

Opp slams Prez address as BJP 2024 manifesto

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Tuesday criticised President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint session of parliament alleging that the speech was like the "first chapter" of the ruling BJP's manifesto for 2024 and key issues related to price control, communal harmony and women were "missing".

While Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said it is the "government's statement that has come through the President" and there is nothing new in it, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien said that while it is "convention" that the President's address is "written" by the government of India, key issues were absent in her speech.

Shiv Sena Deputy leader in Rajya Sabha Priyanka Chaturvedi said that the President's speech has reflections of the ruling party BJP's election manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. "It was an election speech prepared by BJP", Chaturvedi said.

Kharge and his party colleague in Adhir Ranjan Chaudhary in Lok Sabha could not make it out to the President's address at Central Hall of the Parliament.

They along with party colleagues were stuck in Srinagar's due to hostile weather. UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi was present in the Parliament for the President's speech that marked the beginning of the Budget Session 2023. Bharatiya Rashtra Samiti (formerly TRS) and AAP did not attend the President's address.

"If the government is claiming that the country has progressed so much, then why do the poor people of the country continue to suffer due to unemployment and high inflation," said Kharge and alleged that the schemes "renamed" by the Modi government are not reaching the poorest of the poor.

Chowdhury on his part reacted there was nothing on unemployment in the President's speech. "Still, we respect the President's Address," he said

"As is convention, President's Address to both Houses of #Parliament is written by GoI. Any line in speech about controlling prices, creating jobs, strengthening (fiscal) federalism, promoting communal harmony, passing Women's Reservation Bill? Oh and 2 miserly lines about the North East," said Brien.

CPI MP Binoy Viswam alleged the empowerment of women, youths, Dalits and tribals was only on paper. "The historic Central Hall witnessed the President's address, maybe for the last time.

Everything related to freedom struggle and Constitution are being dumped. The address seems to be the first chapter of the ruling party manifesto for 2024. Words are lovely; truths are not..!" he said on Twitter.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said that President Droupadi Murmu doesn't contest elections but it looks like the BJP government is conducting its next election campaign through her. "The entire speech was an election speech trying to praise the government for everything it has done and skipping over the bits it hasn't done so well," Tharoor said. "The content of the speech was explicitly a political speech," he added.

BRS MP K Keshava Rao said that the President's speech did not mention the issues of unemployment and inflation in the country. "We heard the President's address today, but there was no mention of issues of unemployment and inflation. I suggest to the President to advise the PM to bring an act called the 'Adani Act' as there is only crony capitalism now," he said.

14 charred to death in Dhanbad building blaze

PTI ■ DHANBAD

At least 14 people, including women and children, were charred to death and several others injured, after a major fire broke out in a multi-storey building in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district on Tuesday evening, officials said.

The blaze erupted at 6 pm on the second floor of Ashirwad Tower in Dhanbad's Joraphatak area, around 160 km from state capital Ranchi, they said.

Around 40 fire tenders

were pressed into service to douse the flames, the officials said. "The death toll is 14 at present and 11 people are under treatment. The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained," Chief Secretary Sukhdev Singh told PTI. The fatalities include 10 women and three children, a senior police officer said.

Dhanbad Deputy Commissioner Sandeep Singh is monitoring the rescue operation on the spot along with senior police officers.

Chief Minister Hemant

Soren said the district administration is working on an emergency basis and the injured are being treated.

"The death of people due to the fire in Dhanbad is extremely heart-wrenching. The district administration is working on a war footing and treatment is being provided to the injured. I am personally monitoring it," Soren said in a tweet. Meanwhile, former chief minister Babulal Marandi, in a tweet, claimed that at least 50 people are still trapped in the apartment.

Adani's FPO fully subscribed; retail response muted

From Page 1
But Adani Total Gas closed the day down 10 per cent, Adani Power registered a fall of 4.99 per cent and Adani Wilmar declined by 5 per cent.

The Adani group stocks (including Ambuja, ACC and NDTV) have lost about Rs 5.5 lakh crore or about 29 per cent of their combined market cap in the last four trading sessions, new agency PTI said quoting Manish Chowdhury, head of research at Stoxbox.

Adani group stocks have taken a beating on the bourses after Hindenburg in a report made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share price manipulation, at the Gautam Adani-led group.

Meanwhile, equity benchmarks ended with marginal gains as investors kept their powder dry ahead of the Union Budget presentation and the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision.

Fag-end buying helped the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex settle with a gain of 49.49 points or 0.08 per cent at 59,549.90. During the day, it hit a high of 59,787.63 and a low of 59,104.59.

Collegium lists 2 HC judges for elevation to SC

From Page 1
"The Supreme Court of India has a sanctioned strength of thirty four judges and is presently functioning with twenty seven judges. Thus, there are seven clear vacancies. On 13 December 2022, the Collegium recommended five names for appointment as Judges of the Supreme Court, namely (i) Justice Pankaj Mishal, (ii) Justice Sanjay Karol, (iii) Justice PV Sanjay Kumar, (iv) Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, and (v) Justice Manoj Misra.

Their appointment is yet to be notified by the Government. The Collegium resolves to recommend two more names for appointment as judges of the Supreme Court against the two remaining vacancies," said the apex court in a statement.

NCR-PULSE

MORE COMPETITIVE CONGRESS MUST FOR REVIVAL OF HEALTHY DEMOCRACY IN INDIA: RAMACHANDRA GUHA
New Delhi: Historian Ramachandra Guha on Tuesday said that to 'revive' healthy democracy in India in which one party does not steamroll the Opposition, a lot depends on the Congress becoming more competitive, which won't happen merely through a march but by winning votes. Guha was speaking at the launch of the third edition of his seminal work, 'India After Gandhi', here.

RASHTRA SAMUH CONFERENCE BEGAN IN JNU
New Delhi: The 3rd Himalaya Hindmahasagar Rashtra Samuh (HHRS) International Conference on "India and Central Asia: Historical, Cultural and Economic Connectivity" started on Monday at Jawaharlal Nehru University, jointly organised by the Forum for National Awareness and Security (FANS) and School of Language, Linguistics and Culture Studies, JNU. Experts from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Kazakhstan, along with representatives of the Indian Armed forces and Indian Civil Services, academicians, researchers, scholars and social thinkers participated in the event.



'YOUTH AGAINST LEPROSY' NATIONAL FEST HELD
New Delhi: With an aim to bust myths and create social bridges among college youth regarding leprosy, Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation (S-ILF) in collaboration with the Confederation Indian Industry (CII) recently organized 'Youth Against Leprosy', a National Youth Festival which saw participation of colleges from all over the India that undertook the program and training. Sayed Imam, Member, Board of Trustee, SILF said, "youth need to be sensitized to work towards a more inclusive and empathetic society."

INT'L YOGA FESTIVAL TO BE HELD IN MARCH
New Delhi: The International Yoga Festival (IYF) 2023 to be held in the coming March is the major centre of attraction at the stalls of Uttarakhand Tourism department at Bharat Parv. Bharat Parv is a six-day cultural festival and a government of India initiative being organized at the Red Fort in the national capital. Bharat Parv is also showcasing the cultural heritage of Uttarakhand.



Punjab DCs, SSPs in fix over CM's diktat...

From Page 1
Sources informed *The Pioneer* that all the district officers have been asked to prepare the status reports of the development works in their respective districts and other issues related to their districts.

The entire series of events has put the district officers, especially DCs and SSPs of these border districts, in a quandary — whether to attend the Chief Minister's meeting in

Chandigarh or remain present in their districts during the Governor's visit. As per the schedule, the Governor will be holding meetings with the pan-chayats, and prominent residents, listening to the grievances, and redressing them. This is not the first time that Punjab Governor Purohit and Chief Minister Mann have come face-to-face against one another over issues related to the state and governance.

Adultery decriminalisation...

From Page 1
"In view of the aforesaid (2018) judgment, there will always be a concern in the minds of the army personnel who are operating far away from their families under challenging conditions about the family indulging in untoward activities," the application said.

Office of The Chief Engineer (Capital Zone) P.W.D Bhopal (M.P.)							
Tender Notice							
NIT No. 07/G/1/Mis/C.Z./2019 (Year 2023)					Bhopal, Date 19-01-2023		
Online Tender for mentioned below are being invited. The Tender have been uploaded on the e-Procurement system of Public Works Department on the Portal https://mptenders.gov.in Tender details are as below:-							
S. NO.	Tender No.	District	Nature of work	Name of Work	Call No.	Cost of Project (PAC) (Rs. In lack)	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2023_PWDRB_245089_1	Vidisha	Plan	Strengthening of road Vidisha Shamshabad km. 19 to Kashipur Bawdi road length 2.826 km. Dayanandpur Boriya to Bamankhed road length 3.90 km. and Deokhajuri Sherpur Kaswakhedi to Pipalldhar roac length 3.80 km. total length 10.526 km.	1st Call	557.94	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
2	2023_PWDRB_245799_1	Vidisha	Plan	Strengthening of road from Kurwai to Barual via Kaitihora Nahi length 4.95 km. and Imlawada, Chirawla, Sirsawali, Attasemer Sanai road length 4.00 km. total length 8.95 km.	1st Call	581.02	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
3	2023_PWDRB_245800_1	Vidisha	Plan	Strengthening of road from Bhoransa Malhargarh road to Barkhedda length 3.47 km. and Sani to Daankhedi Bridge via Belakhedi Chaurha length 6.60 km. total length 10.07 km.	1st Call	641.59	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
4	2023_PWDRB_245804_1	Betul	Plan	Strengthening of Bhoura Dhapada Sataldehi Chopna Sivnapati Sami Jod Road. Length 2.50 Km. Strengthening of Sathner Dehgud Mandvi Road. Length 1.65 Km. Sonaghati Jogli Mandai Bujrag Road. Length 1.00 Km.	1st Call	552.06	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
5	2023_PWDRB_245807_1	Betul	Plan	Strengthening of Hamlapur Malkapur Barsali Road. Length 6.00 Km. Kolgaon Selgaon Road. Length 4.70 Km	1st Call	832.11	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
6	2023_PWDRB_245809_1	Betul	Plan	Strengthening of Yenkheda to Jawara Road. Length 4.00 Km. Gawal Pouni Road. Length 1.60 Km. Birul Bazar Sawal Mendha to Ghana Road. Length 3.50 Km. Pusi Link Road Length 1.50 Km.	1st Call	628.58	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
7	2023_PWDRB_245811_1	Harda	Plan	Strengthening work of Sanyasha Approach rd Length 4.53 km.	1st Call	528.63	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
8	2023_PWDRB_245814_1	Harda	Plan	Strengthening work of Sigou goula malpon handia rd Length 9.00 km.	1st Call	521.30	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
9	2023_PWDRB_245818_1	Harda	Plan	Strengthening at Pokhari To Harda Via Ahelwada Road. Length 15.62 Km.	1st Call	1136.84	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
10	2023_PWDRB_245822_1	Harda	Plan	Strengthening work of Muhalkala Pipliya Pahatkala rd Length 6.10 km. and Strengthening work of Palasner to Neemgaon rd Length 2.00 km.	1st Call	630.85	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
11	2023_PWDRB_245824_1	Harda	Plan	Strengthening work of Amasel Dholgaunkala Pahatkala rd Length 7.20 km.	1st Call	507.67	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
12	2023_PWDRB_246075_1	Raisen	Plan	STRENGTHENING WORK OF BHOPAL CHIKLOD MARG Km. 23.00 TO 51/4 (BANGRASIVA TO 34 MILE VIA CHIKLOD ROAD) LENGTH 28.40 KM.	1st Call	1236.03	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
13	2023_PWDRB_246076_1	Vidisha	Plan	Strengthening of road Jhiriya Karariya Andiya Souther road length 2.61 km. Kankarkhedhi to Barkhedda, Karariya to Banijyakhedi Teelakhedi to Ahamedpur and Ahamedpur School road length 1.89 km. and Vidisha Teelkhedi Gurariya Pathari Haweli Dhanora Devrajpur Kharbai Jile ki Seema Tak road length 7.43 km. total length 11.93 km.	1st Call	743.37	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
14	2023_PWDRB_246078_1	Vidisha	Plan	Strengthening work for Dhamnod to Dasipur, Madanai, Pachediya Basiya road length 7.09 km.	1st Call	535.42	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
15	2023_PWDRB_246080_1	Vidisha	Plan	Strengthening work for Sumar, Hathiyakheda, Atankheda road length 4.10 km., Panjh approach road length 3.80 km. Dabar approach road 2.15 km. total length 10.05 km.	1st Call	637.85	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
16	2023_PWDRB_246082_1	Narmadapuram	Plan	Strengthening of Seoni Malwa bypass road Length 6.80 Km	1st Call	834.36	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
17	2023_PWDRB_246083_1	Narmadapuram	Plan	Strengthening of Gujranwada Kirpura Rajon road, Length 2.50 Km.	1st Call	545.03	EMD/AI/ Document are to be submitted online only.
Total						11650.66	

The document can only be purchased online from the above website after making online payment. The last date & time for purchase of Document on line is Dated 08.02.2023 up to (17:30). Detailed NIT and other details can be viewed on the above mentioned portal. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

G-22307/22
Chief Engineer (Capital Zone)
P.W.D. Bhopal Madhya Pradesh

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Thursday, 9th Feb., 2023, inter-alia, to consider and approve the Un-Audited Financial Results of the Company for the quarter ended on 31st Dec., 2022.

The information contained in this notice is also available on the Company's website www.cubical90.com as also on the website of the Stock Exchange viz. BSE Limited - www.bseindia.com

For Cubical Financial Services Limited
Place: New Delhi (Ashwani Kumar Gupta)
Date: 31-01-2023 Managing Director

Public Notice
This is to inform general public that Mrs. Kavita Aggarwal is the owner of the Ground Floor (With/Out Roof Rights), "Said Floor", Built on Freehold Residential Property Bearing No. 181, area measuring 150 Sq. yds. in Block-B-2, Situated at Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110063 vide Sub-Registered with Sub-Registrar-II/A-4600). That, Mrs. Kavita Aggarwal has mislabeled the below mentioned documents. a)Original Sale Deed dated 23.09.2005 executed by Mrs. Deepika Narang and Mrs. Sonu Narang in favour of Mrs. Veena Ahuja in respect of said Floor. b)Original Sale Deed dated 02.09.2013 executed by Mrs. Veena Ahuja in favour of Mr. Jaideep Arora in respect of one-half of said Floor. c) Original Sale Deed dated 12.11.2020 executed by Mr. Jaideep Arora and Mrs. Monika Arora in favour of Mrs. Kavita Aggarwal in respect of said Floor as duly registered with Sub-Registrar-II/A-4600). 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Class 12 boy stabbed outside Okhla school

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A Class 12 boy was allegedly stabbed to death outside his school in southeast Delhi's Okhla following a quarrel between two groups of students.

According to police, 18-year-old Mohan, a resident of JJ camp in Okhla Phase II, was a student at Kalkaji school.

The victim's family said the teenager had gone to school to give his physical education exams and while leaving school, a group of boys caught hold of him and started fighting with him during which one of them took out the knife and stabbed him in his chest. Police suspect that the fight took place over the teenager talking to a girl.

There was a quarrel between two groups of students near Hansraj Sethi Park during which the boy allegedly suffered stab wounds to the chest. He was admitted to Purnima Sethi Hospital where he succumbed, according to the police.



A case of murder has been registered, police said. CCTV footage from the area has been checked and local enquiry is being conducted to identify and trace the culprits, the police said.

Meanwhile, the Mohan's family members said his sister was scheduled to get married in the first week of February and the entire family was busy preparing for it.

Geeta, the victim mother, said, "My son had gone to school but he never returned. My daughter's wedding is scheduled to take place on February 6. 'Instead of getting into wedding celebrations, we are now preparing for the last rites of my son. He is no more.

Schoolteachers' Finland trip: Sisodia writes to LG again, says hurdle 'unconstitutional'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The matter of sending Delhi Government schoolteachers to Finland for training has once again become a flashpoint between the Lieutenant Governor and the AAP Government in the national capital as Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has written to him once again seeking immediate approval for the same.

In his letter, Sisodia asked Saxena to immediately approve the training programme. Sharing the letter on Twitter, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also urged the LG to allow the teachers to attend the training programme. "I urge Hon'ble LG to allow our teachers to go abroad for training. Hon'ble LG had himself said that he is not against it," he said in a tweet.

The Delhi government had on January 20 sent the proposal to the Lt Governor's Office to allow the teachers to visit Finland, days after Saxena asked the government to first conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the programme. "The file

related to sending primary teachers of Delhi government schools to Finland for training has been lying on your table since January 20.

"You have neither given your consent to this proposal nor have you started the process of sending it to the Honourable President for taking a decision on it," Sisodia said in the letter. Sisodia alleged that the LG had sent back the file to the government twice on the pretext of seeking clarification.

"Sir, since October 2022, the file is taking rounds in your office. You sent the file back twice on the pretext of seeking clarification. When the Honourable chief minister along with his ministers and MLAs came to meet you to talk about this, you refused to meet us. That day, the media on your behalf said that you have not refused to send teachers to Finland.

"I had sent the file to you again. This time I was hoping that you would give your consent on this within 24 hours. But it has been more than 10



days since the file was sent, your approval has not come yet," Sisodia said in the letter. Sisodia said "politics" should not be played on "such sensitive issues" and urged Saxena to clear the file.

"You unconstitutionally stopped the proposal twice to send teachers to Finland for training. Due to this, a delegation of 30 teachers could not be sent for training in December 2022 and now once again in March 2023, the training of 30 teachers is also on the verge of cancellation. 'That's why I request you again to immediately allow the teachers to be sent to Finland for training.

There should be no politics on such important and sensitive issues," he said.

Kejriwal had earlier said Saxena twice returned a file containing the proposal, asking if a cost-benefit analysis of the programme had been done. The Raj Niwas, in a series of tweets, then clarified that the Lt Governor had only advised the Delhi government to evaluate the proposal in totality and assess the effectiveness of such foreign training programmes undertaken in the past. Saxena advised the government to identify similar training programmes in Indian institutions, it had said.

HC allows 13-yr-old rape victim to abort 25-week pregnancy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday allowed a 13-year-old girl, a victim of sexual assault, to terminate her 25-week pregnancy in the interest of her life and education. Justice Prathiba M Singh said a team of doctors at Safdarjung Hospital would conduct the procedure on Wednesday itself.

The court passed the order after the girl and her mother submitted that she did not wish to carry the pregnancy to term. "This court is of the view that in the interest of the life of the minor girl, her education and keeping in mind the social circumstances, it would be in her interest that the pregnancy is terminated.

"The team of doctors at Safdarjung Hospital would accordingly go ahead with the termination of pregnancy tomorrow itself," Justice Singh said. The high court said the doctors have assured it that they would give her the best possible care during the process of the termination of her pregnancy.

Air India pee-gate: Accused Mishra granted bail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Tuesday granted bail to Shankar Mishra, accused of urinating on a woman co-passenger on an Air India flight from New York to Delhi, saying his custody was no longer required for the collection of evidence.

Additional Sessions Judge Harjyot Singh Bhalla granted the relief to Mishra on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh and a surety of the like amount. The judge imposed various conditions on him, including that he will not tamper with evidence, influence any witnesses or contact them in any manner. Mishra was also asked not to leave the country without the court's prior permission and to join the investigation and trial as and when called by the investigating officer (IO) or the concerned court.

Mishra was arrested from Bengaluru on January 6 and sent to judicial custody by a court here on January 7. He allegedly urinated on the 70-year-old woman co-passenger in an intoxicated condition in the business class of the Air India flight on November 26 last year.

The court noted that the statement of the victim has already been recorded under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), besides the statement by the investigating officer. "Further, the passengers seated at seats 8C and 9C respectively have also already been examined. Crew has also given their statements. No other evidence is required to be collected with the assistance of the accused. Therefore, in these circumstances, it can be concluded that investigation qua the accused is already over and he is no longer required in custody, at least, for that purpose," the judge noted.

The statement of the passenger who was seated at 9C

revealed that the passenger did not support the claim made by the victim in her statement, which, of course, could not be completely brushed aside at this stage, the judge observed, adding that the claim has become more of a matter of trial.

The court noted that the FIR in the case was registered after about a month and five days of the incident and the victim had also not approached the police or insisted on registration of an FIR during this period. "However, on the registration of the FIR, a very short notice seems to have been given to the accused for appearance. It is but natural for anyone accused of a cognisable offence to be in a state of panic and seek an opportunity to be able to exercise the right for seeking anticipatory bail or any other remedy that may be available.

"Non-joining in investigation on the very first occasion



that too on such a short notice cannot itself be treated as showing conduct that the accused intended to flee from the judicial process," the judge said. He said that even otherwise, the presence of the accused during the investigation and trial can always be ensured by imposing stringent conditions.

The court also said that there was no ground to believe that the accused was guilty of any other offences in the past or did not have clean antecedents. "The accused has already spent about one month in judicial custody and the

offence carries a maximum punishment of five years. Further, there is no report, at least, that the accused tried to threaten or intimidate the witnesses or the victim at any stage.

"Although there is a claim that the accused has apologised to the victim on the flight and that subsequently, he transferred some money in her account, which was later on returned, simultaneously, there is no unequivocal claim that he has been trying to harass the victim after the incident," the judge noted.

Govt approves ₹17.5 cr projects to spruce up Delhi before G-20 meet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing with its efforts to spruce up Delhi before G20 meet in March, the Delhi Government on Tuesday approved Rs 17.5 crore projects entailing redevelopment of Mathura Road, Bhairon Marg and Ring Road around ITPO Complex, ensuring greenery by planting trees besides beautification of footpath and central verge. Advanced technologies will be used for the purpose to not only strengthen but also reduce congestion on city roads for smooth traffic flow.

"Hosting G20 in Delhi is a matter of pride for the people of the national capital, in view of this the roads around the ITPO complex will be given a new look. All the work will be carried out in a mission mode to be completed by March," Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi



Manish Sisodia said, adding that along with the resurfacing of these roads, trees will also be planted to enhance their beauty. Allied works such as lane marking, white-washing of parapet walls, painting of kerbstones/railings while special attention will be given to the work of beautification of footpaths and central verges, the drainage system will also be improved.

To ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the com-

muters, all the standards of safety and security will be followed during the construction of roads, Sisodia assured, according to officials here.

They said, under beautification and strengthening of Mathura Road, Bhairon Marg and Ring Road around ITPO Complex project, 5.8 km road from W-Point to Delhi Public School on Mathura Road, from IP flyover to Bhairon Marg T-Point on Bhairon Marg and Ring Road will be done.

Uber accuses former staffer of embezzling ₹1 crore by creating fake profiles



STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Uber has accused one of its former employees of embezzling over Rs one crore by sneaking in fake driver profiles in the company's list of drivers, police said on Tuesday.

The company alleged that the employee, Vinay Gera, tampered with the list of drivers associated with them in the company's server and added 388 fake drivers, who were not associated with the company. These profiles were linked to 18 bank accounts in which the money was transferred.

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) found the allegations prima facie true, and at its recommendation an FIR was registered against Gera at Sushant Lok Police Station on Monday.

According to the complaint filed by Prabhanjan Kumar, the authorised signatory of Uber India Systems Private Limited in April last year, Gera worked in the firm's driver operations team from August to December 2021 at its Sector-44 office.

He was employed by the vendor company TeamLease Services Limited India and had resigned from Uber on December 19, 2021. Gera was responsible for the driver arrears function. "To avoid inconvenienc-

ing driver partners, a spreadsheet is automatically uploaded regularly. A large number of transactions were processed by this automated spreadsheet and Vinay Gera was responsible for updating the details of the driver partner accounts to be paid. Vinay Gera created and placed a number of non-genuine driver partner accounts in the spreadsheet," the app-based taxi firm said in its complaint.

Upon inquiry, the firm found that of the 388 fake drivers' profiles created by Gera, 191 profiles' IP address matched the IP address of Gera's office computer.

"... 191 cases out of 388 cases matched with the IP addresses used by Vinay Gera to log into his work computer on the same day as the creation of the accounts.

"In the above manner, a total amount of Rs 1,17,03,033 has been fraudulently paid to these fake driver partners into only 18 bank accounts," read the complaint.

According to police, Gera has been booked under sections 408 (criminal breach of trust by servant), 420 (cheating), 477-A (falsification of accounts), and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC.

"We are investigating the matter and the accused will be arrested as soon as possible," said Inspector Deepak Kumar, SHO, Sushant Lok Police Station.

Transport Dept to employ remote sensing to identify high-emission vehicle groups

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Transport Department has partnered with an international non-profit working on clean transportation to conduct a study to identify high-emission vehicle groups through remote sensing technology.

The study, which is underway, is being led by the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) and supported by the Clean Air Fund (CAF). It is being done in collaboration with Delhi Transport Department, National Highways Authority of India and Gurugram administration. The ICCT has previously led previously conducted similar studies in several European cities, including London, Paris and Brussels, and in Jakarta.

"The idea was to understand what the real-world emission coming from motor vehicles is. One way is that you look



at ... The vehicle type and the other is you get an idea about it through the PUC (pollution under control certificate). That is a very standard procedure, but we do not know the real-world performance.

"We started this data collection activity a couple of weeks back," said Amit Bhatt, ICCT managing director (India). The remote sensing technology will be used to measure vehicle exhaust emissions at more than 15 locations across Delhi and Gurugram.

Bhatt said vehicle emis-

sions from nearly one lakh vehicles will be studied and the study will continue till March.

Remote sensing devices are installed at two ends of a road. When the vehicle passes, the spectrometre captures what comes out of the tailpipe. We capture the number plate, whether it is a DL number plate, a commercial one, make of the vehicle and the age of the vehicle," he said.

These are sophisticated devices and are costly. On a given day, one location is captured, Bhatt said.

DSSSB fills 6,112 vacant posts of teachers, another lot of 2,200 by Mar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 6,112 vacant posts of teachers have been filled by the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) through regular recruitment in the last four months while another 2,200 will be appointed by March. In a statement issued by the Raj Niwas, all these vacant posts of teachers have been filled following the directions of the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

Compared to September 16, 2022, when the LG first reviewed the status of vacancies in the Education Department, a staggering 6,112 vacant posts of teachers have been filled by the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) through regular recruitment, the LG office said in a statement.

Another 2,200 vacancies of teachers in the government schools will be filled by March this year. The LG has chaired three meetings of officers and the DSSSB to ensure regular monitoring of the progress made, it said.

According to the data provided by the DSSSB, at a review meeting chaired by the LG, the total vacancies of teaching staff in Delhi Government schools that stood at a massive 24,003 on September 16, 2022, has come down to 17,891.

In the process, the number of guest teachers has proportionately come down by 3,094. As on September 16, 2022, the number of guest teachers stood at 19,880 while the same has been reduced to 16,786 as on January 31 this year.

During the review meeting, officials informed the LG that requisition for filling up

543 vacant posts of principals - 363 through direct recruitment and 180 through promotion - has been sent to the Union Public Service Commission and the interviews are likely to be completed by March 2023.

Similarly, requisition has been sent for filling up 131 posts of vice principals through direct recruitment to UPSC.

It may be noted that recruitment for the posts of Principals and vice principals in Delhi Government schools are made by UPSC while the recruitment of other teaching staff is made by the DSSSB on the basis of requisition sent by the Directorate of Education.

"The present grim state of affairs in the Delhi Government schools, with vacancies skyrocketing, resulted because of the fact that requisition for regular recruit-

ment of teachers was not made during the last 7 years of the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government. Instead, the government conveniently kept filling up these posts with guest teachers who are appointed without following any due recruitment process. Also, Guest Teachers cannot share any financial or other related responsibilities/charges. As the employment is not permanent, commitment levels also vary," reads the statement.

This had led to an acute shortage of teaching staff in Delhi Government schools that were running with only 67 percent Regular Teachers. What is more worrisome, as many as 84 percent of these schools were running without principals, which is the main supervisory, administrative and financial authority in the school, it said.



Even in the Vice Principals' category, about 34 percent posts were lying vacant. As of now, 848 out of the 950 sanctioned posts of principals are lying vacant while 627 out of the 1,670 sanctioned posts of vice principals are yet to be filled.

"However, the LG, who has been stressing upon filling up

the vacant posts through regular recruitment and ending adhocism in government departments, took a serious view of such huge vacancies in Delhi Government schools and held review meetings at regular intervals for filling up these posts with regular teachers," the LG office added in the statement.

‘Roads, rlys, waterways infra see unmatched growth in 8 yrs’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Economic Survey on Tuesday listed that roads, railways and waterways infrastructure have seen unprecedented expansion in the last eight years while ports and airports have been substantially upgraded. The survey also pointed out that logistics costs in India have been in the range of 14-18 per cent of GDP against the global benchmark of 8 per cent.

The report tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharama said support for India's economic growth will come from path-breaking measures like PM GatiShakti, National Logistics Policy and Production-Linked Incentives schemes.

The PM Gati Shakti - National Master Plan was announced in 2021 to break departmental silos and bring in more holistic and integrated planning and execution of projects to address the issues of multi-modal and last-mile connectivities.

The projects pertaining to seven engines (roads, railways,



airports, ports, mass transport, waterways and logistic infrastructure) in the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) will be aligned with PM Gati Shakti framework.

Noting that to bring in further convergence with comprehensive planning across the Centre and states, PM GatiShakti has sectoral complementarity of logistics facilitation through the National Logistics Policy launched in September 2022, the survey said,

Applauding the Railways'

efforts for recovering in both the passenger and freight segments post the Covid pandemic, the Economic Survey for 2022-23 has credited the government for substantial increase in funds that has allowed the national transporter to augment infrastructure at a fast pace.

Passenger traffic originating in the Indian Railway was Rs 809 crore during pre-Covid period (2019-20), but dipped to 125 crore in 2020-21, it said. It has since recovered to Rs 351.9 crore in 2021-22. During the

current financial year, passenger traffic has seen further strong growth with the number of originating passengers already hitting 418.4 crore (up to November 2022), the survey said.

In the case of revenue-earning, freight traffic was sustained by Indian Railways despite the Covid shock. "Between FY20-21 and FY21-22, there was a sharp increase in the freight traffic, reflecting the strong revival in the economic activity in the domestic economy.

Economic Survey records steady decline in school dropout rate & increase in enrollment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Economic Survey 2022-23 has recorded there has been a steady decline in the school dropout rate and increase in enrollment both in school and higher education and also gender parity has improved.

"The Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in the primary-enrolment in Class 1 to 5 as a percentage of the population in age six to 10 years -- for girls as well as boys has improved during the financial year (FY)," said the economic survey, tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

This improvement has "reversed the declining trends between FY-17 and FY-19", it stated, adding that "the GER in upper-primary (enrolment in class 6 to 8 as a percent of the population in age 11-13 years), which was stagnant between

FY-17 and FY-19, improved in FY-22".

In corresponding age groups in primary and upper-primary levels, the GER for girls is better than that of boys, the Economic Survey for 2022-23 stated. "In FY-22, school enrolment stood at 26.5 crore children with 19.4 lakh additional children enrolled in primary to higher-secondary levels," it said.

The survey noted that the total enrolment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in FY-22 stands at 22.7 lakh as compared to 21.9 lakh in FY-21, an increase of 3.3 per cent. "The enrolments increased across all levels -- primary, upper-primary, secondary, and higher-secondary, except for the pre-primary level. At the pre-primary level, enrolment reduced from 1.1 crore in FY-21 to one crore in FY-22," it said.

"During the year, about



one crore children were enrolled in pre-primary, 12.2 crore in primary, 6.7 crore in upper primary, 3.9 crore in secondary and 2.9 crore in higher secondary," it said. School dropout rates, for both boys and girls, at all levels have witnessed a steady decline in recent years. The availability of teachers, measured by pupil-teacher ratio, an indicator which is inversely related to improvement in quality of education, has improved at all lev-

els continuously from FY-13 to FY-22, the survey said.

From FY-13 to FY-22, it improved from 34.0 to 26.2 at the primary level, 23 to 19.6 at the upper-primary level, 30.0 to 17.6 at the secondary level and 39.0 to 27.1 at the higher-secondary level, it said.

The survey stated that the improvement in the number of schools, teachers' availability and facilities in schools is expected to help improve enrolment and reduce dropout.

Aviation sector reached average pre-Covid level in Dec 2022 with fliers number hitting 150.1 L

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Survey for 2022-23 tabled in Parliament on Tuesday said the Indian aviation sector reached the average pre-Covid level in December 2022. The Survey reviews how the economy performed in this fiscal year and the road ahead for the next year.

The total number of passengers carried in December 2022 stood at 150.1 lakh, which was 6.4 per cent higher than the pre-Covid average for 11 months from April 2019 to February 2020, the Survey said. In November 2022, total air cargo tonnage stood at 2.5 lakh tonnes, which was 89 per cent of the pre-Covid levels.

The Survey said the civil aviation market has great potential due to the growing demand from the middle class, growth in population and tourism. It added that higher disposable incomes, favourable demographics, and greater



penetration of aviation infrastructure will help grow the market in India.

The Economic Survey for 2022-23, listed various factors that are helping the civil aviation sector, including the UDAN scheme, which has considerably enhanced regional connectivity through the opening of airports in the hinterland.

Under the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme, which is aimed to facilitate/stimulate regional air connectivity by making it affordable,

the total number of tourism routes has increased to 59 and presently, 51 are operational.

"The civil aviation sector in India has great potential owing to growing demand from the middle class, growth in population and tourism, higher disposable incomes, favourable demographics, and greater penetration of aviation infrastructure," the survey said. With the containment of COVID-19 infections and the lifting of travel restrictions worldwide, the survey said, air travel has rebounded.

States & Central health expenditure dips to 2.1% of GDP from 2.2% last yr

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Government expenditure on health, both State and Central, was 2.1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) last year, as per the Economic Survey 2022-23. This is a slight dip from 2.2 per cent of the GDP in the financial year 2021-2022 and an increase from 1.3 per cent of the GDP in 2015-2016. This "highlights the rising importance of public healthcare and social security in ensuring universal health coverage," the report noted.

In absolute figures, the increase translated into Rs 1,75,272 crore in 2015-2016 to Rs 5,48,855 crore in 2022-2023. These figures are straying away from the target of increasing the total public expenditure on health to 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2025 as mandated by the National Health Policy (NHP) of 2017.

The government's share in the total health expenditure has increased from 28.6 per cent in financial year 2014 to 40.6 per cent in 2019 with a significant decline in out-of-pocket expenditure, according to the Survey. It also said that the government is focusing on primary healthcare expenditure which has increased from 51.1 per cent in FY-14 to 55.2 per cent in FY-19.

This not only ensures quality services at the grassroots but also reduces the chances of ailments requiring secondary or tertiary healthcare services, the survey stated.

"The share of government health expenditure in total health expenditure has increased from 28.6 per cent in the financial year 2014 to 40.6 per cent in 2019, with a concomitant decline in out-of-pocket expenditure as a percentage of total health expenditure from 64.2 per cent in 2014 to 48.2 per cent in 2019," the survey stated.

Growing Indian agri sector needs 're-orientation' to meet climate change challenges: Eco Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that the Indian agriculture sector has been growing, the Economic Survey 2022-23 said Tuesday it needs "re-orientation" in view of challenges like adverse impacts of climate change, fragmented landholdings, and rising input costs. The other challenges are fragmented landholdings, sub-optimal farm mechanisation, low productivity, disguised unemployment and rising input costs.

The Economic Survey 2023 presented in Parliament on January 31 said the agriculture credit flow was about 13 per cent more than the target of Rs 16.5 lakh crore in 2021-22. The target for the flow of credit to agriculture for 2022-23 had been fixed at Rs 18.5 lakh crore.

The survey said that as a result of the initiatives and measures taken to strengthen existing policies, there has been a consistent increase in the agriculture credit flow over



the years, exceeding the target every year for the past several years.

As of December 30, 2022, banks issued Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) to 38.9 million eligible farmers with a KCC limit of Rs 4,51,672 crore, the report noted.

"While Indian agriculture has performed well, the sector needs re-orientation in the backdrop of certain challenges...", it said. Stating that the performance of the agriculture sector remains critical to growth and employment in the country, the Survey said investment in the sector must

be encouraged through an affordable, timely and inclusive approach to credit delivery.

It may be noted that more than 75 per cent of rural female workers are employed in the agriculture sector. This implies a need to upskill and create employment for women in agriculture-related sectors such as food processing.

"Here, the self-help groups (SHGs) can play a crucial role in shaping rural women's potential into concrete developmental outcomes of financial inclusion, livelihood diversification, and skill development," the Survey said.

Eco Survey highlights India's plans to be energy independent by 2047

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Noting that India has achieved its target of 40 per cent installed electric capacity from non-fossil fuels ahead of 2030, the Economic Survey has highlighted country's plans to be energy independent by 2047, by relying on green hydrogen through

the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

The mission includes developing green hydrogen production capacity to at least 5 million metric tonne (MMT) per annum by 2030, cumulative reduction in fossil fuel imports over Rs 1 lakh crore and creation of over 6 lakh jobs by 2030.

Further, renewable ener-

gy capacity addition of about 125 GW and abatement of nearly 50 MMT of annual greenhouse gases emissions by 2030.

As per the economic survey, India declared the Net Zero Pledge to achieve net zero emissions goal by 2070. At the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) held in Glasgow,

Scotland, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared the Net Zero Pledge.

The survey states that about 50 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity will come from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

According to the survey, the likely installed capacity from non-fossil fuels will be

more than 500 Gigawatts (1 billion watts) by 2030. This will result in a decline in average emission rates by around 29 per cent by 2029-30, compared to 2014-15.

The survey states that India aims to reduce the emissions intensity of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 45 per cent from its 2005 levels by 2030.

The survey mentions the progress on eight missions under the National Action Plan (NAP) on climate change to address climate concerns and promote sustainable development.

As of October 2022, solar power capacity of 61.6 GW has been installed. This is a key metric under the National Solar Mission.



PM CARES Fund not Govt fund, PMO tells HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Tuesday informed the Delhi High Court that the PM CARES Fund is not a Government fund as donations to it do not go to the Consolidated Fund of India and no third party information can be parted with irrespective of its status under the Constitution and the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

An affidavit filed by an Under Secretary at PMO, who is discharging his functions in the PM Cares Trust on honorary basis, has said the trust functions with transparency



and its funds are audited by an auditor -- a chartered accountant drawn from the panel prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

The PMO contended that irrespective of the status of Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) under the Constitution and the RTI Act, it is not permissible to disclose

third party information.

The affidavit was filed in response to a petition seeking a direction to declare the PM CARES Fund a 'State' under the Constitution to ensure transparency in its functioning. The same petitioner has also filed another petition to declare PM CARES as a "public authority" under the RTI Act, which is being heard together with this plea.

Army conducts exercise to test operational readiness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

As tension continues on the border with China in the eastern sector, the Indian army has carried a major exercise along with other stakeholders to test its operational readiness. Named "Exercise Trishakti Prahar," it was conducted in North Bengal adjoining the crucial Siliguri corridor. China is ramping up its infrastructure on its side facing Sikkim in the region. Giving details of the drill lasting ten days starting January 21, sources said here on Tuesday the aim was to practice battle preparedness of the Security Forces using latest weapons

and equipment in a networked, integrated environment, involving all arms and services of the Army, the Indian Air Force and central paramilitary forces.

As part of the exercise, swift mobilisation and deployment practices were carried out in various locations across North Bengal. Efforts of all agencies including the Civil Administration, Civil Defence Organisations, Police and paramilitary forces were coordinated to ensure efficient move and quick mobilization.

The exercise culminated on Tuesday with an Integrated Fire Power Exercise in Teesta Field Firing Ranges. The Fire Power Exercise was aimed at



synergising the firepower assets of the Indian Armed Forces and para-military forces to orchestrate an integrated battle.

The exercise showcased joint application of various ground and aerial assets to include latest generation Fighter Aircraft, Helicopters, Tanks, Infantry Combat Vehicles,

Medium and Field Artillery Guns, Infantry Mortars and various New Generation Infantry weapons and equipment in a networked environment. The exercise also witnessed participation of newly inducted weapons and equipment made in India as part of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan'.

Vice Chief of IAF retires

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Vice Chief of IAF Air Marshal Sandeep Singh retired on Tuesday after completion of 39 years of service. The new incumbent is Air Marshal A P Singh.

Air Marshal Sandeep Singh was commissioned in the IAF as a Fighter Pilot on 22 December 1983. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA) and National Defence College (NDC). He is an Experimental Test Pilot and Cat 'A' Qualified Flying Instructor, IAF officials said here.

India condemns Peshawar fidayeen blast, conveys condolences to bereaved families

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■
NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

With the death toll rising to 93 in the suicide bomb attack in a mosque in Peshawar, Pakistan on Monday, India on Tuesday condemned the act and conveyed condolences to the families of the victims. The United Nations also condemned the attack and said countries must ensure their territories are not used for terror activities.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here on Tuesday



"India extends its deep condolences to the families of the victims of the terror attack in Peshawar yesterday. We strongly condemn this attack, which has taken the lives of so many people."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and

the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) also condemned the suicide bombing at a mosque in Peshawar city of Pakistan, with a UN spokesperson saying countries must ensure that their territories are not used for terror activities.

Strongly condemning the suicide bombing on Monday that killed at least 90 people and injured over 100 others, Guterres said in a statement that it is particularly abhorrent that the attack occurred at a place of worship. The outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

"Freedom of religion or belief, including the ability to worship in peace and security, is a universal human right," he said.

At the daily press briefing, spokesman for the Secretary-General, Stephane Dujarric, said, "What is clear is that every government or every authority that has control over territory has a responsibility towards the international community to make sure that their territory is not being used for terrorist activities."

He was responding to a question on the attack and promises made by the Taliban

that they would not allow Afghan soil to be used for terror attacks.

The TTP, known as the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the suicide attack, saying it was part of a revenge attack for slain TTP commander Umar Khalid Khurasani who was killed in Afghanistan in August last year.

The 15-nation UN Security Council issued a press statement condemning in the "strongest terms" the "heinous and cowardly" suicide terrorist attack, which took place in the Police Lines area of Peshawar

city, where Police Headquarters and counter-terrorism officials are based.

"The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security," it said.

The Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice. They urged all States, by their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council

resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Government of Pakistan and all other relevant authorities.

The members of the Security Council reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever, and by whomsoever committed.

The Secretary-General reiterated the solidarity of the United Nations with the Government and people of Pakistan in their efforts to address terrorism and violent extremism.

Pakistan Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif, who visited Peshawar shortly after the attack, strongly condemned the attack and took to Twitter to say, "The sheer scale of the human tragedy is unimaginable," adding that the pain of the grieving families cannot be described in words.

"My message to the perpetrators of today's despicable incident is that you can't underestimate the resolve of our people," he said.

"This is no less than an attack on Pakistan," Sharif said, adding that terrorism is the country's "foremost national security challenge".

Doval meets Gen Mark Milley, calls co-op meeting ‘fruitful’

PIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval met US Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff General Mark Milley in Washington late on Monday evening and held discussions on various aspects of bilateral co-operation, which were termed as “fruitful” by Indian Ambassador to US Taranjit Singh Sandhu.

The meeting between Doval and Milley took place late Monday at the India House in Washington, the official residence of India’s Ambassador.

The interaction comes in the backdrop of the US emerging as one of the biggest exporters of weapon systems to India in the last two decades with figures crossing the 20 billion dollar mark. Efforts are on to have joint ventures between the defence companies of the two countries in India to propel the local defence industry to world class standards.

“General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff @thejointstaff called on NSA Ajit Doval today. Fruitful discussion on various aspects of India-US bilateral cooperation,” the Indian embassy in



Washington said in a tweet. Later in the evening, Sandhu hosted a reception in honour of Doval, who is in Washington leading a high-powered Indian delegation for the inaugural India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) dialogue.

It was attended by top officials of the Biden administration, including US National Security Advisor(NSA) Jake Sullivan. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, National Science Foundation Director Sethuraman Panchanathan and National A; NASA Administrator(NASA) Bill Nelson. The reception was also attended by corporate leadership, academics and think tanks. “A unique & special reception in India House! Delighted to host India NSA Ajit Doval, US NSA

@JakeSullivan46, Commerce Sec @GinaRaimondo, CEOs from India & US and leadership of prominent Universities. Insightful conversations on building bilateral cooperation in critical and emerging tech,” Sandhu said in a tweet.

The American side had CEOs of Micron, Lockheed Martin, Applied Materials, Global Foundries, General Atlantic, General Atomics, General Catalyst, America’s Frontier Fund in addition to Co-founder of LinkedIn, executive vice president of NASDAQ. Presidents of US India Business Council (USIBC), US India Strategic and Partnership Forum attended the reception that also saw the presence of presidents of Western Digital and Qualcomm, several other US industry members, including Google.

Corporate leadership from the Indian side included those from Tata Sons, Bharti Enterprises, Larsen and Toubro, Bharat Forge, Reliance Jio, Adani Defence, Mahindra and Mahindra and ArcelorMittal. Leaders from several emerging startups from India also attended the reception of Doval. Prominent among them being Dhruva Space which is working in the

field of satellite development, Digan-tara (space tracking), Pixxel (satellite imagery), 3rdi Tec (communication), Q Pi-Ai(AI & Quantum) and Saankhya Labs (wireless communication).

Announced during US President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s bilateral talks in Tokyo in May last year, the iCET is spearheaded by the National Security Councils of both countries.

It focuses on strengthening the US-India partnership on the technologies that will drive global growth, bolster both countries’ economic competitiveness, and protect shared national security interests.

Underlining the importance of the Icet, the US NSA said it will accelerate America’s technology partnership and strategic convergence and policy alignment with India.

Sullivan and Doval are scheduled to meet at the White House on Tuesday along with their respective high-powered delegations for the inaugural iCET dialogue. Sullivan said the US and Indian governments want to establish a “list of firsts”, “firsts in removing barriers—on both sides—to enable greater ambition by all

of you.” He highlighted how iCET will accelerate the US’ strategic technology partnership with India and advance the two countries’ shared democratic values.

He also recognised the pivotal role that businesses, educators, and investors play and urged the attendees to be ambitious in deepening bilateral business and academic ties. Doval highlighted the need to convert intentions and ideas into actions and specific deliverables through focused steps in a time bound manner.

In their remarks, Doval and India’s Ambassador to India Taranjit Singh Sandhu highlighted India’s remarkable capacity for technology development and absorption, and emphasised India’s use of technology not only as an enabler of economic growth but as an instrument of social inclusion.

Both Doval and Sandhu commended the launch of the iCET, given the natural complementary strengths of the Indian and American economies and the growing strategic convergence between the two countries. They also emphasised India’s growing role as a trusted supply chain partner and contributor in the global technology value chain.

Anti-encroachment op in J&K hours after SC nixes plea against razing

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Hours after the Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a petition against the ongoing anti-encroachment drive in Jammu & Kashmir, the revenue authorities went into overdrive to remove ‘illegal’ encroachments made by the influential politicians, businessmen and others across different district headquarters.

In Srinagar, the revenue department retrieved about 52 kanals of land including 40 kanals allegedly occupied by the owners of Hotel Nedou’s at MA Road.

The revenue authorities said a boundary wall and a shed were demolished as part of the eviction drive. Tehsildar South Moyn Kakroo said 40 kanals of state land illegally

occupied by Nedous Hotel owner at M A Road has been retrieved.

In Jammu, 63 kanals of prime land was retrieved on Monday. Out of 63 kanals, state land measuring 23 Kanal 09 Marla was retrieved by the revenue authorities in village Ghaink Tehsil Bhalwal. The retrieved land was encroached by a former deputy CM Kavinder Gupta.

In Anantnag, the District Administration held massive anti-encroachment drives against Peerzada Mohd Syed, former chief Jammu Kashmir Pradesh Congress and Ex. Minister Syed Farooq Andrabi, former legislator from Dooru and Ex. MoS and heirs of former chief minister Syed Mir Qasim. According to a statement issued by the Anantnag

district authorities, “At Ara Khoshipora, 1 kanal of Kahcharie land under the occupation of Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed was retrieved.

The outer wall of his premises which had been constructed on Kahcharai land has been demolished. It is in place to mention that notices for voluntarily removing the encroachments had been issued to the ex. minister but he had failed to give air to the Government direction.

Similarly, the family of Syed Farooq Andrabi, former legislator from Dooru had encroached upon 2 kanals and 7 marlas of Shamlat 4 land by way of orchards at Shistergam. The same lands have been retrieved and notice boards indicating the status of land have been installed on the site.

Wary of minority vote bank slipping away

Mamata raises CAA-NRC bogey before rural polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Amid reports that her minority vote bank might just be slipping away—in the wake of large-scale corruption charges leveled against Government—ahead of the upcoming rural polls and next year’s general elections, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee once again raised the NRC-CAA bogey blaming the BJP for misleading the people in the name of National Citizenship Register and Citizenship Amendment Act.

Addressing a gathering at Gajol block in minority-dominated Malda district the Chief Minister said, “in the name of NRC they (BJP Government) put others (opposition voters) in jail ... in the name of CAA they are misleading the people.” Referring particularly to the refugees of Matua (SC) community—which had migrated to India post Independence and 1971 war and settled

in the border districts, mostly in North 24 Parganas, Nadia and Malda—she said the BJP was giving them false hopes on CAA. “They are confusing the people on CAA telling them they will grant citizenship to the Matuas ... but if the Matuas are not citizens the how they are taking part in elections ... how they are voting ... We have been taking care of the Matuas for a long time, but when polls approach, the BJP goes to them, feigning as their friends...shouting CAA, CAA,” Banerjee said.

While the CAA entails the grant of citizenship to migrant Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, NRC is about drawing out a list or register of illegal migrants to India. The Muslim population forming



about 30 percent of voters, is particularly sensitive about NRC and the Matua community having sizeable impact in 25-30 Assembly seats is expectant about the implementation of CAA as promised by the BJP.

Apparently aware of the hard electoral arithmetic the Chief Minister said, “the BJP comes with baskets of false promises during the elections whereas throughout the year we take care of the Matuas.”

Attacking the Centre for not releasing the grants due to the State the Chief Minister said “they are holding back funds ... affecting the construction of roads, toilets, and implementation of 100-days’ work

scheme—as if the money belongs to them ... the fund that they are not releasing is rightfully ours... how will we construct houses or implement programmes if you do not release money ... and then they will send central teams to inspect whether schemes have been implemented properly or not ...” The Centre was not paying up more than Rs 1 lakh crore due to the State she alleged.

Of late at least three central teams have visited Bengal to inspect proper listing of Prime Minister Awaas Yojna and right implementation from mid-day-meal scheme. In fact a central team was presently visiting the schools of Bengal to inspect mid-day meal schemes.

NIA files chargesheet in ISIS Module case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday filed a chargesheet against an accused in ‘Activities of ISIS Module in India’ case. The agency filed the chargesheet against accused Mohammad Mohsin Ahmad before the NIA Special Court here.

The case relates to a conspiracy hatched by ISIS and members of the international terror group, a proscribed terrorist organization, for propagation of ISIS ideology and to raise funds for the outfit.

The case was suo-moto registered by the NIA on June 25 last year. “During investigations, it has been established that the accused, Mohammad Mohsin Ahmad, raised funds for ISIS and sent these funds to his Syria-based ISIS handlers through Crypto currency channels,” the NIA said in a statement.

The NIA has charged Ahmad under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) relating to criminal conspiracy and destruction of evidence besides provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The accused is a resident of ITI Women, Digha, Dinapur-cum-Khagaul, Patna, Bihar. “Investigations have revealed that the accused Mohammed Mohsin Ahmad conspired with an ISIS Handler and others for propagation of the ISIS ideology, with the ultimate objective to radicalize the Indian youth and recruit them for ISIS.

He was also involved in raising funds for ISIS from the ISIS sympathizers in India and sending the collected funds to his Syria based ISIS handlers through Crypto-currency channels, thereby supporting the ISIS in furtherance of its terrorist activities,” the agency said, adding, further investigations in this case are in progress.

CBI raids 50 locations in 7 States in constable paper leak case in HP

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday conducted searches at around 50 locations across seven States/Union Territories in an ongoing investigation of two cases related to leakage of question papers for the written examinations for the post of constables in Himachal Pradesh Police.

During searches conducted in Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, the NIA has recovered incriminating documents, the agency said in a statement. The CBI had registered two cases on November 30 last year on the request of Himachal Pradesh Government and further notification by the Centre.

Later, the CBI took over investigation of these cases earlier registered as FIR No. 41 at Police Station, Gaggal and FIR No. 5 of Police Station CID, Bharari (Shimla) by State Police on allegations of leakage of question papers of written examinations for post of constables in Himachal Pradesh Police, held on March 27 last year.

“During investigation and scrutiny of documents, the alleged role of various middlemen based in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, etc were revealed.

BSES
BSES Rajdhani Power Limited

ADDENDUM - 4 AGAINST TARIFF BASED COMPETITIVE BIDDING FOR PURCHASE OF POWER THROUGH DEEP PORTAL REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION (RFQ) NOTIFICATION

Invitation from Entities for supply of power on long-term basis
No.HOD (PMG)/2022-23/1589
Date: 31.01.2023

BRPL has invited proposals from Entities for supply of 500 MW power for 7 years from coal based commissioned projects on long term basis on behalf of BRPL & BPL. RFQ document 1429 issued on 30.8.2022 and their details are available on www.bsesdelhi.com & www.mstoccommerce.com. Due to unavoidable circumstances the revised date are as under:
Last date of sale of RFQ document: 1.3.2023
Last date of submission: 17.03.2023

Head PMG (BRPL)
Regd. Off.: BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019
Corporate Identification No.: U40302DL1997PL1527 Telephone No.: +91 11 4920 7255
Website: www.bsesdelhi.com



Div-II(S&W), Aquem,Margao-Goa
Tender Notice No.10/ET/22-23 has been issued and the same is displayed on website www.eprocure.gov.in for participation of the Interested suppliers.
DI/Advt/2022-23/1905/5546
"Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

UP plans to showcase Global Investors’ Summit successes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow is gearing up to host the UP Global Investors’ Summit which will be held from February 10 to 12. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath aims to make the event a grand one and present it as an example for other States. He has set a target to raise investments worth Rs 17 lakh crore through the GIS.

The chief minister is committed to making UP not only a destination for tourists but also the growth engine of the country. More than 20 Union ministers are expected to attend the summit along with investors from around the world.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu may attend the opening and closing ceremonies. Union ministers, including Home Minister Amit Shah,

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, will be attending the summit.

A roster of participants from both India and abroad is being made along with a session-by-session schedule detailing. There will be eight sessions per day, the first being the inaugural session. The rest of the sessions will be dedicated to end of each day.

Union ministers will play a crucial role in the event, with Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani, Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy, and Defence Minister Rajanath Singh participating in separate sessions on the first day. Air Chief Marshal (retd) RK Singh Bhadauria is also expected to

be part of the summit on the first day. On the second day, many ministers and leaders are expected to attend the GIS, including Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya. The third and final day will be the most important, with programmes for Commerce and Industry Minister Anupriya Patel, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur, and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who may lead the session on industrial financing.

Separate sessions will be held for partner countries, including Singapore, the Netherlands, Denmark, Japan, the UK, and Mauritius. The sessions will convey messages to investors and will include participation from ambassadors and delegations of 11 nations.

production capacity of 166.17 crore litres per annum. Establishment of 17 new distillery units is underway and expected to be commissioned in the next two years.

Ethanol production was 42.70 crore litres in the financial year 2016-17, with an installed capacity of 87.05 crore litres of 38 distilleries, which increased to 99.31 crore litres in the year 2020-21.

The installed capacity also increased to 166.17 crore liters of 53 distilleries. Of which, 43.95 crore litres of ethanol is used in the state while 52.60 crore litres is sold outside the state. At present, a target of 10

per cent ethanol blending has been set by the Government of India and it has to be completed during the current fiscal 2022-23. At present, the actual blending has been accomplished in the country to an average of about 8.1 per cent.

In Uttar Pradesh, the target of 10 per cent blending has already been achieved.

In view of surplus sugar diversion, 47 sugar mills diverted 7 lakh ton sugar by producing B-heavy molasses in the season 2020-21. In the present crushing season, 58 sugar mills by B-heavy and 10 sugar mills by direct cane juice or sugar syrup are expected to divert

about 10-12 lakh ton of sugar in the coming crushing season.

An increase in ethanol production will contribute to the ethanol blending programme and reduce the problem of environmental pollution as well as saving foreign currency on petroleum fuel.

The Cane Development department of Uttar Pradesh is an important department directly linked with farmers and the sugar industry is the single largest industry of the state based on agriculture. Sugarcane is mainly grown in 45 districts of the state and its area in the state is about 27.60 lakh hectares.

‘UP to be major beneficiary in ethanol blending hike’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh will be a major beneficiary of the hike in ethanol blending to 20 per cent with petrol in the next two years. UP is already emerging as a leader in ethanol production and blending. Presently, UP has 75 distilleries with a production capacity of 249.49 crore litres per annum.

The state has become the largest producer of ethanol in the country with 10 per cent blending, the highest among all the states. “The state government is further establishing 17 new distillery units which are expected to be commissioned



in the next two years,” Additional Chief Secretary, Excise and Sugar Industries, Sanjay R Bhoorsreddy said. UP has become the largest ethanol supplier of the country. The total number of distilleries in the state is 75 with a total production capacity of 249.49 crore litres per annum. The total number of ethanol producing distilleries is 55 with a

FIRST COLUMN

VILLAGE LIFE IN VEIL IN UTTARAKHAND

Women still have to cover themselves in villages



KUMARI KAVITA

“To be veiled is a matter of honor, and the girls who follow it are cultured,” said Paruli Devi, an elderly woman from Lamchula village in Bageshwar district in Uttarakhand. She believes that for women and girls to remain ‘cultured’ and maintain ‘respect’ for themselves, it is significant to practice the purdah system. Paruli is not the only one to affirm this notion, as two-thirds of rural women (42 per cent) practise purdah, either as victims of this age-old practice or as a symbol of respect. On the other hand, Rekha and Nisha, two adolescent girls from the same village, questioned the veil culture in today’s world. But they are aware of how it is given utmost importance in rural environments and how far they will be spared from following it. “The rural society compels women and girls to practice the veil system by relating it to respect. But we believe women will receive respect when there is equality between men and women and the provision of equal opportunities,” the duo said. “Because of the veil system, women cannot express themselves freely. The practice does not provide any respect to women. On the contrary, it affects their mental health, and should be rooted out of society,” they further added.



Although several measures have been taken by the government to curb the purdah system, the practice still persists. According to a Lokniti study conducted in 2019 under the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in 11 states among 6,348 women aged 18 and older, two out of every five Indian women practice purdah. Focusing on how purdah has been made compulsory for women mostly in rural areas, Sita Devi, the sarpanch of the village, highlighted the difficulties, saying “whenever a woman goes out of the house, it has been made mandatory for her to cover her head. By any chance if she forgets to cover, the society questions her character. The entire dignity and honour of our families are entrusted to our shoulders, and these practices are the means to retain them.” According to her, women need to come out collectively and speak out against these malpractices. Only then, women will be able to get their rights. The purdah system allows men to exert powerful control over women and their bodies. Often, when women revolt against these practices, they are categorised as disrespectful and ill-mannered. This leads to several forms of violence, be they physical or mental. Bimla Devi, an Anganwadi worker from the village, also spoke on the same lines, explaining how not following the practice often leads to mental harassment and sometimes physical violence. Women are bound to follow it even if they don’t want to. Neelam Grundy, a social worker from the area, said, while adding that married women are blamed for not having a cultured upbringing if they believe in doing away with the purdah system. “Tumhare Ma ne kuch nahi Sikhaya (Your mother did not teach you anything)” is the common phrase used by families to put down their daughters-in-laws. In order to avoid any criticism, women compromise and continue to practice it,” shared Neelam. Spreading awareness to eradicate the purdah system is unlikely to work, unless the root cause of patriarchy and its implications are addressed. Clearly, the purdah system and its practice by women, even if they don’t want to adhere to it, will follow until these systems are demystified amongst women. Most importantly, to spark discussions and dialogues within the family system to better understand why women and girls are expected to uphold the family’s honour and respect. (The author is a student of class 12 from Bageshwar, Uttarakhand: Charkha Features)

Wise allocations will boost the economy

It is the Government’s responsibility to make allocation in the Budget considering all the expectations

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, along with other ministries, has prepared the Budget. Article 112 of the Indian Constitution says that “the receipts and expenditure list of the Government to be laid before the parliament floor” for each financial year (April 1 to March 31). The Indian economy is showing a high-growth trajectory. It recently crossed the UK and became the fifth largest economy. Healthy and wise allocations in the Budget will boost the economy. The vision that India can become a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 can be achieved only when we have the best tenets of the budget and its allocation in various fields. Many experts and economists believe that the Budget 2023-24 will be balanced. The approach toward the economic growth, focus wisely on every aspect, be it capital expenditure on various infrastructures, education, taxation, provident funds, tax slabs, subsidies, incentives to production linked schemes, push to manufacturing and service sectors, semiconductor-based industries installations, health, banking, housing, defence, rural need and demands. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukrainian War had created a deep impact on the economy and GDP of the entire globe during 2020-22. India has also been impacted a lot. The overall slowdown in the manufacturing and service sector caused severe employment loss. Hence by a proper budget allocation we can overcome the impacts up to an extent. Education is an important tool for overall development. The opportunity for education should be given to all. To make education skillful and learning oriented, it needs good books, labs, workshops, infrastructures. The education budget was raised by 11 per cent last year to 3.1 per cent of the total GDP, which is quite less. The expenditure on education is expected to double of the previous year allocation. It should be close to six percent. Taxes are the primary sources to the receipts for the consolidated fund of India. Taxes can be direct tax which is collected directly by an individual like income tax, corporate tax, property tax, etc., or indirect taxes like GST, state excise duty etc. In Financial Year 2022, the ratio of tax revenue to GDP was almost 17.11 per cent. We can have a higher expectation in the financial year 2023. GST collection of Rs 1.52 lakh crore has been recorded as of October 2022, indicating a positive output. However, many people still avoid the tax by taking unfair advantages of the shortcomings in the tax rules. A good taxation system consists of five basic conditions --- fairness, simplicity, transparency, adequacy and administrative ease. Investment in the capital market is important as more infrastructure means more chances for manufacturing, employ-



INDIA HAS CURRENTLY MORE THAN 83,000 STARTUPS AND MORE THAN 100 UNICORNS. DUE TO THE RECESSION AND PANDEMIC EFFECTS WORLDWIDE, THE FUNDING TO STARTUPS HAS DRIED UP. THE BUDGET SHOULD ANNOUNCE FUNDS TO SUPPORT STARTUPS

(Ravi Kumar Gupta and Rohan Gupta teach at Madan Mohan Malaviya University of Technology, Gorakhpur)



ment, tourism and the market. The money for the capital market basically comes from the provident fund, mutual fund, LIC premiums, NSC, bonds and other government authorised investments which have a sure return after a period of time. According to income tax exemption under 80(C), we get tax deduction. The expectation is to raise the amount by Rs 50,000, presently it is Rs 1.5 lakhs and has not been amended since 2014, while inflation and many other factors have made Rs 1.5 lakh limit a very lesser value. It should be increased. The total contribution of the manufacturing sector has decreased in the GDP in recent years. The contribution of the manufacturing sector in GVA was 17.4 per cent in FY-2012, which decreased to 14.5 per cent in FY2021. The government has to step up capital expenditure in this sector. It will help in employment generation as well as more exports can be achieved which will make the target of achieving \$1 trillion of economy true. By the introduction and use of chips in various electronics devices like vehicles, mobile phones and all other appliances, the demand of semiconductor chips has increased manifold, which is met by imports from Japan, Taiwan and China. The expectation is that the government of India should make a proper allocation of budget with the involvement of private partners to make and produce the chips. Disinvestment is the selling of invested stakes. The government sells public sector undertakings (PSUs) and PSU stocks. The government announced many disinvestments in the recent three years, but has been unable to complete the target completely. PSUs like BPCL, OIL, etc., are profitable companies so the expectation is that disinvestment of such companies should not be announced. Even if it is done, there should be moderate disinvestment. High disinvestment provides revenue while lower disinvestment will save the government for future investment. So, it should be done in a very balanced way. Our country is the fifth largest economy in the world. The amount of subsidies provided by the government is very surprising, food and fertilizers subsidies amounting to 1/8th (12 per cent) of GDP. Spending on fertilizer subsidy which is Rs 2.3 lakh crore should be reduced to Rs 1.4 lakh crore and food subsidy to Rs 2.3 lakh crore from Rs 2.7 lakh crore. If the government wants to reduce the fiscal deficit, then it should reduce subsidies. It will definitely make the fiscal deficit balanced, which is targeted around 6.4 per cent of the GDP in current fiscal years. India has currently more than 83,000 startups and more than 100 unicorns. Due to the recession and pandemic effects worldwide, the funding to startups has dried up. The Budget should announce funds to support startups. It is the major provider of jobs and it is going to cross \$500 billion in valuation very soon. Various schemes and regulations are needed for the ease of doing business for the startups. The goal of ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ can be achieved by enhancing the defence systems. According to a research institute of Stockholm, India ranks fourth among the Indo-Pacific countries in self-reliant production capabilities of arms but India ranks 2nd largest importer of the arms and defence related equipment. However, we have defence exports of Rs 14,000 crore and the target is to achieve Rs 25,000 crore of exports by 2025. The objectives of fiscal policy and Budget are to increase the ratio of savings to incomes, raising the rate of investment, flow of expenditure in productive areas, price stability, and reduce inequality. If inequality is not reduced, there will be clashes among the people which will affect negatively and generate instability in the economy. The introduction of GST has also helped in collecting the taxes easily and rapidly. A country’s budget should be balanced. It is also the Government’s responsibility to focus on every aspect and allocate the Budget considering all the expectations.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

CONGRESS IS NEITHER HERE NOR THERE. RAHUL GANDHI'S BHARAT JODO YATRA ONLY ADDS TO THE CONFUSION ABOUT WHAT IT STANDS FOR. — BJP LEADER RAKESH SINHA




I HAVE NOT DONE THIS (YATRA) FOR MYSELF OR FOR THE CONGRESS, BUT FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY. — CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



Finance Minister may opt for a prudent Budget

Budget will probably have something for everybody as political parties have mastered wooing the electorate

One of the important businesses in Parliament is the annual budget presentation. This year too, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the 2023 Budget today. Why is a Budget important? It gives a bird's eye view of the government's fiscal policy and how it will distribute resources. The 2023 Budget will have revised revenue estimates for the current fiscal and tax collection forecasts for the following year. The forthcoming Budget is more important as it will be the last full Budget before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expecting to perform a hat-trick in 2024, and the Budget is bound to have some surprises.



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

The question is: will it be a dream Budget like in 1997 presented by P Chidambaram, which proposed lower slabs of personal and corporate taxes? Or, given the 2024 polls, will it be a populist one? As usual, several expectations and predictions are floating around from financial experts to ordinary citizens. The 2023 Budget will probably have something for everybody as political parties have mastered wooing the electorate. Voters are increasingly getting accustomed to new innovative populist schemes that support welfare spending. The common man is interested in what tax breaks he gets in the Budget. However, some economists, as a contrarian view, say the Budget will focus on supporting development and balancing fiscal pressures. The Finance Minister gave some clues while in the US for the annual IMF-World Bank meeting some time ago and said, "Growth priorities will be kept absolutely on the top for the upcoming Budget." The Minister also said that the Indian economy should not lose momentum. In a recent address to Ficci, she declared that the Budget would follow the spirit of previous budgets to prepare India for the next 25 years. Since attaining freedom in 1947, the Budget presentation has undergone many changes from its colonial past. For instance, earlier the Budget used to be presented in the evening to coincide

with the London timings. A presentation in the evening gave producers and the tax collecting agencies the night to work out the price change. During Vajpayee's regime, Parliament shifted it from 5 pm to 11 am in 1999. In 2017, the Railway Budget was merged with the annual Budget. Sitharaman had broken from the tradition of entering Lok Sabha with a black briefcase holding Budget papers. Instead, she carries a tablet wrapped in a traditional pouch in line with the digital concept. Fortunately, the Modi Government is better positioned to take risks, with considerable tax collections in 2022 despite Covid. The direct tax collection stood at Rs 14.71 lakh crore as of January 10, 2023. There have also been some cutbacks after the Government discontinued the scheme of free food programmes for 800 million people during the pandemic. The sale of Air India was also timely, though privatization might shrink closer to the polls. Voters expect new welfare schemes. A recent Bloomberg survey predicts that the Finance Minister could increase expenditure by about 12.5 per cent year-on-year to Rs 44.40 trillion (\$544 billion) beginning April. More importantly, Budget 2023 will focus on capital expenditure as a growth driver. Custom duties on non-essential goods and luxury items might be increased to prevent import dependency and promote the domestic industry.

The Government will focus on providing more impetus to the manufacturing sector, concentrating on capital goods, defence, railways, and public sector banks. The rural sector is also essential. Price rise is the vital issue people face after the pandemic. There is an urgent need to tackle this. The next critical issue is job creation. Many vulnerable workers lost their jobs during the pandemic and are still on the streets without any permanent livelihood. Go to any market, and you will find that most shops are shut or have moved to a cheaper place. In the absence of social welfare schemes, migrant workers suffer a great deal. The government should address the job crisis. The private sector should also be encouraged to create more jobs. The rising cost of living and falling income has dented the growth of the aspirational middle classes. Senior citizens also demand medical benefits and no tax on their pensions. The government must reduce some direct and indirect taxes so that more money is available to the people. The pandemic showed the need for enhanced outlays towards the health sector to tackle the emerging new Covid variants and better preparedness. More funds are also required for education, rural development, and social sector schemes like NREGA. One can go on with all sorts of predictions. Overall, the FM may opt for a prudent 2023 Budget, which could be soft and pragmatic.

After tank pledges, Ukraine seeks Western fighter jets

AP ■ KIVY

Ukraine is pushing its Western allies to provide it with fighter jets, a week after winning pledges of sophisticated modern tanks to help it beat back Russia's invasion force after almost a year of fighting.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov was due in Paris on Tuesday where discussions about the possible delivery of fighter jets to Ukraine was expected to be on the agenda. After months of haggling, Ukrainian authorities last week persuaded Western allies to send the tanks.

That decision came despite the hesitation and caution of some NATO members, including the United States and Germany. There was no indication that a decision on warplanes to Ukraine



might come any time soon and no sign that Western countries have changed their earlier stance on the issue. Some Western leaders have expressed concern that the move could escalate the nearly year-long conflict and draw them deeper into the war.

The UK government, which has been one of Kyiv's staunchest diplomatic supporters and military suppliers, said that sending its fighter jets is "not practical."

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman, Max Blain, said "the UK's Typhoon and F-35 fighter jets are extremely sophisticated and take months to learn how to fly." "Given that, we believe it is not practical to send those jets into Ukraine," he said Tuesday, though he didn't say that the UK was opposed to other countries sending planes.

Asked by a reporter Monday if his administration was considering sending Ukraine F-

16 fighter jets to Ukraine, US President Joe Biden responded "no."

Kyiv officials have repeatedly urged allies to send jets, saying they are essential to challenge Russia's air superiority and to ensure the success of future counteroffensives that could be spearheaded by tanks recently promised by Western countries.

Ukraine's allies also have ruled out providing Kyiv with long-range missiles able to hit Russian territory, signalling a similarly cautious stance on warplanes.

Asked Tuesday about the supplies of Western weapons to Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov repeated the Kremlin's view that "NATO long has been directly involved into a hybrid war against Russia."

He added after the talks in Moscow with Egyptian Foreign

Minister Sameh Shoukry that the Russian military will "take all the necessary measures to derail the fulfillment of Western plans."

He said that Shoukry conveyed a message from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken about Ukraine, which repeated the previous calls from Washington for Russia to withdraw.

Lavrov said "Russia is ready to hear any serious - I want to underline this word - proposal aimed at comprehensive settlement of the current situation." Both Ukraine and Russia are believed to be building up their arsenals for an expected offensive in coming months.

The war has been largely deadlocked on the battlefield during the winter. As in previous debates about how to help Ukraine, Poland is a leading advocate in European Union for providing military aid.

Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic countries on NATO's eastern flank feel especially threatened by Russia. Asked about Lithuania's call for fighter jets and long-range missiles for Ukraine, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the comments "reflected an aggressive approach taken by the Baltic nations and Poland, who are ready to do everything to provoke further escalation without thinking about consequences."

"It's very sad that the leaders of big European countries that drive the European agenda don't fulfill a balancing role to offset such extremist inclinations," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that France doesn't exclude sending fighter jets to Ukraine, but he laid out multiple conditions before such a significant step is taken.

The conditions, he said, include not leading to an escalation of tensions or using the aircraft "to touch Russian soil," and not resulting in weakening "the capacities of the French army."

He also said Ukraine must also formally request the planes, something that could happen when Reznikov sits down for talks in Paris.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz appeared to balk at the prospect of providing fighter jets, suggesting Sunday that the reason for the entire discussion might be down to "domestic political motives" in some countries.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Monday there are "no taboos" in efforts to help Ukraine.

But he added that sending jets "would be a very big next step."

French Prez doesn't rule out sending warplanes to Ukraine



AP ■ THE HAGUE (THE NETHERLANDS)

President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that France doesn't exclude sending fighter jets to Ukraine, but laid out multiple conditions before such a significant step might be taken.

France has sent Ukraine air-defense systems, rocket launcher units, cannons and other military equipment and has pledged to send armored surveillance and combat vehicles, but has stopped short of sending battle tanks or heavier weaponry.

Asked at a news conference in The Hague on Monday if France is considering sending warplanes, Macron said "nothing is excluded" as long as certain conditions are met.

Among those conditions: that providing such equipment would not lead to an escalation of tensions or be used "to touch Russian soil," and that it wouldn't "weaken the capacities of the French army," Macron said.

He also said Ukraine would have to formally request the planes. He noted that he will meet visiting Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov in Paris on Tuesday. Ukrainian officials have been stepping up demands for heavier weapons from Western allies to push back Russia's forces. At Macron's side, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte

said Ukraine hasn't formally requested Dutch F16 fighter jets so far.

He struck a cautious stance after the Dutch foreign minis-

ter told lawmakers earlier this month that there were "no taboos" about sending the warplanes. "There is no talk about delivering F-16s to Ukraine. No requests," Rutte said Monday. There are "no taboos, but it would be a very big next step." "It is very important we keep supporting Ukraine and that Ukraine articulates to us what they need," Rutte said. He welcomed recent German and U.S. Announcements about sending tanks to Ukraine.

"As the Netherlands, we will keep looking at what we can do," Rutte said. "We don't have Leopard 2 tanks, we lease them."

We've said if it helps we're prepared to buy them and pass them on. Maybe it's better to use those leased Leopard 2s somewhere else.

Recent extremist attacks kill 32 people in Burkina Faso

AP ■ OUAGADOUGOU (BURKINA FASO)

Multiple jihadi attacks across Burkina Faso over several days have resulted in the death of at least 32 people, including soldiers and civilians, government authorities said Tuesday.

Burkina Faso's State Information Agency posted on its Facebook page that a dozen soldiers and a civilian were killed Monday in Falagountou in Burkina Faso's Sahel region during clashes

between the military and jihadis.

Another 20 people were killed in two attacks over the weekend in the country's east-central and western regions. Four people were executed Saturday afternoon when gunmen intercepted their van between Tenkodogo and Ouargaye villages. On Sunday, a passenger mini-bus coming from the western city of Banfora was intercepted by armed men, said Col. Jean Charles dit Yenapono Some, governor of the Cascades



region in a statement.

Eight women and one man were freed, the rest of the people were abducted and their lifeless bodies were found with bullet holes the following day, he said.

Jihadi violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State Group has ravaged the West African country for years

killing thousands and displacing nearly 2 million people. Nearly 5,000 civilians have been killed since 2015, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).

The violence has sowed frustration and distrust among the population and led to two coups last year. The new junta leader, Ibrahim Traore, seized power in September promising to stem the violence but attacks are increasing. Traore has mobilised tens of thousands of civilian fighters to combat the

jihadis alongside the army.

But analysts say the civilian fighters are accused of targeting other civilians perceived to be working with the jihadis, which is fuelling retaliatory attacks. "The types of mass atrocities that are occurring were expected, as the conflict was expected to escalate in the coming months due to the increased mobilisation of the population through the (volunteer) programme and the increasing trend of extrajudicial killings by defence and security forces observed.



US to increase weapons deployment to counter North Korea: Def Secy

AP ■ SEOUL

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday said the United States will increase its deployment of advanced weapons such as fighter jets and bombers to the Korean Peninsula as it strengthens joint training and operational planning with South Korea in response to a growing North Korean nuclear threat. Austin made the comments in Seoul after he and South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup agreed to further expand their combined military exercises, including a resumption of live-fire demonstrations, and continue a "timely and coordinated" deployment of U.S. Strategic assets to the region, according to their offices.

Austin and Lee also discussed preparations for a simulated exercise between the allies in February aimed at sharpening their response if North Korea uses nuclear weapons. Austin's trip comes as South Korea seeks stronger assurances that the United States will swiftly and decisively use its nuclear capabilities to protect its ally in face of a North Korean nuclear attack. South Korea's security jitters have risen since North Korea test-fired dozens of missiles in 2022, including potentially nuclear-capable ones designed to strike targets in South Korea and the U.S. Mainland.

South Korea and the United States have also been strengthening their security cooperation with Japan, which has included trilateral missile defense and anti-submarine warfare exercises in past months amid the provocative run in North Korean weapons tests.

In a joint news conference following their meeting, Austin and Lee said they agreed that their countries' resumption of large-scale military drills last year, including an aerial exercise involving U.S. Strategic bombers in November, effectively demonstrated their combined capabilities to deter North Korean aggression. The allies had downsized their training in recent years to create room for diplomacy with North Korea during the Trump administration and because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We deployed fifth-generation aircraft, F-22s and F-35s, we deployed a carrier strike group to visit the peninsula, you can look for more of that kind of activity going forward," Austin said. He said the U.S. commitment to protecting its allies with its full range of military capabilities, including nuclear ones, remains "ironclad."

North Korea's ramped-up missile tests have been punctuated by threats to preemptively use its nuclear weapons in a broad range of scenarios in which it perceives its leadership to be under threat, including conventional clashes or non-war situations.

Tensions could further rise in coming months with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un doubling down on his nuclear ambitions.

During a political conference in December, Kim called for an "exponential increase" in nuclear warheads, mass production of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons targeting South Korea, and development of more powerful long-range missiles designed to reach the U.S. Mainland.

SALE NOTICE

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
ICICI BANK LTD VS PINTU KUMAR, CS No. 3006/21	Vehicle No. DL14CE1943, Make and Model - NISSAN DATSUN REDIGO, Manu Year -2018.
ICICI BANK LTD VS AKSHAY GIRI, OA 494/2019, IA 2240/2019	Vehicle No. UP14GT8288, Make and Model- SWARAJ MAZDA LTD SAMRAT, Manu Year -2017, Reserve Price: Rs. 2,00,000/-, EMD: Rs.20,000/-
Auction Date: February 16, 2023 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.	
Auction Type :Open Auction	
Place of Auction: Godara Yard, Khawat No. 166/1, Near Atul Kataria Chowk, Behind Gyan Devi, School, Sec -17, Sukhrali, Gurgaon - 122022	
Contact Person - Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/ Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)	
Case Details	Asset Details
ICICI BANK LTD VS VS ESRAR, CS (Comm.) No.4460-2021	Vehicle No. DL10CT1001, Make and Model - MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA LTD REXTON, Manu Year -2014
ICICI BANK LTD VS NIRDESH KUMAR, CS SCJ 2490/17	Vehicle No. DL1LV1048, Make and Model - TATAACE, Manu Year -2014. Reserve Price Rs.35,000/-, EMD :- Rs.5,000/- to be made in favour of ICICI Bank Limited payable at Delhi
ICICI BANK LTD VS SANCHIT, CS (Comm.)785/2019	Vehicle No. UP14GT1840, Make and Model - MARUTI CELERIO, Manu Year -2017
ICICI BANK LTD VS Ashutosh Yadav, CS (Comm) No. 4467-21	Vehicle No. HR35Q6454, Make and Model- JEEP COMPASS, Manu Year -2018

Auction Date: February 09, 2023 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
Auction Type : Online Auction
Last Date of DD Submission: February 09, 2023 before 5:00 PM
Auction Portal Name & URL Link: Bid Karo www.bidkaro.net
Contact Person - Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/ Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)

Case Details	Asset Details
ICICI BANK LTD VS BHARAT SOMASTAMB, RC/312/2014 IN OA/308/2013	Vehicle No. HR51Y0945, Make and Model - BENZ E 280 CDI, Manu Year -2006.
Terms of Sale	
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 have to be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participants/ 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.	
The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- https:// www.bidkaro.net) of our auction agency Bid Karo. Successfully bidder shall have to deposit sale amount (excluding EMD wherein applicable) within 5 days from the approval date by the way of pay order/demand draft/RTGS/NEFT. If you fail to deposit sale amount within 5 days, your EMD (wherein applicable) shall be forfeited.	
The intending bidders may visit ICICI Bank Ltd, Shal Towers, Plot No. 23, New Rohtak Road Karol Bagh Delhi - 110005 for details and inspection of the said hypothecated vehicles	

Form No. INC-26

(Pursuant to rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014)

IN THE MATTER OF: SUMITRANURSING AND MATERNITY HOME LIMITED (CIN: U74899DL1994PLC097289) HAVING REGISTERED OFFICE AT-A-1B/13B, LIG FLATS, PASCHIM VIHAR, NEW DELHI 110063

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the company proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra-Ordinary general meeting held on 20th January, 2023 to enable the company to change its Registered Office from "State of NCT OF DELHI" to "State of UTTAR PRADESH".

For & on behalf of board of For SUMITRANURSING AND MATERNITY HOME LIMITED S/D:- REENA GUPTA, Director, DIN:00129823 Place: Delhi Date: 22.01.2023

Form No. INC-26

(Pursuant to rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014)

IN THE MATTER OF: SUMITRAHEALTHCARE SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70101DL1998PTC094261) HAVING REGISTERED OFFICE AT-A-1B/13B, LIG FLATS, PASCHIM VIHAR, NEW DELHI 110063

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For & on behalf of board of For SUMITRAHealth Care Services Private Limited S/D:- REENA GUPTA, Director, DIN:00129823 Place: Delhi Date: 22.01.2023



Pakistan mosque blast toll rises to 100

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

The death toll from the suicide blast rose to at least 100 on Tuesday after rescue workers retrieved more bodies from the debris of the devastated mosque inside a major police facility in Pakistan's northwestern Peshawar city.

According to security officials, the suicide bomber who was present in the front row during the Zuhr (afternoon) prayers on Monday blew himself up, causing the roof to collapse on the worshippers.

Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) spokesperson Mohammad Asim said that 100 bodies had been brought to the medical facility.

Asim said 53 injured were currently being treated while seven had been admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU). He said that most of the injured were out of danger. Most of the victims were policemen. At least a deputy superintendent of police, five sub-inspectors and the mosque's prayer leader Maulana Sahibzada Noorul Amin were among the dead.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), known as the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the suicide attack, saying it was part of a revenge attack for slain TTP commander Umar Khalid Khurasani who was killed in Afghanistan in August last.

US to increase weapons deployment to counter North Korea: Def Secy

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday said the United States will increase its deployment of advanced weapons such as fighter jets and bombers to the Korean Peninsula as it strengthens joint training and operational planning with South Korea in response to a growing North Korean nuclear threat. Austin made the comments in Seoul after he and South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup agreed to further expand their combined military exercises, including a resumption of live-fire demonstrations, and continue a "timely and coordinated" deployment of U.S. Strategic assets to the region, according to their offices.

Austin and Lee also discussed preparations for a simulated exercise between the allies in February aimed at sharpening their response if North Korea uses nuclear weapons. Austin's trip comes as South Korea seeks stronger assurances that the United States will swiftly and decisively use its nuclear capabilities to protect its ally in face of a North Korean nuclear attack. South Korea's security jitters have risen since North Korea test-fired dozens of missiles in 2022, including potentially nuclear-capable ones designed to strike targets in South Korea and the U.S. Mainland.

South Korea and the United States have also been strengthening their security cooperation with Japan, which has included trilateral missile defense and anti-submarine warfare exercises in past months amid the provocative run in North Korean weapons tests.

In a joint news conference following their meeting, Austin and Lee said they agreed that their countries' resumption of large-scale military drills last year, including an aerial exercise involving U.S. Strategic bombers in November, effectively demonstrated their combined capabilities to deter North Korean aggression. The allies had downsized their training in recent years to create room for diplomacy with North Korea during the Trump administration and because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We deployed fifth-generation aircraft, F-22s and F-35s, we deployed a carrier strike group to visit the peninsula, you can look for more of that kind of activity going forward," Austin said. He said the U.S. commitment to protecting its allies with its full range of military capabilities, including nuclear ones, remains "ironclad."

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During a political conference in December, Kim called for an "exponential increase" in nuclear warheads, mass production of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons targeting South Korea, and development of more powerful long-range missiles designed to reach the U.S. Mainland.

NATO urges closer ties with Japan to defend democracy

AP ■ TOKYO

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg sharply criticized China on Tuesday for “bullying its neighbors and threatening Taiwan” and stressed the need for Japan and other democracies to work together with the alliance to defend the international order.

Calling it a “critical moment for NATO and for Japan,” Stoltenberg, who is visiting Tokyo, said China and Russia are “leading an authoritarian pushback against international rules-based order.” He said trans-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security are “deeply interconnected,” and a victory by Russian President Vladimir Putin in Ukraine would send a message that authoritarian regimes can achieve their goals through brute force. “This is dangerous,” he said.

“China is watching closely and learning lessons that may influence its future decisions,” Stoltenberg said at a joint news conference with Japanese



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

“China is substantially building up its military forces including nuclear weapons, bullying its neighbours and threatening Taiwan, trying to control critical infrastructure and spreading misinformation about NATO and the war in Ukraine,” Stoltenberg said. “China is not our adversary, but we must understand the scale of the challenge and work together to address it.”

Stoltenberg’s direct criticism of China contrasted with Kishida’s more indirect expression of opposition to any one-

sided changes by force to the status quo in the East and South China Seas.

Japan, already a close ally of the United States, has in recent years expanded its military ties with other Indo-Pacific nations as well as with Britain, Europe and NATO amid a growing security threat from China and North Korea.

It was quick to join in U.S.-led economic sanctions against Russia’s war in Ukraine and provided humanitarian aid and non-combatative defense equipment for Ukrainians. That was mainly because of

Japanese fear that Russian aggression in Europe could be reflected in Asia, where concerns are growing over growing Chinese assertiveness and escalating tensions over its claim to Taiwan.

At the news conference, Kishida welcomed NATO’s deepening interest and engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and announced that Japan will open a delegation office at NATO and plans to regularly attend council meetings and chiefs of defense meetings to promote closer communication between Japan and the alliance.

Kishida said he and Stoltenberg agreed to advance ties in areas such as cyberspace, space, disinformation, and critical and emerging technology.

Japan’s government issued a new national security strategy in December stating its determination to build up its military and deploy long-range missiles to preempt enemy attacks, in a major break from its post-World War II principle that limited itself to self-defense.

Blinken in West Asia renews appeal for Israel-Palestinian calm

AP ■ JERUSALEM,

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is wrapping up a two-day visit to Israel and the occupied West Bank on Tuesday with renewed appeals for Israeli-Palestinian calm amid an alarming spike of violence.

Blinken was meeting Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Tuesday, a day after seeing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Standing alongside the Israeli leader, Blinken stressed the importance the Biden administration places on resolving the long-running conflict with a two-state solution.

However, beyond urging a de-escalation of tensions Blinken offered no new US initiative to do so. There were no signs that Blinken was making progress on even the modest goal of halting the latest wave of violence, much less of addressing the broader issues surrounding peace talks.



Netanyahu’s far-right government is dominated by hardliners who oppose Palestinian statehood and are unlikely to make even minimal concessions.

Blinken’s visit comes amid one of the deadliest periods of fighting in years in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem. The violence has further complicated the administration’s already difficult attempts to find common ground with Netanyahu’s government. In Ramallah, Blinken

was expected to discuss the Palestinian Authority’s decision to halt security coordination with Israel.

The security ties, which in the past are believed to have helped contain violence, are deeply unpopular among everyday Palestinians, who accuse Abbas of acting as a subcontractor for the Israeli military.

Before heading to the West Bank, Blinken met with Israel’s opposition leader, former Prime Minister Yair Lapid.

10 wounded in drive-by shooting in Florida: Police

AP ■ FLORIDA (US)

Ten people were injured Monday afternoon during a drive-by shooting in a central Florida neighborhood, police said.

Lakeland Police Chief Sam Taylor said during a news conference that two of the victims were critically injured, while the wounds of the other eight victims weren’t considered life-threatening.

Lakeland is located about 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of Tampa.

“I’ve been here 34 years, and I can tell you I have never worked an event where this many people were shot at one time, ever,” Taylor said.

A crowd of people were gathered along a residential street when a dark-blue sedan rolled by, police said. Shooters fired from the windows before the car sped away. Officers were actively searching for the vehicle and the shooters Monday night, officials said.

Taylor said investigators believe the shooting was a targeted attack.



Teen killed, 4 others injured in shooting at Texas lounge

AP ■ TEXAS (US)

A high school student was injured when a person opened fire over the weekend at a hookah lounge in Austin, Texas, authorities said Monday. Brayden Bolyard, 17, died at the scene of the shooting at the lounge Saturday night, Austin police said in a news release. Police said that the four other people who were shot were taken to hospitals.

Police said in the news release that they have identified a person of interest in the shooting and that the shooter “had prior history with one of

the victims.” The suspect left the scene after the shooting, police said.

The school district in Jarrell, which is about 40 miles north of Austin, said in a statement Monday that the district was “profoundly saddened by the loss of one of our students.” “He was a gifted student and athlete who made a lasting impression on our district,” the Jarrell Independent School District said in the statement.

The district said that counselors would be providing support to students and staff. The district said another student from the district was still hospitalized.

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden informed Congress on Monday that he will end the twin national emergencies for addressing COVID-19 on May 11, as most of the world has returned closer to normalcy nearly three years after they were first declared.

The move to end the national emergency and public health emergency declarations would formally restructure the federal coronavirus response to treat the virus as an endemic threat to public health that can be managed through agencies’ normal authorities.

It comes as lawmakers have already ended elements of the emergencies that kept millions of Americans insured during the pandemic. Combined with the drawdown of most federal COVID-19 relief money, it would also shift the development of vaccines and treatments away from the direct management of the federal government.

Biden’s announcement comes in a statement opposing resolutions being brought to the floor this week by House Republicans to bring the emergency to an immediate end. House Republicans are also gearing up to launch investigations on the federal government’s response to COVID-19.

Then-President Donald Trump first declared the COVID-19 pandemic a national emergency on March 13, 2020. The emergencies have been repeatedly extended by Biden since he took office in January 2021, and are set to expire in the coming months.



The White House said Biden plans to extend them both briefly to end on May 11.

“An abrupt end to the emergency declarations would create wide-ranging chaos and uncertainty throughout the health care system — for states, for hospitals and doctors’ offices, and, most importantly, for tens of millions of Americans,” the Office of Management and Budget wrote in a Statement of Administration Policy.

Congress has already blunted the reach of the public health emergency that had the most direct impact on Americans, as political calls to end the declaration intensified. Lawmakers have refused for months to fulfill the Biden administration’s request for billions more dollars to extend free

COVID vaccines and testing. And the \$1.7 trillion spending package passed last year and signed into law by Biden put an end to a rule that barred states from kicking people off Medicaid, a move that is expected to see millions of people lose their coverage after April 1.

The Biden administration

INDIAN RAILWAYS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (BHARAT SARKAR)

MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAIL MANTRALAYA)

(RAILWAY BOARD)

No. 2022/RS(WTA)-149/TENDER/532 New Delhi, dated 31/01/2023

CORRIGENDUM NO.5 to Tender No. WTA-532

Sub : Tender No. WTA-532 due on 27.02.2023 for "Manufacturing cum Maintenance of 100 nos. of New Generation Energy Efficient Vande Bharat Trainsets with Concentrated Power System Including upgradation of the Government Manufacturing Units & Trainset Depots"

Some of the terms and conditions of the tender have been modified. The prospective Bidders are requested to visit website- <https://ireps.gov.in> for more details.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RAILWAY STORES (RS)

75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAILWAY BOARD) RAIL BHAWAN, RAISINA ROAD, NEW DELHI-110 001 335/2023

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UN: Taliban ban on women aid workers is potential death blow

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN humanitarian chief warned Monday that the Taliban’s ban on women aid workers in Afghanistan is “a potential death blow” to many important humanitarian programmes.

If the Taliban don’t make exceptions to their edict “this would be catastrophic,” Martin Griffiths said at a news conference.

He said a delegation including international aid



groups made the case that Afghan women are critical to humanitarian operations during meetings last week with nine Taliban officials, including Afghanistan’s foreign affairs

and economy ministers.

“We were asked to be patient,” Griffiths said. “We were told that guidelines are being developed by the Taliban authorities which would provide, allegedly, the functioning of women in humanitarian operations.”

He said the Taliban’s consistent message “that there will be a place for women working” was “a slightly patronizing message, but it’s an important one.”

Griffiths noted that after

the Dec. 24 edict by the Taliban barring aid groups from employing Afghan women, the health minister granted an exception for women in the health field and the education minister granted an exception for those involved in primary education.

He said the humanitarian delegation told the Taliban that if they weren’t going to rescind the edict “then we must expand these exceptions to cover all the aspects of humanitarian action.”

China accuses Washington of wanting ‘tech hegemony’

AP ■ BEIJING

China’s government accused Washington on Tuesday of pursuing “technology hegemony” following news reports the United States might step up pressure on tech giant Huawei by blocking all access to American suppliers.

The possible move, reported by Bloomberg News, The Financial Times and The Wall Street Journal, would tighten restrictions imposed in 2019 that limit Huawei’s access to processor chips and other technology.

The company, which makes network equipment and smartphones, was allowed to buy some less-advanced components.

Huawei Technologies Ltd., China’s first global tech brand, is at the centre of conflict between Washington and Beijing over technology and security. US officials say Huawei is a security risk and might facilitate Chinese spying, an accusation the company denies. “China is gravely concerned about the reports,” said a foreign ministry spokeswoman, Mao Ning. She accused Washington of “overstretching the concept of national security and abusing state power” to suppress Chinese competitors.

“Such practices are contrary to the principles of market economy” and are “blatant technological hegemony,” Mao said.

Myanmar military is increasing air attacks, says rights group

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar’s military is increasingly turning to airstrikes with deadly results to try to crush stiff armed resistance, two years after it seized power and plunged the country into a prolonged civil war, said a report Tuesday by a human rights monitoring group.

The military is heavily reliant on fighter jets and helicopter gunships supplied by its allies Russia and China, according to the non-governmental organisation Myanmar Witness and other experts. The group’s compilation of 135 “airwar incidents” from July to mid-December says the number of airstrikes has been on an upward trend since September.

“As the Myanmar military struggles to exert control over areas of resistance, airstrikes have become a key part of their offensive,” the report says.

The military is putting the population of Myanmar in a precarious position, destroying homes, schools and places of worship — sites which should be safe for civilians.” According to a January statement by the National Unity Govt, an underground group that calls itself the country’s legitimate government and serves as an umbrella organisation for opponents of military rule, 460 civilians, mostly children, have lost their lives in airstrikes. Myanmar’s army has defended its actions as meant to fight what it calls terrorist activities and legitimate military targets.

Form No. INC-26 (Pursuant to rule 34 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014) Before The Central Government (Regional Director, Northern Region), New Delhi IN THE MATTER OF: BALAJI MATERNITY HOME PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U85100DL2008PTC174695) HAVING REGISTERED OFFICE AT A-1B/13B, LIG FLATS, PASCHIM VIHAR, NEW DELHI 110063 AND PETITIONER

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the company proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra-Ordinary general meeting held on 20TH January, 2023 to enable the company to change its Registered Office from "State of NCT OF DELHI" to "State of UTTAR PRADESH". Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the company may deliver either on MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director at B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antonydaya Bhawan, CGO Complex New Delhi-110003 within fourteen days of the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company with a copy of the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned below: A-1B/13B, LIG FLATS, PASCHIM VIHAR, NEW DELHI 110063

For and on behalf of board of For Balaji Maternity home Private Limited SD/- REENA GUPTA, Director, DIN:00129823 Place: Delhi Date: 22.01.2023

Form No. INC-26 (Pursuant to rule 34 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014) Before The Central Government (Regional Director, Northern Region), New Delhi IN THE MATTER OF: BALAJI SERVICES (CIN: U85100DL2008NP178457) HAVING REGISTERED OFFICE AT A-1B/13B, LIG FLATS, PASCHIM VIHAR, NEW DELHI 110063 AND PETITIONER

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the company proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra-Ordinary general meeting held on 20TH January, 2023 to enable the company to change its Registered Office from "State of NCT OF DELHI" to "State of UTTAR PRADESH". Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the company may deliver either on MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director at B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antonydaya Bhawan, CGO Complex New Delhi-110003 within fourteen days of the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company with a copy of the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned below: A-1B/13B, LIG FLATS, PASCHIM VIHAR, NEW DELHI 110063

For and on behalf of board of SD/- VIPIN KUMAR GUPTA, Director, DIN:00782741 Place: Delhi Date: 22.01.2023

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India's GDP to be \$3.5 tn by March end: Eco Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has already become the world's fifth largest economy in the 75th year of Independence and will reach the \$3.5 trillion mark by end-March, said the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

In real terms, the economy is expected to grow at 7 per cent for the year ending March 2023. This follows an 8.7 per cent growth in the previous financial year.

"For India, 2022 was special. It marked the 75th year of India's Independence. India became the world's fifth largest economy, measured in current dollars. Come March, the nominal GDP of India will be around \$3.5 trillion," the Survey said.

India's economy crossed the \$3 trillion mark last year. It further said the fundamentals of the Indian economy are sound as it enters its Amrit Kaal, the 25-year journey towards its centenary as a modern, independent nation.

"It is befitting that during



India's Amrit Kaal, it assumed the Presidency of G-20 nations in December 2022," the survey said.

Global problems need global solutions, and global solutions require collaboration and cooperation.

Based on the theme of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth, One Family, One Future', India's G20 Presidency aims to achieve co-ordinated solutions to key issues of global concern.

As per the survey, economic growth is expected to be brisk in 2023-24 as a vigorous credit disbursal and capital investment cycle are expected to unfold in India with the strengthening of the balance sheets of the corporate and banking sectors.

Ahead of budget, States debt cost rises marginally to 7.68%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In the second-highest auction so far in FY23, 13 States raised ₹25,800 crore in debt capital from markets on Tuesday, paying a higher price as the cost rose by 4 basis points to 7.68 per cent.

The latest auction is 9 per cent higher on-year basis but was 19 per cent lower than indicated for this week in the auction calendar, according to a note by Icrs Ratings.

The weighted average cut-off or the interest rate payable annually by the states, rose by a further 4 basis points to 7.68 per cent over the past auction, Icrs Ratings chief economist and head of research & outreach Aditi Nayar said in the note.

She said while the weighted average tenor rose to 15 years from 13, the yield curve was inverted at the longer-end.

Accordingly, the spread between the 10-year state bonds also called state development loans and the benchmark G-sec (Government Securities) yield rose to 33 basis points from 30 basis points last week.

Markets eke out modest gains ahead of Budget, Fed's rate decision

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks ended with marginal gains on Tuesday as investors kept their powder dry ahead of the Union Budget presentation and the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision.

Fag-end buying helped the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex settle with a gain of 49.49 points or 0.08 per cent at 59,549.90. During the day, it hit a high of 59,787.63 and a low of 59,104.59.

The broader NSE Nifty inched up 13.20 points or 0.07 per cent to close at 17,662.15. Mahindra & Mahindra topped the Sensex gainers' chart with a jump of 3.53 per cent, followed by UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, SBI, ITC, Tata Motors, Titan and NTPC.

On the other hand, Tata Consultancy Services, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints, HCL Tech and HDFC were among the major laggards.

"The Indian market has been underperforming compared to the rest of the world because it has been trading at premium valuations, which are in contrast to the moderation forecast in the domestic econ-



omy for FY24.

"The premiumisation has tapered, currently trading in-line with developed markets like the US; however, we continue to trade at a premium to other emerging markets. The Adani saga has prolonged the correction as FII selling has increased. Now the focus is on the outcome of the Budget and Fed policy, on which the market has a mixed view," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

The pre-Budget Economic Survey, tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, said India's economic growth is projected to slow to 6 - 6.8 per cent in the next fiscal, from an estimated 7 per cent in FY23, but the country will remain the fastest growing major economy in the world as it fared better in dealing with the extraordinary set of challenges the globe has faced.

'New diversified markets helping India's exports'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Increasing exports to markets such as Brazil, South Africa and Saudi Arabia are boosting the growth of the country's out-bound shipments, FIEO said on Tuesday.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President A Sakthivel said the Economic Survey has rightly highlighted India's growing and diversifying merchandise trade.

"The new diversified markets, including those of Brazil, South Africa and Saudi Arabia, have led to the increase in exports by up to 2 times," he



said.

The ongoing trade negotiations with the UK, EU, Canada, and Israel will also add further impetus to our exports, he added.

"Reducing the cost of logistics in the country, which now to the tune of 14-15 per cent, comparable to the global benchmark, will help in mak-

ing our exports more competitive worldwide," Sakthivel said.

Yogesh Gupta, Regional Chairman, FIEO (Eastern Region), said the exporter fraternity is expecting fiscal support and affordable credit, from the upcoming budget.

"A need of the hour is to support exports by reducing lending rates and to restore interest equalisation rates in view of the rising cost of credit it will be of great help," Gupta said.

Additional financial support to units generating additional employment in the export sector will also be an incentive for exporters.

CII suggests to set up export panel to widen India's export portfolio



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said.

When asked about the survey pointing out some global effects of the conflict in Ukraine, he replied, "Those are some of the fair 1 would say negative headwinds that exist for India and it is something that we have to keep in mind because at the end of the day we are part of the global economy."

There are several tailwinds as well for India, Bajaj said, noting India is poised to emerge as one of the fastest-growing insurance markets in the coming decade.

"We believe a large number of sectors have reached that level where they need to invest. We are now starting to see capex come in whether it is in construction or whether it is a commodity like steel and cement chemicals.

"The Government has played a very strong role with public sector capex in the last few years and industry is hoping for a similar growth to be announced in the Budget tomorrow which will continue to provide the necessary tailwinds," he said.

The Union Budget for 2023-24 is scheduled to be tabled in Parliament on Wednesday by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharam.

On the Government's PLI schemes for various sectors, Bajaj said the industry is expecting more sectors to be included in the programme.

Equity mutual fund schemes to shift to T+2 redemption payment cycle



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asset management companies are set to move to a shorter redemption payment cycle of T+2 for equity schemes from Wednesday.

At present, funds are transferred to investors' bank account within 3 days after the completion of the redemption process.

Moving to the T+2 cycle for equity schemes will benefit mutual fund investors.

Akhil Chaturvedi, Chief Business Officer of Motilal Oswal AMC, termed the move as a positive step that will give quick and easy liquidity, which can be used to plan re-investment or meet any obligations in a more time-bound manner. From January 27, Indian equity markets moved to a T+1 settlement cycle for all stocks, shortening the settlement cycle by a day and making the availability of funds a day sooner.

To pass on this benefit to mutual fund investors, Association of Mutual Funds on Friday said that all asset management companies will move to the T+2 redemption payment cycle for equity schemes, and implement this uniformly with effect from February 1, 2023.

Adani to set up AI lab in Tel Aviv, develop real estate in Haifa

PTI ■ HAIFA

Indian tycoon Gautam Adani's Imports-to-energy conglomerate will set up an artificial intelligence lab in Tel Aviv as it looks to leverage on a \$1.2 billion Haifa port deal to make more investments in Israel.

Adani, whose business empire was rocked by allegations of fraud by US short seller Hindenburg Research, appeared alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for signing of the deal to takeover Haifa Port in Israel, and spoke of investment opportunities.

He did not make any mention of the row that has already wiped out over USD 70 billion in value from his group stocks.

Adani, 60, said his group will also develop real estate at the port to transform the Haifa skyline.

"We have initiated several dozen technology relationships wherein we have offered the entire Adani portfolio of companies to be a giant sandbox for us to learn together," he said in his speech. "We are also in the process of setting up an Artificial Intelligence lab in Tel Aviv which will work in close collaboration with our new AI labs in India and US."

In last six years, Adani group has struck many critical partnerships with companies such as Elbit Systems, Israel Weapon Systems, and Israel Innovation Authority.

Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone Ltd in partnership with local chemicals and logistics group Gadot in July last year won an Israel government's tender to buy the Haifa Port, a major trade hub on Israel's Mediterranean coast, for about \$1.2 billion.

Digital payments record 24% annual growth at end of Sept 2022: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Digital payments across the country registered a growth of 24.13 per cent in a year through September 2022, as per RBI's index that measures the adoption of online transactions.

The newly-constituted RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) stood at 377.46 in September 2022 against 349.30 in March 2022 and 304.06 in September 2021.

"The RBI-DPI Index has increased across all parameters driven by significant growth in payment infrastructure and payment performance across the country over the period," Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a statement on Tuesday.

The central bank had announced the construction of a composite RBI-DPI in March 2018 as a base to capture the



extent of digitisation of payments across the country.

The index comprises five broad parameters that enable the measurement of the deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different periods.

These parameters are Payment Enablers (weight 25 per cent); Payment Infrastructure - Demand-side factors (10 per cent); Payment Infrastructure - Supply-side factors (15 per cent); Payment Performance (45 per cent); and Consumer Centricity (5 per cent).

GST led to high tax buoyancy, augurs well for resource mobilisation: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Goods and Services Tax collection is showing a higher buoyancy than the pre-GST system, auguring well for future resource mobilisation in the economy, the Economic Survey 2022-23 presented in Parliament said on Tuesday.

Giving a 5-year analysis of tax collection pre and post-GST, the survey said the taxes which were subsumed in the Goods and Services Tax had a buoyancy of one.

However, the buoyancy improved to 1.1 after the GST implementation on July 1, 2017.

"Improved tax collection efficiency was one of the main arguments in favour of GST," said the Economic Survey.



Centre's fiscal deficit touches nearly 60% of full-year target at end-Dec

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's fiscal deficit as of end-December touched 59.8 per cent of the full-year Budget Estimate on subdued growth in revenue collections, according to finance ministry data released on Tuesday.

In actual terms, the fiscal deficit — which is the difference between expenditure and revenue — was ₹9,92,976 crore during the April-December period of 2022-23. In the corresponding period last year, the deficit was 50.4 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) of 2021-22.

The Government has budgeted fiscal deficit at ₹16.61 lakh crore or 6.4 per cent of the GDP in the current financial year ending March 2023. The deficit is funded by market borrowing. As per the Controller General of Accounts (CGA)



data, the net tax revenue at ₹15.55 lakh crore was 80.4 per cent of BE 2022-23. During the corresponding period of 2021-22, the net tax revenue was 95.4 per cent of that year's BE.

Non-tax revenue was at ₹2.14 lakh crore or 79.5 per cent of BE. In the last fiscal, the collection by December was 106.7 per cent of BE.

The Central Government's total expenditure during April-December works out to be 71.4 per cent of BE of 2022-23, lower than 72.4 per cent of BE

in the year-ago period.

Capital expenditure stood at ₹4.89 lakh crore or 65.4 per cent of BE at end-December. The capex was 70.7 per cent of BE during the corresponding period last fiscal.

As per the CGA data, the central government's total receipts, including non-tax revenue, stood at ₹18.25 lakh crore or 79.9 per cent of the current year's BE. In the year-ago period, the total receipts had touched 89.1 per cent of BE 2021-22.

Retail inflation for industrial workers rises marginally to 5.5% in Dec

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for industrial workers rose marginally to 5.5 per cent in December 2022 from 5.41 per cent in November due to higher prices of certain food items.

"Year-on-year inflation for the month stood at 5.50 per cent compared to 5.41 per cent for the previous month (November 2022) and 5.56 per cent during the corresponding month (December 2021) a year before," a labour bureau statement said.

Similarly, it stated that the food inflation stood at 4.10 per cent against 4.30 per cent in the previous month and 5.93 per cent during the corresponding month a year ago.

The All-India CPI-IW (consumer price index for industrial workers) for December 2022 decreased by



0.2 points and stood at 132.3 points. It was 132.5 points in November 2022.

On one-month percentage change, it decreased by 0.15 per cent with respect to the previous month compared to a decrease of 0.24 per cent recorded between corresponding months a year ago.

The maximum downward pressure in the current index came from Food and Beverages group, contributing 0.52 percentage points to the total change.

Tata Motors raises final tranche of ₹3,750 cr from TRG Rise Climate

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Tuesday said it has raised the second and final tranche of ₹3,750 crore from TPG Rise Climate as per an agreement inked in 2021.

In October 2021, Tata Motors announced that it will raise USD 1 billion in its passenger Electric Vehicle (EV) business from TPG Rise Climate in exchange for compulsorily convertible preference shares to create a portfolio of EVs and dedicated Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) platforms.

Tata Motors and TPG Rise Climate entered into a binding agreement under which TPG along with its co-investor ADQ to invest in a



subsidiary of Tata Motors.

"...Pursuant to the Agreement, TPG has subscribed to 3,75,00,000 compulsorily convertible preference shares of the face value of ₹1,000 each in the subsidiary on January 31, 2023, for an aggregate consideration of ₹37,50,00,00,000 as the second tranche of the transaction," Tata Motors said in a regulatory filing.

JSPL, NTPC, Vedanta among 59 firms submit bids for 36 coal block

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday said that 59 companies, including JSPL, NTPC and Vedanta, have submitted bids for 36 coal blocks that were put up for sale under the commercial mines auction.

A total of 96 bids were submitted for the coal blocks.

"A total of 96 bids were received under two tranches of commercial coal mine auctions," the coal ministry said in a statement.

This is the highest ever bids received since the launch of commercial coal mines auction in the year 2020, the ministry said, adding, a "total of six public sector companies had submitted the bids in the ongoing round of commercial coal mines' auction as well".

"Under sixth tranche of auctions, a total of 86 bids both online and offline were received against 32 coal mines and three bids were received only offline but not online, and two or more bids have been



received for 25 coal mines i.e. 79 bids (both online and offline) against 25 coal mines, and 7 coal mines have received single bids (both online and offline)," the minister said.

Of these 32 coal mines, 10 are partially explored blocks

whereas 22 are fully explored mines.

Ambuja Cements, Jindal Power, JSW Steel, Bharat Aluminium Company Ltd, JSW Cement, TANGEDCO and Damodar Valley Corporation are some of the other companies that have submitted their bids.

The auction process of 141 coal, lignite mines for sale of coal was launched by the coal ministry in November, 2022.

The last date for submission of technical bid for all the

mines was January 30.

As part of the auction process, technical bids comprising online and offline bid documents were opened in the presence of the bidders.

"Under second attempt of fifth tranche, a total of 8 coal mines were put up for auction and 10 bids have been received against four coal mines where two or more bids have been received for two coal mines and single bids have been received for two coal mines," it said.

REAL EXPECTED TO CONTINUE EUROPEAN DOMINANCE OF CWC

AP ■ RABAT

One of the last Club World Cups in its current format begins on Wednesday in Morocco, where Real Madrid will be favourites to continue Europe's dominance of the much-maligned FIFA competition. FIFA president Gianni Infantino announced on the sidelines of the World Cup in Qatar in December that an expanded Club World Cup is planned from 2025.

The bigger competition, which would feature 32 teams, has been a controversial pet project of Infantino's for some time. A 24-team Club World Cup, involving eight European sides, had been due to take place in China in 2021 only to be put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

World football's governing body is yet to reveal any further details of the plans, but global players' union FIFPro has already complained of Infantino making the announcement "unilaterally without seriously consulting...with the players".

For now, the Club World Cup limps on with just seven teams, including the six continental champions.

After five consecutive editions in the Middle East it returns to Morocco, which hosted the tournament in 2013 and 2014, and Real will be expected to become the 10th consecutive



European winners.

Real, the reigning European champions, have claimed the title four times, including in Morocco in 2014.

Real will enter in the semi-finals on February 8 and will play in Rabat against either

CONCACAF champions Seattle Sounders, Egyptian giants Al Ahly or New Zealand's Auckland City, the champions of Oceania.

If they win, Carlo Ancelotti's side will advance to the final on February 11.

MOROCCAN HOPES

The other semi-final will see last year's Copa Libertadores winners Flamengo take on either Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia or home hopes Wydad Casablanca.

Widely dismissed as an irrelevance in Europe, the com-

petition is considered far more prestigious in the rest of the world, a chance for their best sides to pit themselves against giants like Real.

Brazilian clubs have won the Club World Cup four times, most recently through Corin-

thians in 2012. Wydad will be hoping to become the first African club to triumph.

The host nation is always represented, but Wydad also won last year's CAF Champions League, and so Al Ahly — the team they beat in the final —

Man Utd lose Eriksen until May

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United midfielder Christian Eriksen is likely to be ruled out until early May by an ankle injury he suffered in the FA Cup win over Reading, the club said Tuesday. Eriksen left Old Trafford on crutches on Saturday after being caught by Reading striker Andy Carroll in the fourth-round tie.

The loss of the 30-year-old Danish playmaker is a blow for United who lie fourth in the Premier League and in the Champions League qualification places after a good run of

form that only ended with the 3-2 defeat by leaders Arsenal on January 22.

United said in a statement: "Christian Eriksen is expected to be out of action for an extended period because of an ankle injury sustained in our FA Cup victory over Reading on Saturday.

"While investigations are continuing, initial assessments indicate that Eriksen is likely to be out until late April or early May."

United said "there is hope that Christian can return in time to play a role in the final stages of the campaign".

have been invited to take part as well.

Walid Regragui led Wydad to that continental title before taking Morocco on a historic run to the World Cup semi-finals in Qatar.

"It's nice for Morocco — particularly after the World Cup we had — for people to see that there's football here, there are fans, and there are beautiful stadiums. It's going to be fantastic for our country," Regragui told FIFA.com

The competition kicks off on Wednesday when Al Ahly — the record 10-time African champions who have finished third at the last two Club World Cups — play Auckland City in Tangier.

The tournament will see a refereeing first after the International Football Association Board, the sport's lawmakers, approved a trial that will allow fans in the stadium to hear officials explain decisions taken after VAR reviews.

West Ham ease past Derby to earn Man Utd clash

AP ■ LONDON

David Moyes cannot wait to take on his former club Manchester United in the FA Cup fifth round after goals from Jarrod Bowen and Michail Antonio sealed West Ham's 2-0 victory at third tier Derby on Monday.

Bowen put West Ham ahead early in the first half and Antonio doubled the lead soon after the interval in the fourth round tie.

Moyes' side will head to Old Trafford in late February as they continue their bid to reach the FA Cup final for the first time since 2006.

It will be Moyes' latest return to United, who sacked the Scot in 2014 only 10 months after he succeeded Alex Ferguson.

"I'm really looking forward to the game. It's a really good game for us," Moyes said.

"Maybe at the moment that's the game we need because we've got players who want to play on the big stage.

"There's nothing bigger than

Old Trafford, so I'm saying to the players, 'Come on, let's go and take it on and challenge them'."

Avoiding an embarrassing defeat against Derby was essential for the under-fire Moyes, but it is Premier League survival that remains his top priority.

The Hammers are languishing in 16th place in the Premier League, just one point above the relegation zone.

"This was a difficult game because Derby had gone 16 unbeaten. In the end, we did a pretty professional job on them," Moyes said.

Moyes made six changes following West Ham's vital 2-0 victory over Premier League relegation rivals Everton in their most recent match nine days ago. Despite the selection gamble, West Ham proved too strong for a Derby side on the up after a turbulent period.

Just 12 months ago, Derby were in turmoil, with the club close to going out of business after they plunged into administration and suffered relegation to the third tier for the first time



since 1986.

Finally rescued in July 2022 when lifelong Derby fan David Clowes bought the club from Mel Morris, the Rams have

been revitalised this term.

Paul Warne's side sit fourth in League One and the FA Cup exit shouldn't detract from their promotion challenge.

West Ham's victory came just hours after the last 16 draw was made.

Wrexham will host Tottenham if the non-league side can beat Sheffield United in a fourth round replay.

Fifth-tier Wrexham, who are owned by Hollywood actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, were seconds away from a shock win against Sheffield United on Sunday before the Championship side snatched a 3-3 draw.

With Reynolds watching at the Racecourse Ground, John Egan scored a late equaliser for United and the teams will meet again at Bramall Lane for the right to face Tottenham.

Manchester City, 1-0 winners over Premier League leaders Arsenal on Friday, travel to second tier Bristol City, for the first meeting of the sides since the League Cup semi-finals in 2018.

Brighton head to second tier Stoke after knocking out holders Liverpool with a dramatic 2-1 victory on Sunday.

India in Group B of Asia Mixed Team Championships 2023

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India has been placed in Group B alongside Malaysia, UAE, and Kazakhstan in the Asia Mixed Team Championships 2023, which will be held here at the Dubai Exhibition Centre, from February 14 to 19.

The draw for the continental event, which will have 17 teams, took place here at Dubai Sports Council on Tuesday, where Indian ace shuttler PV Sindhu was present as the Guest of Honour.

Group A consists of China, Korea, Singapore and Uzbekistan. Group C includes Indonesia, Thailand, Bahrain, Syria and Lebanon while Japan, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong and Pakistan are drawn in Group D.

China, Japan, Indonesia, and Malaysia are the top four seeded teams. All 17 teams are divided into four groups of four countries, and one group with five, where they compete in



Round Robin format with the top two teams advancing to the knockout stage.

Each tie group shall be decided by the results of two singles and three doubles matches. In the Group stage, all five matches of each tie shall be played. In the Knockout stage,

each tie shall be stopped when the tie is decided.

A draw of the knockout stage will be made after the completion of the last match of the Group Stage.

The Indian team was knocked out in the quarterfinals of the first edition held in 2017. India could not go past the group stage in the last edition of the Championship, held in 2019. The 2021 edition was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

INDIA SQUAD:

Men's singles: Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy

Women's singles: PV Sindhu, Aakrushi Kashyap

Men's doubles: Satwiksairaj Ranikreddy/Chirag Shetty, Krishna Prasad Garga/Vishnuvardhan Goud P

Women's doubles: Treesa Jolly/Gayatri Gopichand, Ashwini Bhat/Shikha Gautam

Mixed doubles: Ishaan Bhatnagar/Tanisha Crasto



Farah says 2023 London Marathon will be his last

AP ■ LONDON

British athletics great Mo Farah has said this year's London Marathon will likely be his last as he contemplates the end of a brilliant career.

The 40-year-old is best known for his success on the track winning gold in the 5,000 and 10,000 metres at both the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympic Games, as well as several world titles across both distances.

And while his marathon career has reached nothing like the same heights, Farah is keen to run in London again after missing last year's edition even though he will be 40 by the time of the April 23 race.

"It's been an amazing career and taking part in the London Marathon is a very big deal," he said in a statement issued by event organisers. "I was gutted not to race last year and I just want to give it one more shot.

"It depends on my body. I

just want to get to the start line and see what I can manage. I'm just taking one race at a time."

He added: "I'm not a spring chicken any more. You can't keep coming back in the right shape and, for me, I'd love to be able to finish it at home."

Farah has ruled out competing at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, but may yet try to finish his time as a British international at this year's World Championships in Budapest.

"I'm not going to go to the Olympics and I think 2023 will be my last year," he added.

"But if it came down to it towards the end of the year and you did get picked for your country, I'd never turn that down." Farah last ran in London in 2019, coming fifth, having finished third the year before.

"So it's been a little while," he said. "But I'll be preparing well, I'll head out to Ethiopia and put in a lot of solid training and see what I can do when it comes to April."

No ATP action against Zverev after 'insufficient evidence' of abuse

AP ■ LONDON

Former world number two Alexander Zverev will face no disciplinary action from the ATP after an independent investigation found "insufficient evidence" to substantiate allegations of domestic abuse, it was announced Tuesday.

The German player became the subject of an ATP-commissioned probe in October 2021 following allegations made by his former girlfriend, Olya Sharypova.

Zverev had denied all of the allegations.

But the ATP said in a statement: "A major independent investigation into Alexander Zverev has found insufficient

evidence to substantiate published allegations of abuse. As a result, no disciplinary action will be taken by ATP."

The ATP, the governing body for the men's professional tour, said while the primary focus of the investigation related to alleged abuses at the ATP Masters 1000 event in Shanghai in 2019, its scope also included purported misconduct in other locations, including Monaco, New York and Geneva, as referenced in public reporting.

An inquiry led by the Lake Forest Group (LFG), a third-party investigator, conducted what the statement said were "extensive interviews" with both Sharypova and Zverev, and 24 other individuals including family and friends, players, and other parties



involved with the ATP tour.

It also reviewed submissions by both Sharypova and Zverev, including text messages, audio files, and photos.

Following a 15-month process, LFG submitted its full report to the ATP, which said that "based on a lack of reliable evidence and eyewitness reports, in addition to conflicting statements by Sharypova, Zverev and other interviewees, the investigation was unable to substantiate the allegations of abuse" or determine that violations of the ATP's rules had taken place.

The statement added that the findings "may however be reevaluated should new evidence come to light, or should any legal proceedings reveal violations of ATP rules"

Bayern sign Cancelo on loan from Man City

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich have signed Portugal Bwing-back Joao Cancelo on loan until the end of the season from Manchester City, the German club confirmed on Tuesday.

Bayern have an option to buy the Portuguese defender for a reported 70 million euros (\$75 million) at the end of the season.

Cancelo, who has scored seven times in 41 appearances for Portugal, arrived in Munich on Monday and completed a medical on Tuesday for a move that could spell the end of France international Benjamin Pavard's time at Bayern.

The 28-year-old Portuguese defender joined City from Juventus for 65 million euros (\$70 million) in 2019 and has a contract with the English champions until 2027.

"FC Bayern is a great club, one of the best in the world, and it's enormous motivation for me to now play alongside these extraordinary players in a team," Cancelo said in a statement released by the club on Tuesday.

"I know that this club, this team lives for titles and wins titles every year. I'm also driven by the hunger for success."



Cancelo has won multiple titles throughout his career, including league titles with Benfica, Juventus and Man City.

Bayern sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic said the club "had been thinking about (Cancelo) for a while" before making its move.

"He's the optimal fit in our system with his attacking style of play and dynamism, and his mentality and experience fit very well in our team.

"I'm convinced Joao will help us in the coming weeks and months where we want to win titles."

Bayern secured the deadline-day signing after Cancelo, who has been named in the Premier League Team of the Year for the past two seasons, has fallen out of the Man City first team in recent weeks.

Manager Pep Guardiola has left Cancelo out of the starting line-up in each of the team's last three games, with academy graduate Rico Lewis, alongside Nathan Ake, Kyle Walker and John Stones all preferred to Cancelo.

Cancelo could make his Bayern debut in the club's German Cup match away against Mainz on Wednesday, or in their away Bundesliga clash with Wolfsburg on Sunday.

MANE RETURNS TO TRAINING WITH BALL IN MUNICH

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich forward Sadio Mane trained with the ball for the first time in three months on Wednesday, two weeks ahead of the club's crucial Paris Saint Germain clash.

Mane, 30, took part in the Tuesday morning session, one week after his return to the training pitch.

Mane injured a tendon in his leg during his side's 6-1 win over Werder Bremen in November and required surgery that forced him to miss Senegal's World Cup campaign in Qatar.

Bayern travel to Paris for the first leg of the Champions League last 16 tie on February 14, with the return fixture in Munich on March 8.



Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann previously said he "would not count on" the reigning African Player of the Year to be available for the first leg.

Mane, who arrived in Bayern from Liverpool in the summer of 2022, has scored 11 goals in 23 games in all competitions this year.



There's still enough pull to play for NZ: Ferguson

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

New Zealand pacer Lockie Ferguson empathised with his fellow players giving up central contracts for lucrative T20 league deals but said there is still enough "pull" to represent the country in big-ticket events, such as the World Cup.

Three New Zealand players -- Trent Boult, Martin Gupthill and Jimmy Neesham -- gave up their central contracts last year to play in different T20 leagues across the world.

Asked if it would affect the future of T20 cricket in New Zealand, Ferguson said: "I don't think I have the answer. And it's certainly above my pay grade but, from our point of view, you can understand players when they're at the sort of back end of their careers.

"But at the same time, I know they will still want to play for New Zealand. So finding the balance, I'm not sure what that might be. Certainly, as I said, people above the chain to me, will work that out. But I think, from a player's point of view, we love playing for the Black Caps."

"Certainly since I've been playing such a rich history of being very successful, and that's enjoyable to play and seeing the young talent come through and do well as well is very rewarding.

"So, I think, from a player's point of view, we want to play for New Zealand in World Cups. That's sort of what kids dream of, and I think there's still a lot of pull for that."

The 31-year-old, who played under Hardik Pandya as part of Gujarat Titans side in IPL last year, heaped praise on the India T20 skipper.

"Hardik, I have a very high regard certainly from day one, playing underneath him in Gujarat (Titans), he is a clear leader within the group and demands the audience very quickly.

"But, at the same time, I guess, similar to Kane (Williamson) he has time for everyone in the group," Ferguson said.

"He's done well with India. You can see his body language has been fantastic with the group and I think, he is an exceptional leader for the country. But certainly, I enjoyed my time playing under him."

New Zealand suffered a 3-0 loss against India in the ODI series and are currently tied 1-1 in the three-match T20 rubber after losing the second game in Lucknow by six wickets.

"Look, the one-day series was challenging, certainly the first ODI we had our chance to win it. And then, outplayed in the second one, and in the third one, we were sort of lined out well too. So although on paper it's 3-0, I thought it was a pretty competitive series," he said.

"And then, in the T20s, it's been pretty even throughout. So always nice to come to a decider, particularly in a lovely stadium like this."

The pitches used for the two T20 games favoured the spinners a lot with India skipper Pandya criticising the Lucknow track, which saw New Zealand post just 99 in 20 overs.

Ferguson, however, said low-scoring games are good for cricket since T20 is mostly dominated by batters.

"I bowled my four (overs) in the first game and I actually enjoyed bowling the cross seamers, sort of sped a little bit, got a bit of an extra pace and carry. To be honest, even Arshdeep bowling to me in the last game, there was a little bit of pace and carry, but clearly spin was the right option."

"We play a lot of T20s here in India, and around the world and we have those high-scoring games. And as a bowler, I think sometimes those sort of lower scores, probably not the 100, but lower score games actually are just as exciting and brings a good battle between bat and ball."

"So I think for the game, it's great. Certainly I'm sure fans prefer the big, high-scoring matches but, as a cricket player, that can be pretty exciting."

MEN IN BLUE'S TOP ORDER IN FOCUS IN SERIES DECIDER

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's young top order will be under pressure to deliver in the series-deciding third T20 International against New Zealand here on Wednesday.

It would be fair to say the trio of Shubman Gill, Ishan Kishan and Rahul Tripathi has not made their opportunities count in the absence of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and K L Rahul.

After the game on Wednesday, India don't play a T20I for a long time, leaving the younger crop to make a statement before the focus shifts to the five-day format.

Kishan has not been able to find rhythm in his batting since his double hundred in Bangladesh while the turning ball has troubled Gill, who has not been able to replicate his ODI form in the shortest format. Tripathi, too, has wasted chances that have come his way in the absence of regular number three Kohli.

If it hadn't been for Suryakumar Yadav and Hardik Pandya, India would have struggled to chase down 100 on Sunday.

The surfaces in the series have attracted a lot of attention and it remains to be seen if the players get to negotiate another turning track at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

In the bowling department, Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav playing together has helped India build the pressure on the opposition. With the pitch offering a huge amount of turn, it was surprising that Chahal was used only for two overs after he dis-



missed opener Finn Allen.

After struggling with no-balls, Arshdeep Singh was back to his frugal best in Lucknow and that should give him a lot of confidence going into the decider.

With the series on the line, Pandya is unlikely to change the playing eleven despite clamour for inclusion of Prithvi Shaw, who made a national comeback with this series.

New Zealand, on the other hand, will be expecting more from their middle order. Sensing an opportunity to win a rare series in India. The Blackcaps will be highly motivated for the challenge.

Glenn Phillips has not been at his destructive best but trust him to play a match-winning knock on Wednesday. ODI series sensation Michael Bracewell too is due for a game-changing knock. Number three Mark Chapman will also be looking to make a significant contribution.

New Zealand used as many as eight bowling options in the previous game with four spinners bowling their full quota of overs.

More than 200 runs were scored in the last T20 played here almost two years ago and, after the low-scoring affair in Lucknow, fans would be hoping that normal service is restored.

TEAMS (FROM)

India: Hardik Pandya (captain), Suryakumar Yadav (vice-captain), Ishan Kishan (wicketkeeper), Shubman Gill, Prithvi Shaw, Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar. **New Zealand:** Mitchell Santner (captain), Finn Allen, Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway (wk), Dane Cleaver (wk), Jacob Duffy, Lockie Ferguson, Benjamin Lister, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips (wk), Michael Rippon, Henry Shipleigh, Ish Sodhi and Blair Tickner.

Deepti climbs to 2nd spot in T20I bowlers rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India all-rounder Deepti Sharma has climbed to second spot and has the top position -- currently occupied by England's Sophie Ecclestone -- in her sights in the latest ICC T20I bowling rankings announced on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old off-spinner, who is leading the wicket-taker's list in the ongoing Women's T20I Tri-series in South Africa with nine scalps, has reduced the England left-arm spinner's lead to just 26 rating points.

Deepti (737 points) moved up one spot, while South African left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba, who has picked four wickets in the Tri-series, also climbed a spot to occupy the third place with 732 points.

If the duo continue their form, they could take Sophie's top spot ahead of the Women's T20 World Cup, scheduled in South Africa from February 10.

India and South Africa



will square off in the T20I Tri-series final in East London on Thursday.

India left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad also improved her rank four places and is currently 14th on the list of T20I bowlers.

There was a lot of move-

ment inside the top-10 among bowlers this week, with Australia pacer Megan Schutt (up six places to fifth) and England seamer Katherine Sciver-Brunt (up two spots to sixth) also gaining spots.

Australia right-hander Tahlia McGrath maintained a healthy buffer at the top in the T20I batting rankings, with class South Africa top-order performer Laura Wolvaardt among the biggest movers behind her.

Laura improved four places to ninth on the back of her strong start to the Tri-series against India and the West Indies, while teammate Tazmin Brits jumped 10 spots to 18th after an impressive half-century last week.

West Indies skipper Hayley Matthews moved four places to 22nd overall on the updated T20I rankings for batters.

The only change inside the top-10 in the list for all-rounders saw Australia veteran Ellyse Perry take the 10th spot from Tahlia following a half-century against Pakistan.

Playing tour games on Indian pitches is irrelevant: Smith

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australia skipper Steve Smith says his team is better off training on its own rather than playing tour games on "irrelevant" Indian pitches ahead of the four-Test Border-Gavaskar series.

Australia have decided not to play a single tour game in India during the month-long Test series, primarily due to the hosts serving up green tops for practice matches and spinning tracks for the actual games.

Smith, who won the country's best men's player award for the fourth time in his career on Monday, said nets sessions would benefit his side more than the tour games.

The 18-member squad, led by Pat Cummins, had a pre-series camp on spin-friendly tracks in Sydney and will have a week-long stint in Bengaluru before the first Test in Nagpur from February 9.

"We normally have two tour games over in England. This time we don't have a tour game in India," Smith was quoted as saying by news.Com.Au on



Monday ahead of the team's departure to India.

"The last time we went (to India) I'm pretty sure we got served up a green top (to practice on) and it was sort of irrelevant. Hopefully, we get really good training facilities where the ball is likely to do what it's likely to do out in the middle, and we can get our practice in," said Smith, who beat Travis Head and David Warner to win the Allan Border medal on Monday.

Australia have been criticised for not including tour games, which are an integral part of a long series, in their itiner-

ary. But Smith said rigorous nets sessions will help spinners train better. "We're better off having our own nets and getting spinners in and bowling as much as they can."

Smith, whose side had lost the series 1-2 when it toured India in 2017, indicated a lot of thinking had into the decision.

"We'll wait and see when we hit the ground. I think we've made the right decision to not play a tour match. Like I said, last time they dished up a green top for us (in a tour game) and we barely faced any spin, so it's kind of irrelevant."

Venkatesh takes 5 as K'taka blow away Uttarakhand

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Medium-pacer M Venkatesh sizzled with a five-wicket haul as Karnataka produced a sensational bowling effort to bundle out Uttarakhand for a paltry 116 on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here on Tuesday.

Karnataka were 123 for no loss at stumps.

The 22-year-old Venkatesh justified captain Mayank Agarwal's decision to field after winning the toss as he rocked the top-order, removing Avneesh Sudha (17) and Dikshanshu Negi (9) early after Vidhwanth Kaverappa (2/17) drew the first blood, dismissing opener Jiwanjot Singh (1).

Vijaykumar Vyshak (1/25) then had Swapnil Singh (0) caught by Samarth R, while Kaverappa cleaned up Aditya Tare (14), as Uttarakhand lost half their side for only 64 in 27.4 overs.

Kunal Chandela (31) tried to hold one end but wickets continued to tumble, with Venkatesh returning to strike twice in the 47th over, sending Akhil Rawat (14) and Abhay Negi (1) back to the dressing room.

The Mysore pacer also had Chandela caught by



Manish Pandey to put the final nail in Uttarakhand's coffins as spinner K Gowtham mopped up the tail with two wickets.

In reply, Karnataka seemed to be batting on a different track as both the openers -- Ravikumar Samarth (54) and Mayank Agarwal (65) -- looked in full flow during their unbeaten fifties.

While Samarth cracked seven boundaries, Agarwal had nine hits to the fence

besides a maximum.

ANDHRA ON TOP

Indore: A fluent century by Ricky Bhui and his association with Karan Shinde helped Andhra overcome the blow dealt by skipper Hanuma Vihari's injury on day one of their quarterfinal against defending champions Madhya Pradesh.

Thanks to Bhui's unbeaten 115 and Shinde's 83 not out, Andhra ended the day at a strong 262 for two.

Sent in to bat by MP captain Aditya Shrivastava, the visiting team got off to a brisk start with C.R Gnaneshwar (24) and Abhishek Reddy (22) adding 37 runs.

Reddy was the first to fall, trapped LBW by medium-pacer Gaurav Yadav (2/53), the only MP bowler to pick up wickets on the day.

Skipper Vihari joined Gnaneshwar and the two added 21 runs before the latter was dismissed by Yadav.

Vihari and Bhui played cautiously before the pacy Avesh Khan struck the former with a bouncer. Andhra were 72 for two at that stage.

The blow left Vihari in some discomfort and he subsequently decided to retire hurt. Later, scans revealed that the Andhra captain had suffered a wrist fracture.

The batters though recovered after Vihari's injury and frustrated the MP attack. Bhui, a key member of the visiting team's batting unit, played with a lot of determination, and in Shinde's company, kept the scoreboard ticking.

The duo did not mind playing out a few quiet overs in between but picked up runs when the bowlers erred in line and length. Avesh Khan worked up some pace but sprayed the ball around at times.

BHUT STRIKES CENTURY

Rajkot: Batting at number nine, bowler Parth Bhut shown with the bat and saved Saurashtra the blushes with a gritty century on the first day of their quarterfinal against Punjab here.

Bhut was yet to open his account when Saurashtra lost their eighth wicket for 147 at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium.

However, thanks to the 25-

year-old left-arm spinner's unbeaten knock of 111 and his last-wicket partnership of 95 runs with Yuvraj Singh Dodiya (17), the hosts could stretch their total to 303 before getting bowled out with three overs still remaining in the day.

In reply, Punjab faced just one over and were three for no loss when the stumps were called on Tuesday.

Prabhsimran Singh (2) and Naman Dhir (1) were at the crease.

In all, Bhut struck 11 boundaries and four sixes while scoring his runs at a fairly decent strike-rate of 71.61.

Earlier, Saurashtra's decision to bat first after winning the toss backfired as the Punjab bowlers left the home team reeling at 147 for eight.

Opener Snell Patel was the only specialist batter to show a semblance of resistance as he laboured his way to a fighting innings of 70 off 131 balls, hitting 11 fours in the process.

Leg-spinner Markande was the most successful bowler for the visitors, returning with figures of 4/84, while there were three and two wickets for pacers Baltej (3/60) and Siddarth Kaul (2/81) respectively.

Bhut added 61 runs for the ninth wicket with Chetan Sakariya (22) before Dodiya joined the former.

Bengal pacers make merry as Jharkhand dismissed for 173

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Pacer Akash Deep led Bengal's impressive show with a four-wicket haul as Jharkhand failed to last three full sessions and folded for a paltry 173 in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal at Eden Gardens here on Tuesday.

The Bengal pace trio of Akash Deep, Mukesh Kumar (3/61) and Ishan Porel (1/26) claimed seven wickets between them to revel in bowling-friendly conditions after the home team skipper Manoj Tiwary won a good toss.

More than half of Jharkhand's score was made by their No 3 batter Kumar Suraj, who looked composed and elegant en route to a gritty 89 not out.

The lefthander struck some elegant cover drives, scored on both sides of the wickets using his wrists beautifully but only to be stranded 11 runs shy of a third first-class hundred.

Suraj batted deep into his crease to negate the pace threat by the Bengal pacers and carried his bat through



but wickets kept on falling at the other end.

Jharkhand No 11 batter Ashish Kumar (12 off 8 balls) was one of the four Jharkhand batters to get to a double digit as he lent fine support to brighten Suraj's century prospects.

But Ashish fell after a mix-up as Bengal ended their innings in 66.2 overs. The duo put together 20 runs for the last wicket.

Bad light meant that Bengal could not come out to bat in the first innings as day one ended with 21 overs in arrears.