**OPINION 6** 

TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE

IN DEFENCE

Was in touch

with officials,

didn't sleep:

Punjab CM

MONIKA MALIK CHANDIGARH

Maintaining that he was awake all night on

Saturday ever since he received

the news regarding the

Khalistan ideologue's presence

in Rode Village, Punjab Chief

Minister Bhagwant Mann on

Sunday minced no words to say that "bullets would have been

fired" if the police had arrest-ed Amritpal Singh on March 18

CM, I am sharing with you that

if we wanted to arrest him on

March 18, bullets would have

been fired...But we did not

want to do that," said Mann in

a video message hours after Amritpal's arrest. Notably, the

police had launched a massive

crackdown against Amritpal's radical outfit 'Waris Punjab De',

following which he was evad-

Continued on Page 2

"As Home Minister and as

"which I wanted to avoid".

**WORLD 9** 

CRISIS IN PAK ENOUGH FOR

MILITARY TAKEOVER: ABBASI

**MONEY 10** 

FINMIN WORKING WITH MEITY, RBI

TO CLAMP DOWN ON PONZI APPS

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### NEW DELHI, MONDAY APRIL 24, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

# the pioneer

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# **Punjab cops get Amritpal** after month-long chase

Sent to Assam jail, pro-Khalistan ideologue's arrest came days after wife stopped from flying to London

MONIKA MALIK

Ending a month-long chase, er and Waris Punjab De head Amritpal Singh is finally in the police net. Amid conflicting claims of the Khalistani ideologue's surrender or arrest by the Punjab Police from Moga on Sunday morning, Amritpal booked under the National Security Act (NSA) - has been shifted to Assam's Dibrugarh jail, where nine of his aides are currently lodged.

The 29-year-old Khalistan ideologue Amritpal's arrest came days after his wife Kirandeep Kaur, a British national, was not allowed to board a flight to London at the Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport in Amritsar, and was sent back to Amritpal's native village Jullupur Khera in Amritsar. Police sources claimed that Amritpal came under immense pressure after the police put his wife under surveillance and tracked her activities.

The State Inspector



'Waris Punjab De' chief Amritpal Singh being brought to Dibrugarh Central Jail following his arrest from Punjab's Moga, in Dibrugarh, on Sunday

General of Police (IGP), headquarters, Sukhchain Singh Gill rubbished all reports of surrender and said the fugitive was arrested from Moga's Rode village - the native village of slain militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale - in the morning from outside the village Gurdwara.

"Amritpal was arrested after concrete operational information. We had located him in Rode village after Intelligence inputs, and this village was cornered by the Punjab Police teams," said IGP Gill, addressing the media at Chandigarh hours after his

"A joint team of the Amritsar Police and Punjab Police's Intelligence wing laid siege to the village on Saturday night after we received information that Amritpal is hiding in the village...He was in the gurdwara. He remained in the gurdwara for some time and

after he came out at 6:45 AM we arrested him. We did not enter the gurdwara because of

maryada (decorum). We

nabbed him the moment he came out," said IGP Gill. IGP Gill said that Amritpal has been shifted to Dibrugarh Central jail in Assam under the National Security Act (NSA) which was invoked against him the previous month. "NSA warrants were issued against Amritpal Singh and those warrants have been executed today morning...Amritpal Singh has been arrested by Punjab Police around 6.45 AM today morning in the village Rode," said IGP Gill.

"Amritpal Singh has been sent to Dibrugarh, Assam and further action will be taken as per law and order in the case," he said while issuing a warning against disturbing elements trying to jeopardise the State's peace and harmony

# IAF planes, ship on standby in Saudi

### As the Sudan situation turns grim, India making efforts for safety of citizens: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

With the situation remaining grim in strife-torn Sudan, India has deployed two Indian Air Force C-130J transport planes to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and a Navy ship INS Sumedha has reached Port Sudan to carry out possible evacuation of Indian nationals. There are more than 3,000 Indians currently in the African

Giving the latest update on the situation in Sudan, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Sunday, the Government is making all out efforts to ensure the safety and security of Indians stranded in Sudan.

'We are closely monitoring the complex and evolving security situation in Sudan. We are also coordinating closely with various partners for the safe movement of those Indians who are stranded in Sudan and would like to be evacuated.

Apart from the Sudanese authorities, the MEA and the



also in regular touch with the UN, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and US among others.

"As part of our preparations, and in order to move swiftly, the Government of India is pursuing multiple options. Two Indian Air Force C-130J are currently positioned on standby in Jeddah. And, INS Sumedha has reached Port Sudan," the MEA said in a statement.

Contingency plans are in place but any movement on the ground would depend on the security situation, which continues to be volatile with reports of fierce fighting at various locations in Khartoum Sudanese airspace currently remains closed for all foreign aircraft. Overland movement also has risks and logistical

challenges, it said. "Our Embassy is in regular touch with the stranded Indians in Sudan and is advising them on the viability of safe

movement and the need to avoid unnecessary risk. It is also coordinating all possible assistance including possible exit from Khartoum city as and when the security situation permits safe movement," the MEA said.

It was learnt India may evacuate its nationals through land route from dangerous zones to safer places in the

Continued on Page 2

#### **US** embassy in **Khartoum closes**

Washington: With the last US employee of the Embassy out, Washington shuttered the US mission in Khartoum indefinitely. Left behind were thousands of private American citizens remaining in the east African country. US. officials said it would be too dangerous to carry out a broader evacua-

### **CAPSULE**

### INDIA JUMPS 6 PLACES ON LPI INDEX 2023

six places on the World Bank's Logistic Performance Index (LPI) 2023, now ranking 38th in the 139 countries index, as a result of significant investments technology. India was ranked 44th on the index in 2018 and has now climbed to 38th in the 2023 listing. India's performance has drastically improved from 2014, when it was ranked 54th on the LPI.

suspended till April 30 in Rishikesh and Haridwar due to rain and

### STIR OVER PREGNANCY TESTS ON BRIDES TO BE

scheme of the Madhya Pradesh government stirred a controversy after some of the what guidelines these women The issue is related to the marriage of 219 couples in Gadasarai town in Dindori district under the 'Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana' on Saturday to mark Akshaya Tritaya, an official said on

# Wrestlers put WFI chief on mat again

/ women players file police complaint of sexual misconduct against Brij Singh

**STAFF REPORTER** NEW DELHI

After almost three months, several top India's wrestlers, including Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat, Ravi Dahiya and Sakshi Malik resumed their protest at Jantar Mantar on Sunday against the BJP MP and Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh accusing him of sexual misconduct. Seven woman wrestlers have filed a police complaint accusing him of sexual harassment at the Connaught Place police station but an FIR is yet to be registered. The police complaint was filed on Friday. Protesting wrestlers, surrounded by a huge posse of police personnel, also expressed frustration that



Wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and others at a press conference during their protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Sunday, Ranjan Dimri Pionee

the MC Mary Kom-led Oversight Committee had submitted its report in the first week of April but the report has not been made public by the Ministry of Sports.

Ace India wrestler Punia said on Sunday that the reason why wrestlers are protesting once again is that nothing has been done so far to resolve their issues and the wrestlers are here

able to have such a long career

and how he had to reinvent

himself to face new bowlers of

the younger generation,

Mithali said.

to save wrestling. Punia said it was his moral duty to stand up with the protesting women

wrestlers. "If we don't stand up with them them who will?," the Tokyo Games bronze medallist said. "Even if I have to lay down my life for their cause, I am willing to go to that extent," he

Continued on Page 2

start talking about your foot-

work getting slower, you are picking the line and length late

and you are not quick on the

ball. I wanted to know how he

### Global template vital for crypto regulation in India: Sitharaman

PTI BENGALURU

Underlining that global consensus is necessary for regulation of crypto, before India makes any move on it, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said a global template may have to be created, and everyone will have to work together on it, otherwise

regulating it will not be effective. The Minister, however, said t does not mean controlling of "distributed ledger technology", which has its goodness and

potential. "The G20 of which the India is currently holding the Presidency, it was India's proposal and it has been taken on board, I'm glad that the G20 has kept it in its agenda for this year, the IMF has given a paper on crypto currency and the way it can affect the macroeconomic stability. The Financial Stability Board (FSB), which was set up by G20, has agreed to give a report that will also focus on

financial stability," she said. Continued on Page 2

# Will continue my agitation: Pilot

Pormer Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot on Sunday asserted he will continue with his agitation against his own Government for action against the corruption in the previous BJP Government.

Pilot said he is not backing down from the stand he has taken against the state Congress Government and has been "politely requesting" it to take action in corruption cases from the previous dispensation.

He said despite his daylong fast on April 11, no action has

been taken in such cases. "Speaking truth, raising voice against corruption and injustice, is among the values of the Congress party. Following these values, I observed oneday fast on April 11. Today, it's been two weeks, no action has been taken so far.

"So, again I am politely requesting the Government to fulfil the promises we had made to the people," Pilot told reporters here, adding that now even demanding action



against corruption is being

termed 'anti-party' activity. Pilot was speaking to media after offering his prayers at Jhadkhad Temple (Shiv

Temple) in the city.

He said he welcomes the action taken by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) which arrested several corrupt IAS, IPS, RAS and other offi-

'The Chief Minister himself had said that ACB is active and has raided several corrupt officers, which we all welcome. But, when he had come into power after being in opposition for five years, we never said that we would arrest a patwari or officer. We had said we will take action in the corruption cases that happened in Vasundhara Ji's tenure," Pilot said. *Continued on Page 2* 

### big cat dies; 2nd in a month

PTI ■ SHEOPUR

male cheetah 'Oban' that Astrayed out of the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh last week has been rescued when it was about to cross over to a forest in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh (UP). Oban was brought back to the park, even as one of the cheetahs translocated to KNP from South Africa died on Sunday, a senior forest official said. The deceased cheetah 'Uday' was aged six years. Notably, this is the second such incident at KNP in almost a month. Earlier, Namibian cheetah Sasha died due to a

kidney ailment on March 27. Interestingly, this is also the second time this month that Oban has been tranquilised and brought back to the KNP after the feline wandered a long distance from the park.

After being tranquilised at

Stars rejoice as Twitter restores

renamed 'Pavan', was released around 9.30 PM on Saturday, KNP's Divisional Forest Officer Prakash Kumar Verma said. The cheetah was moving

towards Jhansi in UP when it was rescued. The spotted cat was around 150 km away from the KNP at that time, the official said. On April 7, the feline, which has strayed out of the KNP multiple times, was rescued from Bairad area in Shivpuri after being tranquilised and brought back to

the park, officials said. Meanwhile, tragedy struck KNP again on Sunday as during inspection in the morning, a cheetah brought from South Africa was found "dull" with its "head down" following which veterinarians attending him alerted senior officials and the feline was taken out from the large enclosure for treatment. Unfortunately, around 4 PM, the cheetah passed away," principal chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) Wildlife, J S

# Sachin's advice helped me: Mithali

BHARAT SHARMA ■ NEW DELHI

Having stayed at the top of their game for more than two decades, both Sachin Tendulkar and Mithali Raj are epitome of excellence and longevity in world cricket.

While Tendulkar made people fall in love with the game, Mithali became the first superstar of women's cricket in India. However, self doubt can creep even in the minds of greats like Tendulkar and Mithali.

Ahead of Tendulkar's 50th birthday, Mithali spoke to PTI about her first interaction with him, the influence he had on her batting and on how a chat with the 'Master Blaster' before the 2017 women's World Cup helped reinvent her game.

"I still remember our conversation before the 2017 World Cup in England. After a



"When you have such a managed to overcome all that

long career, every generation and be on top of his game. He

did give suggestions and I tried to put that into training," said Mithali, who ended up amassing 409 runs in the 2017 World Cup and captained India to the final. Though India came up short in the final, it was a pathbreaking result as it revolu-tionised women's cricket in the country Mithali recollected that she

and Tendulkar did not talk a lot about technique as the conversation was mainly about the mental side of the game. "We did not talk in depth

about technique as everyone has different techniques. As a senior pro after playing for so long, all you can help is with the preparation advice to another player and he helped me with that. Around that time, expectations were high for me to deliver with the bat and as captain.

Continued on Page 2

### Man held for threat ahead of **PM's Kerala trip**

PTI ■ KOCHI

Kerala Police on Sunday arrested a man who allegedly sent a letter threatvarious programmes.

Kochi resident Xavier, who runs a business in the city, was arrested by police for allegedly writing the threatening letter in the name of another person. "We have arrested the man after probing the matter in a scientific manner. This was part of a personal vendetta. He wanted the person mentioned in the letter to be arrested," City Police Commissioner K Sethu Raman said.

Continued on Page 2

# **PTI** MUMBAI

ening a suicide bomb attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi who will be visiting the State on April 24 and 25 to take part in

form culled the legacy blue checkmarks for non-paying from accounts that did not pay a subscription fee. Film personalities, includ-

### coveted blue tick for celebrities In a surprising turn of events, Twitter has restored verification badges on several highprofile celebrity accounts with millions of followers, just days after the microblogging plat-

users. The move assumes sig-Amitabh Bachchan, nificance as Indian celebrities and top politicians from Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Prakash Raj, on Sunday welto Congress leader Rahul comed Twitter's move of restor-Gandhi lost verified blue ticks ing verification badges on highon their Twitter accounts this profile celebrity accounts, days after the microblogging platweek after Elon Musk-led microblogging site started removing checkmark icons form culled the legacy blue check marks.

Indian celebrities such as Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan, Akshay

Kumar, Ajay Devgn and Rajinikanth, among others lost verified blue ticks on their Twitter accounts after Elon Musk's microblogging site started removing check mark icons from accounts that did not pay the monthly subscription fee. Later, the social media platform reinstated the badges Bachchan, thanked Musk

in a reference to the hit '90s song "Tu Cheez Badi Hai Mast Mast" from the film "Mohra". "Hey Musk bro! Thank you very, very much for reinstating the blue tick in front of

my name. I feel like singing. Will you listen? So, listen. 'Tu cheez Musk Musk, tu cheez badi hai, Musk,' Bachchan tweeted in Hindi.

Continued on Page 2

in both soft and hard infrastructure as well as

#### KEDARNATH YATRA HALTED TILL APR 30 Rishikesh:

registration of pilgrims for the Kedarnath vatra was or Sunday

snowfall in the upper reaches of the Garhwal Himalayas, officials said. The Kedarnath Dham will be opened to the public on

### **Dindori:** A mass marriage

would-be brides were found to be pregnant and the opposition Congress sought to know under were subjected to medical tests

### Straying cheetah rescued just before entering UP Another KNP Karera forest in Shivpuri district, cheetah Oban, now

# **EC** can't see who the real Countdown for BRS **Sena belongs to: Uddhav**

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said seeing the support he is getting from people, even Pakistan will tell whom the real Shiv Sena belongs to, but the Election Commission (EC) cannot do so as it is "suffering from cataract". He also said that his party and supporters would ensure that "traitors" would be politically finished, a reference to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his supporting MLAs, whose rebellion led to the collapse of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in

In a big blow to the Thackeray-led faction, the Election Commission earlier this year allotted the 'Shiv Sena' name and its poll symbol 'bow and arrow' to the group led by CM Shinde. Addressing a

Pachora in Jalgaon district of north Maharashtra, Thackeray thanked his supporters for coming to the public meeting in large numbers even if he had nothing to offer after he lost the party name and symbol to the rebel group.

"Seeing the number of people present here, even Pakistan will know who the real Shiv Sena is, but not the Election Commission which is suffering from cataract," he said. He exhorted his supporters to express their anger over the rebellion by CM Shinde and 40 party legislators through the ballot boxes to ensure that they are politically finished. Thackeray said the party's "vajramuth" (iron fist) was a very important part of the MVA alliance and dared the ruling Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party

said his party's mashal (flaming torch) will set the throne of Shinde and BJP ablaze.

Those who won elections on his party's ticket betraved him, but those who got these people elected were with him, he asserted. "We will see to it that you are finished. We have cleansed the blot on the state created due to the treachery. Maharashtra is the land of brave people and not traitors," Thackeray said, and asked the party workers if they would

fight till the victory.

The former chief minister asked the BJP to clarify if it would contest the state Assembly elections next year under the leadership of Eknath Shinde. "State BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule has said that Shinde's party will be allotted only 48 seats (out of Govt has begun: Shah

the K Chandrasekhar Rao-led BRS Government in Telangana has begun and the BJP's fight will not stop until the present regime is dethroned, Union Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday

Addressing a public meet-ing titled "Vijay Sankalp Sabha" at Chevella near here, Shah said if BJP comes to power in Telangana, reservations for Muslims will be removed. Elections are due in the southern state later this year.

"The countdown for the ruling BRS in Telangana which has been running a corrupt government in the state for the last eight-nine years has begun," Shah said. He alleged the entire world is watching the public outrage against BRS (Bharat Rashtra Samiti) and KCR, as Rao is addressed. BJP is forming government in Telangana and the corrupt will be put behind bars, he claimed. "Telangana people have come your family corruption. To divert attention they made TRS to BRS," Shah said about KCR recently renaming his

founded party.

He charged policing and administration in Telangana have been completely politicised and welfare measures which are being extended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi are not percolating down to the grassroots

Referring to the arrest of Telangana BJP president and Lok Sabha MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar recently in connection with the case of malpractice after a Class 10 board exam question paper surfaced in an instant messaging app, Shah said party workers won't be cowed down by such acts. "He feels that BJP party workers will be scared if put behind bars. KCR listen, our workers are not scared of your atrocities. Our fight will not stop until you are dethroned," Shah charged.

# NSDC showcases its transformative initiatives at G-20 exhibition

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) showcased its transformative initiatives in skill development, higher education, and international employment opportunities at the G20 "Future of Work" exhibition in Bhubaneshwar. With a strong focus on inclusive skilling, re-skilling, up-skilling, and multi-skilling, NSDC is positioned as the principal architect of the skill ecosystem, creating opportunities for India's talent to thrive in the domestic markets and in the evolving global market.

The NSDC stall at the G20 "Future of Work" exhibition is themed as "Future of Us", emphasizing the inclusive nature of its initiatives that are designed to benefit anyone, anywhere. The stall design is conceptualized to cater to various target audiences from diverse backgrounds and age groups, presenting the benefits of NSDC's initiatives through a human narrative. The NSDC stall showcases all the major verticals of NSDC, including NSDC Academy, NSDC International, and NSDC Digital.

Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO, NSDC said "In line with our Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of "Viksit Bharat," the road to "Viksit Bharat" will lead through "Skilled Bharat," and that's what the Skill India Mission is all about. India's youth need to be prepared for the future of work as technologies disrupt the labour market. Mobile technology, global connectivity, and the Internet offer us a chance to consider global needs. It is essential that we work together to make this opportunity a reality for India's youth.

Sachin's advice...

FromPage 1

"When you hear people talk about 'oh she is nearing her retirement' and you are keen to do really well in that stage and show age is not affecting your skill, that is where I thought he was the best person to reach out as he has gone through all of that," she said.

This was 2017 but Mithali's first meeting with Sachin happened 15 years earlier after she broke the record of the highest individual score in women's Test cricket.

Women's cricket did not get the due attention and facilities back then and Mithali and her teammates were star struck in their first interaction with the batting maestro.

### Stars rejoice...

FromPage 1

Priyanka Chopra Jonas expressed surprise over getting the verification mark being restored. "Woah! Dunno how but the blue tick is back. I'm Priyanka again!" the actor wrote on the microblogging

An excited Nayanthara shared a picture of her's dressed in a traditional Kanjivaram saree and captioned it as:
"BLUE TICK' Verified." "The blue tick is randomly back again? What is happening?"

wrote Malavika Mohanan.
The coveted verification made a surprise comeback on accounts of these celebrities starting late Saturday. It was not immediately clear whether or not these accounts have paid for the verification. While there is no official word from Twitter on the reinstated blue ticks, the company is reportedly restoring the verified status for accounts with high follower

Earlier this week, Twitter started removing the blue tick that had verified the identity of the user behind an account, from the profiles of thousands of celebrities, politicians and journalists on

FromPage 1 Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, reports suggest, monitored the entire operation throughout the night after he was informed by the police that Amritpal has taken shelter in Rode village gurdwara. At around 4 am, it was confirmed to the Chief Minister that Amritpal was surrounded with no escape route.

"It is very clear that we have arrested him, he was surrounded from all sides and had no way to escape. Whatever he said inside the Gurudwara Sahib it is not right to comment on it," said IGP Gill, while rubbishing claims that Amritpal has surrendered. Hours before his arrest, Amritpal addressed the devotees in the Gurudwara, and also released a video in which the pro-Khalistan

preacher claimed that "he decided to surrender even though he had several options, including fleeing to other countries". "I am surrendering after month as the State Government has been exposed completely in the eyes of the people as it had committed untold oppression and atrocities on the Sikh youth," said Amritpal in a video message, which has been widely shared on the social media, was purportedly recorded when Amritpal was at a Rode village's Gurdwara, from where he was

arrested Sunday. Just before Amritpal was taken into custody, videos of him at the gurdwara had gone viral. No less than three videos of Amritpal went viral in the social media, released by Akal Takht's former jathedar Jasbir

Singh Rode, declaring his presence in Gurdwara Sant Khalsa in Rode village on Sunday morning. The first video shows him addressing the sangat at the Gurdwara. In another video, the camera follows him to the basement of the gurdwara where a large portrait of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale has been installed and Amritpal can be seen bowing before the portrait. In the third video, he recites from Sikh scriptures.

Another video, believed to have been recorded in the Gurdwara before his arrest, was also released on 'Waris Punjab De International Instagram page. The video, contradicting the Punjab police version that they have cordoned off Rode village, and claimed that Amritpal himself surrendered to the police.

# Punjab cops get Amritpal... | IAF planes, ship on standby in Saudi

**FromPage 1** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a top-level meeting here to review the situation in Sudan and directed the officials to prepare contingency plans for likely evacua-

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, Ambassador of India to Sudan B S Mubarak and other senior officials were present at the briefing. It was learnt IAF and Navy chiefs also attended the

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, Ambassador of India to Sudan B S Mubarak along with the envoys to Egypt and Riyadh and Secretary (Consular, Passport, Visa Overseas Indian Affairs), Ministry of External Affairs Ausaf Sayeed attended

the high-level meet. More than 150 people, including at least three Indians, were evacuated by Saudi Arabia on Saturday. The three Indians were crew members of the Saudi Arabian airline that was shot at as the fighting began on the ground in Sudan capital Khartoum on April 15.

Jaishankar had talked to his Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates (UAE) some days back and was assured of all help in ensuring safety and security of the Indian nationals in

As the airport is not functional in Khartoum, witness to heavy fighting, sources here said, safe land routes are being explored. The land routes will be used to move them to safer zones first, which is priority. Indian Embassy personnel there will coordinate and assist in the operation, they said. The US evacuated all their

embassy staff from Khartoum and temporarily suspended embassy operations. US President Ioe Biden condemned the violence, saying "it's unconscionable and it must stop". Some more foreign countries were reportedly preparing for likely evacuation of their nationals. South Korea and Japan deployed forces to nearcountries, and the European Union weighing a similar move. The UN World Health Organization said more than 420 people had been killed and over 3,700 wounded in the fighting across Sudan. An internet outage was reported across

Pope Francis called for dialogue between warring fac-

in Khartoum, AFP reported. Heavy fighting broke out on April 15 between forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy

turned rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands Rapid Support Forces

tions, saying "unfortunately the situation remains grave in

Sudan, that is why I am renew-

ing my call for the violence to

stop as quickly as possible and

said a "rapid evacuation oper-

ation" had begun and European

citizens and those from "allied

partner countries" would also

be assisted in the same. Turkey

began rescue operations via

road from the southern city of

Wad Medani although plans

were postponed from one site

France's Foreign Ministry

for dialogue to resume".

### Global template vital for crypto regulation in India: Sitharaman

FromPage 1

"Their (FSB) report and IMF's report are going to be discussed in July when Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors will meet under the G20, and post that in September there will be a summit of Prime Ministers and Presidents of G20 nations that will be held in India," she said.

The Minister was responding to a question on regulating digital or crypto currency during the interaction with 'Thinkers Forum,

The First G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting under the G20 Indian Presidency was held during February 24-25 in Bengaluru.

completely digitalised and technology-driven, the technology which is very distributed, and some times identity is very difficult to be established, but which has potential, it will therefore have to be acted upon only with all countries coming on board," Sitharaman

"No one country individually, in a matter of technology driven, a crypto asset, can effectively control it, because technology doesn't have any borders, it can just pass through. So the very character of it being technology driven requires all countries to be on

board, or else it will not be effective," she said. Further, noting that the understanding in the G20, along with OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and other organisations like IMF, World Bank and so on, is that a global template may have to be created, the Minister said, "all of us will have to work together on it, otherwise regu-

lating crypto may not be effective." But that does not mean that we are controlling the technology of -distributed ledger technology-, it has its goodness, potential and own strengths. We keep that in mind," she added.'

Highlighting that India is today being observed by the global community for the way in which it steered its own way through the pandemic, Russia-Ukraine war and its spillovers, Sitharaman said, inflation in India today is largely "imported" because of the price of fuel and fertilizers.

# Wrestlers put WFI...

FromPage 1 "How long is it going to take for the (Government) committee to submit its report? It's already been three months and we are still waiting to hear from them. Will the report come out after the girls, who have filed complaints, die?" questioned Vinesh Phogat, the world championship medallist.

Government to release the findings. We have filed a complaint at a police station in Connaught Place and want an FIR to be filed against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. "We have nothing to do with the (WFI) election process. We are more concerned about our careers. The (Paris) Olympics are upon us and we want to begin preparations in right earnest," Phogat added.

"Various female wrestlers who have brought laurels to this country in prestigious wrestling competitions have been sexually exploited and harassed by Brij Bhushan Singh, President, WFI," Phogat wrote on Twitter. "Despite complaints on April 21, 2023, the Delhi Police is not even registering the FIR," she added. "We

Total Revenue from operations

Equity Share Capital

a) Basic (in Rs.)

(b) Diluted (in Rs.)

Place: New Delhi Date: 22nd April, 2023

Net Profit/(Loss) before Exceptional items and tax

Net Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax ( after Exceptional items)

or the period (after tax) and other comprehensive income (after tax)]

otal Comprehensive Income / (Loss) for the period [Comprising Profit/(Loss

arning per share (of Rs.10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations

Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax ( after Exceptional items)

will not budge from Jantar Mantar," said Rio Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik. adding "this fight will not stop". "The girls have appeared before the committee, but the report hasn't come. The federation is running as before, organising nationals in their region. So what has changed?

"The promises that were protested, not one of them has been fulfilled. Two day back, seven girls, including a minor, lodged a complaint in a CP police station. Despite that they are not taking us seriously, not lodging FIR. Don't know who is behind this laxity, because such sensitive issues are taken up on an urgent

basis," said Sakshi. A complaint has also been filed with the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW). Responding to it, DCW chief Swati Maliwal issued a notice to Delhi Police saying, "Several women including a minor have alleged that the accused person has indulged in the crime of sexual harassment against them during his tenure at the helm of Wrestling Federation of

India." "Instead of an FIR being filed in the matter, some of the complainants and their family members have started getting phone calls enquiring about the identities of the complainants from an IPS officer posted in the Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS)," the notice issued by the DCW chief stat-

Taking to Twitter, the DCW Chief wrote, "Several women wrestlers of the country had given a complaint of sexual harassment against the WFI President at Connaught Place Police Station two days ago. One of the complainants is also a minor.

Till now the Delhi Police has not registered an FIR in the matter. This is against the law. Have issued a notice to the police in this matter. Asking to respond to the DCW within 48

hours. Singh, who has completed 12 years as WFI president, has confirmed that he will not contest for the top post in the WFI election on May 7. However he had indicated that he may find a role for himself within the national federation.

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E-mail: investor.relations@okplay.in, Website: www.okplay.in EXTRACT OF STANDALONE AND CONSOLIDATED AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH, 2023

451.73

446.91

446.91

446.9

1,919.61

2.33

The above is an extract of the detailed format of Unaudited Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation

389.69

700.07

704.1

3.67

(100.82)

(552.63)

(2.88)

### Was in touch with officials, didn't sleep: Punjab CM incident was reported," he said,

FromPage 1
"...We could have done anything during the Ajnala violence also when they carried the palanquin carrying the Guru Granth Sahib, but I did not want anything done. I cannot tolerate even a drop of water on the Guru. I appreciate the police also for exercis-

At the same time, Mann made it clear that anyone who attempts to disturb peace and harmony will not be spared. 'Aam Aadmi government is duty bound to preserve the hard-earned peace and communal harmony in the state...Law is taking its own course in the case of Amritpal Singh, who was a stooge in hands of the forces inimical to the state and country, and no action is being taken against the

innocents", he said. Recalling the February 23 Ajnala incident in which Amritpal and his supporters brought the Palki Sahib of Guru Granth Sahib, Mann said that he had given strict instructions to the Director General of Police (DGP) that utmost restraint has to be used and the

31.03.2023 31.12.2022 31.03.2022 31.03.2023 31.03.2022 31.03.2022 31.12.2022 31.03.2022 31.03.2023 31.03.2022

Unaudited Audited Audited Audited Unaudited Audited Audited

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2.34

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645.22

649.32

3.38

7,640.77

1,124.10)

1,132.26)

1,920.81

2,483.17

30.53

7.69

(390.08)

(446.66)

(2.33)

'maryada' (respect) of Guru Granth Sahib has to be preserved. Some police personnel sustained injuries in that incident, he said, adding that for "the holy Guru Granth Sahib, we can give any sacrifice".He appreciated the "utmost restraint" shown by the police while dealing with the situa-

"Sometime back, an attempt to disturb law and order and brotherhood came to notice Punjab...Immediately, action was taken on March 18," said Mann as he referred to the police crackdown. "Some persons who play into the hands of country's enemies and some anti-social elements were nabbed," he said.

Amritpal Singh, who used to run an organization that used to inspire youths to take up the gun or indulge in antisocial acts, has also been arrested, he said.

"I want to thank the 3.5 crore people of Punjab that during the last 30-35 when this (crackdown) operation was going on, they maintained brotherhood and no untoward

while stressing that peace, brotherhood, and harmony are very strong in the State. Mann reiterated that Punjabis have made maximum sacrifices in the country's freedom struggle and brave Punjabis continue to safeguard the country's frontiers. A few days ago, five of the Poonch attack belonged to Punjab, he said.

Punjab has always led the country - be it the country's freedom struggle or green revolution -Punjab will continue to lead. I want that the State should emerge at the top in various developmental parameters and then no one can stop our country from becoming number one in the world," he said. Mann said that on Sunday,

spoke to Deputy Commissioners and Senior Superintendents of Police and people are carrying on with their normal routine. There is no report of any untoward incident". "I want to assure you that Punjab will continue to make progress, like it has been doing during past year," said

### Will continue to seek action on BJP's graft...

After Pilot's one-day fast, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had said that ACB has arrested several corrupt IAS, IPS officers, which has nowhere happened in the country. People voted for people because corruption was a big issue before Congress came to power, he said, adding that since there is very little time left in the assembly elections, action should be taken.

"If we all raise corruption done by the BJP or if I raise the corruption issues of the previous Vasundhara Raje government and demand action on them then I believe that it is in the benefit of the party," Pilot said. He also raised questions over inaction against the party leaders who defied the party's high command in September 2022.

"It is true that the incident that took place on September 25 was an open violation of the orders of our Congress President Sonia Gandhi. Mallikarjun Kharge and Ajay Maken were open ly insulted. Why hasn't action been taken against them yet? This is the question, the answer lies with the party," Pilot said.

### Man held for threat ahead of PM's Kerala trip

FromPage 1

The letter in Malayalam, written in the name of Kochi resident NJ Johny, was received at the office of BJP State president K Surendran who in turn handed it over to the police last

The news of the letter came out on Saturday after a report by ADGP (Intelligence) was telecast in the media. After the news was out, Surendran met the media and said he had handed over the threatening letter a week ago to the state police chief.

"Last week, President, BJP state committee, Kerala had received a letter written in Malayalam threatening the life of Hon Prime Minister of India by using a suicide bomber," the intelligence report read. Johny

had yesterday met the media and claimed that he was innocent. "Police have questioned me. I have given them all the details. They cross-checked the handwriting and everything, he said. His family told the police said they suspected another person from the locality, who had some issues with them over some matter related to a church.Police said Xavier had some personal disagreements with Johny and wrote the letter to trap him.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Sethu Raman said 2,060 police personnel had been deployed in Kochi city as part of the security arrangements for the Prime Minister's visit. He also said that around 20,000 participants are expect to take part in the PM's road show.

2015. The full format of quarterly financial results are available on the Stock Exchange website (www.bseindia.com) and on the Company's website (www.okplay.in). The above standalone and consolidated financial results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their meeting held on Saturday, 22°

for OK Play India Limite

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RAJAN HANDA DIN - 0019459

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# LG for action against officers for delaying Rithala STP upgradation

 $D_{\text{(L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena}}^{\text{elhi Lieutenant Governor}}$ has issued an order to identify the officers responsible and take strict action for delay in the upgradation/rehabilitation of Rithala Phase-I sewage treatment plant (STP) - for five years, that has resulted in the discharge of a massive 37,000 million gallons (nearly 15,000 crore liters) of untreated sewage into the Yamuna since January 2020 till now. The L-G has set the deadline of June 2023 for ensuring 95% of sewage treatment before being discharged in the Yamuna. The LG was also informed that the ongoing work on the Rithala Phase-I STP will be completed by June

Accusing the Arvind Kejriwal government for not

granting permission for translocation of trees that was necessary for executing the project even as the Centre has funded the project, the Raj Niwas officials said the files pertaining to this project were pending with the environment department of Delhi government for nearly two years.

The AAP government had earlier stalled dozens of projects of national significance including AIIMS redevelopment, IIT, Delhi Metro, Central Vista, National Highways and residential flats for government employees for up to 03 years by denying permission for tree translocation.

"This prompted Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to recall these files using his special powers under Rule 19 (5) of Transaction of Business Rulle (ToBR), which forced



the Kejriwal Government to clear these proposals. However, this is a rarest of rare cases where the Kejriwal government has stalled the work of Rithala STP to derail the Yamuna cleaning operations which is being monitored by the Supreme Court and the

National Green Tribunal," said officials of the Raj Niwas

This matter came up for discussion in the recent meeting of the High Level Committee constituted by the NGT on Yamuna Rejuvenation, wherein Lt. Governor, Saxena expressed grave displeasure erate misconduct on part of the

The Lt Governor noted that nothing could be more criminal than "poisoning the Yamuna by stalling such key projects." He has issued instructions to identify the officers responsible for this deliberate misconduct and initiate strict action against them. The LG has set the deadline of June 2023 for ensuring 95% of sewage treatment before being discharged in the Yamuna. The LG was informed that the ongoing work on the Rithala Phase-I STP will be completed by June 2023," reads the state-

work Rehabilitation and Up-Gradation of Rithala Phase-I Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)" was awarded to a

private firm namely M/s. VA Tech Wabag Ltd. in June 2018 and the same was scheduled for completion in December 2021. However, the government deliberately kept sitting over two files for translocating over 500 trees for 03 years without assigning any justifiable reason. The LG was informed that the first file for tree translocation was kept pending for 17 months, while the 2nd file related to it was pending for 20 months. The permission was granted only after interference of the Yamuna Monitoring Committee constituted by the

As a result, the project remained stuck for complete 03 and upgradation/rehabilitation work could start only after July 2021, and is still pending completion. All this while, 40

getting criminally dumped by the DJB into the Yamuna, through the Supplementary and Najafgarh drain.

As per the contract, the pri-

vate firm which was already operating and maintaining the STP, had taken over the Rithala Phase-I STP for rehabilitation in July 2018. The firm was operating half portion only for sewage treatment while the remaining half portion was to be rehabilitated/upgraded. The firm had completed 18-months operation tenure on 01.12.2019. following which, the firm was asked to continue with operation and maintenance of the STP but it expressed inability to do so citing an extra expenditure of Rs 78 lakh for repair of equipment. In the meantime, the DJB also carried out an inspection and found that the

scribed final effluent parameters i.e. TSS/ BOD as 20/30 mg/I because this plant was designed for TSS/ BOD as 30/50 mg/I. Further, operation of this plant incurred a cost of Rs 19 lakh per month, and accordingly, it was decided to fully stop the sewage treatment at the STP until it was com-

pletely rehabilitated.
"The rehabilitation work of half portion could not be completed due to awaited permission for tree cutting . from Delhi Government and the delay was not on the part of M/S VA Tech Wabag Ltd... it is proposed to stop the interim operation as sewage being treated is not meeting design parameters and to save wasteful expenditure of Rs. 19 lacs being at present is of no use," the DJB observed.

# AAP for peace, security in Punjab, says Kejriwal after Amritpal's arrest

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday praised Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Punjab police over the arrest of pro Khalistani group leader and "Waris Punjab De" chief Amritpal Singh, saying the AAP government is committed to ensure peace and security in Punjab for which it will even take "tough decisions.

Taking to Twitter, Kejriwal wrote that CM Bhagwant Mann accomplished the mission with maturity and courage. He was commenting to the video post of CM Mann. "We are committed to the peace and security in Punjab. We are also ready to take tough decisions for this," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi after he was apprehended.

AAP convener appreciated Punjab Chief Minister

Bhagwant Mann for accomplishing the "mission" with maturity and courage, and also thanked the people of the state for maintaining peace and supporting the government. "CM@BhagwantMann Sahib accomplished this mission with maturity and courage. Punjab Police achieved success without any bloodshed and firing," Kejriwal said in his tweet, adding, "Many thanks to the public for maintaining peace and supporting the Punjab government during this peri-

Kejriwal further thanked

taining peace during this peri-od and supporting the state government.

Rajya Sabha MP and senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh said the arrest of Amritpal has proved that AAP government will not compromise with the law and order situation in Puniab. "The AAP government did not allow peace and order in Punjab to be disrupted during the entire operation,"

Mann said he was in touch with senior officials throughout Saturday night about the operation and asserted that those who try to disturb peace will face action as per law. In a video message on Sunday, Mann also thanked the people of Punjab for their cooperation and said he does not want the youth to be misled by people with vested interests who run their shops by driving a campaign against the country.

# DCW chief issues notice to police over failure to lodge woman wrestlers' FIR

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) Chief Swati Maliwal has issued notice to Delhi Police for reportedly failing to register FIR in the matter of sexual harassment case of women wrestlers. The Commission has received a complaint regarding sexual harassment with women wrestlers by Brijbhushan Sharan, president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) . It has also sought a detailed action taken report in the matter by April 25.

A senior police officer said, We have received a complaint in this regard and an enquiry is on. No FIR has been registered in the matter yet."

According to the notice, the wrestlers have informed the Commission that they filed a written complaint with Delhi Police two days ago, but their FIR has yet to be registered.



Earlier in the day, wrestler Vinesh Phogat slammed Delhi Police for refusing to file an FIR against Brij Bhushan Sharan.

Taking to Twitter, the DCW Chief wrote, "Several women wrestlers of the country had given a complaint of sexual harassment against the WFI President at Connaught Place Police Station two days ago. One of the complainants is also a minor. Till now the Delhi Police has not registered an FIR in the matter. This is against the law. Have issued a notice to the police in this matter. Asking to respond to the DCW within 48 hours."

The DCW chief also

the social media platform. In her letter issued to the Delhi police, Maliwal stated, "The complainant has informed the commission that several women wrestlers including a minor have alleged that the accused person has indulged in the crime of sexual harassment against them during his tenure at the Wrestling Federation of

'The complainant has also informed the commission that a complaint in this regard was submitted by them at PS Connaught Place on 21.04.2023. She has further informed that no action has been taken by the SHO, Connaught Place on the complaint. She has also stated that...she was informed by him that no FIR has been filed and that action shall be taken on the complaint post Monday," the DCW Chief's letter reads further.

### Man killed by two in Shadipur road rage case



**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

A 39-year-old man has been beaten to death by two persons in Delhi's Shadipur area in an incident of road rage, the police said on Sunday. The accused individuals -- identified as Manish Kumar, 19, and Lalchand alias Pramod, 20, have been arrested.

The incident took place on Saturday. The police received a call about the incident at around 11.30 p.m.The caller said that a man with injuries was lying on the street. "Manish and Lalchand were moving in a cab. The deceased, who was moving on his scooty, was on the road. All three had first argument over giving a passage, which led to a scuffle between them. Thereafter, the accused pushed him off his scooty and then thrashed him," a police

A police team that later reached the spot learnt that the injured individual was taken to a nearby government hospital by the local residents. The deceased, who was later identified as Pankaj Thakur, was declared dead on arrival by the

### Senior journalist attacked with knife, robbed

A<sup>43</sup>-year-old TV journalist was attacked with a sharp edged weapon allegedly by three men who robbed him while he was on a walk in east Delhi's Sanjay lake, police said on Sunday. The victim, a senior mobile phone and his wallet, which had in it a credit and a debit card, and his office identity card, they said.

The victim is the Delhi chief of bureau of his firm which has its office in Jhandewalan, they said. According to police, the victim on Saturday boarded a bus from Jhandewalan and got down at Manglam Chowk. From there, he went to Sanjay lake in Pandav Nagar for a walk.

In the park surrounding the lake, he was accosted by three youths who threatened him to part with his belongings, and when he resisted, attacked him with a sharp edged weapon, police said.

### Brain dead 9-yr-old's family donates his organs, gives new lease of life to 2

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

The family of a nine-year-old boy who was declared brain dead at AIIMS, Delhi following a head injury donated his organs giving a new lease of life

Centre after suffering a severe head injury in a road accident on April 15 gave consent to donate the minor's organs following counselling. The minor passed away on April 21.

This is the fifth paediatric donation (in the 1-6 years of age group) amongst 19 donations to have taken place at JPN apex trauma centre, AIIMS, here since last April.

Children are a very special group and need targeted approaches for brain death certification, maintenance of donor organs after brain death, subsequent organ retrievals and transplantations, Dr Deepak Gupta, Professor of Neurosurgery at AIIMS, Delhi. Both corneas retrieved by the RP Centre Eye bank team



The parents of the child There is a large unmet need for from end-stage diseases of the kidney, liver and heart across India and training of doctors in transplants in children needs to be reinforced at regular inter-"Incidentally, 6 year old

Master S was born with only one kidney (as was confirmed on CT and USG abdomen) and hence only one kidney was retrieved to be transplanted to another boy at AIIMS Delhi, while liver was transplanted at ILBS to another 16-year-old boy in Delhi as per allocation by National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)," Dr Gupta said.

Both corneas retrieved by

will be used to give new vision to patients in need at AIIMS in subsequent days, he said, adding that heart valves were also retrieved for later usage. However, the heart and lungs were not found to be suitable for transplantation by a team of experts from NOTTO.

death certification, donor organ management and counselling for consent and further retrievals was coordinated by a team of doctors, paramedic support staff from the Organ Procurement team (OPT), Organ retrieval banking organisation (ORBO) of AIIMS transplant team of doctors and support staff from the hospital, said Dr Aarti Vij, Head of ORBO at AIIMS said.

Talking about the challenges involving organ donations from very young donors, Dr Gupta said the Biggest myth amongst many is that organ donations can be done only between the 18-60 years of

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approvals, market conditions and other considerations, to make an initial public offering of its equity shares of face value of Re. 1 each ("Equity Shares" and such offering, the "Offer") and has filed the red herring prospectus dated April 14, 2023 ("RHP") with Registrar of Companies, Delhi and Haryana at New Delhi, on April 15, 2023. The RHP shall be available on the website of Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI") at www.sebi.gov.in, websites of BSE Limited and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com, respectively, and is available on the websites of the book running lead managers to the Offer, i.e. Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited, Axis Capital Limited, IIFL Securities Limited, Jefferies India Private Limited and J.P. Morgan India Private Limited at https://investmentbank.kotak.com, www.axiscapital.co.in, www.iiflcap.com, www.jefferies.com and www.jpmipl.com, respectively. Investors should note that investment in equity shares involves a high degree of risk and for details relating to such risk, please see the section titled "Risk Factors" on page 44 of the RHP. Potential investors should not rely on the Draft Red Herring Prospectus dated September 15, 2022 filed with SEBI for making any investment decision The Equity Shares have not been and will not be registered under the U.S. Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "U.S. Securities Act") and, unless so registered, may not be offered or sold within the United States except pursuant to an exemption from, or in a transaction not subject to, the registration requirements of the U.S. Securities Act and applicable U.S. state securities laws. Accordingly, the Equity Shares are being offered and sold (i) in the United States only to persons that are reasonably believed to be "qualified institutional buyers" (as defined in Rule 144A) pursuant to Section 4(a) of the U.S. Securities Act, and (ii) outside the United States in "offshore transactions" as defined in and in compliance with Regulation S and the applicable laws of the jurisdiction where those offers and sales occur. There will be no public offering of the Equity Shares in the United States.

### Court orders prosecution of Army doctor for rape after Afghan's woman's legal battle since 2009

MANOHAR LAL ■ NEW DELHI

senior Army doctor will Anow be prosecuted for the offence of rape following a Delhi court order after a protracted legal battle by an Afghan woman who came to India in 2009 and claimed the accused had married her in Kabul while concealing his first marriage.

The woman, now 32, claimed before a Delhi court in her complaint that the army Major, during his posting at Indira Gandhi Hospital in Kabul, married her as per Islamic practices in 2006 when she was just 16 years and two months of age. She contended that either she should be given the status of his "legitimate wife" or he should be prosecuted. The complaint said that after marriage they resided as husband and wife in an accommodation rented by him in the

Afghanistan capital. "After a couple of weeks ... (the officer) on the pretext of going to India for some work



related to employment left for India and did not return to Kabul and eventually after telling (her)... That he was already married with two children in India thereafter even stopped taking calls from her or her relatives", the complaint said. It said that in the circumstances, she came to India and filed a Domestic Violence Case against him and later a complaint case.

She went to various judicial forums including the Delhi High Court and back to trial courts seeking redressal and this led to a recent order passed by a magisterial court that the army doctor be tried for offence of rape under 376 of the

"Perusal of the record

reveals that the complainant had alleged that the accused had entered into sexual intercourse with her....The accused had admitted the subsistence of his marriage with some other person at the time of the alleged Metropolitan Magistrate Sonika said in her order on the woman's com-

plaint case. The order noted that the complainant had placed on record the CD containing the video of the marriage solemnisation function between her and the accused and its gen-uineness was established by FSL examination. The magistrate said,

'Thus, this court agrees with the contention raised by Counsel for the complainant and is of opinion that the accused should also be tried for offence under Section 376 IPC in addition to other offences. As the offence under Section 376 IPC is exclusively triable by the court of Session, the present case needs to be committed". The trial court listed the matter for scrutiny of documents on April 25.

During the hearing of the case, which was filed in 2016, advocates Ravindra S Garia and Sobat Singh Rawat contended that there is sufficient material on record to frame against the accused under IPC sections 494 (marrying again during the lifetime of spouse), 495 (concealment of former marriage). 496 (fraudulently undergoing the ceremony of marriage) of IPC and additionally, and 376 as the accused had committed sexual intercourse with the complainant who gave her consent under the impression that the accused is her husband.

Advocate Ravi Mehta, appearing for the officer, had raised the preliminary objection on the jurisdiction of the court to deal with the case.

The trial court, however, referred to the 2017 order of the Delhi High Court in Lalitha Lakshmanan on the applicability of section 188 CrPC (offences committed outside

# PM to hold 20 rallies in K'taka to give BJP 'push'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to address 15 to 20 public rallies in the final leg of campaigning in Karnataka to give the much needed "extra push" to the BJP in the State as the Congress is hoping that it may "ride high" on the anti-incumbency factor on the anti-incumbency factor against the saffron party.

The main rivals —the BJP

and the Congress— are campaigning on the local factors keeping aside the national issues with the state leaders, largely, shouldering the burden of the electioneering.

Despite the claim made by the political parties voters in Karnataka are being clearly wooed on the basis of the caste and community lines.

Politicians of all shades are visiting respective religious 'Maths' or monastic leadees of different communities having influence on the people and seeking their 'blessings.'

Though the Congress and the BJP claim that the voters in Karnataka will deliver a clear mandate on May 13, the Janata Dal (Secular), the third party in the fay, sees itself as the possible 'king-maker' in the event of a 'hung assembly' if none closes on to the majority mark of 113 in 224 seats state assembly.

While BJP leader and Union home Minister Amit Shah has set the target of 150 seats for the party, the Congress leader and former CM Siddaramaiah said his party



will win 131 seats in May 10 mark in the 224-member elections. Congress State President D K Shiv Kumar has claimed that the party would win 141 assembly seats.

The BJP is largely banking on the Lingayat votes, the quota it gave to Lingayats and Vokkaligas by deleting 4 percent quota of Muslims and on the plank of 'double-engine' government.

Shah has sought BJP workers to amplify the "double-engine" growth plank and reservations in the final leg of

campaigning for the polls.

He also asked them to ensure the party makes the maximum out of proposed rallies by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in about 20 locations after April 30

Shah is understood to have told the state BJP groups and leaders in Bengaluru a day ago that the exit of Lingayat faces like former CM Jagadish Shettar and Laxman wouldn't stop the party from getting "15-20 seats more" than the halfway

Both the Lingayat leaders from the North Karnataka which have joined the Congress are not known to be mass Leaders like the Lingayat strongman BS Yediyurappa who is also playing a d capitalizing on the 'emotional card' with the voters that this may be his 'swan song'.

Siddaramaiah has also announced to his voters - kurba community- that this would be his last contest of his political

inning.
Yediyurappa is, though, campaigning for the party but not contesting from his traditional Shikaripura constituency where his son Vijayendra is a candidate.

Meanwile, Communist Party of India which is contesting seven seats in the state has decided to extend support to Congress in the upcoming Karnataka Assembly polls on 215 constituencies, the party said in a statement on Sunday.

# India, China hold 18th round of talks at LAC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

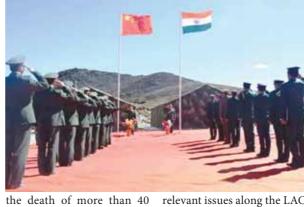
As tension still persists at the border in Ladakh, India and China on Sunday held the 18th round of Corps Commander level talks at the Line of Actual Control(LAC). The parleys focussed on hastening up process of disen-gagement from the two fric-tion points at the LAC in an effort to restore normalcy.

Incidentally, the military

level talks at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point at the LAC came days ahead of Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu's visit to New Delhi next week to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation(SCO)Defence Ministers' conclave on April

Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif may also come though Islamabad is yet to confirm. Russia's defence minister Sergei Shoigu will also attend the meet. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is likely to hold bilateral meetings with the Chinese and Russian defence ministers on the sidelines of the meet.

It will be the first visit by a Chinese defence minister since tension flared up at the LAC in Eastern Ladakh in May 2020. It saw a major clash between the two armies in the Galwan valley in June resulting in the death of 20 Indian army personnel including the commanding officer. The brawl also led to



Chinese soldiers but Beijing is yet to give out the exact toll.

Moreover, the Corps Commander level talks took place days ahead of Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang 's visit to Goa to attend the SCO Foreign Ministers' conclave on May 4 and 5.

As regards the latest round of Corps Commander level talks, the Indian side was led by Lt General Rashim Bali, chief of the Leh based 14 Corps. The two sides are understood to have discussed de-escalation and legacy issues of Depsang plains and Demchok in the talks.

The 17th round of India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the Chinese side on December 20, last year.

An official statement issued then said building on the progress made after the last meeting on 17th July 2022, the two sides exchanged views on the resolution of the

relevant issues along the LAC in the Western Sector in an open and constructive man-

They had a frank and indepth discussion, keeping in line with the guidance provided by the State Leaders to work for the resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest which would help in restoration of peace and tranquility along the LAC in the Western Sector and enable progress in bilateral relations.

In the interim, the two sides agreed to maintain the security and stability on the ground in the Western Sector. Γ̈́he two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest.

India and China have been engaged in a military stand-off for the last three years and both nations have deployed heavy troops in the eastern Ladakh sector.

### India transforming, will become 3rd-largest economy by 2030, says VP Dhankhar

India is transforming and will become the third largest economy in the world by 2030, Vice President

Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Sunday. Addressing a gathering at a state-level programme on saint Dhanna Bhagat's birth anniversary in Haryana's

Kaithal, Dhankhar said India's prestige in the world has never been as high as it is now. Haryana Chief Minister

Manohar Lal Khattar also attended the event.

The vice president said the contributions of saints in the country's history have been tremendous.

"Today the country is witnessing something that was never imagined before.... India has become the fifth largest economy, surpassing the Britishers who had ruled us for 200 years, and farmers and workers have a major contribution in this.

"By the end of this decade...India will be the third largest economy on this planet," he said.

Dhankhar lauded the Haryana government for celebrating the birth anniversary of Dhanna Bhagat on a large At the event, Khattar

announced that his govern-ment will install a big statue of

Dhanna Bhagat in Dhanauri oi a nearby area. He also announced that a medical col-

lege being constructed in Kaithal will be named after Dhanna Bhagat.

Speaking at the event, the vice president said that farmers are the backbone of the country's economy and added more than Rs 2.25 lakh crore has been disbursed to more than 11 crore farmers under a government scheme.

He said that India is transforming, adding people are getting benefits at their doorstep due to technology.

Dhankhar also hailed the

role played by religious leaders during the COVID-19 pan-

"Our sants encouraged every person to help the needy during the COVID-19 pan-demic and at that time, there was no crisis in our country...," he said. Dhankhar, his wife and Khattar also offered prayers at

Dhanna Bhagat temple in Dhanauri village.

# 50,000 km of National Highways added in 9 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $P_{\text{Modi's push for an infra-}}^{\text{rime Minister Narendra}}$ structure upgrade to boost the economy has led to an unprecedented 50,000 kilometre of National Highways - the country's arteries - being added in the last 9 years, according to official data.

India had a total of 97,830 km of National Highways in 2014-15 which has been expanded to 145,155 km by March 2023

per day of roads in 2014-15, the roads being constructed every day in 2021-22, according to the official data.

Roads and highways play a crucial role in a nation's economy. Road transport is the basis of not only economic development but also social development, defence sectors, and access to basic things for life. According to a report, about 85 per cent of passenger and 70 per cent of goods traffic is carried by roads every year, this gives us an idea of its importance.

India has about 63.73 lakh km of the road network, which is the second largest in the world.

National Highways play a very important role in the economic and social development



of the country by enabling efficient movement of freight and passengers, connecting people and facilitating economic activities.

The Government of India From building 12.1 km has implemented multiple initiatives in the last 9 years to National Highway infrastructure in the country. The pace of National

Highways (NH) construction has increased consistently between 2014-15 and 2021-22 due to the systematic push through corridor-based National Highway development approach. In 2014-15, the pace of NH construction was about 12 km/ day, which increased to about 29 km/ day in 2021-22, the data showed.

As a part of Bharatmala Pariyojana, India's largest expressway, i.e., 1,386 km long Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, is being developed, and Delhi -Dausa - Lalsot section of the expressway has already been dedicated to the nation by PM

### CBI books former director of GAIL for disproportionate asset

The

The CBI has booked the then director (marketing) of GAIL for possession of disproportionate assets to the tune of about Rs 5 crore in his name and in the name of his

then Director

(Marketing), Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) (India) Ltd , Bhikaji Cama Place and resident of House No. 90, Duplex-2, Rajat Vihar, Sector 62, Noida and his wife VN Meenakshi have been booked under Section 109 (abetment of Code (IPC) and relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act relating to possession of disproportionate

The case was registered following a written complaint dated April 19 from CBI Inspector Shakti Kumar.

The disproportionate assets case is an offshoot of a separate case against Ranganathan whose official and residential premises were searched earlier by the agency.

The scrutiny of the documents collected and seized during the investigation of the said case revealed that Ranganathan had joined GAIL on October 14, 1985. He served in Indraprastha Gas Ltd from May 27, 2016 to June 15, 2020



as Marketing Director. Further he joined GAIL as Executive Director on June 16, 2020 and was working in the capacity of Director (Marketing) on the day of the searches.

"ES Ranganathan during his posting in IGL and GAIL enriched himself illicitly and acquired assets (both movable and immovable) by corrupt and illegal means in his name and in the name of his wife VN Meenakshi, a housewife," the complaint alleged.

During the check period of January 1, 2017 to January 17, 2022, ÉS Ranganathan was in possession of five immovable properties in his name and in the name of his wife.

Ranganathan was also in possession of huge cash of RS 1,29,10,500, gold jewellery items, foreign currencies and huge balance in several bank accounts opened in his name as well as in his wife's name, which he could not account for satisfactorily, the complaint further alleged.

# World may lose a language every month by 2060: Experts

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Global language experts have flagged concern that the world may lose a language every month over the next four decades i.e. by 2060 if steps aren't initiated to preserve them, with certain Indigenous languages at greatest risk of disappearing. The study, which is the largest of its kind, comes amidst a disturbing observation that India may have lost 220 languages since 1961 and another 150 languages could vanish in the next 50 years.

The global study which is published in the journal Science Advance uses a new publicly available comparative Grambank, that documents the enormous diversity of current languages on the planet. The study also highlights just how much humanity stands to lose and why it's worth saving.

Initiated by scholars in the Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution at the Max Institute Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, more than 100 authors from 68 institutions, including the University of Colorado Boulder, contributed to the years-long, global data project.

The analysis of more than 400,000 data points and 2,400 separate languages and dialects reveals that language loss is occurring unevenly across major linguistic regions of the



guages in northeast South America, Alaska to Oregon, and in northern Australia at Though this global study

of the languages that disappeared in India, renowned literary critic and activist Ganesh Narayan Devy, who documented 780 Indian languages while conducting the People's Linguistic Survey of India in 2010, had found that 600 of these languages were dying. "Close to 250 languages in India had already died over the past 60 years," he said. According to UNESCO,

any language that is spoken by less than 10,000 people is potentially endangered. In India, after the 1971 census, the government decided that any language spoken by less than 10,000 people need not be included in the official list of languages.

However, what is more

interesting is that none of the languages in the Grambank are identical. Of all 2,400 languages and dialects in the dataset, only five match up the same using the grammatand analyze them within Grambank. Though vocabulary may play a big role in the mutual unintelligibility that linguists rely on to determine what counts as separate languages, Grambank shows that the grammatical 'fingerprints' of languages are also typically unique, said Hannah Haynie, co-first author of the study and assistant professor in the Department of Linguistics at CU Boulder.

further said, She "Grambank is showing us the importance of working on language documentation and revitalization in order to preserve this legacy of human communication, culture and cogni-

#### BCI passes resolution opposing recognition to same-sex marriage PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court of India will continue to hear the arguments from Friday for allowing same-sex marriage in the country. The Centre has opposed the idea of allowing same-sex marriages in the country and the Bar Council of India shared similar views as it passed a resolution opposing the grant of legal recognition to same-sex marriages.

"The Joint meeting is of the unanimous opinion that in view of the sensitivity of the issue of same-sex marriage, having a spectrum of stakeholders from diverse socioreligious backgrounds, it is advisable that this is dealt with tion process involving different social, religious groups by the competent legislature," the BCI resolution said.

While talking to news agency ANI, BCI Chairman Manan Kumar Mishra said that considering the socio-religious structure of the country, same-sex marriage in "against our culture". The senior advocate also added that such decisions are matter of legislations and should not be decided by the courts. "Considering the socio-religious structure of the country, we thought it (samesex marriage) is against our culture. Such decisions would not be taken by courts. Such moves must come from process of legislation," the BCI chairman

### Noida hospital doctors diagnose rare Hutchinson Gilford Progeria in child, provide free treatment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

fter running from pillar to Apost for the past seven years, Bhopal-based Aarti Sakhya's quest to know what ails her little daughter Gunjan -- who was prematurely ageing and had lost her hair -- finally ended at the Medical Genetics Department of Post Graduate Institute of Child Health (PGICH or Child PGI), in Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

The doctors not only accurately diagnosed the rare disease Hutchinson Gilford Progeria (HGP), but also ensured that the expensive medicine needed to treat their little patient is provided free of cost.

"Last week, the doctors

handed over the first dose of the medicine to me. The dose will be used for the next four months," said Aarti from Bhopal while talking to The Pioneer on phone. She said that at least she now knows about



will take all precautions and medication to ensure right medical treatment for her daughter. But without the help from doctors at PGICH, her daughter would not have got such an expensive drug. Dr Nilay Mayank, Assistant Professor and consultant

PGICH explained that HGP is estimated to affect 1 in 20 million people and leads to premature ageing and death at around 15 years of age.

"Most of these babies look

healthy at birth but by around 1 year of age show signs of loss of body fat, loss of hairs, stiffness in joints, atherosclerosis in blood vessels, heart diseases and even brain stroke. It is expected that there are around 100 such patients in India," he The earliest signs of this disorder include tightness or

bulging of the skin in the

abdominal/thigh region. Other

signs include poor growth of the child, loss of body fat, loss

of hairs, stiffness in joints, ath-

erosclerosis in blood vessels, heart diseases and even brain stroke., says Dr Mayank Nilay But many of these remain undiagnosed and receive irrelevant treatment owing to lack of awareness among people and even the medicos, Dr Nilay added. The PGICH, Noida has been diagnosing and treating many such disorders since it started functioning last December 2021 and the centre is providing free of cost genetic test and the Lonafarnib therapy for patients with HGP with the assistance of International Progeria Foundation. The cost of one bottle of

this medicine is expected to be around Rs 20 lakhs but it is being provided free of cost at our hospital. The children have shown improvement in their overall health status and are doing well on regular follow up, said Director of PGICH, Noida, Professor Dr Arun Kumar singh who handed over the first dose of the medicine to Arti.

### Health Min to organise today Asia Pacific leaders' conclave on malaria elimination

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

With an aim to galvanise action for malaria elimination by 2030, the Union Health Ministry will organize the Asia Pacific Leaders' Conclave on Elimination here on Monday in partnership with the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA) on the eve of the World Malaria Day on April 25.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandvaya will chair the Conclave which will provide a platform for leaders from the Asia Pacific region to discuss ongoing efforts towards malaria elimination and revitalise national and regional momentum towards the goal of an Asia Pacific

Free from Malaria by 2030. Sessions will include tracking regional and national progress, reaching at-risk populations, leveraging research, innovation, and new



technologies to accelerate progress, and embracing a whole-of-government approach eliminate the dis-

"India has made remarkable progress towards malaria elimination in recent years and has been appreciated at the global level. Among the 11 countries that are part of the World Health Organization's

'High Burden to High Impact' initiative, only India has reported a decline in malaria cases during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Malaria cases and deaths also dropped by 85.1% and 83.6% respectively, from 2015 to 2022," said an official from the

He said however many challenges remain.

According to a 2020-22 report by The Global Fund, malaria is one of the major public health problems in It was reported that 2 per

cent of global malaria cases are reported from India, with the same percentage of deaths reported every year. In a paper published in late May in The Lancet, the

malaria researchers Manju Rahi and Amit Sharma of the Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said "Major challenges include insufficient surveillance, slow and aggregated data reporting especially in exigent situations like cross-border areas and vulnerable high-risk groups." The duo dwelt upon the key issues, such as surveillance, P. vivax malaria, diagnostics, drug resistance, and vector control, under separate heads and suggested possible solutions for each.

# **Modi to lay stone of first** digi science park in Kerala

**PTI** ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to visit Kerala on a two-day trip on April 24, will lay the foundation stone for the country's first Digital Science Park, a Rs-1,500-crore project, here on Tuesday, April 25.

The third-generation Science Park (they are located in bustling city centres) will come up close to the Digital University of Kerala at Technopark Phase IV -Technocity, a government release said.

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw, various ministers of the Left government and Congress's Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor would be attending the event, the release said. The Digital Science Park project had been conceived as a multidisciplinary clusterbased interactive-innovation zone focused on digital technologies and is expected to be completed in two years, it said. In 2022-23 budget, the state government had announced



A blueprint of the Digital Science Park in Thiruvananthapuram

the establishment of a Digital Science Park in an area of 10 lakh square feet in two blocks, the release added. "The park will initially have two buildings with a total area of 2,00,000

square feet. The first one in 1,50,000 square feet will have five floors, housing the Centre of Excellence (CoE) including research labs and digital incubator, while second building will house the administrative as well as Digital Experience centre." The Digital Science Park will start its operations from a 10,000 square feet space in Kabani located at Technopark Phase IV within the next couple of months, it added. Out of the total project outlay of over Rs 1,500 crore, Rs 200 crore has already been allotted by the state government and the remaining amount will be generated from other sources including industry partners, the release said.

Initially, Digital Science Park will facilitate industry and business units as well as technology startups from domains of Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, electronics, smart hardware, sustainable and smart materials. "UK-based semiconductor and software design company ARM has signed an agreement with Digital University Kerala on academic, research and startuprelated activities as part of this

# Nitish-Didi may meet to forge Opp unity

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA** ■ KOLKATA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was likely to meet his Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday, the ruling Trinamool Congress sources said in Kolkata.

Kumar who has been making efforts for a national-level unity of opposition parties and also met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in Delhi will meet Banerjee either at the State secretariat Nabanna or her Kalighat residence in South

The meeting likely to take place at about 2 pm could revolve around opposition unity, central discrimination against non-BJP States and misuse of the federal agencies, sources

The Bengal Chief Minister who has earlier spoken to a number of leaders including her Odisha and Tamilnadu counterpart Naveen Patnaik and MK Stalin besides speaking to former Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh Chief Ministers HD Kumaraswamy and Akhilesh Yadav has however been noncommittal about the Congress' role in the entire scheme of

Whenever asked she has either ducked the poser or has insisted on a post-poll decision about who should lead the Opposition alliance should there be one. "We are of the view



that whoever is stronger in whichever place should be allowed to contest so as to make it a one-is-to-one fight ... things (leadership issues) can be decided at a later period after the elections," she has said.

Considering the fact that the Congress continues to be the second largest party and the biggest opposition force with its presence in almost all the constituencies across the country critics in Bengal have refused to back Banerjee's contention that a viable and acceptable opposition alliance could be possible upon the Bengal Chief Minister's formula depriving the tri-colour party a centrestage status in the opposition scheme of things. This even as her senior

party leaders like Sudip Bandopadhyay, Kunal Ghosh and Saugato Roy have often said that Banerjee herself was a formidable candidate to lead a coalition government — a proposition that has been dis-

carded in Bengal opposition circles: particularly after the TMC losing the national party status in last week. "Do you think Mamata Banerjee, who has been running a party of thieves that is almost on the verge of being kicked away by the people of her State, has the credibility of leading an opposition alliance ... her being in the centre-stage will only drive away a large number of voters in other parts of the country," said a CPI(M) central committee member. Incidentally Kumar's visit to Kolkata comes at a time when Banerjee has lost much of her clout and stranglehold in State politics in the wake of a plethora of scams exploding in the face of her government sending a number of her party

colleagues including former ministers and MLAs to jail. Kumar comes at a time when on account of the alienation faced by the TMC the ruling outfit has not only lost a minority community-dominatelections but also been trounced either by the Left or the BJP in a number of rural cooperative elections indicating her party's gradual decline a la the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's government in 2009 onwards.

The debates notwithstanding, Banerjee has been highly vocal against the BIP government on a few issues that she might find support from her Bihar counterpart: alleged mis-use of federal agencies, alleged discrimination against non-BJP ruled States.

Banerjee a couple of days ago attacked the BJP government for destroying the federal structure of the country saying, "the Centre is not only discriminating against the non-BJP states by stopping their rightful funds but also sending federal agencies to arm-twist the opposition leaders ... the BJP is destroying the federal structure of the country as never before."

She also dared the Narendra Modi Government to put her behind the bar but refused to surrender before it. "I am ready ... you can put my family members and me in jail ... But I will never stop speaking against the misuse of ED and CBI ... my question is how many leaders of BJP-ruled States have been arrested by the central agencies ... is it that if you are in other parties you are a thief and if you are in the BJP you become a clean man," Banerjee said.

Separatism, terrorism come from outside India, says Meghwal

Separatism and terrorism come from outside and is not native to people living in India, Union Minister of State for Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal said here on Sunday. Meghwal was in Jammu to

take part in an MSME conclave. Asked about the arrest of 'Waris Punjab De' chief Amritpal Singh, Meghwal told reporters, "I was in Delhi for the Global Buddhist Summit and people from Leh and Ladakh were there. Everyone wants peace. "India will lead the process of peace in the world. Separatism and terrorism are not in the hearts of those living in India but come from outside.

The Punjab Police arrested Amritpal Singh in Moga's Rode village early on Sunday, ending an over a month-long manhunt against the radical preacher who styled himself after slain Khalistani militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

Amritpal has been taken to Assam's Dibrugarh under the National Security Act.The government is committed to undertaking welfare of all people and winning their hearts through good governance and development, Meghwal added. "It will unite country and make it great," he said.

# Cong will win 150 seats of 224 in K'taka: Rahul

Vijayapura: Invoking 12th century social reformer Basavanna on his birth anniversary, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and ruling BJP leaders only spoke about the Lingayat philosopher in their speeches but didn't follow his teachings. Calling

Government in Karnataka the "most corrupt in the country", he declared that Congress would win 150 seats in Karnataka out of the total 224 in the May 10 Assembly polls, while the "40 per cent BJP government" would get only 40 seats. He was referring to complaints from contractors that the BJP government in the state sought had allegedly sought 40 per cent commission from them for government contracts. "Basavanna had said



don't fear, speak out truth. If we see today, there is BJP and RSS' ideology which is creating an atmosphere of hatred and violence in the country. Prime Minister and BJP leaders speak about Basavanna, but don't follow his teachings," Gandhi said. Addressing a public meeting here, he said Basavanna had spoken about helping the weaker sections of society, he did not say "help the billionaires". "I have read about Basavanna's teachings. He has nowhere written that 'get the country's

wealth to Adani'. I spoke in Parliament house, I asked the Prime Minister as to what was his relationship with Adani? 'The country's entire wealth, ports and airports are being given to Adani; what's your relationship?" he said.

Claiming that his microphone was first switched off in Parliament for asking those questions, Gandhi said his speech was then removed from Parliament records, and at the end he himself was removed from the Lok Sabha. "They think that the truth can only be spoken in Lok Sabha, but it can be spoken anywhere, even here," he said. AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal, Karnataka Congress campaign committee chief M B Patil and KPCC working president Satish Jarkiholi, were among those

# Shinde Govt will fall in 15-20 days, claims Raut

Jalgaon: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed the "death warrant" of the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra Government has been issued and it will collapse in the next 15-20 days. Talking to reporters, Raut,

key leader of former CM Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), said his party was waiting for court's order and expecting that justice will be

The Rajya Sabha member was referring to the Supreme Court's judgement pending on a batch of pleas including one seeking disqualification of 16 Shiv Sena MLAs (of Shinde's party) who revolted against the Thackeray leadership.

"The government of the

existing chief minister and his 40 MLAs will collapse in 15-20 days. The death warrant of this government has been issued. It is now to be decided who will sign it," Raut claimed. The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader had earlier claimed the Shinde government will collapse in February. In June last year, Shinde and 39 MLAs rebelled against the Sena leadership resulting in the party's split and collapse of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government (which also comprises the NCP and Congress) led by Thackeray.

Shinde later tied-up with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to form government in Maharashtra. On June 30, 2022, Shinde was sworn in as the CM along with BJP's Devendra Fadnavis as his deputy.

The apex court last month

reserved its verdict on a batch of cross-petitions of Uddhav Thackeray and CM Eknath Shinde factions pertaining to last year's political crisis in the

### Sec144 in Kaliaganj over rape, murder

Kolkata: Even as war of words ensued between the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights led by its chairperson Priyank Kanoongo and West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) over the investigation procedures of the Kaliaganj "rape and murder" case the North Dinajpur district administration on Sunday clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC in parts of Kaliaganj bordering Bangladesh.

As the investigating officer and the doctor conducting the postmortem of the victim failed to turn up even after being summoned by Kanoongo the latter said that he was thinking in terms of invoking his special powers to summon the Chief Secretary to Delhi for questioning. We met with the victim's family members and the villagers. We have considered all their statements and noted

Youth Cong chief

gets notice to appear

before Assam police

The Assam Police on Sunday asked Indian Youth Congress president Srinivas B V to appear before it by May 2 for questioning in connection

with allegations of harassment and gender discrimination against him by now-expelled

party leader Angkita Dutta.

issued a notice to Srinivas at his

Bengaluru residence, with the

order stating that failing to

comply with it could lead to his

A police team from Assam

### Party hoppers form new outfit NPP in Kerala comity of nations. I'll strength-

Disgruntled leaders of district and regional level political parties in Kerala came under one umbrella and formed National Progressive Party (NP), a political party they claim as distinct and different from other parties. The decision was made by party hoppers V V Augustine and Johny Nelloor, the chairman and 'working' chairman of the new entity respectively.

"We are not against other political parties functioning in the State. We do not have any enmity or rivalry with them. Our gates remain open for the Congress, CPI(M) and AAP. Since BJP is the party ruling the Centre, we will extend cooperation with them too," said Augustine, the septuagenarian leader who is hoping against hope that Hindutva leaders may offer him some posts like governor or lieutenant gover-

Enthused by the formation of NPP and the possibilities of the Church extending its blessings for the new entity's tie up with the BJP, Victor Thomas, district chairman of United Democratic Front quit the alliance and his own party (one of the factions of the Kerala Congresses) and joined the BJP. "Narendra Modi is the only leader who is capable of leading India to the numero uno position in the glocal

en Modi Ji's arms and help him establish a government in Kerala," said Thomas after receiving the membership card and the customary saffron shawl from senior BJP leader Prakash Jawadekar Pathanamthitta.

Meanwhile Augustine and Nelloor said in their joint declaration that the NPP would demand that the Christians be accorded the same reservation enjoyed by the Sikh, Budhists and Jains in education and jobs. "Narendra Modi is good at public relations and it is this capability that we admire," said Augustine who was cautions in not burning the bridges to other fronts. The announcement about

the formation of NPP and decision to extend the hand of friendship with the BJP was made as count down began for the two-day visit of the Prime Minister to the State.

the RSP and former minister in the governments led by A K Antony and Oommen Chandi said that the UDF would not be affected in any way by the departure of these leaders. "They are like extra luggage and e-waste which the BJP itself would find impossible to process. The general opinion in the UDF is that leaders who were irrelevant has left the party and it is a big relief for us," said Baby John.

### Pune court convicts 11 accused in Cosmos Bank cyber fraud case

Pune: A court in Maharashtra's Pune district has convicted 11 people in the Cosmos Bank cyber fraud case, in which hackers siphoned off more than Rs 94 crore through a malware attack over a period of two days in 2018, police said on Sunday.

The judicial magistrate (first class) on Saturday sentenced nine of the accused to four years' imprisonment and two others to three years and imposed a fine on them, an official said.

The accused were convicted of charges under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act, he said. At least 18 persons were arrested from different parts of the country in connection with the fraud that was executed over a period of

two days in August 2018. As per case details, hackers stole information of Cosmos Bank's VISA and RuPay card customers through a malware, attacked SWIFT system (a vast messaging network banks used by financial institutions) and siphoned off more than Rs 94 crore on August 11 and 13,

The hackers had attacked the banks' ATM switch server and withdrawn Rs 78 crore from various ATMs in 28 countries and another Rs 2.5 crore was taken out within India. In another attack on August 13, the hackers again fraudulently transferred Rs 13.92 crore to a Hong Kong-based bank using the proxy SWIFT system.

of check dams for maintaining

water table levels are some of

the measures which can help

tackle the problem, the minis-

# **Case of two 'banned-entry'** candidates in K'taka polls

**PTI** ■ BENGALURU

 $\Gamma$ wo "banned-entry" candidates Vinay Kulkarni and G Janardhana Ředdy present a picture of a peculiar case in the run-up to the May 10 Karnataka Assembly elections. While the Congress candidate Kulkarni can't go to Dharwad, the constituency he is contesting from, following a court-imposed ban, Reddy fielded his wife in Ballari city as he is barred from entry there.

Kulkarni's wife Shivaleela filed the nomination on his behalf."Our supporters are backing us with a firm belief that 'Saheb' will come here. In his absence I am seeking the blessings of the voters asking them treat me as 'Saheb," she told reporters. Since video and phone calls are the only means

said, "I will immerse myself for you and my constituency. You are my strength who backed

Former Minister Kulkarni

was arrested and remanded to

judicial custody in November 2020 in connection with the murder of BJP leader and Zilla Panchavat member Yogeshgouda Goudar in June 2016.He was granted bail by Supreme Court on condition that he would not be allowed to enter Dharwad, the district known as cultural capital of Karnataka as it produced acclaimed literatteurs and music maestros, without permission of jurisdictional court. The jurisdictional Special Court in Bengaluru had rejected his request requesting entry,

the High Court where his petition was dismissed by Justice K Natarajan on Friday. Kulkarni's advocate had argued that he needs to be in the constituen-

cy to campaign.
The HC observed that the party, which gave him ticket to contest, should have known that he was forbidden by the from entering Dharwad.The case of former mining baron Janardhana Reddy of the famed 'Reddy brothers of Ballari' is not much different compared to Kulkarni.

A former BJP minister, Reddy has been barred by the apex court from entering Ballari in Karnataka and Anantapur and YSR Kadapa districts in Andhra Pradesh in connection with illegal mining

arrest. "A five-member team of Guwahati Police are in Bengaluru. The notice was pasted on the door of his residence as he was not present, Joint Commissioner Prateek Thube told PTI over phone. "He has been given time till

May 2 to appear at Dispur police station," Thube, who is a part of the Guwahati police team in Bengaluru, said. The notice said that during investigation, "reasonable grounds" have been revealed to question Srinivas in the case and, hence, he has been asked

to appear before the investigating officer, at 11 am on May 2. A set of 10 directions was given to Srinivas for compliance during the period, including not tampering with evidence, not allowing destruction of any evidence relevant to investigation and cooperating with the probe.

### 'Terrorists used steel bullets in Poonch attack'

Poonch/Jammu: The terrorists who ambushed an Army truck in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch used steel core bullets, capable of piercing an armoured shield, and decamped with the soldiers' weapons, officials said on Sunday, amid intensified efforts to trace and neutralise the per-

They said a sniper is believed to have targeted the truck from the front before the other terrorists sprayed bullets and lobbed grenades on it. Five soldiers were killed and one injured after the terrorists attacked the lone Army truck, which was carrying eatables for iftar to a nearby village, in the dense forest area of Bhata Dhurian late on Thursday afternoon and the vehicle caught fire.

The soldiers were from a Rashtriya Rifles unit deployed for counter-terror operations. Experts from various agencies, including the National Security Guard (NSG) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA), have visited site of the attack over the past two days and have managed to get a clear picture of deadly ambush which was laid by the terrorists, the officials said.

suspended in **Bharatpur** Mali community's protest

**Net remains** 

for 12% quota continues

**PTI** ■ BHARATPUR

Mobile internet service remained suspended in parts of Bharatpur as members of the Mali community continued to block the Jaipur-Agra National Highway ĥere for the third consecutive day demanding a separate 12 per cent reservation in govern-ment jobs and educational institutions.

On Sunday, a large number of demonstrators started gathering at the protest site and demanded the release of their leader Murari Lal Saini, who along with six other people was detained ahead of the agitation, police said.

President of Phule Aarakshan Sangarsh Samiti CP Saini said if the state government fails to fulfil their demands, they will block the Jaipur-Delhi highway. "We can also do a 'Chakka Jam' in the entire state," he said. Mali community comes under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also belongs to the

#### Meghalaya's Jal Jeevan Mission failing due to drying up of water sources altitudes affecting normal life.Marak said the State govister said "People constructing ernment has taken steps to

PTI ■ SHILLONG

Implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission in many parts of Meghalaya is facing hurdles due to drying up of water sources in the northeastern state, PHE Minister Marcuise N Marak said on Marcuise N Marak said on Sunday. Jal Jeevan Mission aims to provide potable water at every doorstep in the country by 2024.

"I have received reports that there are Jal Jeevan Mission projects that are already completed by the

already completed by the department but because of drying up of the water sources, there is no water at intake points," the minister told PTI. Protection and potential retention of water catchment areas,



risen by about six degrees Celsius in most areas in the plains while there has been a deviation of about three to four degrees Celsius in the higher improve water conservation through projects funded by the Asian Development Bank.

"We are trying to con-struct check dams and reservoirs so that we can maintain the water table levels," he stated.The minister also said the problem of water shortage has surfaced across the state due to breakdowns and shutdowns of supply lines.

The department, he said, is trying to solve the issues at the earliest. The minister expressed optimism that the water crisis will lessen with the onset of monsoon. Urging citizens to take up rainwater harvesting individually, the min-

a house should invest in a rainwater harvesting unit. This will be very beneficial for the family and I appeal to each one to try to be part of the solution".
A senior PHE official told

PTI, Meghalaya has been able to provide tap water connections to over 2.82 lakh households (44.45 per cent) as of January 2023, compared to 4,550 households (0.72 per

cent earlier).

Chief Minister Conrad K
Sangma informed the
Assembly in the last budget
session that the Central gov ernment has assured the state of allocating Rs 3,700 crore in 2023-24 for the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in Meghalaya.

"Failure to attend/comply with the terms of this notice can render you liable for arrest under Section 41 A(3) and (4) of CrPC," it added.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

# **Discordant notes**

NCP chief Sharad Pawar met Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani last week

he Congress' strategy to unite the entire Opposition over the Adani-Hindenburg issue seems to be falling apart. The script almost had the monogram of a Marxist classic: an evil corporate house, in cahoots with a friendly regime, trying to dominate the nation by hook or by crook. It is not the first time that the name of a business house or a tycoon has resonated in the political arena, but it is unprecedented that the grand old party and many others in the Opposition thought that they could oust a government as strong as that of Narendra Modi. Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar, however, has poured cold water on the plan to bring the parties opposed to the Bharatiya Janata Party together. It needs to be emphasised here that Pawar is not just another Opposition leader; he is a stalwart with sharp instincts and matchless political nous; he is also one of the most net-



worked politicians in the country. He is the leader who played a key role in Maharashtra in bringing the Congress, the Shiv Sena (before the split), and his own NCP together and cobbling together a government in the western state. What made the feat really commendable was the fact that his political rivals were Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, who are among the most astute politicians in the country with a proven track record.

The fact that Pawar did not try to conceal his meeting with Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani at the former's Silver Oak residence in Mumbai hints at sharp differences within the Opposition ranks over the GOP's Adani-centric strategy. Then there is Ajit

Pawar, Sharad Pawar's nephew. There are signs of his growing proximity with the BJP. It may be recalled that Ajit surprised everyone in Maharashtra on November 23, 2019, when the then governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari swore him in as deputy chief minister with Devendra Fadnavis as chief minister. The government lasted for three days only, with Ajit coming back to the NCP and the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). There are again rumours that he may join hands with the BJP, though the NCP has denied these. But it is a fact that Ajit Pawar recently praised PM Modi's leadership. It is not just Sharad Pawar who is uneasy with the Adani issue being dragged into politics; even not all Congress leaders feel comfortable about this development. For instance, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and his Rajasthan counterpart, Ashok Gehlot, are among those leaders whose criticism of Adani seems to be pro-forma. The Adani Group has investments in both Congress-ruled states. Besides, there is former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's obsession with Savarkar. This strained intra-MVA relations, with the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) unequivocally making its displeasure public. In both cases, Adani as well as Savarkar, Rahul's doctrinaire approach is hurting the Congress' prospects.



Farmers during the ceremonial act of sowing seeds in a paddy field 'Akshaya Tritiya', in Khordha

# Towards selfreliance in defence



### Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor is a step in the right direction. It would make India a production hub of defence equipment

n recent years, the Indian government has taken significant steps towards achieving self-reliance in defence production. One such initiative is the Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor, launched by the Uttar Pradesh government in February 2018. The corridor is a significant push towards creating a conducive ecosystem for defence production and attracting investment in the sector.

The Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor is spread across six cities (districts) in the state, including include Agra, Aligarh, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kanpur and Lucknow. The corridor has been designed to provide a range of facilities and support services to defence manufacturers, including land banks for setting up manufacturing units, testing facilities, and research and development centres. The government has also announced a range of incentives for companies investing in the defence corridor, including tax exemptions and subsidies.

The defence corridor has already seen the signing of several MoUs with leading defence manufacturers, including Lockheed Martin, Airbus, and Tata Advanced Systems. These companies have committed to investing in the state and creating job opportunities for the local population. The Uttar Pradesh Defence

Corridor is a critical component of the government's "Make in India" initiative, which aims to boost domestic manufacturing and create job opportunities in the country. India is one of the largest importers of defence equipment in the world, and the government's focus on indigenous production is a step in the right direction towards reducing the country's dependence on imports. Aim plus is effectively moving from import substitution to export surplus i.e "make for the world". The wars of 1962, 1965 as well as 1971 operations flag that the capability to respond to foreign aggression got stymied under foreign pressure and we were perforce made to either accept unfavourable terms as in the Tashkent accord of the defence corridor. The



of the UPDIC in this direc-

tion will be promising

The defence corridor is expected to generate employment opportunities for over 250,000 people and attract investments worth Rs 20,000 crore. The corridor is expected to create job opportunities across the manufacturing value chain, from component suppliers to assembly and testing facilities. The corridor is also expected to generate ancillary industries and support services. The Uttar Pradesh government has taken several steps to improve the state's infrastructure, which is critical to the success



THE UTTAR **PRADESH DEFENCE CORRIDOR IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF** 

**GOVERNMENT'S** "MAKE IN INDIA" INITIATIVE, WHICH AIMS TO BOOST **DOMESTIC MANUFACTURING** AND CREATE JOB **OPPORTUNITIES** 

government has announced plans to build new airports, highways, and railway lines to support the manufacturing ecosystem. The state government has also announced plans to set up a dedicated defence industrial park in the state, which will provide a range of support services to defence manufacturers.

The Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor is a significant step towards India's self-reliance in defence production. The government's focus on indigenous production is critical to ensuring the country's long-term security and reducing its dependence on imports. The defence corridor is expected to strengthen India's defence manufacturing ecosystem.

The defence corridor is also significant from a geopolitical perspective. India's defence imports have been a concern for its strategic partners, including the United States. The defence corridor is expected to reduce India's dependence on imports and provide a platform for strategic partnerships with other countries, as also to get some of the critical technologies transferred under offset clauses with various deals already concluded but clauses not yet fructified.

The Uttar Pradesh

Defence Corridor is a prime example of the government's efforts to boost the manufacturing sector in the country. The defence corridor is expected to create a conducive ecosystem for defence production and attract investment in the sector. The government's focus on indigenous production is critical to ensuring the country's longterm security and reducing its dependence on imports. The Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor is a step in the right direction towards achieving these objectives.

The defence corridor is also expected to have a positive impact on the state's economy. Uttar Pradesh is one of the largest states in India, with a population of over 200 million people. The corridor is expected to generate employment opportunities for the local population and boost the state's economy. The defence corridor is expected to create a conducive ecosystem for defence production and attract major investment in the sector. The defence corridor is a step in the right direction towards achieving these objectives and strengtnening india's defence manufacturing ecosystem.

(The writer is a former Engineer-in-Chief, of Indian

# The lust for power is anathema to democracy



Karnataka is witnessing defection which is not in keeping with the true spirit of democracy

emocracy is one of the beautiful words in narrative. Whether it be in India or elsewhere, the term arouses devotion and a sense of belonging among the citizens. It's only those who have experienced the aesthetics of democracy can understand the joy of democracy. The feeling that my vote counts in electing the rulers expected to govern adds to the beauty of this socio-political phenomenon.

Myriad political parties and differing ideologies make democracy a carnival. The interesting aspect of this political system is that even the Communists, for whom democracy is alien, swear by democracy! Isn't it a unique process? All political parties in India believe in democracy so long as it suits their convenience. Many times one is reminded of the words of Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company that a customer can have a car painted any colour he wants as long as it's black.

Those who are passionate about democracy describe legislature as the temple of democracy. That's also a scin-



adept at altering the meaning of the temple of democracy through shady deals and actions. In the 1960s, 1970s and till 1985, the phrase Aaya Raam, Gaya Raam was synonymous with popular democratic culture. Elected representatives had no qualms about jumping from one party to another in search of greener pastures. There were instances of a politician defecting from one party to another in the morning, coming back to the parent party by noon only to return to the party that had offered to

make him a minister. When the Rajiv Gandhi tillating description. But in Government, which came to of the political alms seekers.

power in 1984, amended the Constitution with provisions to disqualify those who cross over from the political outfit to another party, there was a sense of relief among the citizens that the Aaya Ram Gaya Ram phenomenon has come to an end. But the treatment has turned out to be worse than the disease. What we see is mass defection from one party to another to subvert the democratically elected government. Karnataka which is going to polls is an ideal example of this wholesale defection.

Legislators are purchased en mass to bring down governments. Crisis managers hire aircraft or luxury buses to transport the MLAs owing allegiance to their party from one hill station to another beach resort to save them from poaching by the rivals.

The run-up to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly elections saw many BJP legislators jumping over to the safety and luxury offered by the rival parties. If you have leaders like D K Shivakumar, it is not at all difficult to pull down any government that survives because

A former chief minister and deputy chief minister who were denied tickets by their party rushed to the rival camp and start abusing their party leadership. Temples of Democracy have become exchanges where stocks are traded. They are share markets where kerb deals are the order of the day. Service to humanity was described as Service to God. (Manava Seva Madhava Seva). But these leaders would not be able to serve the people without being an MLA or MP or minister. All services in the country are taxed. Probably the membership in a legislature assembly or parliament or a minister's post are taxes the public has to pay for the Manava Seva rendered by these leaders.

God save Democracy before it gets labelled as Mobocracy. Our leaders are so passionate about becoming ministers. Withdraw all pay and perks allocated to them and make the entire governing process transparent. They are likely to improve.

(The writer is a senior journalist with The Pioneer. The views expressed are per-

#### PAPER LEAK IS A NATIONAL PROBLEM

Sir — Unemployment is taking the form of a big problem in the country, but in the midst of unemployment, 'paper leak' has become a national issue. To become eligible for a respectable government job, thousands of children leave their happiness aside and study, but while studying for the competitive exam, they are apprehensive that the paper might get leaked. Paper leak is like betrayal of hard working youth. Despite all the problems and struggles, the candidates reach the exam center for a government job, but there are all restrictions before entering the exam center, but the sealed paper is already circulating outside.

This is the reason why the paper leak incidents from Rajasthan to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh are being investigated at different levels. Even the people involved in paper leak and copying are roaming outside after a few days. It is clear from the incidents that the government's arrangements are succumbing to the copycats. The future of lakhs of people hinges on one exam, in such a way paper leak is collectively playing with the future of lakhs of people

Mahesh Kumar Sidhmukh | Jaipur

**GLOBAL BUDDHIST SUMMIT** Sir — Buddha's preaching and ideas are meaningful to any era. Holding Global Buddhist summits will inspire one and all. Good Buddhists must play an active and practical role to stop wars including the ongoing one between Russia and Ukraine. Buddhists have a good name in the entire world for their selfless nature, compassion, sacrifice nature, vegetarianism, non-violence, greedless nature, no domination etc. They must use Buddhist principles for starting peaceful negotiations to bring peace, prosperity and progress to Russia, Ukraine and the entire world (of excellence). This can be easy if Buddhists make a digital presentation of happy development management and joyful success solutions

# **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

# **China turns mediator**

here is no better cure than the dialogue between two conflicting powers. The geopolitical conflicts and regional rivalry had their solution in diplomatic dialogue. We can end years of long rivalry and conflicting interests, by effectively utilising foreign policy decisions. With China turning into a global superpower, it is playing an effective 'Peace-Maker' and 'Negotiator' role to devise peace and tranquillity in like-minded

China has recently concluded the "Beijing

to modern needs. This may help minimise or nullify greed, war mindsets, economic instability, increasing diseases and bad habits like tobacco and liquor consump-

tion, extremism, terrorism, etc.

Madhu Nivriti PS | Secunderabad

#### NARODA MASSACRE

Sir — More than two decades after 11 Muslim community members were killed in the post-Godhra riots in Ahmedabad's Naroda Gam, the court of S.K. Baxi, special judge for special investigation team (SIT) cases, acquitted all the 67 accused including former Guiarat Minister of State for Women and Child Development Maya Kodnani (is a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and was convicted of orchestrating the Naroda Gam and Naroda Patiya massacres. Witnesses testified that Kodnani was at the scene of the crimes, handed out swords to Hindu rioters, exhorted them to attack Muslims and at one point fired a pistol), former VHP leader Jaydeep Patel (is believed to have had a based on Buddhist principles but suitable role in the controversial decision taken

Accord" by playing role in restoring normalcy in the ties of conflicting Iran and Saudi Arabia. The reopening of embassies, consular missions and diplomatic arms between rival nations, had

proved the Chinese prowess. This is the reason why when it comes about the mediation role to be played between Russia and Ukraine, everybody names China first. Hence there is no doubt that China is filling the diplomatic vacuum by effectively utilising its stellar diplomatic prowess and dynamic mediation skills. India no doubt had very strong soft diplomatic skills and embraced its soft power in the entire world since our independence, but our approach to bit less impactful vis-a-vis China. Considering China's changed approach concerning foreign policy decisions handling, India too must extend its diplomatic arms to cover more stretches and corners of the world.

Kirti Wadhawan I Kanpur

to send the bodies of 59 victims of the train burning to Ahmedabad) and ex-Bajrang Dal leader Babu Bajrangi (Téhelka published a hidden-camera interview with Bajrangi, in which Bajrangi talks of his role in the violence against Indian Muslims in the Naroda Patiya massacre, and reporting to Saheb), after a trial spanning 13 years.

People wonder if the special court took 21 years to acquit all accused who killed 11 people! If the special court is unable to find any accused, then why should the court not direct the police or CBI to find out who was responsible for this mass killing? Are such acquittals not emboldening the rioters to do more such acts? This is our new India. Rioters are acquitted, the opposition is put behind bars for complaining against the Government, and rapists are given bail and treated like war heroes when coming back from jail.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

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# **FIRST COLUMN**

### **GOD IS BOTH A REALITY AND A SYMBOL**

God wants us to follow dharma because dharma is the basis of creation



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I hat are these? I will mention a few. God wants us to follow dharma because dharma is the basis of creation. It is founded on sound principles of fairness, justice, etc., out of which the 'karmaphala principle' occupies a premier position, and that is so simple: "What you sow you reap." Throughout our lives, we are doing karmas with our bodies, minds and words. These generate karmaphalas of two kinds: good and bad. They come to fruition in the future. If we act according to dharma with others, we will create trust and goodwill. These are great assets to be able to live a quality life. Similarly, God expects us to do our duties, which pleases Him enormously, because that is only right given to us. Results are in divine hands. When we are dutiful, we please people around us; our families, persons related to our profession, etc.; all are pleased, and we benefit

God expects us to love Him, and He does likewise, which brings us many rewards. If we follow the same practice i.e. of loving others, we are loved in return. Don't we usually evoke a similar response in our dealings with others? Similarly, God expects us to serve Him by preaching supreme knowledge amongst His devotees. God expects us to seek His guidance because He is omniscient. Only God can give perfect guidance



God encourages us to seek His help because we small souls are capable of doing small acts only, unless our past karmas from previous lives are coming to fruition. For example, someone becomes very rich in a short period. Whatever that person may think, he is benefiting from his pious deeds of earlier lives. I follow this instruction to seek help from God whenever I am stuck and from others, who can help. Likewise, God encourages us to take His shelter. Not only should we do that but also benefit by approaching someone who can help us by having a similar mood of surrender. This practice has helped me tremendously in my dealings with others.

God encourages the mode of goodness, which essentially means that we should be good overall. We should behave well towards others, eat what is good for us, speak what is useful to others, etc. Don't we know that being good pays rich dividends? It is a known fact that people help good people rather than bad ones. Similarly, God encourages humility towards Him. When we do that towards God and practice the same in our relationships with others, we benefit immensely. What about being kind? God is a perfect example of this. He never condemns anyone; He punishes, yes, but never condemns. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 9.30-31) Similarly, when we are kind towards others, we reap rich dividends. In the same context, God forgives if someone is truly repentant.

There are plenty of other qualities we can learn from our beloved God. Purity is another. God is purity personified. We can be at least reasonably pure. Purity is such a valued quality that Lord Krishna specifically mentioned that yogis perform acts by body, mind, intelligence and by sense also for self-purification only. (5.11) God wants us to give up ahankara and take His shelter; we will benefit in every facet of our lives. Because this ego pulls us down again and again in our lives. God is so generous that He has allowed us free will, but we mistake it for being independent, which no one can ever be. Why? Because we are always bound by our karmaphalas. When we have good feelings about God (18.65), we become dear to Him.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher)

# Mann Ki Baat: Democracy dialogue



Democracy is not just about electing a government once in five years. It is about dialogue and assimilating various groups

n the countdown to the 100th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', the monthly radio broadcast, there is much to look back on and reflect on the journey of conversation and action. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's penchant for direct dialogue with the people of the country is now without a parallel within the country and also abroad. The radio broadcast has truly been an exemplar that politics is not just the means to gain power but to serve the people. In the 99 episodes, millions of people have found comfort in the voice of empathy of PM Modi and also a reassurance that the prime minister of the country accords topmost priority to their

Democracy is not at all about electing a government once in five years. Democracy is all about dialogue. The discourse must be uninterrupted. Ears should be on the ground. Leaders must know the pulse of the people. Also, leaders cannot be dependent on intermediaries to connect with the people. PM Modi set a trend to connect with the people directly. Millions of letters are received in his office, and many of them have been read out in the radio programme to convey the message that connecting with the people is direct and a bond that is cher-

A careful study of the contents of the 99 episodes reveals that PM Modi has been highly considerate of the issues closer to the people, and he worked to find ways to mitigate the hardships. In a way, the 'Mann Ki Baat' has been a two-way communication between the people and the prime minister. Since the communication has been direct, there has been no scope for noise as well.

Under the watch of PM Modi, the conventional 'top-down' governance approach has been transformed into a 'bottom-up' participatory and democratic model, wherein the potential of 'Jan Shakti' has been unleashed. Public campaigns for women empowerment, clean-liness, promotion of swadeshi products, environmental conservation and others have in some ways been also guided by Prime Minister's conversations with the people in 'Mann Ki Baat'.

'Mann Ki Baat' indeed scores high when compared with any radio-based outreach programs hosted by world leaders in entire history, including former US President Franklin Roosevelt's 'Fireside Chats,' or Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's 'Azad Hind Radio'. It must be noted that 'Mann Ki Baat' has driven home persuasion to the people to own up to the responsibilities of the issues which concern large sections of society. That the government alone will do everything has been an attitude, which has been firmly dispelled by the radio programme.

From December 2016 to March 2023, 'Mann Ki Baat' on Prime Minister's official Facebook handle garnered nearly six crore views. During the covid-19 lockdown period, 'Mann Ki Baat' on PM's Facebook handle garnered over two

Three common themes characterize 'Mann Ki Baat' -- 'Jan Shakti', changing the mindset of the people, and connecting India to its civilisational roots. Also, PM Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' episodes have proven to have a significant impact on the attitude of the general public, turn-



INDEED SCORES HIGH WHEN **COMPARED WITH** ANY RADIO-BASED OUTREACH **PROGRAMS HOSTED BY** WORLD LEADERS IN THE **ENTIRE HISTORY** 



mass movements. He lent his weight to the promotion of Khadi and other 'swadeshi' products, 'Swachhata', Yoga, women empow-erment through 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', water and energy conservation, environmental protection, etc. This has also given suitable support to the realization of the core Gandhian philosophy of 'Swadeshi se Swaraj'.

This can also be gauged from the fact that PM Modi's exhortations led to an increase in the sale of Khadi by 125 per cent within one week. In the last eight years, i.e. from 2014-15, the production in the Khadi sector in 2021-22 nas increased by 191 per cent, while the Khadi sales have increased exponentially by 332 per cent. PM Modi's espousal for a self-reliant India with his call for 'Atmanirbharta' has also found resonance among the listeners of the radio programme. In the 66th episode, he received calls from a woman in Assam and a man in Tamil Nadu, who expressed their wishes to see India becoming a self-reliant country by being 'Vocal for Local' and by achieving Atmanirbharta in the field of defence.

In his first 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, PM Modi, while reading a letter he received from a citizen, suggested his listeners eliminate 10 bad habits (evils), including dirt and filth, calling it the biggest evil that plagued the nation. This set off an ambitious

management. The state of filth in the cities had been appalling. The municipal administrations were proving to be too inadequate for the task of dealing with the everincreasing solid waste, which was taking the form of a mountain at landfill sites across the country. Such garbage mountains have also been sources of emissions of toxic gases, besides contributing to global warming by emitting greenhouse gases. PM Modi wanted the support of the people to deal with the humongous challenge.

indias population is 1.3 billion, which currently generates 62 million tonnes of municipal solid waste per year. Further, as per various studies, India has recently become the most populous country in the world. At this exponential population growth rate, landfills almost 90 per cent of the size of Bengaluru would be required for dumping if the waste remains untreated.

The 'Waste to Wealth Mission' aims to identify and support the development of new technologies that promise to create a clean and green environment. To tackle this issue, the prime minister talked about the potential of recycling garbage and waste to make fertilisers, bricks, electricity, and recycling water for irrigation in several of the 'Mann Ki Baat' episodes.

His call found resonance with the people as accounts of individtask to guide the country to uals and municipal bodies began

coming of collective efforts to address the issue of solid waste management sustainably. Soon, Gram Panchayats also joined the campaigns. The water bodies which had become dump yards for solid wastes were reclaimed and restored to their pristine glories. This is an irreversible attitudinal change in the way people think about issues confronting them.

Giving credit to the media persons, PM Modi recalled an incident where an 18-year-old Bilal Dar from Srinagar was working for 5-6 years to clear plastic, polythene, used bottles, etc., from the Wular Lake, which had become infamous for its toxic debris. It was found that Bilal Dar had cleaned 12,000 kgs of trash as of 2017, for which he was made the brand ambassador by Srinagar Municipal Corporation as well.

În the 84th episode, PM Modi shared another inspiring story of scuba divers, who removed 4,000 kg of plastic waste from up to 100 metres away from the coast of the Mangamaripeta beach within 13 days, highlighting how a small beginning could become a big campaign.

The 99 episodes of 'Mann Ki Baat' has ingrained the message that PM Modi is also a listener, and he has the patience to listen to the tales of the people. This has been the story of 'Mann Ki Baat' so far, which has given a new direction to the three-tier democracy of the country.

(To be continued ...)

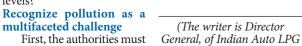
and most notably, imple-

# Air Strategies for Delhi to combat rising pollution levels

(Author is a policy

The Delhi government can show the way forward by employing an imaginative mobility policy that would address the pollution problem in the capital

hile pollution has been a longstanding and perpetual challenge for the whole country, the urban areas and the metro cities have particularly borne the brunt of this scourge. Indian cities have regularly featured among the world's most polluted cities in recent years. And among Indian cities, Delhi has often been the worst-performing one with the dubious distinction of having been ranked the most polluted city in the world for the fourth consecutive year in 2022. So what can Delhi do to moderate and reduce the rising pollution



treat Delhi pollution not



(The writer is Director

Coalition)

merely as an environmental concern but as a larger policymaking challenge which is invariably also intertwined with a range of other issues such as rampant and unplanned urbanization, rising population, ever-surging vehicular population, fossil fuel combustion, stubble burning in the neighbouring states, shoddy and unsystematic waste disposal and management and burning of firecrackers during Diwali and the extended festive sea-

Tackle vehicular pollution Given the excessively

high contribution of vehicular emissions on account of a disproportionately high number of vehicles on Delhi's roads, the government must mount an immediate and

full-frontal campaign to tackle this issue first. According to a recent analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment, vehicles contributed to 51% of PM2.5 levels in the city, the most dangerous air pollutant for human health. And of vehicular emissions, according to another study, 20% of emissions came from four-wheel-

Auto LPG is far better than others

Exhaust emissions of vehicles running on auto LPG as compared to those running on petrol emit 75% less CO, 85% fewer hydrocarbons, and 40% less NO while leading to 87% less depletion. ozone Furthermore, auto LPG

emits almost no black carbon

ing potential (GWP) as against CO2 and methane Auto LPG is a better option

than even EVs, for now While the recent policy push on EVs must be appreciated, there is a need to acknowledge that setting up an EV ecosystem not only necessitates an enormous amount of investment but also has its supply chainrelated constraints, especially in terms of the availability of lithium-ion batteries, a key prerequisite. In contrast, auto LPG already has a welloiled infrastructure in place. Moreover, not only an auto LPG vehicle is a cheaper option than an EV, the price of converting an existing ICE

and has a zero global warm- modest as compared to converting it into an electric vehicle.

Auto LPG is better than

We have seen how over the years, the authorities in Delhi have been gradually bringing in CNG buses for public transport. While CNG may be good for large vehicles such as buses, for a private vehicles such as cars and other four-wheelers, LPG is a better choice. According to experts, auto LPG cylinders weigh less on account of their operating pressure being around 25 kg per cylinder as against 200 kg-300 kg of a CNG cylinder, impacting the performance of the vehicle. BS norms are not enough

It is worthwhile to note

of measures such as setting up smog towers and air filtration

of Bharat Stage (BS) emission norms and the need for a periodic upgrade for vehicles in terms of stringency and implementation, our cities including Delhi continue to reel under heavy pollution. This has occurred even as cities such as Delhi were mandated to be among the first ones to implement and upgrade the required emission norms from time to time as compared to smaller cities and the rest of the Delhi Govt's approach

government has taken a slew

Admittedly, the Delhi systems, taking up trafficrelated dust management, identifying and monitoring vehicle into LPG is far more that despite the introduction pollution and traffic hotspots,

menting Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) earnestly. Under GRAP, the recent prohibition of plying diesel non-BS VI-compliant fourwheelers and entering heavy trucks in Delhi is particularly notable. At the same time, the government has also initiated steps on other nonvehicular origin emissions such as appealing to neighbouring states for redress stubble burning, suspending construction activities and banning firecrackers As part of policy stimulus, bringing down GST on auto LPG and conversion kits would be a first step. Simultaneously, it would also have to accelerate measures on other fronts responsible for the city's pol-

# Militants kill top poll official in Myanmar

A top election official in Myanmar was fatally shot in his car in Yangon, the country's commercial capital, in the latest attack attributed to militants opposed to military rule.

Sai Kyaw Thu, deputy director-general of the militaryappointed Union Election Commission, was shot multiple times on Saturday, according to the military's information office, media reports and a statement of responsibility from an urban guerrilla group.

The information office on Sunday said the attack was carried out by the People's Defence Force, the loosely organised armed wing of the pro-democ-National Government, an underground group that opposes the military-installed government that was established when the army

seized power two years ago.

Many opposition forces including local People's Defense Force groups operate autonomously from the National Unity Government but the military labels them all as "terrorists." A resistance group calling itself "For The Yangon" said it carried out the attack on Sai Kyaw Thu, a former lieutenant colonel. It declared "Mission: Accomplished" in a Facebook post on Saturday evening that was illustrated with three photos of their target. Sai Kyaw Thu is believed to be the most

senior official of the Election

Commission to be shot since

the army seized power on Feb.

1, 2021, from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Resistance groups earlier this year attempted to disrupt preparations for a new election the military had promised by attacking personnel conducting a population survey that could be used to assemble voter rolls and other low-level election workers. Plans for the polls, whose date was never set, were set back indefinitely in February when the military government announced it was extending a

state of emergency due to secu-

Urban guerrillas have carried out many targeted killings, acts of arson and small bombings. Victims included officials and members of the military and their cronies, as well as people believed to be informers or military collaborators.

In November 2021, a former navy officer who was the chief finance officer of Myanmar's military-linked Mytel telecommunications company was fatally shot on a Yangon street. Than Than Swe, then a deputy governor of Myanmar's Central Bank, was shot at her home in Yangon in April 2022. She survived and was promoted to the bank governor. Most recently, a veteran corporate lawyer accused of helping military leaders was shot dead in Yangon by selfproclaimed urban guerrillas in March. After its takeover, the army clamped down harshly on opponents in the cities, arresting thousands and using deadly force even against nonviolent demonstrators.

The repression, which has now accounted for more than 3,400 civilian deaths, triggered widespread armed resistance.

The military dismissed the members of the previous election commission which had ratified the victory of Suu Kyi's party in a November 2020 general election and appointed new ones. It also detained several members of the old commission, and according to reports in independent Myanmar media, pressured them to say there had been election fraud. The new militaryappointed commission declared the 2020 election results invalid and prosecuted Suu Kyi and 15 other senior political figures for alleged fraud. In the statement, "For The Yangon" claimed Sai Kyaw Thu had been a plaintiff in the election fraud case against Suu Kyi. She and ousted President Win Myint and the former minister of the president's office, Min Thu, received three-year sentences in September last year in that

# Ukrainian military forces cross key river

Ukrainian military forces have successfully established positions on the eastern side of the Dnieper River, according to a new analysis, giving rise to speculation Sunday that the advances could be an early sign of Kyiv's long-await-

ed spring counteroffensive.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, reported late Saturday that geolocated footage from pro-Kremlin military bloggers indicated that Ukrainian troops had established a foothold near the town of Oleshky, along with "stable supply lines" to their positions. Analysts widely believe that if Ukraine goes ahead with a spring counteroffensive, a major goal would be to break through the land corridor between Russia and the annexed Crimean Peninsula, which would necessitate crossing the Dnieper River in the country's

Responding to Ukrainian

tions indicated the counteroffensive had begun, Natalia Humeniuk, the spokeswoman for Ukraine's Operational Command South, called for

While neither confirming nor denying the ISW report, she said only that details of military operations in the Dnieper delta couldn't be disclosed for oper-

ational and security reasons.

Speaking on Ukrainian television, Humeniuk added that it was "very difficult work" when "it's necessary to overcome an obstacle such as the Dnieper, when the front line passes through a wide and owerful river.

After more than a year since the Russian invasion, recent fighting has become a war of attrition, with neither side able to gain momentum. But Ukraine has recently

received sophisticated weapons from its Western allies, and new troops freshly trained in the West, giving rise to growing anticipation of a counteroffenThe fiercest battles have lished a foothold near the town of Oleshky, across the Dnieper

been in the eastern Donetsk region, where Russia is struggling to encircle the city of Bakhmut in the face of dogged Ukrainian defense

In the south, the Dnieper has for months marked the contact line in the Kherson region, where its namesake capital is regularly pummeled by shelling from Russian forces stationed

The Associated Press confirmed the posts from the blog-gers, but it wasn't immediately possible to independently verify the data they shared.

Russia is also expected to launch more intensive attacks in the spring, but ISW reported that top Russian defence figures are showing signs that they may be pushing for a consolidation of existing gains in Ukraine, rather than costly new operations, as Moscow struggles with both material and manpower.

The think tank cited comments from financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner Group a private Russian military company whose fighters have spearheaded the offensive on Bakhmut.

On Saturday, Prigozhin's press service posted comments he made on its official Telegram channel in which he argued that Russian forces need to "anchor (themselves) in such a way that it is only possible to tear them out with (the) opponent's

The interview was published shortly after Western leaders meeting at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany pledged to train more Ukrainian personnel and keep up their military support for Kyiv.

As Moscow seeks to bolster its troop numbers, the U.K. Ministry of Defense noted Sunday in an intelligence briefing that Russian authorities had mounted a large-scale military recruitment campaign using social media, billboards and state television. It said Russian officials are

"almost certainly seeking to delay any new, overt mandatory mobilization for as long as possible to minimise domestic dissent," while assessing that this latest effort would likely fail to meet the defense ministry's stated goal of recruiting 400,000 new volunteers. In attacks overnight, local authorities in eastern Ukraine reported that Russian forces had Îaunched at least five S-300 missiles at Kharkiv, the country's secondlargest city and the surround-

# Unprepared for long war, US Army under gun to make more ammo

important munitions of the Ukraine war comes from a historic factory in this city built by coal barons, where tons of steel rods are brought in by train to be forged into the artillery shells Kyiv can't get enough of and that the US can't produce fast

The Scranton Army Ammunition Plant is at the vanguard of a multibillion-dollar Pentagon plan to modernize and accelerate its production of ammunition and equipment not only to support Ukraine, but to be ready for a potential conflict with China.

But it is one of just two sites in the US that make the steel bodies for the critical 155 mm howitzer rounds that the U.S. is rushing to Ukraine to help in its grinding fight to repel the Russian invasion in the largestscale war in Europe since World War II.

The invasion of Ukraine revealed that the U.S. stockpile of 155 mm shells and those of European allies were unpre-

pared to support a major and ongoing conventional land war, sending them scrambling to bolster production. The dwindling supply has alarmed U.S. military planners, and the Army now plans to spend billions on munitions plants around the country in what it calls its most significant transformation in 40

It may not be easy to adapt: practically every square foot of the Scranton plant's red brick factory buildings first constructa locomotive repair depot is in use as the Army clears space, expands production to private factories and assembles new supply chains.

There are some things that Army and plant officials in Scranton won't reveal, including where they get the steel for the shells and exactly how many more rounds this factory can produce.

"That's what Russia wants to know," said Justine Barati of the US Army's Joint Munitions

more than 35 billion in weapons and equipment to Ukraine.

The 155 mm shell is one of the most often-requested and supplied items, which also include air defense systems, long-range missiles and tanks.

The rounds, used in howitzer systems, are critical to Ukraine's fight because they allow the Ukrainians to hit Russian targets up to 20 miles (32 kilometers) away with a highly explosive munition.

"Unfortunately, we understand that the production is very limited and it's been more than a year of war," Ukraine parliamentary member Oleksandra Ustinova said at a German Marshall Fund media roundtable in Washington on Monday. "But unfortunately we are very dependent on 155."

The Army is spending about 1.5 billion to ramp up production of 155 mm rounds from 14,000 a month before Russia invaded Ukraine to over 85,000 a month by 2028, US Army Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo

So far, the US has provided told a symposium last month. Already, the US military has given Ukraine more than 1.5 million rounds of 155 mm ammunition, according to Army

delta from Kherson, ISW said

that Ukrainian troops were

also approaching the nearby vil-

lage of Dachi, citing data from

Thursday and Saturday, ISW

said the bloggers claimed that

Ukrainian forces had main-

tained these positions for weeks

and established stable supply

lines to them, indicating a lack

In Telegram posts on

Russian military bloggers.

But even with higher nearterm production rates, the U.S. cannot replenish its stockpile or catch up to the usage pace in Ukraine, where officials estimate that the Ukrainian military is firing 6,000 to 8,000 shells per day. In other words, two days' worth of shells fired by Ukraine equates to the United States' monthly pre-war production figure.

'This could become a crisis. With the front line now mostly stationary, artillery has become the most important combat arm," said a January report by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Currently, the metal bodies for the 155 mm shells are made at the Army's Scranton plant, operated by General Dynamics, and at a General Dynamics-owned plant in nearby Wilkes-Barre, officials sav.

# **Suspect arrested in German gym attack** that left 4 wounded

Berlin (AP): A suspect has been arrested over last week's stabbing attack at a gym in the western German city of Duisburg in which four people were seriously wounded, authorities said on Sunday.

The man, a 26-year-old Syrian citizen, was arrested shortly after midnight, police and prosecutors said in a statement. He was to be brought before a judge on Monday to determine whether he can be kept in custody on suspicion of attempted murder and other offences pending possible

Police on Friday had released pictures of a man sought in the attack after obtaining footage from a surveillance camera located near the John Reed Fitness studio where the attack took place late Tuesday. Authorities offered a reward of 2,000 euros

Two men, a Syrian and a German, went to police on

Saturday afternoon with information on the suspect, whom they had recognised from the The suspect was arrested

at his apartment in Duisburg,

where police found two knives that may have been used in the The man applied successfully for asylum in Germany in

2016 and had no previous police record, police and prosecutors said. They said they are still investigating what the motive might have been. Officials have said the attacker appeared to have tar-

geted the most seriously injured victim, a 21-year-old man who is still in a lifethreatening condition. The other victims, also men, were two 24-year-olds and a 32-

# A deeply divided Israel limps toward its 75th birthday

**AP** JERUSALEM

Orit Pinhasov strongly opposes the Israeli government's proposed judicial overhaul, but you won't find her anywhere near the mass protests against the plan. She says her marriage depends

Pinhasov's husband sits on the opposite side of Israel's political divide, and joining the protests will only deepen what she says already are palpable tensions in her household.

"I don't go to the demonstrations not because I don't believe in them," she said. "I don't go in order to protect my home. I feel like I'm fighting for my home.

As Israel turns 75 on Wednesday, it has much to celebrate. But instead of feting its accomplishments as a regional military and economic powerhouse, the nation that arose on the ashes of the Holocaust faces perhaps its gravest existential threat yet not from foreign enemies but from divisions within.

For over three months, tens of thousands of people have rallied in the streets against what they see as an assault by an ultranationalist, religious government threatening a national identity rooted in liberal traditions. Fighter pilots have threatened to stop reporting for duty.

The nation's leaders have openly warned of civil war, and families of fallen soldiers have called on politicians to stav away from the ceremonies. Many Israelis wonder if the deep split can ever heal.

ment minister in charge of the main celebration on Tuesday night, has threatened to throw out anyone who disrupts it.

Miri Regev, the govern-

The event takes place at a plaza next to Israel's national cemetery in Jerusalem, where the country abruptly shifts from solemn Memorial Day



diers to the joy of Independence Day, complete with a symbolic torch-lighting ceremony, military marches and musical and dance perfor-

Opposition leader Yair Lapid is boycotting the ceremony. "You have torn Israeli society apart, and no phony fireworks performance can cover that up," he said.

The rift is so wide that Israel's longest-running and perhaps most pressing problem its open-ended military rule over the Palestinians barely gets mentioned despite a recent surge in violence.

Even before the protests erupted, public discourse was mostly limited to the military's dealing with the conflict, rather than the future of the territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war, which Palestinians seek for their

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a polarizing leader revered by supporters and reviled by opponents, has played a key role in the crisis. The divisions gained steam

tion charges in 2019.

Israel barreled through five cycles of elections in under four years all of them focused on Netanyahu's fitness to rule.

Late last year, Netanyahu finally eked out a victory cobbling together the most rightwing government in Israel's history. Within days, it set out to overhaul the judicial system and give Netanyahu's allies the power to overturn court decisions and appoint judges.

The plan, which critics see as a transparent power grab, has triggered unprecedented protests that ultimately forced Jetanyahu to freeze it. In a reflection of the deep

mistrust, the protests have only

grown larger, exposing deeper

fault lines in Israeli society

that go back decades. On Netanyahu's side is a religious and socially conservative coalition that includes the politically powerful ultra-Orthodox minority, the religious-nationalist community, including West Bank settlers, and Jews of Middle Eastern descent who live in outlying

working-class towns.

### German government, unions reach pay deal tor public workers

Berlin (AP): German government officials and labour unions have reached a pay deal for more than 2.5 million public-sector workers, ending a lengthy dispute and heading off the possibility of disruptive all-out strikes.

The ver.di union had pressed for hefty raises as Germany, like many other countries, grapples with high

inflation. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said as the deal was announced around midnight Sunday that "we accommodated the unions as far as we could responsibly do in a difficult budget situation.

The deal entails tax-free one-time payments totaling 3,000 euros (USD 3,300) per employee, with the first 1,240 euros coming in June and monthly payments of 220 euros following until February.

In March, regular month-

ly pay for all will be increased by 200 euros, followed by a salary increase of 5.5 per cent with a minimum raise of 340 euros per month assured. The deal runs through to the end of

Ver.di originally sought a one-year deal with a raise of 10.5 per cent. The deal was reached on the basis of a proposal by arbitrators who were called in after talks broke down last month.

Ver.di chair Frank Werneke said that "we went to our pain threshold with the decision to make this compromise." He said that the raises in regular pay next year will amount to an increase of over 11 per cent for most employees of federal and municipal governments.

The union has staged frequent walkouts over recent months to underline its demands, with local transport, hospitals and other public ser-

New York (AP): Fox Corp's hefty 787.5 million settlement with Dominion Voting Systems over defamation charges is eye-popping, but the ultimate cost to the media company is likely to be much

On Tuesday, Fox settled with Dominion over charges that Fox News baselessly accused the company of rigging its voting machines against former President Donald Trump in 2020. It was the most-watched

lower.

media libel case in decades. Fox had about 4 billion of cash on hand as of December 2022, and MoffettNathanson analyst Robert Fishman expects the company to pay the settlement during the current quarter. How much the lawsuit will actually end up costing Fox is unclear because there are ways it can defray some of the expense, primarily through insurance and the use of tax

Fox can deduct the

Dominion settlement from its income taxes as an expense necessary for the cost of doing business

Dominion likely to cost less

(USD 2,200) for information

Fox Corp's settlement with

Communications Officer Brian Nick has confirmed the

deductibility of the settlement. Big companies often deduct large settlements to help offset some of the cost, but since settlement amounts are usually confidential, it's difficult to pin down exactly

how much they benefit. Payments that are seen as restitution or compensation can be deducted, while payments made to the government or at the direction of a government are usually not deductible.

Robert Willens, a tax professor at the Columbia University School of Business, estimates that after the tax write-off, Fox will incur about three-fourths of the settlement amount, about 590

"The key is that if the pay-

ments are being made to private parties and not at the behest of the government then you can pretty much conclude without any fear of contradiction that the payment

will be deductible," he said. A study by the Government Accountability Office in 2005 found that of 34 settlements totalling over 1 billion, 20 companies reported deducting some portion or all of their settlement payments. Big banks such as Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase reportedly also deducted portions of their settlements of charges tied the financial crisis of 2008.

Also, if Fox is insured, insurance is likely to cover some of the settlement. Chad Milton, a partner at Media Risk Consultants, said a large media company such as Fox could have anywhere between 100 million to 500 million in coverage, including media liability insurance and other types of insurance.

# First-ever emergency phone-based alert tested in UK

London (PTI): The UK government issued a "Keep Calm and Carry On, this is just a test" message for its first-ever life-saving Emergency Alerts warning system, sent to every 4G and 5G enabled smartphone device in the country on Sunday.

A major awareness campaign was launched at 3 pm local time to ensure the British public was aware of the new system's test. The alert has been described as an additional tool in Britain's resilience toolkit when there is an imminent risk to life - such as floods or wildfires.

"Keep Calm and Carry On - that is the British way, and it is exactly what the country will do when they receive this test alert at 3 pm today," said Oliver Dowden, UK Cabinet Office minister and newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister after the exit of Dominic Raab over bullying allegations.

The government's number one job is to keep people safe, and this is another tool in the toolkit for emergency situations, such as flooding or wildfires, and where there is a genuine risk to life. So, it really is the sound that could save your life,"

"Keep Calm and Carry On" is a historic phrase issued by Britain's Ministry of Defence during World War II and has been associated as a quintessentially British saying ever since. It has now been used officially once again as part of the awareness campaign around the new text-based alert system being trialled as an additional safety tool. The alert is accompanied by a siren-like sound similar to

loud ringtone setting on a

mobile phone, with the message reading: "This is a test of Emergency Alerts, a new UK government service that will warn you if there's a life-threatening emergency nearby. In a real emergency, follow the instructions in the alert to keep yourself and others safe. Visit gov.uk/alerts for more informa-

need to take any action." The UK government said that best practices of Emergency Alerts in other countries have shown that they work more when there is a real emergency if people have previously received a test, so they know what an alert looks and sounds

tion. This is a test. You do not

The Cabinet Office said Emergency Alerts have already been used successfully in several countries, including the US,

Canada and Japan, where the system has been widely credited with saving lives, for example, during severe weather events. The government said it has

worked with the emergency services and partners, including the Football Association and London Marathon, to ensure the UK-wide test has minimum impact on major sporting events taking place on Sunday.

"Ŵhilst today's 10-second national test may be inconvenient for some, please forgive the intrusion because the next time you hear the alert, your life and the lifesaving actions of our emergency services could depend on it," said Alex Woodman, Chief Fire Officer for Hertfordshire and Resilience Lead on the National Fire Chiefs

our disposal to keep people safe, and we need everyone to play their part. The new Emergency Alerts system is one way we can do this," Woodman "During times of crises, it's

"We must use every tool at

vital to warn and inform the public at speed. We look forward to further developing the use of the Emergency Alerts capability and the way it can protect and preserve life, as well as supporting policing's wider response to critical incidents with partner agencies. Alongside partners, we will continue to listen carefully to public feedback and ensure the use of Emergency Alerts has a positive impact, said Assistant Chief Constable Owen Weatherill, National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Civil Contingencies.

# **Abbasi: Crisis in** Pak enough for military takeover

 $F^{ormer\ Prime\ Minister}_{Shahid\ Khaqn\ Abbasi\ has}$  warned that Pakistan's economic and political turmoil is so dire that it has the potential to attract a military takeover even as he urged all stakeholders to initiate a dialogue to chart a way forward, media reports said on Sunday.

Abbasi, a senior leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, served as the 21st prime minister of Pakistan from August 2017 to May 2018.

Speaking on a television show, he said that martial law always remained a possibility if the system failed or when there was a conflict between institutions and the political leadership was unable to chart a way forward.

"Pakistan has had many long periods of martial law in very similar situations," the

64-year-old leader said. "In fact, I would say Pakistan has never witnessed a [more] severe economic and political situation before. In much less severe circumstances, the military has taken over," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

Pakistan had been directly ruled for about half of its history by military generals.

The Pakistan Army, which has ruled the coup-prone country for more than half of its 75plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in matters of security and foreign policy.

Abbasi warned of anarchy if friction within the society and institutions became too deep, adding that such a situation could also see the powerful Army step in.

"It has happened in many countries. When the political and constitutional system fails, extra-constitutional (measures) take place," the report quoted him as saying. The PML-N



leader, however, hoped that the military was not considering the option of imposing

"I don't think they are considering that but when they are left with no choice, the old famous speeches of 'mere aziz hamwatano' (a phrase synonymous with military takeovers) are heard," he added.

Amidst the tense relations between former prime minister Imran Khan and the military before his ouster last year, the Pakistan Army has repeatedly said that it would stay out of politics. Pakistan is currently grappling with high external debt, a weak local currency and skyrocketing inflation.

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have plummeted to USD 4 billion, the country's central bank said last week. The cataclysmic floods last year inundated a third of the country, displaced more than 33 million and caused economic damages to the tune of USD 12.5 billion to Pakistan's already teetering economy.

Pakistan and the IMF have failed to reach a staff-level agreement on the much-needed USD 1.1 billion bailout package aimed at preventing the country from going bankrupt. The funds are part of a USD 6.5 billion bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which analysts say is critical if Pakistan is to avoid defaulting

# Baltics condemn China envoy's Curfew in Jamica district stance on ex-Soviet nations

 $T^{\text{he three Baltic states have}}_{\text{strongly condemned com-}}$ ments by China's envoy to France, who appeared to suggest in a recent French television interview that former Soviet republics aren't sovereign

The foreign ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in separate announcements late Saturday deemed statements by Lu Shaye, China's ambassador to France, as unaccept-In a recent interview with

the French news channel LCI, he was asked if he thought that the Crimean Peninsula belongs Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, a move

that most of the world

denounced as illegal.

one perceives this problem," the envoy told the broadcaster. "There's the history. Crimea

was at the beginning Russian, no? It was (Soviet leader Nikita) Khrushchev who gave Crimea to Ukraine in the era of the Soviet Union.' When the channel's pre-

senter noted that according to international law, Crimea is part of Ukraine, the Chinese ambassador drew a parallel to the former Soviet republics including the three Baltic nations that broke free after the USSR collapsed in 1991. "With regards to interna-

tional law, even these ex-Soviet Union countries, they do not, they do not have the status how to say it? that's effective in international law, because there is no international agreement to solidify their status as a sovereign country," he said.

Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis tweeted that "If anyone is still wondering why the Baltic States don't trust China to broker peace in Ukraine,' here's a Chinese ambassador arguing that Crimea is Russian and our countries' borders have no legal basis."

His Estonian counterpart, Margus Tsahkna, said Chinese ambassador's comments were "false and a misinterpretation of history," while Latvian Foreign Minister Edgar Rinkevics said that the statements were "completely unacceptable." Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius would each summon China's ambassador or representative for an explanation of the envoy's comments, the three Baltic countries European Union and

NATO members Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania regained their independence in 1991 amid the fall of the Soviet Union after nearly five decades of Moscow's rule.

In a separate statement, France's Foreign Ministry expressed concern about the ambassador's comments about ex-Soviet states and said: "It's for China to say whether these comments reflect its position, which we hope is not the case." The French ministry said these countries gained independence "after decades of oppression" and that in the specific case of Ukraine, "the entirety of the international community, including China," recognised its borders, including Crimea, when it declared independence in 1991.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia, which is China's ally, has said several times that he doesn't recognise the sovereignty of

# after gunmen wound 7



Kingston (Jamaica) (AP): Police enforced a curfew in a community on the southern fringes of Jamaica's capital on Saturday after gunmen fired on people boarding a public minibus, wounding seven, including three children.

The Jamaica Constabulary Force gave no information on the conditions of the wounded from the brazen attack, which occurred at midafternoon Friday in Seaview Gardens, a poor area of Kingston. There was speculation the gunmen were targeting one of the people trying to get on the bus, but authorities did not comment on a possible motive. Conflict among rival gangs has been blamed for an uptick in violence in the com-

Authorities ordered a twoday curfew in Seaview Gardens, and police said they were looking for two men for questioning about the shooting.

Crime statistics released by the police say 303 people were killed on the island in the first three months of this year, 20 per cent fewer than during the same period of 2022.

German publisher

apologises for

### Imran Khan's party to launch election campaign today

Islamabad (PTI): Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party on Sunday announced that it will formally launch its election campaign in Punjab on Monday though there is no clarity on the date of the polls in the politically crucial province.

'Tehreek-e-Insaf will officially launch its election campaign tomorrow. They (Pakistan Democratic Movement) may not be ready but we are ready, PTI Secretary General Asad Umar tweeted.

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is a coalition of political parties headed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) currently ruling the

Interestingly, PTI's announcement of launching the election campaign comes despite uncertainty surrounding the elections in Punjab, the most populous province which also sends nearly 150 lawmakon external debt obligations. ers to the National Assembly.



The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is waiting for funds from the federal government to conduct the elections. The Defence Ministry has informed the ECP that the Pakistan Army will not be available for providing security.

Parliament and the judiciary have also locked horns over the holding of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces as the cash-strapped government has refused to authorise the funds to meet the expenditures amidst the economic crisis facing the The Supreme Court has

directed the federal government to release Rs 21 billion in funds for the ECP by April 10 and provide security for the elections.

However, the government has refused to release funds for the polls as the Parliament rejected the proposal.

The defence ministry had

also filed a petition in the Supreme Court calling it to take back its order of holding polls on May 14. The case is being heard in the Supreme Court and during the proceedings Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial remarked that the three-member bench will not take back its order for holding polls on May 14.

Former prime minister Khan has been pushing for snap elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the provinces where his PTI ruled

# State immigration chief to stand trial in Mexico

Ciudad Juarez (Mexico): A judge on Saturday ordered the immigration director of Mexico's northern border state of Chihuahua to stand trial on Saturday on charges of homicide, injuries and failure to perform his duties, for last month's deadly fire at a migrant detention centre.

The judge ordered the director, Salvador González, held in prison pending trial.

Juan José Chávez said there was evidence that González failed to do his duty to protect the migrants. Forty migrants died in the March 27 fire in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, after a migrant allegedly set fire to foam mattresses to protest a supposed transfer. "In the end, everything

depends on the head" official, Chávez said.

"Not complying with standards does have its results." Five other officials of the coun-

try's National Immigration Institute, a guard at the centre and the Venezuelan migrant accused of starting the blaze are already in custody facing homicide charges.

The step is significant, in part because González is a retired Mexican navy rear admiral. He is the highest ranking official to be held over for trial in the case, though prosecutors have said they will press charges against the immigration agency's top national official, Francisco Garduño, who is scheduled to make a court appearance April 21. Federal prosecutors have said Garduño was remiss in not preventing the disaster in Ciudad Juarez despite earlier indications of problems at his agency's detention centres. Prosecutors said government audits had found "a pattern of irresponsibility and repeated omissions" in the immigration

### fake Schumacher Al interview Berlin (AP): A German pub-

lisher has fired one of its magazine's editors and apologized to the family of Michael Schumacher for publishing a fake interview with the Formula One great that was generated by artificial intelligence. "This tasteless and mis-

leading article should never have appeared. It does not in any way correspond to the standards of journalism that we and our readers expect from a publisher like Funke," Funke magazines managing director Bianca Pohlmann said on

Pohlmann said Funke was firing the chief editor of Die Aktuelle magazine, where the so-called interview appeared, and the group apologized to Schumacher's family.

Family spokesperson Sabine Kehm already told The Associated Press by email on Thursday that it was planning to take legal action over a "fake artificial intelligence interview by German outlet Die Aktuelle."

The magazine printed a photo of the 54-year-old Schumacher on its front page last weekend along with the words: "Michael Schumacher, the first interview!"The magazine also wrote "it sounds deceptively real" with the supposed quotes attributed to Schumacher generated by AI. tabloid celebrity magazines in

It was while skiing in the French Alps at Meribel that Schumacher fell in December 2013 and suffered a near-fatal who has matched Schumacher's F1 titles record.

# 2 Indians die while swimming in US

New York (PTI): Two Indian students who went missing last week while swimming at a lake in the US state of Indiana are dead, local authorities have confirmed.

Siddhant Shah, 19, and Aryan Vaidya, 20, went swimming at Monroe Lake, roughtown Indianapolis, with a group of friends on April 15 but did not resurface, the USA Today newspaper reported.

After two days of intense searching, divers found their bodies 18 feet below the surface, investigators said on April

Both students attended Indiana University's Kelley School of Business.

Shah and Vaidya were boating on a pontoon on April 15 when their group anchored to swim. Both men did not resurface and friends attempted to help them but were unsuccessful, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources was quoted as saying by the newspaper. One of the men was strug-



gling in the water when others jumped in to help, said Lt. Goldman, Department of Natural sources representative.

Divers searched using sonar and scuba divers, and all day on April 16 under windy conditions, Goldman said. The lake was busy with boaters on April 15, which was sunny and warm. But the next two days, cold

nature of the lake, which was mostly deserted. "With 15-to-20-mph sus-

rain and the wind changed the

tained winds, we're struggling with that," Goldman said. "A lot of the technology we use that makes things more

precise needs better conditions. When dealing with

whitecaps and wind, our sonar is not as effective.

Sycamore Schools confirmed that Vaidya is a 2021 graduate of Sycamore High

"The entire Sycamore community is heartbroken by this sudden loss. Aryan was very involved during his time at Sycamore, including as a member of the student council and DECA," WLWT television station, affiliated with NBC, reported.

"Arvan's death may raise different emotions for our staff and students. Some of these reactions may be mild, others may be more intense. Our Grief Response Team has been mobilised to respond," the school said in a statement.

### **National push to bolster security** of key election technology

Atlanta (AP): An effort to create a national testing programme for technology central to US elections will be launched later this year, aiming to equipment that has been targeted by foreign governments and provided fertile ground for conspiracy theories.

So far, states have been left on their own to evaluate the technology that provides the backbone of election operations: voter registration databases, websites used to report unofficial results on election night and electronic pollbooks, which are used instead of paper rolls to check in voters at polling places.

The nonprofit Centre for Internet Security hopes to provide the nation's first uniform testing programme for the technology, similar to one for voting machines.

Its goal is to start the voluntary service in September as ty and reliability of the technology before the 2024 presidential election.

In 2020, 15 states, includ-Nevada, did not require any type of electronic pollbook testing or certification, according to federal data.

This is a critical need being filled at a critical time," said Chris Wlaschin, senior vice president for Election Systems & Software, a leading voting machine manufacturer that also produces electronic pollbooks. "I think as more election officials learn about it, the more they're going to ask for it." The use of electronic pollbooks in particular has expanded rapidly in recent years. Nearly one-third of all voting jurisdictions in the US used electronic pollbooks in 2020, compared with about 18 per cent four years earlier, according to data collected by feder-

a way to help boost the securi- al Election Assistance Commission. The systems bring unique

security challenges. In many cases, they have internet contems that do. In counties with a vote

centre model, where registered voters can cast a ballot at any polling place, electronic pollibooks often communicate with each other and with the central voter registration system.

That's one way to ensure people are not able to vote at multiple locations or vote inperson after returning a mail

How much of an effect the new testing programme will have on the 2024 presidential election is yet be determined. Much depends on how many technology providers sign up and how many state election offices will use it, but there appears to be wide interest.

"One of the major benefits

of this programme is that it will provide a consistent process for certification for all of the different states that adopt it," Jamie Remes with VR Systems books and election management systems, said during a recent event organised to dis-

cuss the testing programme. The South Carolina Election Commission, which has developed its own voter registration system, was among the offices participating in the centre's testing pilot. Commission member Brian Leach said during the recent panel discussion that he saw one benefit of the programme as helping increase voter confidence in what we are doing." Confidence in elections, particularly among Republicans, has decreased amid a sustained campaign by former President Donald Trump and his allies to discredit the results of the 2020 presidential election.

#### brain injury. His head hit a rock which split open his helmet. Doctors removed blood clots but others were left untouched because they were too deeply embedded in his brain.Since being transferred from hospital in September 2014, the seventime F1 champion continues to be cared for privately at a family home in Switzerland. Schumacher retired from F1 in 2012 after three seasons with Mercedes and was replaced on the team by Lewis Hamilton,

# Ailing elephant in Karachi Zoo dies despite efforts by international vets

Karachi (PTI): Noor Jehan, a 17-year-old African elephant, who underwent critical medical treatment under the supervision of international veteri narians earlier this month died here at a Pakistani zoo on Saturday, officials said.

The elephant was suffering from fever for the past several days, and all efforts were made to save her, Karachi Administrator Saif Ur Rehman Rahman said that Noor

Jehan was treated under the supervision of world-class experts, with the international animal welfare organisation Four Paws also coming to Karachi for her treatment.

Karachi Zoo Director Kanwar Ayub said the elephant passed away at 11:15 am on Saturday after suffering from ill health since November

"She (Jehan) rests in peace now," said animal rights activist



ly working with vets treating the deceased pachyderm.

Four Paws, an international animal welfare organisation, said Jehan's tragic story was a "reminder of the suffering that captive wild animals endure in Pakistan and around the world."

'We hope that the authorities in Pakistan will take this as an example and do better for captive wild animals in the

future," the Dawn newspaper quoted Four Paws as saying. Following her fall, a team

of local vets had been working remotely with Four Paws to monitor the elephant's health, Earlier this month, the

Four Paws team arrived at Karachi Zoo following an SOS from zoo officials after they failed to diagnose and treat Noor Jehan, who had been suffering for months and became so ill that she was unable to move. condition had Her

improved after getting treatment from foreign experts who detected a large haematoma in her abdomen and found the perineal membrane ruptured, it added. Pakistan's zoos are often accused of disregarding animal welfare.

In 2020, a Pakistani court ordered the closure of a zoo in Islamabad due to its deplorable

# Bodies dug up in cult investigation of pastor in Kenya

bodies have been found so far on land owned by a pastor in coastal Kenya who was arrested for telling his followers to fast to death.

Malindi sub-county police chief John Kemboi said more shallow graves have yet to be dug up on the land belonging to pastor Paul Makenzi, who was arrested on April 14 over links to cultism. A further four people died

after they and others were discovered starving at the Good News International Church. Police have asked a court to

allow them to hold Makenzi longer as investigations into the deaths of his followers contin-A tip-off from members of the public led police to raid the

pastor's property in Malindi,

where they found 15 emaciat-

ed people, including the four

The followers said they were starving on the pastor's instructions in order to meet

Police had been told there were dozens of shallow graves spread across Makenzi's farm and digging started on Friday. Makenzi has been on hunger strike for the past four

days while in police custody. The pastor has been arrested twice before, in 2019 and in March of this year, in relation to the deaths of children. Each time, he was released on bond,

ceeding through the court. Local politicians have urged the court not to release him this time, decrying the spread of cults in the Malindi

and both cases are still pro-

Cults are common in Kenya which has a largely reli-

### Tourism booms in Jamaica after pandemic

Kingston (AP): The number of tourists flocking to Jamaica's sun-drenched beaches soared nearly 100 per cent in the first three months of the year, causing long queues and hours-long waits for arriving passengers at the island's main airport.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett told The Associated Press that the problem stemmed from a shortage of airport staff to process the unexpected volume of people flying into Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay since the end of the pandemic. Bartlett told Parliament later that day that there were 1.18 million arrivals from January through March — 94% more than the same period of 2022 and a record high for Jamaica's tourism high season. 'The recovery has been stronger than anticipated and everybody is having difficulty with their airports because (many) of the

workers have not come back,"

Bartlett said.

### **Around 60% voter** turnout in three constituencies

Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal witnessed around 60 per cent voter turnout in its three constituencies of Tanhun-1, Chitawan-2 and Bara-2 where by-polls were held on Sunday.

Journalist-turned-politician Ravi Lamichhane is contesting the election from Chitawan-2, while prominent economist Swornim Wagley and former Deputy Police Chief Ramesh Kharel are contesting from Tanhun-1 and Bara-2 constituencies respec-

According to the Election Commission, the voter turnout in Tanahun-1 was 53 per cent.

The constituency was vacant after Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Paudel, who was the elected lawmaker from the constituency, became the President in March. In

#### Chitwan-2, the voter turnout **Nepal by-polls** was 63 per cent. Lamichhane, who had lost his Parliament Member and Deputy Prime Minister's post due to the citi-

zenship certificate controversy, is contesting from this constituency. Bara-2 saw the highest voter turnout among all the constituencies at 64 per cent. The constituency was vacant as the elected lawmaker Ram Saya Yadav became the Vice-President last month.

Commissioner Dinesh Thapaliya said the by-polls in all the three constituencies were held in a peaceful manner. On Thursday, authorities sealed Nepal's border points with India for 72 hours. The by-elections in the three constituencies have become a prestige issue for both the ruling alliance and the RSP, has not yet withdrawn its sup-port to the Prachanda-led coalition government.

Nepal's Chief Election

# 'Working with MeitY, RBI to clamp down on ponzi apps'

Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the finance ministry is working with MeitY and RBI to clamp down on ponzi apps to prevent them from taking away hard earned money of gullible

Cautioning investors against ponzi apps, Sitharaman said investors should do their due diligence and should not be lured by claims of lucrative returns made by them.

"There are also apps which are coming out and reaching out to people saying we can do this, we can do that. Your money will fetch you this

"Many of them are ponzi, the apps on which we are working with the Ministry concerned, the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and with the Reserve Bank and clamping down on them like never before, so that we don't get those ponzi apps, taking away hard earned money," she said.

Speaking at the Thinkers Forum at Tumakuru (Karnataka), she said, social influencers and financial influencers are all out there but a strong sense of caution is



required in each one of us to make sure we do double checking, counter checking, don't go as a flock into something and therefore protect hard-earned

Asked about regulating social influencers and financial influencers, she said, "I'm not having any proposal before me for regulating them at this

Asserting that investors should be cautious of influencers, she said if there are three or four people giving us very objective good advice, there may be seven others out of 10 who are probably driven by some other considerations.

In 2019, the government enacted a law called the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Act, 2019, which looks to prevent unreg-ulated entities from collecting

deposits and duping the poor and gullible of their hard earned savings.
As per the Act, any deposit

taker who solicits deposit in contravention of Section 3, shall be punishable with imprisonment of not less than one year and up to five years.

As per the law the first claim on the recovered money will be of depositors and the proposed legislation also has some exclusion including money collected by real estate firms and from friends and rel-

menace of illicit deposit-taking activities in the country, which at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned money, according to the government.

It seeks to help tackle the

### FinMin explores options to allow firms to deploy blended finance instruments for green projects

PTI NEW DELHI

The finance ministry is examining the possibility of allowing financial institutions to raise funds from blended finance instruments to invest in green climate projects, sources said.

Blended finance involves leveraging of financial resources of the public sector or philanthropies to phase in private sector investment, thereby catalysing private finance in high-risk and longgestation projects.

The use of blended finance promotes investments in new and emerging sectors and it attracts commercial capital towards projects that contribute to sustainable development, while providing financial returns to investors, the sources said, adding, it holds the potential to catalyse private finance in such pro-

It is still to be tested and therefore the ministry is looking at it from all possible angles, the sources said.

Blended finance is aligned to the Prime Minister goal to cut its emissions to net zero

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, announced India's aim of achieving net zero emissions by 2070 at Glasgow in

Last year, the Union Cabinet approved India's updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) incorporating the Prime Minister's 'Panchamrit' strategy announced at the Glasgow conference into enhanced climate targets.

According to the updated NDC, India now stands committed to reducing emissions intensity of its GDP by 45 per cent by 2030, from 2005 level, and achieving about 50 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

NDCs means national plans and pledges made by a country to meet the goal of months, sources said.

maintaining global temperature increases to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, while aiming for 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Sources said, the Securities and Exchange Board of India and the Reserve Bank of India are engaging with the International Sustainability and Standards Board (ISSB) for standards to be issued on sustainable finance and climate finance.

There is a need for engagement with the standard setting body so that obligation should not be too harsh and unviable for Indian companies, sources said, adding, it should not be tilted towards developed countries and emerging economies are unable to follow it.

ISSB is supposed to announce standards for sustainable finance and climate finance in the next couple of

### Govt likely to announce retail trade policy, accident insurance scheme for GST-registered traders soon

**PTI** ■ NEW DELHI

The government is expected I to announce a national retail trade policy and an accident insurance scheme soon with a view to supporting GSTregistered domestic traders, an official said.

The official said the proposed policy would help provide better infrastructure and more credit to the traders.

It may include provisions related to ensuring easy and quick access to affordable credit, facilitating modernization and digitisation of retail trade; modern infrastructural support for subjects like distribution chain; promotion of skill development and improving labour productivity, and providing an effective consultative and grievance redressal mechanism.

ndia is the world's fifthlargest global destination in the retail space. The commerce and industry ministry along with the department of financial services is also working on framing an insurance scheme for all the GST-registered retail

The government is trying to do policy changes not only in e-commerce but is also bringing a national retail trade policy for physical traders which will be introducing ease of doing business, providing better infrastructural facilities, providing more credit and all sorts of benefits to traders," the official added.

Under the proposed policy, a single window clearance mechanism for traders may be developed, besides a centralised and computerized inspection management system.

Commenting on the development, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said the retail trade policy will certainly help the sector widen their business as it will have definite parameters and fundamentals within which the retail trade would be conducted.

### 354 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.55 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

s many as 354 infrastruc-A s many as 35-1 m. ture projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.55 lakh crore, as per an official report.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,449 projects, 354 reported cost overruns and as many as 821 projects were delayed.
"Total original cost of

implementation of the 1,449 projects was Rs 20,69,658.30 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 25,25,348.87 crore, which



reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,55,690.57 crore (22.02 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for March, 2023 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till March 2023, is Rs 13,90,736.58 crore, which is 55.07 per cent of the anticipated cost of the pro-

However, the number of delayed projects decreased to 616, if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion.

Further, it stated that for 333 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has

# FPIs invest ₹8,643 cr in equities in Apr on reasonable valuation of stocks

 $F^{\text{oreign portfolio investors}}$  (FPIs) have infused Rs 8,643 crore in the Indian equity markets so far this month on the reasonable valuation of stocks, according to analysts.

FPIs infused a net sum of Rs 7,936 crore in equities in March mainly driven by bulk investment in the Adani Group companies by the US-based GQĜ Partners.

FPIs started the current financial year on a positive note and invested Rs 8,643 crore in Indian equities from April 3, data with the depositories showed. The situation is generally

favourable for economies like India in terms of FPI inflows, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India,



Also, the valuation of Indian equities has come to a reasonable level following its consolidation, which prompted FPIs to invest in Indian stocks, he added.

Another market expert believes that valuations have become more palatable given almost zero NSE 50 returns over the last 17-18 months.

Apart from equities, FPIs have invested Rs 778 crore in the debt market during the period under review. In terms of sectors, FPIs

heavily bought financial stocks for Rs 4,410 crore during the fortnight that ended April 15. Besides, they were also buyers of automobiles and capital

goods. In addition, IT stocks too saw buying interest, although marginally. "There were huge delivery

volumes in stocks like HDFC Bank, HDFC, and Tata Motors during the fortnight. It can be safely assumed that the bulk of this delivery buying was done by FPIs. FPIs have also increased their holding in ITC," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. Stocks in which FPI hold-

ing is steadily rising are showing resilience even during market weakness.

"FPI inflows are likely to remain stable, going forward. Financials will continue to attract more inflows since the early Q4 results of the segment are very good," Vijayakumar

Overall, FPIs had pulled

out a net sum of Rs 37,631 crore from Indian equities in 2022-23 on aggressive rate hikes by central banks globally and a record Rs 1.4 lakh crore in 2021-22. Before these outflows, FPIs invested a record Rs 2.7 lakh crore in equities in 2020-21 and Rs 6,152 crore in 2019-20.

In the financial year 2022-23, most of the major central banks started hiking the interest rate, which resulted in the departure of hot money from emerging markets including India. This resulted in an unprecedented rise in prices (Inflation) in economies.

Apart from global monetary tightening, volatile crude, and rising commodity prices along with Russia and Ukraine conflict led to an exodus of foreign money in 2022-23.

# Taxmen using data analytics to identify 'missing link' in supply chain

ST officers are using data Ganalytics to ascertain if the entire supply chain in a parquate GST or if there is a missing link, an official said.

With GST evasion of over Rs 1 lakh crore detected in the last fiscal ended March 31, the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) has stepped up efforts to catch evasion at the initial stage itself so that compliance improves.

"We are using 'end-to-end' analytics for a sector and 'gap analysis' of the taxes paid in a supply chain to ascertain if the entire value chain is paying adequate GST or if there is a missing link," the official told

The data analysis includes comparisons of the tax payment profile of a particular sector vis a vis the erstwhile excise and service tax regime.

"Now that GST system has



stabilised, the effort is to further is not paying taxes in the value streamline it. We want to ascertain if all the sectors which are covered under GST are paying their due share of taxes," an official said.

After the analysis, if the department finds that some changes are required in law or tariffs to check evasion by increasing compliance, then it would be presented before the Council for approval.

chain and there is a case of evasion, enforcement action could be taken, the official said.

"Data analytics is a time taking process, but this is required to check GST evasion at the manufacturing stage itself. It will help increase revenue collection while ensuring that compliance improves," the official added.

AMRG & Associates If a sub-part of any sector Senior Partner Rajat Mohan

said DGGI has been empowered with numerous technology tools to identify high-risk sectors that are not capturing the true value addition in the entire supply chain leading to pilferage of taxes.

GST evasion detection by tax officers almost doubled year-on-year to over Rs 1.01 lakh crore in 2022-23 fiscal. A recovery of Rs 21,000 crore was made by the officers of the DGGI. The total number of

Goods and Services Tax (GST) evasion cases too had gone up with about 14,000 cases detected in 2022-23, up from 12,574 cases in 2021-22 and 12,596 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 availment 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 Rs 3.08 lakh crore, of which over Rs 1.03 lakh crore was recovered. GST authorities arrested 1,402 persons for evading taxes in the last five-and-a-half years till February 2023.

### Plans to develop 50 new tourist destinations across India: Min

PNS NEW DELHI

Presidency coinciding with celebration of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav - Amrit Kaal, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is attempting to develop India's Tourism Sector on a mission mode under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Elaborating the same, Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India today said that India plans to develop 50 new tourism destinations across the country and envisages making 59 new air routes operational to boost tourism in the country.

Speaking during inaugur-session of G20 Tourism Expo organized by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India along with FICCI and



Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Arvind Singh said, "Amidst India's G20 Presidency, India's Tourism sector is showing one of the strongest recoveries in the Asia Pacific region. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, India registered 6.19 million foreign Tourists arrivals in 2022 registering a growth of 305% as compared to 1.52 million in 2021. To promote tourism further, we plan to promote Green Tourism and open

up 50 new Tourism destinations and launch publicity in

overseas market." The Ministry of Tourism has already organized to G20-Tourism working Group Meetings and is exploring promotion of Green Tourism, Digitalization, Skill development, promotion of MSMEs and Destination Management. Besides, the Government is also focusing on robust infrastructure development as a

### Vacancy levels of office space across top 6 cities stable at 16.4% in Jan-Mar: Colliers

PTI NEW DELHI

Vacancy levels of office spaces remained stable at 16.4 per cent during January-March across six major cities compared to the previous quarter with new supply being in line with current demand, according to Colliers.

While Delhi-NCR, Pune and Hyderabad saw an increase in vacancy levels, Chennai witnessed a sharp decline.

The vacancy levels of office space in Mumbai and Bengaluru remained by and large stable, the data showed.

Real estate consultant Colliers India noted that new supply largely treaded alongside demand in most of the markets, resulting in stable vacancy levels.

"At a time when occupiers are delaying decision-making on leasing office spaces amidst continued economic uncertainties, the office market witnessed signs of stability in Q1



remaining intact at 16.4% compared to the previous quarter," said Peush Jain, Managing Director, Office services, India, Going ahead, Jain expect-

in unison, keeping the vacan-cy and rental levels range-The latter part of 2023 may see signs of strong recovery provided the recessionary ncerns lessen in the beginning of the second half of

2023," he said.

ed demand and supply to move

evel of office spaces in Grade-A buildings rose in Bengaluru to 12.8 per cent in January-March from 12.7 per cent in the previous quarter. In Chennai, it dropped to 16.6 per cent from 19.9 per cent.

Office vacancy in Delhi-NCR increased to 20 per cent from 19.6 per cent. Hyderabad saw an increase in vacancy levels to 19.9 per cent from 18.6 per cent. In Mumbai, the vacancy remained flat at 15.3

Vacancy of office space in

Pune rose to 16.7 per cent in the first quarter of this year from 16.2 per cent in October-December 2022. Earlier this month, Colliers

India released data on the office market, which showed that the gross leasing fell to 10.1 million square feet in January-March from 12.5 million square feet in the corresponding period of the previous year.

New supply declined 34 per cent during January-March to 9.5 million square feet from 14.4 million square feet in the year-ago period. Though the leasing activity in Q1 2023 was subdued, Colliers expects that the market is likely to pick up in the latter part of the year, driven by strong growth fundamentals

"While the office market has a strong supply pipeline, developers will be more careful & cautious basis how the demand pans out going ahead, thereby avoiding speculative supply," it added.

### Lenders of Reliance Capital to meet on today to consider bidders' concerns Insolvency and Bankruptcy

head of the second round And of auction scheduled on April 26, lenders of debt-ridden Reliance Capital (RCap) will meet on Monday to resolve concerns raised by bidders, sources said.

Both the potential bidders, Torrent Investment and IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL) of Hinduja Group, have expressed multiple reservations on the proposed auction and its terms and conditions.

According to sources, both Reliance Capital -- Employees' Provident Fund Organisation the bidders have made it clear to the Committee of Creditors (CoC) that unless the issues raised by them are duly resolved to their complete satadvance. isfaction, they are unlikely to participate in the second round

of auction. The COC is likely to meet in the second round of auction again on Monday to address is below the liquidation value the concerns of bidders. of Rs 13,000 crore, sources Both the bidders want

finality, certainty, transparency, no negotiation in value or on terms and conditions, after the second round of auction is over, they said. The two largest lenders of

(EPFO) and LIC are against giving any such undertaking in Both want to keep the room for further negotiations open in case the final bid value

EPFO and LIC collectively hold over 30 per cent voting rights in the COC. IIHL has also requested

that the bidders who are participating in the auction should give an undertaking that they will not give a bid outside the Challenge Mechanism process. Similarly, bidders also want an undertaking from the CoC that no bid outside the Challenge Mechanism will be considered by them.

Both Torrent and IIHL have taken a strong position on this, sources said, adding they wanted the process to be

Code (IBC) compliant, and the number of bidders must be notified 24 hours before the scheduled auction on Wednesday. Torrent has requested to declare after every round how

in the next round and the value of their bids, sources CoC has set a minimum bid amount of Rs 9,500 crore

many bidders are participating

for the first round and Rs 10,000 crore for the second round, with an additional Rs 250 crore for subsequent rounds. The CoC also has put a condition that all bids should have a minimum of Rs 8,000 crore upfront cash payment, sources said. Meanwhile, the Mumbai-

bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has extended the deadline for completing the resolution process of RCap by three months to

# BANGALORE WINS ROYAL BATTLE

A late charge led by a cameo from Dhruv Jurel was not enough for Rajasthan Royals as a century stand between captain Faf du Plessis and Glenn Maxwell set up a thrilling seven-run win for Royal Challengers Bangalore in their Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

Invited to bat, Maxwell (77 off 44 balls) and du Plessis (62 off 39 balls) shared 127 runs for the third wicket from only 66 deliveries to power RCB to 189 for 9 in 20 overs.

Devdutt Padikkal (52 off 34 balls) struck his maiden fifty of the season and Yashasvi Jaiswal made 47 for a 98-run partnership for the second wicket but the Royals were lagging behind in the run chase before gaining momentum in the last five

Jurel played a small cameo of 34 not out off just 16 balls (2x4; 2x6) as the Royals scored 61 runs off the last five overs, losing three wickets in the process. But they fell short by seven runs in the end, reaching to 182 for 6 in 20 overs.

The Royals needed 20 runs off the final over bowled by Harshal Patel but could score

their third defeat in seven matches but remained at the top of the points table due to a superior net run rate (0.844).

Harshal Patel (4-0-32-3) was the pick of the RCB bowlers while David Willey (4-0-26-1) and Mohammed Siraj (4-0-39-1) also played their

parts.

RCB dealt a huge blow to
RR when Siraj bowled a nipbacker to beat the defence of the dangerous Jos Buttler, cleaning him up for a two-ball duck in the first over.

Having scored consistentin the last few matches, Padikkal ended his drought of a half-century as he struck one six and seven fours during his innings. Padikkal was dismissed by Willey, with Virat Kohli taking his 100th catch in

Only two players, Suresh Raina (109 catches in 205 matches) and Kieron Pollard (103 catches in 189 matches) have taken more catches than Kohli in IPL history.

Padikkal's opening partner Jaiswal played some spectacular strokes in the powerplay post which RR were placed at 47 for 1.

Both Padikkal and Jaiswal perished in quick succession



could not find a boundary with Willey keeping it tight.

The benefit was reaped by Patel in the 14th over, when he pegged back RR while denying Jaiswal his fifty, who hit a slow full toss straight to Kohli at long-on. Patel struck again, in the 16th over, to have Sanju Samson (22) caught by Shahbaz Ahmed with RR stumbling to 125 for 4.

Shimron Hetmyer found it tough, managing just three runs from nine balls before he was run out off a superb direct hit from Suyash Prabhudessai at extra cover.

Earlier, du Plessis and Maxwell's century stand threatened to take RCB to a massive total before RR fought back to restrict them to 189 for 9. Du Plessis and Maxwell

had put on 115 runs from 50 balls against Lucknow Super Giants and 126 from 61 balls against Chennai Super Kings.

But RCB stuttered once the momentum was broken after the dismissal of du Plessis, run out off a brilliant direct throw from Yashasvi Jaiswal in the 14th over. The home side collapsed from 139/2 to 189/9, losing seven wickets for 50 runs at the M Chinnaswamy overall tally to 405 runs in just seven matches with his fifth half-century -- the most for any batter so far. His 39-ball knock had eight fours and two

On the other hand, Maxwell struck his third fifty of this IPL to make a 44-ball 77 (6x4s, 4x6s) but the rest of the RCB batters squandered the platform set up brilliantly by their top order. Dinesh Karthik (11) was the only other RCB

batter to score in double digits. Royals bowlers were particularly impressive in the final five overs as they pulled things back with a disciplined effort, while also affecting two run-

None of the Royals bowlers could, however, trouble either Maxwell or du Plessis, who batted with utmost ease.

The two batters came together when RCB were put in a spot of bother by Royals pacer Trent Boult (2/41), who rocked them early twice in his first two

Boult gave a perfect start to RR when he pinned Virat Kohli (0) in front of the wickets for the first breakthrough on the first ball of the game, which was his 100th overall wicket in

# **CSK** reach top of IPL **2023 Points Table**



PTI KOLKATA

Ajinkya Rahane, whose T20 game has undergone complete metamorphosis, smashed an eye-popping 29-ball-71 as Chennai ity Eden Gardens crowd, out-batted Kolkata Knight Riders by 49 runs in an IPL game, here

A transformed Rahane took Eden Gardens by storm with his sensational stroke-play which was complemented in equal measure by the muscular Shivam Dube (50 off 21 balls) and ever-consistent Devon Conway (56 off 40 balls) with CSK scoring an imposing 235 for 4 in 20

With Jason Roy pulling a hamstring while fielding, the chase was out of question and Dhoni's young pace troika of Akash Singh (1/29 in 4 overs), Matheesa Pathirana (1/27 in 4 overs) and Tushar Deshpande (2/43 in 4 overs) along with seasoned spinners Moeen Ali (1/20 in 1 over), Maheesh Theekshana (2/32 in 4 overs) and Ravindra Jadeja (1/34 in 3 overs) restricted KKR to 186 for 8 in 20 overs.

Jason Roy (61 off 26 balls) coming in at No.5 due to hamstring niggle, did try his bit with a 19-ball half-century but 236 even with best of batting line-ups would have been a tallorder. The win took CSK to top of the table with 10 points from seven games while KKR are now placed eighth among 10 teams after fifth defeat at halfeay stage

To add insult to injury, KKR didn't get any home support as the 67,000 capacity Eden stands resembled a Sunflower as 'Canary Yellow' jersey filling up every corner of the

They had come for their beloved Mahendra Singh Dhoni's 'Last Dance' and CSK didn't disappoint them either.

But for that credit goes to Rahane, who is surprising all and sundry each day with his is exactly what is there in Rahane but perhaps, the presence of Dhoni in that dug-out which is proving to be a clincher.

It was hard to fathom that the same Rahane had scored just 133 runs from seven matches at a strike rate of under 104 for KKR last season. But Rahane seemed to have got a new lease of life after getting under the leadership of talismanic Dhoni as he continued his rampaging form for CSK with second fifty of the season.

Long perceived as a Test batter, the 34vear-old dished out some never-seen scoop shots, ruthless pulls laced with his signature drives, en route to his second fifty of the season. Overall, he smashed sixes fours and five sixes in his 29-ball knock that came with a 244-plus strike rate. His fifty came of just 24 balls. His tournament strike-rate among specialist batters, who have faced a minimum of 100 balls, is just a shade below 190.

In all, CSK batters hit 18 sixes, exposing the plight of KKR bowlers in-front of a crowdwhich for them was like playing at "home away from home"

On a day, the Eden immersed in a sea of yellow, KKR bowlers ran for covers with Kiwi opener Devon Conway once again leading the charge with a 40-ball-56, his fourth half-cen-

# DC, SRH eye collective batting effort

PTI HYDERABAD

Their first win secured, Delhi Capitals would expect more from their batters when they take on a stuttering Sunrisers Hyderabad, who will be eager to return to winning ways, in the IPL here on Monday.

The Capitals have had a tough season so far. They have struggled in all departments and, as a result, lost five games on the trot.

However, David Warner and his troops finally managed to eke out their maiden victory as they scrapped their way to a four-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders on Thursday.

The bowling unit got its act together and put up a stellar display to restrict KKR to 127 but the Delhi batters, barring skipper Warner and deputy Axar Patel, failed once again as the hosts

huffed and puffed to the win. Much was expected of Prithvi Shaw and Mitchell Marsh but the

far this season. Marsh hasn't fared well with the ball either, and it is to be seen if the management persists with him or the likes of Rovman Powell and Rilee Rossouw are

two have been huge letdowns so

given another chance. With the young Indian batters struggling, the onus is also on Manish Pandey, a seasoned campaigner, to bat more responsibly in the middle so that Axar has the freedom to play the big shots

towards the end. While the Capitals have a lot of work to do, there are a few positives they can build upon.

Playing his first game of the season, veteran Ishant Sharma bowled a brilliant spell, turning back time. He bowled with accuracy and produced inward movement to fashion the team's first

Under the scanner for his below-par strike rate, skipper Warner also looked at his fluent best against KKR. He will hope to continue in similar vein against his former team, come Monday. Sunrisers Hyderabad have

slumped to back-to-back defeats after it seemed their campaign had taken off. They currently occupy the penultimate spot on the table with four points from six

The Orange Army has looked good on paper but their batting has failed them. Their batters have neither been able to chase nor put up a good total in the previous two games they lost.

With plenty of match winners in the side, they would hope to get their campaign back on track.



#### Priyam replaces | Remaining calm under pressure Nagarkoti in DC reasons for my success: Arshdeep

PTI NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals has roped in Uttar Pradesh batter Priyam Garg as replacement for the injured Kamlesh Nagarkoti for the remainder of the Indian Premier League.

According to an IPL release, fast bowler Nagarkoti has been ruled out of the remainder of the tournament after sustaining a lower back stress fracture.

DC have signed Garg for his base price of Rs 20 lakh.

The attacking batter was first picked by Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2020 and featured in 21 IPL games for SRH across three seasons. Garg is a forced inclusion

despite his poor showing recent years due to lack of options for Delhi Capitals.

Such was DC's plight that even red ball specialist Abhimayu Easwaran, not exactly known for his power-hitting was summoned for trials although Garg pipped him to earn his spot in the side.

**PTI** MUMBAI

oung Punjab Kings pace Y bowler Arshdeep Singh has attributed his success in the ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) to remaining calm under pressure and changing his run-up, which has helped him avoid

The left-arm quick played a big role in his side's 13-run win over Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium here on Saturday, picking up four wickets, including two in consecutive deliveries in the final over, for 29 runs as Rohit Sharma's side fell short by 13

runs while chasing a target of

"Feels good whenever I take wickets, the win makes the feeling better. Before IPL, I changed my run-up and it helped me with avoiding noballs. The rhythm is nice and I'm enjoying my cricket right now," Arshdeep said at the post-match presentation.

Arshdeep has taken 13 wickets in seven games in this edition of the IPL

Asked about his mindset during pressure situations, he said, "Calmness comes naturally, my heart rate doesn't even go up to 120.

Punjab Kings captain Sam Curran described the win at MI's home ground as special.

"It's a special win. Amazing ground, played many games with different sides. Great to get the win. Don't think I should be getting the award, with the way our pacers finished the match," said Curran who was named player of the match for his 55 off in 29 balls in the Punjab innings.

Arshdeep and Nathan

were incredible and the spinners bowled well. When I went in to bat, I knew I had to give myself a chance. In the previous games, I've looked to go big a little too early, reflected on

"But we got a long line-up and we saw Jitesh went bangbang and we know he's got that. He's a massive player and we just have to take our responsibility as players come back

from injuries. MI captain Rohit Sharma conceded that his side made some errors in the field but said would not look too much into

that. "Will tell the boys to keep

our heads high, we've won and lost three. Lots of time left in the tournament, we need to stay in the game and competi-

Quite happy with Green and SKY's batting, they kept us in the game till the end. Credit to Arshdeep for his bowling, not our day today but we gave

# Sachin technically the best batter I've ever seen, played with or against: Ponting

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

him.

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting has rated Sachin Tendulkar as technically the best batter he has ever played against, adding that the legendary Indian cricketer always found a way to combat anything the bowlers threw at

Ponting added that he would wait for Virat Kohli to end his international career before drawing a "fair comparison" between the two Indian

cricketing giants. "I've said forever, Sachin's technically the best batter that I've ever seen, and played with

or against. Whatever plan that we came up with as a bowling group, he found a way to combat it, whether it was in India or Australia," Ponting said on 'ICC Review' on the eve of Tendulkar's 50th birthday.

"It's hard to rank and judge players as everyone is different and everyone plays the game differently. But certainly through the generation that I played, he was technically the best player that I saw.'

Ponting, however, refused to be drawn into comparing Tendulkar and Kohli just yet.

"Trying to compare the times and I know Virat played a little bit in the back end of when Sachin played, but it is a bit of a different game now," said Ponting.

"There's different rules, for instance, around 50-over cricket, with less fielders outside the circle, two new balls, it makes



it a lot easier now for batting than probably ever before.

There's no doubt that the bats have got better. Field restrictions and new balls is a big part of it as well," opined Ponting.

He indicated that during Tendulkar's era, facing the old ball, which was reverse swinging, was indeed a tough task.
"When Sachin was playing

ODIs, the ball at the end of a 50-over game was very hard to see. It was very soft. It was very hard to hit, it reverse swung. You don't see that at all in the modern 50-over game," said

The World Cup-winning captain, who played 168 Tests for Australia, added that a fair comparison between the two giants of Indian cricket could be made once Kohli calls time on his international career.

'Virat's got all that (time) ahead of him just yet. He's an unbelievably good player, there's no doubt about that. He's got over 70-odd international hundreds now. Sachin made a 100 (centuries), didn't he? Let's wait until Virat's career's over and then I think

it'll a much fairer comparison." Ponting feels longevity in the game is a big parameter to judge a player and Tendulkar, having played for more than two decades, is high up in the pecking order.

Tendulkar played 200 Tests and 463 ODIs during the period, scoring 51 and 49 centuries respectively in the two formats and holds the distinction of being the highest run-getter of

all-time. "I always like to judge the

quality of players on their longevity in the game. I think that's the best way to judge players because maintaining such a higher level of excellence for so long is the hardest thing to do. "Some players can come in and do it for three or four vears and look like the best players in the world, but the very, very best sustain it for long periods of time and Sachin sustained it for more than 20 years at the international level.

Recalling Tendulkar's 241 against Australia at the SCG during the drawn fourth Test of the 2003-04 series, Ponting, who was a part of Steve Waugh's side then, said it was a awe-inspiring watching the Indian player's straight drives.

was his best shot. Whether it be on front foot or even back foot -- because he was short in stature, he won't mind me saying that -- he was able to sort of stand up on top of the bounce of the ball and punch it back down the ground, off the front foot or back foot." That marathon innings helped the Sourav Ganguly-led

"I think his straight driving

side post 705 for seven declared. Tendulkar remained unbeaten on 60 in the second The trademark things you think about with Tendulkar was just seeing the full face of

that bat coming straight back down the line of the ball and straight back past the bowler. So I think that'd be his trademark for sure.



नरेन्द्र मोदी प्रधानमंत्री



मंगुभाई पटेल राज्यपाल, मध्यप्रदेश



शिवराज सिंह चौहान मुख्यमंत्री, मध्यप्रदेश



### राष्ट्रीय पंचायती राज दिवस

# डबल इंजन सरकार का प्रयास हो रहा है मध्यप्रदेश का विकास

### ४ लाख ११ हजार लाभार्थियों का 'गृह प्रवेश कार्यक्रम'

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### रेल परियोजनाओं का लोकार्पण, शिलान्यास एवं शुभारंभ

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- रीवा बाणसागर समूह जल प्रदाय योजना टमस समूह जल प्रदाय योजना
  - सीधी बाणसागर समूह जल प्रदाय योजना
  - सतना बाणसागर-२ समूह जल प्रदाय योजना

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सांसद, लोकसभा, खजुराहो

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सांसद, लोकसभा, सीधी

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