectors would evaluate the make-up of the squad following the first three matches, noting that Sean Abbott and Michael Neser were playing county cricket should extra fast-bowling firepower be needed on what are expected to be flat decks.

The squad currently has just four frontline seamers — captain Pat Cummins, Marsh, Josh Hazlewood and Scott Boland.

"We see value in revisiting the squad following the second Ashes Test given the short turnaround between the WTC final and the first Ashes Test, along with the length of the tour," Bailey said.

Australia squad: Pat Cummins (capt), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Todd Murphy, Matthew Renshaw, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, David Warner

Alcaraz brushes aside Borges in Barcelona

AP ■ BARCELONA

World number two Carlos Alcaraz began his belated build-up to the French Open with an emphatic second-round win over Nuno Borges at the Barcelona Open on Tuesday. The Spanish teenager was back in action after hand and back problems forced him to pull out of last week's 2023 debut on European clay at the Monte Carlo Masters.

The top seed swept aside the world number 79 from Portugal 6-3, 6-1 to set up an all Spanish last-16 clash with Roberto Bautista Agut after the 13th seed beat Bernabe Zapata Miralles 6-2, 6-2.

"I feel great," said Alcaraz, playing on the surface for the first time since Rio de Janeiro in February.

Alcaraz pulled out of Monte Carlo with the injuries that had hampered his last appearance, in the semi-finals in Miami where he succumbed to Jannik Sinner.

Alcaraz arrived in Miami as the world number one after success at Indian Wells, but was knocked off the top of the ATP



rankings by Novak Djokovic after the loss to Sinner.

The 19-year-old's bid to successfully defend a tour-level title for the first time got off to the best possible start, as he despatched Borges in 63 minutes on the court named after Rafael Nadal, another absentee from Monte Carlo.

Aside from unforced errors that enabled Borges to reclaim a break in the eighth game, Alcaraz showed little sign of rustiness.

He allowed the Portuguese only one more game in a lop-sided affair.

The 2022 US Open champion converted five of seven break points to continue his quest for a third title of the season after Indian Wells and Buenos Aires.

"Moving well, hitting the ball really well so I feel a lot of confidence playing here in Barcelona," said Alcaraz. "It's a really special place for me."

Norway's third seed Casper Ruud came through 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) against American Ben Shelton to set up a meeting with either Francesco Passaro or Francisco Cerundolo.

Prannoy, Sindhu to lead India at Sudirman Cup

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World No. 9 HS Prannoy and two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu will lead the Indian challenge at the 2023 Sudirman Cup, scheduled in Suzhou, China, from May 14-21.

The senior national selection committee, which met here on Tuesday, picked a "balanced" squad with an aim to clinch a first-ever medal in the mixed team championships.

The Indian men had created history last year by winning the prestigious Thomas Cup and hopes of a potential podium finished were raised further following the bronze winning performance in the Asian Mixed Team Championships earlier



this year. Sudirman Cup is a prestigious tournament and the selectors have picked the best squad after studying the domestic and international results. We are confident that this team will challenge for a medal this year," said Badminton Association of

India secretary Sanjay Mishra.

India have been grouped in Group C along with Malaysia, Chinese Taipei and Australia and their first task will be to make it to the knock-out stage from a potentially tricky group.

The return of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, who missed the Asian mixed team event due to injury, will bolster the men's doubles squad while the experienced Ashwini Ponnappa and new partner Tanisha Castro will provide back-up to the All England semi-finalists Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly.

Kidambi Srikanth and reigning senior national women's singles champion Anupama Upadhyaya will be the other singles players in the squad.

LSG BEAT RAJASTHAN ROYALS IN TOP-OF-THE-TABLE CLASH

DC play do-or-die game vs KKR



POINTS TABLE						
		P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1	RR	6	4	2	1.043	8
2	LSG	6	4	2	0.709	8
3	CSK	5	3	2	0.265	6
4	GT	5	3	2	0.192	6
5	PBKS	5	3	2	-0.109	6
6	MI	5	3	2	-0.164	6
7	KKR	5	2	3	0.320	4
8	RCB	5	2	3	-0.318	4
9	SRH	5	2	3	-0.798	4
10	DC	5	0	5	-1.488	0

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prithvi Shaw, Delhi Capitals' blue-eyed boy till last season, could become the first casualty of the team's floundering IPL campaign as they prepare to take on Kolkata Knight Riders here on Thursday.

The 23-year-old talented opener's spot in the playing XI has come under the scanner after the Mumbai player could manage just 34 runs in five outings this season, with a highest of 15.

With DC having lost all five games so far this season, a rejig of the top order against KKR at the Ferozeshah Kotla in a bid to revive their fortunes could be on the cards.

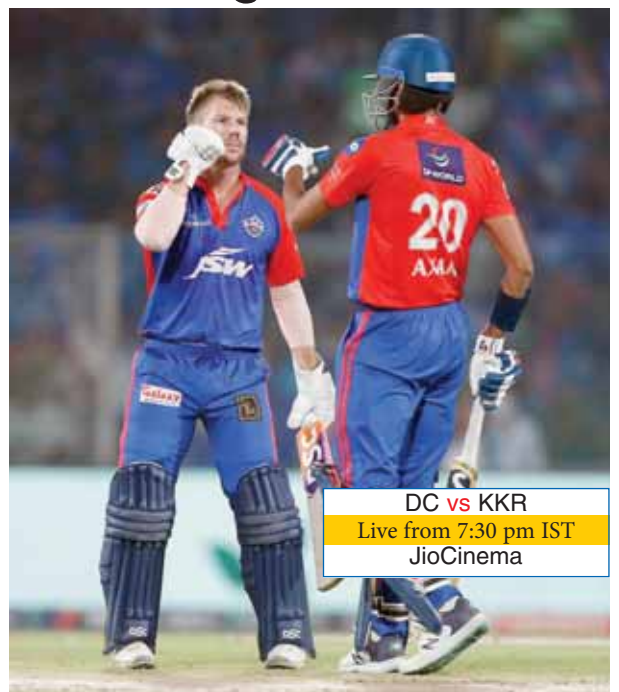
Sarfraz Khan, who has earlier been tried as a wicket-keeper-batter, could be drafted in as a specialist opener for powerplay overs, while the other option could be to promote veteran Manish Pandey.

For the David Warner-led side, this is a must-win situation as all routes to playoffs will mathematically be shut if they suffer another defeat.

KKR, on the other hand, would like to forget the loss against Sunrisers Hyderabad at home and get on with winning some games. Their skipper Nitish Rana, middle-order batter Rinku Singh and West Indian power-hitter Andre Russell do possess the capability to hammer Delhi Capitals' bowlers, led by Anrich Nortje and Mustafizur Rahman.

The five consecutive defeats for Delhi are a reminder that they are really thin on resources in the batting department.

The biggest letdown undoubtedly has been Shaw's



DC vs KKR
 Live from 7:30 pm IST
 JioCinema

lack of performance. The former Under-19 captain, who led India to victory during the 2018 U19 World Cup, looks a pale shadow of himself.

Statistics speak so loud and clear: Shaw scored 479 runs in 2021 and 283 in 10 games last year. But this year he has looked completely out of sorts against quick bowlers, making his position untenable.

The other disappointment has been Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh at No.3. It remains to be seen if Rilee Rossouw and Rovman Powell get back in the mix.

Yash Dhull has a serious technical flaw in his batting and has not been able to rectify the early trigger movement of shuffling towards the off-stump,

making him an ideal candidate for LBW decisions to incoming deliveries.

DC's bench strength too is pretty poor and that's one of the reasons even out-of-form players are not being replaced.

For KKR, Englishman Jason Roy could replace Rahamanullah Gurbaz in the opener's slot with N. Jagadeesan keeping wickets.

It will also be leg-spinner Suyash Sharma's first senior-level game at his home ground.

However, all eyes will be on Nitish and Rinku, the two power-hitters who will be out to entertain the capacity crowd along with Russell and the in-form Venkatesh Iyer, who is fresh from his century against MI, albeit in losing cause.

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The pitch was far from conducive for batting, but the bowlers still had a job to do, and the ones at Lucknow Super Giants did that with aplomb for a 10-run win over Rajasthan Royals in the IPL here on Wednesday.

Chasing 155, RR were stopped at 144 for six as their return to the Sawai Mansingh Stadium after four years ended in disappointment, despite a creditable outing with the ball earlier in the evening.

RR openers Jos Buttler and Yashvi Jaiswal knew that playing strokes wouldn't be easy on this track, but they managed to keep pace with the required run rate.

However, LSG staged a remarkable comeback to emerge winners in the end.

Young Jaiswal made 44 off 35 balls with the help of four boundaries and two sixes, while his senior opening partner Buttler got 40 in 41.

LSG waited quite a bit before bringing their impact

player Amit Mishra into action. And for their first breakthrough, they had to wait till the 12th over, when Jaiswal cut Marcus Stoinis to the short third man fielder Avesh Khan, who seemed to have injured his hand while completing a low catch.

Despite losing a wicket, RR were still in the driver's seat but that changed after Sanju Samson was run out following a horrible mix up with Buttler. The game turned on its head when Buttler holed out to deep mid-wicket to RR at 97 for three in the 14th over.

Shimron Hetmyer joined Devdutt Padikkal in a crucial passage of play, but the former was out caught in the deep off the bowling of Avesh Khan. RR couldn't do much after that.

Earlier, Kyle Mayers top-scored with 51 before Marcus Stoinis (21 off 16 balls) and Nicholas Pooran (28 off 20) helped the team reach 154 for seven.

Trent Boult bowled exceptionally to finish with figures 1-16 in four overs, while Ravichandran Ashwin was also

excellent with the ball, ending with 2/23 from his four.

Seasoned New Zealander Boult sent down two brilliant overs to justify RR skipper Samson's decision to field first after winning the toss.

As Boult, one of the world's leading seamers for more than a decade, went about his task in his usual manner, KL Rahul looked clueless and the pressure

created by the crafty bowler got to the struggling LSK captain. Unable to free his arms, Rahul ended up playing a Sandeep Sharma delivery in the air but the young Jaiswal fluffed the chance. He was on six at the time. After he added another six runs to his total, Rahul got another chance when Jason Holder, who normally has a safe pair of hands, dropped a skyer after running backwards from mid-off.

This was seven balls after Jaiswal had a shy at the bowler's end and missed a run out chance with Rahul well out of crease.

Those two missed chances miffed Samson no end but RR did not have to pay a heavy price as Rahul got out for an unconvincing 32-ball 39.

Having consumed that many deliveries, Rahul would have liked to carry his bat though the RR innings, but Holder had him with a nicely executed slower ball.

After conceding only two runs in the first two overs and 13 in his third, Boult, deservedly, got on the wicket column when he knocked over Ayush Badoni's leg stump.

The missed chances notwithstanding, the RR bowlers were parsimonious and kept LSG to 37 for no loss in the six powerplay overs on a pitch that wasn't the best for batting.

On and off, Mayers managed to find the boundaries, including going down the ground to hit Yuzvendra Chahal over long off for a maximum in the ninth over. Four balls later, Rahul got into the act by smacking the leg-spinner for a huge six over the deep mid wicket fence.

have liked to carry his bat though the RR innings, but Holder had him with a nicely executed slower ball.

After conceding only two runs in the first two overs and 13 in his third, Boult, deservedly, got on the wicket column when he knocked over Ayush Badoni's leg stump.

The missed chances notwithstanding, the RR bowlers were parsimonious and kept LSG to 37 for no loss in the six powerplay overs on a pitch that wasn't the best for batting.

On and off, Mayers managed to find the boundaries, including going down the ground to hit Yuzvendra Chahal over long off for a maximum in the ninth over. Four balls later, Rahul got into the act by smacking the leg-spinner for a huge six over the deep mid wicket fence.

Suryakumar continues to lead ICC T20 rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Swashbuckling Indian batter Suryakumar Yadav continued his stay at the top of the latest ICC Men's T20I Batters Rankings released on Wednesday.

Suryakumar, who has endured a lean run of late, remained static on the ICC list with 906 rating points, and is over a 100 points ahead of the second placed Mohammad Rizwan (798) of Pakistan.

Suryakumar, who is the lone Indian batter in the top 10,

enjoyed a stellar year in the format in 2022. He continued his good run in the series against New Zealand and Sri Lanka earlier this year. Former skipper Virat Kohli is the next best Indian batter on the list as he remained static on 15. Among bowlers, left arm pacer Arshdeep Singh is the top-ranked Indian on 14th, while veteran seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has dropped down a spot to 19.

Hardik Pandya is second in the all-rounders' list, behind leader Shakib Al Hasan.

Ten wickets in three T20Is has helped Haris Rauf catapult Shadab Khan to become the top-ranked Pakistan bowler.

Rauf picked up back-to-back four-wicket hauls against New Zealand in the ongoing T20I series, winning the Player of the Match in the first game.

The Pakistan quick was just ahead of Shaheen Afridi last week and behind Shadab Khan, who was 12th in the T20I bowling rankings. Ten wickets spread across the first three T20Is has seen Rauf move up



five places in the rankings to occupy the 11th spot. Meanwhile, Ish Sodhi (620) and Shaheen (624) have also moved up by four places and two places respectively with the others around them dropping points.

The other big movement in the rankings came from Sri Lanka with Prabath Jayasuriya continuing his magical start to red-ball cricket. The left-arm spinner picked up a ten-wicket match haul against Ireland in the first Test, his second such figures in a very short six-

match Test career. Jayasuriya has 43 wickets in six Tests already with five five-wicket hauls. A career-best seven-wicket haul in the Galle Test against Ireland ensured he moved up by 13 places in the ICC Test bowling rankings to enter the top 20.

While achieving career-best ratings of 669, Jayasuriya also became the top-ranked Sri Lankan bowler in Test cricket. Ramesh Mendis (576), who moved up by three places after a four-wicket haul in the second innings of the Test.

Siraj reported corrupt approach to BCCI ACU before Australia tour: BCCI source

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India pacer Mohammed Siraj had reported a "corrupt approach" to BCCI's Anti Corruption Unit (ACU) from an unknown person, who wanted "inside news" about his team before Australia arrived in the country for a full-fledged tour in February this year.

The India pacer, who is playing for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the ongoing IPL, had promptly reported the matter to BCCI's ACU unit. It is understood that the gambler had lost a lot of money during the India games and messaged Siraj out of sheer frustration.

India had played white-ball home series against New Zealand and Sri Lanka in January-February before Australia arrived. India won the T20 series against Sri Lanka 2-1 before blanking them 3-0 in the ODI series.

Against New Zealand, India won the ODI series 3-0 before triumphing in the T20 series with a 2-1 margin, with the Black Caps winning the lone game of the tour in Ranchi.

"It wasn't a bookie who

approached Siraj. He is a driver from Hyderabad who is addicted to betting on India matches. He had approached Siraj via WhatsApp after losing a lot of money on India games," a senior BCCI source privy to the developments said.

"Siraj reported the approach immediately. The law enforcement (Andhra Police) authorities had nabbed the person," the source added.

The BCCI had beefed up its ACU network ever since the spot-fixing scandal, involving S Sreesanth, Ankeet Chavan, Ajit Chandila and then Chennai Super Kings (CSK) team principal Gurusanth Meiyappan, was unearthed in 2013. Now, each IPL team has a dedicated ACU official who stays in the same hotel and is there at the ground monitoring all the movements.

Also, there is a mandatory ACU workshop for players on the dos and don'ts, and if any player fails to report a corrupt approach, there are sanctions in place. Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan was suspended in 2021 for not reporting a corrupt approach during his IPL stint in the previous season.

"It wasn't a bookie who

Dhawan's injury on PBKS' mind as they face RCB

PTI ■ MOHALI

Punjab Kings (PBKS) would be sweating over skipper Shikhar Dhawan's injury at a time when they need all their firepower against an extremely tough but luckless Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in an Indian Premier League (IPL) match here on Thursday.

Dhawan, 37, who is one of the bright spots in the PBKS team, was ruled out against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) on April 15 in Lucknow due to a shoulder injury and England all-rounder Sam Curran marshalled the side during their two-wicket win at the Ekana Stadium.

There were several unlikely heroes, who put their hands up in the game, with 36-year-old Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza emerging the leading run-getter for the side with a polished 57, while Matthew Short, Harpreet Singh and Tamil Nadu cricketer M Shahrulkh Khan guided the team to the finish line.

But, RCB are a much bigger threat on paper than LSG, and Curran would know he too will need to come to the party with



PBKS vs RCB
 Live from 3:30 pm IST
 JioCinema

the bat if they are to defeat Faf du Plessis' side and earn two points at home.

Curran's iffy form with the bat has been a concern, as he could manage just six runs against LSG, though his three wickets played a key role in restricting KL Rahul's side to 159/8.

PBKS' top order looks solid when Dhawan is around, but with a question mark over his fitness, his opening partner Prabhsimran Singh will have to play sensibly and also hope his

partner plays a responsible knock, which was missing against LSG.

PBKS' bowling, though, has stood the sternest of tests this season with their two left-armers — Arshdeep Singh and Curran — at the forefront, while South African pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada has only added to the potency.

In contrast, RCB have been unlucky when it comes to eking out wins. With skipper du Plessis and Virat Kohli opening the innings, they perhaps have the

best opening pair in the tournament, barring, of course, Yashvi Jaiswal and Jos Buttler for Rajasthan Royals.

With Glenn Maxwell coming in at No.4 and Shabbaz Ahmed, Dinesh Karthik and Suyash Prabhudessai following the Australian, RCB bat really deep. But their biggest flaw, unfortunately, is the same as PBKS — an inconsistent top order.

The close losses have, unfortunately, left RCB taking a back-seat on the IPL table — they are placed eighth with four points from five matches. The side still has many opportunities to up its game and be in contention for the playoffs, but in a fast-paced tournament like the IPL, things change dramatically.

RCB might not have the same firepower in their bowling as PBKS, but their quicks — Mohammed Siraj, Harshal Patel and South Africa's Wayne Parnell — are not short on commitment. All they need is a couple of moral-boosting wins to lift their spirits and put their campaign back on track. That could well come against PBKS on Thursday.



Importance of bowling all rounder diminished due to impact player rule: Venkatesh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The emphasis on specialists due to the impact player rule has led to less bowling time for all-rounders, feels Kolkata Knight Riders opener Venkatesh Iyer.

Back in form with a bang after an ankle surgery, Iyer smashed 83 against Gujarat Titans and 104 versus Mumbai Indians in two of KKR's five games, having come on as impact substitute in all matches.

"Honestly, with the coming of impact players, the number of overs an all-rounder is bowling has dropped down drastically," Iyer said ahead of the match against Delhi Capitals.

He hasn't bowled in any of the games.

"Obviously, if a team has a specialist bowler as their sixth bowler and they don't want to try their all-rounder... This is what impact player rule has brought. It has lessened the utility of all-rounders," said Iyer, who played T20Is and ODIs for India as a middle-order batter last year.

But Iyer understands that the rule is here to stay and teams

are making plans keeping impact player in mind.

"It's a very interesting rule that has come in place. If you are playing in the IPL, it's an international level tournament, the think tank is so big in the every team that I guess they might have figured it out in the very first match itself.

"By now everyone knows how to use the impact player. If you see the results the impact players are turning out to be an X factor."

While he hasn't rolled his arms over in any of the games, he has got the all clear from the NCA to bowl.

"I am 100 per cent ready to bowl. I was given clearance by the NCA. The most pleasing thing is not the runs I am scoring, the thing that I am back on the field and play in such a big tournament."

He was circumspect after the ankle injury but is now back at his best as he became the second IPL centurion for KKR after Brendon McCullum.

"Scoring and all is secondary, I am truly grateful to the almighty that I am just able to play."

Important for young players to react to ball not bowler: Marsh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mitchell Marsh didn't mince words while admitting that Delhi Capitals haven't batted well in their winless run in the IPL so far and the advised young Indian batters to not play bowlers on reputation but on merit of the ball.

Marsh himself hasn't scored in the three games he has played out five.

"There's no doubt that we would like to be batting better. In our all five matches, we haven't been able to get off to a reasonable start or we have lost wickets in clumps," Marsh said ahead of team's next game against KKR.

that we have not been able to do. If we can do that, then we can turn it around."

The team is in a spot after five losses in a row.

"It's always difficult when things are not going right for the team. However, the spirits are high in the camp. We are a family at the Delhi Capitals and we care deeply about each other.

"We are all working extremely hard and hopefully, we can get a win in our next game," Marsh put up a brave front.



and therefore it's about sticking to your process and having good intent."

On young Indian batters failing to come to terms with international quality bowling, Marsh had a single advice.

"I think it's really important for the young players to not play the bowlers but the ball. When someone is bowling at 140 or 150, ultimately, you will have to watch it and react accordingly.

"Facing the fast bowlers of the world is a valuable experience to all the youngsters. Guys like Yash Dhull has a great future, he is a great young kid, he loves learning and that's the kind of culture we have here in Delhi, everyone wants to learn and be a better but unfortunately the results don't show at the moment."