

OPINION 6
BJP JUGGERNAUT ROLLS
IN HINDI HEARTLAND**WORLD 8**
HUNTER BIDEN INDICTED ON
NINE TAX CHARGES**MONEY 10**
SEBI CONSIDERING TO CREATE
NEW ASSET CLASS

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'NO COACH CAN
CREATE ARTIST
LIKE SHAMI'
12 SPORTS

RBI predicts faster growth for Indian economy

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India on Friday expectedly left its key lending rates unchanged for the fifth consecutive time and predicted faster growth in the world's fastest-growing major economy amid an uncertain outlook on inflation ahead of elections.

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee, consisting of three RBI and an equal number of external members, voted unanimously to keep the benchmark repurchase rate at 6.5 per cent. The central bank raised its forecast for economic growth to 7 per cent from 6.5 per cent, maintaining India's position as the world's fastest-growing major economy. **PTI**

IT raids Congress MP premises in Odisha, Jharkhand

Bhubaneswar/Ranchi: With the Income Tax department recovering a total of over ₹220 crore in cash during raids in places linked to an Odisha-based distillery group till Friday afternoon, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the money looted from the public will have to be returned.

Modi was apparently referring to political leaders in Odisha and Jharkhand who have links with the liquor firm. **PTI**

BJP selects its observers to appoint Chief Ministers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Amid a prolonged deliberation over the appointments of new heads for the States won by the BJP last week, the party appointed Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, and Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda as central party observers for the election of legislature party leaders in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, respectively. The legislature party leaders will become Chief Ministers of the three States and the meetings to elect them may take place over the weekend. There is a view within the party that its leadership may usher in fresh faces at the helm of these States.

Singh will be joined by the party's vice president Saroj Pandey and its general secretary Vinod Tawde as central observers for Rajasthan amid an intense buzz within the BJP that the leadership will bring in a new leader, ignoring the claim of two-time former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. Sources said Raje has been making efforts to get

onto the hot seat and in this regard she called on Party chief JP Nadda.

The choice of Singh, one of the senior most BJP leaders and a Rajput leader, is likely to help build a consensus around the leadership's chief ministerial choice among MLAs, a number of whom are seen as supporting Raje. Khattar will be joined by the party's OBC Morcha head K Laxman and its secretary Asha Lakra for the Madhya Pradesh legislature party meeting, while Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and BJP general secretary Dushwant Kumar Gautam will be central observers for Chhattisgarh along with Munda.

In Madhya Pradesh where the BJP scored its biggest victory among the three States with a two-thirds majority, current Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's stake has gone up with the win but there is a view that the party leadership is looking at a leadership change after his 18-year uninterrupted stint in power except for 15 months after the 2018 Assembly polls.

Heritage left unattended, history threatened

ARCHANA JYOTI ■
NEW DELHI

India's invaluable treasures, the monuments of national importance, stand as cultural gems shielded by vigilant guards to prevent any harm or encroachment. Keeping this in mind, currently as many as 248 monuments/museums of national importance under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have security guards, as per the Government data. However, a significant number of them i.e. 94 per cent are left unattended, lacking security personnel. There are a total 3,693 Centrally protected monuments (CPMs) across the States.

Expressing its dismay over the low percentage of CPMs that have security guards and the insufficient number of personnel to meet the requirements, a Department-related Parliamentary Panel on Transport, Tourism and Culture has asked the Government to ensure adequate funds so as to ensure safety of these heritage structures as well as safety of tourists visiting these spots. In its report tabled in Parliament on Friday, the panel noted that security guards are posted at only 248 CPMs/sites/museums i.e. less than about 6.7 per cent of the total number of CPMs. "Also, out of the total

requirement of 7,000 personnel for protection of monuments, the Government could provide only 2,578 security personnel at 248 locations due to budgetary constraints," said the panel led by Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy. Taking the stringent view that budgetary constraints should not be an excuse for not providing security guards to protect our rich cultural heritage, the panel reminded the authorities that, "it is the duty of the Government of the day to protect our cultural heritage sites." The Committee, therefore, recommends that a budget may be provided by the

Government to appoint 7,000 personnel for protection of the monuments or as per the study conducted by IIT, Delhi.

The Committee also suggested the Union Culture Ministry overseeing the ASI to conduct an urgent thorough assessment of the security requirements and budgetary allocation required for the same and "a strong case may be made to the Ministry of Finance requesting allocation of additional funds for this purpose so as to ensure a basic state of protection for all the monuments across the country to preserve them for generations to come."

Putin hails PM Modi as a force to reckon with

**AGENCIES ■ MOSCOW**

Russian President Vladimir Putin praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, highlighting the progressive development of relations between India and Russia under Modi's guarantee. Putin also said he was "surprised" by Modi's tough stance on defending the national security interests of India.

While addressing the "Russia Calling!" Forum, Putin said Modi cannot be intimidated by any pressure from unfriendly countries, reported TASS news agency. "I want to say that relations between Russia and India are developing progressively

along all trajectories, and the main guarantor of this is the policy pursued by Prime Minister Modi," the Russian leader said at the event. Speaking on international pressure, Putin said he "cannot imagine that Modi could be frightened, intimidated or forced to take any actions, steps, decisions that would be at variance with the national interests of India and the Indian people".

"I just look at what is happening from the outside, and sometimes, frankly speaking, I am even surprised at his tough stance on defending the national interests of the Indian state," Putin further noted in his praise of Modi at the investment forum. The Russian President also asserted the importance of increasing settlements in national currencies between Russia and India, emphasising that Russia stands for a "truly democratic model" of global economic development, reported Sputnik.

Modi may launch Mission 2024 from Kashi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to launch Mission 2024 from his parliamentary constituency, Kashi, following the Bharatiya Janata Party's resounding victories in the recent State elections of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh.

"This marks a significant moment as the Prime Minister has chosen Kashi for the kickoff of his Lok Sabha election campaign in 2024. Modi is scheduled to engage in various programmes during his 43rd visit to the city on December 17 and 18," Vijay Bahadur Pathak, a senior BJP leader said.

Kashi has been important centre for the BJP as any election campaign from this city is bound to affect the whole of eastern Uttar Pradesh which has 28 Lok Sabha constituencies.

During this two-day visit, the Prime Minister is slated to present projects amounting to ₹1,000 crore to the public. Among the projects, the inauguration of the Swaraveda Mahamandir, recognised as the country's largest meditation center, is anticipated. Additionally, Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for several projects, including the Phulwaria Four Lane, Amul Plant, and Sarnath Beautification.

Having been elected as the Member of Parliament from Varanasi in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Modi has cultivated a strong bond with Kashi, making a total of 43 visits over the past nine years of his tenure as the Prime Minister. The upcoming visit on December 17-18 is particularly



significant following the BJP's remarkable success in the Assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has communicated the primary details of the visit to the district administration and BJP leaders. The visit will be centered around various development projects in Varanasi. Dilip Patel, the BJP Kashi area president, stated, "The PM will arrive at Babatpur airport by special plane on the afternoon of December 17." On the first day of his visit, the PM is scheduled to visit Chhota Cutting Memorial School grounds, where an exhibition based on 'Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra' for the urban area will be showcased. Later, he will interact with the beneficiary class. In the evening, Modi will attend the Kashi Tamil Sangamam program at Namo Ghat, meeting South Indian guests and participating in the Ganga Aarti. The PM will conclude the day by resting at the BLW Guest House.



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PM Modi inaugurates Global Investors Summit-2023

Says India is set to become world’s third largest economy

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With the assertion that India is all set to become the third largest economy of the world during his third tenure at helm, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Global Investors Summit-2023 at Forest Research Institute (FRI) Dehradun on Friday. Congratulating the Uttarakhand government for the success of the rescue mission in Silkyara, Uttarkashi, the PM said that one gets a feeling of divinity and development in Uttarakhand. Terming Uttarakhand as the best example of the growth story of India, the PM said that the effect of the double engine government is clearly on display in the State. He said that both Union and State governments have put in tremendous effort in increasing connectivity in the State. Modi said that with completion of the Delhi-Dehradun expressway the distance between the two cities will be covered in only two and half hours. He added that the work on Rishikesh-Karnprayag rail project, Char Dham project and others are going on and the State government is also increasing helicopter services in the State. Modi said that Uttarakhand presents a golden opportunity for investors with the kind of connectivity and environment the State offers. In a veiled attack on the Congress party, the PM said that the approach of earlier governments was to keep the border areas away from development but this approach has now been



changed. He said that the government is focussing on theme based tourism and added that Uttarakhand is all set to emerge as a strong brand in the tourism sector.

Remembering his comment made during his Kedarnath visit, the PM said that the words that the third decade of the century will belong to Uttarakhand had emanated from his mouth. He expressed satisfaction that his words are being realised on ground.

Modi said that just like the businessmen his government also does its SWOT analysis. The analysis shows that there

is an increase in aspiration, hope, confidence and innovation in the country. Referring to the results of recent assembly elections, the PM said that aspirational India seeks a stable government and the people are voting for good governance and track record of the government.

The PM congratulated the State government for launching the ‘House of Himalayas’ brand. He said that the new brand strengthens the concept of ‘vocal for local’ and ‘local for global’. He said that the government has taken a target to make two crore Lakhpati Didis and concepts

such as the House of Himalayas are a step forward in fulfilling the target of empowering women.

Welcoming the participants, the Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the objective of the summit is to take the State forward on the path of development by striking a balance between ecology and economy. He said that when Modi was CM of Gujarat, he started the Vibrant Gujarat conclave which has now become a model for others and taking inspiration from it the Uttarakhand government is organising the investors summit. He declared that the summit will be organised every two years. The CM said that grounding of projects worth Rs 44,000 crore has been done in the inaugural session of the summit. Exhorting the investors to invest in Uttarakhand, the CM said the State has a good investment ecosystem, excellent law and order, investment friendly policies and good climate. He said that a mega convention centre will be constructed in the State. The CM said that the State government has appointed Nivesh Mitras who will be the single point of contact with the entrepreneurs wishing to invest Rs five crore and more in the State.

The governor lieutenant general (retd) Gurmit Singh, former chief ministers, ministers, MPs, MLAs and others attended the inaugural session of the summit.

Investors & industrialists call Uttarakhand an attractive destination

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Discussions were held and memoranda of understanding were signed during sectoral sessions on real estate, healthcare and manufacturing at the Global Investors Summit-2023 here on Friday.

In the session on real estate, Urban Development and Housing minister Prem Chand Agarwal said that the attraction for Uttarakhand can be gauged from the rising number of people undertaking the Char Dham Yatra which had reached 56 lakh this year. A floating population of about seven crore arrives in Uttarakhand in a year. The minister said that Haridwar-Rishikesh will be redeveloped on the lines of Varanasi in the future. Housing and Urban Affairs ministry economic advisor Dinesh Kapila said that the real estate sector was regulated properly after the RERA Act in 2016 and the trust of people in this sector has increased after that. He stressed on the need for drafting policies which make land affordable and easily available.

Additional chief secretary Anand Bardhan said that the completion of the Delhi-Dehradun economic corridor in the near future will reduce the distance by road between these two cities to two and half hours. Uttarakhand also benefits from having the capital city closest to Delhi-NCR, he said. The State government is making the land pooling rules easier and simplifying housing bylaws, Bardhan added. Various possibilities were also discussed during a panel discussion in the session. During the session on healthcare, investors assured support to the government's efforts in expanding quality healthcare services to the distant mountainous regions of the State. MoUs worth Rs 18,500 crore have been signed in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sector in the initial phase of the summit. The government and investors decided that the measures for grounding of the proposed

investment should be expedited. Women Empower and Child Development minister Rekha Arya said that special focus is being laid on encouraging participation of the private sector. For the convenience of investors the State government has made customised policies and simplified the rules. The government is according top priority to further improve health services and make them more accessible in the State, she said.

Health and Family Welfare secretary R Rajesh Kumar outlined the investment possibilities in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sector while also informing about the related policies of the State government. The cooperation of the private sector is necessary to meet the quality healthcare demands of a rising population amidst increased awareness on health. In the session on manufacturing, investors referred to Uttarkhand as an attractive investment destination. Skill Development and Animal Husbandry minister Saurabh Bahuguna said that the State government has executed various reforms in different sectors and is continuing the process. The government has made amendments according to the times in the old policies and also brought new policies in different sectors based on the suggestions of industrialists and investors. Industries secretary Vinay Shankar Pandey said that the government has introduced 27 new policies in different sectors and made amendments in the old MSME policy in addition to umbrella policy functioning in various sectors. Industrialists and investors shared their experiences and suggestions during the session. They said that Uttarakhand is an attractive destination for investment. They also expressed interest in establishing enterprises especially in the pharmaceutical, automobiles, health and wellness, hospital, Ayurveda, aroma and other sectors in the State.

BJP thanks PM Modi for grounding of Rs 44K crore MoUs

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Bharatiya Janata Party State President Mahendra Bhatt has thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the grounding of memoranda of understanding worth Rs 44,000 crore on the first day of the Global Investors Summit on Friday. Bhatt said that Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami's efforts have started succeeding under PM Modi's guidance. He expressed happiness at investment MoUs crossing Rs three lakh crore. “PM Modi's arrival

has again proved lucky for us. Our government will work relentlessly till the grounding of all the MoUs signed so far. We also welcome the PM's message on ‘wed in Uttarakhand’ on the lines of Make in India. The government is already undertaking efforts in this direction and the PM's pointing to this aspect will further boost these efforts. We are hopeful that MoUs on a large scale will be signed on the second day of the investors summit,” the BJP State president said.

Congress questions Govt for trashing IDS project for Himalayan States

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara has said that the Modi government has trashed the Industrial Development Scheme (IDS) started in the year 2017 for industrial development of the Himalayan States.

Interacting with the media at the Congress Bhawan here on Friday the PCC president said that the IDS scheme was launched in the year 2017 for industrial development in the Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir. Under the scheme a provision of granting 30 per cent subsidy was made. Mahara said that the scheme was for a period of five years but it was shelved in only four years. He claimed that Uttarakhand has only received Rs 1,100 crore under the scheme till date and a subsidy amount of Rs 5,000 crore is still pending on part of the Union government. He said that apart from exposing betrayal of the

union government the episode also puts up a question mark on the industrial policy of the State.

The PCC president said that the Trivendra Singh Rawat government had organised an investor's summit only to influence the Lok Sabha election of 2019 and the State got nothing from the summit. He added that the summit of 2023 appears to be a replica of the summit of 2018.

He said that the State government has spent a sum of Rs 38 crore on wall paintings, Rs 22 crore on landscaping and Rs 18 crore to colour the shops in saffron colour for the summit.

The vice president (organisation) of Uttarakhand Congress Mathura Dutt Joshi, chief spokesperson Garima Dasauni, media advisor Amrarojeet Singh, spokespersons Rajesh Chamoli and Sheespal Singh Bisht accompanied the PCC president.

Top industrialists promise to invest generously in U’khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Enthused by the potential of Uttarakhand and overwhelmed by the warm reception they received in the Global Investors Summit-2023, the top industrialists of the country appeared positive about investing in the State. In his address in the inaugural session of the summit, the director of Adani group, Pranav Adani said that Uttarakhand has become an important gateway for investment. The group which already has its foothold in the State in the ambitious city gas distribution project and cement plants in the State has made up a plan to expand its business. Adani said that a new Rs 300 crore plant will be set up in Roorkee while a Rs 1,400 crore grinding unit of four million tonne capacity will be set up in the State. These ventures will create 6,000 employment opportunities. He added that the group is planning to develop an aero city near Pantnagar. The chairman and the managing director of Jindal group Sajjan Jindal said that the company will set up two power plants of 1,500 MW capacity each in the next five years. The Jindal group will also invest Rs 15,000 crore in pump storage facilities. Jindal said that the JSW Foundation has

started a clean Kedarnath project under which the temple premises will be made free from plastic waste. The MD of the ITC group, Sanjeev Puri said that the company is planning to open four new hotels in Uttarakhand. He added that the company will set up an integrated pulp unit in the State with an estimated cost of Rs 4,000 crore. Yoga Guru and founder of Patanjali group Swami Ramdev exhorted the investors to invest in Uttarakhand. He said that he had nothing when he came to Uttarakhand and now has built a business empire worth thousands of crores of rupees. Ramdev promised that the Patanjali group will invest Rs 10,000 crore in Uttarakhand and will create ten thousand new employment opportunities. The CEO of Emaar India Kalyan Chakrabarti said that the company will invest Rs 5,000 crore in building townships in Uttarakhand. The founder of TVS Supply Chain Solutions, R Dinesh said that the company has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) worth Rs 12,000 crore with Uttarakhand government. The venture will create 7,000 employment opportunities, he said.

PM asks rich to hold weddings in U’khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi drew loud applause from the crowd when he gave the idea of ‘wed in India’ to the millionaires of the country. He said that it is a pity that the rich of the country are going to foreign destinations for marriage. The PM

suggested that the millionaires should at least hold one marriage of their family in Uttarakhand once every five years. He opined that a robust infrastructure will be created if only 5,000 such marriages are solemnised in the State in one year.

Diversion, closure of educational institutions and secretariat partially checks major traffic woes

PNS ■ DEHRADUN


Though citizens faced traffic woes in the city on Friday, many opined that diversions, closure of educational institutions and the secretariat check the traffic congestion to some extent. Traffic on various roads leading to Dehradun and within the city was diverted due to the summit. Many people said that the traffic management on city roads, closure of schools and the secretariat could be the main reasons behind the comparatively smooth traffic observed on some of the city roads.

According to the traffic diversion plan implemented by the police, traffic from Premnagar to Panditwadi was diverted towards Vasant Vihar. Further, heavy vehicles traveling from ISBT towards Rispana were diverted from Kargi Chowk.



Another local resident Pankaj Dixit said, “Whenever VIPs visit the city, routes are diverted, resulting in traffic congestion that causes inconvenience to the general public. Similarly, during the investors summit, they have been diverted, but this time the situation has changed. The traffic in the city is being properly managed by the police authorities. Additionally, people are choosing to use the affected roads less, as instructed by the authorities, to minimise traffic in the city.”

A shopkeeper at Paltan Bazaar Chirag Gupta said that the traffic diversion due to the investors summit tends to discourage people from visiting the market frequently. Because of the diversion, people have to travel longer distances which makes it inconvenient for them to venture outside. As a result, this time the traffic congestion on the city roads was comparatively lesser than when VIPs visit the city, he added.

**UTTARAKHAND GRAMIN BANK**


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AUCTION SALE NOTICE**Public Notice for Auction for sale of Immoveable properties**
Whereas, the Authorized officer of Uttarakhand Gramin Bank under the Securitization of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security, Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) & in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) found with rules 8 & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice to borrower and Authorized Officer has take physical possession of the properties described herein below. Offers are invited by the Authorized Officer under sub-rule 5 & 6 of rule 8 of the said Act by holding auction on the date, place and time mentioned below. Public at large and borrower and guarantor in general is being informed hereby that Auction under SARFAESI Act-2002 in respect of under mentioned properties will be conducted for sale on the terms and conditions specified herein stated on the basis of "AS IS, WHERE IS" "AS IS WHAT IS" & "WHATEVER THERE IS" for realization of the debate due to Bank. The sale is subject to the conditions mentioned in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

| S. No. | Name & Address of the Borrowers / Guarantors & Branch Name | Outstanding Amount | Description of Property | Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession | Reserve Price/ Earnest Money | Date and time of opening of tender |
|--------|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| 1. | Branch: Kotdwar/Sukhro/Durgapur 1. Sh. Padmendra Singh Aswal S/o Sh Maan Singh Aswal (Borrower/Mortgagor) R/o Vill Kishan Pur ,Sigaddi Road, Tehsil Kotdwar, Distt Pauri 2. Sh Mukesh Gusain S/o Digvijay Singh, (Guarantor) R/o Trilokpur Kalaighati, Kotdwar, Distt Pauri 3. Sh Deepak Kumar S/o Sh Brijesh Lal(Guarantor) R/o Sibbu Nagar, Kotdwar, Distt Pauri Garhwal | Rs 25,65,337/- (Rs Twenty Five Lakh Sixty Five Thousand Three Hundred & Thirty Seven only) as on 06.02.2023 with further interest, costs and charges | All that property bearing Khalt no 8 of Khata - uni Khata no 5, Total area 0.005 Hec ie 49.44 sq mts ie 532 sq ft and constructed there on situated at Vill Ramdayalpur, Patti Haidu khata, Tehsil Kotdwar, Distt Pauri Garhwal (as per Title Deed dtd 31.05.2016 with S no 1913) bounded & butted as under East : Property of vendor, West : Land sold by vendor and house of Sh Shambhu Dutt North : Land of Vendor, South : 40 ft wide Haridwar Road | Date of Demand Notice : 06.02.2023 Date of Possession : 17.10.2023 | Reserve Price : 26,00,000/- Earnest Money : 2,60,000/- | 10.01.2024 Time-12PM Place of Opening of tender : Uttarakhand Gramin Bank, Durgapur, Kotdwar, Distt Pauri. |

Terms & Conditions:- 1.The Auction is being held on "AS IS WHERE IS" AND AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" 2. The secured assets will not be sold below the Reserve Price. 3. Interested Bidders may take bid form from the Branch, Kotdwar/Sukhro/Durgapur, Tehsil Kotdwar Distt Pauri or Regional office-2, Agency, Civil Lines, Pauri & submit the duly filled in Bid Form with a self-attested copy of PAN Card/Aadhar Card & original bank draft/ Banker's Cheque of earnest money in a sealed envelope favoring "Uttarakhand Gramin Bank" payable at "Kotdwar" by 5 PM at UGB Durgapur Tehsil Kotdwar Distt, Pauri, up to 09.01.2024. 4. Last Date of submission of bid :09.01.2024 by 5 PM. 5. Date, Time & Place of opening of Bids :10.01.2024 at 12.00 PM at Uttarakhand Gramin Bank, Branch Durgapur Tehsil Kotdwar, Distt Pauri. 6. Date of Inspection of site: Any working day up to 08.01.2024 between 11 AM to 2 PM for location details our Kotdwar/Sukhro/Durgapur Branch, Tehsil Kotdwar, Distt Pauri, may be approached. 7. Date of Inspection of documents: Any working day of bank between 11 AM to 2 PM & 3 PM to 4 PM till 08.01.2024 at our branch Durgapur Tehsil Kotdwar, Distt Pauri. 8. The intending bidders should make their own independent inquiries regarding encumbrances, title of property put on auction and claims/rights/dues/affecting the property, prior to submitting their bid. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances, whether known or unknown to the bank. The authorized officer/bank will not be responsible for any charge, Lien, encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the govt. or anybody in respect of the property under the sale. 9. No bid will be considered below the reserve price. Bidder should submit his tender in a sealed envelope marked "Bid for the purchase of property of Sh Padmendra Singh." Bidder should submit earnest money with the tender which will be refunded without any payment of interest in case of non acceptance of bid. 10. The successful bidder shall pay initial deposit of 25% of the offer amount within 24 hours of the sale being confirmed in his favor after adjusting EMD and the balance amount within 15 days without giving any notice. Amount of EMD and /or initial deposit as above shall be forfeited on failure to pay the balance amount. 11. All payment shall be made by Demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favor of "Uttarakhand Gramin Bank" payable at Kotdwar. 12. The authorized officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any or all offer (s) or adjourn / date of sale without assigning any reason thereof. 13. The successful bidder shall bear the charges/fee payable such as stamp duty, registration fee etc. as applicable as per law. 14. The buyer will be responsible in respect of all types of payments towards statutory dues or liabilities viz. electricity bill, house tax etc. 15. After opening of the bids the top three intending bidders may be given an opportunity at the discretion of the authorized officer to have inter se bidding among them to enhance the offer price. 16. After auction, for any dispute, the bank will not be responsible for any adverse decision of Hon'ble court. The borrower/owners whose property is being sold take a note of it and make efforts at their end in realizing fair market price of property. This may also be considered as a notice to the borrowers/mortgagors/guarantors under rule 8(6) of the security interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002.

Date : 07.12.2023**Place : Pauri****Authorized Officer: Uttarakhand Gramin Bank**

**पंजाब नैशनल बैंक**

Circle Office, Dehradun
mail id : cs8218@pnb.co.in

(NOTICE UNDER 13 (2) OF SARFAESI ACT 2002 READ WITH RULE 3 OF SECURITY INTEREST ENFORCEMENT RULES 2002
I being an Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor Bank has a reason to believe that all of you the under mentioned notices cannot be served ordinarily as attempted earlier except through this substituted service. As such, all of you the under mentioned notices are hereby informed and called upon through this public DEMAND NOTICE under section 13(2) of the SARFAESI Act with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002 make payment of the amounts due against each of you, as mentioned below, within 60 days, the bank will proceed U/s 13 (4) of the said Act for taking possession of the secured property/ies/Assets mentioned against account and thereafter to sell the same to realize its dues with further interest till realization along with costs as contemplated under the said Act. **Needless to mentioned here that this notice is addressed to you without prejudice to any other remedy available to bank for recovery of its dues, against you.** The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

| S. No. | Name of the Borrower/Guarantor/Mortgagor | Details of Security/Property | Date of Demand Notice | Due Amount |
|--------|---|--|---|--|
| 1. | Branch: Kanwali Road, Dehradun Mr. Mahander Singh S/o Sh. Ganga Ram Singh (Borrower) Address 1: 21, Sangam Vihar Kanwali, Dehradun. Address 2: 697, Priyadarshini Encl, GMS Road, Kanwali, Dehradun. Smt. Doli Singh W/o Mahander Singh (Co-Borrower), Address 1: 21, Sangam Vihar Kanwali, Dehradun. Address2: 697, Priyadarshini Encl, GMS Road, Kanwali, Dehradun. | All that land & superstructure thereon bearing khasra no. 697 min.area 66.04 sq. mtrs. Situated at mauza Kanwali, pargana Canton door,dist dehradun. Bounded and butted as under. North: Property of Sh. Bhupendra Singh Side measuring 58 ft, South: Property of Sh. Dinesh Chawla, side measuring 58 ft, East: 30 ft (9 meter) wide road, side measuring 12 ft, West: land of other, side measuring 12 ft 6 inches. Registered in the office of sub registrar, Dehradun vide bahi no. 1, zild no.1763, page 275 to 298 at sr 3908, dated 31 July 2017. Ownership: Mr. Mahander Singh S/o Sh. Ganga Ram Singh (Borrower/Mortgagor). Residence: 21, Sangam Vihar Kanwali Dehradun. | SARFAESI Notice issued u/s 13(2) on 01.12.2023 for Rs. 27,78,407.74 + Further interest w.e.f. 01.12.2023 The Notice was sent to you by Registered post returned undelivered. Date of NPA 30.10.2023 | Due Amount as on 30.11.2023 Rs. 27,78,407.74 + Further interest and other charges w.e.f. 01.12.2023 |
| 2. | Branch:Nari Shilp Mandir, Dehradun. Mrs las Ganges Zone (Prop) Mrs. Bharti Khanduri (Borrower) Residence: 648/1,Kailashpuri Ballpur Road,Dehradun- 248001. Reg. Office Address: Shop No. 23, Capri Trade Centre Chakrata Road, Dehradun-248001. | 1. Hypothecated Stock of computers laptops and accessories. ownership: Mrs. Bharti Khanduri, Residence: 648/1, Kailashpuri, Ballpur Road, Dehradun-248001 | SARFAESI Notice issued u/s 13(2) on 04.12.2023 for Rs. 12,60,167.35+ Further interest w.e.f. 01.12.2023 The Notice was sent to you by Registered post returned undelivered. Date of NPA 22.08.2023 | Due Amount as on 30.11.2023 Rs. 12,60,167.35 + Further interest and other charges w.e.f. 01.12.2023 |

Date: 07.12.2023**Place : Dehradun****Authorised Officer**



Pushkar Singh Dhami
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

Heartiest Welcome

to

Devbhoomi Uttarakhand



Amit Shah
Union Minister, Home & Cooperation
Govt. of India

Amit Shah

Union Minister, Home & Cooperation
Govt. of India

in the august presence of

Pushkar Singh Dhami

Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

Program

Uttarakhand

Global Investors Summit 2023
Closing Ceremony

Time: 12:30 PM
Venue: FRI, Dehradun

Maa Ganga Aarti & Pujan

Time: 05:30 PM
Venue: Parmarth Niketan,
Rishikesh



Issued in Public Interest by Information & Public Relations Department, Uttarakhand

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Two Himachal men die after pickup falls 600 metres down mountainside

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Two persons from neighbouring Himachal Pradesh died when the pickup vehicle they were in fell into a 700 metre deep gorge in the Kalsi area of Dehradun district on Friday. According to information from the police, at about 6 AM, a pickup vehicle with license plate number HP 08 A 1427 reportedly fell about 600 metres down the mountainside at Timra on the Kalsi-Rohdu route. There were three persons in the vehicle when it met with the mishap.

On receiving information about the accident, the Kalsi police, State Disaster Response Force and Revenue police reached the site to conduct rescue and relief efforts. Two of the persons in the vehicle had died on the spot while the third one was rescued in an injured state. The injured man was taken to the nearest hospital where it was learnt that the pickup vehicle was taking lime from Vikas-nagar to Himachal Pradesh. The two persons who died in the mishap have been identified as Rohit Thapa (21) and



Mohanlal (26). Both are residents of Chaupal in Shimla districts of Himachal Pradesh.

The injured man Vikhyat Singh (30) is also a resident of the same town.

Modern operation theatre inaugurated at Patanjali Ayurved hospital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A modern operation theatre of the surgery department was inaugurated by Patanjali Yogpeeth founder Swami Ramdev and general

world and integrate it with modern medical science. Surgery has been described in Ayurveda since ancient times with Maharshi Sushruta also

but a skill which can be linked with any system of medicine and taken forward. At the surgery and research centre in Patanjali Yogpeeth, Ayurveda and surgery have been joined and the ancient method has been integrated with latest laser technique to start a new chapter in medicine. Patanjali's latest operation theatre is an amalgamation of the ancient and the modern. He said, "On the one hand patients are restored to good health with Yoga, Ayurveda, naturopathy and other ancient medicine techniques in Patanjali, on the other hand it the world's best Ayurvedic hospital recognised by NABH, world class pathology lab recognised by NABL, facilities for dentistry, ophthalmology and ENT with latest equipment along with a research centre. Patanjali Ayurved hospital also has x-ray and ultrasound facilities," he said.



secretary Acharya Balkrishna at the Patanjali Ayurved hospital in Haridwar. Speaking on the occasion, Ramdev said that the Patanjali Ayurved hospital is working on new possibilities to make Ayurveda popular across the

being considered the father of surgery. By linking surgery in Ayurveda with modernity, Patanjali is working to bring a revolution in the medical world, he said. Expressing his views, Balkrishna said that surgery is not some 'pathy'

Minimum temperature likely to drop further in Doon today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The minimum temperature dropped by a notch in Dehradun on Friday and is set to drop further today. However, the maximum temperature has remained above normal and prevented the winter chill from being felt during the daytime. Meanwhile, the State meteorological centre has forecast that dry weather is likely to prevail in the districts of the State on Saturday. Shallow to moderate fog is likely to occur in some parts of Udham Singh Nagar and Haridwar districts during the morning hours. The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness a mainly clear sky with mist likely to occur during the morning hours. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 25 degrees Celsius and eight degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various parts of the State on Friday were 25.9 degrees Celsius and 8.2 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 24.8 degrees Celsius and 7.9 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 15.2 degrees Celsius and 3.6 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 17.5 degrees Celsius and five degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

Four children rescued from child labour in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Following the directions of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), the district task force rescued four children from child labour in Dehradun. The Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) State coordinator Suresh Uniyal revealed that the NCPCR has directed the district task forces to implement the nationwide child labour rescue programme from November 20 to December 10. In line with the said programme and under the supervision of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), the district task force conducted a child labour rescue programme on Friday and rescued four children from the Clement Town area of the city, he said. He further added that out of the four rescued children, one is a 10-year-old girl who was employed at a restaurant. The remaining children were found working in a hotel and a juice corner. Following the rescue operation, the task force has taken legal action against the business owners who employed these children as child labourers. The case has

been registered against the business owners under the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986). The rescued children will soon be handed over to the Child Welfare Committee for counselling. Further, the parents of these children will also participate in the counselling sessions, he said. Uniyal further said that the district task force, as mandated by the NCPCR, will consistently organise child labour rescue programmes in Doon. It will be recalled that recently under the programme, the Haridwar district task force had successfully rescued 20 children who were found working in small restaurants located along the stretch of the highway from Haridwar

CHANGE OF NAME

I, CHAND holder of Indian Passport No: Z2489612 issued at DUBAI on 16/02/2014 and Permanent Resident of Ward No.4 H.No.41 Zayanand Bhartiya Marg Po Kotdwara Pauri Garhwal and Presently Residing at Karama DUBAI UAE do hereby change my name from Chand to Chand (Given name) Maula Bakesh (Surname) with immediate effect.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is informed that I have changed my name from Rajneesh to Rajnish Verma and in future I should be known as Rajnish Verma W/o Surendra Kumar Address: 495/322 Arya Nagar Chowk Opp Shri Arvind Yog Mandir Jwalapur Haridwar UK

In my Husband Service record my name mistakenly recorded as DHANESHWARI where as my correct name is DHANESHWARI DEVI as mentioned in other all documents. Army No 4070220A Ex NK LATE NARESH CHANDRA R/O ATHOORRWALA DEHRADUN UTTARAKHAND. vide Affidavit 06.12.2023 before Dehradun.

In my husband Army Record my Daughter name mistakenly recorded as NUTAN and whereas her correct name is NUTAN JUJYAL as mentioned in all other documents. ARMY No. 4070220A Ex NK LATE NARESH CHANDRA R/O ATHOORRWALA DEHRADUN UTTARAKHAND. vide Affidavit 06.12.2023 before Dehradun.

In my husband Army Record my Daughter name mistakenly recorded as MONIKA and whereas her correct name is MONIKA JUJYAL as mentioned in all other documents. ARMY No. 4070220A Ex NK LATE NARESH CHANDRA R/O ATHOORRWALA DEHRADUN UTTARAKHAND. vide Affidavit 06.12.2023 before Dehradun.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Land Registry number 4302 which belongs to Jai Dutt son of late Madho Ram, Gopal Dutt son of late Sahaj Ram, Yash and Rohan son of Raghava nand which is registered and marked as 1/306 in the records of municipal corporation of vikasnagar and other property of khasra number 903/2 which is currently owned by Jai Dutt and Barudutt son of late Madho Ram, Madiram and Ramanand son of late Tulsiram, Parmanand, omprakash and Manmohan son's of late Sundram.The property is registered in municipal corporation of vikasnagar Both the property are owned by M/s Hotel Madho Lodging House main market vikasnagar Both of the above original Registry are actually lost somewhere.jaiDutt Bijalwan son of late Madho Ram resident of village chillar tehsil tiuni and hall adress m/s Madho Lodging House main market vikasnagar district Dehradun

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is given to public at large that Original Deed deed executed by U.P. Awas & Vikas Parishad in favour of Smt. Shobha Rani W/o Sh. Om Prakash, which is duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Dehradun in Book no. 1, Vol. 407 pages 459 / 469, document no. 5203, 06.10.1995 & Original POA executed by Smt. Shobha Rani W/o Sh..Om Prakash in favour of Sh. Ratish Mohan Agarwal S/o Sh. Kalishchand Agarwal, which is duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Dehradun in Book no. 4, Vol. 4, page 80, A.D.F.B no. 4, Vol. 43, pages 47/54, document no. 770, 26.07.1995. & Original Sale deed executed by Smt. Shobha Rani through attorney holder Sh. Ratish Mohan Agarwal in favour of Sh. Jaspal Singh Rawat S/o Sh. Heera Singh Rawat, which is duly registered in the office of the Sub-Registrar-I, Dehradun in Book no. 1, Vol. 995, page 25, A.D.F.B. 1, Vol. 5845, pages 209 to 220, document no. 4550 17.11.1997. That the said sale deed & POA are lost, if any person find it within 7 days from the publication of this notice then intimate to the contact numbers & address mentioned herein below". (SHAMMI TANDON., ADVOCATE) Contact: 9897006975
Sh.Sushil Kumar Mittal S/o Late Sh. Kedarnath Mittal R/o D-48, Nehru Colony, Dist. Dehradun Mob.: 9800090222
Disclaimer
The Pioneer does not take responsibility for the content for the advertisement (Display/Classified) carried in this newspaper. The paper does not endorse the same. Readers are requested to verify the contents on their own.

For advertisement booking
9045057787 8909212518
Email: pioneerdoon@gmail.com

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM NOTICE
Tender was invited under Tender notice no. 236-DRM-MB-23-24 dated 30.11.2023, the schedule of said tender was corrected and now the advertised cost of this tender is Rs. 3,14,28,813.31 instead of Rs. 3,06,04,241.90 and Earnest Money is Rs. 3,07,200/- instead of 3,03,000/-. Other terms & conditions and date of opening will remain same. 3860/2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

**IREL (India) Limited**
(A Government of India Undertaking-Dept. of Atomic Energy)
Prabhadevi, Mumbai-400 028 CIN: U15100MH1950GOI008187
Advt.No.CO/HRM/23/2023
IREL (India) Limited, a Miniratna-I CPSE, invites online applications from experienced professionals for the following positions in Finance & Technical (Metallurgy/ Material Science) disciplines. Last date of submission of applications is 03.01.2024.

| Name of the post | Grade | Pay scale (in Rs) | No. of Posts |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------------------|--------------|
| Chief Manager (Finance) | E-5 | 80000-220000 | 1 |
| Senior Manager (Finance) | E-4 | 70000-200000 | |
| Deputy Manager (Finance) | E-2 | 50000-160000 | 1 |
| Assistant Manager (Finance) | E-1 | 40000-140000 | |
| Deputy Manager (Technical) | E-2 | 50000-160000 | 3 |
| Assistant Manager (Technical) | E-1 | 40000-140000 | |
| Technical Supervisor | S-2 | 26500-72000 | 4 |
| Junior Technical Supervisor | S-1 | 25000-68000 | |

Eligible and interested candidates are requested to visit Career section of IREL website www.irel.co.in for details and applying.
CBC 48129/12/0043/2324

**Canara Bank**
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
संघिके Syndicate

BRANCH:- S P Road (J)2163 DEHRADUN

POSSESSION NOTICE
(For Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Canara Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of security interest Act, 2002 (Act. No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notice calling upon the Borrower/Surety/Owner/s as given below to repay the amount mentioned below within 60 days from the receipt of the said notice. The borrower/Surety/Owner/s having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Surety/Owner/s and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 & 9 of the said Rules. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.** The Borrower/Surety/ Owner/s in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property, and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of **Canara Bank, S P Road, Branch** for the amount detailed below and interest together with expenses thereon.

| S. No. | Branch & Name of the Borrower/Guarantor | Description Of Immovable Property | Date of Demand & Possession Notice | Amount Outstanding |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| 1. | Branch: SP Road 2163 Dehradun M/s Nidhi HP Gas Agency, Proprietor- Nidhi Sabbarwal D/o S S Sabbarwal 87 Nai basti Saharanpur Road, Dehradun 248001 (Borrower) (Registered Office) C/o Khasra no. 1374 GMS Road Near Kamla Palace Mauza Kanwali Dehra -dun 248001 (Work Office), Ms. Nidhi Sabbarwal D/o S S Sabbarwal 87 Nai basti Saharanpur Road, Dehradun-248001 (Mortgager). | All That Part And Parcel Of The Property Consisting Of Commercial Shop bearing Khata Khatauni no. 2686, (Fasl Year 1394-1399) Khasra No. 1374 Min situated in main GMS Road, Mauza Kanwali Pargana Kendriya Doon Tehsil Sadar District Dehradun in name of Mrs. Nidhi Sabbarwal D/o Mr. S S Sabbarwal. Boundaries: East- Main GMS Road SM 10 ft, West- Property of Sh. Shanti Swaroop, SM 10 ft, North- 14 ft wide private road, South- Property of Sh. Sajwan, SM 25ft. | Date of Demand Notice 26.09.2023 Symbolic Possession notice 06.12.2023 | Rs. 20,65,990.00 (Rupees Twenty Lakh Sixty Five Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Only) as on 01.09.2023 + Incidental Expenses and Costs minus Recoveries w.e.f. 01.09.2023 (if any). |
| Date - 08.12.2023 | | Place: Dehradun | Authorized Officer, Canara Bank | |

IDFC First Bank Limited

(erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792
Registered Office: - KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031.
Tel: +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022



Notice under Section 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

The following borrowers and co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd) The loans of the below-mentioned borrowers and co-borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loan were classified as NPA as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd) are mentioned as per respective notices issued more particularly described in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be applicable and the same will be charged as per contractual rate with effect from their respective dates.

| Sr No. | Loan Account No. | Type of Loan | Name of borrowers or co-borrowers | Section 13 (2) Notice Date | Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice | Property Address |
|--------|------------------|--------------|--|----------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | 42022577 | HOME LOAN | 1. DURGA SAINI 2. HARPREET KAUR SAINI | 29.11.2023 | 57,50,005.99/- | ITEM-1:- ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PLOT NO.20, MEASURING EAST-16.77 MTRS. WEST-16.77 MTR., SOUTH-7.75 MTR., NORTH-7.75 MTR., TOTAL MEASURING 129.96 SQ. MTRS., HAVING KHASRA NO. 191/, SITUATED AT AMAN ENCLAVE, GRAM: SULTANPUR MAJRI, PARGANA: JWALAPUR, TEHSIL & DISTRICT: HARIDWAR, UTTARANCHAL-249407, AND BOUNDED AS: EAST: PLOT NO. 21, WEST: PLOT NO. 19 NORTH: RASTA 9 MTR. SOUTH: NALA ITEM-2:- ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PLOT NO.21, MEASURING EAST-16.77 MTRS. WEST-16.77 MTR., SOUTH-7.75 MTR., NORTH-7.75 MTR., TOTAL MEASURING 129.96 SQ. MTRS., HAVING KHASRA NO. 191/, SITUATED AT AMAN ENCLAVE, GRAM: SULTANPUR MAJRI, PARGANA: JWALAPUR, TEHSIL & DISTRICT: HARIDWAR, UTTARANCHAL-249407, AND BOUNDED AS: EAST: PLOT NO. 22, WEST: PLOT NO. 20, NORTH: RASTA 9 MTR.SOUTH: NALA ITEM-3:- ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PLOT NO.22, MEASURING EAST-16.77 MTRS. WEST-16.77 MTR., SOUTH-7.75 MTR., NORTH-7.75 MTR., TOTAL MEASURING 129.96 SQ. MTRS., HAVING KHASRA NO. 191/, SITUATED AT AMAN ENCLAVE, GRAM: SULTANPUR MAJRI, PARGANA: JWALAPUR, TEHSIL & DISTRICT: HARIDWAR, UTTARANCHAL-249407, AND BOUNDED AS: EAST: PLOT NO. 23, WEST: PLOT NO. 21, NORTH: RASTA 9 MTR.SOUTH: NALA ITEM-4:- ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PLOT NO.23, MEASURING EAST-16.77 MTRS. WEST-16.77 MTR., SOUTH-7.75 MTR., NORTH-7.75 MTR., TOTAL MEASURING 129.96 SQ. MTRS., HAVING KHASRA NO. 192, SITUATED AT AMAN ENCLAVE, GRAM: SULTANPUR MAJRI, PARGANA: JWALAPUR, TEHSIL & DISTRICT: HARIDWAR, UTTARANCHAL-249407, AND BOUNDED AS: EAST: PLOT NO. 24, WEST: PLOT NO. 22, NORTH: RASTA 9 MTR.SOUTH: NALA |

You are hereby called upon to pay the amounts to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd) as per the details shown in the above table with contracted rate of interest thereupon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to initiate proceedings, under Section 13 (4) and section 14 of the SARFAESI Act, against the mortgaged properties mentioned hereinabove to realize the amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd). Further you are prohibited under Section 13 (3) of the said Act from transferring the said secured assets either by way of sale/lease or otherwise.

Date : 09.12.2023
Place : UTTARANCHAL
Sd/-
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited)

कार्यालय जिला पंचायत टिहरी गढ़वाल

अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना ।
जिला पंचायत टिहरी गढ़वाल की ओर से जिला पंचायत टिहरी में वर्ष 2023–2024 हेतु पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से दिनांक 28.12.2023 को अपराह्न 1:00 बजे तक सील बन्द निविदा आमंत्रित किये जाते है, जो उसी दिन अपराह्न 2:00 बजे उपस्थित निविदादाताओं के समुख समिति द्वारा खोले जायेंगे। निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि से दिनांक 27.12.2023 को सांय 4:00 बजे तक जिला पंचायत कार्यालय से प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं। निविदा के साथ निर्धारित प्रतिभूति राशि एन०उस०सी०, टी०डी०आर०, एफ०डी०आर०, सी०डी०आर० आदि के रूप में जो कि अपर मुख्य अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत टिहरी गढ़वाल के नाम बन्धक हो संलग्न करना अनिवार्य हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त रुपये – 100 / – का नाम जुडिशियल स्टॉप पेपर क्रॉस किया रुपये 1:00 का रसीदी डिक्ट हस्ताक्षर युक्त लगा हों ठेकेदार का जी०एसटी० नम्बर पैन नम्बर बैंक पासबुक या कैन्सिल बैंक, आधार कार्ड, जिला पंचायत की पंजीकरण तथा सामान लाईसेंस हों फोटोकापी, संलग्न करना अनिवार्य होगा। प्रत्येक कार्य हेतु तीन से कम निविदाये मान्य नही होगी। अन्य शर्तें पूर्ण न करने पर भी निविदा मान्य नही होगी। निविदा स्वीकृत /अस्वीकृत करने का अधिकार निविदा समिति की संस्तुति पर माननीय अध्यक्ष, जिला पंचायत में निहित होगा। अन्य शर्तें किसी भी कार्य दिवस में जिला पंचायत कार्यालय नई टिहरी में देखी जा सकती है।

| क्र० विकास खण्ड सं० | का नाम | स्वीकृत कार्ययोजनाओं का नाम | प्रतिभूति राशि (२ प्रतिशत रु में) | निविदा का मुल्य रु० में | कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि | निविदा की बैधता |
|---------------------|-------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 01 | नरेन्द्रनगर | ग्रा०प० क्यार्की में टिन सैड निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 02 | नरेन्द्रनगर | ग्रा०प० बडेडा के धौलसूत में पुलिया निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 03 | नरेन्द्रनगर | ग्रा०प० नौडू काटल लम्बधार तोक में मन्दिर के समीप आंगन चौक निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 04 | नरेन्द्रनगर | ग्रा०प० घुघतानी तल्ली के पाथी तोक में यात्री सैड / पैदल पुलिया। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 05 | धौलधार | ग्राम कोटी रौल्यालू की में अनु० बस्ती सम्पर्क मार्ग। | 7000 | 400+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 06 | धौलधार | ग्राम पंचायत मंजकोट में बबलूदास के मकान के पास सुरक्षा दिवार एवं सी०सी० सम्पर्क मार्ग निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 07 | धौलधार | ग्राम लवाणी के गाफर में पंचायती रेन शेड / यात्री शेड प्रांगण निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 08 | धौलधार | ग्राम दडमाली में शेड / प्रांगण निर्माण कार्य। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 09 | धौलधार | जिला पंचायत क्षेत्र बरसूल के विभिन्न ग्राम पंचायतों हेतु बेंच स्थापन कार्य। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 10 | धौलधार | कोडिया से कोटी रौल्यालू की में पाइप लाइन मरम्मत एवं नव निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 11 | धौलधार | गंगोत्री यात्रा मार्ग के स्थान रत्नौगाड में सार्वजनिक शौचालय निर्माण। | 12000 | 600+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 12 | धौलधार | गंगोत्री यात्रा मार्ग के स्थान कमान्द में सार्वजनिक शौचालय निर्माण। | 16000 | 800+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 13 | जौनपुर | ग्रा०प० फेडी किमोडी में मण्डान चौक में सुरक्षा दिवार निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 14 | जौनपुर | ग्रा० मटोली के चम्पागांव में पंचायती चौक में पथर विछान कार्य। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 15 | जौनपुर | ग्रा०प० सैजी में बारातघर का विस्तारीकरण / अवशेष कार्य। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 16 | जौनपुर | पाली में मुख्य मोटर मार्ग से गांव तक सी०सी० | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 17 | जौनपुर | ग्रा० सुरांशु में पंचायती आंगन चौक का विस्तारीकरण कार्य। | 7000 | 400+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 18 | जौनपुर | ग्रा० मसोन में सामुहिक पार्किंग निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 19 | जौनपुर | जिला पंचायत क्षेत्र थल्यूड के विभिन्न ग्राम पंचायत के अर्न्तगत बेंच स्थापन | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 20 | जौनपुर | ग्राम थापला के अर्न्तगत भेडियाना नामे तोक में टिन शेड निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 21 | जौनपुर | ग्राम पंचायत औंडत के बारातघर में इण्टरलौकिंग टाइल्स कार्य। | 10000 | 500+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 22 | जौनपुर | बंलौ की काण्डी के खनाल्दी में पार्किंग / रेलिंग कार्य। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 23 | जौनपुर | थल्यूड में सामुदायिक टिन शेड निर्माण। | 10000 | 500+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 24 | चम्बा | जिला पंचायत क्षेत्र गौसारी के अर्न्तगत विभिन्न स्थानों पर बेंच निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 25 | चम्बा | ग्रा०स०छाती के कोटी तल्ली में विशाल सिंह के मकान से गजा नकोट मोटर मार्ग तक सी०सी० मार्ग। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 26 | चम्बा | ग्रा० बनाली के सौरालिया मन्दिर में पंचायती घर निर्माण। | 8000 | 400+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 27 | चम्बा | ग्रा० साबली के अर्न्तगत शिव दयाल खणका के मकान से नागराजा मन्दिर तक सी०सी० मार्ग व रेलिंग निर्माण। | 8000 | 400+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |
| 28 | चम्बा | ग्रा० उपला पांगर में सामुदायिक मिलन केन्द्र के समीप अतिरिक्त कक्ष एवं शौ०। | 10000 | 500+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 29 | चम्बा | शि०प० क्षेत्र बागी के अर्न्तगत बेंच स्थापन कार्य। | 10000 | 500+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 30 | चम्बा | स्वच्छ भारत मिशन भादूसैण के अर्न्तगत प्लस्टिक वेस्ट मैनेजमेंट इकाई का निर्माण। | 32000 | 1600+18%GST | 3 माह | 45 दिन |
| 31 | चम्बा | जसपुर में मार्ग निर्माण। | 6000 | 300+18%GST | 2 माह | 45 दिन |

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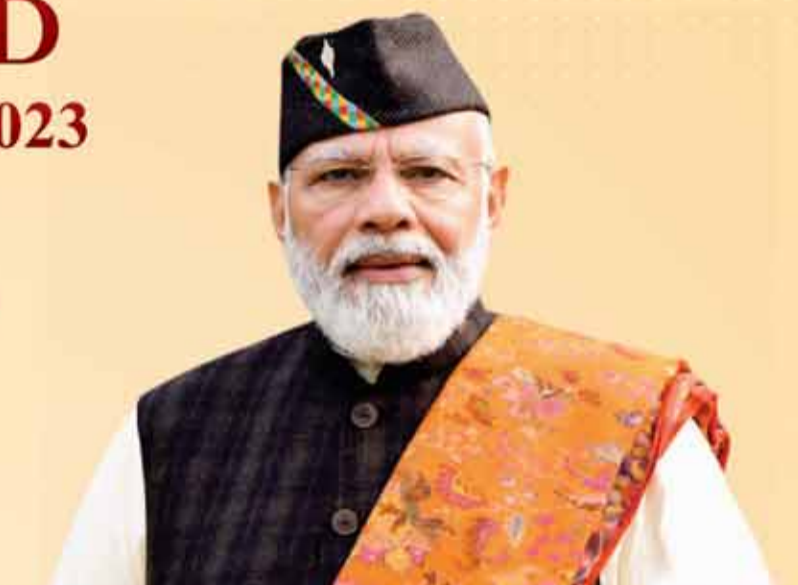
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Chief Minister of Uttarakhand

UTTARAKHAND Global Investors Summit 2023

Closing Ceremony



Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Chief guest

Amit Shah

Union Minister, Home & Cooperation
Govt. of India

in the august presence of

Pushkar Singh Dhami

Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

Date: 09 December, 2023

Time: 12:30 PM | Venue: FRI, Dehradun

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Toying with lives

The authorities were not geared to deal with cyclone Michaung despite early warnings on path, intensity

The devastation caused in Chennai recently by Cyclone Michaung, despite early alerts and enough time to be safe and secure, is proof enough that the Tamil Nadu Government is a very slow learner, if not altogether dyslexic. Just eight years back, a similar situation was witnessed during the infamous Chennai floods but nothing to help address the residents' woes has been done since 2015. Despite early warnings predicting the cyclone's path and intensity, the State Government's lack of preparedness has resulted in widespread suffering for the coastal city. Meteorological agencies had been closely monitoring Cyclone Michaung for days, providing timely and accurate information but the Government failed to take proactive measures. All it did was to declare a public holiday in four districts when the cyclone hit the coast with unprecedented force, leaving behind a trail of destruction. One of the key areas where the Government exhibited lapses was in planning. Many vulnerable, low-lying areas were not evacuated in time; then the lack of coordination between authorities and residents led to chaotic evacuation efforts.



As the cyclone made landfall, it became evident that the relief measures and existing shelters were woefully inadequate; these were overcrowded, lacking basic amenities such as water and sanitation, besides medical aid. Power lines broke down, leading to widespread outages and disrupting communication. Roads were flooded, making it difficult for emergency services to reach the affected areas. The lack of investment in resilient infrastructure has proved to be a significant shortcoming. A city's drainage, which is the most important aspect in such situations, is still a mess with clogged sewers and overflowing wastewater drains. Another critical aspect was the delayed response in initiating rescue operations even after the cyclone made landfall and there were clear indications of stress among the residents, which cost precious lives. The toll could have been much higher had there been no early warning: Now there are modern machines and technology to correctly predict such natural calamities, the authorities need to only show the will and determination, besides acting on the information in a timely manner. The cyclone, now weaker, has moved to Andhra, but leaves behind many questions. In the aftermath of the cyclone, there is a growing call for accountability and a thorough investigation into the lapses. It is imperative that lessons are learned from this apathetic attitude to ensure better preparedness for natural disasters. Moving forward, it is crucial for authorities to prioritise investment in infrastructure, improve coordination in evacuation and relief efforts and foster a culture of preparedness to protect communities from the increasingly unpredictable forces of nature.

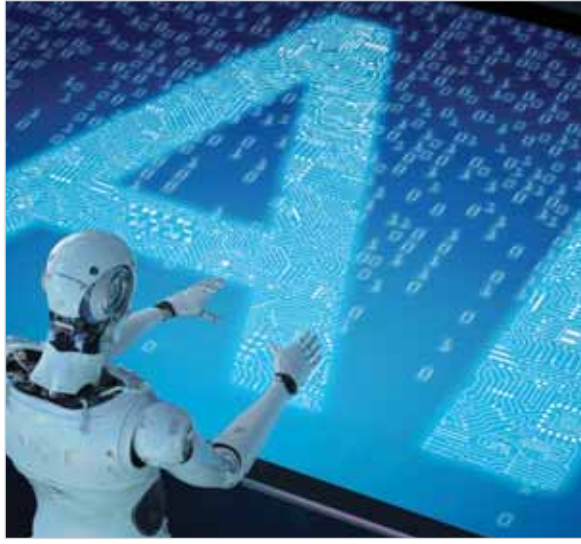


Artists perform during the inauguration of 'Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023', in Dehradun

Use AI tools with caution; it is a double edged sword

Nature of AI will be inherently changing the face of work and we have to understand the technology behind it and be careful in how we use it

Back in late 2022, few were surprised to learn that someone in Silicon Valley had finally managed to build a better chatbot. A chatbot that could actually raise the bar in terms of what consumers should expect? Many agreed that it was about time. What almost no one had prepared for, on the other hand, was a chatbot of the kind eventually unveiled. ChatGPT, it soon became clear, as hundreds of thousands of people gave the tool a try, was more than just the latest iteration of artificial intelligence (AI) - powered customer-assistance software. Many used the word "revolutionary" to describe what the system was capable of doing. Others said the technology seemed sentient like they were interacting with another human and not a machine. And now, attention is turning to the technology's next phase: the one where businesses put it to work. Across industries and at companies of all types and sizes, there are already countless examples of ChatGPT deployment



ments in action. From 'wow' to 'wait and see' In nearly every case, business leaders acknowledge that it's still early days for ChatGPT. They're trailing the technology, "playing with the tool," getting a feel for what it can and cannot do. According to the Dell Technologies 2023 Innovation Index report, 59% of Indian businesses are currently investing or exploring the feasibility of investing in AI to advance innovation. Many say they've already seen enough to know that they could be onto something big. In a report on generative AI that McKinsey published soon after ChatGPT was made available to the public, they pointed out that the technology is one of several recently released platforms that make up the "latest class" of deep learning systems.

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BJP juggernaut rolls in Hindi Heartland

The BJP fought the Assembly elections on Modi charisma and won but it may have to rework its strategy in the South for 2024

BJP will go into 2024 polls with more aggression, renewed strength and confidence which will be laced and embedded in Modi Magic and center's ten-year achievements but its southward journey has been stopped by Congress in Telangana though it has won 8 seats in the House 119. Earlier, BJP had to face defeat in Karnataka and the loss of its ally, AIADMK in Tamil Nadu had also put the saffron party in a dilemma. It was all the way Modi through collective leadership led by the PM did wonders for the BJP in these poll-bound states. A huge gamble and risk was taken by RSS and BJP's high command to make Modi as face of these assembly polls but it paid rich dividends.

It did help in generating the trust of voters who did not hesitate in reposing faith in his leadership though the situation would have been different had CM candidates been declared by BJP. Modi's outreach to tribals also created history as they shifted their loyalty from Congress and supported Modi who promised to look after their welfare in future. The caste census narrative of Congress was neutralized by PM who stressed the need to have faith in four castes viz. women, youth, farmers and the poor, such connotation worked to the hilt. PM's focus on the Congress party's image of corruption also neutralized the anti-incumbency factor in MP besides women voters' overwhelming support of welfare schemes of the Shiv Raj Singh government. Contrary to it, Hindutva's dose in Rajasthan bore the fruit which was compounded by the fielding of ministers and MPs who influenced surrounding assembly segments. It was true in MP also which is considered the factory of experimentation of Hindutva politics. The well-oiled machinery of RSS strengthened the killing spirit of BJP cadres in these poll states besides vast resources at BJP's command. Last but not least, the poll management and strategy of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party president, J.P. Nadda, was successful in putting the rivals on the mat which matters a lot in



winning the elections. Bjp May Re-Work Its Strategy For South. While riding high on the extreme popularity of Modi coupled with the Ram Temple-led Hindutva campaign, the BJP may rework its poll game plan for the south to improve its performance in 2024. According to national president, J.P. Nadda, BJP will focus on the new game plan to have allies in the south and people will vote for PM Modi owing to their faith in his guarantee to fulfil poll promises, unlike the opposition which believes in misguiding the voters to win elections. Nadda is confident about victory in 2024 as cracks have appeared in INDIA which happens to be the group of contradictions and satraps of inflated egos. Congress' defeat may be a good omen for INDIA. The experts feel that Congress party's defeat in Madhya Pradesh and its failure to retain Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh may act as a blessing in disguise for the future of INDIA. First, Congress's victory could have enhanced its bargaining power but defeat has snatched it from the grand old party. Second, it will bring Congress to at equal playing level with other constituents of INDIA

BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER, NITISH KUMAR WAS FEELING ALIENATED DUE TO POLITICAL MANEUVERING BY CONGRESS WHICH WAS AIMING FOR A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE INDIA BLOC

thereby neutralising any iota of arrogance and inflexibility. Third, the jolt to Congress will act as an eye-opener to leaders like Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee, Akhilesh Yadav etc. who may be forced to shed anti-Congress rhetoric and see reasoning in 2024 polls while agreeing to the seat-sharing formula in states like Delhi and Punjab (AAP) and West Bengal (TMC) and Samajwadi Party (UP) respectively. Fourth, the critics of Kejriwal and Mamata argue that both leaders may face corrupt cases and land in jail if Modi returns to power for the third time which may be the predominant reason for their desire to be part of the INDIA alliance. Fifth, Bihar chief minister, Nitish Kumar was feeling alienated due to political maneuvering by Congress which was aiming at a pivotal role in the new INDIA Bloc. One cannot deny the fact that it was Nitish Kumar who had been responsible for bringing warring regional straps to one platform but hurdles were created in assigning him the important position of convenor of INDIA. Now Congress president, Mallikarjun Kharge has convened the meeting of INDIA to iron out differences and move forward with an eye

on 2024. The biggest challenge INDIA faces relates to seat sharing and the finalisation of the common minimum programme. The glitches are huge and may require flexibility and a broad-minded spirit of 'Give and Take' to make the INDIA alliance a reality because it is still confined to paper only. Congress was optimistic about metamorphosis in its fortune as it expected to retain Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and snatch power from the saffron party in Madhya Pradesh. Modi factor has dashed their hopes to the ground as BJP has performed exceedingly well in three states. But BJP proved an outside ring player in Telangana and it will have to console with an increase of its one-seat tally to 8. The BJP and RSS will bank on the Modi factor and the centre's ten-year performance to win in 2024 but there will be a dire need to formulate a new poll strategy for the South as dominance in Hindi states may not be sufficient. The scare of Modi's return to power for 3rd successive time may contribute to this phenomenon. (The writer is political analyst and senior journalist, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STAY ALERT IN WINTER

Sir — Even as temperatures have started to dip, cardiologists have called on people, especially those with pre-existing heart conditions, to be mindful of the winter season, which is known to increase the risk of heart attacks. Cold weather can exacerbate cardiovascular conditions, posing significant risks, particularly for individuals with pre-existing heart issues. The drop in temperature prompts physiological changes, leading to increased blood pressure and heart rate. It is imperative that everyone, especially those with known heart conditions, take proactive measures during the winter months. It is crucial to adhere to prescribed medications, maintain regular follow-ups with your healthcare provider, and adopt lifestyle adjustments such as staying physically active, managing stress, and adhering to a heart-healthy diet. The disruption to the sleep cycle and hormonal balance impacts cardiovascular health, and shovelling snow, engaging in winter sports, and other activities common in cold weather can further stress the heart. The role of "traditional food habits with a higher intake of salt and lipids of animal origin. It is also possible that the influence of day duration and lack of sunlight or UV light in this season stimulates the synthesis of vitamin D3 in the skin and liposoluble cholesterol sulphate, whose deficiency can favour atherosclerosis and inflammation, and be the cause of higher incidence and increased mortality during winter.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

KASHMIR: NEHRU'S BLUNDER?

Sir — Under the present dispensation, the more you imprecate Nehru, the more nationalist and patriotic you are. True to form, Amit Shah has blamed Nehru for his blunders over the Kashmir issue. To be fair to Nehru, he was the PM of India at a time when the PM's job was an unenviable one, what with the horrors of partition and abject poverty casting an ominous dark shadow.

Challenges and opportunities

Platforms like ChatGPT are trained on data from the internet, not on information held by individual businesses. This is getting underlined starkly with businesses not knowing how to fully extract value from data coming through AI channels employed across supply chains. The chatbots also come with their limitations. They will be vulnerable to inaccurate information and bias if the input is not tailored to these chatbots. The rampant use of ChatGPT might also open channels to security threats. ChatGPT is exciting for Indian businesses but it is changing every day. The nature of AI will be inherently changing the face of work. We have to understand the technology behind it and be careful in how we are using it. ChatGPT might be very smart but it is far from perfect. (The writer is a lead solution architect, at Dell Technologies India, views expressed are personal)

Textile industry suffers losses



The onslaught of the coronavirus has had a drastic impact on the global textile industry as well as the Indian textile industry. Even though several sectors like industrial, medical, education, etc. were subjected to a major setback during the pandemic, the textile industry in India was massively affected in terms of productivity, functioning, and employee relations since the entire workforce involved the supply chain. In the last few years, the Indian textile industry has witnessed a huge downfall, particularly in the domestic garment market, with plenty of cancellations in orders and no fresh orders coming through either.

This has resulted in the workforce getting hugely affected, leaving millions of skilled and unskilled labourers with no option but to migrate to their native countries. The Union government should consider the industry's demands and take steps to support them. This should include temporary relief from the import duty on cotton, especially during the off-season. The government should also invest in research and development to help the industry produce cotton more efficiently and sustainably, which will enable it to create more job opportunities, boost exports, and grow the economy. One hopes that the Union government will support this industry to the maximum and revive it soon to get back to its halcyon days. After all, 'cloth' is one of the three immediate and fundamental needs for human life.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

This was the age of a trillion problems and not about making India a \$5 trillion economy. So why does the BJP always behave like an eczema patient who loves to scratch old wounds? "Never be a prisoner of your past. It was just a lesson, not a life sentence." The BJP would do well to read this quote, abide by it, and will continue this.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

WASTEFUL EXPENDITURE IN MARRIAGE

Sir — The wedding season has started. According to data from various cities in the country, at least 38 lakh marriages will occur in the next few days, and at least Rs 4.74 lakh crore will be spent on them. The cultural richness and traditional rituals should indeed be celebrated, but the excessive emphasis on material grandeur can weaken the sanctity of the marital bond, as the economic strain caused by unnecessary expenditure at weddings can have far-reaching consequences.

Therefore, it is important to think about the growing culture of unnecessary expenditure at weddings. At weddings, people spend their entire life savings, but extravagant spending only for sheen and reputation is not sensible. Still, people do it for their reputation among their relatives. These festivals can be celebrated while still sticking to their traditions with a practical approach to spending, which is not only culturally enriching but also economically responsible. By reevaluating our priorities and embracing the beauty of simplicity, we can ensure that weddings remain a true celebration of love, unity, and cultural richness without the unnecessary burden of financial stress. This practice will help aged people and parents to save more for their twilight of life.

Md Ashraf | Lucknow

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOME MENTAL APARTHEID

We must lead a disciplined life and adopt spirituality to tap the law of attraction



RAVI VALLURI

The human mind is cannonaded with innumerable thoughts. It is estimated that around sixty thousand thoughts arise in our mind, on any given day. When the human mind is not at rest or lacks peace, this acts as an obstruction in the pursuit of spiritual growth.

The Banana Swing bowler
Accuracy and rigour were the forte of the master swing bowler John Kenneth Lever. This ubiquitous workhorse for Essex had the uncanny ability to prodigiously bring the ball into the right-handed batsman (universally termed the Banana Swing) with quotidian ability.

The infamous Vaseline incident
However, in 1976, this consummate fast bowler was charged with applying Vaseline on the red cherry to produce English-like conditions at the arid Feroze Shah Kotla grounds in Delhi. It was perhaps the first recorded incident of ball doctoring. The then Indian captain Bishan Singh Bedi vehemently opposed this blatantly unethical method deployed but Lever was acquitted of the charges. One can safely argue that had bowlers from subcontinental countries resorted to such unethical tactics against teams like England, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand (SENA teams) it is quite likely that deservedly rasping punishment would have been meted out. This is a crystal-clear case of mental apartheid.



Monetary figures from international economics
It will be noteworthy to peruse the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures of two Asian giants, India and China as calculated by Professor Angus Maddison, Emeritus Professor at the University of Groningen, Netherlands. The figures are quite revivifying and inspiring. India's share of world GDP was slightly more than a quarter of the total in the year 1000 AD, and just a little less than a quarter between the years 1500 AD and 1700 AD.

Reclaiming a piece of the pie: It is indeed revealing that the Oriental world, in particular, India and China had acquired a significant world share of wealth and economy. Thus, several European trading companies, following the doctrine of Gold, Glory, and God – adopted overt and covert methods to target these gargantuan economies. Over time they successfully subjugated and enslaved these economies. Meanwhile, India's share of world GDP dropped to an insignificant 3.65%. How did things come to such a state? The vastly superior Indian culture reached a plateau.

Yogic power and spirituality: our salvation: However, many Indians themselves condemn and denigrate it, no matter how much the people disparage it, yet it is the Yogic power (Shakti), techniques of meditation and our spirituality which has again catapulted India to the status of prima donna and helped the country scale exalted heights. The contribution of Maharishi Patanjali, our Vedic literature, the splendorous epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana, various philosophical schools and the contribution of Jainism, Buddhism and subsequently of Islam and Sikhism had all made India the hub and cradle of mental invigoration and wondrous contribution. It is indeed the very same mental invigoration that led to the discovery of the concept of zero or even the existence of galaxies in the universe. We were then not victims of mental apartheid.

Way out: Today the world has become a yoga mat. Indians must strive beyond Hatha Yoga repose faith from within and work on certain cardinal principles that have stood the test of time. These are to lead a regulated life and endorse the belief that life is something sacred and precious, acquire spiritual wealth and understand the universal law of attraction. It is only then that we can unshackle mental apartheid.

(The writer is CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd and is a faculty at Art of Living. Views are personal)

Inclusivity for visually impaired is still a dream

Visually impaired experts need to be involved at every stage of decision making on inclusion and accessibility!

The recent news that Fssai has asked food operators to have QR codes on their products, is certainly very encouraging and reassuring, for making this disabling world, somewhat enabling, for people with total blindness and low vision! However, I have a few very pertinent reservations and questions about independent shopping for the visually impaired here: Does every blind or low-vision person own a smartphone, and are they all trained and able to use this gadget properly to be able to avail of this facility? Are there alternatives there for those blind or low-vision persons who are not technology savvy? How will the information,



PREETI MONGA

that every food product label has a QR Code printed on it, and the blind and low-vision persons can access the same independently, while shopping; reach all end users? How can a totally blind or a low vision person, in the first place, be able to locate and reach the store where the food products with printed QR Codes are available? How will the visually impaired person, thereafter, find and then reach independently, the shelves or areas, where these food products with QR Codes printed, are placed in the store or shop? Will these shelves have any indications for the visually impaired to pick up the food product on their own, without obstruction or accidentally dropping other products

that may be lying around the same area? My request is that we need to think more comprehensively, so all kinds of visually impaired persons are able to shop independently. For, these visually impaired persons include the entire spectrum in our population, ranging from children right people who have lost their sight due to age-related issues and have very little support. I would also like to state here; that inclusion is slowly being thought about, all it needs is to include the end-users at all stages from planning to execution of any such initiatives for them; so we come up with effective, simple and comprehensive solutions to make our environment inclusive! Awareness

needs to be created and please do not exclude the end users at any stage of how the existing environment can be made inclusive for all! The solution lies in acknowledging a simple fact; "this world was and is made by sighted people for sighted people, and the blind and low-vision people were completely left out"! And, believe me, we are still left out! A little bit here and there is done, that too, hardly scratches the surface of the disabling environment that we are still forced to live in! It starts with our families, and the mainstream society and goes up to enabling full participation for the visually impaired, we continue to be called as special people with special needs!

We talk about the needs of the disabled as special, because, everything was, is and is being designed for only those who have all parts of the body working perfectly! We are still not provided the same services or facilities in anything; including education, employment or should I say, everything that a non-disabled person enjoys! We are supposed to sit and wait on the margins and wait for things to come to us, that is, if at all someone around feels that that particular thing, knowledge or activity, according to them, is something that could be important for the disabled person/child there! If we are not given the opportunity to learn and to participate in life equally, then how are we ever expected to

become performing and contributing citizens? Strangely, for the sighted world, everything and every activity is being made more and more user-friendly, but, if the same product or activity is to be made user-friendly for a blind or a low vision person, it becomes a special task! For example, modern lifts have become totally inaccessible for independent travel for the blind and low-vision! The buttons indicating floor numbers, have been cleverly replaced by modern technology and are now only touch pads, which can only be used by a sighted person! I strongly feel, that more visually impaired experts need to be involved at every stage of inclusion and acces-

sibility! We all do need to remember that with the kind of lifestyle and other factors around, disability of any type can easily invade any nondisabled person's life in the blink of an eye! Please note, I do not wish this on anyone, for I have myself lived with blindness for the last 5 decades, and, have suffered, struggled and still continue to do so, and will never want to have any of my fellow humans meet with such a dreadful plight! However, when one is not the sufferer, sympathizing with others is a real feel-good activity, but living with any disability is definitely not a cakewalk!

(The writer is the founder and CEO of Silver Linings, views are personal)

SC should declare poll freebies a corrupt practice



UTTAM GUPTA

When a candidate uses his money to bribe the voter, it is treated as corrupt practice, but when his party bribes voters using 'public money' it is not treated the same way

Taking a cue from the practice of mesmerizing voters with freebies - an acronym for "something is given free of charge" - started by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the February 2020 Delhi elections, early this year, in Karnataka elections, the grand old party (GOP) gave five guarantees (a more respectable nomenclature for freebies) on a grand scale. These delivered the intended result.

In the just concluded elections in Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana, the guarantees have occupied the centre stage in the manifestos of all parties expanding their 'scope' and 'scale'. Apart from free electricity, subsidized gas cylinders, free smartphones and tablets, free education/access to English-medium schools, OPS (old pension scheme) etc, the parties have tried to outsmart each other by promising cash transfers.

In Rajasthan, the GOP promised Rs 10,000 every year to the female head of the family under the Griha Lakshmi Yojana. In MP, BJP has promised Rs 1,250 per month under Ladli Behna Yojana; the amount will gradually be hiked to Rs 3,000 per month. Additionally, under the Ladli Lakshmi Yojana, girls will get Rs 200,000/- till they get married. In Chhattisgarh, the BJP has promised Rs 12,000 per year to married women under the 'Mahtari Vandan Scheme'. In Telangana, the GOP has gone a step ahead by promising 10 grams of gold in addition to Rs 100,000/- cash to women getting married.

In the past, farm loan waivers have been a favourite with most parties. This time, they have also gone for a hefty increase in the minimum support price (MSP) for farmers. In MP, BJP has promised MSP of wheat at Rs 2,700 per quintal - 27 per cent higher than the current Rs 2,125 per quintal (fixed by the Centre). For paddy, it has promised an MSP of Rs 3,100 per quintal - 42 per cent higher than the current level of Rs 2,183 per quintal; ditto in Chhattisgarh.

The guarantees are being justified as welfare schemes. This is a farce. A welfare scheme is rooted in three basics viz. the state assistance goes to persons who are poor and primarily focused on bare essentials such as food, fuel, water, housing, education and health; it should be backed by well-orchestrated efforts to garner revenue so that budgetary position is not destabilized; finally, it is given for a 'limited period' after which the beneficiaries should stand on their own.

Mooted with an eye on winning elections, freebies defy these cardinal principles. Barring a few instances where the poor tag is appended to the Scheme, most of them are given to all and sundry. The parties promising these freebies don't even make an assessment of the funding required forget making efforts to garner resources. Finally, no party ever whispers about exiting from the scheme.

In such a scenario, destabilisation of the State budgets is inevitable. In Karnataka, the five guarantees promised by the GOP imposed additional liabilities of around Rs 62,000 crore thereby doubling its fiscal deficit (FD) to over Rs 120,000 crore. The precariousness of the situation can be seen from a comment by the Deputy CM "The government has no money to



THE PARTIES PROMISING THESE FREEBIES DO NOT EVEN MAKE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FUNDING REQUIRED AND FORGET TO MAKE EFFORTS TO GARNER RESOURCES. FINALLY, NO PARTY EVER WHISPERS ABOUT EXITING FROM THE SCHEME

give to the MLAs for carrying out development work; courtesy the poll guarantees'.

In MP, at the current rate of Rs 1250 per month to 12.5 million beneficiaries, the Ladli Behna Yojana costs the state exchequer about Rs 18,750 crore per annum. This will go up to Rs 45,000 crore per annum as the quantum of assistance eventually goes up to Rs 3,000 per month. Meanwhile, the promised hike in MSP to farmers in MP and Chhattisgarh will dent their budgets. For instance, MP will have to spend Rs 5000 crore more on its purchase of paddy.

Unlike any well-intentioned scheme that could have a sun-set, a poll-induced guarantee once given, is more likely to stay eternally and over time, the quantum of assistance will only increase. Besides, it will have repercussions at the all-India level.

For instance, in view of the impending Lok Sabha elections next year, there could be pressure on Modi to give a similar hike in MSP as promised by MP and Chhattisgarh. That will upset the Centre's budget drastically. Since 2021-22, the tax revenue of both the Centre and states have been increasing at a rapid pace and this is helping them rein in their FD levels. If the taxpayers realise that their contributions are being used to indiscriminately give poll-bound freebies to all and sundry, it may even trigger non-compliance amongst them.

The giveaways covering a wide spectrum of items besides large-

scale cash transfers also become a breeding ground for corruption. This is evident from the inclusion of millions of ineligible or fake persons in the list of beneficiaries. For instance, during scrutiny of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), 24 million ineligible farmers were found to have received income transfers in 2021-22 under the Scheme.

The biggest damage freebies inflict is to change the mindset of people in a way that makes them complacent towards work. When, people get access to most of their basic needs free of charge that too 'perpetually', they won't be inclined to make efforts. Whichever way one looks at it, freebies are a recipe for economic disaster. The only way to avoid it is to prohibit parties from promising doles. The question is: who will do it?

In an order in S Subramaniam Balaji vs the Government of Tamil Nadu & Ors in July 2013, the Supreme Court (SC) observed that the distribution of freebies of any kind influences all people. "It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree." Yet, it held:-

"the promises in the election manifesto cannot be construed as 'corrupt practice' under the Representation of People Act (RPA), or any other prevailing law and, hence, distribution of freebies can't be stopped when the ruling party uses public funds for this purpose through the passage of Appropriation Acts in the

state Assembly".

After nearly nine years, of hearing a PIL seeking directions against 'freebies' on January 25, 2022, the SC observed "This is no doubt a serious issue, budget for freebies is going above the regular Budget. This disturbs the level playing field". Yet, on August 3, 2022, it threw the ball in the court of political parties asking them to enact a law on curbing freebies. When the latter are deeply rooted in this practice, why would they enact a law to curb it?

A big deterrent is none other than the SC order of July 2013 which says "... it can't be construed as corrupt practice..." Within the meaning of section 123(1)(A) of the RPA, 1951, the expression 'bribery' has been defined to mean any gift, offer or promise by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent of any gratification with the object of inducing an elector as a reward to his candidature.

The irony is when a candidate uses his own pocket money to bribe the voter, it is treated as corrupt practice, but when the party on whose symbol he is seeking election bribes voters using 'public money', the top court doesn't treat it that way. Currently, a three-judge bench, headed by CJI is hearing a plea to take a re-look. Will it alter its stance?

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

Israel's war against Hamas enters 3rd month Palestinians crowd into ever-shrinking Gaza areas

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

Desperate Palestinians fleeing Israel's expanding ground offensive crowded into an ever-shrinking area of the Gaza Strip as the Israel-Hamas war entered its third month on Friday. The United Nations warned that its aid operation is "in tatters" because no place in the besieged enclave is safe. Israel's military assault on Gaza, a tiny, densely populated territory, has led to widespread civilian casualties and mass displacements, triggering international alarm. The Israeli army said Friday that over the past day the military had struck about 450 targets in the Gaza Strip by air, sea and ground, signalling the continued intensity of its campaign. Palestinian TV stations reported airstrikes on various parts of the territory. "Airstrikes and

random artillery shelling have continued intensely since last night until this morning," said Hassan Al Najjar, a journalist speaking by phone from northern Gaza. Earlier this week, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres used a rarely exercised power to warn the Security Council of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe", and Arab and predominantly Muslim nations have called for a vote on Friday on a Council resolution to demand an immediate cease-fire. The United States, Israel's closest ally, appears likely to block any UN effort to halt the fighting, which was triggered by the deadly October 7 attack by Hamas militants on southern Israel. Still, US concern over the devastation is growing. US officials told Israel

ahead of the expansion of its ground offensive to southern Gaza several days ago that it must limit civilian deaths and displacement, saying too many Palestinians were killed when it obliterated much of Gaza City and surrounding areas in the north. On Thursday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a call with Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer that casualties are still too high, a senior State Department official said. Blinken told Dermer that Israel must also do more to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private diplomatic discussion. Israel insists it must crush the military capabilities of Hamas, which rules Gaza, and remove it from power following the group's October 7

attack. In the first stage of the war, Israel's air and ground campaign focused on the northern half of Gaza, leading hundreds of thousands of residents to flee south. Intense battles continued in parts of the north in recent days, while troops there have rounded up hundreds of Palestinian men. In photos and video published on Thursday, dozens of men are seen sitting in rows on a street in northern Gaza, stripped down to their underwear with their heads bowed as they are being guarded by Israeli troops. The images were the first showing such detentions in the war. Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said troops have detained and interrogated hundreds of people in Gaza suspected of militant links. UN monitors said troops reportedly detained

men and boys from the age of 15 in a school-turned-shelter in the town of Beit Lahiya, in the north. During the war, there has also been a dramatic surge in deadly military raids and an increase on restrictions on Palestinian residents in the occupied West Bank. Israeli forces stormed into a refugee camp in the West Bank on Friday to arrest suspected Palestinian militants, unleashing fighting with local gunmen in which six Palestinians were killed, health officials said. The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment on the operation. Over the past week, Israeli forces expanded their ground offensive into southern Gaza, with a focus on Khan Younis, the territory's second largest city. On Friday, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said Israel's air force

attacked a home facing the society's office in the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza. It did not give details about casualties. Medhat Abbas, a spokesperson for the Health Ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza, reported a strike in the city of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, saying it killed and wounded a number of people but gave no exact numbers. The military says it makes every effort to spare civilians and accuses Hamas of using them as human shields as the militants fight in dense residential areas. With the entire Gaza Strip under military assault, tens of thousands of people displaced by the fighting have packed into the border city of Rafah, in the far south of the Gaza Strip, and Muwasi, a nearby patch of barren coastline that Israel has declared a safe zone.

'94 media workers killed this year, mostly in Gaza'

AP ■ BRUSSELS

A leading organisation representing journalists worldwide expressed deep concern on Friday at the number of media professionals killed around the globe doing their jobs in 2023, with Israel's war with Hamas claiming more journalists than any conflict in over 30 years. In its annual count of media worker deaths, the International Federation of Journalists said 94 journalists had been killed so far this year and almost 400 others had been imprisoned. The figure for deaths is up from 67 in the same period of 2022 — including 12 killed in Ukraine — and double the total of 47 recorded for the whole of 2021.

The group called for better protection for media workers and for their attackers to be held to account. "The imperative for a new global standard for the protection of journalists and effective international enforcement has never been greater," said IFJ President Dominique Pradalié. The group said 68 journalists had been killed covering the Israeli-Hamas war since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7 — more than one a day and accounting for 72 per cent of all media deaths worldwide this year. It said the overwhelming

majority of them were Palestinian journalists in the Gaza Strip, where Israeli forces continue their offensive. "The war in Gaza has been more deadly for journalists than any single conflict since the IFJ began recording journalists killed in the line of duty in 1990," the group said, adding that deaths have come at "a scale and pace of loss of media professionals' lives without precedent". Ukraine also "remains a dangerous country for journalists" almost two years since Russia's invasion, the organisation said. It said three reporters or media workers had been killed in that war so far this year. The organisation also deplored media deaths in Afghanistan, the Philippines, India, China and Bangladesh. It expressed concern that crimes against media workers are going unpunished and urged governments "to shed full light on these murders and to put in place measures to ensure the safety of journalists". It noted a drop in the number of journalists killed in North and South America, from 29 last year to seven so far in 2023. The group said the three Mexicans, one Paraguayan, one Guatemalan, one Colombian and one American were slain while investigating armed groups or the embezzlement of public funds.

Rocket attack targets US Embassy in Baghdad

Baghdad (AP): A rocket attack on the sprawling US Embassy in Baghdad caused minor damage but no casualties Friday morning, US and Iraqi officials said. The attack is the first on the embassy located in the heavily fortified Green Zone of Iraq's capital to be confirmed since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war. The Green Zone houses Iraqi government buildings and embassies on the west bank of the Tigris River. Iran-backed militias in Iraq have claimed responsibility for dozens of attacks that targeted bases housing US troops in Iraq and Syria since Israel declared war on Hamas two months ago. The US military says 78 attacks have been carried out against US facilities over the past weeks, of which 37 were in Iraq and 41 in Syria. An Iraqi security official said 14 Katyusha rockets were fired on Friday, of which some struck near one of the US Embassy's gates while others fell in the river. The official said the rocket attack caused material damage but no casualties.

A US military official said a multi-rocket attack was launched at American and coalition forces in the vicinity of the embassy complex and the Union III base, which houses offices of the US-led coalition. The official added that no casualties and no damage to infrastructure were reported. An embassy spokesperson said the US Embassy was attacked by two salvos of rockets at approximately 4:15 a.m. (0215 GMT). "Assessments are ongoing, but there are no reported casualties on the embassy compound," the official said, adding that no specific group had claimed responsibility for firing the rockets as of Friday morning but early indications pointed to Iran-aligned militias. "We again call on the government of Iraq, as we have done on many occasions, to do all in its power to protect diplomatic and Coalition partner personnel and facilities," the official said.

UK says it has paid Rwanda \$300 mn for a blocked asylum deal

AP ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was under pressure on Friday to explain why Britain has paid Rwanda 240 million pounds (USD 300 million) as part of a blocked asylum plan, without a single person being sent to the East African country. The total is almost twice the 140 million pounds that Britain previously said it had handed to the Rwandan government under a deal struck in April 2022. Under the agreement, migrants who reach Britain across the English Channel would be sent to Rwanda, where their asylum claims would be processed and, if successful, they would stay. The plan was challenged in UK courts, and no flights to Rwanda have taken off. Last month, Britain's Supreme Court ruled the policy was illegal because Rwanda isn't a safe country for refugees. Despite

the ruling and the mounting cost, Sunak has pledged to press on with the plan. The Home Office said it had paid a further 100 million pounds to Rwanda in the 2023-24 financial year and expects to hand over 50 million pounds more in the coming 12 months. Junior Immigration Minister Tom Pursglove defended the cost, saying the money would ensure "all of the right infrastructure to support the partnership is in place". "Part of that money is helpful in making sure that we can respond to the issues properly that the Supreme Court raised," he said. The opposition Liberal Democrats said it was "an unforgivable waste of taxpayers' money". The Rwanda plan is central to the UK government's self-imposed goal to stop unauthorised asylum-seekers from trying to reach England from

France in small boats. More than 29,000 people have done so this year, compared to 46,000 in 2022. Since the Supreme Court ruling, Britain and Rwanda have signed a treaty pledging to strengthen protections for migrants. Sunak's government argues that the treaty allows it to pass a law declaring Rwanda a safe destination. The law, if approved by Parliament, would allow the government to "disapply" sections of UK human rights law when it comes to Rwanda-related asylum claims and make it harder to challenge the deportations in court. The bill, which has its first vote scheduled in the House of Commons on Tuesday, has roiled the governing Conservative Party, which is trailing the Labour opposition in opinion polls, with an election due in the next year. It faces opposition from centrist

Conservative lawmakers who worry about Britain breaching its human rights obligations. Former Conservative Solicitor-General Edward Garnier said the bill was "trying to define things when there is no evidence, or no safe evidence, for that being the case". He told the BBC that changing the law to declare Rwanda a safe haven is "rather like a bill which says that Parliament has decided that all dogs are cats". But the bigger danger for Sunak comes from Conservatives on the party's authoritarian right wing that views curbing immigration as essential to the government's pledge to "take back control" now that Britain has left the European Union. They think the bill is too mild and want the UK to leave the European Convention on Human Rights. Almost every European country, apart from Russia and Belarus, is bound by the con-

vention and its court. Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick piled pressure on the prime minister when he quit the government this week, saying the bill did not go far enough. Sunak insists the bill goes as far as the government can without scuttling the deal because Rwanda will pull out of the agreement if the UK breaks international law. The party differences erupted on social media after the party posted an attack ad aimed at Labour, using an image of a BBC presenter caught making a rude gesture to camera this week. While some Tory lawmakers retweeted the middle-finger image approvingly on X, formerly known as Twitter, others called it crass. "Amazed this has not — despite requests — been taken down, it is beneath us," Conservative legislator Alicia Kearns posted.



Lebanese journalists hold a portrait of Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah, right on the poster at front, who was killed by Israeli shelling, and slain Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh during a protest in front of the United Nations headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023. **File photo**

Hunter Biden indicted on nine tax charges

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Hunter Biden was indicted on nine tax charges in California on Thursday as a special counsel investigation into the business dealings of President Joe Biden's son intensifies against the backdrop of the looming 2024 election. The new charges — three felonies and six misdemeanours — are in addition to federal firearms charges in Delaware alleging Hunter Biden broke laws against drug users having guns in 2018. They come after the implosion of a plea deal over the summer that would have spared him jail time, putting the case on track to a possible trial as his father campaigns for reelection. Hunter Biden "spent millions of dollars on an extravagant lifestyle rather than paying his tax bills", special counsel David Weiss said in a statement. The charges are centred on at least USD 1.4 million in taxes Hunter Biden owed dur-



ing between 2016 and 2019, a period where he has acknowledged struggling with addiction. The back taxes have since been paid. If convicted, Hunter Biden, 53, could a maximum of 17 years in prison. The special counsel probe remains open, Weiss said. In a fiery response, defense attorney Abbe Lowell accused Weiss of "bowing to Republican pressure" in the case. "Based on the facts and the law, if Hunter's last name

was anything other than Biden, the charges in Delaware, and now California, would not have been brought," Lowell said in a statement. The White House declined to comment on Thursday's indictment, referring questions to the Justice Department or Hunter Biden's personal representatives. The charging documents filed in California, where he lives, details spending on everything from drugs and strippers to luxury hotels and exotic cars, "in short, everything but his taxes", prosecutor Leo Wise wrote. The indictment comes as congressional Republicans pursue an impeachment inquiry into President Biden, claiming he was engaged in an influence-peddling scheme with his son. The House is expected to vote next week on formally authorising the inquiry. No evidence has emerged so far to prove that Joe Biden, in his current or previous

office, abused his role or accepted bribes, though questions have arisen about the ethics surrounding the Biden family's international business. The separate, long-running criminal investigation into Hunter Biden had been expected to wind down with a plea deal where he would have gotten two years' probation after pleading guilty to misdemeanor tax charges and avoided prosecution on the gun charge if he stayed out of trouble. The agreement was pilloried as a "sweetheart deal" by Republicans, including former President Donald Trump. He is facing his own criminal cases, including charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., the chairman of the House Oversight Committee, gave credit for the new charges on Thursday to two IRS investigators who testified before Congress that the Justice

Department had mishandled and "slow walked" the investigation into the president's son. Justice officials have denied those allegations. The two IRS employees, Gary Shapley and Joseph Ziegler, said the indictment was "a complete vindication of our thorough investigation". The new charges against Hunter Biden include filing a false return and tax evasion felonies, as well as misdemeanor failure to file and failure to pay. The defence signalled that it plans to fight the new charges, likely at least in part relying on immunity provisions from the original plea deal. Defence attorneys have argued those remain in force since that part of the agreement was signed by a prosecutor before the deal was scrapped. Prosecutors have disagreed, pointing out the documents weren't signed by a judge and are invalid. Lowell said he's also planning to push for dis-

missal of the gun charges next week, calling them "unprecedented and unconstitutional". The three federal gun charges filed in Delaware allege Hunter Biden had lied about his drug use to buy a gun that he kept for 11 days in 2018. Federal law bans gun possession by "habitual drug users", though the measure is seldom seen as a stand-alone charge and has been called into question by a federal appeals court. Hunter Biden's longstanding struggle with substance abuse worsened after the death of his brother Beau Biden in 2015, according to court documents and his memoir "Beautiful Things", which ends with him getting clean in 2019. His gross income nevertheless totalled some USD 7 million between 2016 and 2020, prosecutors said, pointing to his roles on the board of the Ukrainian energy company Burisma and a Chinese private equity fund as well as his position at a law firm.

Judge rules against Prince Harry in early stage of libel case against Daily Mail publisher

London (AP): Prince Harry lost a preliminary round on Friday in his libel case against the publisher of the Daily Mail tabloid over an article that said he tried to hide his efforts to retain publicly funded protection in the UK after giving up his status as a working member of the royal family. A London judge said the Duke of Sussex failed to knock out Associated Newspaper Ltd.'s defence that its article reflected an honest opinion. A hearing is scheduled Tuesday to discuss the consequences of the ruling. Justice Matthew Nicklin said in that ruling that "it is not fanciful that the Defendant will be successful, at trial". He scheduled a hearing on Tuesday in the High Court to discuss the consequences of the ruling. The ruling comes just a day after another judge concluded three days of arguments — mostly behind closed doors — over whether the government unfairly stripped Harry of his security detail after he and his family moved to the US in 2020. Harry, 39, the younger son of King Charles III, is challenging the government's decision to provide security to him on a case-by-case basis when he visits Britain. Harry has said hostility toward him and his wife on social media and relentless news media hounding threatens their safety. The Mail on Sunday and Mail Online published an article in February 2022 about the issue headlined: "How Prince Harry tried to keep his legal fight with the government over police bodyguards a secret ... then — just minutes after the story broke — his PR machine tried to put a positive spin on the dispute." Harry claims the article was "fundamentally inaccurate" and the newspaper libelled him when it suggested he lied in his initial public statements about his case challenging the government.

Greece may be able to benefit from Turkish power plant

Ankara (AP): Türkiye is considering allowing neighbouring Greece to benefit from a nuclear power plant it plans to build near its Black Sea coast, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was quoted as saying on Friday. Erdogan made the comments on his return from a visit to Athens on Thursday, where longtime regional rivals Greece and Türkiye took significant steps toward mending their troubled ties. "We strive to develop and expand cooperation with Greece not only in the field of energy but also in all areas, including nuclear energy," Erdogan told a group of journalists on his flight back. "For example, we can provide Greece the opportunity (to benefit) from energy from our nuclear power plant to be built in Sinop (Province)." His comments were reported by state-run Anadolu

and other media on Friday. During Erdogan's visit on Thursday, Greece and Türkiye signed more than a dozen cooperation deals on trade, energy and education and announced a roadmap for future high-level consultations aimed at avoiding crises. Erdogan travelled to Greece promising to pursue a "win-win" approach that could lay the foundation for broader cooperation. "I believe that my visit, which took place in a very positive atmosphere, will open a new page in Türkiye-Greece relations," Erdogan said. Longstanding disputes have led Athens and Ankara to the brink of war three times in the past 50 years. The latest flare-up occurred in 2020, when Greek and Turkish navy ships shadowed each other in the eastern Mediterranean over a dispute

French teens await verdict over their alleged roles in killing of teacher

AP ■ PARIS

A French juvenile court is handing down a verdict on Friday for six teenagers accused of involvement in the killing of teacher Samuel Paty, who was beheaded by an Islamic extremist after he showed caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad to his class for a debate on freedom of expression. Paty, a history and geography teacher, was killed on October 16, 2020, near his school in a Paris suburb by an 18-year-old of Chechen origin who had become radicalised. The attacker, Abdoulakh Anzorov, was then shot dead by police. Paty's name was disclosed on social media after a class debate on free expression during which he showed prophet caricatures published by the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. The publication

had triggered a deadly extremist massacre in the Charlie Hebdo newsroom in 2015. All those on trial were students at Paty's school. If convicted, they face up to two-and-a-half years in prison. Five of the defendants, who were 14 or 15 at the time of the attack, are accused of staking Paty out until he left school that day and identifying him for the attacker in exchange for promises of 300-350 euros (USD 350-400). Investigators found that the attacker wanted to target Paty but didn't have the means to identify him. The five are facing charges of criminal conspiracy with the aim of preparing aggravated violence. The sixth defendant, who was 13 at the time, is accused of wrongly claiming that Paty had asked Muslim students to raise their hands and leave the classroom before he showed

the class the prophet cartoons. She was not in the classroom that day, and later told investigators she had lied. She is facing a charge of making false allegations. Her father shared the lie in an online video that called for mobilisation against the teacher. He and a radical Islamic activist who helped disseminate virulent messages against Paty are among eight adults who will face a separate trial for adults suspected of involvement in the killing, expected late next year. In sometimes tearful testimony, the teenagers on trial said they had no idea the teacher would be killed, according to French media reports. The trial has been held behind closed doors, and the media are not allowed to disclose the defendants' identities according to French law regarding minors.

'Increasing Covid-19 cases put strain on S'pore hospitals'

Singapore (PTI): Covid-19 infections and hospitalisations are increasing and putting a strain on hospitals in Singapore, the Ministry of Health warned on Friday. Though the health ministry has raised the alert, it has also reassured people that the numbers are not as high as during the pandemic and that the circulating variants are not known to cause more severe illness. In the week ended on December 2, as many as 32,035 people were diagnosed with COVID-19 — the highest number of infections recorded this year, according to a report by The Straits Times newspaper. The previous high was 28,410 infections a week in March, the Ministry of Health (MOH) said. The latest number is almost

10,000 more than the 22,094 diagnosed the previous week. The number of weekly infections has been hovering around 15,000 infections over the past two to three months. The number of people being hospitalised and needing intensive care treatment has also gone up, it said. An MOH statement on December 8 said the average daily COVID-19 hospitalisations rose to 225 from 136 the week before, and the average daily intensive care unit (ICU) cases increased to four compared with one case in the previous week. It said: "This has added workload to our hospitals, which are already busy." Nine people severely ill with Covid-19 were admitted to a hospital in ICU in the week of November 26 to December 2, up from four the previous week.

Putin aims to extend his rule of over 2 decades

AP ■ MOSCOW

Vladimir Putin on Friday moved to prolong his repressive and unyielding grip on Russia for at least another six years, announcing his candidacy in the presidential election next March that he is all but certain to win.

Putin still commands wide support after nearly a quarter-century in power, despite starting an immensely costly war in Ukraine that has taken thousands of his countrymen's lives, provoked repeated attacks inside Russia — including one on the Kremlin itself — and corroded its aura of invincibility. A short-lived rebellion in June by mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin raised widespread speculation that Putin could be losing his grip, but he emerged with no permanent scars. Prigozhin's death in a mysterious plane crash two months later reinforced the view that Putin was in absolute control.

Putin announced his decision to run in the March 17 presidential election after a Kremlin award ceremony, when war veterans and others pleaded with him to seek reelection in what Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described as "spontaneous" remarks. "I won't hide it from you — I had various thoughts about it over time, but now, you're right, it's necessary to make a decision," Putin said in a video released by the Kremlin after the event. "I will run for president of the Russian Federation."

Tatiana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Centre noted that the announcement was made in a low-key way instead of a live televised speech, probably reflecting the Kremlin's spin effort to emphasize Putin's modesty and his perceived focus on doing his job as opposed to loud campaigning. "It's not about prosperity, it's about survival," Stanovaya observed. "The stakes have been raised to the maximum."

About 80 per cent of the populace approves of Putin's performance, according to the independent pollster Levada



Centre. That support might come from the heart or it might reflect submission to a leader whose crackdown on any opposition has made even relatively mild criticism perilous. Whether due to real or coerced support, Putin is expected to face only token opposition on the ballot.

Putin, 71, has twice used his leverage to amend the constitution so he could theoretically stay in power until he's in his mid-80s. He is already the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, who died in 1953.

In 2008, he stepped aside to become prime minister due to term limits but continued calling the shots while his close associate Dmitry Medvedev served as a placeholder president. Presidential terms were then extended to six years from four, while another package of amendments he pushed through three years ago reset the count for two consecutive terms to begin in 2024.

"He is afraid to give up power," Dmitry Oreshkin, a political analyst and professor at Free University of Riga, Latvia, told The Associated Press this year. At the time of the amendments that allowed him two more terms, Putin's concern about losing power may have been elevated: Levada polling showed his approval rating significantly lower, hovering around 60 per cent.

In the view of some analysts, that dip in popularity could have been a main driver of the war that Putin launched in Ukraine in February 2022.

"This conflict with Ukraine was necessary as a glue. He needed to consolidate his power," said commentator Abbas Gallyamov, a former

Putin speechwriter now living in Israel. Brookings Institution scholar Fiona Hill, a former US National Security Council expert on Russian affairs, agreed that Putin thought "a lovely small, victorious war" would consolidate support for his reelection.

"Ukraine would capitulate," she told AP earlier this year. "He'd install a new president in Ukraine. He would declare himself the president of a new union of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia over the course of the time leading up to the 2024 election. He'd be the supreme leader."

The war didn't turn out that way. It devolved into a grueling slog in which neither side makes significant headway, posing severe challenges to the rising prosperity integral to Putin's popularity and Russians' propensity to set aside concerns about corrupt politics and shrinking tolerance of dissent.

For the first time, voting in the presidential election will take place over three days from March 15 to 17, 2024, including in four regions of Ukraine partially and illegally annexed by Russia. The election commission argued that the practice of multi-day voting, used in other elections since the COVID-19 pandemic, is more convenient for voters.

Putin's rule has spanned five US presidencies, from Bill Clinton to Joe Biden. He became acting president on New Year's Eve in 1999, when Boris Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned. He was elected to his first term in March 2000.

Although Putin has long abandoned the macho photo shoots of bear hunting and scuba diving that once amused and impressed the world, he shows little sign of slowing down. Photos from 2022 of him with a bloated face and a hunched posture led to speculation he was seriously ill, but he seems little changed in recent public appearances.

"He's a wartime president, is mobilizing the population behind him," Hill said. "And that will be the message around the 2024 election, depending on where things are in the battlefield."

Pak EC issues notice to PTI on plea against intra-party polls

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's election commission on Friday issued a notice to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party on a petition challenging its recent organisational polls, which were termed as "rigged and fraudulent".

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), held its election on December 2 following a ruling by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for fresh intra-party polls to elect its chairman and other key officer-bearers to retain the cricket bat as its election symbol. The same day, the party announced that it had elected Imran Khan's nominee, Barrister Gohar Khan, as the party Chairman.

Gohar, 45, was hand-picked by the 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician after consultation with his loyalist lawyers who frequently meet him in jail where he has been kept since being arrested on August 5 after conviction in the Toshakhana corruption case. Khan himself avoided filing the nomination due to conviction and disqualification.

However, one of its founding members, Akbar S Babar, who developed differences with the party years ago, filed a petition with the ECP, terming the exercise as "rigged and fraudulent" with a plea for fresh organisational elections. At least 13 other PTI members joined Babar in challenging the election. The members in the petition maintained that no schedule was given before the elections and the voter lists were also not released. "There was no activity in the PTI central secretariat related to elections," the plea said.

Separately, the country's mainstream parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), also questioned the legitimacy of the intra-party elections. A five-member ECP panel, led by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, conducted the hearing on the petition. Babar's counsel implored the commission to declare the PTI's polls null and void and to mandate a fresh conduct of the elections.

Chinese military surveillance balloon seen in Taiwan Strait

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan's Defence Ministry says a Chinese military surveillance balloon was spotted in the Taiwan Strait, as well as a large-scale movement of military aircraft and ships. The ministry said the balloon passed southwest of the northern port city of Keelung on Thursday night, then continued east before disappearing, possibly into the Pacific Ocean.

However, there seemed to some uncertainty about whether the balloon was operated directly by the People's Liberation Army, the military branch of China's ruling Communist Party. The ministry referred to it both as a "PLA surveillance balloon" and as "1 PRC's balloon", using the acronym for the People's Republic of China, China's official name.

A Defence Ministry spokesperson said they had no additional information.

China has long blurred the lines between military and civilian functions, including in the South China Sea, where it operates a huge maritime militia — ostensibly civilian fishing boats that act under government orders to assert Beijing's territorial claims.

Taiwan has threatened to shoot down such balloons, but the ministry did not say what, if any, action was taken. It said the balloon was monitored flying at an altitude of approximately 6,400 metres (21,000 feet). It also said 26 Chinese military aircraft were detected, along with 10 Chinese navy ships, in the 24 hours before 6 am on Friday.

Of the aircraft, 15 had crossed the median line that is an unofficial divider between the sides, but which Beijing refuses to recognise. Some also entered Taiwan's self-declared air defense identification zone outside the island's airspace, which encompasses the 160



kilometer (100 mile) - wide Taiwan Strait. Taiwan's military monitored the situation with combat aircraft, navy vessels and land-based missile systems, the ministry said. The incident came just over month before Taiwan is to hold elections for president and the legislature and raises questions about possible Chinese efforts to influence the vote.

Such incursions occur regularly as a means of advertis-

ing China's threat to use force to annex the self-governing island republic it considers its own territory, wear down Taiwan's military capabilities, and impact morale among the armed forces and the public, who remain largely ambivalent to China's actions.

The Chinese missions have also prompted Taiwan to up its purchases of aircraft from the United States, its chief ally, and revitalize its own defence industry, including producing submarines. Beijing strongly protests all contacts between the island and the US, but its aggressive diplomacy has helped build strong bipartisan support for Taipei on Capitol Hill. US President Joe Biden vowed sharper rules to track, monitor and potentially shoot down unknown aerial objects after three weeks of high-stakes drama sparked by the discovery of a suspected Chinese spy balloon transiting much of the country early in the year.

Japan's leader grilled in parliament over widening fundraising scandal, link to Unification Church

AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and several key Cabinet ministers were grilled by opposition lawmakers in parliament on Friday over a widening fundraising scandal and an alleged connection to the Unification Church which threaten to further drag down the government's sagging popularity.

Support ratings for Kishida's government have fallen below 30 per cent because of public dissatisfaction over its slow response to rising prices and lagging salaries, and the scandal could weaken his grip on power within the governing Liberal Democratic Party. Still, the long-ruling party remains the voter favourite in media polls because of the fragmented and weak opposition.

Dozens of governing party lawmakers, including Cabinet members, are accused of failing

to fully report money they received from fundraising. Kishida has acknowledged that authorities are investigating the scandal following a criminal complaint.

The party's largest and most powerful faction, linked to late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, is suspected of failing to report more than 100 million yen (USD 690,000) in funds in a possible violation of campaign and election laws, according to media reports. The money is alleged to have gone into unmonitored slush funds. Kishida has instructed party members to temporarily halt fundraising parties. "It's a first step," he said on Friday. "We will thoroughly grasp the problems and the cause and will take steps to regain public trust."

Kishida also said he will step down as head of his own party faction while serving as prime minister to show his

determination to tackle the problems. Kishida was bombarded with questions from senior opposition lawmakers about the scandals during Friday's parliamentary hearing.

He separately faces allegations related to a 2019 meeting with former US House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who visited him with top officials from the Unification Church, a South Korea-based religious group that the government is seeking to dissolve over abusive recruiting and fundraising tactics that surfaced during an investigation of Abe's assassination last year. The investigation also led to revelations of years of cozy ties between the governing party and the Unification Church.

Kishida said he was asked to meet with Gingrich as a former foreign minister and that he did not remember the other guests. Photographs in Japanese media show him exchanging

business cards with Unification Church officials.

"I don't see any problem with that," Kishida said. "If there were church-related people in the group, that does not mean I had ties with the Unification Church."

Yukio Edano, a lawmaker for the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, accused Kishida of lax oversight and of attempting to distance himself from the fundraising scandal by withdrawing from leadership of his faction.

Media reports say Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno allegedly diverted more than 10 million yen (USD 69,000) over the past five years from money he raised from party events to a slush fund.

Matsuno was a top official in the Abe faction from 2019 to 2021 and is the first key minister implicated in the scandal by name.

ADB approves US \$200 mn loan to debt-stricken SL

Colombo (AP): The Asian Development Bank said on Friday that it has approved USD 200-million concessional loan to debt-stricken Sri Lanka to help stabilise the country's finance sector following an unprecedented economic crisis that engulfed the Indian Ocean island nation last year.

The bank's announcement comes as Sri Lanka is awaiting International Monetary Fund approval for the second installment of a USD 2.9-billion bailout package to rescue the country from bankruptcy.

The ADB said its Financial Sector Stability and Reforms Program for Sri Lanka includes two subprogrammes of USD 200 million each that would help strengthen the stability and governance of the country's banking sector, and deepen sustainable and inclusive finance, particularly for women-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

"The programme's overarching development objective

is fully aligned with the country's strategy of maintaining finance sector stability, while ensuring that banks are well-positioned for eventual recovery," Takafumi Kadono, ADB's director for Sri Lanka, said in a statement.

He added that the "expected development outcome is a stable financial system providing access to affordable finance for businesses in various sectors of the economy".

Sri Lanka plunged into an economic crisis in 2022, creating severe shortages and drawing strident protests that led to the ouster of then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. It declared bankruptcy in April 2022 with more than USD 83 billion in debt — more than half of it to foreign creditors.

The IMF agreed in March to a USD 2.9-billion bailout package, releasing the first payment shortly thereafter. However, the IMF delayed the second tranche, citing inadequate oversight and debt restructuring.

S Korea's defence chief vows strikes on North if provoked

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's defence minister on Friday vowed massive retaliatory missile strikes on "the heart and head" of North Korea in the event of provocation, as the rivals escalate their rhetoric over their respective spy satellite launches in recent days. The South Korean warning — unusually fiery rhetoric by Seoul directed at Pyongyang — came as the top security advisers from South Korea, the US and Japan gathered in Seoul for talks to discuss North Korea's evolving nuclear threats and other issues.

During a visit to the army's missile strategic command, South Korean Defence Minister Shin Wonsik ordered command officers to maintain a readiness to fire precision-guided and powerful missiles at any time, according to his ministry. Shin said the main role of the command is "lethally striking the heart and head of the enemy, though the types

of its provocations can vary," a ministry statement said.

Animosities between the two Koreas deepened after North Korea launched its first military reconnaissance satellite into space on Nov. 21 in violation of U.N. bans. South Korea, the U.S. and Japan strongly condemned the launch, viewing it as an attempt by the North to improve its missile technology as well as establish a space-surveillance system. South Korea announced plans to resume front-line aerial surveillance in response. North Korea quickly retaliated by restoring border guard posts, according to Seoul officials. Both steps would breach a 2018 inter-Korean deal on easing front-line military tensions.

Last week, when South Korea also launched its first military spy satellite from California's Vandenberg Space Force Base, North Korea slammed the US for alleged double standards and warned

of a possible grave danger to global peace. In a statement Friday, Jo Chol Su, a senior North Korean Foreign Ministry official, said the North would make all available efforts to protect its national interests in the face of threats by hostile forces. The national security advisers from South Korea, the U.S. and Japan are to hold their first trilateral meeting in six months in Seoul on Saturday.

Ahead of the three-way meeting, South Korean national security adviser Cho Tae-yong and his Japanese counterpart, Takeo Akiba, met bilaterally on Friday and reaffirmed a need to strengthen their cooperation with the U.S. to cope with provocations by North Korea. Cho and U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan also met and affirmed that Seoul and Washington remain open to diplomacy with North Korea, according to South Korea's presidential office.

Taiwan prez candidates to hold televised debate as race heats up

Taipei (AP): The three candidates running in next month's Taiwanese presidential election will hold a televised debate on December 30 as the race heats up under pressure from China. The outcome of the January 13 election could have a major effect on relations between China and the United States, which is bound by its own laws to provide Taiwan with the weapons it needs to defend itself and to regard threats to the self-governing island as a matter of "grave concern."

Differences over Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, are a major flashpoint in US-China relations. The debate will feature current Vice President William Lai of the Democratic Progressive Party; Hou Yu-ih, a local government leader representing the main opposition Nationalist Party, or KMT; and former

Taipei mayor Ko Wen-je, of the smaller Taiwan People's Party. Lai, whose party favours the status quo of de facto independence, is favoured to win the election, ensuring that tensions with China will likely remain high. The KMT, which formerly ruled in China before being driven to Taiwan amid the Communist takeover of the mainland in 1949, formally backs political unification between the sides, a prospect most Taiwanese reject. Ko, who briefly flirted with an alliance with the KMT, has advocated restarting talks with China. "The whole world wants to know whether the people of Taiwan will continue to move forward on the path of democracy in this major election, or whether they will choose to rely on China, follow a pro-China path, and lock Taiwan into China again," Lai said in a recent speech.

Dutch police arrest Syrian accused of sexual violence

The Hague (AP): A Syrian refugee was arrested on Friday in the Netherlands on suspicion of crimes against humanity including sexual violence while he was allegedly head of an interrogation team in a militia aligned to the government of President Bashar Assad.

The arrest of the 55-year-old man marks the first time Dutch authorities have charged a suspect with sexual violence as a crime against humanity, the National Public Prosecution Service said in a statement. He is the latest suspect charged in the Netherlands with crimes committed during Syria's grinding civil war. Under universal jurisdiction, the Netherlands can prosecute certain crimes even if they were committed abroad.

The Netherlands and Canada have also taken Syria to the United Nations' top court, accusing Assad's administration of a years-long campaign of "institutionalised" torture

Post-summit news conferences highlight divide between China, EU

AP ■ BEIJING

From trade to human rights, the leaders of China and the European Union differed on a wide range of issues at a summit this week in the Chinese capital. China, which sees Europe as an important export market, raised concerns about trade protectionism and "de-risking", the EU initiative to reduce its reliance on any one country — such as China — for vital raw materials and products.

The EU, which sees imports from China as a potential threat to companies and jobs, pressured China on its large trade surplus with Europe and its de facto support for Russia in the war in Ukraine. Separate post-summit news conferences on Thursday evening highlighted the divergent positions. Wang Lutong, the director general for European affairs, spoke to journalists at China's Foreign Ministry. Then EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President Charles Michel held a joint

news conference at the European Union office in Beijing.

TRADE IMBALANCE
VON DER LEYEN: "If you just look at the last two years, the trade deficit has doubled. This is a matter of great concern for a lot of Europeans. Such imbalances are just unsustainable. The root causes are well known, and we discussed them. They range from a lack of market access for European companies to the Chinese market to preferential treatment of domestic Chinese companies and overcapacities in the Chinese production."

WANG: "Sometimes the EU relates the imbalance of trade between us to overcapacity and subsidies. But we don't think there is overcapacity in such areas like green energy and clean energy. ... China could be very useful to the green transition not only of the EU but also the whole world. So if you want us to support the EU in green transition, do not be protectionist. You make the choice between being pro-



tectionist and encouraging China to participate in your goal in order to achieve that green transition."

TRADE SUBSIDIES
WANG: "The Chinese side has expressed concerns to the EU side on its de-risking and restrictive economic and trade policies, including the anti-subsidy investigation against Chinese electric vehicles as well as its

5G policies. The Chinese side has urged the EU to ensure openness of its trade and investment market, provide an equitable and non-discriminatory business environment for Chinese enterprises and be prudent in using trade remedies."
VON DER LEYEN: "Politically, European leaders will not be able to tolerate that our industrial base is undermined by unfair competition. We like competition. It makes us better; it lowers prices; it is good for the consumers. But competition needs to be fair. ... Europe does not want to decouple from China. ... What we want is de-risking. De-risking is about managing the risks we see, addressing excessive dependencies through diversification of our supply chains ... and thus increasing our resilience. And this is not exclusive to China."

UKRAINE
VON DER LEYEN: "Russia's war of aggression is a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter,

and it is a serious threat to European security. And this is why we recalled the need for China to use all its influence on Russia to stop this war of aggression and to engage in Ukraine's peace formula. We also reiterated (to China) to refrain from supplying lethal equipment to Russia and to prevent any attempts by Russia to undermine the impact of sanctions."
WANG: "Sometimes European politicians said to us that China needs to speak to Russia, you need to speak to President Putin about withdrawing their soldiers. This is a very independent sovereign nation. President Putin is making his decision based on his own national interest and security. So that's why we are also urging Europeans to speak to Russians about it. We think ... it's important that Europeans and Russians talk about the possible security architecture in Europe and it's also important that Russians and Americans talk about the possible strategic stability."

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Stock markets hit new peaks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty rebounded to close at their new lifetime highs on Friday after the Reserve Bank raised the growth forecast for the current fiscal and kept policy rates unchanged, triggering heavy buying in banking and other rate-sensitive stocks. The 30-share BSE Sensex rose 303.91 points, or 0.44 per cent, to hit its new peak of 69,825.60. The index touched the highest intra-day level of 69,893.80. The broader index Nifty also climbed 68.25 points or 0.33 per cent to reach a fresh record high of 20,969.40. Among major Sensex movers, HCL Tech logged the biggest gain of 2.69 per cent, followed by JSW Steel (2.44 per cent) and Infosys (1.67 per cent). Other gainers included HDFC Bank, Titan, Axis Bank and



ICICI Bank. In contrast, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards. “The RBI took a balanced approach by raising the economic growth forecast and also expressing concern on food inflation, which may have

an elevated trajectory in the short term. A drop in rabi sowing and dipping reservoir levels provides a perception that foodgrain prices can rise. The impact was visible on FMCG stocks, which underperformed today,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Foreign institutional investors sold shares worth Rs 1,564.03 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. The six-member Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI on Friday decided to keep the benchmark repurchase (repo) rate at 6.5 per cent. The central bank raised its forecast for economic growth to 7 per cent from 6.5 per cent, maintaining India’s position as the world’s fastest-growing major economy, after a stronger-than-expected 7.6 per cent growth in the July-



September quarter. Elsewhere in Asia, Shanghai Composite gained 0.11 per cent, while the Nikkei 225 and Hang Seng fell by 1.68 per cent and 0.15 per cent, respectively. European markets were trading higher with France’s CAC 40 gaining by 0.91 per cent and London’s FTSE 100 rising by 0.55 per cent. Germany’s DAX was trading 0.39 per cent higher. The US markets ended with significant gains in overnight trade on Thursday, with the Nasdaq rallying more than 1 per cent. Global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 1.62 per cent higher to USD 75.25 a barrel. On Thursday, the 30-share index fell 132.04 points, or 0.19 per cent, to close at 69,521.69. Nifty declined 36.55 points, or 0.17 per cent, to settle at 20,901.15.



Crossborder remittances using e rupee to halve cost of such payments to 3 per cent: Ajay

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or e-rupee can help halve the cost of cross-border remittances to 2-3 per cent, an official said on Friday. Economic Affairs Secretary in the Finance Ministry Ajay Seth said CBDC can be used for trade, remittances, or any other cross-border payment. “At the moment, cross-border payment is not a very efficient system, it takes time. At the same time, there is cost factor,” Seth said. Giving data, he said remittances to India is around USD 100 billion annually and compared to the global level of 8-9 per cent, the cost in India is low at 5 per cent of each transaction value. “So, for cross-border pay-

ments, CBDC can be very effective to bring down cost further to the range of 2-3 per cent,” the Secretary said at the Ficci Annual Convention here. The introduction of CBDC was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The RBI began the pilot wholesale CBDC project on November 1, 2022, while the pilot on retail version was launched on December 1, 2022. The e-rupee is in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender. It is being issued in the same denominations as the paper currency and coins. It is being distributed through financial intermediaries, i.e., the banks. Users are able to transact with e-rupee through a digital wallet offered by the participating banks.

India urea production rises to 284.95 L tonne in 2022-23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India’s urea production has increased to 284.95 lakh tonnes last fiscal from 225.08 lakh tonnes in 2014-15, the government informed Lok Sabha on Friday. In written replies, Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Bhagwanth Khuba said the central government ensures adequate availability of urea to meet the requirements of states/Union Territories. To increase the availability of urea through indigenous sources, the Centre announced New Investment Policy (NIP) - 2012 to facilitate fresh investment in the urea sector and to make India self-sufficient in the sector. “A total of 6 new urea units have been set up under NIP - 2012, which together have added 76.2 lakh tonnes per annum in the existing indigenous urea production capacity of the country. “In addition, Government of India also introduced the New Urea Policy (NUP)-2015 on 25th May, 2015 with one of the objectives of maximising indigenous urea production. As a result, the indigenous production of the country increased from 225.08 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 to 284.95 lakh tonne in 2022-23,” Khuba said. The minister also said that the gap between demand (requirement) and production of fertilizers is met through imports. Under the Urea Subsidy Scheme (USS), urea is provided to the farmers at a statutorily notified



Maximum Retail Price (MRP). Besides, under the Nutrient Based Subsidy Policy, a fix amount of subsidy is notified on annual/semi-annual basis, which ensures availability of P&K fertilizers at reasonable prices to farmers. Urea is imported on government account. However, all P&K (phosphatic and potassic) fertilizers (DAP, MOP and NPK) are covered under Open General License (OGL) under the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme and they are imported by the fertilizer companies on commercially viable terms. According to the data, imports of urea fell to 75.8 lakh tonnes in 2022-23 from 91.36 lakh tonnes in the previous year. Imports of Di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) rose to 65.83 lakh tonnes from 54.62 lakh tonnes, while the inward shipments of MOP fell to 18.66 lakh tonnes from 24.6 lakh tonnes. NPK imports increased to 27.5 lakh tonnes from 11.7 lakh tonnes.

IIFL Securities stock settles 5 per cent higher

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of IIFL Securities settled 5 per cent higher on Friday after the SAT set aside Sebi’s order prohibiting the company from onboarding new clients for two years. The stock of the brokerage firm rallied 5.13 per cent to settle at Rs 124.05 apiece on the BSE. On the NSE, scrip of IIFL Securities jumped 4.20 per cent to close at Rs 122.85 per piece. During the day, shares of brokerage firm IIFL Securities touched a 52-week high of Rs 134.40 each on BSE and NSE. On the volume front, 1.02 crore shares were traded on the NSE, while 8.10 lakh shares exchanged hands on the BSE, during the day.

At the close of the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex bounced 303.91 points or 0.44 per cent higher to settle at 69,825.60, while NSE Nifty rose 68.25 points to close at 20,969.40. On Thursday, the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) set aside the market regulator Sebi’s order prohibiting IIFL Securities from onboarding new clients for two years, and slashed the fine levied on the brokerage house to Rs 20 lakh from Rs 1 crore. The order came after IIFL Securities, earlier known as India Infoline Ltd., filed an appeal against the order passed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in June. The capital markets regulator, in June, prohibited IIFL Securities



from taking up new clients for two years for alleged mis-utilisation of client funds.

Setting aside Sebi’s order, SAT Presiding Officer Justice Tarun Agarwala and technical member Meera Swarup said, “There has been no misuse of client funds and by wrongly considering the non-funded portion of the bank guarantee as per the 2016 circular, an attempt has been made out to show that there was a misuse of client funds which, in our opinion, is patently erroneous”. Further, it said that there was no failure on the part of the appellant (IIFL Securities) to segregate the money of the client. It is not that these monies have been misused for their purposes, and so no penalty under the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act (SCRA) could be imposed.

India has 3 years window to attract companies moving out of China: NITI Aayog

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has a two-to-three-year window to capitalise on the global strategy of de-risking from China and the government needs to be very alert to come up with a set of policies that make the shift of businesses to India attractive and easier, NITI Aayog CEO Subrahmanyam said on Friday. Addressing CII Global Economic Policy Forum 2023, Subrahmanyam further said India is in a sweet spot due to the outcome of geopolitics and the fact that the country has a young working-age population. “So I think, in the next 15 to 20

years time span, India has an opportunity in manufacturing. But the opportunity and the window for India is at best two to three years, because supply chains are unwinding, they’re becoming shorter, and they’re looking for new geographies. “This is going to be a two-three year phenomenon, and then supply chains will get frozen,” he said. Subrahmanyam pointed out that it is not just non-Chinese companies but even Chinese companies which want to move out of China because of labour shortages. “They are having a shortage of demand because there is a population shift in terms of the age,



a shortage of labour supply, the rising cost of labour and the stressed capital markets,” he said. Noting that the capital market system is under stress in China, Subrahmanyam also

said it is a very clear signal to big MNCs from their capitals that de-risk from Beijing. “So even if global trade does not grow in total, there could be a shift in trade from one geogra-

phy to the other. So that is something which India can capitalize in the short run,” he emphasised. The NITI Aayog CEO opined that to attract businesses from China, India will have to compete with Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey, Mexico and Bangladesh. “So I think ... We need to be very alert to come up with a set of policies, a set of programs to make doing business and shifting business to India attractive,” he said. Subrahmanyam also pointed out India’s customs rule does not allow import of used goods when companies shift the factory as they move pre-owned

stuff. “So you need to allow that to happen as there are half-a-dozen other countries who are going to be competing with you to get the shift out of China,” he said. On the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), Subrahmanyam said Indian companies need to adapt fast to the carbon tax if the major markets are moving in that direction. “The fights will be fought by the government at the international level. But at the bottom level, for survival’s sake, I think companies will need to adjust and the government would have to come up with policies to facilitate that,” he added.

Nayara to start polypropylene plant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nayara Energy, India’s second-largest private oil firm, on Friday said it will start operations of a new polypropylene plant in the first half of next year, marking its entry into the lucrative petrochemical sector. In the last financial year (April 2022 to March 2023), India’s consumption of polypropylene stood at 6.4 million tonnes, of which around 1.6 million tonnes or around 25 per cent was imported. With wide applications in segments like packaging, automotive applications, consumer durables and lifestyle products, the demand for polypropylene (PP) is projected to rise. “Nayara is well on track for its entry into the petrochemicals sector with its upcoming 4,50,000 tonnes per annum polypropylene plant expected to be commercially operational during H1 2024 - when Nayara expects the demand to accelerate and margins to kick in,” the firm said. As India’s GDP grows, the demand for polypropylene is expected to grow to around 7.5 million tonnes in the next two years, creating sufficient room for new and upcoming domestic capacities. Nayara said it will be the first polypropylene (PP) producer in the country using the latest



phthalate-free catalyst for the entire PP production. Phthalate-free grades will provide cleaner PP for pharma, health and hygiene applications. “Our customers are also expected to achieve higher throughput, quality consistency and smooth processing with our PP grades produced using advanced catalyst and technology platform,” it said. “We will be packaging our products in pilferage-contamination proof HDSS bags. Our customers will also have the advantage of our all-India sales distribution network and strong technical support. We believe it will be the best product in India for food applications.” Presently, refinery-based PP economics are lower due to strong fuel cracks and lower PP prices (which have fallen significantly in the last 18 months). This is the cyclical nature of the business and the long-term

prospects of the industry remain bright. Importantly, integrated refineries with Petchem portfolios are expected to achieve margin resilience through business cycles as compared to stand-alone refiners. “At the same time, we are actively considering increasing investment in the India growth story, especially in the petchem sector,” Nayara said. With its strategically located refinery at Vadinar in Gujarat, which is the largest petrochemical consumption region in the country, the company is positioned to make a strong entry into this high growth segment. Nayara operates a 20 million tonnes a year oil refinery at Vadinar and also has more than 6,500 petrol pumps in the country. It delivers about 8 per cent of India’s refining output.

Sebi considering to create new asset class

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi is looking to create a new asset class -- which lies between mutual funds and portfolio management services (PMS) -- and the new product can cater to high-risk investors, its chief Madhabi Puri Buch said on Friday. The Sebi chief said that there is a spectrum of asset classes for investors. Of these, “mutual funds are the highly retail investors, then you have in between a PMS and then you have AIF (alternative investment fund) for private equity”. “We feel there is room for an additional asset class somewhere between mutual funds and PMS... Sebi is looking into a whole new asset class,” Buch told reporters here at the sidelines of a CII event. In October, mutual funds industry body AMFI clarified that the idea of introducing a new asset class, which lies between mutual funds and PMS, was at a “very nascent stage”. According to the industry body, there was a deliberation within the industry for an instrument that caters to investors who are looking for an intermediate investment product between mutual funds and PMS. When asked about the total expense ratio (TER), she said that a lot of back-testing is happening and co-creation is happening. In May, Sebi floated a consultation paper and proposed a uniform total expense ratio across mutual fund schemes in a bid to bring in transparency in the costs charged to unitholders. TER is a percentage of a scheme’s corpus that a mutual fund house charges towards expenses, including administrative and management.

GDP growth of 7 per cent in FY24: RBI DG Michael Patra



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Michael Patra on Friday termed the revised 7 per cent growth expectation of the RBI as a “conservative estimate”. Speaking to reporters after the announcement of the bi-monthly policy review, Patra said the real GDP growth in the first half of the fiscal year has beat all estimates, including the RBI’s. Patra said if one were to add the RBI’s estimates for the second half, the GDP growth for FY24 will come at 6.9 per cent. But, the high frequency data for October and November points to robust economic activity. “So at the current time, 7 (per cent) is like a conservative estimate,” the Deputy Governor in-charge of the important monetary policy department said. Earlier in the day, the Reserve

Bank sharply revised up its GDP estimate for FY24 to 7 per cent from the earlier expectation of 6.5 per cent. Many watchers were expecting the RBI to do the revision, but the 0.50 per cent push was not expected by any analyst. On growth, Governor Shaktikanta Das said that the demand for two-wheelers is high as seen in over 20 per cent growth during the festive season and also added that fast moving consumer goods companies are also reporting a turnaround in rural demand. He added that private capex is also showing signs of revival, particularly in sectors like petroleum, steel cement and chemicals, and pointed out that capacity utilization has reached a threshold at 74 per cent. “It has reached a point where we can expect private investment also to start picking,” he said. “Many companies in the manufacturing sector are using their own internal reserves and surpluses to invest. They’re not approaching the bank or they’re not resorting to any other kind of borrowing or raising funds. They’re using their own internal reserves and surplus for investment,” Das said. Das also said that there is growing international confidence in India’s economy, and he has seen the same in interactions with governors of other central banks, other regulators and foreign investors.



CCI conducting market study on artificial intelligence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fair trade watchdog CCI is conducting a market study to assess the impact of artificial intelligence on the competition landscape, the regulator’s chief Ravneet Kaur said on Friday. In recent times, there has been an increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) applications in several sectors. “We are doing a market study on artificial intelligence... In that study (we will) try to understand the dynamics better. We can differentiate what kind of AI that we would like to support and which one is stifling competition,” Kaur said at an event organized by industry chamber FICCI here. This can provide valuable insights into the competitive landscape. The CCI has the mandate to curb unfair business practices in the marketplace across sectors and also promote fair competition. Since its inception, the CCI has cleared 1,000 combinations, mergers & acquisitions cases, Kaur said. The CCI has played a key role in regulating and ensuring a competitive market in the country.

Junior Women Hockey World Cup

India beat Korea 3-1 in classification match

PTI ■ SANTIAGO (CHILE)

India came from behind to outwit Korea 3-1 in the 9th-12th place classification match of the Junior women's hockey World Cup here. Ropni Kumari (23rd minute), Mumtaz Khan (44th) and Annu (46th) scored for India, while Jiyeun Choi (19th) was the goal-getter for Korea on Thursday. In the opening quarter, Korea dominated possession and secured the first penalty corner, but they could not utilise the chance.

India, opting for counter-attacks, kept Korea's defence busy but couldn't convert their promising entries to the opposition circle, resulting to a goal-less deadlock after the first 1quarter. The second quarter mirrored



the intensity of the first, with India and Korea persisting in their attacking plays. Choi broke the deadlock with a precise penalty corner strike, but India swiftly responded through Ropni, who equalized from another penalty corner. Korea, desperate to regain the lead, ramped up their aggression. Despite their fervent efforts, India's solid defence thwarted Korea's advances and counter-attacked skillfully, keeping the pressure on their opponent's defensive line. However, no more goals were scored in the second quarter as both teams entered the half-time break with the score levelled at 1-1. In the third quarter, India dominated the proceedings by keeping possession and troubling Korea's defence rigorously. The

strategy paid dividends as Mumtaz brilliantly slotted the ball home from a penalty corner to give her team the lead. The penultimate quarter ended 2-1 in favour of India. India intensified their attacks and extended their lead early in the fourth and final quarter of the game as Annu netted a superb field goal, securing a two-goal advantage for her team. India continued to unsettle Korea's defence, maintaining their momentum and denying any chance of a comeback. The victory means that India, who had earlier bowed out of the title contention after finishing third in Pool C, will stand a chance to finish ninth in the tournament when they take on either Chile or USA in their last match on Saturday.



Suárez wins the golden ball

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Uruguayan striker Luis Suárez, a former teammate of Lionel Messi at Barcelona, won the golden ball as the player of the season in the Brazilian league. The 37-year-old Suarez, who played with Messi in Spain after several seasons at Liverpool and Ajax, scored 17 goals for Brazilian league runner-up Gremio. The season ended Wednesday with Palmeiras defending its title. Suárez scored two goals on the final day of the season in a 3-2 victory over Fluminense at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. The Brazilian league's top scorer was Atletico Mineiro forward Paulinho with 20 goals. Suárez said many times he feared he could not finish the season in Brazil because of intense knee pain and the hassle of long flights, but a selection of journalists voted for him to win the golden ball award.

Suárez played 53 matches for Gremio and scored 26 goals in three competitions this season. "I am almost 37 years old, this is the year I played the most times in my career. It was also the year I was most often distant from my family. This award belongs to them," a tearful Suárez said Thursday after receiving the trophy from former national team teammate Diego Lugano. When asked about his future, however, Suárez did not respond. But he said he will remember not only Gremio fans, but also those of other clubs who respected him as an opponent. "It is hard to see rival fans here applaud you when you play, and that did happen to me in some places," Suárez said. "This is all about the player's mind, it doesn't matter how old they are. It could be Endrick at age 17, Hulk, Suárez ... The mindset and the commitment have to be there for you to play and do what you like.

Soccer fans take legal action

To stop French authorities from banning away supporters at games

AP ■ PARIS

An umbrella organisation for soccer fan groups has taken legal action aimed at stopping French authorities from banning away supporters attending some games this weekend. The National Supporters' Association said Friday it has referred the matter to France's highest administrative court as it seeks to challenge bans targeting four matches, including two in the top-tier of the French league. The bans ordered by the French government and local authorities followed the death of a supporter in Nantes last weekend. Sports minister Amelie Oudea-Castera said this week that preventing supporters from traveling to rival clubs could help restore calm following a series of incidents this season. "These appeals are in no way intended to minimize the seriousness of last Saturday's tragedy," the group said. "No one can doubt the immense sadness in the French stands. Nor can anyone doubt our sense of responsibility." The group argued that it's essential to let away fans attend the matches involving Reims, Lens, Auxerre and Bordeaux to guarantee safety for all, especially because many fans are already on site. "The aim of our approach is to ensure that these matches can take place in an atmosphere of respect and freedom," the group said. Reims said this week that its fans were not allowed to

travel to Nice because their French league match on Sunday has been identified as "at risk" of violence. Lyon fans were not allowed to attend Wednesday's 3-0 loss at Marseille and Lens supporters have been banned from travelling to Friday's match in Montpellier. In France, travelling fans are regularly banned from high-risk games such as those between bitter rivals Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille. But Oudea-Castera suggested the measure could be used more often. Marseille fans at their Stade Velodrome deployed banners protesting such bans before their team's match against Lyon. "Banned from travelling in the country of freedoms. Today more than ever, freedom for ultras," their message read, in a reference to diehard fans often described as "ultras." The National Supporters' Association said it decided not to challenge the bans imposed on away fans for matches between PSG and Nantes, Saint-Etienne and Nimes, Lorient and Marseille, as well as Lyon and Toulouse. "These orders are highly questionable. But (these matches) will attract very large crowds. It's too late to change their framework," the group said. The Nantes fan who died last week was killed following a fight between supporters before the club's 1-0 win over Nice. The public prosecutor's office has launched an investigation into voluntary manslaughter.

Naruka, Raiza unstoppable in shooting trials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hangzhou Asian Games silver medalist Anantjeet Singh Naruka was unchallengeable in the men's skeet national selection trials 1, while Raiza Dhillon overcame national champion Ganemat Sekhon in women's skeet at the Karni Singh range here on Friday. Rajasthan's Naruka and Haryana's Raiza, both shot down 58 clay targets in the 60-shot final to register victories. National champion Naruka, following his exploits in Hangzhou, shot 24 early in the morning in the final qualification round to finish on top in the 40-strong field with a score of 121 out of a possible 125. He missed a target on his very first station in the six-man final, but only one more after that, to leave behind Sheeraz Sheikh comfortably in second



place. Sheeraz shot 56, while Gurjaot Khangura was third with 45-hits in the first 50 targets.

Sheeraz, on a comeback trail, also kept his poise throughout the day, coming second in a four-man shoot-off for two

final qualification spots. Gurjaot won the shoot-off to take the other spot. In women's skeet, Raiza was in sublime form throughout the three-day competition and shot three rounds of perfect 25s to top the qualifiers with a score of 122. She would have broken Ganemat's current national record by two had the scores of the trials been considered. Indian No. 1 Ganemat shot a perfect 25 on the day to get into the finals in second place with a score of 120. There was no stopping Raiza, however, as she shot down 58 targets as against Ganemat's 54 in the finals, to win. Rajasthan shooter Maheshwari Chauhan finished third with a score of 43. The skeet finals concluded the first shotgun national selection trials and the second is due to take place in Bhopal from December 15-21.

Jon bolts for LIV Golf in stunning blow to PGA Tour

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Masters champion Jon Rahm bolted for Saudi-funded LIV Golf for what's believed to be more money than the PGA Tour's entire prize fund, a stunning blow that deepens the divide in golf as the two sides were negotiating a commercial deal. Rahm confirmed the move in an interview with Fox News on Thursday. Wearing a black letterman's jacket with the LIV logo, he said it was not an easy decision. "I've been very happy," Rahm said. "But there is a lot of things that LIV Golf has to offer that were very enticing." He said he would keep private how much the deal was worth amid reports that put his compensation in the \$500 million range, which likely would include equity in his new team.

The PGA Tour's total purse in 2023 was about \$460 million. The development comes 25 days before the deadline for the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund try to finalize their June 6 agreement to become commercial partners in a for-profit enterprise, along with the European tour. Talks have been going slowly, and Tiger Woods said last week there were a lot of moving parts. The biggest moving part turned out to be the 29-year-old Rahm, the No. 3 player in the world and a two-time major champion approaching his prime, being the latest to defect. Rahm had been adamant that he has enough money and that he cares only about history and legacy. He recently said he "laughed" whenever he saw his name linked to LIV. "It was a great offer. The money is great, obviously it's wonderful," Rahm said.



"But what I said before is true: I do not play golf for the money. I play golf for the love of the game and for the love of golf. But, as a husband, as a father and as a family man I have a duty to my family to give them the best opportunities and the most amount of resources possible and that is

where that comes in." He remains eligible for the majors for the next five years - the Masters for life, the U.S. Open until 2031. Still to be determined is how the move affects his eligibility for the Ryder Cup. "It's hard to sit here and criticize Jon because of what a great play-

er he is," Rory McIlroy said in an interview with Sky Sports. "Jon is going to be in Bethpage in 2025 (for the Ryder Cup). Because of this decision, the European tour is going to have to rewrite the rules. There's no question about that." Rahm's addition gives LIV Golf seven of the last 14 winners at the majors. "LIV Golf is here to stay," Lawrence Burian, the COO of LIV Golf, said in a news release sent out after Rahm's appearance on Fox News. PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan had been scheduled to meet this week with Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the head of the PIF. The meeting was delayed until next week, but it wasn't clear if it was still on or how Rahm's announcement affects the negotiations. Since the stunning commercial partnership was proposed on June 6, the tour has also enter-

tained offers from private equity groups. Those include Fenway Sports Group and Acorn Growth, which includes former AT&T Chairman Randall Stephenson. He resigned from the PGA Tour board out of protest with its deal with Saudi Arabia. The agreement originally included language to end the poaching of players, but that was removed when the Justice Department had antitrust concerns. Signing with LIV is counter to everything Rahm has said about the league. He has declared his support for the PGA Tour dating to February 2022, and as recently as August he told a Spanish podcast that "I laugh when people rumor me with LIV Golf. I've never liked the format." He had said 54 holes with no cut and a shotgun start "is not a golf tournament."

Lake Placid offers proposal to host sliding sports for 2026 Winter Games



AP ■ LAKE PLACID (US)

Lake Placid has put forth an offer to host sliding sports for the 2026 Winter Olympics, which are scheduled to take place in Italy, where organizers are struggling to provide a venue for bobsled, luge and skeleton racing. The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee

announced the bid after its quarterly meeting Thursday, only two days after the chief of the Milan-Cortina Games said it is possible the hosts could come up with a new proposal to build a track. In October, organizers told the IOC the Italian government had ordered them to move the events due to cost overruns involved in renovating the

Cortina sliding track. Sliding centers in Switzerland and Austria were considered the best options. Lake Placid hosted the Winter Olympics in 1932 and 1980 and, as home of a U.S. Olympic Training Center, has a state-of-the-art sliding center. Last year, a \$104 million renovation of the Olympic center was wrapped up in time for Lake Placid to host the FISU World University Games. USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland said Olympic organizers invited the proposal from Lake Placid. "At this stage, our role is simply to help them present a proposal and to endorse that proposal and ensure that we have the broad support required from the municipalities as well as from the athlete and (national governing body) community," she said. Milan-Cortina is hopeful of not becoming the first Winter Games to hold events outside the host nation's borders, though it's not unheard of on the Summer side: Next year's surfing competition for the Paris Olympics will be held in Tahiti.

HI names 22-member Indian women team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Goalkeeper Savita Punia will continue to lead the Indian women's hockey team, while veteran forward Vandana Katariya will be her deputy as the national federation on Friday announced a 22-member team for the upcoming 5-Nation Tournament in Spain. India will play against Ireland, Germany, Spain and Belgium in the tournament which is scheduled to be held from December 15 to 22 in Valencia. It will serve as the preparatory assignment ahead of the all-important Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi beginning from January 13. "We are going with a well-balanced, strong team," Indian women's hockey team chief coach Janneke Schopman said in a release from HI. "The tournament gives the players an ideal platform to build on the recent performances and keep themselves in the right frame of mind heading into the all-important Olympic Qualifiers. "The matches against the top European teams will also help



us identify areas that need improvement ahead of the tournament, and we are looking forward to making the most out of the opportunity." The Squad: Goalkeepers: Savita (Captain), Bichu Devi Khairabam Defenders: Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Gurjit Kaur, Akshata Abaso Dhekale Midfielders: Nisha, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Monika, Salima Tete, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Sonika, Jyoti, Baljeet Kaur Forwards: Jyoti Chhattri, Sangita Kumari, Deepika, Vandana Katariya (Vice-Captain), Beauty Dundung, Sharmila Devi.

FIA ends its conflict of interest investigation into Toto, Susie

AP ■ PARIS

Formula One's governing body has dropped its probe of a potential conflict of interest between Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff and his wife Susie Wolff, who works for F1's management group. The FIA's compliance department had been looking into the Wolffs following allegations of a conflict of interest and whether they have shared confidential information. "The FIA can confirm that there is no ongoing investigation in terms of ethical or disciplinary inquiries involving any individual," the organization said in a statement on Thursday. Susie Wolff is the managing director of the all-female series F1 Academy. She had rejected the claims "in the strongest possible terms" and said she was "deeply insulted." The probe began after a report in BusinessF1 magazine that rival team executives raised concerns about whether Toto and Susie Wolff passed on information discussed in private meetings. Susie Wolff reports to F1 chief executive Stefano Domenicali.



The BusinessF1 report said team officials were alarmed when Toto Wolff made comments in a recent meeting that included details they felt could only have come from F1. The report did not detail what was discussed. The Mercedes team and Formula One Management, which runs the commercial side of F1, denied any allegations of improper sharing of information or conflict of interest. "Following a review of Formula One Management's F1 code of conduct and F1 conflict of interest policy and confirmation that appropriate protective measures are in place to miti-

gate any potential conflicts, the FIA is satisfied that FOM's compliance management system is robust enough to prevent any unauthorized disclosure of confidential information," the FIA's statement said on Thursday. On Wednesday, nine Formula One teams released nearly identical statements denying they had complained to the FIA about an alleged conflict of interest. The flurry of statements followed an appearance by Red Bull team principal Christian Horner on Sky Sports in which he denied instigating the investigation.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shami, who finished on top of the bowling charts with 24 wickets from seven matches in the ODI World Cup, has been India's go-to bowler in ODIs and Tests.

Mhambrey, one of the quietest back-room workers in the current Indian set-up, doesn't want to take any credit for Shami's success.

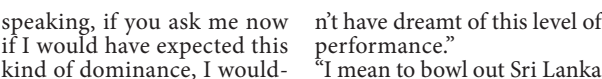
Will India get another talent like Mohammed Shami?

"Well, if I tell you that coaches could create a bowler like Shami, then I would be lying. If a bowler can land it on upright seam every time then every other bowler in the world will be Shami," Mhambrey told PTI in an exclusive interview before leaving for the tour of South Africa.

The former India pacer also spoke about another brilliant operator Jasprit Bumrah in the same vein.

"Even Bumrah with his unusual action gets the ball to move in or away with same action. This is an art and lot of hard work and dedication goes into perfecting the art." The way Shami and Bumrah have managed to dominate the batters around the world is something that has surprised Mhambrey. Many would be envy of their success.

"I think in Test matches, we had Bumrah, Shami and Ishant (Sharma), who created this kind of magic but frankly



bowl them out for 80. That was surreal. Obviously with an attack like ours, we expect-

ed them to do well but to put up such a performance on the biggest stage for such a sus-

However Dravid and his team never lost sight of bigger picture, which is to create a bench strength.

"When we took over, we needed to see that two years down the line, we have also created a sufficient bench strength in every format. We had to identify at least 3-5 bowlers from next batch and also ensure that they get enough game time and are ready for the challenges of international cricket. Rahul, Vicky (Rathour), myself and (T) Dilip got together and identified the bowlers."

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| S. No. | Name of the Borrower /Guarantor | Brief Description of Properties/Possession Type | Liabilities | Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Amount in Multiple | Branch Name Contact Mobile No. | | |
| 1. | Borrower: 1. M/s Shree Fols Proprietor:- Mr. Praveen Reddy, S/o Mr. Janardhan Reddi, Khasra No. 106, Bhagwanpur, Raipur Industrial Area, Distt Haridwar, Bhagwanpur, Uttarakhand - 247661. Proprietor: Mr. Praveen Reddy S/o Mr. Janardhan Reddi, Add 1: R/o Village Nagar Mandal Lokeshtaram, Distt - Adilabad (Andhra Pradesh), Add 2: R/o Flat No.-A-06, Khasra No. Part of 150 Type 2 BHK, 2nd Floor without Roof Right in Anand Vihar Colony, Vill - Makhanpur Mehmoood Aalam Musthakm, Pargana Bhagwanpur, Tehsil - Bhagwanpur, Distt. Haridwar, Uttarakhand, Add 3: R/o Pharma Pack, Kh. No. 143, Raipur, Bhagwanpur, Haridwar, Uttarakhand - 247661. | Name of Title Holder: Mr. Praveen Reddy, S/o Mr. Janardhan Reddi EMT of all that of residential property Flat No. A-06, Khasra No. Part of 150, Type 2 BHK, 2nd Floor without Roof Right in Anand Vihar Colony, Vill - Makhanpur Mehmoood Aalam Musthakm, Pargana Bhagwanpur, Tehsil - Bhagwanpur, Distt. Haridwar, Uttarakhand, Total Land Area measuring 965 sq. feet or 89.68 Sq. Mts. Boundaries as per actuals: East- Common corridor/Staircase party Balcony & open area then after 30 ft road, West- Balcony/Open land (Below), North- Flat No. A-05, Flat of other, South- Flat No. B-05, Flat of other. Physical Possession w.e.f. 01.02.2022+ Expenses - Recoveries after 27.02.2022 in account 2909755000018, Rs 60,978.41 as on 27.02.2022 + Interest w.e.f. 30.01.2022+ Expenses - Recoveries after 27.02.2022 in account 2909766000012 and Rs 7,73,224.40 as on 27.02.2022 + Interest w.e.f. 06.02.2022+ Expenses - Recoveries after 27.02.2022 in account 2200768000141 | Rs. 20,43,891.00 as on 27.02.2022 + Interest w.e.f. 01.02.2022 + Expenses - Recoveries after 27.02.2022 in account 2909261010154, Rs 7,81,303.46 as on 27.02.2022 + Interest w.e.f. 27.02.2022 + Expenses - Recoveries after 27.02.2022 in account 2909619000284, Rs 3,64,930.30 as on 27.02.2022 + Interest w.e.f. 30.01.2022+ Expenses - Recoveries after 27.02.2022 in account 2909766000012 | Cb2909@canarabank.com | Canara Bank, Bhawanpur Ph.No. 9456591049 | | |
| 2. | Borrower: Mr. Jabir S/o Mr. Hanif, Add 1: R/o H No. 45, Chauk Bazaar, Landhora, Tehsil Roorkee, Haridwar, Uttarakhand - 247664. Add 2: Khasra No. 242, Gram Jamalpur Kalan, Pargana Jwalapur, Tehsil & Distt Haridwar. | Name of Title holder: Mr. Jabir S/o Mr. Hanif EMT of all that of residential property at Khasra No. 242, Gram Jamalpur Kalan, Pargana Jwalapur, Tehsil & Distt Haridwar. Total Land Area measuring 750 sq feet or 69.70 square meter. Boundaries: East- 43'0", Land of Seller, West- 44'0", Land of Seller, North- 17'3", Rasta 7'6" wd, South- 17'3", Rasta 16' wd. Physical Possession | Rs. 7,11,528.32 as on 30.12.2021 + Interest w.e.f. 01.12.2021 + Expenses - Recoveries after 30.12.2021 | Rs. 7.00 Lakh Rs. 0.70 Lakh Rs. 10,000/- Email id: cb5097@canarabank.com | Canara Bank, Jwalapur-I Ph.No. 945659108 | | |
| 3. | Borrower: Mr. Ashu Azam S/o Mr. Sikandar R/o Add 1: 69 Mohalla Kotarwan Jwalapur, Haridwar - 249407. Add 2: House on Plot no. 7, Gayatri Vihar Colony Sarai Village Jwalapur , Pargana & Tehsil Jwalapur, District Haridwar- 249407. Guarantor's Mr. Bal Krishna Sharma S/o Mr. Ramesh Chandra Sharma R/o 34 Gali No A5 Tehri Vishatphal Colony Jwalapur, Distt Haridwar - 249407. | Name of Title Holder: Mr. Ashu Azam s/o Mr. Sikandar EMT of all that of residential property (house) constructed at part of Plot no. 7, Khasra no. 1499 situated at Village Jwalapur (Gayatri Vihar Colony Sarai), Pargana Roorkee Tehsil & District Haridwar - 249407. Total Land Area measuring 445.25 sq ft i.e 41.47 square meter. Boundaries: East- Land of other, West- 16 feet wide road, North- Plot No. 08, South- Part of Plot No. 7. Physical Possession | Rs. 8,47,915.09 as on 02.12.2022 + Interest w.e.f 04.11.2022 + Expenses - Recoveries after 02.12.2022 | Rs. 11.70 Lakh Rs. 1.17 Lakh Rs. 10,000/- Email id: cb18734@canarabank.com | Canara Bank, Jwalapur-II Ph.No. 9456591111 | | |
| 4. | Borrower: Smt. Jyoti W/o Sh. Sonu R/o Add 1: Madhu Vihar Colony, Phase 1, Jamalpur Kalan, Jwalapur, Haridwar, Uttarakhand 249407. Add 2: Plot No. 8, Khasra No. 443M, Suman Vihar Colony, Phase 2, Village Suman Nagar, Pargana Roorkee, Distt. Haridwar 249402. Sh. Suno S/o Sh. Sikander R/o Add 1: Madhu Vihar Colony, Phase 1, Jamalpur Kalan, Jwalapur, Haridwar, Uttarakhand 249407. Add 2: Plot No. 8, Khasra No. 443M, Suman Vihar Colony, Phase 2, Village Suman Nagar, Pargana Roorkee, Distt. Haridwar 249402. | Name of Title Holder: Smt. Jyoti W/o Sh. Sonu urf Suno EMT of residential property at Plot No. 8 measuring East - 30 ft, West - 30 ft, North - 35 ft, South - 35ft, Khasra No. 443M situated in Suman Vihar Colony, Phase 2, Village Suman Nagar, Pargana Roorkee, Teh. & Distt. Haridwar (Out of limits of Nagar Nigam Haridwar). Total Land Area measuring 1050 Sq. Ft. i.e. 97.58 Sq. Mtr. Boundaries: East- Way 20 ft. wide, West- Land of other person, North- Plot No. 09, South- Plot No. 07. Physical Possession | Rs. 24,50,387.00 as on 05.01.2023 + Interest w.e.f 08.12.2022 + Expenses - Recoveries after 05.01.2023 | Rs. 19.90 Lakh Rs. 2.00 Lakh Rs. 10,000/- Email id: cb18734@canarabank.com | Canara Bank, Jwalapur-II Ph.No. 9456591111 | | |
| 5. | Borrower: 1. Smt. Sabnam W/o Sh. Tajuddin, R/o Mohalla Hajjaban, Jwalapur, Haridwar Uttarakhand 249407. 2. Sh. Salauddin S/o Sh. Tajudin, R/o Mohalla Hajjaban, Jwalapur, Haridwar Uttarakhand 249407. Guarantor's: Sh. Aziz S/o Sh. Soukat R/o HNo. 574, Sarai, Jamalpur, Haridwar Uttarakhand 249404. | EMT of all that of residential property in the name of Smt. Sabnam W/o Sh. Tajuddin and Sh. Salauddin S/o Sh. Tajudin, (land & Building) on plot no. 01, belonging to Khasra no. 1483, situated at Village Jwalapur (Out of limits of Nagar Nigam Haridwar) Pargana Jwalapur Teh. & Distt. Haridwar. Total Land Area measuring 769.20 Sq. Ft. i.e. 71.48 Sq. Mtr. Boundaries: East-Plot No. 12, West-Way 11ft. wide, North- Plot of other person, South- Plot No. 02. Physical Possession | Rs. 19,10,945.00 as on 30.01.2021 + Interest w.e.f 01.01.2021 + Expenses - Recoveries after 30.01.2021 | Rs. 15.00 Lakh Rs. 1.50 Lakh Rs. 10,000/- Email id: cb18732@canarabank.com | Canara Bank, Haridwar Kankhal Ph. Na. 941111368 | | |
| 6. | Borrower: Smt. Shaheen Praveen W/o Sh. Islamuddin R/o 306/26, Purabiya Basti, Haridwar Uttarakhand 249407. Guarantor's: Sh. Inam Ali S/o Sh. Bhura R/o Sarai, Haridwar Uttarakhand 249404. | EMT of all that of residential property in the name of Smt. Shaheen Praveen W/o Sh. Islamuddin, bearing Plot No. 15, Khasra No. 242, situated at Vill. Jamalpur Kalan, Pargana Jwalapur, Teh. & Distt. Haridwar. Total Land Area measuring 60.64 Sq. Mt. i.e. 652.50 Sq. Ft. Boundaries: East- Drainage, West- Plot of other person, North- Way 16ft. wide, South- House of Sh. Mustafa. Physical Possession | Rs. 12,25,987.00 as on 30.01.2021 + Interest w.e.f. 01.01.2021 + Expenses - Recoveries after 30.01.2021 | Rs. 12.00 Lacs Rs. 1.20 Lacs Rs. 10,000/- Email id: cb18732@canarabank.com | Canara Bank, Haridwar Kankhal Ph.No. 941111368 | | |
| 7. | Borrower: 1. Sh. Divyam Bisht S/o Sh. Rajendra Singh Bisht, 2. M/s Divyam Motors Prop. Sh. Divyam Bisht S/o Sh. Rajendra Singh Bisht, Guarantor: Sh. Satya Pal Singh S/o Sh. Loothi Singh. | Name of Title holder: Sh. Divyam Bisht S/o Sh. Rajendra Singh Bisht. EMT of all that of residential property, Flat MJ-504 (without roof right), 4th floor, Madhur Jamuna | | | | | |