

OPINION 6
NEW CYBERSECURITY
LAWS NEED OF HOUR

WORLD 9
AT LEAST 78 KILLED
IN SANAA STAMPEDE

MONEY 10
GST EVASION DETECTION
NEARLY DOUBLES IN FY23

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RCB THRASH
PBKS BY 24
RUNS IN IPL
12 SPORT

5 jawans martyred in terror attack

Army vehicle catches fire after terrorists lob grenades at it; combing operation on

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Five Army soldiers were martyred and another was seriously injured on Thursday after their vehicle caught fire following one of the most provocative terrorist strikes on a moving Army vehicle close to the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Army truck was reportedly ferrying ration supplies and other items at the time of the incident. The deceased Army soldiers were from a Rashtriya Rifles unit deployed for counterterrorism operations, according to a statement issued by the Udhampur based Northern Command headquarters.

"On Thursday around 3pm, one Army vehicle, moving between Bhimber Gali and Poonch in the Rajouri sector was fired upon by unidentified terrorists, taking advantage of heavy rain and low visibility in the area. The vehicle caught fire, due to likely use of grenades by terrorists," said the statement.

The terror incident is likely to cast its shadow on the forthcoming G-20 Tourism working group meeting lined up in Srinagar.

The seriously injured soldier was rushed to the Army



An army vehicle on fire after terrorists targeted it with grenades in the Bhatadurain area of Mendhar in Poonch district on Thursday

Hospital at Rajouri.

Immediately after the attack, local residents in the area rushed to the spot and struggled hard to douse the flames and shift the charred bodies. Gory images of slain soldiers surfaced across various social media platforms.

An advisory issued by the Defence spokesman against sharing these images had little impact.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was also briefed by Army Chief General Manoj Pandey about the attack. The Defence Minister offered condolences to the families of the deceased tweeting, "Anguished by the tragedy in Poonch District (J&K), where the Indian Army has lost its brave soldiers after a truck caught fire. In this tragic hour, my thoughts are with the bereaved families."

Till the time of filing the report, the "unidentified" terrorists remained at large after they vanished from the thickly forested belt of Bhimber Gali without facing any resistance.

The joint team of security forces have launched a massive manhunt to track down the footprints of perpetrators behind the "audacious terror attack". Traffic was diverted

on the Jammu-Poonch highway to carry out the searches in the area amid inclement weather conditions.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval had only last week reviewed the security situation in the Union Territory to ensure peaceful conduct of the G-20 meeting. Jammu & Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, and other senior officials too had attended the meeting.

Coimbatore car blast: NIA files chargesheet

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday filed a chargesheet against six people in the October 2022 Coimbatore car bomb blast case. Mohammed Asarutheen, Mohammed Thalha, Firos, Mohammed Riyas, Navas and Afsar Khan have been charged under various sections of the IPC, Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 of Explosives Substances Act and sections 16, 18, 20, 38 and 39 of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. **See P4**

All 67 accused in Naroda Gam riots case acquitted

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

More than two decades after 11 Muslim community members were killed following the Godhra train carnage in Ahmedabad's Naroda Gam, a special court here on Thursday acquitted all the 67 accused in the case, including former Gujarat Minister Maya Kodnani and ex-Bajrang Dal leader Babu Bajrang.

The Ahmedabad-based court of SK Baxi, special judge for Special Investigation Team (SIT) cases, acquitted all the accused in one of the worst massacres witnessed during the State-wide riots triggered by the Sabarmati train carnage on February 27, 2002. The Naroda Gam case was probed by a Supreme Court-appointed SIT. A detailed court order was awaited.

Those acquitted include former BJP minister in the Gujarat government Kodnani (67), former VHP leader Jaydeep Patel and ex-Bajrang Dal leader Babu Bajrang. There were a total of 86 accused



Ex-MLA Maya Kodnani, along with advocates, comes out of the Sessions Court after the verdict on Naroda Gam massacre case, in Ahmedabad, on Thursday

in the case, of which 18 died during the pendency of the trial, while one was discharged by the court earlier under Section 169 of the CrPC due to insufficient evidence against him.

Reacting to her acquittal, Kodnani said, "The truth has truly won today." Advocate Chetan Shah, who represented 82 out of the 86 accused, said he made sure "innocents" were acquitted for which he presented a written argument in the court running into 7,719 pages.

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CAPSULE

NO LAWYER CAN GO ON STRIKE: SUPREME COURT
New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday said no lawyer can go on strike or abstain from court work and asked all high courts to constitute "grievance redressal committees" headed by their chief justices to address the problems of advocates.

PILOT CALLS FOR JUSTICE AT BJP MP'S DHARMA SITE
Jaipur: In an embarrassment to the ruling Congress in Rajasthan, party leader Sachin Pilot on Thursday visited the protest site where BJP MP Kirodi Lal Meena is sitting on a dharna with the family of a man who allegedly killed himself recently. The former deputy CM called for "visible" justice to the family without delay.

AMRITPAL'S WIFE BARRED FROM GOING TO UK
Amritsar: Fugitive radical preacher Amritpal Singh's wife Kirandeep Kaur was stopped from boarding a flight to London at the Sri Guru Ram Dass International Airport here, sources said on Thursday.

YASH CHOPRA'S SINGER WIFE PAMELA DIES AT 74
Mumbai: Pamela Chopra, playback singer, writer and late filmmaker Yash Chopra's wife, died on Thursday at a Mumbai hospital.

Assam, Arunachal ink historic pact to resolve intractable border row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Assam and the Arunachal Pradesh Governments on Thursday signed an agreement in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah here to resolve their decades-long border disputes.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart Pema Khandu signed the pact. Assam and Arunachal Pradesh share an 804.1-km-long border.

The two States have been negotiating to resolve the border dispute, with Sarma and

Khandu signing the Namsai Declaration on July 15 last year wherein they had pledged to find a solution soon. The two States decided to resolve the dispute in 123 villages.

Shah termed the border agreement a "historic" event. Sarma said the deal is a "big and successful" moment. Khandu described the deal as "historic". Regional committees dealing with specific areas were formed last year, comprising ministers, local MLAs, and officials from both sides to take the discussion forward.

Continued on Page 2



Apple CEO Tim Cook at the opening of India's second Apple retail store, at Saket in New Delhi on Thursday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Rahul's plea for stay on 'Modi surname' conviction rejected; Cong to move HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SURAT/NEW DELHI

After a Gujarat court rejected Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's application for a stay on his conviction in a criminal defamation case that has led to his disqualification as a Member of the Lok Sabha, the Congress on Thursday said it will continue to avail all options available under the law and move the high court.

A Surat court rejected Rahul's plea for a stay on his conviction in a criminal defamation case over his "Modi surname" remark, holding that the Congress leader should have been "more careful with his words" since he was a Member of Parliament and the then president of the country's second largest political party.

Denying the disqualified MP relief that could have paved the way for his reinstatement in the Lok Sabha, additional ses-



sions judge RP Mogera observed that a "high standard of morality" is expected from a person like Rahul, adding that the trial court had imposed a sentence which was permissible in law.

It also observed that the Congress leader's removal or disqualification as MP under section 8(3) of Representation of the People Act, 1951 "cannot be termed as irreversible or irreparable loss or damage".

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Rahul should shed his arrogance, say sorry for insulting OBC, demands BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after the Surat sessions court dismissed an appeal by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to stay his conviction in a criminal defamation case, the BJP lashed out at him saying he should "leave his arrogance" and "apologise" to the OBC community.

The BJP termed the court order as a "slap on the Gandhi family's arrogance" and "victory" of the people.

Addressing a press conference here, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said that the court's decision proves that the law is equal for everyone.

Continued on Page 2

Daily Covid cases rise to 8-month high, 40 fall prey to virus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Covid-19 cases in the country in a day rose to 8-month high as the Union Health Ministry data put the number at 12,591 on Thursday.

With 40 deaths in a day, the death toll has increased to 5,31,230. The active cases have increased to 65,286.

The total tally of Covid cases was recorded at 4.48 crore. The daily positivity rate was 5.46 per cent and the weekly positivity rate was 5.32 per cent.

Active cases now comprise 0.15 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate was 98.67 per cent, according to the Health

Ministry website.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has surged to 4,42,61,476 while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.18 per cent.

According to the ministry's website, 220.66 crore doses of the Covid vaccine have been administered in the country so far under the nationwide

Covid-19 vaccination drive.

Delhi on Thursday logged 1,603 Covid-19 cases with a positivity rate of 26.75 per cent along with three fatalities.

With the new fatalities, the death toll from the pandemic rose to 26,581 in the national capital. Out of 7,976 Covid beds, 390 are occupied, the data showed.

Delhi had recorded 1,537 Covid cases on Tuesday with a positivity rate of 26.54 per cent. On Wednesday, the city reported six deaths along with 1,757 new cases with a positivity rate of 28.63 per cent.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has tested positive for Covid-19, officials said on Thursday. He

is currently under home quarantine with mild symptoms. A team of doctors examined him and advised him rest, the Defence Ministry said.

He was scheduled to attend the Indian Air Force Commanders' Conference in Delhi on Thursday, but had to skip it after testing positive for the virus, it said.

SC releases UP Secys day after HC jailed them

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered release of two secretaries of the Uttar Pradesh finance department, who were taken into custody on the orders of the Allahabad High Court in a contempt case.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) KM Nataraj, appearing for the State, told the bench that an "unprecedented order" has been passed by the High Court by which the finance secretary and special secretary (finance) have been taken into custody in a contempt matter in a case related to facilities for retired high court judges. The ASG said the High Court has also issued bailable warrants to the chief secretary of the State in the matter.

Bilawal to attend SCO meet in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD

In a major development given the strained ties between India and Pakistan, latter's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will visit India next month to take part in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Foreign Ministers' conclave. It will be the first such high-profile visit by a Pakistani Minister since then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to New Delhi in 2014 to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony.

The announcement regarding Foreign Minister Bilawal's schedule was made on Thursday by Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz



Zahrah Baloch in Islamabad at the weekly media briefing.

"Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will be leading the Pakistan delegation to the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) being held on May 4-5, 2023, in Goa, India," she said, ending weeks-long speculation if he would attend the conference in person amid major differences between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

Continued on Page 2

HC asks Google, YT to take down false content on Aaradhya's health

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday restrained several YouTube channels from publishing misleading content on the health of Aaradhya Bachchan, daughter of actors Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, saying spreading misinformation about a child reflects "morbid perversity".

The court, while dealing with a lawsuit by the minor child and her father, directed Google to take down from its platform certain videos which claimed that Aaradhya Bachchan was "critically ill" and "no more".

Continued on Page 2

Inspired by Buddha teachings, India working for global welfare, says PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lord Buddha's teachings are the basis for solutions to the greatest challenges confronting the world, including war, economic instability, terrorism and climate change, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday after inaugurating the two-day Global Buddhist Summit here which is being attended by delegates from 30 countries.

Taking a swipe at rich nations, the Prime Minister said that the world is facing a climate change crisis now because in the last century "some countries stopped thinking about others and the coming generations. For decades they kept thinking that meddling with nature will not impact them. They kept putting it on others."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets a Buddhist monk during the inauguration of Global Buddhist Summit 2023 in New Delhi on Thursday

"Inspired by the teachings of Lord Buddha, India is taking new initiatives for global

welfare," Modi said. "Had the world followed His teachings, it would not

have faced the climate change crisis," Modi said emphasizing that the path shown by Lord Buddha is the "path of the future and sustainability".

Addressing a gathering of eminent Buddhist monks, scholars, ambassadors and diplomats, Modi quoted ancient texts on Lord Buddha's teachings and said the need of the hour is that people and nations prioritise global interests along with that of their own by drawing inspiration from the Buddha's philosophy. "This is the road to a happy and stable world. This is necessary to move from self to the wider world, from narrowness to integral (approach), the Prime Minister said, adding that the world will have to think about the poor and countries lacking resources.

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Amritpal's wife stopped at airport from going to UK

PTI ■ AMRITSAR



Fugitive radical preacher Amritpal Singh's wife Kirandeep Kaur was stopped from boarding a flight to London at the Sri Guru Ram Dass International Airport here, sources said on Thursday.

She was questioned by the immigration authorities and some other officials for more than three hours and thereafter, asked to return along with some relatives who had come to see her off at the airport.

Singh married Kaur, a UK-based Non-Resident Indian, on February 10. Kaur, who is a British citizen, reached the airport at around 12 noon to

board the flight to London but was stopped by the immigration staff and later, the Punjab Police was informed. According to reports, she was stopped at the airport as there was a lookout circular (LoC) issued against her, however, there was no official word on it. Punjab Police officials too refused to share any informa-

tion about the incident. The Air India flight for London took off at its scheduled time of 1.20 pm. Kaur was going to the UK for the first time after her marriage.

More than a month after a police crackdown against Singh and his aides, the radical preacher continues to remain elusive even as a manhunt to nab him is underway. Police launched the crackdown against Singh and members of his outfit 'Waris Punjab De' on March 18.

He and his associates were booked under several criminal cases related to spreading disharmony among classes, attempt to murder, attack on

police personnel and creating obstructions in the lawful discharge of duty by public servants. Singh got married to Kaur in a simple ceremony at Jallapur Khera, his native village in Amritsar.

The 'Anand Karaj' (marriage as per Sikh rituals) was held with a limited gathering of family members from both sides at a gurdwara in Baba Bakala in Amritsar. Singh had said that a marriage ceremony should be simple and urged people not to splurge money on grand weddings. The preacher said his marriage was an example of reverse migration and announced that he and his wife would live in Punjab.

Illegal sale of Rly berths: CBI raids 12 places in 5 States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday said it has conducted searches at 12 locations across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi in an on-going investigation of a case related to illegal sale of reserved berth e-tickets of Indian Railways through IRCTC website.

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is a public sector undertaking (PSU) under the Indian Railways. "During searches, digital devices, mobile phones containing the illegal software, incriminating docu-

ments and other details including tickets of passengers booked earlier using illegal software were recovered," the CBI said in a statement.

During investigation, it was found that the agents were allegedly using illegal software to bypass the manual entry process for purchasing tickets, which were sold to travellers at a premium.

The CBI identified the agents involved in this illegal activity and conducted simultaneous searches. The person responsible for selling and distributing the illegal software to various agents was also identified. Investigation is continuing, it added.

IN-SHORT

IIM SIRMAUR HOLDS 7TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION
New Delhi/Shimla: The 7th Annual Convocation of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Sirmaur was conducted on Thursday at the Institute's campus at Paonta Sahib in the gracious presence of Naina Lal Kidwai, Chairman, Rothschild India and Senior Advisor, Advent Private Equity was the Chief Guest for the occasion and delivered the Convocation Address. Professor Prafulla Y. Agnihotri, Director, IIM Sirmaur, presented the Director's Report on the occasion. Also present were Ajay S. Shriram, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIM Sirmaur, awarded MBA Degrees to the graduating students in the presence of families of graduating students. According to the Press release by the institute, 238 students were conferred the MBA and 50 were conferred the Master of Business Administration on Tourism and Hospitality Management (MBA. Among the graduating students, there are 87 girl students. Rohit Dadheech received Chairman's Gold Medal for the MBA. Director's Medal was awarded to Debahuti Deo while Gaurav Sonawane received award for the Best All Round Performance while Rahul Ranjan and Chhavi Bansal received awards for proficiency in Finance and Marketing areas respectively.

PENGUIN TO LAUNCH COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES KOCHI: Penguin, the leading book publishing company in the country, is making an innovative step in the field of short stories, the most popular segment in the world of literature. For the first time in India, the publishing house is bringing out a collection of ten short stories set in South and South East Asia over the last five decades. My Mother Pattu, the collection of stories authored by Saras Manickam, who shuttles her days between India and other countries in South East Asia will be a new experience to short story aficionados in India, according to a release issued by Penguin on Thursday.

All 67 accused in Naroda...

From Page 1
Advocate Shahshad Pathan, who represented the victims, said the acquittal order will be challenged in the Gujarat High Court. "We will study the grounds on which the special court decided to acquit all the accused and challenge the order in the High Court. It appears the victims have been denied justice. The question remains as to who burnt 11 persons to death in the presence of policemen?" Pathan said.

One of the accused who was acquitted said the special court's judgment has exposed those who conspired to frame innocents like him. "The court has passed its order after studying all the aspects of the case. That the truth always wins has been proved again today," he said. Riots broke out in the Naroda Gam area of Ahmedabad on February 28,

2002, during a bandh called to protest the torching of the S-6 coach of Sabarmati Express by a mob near Godhra station a day earlier. As many as 58 train passengers, mostly karsevaks returning from Ayodhya, were charred to death.

Six different judges have presided over the case. When the trial started in 2010, SH Vora was the presiding judge. He was later elevated to the Gujarat High Court. Special judges who subsequently handled the case included Jyotsna Yagnik, KK Bhatt and PB Desai, all of whom retired during the pendency of the trial.

Special judge MK Dave came next, but was transferred before the conclusion of the trial, advocate Chetan Shah said. Kodnani was separately convicted and sentenced to 28 years in jail by the trial court in the case related to the post-Godhra riot in Ahmedabad's Naroda Patiya area where 97 people were massacred.

Rahul's plea for stay on Modi...

From Page 1

The former Congress chief who will continue to remain out on bail, stood disqualified from contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly elections for a period of eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction.

Dismissing Rahul's application against the Surat trial court order on March 23, the sessions court said the power accorded under section 389 (1) of the CrPC to suspend/stay the conviction is required to be exercised "with caution and circumspection" as observed by the Supreme Court in a number of pronouncements.

"If such power is exercised in a casual and mechanical manner, the same would have serious impact on the public perception on the justice delivery systems and such order will shake public confidence in judiciary," the court said in its 27-page order that triggered a fresh slugfest between the Congress and the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Rahul's lawyer Kirit Panwalka said the sessions court

has set May 20 as the date to begin hearing on his appeal against the trial court order. He said the Congress leader will continue to remain out on bail till the disposal of his main appeal as per the session court's April 3 order.

Congress termed as "erroneous and unsustainable" the court order and said the judge seems to be "over-shadowed" by the high office of the Prime Minister.

Senior Supreme Court lawyer and a Congress spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi said they would be moving the High Court "very shortly" as the judgement is "fallacious" and is contrary to all basic elementary principles of law. Sources said that Singhvi, himself a noted lawyer, is likely to appear before the Gujarat High Court.

"There is a legal error in the judgement. We respect all courts and we have the High Court and Supreme Court. We have several grounds to challenge the judgement. We will move the high court in the very near future," Singhvi briefed the

media at AICC Press conference post the court order.

"A most unfortunate and unsustainable legal decision of the magistrate has been upheld in an even more unsustainable and erroneous judgement of the Sessions court given today. The conviction has been upheld contrary to all basic elementary principles of law," Singhvi said at AICC Press conference after the order by court.

"Let me assure you that the judgement will be challenged in accordance with law in the very near future," he said.

Arguing that the judgement is "wrong" with no legal standing, Congress said the court has noted that Prime Minister Modi has been defamed along with 13 crore others with the Modi surname, which shows that the judge is "over-shadowed" by the exalted office of the Prime Minister.

"Clearly, unfortunately the judgement is influenced by the high office of the Prime Minister, forgetting that the honourable Prime Minister is not the complainant," Singhvi said. "We are confident that

superior courts with Constitutional power of judicial review, namely the High Court and the Supreme Court, have the power and will set right the legal errors found in these two judgements. We are clear that the judgement in devoid of valid sustainable legal reasoning," he said.

Singhvi said the one-line remark of Rahul in a two-and-a-half page speech "has been from inception distorted completely out of recognition to serve the narrow ends of motivated complainants, that has been hardly interpreted in the sessions court judgement and what little has been said is a complete distortion, legally erroneous." Rahul had on April 3 approached the sessions court for appeal against the lower court's order.

Their completely misleading and displaced statements about the OBCs have backfired on them and the entire community and the whole of India now see the BJP as using the OBC community for narrow and cheap political games, he said.

Rahul should shed his arrogance, say sorry for insulting...

From Page 1

Patra said the judicial ruling has "silenced Rahul and his ecosystem" who were casting doubts on Indian institutions. "Today's judgment clarified that the Constitution triumphs in India and not dynastic politics. This is a slap on the face of the Gandhi family. Today, the Surat court proved that the law is the same for everyone and no one is above it. This is a blow to the arrogance of the Gandhi family and a victory for the common people of India, judiciary," he said.

"Today's verdict states that no protests, no mobilisation can make the judiciary buckle under pressure. It is a special moment for the judiciary as well," he said.

The BJP leader said "Rahul Gandhi had used objectionable language and insulted the marginalised community, and even engaged in name-calling against them. Despite doing all

of this, the Gandhi family thought they would be able to get away with it, but that has not been the case."

Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal also took a dig at the former Congress president following the verdict, stating that the Congress leader seemed to view himself as above the law.

"We have always said that Rahul Gandhi started considering himself above law and some people from his party also asked why is he not getting special status?" said Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal.

The sessions court's rejection of the plea also makes it clear that Rahul's disqualification from Lok Sabha membership will also continue and will remain barred from contesting elections for eight years. The Election Commission may now also be prompted to announce byelection to Wayanad, Rahul's former Lok Sabha constituency in Kerala.

कार्यालय नगर परिषद पथरिया जिला दमोह

क./लोक निर्माण/निविदा/2023/16 पथरिया दिनांक 17.04.2023

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

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छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.)

|| सर्व संबंधित को सूचना ||

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स महावीर कोल वॉशरीज प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, ग्राम-भेलाई, तहसील-बलोदा, जिला - जांजीर-चांपा (छ.ग.) द्वारा कुल क्षेत्रफल - 19.53 एकड़ में संचालित कोल वॉशरी क्षमता- 0.96 मिलियन टन प्रतिवर्ष से 2.48 मिलियन टन प्रतिवर्ष के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृत हेतु लोक सुनवाई बाबत छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त प्रस्तावित परियोजना के संबंध में आपत्ति / सुझाव / टीका-टिप्पणी इस अधिसूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के अंदर क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छ.ग. पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, बिलासपुर के कार्यालय में मौखिक अथवा लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजना के लिए लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 24/05/2023 को समय प्रातः 11:00 बजे स्थान - शासकीय प्राथमिक शाला झर्राडीह, ग्राम पंचायत भेलाई तहसील - बलोदा, जिला- जांजीर-चांपा (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। यह भी सूचित हो कि लोक सुनवाई के दौरान भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, वायु विंग, जोशबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, मुख्य वन संरक्षक, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, अरण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला - रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।

ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथासंशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार डाफ्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट कार्यालयकक्षार की प्रति (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसकी सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन / पठन हेतु कार्यालय कलेक्टर जिला-जांजीर-चांपा, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, कार्यालय जिला पंचायत जांजीर, जिला-जांजीर-चांपा अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कार्यालय अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.) जांजीर, जिला-जांजीर-चांपा, महाप्रबंधक, कार्यालय जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र चांपा, जिला-जांजीर-चांपा क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यापार विहार पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय पार्क के पास, बिलासपुर, सरपंच / सचिव कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत- भेलाई, बिराहनी, मोहदा, चारपाया एवं मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी, नगर पंचायत बलोदा, तहसील-बलोदा, जिला- जांजीर-चांपा (छ.ग.), डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन, मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, वायु विंग, जोशबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, मुख्य वन संरक्षक, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, अरण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला - रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।

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

Inspired by Buddha...

From Page 1
Modi asserted inspired by the teachings of Lord Buddha, India is taking new initiatives for global welfare," he said, asserting that India has been following the path shown by the Buddha and cited the country extending help to others, including Turkey after it was hit by an earthquake, to say that it has treated every human being's pain as its own.

"Challenges to solutions is the journey of the Buddha (samasya se samadhan). The Buddha didn't leave his palace because He was in discomfort, He left because he saw and felt the pain of others," he said at the

summit being organised by the Union Ministry of Culture in collaboration with International Buddhist Confederation (IBC). Modi recalled his speech at the United Nations a few years ago where he said, "India didn't give war to the world, it gave the Buddha" and said the summit will provide an "effective platform" for putting together efforts of all countries in direction of achieving a peaceful and prosperous world while fostering sustainability. Platforms like IBC are giving the opportunity to "like-minded and like-hearted countries" to spread Buddha Dharma and peace," Modi said.

HC asks Google...

From Page 1
Justice C Hari Shankar said every child is entitled to be treated with honour and respect and dissemination of misleading information in respect of a child's health was "completely intolerable in law". The judge emphasised that Google was making money from the activities on YouTube and, therefore, besides ensuring compliance with the law, it also has a social responsibility to ensure such content is not shared on its platform.

"Although this is not the first time that such misinformation is being circulated for celebrities, when information relates to a child of tender age, it reflects morbid perversity on part of the persons circulating the video in complete apathy to the interest of the child," said the court as it stopped the uploaders from further publishing similar content with respect to the minor girl's health.

"Every child is entitled to be treated with honour and respect, be it the child of a celebrity or a common person. Circulating misinformation as regards physical and mental health of a child is something that is completely intolerable in law," it said. The court, in

the interim order, asked Google to disclose the details of the uploaders, including email and IP addresses, and clarified that similar videos, whenever brought to Google's notice by the plaintiff, shall also be taken down.

"You have a responsibility to see proper dissemination. You are providing a platform on which misinformation is being provided to the public. How can such a thing be tolerated?" the court told counsel for Google.

"YouTube does not run for charity. It is a profit making platform. If you are making money. You have a social responsibility. You can't allow your platform to run such kinds of videos," it said. Senior advocate Dayan Krishnan argued videos were available on YouTube making "fake claims" in relation to the 11-year-old child in violation of the intermediary rules as well as the right to privacy and intellectual property rights.

The plaintiffs, also represented by lawyers Pravin Anand and Ameet Naik, contended Google cannot be a "tacit onlooker" when rules cast a duty on intermediaries to undertake due diligence and make reasonable efforts to prevent invasion of privacy and content harmful to children.

SC releases UP ...

From Page 1
The matter was mentioned for urgent hearing before a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice P S Narasimha, which took it up on board. "Issue notice, returnable on April 28, 2023. Till the next date of listing, there shall be a stay of the operation of the orders of the division bench of the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad dated April 4, 2023 and April 19, 2023.

The officers of the Government of Uttar Pradesh, who have been taken into custody, shall be released forthwith," the bench said in its order, adding that registrar (judicial) of the apex court shall communicate the order both telephonically and on e-mail to the registrar general of the high court for immediate compliance. Later in the day, the Allahabad High Court ordered that the two officials be released.

Hearing a petition filed by the Association of Retired Supreme Court and HC Judges and another, the bench of Justice Suneeet Kumar and Justice Rajendra Kumar observed, "It is informed that the orders dated April 04, 2023 and April 19, 2023, passed by

this court have been stayed, till the next date of listing, by Supreme Court vide order dated April 20, 2023". The high court said, "Further, officers of the Uttar Pradesh Government who have been taken into custody shall be released forthwith." In its April 19 order, the high court had observed that having regard to the averments made in the affidavit and the conduct of the officers "suppressing material facts and misleading the court, prima facie, have committed criminal contempt of the court."

It had said the officers present in the court -- Shahid Manzar Abbas Rizvi, Secretary (Finance) UP and Sarayu Prasad Mishra, Special Secretary (Finance) — were taken into custody and they shall be produced before the court on April 20 at 11 am for framing of charge. "Issue bailable warrants to chief secretary, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, and Dr Prashant Trivedi, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) UP, Lucknow, through the chief judicial magistrate concerned, to ensure their presence before this court on April 20, 2023," the high court had said, adding the officers shall show cause as to why charge may not be framed against them.

Assam, Arunachal ink historic pact to resolve intractable...

From Page 1
Arunachal Pradesh, which was made a Union Territory in 1972, has been maintaining that several forested tracts in the plains traditionally belonged to hill tribal chiefs and communities and these were "unilaterally" transferred to Assam earlier.

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have inked a historic pact to resolve intractable border issues. The agreement, signed in Imphal, states that the two states will resolve their long-standing border disputes through mutual dialogue and cooperation. The pact also includes provisions for joint development projects and improved trade relations between the two states.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ Loan Account Number & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Shweta., Salvir, Arya Nagar, Nagar Palwal, Faridabad- 121102. A/c No- LBFDB00006283397, LBP1LW00006244731	Khwat Khata, No-115/120, Killa No-18 (2-11) Mauza Fazalpur Nayagaon Palwal- 121102	04/03/2023 Rs.1,13,337/- Rs.44,74,292/-	28/12/2022
2.	Ashutosh Yadav, Narendar Kumar Yadav, House No. 553 Sec 14 Haryana Gurgaon- 122001. A/c No- LBGUR00004863716, LBGUR00004858678	Plot No-304, Huda Sector-1 Part -1 Narnaul Complex Haryana Rewari- 123401	04/03/2023 Rs.29,30,718/- Rs.15,56,028/-	11/10/2022

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

Date : April 21, 2023
Place : Delhi/INCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Bilawal to attend SCO meet..

From Page 1
She said the Pakistan Foreign Minister would be attending the meeting as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had invited him to attend the SCO meet.

"Our participation in the meeting reflects Pakistan's commitment to the SCO Charter and processes and the importance that Pakistan accords to the region in its foreign policy priorities," Baloch said. "It will not be appropriate to focus on a particular member," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson

Arindam Bagchi said on participation of Pakistan in SCO Foreign Ministers' meet. He also said it is premature to say bilateral meeting between Zardari and Jaishankar may take place on the sidelines of the SCO conclave. Meanwhile, it would be the highest-level visit to India by any Pakistani leader in recent years and a possible opportunity to break the ice between the two nations. The ties between India and Pakistan came under severe strain after India's warplanes pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist

training camp in Pakistan's Balakot in February 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack.

The relations further deteriorated after India announced the withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special powers and the bifurcation of the erstwhile State into Union territories in August 2019. India has been maintaining that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment free of terror and hostility for such an engagement.

Rain brings respite from heatwave in Delhi-NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Many parts of the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) on Thursday evening received light rain that was accompanied by thunderstorms, bringing some respite from the persistent heatwave condition in the region. Hailstorms were also reported from parts of the city. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted rains in Delhi-NCR for the next three days.

The weather department has earlier predicted hailstorm at isolated places in Delhi during the day. It also said that the skies are expected to be partly cloudy for the next few days.

"A western disturbance is en route to Delhi-NCR." On the 18th, no significant activity is forecast throughout the day, but light rain or drizzle is possible at night.

"Thunderstorms and light rain are forecast on the 19th, with some effect possible on the 20th," IMD scientist Kuldeep Srivastava said.

Delhi Rains trend on Twitter with the beautiful visuals shared by users experienc-



ing the weather. Many captured the Delhi rain showers on their phones and shared them online. While some shared videos of rain and hail, foodies told others what they were munching to make the most of the lovely weather. A few also noted that they heard thunders.

The weather department has predicted hailstorms at isolated places in Delhi during the day. It also said that the skies are expected to be partly cloudy for the next few days. Greater Noida and parts of Gurugram are likely to witness rain and thunderstorm along with moderate winds, a meteorologist from Skymet Weather Services Mahesh Palawat said.

On Thursday, the maximum temperature settled at

36.3 degrees Celsius, one notch below the normal, while the minimum was recorded at 23.4 degrees Celsius, two notches above the season's average, according to an India Meteorological Department (IMD) bulletin. The relative humidity at 5.30 pm was 33 per cent, the bulletin said.

The air quality was recorded in the moderate category with an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 159, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data showed.

According to the CPCB, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

DDA draws lots for rehabilitation of 1K Jailorwala Bagh JJ dwellers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has conducted a draw of lots for 1,093 households for rehabilitation of dwellers of a JJ cluster at Jailorwala Bagh area, as part of in situ rehabilitation project. According to officials, the draw was conducted on Wednesday.

"The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) conducted a draw of lots for 1,093 households for rehabilitation of JJ dwellers of Jailorwala Bagh, Ashok Vihar as part of in situ rehabilitation project," the DDA said.

In situ, slum rehabilitation of 376 Jhuggi Jhopri clusters is being undertaken by the DDA.

The objective of the rehabilitation project is to provide a better and healthy living environment to the residents of JJ clusters, with proper amenities and facilities, officials said.

At the Jailorwala Bagh site, 1,675 EWS flats of 400 sqft (424.1 sqft, including circulation area) are likely to be ready for possession by July 31. The total cost of construction incurred by DDA on the project is Rs 421.81 crore, it said in a statement. The eligible



families will have to pay Rs 1.71 lakh (Rs 1,41,000 as a beneficiary contribution of the flat + Rs 30,000 as a maintenance charge for five years).

The DDA shall be subsidising each flat by an amount of approximately Rs 24 lakh, the DDA said. Each flat comprises two rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, a toilet and a balcony with all the civic amenities with a covered area of 400 sqft (424.1 sqft, including circulation area).

The construction of the flats has been done using the latest MIVAN technology where all components of the buildings are made of concrete, it said. In each tower, there is an open recreational space on the eighth floor. There are community facilities in Tower C like community halls, four

shops, Anganwadi, a classroom, a doctor's clinic, children's daycare centre. There is a provision of lifts in each tower, officials said.

A basement area measuring 11,024 sqm has been constructed for parking. In addition, there is a provision for surface parking, they said. Ample green spaces measuring 9257.70 sqm have been provided within the project site. There is a provision for STP which is based on MBBR (moving bed biofilm reactor) technology, the statement said.

There is a triple water supply system; potable water shall be provided by the Delhi Jal Board. Non-potable water requirements shall be met by treated underground water and treated water from Sewage Treatment Plant, it added.

LG reviews progress of bio-mining, disposal of legacy waste at landfill sites



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena reviewed the progress of works on bio-mining and disposal of legacy waste at the three landfill sites of MCD at Okhla, Ghazipur and Bhalswa. The meeting was attended by senior officials of MCD and the Delhi Government.

Legacy waste that include Inert, C&D and RDE at the 03 sites that was being disposed at the rate of 1.41 Lakh MT / month in June, 2022 went up to 6 Lakh MT / month by November, 2022 and is currently being bio-mined at a rate of 7.5 - 8 Lakh MT / month

with daily remediation figures touching 25,000-26,500 MT / day.

Setting a goal of disposing 12 Lakh MT / month, the L-G instructed that concessionaires be encouraged and directed to achieve their total capacity of 10,800 MT / day at Bhalswa, 21,000 MT / day at Okhla and 6,800 MT / day at Ghazipur. This will result in a monthly disposal of 11.40 Lakh MT / month, the L-G underlined.

He further observed that while works at Bhalswa and Okhla were going on in a satisfactory manner, those at Ghazipur were lagging. He instructed officials to get the same rectified at the earliest.

Transport dept to set up AI-powered cameras at entry points to Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi transport department will soon set up artificial intelligence-powered cameras at entry points to the national capital to check traffic violations, including those of pollution control norms. "Not only pollution control, but these cameras will also detect other offences. One of the cameras will read number plates and the system will identify the vehicle's owner and also generate other details. It will detect whether the vehicle has a valid PUC and if not, the diver will get an e-challan," an official said.

"The data will be integrated with the e-challan system. There are also plans to integrate this with the environmental compensation cess collected by the MCD on behalf of the Delhi government. The cess is collected from commercial vehicles entering Delhi," he said, adding the move will also reduce manual intervention.

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot held a meeting Wednesday over this. In a tweet in Hindi, he said, "To ensure lane enforcement in Delhi, under the able leadership of CM @ArvindKejriwal ji,



the Delhi government will use smart measures like AI-enabled cameras etc. Today, a meeting with the agencies was held to ensure lane driving and road safety in Delhi."

According to sources, the minister has asked officials to firm up a plan and come up with a proposal. "The cameras will also be used to check lane enforcement of buses. They will detect whether vehicles are plying in bus lanes or being parked in them. They will also help in detection of other offences," the source added.

The department is likely to float a tender for the ambitious project in one-and-a-half months, an official said, adding, "We are drafting the tender document and finalising the details. The cameras are likely to be installed at 13 main entry points of Delhi and NDMC entry points."

Atishi checks Bhairon Marg underpass work

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi PWD Minister Atishi on Thursday inspected the under construction underpass between Bhairon Marg and Ring Road.

In order to decongest traffic on the Ring Road, the Delhi government is constructing an underpass between Bhairon Marg and Ring Road. This will benefit the thousands of commuters moving towards and from Sarai Kale Khan, Akshardham, and Noida every day.

While inspecting the progress of the work, PWD Minister Atishi said, "Construction of this underpass on Ring Road at Pragati Maidan is a magnificent example of modern engineering. Constructing this underpass underneath a busy railway line was a challenging task, but our PWD engineers proved their readiness to tackle every challenge. Such projects prove that despite various challenges on the ground, the Kejriwal Government's PWD department is determined to make Delhi roads traffic jam free."

The minister said that the PWD has adopted a very unique engineering model to construct this underpass. For the first time in the country, this engineering technique of



box pushing is being used on such a large scale, which shows that our PWD is always ready to face new challenges and come up with unique solutions."

According to PWD officials constructing this underpass is a big engineering challenge in itself. A part of the underpass is located underneath a very busy railway line where about 120 trains pass daily. Construction work cannot be done in conjunction with the active railway corridor that is regularly used for trains. Therefore, PWD is only able to work here for 4-5 hours daily. This includes 3-4 hours for removing and fixing the railway line, and the remaining time is spent by PWD moving 1400-tonnes concrete blocks underneath the railway line to make the tunnel.

The railway line is at a

height of 9 metres from the ground. The concrete block is moved 30 cm daily by using 6000 horsepower hydraulic machines to prevent the railway line from sinking during the work.

After sliding the concrete block, the soil present there is removed. Only after this, the work of box pushing can start again the next day. Here the engineers shared that the technique of box pushing was used earlier as well but this work is being done on such a large scale for the first time in the country.

"Here, another big challenge is that the Yamuna River is very close to the underpass, which makes it difficult to work here. But despite facing these challenges, the engineers at PWD have found the solution to this challenge too," officials added.

Delhi Govt released ₹400 crore to develop MCD-run schools: Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday released Rs 400 crore for the development of MCD-run schools. The Delhi government has allocated Rs. 1,700 crores under the grant-in-aid scheme for the MCD schools this year.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi Education Minister Atishi along with Delhi Mayor Dr Shelly Oberoi said MCD funds have been increased to Rs 1700 crore and today we are releasing Rs 400 crore." They shared that the Kejriwal government will transform MCD schools on the lines of Delhi government schools. "Education has always been the priority of the Delhi government. It has always allocated a major chunk of the budget for education. "Our main aim is to make MCD schools better," Atishi said.

Atishi said that the education system of Delhi has been facing a crisis because government schools that provide education from Class 1-5 come under MCD. "Due to the lack of facilities and a conducive learning environment there, when students from MCD schools are admitted to Delhi government schools



they often fall behind. They lack basic foundational skills," she said.

Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi noted that the AAP dispensation in the city government has always focused on education, following the ideologies of Dr BR Ambedkar.

There are around 1,500 schools within MCD's jurisdiction, with nearly 9 lakh children and approximately 19,000 teachers. She stated that when they visited the MCD schools, they found that most of the schools were in very poor condition and

required major and minor repairs. There are some MCD schools that require the construction of new classrooms, while others could not complete their construction work due to a lack of funds. In such a situation these funds released by the Delhi government will be extremely helpful.

"MCD schools need a lot of development in infrastructure and manpower. To ensure these issues are addressed, the Delhi government has allocated a huge budget to the MCD schools," she said.

₹50 cr looted from Govt exchequer by illegal Ayurveda panel: Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming it another scam in the AAP led Arvind Kejriwal government, the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Thursday alleged that an illegal panel of some Ayurveda institutions continued to work for a year and Rs 50 crore was looted from the government exchequer in connivance with the officials. The BJP leader linked this scam with the former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and former Health Minister Dr. Satyendar Jain. Both Sisodia and Jain are currently in Jail. In a letter to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, the BJP leader has requested to order an inquiry into this entire scam to find out how the government exchequer was looted in the name of Ayurveda in Delhi and even after scrapping the panels by the central government.

According to Bidhuri, the Central Government had started a pilot project in April 2021 to provide Ayurveda medicines to the beneficiaries of CGHS. For this, a panel of 23 Ayurveda institutions was formed. It was clearly stated that this panel is being made only on a trial basis for one year. The Director General of Health Services (DGEHS) Government of Delhi also recognized this panel as an AYUSH Health Care Institution for OPD and IPD.



It was also stated by the Director that since these institutions have been recognized in the CGHS of the Central Government, therefore only those institutions which are in the CGHS panel have been kept in this panel.

Bidhuri said that since the Central Government had made this panel only for one year, then by a notification on March 31, 2022, this panel was scrapped, and it was not renewed.

"The strategy of this entire rigging was conceptualized by Dr. Neeraj Kumar, Senior Medical Officer, who is very close to former Health Ministers Dr. Satyendar Jain and Manish Sisodia. This panel continued to be recognized for one year? During this, how many crores of rupees were paid by the government to these institutions? What was the share of Aam Aadmi Party leaders in this payment and who all are involved in this whole scam?" Bidhuri said.

"The surprising thing is

that even after the panel was abolished by the Centre, the DGEHS of the Delhi Government did not abolish this panel and continued to give benefits to these 23 Ayurveda institutions and their bills of crores continued to pass.

"When some other Ayurveda institutions also applied during this time, they were told that since they are not on the panel of CGHS, they cannot be given this benefit, but no one has the answer that when the panel of CGHS was over by 31 March 2022, then how did the DGEHS of Delhi Government keep this panel restored. No office order was even issued for this," he said.

He said that when the secrets of this rigging of the Health Department of the Delhi Government started to open, then suddenly an order was issued on March 10, 2023, and it was said that this panel is being abolished from March 13.

4th runway at IGIA in Sept

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The fourth runway at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport will become operational in September. Once operational, the fourth runway will not only increase the per hour flight handling capacity of the Delhi airport, but will also cut down the waiting time for approaching and departing flights. This will be only Indian airport to have four runways.

"September 2023 will be witness to Delhi airport getting a new terminal and the fourth runway becoming operational. The Indian aviation sector is growing rapidly and we are preparing for better infrastructure and better connectivity with a renewed focus on innovation," Union Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Bansal said on Thursday. The aviation secretary made the comments at the EU-India Aviation Summit, which began on Thursday.

According to officials familiar with the development, the fourth runway is expected to be around 4,400 metres long and 75 metres wide. It is slightly smaller than the third runway (known as 29/11). "The fourth runway is expected to ease the pressure of a likely rise in flight operations. The new runway will considerably cut the waiting time for flights to land and take off," an official said.

The new runway will be equipped with advanced landing systems allowing flight operations in visibility as low



as 50 metres. The strip will be capable of catering to the biggest passenger aircraft, the Airbus A380. The fourth runway will also have instrument landing systems at both its ends to allow compatible aircraft to land even when the visibility is as low as 50 metres during dense fog. "This will also make Delhi airport the only one in the country to have three runways with advanced landing system," the officer added.

The new runway is part of Phase III-A of the Delhi airport's expansion plan. The original deadline for the plan was mid-to-end 2022.

DIAL (Delhi International Airport Limited), a joint venture majority-owned by the GMR Group, had in 2019 announced an investment of Rs 9,800 crore to upgrade the existing Terminal 1, build a fourth runway and for other

development works to increase the airport's capacity to 100 million passengers a year from 66 million now. The work on the runway was affected due to the coronavirus, the official said.

Delhi airport at present is undergoing expansion to attain a passenger handling capacity of up to 140 million per year. The current capacity of the airport is of around 100 million passengers.

As planned, apart from the fourth runway, the revamped airport will have a first of its kind dual elevated cross taxiway which would help in reducing the taxiing time of aircraft. Terminal 1, which is at present closed for operations, is also being expanded and its total area will increase taking its passenger handling capacity from 20 million passengers per year to 40 million.

Delhi Zoo shows off its white tiger cubs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Visitors at the National Zoological Park, popularly known as Delhi Zoo in the national Capital can now take delight in watching eight-month-old two white tiger cubs which were released by Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav into the enclosure arena of the big cats on Thursday. Soon after their release, the cubs could be seen playfully frolicking as they tag behind their mother. Yadav has named the female cub 'Avani', meaning earth and the male cub 'Vyom', which means universe. Until now, these were kept in a shelter during the night and in a side kraal with their mother during the day.



INBRIEF

DCAC ORGANISES VYAPAAR E-SUMMIT

New Delhi: The Delhi College of Arts and Commerce (DCAC), Delhi University on Thursday organised a Vyapaar E-Summit. Speakers at the event were Bharat Bhushan, the chief visionary of the Samarth Bharat Career Development Centre, Ramesh Agarwal, the head of Agarwal Packers and Movers and Navratan Aggarwal, director of Bikanervala foods. Professor Abhay Kumar Dubey, chairman of the Governing Body of DCAC in his brief address established a link between colonial education and the aspiration for salaried jobs. Principal of the college, Professor Rajiv Chopra also motivated students to be more innovative and entrepreneurial.

FLYING SQUAD BUSTS ILLEGAL G'GRAM HOSPITAL

Gurugram: A joint team of the CM Flying Squad and Health Department on Thursday busted a hospital that was functioning illegally at village Bajghera here in Gurugram. The hospital 'Anand' was being run by four persons. The hospital has 13 beds, an operation theatre, a general ward, a private room, a lab, medicines and an emergency room. DSP Inderjeet Yadav said, the CM Flying Squad received a tip-off that a private hospital was being run illegally in the village Bajghera. The squad, along with the officials of the Health Department, conducted a raid at the hospital.

Heatwave impact: 90% of India in danger zone, says study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Painting a scary picture of what is in store in the near future as heatwaves become intense, and a routine feature in India, a study has said that nearly 90 per cent of the country is in the "danger zone" of heatwave impact and almost all of Delhi is at risk of severe heatwave impacts, which is not reflected in its recent State action plan for climate change.

The researchers at the University of Cambridge reported in PLOS Climate explained that though, India currently uses a national

Climate Vulnerability Indicator (CVI) to measure climate vulnerability and make plans for adaptation, it doesn't have a physical risk indicator for heatwaves, which is a key missing factor that would help policy-makers consider how extreme heat actually impacts the Indian population.

The new study is the first to include a "heat index" to measure the recurring impacts of Indian heatwaves on the country's population. The index measures how hot the human body feels relative to the surrounding conditions when humidity and air temperature



The IMD has already

sounded an alarm saying that most parts of India are likely to see above-normal maximum temperatures from April to June.

The researchers also analysed that India's global ranking according to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (SDGs) has gone down in the last 20 years because it hasn't met the goals for 11 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, all of which were very important for SDG 13 (Climate Action).

The study which comes close on the heels of an analy-

sis by the Centre for Policy Research of India's Heat Action Plans (HAPs) suggests that the CVI underestimates the main risks and threats of heatwaves to the Indian population because it does not include any kind of heat stress measure. This missing element also makes it harder to identify areas of the country, like Delhi and other larger urban areas that are most vulnerable.

"So, we could figure out how extreme heat really affects people and in which parts of the country," said first author Dr Ramit Debnath, Cambridge Zero Fellow at the University of

Cambridge. "A heat stress measure which identifies the impacts and the parts of India where the population is most vulnerable to recurring heat waves would help to make state Heat Action Plans being created across India more effective."

Some of those unidentified areas at the intersection of climate extremes and non-climate, structural and social-economic factors (shown by SDGs) may also be at risk of increased vulnerability to the impacts of extreme heat.

Researchers used publicly available data on state-level

climate vulnerability indicators from the Indian Government's National Data & Analytics Platform to classify severity categories. They then compared India's progress on its SDGs over 20 years (2001-2021) with extreme weather-related deaths during the 20-year period from 2001-2021.

The CPR in its HAPs analysis noted that most of them are not built for local contexts, not suited to the risks faced by local populations while many were underfunded, have weak legal foundations and also insufficiently transparent.

IN BRIEF

IAF TO PARTICIPATE IN EXERCISE INIOCHOS-23
New Delhi: The Indian Air Force (IAF) will participate in Exercise INIOCHOS-23, a multi-national air exercise hosted by the Hellenic Air Force. The exercise will be conducted at the Andriada Air Base in Greece from April 24 to May four. The Indian Air Force will deploy four SU-30 MKI and two C-17 aircraft. Giving details of the exercise, IAF officials said here on Thursday the objective of the exercise is to enhance international cooperation, synergy and interoperability amongst the participating Air Forces.



RAJNATH TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID, ADVISED REST
New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has tested positive for COVID-19. He was scheduled to attend the Indian Air Force Commanders' Conference in New Delhi on Thursday but had to skip it after being tested positive for the virus, the defence ministry said here on Thursday. It also said Rajnath is currently under home quarantine with mild symptoms. A team of doctors examined him and has advised him rest.

Covid led to backsliding on children's vaccinations: UNICEF

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-19 may have mysteriously spared kids from severe infection but it led to major backsliding on childhood vaccinations as has been revealed by a new UNICEF report released on Thursday. It warned that India is home to about 2.7 million of the world's zero-dose children despite it being among only three countries out of 55 where the perception of the importance of vaccines held firm or improved after the pandemic. Zero-dose children are those who have not received a single routine vaccine.

On a positive note, The UNICEF's "The State of the World's Children - 2023" said that nevertheless, India was



able to arrest the backslide between 2020 and 2021 to bring the number of zero-dose children down to 2.7 million thanks to unwavering political commitment and sustained evidence-based catch-up campaigns initiated by the government, including the fourth Intensified Mission

Indradhanush (IMI) and its continued provision of comprehensive Primary Health Care services.

Flagging concerns about potential polio and measles outbreaks, the report warned that 67 million children across the globe missed out on vaccinations between 2019 and

2021 with the coverage levels declining in 112 countries. In 2022, the number of children paralysed by polio was up 16 per cent on-year in 2022. Of the 67 million children whose vaccinations were "severely disrupted," 48 million missed out on routine vaccines entirely.

When comparing the 2019-to-2021 period with the previous three-year block, there was an eight-fold increase in the number of children paralysed by polio, highlighting the need to ensure sustained vaccination efforts.

"This data is a worrying warning signal. We cannot

allow confidence in routine immunizations to become another victim of the pandemic.

"Otherwise, the next wave of deaths could be of more children with measles, diphtheria or other preventable diseases," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell.

"For every child, vaccination reveals the perception of the importance of vaccines for children declined by more than a third in South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Ghana, Senegal and Japan after the start of the pandemic," the UNICEF report said. In the new data -- collected by The Vaccine Confidence Project and published by UNICEF -- China, India and Mexico were

the only countries studied where the data indicated that the perception of the importance of vaccines held firm or even improved.

The report said that vaccine confidence is volatile and time specific despite more than 80 per cent of the respondents perceived vaccines as important for children in almost half of the 55 countries studied.

However, the report warns that the confluence of several factors suggests the threat of vaccine hesitancy may be growing. These factors include uncertainty about the response to the pandemic, growing access to misleading information, declining trust in expertise and political polarisation.

US assisting India to develop own defence industrial base

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

In an effort to strengthen India's capabilities to meet any challenge from China, the US is providing assistance to its critical partner India and develop its own defence industrial base. Moreover, New Delhi and Washington face the same security challenge from Beijing in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region.

Making this assertion, Admiral John Christopher Aquilino, commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, also said "we value our partnership with India, and we've been increasing it and doing a lot more, over time. They have the same security challenge, primary security challenge that we do, and it's real on their northern border."

He told this to members of the House Armed Services Committee during a hearing on Indo-Pacific National Security Challenges late Wednesday in Washington.

The top commander said the US is providing assistance to its critical partner India to enhance capabilities that it



might need to defend its border with China and also develop its own defence industrial base.

"Two skirmishes now in over the past nine or 10 months on that border, as they continue to get pressurised by the PRC (People's Republic of China) for border gains," Admiral Aquilino said.

He was responding to a question from Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna.

"I would like you to reflect on the importance of the relationship -- postcolonialism India and China had a relationship to emerge as the Asian voice. But that relationship now has really soured with a concern that there should not be a hegemon in Asia and that

Centre to focus on capacity-building of young officers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said the Government's focus is on capacity building of officers still having 25 years of service as they can devote their full energy and capability to the making of India at 2047.

Addressing the inaugural session of 16th Civil Services Day at Vigyan Bhawan, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said that the Government believes in the mantra of "maximum governance, minimum government" given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi where the Government acts as a facilitator and not an intimidator.

"When we talk of a government like this it means increased transparency, increased accountability and most of all increased citizen participation," said the minister of state for personnel.

While Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar too addressed the gathering, PM Modi would be addressing the nation on the Civil Services Day and conferring the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2022, on Friday.

After Shettar, Savadi exit, BJP plans a Lingayat as K'taka CM

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP is contemplating to project 'next Karnataka Chief Minister' from the Lingayat community after the exit of prominent Lingayat leaders -- former Chief Minister Jagdish Shettar, ex-deputy-CM Laxman Savadi -- from the party has led the Congress to build a 'narrative' that the saffron party has turned "anti-Lingayat." Congress campaign committee chief M B Patil, a Lingayat himself, has claimed that the Lingayat tide is turning in favour of the Congress "after a long period" and he anticipates "beginning of home coming of Lingayats".

The BJP's Lingayat leaders this week held a meeting with the community's strongman and former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa's residence at Bengaluru to counter the Congress claim to the most dominant community in the state. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan who is Karnataka's election-in-charge for the BJP has also understood to have attended the meeting and said to have taken note of "suggestions" for projecting a



"Lingayat CM" to the central leadership.

Chief Minister Basavraj Bommai, also a Lingayat, questioned the Congress claim to the community saying that in last 50 years since 1967, the Congress has not made a Lingayat a Chief Minister except for the nine-month tenure of Veerendra Patil.

The denial of tickets to Shettar and Savadi by the BJP and their joining the Congress has given the latter a political opportunity to put the BJP on a back-foot and also point to the Yediyurappa's "forced resignation", last year, by the BJP high command. Shettar and Savadi has political influence in the Northern Karnataka and Congress is using them in most of the assembly segments of the region.

ED cracks down on illegal forex platform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached movable/immovable properties worth Rs 34.75 crore in connection with investigation of illegal forex trading platform OctaFx, its related entities and others under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The attachment is in the form of bank balances, cryptocurrencies, vehicles, gold coins, and cash. The ED had initiated investigation on the basis of FIR registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and MPID Act by Pune Police. Further, the RBI has also issued an Alert List of unauthorised entities where-in the name of OctaFx (www.octafx.com) and www.octafx.com is reflecting, the agency said in a statement.

The ED investigation has revealed that the online trading app and website are operating in India in association with India base entity OctaFx India Pvt. Ltd. This forex trading platform is widely promoted on social networking sites and is also following referral-based incentive models for acquiring users to its platforms.

Jaishankar to meet UN Secretary General in NY to discuss Sudan situation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As situation remains tense in strife-torn Sudan causing concern about safety of Indian nationals there, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is expected to meet United Nations Secretary General António Guterres in New York. Moreover, some plans are being worked out on evacuating Indians from Sudan but it will depend on ground situation, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Thursday.

In a related development, Jaishankar discussed the situation in Sudan with the Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. "Deeply value his assessments and insights, as also his very helpful attitude. Agreed to remain in close touch," he tweeted. Earlier, Jaishankar early Wednesday talked to his counterparts of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the issue.

Elaborating upon the current position in Sudan, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here on Thursday the ground situation in Sudan is very "tense" and India is in



touch with various countries with a key focus on ensuring the safety of Indians in the violence-hit country. He also said New Delhi is keeping a close watch on developments in Sudan adding the safety and security of the Indians is our key focus.

Bagchi also said Jaishankar is expected to meet the UN Secretary-General in New York on the situation in Sudan. Asked whether India is looking at evacuating the Indians in Sudan, he said some plans are being worked out but it will depend on the ground situation.

He also said the Indian embassy in Khartoum is open, functioning and rendering all services with officials working from separate locations. Nobody is inside the Embassy building right now, Bagchi said.

Audits vital due to impact on Govt functioning, says CAG Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) Girish Chandra Murmu has said audit reports have assumed immense importance as they induced action from the executive by way of design improvements, mid-course corrections, strengthening systems and even review of certain policies.

Murmu while delivering a keynote speech on 'Audit impact - the Indian perspective' at IMPACT 2023 in Canberra (Australia) shared a few experiences wherein audit findings had a distinctly visible impact on executive functioning.

He further said that all business processes in India were now fully digitised, and the entire audit cycle was being operated through the OIOS (One IA&AD One System), an end-to-end audit process and knowledge management system for the institution.

He underlined the role of audit as a catalyst to good governance, promoting accountability, transparency, and efficient and effective functioning of organisations and government.

RS may be known as 'house of elders', but LS 'elder brother': Dhankhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said the Rajya Sabha may be known as House of Elders, but the Lok Sabha is the "elder brother" as it gets to decide who will be the prime minister of the country and also holds the key to the treasury. Dhankhar made the remark at an event to celebrate the Rajya Sabha Day here. Rajya Sabha came into being on April 3, 1952. Its first sitting was held on May 13, 1952. Dhankhar, who is also the Rajya Sabha Chairman, cited provisions of the Constitution to say Parliament comprises the President, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

"We are one. At times, things come up -- Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha. This is what happened in Lok Sabha, this is what happened in Rajya Sabha

... Employees. We are the House of Elders, we are the upper house. But they (Lok Sabha) are the elder brother," he said, while pointing towards the Lok Sabha Secretary General.

"Who'll be the prime minister of the country, they get to decide. They hold the key to the treasury (the Consolidated Fund of India)," he said. He also praised Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, saying he is matchless.

Dhankhar said the roles of the two Houses have been decided by the framers of the Constitution. Speaking during the event on Thursday, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson Hariharan said Parliament is an organic body which has to change with changing times. Dhankhar suggested that Rajya Sabha employees tour various parts of the country in groups for which the secretariat will offer help.

India, Thailand review bilateral defence ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Thailand on Thursday reviewed their bilateral defence ties and identified means to enhance defence industry, maritime security and multinational cooperation during the 8th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue in Bangkok.

Giving details of the meeting, defence ministry officials said here, the dialogue was co-chaired by Special Secretary, Ministry of Defence, India Nivedita Shukla Verma and Deputy Permanent Secretary for Defence of Ministry of Defence, Thailand General Nuchit Sribunsong. During the meeting, both sides expressed satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries.

The progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives was reviewed. The co-chairs identified means to enhance existing areas of collaboration, especially in the field of defence industry, maritime security and multinational cooperation. Thailand expressed confidence in the capability of Indian defence industry. The two chairs also articulated steps in the direction of emerging areas of cooperation and issues pertaining to global commons.

NIA chargesheets six accused in Coimbatore car bomb blast case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday filed a chargesheet against six accused persons in the Coimbatore car bomb blast case.

An explosion had taken place at an ancient temple "Arulmigu Kottai Sangameswarar Thirukovil" at Eswaran Kovil Street, Ukkadam, Coimbatore in October last year. A vehicle-borne Improvised Explosives Device (VB-IED) driven by Jamesha Mubeen had blown up in front of the temple. Mubeen was killed in the blast.

"Investigations had revealed Mubeen was inspired by ISIS ideology to carry out this attack. He had also taken 'bayath' or oath of allegiance to its self-proclaimed Caliph Abu-al-Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi," the NIA said in a statement.

The NIA re-registered the case on October 27, 2022 and took up the investigation.

A pen drive recovered from Mohammed Asarutheen contained video recordings of Jamesha Mubeen, where he had identified himself as a member of Daulat-e-Islamia



(or Islamic State). He had spoken extensively on his intention to commit a suicide terror attack against the 'kafirs' (non-believers) and to become a martyr, the agency said.

Mubeen was inspired by the bayans (sermons) of Zahran Hashim, a radical Islamic cleric of Sri Lanka, who masterminded the Easter serial suicide bomb attacks in 2019 killing around 260 people. Mubeen wanted to orchestrate a similar kind of attack against the 'kafirs' in India, it said.

Handwritten notes were recovered from Mubeen's residence wherein criticism of the existing democratic system, which is not in tandem with Islamic laws, has been mentioned. There is also a mention of 'targets', including government office buildings, district court, public gathering places like parks, railway station, and a few other local temples are also mentioned in these notes.

Didi sues LoP over 'call to Shah' claim

Suvenu vows to dethrone Mamata as Bengal CM, or quit politics

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There was much ado about a couple of phone calls from Nabanna (Bengal State secretariat) to North Block. Fierce war of words continued in rural-polls-bound Bengal even as State Opposition Leader Suvenu Adhikari on Thursday vowed to quit politics if he failed to dethrone Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Referring to a legal notice from the Chief Minister seeking his apology for telling a public rally at Singur as to how Banerjee had publicly fouted the Home Minister but telephonically solicited his help to get the Trinamool Congress' national party' status restored the BJP leader said, "I have received a legal notice to prove my claim ... But I in turn challenge her to move



Suvenu Adhikari

the Court and then I will make TRAI and BSNL a party to the suit so that I can get her call details produced in the court ... this will prove whether she had called the Home Minister or not." His avowal came a day after the Chief Minister offered to quit her chair if Adhikari could prove his claim of Banerjee calling up the Home

Minister to help Election Commission of India's order derecognizing the TMC as a national party repealed. He also attacked the Chief Minister for using bad words against the Home Minister. Adhikari who earlier called the Chief Minister the "queen bee of the corruption beehive" said that the Chief Minister had no right to demand the Home Minister's resignation for his speeches from public rallies.

He was referring to Mamata Banerjee's remarks wondering how Shah being a holder of a constitutional post could talk of toppling a democratically elected State government. "The Home Minister had said in a rally at Birbhum that if the BJP could get 35 out of 42 parliamentary seats at the hustings then my government in Bengal will not last its full

term till 2026 ... it will fall way before that," Banerjee had said referring to Shah's Birbhum rally speech last week. "How can a Home Minister who holds a constitutional post can talk of toppling a democratically elected government ... I demand his resignation for making such unconstitutional remarks," Banerjee said on Monday. Adhikari on Thursday hit Banerjee back saying, "He has no right to

attack the Home Minister who was addressing a public rally and not using his office premises as she has often been doing to make political statements." And then he added, "I had challenged her and defeated her in the Assembly polls from Nandigram seat ... Now I promise to make her a former Chief Minister ... if I cannot dethrone her I will quit poli-

tics." He challenged her to move the Court against him. "I challenge her to move the Court as I still stick to my assertion that she had indeed called up the Home Minister between March 4 and April 12 ... Let her move the Court ... incidentally she should not forget that there are proceedings pending in Assam and Maharashtra ... if those proceedings are pursued then she would be in trouble," Adhikari said.

TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee promptly reacted to his statement saying his party would indeed move the Court. "We will make him suffer in court ... if he does not apologise for his lies he will face the consequence ... we will definitely take him to the court and no Bench no Judge will save him," he said.

Amid Opp's demand for JPC probe into Hindenburg-Adani report

Adani meets Pawar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Industrialist Gautam Adani met Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar at the latter's residence here on Thursday amid the Opposition's demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani-Hindenburg issue.

The meeting, held at Pawar's residence Silver Oak in south Mumbai this morning, lasted for nearly two hours, sources said. Earlier this month, Pawar had come out in support of the Adani group and criticised the narrative around the US short seller Hindenburg Research's report on the conglomerate.

Taking a position at variance from senior ally Congress, Pawar had said he favoured a Supreme Court committee to



probe allegations against the Adani group since the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would have a majority in the JPC based on numerical strength in Parliament and this would lead to doubts on such a probe.

The NCP supremo had later said although his outfit does not agree with the demand of anti-BJP parties for a JPC probe into allegations

against the Adani group, it will not go against their stand for the sake of Opposition unity. The Supreme Court had last month ordered the setting up of a six-member committee headed by a former apex court judge to look into various regulatory aspects for stock markets, including the recent Adani group shares crash triggered by Hindenburg Research's fraud allegations.

One-man panel to probe Kharghar heatstroke deaths

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid a clamour by the Opposition for a two-day special session of the State Legislature and an inquiry by a retired judge to fix responsibility for the Kharghar heatstroke deaths, the Maharashtra government on Thursday set up a one-member committee headed by a senior bureaucrat to look into the circumstances leading to the death of 14 persons after the "Maharashtra Bhushan award" ceremony on April 16.

After the State Congress and NCP - both the constituents of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) - wrote separately to Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais seeking a special session of the State Legislature and setting of a judicial probe to fix responsibility for the deaths, chief minister Eknath Shinde took to twitter to announce setting up of a one-member committee headed by an Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) to probe the 14 purported heatstroke deaths at Kharghar in Navi Mumbai. Shinde said that the Additional

chief secretary-headed committee would among other things look into the cause of the deaths and make recommendations to the state government on how to prevent such mishaps in future. The committee had been set a deadline of one month to submit its report to the state government.

The mishap took April 16 when at least 14 persons succumbed to heatstroke and dehydration and scores of others were hospitalised immediately after a public function organised at an open ground at Kharghar to honour the 'Maharashtra Bhushan-2022' Award to Dattatreya Narayan Dharmadhikari. Union Home Minister Amit Shah conferred the honour on social Appasaheb Dharmadhikari.

Held in the scorching heat, the public function began at 11 am and lasted for more than three hours. The temperature that prevailed at the ground at that time was 42 degrees C. There are conflicting versions about the circumstances leading to so many deaths. While one version is that 14 disciples of Appasaheb Dharmadhikari

died to heatstroke and dehydration, some eyewitnesses have attributed the deaths to a stampede that reportedly took place at the end of the function when the crowds were dispersing from the open ground. In all, nearly seven lakh followers of Appasaheb Dharmadhikari had turned out for the award ceremony.

In a letter written to the Governor, former Deputy Chief Minister and current leader of the Opposition Ajit Pawar of the NCP demanded that a case of culpable homicide not amounting to murders against those in the state government behind organising the event.

Pawar urged the Governor to appoint a retired judge to probe the lapses leading to the deaths at the Maharashtra Bhushan Award ceremony. He also requested the Governor to ask the state government to increase the compensation being paid to the next of kin of each of the deceased in the mishap from Rs 5 to lakh to Rs 20 lakh and to pay a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to each of persons hospitalised in the mishap.

Pamela Chopra dies at age of 74

Wife of Yash Chopra, Pamela was known for songs like 'Meri Banno ki aayegi baraat', 'Main sasural nahin jaongi'

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Noted playback singer of "Main sasural nahin jaongi" and "Meri Banno ki aayegi baraat" fame Pamela Chopra - widow of renowned yesteryear filmmaker Yash Chopra - died at the Lilavati Hospital here on Thursday.

Pamela Chopra nee Singh was 74 and is survived by two sons filmmaker Aditya and actor Uday. She had not been keeping well for the past few weeks. She had been admitted to the Lilavati Hospital a fortnight ago.

"With heavy hearts, the Chopra family would like to inform you that Pamela Chopra, 74, passed away this morning. Her cremation took place at 11 am today in Mumbai," the Chopra family said in a statement issued here.

The family requested "for privacy in this moment of deep sadness and reflection"



In this Monday, November 12, 2012, file photo, Bollywood actor Uday Chopra and his mother Pamela Chopra arrive for the premiere of 'Jab Tak Hai Jaan' in Mumbai. Pamela Chopra passed away on Thursday

and expressed gratitude to all for their prayers. Earlier in the day, Lyricist Javed Akhtar - confirming Pamela's death - tweeted: "Today Pam ji the better half of Shri Yash Chopra has passed away. She was a great lady. Intelligent, educated, warm and witty."

Those who like me have worked closely with Yash ji know about her contribution in his scripts and music. She was an exceptional person. Daughter of Indian Army officer Mohinder Singh and cousin of yesteryear actress Simi Garewal, Pamela married

filmmaker Yash Chopra in 1970. Yash Chopra, also a Dadasaheb Phalke Awardee, passed away in Mumbai in October 2012 at the age of 80 years, after he suffered from acute Dengue.

Though she was a writer and producer in her own right, Pamela was known for her playback singing in Hindi and Punjabi. She sang for many films including the popular ones made by her husband Yash Chopra like "Kabhi Kabhi" (1976), Mujse Dosti Karoge! (2002) and Trishul (1976).

Abhishek to go on Jan Yatra ahead of panchayat polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With volleys of corruption charges exploding one after the other in the ruling Trinamool Congress' face sending a number of MLAs, Ministers and functionaries to jail and causing its political TRP to cave in as never before the general secretary of the party Abhishek Banerjee has decided to embark on a Jan Sanyog Yatra (public relations march) and for the first time in the outfit's history to reach out to the people ahead of the coming panchayat elections.

During the two-month-long Yatra commencing April 25 would see Banerjee touching all the districts and blocks from Coochbehar in North Bengal to Ganga Sagar Islands in the southern part of the State meeting the people and seeking their opinion on their choice of candidates.

During the Yatra Banerjee, who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, will not return to Kolkata and stay in the villages, exchange and absorb the people's views, the TMC leader said.

"There will be no intermediary ... I will hold small block level meetings before holding discussions with the common man every day and seek their opinions ... there



will be secret ballot where they will provide the names of the candidates they prefer," Banerjee said adding "this type of democratization process is being undertaken for the first time in the history of Indian politics." The junior Banerjee's statement comes a day after the Chief Minister announced the party's plans for a public relations rally.

"The panchayat raj means people's government where the people are the biggest stakeholders and so their opinion should be of prime importance ... I will visit about 7,000 booths and try to understand their issues, their grudges and grievances and then take their opinions about the possible candidates ... there will be no centrally imposed candidate ... there will be no closed-door selection of the candidates this time round," Banerjee, whose party is facing massive alienation at the village level, said.

As Valmiki reserve nears capacity, Bihar to explore tigers' relocation

PTI ■ PATNA

The Bihar government will be exploring the possibility to relocate some tigers from the Valmiki reserve, the state's only national park, as it is nearing its capacity, an official said on Thursday.

The tiger population at the reserve in West Champaran district has substantially increased over the years and estimates suggest that it is over 50 now, Bihar's Chief Wildlife Warden PK Gupta told PTI.

"The photographs captured through camera traps and data collected manually have been sent to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Dehradun for final vetting," he said. "The final tiger estimates for 2022 (state-wise population of big cats) are likely to be available in two months. We are quite sure that the final

count at the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) will be more than 50," he added. The number of tigers at the reserve increased from eight in 2010 to 48 adults in 2021, Gupta said. "Besides, there are six sub-adults and eight cubs at the VTR, as per our estimation," he said.

Simultaneously, the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department has engaged inter-governmental agency Global Tiger Forum (GTF) to estimate the capacity of the reserve, Gupta said. On the basis of its report, possibilities will be explored to relocate some tigers to other reserve forests for ensuring their optimal conservation and minimising conflicts with human beings, he said. Established in 1990 as the 18th tiger reserve of the country, the VTR's core area spans 909.86 sq km with Gandak and

Masan rivers crisscrossing it. It ranked fourth in the density of the tiger population, according to official data. Apart from big cats, bears, hyenas, leopards, langurs, monkeys, flying squirrels, wild cats and buffaloes are found in the reserve.

GTF secretary Rajesh Gopal, who has been closely associated with 'Project Tiger' in India for almost 35 years, said the VTR has already reached its capacity.

"The VTR has reached its capacity. On the basis of our findings, the state government can explore options to handle the situation," he said. The reserve is an important part of larger Valmiki-Chitwan-Parsa forests, which is one of the most significant tiger habitat blocks within Terai arc landscape at foothills of Himalayas, Gopal said, adding that it is surrounded by human population in the south.

'70% of 6K marginal farmers do non-farm work to earn more

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Around 70 per cent of over 6,000 marginal farmers engage in non-farm activities for income support, but 84 per cent of them do not want to sell off their land to pursue other economic activities.

According to the study conducted by the Development Intelligence Unit (DIU), a collaborative venture between Transforming Rural India Foundation and Sambodhi, marginal farmers are largely engaged in non-agricultural activities like wage labour and livestock management to supplement their income.

Small and marginal farmers with less than two hectares of land holding account for a little over 86 per cent of all farmers in India, but own just about 47 per cent of the crop area, according to the 10th agri-

culture census 2015-16. The study, titled 'Annual Survey Of State Of Marginal Farmers In India', highlights that 84 per cent of the marginal farmers in spite of low profits and natural calamities are not willing to quit farming, and are not interested in selling off their land to pursue other economic activities. Classifying it by landholding size, the tendency to reduce farming increases with higher land holding while those with the lowest landholding wish to continue with farming. According to the survey, 93.9 percent of the farmers with 0 to 0.5 acres of land and 81.39 percent with 2 to 2.5 acres prefer to continue farming.

In contrast, only 5.32 percent of the smallest landholding farmers and 14.76 percent of the largest landholding farmers want to reduce this activity. Around 10.99 percent chose to reduce it in due course, while

only 2.77 percent wanted to leave farming altogether. "The responses are both contrarian, and absence of pathway shows the vulnerability of the marginal farmer livelihood portfolio, particularly when hit by pandemic-like shocks," the survey said.

According to the data, Indian farms became more fragmented between 2010-11 and 2015-16, holdings continued to be inequitably distributed. During this period the proportion of small and marginal farmers grew from 84.9 percent to 86.2 percent, a growth of about 9 million, while the total number of operational holdings grew from 138 million to 146 million.

Further, these 126 million farmers owned 0.6 hectares holding each on average, which is not enough to produce surpluses which can financially sustain their families.

Experts question need for Sabarimala railway line

Route to shrine goes through cannabis growing area, so trains will only help mafia

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The over enthusiasm by a section of people in Kerala to force the Centre to go ahead with the Angamali-Sabari Railway Line has baffled experts in rail travel and security agencies. It is expected that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to make important announcements about rail projects to be implemented in the State.

The route to Sabarimala is to facilitate the pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Lord Ayyappa, situated in the deep forests of the Western Ghats in Pathanamthitta district. "The Sabarimala Temple remains



opened for just three months in a year and we have to give a serious thought to the demand for an exclusive rail line. What Kerala needs right now is high speed trains connecting Kasaragod in the north with Thiruvananthapuram in the south," said Alok Kumar Verma, former chief engineer, Indian Railways. According to Verma, Kerala should give top

priority to bring down the travel time between Kasaragod and Thiruvananthapuram and ply more trains in this stretch by making slight changes in the existing alignments. John Peruvanantham, of save Western Ghats Movement tells that a cartel of contractors, land sharks and politicians are behind the mission to get the sabari Rail going. "Right now,

we are facing with wild animals leaving forests areas and trespassing into human settlements thereby increasing the number of human-animal clashes.

This is a railway line which the state can do away with," said John. The Elephant Peak in the Western Ghats is a haven for cannabis growers in the districts of Idukki, Kottayam and Theni.

The trains would help the cultivators to shift the consignment to Kochi, according to B V Kumar, former director general of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence who has led team of narcotic experts to destroy cannabi farms in the

forests. "The rail route through the ecologically sensitive area is a ploy to divert the attention of the agencies meant to prevent narcotics smuggling," Kumar told *The Pioneer*. Former Chairman of Delhi Metro and Konkan Rail, E Sreedharan has also expressed his reservation about the demand for the Angamali-Sabari Railway Line project.

"First we have to find out whether such a rail line would have the required number of passengers to keep the cash register ticking. I am sure pilgrims to sabarimala prefer journey by road because they could offer worship in temples along the route," said Sreedharan.

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Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invited for the supply of following materials from all bidders:-						
NIT No.	Brief Tender Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening	
CMC/BR/23-24/RB/PR/FH/1102	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV GRADE POWER CABLE OF SIZE 2X25 SQ.MM	18.72 Cr.	18.72 Lakhs	10.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	10.05.2023 15:15 Hrs	
CMC/BR/23-24/RB/PR/FH/1105	SUPPLY OF 33KV XLPE INSULATED ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR OFC EMBEDDED POWER CABLE OF SIZE 3CX400 SQ.MM	18.71 Cr.	18.71 Lakhs	10.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	10.05.2023 15:30 Hrs	
CMC/BR/23-24/RB/PR/FH/1104	SUPPLY OF 66KV XLPE INSULATED ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR POWER CABLE OF SIZE 3CX300 SQ.MM	3.17 Cr.	6.34 Lakhs	10.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	10.05.2023 15:45 Hrs	
CMC/BR/23-24/RB/PR/FH/1106	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1 KV PVC INSULATED CONTROL CABLE (FRLS)	3.50 Cr.	7.00 Lakhs	10.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	10.05.2023 16:00 Hrs	
CMC/BR/23-24/RB/PR/RJ/1107	SUPPLY OF VARIOUS RATINGS OF CONTROL AND RELAY PANELS IN BRPL	6.50 Cr.	6.50 Lakhs	10.05.2023 15:00 Hrs	10.05.2023 16:15 Hrs	
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Disaster to dividend

India has become the most populous country in the world, but that is no longer seen as a problem

A few decades ago, the prospect of India overtaking China as the world's most populous nation would have horrified most people in our country. Population was regarded as one of the biggest problems the country was facing. The challenges of uncontrollable population growth were taught in schools. At a very young age, children got to confront the Malthusian nightmare. Advertisements of Nirodh, the contraceptive manufactured by a public sector undertaking, were regularly played on radio sets. Kids often got curious to know about the ware that was being advertised so regularly, much to the dismay and embarrassment of their parents. Politicians frequently talked about the challenges the rising numbers presented to the nation; intellectuals debated over demographic trends. There were movies, television shows, etc., highlighting the issue. During the Emergency, coercive methods were used to promote population control programmes, the most notorious of them being that of vasectomy, or 'nasbandi' in Hindi. This resulted in a lot of excesses, and proved to be a factor in the defeat of Indira Gandhi in 1977. That was then. Now, political and thought leaders talk about 'demographic dividend.' For instance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in January 2022 that the world has admitted that India has two limitless powers—demography and democracy. "The youth of India carry democratic values along with demographic dividend." From the Malthusian apocalypse to demographic dividend! How times change—and with them our perspectives!



India will have 2.9 million more people than China by the middle of this year. Our population by mid-year is estimated at 1.4286 billion, against 1.4257 billion for China, as per the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA's) 'State of World Population Report' for this year. Population has ceased to be an issue in our country primarily because its growth has been checked; and, fortunately, no coercive methods were used to do that. Further, the growth rate has declined among all communities. The total fertility rate (TFR)—that is, the average number of children born to any woman in her lifetime—declined to 2 in 2019-21 from 2.2 in 2015-16. This has been the result of economic growth and development; millions of Indians have managed to escape the vicious circle of extreme poverty and fast-growing population. It must be noted here though that the demographic dividend, if not properly deployed, can create new problems. The need of the hour is not just economic growth but growth with employment generation. While India is doing well in terms of GDP expansion—it remains the fastest growing large economy—the same cannot be said about job creation. It has to ensure that the supply-side constraints, which are the bane of our economy, are removed—the sooner, the better. This will not just expedite growth but also boost manufacturing, which is a huge job creator.

PICTALK



A physically challenged person keeps himself cool amid a heatwave, in Nadia

New cybersecurity laws need of hour



SIDDHARTHA MISHRA

BHAWNA SHARMA

The current IT Act contains a thin list that doesn't recognise newer cyber crimes such as spoofing, phishing, smishing, web jacking, salami-slicing

Some recent incidents have indicated that India may face severe cybersecurity challenges in the near future that would necessitate the framing of a robust cybersecurity mechanism. A plethora of cases have been reported in the recent past in which people were duped of a large amount of their money by falling prey to the tactics of cyber fraud online. Such incidents took place while doing simple acts such as booking a cab online or lodging an online complaint with the bank etc.

Such incidents are not confined to individuals, even the government and business houses fall prey to cybercrimes. The recent case of a ransomware attack on health data of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and the much talked about phishing scam with the ICICI Bank when its customers reported receiving phishing emails asking for their sensitive information and directing them to a forged link, are an alarming eye-opener.

Cyber security is hindered in various ways and forms, such as cyber spoofing, phishing, vishing, smishing, ransomware, malware, password attack, denial of service attacks, crypto-jacking, and web-jacking to name a few. A recent report by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation revealed that India ranked 4th in the list of victims of cybercrimes in the world and among all types of cyber attacks, phishing is the most common sort of cyber attack. Even the Indian Government also reported the same statistics as its body Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), India recorded nearly 13.91 lakh cyber security incidents in the year 2022.

The impact of cyber attacks is grave. For businesses, it causes a loss of productivity, revenue and reputation, breaks customers' trust, and they may even be fined if they failed to adhere to due diligence requirements regarding cyber-attack notifications of the government. For the government, the effects may range from loss of sensitive data to posing threat to national security. For individuals, the



effect can be financial loss, personal data loss, loss of faith in government and businesses and even consequent mental trauma.

The Information Technology Act, of 2000, is a 23-year-old law and was introduced to provide legal recognition to transactions carried out by means of electronic data and documents and to facilitate electronic filing of documents with government agencies.

The present IT Act contains a narrow list of cybercrimes that doesn't recognize various newer types of cybercrimes such as spoofing, phishing, smishing, web jacking, salami-slicing, etc. Moreover, those that are recognised as cybercrimes are vaguely defined, such as cyber-terrorism etc. The Act has no provisions for measures for cyber awareness and digital literacy enhancement schemes, nor does it provide for certification requirements for the assurance level of whether any of the ICT products and services is cyber-secured to be offered to the users. The only body under the Act, i.e. the CERT-In, is burdened with all the responsibilities and functioning in relation to cyber security



THE IT ACT, 2000, IS A 23-YEAR-OLD LAW WHICH WAS INTRODUCED TO PROVIDE LEGAL RECOGNITION TO TRANSACTIONS CARRIED OUT BY MEANS OF ELECTRONIC DATA AND DOCUMENTS, AND TO FACILITATE THE ELECTRONIC FILING OF DOCUMENTS WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

in India. The functioning of the CERT-In is limited in scope and restricted to the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on cyber incidents, forecasting cyber incidents, coordination, issuing guidelines and cyber security.

The CERT-In must be further empowered to carry out regular monitoring of the critical infrastructure vulnerable to cyber attacks, provide for ex-post technical inquiries of incidents having a significant impact on the cyber security of the country, develop expertise in the field of cyber security in different sectors such as health, defence, agriculture, e-commerce etc. It must provide an 'informational hub' on its portal regarding the information on cyber security originating in India, promoting education in the field of cyber security, and also raising cyber-hygiene and digital literacy.

The existing Act has no additional due diligence requirements on the Intermediaries or entities providing ICT products and services. They are not required to comply with risk audit, security-by-design, cyber threat assessment, cyber-skill capacity building in the organisation and other

requirements for creating a cyber-safe environment. Along with this, presently there is a divided response mechanism in case of a cyber security incident, a whole of government response is missing, and there is no single body that is involved in cyber security incidents.

Increased digitalisation and connectivity increase cyber security risks, thus making society as a whole more vulnerable to cyber threats and exacerbating the dangers faced by individuals, including vulnerable persons and children. In order to mitigate those risks, all necessary actions need to be taken to improve cyber security in the country and for this, updated cyber security legislation is needed.

The aim for the development of advanced digital infrastructure for India would be fulfilled through the establishment of a new, enhanced, and updated regulatory framework for bolstering and safeguarding the cyber security of the nation.

(Sidharth Mishra is a Senior Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, and Dr Bhawna Sharma is a Senior Associate at Data Privacy & Cyber Security, Advisory, PwC India)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THIS NO. 1 MEANS NOTHING

Sir — India and its people should not celebrate and boost its bogus image for becoming the world's most populous country, overtaking China with almost 3 million more people by mid-2023, data released on Wednesday by the United Nations showed which is nothing but a disaster for the country in the present situation with unemployment is all-time high. The report estimates India's population at 1,428.6 million or 1.4286 billion against 1.4257 billion for China which is very serious and dangerous. India has no recent official data on how many people it has because it has not conducted a census since 2011. India's once-in-a-decade census was due to be held in 2021 but was delayed by the government. India's immense size and lasting growth also lay bare its enormous challenges, renewing in this latest spotlight moment a perennial, if still uncomfortable, question: When will it ever fulfil its vast promise and become a power on the order of China or the United States? With these limited opportunities in various fields, India is heading for disaster and population explosion for which India has to pay a very heavy price in future.

Bhagwan Thadanil | Mumbai

REFURBISHING ELECTRONICS ITEMS

Sir — E-waste is an environmental problem, with only 20% of 50 million tons produced annually being disposed of properly. To combat this, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends purchasing refurbished electronics, which reduces the demand for new products, conserves resources, and reduces future waste. Refurbishing one million smartphones can recover significant amounts of valuable metals. Buying refurbished electronics is cost-effective, beneficial to the environment, and often come with warranties. Refurbished electronics are on the rise, with a projected global market valuation of \$272.91 billion by 2031. Asian countries, including India, are leading the trend, expecting 2X growth by 2025, especially in tech-enabled products. The global pan-

Celebrating World Liver Day



Today is World Liver Day, celebrated to promote the well-being of human beings. The liver is the second largest organ of the human body performing multiple functions like digestion, metabolism providing immunity and protecting the body from harmful toxicants.

But, for the last three decades owing to changing lifestyle patterns like regular intake of junk food, less exercise or physical activity, lack of regular checkups, etc, there has been a 100%

increase in the incidence of liver diseases. About 20 lakh people perish every year, while two third of these are caused by viral hepatitis.

Type 2 diabetes, (NAFLD) which affects nearly 25 % of the global population, together with Hepatitis A, and B, liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, and non-alcoholic fatty liver have been making rapid inroads into the life of human beings, it is often regarded as a silent killer as many a time humans do not show symptoms and only came to know about this serious disease after much damage has already been done.

This year's theme is to remain vigilant and do regular liver checkups as a fatty liver can affect anyone. Remaining vigilant towards one's health, and avoiding alcohol together with global initiatives and awareness drives can make a big difference to fight this global menace.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

demic and work-from-home culture have contributed to this growth, increasing the demand for reconditioned electronics. These items are usually refurbished by manufacturers themselves. They are comparable in quality to new products, often with warranties. By buying refurbished electronics, consumers can positively impact the environment by boosting the circular economy, lowering the replacement cycle, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Buying refurbished electronics can stimulate local economies, create jobs, and support sustainable and socially responsible practices.

AmarjeetKumar | Hazaribagh

HEARTBREAKING NEWS

Sir — It is shocking to hear that at least 18 people died and scores were injured at a Government-sponsored event in Navi Mumbai, owing to extreme heat. Amit Shah and Eknath Shinde attended the meeting and turned the event into an election rally. While VIPs were covered with shed and shamiana on their heads with air coolers, common people at the meeting

were left with any covering on their heads in the temperature of 42 degrees. Because of the negligence, many people died and scores were admitted to hospital. If this had happened in the opposition-sponsored meeting then BJP had done much Halla ballao.

The people were compelled to sit under the open sky, under scorching heat, so that they could see flower petals being showered from chartered aircraft and the overhead drones could show them in numbers. Now it is a matter of great shame that Government is showing comorbidity as a scapegoat. Instead of accepting its failure, the district administration has blamed the people themselves for the tragedy saying that they suffered from comorbidities. Indeed it is a heartbreaking tragedy and who should be blamed for it — the political leaders, the organisers, the officials, or the innocent people themselves who attended the meeting?

Zeeshaan | Kazipet

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Artificial intelligence has its own challenges

Brands and agencies must mitigate the risks associated with generative technology in AI and advertising



SAHIL CHOPRA

We are waking up in a world where technology never sleeps, and the rise of Artificial Intelligence is revolutionising different spheres of our life. But, unfortunately, the shine of the artificial seems to have overshadowed the real. Unsurprisingly, the advertising industry has also been unable to escape the temptation to rely on AI.



In the past few days, we have witnessed several brands create ad campaigns harnessing the power of generative AI technology. As always, there's a lot of hype around the use of AI in advertising, and the topic remains to be one sparking a lot of arguments. One of the common dilemmas is to address the many risks that come with the unparalleled power of generative AI technology and how can brands and advertisers mitigate them. From copywriting to graphic designing, AI imitates human creativity with unquestionable precision. However, inside the beautifully wrapped gift box of AI-generated content lies Pandora's box of potential pitfalls.

When AI comes into play, there's always the risk of unintended bias lurking beneath the content generated. AI algorithms generate content based on the data they are trained on, and if any of this data comes from prejudice, the content generated will turn out to be subjective. Consequently, we will see advertising campaigns that reinforce stereotypes rather than breaking them. To eliminate such risks, it becomes imperative for brands and advertisers to keep a keen eye on their AI-generated content for any biases. In addition, advertisers should be mindful when choosing AI technology and ensure that the algorithms used are designed, keeping ethical considerations in mind. The AI-generated content can be further

vetted by presenting various viewpoints.

AI-generated content is putting a big question mark on the credibility of digital content. Generative AI is a powerful tool; sometimes, that power can be scary with the realistic images, videos, and text it can produce. This can spread misinformation and blur the line between what's real and what's AI-generated. Recently, the winner of a photography contest forfeited the prize after revealing that AI created the photograph submitted. This calls for marketers to be transparent in their approach toward campaigns. Brands should responsibly use AI-generated content and further employ strict processes to ensure the accuracy of the content.

The use of AI doesn't come for free, and most often, the cost is creative control. AI-generated content could cast marketers aside from the creative process, leaving the advertising campaigns devoid of personalization and emotional connection. Marketers should understand AI is not an alternative to human creativity. Instead, AI should boost productivity to make

enough time for things requiring more attention. AI, coupled with human intuition and insight, can help marketers create more engaging, personalized, and emotionally coherent content.

The use of AI is a complex subject with many legal and ethical complications. Artificial intelligence-generated content can also result in copyright infringement and legal disputes. Furthermore, marketers should be wary of the ethical implications of using AI-generated content. Therefore, advertisers and brands should work together to put explicit guidelines in place to ensure the responsible and ethical use of AI.

Generative AI has its perks and cons and can revolutionize how we do things. However, brands and advertisers should prioritize authenticity and transparency when it comes to the creative process. In addition, marketers should steer clear of driving content with AI as the only pilot. Instead, AI should be seen as an efficient co-pilot to tackle monotonous jobs to save time.

(The writer is founder and CEO, iCubesWire)



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S POSITION IN A BIPOLAR WORLD

The Government is firing on all cylinders to make its G20 presidency meaningful



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Indian finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman was in Washington last week, attending spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund. On the sidelines she met with world bank representatives, hosted the second G20 finance ministers' meetings and managed several bilaterals with think tanks and business leaders. The second G20 finance ministers' meeting in Washington, followed the Bengaluru round, where geopolitical issues (read Russian invasion of Ukraine) hijacked important financial stress and regulatory issues, many of the G20 nations need to worry about. The Indian government is currently firing from all barrels to make its presidency meaningful, with some tangible long-term outcomes. As India reached the halfway mark of 200, G20 meetings spread across 50 cities of the country, reiterating the whole-of-government approach to make its presidency count, the group remains many steps away from reaching a consensus on critical issues facing the planet.

However, it seems India is alert to the lack of consensus between G20 member nations on several issues and has chosen to project itself as a solution finder. In Washington, round while, not much was expected, India did manage to get closer to a consensus on reforming multilateral development banks and regulation on cryptocurrency. The issue of debt stress faced by multiple low-income countries, many of whom happen to be in India's neighbourhood, is still a tricky subject to tackle. China, which may be one of the largest lenders or influencers on financial matters for many of these low-income nations facing debt stress, is playing hardball.



Meanwhile, there has been a gradual shift in the global outlook towards China, more from a European gaze than the rest. A few weeks ago, several European leaders went to China to renegotiate their bilateral and multilateral commitments and sent out mixed signals for the rest of the world. While the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, warned citizens regarding the Chinese aggression, French President, Macron seemed to be moving closer to China at the cost of displeasing the US. Macron suggested Taiwan may not be a great cause of concern for Europe, even though it continues to be one of the most contentious issues between China and the US on the geopolitical chess board.

Macron, it seemed, was trying to take a step back from the US-led geopolitical outlook, to which many of his European colleagues are loyal subscribers. Much of Europe and the US rejected his views, while China and Russia were visibly happy. India, which values France as one of its closest strategic allies, was alerted but chose not to react. Analysts questioned if the French President's comments were the first visible signs of the cracks in European unity, stitched together by US, in the immediate run-up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine last year. One of the most vocal sales pitches for a wider-ranging economic sanctions regime on Russia, and subjecting much of the globe to, high hydrocarbon prices, was bringing much of Europe together on a common cause, after world war 2.

This points to war, high inflation, and fatigue, increasingly surfacing as key concerns for many European nations. India has chosen to be an alert bystander during the war. While India continues to increase hydrocarbon imports from Russia, even considering a free trade agreement, it has upgraded its US bilateral from strategic defence to a critical and emerging technology partnership. It has maintained open lines of communication with Europe, including showing enough enthusiasm for a trade agreement. As India reaches nearly the halfway mark of its G20 presidency, it managed to learn some lessons which include, finding a consensus on several key global economic issues is elusive, however, with creative diplomacy, it could bring warring parties together on emerging challenges such as cryptocurrency and climate change funding. It knows the US-China rivalry will expand, and at some point in time, it will have to move closer to the US side, however, the time for choosing a side may be critical.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

India-Pak reunion clamour is senseless



PRAFULL GORADIA

It would neither be logical nor feasible to reunite India and Pakistan. Unlike the two Germanies, the very idea is fraught with unspeakable dangers



Some recent writings have spoken of the desirability of merging Pakistan with our country. That, in their opinion, is to save our neighbour from disaster. Howsoever noble sounding this might be, its implementation would be fraught with national suicide. While ardently pursuing his advocacy for a separate state for the subcontinent's Muslims, Pakistan's founder Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had categorically declared at Lahore that "the two communities (meaning Hindus and Muslims) cannot coexist in one country". He had gone on to back up his demand with an appeal for an exchange of populations. Such an exercise had been done in 1923 by the League of Nations (predecessor of the UNO) wherein Muslims in Greece crossed over to Turkey, whose Christians shifted to Greece in an organized manner.

As it happened, only a few Muslims crossed over to Pakistan, whereas almost all the Hindus were chased out of there; the remaining being ethnically cleansed. Nevertheless, in the light of history, Partition proved to be a blessing because India's population remained in balance. To upset that balance would be to commit national suicide. In any case, the people of Pakistan have grown up under three successive constitutions, all of which confer sovereignty to Allah the Merciful.

One particular newspaper article published recently was emphatic in its comparison with the reunification of Germany at the end of the Cold War. Such comparisons are not only misplaced but are grossly misleading as well. For



ONE PARTICULAR NEWSPAPER ARTICLE PUBLISHED RECENTLY WAS EMPHATIC IN ITS COMPARISON WITH THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY AT THE END OF THE COLD WAR

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

one, all Germans are the same people; virtually all of them Christian, who were torn apart by the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union. Not a single German had demanded this partition on the morrow of WWII. Uncannily, Marshall Josef Stalin, the Soviet dictator, might have accepted a united Germany provided the whole of Deutschland would have come under the Soviet roof. Stalin indeed did cherish this rope; had President Roosevelt lived longer, and not been replaced by Harry Truman, who cherished no illusions about Stalin being a reasonable partner for peace.

To return to Pakistan, Jinnah had promised the Muslims in 1946, "I assure you that once were free of the clutches of these Hindu Baniyas, we shall make Pakistan the most prosperous country in the world". As luck would have it, not long after Partition, the country became a member of the Baghdad Pact (which later became the CENTO) and also SEATO based in Thailand. As an ally of the USA, aid in dollars began to pour in. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan became an 'indispensable ally'.

Naturally, there was no shortage of aid; how much was spent on the military and how much for civil society cannot be known, as probably no accounts would be

available today. However, one did get to hear of milk and honey flowing in that country in the closing years of the twentieth century. There were also reports of Pakistan's per capita GDP overtaking India's. The American withdrawal from Afghanistan has had a cataclysmic effect on the Pakistani economy because its utility as an ally has petered out.

Jinnah was a brilliant lawyer who not only pleaded effectively but could also persuade an unwilling litigant to take up a cause—in this case, it was that of a separate Muslim homeland. The Muslim-majority provinces like Bengal, Punjab and Sind were happy with their majorities; legislators and ministers, and always had a Muslim premier. So, why Partition?

The Muslims, in the provinces where they were in a minority, needed the warmth of a Muslim state, but could not obtain it, because they were in a thin minority. Jinnah, therefore, brought out the concept of an exchange of population from his bag of arguments. The minority Muslim population in the non-Muslim majority provinces could emigrate to the proposed New Medina. Students of the Aligarh Muslim University were very active in canvassing for a New Medina.

The last Caliphate had been abolished in 1924. Jinnah argued that the Muslims in the subcon-

tinents would be outnumbered by the Hindus. They, i.e., the Muslims were less educated and their elite were mostly landowners, lacking industries or trade and commerce. Jinnah with his eloquence in English (he could not orate in any other language) was able to convince most of them that the challenge before them was "Pakistan or Perish".

The Qaid-e-Azam was an introvert who did not mix with the masses. His social circle was the Parsi and Gujarati elite, mostly from Bombay, a city that the Qaid loved dearly. He was barely familiar with Islamic theology. His father's name was Poonjabhai, grandfather Premjibhai and great-grandfather Meghjiabhai Thakkar. The family was pushed into Islam as the Lohana community—Jinnah's caste—would not tolerate trading in fish, which Jinnah's grandfather Premjibhai had to take up.

All in all, Jinnah was a brown Englishman who wore expensive Saville Row suits and loved fraternizing with the English. Street and maidan politics, which were Gandhi's forte, were not Jinnah's cup of tea. He accepted the life presidency of the Muslim League to get even with Gandhi. Partition was a mistake, as unfolding events are proving. All Jinnah was obsessed with was his place in history, no matter what the cost was.

Tech in hospitals can improve doctor-patient relationship

Technology is a great enabler to cater to the specific needs of patients and help doctors in delivering precise and quality care to their patients

Technology has increasingly come to exercise an influence on most industries, sectors, functional areas and work settings today. And healthcare has been no exception. Whether it is in terms of building infrastructure, designing delivery systems, making machines, devices and equipment, or educating, training and upskilling the workforce, technology in some form and shape has played its role eventually improving patient outcomes and quality of care.

Although the healthcare service delivery value chain especially in a hospital setting involves a wide spectrum of players including administrative staff, receptionists, doctors, nurses, attendants, pharmacists, accountants and IT staff,



DEEPAK SHARMA

the doctor-patient relationship lies at the centre of this whole care pathway. Here is how the use of technology in hospital settings improves the doctor-patient relationship:

Facilitates huge improvement in clinical care

First, technology by its very nature is a great enabler to cater to the specific needs of patients and help doctors in delivering precise and quality care to the patients. The diagnostic technologies available at the hospital help in timely and accurate diagnosis with constant monitoring of the patient's condition to prevent worsening of the patient's condition or delay in treatment.

And this is relevant to the testing of signs and symptoms not just for communicable

diseases but also for non-communicable conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, stroke etc. As a logical corollary, technology even aids preventive health monitoring of patients, the importance of which has been increasingly established during the pandemic. Further to diagnosis, a wide range of technologies employed during patient treatment helps doctor in a big way. The presence of critical care devices such as patient monitors, ventilators, defibrillators and oxygen concentrators etc are particularly critical to the overall patient outcome.

Improves the workflow and patient experiences

Second, technologies particularly IT and digital connect-

ivity and storage technologies are a great asset to any hospital or healthcare facility. From identifying the right doctor for the right medical condition, scheduling an appointment, referring to another specialist or a department if required, guiding the patient to the diagnostics and testing centres, facilitating bill payments, maintaining patient records, deployment of technology in hospitals can improve the overall workflow and enhance the experience and satisfaction level of the patients.

AI and big data technologies boost clinical and operational efficiencies

Fourth, by way of increased investment in AI and big data technologies, hospitals help doctors improve their

clinical efficiencies and better streamline their own administrative and operational flows.

Because of the availability of patient records in the form of EHRs, EMRs and master patient index, a doctor has access to all the relevant information and data on a patient before he can make a clinical decision. This pre-empt the chances of any error of judgment thereby contributing to better health outcomes for the patient. At the same time, possession and analysis of data enable hospitals to improve their resource planning, allocation of personnel, inter-department coordination and emergency care preparedness, all of which can go a long way in eventually raising the quality of care from the standpoint of patients.

Remote and telehealth technologies are a win-win

Fifth, by placing remote telehealth technologies and systems, hospitals can significantly expand the scope and range of their services. Smartphone technologies, digital ophthalmoscopes, digital stethoscopes, digital otoscopes, wearable biosensors, mobile sensors and other monitoring devices can be leveraged to create a remote and telehealth ecosystem underpinned by a foundational internet infrastructure that can enable hospitals to offer services irrespective of their physical location.

Such technologies also help doctors offer follow-up consultations as well as monitor patients who would have been examined physically the

first time. While this saves time and resources for doctors and patients, it also allows sufficient time and space for hospitals to cater to other patients. Remote systems also help patients with sensitive and so-called publicly-undesirable conditions such as mental health, reproductive disorders, and rectal and colon diseases, among others to freely converse with specialists, at least for the initial consultation.

Doctors essentially represent the hospital before a patient. And hospitals ensuring the availability of required technologies does not just improve the quality of care but strengthen the trust and confidence between the doctors and their patients leading to better patient care and organisational outcomes.

Khan's ally becomes PoK PM

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, a lawmaker from former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party was elected as the "prime minister" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on Thursday.

The top post fell vacant last week after former "premier" Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan was disqualified by the region's high court over maligning the top judiciary.

Haq, who was the Speaker of the region's assembly, got the trust of all 48 members present in the house as all major parties, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, rallied behind him.

His predecessor was disqualified in a dramatic move by the high court in the region on April 11 for committing contempt of court by criticising the top judiciary in a public speech.

Earlier on Monday, an assembly session held to elect a new "prime minister" was adjourned without any polling taking place.

Sardar Tanveer at a function in Islamabad had indirectly blamed the judiciary for affecting the functioning of his government and interfering in the domain of the executive through the grant of stay orders.



Though he appeared before the court and tendered an apology, but it was not accepted. Later his appeal was also rejected by the region's apex court.

IMRAN KHAN'S INSTAGRAM HEAD ABDUCTED

Authorities in Pakistan allegedly abducted the Instagram head of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf here on Thursday as part of the federal government's ongoing crackdown against social media activists from ousted prime minister Imran Khan's party.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in collaboration with the intelligence agencies and police have launched a nationwide operation against social media

activists, especially of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party following an alleged online smear campaign against Pakistan Army chief Gen Asim Munir.

Attaur Rehman, PTI's Instagram head was picked up from Lahore in the early hours of Thursday.

Khan on Thursday claimed on Twitter that the party's Instagram lead Attaur Rehman was "picked up" on Thursday morning from Lahore.

"Another abduction late last night — this time of PTI's Instagram lead Attaur Rehman from Faisal Town Lahore. Strongly condemn these continuing abductions of our social media team. Atta has been with us for 15 years. The powerful are breaking all laws with impunity," Khan tweeted and demanded his release.

Last week, the intelligence agencies picked another main social media activist, the PTI — 'Humara Pak' head Waqas Amjad — who was allegedly tortured in judicial custody.

Last month, Khan's focal person on social media Azhar Mashwani was also picked up by authorities.

Khan has blamed the military establishment for "abducting" his party's social media activists.

He deplored the torture of Amjad, saying, "today there is total law of the jungle in Pakistan."

Missing Indian climber found alive on Mount Annapurna

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Indian climber Anurag Maloo, who went missing on Monday after falling into a deep crevasse on Nepal's Mount Annapurna, has been found alive in critical condition by rescuers, his brother and organisers said on Thursday.

Anurag, 34, a resident of Kishangarh in Rajasthan, went missing on Monday after he fell from around 6,000 metres while descending from Camp III. Mount Annapurna is the 10th highest mountain in the world.

A team of rescuers located the Indian climber in a deep crevasse between Camp III and Camp II of the world's tenth highest peak, said Thaneshwor Guragain, information officer at Seven Summit Treks - the organiser of the expedition.

He has been airlifted to Kathmandu and admitted to Medcity Hospital at Bhaishepati area of Lalitpur district, Guragain said.



Hospital staff get ready to evacuate as a helicopter carrying injured Indian climber Anurag Maloo who was rescued from Annapurna region lands at Medcity hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal on Thursday. AP/PTI

Anurag is still unconscious and his condition is very critical, Guragain told PTI over phone. "He is found alive. He has been taken to the hospital in critical condition, but he is still alive," Sudhir Maloo, his brother, said.

"We will have to shift our

focus towards the medical side now," Sudhir added.

The rescue team that went looking for him in the crevasse he had fallen into has found and rescued him, according to Sudhir.

A helicopter and a team of six Sherpa climbers led by

Chhang Dawa Sherpa had been mobilized for the search and Anurag was found in a deep crevasse at some 5800 metre altitude on Thursday morning. He was first taken to the Manipal Hospital in Pokhara and then flown to Kathmandu for further treatment.

Pak govt cites hurdles in holding provincial polls

Islamabad (PTI): The political instability in Pakistan, a spike in terrorism and the threat of an "all-out war" with India were among the security-related hurdles cited by the defence ministry which prevented the government from holding the provincial election in Punjab now, according to a media report on Thursday.

The report, submitted to the Supreme Court by the defence ministry, noted that elections in the politically crucial Punjab province would fuel fault lines in Pakistan and might encourage India to take advantage of ethnic issues, water disputes, and other issues, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The ministry submitted its report along with an application to request the apex court withdraw its election-date order, fearing a spike in terrorism threats if elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies were held before polls in other provincial assemblies.

A three-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial on April 8 fixed May 14 as the new date for elections to the Punjab Assembly and quashed the Election Commission's decision to extend the date of the poll from April 10 to October 8.

The newspaper said that the report stated Pakistan faced cross-border terrorism, instability in the country, threats from the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP), the Islamic State (IS) fighters returning to Pakistan from several countries, the "ill-designs of the Indian spy agency" and "even an all-out war" with the neighbouring country.

The report explained that the security situation over the last few years had necessitated the concurrent deployment of forces on the country's eastern and western borders.

The report also feared that Pakistan would continue to be a victim of the "global great game", where India enjoyed

primacy. Pakistan was not only threatened due to insecurity because of external aggression but also by internal instability, it said, adding that both were interlinked "since the internal chaos invites external aggression".

Referring to the Punjab province, the report said a fresh wave of terrorism had emerged in the province, with some 150 threat warnings received from January 2022 to April 2023.

Of them, 78 threats had been averted through counterterrorism or intelligence-based operations, but eight could not be prevented, the report said.

It said sleeper cells of terrorist elements were active in Punjab, especially south Punjab, and even in Islamabad, as evidenced by the high-profile attacks. Besides, several militants belonging to the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group and other outfits were also returning to Pakistan from Syria, Yemen and the Middle East, it said.

WH: US committed to work with India

Washington (PTI): The Biden administration is committed to working together with India in groups like the Quad to advance economic growth and expand bilateral cooperation, the White House has said. In November 2017, India, Japan, the US, and Australia gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the Quad to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence.

"The United States and India have a strong bilateral relationship and that's including trade as well, trade relationship," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters at her daily news conference on Wednesday.

"We are committed to continuing working together and in groups like the Quad to advance economic growth for our two countries and expand cooperation of our shared priorities. That is a commitment that you can know that is coming from the United States," Jean-Pierre said. US President Joe Biden hosted the first-ever summit of

the Quad leaders in the virtual format in March 2021 and vowed to strive for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, inclusive, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion, sending a subtle message to China.

Beijing claims almost all of the 1.3 million square miles of the South China Sea as its sovereign territory. China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The top US official's remarks came in response to a question on the US becoming India's largest trading partner, surpassing China. The US has emerged as India's biggest trading partner in 2022-23 on account of increasing economic ties between the two countries.

According to the provisional data of the commerce ministry, the bilateral trade between India and the US has increased by 7.65 per cent to USD 128.55 billion in 2022-23 as against USD 119.5 billion in 2021-22. It was USD 80.51 billion in 2020-21.

US court to decide Rana extradition case in 30 days

Washington (PTI): A US court has dismissed a status conference motion moved by imprisoned businessman Tahawwur Rana sought for his involvement in the deadly 2008 Mumbai terror attack, stating that it anticipates a ruling on the Pakistani-origin Canadian's extradition to India within 30 days.

Judge Jacqueline Chooljian of the US District Court in the Central District of Los Angeles, California held the last hearing on this issue in June 2021 and the last set of papers was filed in July 2021. The court is yet to give a verdict on the US government's request to extradite Rana to India.

In a motion moved through his lawyer last month Rana, 62, asked for a status conference - a court-ordered meeting between the prosecution and defence to discuss the case details and a plea bargain.

'India, US facing security challenge from China'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US is providing assistance to its critical partner India to enhance capabilities that it might need to defend its border with China and also develop its own defence industrial base, a top American commander has said, stressing that New Delhi and Washington face the same security challenge from Beijing in the Indo-Pacific region.

"We value our partnership with India, and we've been increasing it and doing a lot more, over time. They have the same security challenge, primary security challenge that we do, and it's real on their northern border," Admiral John Christopher Aquilino, commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, told members of the House Armed Services Committee during a hearing on Indo-Pacific National Security Challenges.

"Two skirmishes now in over the past nine or 10 months on that border, as they continue to get pressurised by the PRC (People's Republic of China) for border gains," Admiral Aquilino said.

He was responding to a question from Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna.

"I would like you to reflect on the importance of the relationship — postcolonialism India and China had a relationship to emerge as the Asian voice. But that relationship now has really soured with a concern that there should not be a hegemon in Asia and that China is treating other countries as junior partners," Khanna said.

"It seems to me that this gives us an opportunity to ensure that China doesn't emerge as a hegemon to strengthen the relationship with India," said the Indian American Congressman.

'2 Sikhs held in California sought in murder cases'

Washington (PTI): Two of the 17 Sikhs arrested in California over the weekend from two warring criminal gangs are facing murder charges in several cases in India, while another two are sought in other criminal cases, US officials said, stressing that they have prevented a major mass casualty incident with their actions.

The two Sikhs who are facing murder charges in India are Pavittar Singh and Husandeep Singh, according to a spokesperson of the California Attorney General. While their nationality has not been disclosed so far, it is believed that they are still Indian citizens and have a pending asylum application.

A major mass casualty was prevented when local and federal law enforcement agencies in a series of raids arrested 17 Sikh men from various cities in northern California, mostly in and around the historic Yuba City, which has a predominant Sikh population, from two rival Sikh criminal syndicates.

The two rival gangs are called 'Minta Group' and the 'AK47 group.' The leader of the first group is Minta. Each of the two gangs has at least 30 members.

To the surprise of even the law enforcement agencies, the group members were found to have several dangerous firearms when they were arrested. "During the investigation, 41 firearms were seized. Those



firearms included AR15s, AK-47s, handguns, and at least one machine gun," Jennifer Dupre, the district Attorney of Sutter County said.

Two of those arrested from San Joaquin County - Dharmvir Singh alias Minta and Jobanjit Singh - were stopped on their way to Manteca, where they were allegedly going to commit a homicide, with pistols, large capacity magazines, and fully automatic weapons on them.

Dupre said law enforcement was able to stop two vehicles before they could arrive at a Sikh parade in Sacramento over the weekend.

"While a shooting did occur at the temple, we were able to stop a mass casualty incident. If those weapons had gotten into the parade, it could have been a blood bath," Dupre said. California's Attorney General Rob Bonta said during the investigation, they prevented at least two additional shootings from happening.



Demonstrators holding flares invading the Euronext Paris building in protest to the pension reforms at La Defense business district in Paris, on Thursday. Union activists stage scattered actions to press France's government to scrap the new law raising the retirement age AP

More peril for Trump in pending probes than NY: AP-NORC poll

Washington (AP): Former President Donald Trump has emerged largely unscathed politically from his New York indictment. But a new poll suggests that investigations in Georgia and Washington could prove more problematic.

Only 4 in 10 US adults believe Trump acted illegally in New York, where he has been charged in connection with hush money payments made to women who alleged sexual encounters, according to the new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

More — about half — believe he broke the law in Georgia, where he is under investigation for interfering in the 2020 election vote count.

The poll finds about half feel similarly about his role in the storming of the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and his handling of classified documents found at Mar-a-Lago, which are both under investigation by the Justice Department.

The findings suggest potential future charges in those cases against



Trump may resonate more deeply with the American public than his alleged cover-up of payments to porn actor Stormy Daniels and other women at the height of the 2016 campaign — charges that nearly 6 in 10 adults believe were politically motivated.

While the case drew intense media coverage and made Trump the first former president in US history to be charged criminally, legal experts have long argued that the other investigations pose far more serious potential risk.

The Georgia case, in particular, concerns even some longtime Trump supporters.

"I just feel like he kind of got himself involved in something that he shouldn't have. I don't know if it's necessarily illegal, but just let the votes be the votes," said Stephanie Trinidad, a Republican who lives in Dracut, Massachusetts, and voted for Trump in 2016 and 2020.

The poll offers further evidence that Trump has faced limited political fallout from the indictment, which instead proved a massive fundraising boon. His campaign has raised more than USD 15 million since news of the indictment broke — much from new donors — and he has rolled out a list of new endorsements.

While the poll finds only 30 per cent of Americans, including 55 per cent of Republicans, say they want Trump to run for president again in 2024, those numbers have changed little since an AP-NORC poll conducted in January.

Yellen calls for better US-China relations as tensions increase

Washington: Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will strike a conciliatory tone when she talks about US-China relations on Thursday, calling for "cooperation on the urgent global challenges of our day" while supporting economic restrictions on China to advance US national security interests. "We seek a healthy economic relationship with China: one that fosters growth and innovation in both countries," Yellen says in prepared remarks to be delivered at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

Yellen plans to deliver a speech that calls for improved relations between the two countries, which have seen increasingly strained relations after the discovery of a Chinese surveillance balloon in US air space and since the Communist nation has grown its ties with Russia despite its continued invasion into Ukraine.

"A growing China that plays by international rules is good for the United States and the world," Yellen

says. "Both countries can benefit from healthy competition in the economic sphere. But healthy economic competition - where both sides benefit - is only sustainable if that competition is fair."

The speech comes as tensions between the U.S. and China are at a fever pitch. The discovery of a surveillance balloon outfitted with high-tech equipment designed to gather sensitive information, making a pass over a sensitive US military site, has drawn lawmakers' scrutiny.

And China's support of Russia as it continues to wage its war in Ukraine is causing concern among Western leaders. Though China has maintained that it is neutral in the conflict, stating that it won't sell weapons to either side in the war, it recently held joint military drills with Russia.

Yellen, in her speech, says US national security "is of paramount importance" in the relationship with the People's Republic of China. PTI

Lanka confirms request for exporting one lakh monkeys to China

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka on Wednesday confirmed China's request for importing 1,00,000 endangered monkeys from the cash-strapped island nation, amidst protests from environmental groups against the deal.

Gunadasa Samarasinghe, the top bureaucrat in Sri Lanka's Ministry of Agriculture said that a privately-owned Chinese company connected to Zoological Gardens which are animal breeders had made the request to his ministry.

"We will not send the whole 100,000 in one lot. But we considered the request due to crop damages caused by the monkeys in several parts of the country.

They will not be taken from conserved areas. The focus will be only in the cultivation areas", Samarasinghe told reporters.

The toque macaque monkey is endemic to Sri Lanka and classified as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list.

Last week, Sri Lanka's agriculture minister Mahinda Amaraweera said that China's request for 1,00,000 monkeys to be exhibited at over 1,000 Chinese zoos could be considered.

SC temporarily extends access to abortion pill

Washington (AP): The Supreme Court has temporarily extended women's access to an abortion pill until Friday while the justices consider whether to allow restrictions on mifepristone to take effect as a legal challenge to the medication's FDA approval continues.

In an order signed by Justice Samuel Alito on Wednesday, the court indicated it will act by Friday night.

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.

SpaceX rocket explodes just after launch

South Padre Island: SpaceX's giant new rocket exploded minutes after blasting off Thursday on its first test flight and crashed into the Gulf of Mexico.

Elon Musk's company was aiming to send the nearly 400-foot (120-meter) Starship rocket on a round-the-world trip from the southern tip of Texas, near the Mexican border.

It carried no people or satellites. Images showed multiple engines weren't working on the 33-engine rocket as it climbed from the launch pad, reaching as high as 24 miles (39 kilometers).

The flight plan had called for the booster to peel away from the spacecraft minutes after liftoff, but that didn't happen.

The rocket began to tumble and then exploded four minutes into the flight, plummeting into the gulf.

After separating, the



spacecraft was supposed to continue east and attempt to circle the world, before crashing into the Pacific near Hawaii.

Throngs of spectators watched from South Padre Island, several miles away from the Boca Chica Beach launch site, which was off limits. As it lifted off, the crowd screamed: "Go, baby, go!"

Musk, in a tweet, called it "an exciting test launch of Starship! Learned a lot for next test launch in a few months." In the weeks leading up to the flight, Musk gave 50-

50 odds that the spacecraft would reach orbit. The company plans to use Starship to send people and cargo to the moon and, eventually, Mars.

NASA has reserved a Starship for its next moon-walking team, and rich tourists are already booking lunar flybys.

It was the second launch attempt. Monday's try was scrapped by a frozen booster valve. At 394 feet and nearly 17 million pounds of thrust, Starship easily surpasses NASA's moon rockets — past, present and future. AP

NATO chief in Kyiv first time since Russian invasion

AP ■ KYIV

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg defiantly declared on Thursday that Ukraine deserves to join the military alliance and pledged continuing support for the country on his first visit to Kyiv since Russia's invasion just over a year ago.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Stoltenberg, who has been instrumental in marshalling support from NATO's members, to push for even more from them, including warplanes, artillery and armoured equipment.

The Kremlin has given various justifications for going to war, but repeated Thursday that preventing Ukraine from joining NATO was a key goal behind its invasion, arguing that Kyiv's membership in the alliance would pose an existential threat to Russia.

NATO leaders said in 2008 that Ukraine would join the alliance one day, and Stoltenberg has repeated that

promise throughout the course of the war — though the organisation has established no pathway or timetable for membership. "Let me be clear, Ukraine's rightful place is in the Euro-Atlantic family," Stoltenberg told a press conference.

He said he and Zelenskyy discussed a NATO support program. "This will help you transition from Soviet-era equipment and doctrines to NATO standards and ensure full interoperability with the alliance," Stoltenberg said.

He noted Thursday's announcement by Denmark and the Netherlands that they plan to provide Ukraine with at least another 14 refurbished Leopard 2 battle tanks from early 2024.

He added that he expected countries to "make new announcements of concrete military support to Ukraine" at a meeting Germany on Friday.

The fighting in recent months has become a war of attrition, with neither side able to gain momentum.

But Ukraine is expected to



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy greet each other after joint press conference in Kyiv on Thursday AP/PTI

launch a counteroffensive in coming weeks, and it has recently received sophisticated weapons from its Western allies. NATO has no official presence in Ukraine and provides only provides nonlethal support to Kyiv, but Stoltenberg has been the strong voice of the alliance throughout the war.

A procession of interna-

tional leaders has made the journey to Kyiv over the last year, and the former Norwegian prime minister is one of the last major Western figures to do so.

NATO, formed to counter the Soviet Union, has long feared being dragged into a wide war with nuclear-armed Russia, but as the West has

moved from hesitantly providing helmets and uniforms to tanks, warplanes and advanced missile systems, high-level visits have become routine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that preventing Ukraine from joining NATO remains one of the goals of what Moscow calls its "special military operation."

Speaking in a conference call with reporters, Peskov said that Ukraine's accession would pose a "serious, significant threat to our country, to our country's security."

Earlier this month, Finland joined the alliance, setting aside decades of neutrality in a historic realignment of Europe's post-Cold War security landscape. While NATO says it poses no threat to Russia, the Nordic country's accession dealt a major political blow to Putin. Finland's membership doubles Russia's border with the world's biggest security alliance.

Neighbouring Sweden is expected to join in coming months, too, possibly by the

time U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts meet in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius in July. The alliance has focused on bolstering defences on its own territory to dissuade Putin from attacking any member country. Under NATO's collective security guarantee, an attack on one member country is considered to be an attack on them all. On Friday, Stoltenberg will attend a Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. It's the main international forum for drumming up military support for the conflict-ravaged country.

Meanwhile, the Ukraine Space Agency said Thursday that a bright flash of light in the night sky over the country the previous day was probably a meteorite entering the earth's atmosphere. Residents of the capital and several cities in Belarus saw the flash of light, which lingered for a couple of seconds, and an explosion was heard in the Kyiv region. It triggered an air raid alarm in Kyiv.

At least 78 killed in Sanaa stampede

AP ■ SANAA

A crowd apparently spooked by gunfire and an electrical explosion stampeded at an event to distribute financial aid during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Yemen's capital late Wednesday, killing at least 78 people and injuring at least 73 others, according to witnesses and Houthi rebel officials.

The tragedy was the deadliest in years that was not related to Yemen's long-running war, and came ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan later this week.

Armed Houthis fired into the air in an attempt at crowd control, apparently striking an electrical wire and causing it to explode, according to two witnesses, Abdel-Rahman Ahmed and Yahia Mohsen. That sparked a panic, and people, including many women and children, began stampeding, they said.

Video posted on social media showed dozens of bodies, some motionless, and others screaming as people tried to help. Separate footage of the aftermath released by Houthi officials showed bloodstains, shoes and victims' clothing scattered on the ground. Investigators were seen examining the area.

The crush took place in the Old City in the center of Sanaa, where hundreds of poor people had gathered for a charity event organized by merchants, according to the Houthi-run Interior Ministry.

Distributing financial aid is a ritual during Ramadan, when the faithful fast from dawn to dusk.

People had gathered to receive about \$10 each from a charity funded by local businessmen, witnesses said. Wealthy people and businessmen often hand out cash and food, especially to the poor during Ramadan.

Interior Ministry spokesperson Brig. Abdel-Khaleq al-Aghri, blamed the crush on the "random distribution" of funds without coordination with local authorities.

Motaher al-Marouni, a senior health official, said 78 people were killed, according to the rebels' Al-Masirah satellite TV channel. At least 73 others were injured and taken to the al-Thowra Hospital in Sanaa, according to hospital deputy director Hamdan Bagheri.

The rebels quickly sealed off a school where the event was being held and barred people, including journalists, from approaching.

The Interior Ministry said it had detained two organizers and an investigation was under way. The Houthis said they would pay some \$2,000 in compensation to each family who lost a relative, while the injured would get around \$400. Yemen's capital has been under the control of the Iranian-backed Houthis since they descended from their northern stronghold in 2014 and removed the internationally recognized government.

Sunak reviewing 'bully' report on top deputy

AP ■ LONDON

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was reviewing a long-awaited report he received on Thursday on whether his top deputy bullied civil servants.

Justice Secretary Dominic Raab, who is deputy prime minister, has denied multiple complaints that he was overly demanding and that he belittled and demeaned his staff. He said he "behaved professionally at all times," but would resign if the bullying complaints were upheld.

Sunak's spokesman, Max Blain, said the prime minister received the report on Raab's behaviour Thursday morning.

"He is carefully considering the findings of the report before coming to a judgment," Blain said.

Raab, 49, was first elected to Parliament in 2010 and has served in senior government posts including justice secretary and foreign secretary. Appointed deputy prime minister under Boris Johnson, he briefly took charge of the government when Johnson was hospitalized with COVID-19 in April 2020.

The report is the latest ethics headache for Sunak, who vowed to restore order and integrity to government after three years of instability under predecessors Johnson — brought down in summer 2022 after multiple scandals — and Liz Truss, who quit in October after six weeks in office when her tax-cutting economic plans sparked mayhem on the financial markets.

But he has struggled to shake off opposition allegations

that the Conservative government remains mired in scandal and sleaze.

Sunak also faces an investigation announced this week by a parliamentary watchdog over whether he properly disclosed his wife's interest in a company that stands to benefit from a massive boost to free child care in his administration's budget.

A member of his Cabinet, Gavin Williamson, quit in November over bullying claims. In January Sunak fired Conservative Party chairman Nadhim Zahawi for failing to come clean about a multimillion-dollar tax dispute.

A separate inquiry is underway into claims Johnson secured a loan with the help of a Conservative donor, Richard Sharp, who was later appointed chairman of the BBC.

Danes, Dutch to donate tanks to Ukraine

Copenhagen (AP): Denmark and the Netherlands announced on Thursday that they plan to provide Ukraine with at least 14 refurbished German-made Leopard 2 battle tanks, to be supplied from early 2024.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen called it "a significant donation" which came on top of a contribution by Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany, announced in February, to supply at least 100 older Leopard 1 A5 tanks.

In a joint statement, the Danish and Dutch defence ministers said the estimated cost of 165 million euros "to

jointly acquire, refurbish and donate" will be equally divided between the two NATO members.

"In this way, we will jointly take part in the Leopard 2 coalition," supported by many partners and allies," they said.

In January, Germany agreed to send 14 newer Leopard 2 A6 tanks from its military's current stocks, and raised the number to 18 in February. Acting Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen stressed that the tanks were not Danish but are "bought in collaboration with the Netherlands."

Denmark currently has

Leopard 2 A7 tanks which are a "different and newer model than the one we are donating now," Lund Poulsen added.

In a separate statement, Dutch Defence Minister Kees Ollongren said that "having the Leopard 2 A4 main battle tank at its disposal will give Ukraine superiority on the battlefield, due to the tank's major fire power, high level of protection and speed.

"Over the last few weeks, the Ukrainian armed forces have already demonstrated that they are able to master the skills needed to operate the tank in a short amount of time," she added.

Cuba's parliament ratifies Prez Díaz-Canel for new term

AP ■ HAVANA

Cuba's National Assembly on Wednesday ratified President Miguel Díaz-Canel for a new five-year term, in a decision to maintain continuity as the island faces a deep economic crisis.

More than 400 representatives to the assembly who were ratified by voters in March took office early Wednesday and then convened the chamber to elect the government's leadership and the president. Díaz-Canel obtained the votes of 459 of the 462 legislators present.

Vice President Salvador Valdés Mesa also was ratified, by 439 votes.

In his new term, Díaz-Canel must deal with a severe recession prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, soaring inflation triggered by a series of financial policy decisions and strict sanctions imposed by the US. He also must grapple with discontent among many Cubans expressed in part through record rates of emigration to the US and elsewhere. Among the measures his team will be focusing on "immediately," Díaz-Canel said, are food production, an increase in exports, and the development of the "socialist-state enterprise."

He added that controlling inflation is a priority in the country's "economic battle."

Díaz-Canel, a slow-talking, gray-haired former engineer who turns 63 this week, also heads the party.

In 2018, he became Cuba's first leader in six decades not surnamed Castro, after Raul Castro went into semi-retirement following his stint as president. He had taken over from his brother, Cuba's revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, in 2016.

The country had "hopes of political and economic changes" at the time, but Díaz-Canel instead has become the standard bearer of continuity, said Luis Carlos Battista, a Cuban-American analyst and lawyer living in Washington.

"The president, five years after being ratified by the National Assembly, has not yet managed to convey to the public an idea of progress," Battista said.

In recent years, the economy has collapsed, with GDP falling 11 per cent in 2020 after the pandemic struck. Inflation from January to October of last year was 40 per cent at official rates — and even more when the black market it taken into account.

In July 2021, Díaz-Canel faced the country's first major wave of protests in at least two decades, which left one dead, stores vandalised, and cars destroyed and which the government accused groups in the US of fomenting.

Japan vows security review before G7

Tokyo (AP): Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida denounced a pipe bomb attack at a campaign event he attended last weekend and pledged to review security procedures to ensure safety for dignitaries visiting the country for the Group of Seven summit he will host in May. "No matter what the reason is, the use of violence to shut down free speech should never be tolerated," Kishida told selected media from G-7 countries on Thursday at the Prime Minister's Office, as he stressed that the attack occurred during a nationwide local election campaign.

"The election, which is the foundation of democracy, should not succumb to violence. We must carry out the election until the end," he said, explaining why he has continued to deliver speeches since the attack on Saturday.

A man hurled a pipe bomb at Kishida at the fishing port of Saikazaki in the western prefecture of Wakayama just before he was to make a campaign speech for a local candidate from his governing party.

The moment the explosive fell near him, he was pushed away by special police and evacuated unhurt before the

bomb exploded.

The alleged attacker, Ryuji Kimura, 24, was wrestled to the ground and arrested on the spot.

The attack, which targeted the prime minister less than a year after former leader Shinzo Abe's assassination, raised questions about whether any lessons had been learned from Abe's case, especially as Japan navigates key events like the ongoing elections and G-7 meetings.

"As we prepare to welcome many guests from around the world for the G-7 summit and other events, I feel it is very important to once again review our security measures so that our guests can visit Japan with a sense of safety," Kishida said.

During the May 19-21 summit in his electoral constituency of Hiroshima — the target of the world's first atomic attack — Kishida plans to appeal for nuclear disarmament, while pledging support for the rules-based international order and vowing to play a greater role as the only Asian member of the G-7 to bridge Western economies with the so-called Global South nations. He will also demand that Russia stop the war on Ukraine immediately.

Indian held on US extradition warrant in UK

London (PTI): An Indian national with addresses in the UK and Belgium has been arrested in London by Scotland Yard on an extradition warrant from the US, it emerged as part of a UK-US coordinated action targeting terrorism financing.

Sundar Nagarajan, also known as Nagarajan Sundar Poongulam Kasiviswanathan Naga and Sundar Poongulam K. Nagarajan Nagarajan, was arrested by the Metropolitan Police's National Extradition Unit from an address at Hayes in west London on Tuesday. After being refused bail, the 65-year-old Madurai-born Nagarajan is due to appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London next week.

After being refused bail, the 65-year-old Madurai-born Nagarajan is due to appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London next week wanted by the US authorities for fraud and money laundering offences. His arrest followed action by the Met's Counter Terrorism Command to arrest a 50-year-old man in Wales on suspicion of funding terrorism.

"The ongoing investigation and arrest relates to suspected terrorist financing and money laundering, which is believed to be connected to wealthy art collector and diamond dealer, Nazem Ahmad," the Met Police said.

Solar eclipse wows viewers in Aus, Indonesia

AP ■ JAKARTA

Under a cloudless sky, 20,000 eclipse chasers crowded a tiny outpost to watch a rare solar eclipse plunge part of Australia's northwest coast into brief midday darkness Thursday while temporarily cooling the tropical heat.

The remote tourist town of Exmouth, with fewer than 3,000 residents, was promoted as one of the best vantage points in Australia to see the eclipse that also crossed remote parts of Indonesia and East Timor.

An international crowd had been gathering for days, camping in tents and trailers on a red, dusty plain on the edge of town with cameras and other viewing equipment pointed skyward.

NASA astronomer Henry Throop was among those at Exmouth cheering loudly in the darkness.

"Isn't it incredible? This is so fantastic. It was mind-blowing. It was so sharp and it was so bright. You could see the corona around the sun there," the visibly excited Washington resident said.

"It's only a minute long, but it really felt like a long time. There's nothing else you can see which looks like that. It was just awesome. Spectacular. And then you could see Jupiter and Mercury and to be able to see those at the same time during the day — even seeing Mercury at all is pretty rare. So that was just awesome," Throop added.

First-time eclipse chaser Julie Copson, who traveled more than 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) north from the Australian west-coast port city of Fremantle to Exmouth, said the phenomenon left her skin tingling.

"I feel so emotional, like I could cry. The colour changed and I seeing the corona and sun flares..." Copson said.

"It was very strong and the temperature dropped so much," she added, referring to a sudden 5-degree-Celsius (9-degree-Fahrenheit) fall in tempera-

ture from 29 degrees Celsius (84 Fahrenheit) when the moon's shadow enveloped the region.

It was the fifth eclipse for Detroit resident Shane Vartti, who began planning his trip to Exmouth a year ago.

"It's very exciting. All this effort has come to fruition," Vartti said.

In Indonesia's capital, hundreds

came to the Jakarta Planetarium to see the partial eclipse that was obscured by clouds.

Azka Azzahra, 21, came with her sister and friends to get a closer look by using the telescopes with hundreds of other visitors.

"I am still happy to come even though it is cloudy. It is happy to see how people with high enthusiasm come here to see the eclipse, because it is rare," Azzahra said.

The call to prayer resounded from the city's mosques when the eclipse phase began as Muslims in the country with the world's largest Muslim population said eclipse prayers as a reminder of God's greatness.

In East Timor, people gathered around the beach in Lautem municipality, waiting to witness the rare solar eclipse through their eclipse glasses.

Some of them came from other countries and gathered with locals to have a clear view of the eclipse.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY MARINE DEPARTMENT
No. MD/ACCTS-WK-R-4/2022/499
Dated, the 19th April 2023
e-Tender Call Notice (e-TCN)

Name of the Work: "Supply of 01 No. 60 Ton Bollard Pulp Tug along with Manning crew on Hire for Marine Operation at SPMs and Inside Harbour at Paradip for a period of seven years". Estimated Cost put to tender: ₹. 75,48,71,148/- . Last date & time of submission of bids through on-line bidding is 15:00 hours on Dt. 06.06.2023. Technical Bids shall be opened at 16:00 hours on Dt.07.06.2023. For details, please log on to the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.
Dy. Conservator
Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/05/2023-24, Dt.20.04.23

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
No.:CE/PHD(M)/ACCTS. 17/20/156
Date: 18.04.2023

Name of the Work: "Detailed Engineering, Construction, Supply, Delivery, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of 16 MLD Water Treatment Plant at Baijipara Water Works including 03 months trial run and One year operation & maintenance". Estimated Cost: Rs. 11,56,06,712/- Last Date & time of submission: 22.05.2023 up to 5:00 PM. Refer our website for details: eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app
Executive Engineer, PHD(M), PPA
PPA/PR/06/2023-24 Dt.20/04/2023

NAGAR NIGAM DEHRADUN
Tel : 0135-2714074 Website: www.nagarnigamdehradun.com
E-Mail: nagarnigam.ddn@gmail.com

E-Tender Notice

NND invites Request for Proposal (RFP) for Project Management Consultancy (PMC) for Source Segregation, Door to Door Collection, Secondary Collection & Transportation of Waste (C&T) for 51 wards for five years from eligible bidders having experience as indicated in the RFP document. Interested bidders are requested to download the RFP document from e-tenders portal government of Uttarakhand between the said dates. Pre-bid meeting is scheduled at 2:30 pm on 26.04.2023. Any Addendum/Corrigendum including date of extension will be uploaded only on www.uktenders.gov.in. The Municipal Commissioner have right to cancel tender at any stage without giving any reason. The last date for online submission of bids is 10.05.2023 at 2:00PM.

Municipal Commissioner
Nagar Nigam Dehradun

कार्यालय नगर निगम रुड़की-जिला हरद्वार (उत्तराखण्ड)
दूरभाष नम्बर 01332-272666 ई-मेल आईडी00 nagarnigamroorkee@gmail.com

E-Tender Notice

Nagar Nigam Roorkee invites open Tenders in Two Bid System for "Treatment of legacy waste under swm with Bio-remediation and Bio-mining techniques" Tenders Details are given below.

Sr. No	Bid Submission Start Date	Bid Submission End Date	Bid Opening Date
01	22/04/2023	15/05/2023	16/05/2023

For More Details visit to www.uktenders.gov.in.
पत्रांक: 27/स्वा-अनु0/ई-निविदा/नॉनितरु0/2023-24
दिनांक: 20.04.2023

सहायक नगर आयुक्त
नगर निगम रुड़की

NORTHERN RAILWAY
(E-Auction Notice)

The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites e-Auction through IREPS (<https://ireps.gov.in>) for allotment of contracts of Special Minor Catering Units at following railway stations/locations:

E-Catalogue No.	Type of Units	Station and Reserved for category	Date & Time for e-auction
CATG-01	Special Minor Units (SMUs)	Narwana (NRW) - ST, Tuglakabad (TKD) - SC, Narela (NUR) - OBC, Bahadurgarh (BGZ) - FF, Sahibabad (SBB) - FF (W), Delhi Jn. (DLI) - BPL (W)	Start: 08.05.2023 at 11:00 hrs.
CATG-02	Special Minor Units (SMUs)	Palwal (PWL) - ST, Delhi Sarai Rohilla (DEE) - ST, Dayabasti (DBSI) - ST, Delhi Azadpur (DAZ) - MIN, Gurgaon (GGN) - FF (W), Faridabad New Town (FDN) - BPL	Start: 09.05.2023 at 11:00 hrs.
CATG-03	Special Minor Units (SMUs)	Karnal (KUN) - ST, Modinagar (MDNR) - SC, Tilakbridge - (TKJ) - MIN, Delhi Cantt. (DEC) - FF (W), Delhi Sarai Rohilla (DEE) - BPL, Delhi Shahdara (DEE) - BPL	Start: 10.05.2023 at 11:00 hrs.

Website particulars where complete details of E-Auction can be seen <https://ireps.gov.in> (E-Auction-Leasing)

All contractors who intend to participate in the e-auctions conducted through E-Auction Leasing module of IREPS should fulfill following mandatory requirements before they can submit their bids:

- Registration on IREPS for E-Auction Leasing module -Active IREPS User Account for E-Auction Leasing Module.
- Payment of One Time Registration Fee; Current Account in State Bank of India; Integration of SBI Bank Account with IREPS Account; Lien Marking of Funds; Update of Turnover Details.
- A new mechanism namely Virtual Account Number (VAN) has been introduced now for E-Auction Leasing module, which can be used by the bidders as an alternative to Lien Marking Mechanism.
- The bidders are free to switch between Lien Marking Mechanism (if activated) and VAN mechanism at any point of time, before entering the bidding room.VAN mechanism does not require the bidder to have a current account in State Bank of India. The users are free to transfer money from any of their existing bank accounts in any bank to their VAN account, which enables them to participate in IREPS E-Auctions.
- Contractors who do not have IREPS account for any module of IREPS can submit their online request for registration by clicking on New Vendors / Contractors (E-Tender /E-Auction Leasing) link on IREPS Home page.

Railway Authority to contact, in case of any query : Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Commercial Branch, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055; Email: catering.delhidivision@gmail.com, Tel: 011-23743084
No.: NR-DLICOMM(CTG)/19/2022-0/ Sr.DC/PM/SLI/NR Dated: 04.2023 1190/2023
Serving Customers with a Smile

GST evasion detection nearly doubles in FY23

To ₹1.01 L cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST evasion detection by tax officers almost doubled year-on-year to over ₹1.01 lakh crore in the just concluded 2022-23 fiscal, an official said.

During the last fiscal, a recovery of ₹21,000 crore was made by the officers of the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI).

The official said the government is taking steps to increase compliance and using data analytics and human intelligence to identify fraud.

"DGGI officers have detected evasion to the tune of ₹1,01,300 crore in 2022-23. Of this, recovery of ₹21,000 crore have been made," the official told PTI.

In 2021-22, DGGI, the investigative agency under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, detected evasion of over ₹54,000 crore and made a tax recovery of over ₹21,000 crore. The total number of Goods and Services Tax (GST) evasion cases has gone up this fiscal with about 14,000 cases detected in 2022-23, up from



12,574 cases in 2021-22 and 12,596 cases in 2020-21.

The modus operandi adopted by fraudsters included short payment of tax by undervaluing taxable goods and services, wrong availment of exemption notifications, wrong availment of the input tax credit, non-payment of tax on supply of taxable goods and services (clandestine removal), and fraudulent avail-

ment of the input tax credit on the basis of invoices from fake firms. In a reply to the Lok Sabha last month, the Finance Ministry said total GST evasion detected between July 2017 to February 2023 was close to ₹3.08 lakh crore, of which over ₹1.03 lakh crore was recovered. GST authorities had arrested 1,402 persons for evading taxes in the last five-and-a-half years till February 2023.

Equity markets settle with marginal gains in highly volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended with marginal gains on Thursday after falling in the past three days, helped by fag-end buying in energy, telecom and utility stocks.

Investors remained cautious amid renewed foreign fund outflows and prevailing risk-off sentiments ahead of US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision, traders said.

In a highly volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 64.55 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at 59,632.35. During the day, it hit a high of 59,836.79 and a low of 59,489.98.

The broader NSE Nifty went up by 5.70 points or 0.03 per cent to finish at 17,624.45.

"Markets ended the 3-day losing streak on selective buying in financials, telecom and utility stocks. The market had run up sharply over the past week or so, but with FIIs turning sellers in the last few sessions and global central banks signalling more hawkish bets going ahead, traders are maintaining a cautious stance," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of



Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

Among the Sensex firms, Asian Paints, NTPC, Tata Motors, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, ITC, HDFC Bank and Maruti were the biggest winners.

Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance, Nestle, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries and HDFC were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge ended marginally lower by 0.03 per cent, while smallcap index climbed 0.10 per cent.

Cumulative impact of monetary policy actions still unfolding: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, in the rate-setting panel meeting earlier this month, opined that the cumulative impact of the monetary policy actions over the last one year is still unfolding and needs to be monitored closely, as per the MPC minutes released on Thursday.

Das, along with the five other members of the Monetary Policy Committee, voted for a pause in rate hike earlier this month.

The central bank, which effected six back-to-back hikes in the key short-term lending rate (repo) since May 2022 to check high inflation, decided to take a pause early this month. The cumulative rate hike since May 2022 is 250 basis points.

"The cumulative impact of our monetary policy actions over the last one year is still unfolding and needs to be monitored closely," Das said during the last Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting held during April 3-6.

Inflation for 2023-24 is projected to soften, but the disinflation towards the target is likely to be slow and protracted. The projected inflation in Q4:2023-24 at 5.2 per cent would still be well above the



target, he noted.

"Therefore, at this juncture, we have to persevere with our focus on bringing about a durable moderation in inflation and at the same time give ourselves some time to monitor the impact of our past actions."

Das said, "I am, therefore, of the view that we do a tactical pause in this meeting of the MPC", as per the minutes of the MPC meeting released by the RBI.

MPC member and RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra said that an ongoing assessment of the macroeconomic outlook should inform a preparedness to re-calibrate monetary policy towards a more restrictive stance with consistent actions, should risks to the inflation tra-

jectory materialise and impede its alignment with the target.

The process of getting inflation back to target could turn out to be gradual and uneven but the mission of monetary policy is to shepherd this process through potential bumps while containing second-round effects and anchoring inflation expectations, he added.

The government has mandated the central bank to ensure that retail inflation based on the consumer price index (CPI) remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The retail inflation in March fell to a 15-month low of 5.66 per cent and came back to the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent.

Tata Power to install twenty EV charging stations in Coimbatore

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Integrated power company Tata Power has partnered with the Coimbatore municipal corporation to install 20 public electric vehicle charging stations in the textile city, the company said on Thursday.

With the installation of 20 public EV chargers, the total EV charging stations set up by Tata Power in Tamil Nadu would increase to 116.

The four-wheeler charging stations would provide 24x7 charging facility along with maintenance support to electric vehicle owners in Coimbatore and neighbouring cities.

"We are pleased to partner with Coimbatore Municipal Corporation which is the second largest corporation in Tamil Nadu to provide optimal EV charging solutions to all EV users in the city and nearby areas," Tata Power head-business development (EV charging)



Virendra Goyal said in a statement.

"Through our association with Coimbatore Municipal Corporation and more such municipal bodies, we strive to make EV adoption in India feasible while making the EV charging stations easily accessible to users," he said.

The charging stations would be accessible through Tata Power EZ Charge mobile application which is equipped with locating a charging station, remote vehicle charging monitoring and e-payments.

Merchandise exports may cross \$500 bn in 2023-24: Exporters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's merchandise exports are likely to cross \$500 billion this fiscal due to healthy demand for domestic goods in key global markets, including the US, and benefits from trade pacts, according to exporters.

They said that other destinations like Russia would give a huge boost to the country's outbound shipments, particularly in the agri and food processing sectors.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said they are targeting to take the shipments to \$500 billion-510 billion during the current financial year.

Services exports are likely to reach around \$390 billion in 2023-24 from \$322.72 billion in 2022-23.

"Together with goods and services, we are targeting exports of \$900 billion this fiscal," FIEO Director General



Ajay Sahai said.

He noted that free trade agreements with the UAE and Australia would provide a huge platform to boost exports in those markets.

"Production-linked incentive scheme too will provide an impetus to our exports as domestic production would jump due to the incentives," Sahai added.

Ludhiana-based engineering exporter and Hand Tools Association President SC Ralhan said there are healthy signs of economic growth in

the US, which accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total outbound shipments.

"Order books are good and we expect that going by the current trend, our exports would cross \$500 billion this fiscal," he said.

India's exports rose by over 6 per cent to \$447.5 billion in 2022-23 compared to \$422 billion in 2021-22.

Mumbai-based exporter and Chairman of Technocraft Industries Sharda Kumar Saraf too said that this fiscal would be better than the last year for India's exports.

"The impact of the Russia-Ukraine war is tapering off as industry has found an alternate route for trade and sources of energy. In India, there is a significant improvement in infrastructure and that would give solid support to exporters," Saraf said.

Going by the current trend, the exports would cross \$500 billion in 2023-24, he added.

Rupee gains 7 paise against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 7 paise to close at 82.17 against the US dollar on Thursday, as crude oil prices retreated from elevated levels.

Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equities also supported the local unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.21 against the US currency and finally closed at 82.17 against the greenback, registering a gain of 7 paise over its previous close.

During the session, the rupee touched a high of 82.12 and a low of 82.21 against the dollar.

On Wednesday, the rupee closed at 82.25 against the US currency.

According to Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, the rupee traded positively on the back of the dollar index trading below \$101.70 along with weakness in crude as WTI traded below \$78, giving support to the rupee.

"Rupee continues to be in the broad range between 81.80-82.25 pricing in the interest rate probability of a hike in May policy by 0.25 bps. The rupee range can continue between



81.80-82.25," Trivedi added.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.08 per cent to 101.88.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures declined 1.65 per cent to \$81.75 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 64.55 points or 0.11 per cent to end at 59,632.35, and the broader NSE Nifty gained 5.70 points or 0.03 per cent to 17,624.45.

According to Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, the rupee appreciated against the dollar on Thursday, tracking gains in the Asian peers.

The Chinese Yuan, the South Korean Won, and the Philippine Peso led the Asian peers as the dollar index took a breather on Thursday, Iyer said.

Gold jumps ₹440; silver climbs ₹850 amid strong global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices jumped ₹440 to ₹60,340 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a rally in prices of precious metal internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at ₹59,900 per 10 grams.

Silver also climbed ₹850 to ₹75,450 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at ₹60,340 per 10 grams, up ₹440 per 10 grams," Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas markets, both gold and silver were traded higher at \$1,996 per ounce and \$25.16 per ounce, respectively.

Gold prices traded higher in Asian trading hours on Thursday.

Comex spot gold price is trading up by 0.11 per cent at \$1,996 per ounce against its previous close, Gandhi said.



Jio rolls out 82,500 sites for 5G service, Airtel less than 20,000

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio has rolled out over four times more 5G sites compared to its competitor Bharti Airtel, according to official data published by the Department of Telecom.

According to the data, Reliance Jio has rolled out 82,509 sites for 5G services, while Bharti Airtel has 19,142 sites as of March 3.

"After the inauguration of 5G services in the country by the Hon'ble PM, Telecom Service Providers continue to progressively roll out 5G services and required infrastructure in a phased manner across the country," the DoT said in a monthly summary report comprising status of telecom projects and infrastructure update.

HCL Technologies Q4 profit rises 11% to ₹3,983 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

HCL Technologies on Thursday posted a 10.85 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to ₹3,983 crore in the fourth quarter of the financial year ended March 2023.

The company posted a net profit of ₹3,599 crore in the same period a year ago.

HCL Technologies' profit, however, declined on the quarter-over-quarter basis by about 3 per cent from ₹4,096 crore — its highest-ever profit in any quarter.

The company's revenue from operations rose by about 18 per cent to ₹26,606 crore during the reported period from ₹22,597 crore in the March 2022 quarter.



However, sequentially, its revenue declined marginally from ₹26,700 it reported in the third quarter.

For the year ended March 31, 2023, HCL Technologies' profit increased by 10 per cent to ₹14,845 crore from ₹13,499 crore in the same period a year ago.

Its annual consolidated revenue from operations crossed ₹1 lakh crore.

The company's annual revenue increased by 18.45 per cent to ₹1,01,456 crore at the end of 2022-23 from ₹85,651 crore a year ago.

ICRA projects 20-25% growth for India's quick service restaurant industry in FY-24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's quick service restaurant industry is likely to witness 20-25 per cent growth in the current financial year supported by demand uptick and increasing penetration driven by a rapid expansion of stores.

Over the long-term, revenue growth shall be supported by factors like rising QSR penetration levels, a shift from the unorganised to the organised segment with a preference for branded quick service restaurant (QSR) players, given the hygiene and convenience factors (delivery over dine-in), etc, ICRA said.

"On the back of a robust industry revenue expansion of around 30-35 per cent in YoY terms estimated for FY2023, ICRA projects growth to moderate somewhat while remain-



ing strong at 20-25 per cent in FY2024 on account of the demand uptick and increasing penetration driven by a rapid expansion of stores," the rating agency said.

However, downside risks to the estimates remain from the emergence of any further Covid waves or any material weakening in purchasing power due to a high inflationary interest-rate regime, ICRA stated.

HDFC Bank picks Kaizad Bharucha as new deputy managing director

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

HDFC Bank on Thursday said it has appointed Kaizad Bharucha as deputy managing director and Bhavesh Zaveri as executive director for three years.

The RBI, in its communication dated April 19, 2023, has approved the appointment of Kaizad Bharucha as Deputy Managing Director of the bank for three years with effect from April 19, it added.

Nokia first quarter net sales rise 10% to 5.8 bn euros as India biz jumps four-fold

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finnish telecom gear maker Nokia on Thursday reported a 10 per cent increase in global net sales to 5,859 million euros in the first quarter ended March 2023, on account of over a four-fold jump in Indian business.

The company registered 5,348 million euros in net sales in the same period a year ago.

"Network Infrastructure and Mobile Networks both grew at double-digit rates, with Network Infrastructure



increasing 13 per cent, led by Optical Networks and IP Networks, and Mobile Networks increasing 13 per cent, reflecting the continued ramp up of 5G in India," Nokia said in its earnings report.

Boost in Indian sales saved the company from the reduced spending in North America and other geographies.

Nokia India sales zoomed over four-fold to 853 million euros during the reported quarter from 200 million euros in the March 2022 quarter on account of fast pace deployment of the 5G network in the country.

"Mobile Networks net sales grew 13 per cent (on constant currency basis) as 5G deployments in India ramped up, more than offsetting a slow-down in North America spending," Nokia President and CEO Pekka Lundmark said in the earnings report.

Natco Pharma to set up subsidiary in Indonesia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Natco Pharma Ltd on Thursday said its board has approved setting up of a subsidiary in Indonesia with an investment of up to \$3 million (nearly ₹25 crore) for selling pharmaceutical products in that country.

The new subsidiary — PT. NATCO Lotus Pharma — will be a joint venture with Natco holding 51 per cent and the balance stake 49 per cent by PT. Mitra Medis Exim (MME).

Focus is on enhancing audit quality, says ICAI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) on Thursday said focus is on enhancing audit quality mechanism, benchmarking the global best practices in Sustainability Reporting requirements and Assurance Standards and actively participate in G20 endeavors with the Central Government.

President, ICAI, Chartered Accountant (CA) Aniket Sunil Talati, said taking forward India's economic growth story, the ICAI has become a prime partner with B20 dialogue. "The partnership of ICAI with B20 as a prime partner reflects its commitment to support the Government in making India a Vishwaguru," Talati said addressing a press conference in the national Capital.

While Talati was elected as President ICAI, CA Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal as the new Vice-President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) in February this year. With more than 3.75 lakh members and over 7.80 lakh students, ICAI is the world's second largest accounting body.

While sharing the most important role of ICAI, Talati said the Regulatory framework of ICAI is an intricate system on which the pious, glorious and respectful structure of one of the largest accounting bodies in the world stands. "ICAI vigorously and constructively endeavor to make its Regulatory and

Disciplinary mechanisms are more robust and responsive together with its disciplinary directorate, financial reporting review board, peer review board, taxation audits quality review board, centre for audit quality," Talati said. While talking about disciplinary cases, the president shared that ICAI has a zero-tolerance



CA Aniket Sunil Talati (President) The institute of chartered accountants of India with CA Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal (vice president) Jand CA (Dr.) Sajeet Kumar Singhal, (Chairman, PR) during the Press Conference held by ICAI in New Delhi on Thursday

policy against any disciplinary case and in few of the cases the body have removed members from register of members for life.

Talati said that the Institute has recently developed and released the "Guidance note on audit of banks 2023" edition, that provides detailed guidance to auditors conducting audits of banks and bank

On the occasion he also informed that Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, had approached ICAI to place systematic reliance on UDIN to assess the veracity of the information certified by Chartered Accountants (CA) in the prescribed format for the empannelment of the news agencies based on circulation and rates.

While addressing the media Agarwal shared the details about the 57 th Campus Placement Programme being organized by the Institute for the newly qualified CAs who passed the CA final examination in November 2022.

Haaland fires Man City into CL semis

AP ■ MUNICH

His 48th goal for Manchester City this season.

Erling Haaland scored again on Wednesday for City to advance to a Champions League semifinal against Real Madrid with a 1-1 draw against Bayern Munich in the second leg of their quarterfinal.

The Norway forward missed a first-half penalty but atoned by sealing City's progress with a 4-1 win on aggregate by scoring on a counterattack in the 57th minute, just after Bayern missed a good chance at the other end.

Bayern's lack of confidence after losing the first leg 3-0 in Manchester showed as it failed to take advantage of numerous chances.

"We really wanted to take the lead in the first half," said Joshua Kimmich, who scored Bayern's consolation from the penalty spot in the 83rd.

"We had a few chances, very, very good chances, and we needed the lead against City to make them nervous. It's obviously easier for them when they can keep it scoreless for a long time. It's very annoying... I'd like to have experienced the second half if we'd scored in the first."

The penalty was awarded after City defender Manuel Akanji was cited through VAR for handball.

Bayern counterpart Dayot Upamecano was also penalized for handball when Ilkay Gündogan's cross grazed the bottom of his arm in the 35th, but Haaland blasted that spot



kick just over the bar. Kevin De Bruyne played Haaland through to settle it early in the second half, when the unfortunate Upamecano slipped as he tried to recover. "We played very well in the difficult moments, we were very

compact and we didn't give Bayern much," De Bruyne said. "At the other end we got one chance. And when we scored the goal, it was much harder for Bayern."

City did little in manager Pep Guardiola's return to the

club he led to three consecutive Bundesliga titles between 2014-16, but the visitors didn't need to thanks to their commanding lead from the first leg and Bayern's lack of efficiency.

It is the Bavarian powerhouse's third consecutive quar-

terfinal exit since winning the tournament in 2020 and the second competition it has been knocked out of in as many weeks following Freiburg's win over Bayern in the German Cup quarterfinals.

Bayern chief executive

Oliver Kahn and sporting director Hasan Salihamidžić fired Julian Nagelsmann as coach last month as they felt the team was in danger of missing its targets for the season. Tuchel has since only seen the team win two from six games across all competitions. Bayern still leads the Bundesliga by two points from Borussia Dortmund with six rounds remaining.

Bayern fans held a huge banner toward the end of the Wednesday's game criticizing Salihamidžić and Kahn saying "Targets may be missed - the club's values not!"

Bayern had made an encouraging start only to be let down with final crosses going astray and poor finishing.

Leroy Sané had the best early chance when Jamal Musiala sent him through but the Germany winger sent his shot just wide of the far post.

Referee Clement Turpin upset the home team when he showed last defender Upamecano a red card for bringing down Haaland, who was offside. Turpin rescinded the red card after the linesman flagged the offside, then booked Tuchel for his ironic applause.

Tuchel was sent off late with his second yellow card for protesting another decision, while his assistant Zsolt Löw was shown a direct red card.

City is bidding to win the Champions League for the first time. It would be Guardiola's first since winning as Barcelona coach in 2011. City will play Madrid, the defending champion, away for the first leg of their semifinal in May.

Inter advances past Benfica, sets up Milan semifinal

AP ■ MILAN

The Milan clubs are set to meet again in another Champions League semifinal a decade after their last encounter in the final four of Europe's elite club competition.

Inter Milan drew 3-3 against Benfica on Wednesday to complete a 5-3 aggregate victory over the Portuguese team. That came a day after AC Milan prevailed against Napoli in their quarterfinal.

After Nicolò Barella's opener for Inter, Fredrik Aursnes restored some hope for Benfica shortly before half-time. But Lautaro Martínez and substitute Joaquín Correa netted in the second half to help Inter reach its first semifinal since José Mourinho led it to the treble of the Champions League, Serie A and Italian Cup in 2010.

Inter nevertheless managed to relinquish a two-goal lead as António Silva and Petar Musa netted late on for Benfica.

"Obviously I am happy, and I am happy for the boys because it is an important and historic achievement," Inter coach Simone Inzaghi said.

"We've come a long way, from a very, very difficult group.

"With regards to the goals, their forward did well on the second goal and on the third goal we heard a whistle and so several players stopped. Of course I would have wanted to



have won 3-2 and I'm more disappointed for the boys but we were already through to the semifinal and there was that whistle that we heard on the bench too... we would have deserved the win."

The Nerazzurri will face its city rival in a repeat of the 2003 semifinal. AC Milan won that on away goals and went on to beat Juventus in the final.

"It's a very special match, we know what it means to play a match of this sort," Inter forward Martínez said.

"Now we have to pick up points again in Serie A and then we'll think about the Champions League.

"I play this sport to win everything."

Real Madrid will face Manchester City in the other semifinal after the English team drew 1-1 at Bayern Munich on Wednesday to advance 4-1 on aggregate.



Indian men's recurve team storm into World Cup final

To face China in gold medal clash

AP ■ ANTALYA

India stormed into the final of the men's recurve team event for the first time in nine years after registering three wins in the ongoing Archery World Cup Stage 1, here on Thursday.

The trio of Atanu Das, B Dhiraj and Tarundeep Rai will face China in the gold medal clash on Sunday in pursuit of India's first World Cup gold medal in the men's recurve team event after 13 years.

The men's recurve team, which got a first-round bye after qualifying as the fourth seed, faced a stiff challenge to begin with as it defeated 13th seed Japan 5-4 with a 29-28 win in the shoot-off.

The Indians shot two perfect 10 from three attempts (10, 10, 9) to seal the issue in the tie-breaker after both the teams were locked 4-4 (49-52, 57-52, 54-51, 52-57) following four sets of intense shooting.

Thereafter, it was an easy sailing for the Indian trio that got past 12th seed Chinese Taipei and ninth seed Netherlands by identical 6-2 margins to set up a summit clash with second seed China.

The Netherlands will take on Slovenia in the bronze play-off.

It was an easy outing against Chinese Taipei as the Indian men's recurve team raced to 4-0 lead before sealing the issue 6-2 (55-54, 57-54, 51-53, 58-56) with four 10s including an X (closer to the centre).

Next up, were the Netherlands who were on a high after eliminating top-seed and tournament hosts Turkey (6-0), a team that included the reigning Olympic champion Mete Gazoz.

The Dutch raced to a 2-0 lead but the Indians came back strongly to win 6-2 (56-58, 57-53, 57-55, 56-54).

TURKISH DELIGHT

Incidentally, it is at the same Mediterranean coastal resort of Antalya where the Indian men's recurve team had tasted its first success in a World Cup way back in 2008.

The team of Jayanta Talukdar, Rahul Banerjee and Mangal Singh Champa defeated their Malaysia rivals 218-215 en route to a maiden recurve men's team gold medal in the World Cup.

Shamim Khan maintains lead with resilient second round display

AP ■ AHMEDABAD

Delhi's Shamim Khan held on to his overnight lead with a resilient second round display of an even-par 36 at the Ahmedabad Open here on Thursday.

Two-time PGTI Order of Merit champion Shamim (31-36), who enjoyed a two-shot lead after round one, totalled five-under 67 at the halfway stage to stay ahead of the rest of the field by one shot at the Rs 1 crore event.

Noida's Amardeep Malik

(32) and Ahmedabad-based Samarth Dwivedi (34), both of whom submitted flawless cards, were tied for second at a total of four-under 68 along with Bengaluru's Shaurya Binu (34), Delhi's Kshitij Naveed Kaul (35) and Faridabad's Abhinav Lohan (35).

The first two rounds of the event at the Glade One Golf Resort & Club comprised nine holes each. After the completion of 18 holes on Thursday, the cut was applied at one-over 73. Fifty-two professionals and one amateur made the cut.



The third and fourth rounds will now comprise 18 holes each. The tournament will be played over a total of 54 holes.

The par for the course in the first two rounds was 36. The par for the course in the third and fourth rounds will be 72.

Nadal out of Madrid Open after slow recovery from hip injury

AP ■ MADRID

Rafael Nadal will miss the Madrid Open next week because his recovery from a hip injury is going much slower than expected.

The 22-time Grand Slam winner has been sidelined since January by a left hip flexor injury he picked up at the Australian Open. The issue has kept him from the Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo and Barcelona tournaments so far.

The Madrid Open he's won five times starts on Monday. "(This injury) was supposed to keep me out six to eight weeks, but I have been out 14," Nadal said in Spanish in a message on Instagram on Thursday.

"We have followed all the medical advice, but my recovery has not gone as they said it would, and now we find ourselves in a difficult situation."

The 36-year-old Nadal did not mention his prospects for being fit for the French Open starting on May 28.

Charismatic Betis captain Joaquín Sánchez set to retire

AP ■ MADRID

Charismatic Real Betis captain Joaquín Sánchez has announced that he will retire at the end of the season.

The 41-year-old midfielder, known just as much for his comic vein as for his well-rounded game, announced his decision through a video posted on social media on Wednesday.

He said it was finally time to "hang up my boots, my art."

Carrying a playful demeanor throughout his career, Joaquín will retire after 23 seasons, most of them with boyhood club Betis. He also played for Málaga, Valencia and Fiorentina in Italy.

Joaquín needs to play in eight of Betis' final nine Spanish league matches to break the record of most league appearances, a mark currently held by former Spain and Barcelona goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta, who played 622 league games. Joaquín sits on 615.

Joaquín had contemplated retiring last season but eventu-



ally returned for a final year after Betis won the Copa del Rey.

He also helped Betis win the Copa title in 2005 and was with Valencia when it won the Copa in 2008.

Joaquín debuted with Betis' main squad in 2000, when the team was in the second division.

Joaquín made more than 50 appearances with Spain's national team, but none since 2007. In 2018, he posted a joke Instagram video asking then Spain coach Luis Enrique why he had not been included in the national squad.

"I have two missed calls here and I don't know if they are from you or not?" Joaquín asked.

Sabalenka, Gauff, Rybakina advance in Stuttgart

AP ■ TURIN

Second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka advanced to the quarterfinals at the Porsche Grand Prix by beating Barbora Krejčíková 6-2 6-3.

The Australian Open champion has reached the final in Stuttgart for two straight years but has yet to win the clay-court tournament.

Krejčíková, the 2021 French Open champion, has beaten Sabalenka only once in 35 career meetings.

Coco Gauff, Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina and Ons Jabeur also recorded victories on Wednesday.

The fifth-seeded Gauff fought off a deciding-set comeback from Veronika Kudermetova to win 6-2 4-6 7-6 (3) and move into the second round.

Gauff's Russian opponent won four straight games to take the second set from 4-2 down and came back from 5-3 down in the decider to force a tiebreaker before Gauff finally secured the win. The 19-year-old American plays Anastasia Potapova next.

Gauff is playing her first tournament since splitting with coach Diego Moyano following the Miami Open.

Rybakina won five games in a row to seal a 7-5 6-3 win over Jule Niemeier after trailing 3-1 in the second set. She next plays Beatriz Haddad Maia.

The third-seeded Jabeur beat Jelena Ostapenko 1-6 7-5 6-3.

Playing each other for the third time in four tournaments, Karolína Plíšková beat eighth-seeded Maria Sakkari 6-2 6-3 to set up a second-round meeting with Donna Vekić. Plíšková takes a 4-3 lead in career meetings with Sakkari, who eliminated the Czech player in the third round at Indian Wells last month before going on to reach the semifinals.



Mumbai City FC prevail 1-0 over Chennaiyin FC in Super Cup

AP ■ MANJERI

Mumbai City FC registered a 1-0 win over Chennaiyin FC in a thrilling final Group D match but it was not enough to secure a place in the semifinals of the Super Cup football tournament here.

Ayush Chhikara scored his maiden goal in Mumbai colours on Wednesday night.

However, following NorthEast United's 6-3 win over Churchill Brothers, the result was not enough to earn a semifinal place as the Islanders bowed out of the tournament with a win.

Proceedings kicked off with early pressure from Chennaiyin FC, who did not allow Mumbai City FC to find their rhythm in the first 10 minutes.

In the ninth minute, Rowlin Borges from deep in the Mumbai City box deployed an incisive long ball and immediately put Chhangte into play on the right. Chhangte burst forward with pace and played into a nearly empty box, only for it to be cleared by Vafa.

Nawaz was called into action in the 14th minute when Dueker played a long grounded ball to Rahim who dribbled his way into the box and fired a low driven shot that was kept out by a spectacular save by Nawaz, diving to his right.

In the 19th minute, an illegal back pass into Samik Mitra's

hands in the Chennaiyin goal, forced by the pressure from the Mumbai forward line, led to an indirect free kick on the edge of the six-yard box.

Rowlin Borges let fly a driven strike that was deflected by a tightly packed Chennaiyin defence on the goal line.

Soon after in the 25th minute, the touch of Apuia from the centre of the park found Vikram with a lobbed through ball as he was surging forward on the right wing.

Chennaiyin FC's Narayan denied the move with a good piece of defending.

In the 33rd minute, Mumbai City broke the deadlock. The play began with Rahul Bheke just outside the Mumbai box as he played a quick ball to Chhangte, who cleverly played in Bipin Singh, behind the defenders.

Bipin burst forward on the left flank with intent and as he penetrated the box, he deftly slid it across the six-yard box, on a platter for a young Ayush Chhikara who found the back of the net for his first ever goal for the club.

In the second half, Chennaiyin FC once again looked to be on the offensive. Their sense of urgency was abundantly clear, but they were unable to sting a threatening attack against the compact defensive line of the Islanders.

Badminton keeps barring Russia as Olympic qualifying begins

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Badminton upheld its ban on Russian and Belarusian players in international competitions on Thursday, days before Olympic qualifying begins.

Badminton's qualifying period for next year's Paris Olympics starts on May 1 and uses a calendar-year ranking.

Meanwhile, modern pentathlon said it would set up a "pathway" for athletes from the two countries to return but didn't commit to a date.

The Badminton World Federation cited security concerns and the need for "more clarity" on the International

Olympic Committee's "complex criteria" to admit some Russians and Belarusians as neutral athletes without national symbols but keep excluding others, such as military personnel or those who have supported the invasion of Ukraine.

The IOC also recommends allowing athletes from only Russia and Belarus to compete individually and not in team sports or "team events in individual sports." That raises the prospect in badminton of players being allowed to play singles but not doubles as a national team, a point the BWF did not address directly in its statement on Thursday.

Challenge is to keep winning streak intact in Europe leg of Pro League: Rohidas

AP ■ ANTALYA

Experienced defender Amit Rohidas feels the biggest challenge for the Indian men's hockey team going forward is to keep up the winning momentum in its Europe leg of the ongoing FIH Pro League.

Having finished a creditable third last season, India are currently leading the FIH Pro League standings with 19 points from eight games, which includes their magnificent show in Rourkela last month where they remained unbeaten against world champions Germany and Australia.

The Indians will now travel to Europe in May-June, where they will take on Belgium and Great Britain in London fol-



lowed by a short trip to Eindhoven where they play Argentina and hosts Netherlands.

"Last time we finished third in the league. In the FIH Hockey Pro League, we have typically done well at home but the challenge is when we play abroad and this time, we aim to keep up the winning streak when the matches move to Europe,"

Rohidas said in a Hockey India release. The 39-member core group is currently taking part in a national camp at the SAI centre here. After the Pro League games in London and Eindhoven which end in June, the Indian team will return home to prepare for the Hero Asian Champions Trophy to be held in Chennai from August 3 to 12, followed by the Hangzhou Asian Games.

"No doubt it's going to be an exciting period for hockey with major tournaments coming up. After the Asian Games, we will start the next season of Pro League and then there's the Hockey 5s World Cup as well so in that sense, there is a lot of hockey coming up right until the Paris Olympics," he said.

Veterans' Capital Gains: Warner, Ishant star in Delhi's first win of IPL season



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Skipper David Warner found his perfect hitting arc after Ishant Sharma rolled back the years but even then Delhi Capitals stuttered badly in a modest chase before beating Kolkata Knight Riders by four wickets on Thursday to stay afloat in this edition of the IPL.

With their backs to the wall after five defeats on the trot, the DC bowling line-up collectively came to the party as KKR managed only 127 on a spicy deck which aided both pacers and spinners alike.

Warner, DC's best batter this season, was struggling with his strike-rate in earlier games but on Thursday, he smashed 57 off 41 with the target being reached with four balls to spare.

The DC batting, save Warner looked wobbly once again but a below-par score perhaps saved the day for the home team as the ball started gripping in the second half of the chase making it difficult for strokeplay.

Axar Patel (19 not out off 22 balls) despite a groin strain managed to take his team past the finishing line.

DC's victory was about two veterans winning the Powerplay contest for their team.

The 34-year-old Ishant (2/19 in 4 overs), who is well past his prime, got his first opportunity and used his oodles of experience to peg back KKR inside the 'Bowling Powerplay'.

The 36-year-old Warner then showed his destructive avatar hitting as many as 10 boundaries in the 'Batting Powerplay' to kill the contest and earn his team's first win of the competition.

The manner in which he swept, the two KKR spinners Sunil Narine and Anukul Roy hardly had any answers. In all, he hit 11 boundaries.

The win doesn't alter DC's standing in the points table as they remain last but the victory does give them hope for a turnaround.

Once Warner won a good toss and opted to field, Ishant, playing his first IPL match in over two seasons, was bang on target with 13 dot balls and hitting those immaculate three-quarter lengths, just like yesterday.

In rhythm, he still hits 140 clicks but once he was done with his four overs, he literally collapsed in the dug-out chair as Prithvi Shaw came in as 'Impact Player'.

His India days are well over and Ishant certainly would like to remain an 'IPL to IPL' player till his body allows him to take rigours of top flight cricket.

Mukesh Kumar (1/34 in 4 overs) also bowled well in the Powerplay while Axar (2/13 in 3 overs), who hasn't enjoyed favourable match-ups against left-handers, removed the dangerous Rinku Singh as KKR lost wickets in clumps.

If Ishant, Mukesh and Axar were brilliant in the front 10, Kuldeep Yadav (2/15 in 3 overs), who got Jason Roy (43 off 39 balls), was brilliant as he created doubts in the minds of the batters by varying his pace.

Du Plessis, Siraj script RCB win

PTI ■ MOHALI

Faf du Plessis played a special knock despite a rib injury before Mohammed Siraj produced his best figures in the IPL to set up a 24-run win for Royal Challengers Bangalore against Punjab Kings here on Thursday.

Playing as an 'Impact Player' due to his injury, Du Plessis plundered 84 off 56 balls and shared a 137-run opening wicket stand with stand-in captain Virat Kohli (59 off 47) to steer RCB to 174 for four after being put in to bat.

Though in-form skipper Shikhar Dhawan was unavailable for the second game in a row, Punjab had enough firepower to chase down 175 but lost too many wickets at the start of the chase.

Siraj delivered with wickets with the new ball as well as in the death overs to end up with 4/21 in four overs and secure a welcome victory for his team. Jitesh Sharma's counter-attacking 41 off 27 for Punjab went in vain.

It was RCB's third win in six games while Punjab suffered their third loss in six matches.

Siraj was too hot to handle in the powerplay as he removed left-hander Atharva Taide with a sharp inswinger off the second ball of the innings before removing the dangerous Liam Livingstone in the fourth over. Both lbw dismissals came after successful DRS reviews.

Wanindu Hasaranga then castled Matthew Short with a googly before run-outs of Sam Curran and Harpreet Bhatia made matters worse for the home team.

At 97 for six, the game looked done and dusted but Jitesh Sharma kept Punjab in the game with some clean hitting, especially down the



ground. He ran out of partners eventually.

Earlier, at 91 for no loss in 10 overs, RCB were on course for 200 plus total but Punjab bowled well in the middle and death overs to restrict the opposition.

Du Plessis hammered five sixes and as many fours in his belligerent knock. Like he often does, the former South Africa skipper was not afraid to show his stumps to the spinners to free his arms for the big shots.

Kohli made 59 off 47 balls though the first half of his innings was more fluent.

It was the fourth fifty plus score for the RCB opens this season, highlighting their consistency.

RCB would be a tad disappointment with the total they ended up with after a flying start from du Plessis and Kohli, who fired their team to 59 for no loss in the powerplay.

Arshdeep Singh and Curran employed the short-ball tactic against du Plessis and Kohli with the new ball but it did not work.

The Indian star began with his trademark cover drive off spinner Harpreet Brar before pulling a short ball from Arshdeep over short fine leg for another four in the third over.

Du Plessis got going with a couple of sixes off Brar, who opened the bowling alongside Arshdeep. The South African made room for a massive straight six over Brar's head and followed it up with another one wide of long on. However, his best of the lot was the straight six off pacer Nathan Ellis as he stood still to slap it over the bowler's head.

RCB could only manage 83 runs off the last 60 balls. Rahul Chahar and Sam Curran could not take wickets but did not allow the batters to break free.

Kirsten admits defending totals a worry, says need to find right bowler for the

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defending champions Gujarat Titans have been struggling to defend totals this season and team's mentor Gary Kirsten has blamed it on an unsettled bowling line up.

In the five games played so far, GT won three and the two defeats have come while defending totals. "In the last IPL we defended four and chased down six games. This year we haven't defended a total yet but it is early days in the tournament. Last year we had a settled bowling line up. This year due to injuries and guys who we bank on in crucial overs, aren't necessarily ready to go," Kirsten said during a virtual press conference.

GT are probably missing New Zealand pacer Lockie Ferguson, who they have traded to Kolkata Knight Riders.

"Every team needs to adapt to different situations you are confronted with and for us it's an opportunity to look at that area and potentially reset and make sure we have the right guys to do the job," he added.

The South African was in awe of Shubman Gill, who has been instrumental in providing good starts to GT. The young batter is the leading scorer for his team with 228 runs from five games, averaging nearly 46.

"He (Gill) has developed more into a class player. One could see that with his run of form with the Indian team across formats. We always knew he was going to be a class player. The next level for Shubman is how he can take what he has got in his skills and how he can create real impact on a game," Kirsten said.



LSG skipper KL Rahul fined ₹12L for maintaining slow overrate

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Lucknow Super Giants captain KL Rahul has been fined Rs 12 lakhs for maintaining a slow over-rate during their Indian Premier League match against Rajasthan Royals here.

LSG defeated Rajasthan Royals by 10 runs on Wednesday night at the Sai Mansingh Stadium.

"As it was the team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Mr. Rahul was fined Rs 12 lakhs," IPL said in a statement.

The IPL aims for matches to finish in three hours and 20 minutes, but slow over rate is proving to be an issue, with several games stretching past the four-hour mark.

Kyle Mayers top-scored with 51 off 42 balls as LSG posted 154 for seven. In reply, RR were restricted to 144 for six in 20 overs, with Avesh Khan taking three wickets for LSG.

CSK hope for Stokes boost ahead of SRH clash

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Four-time champions Chennai Super Kings will hope their star allrounder Ben Stokes finally takes the field after recovering from his injury when they go up against Sunrisers Hyderabad in their IPL match here on Friday.

In a relief to CSK, Stokes, who was suffering from a toe injury and missed three IPL matches, took part in the net practice on Wednesday after regaining fitness and is available for selection.

The England Test captain's return will be a big boost for CSK as they return to their fortress following a close win over Royal Challengers Bangalore. Their opponents Hyderabad, however, copped a defeat at the hands of Mumbai Indians.

The Super Kings batters have been able to put up good scores, thanks to the starts provided by Devon Conway and Ruturaj Gaikwad at the top while the big-hitting Shivam Dube has managed a few impactful knocks.

Ajinkya Rahane has been a revelation, batting with a lot of freedom and going after opposition bowlers, but in an orthodox manner and though the rest of the batters have not done much, the crowd, especially in Chennai, will expect to see a vintage Dhoni uncorking some huge hits.

While the CSK batting unit has been finding the runs, the bowlers have been inconsistent and fielding below par.

Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana did an admirable job in the match against RCB but the same cannot be said of the others, though Tushar Deshpande has got better with every game.

CSK will be wary of the fact that they were trumped in the previous home game by Rajasthan Royals, losing by three runs as the middle-order could not force the pace leaving Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja too much to do at the end.

The Super Kings will look to strangle SRH batters with spin as is their wont and the trio of Theekshana, Jadeja and Moeen Ali could prove more than a handful.

CSK has won four of its last five matches against Hyderabad and the home team would hope to extend the run.

SRH, on the other hand, would be expecting their batting unit to click and the onus would be on captain Aiden Markram to rise to the occasion. The other batters in the line-up need to step up if Hyderabad hope to upset CSK's appellation at Chepauk.

Loss of wickets in the powerplay has set Sunrisers back and head coach Brian Lara said after the defeat to MI that someone in the middle-order needs to bat deep and finish off games.

The impressive Harry Brook will be the man to watch in the Hyderabad line-up and if he gets going he could prove a handful for the CSK bowlers.



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Broadcaster paying commentator to express opinion must be accepted: Buttler

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Royals and England wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler says if a commentator criticises a player, he is only doing his job, and that acceptance should be an integral part of any cricketer's career.

"Acceptance is a big part of the job. Accepting that broadcaster pays someone to give their opinion; they are just doing their job. It is not a personal attack on me when they criticise me," Buttler told Humans of Bombay in an interview.

"And I watch other sports. I watch football and go 'oh how did he miss that? It was so easy'. That is exactly what people are doing when I drop a catch or go for a low score. I do exactly the same thing without realising when I watch other sports. Just acceptance," he said.

The England white-ball skipper says he always wanted to be an all-format cricketer, and not being able to perform in Test cricket is something that still bothers him.

"My strengths have always been better ODI and T20 player. I was desperate to become an all-format player and a very successful Test cricketer. I played a lot of Test cricket in the end but never quite performed to a level quite consistently that I felt I could have achieved, and that will always be a frustration. I always wanted to be one of the best players in the world," he said.

Buttler, who captained England to their second ICC T20 World Cup win last year, named South African Jonty Rhodes and Australian legends Adam Gilchrist and Steve Waugh as being his inspiration in his early days.

"Jonty Rhodes was an early inspiration for me. I did not always keep wickets. I used to love fielding. The 1999 World Cup was in England, so I have very clear memories of going and watching some of those games. Adam Gilchrist was another, a wicketkeeper-batsman, he changed the mode of keeper-batsman.

Punjab's dependency on Dhawan a major concern: Harbhajan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab Kings' dependency on skipper Shikhar Dhawan is a major concern and rest of the players will have to take responsibility if they have to emerge as title contenders in the ongoing IPL, said former India spinner Harbhajan Singh.

Dhawan has scored bulk of the runs, amassing 233 in four innings with 99 not out being the highest as PBKS managed two wins and two losses under his captaincy so far.

Dhawan, however, missed their last game due to a shoulder injury, with stand-in skipper Sam Curran guiding the team to a win against Lucknow Super Giants.

"The Punjab side seems largely dependent on their captain Shikhar Dhawan in the batting department which is a concern," Harbhajan told Star Sports Cricket Live.

"While depending on one player, you can win two or three matches but you cannot win a tournament like IPL. The rest of Punjab players will have to support their captain and take responsibility if they wish to go forward."

Harbhajan also heaped praise on Kolkata Knight Riders batter Venkatesh Iyer, who slammed the first IPL century for his franchise in 15 years, after Brendon McCullum.

"Venkatesh Iyer is a special player and proved that with his maiden TATA IPL century. Batters like David Warner and KL Rahul should learn a couple of things from his innings," he said.

"Iyer didn't just strengthen his team after the fall of an early wicket but also scored runs with a strike rate of more than 200."

PBKS will face Royal Challengers Bangalore, while KKR takes on Delhi Capitals on Thursday.



Batters weren't committed enough to take down bowlers: Sangakkara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rajasthan Royals should have gotten over the line after the rollicking start provided by the openers to the chase but the batters weren't committed enough to take down the Lucknow Super Giants bowlers at the back end, said head coach Kumar Sangakkara.

Chasing LSG's 154 for seven, RR were coasting along when openers Yashasvi Jaiswal (44) and Jos Buttler (40) were at the crease as the duo shared 87 runs in 11.3 overs. But some quick wickets derailed their chase as RR eventually fell short by 10 runs.

"Our openers put on a really good stand. We were needing 8 per overs when the 12th over finished with 10 wickets in hand, that's not very difficult," said Sangakkara during the post-match press conference.

"Unfortunately, we lost three wickets in three overs. We still should have gotten over the line. We had enough batting in the shed. We left it a little bit too late and needed too many boundaries in the end.

"At the back end, especially (Ravi) Bishnoi's last over, we weren't committed enough to take him down for three four sixes. Even if the batter got out that time it didn't matter."

The Sri Lankan great said the pitch was not easy to bat on as the ball got older.

"I think we got a better powerplay than they did. It was all about targeting one or two over but unfortunately every time we wanted to do that we lost a wicket," Sangakkara said.

"It was a difficult wicket to bat on as the ball got older but they also bowled very well. It was a tough pitch and Lucknow bowled really smartly but at the same time we should have got over the line."

With RR needing 51 off 29 balls, Ryan Parag could manage just 15 not out off 12 balls as they finished at 144 for six.

"In that situation (last couple of overs), he can just go out and hit as many sixes as quickly as he can. It's a very clear plan that Riyan has. We had Dhruv (Jurel) to kind of take care of the pace and we just needed 2-3 sixes in the middle overs," Sangakkara said.

"He's (Parag) been batting well in the nets. We do back our players quite well ... Unfortunately, he hasn't been in good form. We will assess that and address that at his training and see where we get to over the next few games."

Sangakkara was full of praise for Ravichandran Ashwin, who returned with figures of 2 for 23 on Wednesday night.

"He (Ashwin) is just concentrating on bowling his stock ball, he trusts his variations. He has a great series in terms of



Sangakkara said.