OPINION 6

INDIA EMERGES AS A MAJOR

WORLD PLAYER

WORLD 8

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Opposition backed security breach: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi charged Opposition parties on Tuesday with providing "muted and indirect" support to the security breach incident in Parliament. He that, due to their conduct, they will remain in Opposition with further reduced numbers in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing what he claimed to be the last BJP parliamentary party meeting this year, Modi set out the theme for the ruling alliance's campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha election. He took a swipe at the INDIA bloc over its meeting on Tuesday. Slamming Opposition parties for

Parliament disrupting proceedings, Modi said that they were giving a "political spin" to the incident in frustration over their losses in the recent Assembly polls. He added that their goal is to oust his but government, the government's objective is to ensure a bright future for India. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi quoted the Prime Minister, stating, "Some people are uniting in their intent to remove the BJP from power, while we, as patriots, are working for the betterment of India. They are utilising their strength to overthrow the government, whereas we are using our strength for the



Modi asserted the Opposition's conduct in Parliament will result in further reduction of their numbers in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, while the BJP aims to increase its tally. Pointing to empty rows in the auditorium where all BJP MPs had gathered, he mentioned that these will be filled after the 2024 polls.

Referring to the December 13 incident of two persons jumping into the Lok Sabha chamber from the visitors' gallery and opening smoke cans, he emphasised that anyone who believes in democracy will not accept such an act. He added that this act should have been

condemned unanimously.

"Unfortunately, what I have been witnessing is that the Opposition is expressing its frustration over losing in the elections and giving a political spin to the entire incident. They are even providing muted and indirect support to it, which is worrisome. Supporting the incident and suggesting things like 'what else could they have done' is both worrisome and condemnable," he said, according to a source.

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi recently said that issues like unemployment and price rise were behind the security breach. "How can a party that believes in democratic values overtly or covertly justify it?" the Prime Minister said, according to BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad.

The conduct of these parties clearly indicates that they have made up their minds to remain in Opposition and are practising for it, Modi said, adding that the nation has also decided to keep them there and further reduce their strength.

Modi asked BJP MPs to maintain restraint and adhere to democratic norms. "We should expose the Opposition while keeping our voices under control and staying within the limits of democracy. In the coming days,

regardless of whether others participate or not, we must actively engage in Parliament's proceedings," he said, noting that some important Bills are coming up for discussion in both

"It would have been good if the Opposition had participated in these debates, but perhaps good deeds are not in their fate," he said in a biting criticism of these parties, according to party leaders.

The Prime Minister also urged BJP members to inform first-time voters about the situation in the country ten years ago, emphasising that those around 18 years old have only witnessed his government's development works and India's rising global stature. They might not be aware of the corruption and misrule a decade ago, he added.

He suggested that a campaign on these lines could be taken up on National Voters' Day, which falls on January 25.

Modi asked them to visit border villages to witness the development there and highlight it. He mentioned that Dhordo in Gujarat is a model village for the development of border areas and recently received a UN honour as the best tourist destination.

Modi also drew attention to his use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) during his address at Kashi Tamil Sangamam in Varanasi on Sunday, which translated his Hindi speech into Tamil in almost real-time.

49 more MPs shown the door

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The suspensions spree continued in Parliament with 49 more Lok Sabha MPs from the Opposition benches suspended from the House for disrupting proceedings on Tuesday. This comes a day after 78 opposition members suspended from Parliament. The Opposition criticised the government, calling Parliament a graveyard of the Constitution and comparing it to the North Korean assembly.

The total number of sitting Parliamentarians suspended during this Winter Session, combining the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, now stands at 141. Before resuming the morning session of Parliament, the constituents of the Opposition INDIA bloc decided to strongly raise the demand for a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah on the Parliament security breach issue in both Houses.

The last time such a large number of MPs were suspended was under the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on March 15, 1989, by then Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar. A total of 63 MPs from the Opposition benches were suspended for the remainder of the week, which was three days during the Budget Session. The



suspended MPs included VP Singh, Somnath Chatterjee, VC Shukla, Indrajit Gupta, and S Jaipal Reddy during the 8th Lok Sabha, sources said.

In the current Parliament, the Opposition side has lost more than two thirds of its strength for the duration of the Winter Session, and only nine MPs of the principal Opposition Congress, including former party presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, are left in the Lok Sabha.

The MPs suspended on Tuesday include National Conference's Farooq Abdullah, Congress leaders Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari, and Karti Chidambaram, as well as Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav. Continued on Page 2



Star performer India to add 16 per cent to global growth: IMF

PTI WASHINGTON

progress of India.

owing at a robust rate due to eco-Gnomic reforms in key sectors like digitisation and infrastructure, India has emerged as a star performer and is projected to contribute more than 16 per cent of the global growth, the International Monetary Fund said on Monday.

"What we have been observing for quite some time now is that India has been growing at a very robust rate. It is one of the star performers when it comes to real growth when you look at peer countries. It's one of the fastest growing large emerging markets and it's contributing, in our current projections, more than 16 per cent of global growth this year," Nada Choueiri, the Mission of India at IMF, told PTI in an interview.

The IMF on Monday released its annual Article IV consultation with India, according to which the South Asian country, underpinned by prudent macroeconomic policies, is on track to be one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world this year.

Nonetheless, the economy is facing global headwinds, including a global growth slowdown in an increasingly fragmented world, Choueiri said.

There is a very strong push by the government to invest in infrastructure and develop the logistics that are needed for a solid basis for growth, Continued on Page 2 Choueiri said.

VP slams mockery by MP as shameful

Expressing concern over an MP mimicking Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman Dhankar, the latter termed the act as "shameful" and "ridiculous," The Upper House witnessed disruptions Opposition members continued

to raise a din over the breach of Parliament issue.

When the Rajya Sabha assembled at 2 pm in the post-lunch period, Dhankhar referred to mimicry made of the Lok Sabha Speaker and also of the Raiva Sabha chairman by an MP in the Parliament complex. "You are not aware of the kind of response that is against this institution in the minds of the people, and we had the occasion to see the lowest level.

"Imagine what must be going through my heart when your senior leader videographs a Member of Parliament mocking institution of the chairman... Don't judge my background as that of a farmer," the chairman said, attracting the attention of senior Congress leader P Chidambaram. The institution of the chairman, he added, has been ravaged, and that too by a political party that

has ruled for so long.
"A member of Parliament videographing another one, for what? I suffered, I tell you, on Instagram. Mr Chidambaram (who was present in the House), your party put out a video that was later withdrawn; it was shameful to me. You used Twitter, the official handle of

the spokesperson, to demean



me, insult me, insult my background as a farmer, insult my position as a Jat, insult my position as Dhankhar said. chairman,"

Soon after the house met at noon, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rebuked senior Congress member Digvijaya Singh for causing disorder and asked him to take his seat.

"I saw some time ago on TV channels... There is no limit to falling. I saw a senior leader of your party videographing the unparliamentary behaviour of another MP. He is even a bigger leader than you. I can only wish for good sense to prevail," he said, adding, "There must be some limit... At least spare some

places? The issue is that the office of the chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the office of the Speaker are very different. Political parties will have their cross-currents; they will have exchanges, but imagine a senior leader of your party videographing another member of a different party. Mimicry of the chairman, mimicry of the speaker... How ridiculous, how shameful, how

unacceptable," he said. Continued on Page 2

Kharge emerges as INDIA Bloc's PM face

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA NEW DELHI

West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, along with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, pro-posed Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's name as the prime ministerial candidate of the Opposition bloc INDIA, as stated by MDMK leader Vaiko after the eting in the national This meeting coincided with the day when a large number of Opposition Parliamentarians were suspended for the remaining days of the Winter Session.

However, Kharge emphasised that it is crucial to secure a victory first, and all other decisions can follow. Sources indicated that the allies stressed the need for the seat-sharing formula for the Lok Sabha 2024 to be in place by December 31. Present at the meeting were CPP chairperson Sonia Gandhi, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, Mamata Banerjee, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, Bihar

he Allahabad High Court on

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday dismissed pleas challenging the maintainability of a 1991 suit seeking the

"restoration" of a temple at the

site where the Gyanvapi mosque

now stands in Varanasi. The

court observed that the

"religious character" of a disputed place can only be determined by the court.

The high court dismissed five

connected petitions filed over

the years by the mosque

management committee and the

Uttar Pradesh Central Sunni

filed before the district court is

not barred by the Places of

PTI PRAYAGRAJ

meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his Deputy Tejaswi Yadav, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, NCP supremo Sharad Pawar, former Union Minister Lalu Prasad, National Conference leader Farooq Prasad, Abdullah, PDP leader Mehbooba

NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge during the INDIA Bloc

19 DH

National Mufti, and the Left party leaders.

leader Uddhav Shiv Sena Thackeray was also attendance.

BER 2023

Sources have revealed that the leaders engaged in discussions on a joint campaign, seat-sharing arrangements, and reconsideration of their strategy following the recent setback for the grand old party in the

victorious in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, although it achieved success in Telangana, marking the second southern state after Karnataka in its accomplishments.

The meeting took place amid intermittent challenges among crucial allies such as the Samajwadi Party, TMC, and AAP, with their leaders discontent in public. Following the Tuesday meeting, Vaiko stated that Kharge's name was proposed by Banerjee and Keiriwal. However, other leaders maintained that no final decision was reached on the issue during

the meeting.
After the Congress president's name was proposed as a candidate for the country's first Dalit prime minister in a meeting attended by 28 Opposition leaders, Kharge commented, "I work for the downtrodden. Let us win first, then we will see. I don't

seek anything."

Continued on Page 2

Places of Worship Act no bar in restoring Gyanvapi temple: HC

Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which mandates that the "religious character" of a place cannot be changed from what existed on August 15, 1947. In a significant observation, Justice Řohit Ranjan Agarwal pointed out that the Act did not provide a definition for the term religious character." emphasised that determination could only be Waqf Board. It held that the suit made through evidence presented in court by the opposing parties.



"Either the Gyanvapi compound has a Hindu religious character or a Muslim religious character. It can't have dual character at the same time," stated Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal. He ordered that the trial in this case, which holds "vital national should importance," concluded as soon as possible,

preferably within six months. 'In the national interest, it is necessary for the suit to proceed expeditiously and be decided with utmost urgency, with the cooperation of both contesting parties and without resorting to any dilatory tactics," he said.

Continued on Page 2

Crackdown on illegal Rohingyas

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

In a massive crackdown, the Jammu & Kashmir Police teams on Tuesday swooped down on over three dozen locations across five districts of Jammu province to expose the unholy nexus between a large number of facilitators and Rohingyas (illegal immigrants from Myanmar).

During the day, more than 10 fresh FIRs were registered, seven in Jammu district alone and one each in Doda, Kishtwar, Rajouri, and Poonch districts. Around 40 people have been detained so far for See Page 2 questioning

 $M_{
m Australian}^{
m itchell}$ Starc surpassed his Australian bowling partner Pat Cummins to become the most expensive buy in IPL history with an eye popping bid of Rs 24.75 crore as pacers attracted big moolah at the

auction here on Tuesday. Not long after Cummins fetched an unprecedented pay packet of 20.50 crore from Sunrisers Hyderabad, Starc raised the bar when Kolkata Knight Riders

made a multi million dollar bid

Starc makes IPL history with for the left-arm pacer who last played in the IPL in 2015.

Such are the unpredictable ways of IPL that the one third of the formidable Australian pace trio, Josh Hazlewood, went unsold in the first round of auction from a base price of Rs 2 crore.

Gujarat Titans and KKR were involved in a long and exhilarating bidding battle for Starc before the latter lapped him up for a record deal.

Starc, 33, has usually prioritised international duty over IPL but



one eye on the T20 World Cup that follows the IPL. decided to enter the auction with He has played only two seasons

of the IPL, taking 34 wickets in 27 games at an average of 20.38. In contrast, Cummins has been a regular at the IPL but skipped the 2023 edition to focus on the Ashes and the ODI World Cup. An intense bidding war followed for Cummins with Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bangalore, Chennai Super Kings, and Sunrisers Hyderabad raising their paddles frenetically to secure the services of the fast bowling all-rounder.

In the end, it was SRH who broke the bank for Cummins, who

drew the highest-ever bid surpassing the Rs 18.5 crore that Punjab Kings had shelled out for England's Sam Curran last year. It was not the first time that Cummins attracted huge sums at the IPL auction. Ahead of the 2020 edition, KKR had paid Rs 15.5 crore for his services. Besides Cummins, Sunrisers also grabbed World Cup final hero Travis Head for Rs 6.80 crore. Among the fast bowlers, the

others who broke the bank were

Harshal Patel (Rs 11.75 crore to

Punjab Kings), Alzarri Joseph

Yadav (Rs 5.80 crore to Gujrat Titans) and Shivam Mavi (Rs 6.40 crore to LSG). Harshal, who was released by

(Rs 11.50 crore to RCB), Umesh

RCB ahead of the auction, remains a sought after player with Punjab Kings going the distance for the out-of-favour India pacer. In the batters category, Daryl Mitchell had a massive payday with Chennai Super Kings spending Rs 14 crore for the New Zealand batter. Continued

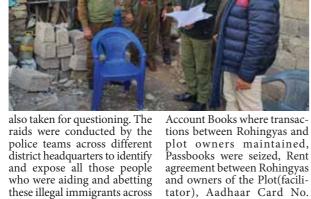
Continued on Page 2

J&K Police raid 5 districts over Rohingyas, facilitators nexus

In a massive crackdown, the Jammu and Kashmir police teams Tuesday swooped down on over three dozen locations across five districts of Jammu province to expose the 'unholy' nexus between a large number of facilitators and Rohingyas (illegal immigrants from Myanmar).

During the day more than 10 fresh FIRs were registered by the police, seven in Jammu district alone and one each in Doda, Kishtwar Rajouri, and Poonch districts. Around 40 people have been detained so far for further questioning by the police during these raids. The Police in the Jammu region have taken action against the facilitators providing shelter to Rohingyas in the Jammu, Kishtwar, Doda, Poonch, and Rajouri districts.

Briefing media persons late Tuesday evening here at District Police lines Inspector General of Police Jammu range, Dr Anand Jain told reporters that thorough investigations and intelligence reports suggested certain elements have been involved in facilitating the illegal settlement of Rohingyas, posing potential threats to the security and socio-economic fabric of the UT of J&K. He said searches were conducted at approximately 40 locations in the area of seven(7) police stations in which 39 abettors were



identity documents such as Aadhar cards, ration cards, Anand Jain said the facilitators, once apprehended, will be subject to legal proceedings, and any violation of laws about national security and immigration will be dealt with firmly.According to IG, Jammu zone, a total number of seven FIRs were registered at seven police stations of Satwari, Trikuta Nagar, Channi Himmat, Bahu Fort, Nowabad, Domana, and Nagrota police stations U/s = 420/120

the Jammu region, sheltering

them, helping them acquire

B/167/468/471/447 IPC, 14C Foreigners Act. Police teams also recovered 04 persons for Creating Fake Aadhar and Ration Card of Rohingya Man in Gursai area of Poonch Three more persons were

arrested in Poonch for creating fake Aadhar card and ration card

Meanwhile, Kishtwar Police have so far arrested 13 persons which Includes 06 Rohingyas and 07 Supporters. These facilitators helped Rohingyas in procuring a Domicile Certificates, Aadhaar Card, Voter cards and Ration Cards In this connection case, FIR 22/2023 420/465/467/468/471/120-B/IPC was registered at PS Dachhan,

Doda Police have so far registered (03) FIRs against (10) Foreigners (Rohingyas and Bangladeshi nationals) and their facilitators for illegally procuring Indian identity documents like, Domicile Certificates, Aadhaar Cards, Ration Cards, Voter ID Cards and PAN Cards etc and illegally staying in District Doda.

In district Rajouri, police arrested one person from Laam area of Nowshera for facilitating a Rohingya woman namely Haleema D/O Mohd Nazir R/O Mayanmar, A.P Narwal Bala, Jammu.

The arrested person has been identified as Lal Din S/O R/O Kampla Mohra, Tehsil Qila Darhal & District Rajouri.

Opposition attacks Centre after suspension of 49 more LS MPs

Opposition MPs on Tuesday slammed the government after 49 more Lok Sabha members were suspended from the House, calling Parliament a graveyard of the Constitution and comparing it with the North Korean Assembly.

A "complete purge" is being executed to ensure the passage of "draconian bills" without any meaningful debate in the new Parliament, the Congress claimed, dubbing it as "Namocracy' in all its tyranny". Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the Modi government wants to demolish democracy. It does not want the people of India to hear the opposition and thus, has adopted the policy of "suspend, throw out and bulldoze".

"The suspension of a total of

141 Opposition MPs from Parliament reinforces our charge that an autocratic BJP wants to demolish Democracy in this country. We all know that key Bills like the Criminal Law Ámendments, which unleash draconian powers and impede citizen's Rights, are listed," he said in a post on 'X'. "Modi Govt does not want the people of India to hear out the Opposition, while these Bills are debated and deliberated. Therefore, they have adopted this "Suspend, Throw Out and Bulldoze" tactic to destroy Democracy," Kharge said. "Our simple demands about



making a statement in Parliament on the grave security breach and a detailed discussion on the same, remain unaltered," he added.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said this was being done so that the BJP MP "who facilitated the entry of the two intruders" into the Lok Sabha on December 13 goes scot-free.

The opposition party's attack came soon after 49 Lok Sabha MPs were suspended from the House for disrupting proceedings on Tuesday, a day after 78 opposition members were suspended from Parliament.

Ramesh underlined the suspension of the Lok Sabha MPs on Tuesday to allege that "a complete purge is being executed so that draconian bills are passed without any meaningful debate, and so that the BJP MP who facilitated entry of the two intruders into the Lok Sabha on December 13th goes scot-free"

Today at least 50 more INDIA MPs were suspended from the Lok Sabha alone! A complete purge is being executed so that

Jaya points out bhayanak washrooms in Parliament amid suspension row

ing such steps. These people out any meaningful debate, and so that the BJP MP who will not come back in the facilitated entry of the two

Ramesh said in a post on 'X'. 'Namocracy' in all its tyranny is coming to light in the new Parliament, he said in Hindi. The MPs suspended on Tuesday include the National Conference's Farooq Abdullah, Congress leaders Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari and Parliament. Karti Chidambaram and Samajwadi Party MP Dimple

intruders into the Lok Sabha on

December 13th goes scot-free,'

'INDIA' bloc MPs have been demanding a statement from Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the security breach in Parliament on December 13. Among the other MPs suspended from the Lok Sabha are Supriya Sule of the NCP, S Jagathrakshakan and DNV Senthil Kumar of the DMK, Giridhari Yadav of the JD(U), Danish Ali, who has been suspended from the BSP, and Sushil Kumar Rinku of AAP. While moving the motion to suspend the

Parliamentary Affairs Minister

protesting members of being frustrated" over the recent assembly election results.

"INDIA bloc MPs have been demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah on the security breach in Parliament on December 13. They had agreed not to bring placards. They are frustrated with their loss, so they are tak-

iour continues," Joshi said. In an unprecedented move, 78 opposition MPs were suspended from Parliament on Monday, triggering a strong reaction from the Congress and other parties that accused the BJP government of trying to bulldoze key legislations in "Opposition-less"

House next time if this behav-

Reacting strongly to the suspensions, Shiromani Akali Dal MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal said, "The graveyard of the constitution is visible here".

"Opposition MPs whose job is to raise questions in Parliament are thrown for doing their job...This is the new India... See it," she said outside Parliament. Congress MP Chidambaram said Parliament will soon resemble the North Korean assembly. "We are going to resemble North Korean assembly and only thing missing is synchronised clapping when the PM walks in. This is going to be a token house," he

Bengal tops acid attacks cases for 3 years in row

SAUGAR SENGUPTA

 $B_{\text{in what the Opposition}}^{\text{engal continued to flourish}}$ BJP called "in the house of shame" even as the Trinamool Congress-ruled State topped the list of acid attack cases in the country for three consecutive years in a row.

According to the National Crime Record Bureau, in the past two years the maximum number of acid attacks has been reported from Bengal. According to reports 35 women suffered injuries in 31 incidents throughout the State in 2022 while in 2021 there were 34 acid attacks in the



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For the year 2022 Uttar Pradesh recorded 25 victims in 23 incidents of acid attacks while Madhya Pradesh came a close third with 11 victims in seven incidents. For the corresponding period, India recorded 124 incidents of acid attack with 140 victims. This, apart from the 38 incidents of attempted acid attack cases. In 2021 too, the highest number of acid attacks were reported from Bengal where 34 women were injured followed by Uttar Pradesh 22 and Rajasthan 15.

reported in the country, according to NCRB data. In "attempts to acid attack".

The data for the year 2020 shows 29 victims in as many incidents of acid attacks in Bengal. In the same year 5 incidents of attempted attacks were recorded as well. The same year Uttar Pradesh followed closely behind with 23 victims in 21 cases and 4 attempted cases whereas Karnataka and Odisha jointly held the third position with 6

In the same year India recorded a total of 105 cases of acid attacks where 109 people were injured. For the same year there were 33 incidents of attempted attacks.

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POLICE HEADQUARTER, M.P., BHOPAL

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30 Nos

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05 Nos

38 Nos

01 Nos.

According to the latest research the number of reported acid violence cases hovers around 200 annually whereas in global terms 80 percent of acid attack survivors are women, and 60 per cent of cases go unreported. This, whereas seventy-six per cent of the attacks are committed by a person known to the victims. When asked about the rising numbers of acid attacks in the country as also in Bengal, a member of Acid Survivor International Trust said how the Supreme Court order of Incidentally in the last five years, 1,362 acid attacks were 2014 --- making production of identity cards mandatory for purchase of acid and registration of acid selling shops oblig-2021, as per the latest available atory --- in this regard is data, 176 acid attacks were being violated making the job

379803635025 of one Rohingya

lady who got married to a local

boy has been seized, Credit

Card and its information

regarding who issued the

Credit Card, Mobile phones of

owners and Rohingyas were

seized, SIM cards issued to

Rohingyas by different indi-

viduals were seized, Revenue

records of the owners where

Rohingyas were staying were

seized, Water and electricity

bills details connecting owners

to the Rohingyas by providing

amenities to the Rohingyas, Vehicle RC Details used by

Rohingyas, Bank documents

among other incriminating

In Poonch, police teams arrest-

ed three conspirators among

material were seized.

The member of the NGO said how many cases of acid attacks go unreported in interior areas and how even the police avoid registering these cases so as to shirk responsibility.

"The trauma a person passes through after one survives an acid attack is unbearable ... it is necessary for the Governments to take note of the crime and act on the Supreme Court directions or else the Court will have to nudge them into action," she

Besides, she said slow delivery of justice also makes life worse for the victims and encourages the criminals.

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05/01/2024 Time 14:00 PM

06/01/2024 Time 16:00 PM

NEW DELHI

🕻 amajwadi Party MP Jaya SBachchan on Tuesday drew attention towards the washrooms in Parliament and said Hamara washroom itna bhayanak hai(our washrooms are terrible)," after she walked out of the Rajya Sabha in protest against the suspensions. She also accused Rajya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar of not letting her

"Ŵe have been trying to speak since morning. The Leader of the House has said that we will see how much patience you have. The House proceedings will go on till 11 pm tonight. They take water and loo breaks every five minutes. Even our washrooms are terrible," she told a private television chan-



She also slammed the Centre

for trying to get the bills passed without any discussion: They are using unfair and unjust measures If you wanted to pass the bill, do it just like that. What's the point of doing 'ayes and noes. Why this

The opposition benches in both the Houses wore a deserted look on Tuesday as 49 members were suspended today in addition to the 78 that

day. As of now, 141 Opposition MPs stand suspended from the Parliament. Two other women Rajya Sabha MPs - Trinamool Congress

faced the same action yester-

Dola Sen and Shiv Sena (ŬBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi were also accompanying Ms Bachchan. They are the only women MPs who have not been suspended from the



on the Deputy Chairman, Raiya Sabha, Harivansh in Parliament House Complex on Tuesday. Both sides discussed various issues of bilateral interests including the need for more Parliamentary exchanges for fostering stronger bilateral relations between India and European Union

H-1B domestic visa renewal pilot clears White House review



PTI WASHINGTON

In a move that will benefit professionals already in the US, a pilot programme to resume domestic visa renewal for qualified H-1B visa applicants has cleared a review by a top regulatory body under the White House. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The pilot programme which will be limited to 20,000 participants initially comes months after the White House announced the plan during the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June. Under the pilot cleared by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) review on December 15, the qualified H-1B visa

applicants will not have to travel abroad to renew the work visa

The OIRA is a statutory part of the Office of Management and Budget within the Executive Office of the US President.

In November, Julie Stufft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services, said, "In India, the demand (for US visas) is still very high. The wait time of six, eight and 12 months is not what we need and (it is) not indicative of how we view India."

We want to make sure that Indian travellers can get appointments as quickly as possible.

One way we are doing that is through the domestic visa renewal programme, which is focused very much on India. We are piloting that," she said.

Over three months, beginning in December, the State Department will be issuing 20,000 visas to foreign nationals who are already inside the

Starc makes...

From Page 1

Head, who scored a matchwinning century in the ODI World Cup final against India and also starred in the World Test Championship final team earlier this year, saw reigning champions Chennai Super Kings and SRH indulge in a bidding war.

The wicketkeeper batter was finally grabbed by 2016 champions SRH.

New Zealand batter Rachin Ravindra, with a base price of Rs 50 lakh, was snapped by CSK for a modest Rs 1.8 crore. Ravindra was another star of the recently held ODI World Cup in India.

West Indies T20 skipper Rovman Powell emerged as the costliest player among capped batters, going to Rajasthan Royals for Rs 7.40

49 more MPs... From Page 1

Parliamentary

Minister Pralhad Joshi, while moving a motion for the suspension of the MPs, accused the protesting members of being members "frustrated" over the recent Assembly election results.

demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah on the security breach in Parliament on December 13. They had agreed not to bring placards. They are frustrated with their loss, so they take such steps. These people will not come back to the House next time if this behavior continues," Joshi said.

"They are insulting the chair and the people of India by bringing placards," he added. Joshi also informed the Rajya Sabha and regretted the fact that members of the Opposition had disgraced the upper house presiding officer, who is also the Vice President

of India, by making fun and mimicking in public.

Joshi sought immediate apologies to the Chair for having insulted him, and given their track record, similar things Congress has done in the past by also mocking the first tribal

Parliament passed a bill extending protection from action against punitive unauthorised developments in Delhi for three years beyond December 31. Earlier in the day, The National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Act, 2023, was passed by a voice vote in Lok Sabha after a brief discussion in which three members participated. In the Upper House, eight members participated discussions on the bill, and it

Kharge emerges...

He added, "First, we have to win and secure a majority, and then MPs will decide democratically," briefing the media on whether he could be the PM candidate for the Opposition

Upon her arrival in the national capital on Monday, Banerjee informed the media that any decision on the prime ministerial candidate for the alliance would be made after the election.

"When so many political parties come together, it is a democracy, with different states, diverse views, and varying opinions, but ultimately, INDIA is a platform where we are fighting together," said

Baneriee. Kharge stated that INDIA bloc parties will focus on seatsharing talks at the state level and hold public meetings across the country, emphasising that any decision on the prime ministerial candidate will be made after

the elections. Sources have indicated that INDIA bloc parties have

decided to finalise seatsharing by the second week of January. Addressing the press conference after a meeting of top leaders of the INDIA bloc, Kharge said, "All INDIA parties unanimously decided on how to take the alliance forward. At least 8-10 meetings will be conducted together across the country." 'If alliance members don't

come on the same stage, people will not be aware of the alliance. Everyone agreed to this," he said. The Congress president mentioned that seat-sharing talks will be held at the state level, and if any issues arise, the INDIA bloc leadership

will address them. "Whether in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Bihar, UP, Delhi, or Punjab, the issues on seat sharing will be resolved,"

he said. Kharge also mentioned that INDIA parties passed a resolution condemning the suspension of Opposition MPs in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha and will hold a protest on December 22. This was the fourth meeting of the INDIA bloc leaders.

Places of Worship...

was passed by a voice vote.

The order on the Gyanvapi mosque-Kashi Vishwanath temple issue follows other significant court rulings on temple-mosque disputes in Uttar Pradesh over the past few months.

Supreme previously granted approval for a survey of the Gyanvapi mosque premises by the Archaeological Survey of India, and the high court allowed a survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque adjoining the Krishna Janmasthan temple in Mathura. Hindu litigants argue that the two mosques were constructed after the demolition or partial demolition of temples, and the surveys are expected to reveal evidence supporting this claim.

The high court acknowledged the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) survey conducted at the Gyanvapi masjid, following directions by the trial court, which is hearing the petition of a group of women seeking regular access to Hindu deities depicted on the mosque's rear wall.

online opening of Technical-Bid the results of their qualification as well Price-Bid opening wil be intimated late (D.R. Teniwar) D.I.G. (Provisioning)

5. Intending Bidders are advised to visit this website regularly till closing date of submission to

keep themselves updated as any change/modification in the tender will be intimated through

Bids will be opened as per date/time as mentioned in the Tender Critical Date Sheet. After

G-21938/23

For: Director General of Police M.P.

City Government bent on closing 12 colleges: BJP

Vijender in letter to LG raises issue of 12 colleges opened by BJP

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELH

 $\Gamma^{
m ormer}$ president of Delhi BJP and MLA from Rohini, Vijender Gupta, on Tuesday wrote a letter to Delhi Lieutenant Governor of Delhi V K Saxena, expressing his concern about the possibility of closure of 12 colleges opened during the BJP rule in Delhi by the Delhi Government.

Drawing the attention of the Lieutenant Governor towards this issue, Gupta said the Delhi Government is pushing for closure of these colleges. Delhi's Education Minister

Atishi has written a letter to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in this regard, in which she has openly expressed her intention to surrender these 12 colleges to the Centre. She has written that the Central Government should take over these colleges under its control as the Delhi Government is unable to provide funds to these colleges, Gupta said.

He said it is on record that when Aam Aadmi Party(AAP) came to power, it had



these colleges on the verge of

closure. There is a delay of three

to five months in the payment

of salaries of teaching and

Non-payment of retirement

benefits due to retired and

deceased employees. Non-pay-

ment of dues related to Medical claims, LTC, Children

Education Allowance, arrears

of Seventh Pay Commission.

No recruitment on 600 teach-

ing and 500 non-teaching

non-teaching staff.

announced opening 5 new colparty has not opened even a single new college affiliated to Delhi University during its 10year rule in Deĺhi.

Not only this, the AAP government is bent on closing 12 colleges which were opened during the BJP rule in Delhi. Out of these 12 colleges, many colleges like Deendayal Upadhyay, Acharya Narendra Dev, Bhaskaracharya, Shaheed Sukhdev College have high ranking in the National Institutional Framework.

From the year 2020 and especially after the letter written by Atishi to the Central Government warning of stopping the funding of these colleges from 01 April 2024, the above problems have become more serious, which is a proof the feilure of the Education of the failure of the Education Policy of the Delhi Government.

Gupta said the appointments of teachers in the colleges regulated by the University Grant Commission and maintained by the Central Government have almost been completed But due to the situation created by the Delhi Government the appointments of teaching and non-teaching staff could not be started in these 12 col-

Considering the seriousness of the situation, Gupta appealed to the Lieutenant Governor to intervene against the Delhi Government to save the teachers, other employees and students of these colleges from problems created by Delhi Government to save the future of thousands of students studying in these colleges.

Parliament passes Bill extending protection to unauthorised colonies

Parliament on Tuesday passed a Bill extending protection from punitive action against unauthorised developments in Delhi for three years beyond December 31.

Beariner in the day, The National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Act, 2023 was passed by a voice vote in Lok Sabha after a brief discussion in which three members partici-

In the Upper House, eight members participated in the discussions on the Bill and it was passed by a voice vote.

The Lok Sabha passed the bill to extend protection against punitive action to unauthorised developments in Delhi for three years beyond the December 31 deadline with the BJP MPs accusing the AAP dispensation in the national capital and the previous Congress-led UPA government at the Centre of not doing enough.

The Bill was passed by a voice vote after a brief discussion in which three members participated. The Bill seeks to provide protection to certain forms of unauthorised developments in Delhi from punitive action where adequate measures are yet to be taken.



The National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Act, 2023, extends the protection given to unauthorised buildings till 2026.Participating in a discussion on the Bill, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said, "Over a period of time because there has been a large influx from rural and semi-rural areas into Delhi... There has been a large amount of unauthorised build-

ing construction and encroach-

ments resulting in a situation

that by 2006, on account of

Directives from the apex court

and Delhi High Court, a

process of sealing and demolitions commenced". "Then the government in 2016 deemed it fit to bring a law which would provide protec-

tion against sealing and demolition. Between 2006 and 2011, these laws were passed on an annual basis...There were attempts made by previous governments to deal with these issues but the problem largely

remained unaddressed. "When we approached the Delhi government (AAP), we were told by the Delhi govt that the issue is being addressed and we believed them. In 2019 we got to know that the surveys they were supposed to conduct would take two more years... It was then that our government introduced the PM-UDAY scheme in October 2019 but almost immediately we had to face the pandemic and work was impacted," he said. South Delhi MP Ramesh

Bidhuri alleged that both the Congress and the Aam Aadmi

people on the issue.

Provisional certificates were issued to people when Sonia Gandhi made a pre-poll promise to regularise the unau-thorised colonies, however, nothing happened. They just made tall claims. Then in 2018, the Kejriwal government passed a false proposal that they are regularising the unauthorised colonies but nothing has happened till date," he

Parvesh Verma, West Delhi MP, called for the inclusion of the Green Land Area (GDA) and land pooling policy in the 2041 master plan.

Responding to the members, Puri said, "Out of the 2-2.5 crore people, 40 lakh benefited by authorisation of unauthorised colonies but still some sections not covered in the initial list but more will be bene-

"Land-pooling will benefit more than 70 lakh people. Delhi is not only a city growing in population but also in economic strength and a lot of rebuilding is taking place. This Bill seeks extension for three years which will give us time and cushion for carrying out wide-ranging consultation for orderly development of unauthorised colonies," he added.

Amid rise in Covid cases, Delhi doctors ask people to exercise caution

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a recent uptick in COVID-19 cases in the country ahead of the festive season, doctors in Delhi have advised people to wear masks, avoid gatherings and maintain a healthy diet.

With Christmas and the New Year approaching, doctors at some hospitals in the city also referred to the detection of the first case of the new JN.1 variant of the coronavirus in the country and asked people to exercise extra caution. According to sources in the

government, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviva will on December 20 review the preparedness of health facilities and services in the wake of an upsurge in respiratory illness cases, including those of Covid, in some states.

India's first JN.1 case was detected in a sample taken Kerala with mild symptoms on December 8. Earlier, a traveller Tamil Nadu's Tiruchirapalli district was found to be infected with the JN.1 variant in Singapore.

Kuldeep Kumar Grover, head of the critical care and pulmonology department at the C K Birla Hospital, said many patients who suffer from pollution-induced respiratory problems describe their symptoms as being similar to those



induced by the Covid infection, including sore throat, nasal dripping and blockage. Senior consultant at Metro

Hospital Saibal Chakravorty said Christmas is around the corner and New Year is not far. Both these occasions see people gather in large numbers, he said, adding that gatherings should be avoided as much as possible. People should also maintain a balanced and wear masks, patients to use inhalers and avoid stepping out as much as possible...," he said. Mandaviya on Wednesday will hold the review meeting virtually with health ministers and additional chief principal secretaries (health) of all states and Union territories and officials of central ministries and departments concerned, according to the sources. The government on Monday

asked states and UTs to main-

tain constant vigil amid the uptick in respiratory illness cases and the detection of the JN.1 variant of the coronavirus in the country. "The capital may see a wors-

ened health problem as a result of the new IN.1 variant and pollution if the growing scenario is not seriously addressed," Gurmeet Singh Chabbra, director and head of the pulmonology department healthy diet, Chakravorty said. at Marengo Asia Hospitals,

He said since COVID-19 mostly affects the respiratory system, it could considerably damage the population's respiratory health when combined with the already-degraded air quality from pollution.

He said it was imperative to prioritise public health, implement preventive measures and take precautions to improve air quality while implementing controls to curb the spread of

DJB losses increase to over ₹1,196 crore in 2021-22

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board's finan-cial losses have jumped from Rs 344.05 crore in the 2019-20 fiscal to Rs 1,196.22 crore in 2021-22, while the board has a debt of more than Rs 73,000 crore, officials said. The DJB is estimated to incur a loss of Rs 854.86 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal, they added. The information was shared by

the DJB with the Delhi Assembly on Monday. The DJB had incurred a loss of

Rs 344.05 crore in 2019-20, which rose to Rs 770.87 crore in the next fiscal and then to Rs 1,196.22 crore in the 2021-22 fiscal. The debt of DJB stands at Rs 73,196.55 crore, which includes an interest of Rs 35,829.96 crore and principal amount of Rs 37,366.59 crore. The number of consumers have risen from 18,94,096 (18.94 lakh) in 2014-15 to 2022-23 financial year.

The DJB earned revenues of Rs 1,668.26 crore, Rs 1,764.57 crore, Rs 1,448.10 crore and Rs 1,827.42 crore in the 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years, respectively, according to the data.

The DJB said that the number of consumers has risen through the years. The Delhi government provides 20,000 litres of free water to each household in



This cost is borne by the government, the officials said, adding that the decrease in revenue from time to time is due to the lack of enforcement, faulty meters and illegal con-

The Delhi government informed the Assembly that the DJB accounts of the last 15 DJB's accounts have been while the performance audit till March 31, 2022 has been completed. The Principal Accountant General (Audit) wing of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) carries out the audit of DJB's accounts. The annual accounts of 2018-19 and 2019-20 have been prepared that will be sent to the CAG after approval from board by the urban development department.

The Delhi BJP has many a

times alleged that the accounts of the DJB have not been prepared since 2016-17 nor has any audit been done since Earlier this month, Delhi Chief

Minister Arvind Kejriwal had directed for a CAG audit of the years.

funds, the Delhi government's finance department had released Rs 535 crore to the DJB for nearly 70 projects of the agency on December 11. Delhi Water Minister Atishi had last month claimed that the national capital was staring at a "man-made water crisis" due to the stoppage of funds to the DJB by the finance department and demanded Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena's immediate intervention.

murder case Says confession inadmissible as evidence

Court discharges

5 accused in 2019

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 ${
m M}$ ore than four years after a man was shot dead during a robbery bid in Ashok Vihar, a Delhi court has discharged five accused, saying their disclosure statement was inadmissible as evidence and nothing connected them with the crime. The court, however, ordered

framing charges against the sixth accused, noting that the weapon allegedly used in the murder was recovered from him and that he was seen chasing the deceased in CCTV footage

Additional Sessions Judge Vikram was hearing a case against Ajay Sharma, Deepak, and Jitender alias Smakiya, who were accused of intercepting the victim Nasim, who was carrying Rs 1.75 lakh, and shooting him dead on February 28, 2019 in Ashok Vihar.

Referring to two Supreme Court verdicts of 1996 and 2016, the court said, "Nothing confessed by accused persons before police officials is admissible as evidence...No fact was discovered from the confessions which can connect them

with the crime except the fact they were in contact on the telephone with each other." The court said there were no

public witnesses to show the accused were present at the spot, nor was there any evidence, except for the disclosure statements linking the seized vehicles allegedly used in the offence with the crime. 'The only material admissible

in this case is the discovery of Sharma, who is otherwise already captured in CCTV footage chasing the deceased," it said in an order dated December 15.

Underscoring that no prima facie case was made out against the five accused, the court dis-Sharma will face trial for the offences under the Indian Penal Code section 302 (murder) and provisions of the Arms Act. According to the prosecution, Sharma, Deepak, Saleem and Hari Mohan were the ones to be arrested first and they confessed to the crime. Joginder and Jitender were arrested later on a tip-off, and they also gave disclosure statements about their involvement in the inci-

DU students whose degree in limbo to get 10 grace marks to pass PTI NEW DELHI (UG) and postoraduate (PG)

The Delhi University (DU) students, who have failed to clear a single remaining paper and have exhausted all special chances to obtain a degree, will be awarded grace marks to

pass, said a senior varsity offi-

cial on Tuesday.

The students will be granted 10 additional points as grace marks to obtain their degree and will be applicable for only those who have not been able to clear one paper despite availing all their special chances, the official said.

"If a student has not been able to complete his/her degree because they flunked in a single paper, the Delhi University will grant 10 additional marks to such students to help them pass the exam and obtain their degree," the official told PTI. The provision will include the

students whose degree should have been completed in 2021-22 and 2022-23 during the COVID-19 outbreak in India, and those who appeared for the centenary chance with a limit of four papers, the official explained.

It will also be applicable for the M.Phil students besides those enrolled in the undergraduate

(UG) and postgraduate (PG) programmes, as per a proposal document approved by the Executive Council -- the university's highest decision marking body. The decision has been taken to

provide relief to the students, who either were not able to appear for the exams during the pandemic due to unforseen challenges such as remote learning, limited access to resources or health related concerns or have their degree in limbo due to failing in just one paper, it said. As per the approved propos-

al, the university will constitute a committee comprising of academic advisors, faculty members and administrator to evaluate the requests from the students to avail the grace

The students will be required to submit a valid reason for failing to clear the single paper or extending their span period for completing the degree -- the feasibility of which will be considered on a case-by-case

The committee will also decide to conduct a special chance examination for these students to facilitate their degree com-

Nine years old girl abducted, raped, murdered in Delhi

PTI NEW DELHI

Anine-year-old girl was allegedly abducted, raped and murdered in north Delhi's Swaroop Nagar area, police on "On December 12, at 8.30 pm,

we got a call of kidnapping of a nine-year-old girl. Police registered an FIR under Section 363 (kidnapping) and teams were formed to nab the accused, who was identified as Sanjeev Rana (52)," said a senior police officer.

The victim's parents, who work in a factory as labourers and live in a rented accommodation, told the police that their daughter was kidnapped by a man when she was playing outside the house.

It was found during the investigation that the victim sat in the vehicle of the accused around 2 pm on December 12, police said.

While the search of the girl was going on, the accused met with a road accident and was admitted at a hospital in Rohini on December 15. Police team was sent to the hospital, but he was unfit for statement," said



the police officer.

The accused confessed to abducting, raping and murder of the girl child on December 17 and dumping her body in the Munak Canal, police said. We are checking entire routes of the accused and the accused will be brought in to search for the victim's body on Tuesday,' said the police officer.

An FIR has been registered under sections 364 (kidnapping or abducting in order to murder), 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence or giving false information to screen offender) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act police said.

Different police teams are searching for the victim's body,



Meerut and other places including 65 revenue estates of Delhi, Gurugram and Uttarakhand, calling it completely misconceived and waste of judicial time. "The present writ petition is

nothing but an abuse of the process of law and complete waste of judicial time. In view of the above, this court is inclined to dismiss the writ petition by imposing costs of Rs 10,000 on the petitioner. Let the costs be deposited by the petitioner with the Armed Forces Battle Casualties Welfare Fund within a period of four weeks today," from Justice Subramonium Prasad said in an order which was passed on Monday and made available on the court's website on Tuesday.

Petitioner Kunwar Mahender Dhwaj Prasad Singh claimed that the land of the erstwhile United Province of Agra



Plea claims ownership of land from Agra

to Gurugram, HC nixes it with ₹10K costs

treaty with him for his and Ganga from Agra to claimed territory and pay the Meerut, Aligarh, Bulandshahar, 65 revenue compensation that's due to states of Delhi, including Gurgaon and Uttarakhand Singh, who claimed to be a successor and heir of the comes under the Princely State of Beswan family. It Beswan family, also sought a said the land belongs to the direction to the Centre to not petitioner's family since there conduct elections for the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state was no accession agreement

adopt the process of merger,

signed between his forefaassemblies and local bodies thers and the Government of The high court dismissed his petition seeking a direction to the central government to The high court said, "The

within the territories claimed by him, without following the due process of law for

claims raised by the peti-

or adjudicated in a writ petition. The petitioner has only filed some maps, historical accounts, which in the opin-

tioner in the present writ

petition cannot be gone into

ion of this court do not indicate any existence of the Beswan family or existence of any right of the petitioner. The judgments, extracts from wikipedia report, documents of political integration of India, instrument of accession also do not substantiate the case of the petitioner." It said writ courts cannot enter into a field of investigation which is more appro-

priate for the civil court in a properly contested suit. Questions of fact which require determination, where rival claims of the parties have to be decided, which are

purely factual, can be adjudicated in a properly insti-tuted suit and the proceedings under Article 226 of the Constitution is not the proper remedy, the court said. Article 226 empowers high courts to issue writ or orders to any person or authority across territories under its

jurisdiction.

Modi, Netanyahu hold talks on maritime traffic

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

As Israel-Hamas conflict continues, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday held telephonic talks wherein the latter briefed Modi on the recent developments. The Israeli Prime Minister had called Prime Minister Modi. The two leaders shared concerns regarding the safety of maritime traffic. Prime Minister Modi reiterated the need for continued humanitarian aid for the affected population and emphasized an early and peaceful resolution of the conflict, including the release of all hostages, through dialogue and diplomacy. The two leaders agreed to remain in touch, a Prime Minister's

Office(PMO)statement said. "Had a productive exchange of views with PM @netanyahu on the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, including shared con-cerns on the safety of maritime traffic," Modi posted on 'X'.
"Highlighted India's consistent stand in favour of early restoration of peace & stability in the region with continued humanitarian assistance for the affect-

There have been concerns over



the safety of maritime traffic in the region. A missile reportedly fired by Yemen's Houthi militants hit a commercial tanker in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen last week trig-

The talks between the two leaders took place days after India voted in favour of a United Nations resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, According to the health ministry in Gaza, at least 19,600 people - most of them women and children - have been killed in Israeli attacks on the strip of land since October 7, when Hamas launched a multi-pronged attack on the Jewish country, killing around 1,200 civilians. Around 240

people had also been taken

Modi and Netanyahu had talked to each other on October 10 also and Modi had expressed deep condolences and sympathy for those killed and wounded as a result of the terrorist attacks in Israel and conveyed that people of India stand in solidarity with Israel in this difficult hour.

He reiterated that India strongly and unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Prime Minister Modi had also highlighted the issue of safety and security of Indian citizens in Israel. Prime Minister Netanyahu assured of full cooperation and support.

Suspended MPs' 27 questions removed from Lok Sabha query list



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

As many as 27 questions posed by suspended Opposition members of the Lok Sabha were deleted from the list of queries to be asked on Tuesday. Similarly, the names of several suspended MPs were removed from groups of members asking the same question to various ministers.

The name of Hanuman Beniwal, who resigned from Lok Sabha after being elected as a member of the Rajasthan assembly, was also

While two-starred questions asked by Aparupa Poddar(TMC)and Ramya Haridas(Congress)were deleted, 25 unstarred questions were also deleted from the list. Ministers give oral replies to starred questions and written replies to unstarred ques-

As many as 46 opposition members of the Lok Sabha have been suspended for dis-playing placards and raising slogans, demanding a reply from the home minister over the December 13 Parliament security breach matter.

Ahead of polls, NaMo app launches survey to gauge voters mood



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

With Lok Sabha polls months away, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'NaMo' app on Tuesday launched a survey to gauge the popular mood on a variety of issues, including people's views about the performance of his Government and their local MP.

The 'Jan Man Survey' seeks the people's response on various aspects of governance and leadership and its ques-tions include both centrallevel development and specifics related to the user's constituency. BJP sources said this is an innovative survey that aims to tap into the 'jan man' (the common man's mind) to know what is on citizens' minds through an "interesting and gamified" interface, adding that Modi has always championed the use of technology to reach out

The survey enables citizens to identify other popular leaders in their respective constituencies as the ruling party feels that this participatory process will empower individuals to express their opinions, underscoring the importance of each citizen's perspective in the democratic process, they added.

'One of the key highlights of the survey is it's user-friendly interface and concise questions that delve into crucial areas, such as the impact of government schemes and projects that excite respondents the most," a BJP leader said.

Mansukh calls meet to discuss Covid preparedness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

In the wake of increasing cases of respiratory illnesses, including Covid-19 across the country, Union health Minister Mansukh Mandivaya has called for a meeting of state health ministers on Wednesday to assess preparedness to tackle the infections

He will hold the review meeting virtually with health ministers and additional chief principal secretaries (health) of all states and union territories (UTs) and officials of central ministries and departments concerned, said the sources in the Ministry.

He will also take stock of the status of availability of medical oxygen, hospital beds, ventilators, drugs, diagnostics and referral transport as well as that of ILI/SARI surveillance mea-

The Government has already issued advisory to the States and UTs, emphasizing on critical Covid control and management strategies citing the upcoming festive season. It has advised states to put in place requisite public health measures and other arrangements to minimise the risk of increase in transmission of the disease by adherence to maintenance of respiratory hygiene

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra records 1.03 crore footfall since November 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

ed," he said.

Under the ongoing Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra initiated in November 15, a cumulative footfall of over 1.03 crore has been recorded to date at the 65,348 health camps in 3,156 gram panchayats and urban local bodies, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday. More than 19,03,200

Ayushman Bharat cards have been distributed so far to the

beneficiaries under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). Ayushman cards are being created using the Ayushman app and physical cards are being distributed

A total of 5,31,025 Ayushman cards have been created at the health camps held on Monday. Cumulatively, 84,27,500 cards have been created to date, the ministry said.

In addition, around 81,15,000 people have been screened

to the beneficiaries.

for hypertension and diabetes, the ministry said. More than 3,74,000 people

were suspected to be positive for hypertension while more than 2,69,800 were suspected to have diabetes and more than 5,99,200 people were referred to higher public health facilities, it added.

As far as tuberculosis (TB) is concerned, more than 36,48,700 people have been screened out of which more than 2,63,000 were referred to higher public health facilities,



patients for TB is being carried The ministry said screening of out for symptoms, sputum testing and by using NAAT machines wherever available. Cases suspected to have TB are referred to higher facilities. Under the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMA), consent is being taken for patients suffering from TB to receive assistance

from Nikshay Mitras. Attendees willing to be Nikshay Mitras are also being provided on-spot registration. More than 1,19,500 patients have given consent under PMTBMBA and more than 46,700 new Nikshay Mitras were registered. Under the Nikshay Poshan

Yojana (NPY), monetary assistance is provided to TB patients through Direct Benefit Transfer.

For this purpose, details of the bank accounts of the pending beneficiaries are being collected and accounts are being Aadhaar seeded. Details of 31,300 such beneficiaries have been collected, the ministry

Besides, more than 3,83,000

people have been screened for sickle cell disease so far, out of which 18,300 were found to be positive and referred to higher public health facilities. In areas with predominant tribal populations, screening of eligible populations (up to 40 years of age) is being done for the detection of Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) through the Point of Care (PoC) tests for SCD or through solubility tests. Cases testing positive are being referred to higher centres for management.

The under mentioned Assets will be sold through auction on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" for recovery of dues

as per court orders, in the following cases						
Case Details	Asset Details	Reserve Price	EMD			
ICICI Bank Ltd. Vs Prashant Choudhary & Anr., CS (COMM) No. 1894/22	Vehicle No. DL9CAR0890, Make and Model- MARUTI SUZUKI WAGON R, Manu Year- 2018	Rs. 2,20,000/-	Rs. 22,000/-			
Auction Date: January 04, 2024, From 11:00 am to 02:00 pm.						

Place of Auction: Godara Yard, Khewat No. 166/1, Near Atul Kataria Chowk, Behind Gyan Devi, School, Sec- 17, Sukhrali

Contact Person: Swapnil Upadhyay (8126013708)/ Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)

The particulars of the said asset specified herein above have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participant/s are therefore requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself / themselves/ itself with regard to the said asset and other relevant details pertaining to it before submitting the bids. All bidders are required to come at auction site with original KYC documents to participate in the auction.

Successful bidder shall have to deposit remaining sale amount within 5 days from the approval date by the way of pay order/demand draft/RTGS/NEFT. In case if you fail to make the remaining sale amount within 5 days, your EMD amount will be forfeited.

The intending bidders may visit at ICICI Bank Ltd, Shal Tower Plot No. 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005 for details and



New Okhla Industrial Development Authorit Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, (U.P.) Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & https://etender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc

(/					
S. No.	Job No./Work Name	Amount			
1.	10/D(H)/DGM(H)/DD(H)-II/2023-24 , D/o Park (SH: Playing Equipment) Sector-34, 37, 52, 53 Etc. Noida	Cost Rs. 94.80 Lacs			
2.	37/D(H)/GM/DD(H)-II/2023-24, D/o Green Belt (P/f MS Grill for safety of Green Belt parallel to BGIR Sector-37), Noida.	Cost Rs. 51.31 Lacs			

Which can be uploaded by date 27.12.2023 upto 5.00 pm Pre-qualification shall be opened / downloaded on date 28.12.2023 at 11.00 am

(0)		
S. No.	Job No./Work Name	Amount
1.	45/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2023-24, M/o Green Belt (C/o boundary wall near Kothari School and near C-Block parallel to drain in Sector-50), Noida.	Cost Rs. 96.24 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date 03.01.2024 upto 5.00 pm Pre-qualification shall be opened / downloaded on date 04.01.2024 at 11.00 am.

Noida

Place: Gurgaon

Director (Hort.) Office: Sector-39, **CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA**

Government committed to meet energy needs of people: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Tuesday said that the Government is committed to meeting the energy needs of its rely on coal power until it achieves developed country

The country cannot meet the energy needs of its people by just "importing oil and gas", he said adding that, "while we are increasing our renewable capacity, we will also have to rely on coal power until we achieve the objective of a developed India."

India relies on coal for about 70 per cent of its power generation and aims to add 17 gigawatts of coal-based power generation capacity in the next 16 months.

In fact, we have asked rich

by achieving negative carbon emissions (removing more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than emitted), not merely reaching net zero by 2050, the Minister said, sharing details with the media come of the recently concluded UN climate conference in the United Arab Emirates.

"While we are increasing our renewable capacity, we will also have to rely on coal power until we achieve the objective of a developed India.'

He said India is committed to meeting the energy needs of its people and this cannot be done by just "importing oil and

India relies on coal for about 70 per cent of its power generation and aims to add 17 gigawatts of coal-based power generation capacity in the next 16 months.



Yadav said India "strongly resisted" the rich nations' call for limitations on new and unabated coal power generation. "We said you cannot dictate or tie up any country." Around 40 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions stem from coal, with oil and gas accounting for the remaining percentage.

Developing countries, including India, pushed rich nations to take the lead in climate action and "that's why the climate conference in Dubai got extended", Yadav said.

He said India accounts for 17 per cent of the global populaglobal carbon emissions is just four per cent. "Poverty eradication is a priority for many nations. So, we did not give in to the pressure from developed countries (for a fossil fuel phase-out)," Yadav

The minister said developed nations, which account for a large part of historical emissions (since the start of the industrial revolution), are required to provide finance and technological support to developing countries to help them combat climate change. "But the developed countries are pressuring developing

nations to end the use of fossil fuels. We did not accept it (at COP28). We said efforts to (limit temperature rise to) 1.5 degrees Celsius should be seen in light of national circumstances and should adhere to (the principles of) equity and responsibilities and respective capabilities.' These principles acknowledge

that countries' efforts to combat climate change should be considered in light of their contributions to total emissions. They also stress that wealthier nations should bear primary responsibilities due to their substantial historical emissions. Countries reached a historic deal on a 'transition away from fossil fuels' at COP28 in Dubai last week while emerging economies like India and China strongly resisted the targeting of coal. The deal called for tripling

Increase Budget allocation on health to

capacity and doubling energy efficiency rates by 2030 which, according to the International Energy Agency, is critical to avoid breaching the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold. According to the Global

international scientists, India's per capita carbon dioxide emissions rose by around five per cent in 2022 to reach two tonnes but these were still less than half of the global

The United States topped the per capita emissions chart with every individual in the country emitting 14.9 tonnes of CO2, followed by Russia (11.4), Japan (8.5), China (8), and the European Union (6.2). The global average stood at 4.7

tonnes. The US is also the biggest CO2 emitter since the industrial revolution.

FICICI Bank PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Pushpamangalam Estate, NH Bye pass road, Edapally, Cochin- 682024

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Asset under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Subhash (Borrower) Mrs. Vineetha B (Co- Borrower) Loan Account No. LBKOL00005114435	4.65 Ares (11.49 Cents) Block No.27, Re Sy No 21/1/13/2/1, Enadimangalam Village, Adoor Taluk, Pathanamthitta. Property Is A Vacant Land Area 5005 Sq.ft. North: Property Of Suresh South: Road East: Road West: Property Of Geetha	Rs. 28,43,904/- (As on December 12, 2023)	Rs. 14,88,000/- Rs. 1,48,800/-	January 05, 2024 from 02:00 PM to 04:00 PM	January 20, 2024 from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM

(URL Link-- https://www.disposalhub.com). The Mortgagors/ notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **January 19, 2024** before **04:00 PM** failing which, this/these secured asset/s will be

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency NexXen Solutions Private Limited

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, Pushpamangalam Estate, NH Bye pass road, Edapally, Cochin- 682024 on or before January 19, 2024 before 05:00 PM and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before <mark>January 19, 2024</mark> before **05:00 PM** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank** Limited, Pushpamangalam Estate, NH Bye pass road, Edapally, Cochin- 682024 on or before January 19, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Cochin. For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8138023587/9004474395.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s Date: December 20, 2023 **Authorized Officer**

2.5 per cent of GDP, Government told PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI

In its pre-Budget recom-mendations, NATHEALTH-Healthcare Federation of India on Tuesday asked the government to increase budget allocation on health to 2.5 per cent of GDP while also calling for a restructuring of the healthcare GST framework. "India's healthcare demands urgent and strategic reforms. I advocate for increasing our healthcare budget to 2.5 per cent of GDP, rationalising the GST framework, and strengthening our healthcare value chain," NATHEALTH President Ashutosh Raghuvanshi said in a statement here.

The demand comes amid concerns that India's public healthcare spending remains low, at only around 1.6-1.8 per cent of GDP. These allocations are insufficient to tackle the magnitude of healthcare challenges.

Raghuvanshi, who is also the Managing Director and Chief

ICICI Bank Limited

Executive Officer of Fortis care credit chain through Healthcare, further said, "It is crucial to focus on capacity building and training of healthcare professionals to meet the growing demands of our nation. These steps are vital for a robust and responsive healthcare system in

As per the statement, the Federation also underscored the need for transformative measures that prioritise bolstering healthcare infrastructure and making strategic investments to overcome supply side constraints.

It recommended "increasing budget allocation to 2.5 per cent of GDP to augment the social insurance schemes. boosting healthcare reforms and infrastructure and fasttracking digital health services across India.'

On the need for rationalisation of GST for the healthcare sector, it said, "Although increased budget allocation has been a longstanding request from the sector, there remains another persistent issue concerning the healthGST.'

Indirect taxation and lack of input credit for providers poses a significant challenge for the healthcare industry, NATHEALTH said, adding that it "strongly recommends outlining a reform agenda in the Finance Bill aimed at restructuring the healthcare GST framework".

The focus for boosting the value chain should remain on augmenting local capabilities to extend care to the most remote areas, while concurrently emphasising localisation, NATHEALTH said. Additionally, harmonising

global best practices necessi-

tates integrated budget allocations for effective execution as well as safeguards for quality and patient safety, it added. It also said the government should allocate funds for training and development programmes for doctors, nurses, and allied healthcare workers, putting special emphasis on digital learning stack and smart certification

standards.

Farmers in deep distress, Karnataka CM

PTI ■ BENGALURU

arnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tues-day met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi and requested early release of a drought relief of Rs 18,177.44 crore from the Centre, and said the farmers of the State are in deep distress.

The Congress government in the state has been critical of the Modi government alleging delay in releasing drought relief to the state, despite its repeated requests, and even after the central team of officials visiting and conducting inspections in various affected regions.

The Karnataka government has declared 223 out of 236 taluks as drought-hit.

In a memorandum to the PM, the Chief Minister said, "It is learnt that the sub-committee of the National Executive Committee, chaired by the Union Agriculture Secretary, met on November 13 and considered Karnataka's memorandums and the report of the Inter-Ministerial Central Team

The sub-committee, it is also learnt, has submitted its report to the Home Ministry, which is expected to place the same before the high-level committee chaired by the Union Home Minister, Siddaramaiah said in the memorandum.

He also noted that it was nearly three months since the first memorandum was submitted and two months since the IMCT made field visits.

The farmers of Karnataka are in deep distress, he said, adding "since crops have failed, it is necessary that we pay the input subsidy to the farmers soon so as to alleviate their hardship and suffering." Siddaramaiah was accompanied by state Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda during the meeting with PM. Listing out memorandums submitted to the Central government seeking relief and the Government of India deputing the IMCT, which visited the state between October 4 and 9, the CM said in the memorandum to the PM, "...Total claim of Karnataka is Rs 18,177.44 The Rs 18,177.44 crore drought

relief sought from National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) includes Rs 4,663.12 crore input subsidy, Rs 12,577.86 crore gratuitous relief, Rs 566.78 crore for drinking water purposes, Rs 363.68 crore for animal husbandry interventions.

Further noting that under MGNREGA, for the taluks where drought has been declared, the number of days of employment should be increased from 100 days per job card to 150, Siddaramaiah said a request for this has been made and the matter is pending in the Ministry of Rural Development for a long time. Kindly expedite a decision on this very important matter."

According to the state government, around 48.19 lakh hectares of agriculture and horticulture crops have suffered losses ranging from 33 to 100per cent, with the majority of area reporting loss of more than 80 per cent.

The Chief Minister noted that

CM SEEKS ₹18.000 CR DROUGHT RELIEF FROM CENTRE



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a meeting, in New Delhi, Tuesday. Karnataka Krishna Byre Gowda is also seen

small and marginal farmers are most affected, as about 83 per cent of the land area under cultivation is covered by small and marginal farm holdings. The land area under cultivation

The land area under cultivation falling under Small & Marginal Farm holdings (SMF) is very important to determine the input subsidy payable to the state, he said. Karnataka has a robust digital database of farmers under the system called FRUITS (Farmer Registration & Unified Beneficiary Identifi-Unified Beneficiary Identifi-cation System). This system is Aadhaar-enabled and therefore is very reliable.

Requesting the Centre to the consider the area under SMF holdings as per the Aadhaarenabled FRUITS digital database, the CM said, the trends since 1970-71 show that, due to constant sub-division and frag-mentation of holdings, the number of SMF holdings, and therefore the area under such land holdings, has been increas-

ing.
The 2015-16 Agriculture
Census shows that in Karnataka
43.94 per cent of land area

However, as per the FRUITS database of Karnataka, 83 per cent of land is covered by holdings which are small and marginal, he said.

"It is therefore to request the Prime Minister to direct the High-Level Committee under the Home Minister to consider the number of and area under SMF holdings as per the FRUITS database of Karnataka."
The average size of operational holding in Karnataka has decreased from 3.2 Ha in 1970-71 to 1.35 Ha in 2015-16, Siddaramaiah further said. "The average size would have further decreased in the last 8 years since 2015-16. Therefore, relying on 2015-16 data (agriculture census) would cause great injus-

"If for some reason FRUITS data cannot yet be considered, then the Government of India may consider projecting the area falling under SMF category and OSMF (Other than SMF) category based on past trends and updating the figure to 2023," he added.

tice to Karnataka.'

Posters demand pivotal role for Nitish on INDIA bloc meet day

Posters calling for assigning Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar a big role in national politics were seen in several parts of the State capital on Tuesday when the JD(U) leader was away in Delhi to attend a crucial meeting of INDIA

The JD(U) came out with a quick clarification that it had nothing to do with the posters, wary of upsetting the supreme leader who has been at pains to assert that his efforts at forging opposition unity were not guided by personal ambitions. Ally RJD, on its part, made it clear that the primary goal was to defeat BJP in Lok Sabha polls and if, in the process, the CM landed the top job, it would be "a matter of pride for Bihar".

"It is not known who has put out the posters. But its message of 'nishchay' (resolve) is something none can find fault with", said JD(U) chief spokesman and MLC Neeraj Kumar.

He was reacting to the posters with two images of Kumar, one taken from the side and the other from behind with a pithy Hindi slogan "agar sach mein vijay chahiye to phir ek nishchay chahiye' (to ensure victory, a united resolve is needed).

The word 'nishchay' (resolve) was highlighted, bringing to the people's mind seven resolves ('saat nishchay') of the Nitish Kumar government, a bottom-up development model of the socialist leader who takes pride in his track record as the state's longest-serving chief minister.

Speculations are rife that at the meeting in the national capital, parties may agree to name the septuagenarian as convener of the fledgling INDIA coalition to bring a degree of cohesive-

Notably, Kumar had hosted the first meeting, here in June, of leaders opposed to the BJP from across the country and the acronym INDIA was agreed upon at the subsequent conclave held in Bengaluru a month later.

Most leaders of the coalition, including Kumar, have been of the opinion that by virtue of being the largest party, the Congress, which is also a partner Bihar's ruling in Mahagathbandhan, should be at the forefront of

the national conglomerate However, sources in the Mahagathbandhan concur that there may be a call for a rethink in



the backdrop of recent assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan where Congress performed badly and also ended up riding roughshod over allies like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

Meanwhile, the RJD, which is the largest constituent of the Mahagathbandhan, and seen as a staunch Congress ally by virtue of personal equations between its founder Lalu Prasad and the Nehru-Gandhi family, said it was okay with the even if these were put out by the ID(U) RJD spokesman Mrityunjay Tiwari said, "Every party likes to see its leaders to rise. Even if Nitish Kumar's party had put out the posters, there is nothing wrong. If our chief minister becomes the PM, it will be a matter of pride for every citizen

He, however, hastened to add "these are secondary things. Our leader Teiashwi Yaday has stated on the floor of the assembly that he was happy discharging his duties as the deputy CM and not in a hurry to succeed Nitish Kumar. Both leaders came together to oust the BJP from power. The feat has to be replicated nationally"

Kochi Book Fair draws thousands

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Books, whether it be novels, biographies, memoirs etc are fast becoming extinct despite the efforts by publishers to draw the attention of readers to their products. In this era of cybergraphics and a linear life of the control of space and on-line publications, it is quite difficult to organize book fairs and this has made publishing houses to try all kinds of marketing strategies. Conventional book fairs have given way to literary festivals where books take a back seat while social and personal issues are the unique selling propositions (USP).

One of the book fairs staged in Kerala has resorted to debates and discussions featuring "well known" writers and their readers discussing the importance of menstrual blood and its impact in society. What was they trying



to driven home is a question that remained unanswered even after the conclusion of the session. It is in this environment a the 26th edition of Kochi International Book Fair was held at Ernakulam. The vast maidan in front of Lord Shiva temple at Ernakulam played host to the KIBF which has become a regular feature in the cultural calendar of Kochi. More than 200 publishers drawn from all over India took part in the event which has become the pioneer earned the sobriquet Holy Grail of book fairs in the State. KIBF retains its top grading because what we offer the customers. We stick to the mission of promoting books and authors. Every year we honor selected authors ranging from veterans to GenNext, GenNext," said E N Nandakumar , chairman, KIBF. Holding a book festival without any interruption for 26 years and that too without any sponsorship from the authorities or corporate world itself is a great challenge

but Nandakumar has proved the cynics wrong.
"We limit the book fair to its stat-

ed objectives which are promoting books and authors and what the writers have to tell the readers. Authors from all States are invited to deliver speeches and they educate the readers about the trends in their languages,' said Nandakumar.

What makes the KIBF unique is the pluralism which we come across the book stalls. There are publishers selling Ramayana, Maha Bharatha, Gita, Veda and Upansihads while there are evangelists who force us to opt for Holy Bible or Holy Quran. It is an interesting world," said Mankombu Gopalakrishnan, poet and script writer. Nonagenarian Prof M K Sanoo.

a known CPI-M fellow traveler could be seen rubbing shoulders with P K Ramachandran, a Sanghi as well as an environ-mentalist. The fair offered the visitors a kaleidoscopic experience of Kerala culture that featured great artists like Smitha Rajan (an internationally reputed Mohiniyattam performer), Sopana Sangeetham, (Kerala's own classical music form based on Jayadeva's Gita Govindam), a festival of writers including beginners as well as veterans discussing different aspects of the feeling of success, Chavittu Nadakam, a theatrical show brought to Kerala by the Portuguese traders and proselytizers which recounted stories from Bible in drama form. Dying art forms like Katha Prasangam got a rejuvenation in this edition of the book fair and the festival, in the words of former union minister veteran scribe M J Akbar, was a refreshing experience to the mind.

Bihar for 4D imaging radar to curb traffic violations

PTI PATNA

 $T^{\text{he Bihar Police is going to}}_{\text{introduce a speed violation}}$ detection system with 4D imaging radar to effectively monitor traffic on national highways in Tuesday.

The new system, which will be introduced in February next year, is extremely accurate in estimating the speed of a vehicle, unlike the video-based mechanism that needs multiple images to figure out the speed

Talking to PTI, Bihar Police (Traffic) Additional Director General Sudhanshu Kumar said "The traffic police is going to introduce a new '4D imaging radar-based speed violation detection system' for effective traffic monitoring on the national highways in the state from February 2024.

4D imaging radar is a high-resnology that offers significant advantages over 3D radar. He said the operations of the system are simple.

"It is a single system to be installed on the top of a traffic police vehicle and can cover several lanes. The speed is measured by radar whereas the lane video cameras will automatically record the number plate of the violating vehicle," Kumar said. It will be of great help to check



national highways in the state, he said. "This technology for effective traffic monitoring will be introduced in a phased manner, the ADG said.

Initially, the system will be in place at "56 points on national highways 2, 28, 30, 31 and 57", he said.

By the end of the next financial year, this will be introduced on all national highways that pass through the state, he added. The camera can also record other violations like red-light jumping, wrong-side driving, and triple riding on two-wheelers among others, he said, adding that the facility is equipped with cameras to record violations even at night. At least 44 per cent of the total

place on national highways in Expressing concern over deaths due to road accidents on highways, the ADG said, "The government is committed to reduc-

ing such fatalities and is taking up several steps to contain the number of accidents. We will soon introduce highway (national) patrolling vehicles, which will be deployed at strategic locations in every 50 km".

pelling the RJs to cover a portion of the journey on foot, Fr Paul told PTI. He said the RJs bring

out what is happening in those remote villages and the issues like transport, water, sanitation,

health, education and unem-

ployment faced by the villagers

After talking to the villagers, our

RJs try to help them with their

issues and also tell them about

overnment schemes which are

ikely to mitigate their prob-

The RJs also try to create aware-

ness among the villagers about

having names in the voters' list

and the importance of voting.

Radio Salesian operates from 8

am to 8 pm daily. As mandated

by regulations, 50 per cent or

more of the programmes are

lems," Fr Paul said.





Teenage pregnancies reduced in Assam: Himanta

ssam Chief Minister AHimanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday claimed that teenage pregnancies in the state have come down drastically to 40,012 this year from the previous year's 1,05942 following action taken against child marriage.

'Our relentless pursuit against child marriage and teenage pregnancy is yielding positive results' the chief minister posted in 'X'. 'Registered teenage pregnancies in the state has come down drastically from 1,05,942 in 2022-23 to 40,012 in 2023-24. We won't rest until we bring this figure to zero', he said.

According to data presented by the chief minister, the twin districts of Dhubri and South Salmara had the highest teen pregnancies at 14,769 the previous year and this came down to 5,482 this year followed by the districts of Nagaon and Hojai

where it declined from 12,107 to 4.578 and in the districts of Barpeta and Bajali it decreased from 11,449 to 4,000.

The districts with the highest cases of child marriage and teen pregnancies have a predominant minority population of migrant origin from Bangladesh. The state government had launched a twophased crackdown against child marriage in February and October this year, leading to nearly 5500 arrests mostly in minority-dominated districts. The chief minister had asserted that the social menace would be completely eliminated by 2026 and all gram panchayat secretaries will be designated as child marriage prevention officers. Sarma had earlier claimed that maternal deaths have decreased

by over 33 per cent and child

deaths by nearly 15 per cent in

the state since the launch of the

crackdown.

Leopard strays into Guwahati colony



PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Three persons, including two forest department employees, were injured in an attack by a leopard which strayed into an under-construction building in a densely populated residential locality here on Tuesday, a forest official said.

The leopard, suspected to have strayed from the forest surrounding the city, attacked and injured a construction worker in the Fatasil Ambari area.

Panic-stricken residents of the area called the forest department and when its employees reached the spot, the leopard attacked two of them.

The leopard was tranquilised after four hours and taken to the Assam State Zoo in a cage, the official added.

The injured were admitted to a hospital and their condition was stated to be out of danger.

RSS founder's memorial year during the winter session of

PTI ■ NAGPUR

The NCP faction led by Ajit Pawar ignored the BJP invitation and stayed away from visiting the memorial of RSS founder KB Hedgewar and second 'sarsanghchalak' MS Golwalkar in Reshimbaug here on Tuesday.

The invitation was extended by the Bharatiya Janata Party to its ruling alliance partners Shiv Sena and the Ajit Pawar faction of the NCP on Monday.

Ministers and MLAs belonging to the BIP visit the memorial of Hedgewar and Golwalkar every

the state legislature. On Tuesday morning, several

Ajit faction skips visit to

leaders of the BIP, state ministers and legislators visited the Hedgewar Šmruti Mandir. Speaking to reporters on the premises of Vidhan Bhavan here, MLC Amol Mitkari, who belongs to the Ajit Pawar camp, said, "It is our right to not go there and pay a visit. It is the prerogative of every party on whether to visit a particular

It is true that the NCP was invited by the BJP but no one went there," said a party functionary.

place or not".

Leaders from the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, including state school education minister Deepak Kesarkar, party legislators Bharat Gogawale and Manisha Kayande among others, also paid tributes at the memorial.

Hedgewar Smruti Mandir is located in Reshimbaug and the Sangh headquarters is in the Mahal area of Nagpur. In a letter sent to all ministers

and legislators from Shiv Sena and the Ajit Pawar faction, BJP legislature party's chief whip Ashish Shelar stated that attendance is mandatory.

Subsidised Doda-Jammu helicopter service takes off

subsidised helicopter service Ato facilitate travel during the winter months to the mountainous Doda district took off from Jammu on Tuesday , officials said. The inaugural ceremony in Doda was attended by Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh and Senior Superintendent of Police Abdul Qayoom "To facilitate travel in winter, the

subsidised helicopter service

from Doda to Jammu has taken

off," Singh said. Three people from Doda were among the first passengers to fly to Jammu on the inaugural service. The government-subsidised service is priced at Rs 2,500 per person, making it an affordable and accessible means of transport, Singh added.

Assistant Commissioner (Panchayat) Ashfaq Khanji will oversee the operations as the designated nodal officer. Mumbai-based Global Vectra Private Limited has been chosen

to manage the service. Singh emphasised the service's significance, especially for people requiring emergency or time-sensitive travel.

The aerial option aims to be an efficient alternative to the lengthy 180-kilometre road journey," he said. This move not only improves connectivity but also opens up opportunities for tourism, particularly during the winters, when certain regions face challenges of accessibility, Singh added.

Radio brings out voice of Bengal's remote tea garden villages pal of Salesian College. These villages are often not easily accessible by vehicles, com-

PTI ■ SILIGURI (WB)

In a remote village among tea gardens in the northern part of West Bengal, an elderly retired army soldier narrates the stories of bravery during fights. In another such hamlet, a woman sings songs which are relatable to those living in all nearby villages. As their voices are aired on a community radio, listeners hear with rapt attention as they consider those expressions to be their own.

"Recently we visited Dupkin

village where we came across a widowed woman who told us how listening to our community radio station helped her overcome depression," radio jockey (RJ) Samir told PTI. Samir and other RJs who work for Radio Salesian 90.8 FM, a community radio station, visit remote hill villages 6,500 feet above sea level in Darjeeling district to meet local Nepali-speaking people and make programmes on issues affecting them.

In a community radio, local people produce and broadcast their own programmes and participate in operating the station.

From the first week of November this year, our RJs have started moving out to villages every Saturday. We have an ambitious plan to reach out to 40 remote villages," said Father CM Paul, founder-director of

Radio Salesian and vice princi-

made in collaboration with the community. We have programmes for all categories of people - children, youths, women, elderly people, farmers, entrepreneurs, success stories," Fr Paul said.

The RJs have become celebrities and their visit to a village turns out to be a festival. "We visit villages to give a voice to them. They treat us like celebrities and organise feasts for us. Retired Gurkha soldiers of the Indian Army tell us how they fought and other stories of bravery of fellow soldiers," Samir said.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Unduly harsh

The unprecedented suspension of Opposition MPs from Parliament does not augur well for conventions

■ n a shocking turn of events, the suspension of 141 Opposition MPs from both Houses since last Thursday has created ripples and triggered concerns about the health of the nation's democratic institutions. The INDIA bloc has lost almost half its strength in the Rajya Sabha and one-third in the Lok Sabha as 78 MPs were suspended earlier on Monday for "unruly behaviour" and "disregarding the directions of the Chair". While maintaining order and decorum in the House is essential, the mass suspension has triggered a debate on whether the response is proportionate to the charges assigned. True, parliamentary decorum is necessary but, having said that, smooth functioning of the House is as much the Government's responsibility as it is the Opposition's. In the old days, back channels were employed by the Speaker to persuade the Opposition from desisting to disrupt the House. Besides, it cannot be termed level playing field as many ruling party MPs have got away with



worse behaviour. Apart from seeming undemocratic, such decisions do not reflect nicely on the Government's inclusive and tolerant nature. This is a record number of parliamentary suspensions in a day and also in a session. The move, amid heightened political tension and debates on crucial issues, raises questions about the repercussions for the functioning of Parliament.

Given that the penultimate session of this Lok Sabha has several Bills pending for discussion and voting, the importance of the presence of the Opposition MPs in the House cannot be overstated. This mass suspension threatens to create a void

in the representation of various constituencies while transacting business in the House, thereby subverting the democratic process. The Opposition, with its myriad voices, plays a crucial role in shaping legislation and policies that impact the lives of millions. Let us not forget that the world is watching, and rather keenly. Such incidents are widely reported in the world press and a negative sentiment about Indian democracy is generated. There is growing concern around the world that the Indian Government stifles dissent and silences Opposition voices. These suspensions only strengthen such a notion. In a healthy democracy, constructive debates, discussions and disagreements are integral to the decision-making processes. The mass suspensions may create an atmosphere of fear and deter MPs from expressing their views freely. There is a need for the parliamentary leadership to engage in dialogue and find constructive solutions to the challenges. The onus is on leaders from the ruling party to reach out to the Opposition and find an amicable solution that upholds the ideals of democracy. Democracy thrives on the diversity of opinions, and any attempt to curtail this diversity may have long-term consequences for the health of the democratic fabric.



Devotees gather during the flag hoisting ceremony on the annual festival of Kodiyettam, in Thiruvanathapuram

India emerges as a major world player



India has a large workforce and higher economic growth. It must take advantage of this opportunity to assert itself in 2024 on world stage

ostradamus, French seer and astrologer, predicted five hundred years ago that in 2024, severe flooding due to climate change would occur. He also foretold significant economic, environmental, political, and social changes. He predicted conflicts with China and war in the Middle East and that there would be a new Pope in the Vatican and a new King in England.

As 2024 approaches, it's time to reflect on the past and anticipate the future for the world, especially India. Next year, more than 40 countries, including seven with large populations, are scheduled to hold national elections, potentially leading to significant changes in leadership.

The face-off between President Biden and his predecessor, Trump, is one of the most significant of our time. President Putin is seeking his fifth term in Russia's presidential election. President Zelensky may run for re-election in Ukraine, while two female candidates are vying for the Mexican presidency.

The 2024 Olympic Games have been scheduled to take place in Paris from July 26 to August 11. The opening ceremony will be held on boats carrying athletes down the Seine River instead of in a stadium. Banknotes featuring King Charles III's picture will soon be circulated. Mobile phones have been banned from schools in the Netherlands. As the BJP promised, the Ram temple's inauguration in Ayodhya is scheduled for the start of the new year. Article 370 has been revoked, and now the focus is on reaching a consensus on the Uniform Civil Code. The Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, will present the annual budget on February 1. The 2024 Lok Sabha election will be crucial for PM Modi's political future. The result will impact Rahul Gandhi's leadership in Congress and test the Opposition's unity. It will also be an opportunity for the BJP to gain support in the South and hold on to its importance in the North. Assembly elections in eight states will be held next year, including Jammu and Kashmir. Opposition parties have been dissatisfied



The Congress and other Opposition parties have agreed to join forces and counter the BJP's resources, leadership, and organization.

The US economy is expected to grow by 2.4% in 2023 and 1.2% in 2024. However, the growth rate is predicted to slow, leading to a mild recession in 2024. Reuters says the global growth rate will decline from 2.9% to 2.6% next year. India's economy is expected to grow by 6.3% in 2024, making it the fastest-growing major economy in the world for the third consecutive year due to the country's resilience and reduced vulnerability to external shocks. The International Monetary Fund predicts India's growth rate to be over 6% in 2023 and 2024, surpassing China's 4-5% growth rate. By 2030-31, India is expected to have a GDP of \$6.7 trillion, becoming the world's thirdlargest economy behind the US and China. The education, healthcare, IT, and PLI industries may grow significantly. Concerns include political instability, inflation, talent shortages, cyberattacks, climate change, and changing work styles. India's position as a global power and leader of

THE 2024 LOK SABHA **ELECTION WILL BE** CRUCIAL FOR PM MODI'S POLITICAL FUTURE. THE RESULT WILL IMPACT RAHUL **GANDHI'S** LEADERSHIP IN **CONGRESS AND** TEST THE OPPOSITION'S UNITY

leadership at the G20 summit in 2023. The next summit will take place in Rio de

The Quad leaders' summit, planned to be held in New Delhi in January, has been postponed to a later date in 2024. Additionally, the CHOGM meeting is also scheduled to take place in 2024. Modi's "Neighbourhood First" strategy establishes cooperative regional frameworks for promoting regional peace and development. Elections to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will be significant next

The US-India relationship is improving steadily, and policies could remain unchanged despite election results. Officials from both countries will continue to collaborate to promote a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region through the 2+2 mechanism. The two nations cooperate in various fields, including space, defence, security, clean energy, multilateral collaboration, and people-to-people ties. Additionally, Illula and the US have announced their courage.

(The writer is a popular in the vigues) naut to the International Space Station by the year 2022.

future with the help of technology. Millions of jobs will be replaced by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Doctors will use AI to diagnose diseases, and robots will make coffee. During FY 2022-23, India's trade with the US reached a total of USD USD 128.55bn, making the US India's biggest trading partner. India sold USD 78.31 billion worth of goods to the US and bought USD 50.24 billion from them. India wants to expand its defence relationships with the West. It is neutral on the Ukraine war. PM Modi expressed shock over the Israel-Hamas conflict and stands with Israel. India is now the world's most populous country, which can lead to a larger workforce and higher economic growth. India must take advantage of this opportunity for higher economic development. In 2024, we will encounter both challenges and opportunities. To tackle these challenges and make the most of opportunities, it's essential to stay focused, be adaptable,

> columnist, views are personal)

The role of media in transforming the nation



Media should, not only inform and educate people, but also empower individuals, foster social change and ensure political stability

Media moulds behavioural dynamics and change to generate positive momentum or negative torque. Be it news media, visual media or social media, it has become an instrument for reform and transformation to create awareness in people to cause the paradigm shift and restore the trajectory of growth in a positive direction.

Journalism as per its traditional lexiconic delineation includes aggregating, writing and presenting news or news articles for widespread distribution to inform the audience. The new connotation attached to media reflects its metamorphosis from the broadcasting of news to that of an agent of socio-economic change. Tom Stoppard a Czech-born British playwright expressed that 'I still believe that if your aim is to change the world, journalism is a more immediate shortterm solution. Even Oscar Wilde went a step forward to state 'in America president reigns for four years and journalism governs forever and ever'.

Media renders voice for and voiceless, says for the

the predicaments of the impecunious and vulnerable groups and projects the path for progress. It has proved to be a crucial factor in connecting, informing and inspiring a society/nation to induce it to traverse the right path for inclusive and holistic development, information engineering for impressive growth has become a synonym for

positive media dynamics. Presentation of unbiased pictures with truthful candour sans fear and favour should be the motto of the media. Though difficult in the age of mundanity and profanity, and media being no exception to the lures, but still media maintains and takes a positive role for the betterment of the nation barring exceptions.

Five golden rules have evolved to form the guidelines for media including social media. Those are to create content value for the audience, focus unsayable (ineffable), reflects on the content not on the plat-

contributions (positive) to the society/nation, the presentation and content with creative favour and guide the people with a positive mode. In short, it can be stated that these key roles can be played by mass communication to herald a new beginning. The first one is the dissemination of vital information to the public which is essential for decision-making and awareness. The second one is serving as a crucial tool for education and raising awareness about social and health issues promoting positive behaviour and practices. In a developing country, the media plays a very important role not only by promoting democracy but by providing a platform for political dis-

form, presentation of news

Media promotes economic development by flowing information, promoting business, directing growth and vectoring cultural exchanges to make things lively (to pave the way for social change). The social changes are effected by mass communication by highlighting social injustices, gender inequality and

human rights violation cases.

By mobilizing public opinion, the media can set steps for the cultural renaissance.

Social cohesion can be affected by mass media providing platforms for people to connect and share ideas - to promote national identity and unity. The important role of media in health promotion and disease prevention cannot be undermined. Media projects the requirements of the people to attract the attention of the government to take up development in a planned way. And most important thing is that mass media can shape the image of the nation on the global stage, promoting foreign investment and

It is discernible that media has an all-pervasive influence on people in the modern age social media included) to foster any change. Media can also play a destructive role in all these spheres mentioned above if it becomes biased, partisan and prejudiced. Hence positive, constructive and truthful media is the requirement of the time to project the nation on the path of inclusive, holistic development and affirmative

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Sir — The high-level committee on "One Nation, One Election" under former president Ram Nath Kovind is learnt to be meeting on Monday to review the progress made so far, including on the responses by political parties to the idea of holding simultaneous polls. However, synchronizing all elections nationally risks undermining India's federal struc-

Each state has distinct socio-economic, cultural, and political dynamics, and consolidating elections may overshadow local issues, impacting effective representation. Moreover, holding simultaneous elections for central and state governments poses significant logistical challenges. Managing such large-scale elections in a diverse and populous country necessitates substantial resources, manpower, and infrastructure, potentially straining administrative capacities and diverting focus from critical governmental func-

Jahangir Ali Mumbai

PANNUN CASE

Sir — Strangely, the US has alleged that India had plotted to assassinate the Khalistani activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. It is also strange that the US has taken the issue so seriously to save a separatist and a troublemonger of its friendly country India. Protection for separatists and terrorists is alike bad. If a separatist is protected by another country, it is tantamount to allowing its soil to be used for hostile activities against another country. The separatists always encourage terrorist activities to subserve their separatist interests. In doing so, the separatists are directly or indirectly and overtly or covertly responsible for the killing of innocent civilians and subversive activities. Sheltering the separatists strains the relationship between countries. The US is enraged over the "Indian attempt" to kill Pannun. It Is India which should have taken the issue seriously for fostering the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Govt tight lipped on security breach



s per the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) tradition, the Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have stayed away from both Houses of Parliament since Wednesday's storming of the Lok Sabha by two smoke-canister-carrying youths, ignoring the Opposition's demands for a statement from the government on the "grave security breach". Instead, PM Modi has in a newspaper (Hindi daily Dainik Jagran) interview advised against any "vaad-vivaad" (debate) or "pratirodh" (protest) over the

that ties with India may suffer serious damage. It shows that for the US, the interest of a separatist is more important than friendship with India. The US needs to change its outlook towards India and it should not allow its soil to be used by it against a friendly country.

K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

SLOTH BEARS THREATENED

Sir — Sloth bears, which are mainly found in tropical forests of India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, are threatened by urban activities like mining. Of course, hunting and human intrusion also pose a danger to them. Land cultivation around forest areas has contributed to sloth bears moving to unprotected areas. Being one of the eight bear species, they are placed under Schedule 1 of the Indian Wildlife(Protection) Act, 1972. separatists. US lawmakers are of the view Innumerable reports have pointed out the

Parliament security breach. Even In the interview, Modi makes no direct reference to the Opposition's protests in Parliament, the suspension of MPs.

or the role of Pratap Simmha. Whereas, HM Shah was sidestepping the House and making statements to a media conclave that the Opposition was "politicising the issue". Sadly, no one will speak on the floor of the house which truly is the only place for them to speak on this issue. People wonder why PM Modi wants to hush up this issue because Mysore's BJP MP Simmha is involved and a serious security breach. It exposed all the tall claims of the BJP. Prime Minister Modi was very vocal when his convoy was blocked. Now he wants others to stop discussing the Parliament security breach. I want to ask PM Modi, can he guarantee the security of MPs? if the pass was issued by an opposition MP, the MP would have been arrested by now. It's only when the BJP is at the receiving end do they advise not to rake up such issues. Then everything is acceptable to them. Under such circumstances how the Opposition expected that both of them would speak on the floor of the house? Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

sloth bears straying into residential areas. Corridor interference and climate change have hit the animals hard.

Their principal diet consists of termites and ants; the destruction of forests can be devastating for them. Efforts are on to protect the bears through wide-ranging measures. Radio-collaring of select sloth bears over a period to further understand their home range, distribution, movement and human-sloth conflict is being undertaken in some districts of Karnataka. Since sloth bears have small home ranges, due to their food habits, they can only afford to move short distances. Besides, there rarely is conflict between different species. Scat, foraging and pug marks are important clues that give away their movement. Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

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FIRST COLUMN

THE YARDSTICK OF TRUE DEVELOPMENT

Economic and scientific achievements are not the only criterion for measuring development



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR **NIKUNJ JI**

ndia is not just a rising power, it has already risen. Its economy has risen at a breathtaking rate... we look forward to a greater role for India on the world stage,. This statement by the most powerful leader in the world 'The US President' created so much buzz across the world as well as in India. Similar kinds of sentiments were expressed by most of the world leaders who had gathered at the G20 summit in India. However, on an introspective note, if one thinks then the question that comes to mind is 'Have we risen?' If Yes then to what extent? Are we only happy to see scientific, technological, space, manufacturing & infrastructural development? Is that the parameter of our progress? How do we measure that we have advanced in this age of global competition?

There is no doubt that science has been a wonderful achievement for us. But, how many of us would be aware of the fact that beneath this development juggernaut, our true wealth is lying buried? Don't we realize that our spirituality and our values are all lying buried under materialism? Remember, our world is not confined to just the physical aspect of life, there is psychology, the spirit, the inner self with which we identify.

What we need to know today is Who am I? What is it that represents us? Unfortunately, science does not give us direct answers to all these crucial questions. Science and technology have made us materially prosperous but spiritually impoverished. Our minds are fatigued, our souls are aching and hence we need to reclaim our lost energies by charging ourselves spiritually.



There is no dearth of knowledge or ideas in the world, but one needs to understand that we have to experience knowledge rather than just know it. The age of science does not refer to technology only; it also refers to the attitude, the lifestyle and the total philosophy of life. With years of development, we have learnt to swim across the ocean like fish and to fly across the continents like birds, but now we have to learn to walk on earth like human beings.

Today the same scientists who were deep-neck busy in their laboratories throughout the day are moving from physics to metaphysics because they want to know reality. We should remind ourselves that we are not prototypes manufactured on an assembly line; we are all individual personalities having our own identities based on our values, personality traits & mannerisms. Each one of us carries a certain set of values given by our parents & teachers. However we should remember that values cannot be known or taught, you have to imbibe them. We can have a long list of values but basically, a value is that for which we dedicate our life.

One needs to experience values practically & enlighten oneself to make a difference in the whole world. Just imagine, if one realized, that a refined individual can uplift and enlighten the whole atmosphere, then what would be the scene when every individual would be refined with values? Doesn't it sound amazing?

So, treat yourself as that anvil from which the spark should come which inspires each person who comes in contact with you & passes on the values of respect for life, compassion, wisdom, and honesty to all because the more we share our values, the more it multiplies.

> (The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

FDI in export-linked e-tailing is a bad idea -



When the government expects the foreign companies to do almost everything that a retailer do, how can the former deny the latter the right to sell



he government is considering allowing foreign direct invest-ment (FDI) in inventory-based models of e-commerce, subject to the rider that these will be solely aimed at export markets. A comprehensive policy on FDI in e-commerce has been under deliberation since 2018. In fact, during discussions with representatives of e-commerce firms and a domestic traders' body viz. Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) held on August 2, 2023, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry made a presentation on the 'fundamentals' of the proposed e-commerce policy.
Against this backdrop, it is anomalous to

deal with the subject matter in bits and pieces by carving out a special dispensation for e-commerce firms catering only to export markets. Even if the government was keen for such a carve-out, this ought to be done as an integral part of a 'holistic' package for e-commerce.

E-commerce is the process of selling goods and services over the Internet. In early 2016, the government allowed 100 per cent FDI under the so-called marketplace model. The marketplace is a platform where vendors sell their products to consumers even as its owner merely acts as a facilitator by providing services such as booking orders, raising invoices, arranging delivery, etc. She can't hold inventory or

undertake direct selling.
The policy intent was abundantly clear. The foreign investor in the marketplace wasn't supposed to invest in the inventory model. However, there were some exceptions. A foreign manufacturer is permitted to sell its products manufactured in India through e-commerce retail. Another way FDI can flow into e-commerce retail business is through single brand retail (SBR) trading entities operating brick-and-mortar stores (for instance, Swedish furniture retailer IKEA) - as opposed to multi-brand retail (MBR) or simply 'retail' as it is understood in common parlance. Despite the policy intent requiring a clear demarcation between the two models one (read: marketplace) in which FDI was allowed and the other direct selling where it wasn't, a clever bureaucrat in DPIIT obliterated it while



THE BIG QUESTION IS: WHO WILL ENFORCE THE LABYRINTH OF RULES? AT A **FUNDAMENTAL** LEVEL, WHAT IS THE NEED FOR CARVING OUT A NICHE FOR **MARKETPLACE** OWNERS IN THE FIELD OF EXPORTS

drafting the fine print of the policy document. The Press Note 3 (2016 series) prescribed two conditions. First, the foreign entity owning marketplace cannot permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on the marketplace from one vendor or its group companies. Two, it cannot directly or indirectly influence the sale price.

In the absence of specifying who that vendor should be, it made way for a company linked to the owner of the marketplace to get in. The latter could set up four companies (call them subsidiaries or JVs) and control 25 per cent each of total sales on the platform. Contrary to the policy intent, which prohibited foreign investors in inventory models or direct selling, the fine print did just the opposite. Having allowed its entities to control almost all of the sales made on the marketplace, the second condition that the latter can't directly or indirectly influence the sale price is laughable. The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) who were impacted the most by this backdoor entry of e-commerce giants Amazon, Walmart/Flipkart etc in direct selling complained to the government. In response, on December 26, 2018, the DPIIT clarified that "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its joint venture (JV) with an Indian company can't have ownership of the seller." Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 per cent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter."

Foreign investors can circumvent the first rider by having less than 50 per cent shareholding in the seller firm and arguing that they have no control (majority) over the latter. The marketplace owner can also sell his 'own' product – albeit through its wholesale arm - on the platform. All that the wholesale arm needs to ensure is to restrict supplies to the seller within the 25

It isn't just a case of boundaries getting blurred. The official notes recognize and give legitimacy to the connection between the marketplace owner and the seller. These don't prohibit foreign firms from keeping inventory and engaging in direct selling to consumers. They are doing it at the cost of millions of small traders. For instance, only three dozen firms out of the 400,000 sellers on the Amazon platform account for 67 per cent

of sales on it. Meanwhile, in 2020/2021, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, issued the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, under Section 101 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The rules bar affiliated entities from selling on e-commerce platforms; restrict business-tobusiness sales in e-commerce; restrict 'flash sales'; prevent 'abuse of dominant position' by e-commerce firms and disallow sellers from using the name or brand associated with the marketplace e-commerce entities for the promotion of goods. When seen in juxtaposition with Press Note 3 (2016 series), all this is nothing more than plain rhetoric. Moreover, in the absence of a regulatory authority (this hasn't even been proposed in the draft e-commerce policy) and institutional mechanisms to track the actions of foreign firms, it isn't possible to ensure compliance with the rules.

Now, mandarins in the commerce ministry want to exempt bigger ecommerce players like Amazon from a rule that 'prohibits the marketplace owner from holding inventory' in case the product is meant for the export market. This is amusing as this rule was never put into practice even when it comes to domestic retail sales, courtesy of clever drafting by the

To enable these players to avail of the exemption, they are thinking of riders such as requiring them to keep the inventory for exports separate from their other operations and a mechanism like a custom bonded warehouse strictly separated from the domestic tariff area (DTA) and markets. The intent is that the product is meant for export once it enters the bonded space, it can't re-enter the DTA.

The big question is: who will enforce the labyrinth of rules? At a fundamental level, what is the need for carving out a niche for marketplace owners in the field of exports? The ministry argues: that this will enable domestic producers including farmers, small artisans, and product owners to access the global markets. This argu-ment is untenable. First, the MNCs are here to avail of the everexpanding opportunities in the Indian market and our policymakers have so far helped them by suitably crafting the rules. Second, the former hasn't helped MSMEs sell in the domestic market. How can they be expected to help in exporting? The government should drop the proposal of roping in foreign ecommerce players to boost exports. Instead, it needs to focus on addressing the present mess.

The idea of a marketplace is flawed. When, the government expects the foreign company to do almost everything that a retailer does viz. booking orders, raising invoices, arranging delivery, accepting rejection and so on, how can the former deny the latter the right to sell? The way forward is to shun this idea; instead, allow 100 per cent FDI in retail. Bureaucrats had already done it but in a 'subtle' way. The government should make it obvious and straightforward. Moreover, 100 per cent FDI should be permitted to all retailers, online or offline, big or small for a level playing field.

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

Contemporary shows like

'The Kapil Sharma Show'

and 'Comedy Circus' have

gained immense popularity

but have veered towards sen-

sationalism, at times sacrific-

ing subtlety and decency for

ratings. This shift raises crit-

ical questions about the

evolving nature of comedy

and its responsibility to

deliver wholesome enter-

tainment to a diverse audi-

ence. The choice rests on the

audience's preference entire-

ly. Until tĥen, let us laugh

with laughter.

Responsible social comedy, Bollywood style

Comedy has undergone a transformative journey; from the era of 'innocent' slap-stick humour to more satirical commentary on social anomalies

n her paper "Laughter Through the Ages: Role of Comedy Films in Shaping Bollywood," Dr. (Prof.) Maithili Ganjoo, a Professor in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies Rachna Manav International University, Faridabad, explores the evolution of comedy in Indian cinema. According to Ganjoo, the first full-fledged satirical comedy film in India was "Bilet Pherat (London Returned)," produced by Dhirendra Nath Ganguly in 1921, addressing cultural mismatches with humour. While early films gained popularity swiftly, comedy took time to emerge, initially providing comic relief in theatrically

driven plots. She further writes that post-



RAJDEEP PATHAK

independence, Hindi films introduced comedians like Mukri, Asit Sen, and Keshto Mukherji, known for slapstick humour. However, situational comedy gained prominence with films like "Guddi" (1971) and "Bawarchi" (1972) by Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee, depicting middle-class life humorously. In 1983, Kundan Lal Shah's "Iaane Bhi Do Yaaron" marked the maturation of comedy in Hindi films, under the label of Parallel or alter-

nate Cinema. The next phase of Indian cinema witnessed a remarkable surge in the recognition of comedy movies, marking a shift towards blockbuster hits like "Chameli ki Shaadi," "Angoor," "Mr. India," and the iconic "Andaz Apna Apna."

Concurrently, Indian television experienced a comedic boom with shows such as Jaspal Bhatti's 'Ulta Pulta,' Pankaj Kapoor's 'Office Office,' and 'Zabaan Sambhal Ke,' offering a delightful dose of laughter to living rooms across the nation. The 90s again witnessed the

rise of slapstick comedy, popularised by the David-Govinda camp, incorporating verbal comedy in films like "Aankhen" (1993), "Coolie No. 1" (1995), and "Judwaa" (1997). In films like "OMG!" (2012) and "PK" (2014), Prof. Ganjoo further explores how laughter is directed towards religion, navigating India's culturally diverse landscape. Recent years have seen the success of 'Comedy success of Franchises', such as Rohit



Shetty's "Golmaal" series, the "Welcome" series, "Hera Pheri" series, "Masti" series, "Dhamaal," "Fukrey" series, "Housefull" series, featuring Bollywood's prominent stars and enjoying massive box office success with growing fan bases. Other series may follow suit.

The comedy genre has further evolved to include films like 'Hindi Medium,' which ingeniously tackles 'contemporary social issues, such as the significance of education in determining societal status. In contrast to parallel cinema, these comedies bring political undertones to social nar-

ratives, subtly critiquing societal norms while entertaining audiences with a humorous

As time progressed, the landscape of comedy underwent a transformative journey. From the era of 'innocent' humour represented by shows like "Flop Show" and "Dekh Bhai Dekh," the trend evolved into more satirical productions like 'Sarabhai v/s Sarabhai' and 'Khichdi.' The emergence of stand-up comedy further reshaped the comedic scene on both the big and small screens, introducing popular comedians like Kapil Sharma, Bharti Singh, Sunil Pal, and Sunil Grover.

brought

However, the transition to small-screen comedy also challenges.

(The writer is a programme executive with the Gandhi Smriti Sansthan, views are personal) This is the second part of the two-part series on Bollywood comedy. Concluded the pioneer

127 killed, over 700 hurt in China's worst quake

At least 127 people were killed and over 700 others injured when a powerful 6.2-magnitude earthquake jolted a mountainous region of northmountainous region of north-western China late Monday night, the deadliest quake in the quake-prone region in nine years. The quake, followed by strong aftershocks, killed 113 people in Gansu, while 14 died in the neighbouring Qinghai province in the Himalayan region, local authorities said on region, local authorities said on Tuesday as they launched rescue efforts in icy conditions.

Qinghai province is adjacent to the Tibet Himalayan region which is prone to frequent earthquakes due to shifting of continental plates.

While 536 people were injured in Gansu, 182 people were wounded and 20 others missing in Qinghai, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

According to the China Earthquake Networks Centre, the shallow quake jolted Gansu and Qinghai provinces at 11:59 pm on Monday, with a focal depth of 10 kilometres.

The epicentre of the earthquake Liugou township is about 8 km from the county seat of Jishishan Bao'an, Dongxiang, Sala autonomous county in Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture in

The earthquake damaged 155,393 houses in Gansu.

The epicentre of the earthquake in Gansu was only 5 km away from the boundary between the two provinces. Within 50 km of the epicentre, there are 22 townships in Qinghai, Xinhua reported.

Wang Wen, vice mayor of Haidong city in Qinghai, told the media that local departments will carry out safety checks on infrastructure like the supplies of power, water and gas, as well as communications to ensure that people's basic necessities are met.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang have ordered all-out rescue efforts to minimise casualties after the earthquake.



A government worker looks at the debris of a house brought down in the earthquake in Jishishan county in northwest China's Gansu province on Tuesday

Xi asked local authorities to rescue and treat the injured people promptly, and closely monitor the earthquake situation and weather changes to prevent secondary disasters.

Monday night's quake was China's deadliest since an earthquake killed 617 people in Yunnan province in 2014.

Residents interviewed by Shanghai-based media outlet Shanghai-based media outlet The Paper on Tuesday said many people were asleep when the quake struck and did not have time to take shelter.

According to the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, a woman, who lives 90 km from the epicentre, said her house collapsed and

said her house collapsed and she escaped being buried because she was still awake.

Videos and photos circulating on social media showed firefighting crews trying to pull out residents buried under rubble and others showed quake victims taking shelter on the road while wrapped in quilts amidst biting cold.

The quake has destroyed some rural roads, leading to power outages and telecommunication failures. The maintenance crew has been working overnight to repair the damaged infrastructure.

Several villages suffered power failures and disruption

The Ministry of Transport, which monitors the operation of roads, said on Tuesday morning that a bridge across the Yellow River had cracked because of the quake.

According to local meteorological authorities, the daily low temperature in Jishishan is reported to climb minus 10 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.

The provincial fire and

rescue department sent 580 rescuers aided with 88 fire engines, 12 search and rescue dogs, and more than 10,000 sets of equipment to the disas-

The railway authority has suspended passenger and cargo trains passing through the quake zone and ordered a safecheck of railway tracks.

Meanwhile, a second quake struck the neighbouring Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region hours later on Tuesday. The Atux City of Kizilsu

Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, was struck by the earthquake at 9:46 am local time on Tuesday, the CENC said. The epicentre, with a depth

of 10 km, was monitored at 40.02 degrees north latitude and 77.86 degrees east longitude, the CENC said. Gansu and Qinghai also experienced

Israel strikes south Gaza and raids hospital in north

raeli forces raided one of the last functioning hospitals in Gaza's north and bombarded the south with airstrikes that killed at least 28 Palestinians, pressing ahead with their offensive Tuesday with renewed backing from the United States, despite rising international alarm. The air and ground war, launched in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into Israel, has killed nearly 20,000 Palestinians, displaced some 1.9 million, demolished much of northern Gaza and sparked attacks on U.S. and Israeli targets across the region.

Assaults on ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Iranbacked Houthi rebels have led major shipping companies as well as the oil and gas giant BP — to suspend trade though the vital waterway, prompting the U.S. and its allies to launch a new mission to counter the

But after meeting with Israeli officials Monday, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin

said he was "not here to dictate timelines or terms.

His remarks signaled that the U.S. would continue shielding Israel from growing international calls for a cease-fire as the United Nations Security Council was set to hold another vote Tuesday, and would keep providing vital military aid for one of the 21st century's deadliest military campaigns.

STRIKES ACROSS GAZA A strike on a home in Rafah where displaced people were sheltering killed at least 25 people, including a 2-year-old boy and his newborn sister, and another strike killed at least three people, according to

who saw the bodies arrive at two local hospitals early

Rafah, which is in the southern part of Gaza where Israel has told Palestinians to seek shelter, has been repeatedly bombarded in recent days, as Israel has struck what it says are militant targets across the territory, often killing large num-

bers of civilians.

The military said Tuesday that it had killed a prominent Hamas financier in an airstrike on Rafah, without specifying when it occurred or if others killed wounded.Meanwhile, fierce battles also raged in northern Gaza, which has been reduced to a wasteland seven weeks after Israeli tanks and troops stormed in.

Israel's bombardment of the urban Jabaliya refugee camp on Tuesday killed at least 27 people and wounded more than 100, according to Munir al-Boursh, a senior official at the Hamas-run Health

people were killed in strikes overnight, according to hospital records. Among the dead were a mother and her four children, who were killed as they sat around a fire, according to an AP reporter who filmed the aftermath.

Hamas has continued to put up stiff resistance and lob rockets at Israel. The militants said they fired a barrage toward Tel Aviv on Tuesday, and air raid sirens went off in central Israel. There were no immediate reports of casualties or

The war began after Hamas and other militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in Israel and abducted 240

More than 19,400 Palestinians have been killed since then, according to the Health Ministry, which has said that most are women and minors and that thousands more are buried under rubble. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Pentagon announces new mission to counter attacks on commercial vessels in Red Sea

AP MANAMA (BAHRAIN)

The US and a host of other nations are creating a new force to protect ships transiting the Red Sea that have come under attack by drones and ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced early Tuesday in Bahrain.

The seriousness of the attacks, several of which have damaged the vessels, has led multiple shipping companies to order their ships to hold in place and not enter the Bab el-Mandeb Strait until the security situation can be

"This is an international challenge that demands collective action," Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in statement released just after midnight in Bahrain. "Therefore today I am announcing the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian, an important new multinational security initia-

The United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain will join the US in the new mission, Austin announced. Some of the countries will conduct joint patrols while others provide intelligence support in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Several other countries have also agreed to be involved in the operation but prefer not to be publicly named, a defense official said on the condition of anonymity to discuss additional détails of the new mission that have not been publicly announced.

The mission will be coordinated by the already existing Combined Task Force

153, which was set up in April 2022 to improve maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden. There have been 39 member nations in CTF 153, but officials were working to determine which of them would participate in this latest effort

Separately, the United States has also called on the United Nations Security Council to take action against the attacks.

In a letter to council members obtained Monday by The Associated Press, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said Houthi attacks targeting commercial vessels legally transiting the international waterways continue to threaten "navigational rights and freedoms, international maritime security, and international com-

The 15 council members discussed the Houthi threat behind closed doors Monday but took no immediate action.

Three US warships — the USS Carney and the USS Mason, Navy destroyers have been moving through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait daily to help deter and respond to attacks from the Houthis.

The move to set up the expanded operation came after three commercial vessels were struck by missiles fired by Iranian-back Houthis in Yemen on December 3. Those attacks were part of an escalating campaign of violence that also included armed and other drones launched in the direction of US warships.

To date the US has not struck back at the Iranianback Houthis operating in Yemen or targeted any of the militants' weapons or other

2 Indian-origin men jailed in UK for smuggling drugs

London (PTI): Two Indian-origin men have been sentenced to a total of 34 years' imprisonment in Britain after a London trial found them guilty of smuggling drugs hidden amid farm produce from Africa and South America

Anand Tripathi, 61, and Varun Bhardwaj, 39, were also convicted of evading import duty payable on cigarettes which came hidden alongside biscuits from Chennai, Bombay Mix snacks from Mumbai and coconut fibre used to manufacture doormats from Sri Lanka.

The UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said the scheme involved the pair using their freight company as a cover to clear shipping containers that held drugs and cigarettes and diverting them from their intended destination to a warehouse they controlled. These illicit shipments were then offloaded by organised crime groups. "These two men played vital roles in trying to flood UK streets with huge quantities of illegal drugs," said Richard Partridge from the CPS, following the sentencing at Isleworth Crown Court in west I ondon lest weak Court in west London last week.

"This conspiracy was only made possible by Anand Tripathi's experience in importa-Varun Bhardwaj's willingness to assume day to day management of their operation. There were clearly others involved in the scheme who haven't yet been identified but this successful operation and their substantial sentences serves as a warning that authorities in the UK work together to disrupt and prosecute smugglers," he said. The duo was convicted in November after a 71-day trial when the jury heard that in total the men imported 272.86 kilograms of cocaine and 2,503.36 kilograms of cannabis across four shipments between September 2021 and November 2022. One shipment contained iust over two tonnes of cannabis hidden amongst yams from Ghana. Another containing 49 kilograms of cocaine was concealed with oranges from South Africa. The drugs had an estimated street value of GBP 28.9 million but were all seized before

EU investigating Musk's X over breaches of social media law

London: The European Union on Monday made Elon Musk's online platform X the first tech company to face an investigation under Europe's tough new regulations designed to clean up social media and protect people from toxic online content."Today we open formal infringement proceedings against @X" under the Digital Services Act, European Commissioner Thierry Breton said in a post on the platform formerly known as Twitter. Musk, in response, questioned whether the EU would also scrutinize other social media The 27-nation bloc is ratch-

eting up the pressure on X after asking the company in October for information on its handling of hate speech, misinformation and violent terrorist content related to the Israel-Hamas war. The case presents the first test for the Digital Services Act, part of a set of pioneering regulations that the EU has drawn up to rein in the power of tech companies. The European Commission, the EU's executive branch, "will now investigate X's systems and policies related to certain suspected infringements" of the DSA, spokesman Johannes Bahrke told a press briefing in Brussels. "It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation." The San Francisco-based social media platform says it is "committed to complying with the Digital Services Act, and is cooperating with the regulatory process. It is important that this process remains free of political influence and follows the law"."X is focused on creating a safe and inclusive environment for all users on our platform, while protecting freedom of expression, and we will continue to work tirelessly towards this goal," the company said in a statement. Musk has touted the platform as a place for free speech to thrive, but changes that the Tesla CEO made to the site after he bought it a year ago — such as cutting the number of content moderators. He has also pulled the platform out of a voluntary EU pact against disinformation. AP

Google to pay \$700 mn to US states, consumers

AP WASHINGTON

oogle has agreed to pay \$700 million and make several other concessions to settle allegations that it had been stifling competition against its Android app store the same issue that went to trial in another case that could result in even bigger changes.

Although Google struck the deal with state attorneys general in September, the settlement's terms weren't revealed until late Monday in documents filed in San Francisco federal court. The disclosure came a week after a federal court jury rebuked Google for deploying anti-competitive tactics in its Play Store for Android apps. The settlement with the states includes \$630 million to compensate US consumers funnelled into a payment processing system that state attorneys general alleged drove up the prices for digital transactions within apps downloaded that powers most of the world's

Like Apple does in its iPhone app store, Google collects commissions ranging from 15% to 30% on in-app purchases — fees that state attorneys general contended drove prices higher than they would have been had there been an open market for payment processing. Those commissions generated billions of dollars in profit annually for Google, according to evidence presented in the recent trial focused on its Play Store.

Consumers eligible for a piece of the \$630 million compensation fund are supposed to be automatically notified about various options for how they can receive their cut of the

Another \$70 million of the pre-trial settlement will cover the penalties and other costs that Google is being forced to

from the Play Store. That store pay to the states. Google also designed to make it even easier for consumers to download and install Android apps from other outlets besides its Play Store for the next five years. İt will refrain from issuing as many security warnings, or "scare screens", when alterna-

tive choices are being used.
The makers of Android apps will also gain more flexibility to offer alternative payment choices to consumers instead of having transactions automatically processed through the Play Store and its commission system. Apps will also be able to promote lower prices available to consumers who choose an alternate to the Play Store's payment processing. Washington DC Attorney General Brian Schwalb hailed the settlement as a victory for the tens of millions of people in the US that rely on Android phones to help manage their

Apple to halt sales of its watches in US

Cupertino (US) (AP): If two of your holiday shopping list, don't dawdle for much longer because the devices won't be available to buy in the US later this week if the White House doesn't intervene in an international patent dispute.

Apple plans to suspend sales of the Series 9 and Ultra 2 versions of its popular watch for online US customers beginning Thursday afternoon and in its stores on Sunday.

The move stems from an October decision by the International Trade Commission restricting Apple's watches with the Blood Oxygen measurement feature as part of an intellectual property dispute with medical technology company Masimo.

The White House had 60 days to review the ITC order issued on Oct 26, meaning Apple could have kept selling the two affected models in the US through Christmas.

Disney Co. dropped him hours

charge and of aggravated

A Manhattan jury found

after the verdict.

Indian man arrested in UK in terror funding case extradited to US

national arrested in London on a provisional American warrant as part of a US-UK coordinated action targeting terrorism financing has been extradited to the United States after consenting to face trial in America, British authorities said on Tuesday.

Madurai-born Sundar Nagarajan, 65, was arrested by the Metropolitan Police's National Extradition Unit from an address at Hayes in west London on April 18.

The UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) told Westminster Magistrates' Court in London at the time that Nagarajan is the accountant linked to the finances of the designated Hizballah terrorist organisation and is a "requested person" (RP) by the US authorities for fraud and money laundering offences. "The RP was successfully removed to the US on

this week. Nagarajan, also known as Nagarajan Sundar Poongulam Kasiviswanathan Naga and Sundar Poongulam K Nagarajan Nagarajan and having addresses in the UK and Belgium, had initially challenged his extradition on human rights and dual criminality grounds and an extradition trial was due to begin in London in January 2024.

It is not clear what led to him later consenting to his extradition to face the charges in a US court. His arrest followed action by the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command earlier this year to arrest a 50-year-old man in Wales on suspicion of funding terrorism. "The ongoing investigation relates to suspected terrorist financing which is believed to be connected to wealthy art collector, Nazem Ahmad," the Met Police said at the time.

they could be sold on. Marvel, Disney drop Jonathan Majors after

Iceland volcano erupts weeks after many evacuated from nearby town

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

volcanic eruption started A Monday night on Iceland's Reykjanes Peninsula, turning the sky orange and prompting the country's civil defence to be on high alert. The eruption appears to have occurred about four kilometers (2.4 miles) from the town of Grindavik. the Icelandic Meteorological Office said. Grainy webcam video showed the moment of the eruption as a flash of light illuminating the sky at 22:17 local time. As the eruption spread, magma, or semi-molten rock, could be seen spewing along the ridge of a

"The magma flow seems to be at least a hundred cubic metres per second, maybe



more. So this would be considered a big eruption in this area at least," Vidir Reynisson, head of Iceland's Civil Protection and Emergency Management told the Icelandic public broadcast-

er, RUV. In November, police evacuated the town or Grindavik after strong seismic activity in the area damaged homes and raised fears of an imminent eruption

he's convicted of assaulting ex-girlfriend **AP** ■ NEW YORK Tonathan Majors was convicted on Monday of assaulting his former girlfriend after a trial that he hoped would vin-dicate him and restore his status as an emerging Hollywood star. It did just the opposite: Marvel Studios and the Walt

Majors, 34, guilty of one misharassment, looked slightly demeanour assault charge and one harassment violation stemming from his March confrontation with then-girlfriend Grace Jabbari. She said he attacked her in a car and left her in "excruciating" pain; his lawyers said Jabbari was the aggressor.Majors, who was acquitted of a different assault



downward and showed no immediate reaction as the verdict was read. He declined to comment as he left the courthouse.Marvel and Disney immediately dropped the "Creed III" star from all upcoming projects following the conviction, said a person close to the studio spoke on

condition of anonymity

because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly on the matter. Before his arrest, Majors

had been on track to become a central figure throughout the Marvel Cinematic Universe, playing the antagonist role of Kang. Majors had already appeared in "Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania" and the first two seasons of "Loki." He was to star in "Avengers: The Kang Dynasty", dated for release in May 2026.

Majors, whose credits include "The Last Black Man in San Francisco," "Devotion" and "Da 5 Bloods," had been one of the fastest-rising stars in Hollywood. The Yale School of Drama

graduate also starred as a troubled amateur bodybuilder in "Magazine Dreams," which made an acclaimed debut at the

January and was set to open in theatres this month. Ahead of Majors' trial, Disney-owned distributor

Searchlight Pictures removed

"Magazine Dreams" from its

release calendar. Majors' sen-

Sundance Film Festival in

tencing was set for February 6. He faces the possibility of up to a year in jail for the assault conviction, though probation or other non-jail sentences also are possible. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said in a statement that the trial "illustrated a cycle of psychological

and emotional abuse, and escalating patterns of coercion". The dispute between

Majors and Jabbari began in the backseat of a chauffeured car and spilled into the streets of Manhattan.

N Korea's Kim threatens 'more offensive actions' against US

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un threatened "more offensive actions" to repel what he called increasing US-led military threats after he supervised the third test of his country's most advanced missile designed to strike the mainland US, state media reported Tuesday.

Kim's statement suggests he is confident in his growing missile arsenal and will likely continue weapons testing activities ahead of next year's presidential election in the United States. But many observers say North Korea still needs to perform more significant tests to prove it has functioning missiles targeting the US mainland. After watching Monday's launch of the Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic mishow North Korea could respond if the United States were to make "a wrong decision against it," according to the official Korean Central News

Kim stressed the need to "never overlook all the reckless and irresponsible military threats of the enemies ... and to strongly counter them with more offensive actions," KCNA said. The Hwasong-18 ICBM is a developmental, solid-fueled ICBM that is considered North Korea's most powerful weapon.



makes launches harder for outfueled missiles, which must be fueled before liftoffs. But many foreign experts say North Korea still has some other technological hurdles to master to acquire reliable nucleartipped ICBMs, such as one to protect warheads from the harsh conditions of atmos-

pheric reentry. KCNA said the Hwasong-18 missile, launched on a high angle to avoid neighboring countries, flew a distance of 1,002 kilometers (622 miles) for 73.5 minutes at a maximum altitude of 6,518 kilometers (4,050 miles) before landing in but they're certainly growing

new solid propellant ICBM." Leif-Eric Easley, a professor

at Ewha University in Seoul, said the North's latest ICBM test is yet another indicator of how far its missile engine technology has progressed, but added there are limits to what North Korea can learn from lofted trajectory firings.

"Demonstrating warhead targeting and reentry capabilities would involve provocative launches across greater distances," Easley said. "So more significant tests of both technology and diplomacy are likely in KCNA said its Hwasong-18

test was meant to issue a warning over its rivals' confrontational military moves on North Korea. It said a recent U.S.cuss their nuclear deterrence plan openly revealed their intention to hold joint drills with a simulated nuclear attack on North Korea. It also referred to the second Nuclear Consultative Group meeting between senior U.S. and South Korean officials last Friday. During their meeting in Washington, the two countries agreed to update their nuclear deterrence and contingency strategies and incorporate nuclear operation scenarios in their combined military exercises next summer, according to officials in Seoul.

Four killed as train torched in B'desh amid political unrest

Unidentified persons set on fire a passenger train here in the Bangladeshi capital on Tuesday killing at least four people, including a woman and her minor son, amidst the political unrest over the January 7 elections. The attack coincided with the nationwide stoppage called by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Tuesday as part of its ongoing campaign to boycott the polls and launch a formal protest against the Election Commission's polls schedule.

The arson attack on the train was the fifth in the past month but the deadliest so far in terms of casualties. The miscreants set on fire three compartments of the Dhaka-bound interdistrict Mohanganj Express early morning shortly after the train left the Airport Railway Station at the entry point of the capital, police and witnesses said.

"The passengers saw the fire after the train left the Airport station, it was stopped at the next stop at Tejgaon station," Tejgaon police station officer-in-charge Mohammad Mohsin said. At least four persons, including a woman and her child, have died after the train was set on fire amid a hartal called by the BNP.

Mohsin said another minor boy was missing while his mother awaited in front of the gutted compartment as fire service rescuers were searching inside. Railway officials said the locomo-



tive master halted the train at Tejgaon where the fire service rescuers doused the blaze and retrieved four bodies while two of the dead remained unidenti-

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League has emerged as the prime contender in the absence of ailing expremier Khaleda Zia's BNP which has boycotted the January 7 polls since its demands for a noparty caretaker government to organise the voting were not met.

Awami League is contesting the polls against its technical Opposition in Parliament Jatiya Party and independent candidates, including the rebel contenders who fielded their candidature after failing to secure the party nomination.

Awami League earlier said it would encourage the indepen-dent, including the party's rebel candidates to make the polls participatory though voters have lit-tle option other than reelecting the ruling party for the fourth consecutive term since the December 2008 elections. One passenger was killed last week and dozens wounded as saboteurs uprooted railway tracks on the same train on the same route last week when seven carriages derailed in Gazipur on the outskirts of the capital.

Dozens of trucks, buses and private cars were torched since late October while the violence killed at least six persons. Hasina, meanwhile, said, "They can't oust the government by killing

Bangladesh will deploy the Army for 13 days from December 29 to maintain order "in aid of civil power" ahead of the January 7 general elections amid the political unrest. However, the military called it a routine poll time duty. The Election Commission announced the polls schedule on November 15 amid continued political unrest.

DiCarlo stressed that UN

13 dead, 178 hurt after fuel depot blast in **Guinea capital**

Conakry (Guinea): An explosion and inferno at Guinea's main fuel depot in the capital of Conakry left at least 13 people dead and 178 injured, authorities said on Monday, as the West African country was assisted by other nations in

managing the disaster.

The massive explosion sparked the fire at the Guinean Petroleum Company depot after midnight Sunday, Guinea's presidency said. It caused significant damage in the heart of the Kaloum administrative district, home to most government offices. At least 89 of the 178 people injured have been treated and are back home, the government said in a statement. It also updated the casualty toll that Guinea's Civil Protection Service had earlier said was provisional. Among the 13 killed were foreigners, it added.

Authorities said an invesrigation has started to reveal what caused the explosion at the depot that supplies most of the fuel in Guinea. The depot had been in the process of being relocated to a remote site in a bid to avoid such a disaster. There are now fears of a major supply disruption as the country relies on imported refined petroleum products.
Officials were "identifying vital fuel-related needs to pre-

vent possible disruptions in supplies from the capital to other parts of the country", the government said in the statement. A worker at the depot was quoted by the Conakry-based Guinee Matin news website as saying the explosion occurred while a ship was offloading. "I lost several of my friends in this fire. Some like me are guards, others are technicians. ... All offices are destroyed as well as all equipment," said the worker identified as Ahmed Conde.

Security Minister Bachir Diallo said on state television the fire had been contained and some countries including Senegal and Mali were sending medical and safety teams. The fire razed several offices and buildings. Many residents fled their homes as thick smoke

spread.
"I was sleeping when I

Turkey links Sweden's NATO bid to US approving F-16 jet sales and Canada lifting arms embargo

Sweden's NATO membership by Turkey's parliament hinges on the U.S. Congress' approval of Turkey's request to purchase F-16 fighter jets, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said, calling on the two legislatures to act "simultaneously.

In comments reported on Tuesday, Erdogan also said Canada and other NATO allies must lift arms embargoes imposed on Turkey. "Positive developments from the United States regarding the F-16 issue and Canada keeping its promises will accelerate our parliament's positive view on Erdogan said. "All of these are

He made the comments late Monday while returning from a visit to Hungary. Hungary and Turkey are the only two NATO members not to have formally approved Sweden's bid to join the trans-Atlantic military alliance. Erdogan's comments were reported by the state-run Anadolu Agency. He told reporters that Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has raised the issue of a simultaneous approval by Turkey's par-

liament and Congress during discussions this week with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "If we operate this simultaneously, we will have the opportunity to pass this through the parliament much more easily," Erdogan quoted Fidan as telling Blinken.

coast. It said Kim expressed

'great satisfaction" with the

launch, which verified again

the reliability of "the most

powerful strategic core striking

of the Hwasong-18 missile. Its

two previous launches

"Based on their statement, this looks to have been an

exercise in signaling and a

developmental test in one," said

Ankit Panda, an expert with the

Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace. "There's

nothing new here technically as

far as I can tell at this early stage,

occurred in April and July.

It was the North's third test

means" of North Korea.

Erdogan submitted a protocol on Sweden's admission to parliament in October, but the ratification process has stalled.

The Turkish leader has since linked the matter to Congress' approving Turkey's request to purchase 40 F-16 fighter jets and kits to modernize its existing fleet

Iran accused of illegally testing missiles

United Nations (AP): The Western powers in the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran accused Tehran on Monday of developing and testing ballistic missiles, transferring hundreds of drones to Russia, and enriching uranium to an unprecedented 60 per cent level for a country without a nuclear weapons programme — all in violation of a UN resolution endorsing the

Iran and its ally, Russia, dismissed the charges by Britain, France and Germany, strongly supported by the United States, which pulled out of the agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2018. The six-party agreement could not develop atomic weapons. Under the accord, Tehran agreed to limit enrichment of uranium to levels necessary for the peaceful use of nuclear power in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. The sharp exchanges came at the Security Council's semi-annual meeting on the implementation of its resolution endorsing the 2015 nuclear deal.

Both Iran's UN Ambassador Amir Iravani and Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia blamed the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA, Western sanctions and an "anti-Iran" stance for the current standoff. Iravani said Iran is peaceful purposes under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and Nebenzia rejected alleged evidence that it was using Iranian drones in Ukraine. Then-President Donald

Trump said when unilaterally pulling out of the accord in 2018 that he would negotiate a stronger deal, but that didn't happen. Iran began breaking the terms a year later and its 60 per cent enrichment is near weapons-grade levels, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog. Formal talks to try to find a roadmap to restart the JCPOA collapsed in August 2022. At Monday's council meet-

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres still considers the JCPOA "the best available option to ensure that the Iranian nuclear programme remains exclusively peaceful". She urged Iran to reverse course, as did the three European countries who issued a joint statement quoting the IAEA as saying Iran's stockpiles of enriched uranium now stand at 22 times the JCPOA limit. "There is no credible civilian justification for the state of Iran's nuclear programme," the UK, France and Germany said. "The current trajectory only brings Iran closer to weapons-related

heard a whistle, then a deafen-ing explosion," said resident Mounatou Balde.

Pak EC defers Imran, Fawad's indictment

PTI ISLAMABAD

¬he Election Commission of ■ Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday once again deferred the indictment of ex-premier Imran Khan and former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in a case pertaining to contempt of the electoral body and the chief election commissioner (CEC). A four-member bench of the ECP arrived at the Adiala Jail on Tuesday, where both Imran and Fawad are incarcerated, to charge sheet the

politicians. Imran, 71, has been in jail since August 5, when he was arrested after a conviction in the Toshakhana case. The ECP on December 6 decided to conduct Imran and Fawad's jail trial in light of the interior ministry's denial to produce the former premier before the commission, citing security concerns. Last year, the electoral body had initiated contempt Umar and Fawad for allegedly using "intemperate" language against the chief election commissioner and the electoral

However, instead of appearing before the ECP, the three had challenged the ECP notices and contempt proceedings in various high courts arguing that Section 10 of the Elections Act 2017, which is the statutory provision regarding the commission's power to punish for contempt, was against the Constitution.

The PTI leaders had also sought from the high courts a declaratory relief from the charges. But in January, the Supreme Court allowed the EĈP to continue proceedings against Imran, Fawad and Umar, and on June 21, the ECP decided to frame charges against the trio, which has yet

Fawad was arrested from ful authority. "This is an open leader contended. Fawad said corruption case and has been in custody ever since. At the previous hearing, the electoral watchdog had announced that it would conduct indictment proceedings against the former premier and the ex-information minister in jail and asked the Ministry of Interior to make necessary arrangements.

hearing has changed," he said, adding that the case could be heard transparently only when the media was present.

Shaheen further demanded that the media, public, family members and lawyers should be allowed to attend the indictment proceedings. He also complained that Imran's

CONTEMPT CASE

In the latest development on Tuesday, the ECP bench deferred the indictment and adjourned the hearing till December 27.

Speaking to media outside Adiala Jail, Imran's lawyer Shoaib Shaheen said Imran's petition challenging the jail trial was pending before the Lahore High Court. He contended that orders for the trial were passed without any law-

legal team was not allowed to enter the jail on Tuesday with the complete case record.

Separately, Fawad, through his counsel Faisal Chaudhry, submitted a plea to the ECP on Tuesday seeking an open trial for the contempt proceedings.

'The proceedings in central jail Adiala are not open, transparent and are in square violation of law and the Constitution," the former PTI

duty to extend the constitutional rights to the applicant in letter and spirit.

"It is also strange and shocking that the learned members of the ECP have decided to start proceedings in jail, that in the applicant's firm opinion is not in accordance with the stature and respect of a constitutional body such like," he said in the plea. Fawad alleged that "to victimise the political opponents the trials behind the jail walls have become the order of the day".

'The closed-door trial is highly objectionable, without basking of law and in complete derogation of basic Constitutional rights of the applicant as well as in complete negation of international law fundamental human rights and international

Reports says airstrike by Jordan targets drug dealers in Syria

Beirut (AP): An airstrike believed to have been carried out by Jordan's air force struck a province in southern Syria late on Monday night, Syrian opposition activists said. Hours earlier, Jordanian authorities said their troops killed several smugglers in a border clash.

There was no immediate confirmation from Jordan on the strike that hit the province of Sweida, a known route for drug smuggling from war-torn Syria to its southern neighbour.

Smugglers have used Jordan as a corridor over the past years to smuggle highly addictive Captagon amphetamines out of Syria, mainly to oil-rick Arab Gulf states. Jordanian authorities have managed to stop several smuggling attempts, including some in which smugglers used drones to fly the drugs over the border.

The Britain-based Syrian



Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said Monday's airstrike targeted the area of Salkhad and killed a well-known drug dealer in the region. It said the strike was most likely carried out by Jordan's air force but did not elaborate.

Earlier on Monday, Jordan's state news agency said the country's border guards killed and wounded several smugglers along the border with Syria. It added that nine smugglers were detained and that troops seized

nearly five million pills of Captagon, as well as an unspecified amount of cannabis.

The Captagon industry has been a huge concern for Jordan, as well as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries as hundreds of millions of pills have been smuggled over the years. The drug is used recreationally and by people with physically demanding jobs to eep them alert.

In late August, an airstrike hit an alleged drug factory in southern Syria near the Jordanian border, an attack believed to have been carried out by Jordan's air force. In May, another airstrike on a village in Sweida killed a well-known Syrian drug kingpin and his family. Activists believe that strike was conducted by the Jordanians. Jordan has so far not claimed responsibility for any of the strikes.

Biden push for Ukraine aid stalls in Senate as negotiations over border curbs drag on

AP WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden's push to have Congress replenish wartime aid for Ukraine as part of a deal on border and immigration policy changes will almost certainly drag into next year. The Senate, which had postponed its holiday recess, returned to Washington on Monday after negotiators worked through the weekend on the border legislation, trying to reach an agreement that could unlock the Republican votes for Biden's USD 110 billion package of aid for Ukraine, Israel and other security priorities.

But senators said they still had plenty of work ahead, and it remained uncertain how many more days the Senate will remain in session this week. Barely half of the senators returned for a Monday evening vote. "Obviously we need time," said Sen Chris Murphy of

Democratic negotiator. The delay heaps more uncertainty on the future of the Biden administration's priority of providing support against Russia's invasion. It also puts a potential pause on politically fraught negotiations over immigration and border security policy, though Senate negotiators planned to continue working on the package. Senate Majority Leader

Chuck Schumer said the negotiations were "among the most difficult things we've done in recent memory' "Everyone knows that

something should be done to fix our broken immigration system," he said in a Senate floor speech to start the week. "But we can't do so by compromising our values. Finding the middle ground is exceptional-

The House has already departed for the year as Congress settles into a long winter's break. Lawmakers aren't scheduled to return until the second week of January, and they will then need to tend to other matters besides the Ukraine funding, including facing a partial shutdown in mid-January if Congress can't pass a government funding package. But as the Senate undertook the first substantial rewrite of immigration and border security law in decades, Republicans insisted they would not agree to rushing legislation. "Getting this agreement

right and producing legislative text is going to require some time," Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said on the Senate floor. Schumer had scheduled additional work days this week in hopes of pushing the Ukraine aid through the chamber, but made no mention of a vote on the package on Monday. He said both Republicans and Democrats would need to make more concessions and it would take "some more time to get it

Members of the core Senate negotiating group — Murphy and Sens. Kyrsten Sinema, an Arizona independent, and James Lankford, an Oklahoma Republican — met with White House staff on Monday and planned to continue meeting throughout the week. "We're all going to be back in January, but it's going to take a while to be able to finish up all the text," Lankford said. The weeks-long wait comes

as the Defence Department says it has nearly run out of available funds for supporting Ukraine's defence. In a letter to Congress, the Pentagon notified lawmakers last week that will soon be transferring more than USD 1 billion to replenish stockpiles sent to Ukraine, with no further funds available as it maintains the United States' own military readiness. "Once these funds are obligated, the President Vladimir Putin as Department will have exhausted the funding available to us for security assistance to Ukraine," according to the letter obtained by The Associated Press. The department said "it is essential that Congress act without delay" on the pending supplemental request. Ukrainian forces tried to

launch a counteroffensive this year, but faced dug-in Russian troops, minefields and other hazards. They struggled to make any significant gains. As the conflict grinds

towards the end of a second year, US public support has waned for sending billions of dollars more in weapons and economic aid. The European Union, too, had to push into the new year a plan to supply Ukraine with USD 54.5 billion after a veto from Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a right-wing leader who is on good terms with Russian

well as Donald Trump, the former president and front-runner for the Republican nomination next year. Ás his country scrapes low

on money to repel Russia, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has travelled the world to ask for support. He elicited praise from Republicans after meeting with them in the Capitol last week, but the conservatives remained unmoved and in no hurry to approve Biden's emergency

funding request. Republicans have said there is still time to redouble support before Ukraine's defense suffers. Republican Sen Chuck Grassley of Iowa said that since the European Union put off sending Kyiv more money until the new year, he thinks the US can as well. "If it's OK for them, it's surely OK for us," he said. Dozens of Republican House members have signalled they won't support continued Ukraine aid, and even GOP senators who in the past have been stalwart advocates of the Ukraine war effort have insisted that Congress also new restrictions. Biden has offered to com-

promise on border and immigration policy, and top White House officials have joined the Senate negotiations, including Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

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Sensex, Nifty hit new record highs

Soar to lifetime high on firm global trends, buying in FMCG, oil shares

21,418.65

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty scaled new lifetime high levels in intra-day trade on Tuesday before closing with gains on the back of buying in FMCG and oil shares and positive global cues. In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 122.10 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 71,437.19.

During the day, the barometer jumped 308.62 points or 0.43 per cent to reach its all-time intra-day 71,623.71.

The broader Nifty climbed 86.4 points or 0.40 per cent to hit its record peak of 21,505.05. It finally closed higher by 34.45 points or 0.16 per cent at



Buying in FMCG, oil and gas, power and select banking shares supported the recovery while losses in IT and auto shares capped gains, analysts said. Among the Sensex firms, Nestle

rose the most by 4.66 per cent. NTPC rose by 2.16 per cent, Reliance Industries by 1.53 per cent, State Bank of India by 1.04 per cent and Hindustan Unilever by 1.03 per cent. ITC, Power Grid and Bajaj Finance

Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finserv and Maruti were among the lag-

TOP GAINERS

Coal India

Line Cola

TOP LOSERS

Adami Ports

Hery Metocorp

SSI Life Inno

Tata Cons. Prod

The broader market sustained its optimism, but the incremental rally is contracting. Investors are cautious ahead of the Eurozone inflation data announcement, which is forecast to drop marginally," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geoitt Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.31

per cent while smallcap index climbed 0.10 per cent. Among the indices, energy jumped 1.49 per cent, FMCG climbed 1.24 per cent, utilities (0.75 per cent), oil & gas (0.46 per cent) and power (0.39 per

Commodities, consumer discretionary, IT, auto, teck and capital goods were among the lagIn Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled in the positive territory, while Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trad-

ing in the green. The US markets ended with gains on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent

crude declined 0.30 per cent to USD 77.72 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors

(FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 33.51 crore on Monday after continuous buying, according to exchange data. Snapping its three-day rally,

the BSE benchmark declined 168.66 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at 71,315.09 on Monday. The Nifty fell by 38 points or per



RBI tightens norms to check evergreening of loans by lenders through AIFs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In a move to curb "ever-Lgreening" of loans, the Reserve Bank on Tuesday barred banks and NBFCs from investing in any scheme of Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) having investment in companies that have taken loan from the lenders concerned in the past 12

Banks and NBFCs, which are Regulated Entities (RE) under the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), make investments in units of AIFs as part of their regular investment operations.

Venture capital funds, angle funds, infrastructure funds, private equity funds and hedge funds, among others, are AIFs.

In a circular, RBI said, "certain transactions of REs involving AIFs that raise regulatory concerns have come to our notice".

These transactions entail sub-

stitution of direct loan exposure of REs to borrowers, with indirect exposure through investments in units

of AIFs, it said. RBI said that in order to address concerns relating to possible evergreening through this route", REs cannot make investments in any scheme of AIFs which has downstream investments either directly or indirectly in a debtor compa-

ny of the lender. Further, it has directed lenders that such investments would be required to be liquidated within 30 days.

In case, REs are not able to liquidate their investments within the prescribed time limit, they should make 100 per cent provision on such investments, it added.

The debtor company of the RE means any entity to which the lender currently has or previously had a loan or investment exposure anytime during the preceding 12

PE/VC bets plummet to 43-month low of USD 1.6 bn in November

Investments by private equity and venture capital funds plummeted to a 43-month low of USD 1.6 billion in November, a report said on Tuesday. The investments were 69 per

cent lower than the year-ago period and 60 per cent less than October, the report by industry's lobby grouping Indian Venture Alternate Capital Association (IVCA) and the consultancy firm EY said.

By volume terms, there were 58 deals in November 2023 as against 106 in the year-ago period and 73 in October 2023, the report said.

Based on the available data, the consultancy firm's partner Vivek Soni said he anticipates PE/VC investments for 2023 to come at 10-12 per cent below the USD 56 billion in 2022.

"This fall has been primarily fuelled by a sharp contraction in startup investments and a drop in number of large deals on account of the widening bid ask spread between investor valuations and seller expectations," he



In November, there were six large deals of value greater than USD 100 million, aggregating to USD 993 million, which is just a fourth of what was recorded in the year-ago period.

Actis's USD 205 million bet for acquiring 321 MW solar assets of Acme was the largest investment in the month, the report

There were 22 exits worth USD 1.2 billion in November compared to USD 2 billion in November 2022 across 34 deals. PE/VC funds raised USD 401 million in November for investing in future, which was lower than the USD 1.9 billion raised in November 2022 and USD 2.4 billion in October 2023, the report added.

SpiceJet shares jump nearly 8 per cent in intra-day trade; settle in positive territory

PTI MUMBAI

Tuesday.

Shares of SpiceJet on Tuesday jumped nearly 8 per cent in intra-day trade after the company said it has expressed interest to acquire Go First and plans to submit its offer after carrying out due diligence of the bankrupt carrier. The stock climbed 7.77 per cent

ndian equity markets will rise

by up to 10 per cent in 2024,

a domestic brokerage said on

About Nifty target for end-

2024, HDFĆ Securities' head of

retail research Deepak Jasani

said he expects a rise of 8-10

per cent from the current lev-

The 50-share benchmark

closed at 21,453 points, which

is over 17 per cent higher than

the close in the year-ago peri-

To a question about the elec-

tions, the company's managing

director and chief executive

Dhiraj Relli said the outcome

of the general election will

have a "limited impact" on the

market as investors have

already started pricing in the

to Rs 69.20 -- its 52-week high -- during the trade on the BSE. It finally ended at Rs 66.08, up 2.91 per cent.

Go First, which stopped flying since May 3 amid financial woes mainly triggered by Pratt & Whitney engine issues, is undergoing an insolvency resolution process. In a regulatory filing, SpiceJet

said it "has expressed interest with the resolution profession-al of Go First and wish to submit an offer post diligence, with a view to creating a strong and viable airline in a possible combination with SpiceJet".

The airline, which is grappling with financial headwinds, last week announced raising

around USD 270 million from various investors. The Board of the Company has recently approved and initiated the process of raising

fresh capital of about US\$ 270 million to strengthen its financial position and provide resources to invest in growth plans," the filing said on

> in the next year, it said. Its head of institutional research Varun Lohchab said it has become very difficult to pick up broader sectoral stories

> investors to be more choosy about select stocks in each of the sectors. The brokerage has positive outlooks on industrials, infrastructure, realty, cement, auto,

to bet on because of the high

valuations and advised

sectors and chemicals. Relli said the lacklustre rural demand is a worry due to which the consumptionfocused companies are not doing well and specifically

Nifty to rise 10 per cent in 2024; large caps will see faster growth: HDFC Securities

after the impressive win in the state polls, and political stability because of that.

He said the months leading up to the election results will see some changes in the months leading up to the polls.

Relli urged everybody to look at the market story beyond the election results as well and pointed to the softening of inflation and rate cuts by RBI in the second half of the year. Inflation will cool down to as low as 2.5 per cent in the sec-



will lead to a shift of stance by the central bank and also cuts of 0.50 per cent in rates, the brokerage said. It feels the small and mid-caps

have seen huge appreciation in the recent past and will offer limited upside, and made its preference clear for the large caps, Relli said.

He said some of the portfolio management services (PMS) have stopped taking fresh flows into their small-cap schemes and many more will follow suit

oil and gas, and pharma sectors, he said, adding that it is negative on consumer staples and consumer discretionary

pointed to unemployment as a challenge.

Telecom Bill 2023 progressive, forward looking, | India cannot do away with energy brings predictability, say Industry captains

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The industry on Tuesday ■ said the new telecom Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha is progressive and forward-looking, and marks groundbreaking reforms by streamlining India's licensing landscape. Leading voices of telecom

industry, including Bharti Airtel MD and CEO Gopal Vittal, and Vodafone Idea CEO Akshava Moondra, lauded various provisions of the Bill. especially those related to security provisions, right of way, and simplification of licensing among others.

"I would like to warmly compliment the government for introducing a progressive and forward-looking Telecommunications Bill in Parliament. The Bill suggests groundbreaking reforms by streamlining India's licensing landscape," Vittal said.

He said the Bill aims to simplify the current "convoluted sys-



tem" that includes various types of licensing (license, registration, permission), into a "more cohesive and efficient" authorisation-based regime. "The seminal spectrum reforms

initiated in 2021 eliminated SUC for future spectrum assignments and provided the option of moratorium of past spectrum dues and annual spectrum roadmap. These reforms have now gained further momentum under the proposed Telecommunications Bill 2023," he said.

The proposed legislation ensures predictability and avail-

ability of spectrum covering aspects such as refarming, harmonisation and trading/leasing/sharing. This, he said, will lead to the creation of a robust digital infrastructure and increased penetration of services, benefitting all Indians. The captains of the telecom industry also appreciated the reforms related to Right of Way (RoW).

"The proposed reform on RoW is yet another seminal move that is set to accelerate the rollout of telecom infrastructure. including 5G in the country. The move will provide the necessary enforceability of central RoW rules at the local level," Vittal said

The provisions related to public and private property, common ducts further instill confidence in the industry for faster rollout, he added. According to him, another pivotal reform involves the restructuring of penalties, as penalty framework regime under the proposed Bill. This will be achieved through

a tiered system of graded penalties proportionate to the "The introduction of a voluntary

undertaking and an appeal process within the government aims to mitigate litigations thereby promoting more efficient resolution of disputes," he said. Vittal said the government has rightfully retained oversight of telecom networks from a sovereign security perspective, a requirement integral to India's telecom licences over the last two decades.

Vodafone Idea CEO Akshaya Moondra described the Telecommunications Bill, 2023, as a watershed moment in the telecom reform process and said it reaffirms the the government's commitment to provide Indian telecom with a futurefit framework that helps achieve the growth aspirations the government simplifies the of new India.

security to meet climate goals: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India cannot do away with Lenergy security only because it has to meet climate goals, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The statement assumes significance due to India's focus on energy transition with ambitious targets of 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 and net-zero by 2070.

India's power demand touched an all-time high of 243.27 GW in September this year. India has installed power generation capacity of about 426 GW, including over 213

GW coal and lignite based. 'We cannot do away with energy security, only because we have to meet the climatic goal," Special Secretary and Financial Adviser, Ministry of Power, Ashish Upadhyay, said while addressing the inaugural CII South Asia Power Summit.

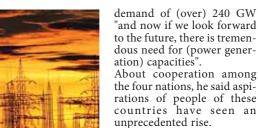
Apart from India, three other



countries in the region --Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Nepal -- are participating in the summit.

We have got huge resource of thermal (coal-based) power. Of course with due respect to all those who are talking about climate change protection and net zero emission... We have highest regard for it and are working highly for it. But for us, energy security is also important.

He further said this year the country saw peak power



He said the four countries are eyeing high economic growth rates of up to 8 per cent. We are very well poised to

meet the increased demand as we have the common grid that can transfer any amount of energy from one region to another," he said.

The region has natural resources, rivers flowing through the nations which can be tapped, he added. While mentioning about global disruptions following the Russia-Ukraine war, he said the region should work together to create its market and "protect our society against future disru

Rupee falls 9 paise to close at 83.19 against

The rupee declined by 9 paise to settle at 83.19 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday due to dollar buying by importers amid lingering worries over oil supplies through the Red Sea route. Forex traders said that positive sentiment in the stock market, a weak greenback against major currencies overseas and steady crude oil prices restricted losses in the local currency.

importers following a recent spike in the rupee amid increased FII inflows kept the unit under pressure. On Monday, the domestic currency settled 7 paise lower at 83.10 against the dollar, a day after witnessing a jump of 27 paise on Friday.

twice this week to touch a high of 82.90.

over oil supplies amid attacks by rebel group Houthis on

BUSINESS BRIEF

SRM GLOBAL HOSPITALS PERFORMS SUCCESSFUL LIVER TRANSPLANT KATTANKULATHUR:

SRM Global Hospitals has successfully completed a donor liver year-old man. The man, suffering from End Stage Liver Disease, has now recovered well and is actively engaged in his daily routine. The successful procedure, a



patient care, is a significant milestone in SRM Global Hospitals, especially for its Institute of Liver and Gastro Sciences, said Dr. P. Sathyanarayan, President, SRM Global Hospitals. The patient, hailing from New Delhi, had been grappling with End Stage Liver Disease for three years. At the time of his arrival at SRM Global Hospitals' Institute of Liver and Gastro Sciences, he suffered from water retention in the abdomen, swelling on the legs, and significant weight loss - indicating his condition's severity

MeitY Secy: India should go up value chain in electronics components manufacturing More electronics components manufacturing units should

India should move up the value chain in the manufacture of electronics components from the present levels of 15 per cent, a top official of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said on Tuesday.

S Krishnan, Secretary Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said that even at 15 per cent value addition, the employment potential is immense and the government is prepared to support this endeavour by the entrepreneurs.

Speaking at the Merchants Chamber of Commerce and Industry here, Krishnan said



the country is an important part of the new policy of the government. Now the present level of value addition by Indian companies is 15 per cent. Work should be directed towards increasing this percentage and the government is prepared to

come up in the country. "The component eco-system should come up in India and investments have to be made", he Regarding semiconductors, he

said that India requires a resilient supply chain and the government has earmarked an amount of Rs 75,000 crore to be spent over a period of five years towards giving subsidy. Supplies were disrupted during COVID-19 affecting industries like automobiles.

Krishnan said one of the goals of the government is to make the digital economy of the size of USD one trillion by 2030.

Realty firm Nila Spaces sets up \$1-mn fund for tech startups in real estate tem and immersive sessions on

 R^{ealty} firm Nila Spaces on Tuesday said it has set up a USD 1-million fund to support technology startups in the real estate sector.

In a statement, Ahmedabadbased Nila Spaces said it has started a VisionX Program, an initiative with a commitment of USD 1 million dedicated to prop-tech startups. Managed by Awfficacy Capital,

VisionX is a 12-week rolling accelerator programme tailored to nurture and elevate early-stage prop-tech startups. Participants will benefit from personalised mentorship, access to the prop-tech ecosys-

business development and investor readiness. To become eligible for participation, startups must be at

seed-stage or early-stage, demonstrate innovation in their product or service, possess high growth potential and scalability, and having committed to actively engaging with mentors, advisors, and the prop-tech ecosystem at large. Deep Vadodaria, CEO of Nila Spaces, said, "In today's real estate evolution, innovation is a necessity, not a choice. The VisionX Program is our commitment to propel prop-tech startups, providing capital, and



US dollar

PTI MUMBAI

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened flat at 83.10 against the greenback and traded between the peak of 83.09 and the lowest level of 83.22. It finally settled at 83.19, registering a loss of 9 paise over its previous close. Traders said dollar buying by

The rupee breached the 82 level

Traders are also concerned

Hardik, Savita win accolades in FIH Annual awards

Win 'FIH Player of the Year', 'Goalkeeper of the Year (women)' awards respectively

PTI ■ LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND)

ndian men's hockey team midfielder Hardik Singh ■and women's side captain Savita on Tuesday won the FIH Player of the Year and Goalkeeper of the Year (women) awards respectively.

The awards were declared following a vote by an expert panel, National Associations - represented by their respective national teams! tive national teams' captains and coaches, fans and media. With 114 caps to his name, Hardik is the next big thing in Indian hockey. He rightly showcased that, when he became a vital cog in India's bronze-medal win at the 2020 Olympics and his performance have gone from strength to strength since then.

This is Hardik's second big award this year as he was also conferred the Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Award for



With his flamboyance in the

midfield, he has become one of the pivotal members of the Indian team in recent years. "When you've got a great team,

they make your game better and life easier. I am grateful for all those who have voted for me and thankful to the entire team and Hockey India for helping me reach this stage," said the current India vice-captain. As for Savita, this is her third consecutive FIH Women's Goalkeeper of the Year award,

having won the recognition in 2021 and 2022. The Indian custodian has been in prolific form throughout 2023. Starting from the Test matches in Australia to the Hangzhou Asian Games, Savita has been on top of her game. The 33-year-old helped India

emerge as the champions of the Asian Champions Trophy held in October in India. She will be looking to help India qualify for the Paris Olympics with a top three finish at the upcoming FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifier in Ranchi in January next year. Thankful to all my teammates and support staff who have helped me grow as an individ-

This award will motivate me to work harder and get more success for our country. Lastly, thankful to all those who voted for me," she said.

Xan de Waard of the Netherlands has been elected as

2023 FIH Player of the Year in the women's category.
Dutch goalkeeper Pirmin Blaak
won the FIH Goalkeeper of the

Year awards among men, while the awards for FIH Rising Stars went to Teresa Lima (Spain) Gaspard Xavier (France).

China women's head coach Alyson Annan and Germany men's head coach André Henning won the FIH Coaches of the Year awards, while Ayanna McClean (Trinidadand-Tobago) and Ben Göntgen (Germany) were awarded with the FIH Umpires of the Year recognitions.

Girona back on top of Spanish league after beating Alaves

AP MADRID

Girona returned to the top of the Spanish league after a comprehen-sive 3-0 win over mid-table Alaves.

The result lifted Girona two points ahead of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga and nine clear of third-place Barcelona.

Striker Artem Dovbyk scored two goals and

scored two goals and winger Yan Bueno Cuoto dazzled on the right wing as Girona was far superior. Alaves has gone 24 matches away from home without a win, the worst such run in the club's history.

The surprise title contender took the lead midway through the first half when Dovbyk was on hand to nod home a rebound after Antonio Sivera could only parry Cuoto's shot.

Cuoto was involved again four minutes before halftime when the tricky



winger fed Portu, who spun and rifled in a low shot. With an hour gone, Dovbyk made it 3-0 from the penalty spot after Cuoto was brought down in the box. It was the Ukrainian striker's 10th goal in 16 games. Only Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham has scored

Alaves was 13th place in La Liga, three points above the relegation zone. Its next match is at home to Real Madrid on Thursday.

Man City basks in warmth in Saudi Arabia with De Bruyne back training at Club World Cup

AP JEDDAH (SAUDI ARABIA)

Manchester City left behind a chilling run of English Premier League results to find some midwinter sun in Saudi Arabia and the warm glow of Kevin De Bruyne back in train-

ing.
The Belgium playmaker took part in light training on the field in Jeddah where on Tuesday the European champion makes its Club World Cup debut in the semifinals against Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan. De Bruyne's Premier League season stalled after barely 20 minutes in August when he aggravated a hamstring injury that also ended his Champions League final early. That win over Inter Milan earned City the ticket to Saudi Arabia.

"It's a pleasure to be here, an honor," City coach Pep Guardiola said on Monday at King Abdullah Sports City stadium before De Bruyne's surprise run-out on a balmy 25degree C (77-degree F) evening. The champion of Europe has won 15 of the past 16 editions



of FIFA's continental club event - Corinthians beat Chelsea in the 2012 final - but Guardiola dismissed the suggestion it is not a true enough test.

"We want to take it like a privilege," he said. "You have to do something exceptional in the past, that's why you are here." The change of scene could be timely after City gave up more late goals and dropped more league points on Saturday in a 2-2 draw at home to Crystal

"We have to improve how to

finish our games, be more aware what you have to do in certain moments," said Guardiola, whose team takes a week-long break from the English winter in fourth place, trailing leader Arsenal by five

Seeking to respect the last edition of the FIFA event in its seven-team format, the City coach said the club should treat its tournament debut as a "once in a lifetime" chance. City, however, has been rewarded twice over by FIFA for its

Champions League title with the winner of each final from 2021 through 2024 also getting places at the relaunched 32-team Club World Cup in 2025. That will be a month-long tournament in the United States committing the two finalists to extending a tiring season for seven more games through July 13, 2025.

"I am not against new competitions," said Guardiola, noting City was among the clubs consulted by FIFA before the decision on Sunday. "I am against the lack of time to recover year by year. This should change." Now more than 15 years into his top-level coaching career, Guardiola pits his wits on Tuesday against the man he faced on his competitive debut: Maciej Skorza of Poland, now Asian champion with Urawa

In August 2008, while Lionel Messi was in China helping Argentina take gold at the Beijing Olympics, Guardiola sent out Barcelona to face Skorza's Wisla Krakow in a Champions League qualifying

Brest fighting for European spots in French league

Since coming back from two goals down to stun last season's runner-up Lens on the opening day of the season, Brest has continued to take the

French league by surprise. The result? With one match left to play before the year-end break, the small club from the Brittany region dreams about

Europe. After 16 rounds of matches, Brest boasts its best record ever at this stage of the French league season, with eight wins, four draws and only four defeats for a total of 28 points. That's just nine points fewer than leader Paris Saint-Germain and its armada of stars. And four points fewer than second-place Nice ahead of Brest's game against local rival Lorient on Wednesday. week in, week out. For its final league game of the year, PSG hosts Metz. Nice plays Lens and third-place Castillo said. To build a stable future, Brest

Monaco travels to Toulouse. Not many experts could have imagined such an ascending struggling side appointed Eric Roy as its coach in January, with hopes that the 55-year-old would help the club remain in deals.

the top division. At the time, Brest sat in the relegation zone, two points from safety. The moved seemed like a perilous gamble since Roy had been out of a coaching job for more than 10 years and a short stint at Nice. Less than a year later, Roy's has not only kept the club among the elite, but he has delivered much more than what was expected.

The coach has built a team

strength and ability to sustain long spells of pressure while being clinical up front.

"We're moving forward and trying to cultivate (a culture) of humility and of hard work, without forgetting that we can have ambition," Roy said. At the club, no one embodies

Brest's success better than Romain Del Castillo, who joined two years ago. After several injury setbacks,

the 27-year-old player born in Lyon is finally enjoying the best season of his career, with five goals and two assists so far. Switching position from the left of the attack to a playmaking role has certainly helped the left-footed Del Castillo blossom, with his efficient dribbling game and excellent vision to create chances on display

"It's up to me to be a technical leader on the pitch, but also in the dressing room," Del

has recently renewed Del Castillo's contract, linking him to the club through Two other influential players midfielder Pierre Lees-Melou and striker Jeremy Le Douaron have also extended their

Although Roy claims the club's ambition for the season remains to avoid relegation, the team can certainly have higher goals, with qualification for a European competition next season on everyone's mind. "Europe seems a long way away," Roy said. "I like to do things step by step. Today, we're taking it easy, keeping our feet on the ground with a lot of humility. If there's a change in

Bo Larsson. Sweden and Malmo soccer great, dies at 79

AP ■ MALMO (SWEDEN)

 $B^{o\, Larsson,\, the\, Swedish\, soc-}_{cer\, great\, who\, played\, 70}$ times for his country and at three World Cups, has died. He was 79.

announced the death of Larsson on Tuesday. No more details were disclosed. Larsson, who could play in

midfield or as a striker, featured at the World Cups in 1970, 1974 and 1978 and is regarded as one of Malmo's greatest ever players.
"Bosse" - as he was fondly

known - scored 289 goals in 546 games for the southern club, where he won the league six times from 1965-77 and was the competition's top scorer three times. He also had a stint playing for Stuttgart in Germany between 1966-69 before returning to Malmo.

A32-team World Cup for clubs is FIFA's big play to

If successful, it could follow the

English Premier League and

Champions League as one of the

most popular and lucrative

sports competitions in the world, generating billions of euros (dollars).

Conversely, it could spark a

backlash from players and

coaches, who already complain

about the congested match cal-

"I am not against new compe-

titions, I am against the lack of

time to recover year by year. This should change,"

Manchester City manager Pep

Guardiola said on Monday, in

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where

they aim to win the last Club

World Cup before it is radical-

ly rebooted. World players' union FIFPRO

went further after FIFA announced the dates of the

first edition of the expanded tournament, which will be host-

ed by the United States from

The extreme mental and phys-

ical pressures at the pinnacle of

the game is the principal con-

June 15 to July 13, 2025

change the face of soccer.

AP GENEVA

endar.

Albania gives citizenship to Brazilian coach Sylvinho who has led team to Euro 2024

AP ■ TIRANA (ALBANIA)

lbania coach Sylvinho, a Albanian citizenship in a show of appreciation for qualifying the tiny Western Balkan coun-Championship.

Albania reached Euro 2024 atop a group including the Czech Republic and Poland. It's only the second time the country has qualified.

Prime Minister Edi Rama invited President Bajram Begaj and Sylvinho to the podium of the "Best of 2023" gala for the ceremony.

"Today, together and due to the president, we declare you an Albanian citizen," Rama said. "I am signing a legal contract (with Sylvinho) legalizing him as an Albanian," Begaj said before handing him a passport. An emotional Sylvinho

cern of players with multiple

club and national team compe-

titions, leading to exhaustion,

physical injuries, mental health

issues, diminished performance,

and risks to career longevity,

On Sunday, FIFA said the dates

would be "harmoniously aligned

with the international match

calendar" to ensure sufficient

rest for players ahead of the start

But a significantly expanded

tournament in 2025 means top

players face three straight years

of major competitions during

the usual offseason, given the European Championship and

Copa America are being staged

in 2024 and the next World Cup

"Clubs play a fundamental role

in world football, and the Club

World Cup will be a major mile-

stone in providing clubs from all

confederations with a fitting

stage on which to shine at the highest level of the game," FIFA

President Gianni Infantino said.

It is a peculiar quirk of soccer that a global club event has

of domestic leagues.

FIFPRO said.

is in 2026.

remembered his journey from Sao Paolo to London then Spain, back to Britain, then Italy and "landed in Tirana, a beautiful land, a beautiful country

In 2004, Sylvinho obtained a ing three years' residency there. Albania hopes to keep Sylvinho as the coach in a bid to reach the 2026 World Cup for the first time.

Sylvinho's current deal ends after next summer's Euro in Germany.

Albania also gave citizenship to Italian coach Giovanni de Biasi after he ushered Albania to Euro 2016. Rama said de Biasi, who was present, showed that going to the European finals was not an impossible dream. All of the national team also received the diplomatic pass-port "as ambassadors of the Albanian state," Rama added.

Springer earns PGA Tour card a month after losing three years old daughter Emma, learned their daughter had Trisomy 18 - also known as Edwards Syndrome - in

AP PONTE VEDRA BEACH

Just over a month after losing his 3-year-old daughter to a genetic disorder, Hayden Springer held steady down the closing hole Monday and cards at the tour's first Qschool in 11 years.

Springer closed with a 1-under 69 on the rain-soaked Dve Valley course at TPC Sawgrass, advancing to the PGA Tour for the first time with two shots to

Harrison Endycott of Australia had no such drama with his golf, building a comfortable lead and posting a 67 to finish as medalist, which paid \$50,000. Far more valuable was a spot on the PGA Tour next year. Also earning cards were Trace Crowe, Blaine Hale Jr., Raul Pereda of Mexico and



Everyone who reached the final stage was assured some level of status on the Korn Ferry Tour. Springer leaned on having full status from winning the Canadian tour points title this year.

His story first came to light when he qualified for the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines two years ago. Springer and his wife,

which babies are born with three copies of chromosome 18 instead of two. Such infants typically don't make it 72 hours. Sage was 3 when she "I definitely came in this week trying to make sure that I was gonna have enough of an emotional capacity to play and to be

ready," Springer told Golf Channel. "Because it's definitely been a tough last month and emotional last month.' The Springers also have a 1year-old daughter, Annie. Springer looked to have a card locked up until making bogeys

at the 12th and 13th. He bounced back with a birdie on the par-3 14th. But then he failed to birdie the par-5 16th, and he pulled his tee shot into the water on the tough par-4



FIFA's rebooted Club World Cup could change face of soccer Leon have qualified via CON-CACAF Champions Cup wins. From Asia, Saudi Arabia's Al

> Diamonds are guaranteed places.

> Hilal and Japan's Urawa Red

City.

Countries are capped to two teams unless more than two win a continental title. The first expanded tournament will be without storied English teams Liverpool and Manchester

FIFPRO has called for discussions to introduce player health and safety regulations as a matter of urgency.

players' union analyzed the impact of what it described as extreme calendar congestion' last season when the World Cup was staged in Qatar in November and December. It said 43% of World Cup players surveyed experienced "extreme or increased mental fatigue." Last season, Manchester United

Fernandes made 70 appearances for club and country, including a run of 20 consecutive games. Manchester City and Spain midfielder Rodri played in 10 different compe-

"If you look at it, it's a bit crazy the rest that we get and the risk of injuries. If we have this many games for so long, the games will lose the energy, lose the intensity," City mid-fielder Bernardo Silva said on Monday. "No complaints, but the amount of games makes it complicated to be fit all the time and for our energy levels

to be proper."
To add to the demands on players, the rebooted Club World Cup comes at the end of the first season of the revamped Champions League, which sees teams play eight games in the first phase, rather than six.

THERE'S MORE While the Club World Cup has

been expanded, FIFA will also hold an annual Intercontinental Cup. It appears to replace the current Club World Cup, and will see the Champions League winner face the winner of a playoff between the champions from the other confederations.



It is planned that the Club never captured the imagination World Cup will be held every of fans and teams around the four years after 2025.

In its current format, the European and South American champions enter at the semifinals stage and have to play just two games to win the title. More often than not, the final is

between those two continents, with European teams dominating the modern era. Only Brazilian team Corinthians has broken Europe's winning run in

The sense of formality likely hasn't helped the tournament capture wider interest, with teams from Asia and Africa not expected to upset giants such as Real Madrid, Barcelona and Liverpool. The fact it is staged in the mid-

dle of the European season does not help.

NEW FORMAT

The 32-team tournament addresses those issues, with 12 European and six South

American teams participating. Asia and Africa will have four teams each, plus four from North and Central America and the Caribbean The tournament will be staged during the offseason for many

leagues, which is when major tournaments are traditionally played. With no competition from the likes of the English Premier League, the Club World Cup has the potential to own the space around the

each group, leading to a knockout stage from the round of 16 through to the final. FIFA considered a six-game tournament with eight group winners advancing to a quarterfinals round. The concern

The format will emulate the men's and women's World

Cups, with eight groups of

four. Two teams advance from

was that format would create too many dead games in the group stage.

QUALIFYING TEAMS FIFA has established a qualify-

ing criteria based on winning each confederation's biggest title, such as the Champions League, and ranking points for performance in that com petition.

Manchester City, Madrid and Chelsea have already qualified as the three most recent Champions League winners. Bayern, Paris Saint-Germain, Inter Milan, Porto and Benfica are also set to take part via their ranking points, FIFA said.

Copa Libertadores winners from the last three seasons - Brazil's Palmeiras, Flamengo and Fluminense - have also qualified. Seattle Sounders, along with Mexico's Monterrey and Club

African entrants include Al Ahly of Egypt and Wydad of Morocco. Oceania will be represented by New Zealand team Auckland

BACKLASH

United.

A report this year by the world

and Portugal midfielder Bruno

SOUTH AFRICA BOWL OUT INDIA FOR 211

PTI GQEBERHA (SOUTH AFRICA)

pener B Sai Sudharsan and skipper KL Rahul smashed fifties but South Africa fought back to bowl out India for a modest 211 in the second ODI of the three-match series here on

Sudharsan made a well-compiled 83-ball 62 studded with seven boundaries and a six, while Rahul cracked a 64-ball 56 laced with seven hits to the fence as the duo

added 68 runs for the third wicket. But none of the other batters could make it count as South African bowlers forced their way back into the game with regular strikes, dismissing the visitors in 46.2

Put in to bat, India found the going tough with South African seamers, especially Nandre Burger (3/30 in 10 overs), exploiting the pace and bounce on offer at the St George's Park pitch to trouble the visitors. Ruturaj Gaikwad (4) was trapped in front in the second ball off Burger but Sudharsan and Tilak Varma (10) managed to absorb the pressure created by the seamers in the

While Tilak was struggling a bit, opener Sudharsan was all class as he played his off drivers and pulls with ease for boundaries as India reached 46 for one in the first

However, Tilak was sent back by Burger with a bouncer, bringing skipper Rahul on

With the South African seamers bowling in tandem, runs dried up as India could score only 10 runs in next six overs from

Sudharsan too looked a bit subdued but once spinner Keshav Maharaj (2/51 in 10



overs) was introduced, he produced a slogsweep to send the ball over deep midwicket for the first six.

In the 20th over, Sudharsan dived to complete a risky singles to complete his second successive fifty.

After a watchful start, Rahul produced two pull shots for successive boundaries off Wiaan Mulder (0/19 in 4 overs), before finding the ropes off Lizaad Williams (1/49 in 9 overs) and Aiden Markram (1/28 in 4 overs) to bring up the team 100 in the 24th over.

Williams broke the 68-run stand, dismissing Sudharshan, who was a bit surprised by the extra bounce and ended up edging one to Klaasen.

Sanju Samson then wasted the opportunity as he dragged one on to the stumps off Beuran Hendricks (2/34 in 9.2 overs) as India slipped to 136 for four in 32 overs.
Rahul punished Maharaj for a poor delivery with a sweep shot and then picked up three runs to complete his fifty in 60 balls. Debutant Rinku Singh then danced down the pitch to send the spinner over longon as 16 runs came off the 35th over. Rahul then played a ramp shot for a four and just when things were looking up, it

all went downhill. First, Rahul was removed by Burger for his third wicket with David Miller taking the catch at backward point and then five balls later, Rinku was stumped off Maharaj's bowling as the visitors were suddenly

reduced to 169 for six. Maharaj then accounted for Kuldeep Yadav (1), while Axar Patel (7) holed out at long-off off Markram.

Avesh Khan (9) and Arshdeep Singh (18) then smashed a six each to take India past





PTI JOHANNESBURG

against India due to injuries.

Phehlukwayo suffered a left-side strain while Baartman was sidelined with a right-side strain. Trailing 0-1, South Africa will be looking to restore parity in the second ODI at Port Elizabeth on

Western Province fast bowler Beuran Hendricks has been added to the South Africa squad.

Updated South Africa ODI squad: Aiden

Markram (captain), Nandre Burger, Tony de Zorzi, Reeza Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Mihlali Mpongwana, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne and Lizaad Williams, Beuran Hendricks.



Will need a few months to be 100% fit: Pant

PTI ■ DUBAI

The supremely gifted Rishabh The supremery grace representations and Pant says he will need a few more months to get back to playing competitive cricket as he appreciated the love and support he received during his long rehabilitation period.

Pant had met with a horrifying car accident last year and missed the entire 2023 after undergoing

a knee surgery.
"(I am feeling) much better (than) what I was doing a few months ago. So like, (I am) still on recovery towards 100 per cent (fitness). But hopefully in a few months time, I'll be able to a few months time, I'll be able to do it," an optimistic Pant said in a video posted by the Delhi Capitals on its instagram page. The Delhi Capitals skipper, who will be present at the mini auc-tion alongside Team Director Sourav Ganguly and head coach Ricky Ponting here on Tuesday, had a close shave after his car hit had a close shave after his car hit a divider on National Highway towards Roorkee and caught fire in a terrifying accident in December last year.

The 26-year-old suffered multiple injuries and is currently under going rehab at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. However, he is expected to be back to action during the IPL which starts on March 22.

What touched Pant was the love and concern shown by the fans, which he felt he realised for the first time

"I think it's been really amazing because whenever we keep on playing cricket, we feel no one loves us because there is always pressure in so many things. But

actually yes, it's a hard time. "But I got to know at least people love us. They respect us and the kind of appreciation and the kind of concern I would say people have shown over a period of time because of my injury," Pant said.

"I think it was heartfelt, like crazy for me because it means a lot as an individual." Pant said the love and affection

shown by people has helped him make a quicker recovery.

When you are going through a very rough time or something like that happens to you. It's not only physical, it's like mentally also and if your supporters and the people support you or show you love, it means a lot and it's it really helps in recovering." In the absence of Pant, Australia opener David Warner led DC last season with the team finish-

ing second from last. Thank you for always being supportive all the time. Yes, I know sometimes we have given

you a hard time as fans.

But see, we try to do our best all the time and, hopefully, next year in time to come, we will show the kind of respect or love you have shown over a period of time, hopefully we can reciprocate it over a period of time, and just keep supporting us," Pant

'Notorious winner' Gambhir alongside Shreyas can transform KKR: Morgan

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Former Kolkata Knight Riders Captain Eoin Morgan believed that the combination of captain Shreyas Iyer could help the team to resurrect its fortunes in the IPL 2024.

The Knight Riders, who finished seventh in 2023 and 2022, have brought back two-time title winning captain Gambhir as their mentor ahead of the next edition. Iyer had missed the whole of last IPL owing to an injury as Nitish Rana led the

"I think Shreyas missed last year, and obviously, Nitish Rana came in and did what he could on such short notice. You know, under high pressure circumstances and getting to know the new coach and trying to make things work proved very chal-

"But bringing Gambhir back in who is a notorious winner. Having played alongside him and under him as captain, Gambhir knows how to get it done," said Morgan, IPL expert with JIO Cinema, during an interaction.

"Gambhir along with Shreyas will be mentoring KKR in every facet and given the record that he's had in the Knight Rider shirt, I think, it will make a positive impact.'

Morgan, who had led England to an ODI World Cup victory in 2019, said Australian left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc will be a hot property in the auction on Tuesday

Morgan opined that Starc could trigger a bidding war between the Knight Riders and Gujarat Titans.

"I think Mitchell Starc alongside Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, probably, Gerald Coetzee as overseas bowlers will be the most sought after. KKR and GT need good pacers at the

moment GT probably have one of the biggest purses in this auction and they let go of Hardik

Pandya. So, they have a lot of recruiting to do, but I think they probably need an imposing strike bowler," said Morgan. While Morgan asserted that bowlers will be in demand during the auction to be held in Dubai, a few batsmen such as England's Harry Brook, Australia's Travis Head and Rachin Ravindra of New Zealand will evince some interest from the bidders.

"When you look at the teams. I suppose they are coming into auction when their top-order is pretty much full. So, in that regard, I don't see many batters going for huge amounts of

"Brook is going to be in there and will be sought after. I think Head is going to create a strong buzz, given the last year and a half to two years he has had in all formats of the game.

Man of the Match in the WTC and World Cup final. He has really left an indelible mark on Indian minds. So, he will definitely be sought after," he said. The Ireland-born cricketer said Ravindra also has an edge because of him being left-hand-

ed top-order batter. "Likewise, Head, Ravindra is a player you can actually see teams identify with their need...you know, a top order left-handed batter. Whoever goes for one and doesn't get it and will go for the other," he

added. Morgan felt that all-rounder Shardul Thakur and uncapped batter Shah Rukh Khan could be the biggest buys among the

Indian players. Shardul could be the mostsought-after Indian player given his all-round ability and the flex-ibility with his bowling and the attacking nature in which he bats. He makes himself a very attractive selection. "Shah Rukh too, because I think he's in fine form. He's so destructive and carries a sort of Rinku Singh model of finishing, and he could potentially create a bidding war," Morgan signed off.

ruled out of ODIs against India ruled out of the remainder of the ODI series



Sunrisers Hyderabad grabbed the services of Australia's World Cup final hero Travis Head for Rs 6.80 crore after an South Africa all-rounder Andile Phehlukwayo and pacer Ottniel Baartman were on Tuesday

SRH snap Head

for ₹6.8 crore,

Powell fetches

intense bidding battle with CSK while Royman Powell emerged as the costliest player in set 1 of

the IPL auction, going to Rajasthan Royals for Rs 7.40

West Indies T20 skipper Powell,

who had a base price of Rs 2

crore, was the first player to go

under the hammer at the mini

auction and as many as three

rope him in for the 2024 season.

Eventually, Rajasthan Royals

got their hands on the big hit-

ter, who also captains their team

Barbados Royals in the Carib-

Head, who scored a match-

winning century in the ODI

World Cup final against India

and also starred in the World

Test Championship final against the Rohit Sharma-led team ear-

lier this year, on the other hand.

saw reigning champions Chen-

nai Super Kings and SRH indul-

ge in a bidding war. The wick-etkeeper batter was finally grab-bed by 2016 champions SRH.

The trio of former Australia skipper Steve Smith, India's

Manish Pandey and Rilee Ros-

souw went unsold, while Eng-

land's Harry Brook was snapped

by Delhi Capitals for Rs 4 crore.

bean Premier League (CPL).

crore, here on Tuesday.

eams showed keen i

₹7.40 crore

PTI DUBAI

Pakistan names new-look T20I team

Pakistan on Tuesday named a new-look 17-member squad under captain

Zealand, beginning January 12. The selectors named uncapped wicketkeeper-batter Haseebullah, pace all-rounder Abbas Afridi and mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed for the first time in the T20 squad. Test captain Shan Masood was not included in the team contrary to speculation in some quarters. Three wicket keeper-batters

International away series against New

were named in the squad. Last month, the Pakistan Cricket Board had announced Shaheen Shah Afridi as their new T20I captain — with Shan Masood as Test captain — shortly after Babar Azam stepped down from captaincy in all three formats.

The selectors also recalled batters Sahabzada Farhan and Azam Khan after seasoned allrounder Shadab Khan was ruled out of the New Zealand series with an ankle injury that he picked up during the recent National T20 $\,$ Championship in Karachi.

The 27-year-old Farhan last played for Pakistan in a T20I match in late 2018 while



Azam's last appearance was in 2023 against Afghanistan in Sharjah.

Pakistan last played a T20I series in April against New Zealand and two players from __ all_rounder Fal

and wicketkeeper-batter Muhammad Haris
— were dropped for the New Zealand series.
Chief Selector Wahab Riaz, while announcing the squad, said that fast bowler Haris Rauf had also been included in the touring side after he excused himself from the Test series in Australia.

"He was given NOC to play in the Big Bash for five matches and he will join the team from there," he said.

Riaz said youngsters like Saim Ayub, Haseebullah, Zaman Khan, Azam Khan, Aamir Jamal and Abbas Afridi who don't have much exposure in international cricket would be tested in New Zealand in view

of next year's T20 World Cup. **Pakistan T20I squad:** Shaheen Shah Afridi (Capt), Aamir Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Iftikhar Ahmed, Muhammad Nawaz, Muhammad Rizwan, Muhammad Wasim junior, Sahabzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan.

After 4 years out of test cricket, allrounder Mitchell Marsh is back in a big way for Australia

AP MELBOURNE

Pour years after being dropped as a test player for Australia due to a run of poor results, allrounder Mitchell Marsh made a telling return to form with a runa-ball century against England at Headingly during the Ashes

series in July. His resurgence as a batter - and bowler - continues.

In the first cricket test against Pakistan in Perth, Marsh scored 90 and 63 not out to be named man of the match in the home side's 360-run win inside four days. The 32-year-old Marsh also claimed the crucial wicket of former captain and star batter Babar Azam in the first innings to further highlight his overall value to the team.

Marsh was dropped by selectors in December 2018 after a run of 11 innings saw him score single figures seven times — including two ducks. His highest score during that streak was 45 runs. Australia captain Pat Cummins says one key difference in the new-look Marsh is his willingness to play to his strengths, rather than try to imitate the batting style of others. "I think he's just got a really clear

process at the moment in what-

ever format it is," Cummins said.

"He knows how to score runs,

and you know he doesn't really

care what it looks like. "I think in the past you can get caught up in, There's a template of how you're meant to play test

cricket or supposed to play test cricket and you've got to have a good forward defense'. I think Mitch has found a really good

game plan." Australia has won 15 tests in a row against Pakistan in Australia, and Cummins and Co. Will hope to extend that streak in the Boxing Day test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground beginning Dec. 26. It's the second of three in the series, with the third set to start Jan. 3 in Sydney.

Off-spin bowler Nathan Lyon will enter the MCG match having taken test wicket No. 500 during the win in Perth.

"He's a star. He's so good," Australia batter Marnus Labuschagne said of Lyon, who joined Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath as Australians with 500

"He's got a natural ability, very gifted ability of bowling a very good off-spin ball. The amount of revs he gets — it's almost impossible for anyone else to get that amount of revs . . . That skill alone is almost unteachable. Lyon reached the 500-wicket

landmark when he successfully went for a leg_before wicket referral against Faheem Ashraf and was embraced by his teammates. The off-spinner raised the ball to the applause of the Perth crowd. Lyon then clean bowled Aamer Jamal in the same over off a delivery which bounced no higher than ankle height to finish with 2-18 in his memorable test match.

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