

WORLD 5
TRUMP RAISES
OVER \$4M IN 24 HOURS

MONEY 6
MARCH GST AT ₹1.60 L CR;
2ND HIGHEST EVER

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Supari given for 'Modi teri kabar khudegi': PM

PNS ■ BHOPAL

In a veiled attack on the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said some people are hell-bent to sully his image and they have given a "supari" (contract) for this purpose colluding with certain people sitting in India and also outside the country.

Modi said such people have taken a pledge that "Modi Teri Kabar Khudegi".

Modi's comment has come amid a slugfest between the Congress and the BJP over Rahul Gandhi's "democracy under brutal attack in India" remarks in the UK and Germany taking note of Rahul's disqualification from the Lok Sabha. The BJP has accused the Congress of "inviting foreign powers" for interfering in India's internal matters.

The Prime Minister was addressing a gathering at Rani Kamalapati railway station in Bhopal after flagging off the semi-high-speed Bhopal-Delhi Vande Bharat Express train.

"There are some people in our country who have been determined since 2014, spoken publicly and declared their resolve that they will tarnish Modi's image. For this, they have given 'supari' (contract) to various people.

"Some people are sitting inside the country to support



They are colluding with some abroad, but they don't know that common Indians are my 'Suraksha Kavach'

— PM NARENDRA MODI

these people and some are doing their work sitting outside the country. These people have been continuously trying to spoil and dent Modi's image," he said.

But India's poor, the middle class, tribals, Dalits, backward classes and every Indian have become the security cover of Modi, which made these people furious forcing them to adopt new tricks, the prime minister said.

Amid their conspiracies, every countryman has to pay

attention to the development of the country and pay attention to building the nation, he said.

Slamming the Congress without taking its name, Modi said previous governments were busy with vote bank appeasement whereas his government is busy satisfying people. "They (the previous governments) considered one family (a reference to the Gandhis) as the first family of the country. They ignored the poor and middle class, and the Railway is a living example of this (ignorance)," he said.

A fresh war of words erupted between the BJP and the Congress after senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Thursday thanked the German foreign ministry and Richard Walker, Chief International Editor of Deutsche Welle, for

"taking note of how the Democracy is being compromised in India through the persecution of Rahul Gandhi".

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju had shared a screenshot of Digvijaya Singh's tweet, saying, "Thank you Rahul Gandhi for inviting foreign powers for interference into India's internal matters. Remember, Indian judiciary can't be influenced by foreign interference. India won't tolerate 'foreign influence' anymore because our Prime Minister is:- Shri @narendramodi ji".

Modi said when he was informed about this programme (flagging off Vande Bharat express train from Bhopal), he asked why it is scheduled on April 1. "I said Congress friends will say that Modi will make (people) April fool but the train is being run from April 1. This is a symbol of our confidence, capabilities and skills", he said.

The PM said the average Railway budget for Madhya Pradesh used to be ₹600 crore before 2014 but it has now gone to more than ₹13,000 crore.

Modi said previous governments could have easily upgraded the already existing rail network which India acquired after Independence but the development of railways was sacrificed due to vested political interests.

Stay ready to deal with new threats, PM urges military

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked the three Services to stay ready to deal with new and emerging threats, emphasising that all steps are being taken to equip the Armed Forces with necessary weapons and technologies.

He made these assertions during the Combined Commanders' Conference in Bhopal which began on March 30. He also reviewed the security situation and operational readiness of the Armed Forces during the valedictory session of Combined Commanders' Conference.

He was also updated about the steps underway for the creation of Theatre Commands in an effort to fight the modern day war with perfect synergy between the three Services namely army, navy and air force, sources said.

During the conference, deliberations were held over a spectrum of issues pertaining to national security, including jointness and the-aterisation in the armed forces.

Giving details here, officials said the Prime Minister was briefed by Chief of Defence Staff(CDS) General Anil Chauhan about the various discussions conducted during this year's conference.

Defence export soars by ten-fold in last six years

Make-in-India paying dividends, asserts PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has achieved an all-time high defence equipment export worth ₹15,920 crore in 2022-23 and it is a ten-fold jump in last six years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded this development after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday made the announcement.

"Indian defence exports reached an all-time high of ₹15,920 crores in FY 2022-23. It is a remarkable achievement for the country," Rajnath said in a tweet. He also said defence exports will continue to grow exponentially under the inspiring leadership of Modi.

The Prime Minister lauded India's defence export under Make in India and said it indicates the reforms in this sector over the last few years are yielding good results.

"Excellent! A clear manifestation of India's talent and the enthusiasm towards 'Make in India.' It also shows the reforms in this sector over the last few years are delivering good results. Our Government will keep supporting efforts to make India a defence production hub," the PM wrote on Twitter



Defence exports were ₹1,521 crore in 2016-17, ₹4,682 crore in 2017-18, ₹10,745 crore in 2018-19, ₹9,115 crore in 2019-20, ₹8,434 crore in 2020-21, and ₹12,814 crore in 2021-22.

India exports missiles, the advanced light helicopter (ALH), offshore patrol vessels, personal protective gear, surveillance systems and a variety of radars to around 85 countries. Talks are on with potential customers for light combat aircraft Tejas, different types of helicopters, artillery guns, Astra beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles, Akash surface-to-air missile systems, tanks, sonars and radars.

Egypt and Argentina have evinced interest in procuring 20 and 15 Tejas jets respectively. Moreover, India may export ALH to the Philippines.

Last year, BrahMos Aerospace and the Philippines signed a deal worth almost \$375 million for the Philippine Marines to buy three batteries of the BrahMos supersonic

cruise missile, and Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited won an export order worth \$155.5 million for supplying 155mm artillery guns, the first such order for an Indian firm.

In 2020, the Union Cabinet gave its go-ahead to the export of Akash missile systems and also created a high-powered panel for swifter export approvals.

The Government has given a major boost to self reliance over the last few years and inked deals worth over ₹36,000 crores on Thursday including warships, supersonic missiles for the navy, and surface-to-air missiles and weapon locating radars for the army.

In fact, the last financial year ending Friday saw the defence ministry placing orders with domestic manufacturers worth ₹53,000 crores including basic trainer aircraft, a satellite for the army, training ships, medium-power radars, radar warning receivers, air defence systems, and Dornier aircraft.

Georgia 1st US state to pass resolution against Hinduphobia

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Georgia Assembly has passed a resolution condemning Hinduphobia, making it the first American State to take such a legislative step. Condemning Hinduphobia and anti-Hindu bigotry, the resolution said Hinduism is one of the world's largest and oldest religions with over 1.2 billion adherents in over 100 countries and encompasses an array of diverse traditions and belief systems with values of acceptance, mutual respect and peace.

The resolution was introduced by Representatives Lauren McDonald and Todd Jones from Forsyth County in the suburbs of Atlanta, home to one of the largest Hindu and

Indian-American diaspora communities in Georgia.

The resolution observed that the American-Hindu community has been a major contributor to diverse sectors such as medicine, science and engineering, information technology, hospitality, finance, academia, manufacturing, energy, retail trade, among others

Stating that there have been documented instances of hate crimes against Hindu-Americans over the last few decades in many parts of the country, the resolution said Hinduphobia is exacerbated and institutionalised by some in academia who support the dismantling of Hinduism and accuse its sacred texts and cultural practices of violence.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students on Bhopal-Delhi Vande Bharat Express train after flagging off the semi-high speed train in Bhopal on Saturday. The train will run on all days except Saturday. It will depart from Rani Kamalapati station at 5.40am and reach Hazrat Nizamuddin station at 1.10pm. The Delhi-Bhopal leg of the train will start at 2.40pm and reach Bhopal at 10.10pm, officials said. The train is scheduled to halt at Gwalior and Agra enroute

PTI

Edgy calm day after Ram Navami clashes; Shah on Bihar visit

'Not natural, disturbing', Nitish blames vested interest for violence

PNS ■ PATNA/HOWRAH

A day after communal celebrations in six States, situation remained peaceful but tense on Saturday.

However, the prohibitory order Section 144 was still in force in the affected areas Howrah, a police officer said.

Meanwhile Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday asserted communal tensions during Ram Navami festivities at Sasaram and Bihar

Sharif towns were triggered by some people indulging in "gadbad" (mischief) and rejected the BJP's charge of poor law and order situation in the State.

And on the day when the BJP and Kumar's JD(U) traded charges over communal disturbances which caused Union Home Minister Amit Shah to cancel one of the programmes scheduled on April 2, the Union Home Minister reached Bihar on Saturday.

Taking over investigations into the clashes, Bengal CID collected samples and spoke to local people as well as police personnel who were deployed there during Thursday's clash, the officer said.

In Patna, while interacting

with media persons here on Saturday, Kumar also made light of Shah canceling his tour of Sasaram in view of riots, remarking, "I don't know why he was coming and I don't understand why he decided not to come".

"Communal tensions during Ram Navami festivities at Sasaram and Bihar Sharif are disturbing. Such incidents happened for the first time in the area. It's not natural.... We know that some people are indulging in "gadbad" (mischief) and are trying to disrupt communal harmony in the state. We will not allow this to happen," the Chief Minister said.

He said police officials have been instructed to identify those who are indulging in mischief and to "take strict action against them".

Normalcy has been restored in both the places though senior officers are camping in the affected areas by way of caution and security forces have been deployed in the area, Kumar said.

The State police have so far arrested 45 people in connection with communal riots at Sasaram and Bihar Sharif that erupted during the Ram Navami festivities. Vehicles, houses and shops were torched and several people injured in communal flare-ups reported in both towns.



CAPSULE

INDIA LOGS 2,994 COVID-19 CASES

New Delhi: India on Saturday recorded 2,994 new Covid-19 infections, while the number of active cases increased to 16,354, according to Union Health Ministry data. With the fresh infections, India's Covid-19 tally stands at 4.47 crore (4,47,18,781). The death toll climbed to 5,30,876, with nine deaths.

MODERATE INTENSITY QUAKE HITS NEPAL

Kathmandu: A moderate intensity earthquake was recorded with its epicentre at Suti in the Dolakha district of Nepal on Saturday morning. The earthquake of 5.2 magnitude was recorded at 11.27 am in Dolakha, 180 km east of Kathmandu, according to the National Seismological Centre here.

'JUVENILITY PLEA CAN BE RAISED AFTER 22 YEARS'

Lucknow: In an important judgment, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court has held that a person can raise a plea of juvenility even after passage of 22 years during trial.

Freed from jail, Sidhu raps Centre, Punjab Govt

PNS ■ PATIALA

Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu walked free on Saturday after spending nearly 10 months in Patiala Central Jail in a 1988 road rage death case. Soon after walking out of the jail, Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu slammed the Centre, alleging that democracy is in chains and institutions have turned slaves.

Sidhu described Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann as "akhbhari mukhmantri" and criticised the Government over law and order and debt issues.

The 59-year-old's supporters had assembled since morning outside the prison to accord him a grand welcome upon his release and they could be heard chanting "Navjot Sidhu zindabad".

Several Congress leaders, including Amritsar MP Gurjit Aujla, were waiting for the return of Sidhu.

After cold comfort, mercury to shoot above normal in summer

IMD prediction

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After unseasonal rainfall, several parts of India are to witness hotter-than-usual weather from April, May and June, raising the risk of more strain on the power sector as people turn to air conditioners to cool themselves.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted that most of India, barring parts of north-west and peninsular region, is expected to experience above-normal maximum temperatures in April, May and June.

"A significantly higher number of heatwave days are predicted over most parts of Central India, East India and Northwest India during the hot weather season during April, May and June.

"Above normal heatwave days are likely over many parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, East Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Gangetic



West Bengal, north Chhattisgarh, western part of Maharashtra, Gujarat and some parts of West Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana during April." IMD director general Mrutyunjay Mahapatra said in a virtual Press conference.

A heatwave is declared if the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, at least 37 degrees Celsius in coastal areas and at least 30

degrees Celsius in hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius.

As some States received unseasonal rain in March, damaging wheat, mustard and onion crops, it has raised the risk of an increase in prices.

While farmers pray for sunshine for the drenched crop to dry, they remain wary of extreme heat waves that could further erode yields.

Rainfall across the country

was 26 per cent above normal in March, Mahapatra said.

The Power Ministry predicts that peak electricity demand will climb to a new record in April as people crank up their air conditioners, fans and refrigeration units.

According to the IMD, the probability forecast for the minimum temperatures indicates that during the hot weather season (AMJ), normal to above normal minimum temperatures are very likely over most parts of the country with the exception of some areas in northeast and northwest India, as well as some isolated pockets in Peninsular India where below normal minimum temperatures are likely.

India logged its hottest February in 2023 since record-keeping began in 1901, according to the IMD.

However, above-normal rainfall (37.6 mm against a normal of 29.9 mm) due to seven western disturbances, including five strong ones, kept temperatures in check in March.

Ramnavami Akharas processions taken out after protest

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Perhaps for the first time in the history of the city, Ramnavmi processions were taken out for two days. Over 30 Ramnavami jhanda processions out of the 160 plus Akharas on Saturday, bringing the Ramnavami festivity to an end.

DC Vijaya Jadhav and SSP Prabhat Kumar visited Jugsalai to inspect peaceful processions of the pending Akhara Samitis.

Though a majority of the Ramnavami processions were brought out on Friday night after hours-long discussion and consultation held between the district administration and the



Akhara Samitis after a dispute cropped up due to the administrative restrictions which had prevented the Akhara organisers to use trailers and DJ in the processions.

A majority of the Akhara organisers had refused to take out processions in protest on Friday, the East Singhbhum deputy commissioner, Vijaya Jadhav had convened a meeting of the Akhara organisers at the local Circuit House in the evening. The Jamshedpur MP, Bidyut Baran Mahto was also called in the meeting.

After listening to the grievances of the Akhara organisers and the opinion taken from the MP, the deputy commissioner took

back the restrictions, ensuring the way for the Akhara organisers to take out the processions in the way they wanted them to happen.

Despite it being too late for the organisers to embark upon taking out the processions, over 100 Akhara organisers began the processions and immersed the jhanda in the rivers Kharkai and Subarnarekha by midnight. The Akhara organisers led by the Central Akhara Committee president, Abhay Singh had refused to take out the processions after the police had seized a trailer that was being decorated for the Ramnavami procession at Aam Bagan ground in Sakchi on Thursday. Singh had also

declared for Jamshedpur bandh today, which was also called off after the impasse was over following the administrative restrictions were lifted.

The local police stations have also been directed to work in along with peace committee members of different police stations and keep an eye on persons spreading rumour and take steps to detain the said miscreant. Pickets would be posted and round the clock patrolling would be done to maintain law and order, he said, adding peace committee meetings have been held with various communities, who have assured cooperation for peaceful observance of the festival.

Model school Bishnugarh devoid of basic facilities

SHAILESH SHARMA : HAZARIBAG

The Human Resource Department of Jharkhand has inaugurated a model school in Bishnugarh block headquarter for rural students. After the enrolment of boys and girls from 6 to 12 standards, the teaching work was started.

In the beginning the government had provided drinking water and toilet facilities for students. But, after two - three years the facilities of drinking water and toilets are unavailable in the school. The facility of electricity did not also continue for two years. The equipment and wires were stolen by miscreants. The principal of the school had informed the local police in writing, but no action was taken by the police, said school authorities. At the opening of the school 129 girls and boys had taken admission in the school but due to lack of basic facilities the strength has declined to only 50.

The library of the school was full of books but slowly it was reduced. At present the students are not getting the facility of books from the library. Due to lack of funds the building of the school is in very bad condition, in 11 years white wash used to be in the building. At present one principal four teachers and two non-teaching staffs are working in the school

BEST EVER PERFORMANCE OF BSL IN THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022-2023



PNS : BOKARO

In the financial year 2022-23, BSL has achieved its best ever performance under the leadership of Amarendu Prakash, Director-in-Charge of BSL, by creating many new records and setting benchmarks as overall in production, dispatch and techno-economic parameters. Best ever oven pushing, gross sinter production, hot metal (from 4 furnace operations), crude steel from SMS-New & SMS-II, total crude steel (from

4 furnace operations) and CRM-3 in FY 2022-23 Records have been made in the production of CR Saleable, as well as new records have been made in the sale of coke chemical, overall energy consumption, overall refractory consumption and dispatch of granulated slag. Notably On 1st April, DIC BSL Amarendu Prakash and all the Executive Directors visited various departments of the plant and congratulated the entire team BSL including officers, workers and contract workers on

this wonderful achievement of Team BSL. The Director-in-Charge exhorted the employees to take their performance level further in the new financial year, with a message to focus especially on safety and quality.

In the financial year 2022-23, Bokaro Steel Plant has registered an increase in all major products as compared to the previous year. 7.1% in Oven Pushing, 4.0% in Gross Sinter, 5.8% in Hot Metal Production, 8.0% in Crude Steel (SMS-New), 7.3% in Crude Steel (SMS-2), 3.6% in HR Plate/Sheet and 8.6% in Cr Salable has been achieved. In 2022-23, Bokaro Steel Plant has created daily, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly records as well as annual records. In this series, 179720 oven pushing from 6 battery operation, 6362000 ton gross sinter production, 4514000 ton hot metal production from four

furnace operation, 4118000 ton crude steel production from four furnace operation, 632000 ton crude steel production from SMS-New, SMS-2 Crude Steel production from 3487000 ton and CRM-3 to 708000 ton of Cr Salable production which is the best ever production since inception of Bokaro Steel Plant. Also Blast Furnace has created a daily production record of 15408 ton of Hot Metal on 6th March 2023 from four furnace operations. Similarly, on February 22, 2023, SMS-New created the best daily record ever by casting 64 heats from flying tundish in a single sequence. The Hot Strip Mill after modernization set the best ever daily record by producing 14796 ton of coils on 31 Dec 22. Notably In the financial year 2022-23, BSL has also created a new record by earning 285 crores from the sale of Coal Chemicals.

RAGHUBAR DAS BEGINS PALAMU TOUR ON APRIL 2

M F AHMAD : DALTONGANJ

National vice president of the BJP and former chief minister of Jharkhand Raghubar Das is due to tour Palamu and Garhwa from April 2. On April 2 he is to visit Panki where as per his tour programme circulated by the senior BJP leader Sheo Kumar Mishra, Raghubar Das is to meet the riot victims of Panki. He will be the second top BJP leader who will be meeting the Panki riot victims in a span of a week. Just a few days ago Babulal Marandi had met the victims. The victims understandably were the families of the majority community from where accused of rioting had been caught and jailed by the police. The BJP has termed the members of the majority community 'victims' whom the police caught and jailed. SP Palamu Chandan Kumar Sinha has gone on record saying that those who have been caught and jailed are the ones against whom the police have concrete and undisputed evidence of their indulgence in the Panki riot of February 15. SP has also said the FIRs lodged in the Panki riot are by the police and hence trial and conviction are set to be there with the accused caught and jailed.

The Pioneer spoke to Raghubar Das today on phone who said very diplomatically that "I am coming to Panki on April 2. My programme is to meet the public." Das's tour programme has a mention of Jan Choupal which he has in Palamu, Garhwa and in Manika assembly constituency in Latehar district. The Panki BJP MLA Shashibhushan Mehta said he is very busy with the programme of Raghubar Das. The BJP MLA Mehta has in recent weeks, after the Panki riot of February 15, embraced Hindutva card more feverishly as his tone and texture these days is not what it used to be in the past, said his own BJP party men requesting for anonymity.

NTPC records best ever performance

crosses 23 million tonnes coal production in FY 22-23

PNS : RANCHI

Chairman and Managing Director of NTPC, Gurdeep Singh, has led the coal mining division of NTPC to portray a phenomenal year-on-year growth (Y-o-Y) of 65% with the coal production of 23.20 million tonnes in this fiscal as compared to 14.02 million tonnes in the previous fiscal. The four operational coal mines viz. Pakri-Barwadih (Jharkhand), Chhatti Bariatu (Jharkhand), Dulanga (Odisha) and Talaipalli (Chhattisgarh) have contributed to accomplish this highest ever annual coal production since inception. So far, the captive mines have delivered 68.28 Million Tonnes of coal to more than 22 power plants of NTPC.

Along with this coal production, NTPC has also attained the highest ever annual overburden removal of 73.0 million cubic meters witnessing a Y-o-Y growth of 129% as compared to 31.9 million cubic meters of overburden removal in the previous fiscal.

The CMD, NTPC congratulated the entire coal mining team on achieving this feat and expressed his confidence

on achieving the target of 31 million tonnes for the next fiscal.

Ramesh Babu V, Director (Operations) and Nominated Owner of all mines, NTPC appreciated the coal mining division for setting the production benchmarks. In FY 22-23, the nation witnessed an unrelenting surge in power demand due to heatwaves and rapid economic recovery. Amid this energy crisis NTPC coal mining took outstanding efforts to enhance coal production and ensure consistent quality fuel supply to NTPC power plants.

Partha Mazumder, Regional Executive Director (Coal Mining), NTPC extended his gratitude to the Ministry of Power; Ministry of Coal; Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; Govt. of Jharkhand; Govt. of Odisha; Govt. of Chhattisgarh; Directorate General of Mines Safety; and the district administrations for their unwavering support to NTPC coal mining in overcoming the road-blocks of land acquisition, rehabilitation & resettlement, agitation by local villagers, etc.

In line with the digital mission of NTPC management,

the coal mining team has also introduced initiatives such as e-SMP - digitised Safety Management Plan; Sachetan - safety mobile app; Khanan Drishti - web app for recording & monitoring production efficiency; Integrated Coal Management System; GPS tracking of man & machinery through LoRaWAN technology; dump slope monitoring through TLS; and HEMM simulator at Talaipalli mine.

NTPC coal mining also acknowledges the responsibility of reducing the carbon footprint. The working areas are equipped with dust suppression and water-sprinkling systems. The monitoring of emissions, SOx, NOx, particulate matters, etc. are being done continuously, and tree plantation is being done at all available opportunities. Electrically operated HEMMs have also been introduced in the mines. Coal transportation by road has been minimized by operationalizing a conveyor system (one of the largest in Asia) at Pakri Barwadih mine and use of rail transport from pit head to power plant at Dulanga and Talaipalli mines.

As wise men say, success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.

TDF ANNOUNCES 1000 SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SC, SSC ASPIRANTS

PNS : RANCHI

Tribal Design Forum and IEQ seeks to address the aspirations of the young members from the tribal communities, who are Staff Selection Commission (SSC) aspirants could be supported by enabling them to access high-quality, well-designed study material to help them prepare well for the SSC examinations with least financial burden on them.

To facilitate access to quality SSC examination preparation, Tribal Design Forum and IEQ Edutech have come together to offer 1000 Scholarships to SSC Aspirants from all tribal communities in India (as listed in the Scheduled Tribe list of the Government of India) with the hope that it shall enable them to prepare single-mindedly for the upcoming SSC examinations.

IEQ Edutech is a quality multimedia solutions provider for SSC examinations that creates user-centered design solutions for SSC aspirants. IEQ Edutech shall soon be launching an innovative mobile app called 1PYQ that shall enable the aspirants to play audio, print and practice Previous Year Questions of SSC Exams in an affordable manner. One of the unique features of the 1PYQ app is the audio books in English and Hindi with a very user-friendly interface.

The 1000 TDF SSC Scholarships are being offered on a need-based basis to provide multimedia SSC Exam study kits for the preparation of upcoming examinations. SSC aspirants from the tribal communities can apply for the TDF SSC Scholarships between 31 March and 30 April 2023 through www.tribaldesignforum.com. All details regarding TDF SSC Scholarships are available in Hindi and English at www.tribaldesignforum.co

HZL INKS MOU WITH RCA TO SET UP ANIL AGARWAL INTERNATIONAL CRICKET STADIUM IN JAIPUR

R SHARMA : BOKARO

Vedanta's Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA) for the development of the world's third-largest cricket stadium in the village of Chonp in Jaipur. Vedanta's HZL will spend INR 300 crore on the stadium, one of the largest corporate investments in India's sports infrastructure. The stadium will be named "Anil Agarwal International Cricket Stadium, Jaipur". Notably The MoU was signed by Bhawani Shankar Samota, Secretary, RCA and Arun Misra, CEO, HZL, in the presence of Dr. C.P. Joshi, Speaker Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha and Chief Patron, RCA. Priya Agarwal Hebbur, Chairperson, HZL and Non-Executive Director, Vedanta Ltd. and Vaibhav Gehlot, President, RCA. The stadium facilities will be spread across 100 acres and have a seating capacity of more than 75,000. Only Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium and Melbourne Cricket Ground have larger



seating capacity than this stadium. In terms of the size of the playing field area, this stadium will be the largest in the world.

Vedanta Chairman, Anil Agarwal, shared his vision for this contribution, "Sport gives us the best life lessons in leadership, teamwork, competition and hunger to succeed. If India's youth participates wholeheartedly with energy and passion - nurtured by world class infrastructure - they will become an unbeatable talent pool. Vedanta dedicates this stadium and its facilities to new India. Let's play." Speaking at the occasion, Priya Agarwal Hebbur, Chairperson, Hindustan Zinc Limited and Non-Executive Director, Vedanta Ltd. said, "Cricket is a national passion.

We are proud and privileged to have the opportunity to set up this world-class facility which will benefit players and spectators. India has huge potential as a sporting nation. Vedanta and HZL are committed to creating a best-in-class enabling environment for the flourishing of our country's talent and interest in sports."

The stadium will be completed in phases. A 40,000 capacity is set to be completed by October 2023. The overall project of the first phase will cost Rs. 400 crores, out of which Rs. 300 crores will be borne by HZL and the remaining Rs. 100 crores will be taken care of by RCA. The stadium will have an indoor games facility, training centers for other sports, a clubhouse and parking for 3,500 vehicles

MLA inaugurates Open Gym to mark Bokaro Foundation Day



PNS : BOKARO

On the occasion of Bokaro District Foundation Day, Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan inaugurated the open gym in the upgraded middle school Marafari and congratulated the establishment of the district by distributing sweets among the children. In order to motivate physical fitness, Legislator Narayan inaugurated the open gym set up by the MLA fund in the upgraded middle school Marafari. Notably seven different types of machines have been made available for physical exercise

in this open gym which includes shoulder, hand twister, jogger, leg press and twister machine etc. Local residents along with school students thanked MLA for providing the facility of an open gym.

Further MLA said that along with the students, the villagers will also get the facility to exercise so that everyone's health remains boosted. Beside this he also listened to the problems of the villagers present on the occasion and also assured to solve them soon. Expressing happiness over the opening of the open gym, the villagers said that now we do not need to go to the expensive gym. On this occasion Development Officer Mithlesh Kumar, BJP District General Secretary Sanjay Tyagi, Shyam Gupta, Dr. Ashok Kumar, Principal Manoj Jha, Mathur Mandal, Alok Verma, Anil Gorai, Vipin Bihari Prasad, Laxman Singh, Manju Kumari, Abhay Kumar etc were present.

WORKSHOP ON METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AT MANIPAL MEDICAL COLLEGE

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

A workshop on Methodological Approach to Evidence Generation-MAEG is being organised at Manipal Tata Medical College, a constituent unit of Manipal Academy of Higher Education- An Institution of Eminence from 31 March to harness the research skill of the faculty and Consultants of Manipal Tata Medical College, Tata Main Hospital and Allied Health Sciences, MTMC supported by Pfizer India Ltd. Prof (Dr) B.Unnikrishnan, Dean, Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore, MAHE graced the occasion as Chief Guest and Dr.Komal Gaur, Medical lead, RWE, Pfizer India Ltd. was the Guest of Honour.

The inaugural function was presided by Dr. Sunita Tripathy, Dean In-charge, MTMC and Dr.Rajiva Dwivedi, Director (Academics Administration and Quality) who also felicitated the guests.

Swami Vivekananda's Reflection on India's G20 Presidency



DR. NEHA SINHA & NIKHIL YADAV

As we know, India has the Group of Twenty (G20) presidency from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023. This is a significant period for India globally as the Group of Twenty (G20) comprises the World's most powerful developed and developing countries, accounting for 85% of the World's domestic product, 75% of trade, and more than two-thirds of the population. Argentina, Australia, Brazil,

Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, The Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union comprise the G20 group. This year's (G20) meeting will be held on September 9-10 in Delhi, with nine guest countries and numerous international organizations also invited. Even though the central G20 Summit is being held in Delhi, many important meetings and programs from December 1, 2022, to November 30, 2023, are being organised in almost every province of India. Some of the major host cities where these meetings will take place are Bhubaneswar (Odisha), Amritsar (Punjab), Bengaluru (Karnataka), Chandigarh (Punjab and Haryana), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), among others. Public participation is also being ensured for the first time, along with the participation of every province in



an international event. The presidency of G20 to India has come up with challenges and opportunities. India is presently the fifth largest economy in the World, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and also among the most populated countries in the World. So, on the one hand, India is ready to demonstrate its material power; on the other hand, as the World's most ancient civilization, India is willing to show its rich and ancient cultural heritage to the World. Nevertheless, it is essential to

note that India should display its spiritual wisdom to the World because it will be its original and unique contribution to the World. Swami Vivekananda, the great yogi of the 19th century, said that "each nation has a destiny to fulfil, each nation has a message to deliver, each nation has a mission to accomplish. Therefore, from the very start, we must have to understand the mission of our own race, the destiny it has to fulfil, the place it has to occupy in the march of nations, the note which it has to contribute to the harmony of races." India's vision for G20 is relatively straightforward, which can be extracted from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at unveiling the logo, theme, and website of India's G20 Presidency on November 8, 2022. Among others, the Prime Minister focused on three crucial points in his speech: "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," universal brotherhood, and

Advaita. These three points will be the original contribution of India to the globe through G20. Modi is taking forward the legacy of Swami Vivekananda by popularising the ancient Indian wisdom to the World. Swami Vivekananda, when he went to the west, was the first person to introduce this Indian concept of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which says that the whole World is our family. Universal brotherhood which discards the narrow concept of brotherhood into universal unity and Advaita - which promotes unity in diversity and the idea of oneness. Swamiji's September 11, 1893 speech, the "Response to Welcome," at the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, America, is popularly known as the Universal Brotherhood speech. Swamiji said, "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the World both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not

only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true." This notion of universal acceptance was an eye-opener for the west. At the same time, one can be proud of his religion and accept others simultaneously. This idea of the Universal Brotherhood, which views the whole World as one family, came from our ancient Hindu text Maha Upanishad. In his lectures and speeches, Swamiji preached the ancient Indian wisdom which was attended by thousands of westerners.

Through his tireless efforts, Swamiji erased the wrong picture of India, from a poor country to a country of knowledge and wisdom. Today in the 21st century, India has progressed in almost every field of life and is ahead in several aspects even when compared with the developed countries. However, its unique contribution to humanity cannot be material but always spir-

itual. The Prime Minister of India had identified it. Thus, by making it the theme of G20, he is confidently taking ahead the ancient message of India, which Swami Vivekananda took up to the west for the first time. It is also interesting to know that PM Modi is himself inspired by the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda, which he had mentioned in his several speeches. With G20, he takes Swamiji's task forward with conviction and sincerity by introducing the Indian knowledge system to the G20 leaders, delegates, and officials.

DR. NEHA SINHA IS A SENIOR ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT AMITY INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, NOIDA & NIKHIL YADAV IS RESEARCH SCHOLAR AT JNU & YOUTH HEAD, VIVEKANANDA KENDRA, NORTH ZONE.

CM Baghel rolls out monthly allowance scheme to jobless

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Fulfilling another election promise of 2018, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday launched an ambitious Unemployment Allowance Scheme.

Baghel also approved orders for unemployment allowance of Rs 2,500 per month to four eligible unemployed youths during the launch.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said he had announced the



scheme in the assembly session in the interest of youths.

He said the registration

process for unemployment allowance started from April

1. According to the Chief Minister, a plan has also been formed to provide employment-oriented training to youths so that they do not remain unemployed for long.

It is intended that the youths receiving unemployment allowance can also find work in the future.

Agriculture Minister Ravindra Choubey said the Chief Minister has started an important and ambitious scheme for the unemployed youth which will give them strength to improve their future.

Security forces, Maoists battle it out in C'garh

STAFF REPORTER ■
BIJAPUR

A gun battle occurred on Saturday between security forces and Naxalites in Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh.

This happened in the jungles of Sawnar village when the security forces were on a search operation, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Chandrakant Governa told The Pioneer.

The Central Reserve Police Force, the Special Task Force and District Reserve Guard went to the area following inputs about the presence of Maoist People's Liberation Guerrilla Army Co 2 Commander and other



Naxalites.

The Maoists opened fire when the security forces were cordoning off the forest.

The Naxalites escaped after they found security per-

sonnel zeroing in on them, the officer said.

The police seized a Naxalite uniform, a rucksack and other daily use items from the spot, he said.

Three C'garh hospitals get NQAS certification

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Union Health Ministry has awarded three more health centers in Chhattisgarh National Quality Assurance Standard (NQAS) certificates for providing excellent healthcare and better treatment to patients.

In February, a team from the Ministry inspected the three hospitals and tested the quality of services.

Official sources said the NQAS certificates were awarded to the Sitapur Community Health Center in Surguja district, the Komakhan Primary Health Center in Mahasamund and the Gopalpur Urban Primary Health Center in Korba.

The Gopalpur Center got 89 percent, the one at Komakhan 85 percent and the Sitapur Center earned 84 percent marks in the evalua-



tion.

The hospital's services and satisfaction level were tested on various parameters by an expert team, a statement said.

These included available services, patient rights, inputs, support services, clinical services, infection control, quality management and outcomes.

'Chhattisgarh Socio-Economic Survey vital for new schemes'

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Inaugurating the Chhattisgarh Socio-Economic Survey 2023 on Saturday, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said it will be useful to develop new schemes and maximize benefits to people with their better implementation.

He flagged off the survey teams of different districts at an event held here. The survey work will run in the entire state till April 30.

He said it is an important campaign conducted by the state government in public interest. The team will go door-to-door in rural areas. The survey will be done through a mobile application.

Those deprived of vari-



ous schemes after the survey can be added in the new list.

They can derive full benefits of various public welfare

schemes of the government based on their eligibility, he

It is an important campaign conducted by the state government in public interest. The team will go door-to-door in rural areas. The survey will be done through a mobile application

said.

Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Ravindra Choubey also addressed the event.



AICC Chhattisgarh in-charge Selja Kumari, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and PCC chief Mohan Markam at a torch rally taken out by the Congress in Raipur on Saturday evening. Pioneer Photo

CS for focusing on mining revenue hike in Chhattisgarh

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain on Saturday urged the mining department to increase revenue by optimum extraction of mineral resources.

An official communication said the Chief Secretary instructed the officials to prepare an action plan to scale up the mineral revenue through maximum production from the approved mines.

He reviewed the measures to be taken to increase the production capacity and to install CCTV cameras in important mining areas.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the works to increase the revenue from the Public Works Department



(PWD).

He also instructed the

PWD officials to speed up the work of painting various

government buildings with cow dung paint.

Two held with cannabis valued at Rs 1.40 Crore

STAFF REPORTER ■
MAHASAMUND

Chhattisgarh Police seized 700 kg of cannabis valued at Rs 1.40 crore and arrested two brothers in Mahasamund district who were transporting it to Madhya Pradesh from Odisha, police said on Saturday.

Mahasamund Superintendent of Police Dharmendra Singh told The



Pioneer that they were Kalpnath Dohar (31) and his elder brother Rajaram (35), both from Satna in Madhya Pradesh.

The action followed a tip on Friday that the contraband was being transported via National Highway 53.

Police intercepted a truck near an eatery at the Singhoda check post. The cannabis, stuffed in gunny bags, was hidden under puffed rice, the officer said.

State BJP chief raises concern over murder

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Bharatiya Janata Party President Arun Sao raised concern over the murder of a party leader in Tilda Newra of Raipur district.

Sao said Jitendra Pal of Kundru village was an office bearer of the BJP de-addiction campaign. He was beaten with stick and stabbed to death.



His 16-year-old son who came to his rescue was also stabbed, Sao said.

He urged the government to tell the police to arrest the culprits and provide financial assistance to the Pal family.

Father stabbed to death, son injured

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

A father was stabbed to death and his son was injured over a monetary dispute in a village in Raipur district, police said on Saturday.

Raipur Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Neeraj Chandrakar said Jitendra Pal

(46) was killed while his son Ayush (17) was injured. The incident took place in Kundru village on Friday night when the accused identified as Ashu, Ishu, Ravi, Fenta and others stormed Pal's house and stabbed them with sharp weapons.

A murder case has been lodged against the accused. Efforts are on to nab them.

JAGDALPUR INSTITUTE OF NURSING ADHESHWAR ACADEMY CAMPUS, HALBA, KACHORA, JAGDALPUR, BASTAR (C.G.)			
Approved by Regulatory Council Under Temporary Affiliation College to Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Memorial Health Sciences & Ayush University of Chhattisgarh, Uparwara, Naya Raipur			
Application are invited for following posts under Statute -16			
S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Post	Qualification and Experience As per INC Norms
01	Principal Cum Professor	01	Essential Qualification:- M.Sc.(N), Experience: M.Sc.(N), Ph.D. (N) having total 15 years experience with M.Sc. (N) out of which 10 years after M.Sc.(N) in collegiate programme. Ph.D. (N) is desirable
02	Vice-Principal Cum Professor	01	Essential Qualification:- M.Sc.(N), Experience: M.Sc.(N), Total 12 years experience with M.Sc. (N) out of which 10 years teaching experience after M.Sc.(N) Ph.D. (N) is desirable
03	Associate Professor / Reader	05	Essential Qualification:- M.Sc. (N), Experience: Total 8 years experience with M.Sc.(N) including 5 years teaching experience. Ph.D. (N) is desirable.
04	Assistant Professor / Lecturer	10	Essential Qualification:- M.Sc. (N), Experience: M.Sc.(N) with total 3 years teaching experience. Ph.D. (N) is desirable.
Other terms & conditions:- 1. Experience: As per Council Norms. 2. Pay Scale: As per State Govt. Pay Scale. 3. Reservation: As per State Government Norms			
Selection criteria :- Selection will decide on merit. Merit list will be prepared on the basis of Academic marks, Educational Qualification, Interview, Experience and Academic contribution of candidate in various field like - " Number of paper publications in various national / international journals. " Paper presentation in conferences.			
*Total No. of conferences attended.			
Last date of receipt of Application:- Within 15 Days from the date of publication of advertisement.			
			Deputy Registrar

PM reviews op readiness of Armed Forces

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked the three Services to stay ready to deal with these new and emerging threats, emphasising that all steps are being taken to equip the Armed Forces with necessary weapons and technologies.

He made these assertions during the Combined Commanders' Conference in Bhopal which began on March 30. He also reviewed the security situation and operational readiness of the Armed Forces during the valedictory session of Combined Commanders' Conference.

He was also updated about the steps underway for the creation of Theatre Commands



in an effort to fight the modern day war with perfect synergy between the three Services namely army, navy and air force, sources said.

During the conference, deliberations were held over a spectrum of issues pertaining to national security, including jointness and theaterisation in the armed forces.

Giving details here, officials said the Prime Minister was briefed by Chief of Defence Staff(CDS) General Anil Chauhan about the various

discussions conducted during this year's conference. Modi complimented the Armed Forces for their role in nation building and providing Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) assistance to friendly countries.

During the final day of the session, various topics including aspects of digitisation; cyber security; challenges of social media; Aatmanirbharta; absorption of Agniveers and jointness were discussed.

In a significant development from the past, the scope of the conference was expanded this year, wherein, a few multi-layered and interactive sessions were conducted with participation of soldiers from every command of the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force, including the Tri-Services Andaman and Nicobar Command.

Raut gets death threat from Bishnoi, 1 held

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Less than 24 hours after Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and MP Sanjay Raut received a threat message on his WhatsApp on alleged behalf of mafia leader Lawrence Bishnoi that he would be shot dead in New Delhi, the Maharashtra police on Saturday detained one person for questioning in Pune for questioning.

Identifying the person detained as one Rahul Talekar who works at a hotel in Pune, the police said that he had been handed over to the Mumbai police for further investigations. Raut had received a whatsapp message late on Friday evening warning that he would be shot dead with an AK47 in New Delhi along the lines of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala who was eliminated last year.

Raut got a threat in a WhatsApp message on Friday evening warning that he would be shot dead with an AK-47 in New Delhi, with reference to the killing of the Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala last year. The threat received by Raut reward thus: "Anti-Hindu, I will kill you. Meet me in Delhi, will finish you off with an AK47. Like Moosewala. Treat this as a message from Lawrence Bishnoi," with a reference to Salman Khan. Immediately after he received



the threatening message, Raut had complained to the Mumbai Police Commissioner about it. Raut's MLA-brother Sunil Raut lodged a formal complaint with the Kanjurmarg police on Saturday morning.

Based on the technical evidence gathered by the Mumbai police that the person who had sent the whatsapp message to Raut was in Pune, the crime branch sleuths of the Pune detained Talekar, a resident of Wadgaon Sheri, from a hotel at Kharadi Chandannagar in Pune.

While it is not known immediately as to the motive behind Talekar handing a death threat to Raut, the detained person has told the police that he had sent a threat message to the Sena (UBT) MP under the influence of alcohol. He reportedly told the police that he had telephoned Raut many times, but the latter had not taken his call. Preliminary investigations have revealed that Talekar had no political affiliation nor were there any criminal antecedents. Soon

afterwards, Raut complained to Mumbai Police Commissioner, and a probe was initiated, leading to the detention of the suspect in Pune. The Mumbai police are questioning him on his links with the Bishnoi gang and also the recent email threats issued to Bollywood actor Salman Khan.

Reacting to the latest death threat, Raut – whose security was beefed up immediately after he received the whatsapp threat message – said: "I have been targetted in a similar manner in the past as well. But, I will not be cowed down by such threats".

"My security as well as the security covers of several Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders' security have been withdrawn and deployed for the 'gaddars' (traitors)... What has the government done about this?" Raut asked. Alluding to similar threats issued to prominent NCP leader of Thane Jitendra Ahwad, Raut accused the state government of ignoring such threats faced by opposition leaders.

Leaders of Opposition in the State Assembly Ajit Pawar and his counterpart from Upper House Ambadas Danve, NCP MP Supriya Sule and Congress leaders expressed serious concerns over threats and urged government to take matter seriously.

Now India, Malaysia can trade in ₹



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Trade between India and Malaysia can now be settled in Indian Rupee (INR) in addition to the current modes of settlement in other currencies. This follows the decision by the Reserve Bank of India in July 2022 to allow settlement of international trade in Indian Rupee (INR), the ministry of external affairs(MEA) said here on Saturday.

This initiative by the RBI is aimed at facilitating the growth of global trade and to support the interests of the global trading community in Indian Rupee (INR).

India International Bank of Malaysia (IIBM), based in Kuala Lumpur, has operationalised this mechanism by opening a Special Rupee Vostro Account through its Corresponding Bank in India i.e. Union Bank of India, MEA said.

Bhutan King's 3-day India visit starts from Monday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk will visit India for three days starting Monday at the invitation of President Droupadi Murmu. He will be accompanied by Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and senior officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

The visit is in keeping with the long standing tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries, the ministry of external affairs said here on Saturday. During the visit, King of Bhutan will meet with the President and the Prime Minister.

The External Affairs Minister and senior officials will call on the King of Bhutan. India and Bhutan enjoy unique ties of friendship and cooperation, which are characterized by understanding and mutual trust.

The visit would provide an opportunity to both sides to review entire gamut of bilateral cooperation and to further advance the close bilateral partnership, including economic and development cooperation.

Will not entertain any rebellion, says HDK after JD(S) faces 'Bhavani challenge'

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Amid the family feud over Hassan Assembly seat in poll-bound Karnataka, former chief minister H D Kumaraswamy on Saturday said he will not entertain any 'rebellion'.

He also said the second list of candidates will be released on Monday including for the Hassan seat.

The Hassan seat has become a big headache for Janata Dal (Secular), which is witnessing a rebellion within the first family of the party. The party which was among the first to release its list of candidates has not been able to finalise a name for Hassan constituency yet.

The reason being that the former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's daughter-in-law and H D Revanna's wife Bhavani Revanna is adamant about contesting the election from Hassan, which is a JD(S) stronghold.

It is now learnt that the Bhavani has warned that she would contest the election as an independent candidate if she is denied a ticket. Her two sons – Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna and MLC Suraj Revanna too have backed their mother. "I will not entertain any rebel-

lion. I have already said this several times that we will respond to the sentiments of the party workers. Even if there is pressure it will not work because the final decision will be left to the wishes of the workers," Kumaraswamy told reporters.

According to sources in the JD(S), Kumaraswamy is keen on fielding H S Prakash's son H P Swaroop. H S Prakash was a four-time MLA from this constituency who lost the 2018 Assembly election to BJP's Preetham Gowda. Six months after losing the Assembly election, Prakash passed away.

The JD(S) second-in-command wanted to field Swaroop keeping in view the large support base and sympathy he enjoys among voters, the sources said.

They added that 89-year old Deve Gowda, who is not keeping well, called the leaders from Hassan to discuss the issue at his Bengaluru residence. With the Hassan conundrum growing to enormous proportions, senior party leaders reached Bengaluru on Saturday to find a way out. "Some of our leaders have arrived here with regard to Hassan constituency and they too made an appeal.

States responsible for implementing schemes related to menstrual health: Centre to SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has told the Supreme Court that it is dedicated to improve access to menstrual hygiene for young and adolescent girls but the responsibility of providing healthcare services lies with the respective state governments as public health is a state subject.

In an affidavit filed before the top court, the Health ministry said it has undertaken awareness and training programmes and made necessary resources available to girls across the country.

"It is submitted that public health is a state subject and the responsibility of providing healthcare services is that of respective state governments.

"The Central government and its agencies are not the implementing bodies for schemes relating to menstrual health; and it is in fact the states and their agencies which are at the forefront of enforcement of the policies," the ministry said.

It submitted that the Central government is committed to improving menstrual hygiene for young and adolescent girls and to make necessary resources accessible to them.

The affidavit was filed in response to a PIL by Congress leader Jaya Thakur seeking issuance of directions for providing free sanitary pads to girls studying in classes 6 to 12 in government schools across the country.

The ministry stated that menstruation and menstrual practices are clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions for women as well as adolescent girls in India which is combined with limited access to products of sanitary hygiene and lack of safe sanitary facilities.

"Moreover, traditionally, there have been practices of using old clothes as pads by recycling them, use of ash or straw, which not affect menstrual hygiene but also have long term implications for reproductive health.

"The government is dedicated to increase awareness among adolescent girls on menstrual hygiene, build self-esteem and empower girls for better socialisation. The government is also working towards increasing access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins for girls in rural areas," the ministry said.

Thakur in her plea said serious difficulties are faced by adolescent females between the ages of 11 and 18 years who come from poor backgrounds, in receiving education on account of lack of access to education, a constitutional right under Article 21A of the Constitution. "These are ado-



lescent females who are not equipped with and are also not educated by their parents about menstruation and menstrual hygiene. The deprived economic status and illiteracy leads to prevalence of unhygienic and unhealthy practices which has serious health consequences, increase obstinacy and leads to eventual dropping out from schools," the plea said.

The plea, filed through advocate Varun Thakur, said to achieve gender equality, it is crucial that girls are able to actualize their educational potential.

Referring to a 2018 order of the Delhi High Court, the plea said it had mandated the Delhi government to provide free or subsidized access to menstrual hygiene products in schools and to make arrangements for education on menstruation and menstrual hygiene.

"The Government of India has deliberated for several years with regard to the inclusion of the right to education as a fundamental right. The Saikia Committee of 1997 had been appointed to examine the economic viability proposal as to whether the right to free elementary education up to 14 years of age could be made a fundamental right," it said.

The plea said the Right to Education Act, 2009, was enacted and took effect from August 26, 2009 with the objective of providing free and compulsory education in the age group of six to 14 years.

It added the apex court's 2019 verdict in the Sabarimala temple case addressed menstrual taboos and the associated stigma and ruled that the discriminatory emphasis placed on biological differences constituted a violation of Article 14 -- the right to equality -- and emphasized that the social exclusion of women based on menstrual status is a form of untouchability.

"Prevalent myths about menstruation force millions of girls to drop out of school early or be ostracized for the duration of their menstrual cycle every month. They also affect the hiring of female workers, as it is felt that the menstruation hampers their productivity capabilities. Unfortunately, it continues to be treated as a taboo in many societies, shrouded in a culture of silence and shame," the plea said.

Trader cheats SBI of ₹95 cr, arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Kaushik Kumar Nath, a Kolkata based businessman in a money laundering case linked to defrauding the public sector lender State Bank of India (SBI) to the tune of Rs 95 crore.

The ED said Nath availed various credit facilities from the State Bank of India by submitting forged and fabricated documents. The funds received in the guise of credit facilities were withdrawn in cash and used for purposes other than for which it was sanctioned.

The SBI has been cheated and defrauded to the tune of Rs 95 crore, it said. The ED has initiated the investigation under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on the basis of four different FIRs/charge sheets registered/

filed by CBI, Kolkata. During investigation by ED, another case registered by the Crime Branch, Mumbai Police also came to the notice of the agency. "Kaushik Kumar Nath is frequently changing his identity and defrauding the banks. Recently, he had shifted his base to Mumbai and engaged in such type of criminal activities there," the ED said in a statement.

ED has identified several immovable properties acquired by the accused from the 'Proceeds of Crime'. Out of the said properties, four properties worth Rs 3.68 crore are already attached by the ED.

Nath was produced before the Special Court, Kolkata on Friday. The Court has granted him to ED custody for 10 days till April 10. Further investigation in the case is in progress, it added.

Contract inked for building 6 next gen missile vessels at cost of ₹ 9,805 cr

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/KOCHI

The Cochin Shipyard Limited has signed a contract for building six Next Generation Missile Vessels (NGMV) for the Indian Navy at a cost of Rs 9,805 crore with the delivery of ships set to begin from 2027.

The state-run shipyard said the contract marks its entry into advanced weapon intense platforms. "The primary role of the ships would be to provide offensive capability against enemy warship, merchantmen and land targets," Cochin Shipyard said in a release. It said the delivery of ships is scheduled to commence from



March 2027. "The NGMVs would be heavily armed war vessels incorporating stealth, high speed and offensive capability. These ships will be capable of conducting maritime strike operations, anti-surface warfare operations and would

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two accused persons from Raniganj and Kolkata, both in West Bengal, in connection with a 2022 case relating to recovery of 27,000 kg ammonium nitrate explosive.

The arrested duo is alleged to be illegal suppliers of explosives, detonators and gelatin sticks. In June 2022, a Tata Sumo car, which was found transporting around 81,000 electric detonators was intercepted by Special Task Force (STF) Kolkata.

The cache of detonators was seized and Ashis Keora, the driver of Tata Sumo was arrested. Ashis led the police to a stash of illegally stored explosives, including 27,000 kgs of ammonium nitrate, 1,625 kg of gelatine sticks and 2,325 more elec-

tric detonators. After the NIA took over the case, initially registered at Police Station Md. Bazar in Birbhum, in September 2022, the agency made its first arrest in January 2023 with the apprehension of Rintu Sk. The NIA on Friday arrested another two accused from Raniganj and Kolkata, who have been identified as Merazuddin Ali Khan of Bokaro and Mir Md. Nuruzzaman of Birbhum, the NIA said in a statement.

While Mir Md. Nuruzzaman had supplied 27,000 kg of ammonium nitrate to Rintu Sk, Merazuddin Ali Khan had supplied electric detonators and gelatine sticks to Rintu Sk, it said. Further investigations to establish the sources of pilferage of the explosives and other bomb making materials, including detonators and gelatine sticks are in progress, it added.

China granted visas to over 18,000 Indians since January: Envoy

Kolkata: China has issued visas to over 18,000 Indians in the last three months, a Chinese diplomat said. Interacting with a group of journalists in Kolkata, Minister Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in India, Chen Jianjun, said he was looking forward to more Chinese being given visas by India.

"The number of visa applications for China has been on the rise. Since January, we have given visas to 18,560 Indians," he said.

"Since August, 9,409 student visas have been issued to Indian students," he said. However, Jianjun said, the number of visa applications is yet to reach the pre-pandemic levels.

PNS

6 German Shepherds to take on wildlife thugs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Six German Shepherds, ranging between six and nine months old, and their 12 handlers have joined the forest departments of Karnataka (4), Bihar (1), and Madhya Pradesh (1), to take on the wildlife criminals and protect flora and fauna in their respective states.

This takes the total number of wildlife sniffer dogs trained under TRAFFIC and WWF-India's Ravi Singh in India to 94, said Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO WWF-India.

The canines had received seven-month-long training at basic training Centre, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force



(BTC-ITBP) camp in Panchkula, Haryana from September 2022. The dogs have been trained to detect tiger and leopard skins, bones and other body parts, bear

bile, red sanders, and other illegal wildlife products. BTC-ITBP had organised a passing out ceremony to felicitate the dogs and their handlers in their successful completion of the training course recently. Singh said, "Dogs are not just man's best friend. Once trained as wildlife sniffer dogs, they play a crucial role in protecting our wildlife from crime and illegal trade. This is also true for the 94 wildlife sniffer dogs trained by WWF-India and TRAFFIC over the years"

Dr Merwyn Fernandes, Coordinator of TRAFFIC's India Office, said, "Illegal wildlife trade is a serious threat to the conservation of species in the wild. Wildlife law enforcement practices are crit-

ical in containing this threat, and the use of wildlife sniffer dogs for wildlife crime prevention and detection is crucial." "We hope at least four to five wildlife sniffer dogs are deployed in each state and at trans-border areas, working with law enforcement agencies to protect our wildlife."

Dr Dipankar Ghose, Director & HoD, Wildlife & Habitats Division, WWF-India, and Interim In-Charge, TRAFFIC's India office added, "Detecting smuggled wildlife is an ongoing challenge for law enforcement agencies. TRAFFIC and WWF-India support initiatives that bring in new tools and technology for wildlife crime detection and prevention.

Indictment scrubs ‘Teflon Don’ of invincibility

AP ■ NEW YORK

When Donald Trump steps before a judge next week to be arraigned in a New York courtroom, it will not only mark the first time a former US president has faced criminal charges. It will also represent a reckoning for a man long nicknamed “Teflon Don,” who until now has managed to skirt serious legal jeopardy despite 40 years of legal scrutiny.

Trump, who is the early frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, is expected to turn himself in Tuesday. He faces charges including at least one felony offense related to hush money payments to women during his 2016 campaign. Like any other person facing trial, he will be booked, fingerprinted and photographed before being given the chance to enter a plea.

The spectacle that is sure to unfold will mark an unprecedented moment in American history that will demonstrate once again how dramatically Trump — who already held the

distinction of being the first president to be impeached twice — has upended democratic norms. But on a personal level, the indictment pierces the cloak of invincibility that seemed to follow Trump through his decades in business and in politics, as he faced allegations of fraud, collusion and sexual misconduct.

“Boy, after all this time it’s a bit of a shock,” Trump biographer Michael D’Antonio said of the indictment. “You know I always thought of him as the Gingerbread Man, shouting, You can’t catch me!” as he ran away.”

“Given his track record,” he said, “I had trouble imagining he would ever be held accountable.”

“These are not things that Donald Trump ever thought in his entire life, nor I, for that matter, that he would ever be confronted with,” Michael Cohen, Trump’s longtime fixer and a key witness in the case who served jail time for the payments, told CNN.

Of course, some of the celebration by Trump’s detrac-



tors may be premature. The former president could seek to have a judge quickly dismiss the case. And even if it moves forward, there’s no guarantee of conviction. Intensifying investigations in Atlanta and Washington are seen as potentially more serious legal threats.

Still, Trump and his team were caught by surprise when word of the New York indictment broke Thursday evening, following news reports that the grand jury hearing the case was set for a weeks-long hiatus. As the deliberations dragged on, some in Trump’s

orbit had become convinced that the case had stalled and that charges might never be brought. That included Trump attorney Joe Tacopina, who said Friday morning he had hoped the “rule of law would prevail.”

Trump, he said on the “Today” show, was “initially was shocked” by news of the charges, but quickly pivoted to his usual pushback playbook.

“After he got over that,” he said, Trump “put a notch on his belt and he decided we have to fight now. And he got into a typical Donald Trump pos-

ture where he’s ready to be combative on something that he believes is an injustice. ... I think he’s now in the posture that he’s ready to fight this.”

In the meantime, Trump and his team have tried to use the news to his advantage, hoping to energize his loyal base by painting the investigation as part of a larger plot to derail his candidacy.

Trump ally Rep. Jim Banks, R-Indi, who formally endorsed the former president Friday, said Trump “doesn’t back down” and was going to “fight back,” telling a local radio show it was “yet another chapter where Donald Trump is going to come back on top in the end.”

The media maelstrom has catapulted the former president back into the spotlight he craves, at least temporarily limiting attention being paid to his rivals, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is widely expected to challenge Trump for the nomination, and has been holding events across the county to promote his book.

Former president raises over \$4m in 24 hours

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump raised over USD 4 million towards his 2024 presidential run in 24 hours after a Manhattan grand jury indicted the former US president on charges related to paying off a porn star, his office has said.

According to the former president’s campaign, over 25 per cent of donations came from first-time donors to the Trump Campaign, further solidifying his status as the clear frontrunner in the Republican primary.

“This incredible surge of grassroots contributions confirms that the American people see the indictment of President Trump as a disgraceful weaponisation of our justice system by a Soros-funded prosecutor,” it said in a statement on Friday. “With an average contribution of only USD 34, Trump’s 2024 campaign is funded by an unmatched coalition of hardworking patriots who are fed up with special interest donors like Soros spending billions of dollars to influence our elections,” it said.

Americans from across all 50 states donated to President Trump’s campaign within the first five hours of the “sham indictment”, the

statement said.

On Thursday, within minutes of Trump’s indictment, the Trump campaign fired off a fundraising email soliciting contributions toward the 76-year-old’s 2024 campaign.

It was the first of more than half a dozen fundraising emails sent out by the Trump campaign after the indictment.

The White House has refused to comment on the indictment of the former president.

“I have no comment on that,” President Joe Biden told reporters on Friday.

Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters in Zambia: “I am not going to comment on an ongoing criminal case as it relates to the former president.”

Trump is currently the front-runner among all declared and potential contenders for the 2024 Republican White House nomination. There is nothing in US law that prevents a candidate who is found guilty of a crime from campaigning for and serving as president - even from prison.

Trump was twice impeached by the House of Representatives. He was acquitted by the Senate both times.

Indians among eight found dead near Canada-US border

PTI ■ TORONTO

Canadian police have recovered the bodies of two more migrants, including that of an Indian woman, who drowned in a river while two families of Indian and Romanian descent were attempting to enter the US from Canada illegally, taking the death toll to eight.

The bodies were found on Friday in a marsh on the riverbank near Akwesasne, a community which straddles Quebec, Ontario and New York state. One other person is still missing.

The two more bodies recovered included one infant, who was a Canadian citizen of Romanian descent. The second was of a woman who was an Indian national, CTV news reported.

Police say the deceased — believed to be two families of Indian and Romanian descent — were trying to cross the St

Lawrence River into the United States from Canada. Among them were two children under the age of three, both Canadian citizens. “Unfortunately, these situations happen. It’s not something new,” Akwesasne Mohawk Police chief Shawn Dulude said of people trying to cross.

“We’ve seen it happen in the past, and hopefully as we move forward ... it’s something we can one day eliminate,” the officer was quoted as saying by the Montreal Gazette newspaper.

Akwesasne police are working with Immigration Canada to assist with identifying the victims and notifying the next of kin. They are also increasing surveillance on the river, it said.

Authorities located the first body in the marsh around 5 pm on Thursday during an aerial search conducted at the request of the Canadian Coast Guard.

Throughout the day on

Friday, search crews could be seen wading through a marshy area near the local marina with the help of a light aircraft. A helicopter also scanned the river. The last two bodies were retrieved from the water during the day.

Police recovered two more bodies from the river on Friday, after discovering six bodies and an overturned boat during a missing person search Thursday afternoon, CBC News reported.

They are believed to have been an Indian family and a Romanian family who were attempting to cross into the US, police said, adding, that an Akwesasne resident remains missing. The bodies were discovered as the result of a search for another missing person, Casey Oakes, that also started Thursday. He was last seen Wednesday boarding a small, light blue vessel departing from the east end of Cornwall Island, in St. Lawrence.

US museum to return 15 smuggled sculptures to India

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art will return 15 sculptures to India after it was learnt that the antiquities were illegally removed from the country and sold by disgraced dealer Subhash Kapoor.

In a statement Thursday, the Met said it will transfer the 15 sculptures for return to the government of India. The works range in date from the 1st century BCE to the 11th century CE, and include terracotta, copper and stone.

All of the works were sold at one point by Kapoor, who is currently serving a prison sentence in India.

“The Museum is committed to the responsible acquisition of archaeological art and applies rigorous provenance standards both to new acquisitions and to works long in its collection. The Museum is actively reviewing the history of antiquities from suspect dealers. The Museum values highly its long-standing relationships with the government of India and is pleased to resolve this matter,” the Met said in the statement. The museum contacted Homeland Security about its works from Kapoor in 2015 and is “pleased to be acting on this matter today as a result of the criminal investigation into Subhash Kapoor” by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, it said.

Through this cooperative partnership, the museum received new information from the Manhattan DA’s office about 15 works of art that made it clear that the works should be transferred, resulting in a constructive resolution, the statement said.

In addition, in cooperation with the DA office’s criminal investigation into Turkish sites Bubon and Perge, the museum recently removed from display from its Greek and Roman galleries three pieces from Turkey — two of which were loans and a third is part of the Met’s collection, it said.

Pak inflation woes not over yet

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The cash-strapped Pakistan government has warned of more inflation coupled with a slowdown of the economy, blaming the delay in inking the crucial deal with the IMF for the worsening economic crisis, according to a media report on Saturday.

In its monthly outlook report issued on Friday, the Finance Ministry also said that political instability has started feeding the strong inflationary expectations, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Holding back its inflation forecast figure for the outgoing month, the Finance Ministry painted a gloomy outlook of the economy, saying that the Monthly Economic Indicator, a tool to predict the economic growth rate based on past and current indicators, has further slowed.

“Inflation in March may remain in the upper bound as observed in February when it was 31.5 per cent,” the ministry stated. Although it did not give

a figure this time, the market expects inflation to shoot up to 36 per cent due to a host of negative measures, the report said.

A conservative internal assessment of the Finance Ministry suggested around 34 per cent inflation rate in March. The ministry said that a “potential reason for rising price level is political and economic uncertainty.”

The ministry also noted that the delay in finalising the USD 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme was causing further economic distress.

“The economic distress resulting from delay of the stabilisation programme has exacerbated the economic uncertainty due to which inflationary expectations have remained strong,” the report said.

Pakistan has been struggling hard to revive the USD 6.5 billion derailed IMF bailout package that the Washington-based global lender approved in 2019. Although, its missteps, like the petrol subsidy and attempts to

borrow directly from commercial banks, have further complicated the matters for the cash-starved country.

The Finance Ministry said that even the contractionary monetary policies of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) were not helping contain the inflation.

“Despite the SBP’s contractionary monetary policy, the inflationary expectations are not settling down,” the ministry said, showing dissatisfaction with the central bank’s tight monetary policy.

The SBP increased the policy rate by 3 per cent to 20 per cent in the last Monetary Policy decision held this month.

The monthly outlook report stated that bulk buying during Ramzan may cause a demand-supply gap, resulting in an escalation of the prices of essential items.

Due to the lagged effect of last year’s floods, production losses, especially of significant crops, have not yet been fully recovered. Consequently, the shortage of essential items has emerged and persisted.

As a result, “inflation is expected to stay at elevated levels owing to market frictions caused by relative demand and supply gap of essential items, exchange rate depreciation and recent upward adjustment of administered prices of petrol and diesel”, the report added.

The Finance Ministry stated that the average Monthly Economic Indicator (MEI) during the first eight months of the current fiscal year indicates a further slowdown in domestic economic activities.

The slowdown seems to be driven by a lack of industrial dynamism, accelerating inflation, which erodes the purchasing power of consumers and investors and is also illustrated by negative growth in exports and imports.

The indicator was already in negative territory since the start of the fiscal year. The Finance Ministry’s latest assessment indicates that there may not be any growth during the current fiscal year if no improvement is witnessed in the remainder period.

Lanka to bring counter-terrorism Bill in parliament this month: PM

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena on Saturday said a new counter terrorism draft bill to replace the much maligned Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) of 1979 is to be introduced in the parliament later in April.

Sri Lanka is replacing the PTA with a new legislation called the Anti Terrorism Act (ATA) after the former law was roundly condemned for its draconian nature where people were allowed to be detained without being charged for indefinite periods of time.

Sri Lanka faced international calls to repeal the PTA which was enacted in 1979 as a temporary measure to counter the rising Tamil separatist militancy.

“The new bill will be presented in parliament in the third week of April. It will replace the PTA,” Gunawardena said.

On March 17, the 97-page ATA was published in the government gazette.

It aimed to replace the PTA which is often being criticised as a tool used by the successive governments to crush dissent.

The European Union since 2016 has been urging the Sri Lankan government to repeal the PTA and bring in a new counter terrorism legislation in line with international standards. The EU has linked its GSP+ export tariff concessions to Sri Lanka modifying its counter terrorism Act.

The opposition and rights groups have already objected to the ATA, saying that it does not differ much from the PTA.

They hold that ATA could be used to crush democratic protests and political opposition while the security forces being conferred powers to crackdown with judicial procedure to brand any dissent as terrorism.

Sajith Premadasa, the main opposition leader, told reporters: “We see this as undemocratic and authoritarian because it targets political opponents, trade unions and the public.”

Mano Ganesan, a minority Tamil political leader, questioned the need for a new counter terrorism law when the country is currently free of any acts of terrorism.

Critics charge that the ATA would be more harmful than the PTA. Sri Lanka, which currently is reeling under its worst economic crisis, has witnessed several activities that have threatened its national security.

The nation saw the end of Tamil insurgency in 2009 after the killing of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. A fresh security threat dented the country’s security after the Easter suicide attacks in 2019 that killed 290 people.

Israeli cops shoot man in Jerusalem

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli police shot and killed a man who they alleged tried to snatch an officer’s gun at an entrance to a Jerusalem holy site early Saturday, raising fears of further violence during a time of heightened tensions at the flashpoint compound.

The police said the slain man was 26-year-old Mohammed Alasibi from Hura, a Bedouin Arab village in southern Israel.

Palestinian worshippers at the entrance to the site on Saturday morning had a different account, saying that

police shot the man at least 10 times after he tried to prevent them from harassing a woman who was on her way to the holy compound.

Hours after the incident, the muddy stone alleyway leading to the compound was still stained with blood.

Authorities said that officers detained the man for questioning outside the sacred compound home to Al-Aqsa Mosque in the heart of Jerusalem’s Old City — the third holiest shrine in Islam. The compound, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, is also the most sacred site in Judaism.

Pope leaves hospital, to preside over Easter mass

AP ■ ROME

A chipper-sounding Pope Francis was discharged Saturday from the Rome hospital where he was treated for bronchitis, quipping to journalists before being driven away that he’s “still alive.”

Francis, 86, was hospitalised at Gemelli Polyclinic on Wednesday following his weekly public audience in St Peter’s Square after reportedly experiencing breathing difficulties. The pontiff received antibiotics administered intravenously during his stay, the Vatican said. In a sign of his improved health, the Vatican released details of Francis’ Holy Week schedule. It said he would preside at this weekend’s Palm

Sunday Mass and at Easter Mass on April 9, both held in St. Peter’s Square and expected to draw tens of thousands of faithful. A Vatican cardinal will be at the altar to celebrate both Masses, a recent practice due to the pontiff having a troublesome knee issue.

But Francis is scheduled to celebrate Holy Thursday Mass, which this year will be held in a juvenile prison in Rome. Still unclear was whether he would attend the late-night, torch-lit Way of the Cross procession at Rome’s Colosseum to mark Good Friday. Before departing Gemelli Polyclinic late Saturday morning, Francis comforted a Rome couple whose 5-year-old daughter died Friday night at the Catholic hospital. Outside,



Serena Subania, mother of Angelica, sobbed as she pressed her head into the chest of the pope, who held her close and

whispered words of comfort.

Francis seemed eager to linger with well-wishers. When a boy showed him his arm cast,

the pope made a gesture as if to ask “Do you have a pen?” Three papal aides whipped out theirs. Francis took one of the pens and

added his signature to the child’s already well-autographed cast.

The pontiff answered in a low voice that was close to a whisper when reporters peppered him with questions, indicating he had felt unwell — “I felt sick,” he said, pointing to his mid-section — a symptom that convinced his medical staff to take him to the hospital Wednesday. Asked how he felt now, Francis joked, “Still alive, you know.” He gave a thumbs-up sign. Francis exited the hospital from a side entrance, but his car stopped in front of the main entrance, where a gaggle of journalists waited. He opened the car door himself and got out from the front passenger seat. Francis had a cane ready to lean on.

March GST at ₹1.60 L cr; 2nd highest ever

FY-2023 gross collection up 22%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST collections in March grew 13 per cent to the second highest ever at ₹1.60 lakh crore, taking the growth rate of revenue mop-up for full 2022-23 fiscal to 22 per cent. March also saw over 91 per cent of the GST registered businesses filing returns and paying taxes — reflecting greater compliance and improving economic activity.

Gross GST revenue collected in March 2023 is ₹1,60,122 crore, of which Central GST is ₹29,546 crore, State GST is ₹37,314 crore, Integrated GST is ₹82,907 crore (including ₹42,503 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹10,355 crore, the finance ministry said in a statement.

In April 2022, GST collection had touched a record high of close to ₹1.68 lakh crore. The second highest mop-up was recorded in March 2023, at a little over ₹1.60 lakh crore.

For full 2022-23 fiscal year, gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) mop-up grew 22 per cent to ₹18.10 lakh crore. The



average gross monthly collection for the full year is ₹1.51 lakh crore.

March is the fourth time in the just gone by financial year that the monthly gross GST collection has crossed ₹1.5 lakh crore-mark. Last month also witnessed the highest IGST collection ever, the ministry said.

Revenue for the month of March 2023 is 13 per cent higher than the GST revenue in the same month last year, the ministry said. During the month, revenue from import of goods was 8 per cent

higher and revenue from domestic transaction (including import of services) is 14 per cent higher than the revenue from these sources during the same month last year.

The ministry said return filing during March 2023 has been the highest ever. 93.2 per cent of statement of invoices (in GSTR-1) and 91.4 per cent of returns (in GSTR-3B) of February were filed till March 2023 as compared to 83.1 per cent and 84.7 per cent, respectively a year ago. KPMG in India Partner Indirect Tax

Abhishek Jain said the monthly and yearly GST collection point towards the growing trajectory of the Indian economy.

“Another cheer point is the highest ever compliance rate with 91.4 per cent of returns being filed in the month of March, indicating success of revenue authorities and businesses in ensuring tax compliance and preventing tax evasion,” Jain said.

Deloitte India , Partner, Leader - Indirect Tax, Mahesh Jaising said with the growth in economic activity and increased focus on GST analytics based audits, the trend should see upward trajectory in the coming months.

“Also, with the new FTP being rolled out from today, we have to wait and watch the impact on the import-export which is expected to have a role in GST collections too,” Jaising said.

Tax Connect Advisory Partner Vivek Jalan said businesses are also understanding that robust compliance is the way forward under GST and a significant boost in GST return filing taking the compliance ratio to more than 90 per cent from early 80 per cent shows that Indian businesses are fast moving into the mainstream. This would enhance the Income Tax revenues also and lead to overall GDP growth, Jalan added.

FinMin launches 3-month campaign to boost micro-insurance schemes at Panchayat level

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To achieve saturation under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), the Finance Ministry on Saturday launched a three-month campaign.

“A special 3 months campaign has been launched by DFS at Gram Panchayat Level covering all districts in the country to saturate all eligible persons under the PMJJBY and PMSBY w.e.f 1st April 2023 to the 30th June 2023,” Department of Financial Services (DFS) said in a tweet.

Under the campaign, camps are going to be organised at the Gram Panchayat level across all districts in the country by the banks with active participation of the State administration and other Ministries of Government of India to ensure that benefits of the two Jan Suraksha schemes reach the masses. Chief Secretaries of States/



UTs, Chairman/ MD and CEOs of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have been advised to extend full support during the campaign, an official statement said.

Lead District Managers (LDMs) will lead the campaign in consultation with State/ UT Level Bankers Committees of the States/ UTs and District Magistrates/ Collectors of the Districts. Line Ministries of Government of India have been

advised to utilise their field functionaries for identification and mobilisation of the Scheme beneficiaries for enrolment, it said.

All Nodal Officers from DFS have been instructed to participate in the special SLBC/ UT/LBC meetings and to undertake field visits for monitoring the Gram Panchayat level saturation campaign, it added.

The PMJJBY offers life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh in case of death due to any reason to people in the age group of 18-50 years having a bank or post office account, who give their consent to join or enable auto-debit of premium.

On the other hand, the PMSBY offers insurance cover of ₹2 lakh for accidental death or total permanent disability and ₹1 lakh for partial permanent disability to people in the age group of 18-70 years with a bank or post office account, who give their consent to join or enable auto-debit of premium.



UltraTech Cement FY23 production up 12.4% to 105.7mn tn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading cement maker UltraTech's consolidated sales rose by 12.4 per cent to 105.7 million tonnes (MT) in FY2022-23, Aditya Birla group firm said in a regulatory filing on Saturday.

The company produced 94 MT of cement in FY22.

Its total sales volume in the domestic market also crossed 100 MT for the financial year that ended on March 31, 2023.

UltraTech's total sales volume for the India market in FY23 was at 101.7 MT, up 13.63 per cent compared to 89.5 MT a year ago.

“We are pleased to inform the company has achieved 100 million tonnes of production, despatches and sales in FY23,” it said.

Its grey cement production

in the domestic market was at 100.1 MT in FY23, reporting 13.75 per cent growth while its white cement production was 1.5 MT, up 11 per cent.

UltraTech's overseas production, mainly grey cement was 4.4 MT in FY23. For the fourth quarter that ended on March 31, 2023, UltraTech's total consolidated sales volume was at 31.7 MT and its India volume was at 30.5 MT.

UltraTech has a consolidated capacity of 132.35 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of grey cement. It has 23 integrated manufacturing units, 29 grinding units, one clinkerisation unit and eight Bulk Packaging Terminals.

It is the third largest cement producer in the world, excluding China.

Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata Motors report best-ever wholesales in FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors reported their highest-ever dispatches to dealers last fiscal, enabling the domestic passenger vehicle industry to log in best-ever performance to date.

The country's largest car-maker Maruti Suzuki India reported its highest wholesales to date at 19,66,164 units, up 19 per cent from 16,52,653 units in 2021-22.

Its domestic dispatches rose to 17,06,831 units in 2022-23, up 21 per cent from 14,14,277 units in 2021-22 fiscal.

Hyundai Motor India said its overall wholesales last fiscal were the highest ever since commencing operations in the country.

The automaker dispatched 7,20,565 units to dealers last fiscal, up 18 per cent from 6,10,760 units in 2021-22. Its domestic dispatches rose to 5,67,546 units last fiscal, up 18 per cent from 4,81,500 units in the 2021-22 financial year.

The country's second-largest carmaker said it was its best performance to date in terms of sales volume in the domestic market in a financial year.

Tata Motors also reported the best-ever passenger vehicle dispatches in the domestic market last fiscal at 5,38,640 units, up 45 per cent from 3,70,372 units FY22.

Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Officer, Marketing and Sales, Shashank Srivastava said the company reported its highest-ever sales in a financial year despite chip shortage con-



tinuing to impact the production activity. He noted that the overall industry sales last fiscal rose to 38.89 lakh units, an increase of 27 per cent from 30.69 lakh units in 2021-22. “Both wholesales and retails were the highest for the industry last fiscal,” Srivastava said.

The industry sales were expected to rise to 4.05-4.10 million in the current fiscal, he added.

“We expect the industry growth to be in the range of 5-7 per cent this fiscal and the company would like to perform better than the industry,” Srivastava said.

He noted that with models like Jimny and Fronx in its kitty, the company expects to corner 25 per cent of the SUV market in the current fiscal. MSI ended the last fiscal with a market share of 12.6 per cent in the SUV segment with sales of 2,02,800 units.

The company, which has discontinued its entry-level model Alto 800 citing affordability factor, said the SUV segment continues to outpace others

with a contribution of 43 per cent in the overall domestic passenger vehicle industry.

Srivastava noted that the contribution of the hatchback segment has come down to 35 per cent last fiscal from 46 per cent in 2016-17.

“Affordability has been hit and it has affected the uptake in this segment. If the income levels go up, we can hope for it to make a comeback. Even now the top best-selling cars in the country are hatchbacks,” he said.

Srivastava noted that the chip shortage would continue to impact the industry for the next few quarters. MSI's total order backlog stood at around 3.8 lakh units, with Ertiga leading in terms of pending bookings, he added.

Srivastava confirmed that the company would have a certain production loss in the fourth quarter due to supply constraints. The company had a production loss of around 46,000 units in the third quarter.

Replying to a query, Srivas-

tava noted that the company has taken a price hike of around 0.8 per cent from April.

Hyundai reported domestic dispatches of 5,67,546 units last fiscal, up 18 per cent from 4,81,500 units in the 2021-22 financial year.

Exports rose 18 per cent year on year to 1,53,019 units. “FY 22-23 has been a phenomenal year for the company, as we introduced seven segment-defining products like the all-new Hyundai Tucson, new Venue, Venue N Line, all electric IONIQ 5, new Grand i10 NIOS, new AURA and the all-new Verna catering to different segments thus giving a strong push to brand Hyundai amongst new-age Indian customers,” Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg said in a statement.

Despite global headwinds, the company sees momentum in the Indian auto industry to continue, he added.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Managing Director Shailesh Chandra stated noted that the steep growth witnessed

Sebi bans 3 individuals from securities mkt for 2 yrs, fines ₹90 lakh in ZEEL insider trading case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred three individuals from the securities market for two years and imposed penalty totalling Rs 90 lakh on them in a case pertaining to insider trading activities in the scrip of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL).

The three individuals banned by the regulator — Bijal Shah, Gopal Ritolia and Jatin Chawla — have also been directed to pay the fine within 45 days.

In addition, Ritolia and Chawla have been directed to

disgorge illegal gains to the tune of Rs 7.52 crore and Rs 2.09 crore respectively along with interest, the regulator said in its 152-page final order on Friday.

The case relates to insider trading activities by certain entities in the scrip of ZEEL, while in possession of unpublished price sensitive information (UPSI) pertaining to audited financial results of the media company for the quarter ended June 30, 2020 as well as launch of ZEEPLEX by the company on September 1, 2020.

Bijal Shah, who was head of



the financial planning and analysis, strategy and investor relations at ZEEL during the relevant time, had access to this unpublished price sensitive information.

He in turn, communicated

the information to Ritolia and Chawla, who traded on the basis of this information and earned profits to the tune of Rs 7.52 crore and Rs 2.09 crore respectively, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said.

According to the regulator, Shah is not liable for insider trading, he has played the primary role in disclosing the unpublished Price sensitive information to Ritolia and Chawla, which resulted in the violation of the provisions of insider trading rules.

MCL reaches new high in coal production

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) on Saturday said the company has registered a record 193.3 million tons of coal production during the 2022-23 financial year.

The MCL also posted the highest ever 192.7 million ton coal despatch to consumers, Chairman-cum-Managing Director Om Prakash Singh, said while addressing the AGM here. “The MCL registered a growth of 15 per cent for the financial year 2022-23, while coal despatch showed nine per cent growth over the previous financial year 2021-22,” Singh said.

The company has achieved all its tar-



gets much ahead of schedule and has helped Coal India surpass its target of 700 million tons set for the financial year 2022-23, the CMD said.

He said 97 per cent of total production of MCL was through eco-friendly equipment surface miners. He said that the coal despatch to the power sector also increased from 127.12 million tons, 2,922 to 148.8 million tons in 2022-23 with a growth of 17 per cent.

Strengthening its business activities, the company made Capital Expenditure (CapEx) of Rs 3,850 crore during the financial year 2022-23, he said adding that MCL enjoys being the top company in Odisha contributing under CSR.

Godrej Properties buys four acre in Pune for housing project; eyes ₹1K cr revenue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Godrej Properties has acquired a 4-acre land parcel in Pune to build a luxury housing project with an estimated revenue potential of ₹1,000 crore. In a regulatory filing on Saturday, Godrej Properties informed that it has acquired around 4-acre land parcel near Korgaon Park in Pune. The development on this land will primarily be a luxury housing project.

“The project will have a developable potential of approximately 7.5 lakh square feet with an estimated revenue potential of approximately ₹1,000 crore,” the company said.

The company, however, did not disclose the financial details of the transaction. Gaurav Pandey, the MD and CEO of Godrej Properties, said the demand for luxury homes has remained strong over the past few years.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform general public that Sh. Radhey Shyam has acquired the Property Bearing No. 51/A area measuring 96 Sq. Yds., Out of Mustali No. 81, Kila No. 7, Situated at Vaka Moja Ballabgarh (Gang Colony) Tehsil Ballabgarh Distt. Faridabad Haryana vide two separate Transfer/ Deeds dated 25.06.2018. Doc. No. 3008 and dated 24.02.2023. Doc. No. 8788 and Now, Sh. Harsh Sharda and Sh. Radhey Shyam are mortgaging the above said property with Industrial Bank Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Munesh Dhanani/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Vertices North, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-II, Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/ 9818228636 (M).

PUBLIC NOTICE
1. Rahul Sehgal S/o Satish Kumar Sehgal, the absolute legal owner and in possession of Built up Third Floor with terrace rights, with area of 83 sq. yds., built on Property having Municipal No. 2640, Lambi Gali, Besi Punjabiyan, Subzi Mandi, Delhi-110007, by virtue of a Sale Deed reg. with doc. no. 1581 on 10/02/2023, intends to mortgage the said Property in favour of Bajaj Housing Finance Limited and thus, invites any and/or all objections, claims, rights, interest and information on encumbrances, mortgages, charges etc. in respect of the past and/or present title to the above property within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice to Mr. Vikram K. Saw, Flat No. 544, 1st Floor, Site-1, Shankar Garden, New Delhi-110018 with Email:- vikshalega@gmail.com, Landline:- 011-35686622, Mob:- 9899638482. Any such claims or information after the expiry of 7 days shall be deemed to have waived and/or abandoned and not be entertained.

OFFICE OF THE DIGP, GROUP CENTRE, C.R.P.F. DADRI ROAD GREATER NOIDA-201306
No.EIV: 1/2022-23-M/School Dated, the 29/03/2023
ADVERTISEMENT
It is informed that requirement of Lady Headmistress, Teacher & Aaya for Nursery and KG for the academic Session 2023-24 at Montessori School of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Group Centre, CRPF, Dadri Road, Sutiana, Greater Noida-201306 purely on temporary and contractual basis (From 01/07/2023 to 31/05/2024). Applications are invited from eligible Indian citizens for the following posts:-

Sl. No.	Post	Number of Post	Honorarium per month	Age	Education Qualification
01	Headmistress	01	15,000/-	30-40	Graduation with at least 50% Marks and B.Ed or Two year Diploma in Elementary Education or B.T.C or equivalent and five years teaching experience in Basic School.
02	Teacher	04	12,500/-	21-40	Graduation with at least 50% Marks and B.Ed or Two year Diploma in Elementary Education or B.T.C or equivalent.
03	Aaya	04	10,000/- (12 post)	18-30	Passed class V or equivalent examination with Hindi.

Notes:- The number of above mentioned posts can be reduced and increased at any time without informing.
02. **Application form/Mode of Application:-** (A) Application form has to be submitted in the following format (1) Name/paste photo of applicant (2) Name of the father/husband of the applicant (3) The post for which the application is made (4) Applicant's permanent address (5) Applicant's current correspondence address and mobile number (6) Applicant's citizenship (7) Applicant's date of birth (8) Applicant's caste (9) Applicant's education (10) Applicant's class nursery educational experience (11) Any other information (12) Signature of the applicant (B) **Method of applying:-** Application of interested candidates, for the appointment to the said posts can till date 24/04/2023 till 1600 hrs. to Office of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Group Centre, Central Reserve Police Force, Dadri Road, Greater Noida-201306 and Candidates qualifying to the post will be called appear for the interview on 01/05/2023 at 10:00 hrs at the Office of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Group Centre, CRPF, Dadri, Greater Noida-201306.
Notes:- Detailed advertisement can be on the website of CRPF www.crpf.gov.in, Sd/- Deputy Inspector General of Police, Group Centre, CRPF, Greater Noida

SANT HARI DASS COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
(Affiliated to GGSIPU, Okhla, New Delhi)
Bani Camp, Opp. Air Force Station, New Delhi-43
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Email: sant.hari.dasscollege@gmail.com
Required for BBA(B) Programme:
• Professor - 01
• Associate Professor - 02
• Assistant Professor - 02
Required Assistant Professor for B.Ed. Programme:
• Foundation Courses - 02
• Teaching of English - 01
• Teaching of Science - 01
• Teaching of History - 01
• Teaching of Hindi - 01
• Teaching of Social Science - 01
• Teaching of Political Science - 01
• Fine Arts/ Performing Arts - 01
• Computer Lab Assistant - 01
• Librarian - 01 • Accountant - 01 • Clerk - 01
• Receptionist/Office Assistant-01
Pay Scale & Qualification as per Govt. Norms.
Walk-in-Interview on 22nd April 2023 at 10:00 am onwards

PUBLIC NOTICE
TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN
My client Mr. Vijay Chopra son of Late Mr. Tarsem Lal Chopra resident of 601, Tower C, The IVY, Sushant Lok, Phase-I, Gurugram, Haryana has entered into Agreement to Sell dated 5th of November, 2022 with Mrs. Nirmal Arya, the widow of Late Dr Raj Pal Arya, resident of 4 College Road North Liverpool L23 8JP, U.K., with respect to the purchase of Property No.Y-96, Regency Park-II, DLF City, Phase-IV, Gurgaon, Haryana with condition that she will get the sole ownership in her favour by getting the Will Probated in the Indian Court of Law (Haryana), within the stipulated date of 31st March, 2023. The said Property is registered under the joint ownership of Mrs. Nirmal Arya and Late Dr Raj Pal Arya (who passed away on the 10 Sept. 2020 leaving behind a WILL in favour of his wife Mrs. Nirma Arya) and as such under Indian Court of Law the WILL is required to be probated to prove the ownership solely in favour of Mrs Nirmal Arya. The Seller has not provided the Probated WILL through Haryana Court requiring the sole ownership in her favour, as required and settled vide the said Agreement to Sell, and didn't turn up for completing the transaction on the stipulated date. As the case is still pending in the court of law with next court date on 10-05-2023, my client had conveyed his willingness to the seller, through email, that he will get the Sale Documents registered upon the seller providing the proof of sole ownership in her favour. This public notice is being given to caution the public in large that anyone who intend to purchase the above subject property may be doing at their own risk and responsibility.
Gajender Yadav (Advocate)
Chamber No.59, Distt. Court, Gurugram (Haryana) Mob: 931707317

AFTER IMPRESSING AT WORLDS, PREETI EYES BERTH IN ASIAN GAMES-BOUND CONTINGENT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After impressing in her maiden Women's World Boxing Championships, the prodigiously talented Preeti Pawar is eager to put to test the learnings from the tournament at the first Olympic qualifiers - the Asian Games this year -- provided she secures a spot in the Indian contingent.

The 19-year-old put up a fearless display across all her three bouts in the marquee event here as she notched an RSC win before toppling the top seed and last edition's silver medalist Lacramioara Perijoc of Romania.

She made a pre-quarterfinal exit after losing a fiercely-contested bout to two-time medalist, Thailand's Jitpong Jutamas, earning plaudits from everyone.

"Junior and youth level is mostly about who attacks more but once you are at the senior level, you have to play with your mind and be more technical," Preeti told PTI.

"I feel I need to modify my game, I should not be attacking all the time, I need to counter more. I am working on improv-



ing my strength and tweaking techniques.

"If I qualify for the Asian Games that will be great. So, I want to be prepared for the Olympic qualifying event," added Preeti, who competes in

the 54kg class, an Olympic category.

The Asian Games from September 23 to October 8 in Hangzhou, China are the first Paris Olympics qualifying event for boxers from the continent.

For someone, who was averse to the idea of taking up boxing a few years back, the Bhiwani pugilist has made a name for herself quickly in the sport.

"I never thought I'd come

into sports and choose boxing as my career. I wasn't interested in sports. I was focussed on my studies.

"One day, my uncle and father came and said to me that I have to do boxing."

The then 14-year-old's immediate reaction was "Main nahi karungi, boxing toh bilkul bhi nahi (I will never take up boxing)."

But Preeti, whose father is an assistant sub-inspector in Haryana Police, reluctantly started training at her uncle and former national medallist boxer Vinod Sai Pawar's, boxing academy.

"In the beginning boxing was forced on me, I used to go for training but after coming back I used to cry, kabhi pair dard hota tha kabhi haath (sometimes my feet would hurt, other times my hands)."

"It went on for 6-7 months. When I started playing, competitions I developed interest. Then when I won medals, the confidence and interest increased."

At her uncle's boxing club, there weren't many girls, so Preeti regularly sparred with

boys, much to the dislike of her mother.

"Mummy was scared that I'll get punched. Once during training, I got hit and passed out. I had to be taken to a doctor," recalls Preeti.

The Haryana-based boxer clinched the silver medal at the Youth Asian Championships in 2021. She also joined the Inspire Institute of Sports, which has sponsored her since then.

Making her transition to the senior level, Preeti won bronze in her maiden event -- the 2022 Asian Championships at Jordan. She lost to the Tokyo Olympics featherweight champion Sena Irie of Japan in the semifinal.

"When I boxed in my first senior competition, I felt this to where real boxing starts. I lost to the Tokyo Olympics champion but I got a lot of confidence from that bout."

The teenager is a little low on experience but believes there is no substitute to hard work.

"I don't think anyone has been able to achieve what I have in a such a short time. So, time doesn't matter how long you have been there, it is the hard work that counts."



ITF Mysuru Open: Mukund -Vishnu pair bags doubles title

PTI ■ MYSURU

India's Mukund Sasikumar and Vishnu Vardhan bagged the doubles title at the ITF Mysuru Open as the duo showed admirable endurance against compatriots B Ritvik Choudary and Nikki Poonacha here on Saturday.

The two defeated top seeds Choudary and Poonacha 6-3, 6-4 in 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Mukund and Vishnu warded off seven break points in the match while they converted two opportunities to break their opponents to ease their way to the title.

"I am very happy to return to Mysore Tennis Club. I was here as a 12-year-old and I was also the winner of the first International tournament here in 2012. Now, I am very happy to win the doubles title, so I think I partially defended my title," Vardhan said after the match.

"When I came here with my mom in 2012 I was reconsidering playing tennis professionally and from that point to be in Grand Slam ranking and India No 1, it has been a remarkable journey," said Mukund after the match.

"During the pandemic, my life had hit the rock bottom again but I was decided that irrespective of how this week had gone, this will be a new start to an unforgettable journey this year and I hope to return here soon but hopefully you will see me in bigger tournaments."

In fact, it was the second match of the day for Mukund and Vishnu and they showed great powers of concentration to stay focused on the task.

They also won more than 80 percent of points on both first and second serves, indicating the consistency in their game.

Earlier in the day, Mukund and Vishnu romped into the doubles final upsetting second seeded Australia-Ukraine pair of Blake Ellis and Vladyslav Orlov 6-4, 7-5.

The USD 25,000 event is being hosted by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA).

In the singles, India's campaign ended when Mysuru lad S D Prajwal Dev went down fighting to George Loffhagen of Britain 5-7, 4-6 in a tight semifinal match that lasted precisely two hours.

Loffhagen will face eighth seeded Australian Blake Ellis, who shocked second seeded American Oliver Crawford 7-5, 6-3 in the other last four clash. The final will be played on Sunday.

Results (Singles, semifinals)
George Loffhagen (GBR) beat SD Prajwal Dev (IND) 7-5, 6-4 (8) Ellis Blake (AUS) beat (2) Oliver Crawford (USA) 7-5, 6-3

Doubles, Final:
Mukund Sasikumar (IND) / Vishnu Vardhan (IND) beat Ritvik Choudary (IND) and Nikki Poonacha (IND) 6-3, 6-4.

Maini bags maiden F2 podium at Melbourne

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Indian driver Kush Maini of Campos Racing fought off a strong challenge from Arthur Leclerc of DAMS in a rain-interrupted race to claim his first-ever Formula 2 podium with a third-place finish at the Albert Park, here on Saturday.

Maini started from P3 on the grid on prime tyres and held on to his position for several laps while Arthur Leclerc was right behind him putting pressure on the softer tyres.

Leclerc got past Maini but the Indian fought back and made a last second dive onto the inside and got back P3.

Leclerc kept the pressure on through the safety car restarts as well but Maini held on to a well-deserved maiden podium in F2.

"I have been waiting on the doorstep of getting onto a podium and narrowly missed it at Bahrain," the 22-year-old said.

"It was great to get my first podium on a new track as a rookie. It is most important to keep consistent as it's a very long series. We have had a good start to the season so far with consistency in qualifying always in the top 8."

Dennis Hauger (MP Motorsport) and Jak Crawford (Hitech Pulse-Eight) took the top-two finishes.

Haaland misses Man City match vs Liverpool due to injury

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester, Apr 1 (AP) Prolific striker Erling Haaland was not part of Manchester City's squad to play Liverpool on Saturday after failing to recover from a groin injury.

The Norway international, who has scored 42 goals in all competitions this season, had to withdraw from his country's European Championship qualifiers against Spain and Georgia last week because of the problem.

"He is not fit. He doesn't feel proper," City manager



Pep Guardiola said ahead of the game.

"It is not a big issue but today he was not right."

Haaland leads the Premier League scoring charts with 28 goals and has hit nine in his last three games in all competi-

titions.

The game was important for both teams, with City eight points behind first-place Arsenal with a game in hand, and Liverpool fighting to secure a top-four spot for Champions League qualification.

Guardiola earlier this week said the 22-year-old Haaland would be given the chance to prove his fitness during the team's training session on Friday. Haaland's father, Alf-Inge, was quoted by Norwegian TV during the week saying his son had traveled to Barcelona for treatment.

NBA, players reach deal for new labour agreement



AP ■ NEW YORK

The NBA will have labor peace for years to come. The league and its players came to an agreement early Saturday on a new seven-year collective bargaining agreement, the NBA announced. It is still pending ratification, though that process is almost certainly no more than a formality.

The deal will begin this summer and will last at least through the 2028-29 season. Either side can opt out then; otherwise, it will last through 2029-30.

Among the details, per a person familiar with the negotiations who spoke to The Associated Press: the in-sea-

son tournament that Commissioner Adam Silver has wanted for years will become reality, and players will have to appear in at least 65 games in order to be eligible for the top individual awards such as Most Valuable Player. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because neither the league nor the National Basketball Players Association released specifics publicly.

Another new part of the CBA will be a second luxury tax level that, when reached, will keep teams from using their midlevel exception to sign players. That was a clear compromise, given how some teams wanted the so-called "upper spending limit" that

would have essentially installed an absolute ceiling on what can be spent each season and help balance the playing field between the teams that are willing to pay enormous tax bills and those who aren't.

Not in the CBA is a change to the policy that would allow high school players to enter the NBA draft. It was discussed and has been an agenda item for months, but it won't be changing anytime soon - probably not for at least the term of the next CBA.

"We also appreciate that there is a lot of benefit to really having veterans who can bring those 18-year-olds along," NBPA executive director Tamika Tremaglio said in February during an NBPA news conference at All-Star weekend.

"And so, certainly anything that we would even consider, to be quite honest, would have to include a component that would allow veterans to be a part of it as well."

Silver said Wednesday, at the conclusion of a two-day Board of Governors meeting, that he was hopeful of getting a deal done by the weekend. He also said there had been no consideration - at least on the league's part - of pushing the opt-out date back for a third time.



Marseille held 1-1 at home by Montpellier in French league

AP ■ MARSEILLES (FRANCE)

Marseille missed the chance to put pressure on French league leader Paris Saint-Germain after being held at home by in-form Montpellier to 1-1. Matteo Guendouzi's first-half penalty was all Marseille had to show for dominating possession and chances as the visitors stayed unbeaten in the seventh game since coach Michel Der Zakarian returned last month.

Marseille's draw means PSG can move nine points clear on Sunday with a win at home over Lyon. The visitors made a better start and Arnaud Nordin fired Montpellier ahead in the 12th minute, though he had to wait for a VAR check to celebrate after he was initially flagged offside. Wahbi Khazri made a fine turn to elude Guendouzi and set off on a run that sucked in four Marseille defenders before he played the ball to Elye Wahi, who sent it straight on to Nordin for the French forward's fifth league goal.

Verstappen takes pole position at F1 Australian Grand Prix

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Max Verstappen will have his best chance of claiming an inaugural Australian Grand Prix title after taking pole position in his Red Bull for Sunday's third race of the Formula One season on the Albert Park circuit.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton is among rivals sharing renewed hope after the dominance Red Bull has had over its rivals was diminished during Saturday's qualifying session.

Verstappen, a two-time world champion, was not pleased with the performance of his RB19 despite setting a track record around the circuit on Saturday.

After setting a lap record during practice earlier on Saturday, the drivers' championship leader set a benchmark of 1 minute, 16.732 seconds in the final session of qualifying.

"I have been on the podium once, but I want to be on a different step this time," Verstappen said after claiming his first pole position in Australia. His teammate Sergio Perez, who sits just one point behind the Dutch driver in the championship, will start from the back of the grid after



enduring a horrible day in Melbourne.

After declaring Red Bull would win every race this season after their supremacy in Bahrain, Mercedes driver George Hamilton shared the front row of the starting grid after recording a time 0.236 seconds slower than Verstappen.

Hamilton will start in third position on what was an encouraging day for Mercedes, with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso qualifying fourth.

"This is totally unexpected. For us to be up in the two front rows is a dream," Hamilton said. "To be this

close to Red Bull is incredible. I think this gives everyone in the team a boost and a glimpse of hope. This will spur everyone on. It will inspire everyone to continue to push."

Verstappen, who won the season-opening race in Bahrain, was progressively faster on Saturday but raised concerns about his car on the lap prior to setting the new mark.

"Downshifts are getting worse as well," Verstappen said.

Verstappen said he has confidence in the Red Bull's reliability. But he was surprised by how close the Mercedes pair finished.

Sinner stuns top-ranked Alcaraz in Miami Open semifinals

AP ■ MIAMI GARDENS (FLORIDA),

Tenth-seeded Jannick Sinner of Italy stunned top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz in the Miami Open semifinals, rallying from a set down to beat the defending champion, 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-2 in a three-hour thriller.

Sinner ended Alcaraz's winning streak at 10 matches on Friday night. Sinner's powerfully steady baseline game wore down Alcaraz, who appeared to be cramping early in the decisive third set while

he also dealt with an apparent finger injury. He will lose the No. 1 ranking to Novak Djokovic.

Sinner, the 21-year-old who made the Miami Open final last year but hasn't been past the quarterfinals of a major, will face fourth-seeded Daniil Medvedev of Russia in the championship match Sunday. Medvedev has beaten Sinner in all five meetings.

Alcaraz had been so dominant recently, he hadn't lost a set since February before Sinner's rally in the Miami

humidity. The Alcaraz hype train has been so breakaway NBA stars Luka Doncic and Jimmy Butler showed up to watch the Spanish star from the teal seats.

Alcaraz also fought Sinner in Indian Wells in the semifinals, and it was a taut match but not quite like this. These two young guns are poised for a long and spectacular rivalry. Sinner's victory ended Alcaraz's hope of becoming the first man since Roger Federer in 2017 to win the Sunshine Double of Indian Wells and Miami.



Medvedev beat fellow Russian Karen Khachanov 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-3 on the same day Wimbledon announced Russians will be allowed back.

Medvedev has won 23 of 24 matches - the lone loss to Alcaraz - and is in his fifth straight final.

Also Friday, No. 15 seed Petra Kvitova beat unseeded Sorana Cirstea 7-5, 6-3 in the second women's semifinal. Kvitova will face Elena Rybakina in the final.

Alcaraz prevailed in the first set in a tiebreaker but that took a lot out of Alcaraz's 19-

year-old legs. Between points in the third set, Alcaraz was stretching noticeably during the third set, trying to stave off cramps and waved to the crowd for support.

Despite Alcaraz getting the second set back on serve, Sinner stunned Alcaraz in the ninth game, breaking him at love to go up 5-4 and then closing it out. Alcaraz had won 21 straight sets.

An ATP trainer came out to attend to Alcaraz midway through the second set, examining one of his fingers before the cramps set in.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said this week in Melbourne he believes gender equality in the sport is inevitable.

"I think it is fantastic to see the amount of girls, females, that are showing interest in Formula One now and we're seeing it at all levels," he said.

"I think the interest is growing. It is appealing to more women to get involved in the sport, whether that is from an engineering basis, or across all aspects of the organization."

"As the sport does become more accessible, and we are pushing to make it more accessible, I think that is something that will naturally happen anyway."



Trump has become the first former president to be indicted in a criminal case after a grand jury investigation into hush money payments made on his behalf during the 2016 presidential campaign, write ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MEG KINNARD

TRUMP INDICTMENT & INVESTIGATION

Donald Trump’s unprecedented indictment comes as the Republican faces other legal investigations and launches a bid to return to the White House in 2024.

The indictment will test the Republican Party already divided over whether to support Trump next year, in part due to his efforts to undermine his 2020 election loss.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing and accuses prosecutors of engaging in a politically motivated “witch hunt” to damage his campaign.

Here’s a look at the hush money case, the grand jury investigation and possible ramifications for Trump’s presidential campaign:

WHAT’S THIS CASE ABOUT?

The grand jury spent weeks meeting in secret to probe Trump’s involvement in a \$130,000 payment made in 2016 to the porn actor Stormy Daniels to keep her from going public about a sexual encounter she said she had with him years earlier. Trump lawyer Michael Cohen paid Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, through a shell company before being reimbursed by Trump, whose company, the Trump Organisation, logged the reimbursements as legal expenses.

Earlier in 2016, Cohen also arranged for former Playboy model Karen McDougal to be paid \$150,000 by the publisher of the supermarket tabloid The National Enquirer, which then squelched her story in a journalistically dubious practice known as “catch and kill.”

Trump denies having sex with either woman. Trump’s company “grossed up” Cohen’s reimbursement for the Daniels payment to defray tax payments, according to federal prosecutors who filed criminal charges against the lawyer in connection with the payments in 2018. In all, Cohen got \$360,000 plus a \$60,000 bonus, for a total of \$420,000.

Cohen pleaded guilty to violating federal campaign finance law in connection with the payments. Federal prosecutors say the payments amounted to illegal, unreported assistance to Trump’s campaign. But they declined to file charges against Trump himself.

WHAT ARE THE CHARGES?

The indictment has not yet been unsealed, so it’s not totally clear.

Some experts have said they believe Trump could be charged with falsifying business records, which can be a misdemeanor or a felony under New York law. To secure a conviction on the felony charge, prosecutors would have to prove that records were falsified with the intention of committing or concealing a second crime. It’s not clear what prosecutors may allege as the second crime.

WHAT HAS TRUMP’S LAWYER SAID?

Trump’s lawyer, Joe Tacopina, said Thursday that the former president didn’t commit any crime and vowed to “vigorously fight this political prosecution in court.”

Tacopina has accused prosecutors of “distorting laws” to try to take down the former president. He has described Trump as a victim of extortion who had to pay the money because the allegations were going to be embarrassing to him “regardless of the campaign.”

“He made this with personal funds to prevent something from coming out — false, but embarrassing to himself, his family, his young son. That’s not a campaign finance violation, not by any stretch,” Tacopina said on ABC’s ‘Good Morning America’ before the indictment.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Law enforcement officials have been making



“THE THUGS AND CRIMINALS WHO ARE CORRUPTING OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM WILL BE DEFEATED, DISCREDITED AND TOTALLY DISGRACED”
— DONALD TRUMP

security preparations for days for the possibility of an indictment and a court appearance by the president.

Trump was expected to surrender to authorities next week, though details were still being worked out, according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss a matter that remained under seal.

WHAT’S THIS GRAND JURY AND WHO TESTIFIED?

A grand jury is made up of people drawn from the community, similar to a trial jury. But unlike juries that hear trials, grand juries don’t decide whether someone is guilty or innocent. They only decide whether there is sufficient evidence for someone to be charged.

Proceedings are closed to the public, including the media. New York grand juries have 23 people. At least 16 must be present to hear evidence or deliberate and 12 have to agree there is enough evidence in order to issue an indictment.

David Pecker, a longtime Trump friend and the former chief executive of the parent company of The National Enquirer, returned to the courthouse this week where the grand jury was meeting.

Pecker’s company, American Media Inc., secretly assisted Trump’s campaign by paying \$150,000 to McDougal in August 2016 for the rights to her story about an alleged affair with Trump. The company then suppressed

McDougal’s story until after the election.

The grand jury also heard from Cohen, as well as Robert Costello, who was once a legal adviser to Cohen.

The men have since had a falling out, and Costello indicated he has information he believes undercuts Cohen’s credibility and contradicts his incriminating statements about Trump. Costello testified at the invitation of prosecutors, presumably as a way to ensure that the grand jury had an opportunity to consider any testimony or evidence that might weaken the case for moving forward with an indictment.

Trump was also invited to testify, but didn’t.

WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS FOR TRUMP?

Neither the indictment itself nor a conviction would prevent Trump from running for or winning the presidency in 2024.

Last week in Waco, Texas, Trump took a defiant stance at a rally by disparaging the prosecutors investigating him and predicting his vindication as he rallied supporters in a city made famous by deadly resistance against law enforcement.

“You will be vindicated and proud,” Trump said in a speech brimming with resentments and framing the probes as political attacks on himself and his followers. “The thugs and criminals who are corrupting our justice system will be defeated, discredited and totally disgraced.”

Before the charges were handed down, many party leaders had also already begun to defend the former president.

During a visit this month to Iowa, former Vice President Mike Pence called the idea of indicting a former president “deeply troubling.” Another 2024 Republican prospect, New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, has said there is a sense that the former president is being unfairly attacked.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, a declared candidate who also served as Trump’s UN ambassador, has called Bragg’s case an attempt at scoring “political points,” adding, “You never want to condone any sort of prosecution that’s being politicised.”

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is considering joining the 2024 Republican field, slammed the investigation as politically motivated. But he also threw one of his first jabs at the former president in a quip likely to intensify their rivalry. DeSantis said he personally doesn’t “know what goes into paying hush money to a porn star to secure silence over some kind of alleged affair.”

WHAT ABOUT OTHER TRUMP INVESTIGATIONS?

The New York case is just one of many legal woes Trump is facing.

The Justice Department is also investigating his retention of top secret government documents at his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, after leaving the White House. Federal investigators are also still probing the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol and efforts to overturn the 2020 election that Trump falsely claimed was stolen.

In Georgia, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has been investigating whether Trump and his allies illegally meddled in the 2020 election. The foreperson of a special grand jury, which heard from dozens of witnesses, said last month that the panel had recommended that numerous people be indicted, and hinted Trump could be among them. It is ultimately up to Willis to decide whether to move forward.



- Many surgical conditions in children are TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ADULTS
- The laparoscopic hand instruments in children consists of smaller length and diameter
- In children, the inside space to work is less which makes surgery very difficult
- Minimally Invasive surgical team needs to be highly experienced and trained.

Trump at the end of primrose path

The spectacle around Donald Trump’s indictment and arraignment in a court will mark an unprecedented moment in American history that will demonstrate once again how dramatically Trump has upended democratic norms. But on a personal level, the indictment pierces the cloak of invincibility that seemed to follow Trump through his decades in business and in politics, as he faced allegations of fraud, collusion and sexual misconduct, writes JILL COLVIN

When Donald Trump steps before a judge next week to be arraigned in a New York courtroom, it will not only mark the first time a former US president has faced criminal charges. It will also represent a reckoning for a man long nicknamed “Teflon Don,” who until now has managed to skirt serious legal jeopardy despite 40 years of legal scrutiny.

Trump, who is the early frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, is expected to turn himself in on Tuesday. He faces charges, including at least one felony offence, related to hush money payments to women during his 2016 campaign. Like any other person facing trial, he will be booked, fingerprinted and photographed before being given the chance to enter a plea.

The spectacle that is sure to unfold will mark an unprecedented moment in American history that will demonstrate once again how dramatically Trump - who already held the distinction of being the first president to be impeached twice - has upended democratic norms. But on a personal level, the indictment pierces the cloak of invincibility that seemed to follow Trump through his decades in business and in politics, as he faced allegations of fraud, collusion and sexual misconduct.

“Boy, after all this time it’s a bit of a shock,” Trump biographer Michael D’Antonio said of the indictment. “You know I always thought of him as the Gingerbread Man, shouting, ‘You can’t catch me!’ as he ran away.”

“Given his track record,” he said, “I had trouble imagining he would ever be held accountable.”

“These are not things that Donald Trump ever thought in

his entire life, nor I, for that matter, that he would ever be confronted with,” Michael Cohen, Trump’s longtime fixer and a key witness in the case who served jail time for the payments, told CNN.

Of course, some of the celebration by Trump’s detractors may be premature. The former president could seek to have a judge quickly dismiss the case. And even if it moves forward, there’s no guarantee of conviction. Intensifying investigations in Atlanta and Washington are seen as potentially more serious legal threats.

Still, Trump and his team were caught by surprise when word of the New York indictment broke Thursday evening, following news reports that the grand jury hearing the case was set for a weeks-long hiatus. As the deliberations dragged on, some in Trump’s orbit had become convinced that the case had stalled and that charges might never be brought. That included Trump attorney Joe Tacopina, who said on Friday morning he had hoped the “rule of law would prevail.”

Trump, he said on the “Today” show, was “initially was shocked” by news of the charges, but quickly pivoted to his usual pushback playbook.

“After he got over that,” he said, Trump “put a notch on his belt and he decided we have to fight now. And he got into a typical Donald Trump posture where he’s ready to be combative on something that he believes is an injustice. ... I think he’s now in the posture that he’s ready to fight this.”

In the meantime, Trump and his team have tried to use the news to his advantage, hoping to energise his loyal base by painting the investigation as part of a larger plot to



derail his candidacy.

Already, the charges have been a boon to his struggling fundraising. The campaign announced Friday evening that it had raised over \$4 million in the 24 hours after the indictment became public, far smashing its previous record after the FBI search of Trump’s Mar-a-Lago club.

More than 25 per cent of

donations, according to the campaign, came from first-time donors. The average contribution: \$34.

His campaign also continued to blast out supportive statements from dozens of top Republicans who have rallied behind Trump, including several of his declared and likely challengers, underscoring his continued hold on the party.

Trump has been in contact by phone with key congressional allies, including members of House leadership and top committees, according to people familiar with the conversations, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the response.

Trump ally Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., who formally endorsed the former president on Friday,

said Trump “doesn’t back down” and was going to “fight back,” telling a local radio show it was “yet another chapter where Donald Trump is going to come back on top in the end.”

The media maelstrom has catapulted the former president back into the spotlight he craves, at least temporarily limiting attention being paid to

his rivals, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who is widely expected to challenge Trump for the nomination, and has been holding events across the county to promote his book.

Trump aides have been discussing other ideas to maximise the situation, including the possibility of holding a press event either before or

after the arraignment. Trump is expected to travel from Florida to New York on Monday and stay overnight at Trump Tower in midtown Manhattan before heading to the courthouse early on Tuesday. He will return to Florida after the arraignment.

Trump has long denied that he had a sexual encounter with the porn actor known as Stormy Daniels and has blasted Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg for pursuing the years-old case.

Trump is also facing continued investigations in Georgia, over his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, and in Washington, where a special counsel is probing the events of January 6, 2021, as well as Trump’s handling of classified documents at Mar-a-Lago and potential obstruction of the investigation.

But Sam Nunberg, a longtime former aide who broke with Trump years ago, said that while he no longer supports Trump, he believes the Manhattan case is “a waste of time,” given the allegations, which remain under seal. And he said he was skeptical it would ultimately matter.

“It doesn’t surprise me,” he said of the indictment. “What would surprise me is if he actually ended up behind bars in prison and I don’t see that happening.”

D’Antonio said that sentiment - and a continued belief that Trump will somehow prevail and dodge the charges - continues among the many people who have reached out to him in the last 24 hours, despite the charges.

“They’re like, he’s going to get away with it,” he said. “Somehow, he’s going to get it thrown out.” AP

PERSPECTIVE

Demystifying philosophical layers of temples

A notion of sacred has held humankind from time immemorial, bestowing meaning on material pursuits. The onslaught of rapid urbanisation and technological progress has intriguingly rendered sacred spaces all the more relevant. With changes unfolding at breakneck speed, such spaces facilitate introspection and self-enquiry. People from the Indian subcontinent would generally be familiar with the sanctifying ethos of a temple, but a few recognise its philosophical and cosmological foundations. Temples pave the way for individual salvation and also stimulate congregational worship. It is precisely at an interface of these two processes that the philosophical moorings of a temple can be located.

For several centuries, Vastu-shastras have functioned as the principal textual manuals for constructing temples. Texts like Manasara and Mayamatam emphasise the need to construct temples or even towns on square grid plans. Shapes like squares, triangles, circles and even points are liberally employed in temple architecture, and they each carry a distinct meaning. In this case, a square represents the manifest territorial world that needs to be transcended. The square grid plans, which in the words of scholar Stella Kramrisch function as “forecasts for temples”, are known as vastu-purusha mandalas. Gods associated with each of the squares within the mandala are ritually invoked to pacify the vastu-purusha, and ensure that

peaceful conditions prevail.

Such diagrams also illustrate the underlying impulse of Indian philosophical traditions to collapse all distinctions between man, God and cosmos. The Samkhya philosophy stresses the unity between microcosm and macrocosm, while Advaita Vedanta extends this further in its theory of the union of atman and brahman. To that extent, each part of a temple is considered to represent the cosmos in a microcosmic capsule, and this imparts spiritual meaning to even the most insignificant components of a shrine. The components of a temple are generally named after parts of the human body, illustrating the organic unity underlying temple architecture in the Indian subcontinent.

This metaphysical union can also be most prominently noticed in the image-worshipping traditions that have passed on from time immemorial. If Vedic texts stress the importance of concentrating the mind on a single object, the Puranas and Agamas are known for their pronounced sectarian predisposition. Nonetheless, continuity can be seen in the way these texts extol aniconic traditions such as the worship of bana-lingas and salagramas.

The linga and yoni manifest forces embodied by Shiva and Parvati respectively. In other words, the stone shaft known as the linga represents Shiva as a silent spectator of the world whose existence is contingent upon the creative energies released by Shakti, who resides at the base. This creative



interplay of two opposing forces provides the dynamic equilibrium required for maintaining the cosmic balance. The salagramas, on the other hand, are stones resembling the discus of Vishnu, and generally acquire this shape because of weathering activity caused by rivers.

These continue to be venerated by Vaishnavites across the country, as was recently noticed in the ecstatic reception

to the Salagrama stones that arrived in Ayodhya from Nepal.

A regular visit to the temple is also suffused with philosophical import. Before entering the sanctuary, a devotee is greeted by the imposing structure of a temple, which in many ways resembles a mountain. Vastu-shastras frequently liken temples to Mount Meru, which is held in high esteem by Hindus. A devotee then enters

the porch and views several sculptures adorning the walls of any temple. Subsequently, the devotee sets foot into the hallowed precincts of the dimly-lit garbha-griha which — almost like a cave within a mountain — is unadorned and houses the chief deity. Texts suggest that an invisible axis connects this deity with the superstructure of a temple. In fact, it is during the consecration of a temple that the deity’s

attributes are manifested by the intervention of priests. This ritual process is called “pranapratishta” and literally suggests instilling prana (life) within the deity.

In other words, the deity is considered to have life just like a human being, and germinates within the womb-chamber (garbha-griha) of a temple. After seeking darsan of the deity, a devotee circumambulates the shrine, and attends to

the subsidiary deities placed on its side walls. This is also a profoundly meaningful exercise as it helps a devotee absorb the energies prevailing within a temple.

The power of visual motifs can also be discerned in the narrative friezes adorning the walls of several temples in India, illustrating stories from epics and Puranas. The Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, which is the only temple in the complex under active worship, contains such friezes and their stories are generally concerned with the restoration of dharma. The Kirat-arjuniya tale is illustrated in several temples of the region. This involves a conflict between Shiva in his incarnation as a hunter (kirata) and Arjuna, who seeks to consolidate his military powers when in exile. Arjuna is put through numerous challenges, before being blessed with the desired armoury. Such stories of perseverance, devotion and truthfulness serve to enhance a devotee’s spiritual experience within a temple.

For all these reasons, the structural features of temples are chiefly responsible for making them an integral part of India’s spiritual landscape. The vibrant temple culture of Bharat has withstood the ravages of time chiefly because of these empowering philosophical and cosmological concepts that subliminally enrich devotee’s experience within a shrine. These need to be acknowledged to foster a society that is rooted to its traditions even as it embraces cosmopolitan ambitions.

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