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AMID EXPECTATIONS OF LOWER RATE HIKE

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY FEBRUARY 7, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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2,600 killed in Turkey, Syria quake

Hundreds more trapped under rubble as devastating temblor topples buildings

AP ■ ADANA (TURKEY)

A powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked wide swaths of Turkey and neighbouring Syria on Monday, killing more than 2,600 people and injuring thousands more as it toppled hundreds of buildings and trapped residents under mounds of rubble or pancaked floors.

Authorities feared the death toll would climb as rescuers searched through tangles of metal and concrete for survivors in a region beset by more than a decade of Syria's civil war and a refugee crisis.

Residents jolted out of sleep by the pre-dawn quake rushed outside in the rain and snow to escape falling debris, while those who were trapped cried for help. Major aftershocks, including one nearly as strong as the initial quake, continued to rattle the region.

"I don't have the strength anymore," one survivor could be heard calling out from beneath the rubble in the Turkish city of Adana, as rescue workers tried to reach him, said a resident, journalism student Muhammet Fatih Yavuz. He said three buildings near his home were toppled.

The quake, which was centered on Turkey's southeastern province of Kahramanmaraş, sent residents of Damascus into the street and was felt as far away as Cairo and Beirut.

"Because the debris-removal efforts are continuing in many buildings in the earthquake zone, we do not know how high the number of dead

and injured will rise," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

In Adana, 20 or so people used power saws atop a collapsed cement building to clear out space for any survivors to climb out or be rescued. The men picked up rubble and threw it elsewhere in a tedious process.

The quake piled more misery on a region that has seen tremendous suffering over the past decade. On the Syrian side, the area affected is divided between government-held territory and the country's last opposition-held enclave, which is surrounded by Russian-backed government forces. Turkey, meanwhile, is home to millions of refugees from the civil war.

In the rebel-held enclave, hundreds of families remained trapped in rubble, the opposition emergency organisation called the White Helmets said in a statement. The area is packed with some 4 million people displaced from other parts of the country by the war. Many of them live in buildings that are already wrecked from past bombardments.

Strained health facilities quickly filled with injured, rescue workers said. Others had to be emptied, including a maternity hospital, according to the SAMS medical organization.

The region sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes. Some 18,000 were killed in similarly powerful earthquakes that hit northwest Turkey in 1999. The U.S. Geological



Civil defense workers and residents search through the rubble of collapsed buildings in the town of Harem near the Turkish border, Idlib province, Syria on Monday

AP | PTI

Survey measured Monday's quake at 7.8, with a depth of 18 kilometers (11 miles). Hours later, a 7.5 magnitude quake struck more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) away.

The second jolt in the afternoon caused a multistory apartment to topple face-forward onto the street in the Turkish city of Sanliurfa, disintegrating into rubble and raising a cloud of dust as bystanders screamed, according to video of the scene.

Continued on Page 2

Modi expresses condolences

India to send 2 NDRF teams

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday expressed condolences on the loss of lives in the earthquake in

Turkey and Syria and assured all possible assistance to in this time of crisis. Two teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) comprising nearly 100 personnel will leave for Turkey soon with medicines and other related material.

"Anguished by the loss of lives and damage of property due to the earthquake in Turkey. Condolences to the

bereaved families. May the injured recover soon," Modi said in a tweet.

"India stands in solidarity with the people of Turkey and is ready to offer all possible assistance to cope with this tragedy," the Prime Minister said tagging a tweet by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the quake.

Continued on Page 2

PM: Renewables, hydrogen to make India 3rd big eco

PNS/AGENCIES ■ BENGALURU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday laid out his vision of making India the world's third-largest economy with a focus on renewable energy, biofuels and hydrogen as he pivots a roadmap to cut reliance on imported oil and gas.

Modi met top oil and gas industry leaders for the annual brainstorming to discuss ideas and initiatives to put India on a sustainable growth path, sources aware of the matter said.

The meeting on the sidelines of the India Energy Week here saw the Prime Minister outline his vision to make India the world's third-largest

economy from the current fifth-largest. For this, the fuel needed should come from renewables, biofuels and hydrogen.

Sources said at the meeting Modi spoke of using 100 per cent renewable energy and increasing blends of ethanol and biofuels in traditional fuels.

Also, he talked about making India the world's largest hydrogen-producing nation.

Hydrogen is the cleanest known fuel which on burning emits only water and oxygen.

Sources said heads of international oil companies such as BP plc of UK, ExxonMobil and TotalEnergies participated. Rosneft head Igor Sechin too attended the meeting.

Continued on Page 2

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of the 'India Energy Week 2023' in Bengaluru on Monday. Karnataka Governor Thaaavar Chand Gehlot and Union Minister HS Puri are also seen

PTI

Parl stalled over Adani row for 3rd day; logjam may end today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament proceedings remain paralysed for the third working day on Monday amid the protests by Opposition parties on Adani-Hindenburg row, with the Congress taking to streets across the nation demanding a statement from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal held meetings with floor leaders of Opposition parties to end the logjam after both Houses were adjourned for the day.

Joshi and Meghwal met floor leaders, including the Congress' Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, the TMC's Sudeep Bandopadhyay and the DMK's TR Baalu, among others.

During the meetings, leaders across party lines were of the view that discussions should be held on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address. Opposition sources



Opposition parties' MPs stage a protest over Adani row in the Parliament complex, in New Delhi on Monday

PTI

said the chances of Parliament functioning normally on Tuesday to take up a discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address are "bright".

The Opposition created uproar in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, leading to their adjournment for the day without transacting any business, thus stalling the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address. The first adjournment in both the Houses occurred soon after it

resumed at 11 am; and the second minutes after the House resumed post lunch.

Sources said that the first part of the Budget Session scheduled till February 13 could be cut short and that treasury benches may blame the Opposition for not allowing Motion of Thanks on the maiden speech of the first Tribal President before the commencement of the Budget Session on January 31.

Continued on Page 2

SC to hear today plea against lawyer Gowri's elevation as HC judge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a serious development, the Supreme Court on Monday decided to hear on Tuesday a plea challenging the appointment of lawyer Lekshmana Chandra Victoria Gowri as a judge of the Madras High Court, soon after the Centre notified her judgeship. The petition filed by a group of lawyers accused Gowri of having links with the BJP and that she was involved in hate speeches.

The apex court had earlier in the day agreed to hear on February 10 the petition against her elevation but the matter was mentioned again and the hearing was fixed for Tuesday by a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, which said the collegium has taken note of "certain developments" after her name was recommended to the Centre.

During the second mention, the bench was apprised by senior advocate Raju

Ramachandran that the Centre has notified the appointment of Gowri as an additional judge of the Madras High Court and urged for urgent intervention. He said that the issue was of "eligibility and not the suitability" and vital information was not before the collegium which created the handicap.

The proposal to elevate the woman lawyer, who has been representing the Centre before the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, has been mired in controversy after reports emerged about her alleged affiliation to the BJP. Some bar members of the Madras HC had written to the CJI seeking recall of the recommendation made for appointing Gowri as an additional judge of the HC alleging she made hate speeches against Christians and Muslims.

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, during the day, announced the fresh appointments on Twitter and extended his best wishes to them.

Continued on Page 2

Naval LCA: Milestone in Atmanirbhar Bharat



In a major milestone, the Naval variant of the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) undertook maiden landing onboard the country's first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier INS Vikrant

PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a major boost to self-reliance in aircraft technology, the indigenously designed and manufactured naval version of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) made its maiden landing and take-off from the indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on Monday.

"A historical milestone achieved towards Atmanirbhar Bharat by Indian Navy as naval pilots carry out landing of LCA (Navy) onboard INS Vikrant. Demonstrates India's capability to design, develop, construct and operate indigenous aircraft carrier with indigenous fighter aircraft," the Navy said in a statement.

Continued on Page 2

MCD fails to elect Mayor 3rd time in two months

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) failed to elect its Mayor for the third time on Monday as ruckus erupted over the Aldermen (nominated members) being allowed to vote in the election to the post. As the MCD House proceedings adjourned without electing a Mayor, the AAP, alleged a "planned conspiracy" by the BJP to stall the process and said it would move the Supreme Court to seek a "court-monitored" election.

The MCD House has witnessed unprecedented developments since January 6, when it had convened for the first time after the high-stakes civic polls and adjourned following acrimonious exchanges between members of the BJP and the AAP.

As the ruckus erupted, presiding officer Satya Sharma adjourned the House saying, "Election cannot be held in this atmosphere."

Detailed report on P3

CAPSULE

UKRAINE WAR STRESS ON RUSSIA-INDIA TIES: ENVOY
New Delhi: Denis Ailpov, Russian Ambassador to New Delhi, on Monday said its ties with India are under some "stress" due to the current tectonic geo-political shifts in view of the "arrogant" approach of the US-led West on the Ukraine conflict including its sanction regime against Moscow that caused disruptions in financial and logistics mechanisms.

P5

DELHI'S MAX TEMP SOARS TO 29 DEG C

New Delhi: Delhi on Monday recorded a maximum temperature of 29 degrees Celsius, six notches above normal and the highest in the month in two years, according to the IMD. The minimum temperature settled at 9.2 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of the year, it said.

Adani to pre-pay \$1,114 mn for release of pledged shares ahead of maturity in Sept '24

Adani Group's mcap dips by ₹9.5 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Group on Monday announced that promoters will pre-pay USD 1,114 million for the release of pledged shares of its firms ahead of the maturity in September 2024 while saying the step is being done "in light of the recent market volatility".

These shares belong to Adani Ports & Special Economic Zones, Adani Green Energy and Adani Transmission, a statement said. "This is in continuation of

promoters' assurance to pre-pay all share-backed financing," it said. The statement assumes significance in view of the allegations of fraud and stock manipulation by a short-seller against the Adani Group, which led to a steep fall in the share prices of group firms.

Shares of most of the Adani group firms ended lower on Monday, with the group companies' combined mcap witnessing a sharp fall of ₹9.5 lakh crore after US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research's adverse report. Forex traders said the report has soured market mood towards Adani Group stocks.

Continued on Page 2

Korean pilgrims to retrace Buddha's footsteps in India

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

India, the "spiritual home" of many South Koreans, is all set to welcome over 108 Buddhist pilgrims, including monks, who will be on a 43-day-long sacred journey from February 9. They will cover 1,167 kms on foot as they seek to retrace the footsteps of Gautam Buddha during his lifetime from Sarnath to Shravasti.

The pilgrims will visit Buddhist holy sites in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and Buddha's birthplace at Lumbini in Nepal, participating in religious assemblies, practising walking meditation and praying for world peace.

The walk comes as a part of the ongoing celebrations of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India

and South Korea, Ambassador of Republic of Korea to India Chang Jae-bok told reporters here at a press conference. "This occasion coincides with India's G20 presidency and South Korea is committed to India's success at G20," he said while calling the one-of-its-kind people-to-people contact programme as a befitting tribute to the spiritual bond the two countries share with each other.

"Buddhism was introduced in Korea in the 4th century and once became the official religion of an ancient Korean kingdom. Today, one-fifth of Korea's population is Buddhist and regards India as its spiritual home. Every year, thousands of them visit India on pilgrimages to various Buddhist sacred sites, enriching the close ties of cooperation and friendship



between our two peoples," he said, adding that Buddhist teachings are similar to the motto of India's G20 presidency 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

Organised by the Jogye-Order Sangwol Gyeolsa Society, a non-profit organisation of Korea, the sites to be covered during the pilgrimage span

the life of Buddha from his birth to his Parinirvana.

To emphasise common Buddhist ties between the two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had presented Korea with a sapling of the sacred Bodhi tree during his 2019 state visit, while last year he inaugurated the Khushinagar international air-

port in Uttar Pradesh, hoping that it will be a gateway to the Buddhist circuit in India.

"The circuit seeks to help tourists experience first hand the teachings of Lord Buddha and retrace the footsteps of Buddha during his lifetime," Apurva Chandra, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

Chandra said the walking pilgrimage was part of the Prime Minister's vision to popularise India's Buddhist tourism circuit across the world. He said the Centre and the Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar will extend all assistance such as safety and way-side amenities to the pilgrims throughout the pilgrimage.

Out of 42 nights, the pilgrims will spend 12 nights at accommodations and 29 nights in tents.

No scope for hate crimes, speech in India, says SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday observed that there is a growing consensus around hate speech and stressed there is no scope for hate crimes on the basis of religion in a secular country such as India.

"There cannot be any compromise on hate speech at all," the top court said and added that it is only if the State acknowledges the problem of hate speech that a solution can be found.

It also said that it is the primary duty of the State to protect its citizens from any such hate crimes.

A bench of justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna said, "When action is not taken against hate crimes then an atmosphere is fostered which is very dangerous and it has to be rooted out from our lives. There cannot be any compromise on hate speech at all."

The top court was hearing a plea of a Muslim man who has alleged that he was assaulted and abused in the name of religion on July 4, 2021, by a "screwdriver gang" of criminals as he had boarded a car to go to Aligarh from Noida, and that the police has not bothered to register any complaint of hate crime.

The bench told Additional Solicitor General (ASG) KM Nataraj, appearing for the Uttar



Pradesh government, that, "Nowadays there is a growing consensus around hate speech. There is no scope for hate crimes in the name of religion in a secular country like India. It has to be rooted out and it is the primary duty of the state to protect its citizens from any such crimes." "If a person comes to the police and says that I was wearing a cap and my beard was pulled and abused in the name of religion and still no complaint is registered, then it is a problem," it said.

Justice Joseph said action of every state officer augments respect for the law. Otherwise, everyone will take the law into their own hands, he said.

The bench, which sat till 6 pm hearing the matter, said, "Will you not acknowledge that there is a hate crime and you will sweep it under the carpet? We are not saying anything adverse. We are only expressing our anguish. That is all."

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, appearing for the petitioner Kazeem Ahmad Sherwani, said it was on January 13 that this court had asked the state government to produce the case diary that police had registered the FIR after two years and that too with all bailable offences barring one.

Nataraj conceded that there were lapses on part of police officials and said that a special investigation team has been constituted headed by an ACP-rank officer and disciplinary action has been taken against erring police officials.

The bench said, "You set an example and let such people face consequences for dereliction of duty. It is only when you take action against such incidents that we will come at par with developed nations. Yes, there has been clear lapse and there is nothing wrong in admitting a mistake".

Int'l Kabbadi player files rape plaint against coach

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old Kabbadi player, who has represented India in international events, has accused her coach of raping and blackmailing her by threatening to leak her private pictures on social media, police said on Monday.

She had filed a complaint against her coach at the Baba Haridas Nagar police station in Dwarka last week, and joined the investigation in the case on Monday, they said.

Her statement has been recorded before a court under section 164 (magistrate recording a confession or statement) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), police said. "In her complaint, the woman

said she was preparing for a Kabaddi competition in Hiranakudna near Mundka in Delhi in 2012. In March 2015, her coach made sexual relation with her without her consent," a senior police officer said. She has also accused her coach of criminal intimidation, he said quoting the complaint.

"She further stated that in 2018, the accused forced her to give him a part of the winning amount (from a competition) following which she transferred Rs 43.5 lakh in the bank account of her coach, who has been identified as Joginder," the officer said. "In 2021, she got married and the accused is now blackmailing her by threatening to leak her private photos," he said. Deputy Commissioner

of Police (Dwarka) M Harsha Vardhan, said the case has been registered under sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. "During investigation, today she joined the probe and her statement was recorded in court under section 164 of the CrPC. We have formed teams to nab the absconding coach," he said.

The case comes close on the heels of some of the country's top wrestlers levelling allegations of sexual harassment and corruption against Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. They had staged a protest in January but ended it after the government asked Singh to step aside.

Haryana's 'Aakraman-4' to prevent crimes launched

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

To prevent crimes and to maintain law and order across the State the Haryana Government launched its special campaign 'Aakraman-4', police said.

As part of this campaign, 207 special teams including 828 police personnel of the Gurugram police under the campaign nabbed 207 criminals including a criminal carrying a reward of Rs 15,000 and 15 wanted criminals during the 24 hours operation after raiding several places in the city.

During the operation, a total of 77 cases were registered against such criminals under various sections of the IPC at different police sta-

tions. During this special drive, a total of 18 accused carrying illegal weapons were arrested and a total of 18 cases were registered against them in the concerned police stations and a total of 18 country-made pistols/pistols and 9 live cartridges were recovered from their possession.

A total of 41 accused of possessing/selling illicit liquor were arrested and 41 cases were framed against them and a total of 788 bottles of liquor and 60 bottles of beer were recovered from their possession. While taking action against those who keep/sell narcotics, a total of 7 accused and 7 cases were registered against them and 288 kilograms of ganja was also recovered.

2 food delivery men held for robbery

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi police has arrested five persons, including two food delivery executives, for allegedly robbing Rs 32 lakh from a man at gunpoint near Hedgewar hospital in east Delhi.

According to police, the accused have been identified as Rihaan, 28, and Nazim, 27, both residents of Uttar Pradesh, and Ansaar alias Aahad Khan, 30, Rahul Verma, 20, and Aakash, 25, all residents of

Delhi. On January 29, police got information regarding a robbery of Rs 32 lakh near Hedgewar Hospital.

The complainant said that three people came on a bike, hit him with the butt of the pistol and robbed him of his bag that had Rs 32 lakh in it, a senior police officer said.

During the investigation, police checked several CCTV cameras and analysed the entry and exit route. Verma and Aakash were the first ones to be nabbed, Deputy Commissioner

of Police (Shahdara) Rohit Meena said.

At their instance, police further conducted raids and nabbed Nazim, Ansaar, and Rihaan, the DCP said. Interrogation so far has revealed that the robbery was planned by Ansaar, Nazim, and Rihaan, and another accused.

The gang had been conducting recce of the victim for the last 15 days and had selected January 26 for the robbery. They later changed the date.

7 IAS officers transferred

New Delhi: The government on Monday transferred seven IAS officers of joint AGMUT cadres with immediate effect. As per order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ira Singhal, a 2015 batch cadre and Aman Gupta (2013 batch), both from Delhi have been asked to join postings in Arunachal Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar respectively. Singal, who is specially abled, topped the UPSC exam in 2014 and is an inspiration for many. She is the first differ-

ently-abled to achieve that feat in the general category. As per the order, IAS official Arun T (2013 batch) cadre has been moved from Puducherry to Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (DNH&DD).

IAS official Suneel Anchipaka (2014 batch) who is serving in Andaman Nicobar has been moved to Goa while Ankita Anand and Mekala Chhatanya Prasad, both from 2015 batch have been transferred from DNH & DD to Delhi. PNS

2,600 killed in Turkey, Syria quake

From Page 1

Orhan Tatar, an official from Turkey's disaster management agency, said it was a new earthquake, but Yaareb Altaweel, a seismologist with the USGS, said it was considered an aftershock took place on the same fault line as the first.

Thousands of buildings were reported collapsed in a wide area extending from Syria's cities of Aleppo and Hama to Turkey's Diyarbakir, more than 330 kilometers (200 miles) to the northeast. A hospital came down in the Mediterranean coastal city of Iskenderun, but casualties were not immediately known, Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay said.

Bitterly cold temperatures could reduce the time frame that rescuers have to save trapped survivors, said Dr. Steven Godby, an expert in natural hazards at Nottingham Trent University. He added that the difficulty of working in areas beset by civil war would only complicate rescue efforts.

Television stations in Turkey aired screens split into four or five, showing live coverage from rescue efforts in the worst-hit provinces. In the city

of Kahramanmaras, rescuers pulled two children alive from the rubble, and one could be seen lying on a stretcher on the snowy ground.

Offers of help — from search-and-rescue teams to medical supplies and money — poured in from dozens of countries, as well as the European Union and NATO. The vast majority were for Turkey, with Russian and even an Israeli promise of help to the Syrian government, but it was not clear if any would go to the devastated rebel-held pocket in the northwest.

In Turkey, people trying to leave the quake-stricken regions caused traffic jams, hampering emergency teams. Mosques around the region were opened to provide shelter for people unable to return to damaged homes amid temperatures that hovered around freezing.

In Diyarbakir, hundreds of rescue workers and civilians formed lines across a mountain of wreckage, passing down broken concrete pieces, household belongings and other debris as they searched for trapped survivors while excavators dug through the rubble below. As night fell, people in Gaziantep sought shelter in shopping malls, stadiums and

community centers. In northwest Syria, the quake added new woes to the opposition-held enclave centered on the province of Idlib, which has been under siege for years, with frequent Russian and government airstrikes. The territory depends on a flow of aid from nearby Turkey for everything from food to medical supplies.

The opposition's Syrian Civil Defense described the situation there as "disastrous." At a hospital in Idlib, Osama Abdel Hamid said most of his neighbors died. He said their shared four-story building collapsed just as he, his wife and three children ran toward the exit. A wooden door fell on them and acted as a shield.

"God gave me a new lease on life," he said.

In the small Syrian rebel-held town of Azmarin in the mountains by the Turkish border, the bodies of several dead children, wrapped in blankets, were brought to a hospital.

More than 1,500 people were killed in 10 Turkish provinces, with some 9,700 injured, according to Turkish authorities. The death toll in government-held areas of Syria climbed to over 460 people, with some 1,300 injured, according to the Health Ministry. In the country's rebel-held northwest, groups that operate there said the death toll was at least 380, with many hundreds injured.

Huseyin Yayman, a legislator from Turkey's Hatay province, said several of his family members were stuck under rubble of their collapsed homes. "There are so many other people who are also trapped," he told HaberTurk television by telephone. "There are so many buildings that was damaged.

Parl stalled over Adani row for 3rd day; logjam may end today

From Page 1

The government was hopeful that the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address will start on Monday. The Prime Minister generally replies to the discussion in both Houses.

Ruling BJP members have maintained that the affairs involving private entities cannot be discussed in Parliament and Opposition parties can raise the issue during the customary debate on the President's address at the start of the Budget Session on January 31.

On the part of the Government, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday indicated that the Adani stock rout following a Hindenburg report was a company-specific issue.

She said banks and insurance companies are "not over-exposed" to any one company and assured that Indian mar-

kets are very well managed by its regulators. The protest by various opposition parties in front of the Gandhi statue followed a meeting to coordinate their joint strategy in the House on the Adani issue.

Congress, DMK, NCP, BRS, JDU, SP, CPM, CPI, JMM, RLD, RSP, AAP, IUML, RJD and Shiv Sena were among the parties that participated in the meeting held in Kharge's chamber. Trinamool Congress members skipped the meeting but joined the protest in front of the Gandhi statue in the Parliament complex.

"We demand a discussion on our notices, we are ready for a detailed discussion. We want the Adani issue to be taken up first," Kharge told reporters, asserting that the opposition is ready to speak on the President's Address.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Om Birla urged protesting MPs to return to their seats and par-

ticipate in the debate. "This is not good. Sloganeering is against the dignity of the House. People have elected you to raise their issues in Parliament but you are not interested in participating in debate.

Have people elected you for sloganeering in Parliament? You have ruled this country for a long time. Such behaviour is not good on your part. You are not interested in allowing the House to function properly," Birla said, disallowing the adjournment notices.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar disallowed the 10 adjournment notices given by various leaders asking the Members to let the listed business conclude.

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh said it was surprising that the chair was rejecting notices by opposition members under Rule 267 again and again.

Modi...

From Page 1

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also condoled the loss of lives in the earthquake. "Deeply distressed by the loss of lives and damage in the earthquake in Türkiye. Have conveyed to FM @MevlutCavusoglu our condolences and support at this difficult time," Jaishankar said in a tweet.

Meanwhile, the decision to dispatch aid was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) here.

The meeting was attended by Cabinet Secretary, representatives of Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs, Civil Aviation, health and family welfare, besides the National Disaster Management Authority and the NDRE.

Two teams of NDRF with specially trained dog squads and necessary equipment are ready to be flown to the earthquake-hit area for search and

rescue operations, the PMO said in a press release.

Medical teams are also being readied with trained doctors and paramedics with essential medicines. "Relief material will be dispatched in coordination with the Government of Republic of T  rkiye and Indian Embassy in Ankara and Consulate General office in Istanbul," the PMO said.

"Medical Teams are also being readied with trained doctors and paramedics with essential medicines. Relief material will be dispatched in coordination with the Government of Republic of T  rkiye and Indian Embassy in Ankara and Consulate General office in Istanbul," the PMO statement added.

Earlier in the day, Modi condoled the deaths and said "Deeply pained to learn that the devastating earthquake has also affected Syria. My sincere condolences to the families of the victims. We share the grief of Syrian people and remain committed to provide assistance and support in this difficult time", the prime minister tweeted.

COURT NOTICE
IN THE COURT OF Ms. Sarita Solanki
Judicial Magistrate - Ist Class, Gurugram

M/S India Infoline Housing Finance Ltd
VS
BABU KUKKALA GOUD
CIS NO. NACT/17091/2017
CMR No. HXGR03-049024-2017
Next Date:- 20-02-2023

PUBLICATION ISSUED TO:
BABU KUKKALA GOUD
Address: K BABU GOUND H NO 2-2/48A, SAI REDDY COLONY MACHA BALLARAM HYDERABAD 500010

In above titled case, the accused could not be served. It is ordered that accused should appear in person or through counsel on 20-02-2023 at 10.00 a.m.

For details login to <https://highcourtchd.gov.in/> frs=district.notice&district=Gurugram

Judicial Magistrate,
Ist Class Gurugram

Dated, this day of 03-02-2023

THE PIONEER
CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME.

I, Dahengbam Radharani Devi, spouse of Maj. KDK Singh, resident of **Kwakeithel Mayaikoibi Chabungbam** Leirak, PO- Imphal, PS- Lamphel, District- Imphal, West Manipur, have changed my name from Dahengbam Radharani Devi to **Wahengbam Radharani Devi** and my date of birth is **01-06-1957** vide Affidavit dated 01-02-2023 before the Oath Commissioner (Judicial), Imphal West, Manipur.

PD(90264)C
I, Mukesh Kumar S/o Shree Kundan Lal R/o A-403, Sector-19, Noida Gautam Budh Nagar have changed my daughter name **Vaanya Mahey** to **Vaanya Sharma** and Son name **Aanav Mahey** to **Aanav Sharma** for all future purposes.

PD(90265)A

G20 **NORTHERN RAILWAY** **75**
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

Tender Notice
Invitation of tender through E-Tendering.
(E-Procurement Systems)

N.I.T No.	42 (A,B) 22-23WE
Name of work with its location	(A) Renovation of Toilets of Two shafts of A wing & one shaft of C/D wing including provision of Handicap Toilets drinking water area and other misc. works at Rail Bhawan in the S/o SSE/W/RB under ADEN/E/III
	(B) Renovation of Toilets of shafts of AC wing & C wing including drinking water area, Exterior PUD Emulsion Paint of Rail Bhawan Building and other misc. works at Rail Bhawan in the S/o SSE/W/RB under ADEN/E/III
Approx. Cost of work	(A) 26953699.84 (B) 23022245.50
EMD amount	(A) 284800.00 (B) 265100.00
Completion period of work	(A) 02 Months (B) 02 Months
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Closing date of tender on 28-02-2023 at 15:00 hrs.
Website particular notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.	Above tender available on website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
128-W/269/OET/22-23WE/NIT/42 (A,B) Dated: 06-02-2023.	391/2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

PM: Renewables, hydrogen to...

From Page 1

Heads of Indian public sector companies, as well as international Energy Agency (IEA) executive director Fatih Birol, too attended the meeting. Mining billionaire Anil Agarwal as well as Tullow Oil CEO Rahul Dhir were also present.

Sources said industry leaders spoke of imperatives for making India the world leader.

Some wanted taxes in the oil and gas sector to be brought down to global levels of 40 per cent from the current 70 per cent, while others talked about enabling ease of doing business through self-certification.

SC to hear today plea against...

From Page 1

A total of 11 advocates, including lawyer Gowri, and two judicial officers were on Monday appointed as additional judges in the high courts of Allahabad, Karnataka and Madras. The apex court bench, also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala, took note of the fresh mentioning of the case by Ramachandran and said, "Since we have taken cognisance of the development, we can list it tomorrow morning. We can constitute a bench."

"There are certain developments which have taken place, in the sense that the collegium has taken cognisance of what was drawn to our attention, or came to our notice after we formulated our recommendations on the recommendation of the Chief Justice of the collegium of High Court of Madras," the CJT told the senior lawyer. The plea was filed by some advocates including Anna Mathews seeking to set aside the recommendation of Gowri for the judgeship accused that Gowri was involved in hate speeches against Christians and Muslims and she is an office bearer of BJP's Mahila Morcha.

Adani to pre-pay...

From Page 1

"In light of the recent market volatility and in continuation of promoters commitment to reduce the overall promoter leverage backed by Adani listed companies shares, we are pleased to inform that promoters have posted the amounts to pre-pay USD 1,114 million ahead of its maturity of September 2024", the statement said.

On pre-payment, 168.27 million shares of Adani Ports & Special Economic Zones representing 12 per cent of promoter's holding will be released. In the case of Adani Green Energy, 27.56 million shares representing 3 per cent of promoter's holding will be released.

MCD fails to elect Mayor for 3rd time after row over Aldermen voting

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Even two months after the AAP won the civic body polls, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) failed to elect its Mayor for the third time on Monday after a ruckus erupted over the Aldermen (nominated members) being allowed to vote in the election to the post.

As the MCD House proceedings adjourned without electing a Mayor, the AAP, alleged a "planned conspiracy" by the BJP to stall the process and said it would move the Supreme Court to seek a "court-monitored" election.

The House has witnessed unprecedented developments since January 6, when it had convened for the first time after the high-stakes civic polls and adjourned in vain following acrimonious exchanges between members of the BJP and the AAP.

As the ruckus erupted, presiding officer Satya Sharma adjourned the House saying, "Election cannot be held in such an atmosphere. The House is adjourned until the next date."

Both the BJP and AAP have accused each other of preventing the mayoral polls, with the bone of contention being the appointment of Aldermen and their voting right in the House.

Earlier, soon after the MCD House assembled around 11:30 AM, after a delay of half an hour, Sharma announced that Aldermen will be allowed to vote in elections to the posts of Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Standing Committee members which will be held simultaneously. Sharma cited the 2016 High Court ruling in North Delhi Municipal Corporation Vs Onika Mehrotra case for the direction.

No sooner had she made the announcements, it drew protests from AAP Councillors. Veteran politician and party's Leader in the House, Mukesh Goel, stood up from his seat, and said Aldermen can't vote, and even stepped into the Well of the House to hand over a document to Sharma. As the chorus of protest grew, BJP Councillors started raising slogans and asked AAP members to not prevent the mayoral poll.

After the din reduced, the presiding officer said AAP Councillors Akhilesh Tripathi and Sanjeev Jha should not be allowed to vote because they have corruption allegations against them, drawing a sharp reaction from the AAP Councillors. BJP Councillors then started protesting, demanding the removal of Tripathi and Jha from the House. The MLAs in the House are among the 14 AAP legislators nominated by the



Delhi Assembly Speaker to the MCD in December. As the commotion grew, the presiding officer announced that "the House stands adjourned till the next date".

AAP leaders and Councillors sat, rather stolidly in the seats, as BJP members walked out of the House's chamber named after the first Mayor of Delhi -- Aruna Asaf Ali. AAP Mayoral candidate Shelly Oberoi rued: "This was the third time the House meeting was held and here we are again without the Mayor. The intention of the BJP was clear from the very beginning. Everything that was held in the House was unconstitutional."

Later at a press conference held at the Civic Centre -- the towering MCD headquarters in the heart of Delhi -- AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, party MLA Atishi and AAP's MCD in-charge Durgesh

Pathak tore into the BJP, saying they have decided to go to the Supreme Court seeking a time-bound and court-monitored election for Delhi Mayor. "Today, through the media, people have seen what is being done... It is clear that the presiding officer is working on the directions of the BJP, and there is a planned conspiracy to not let the mayoral election take place," Singh said.

The standoff between the BJP and AAP had stalled the election process during the earlier two sessions of the municipal House on January 6 and 24.

The AAP had emerged as a clear winner in the December 4 polls, bagging 134 wards and ending the BJP's 15-year rule in the civic body. The BJP won 104 wards to finish second, while the Congress won nine seats in the 250-member municipal House.

AAP accuses BJP of hatching plot to stall Mayor's election

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Monday launched an all-out attack on the BJP, accusing it of hatching a conspiracy to stall the mayoral election for a third time by disrupting the MCD House proceedings. The AAP, which fielded several leaders to attack the BJP over the issue, said it will move the Supreme Court to demand a court-monitored poll.

Hitting out at the BJP over the adjournment of the MCD House proceeding for the third time, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday said the party wants to run the MCD forcibly and hence it is resorting to ruckus in the House and is not allowing the mayoral polls to be held.

"The BJP resorted to ruckus while the AAP councillors were sitting peacefully. The ruckus created by the BJP shows that the party does not believe in the Constitution, laws and they only believe in hooliganism," he said. The deputy chief minister further alleged that the BJP is "run-

ning the MCD" with the help of officers and taking "wrong" decisions.

AAP will seek Supreme Court's intervention for impartial mayoral elections in MCD. The ruckus created by the BJP shows that the party does not believe in the Constitution, laws and they only believe in hooliganism," he said.

The deputy chief minister further alleged that the BJP is "running the MCD" with the help of officers and taking wrong decisions."On December 7, the MCD election results were announced and today is February 6. A clear mandate was given to the AAP but the BJP is not allowing the election of the mayor to be held," he said.

He also claimed the BJP tried to "buy" AAP councillors but none of them accepted its offer. According to the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act, 1957, the mayor and the deputy mayor are to be elected in the very first session of the House after the civic polls. However, it's been two months since the municipal



elections were held on December 4 and Delhi is yet to get a mayor.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh alleged that presiding officer Satya Sharma, appointed by the LG, disregarded all constitutional laws."Presiding officer Satya Sharma said that the alderman will have voting rights. Our question is, where has this rule come from? Will the LG define the constitution now?" Singh asked at a press conference.

The presiding officer said the polls will be held simultaneously which is also wrong as the agenda stated that the mayoral elections will be held first, the AAP leader said. Emerging from the House, AAP leader Atishi told reporters, "We will go to the

Supreme Court, and we will go today itself so that the mayoral elections can be held in a court-monitored manner."

"Our demands are that the mayoral election be held in a time-bound manner in the next two weeks and the aldermen be not allowed to vote," she said. Atishi claimed the BJP had planned to disrupt the proceedings so that the House could be adjourned.

According to the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act, 1957, the mayor and the deputy mayor are to be elected in the very first session of the House after the civic polls. However, it has been two months since the municipal elections were held on December 4 and Delhi is yet to get a mayor.

BJP says AAP resorting to excuses to defer poll

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday accused the AAP of resorting to excuses to stall the mayoral election, as the MCD House was adjourned for a third time in a month without completing the poll process. Minutes before the MCD House meeting, the BJP paraded its nine Councillors at its Delhi Unit office, alleging that AAP was trying to poach them.

Leaders from the BJP said their Councillors, Aldermen, and MPs will stage a protest outside the AAP headquarters here on Tuesday. The real face and character of AAP was exposed with its leaders trying to poach BJP councillors, working president of Delhi BJP Virendra Sachdeva said. "There is a rift in the AAP. It talks about bringing revolution by making tall claims on TV, but its leaders do not have faith in their top leadership, that is why they are constantly postponing the elections," he charged.

The nine BJP councillors --

Monika Pant, Manish Chadha, Sushil Jaunti, Sandeep Kapoor, Dharamveer Sharma, Chandan Singh, Brajesh, Umang Bajaj, Shashi Yadav — alleged that they were approached by AAP with offer of money and political posts, if they cross vote in its favour.

BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri, who addressed a press conference with other party colleagues, rejected AAP's opposition to allow aldermen (nominated councillors) to vote in the mayoral poll. The law mandates the Central government to decide who will vote in the MCD House, he said.

BJP MP said that the AAP is trying to suppress its infighting for the third time in the mayoral election in the corporation because our sources in AAP tell us that the corporation councilors from whom crores of rupees were collected in lieu of tickets are today asking for return of their money in exchange for voting in MCD elections.

BJP MP Harsh Vardhan,

who came to the House on Monday, however, said the aldermen have been "given the right to vote by a court" and the "presiding officer is doing everything as per the law". "My appeal to the councillors, irrespective of whether they belong to AAP or BJP is that wisdom should prevail upon them and they should ensure that the voting takes place in an amicable manner," he said.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri lambasted the AAP saying that they are deliberately not allowing the formation of the Municipal Corporation in view of its possible defeat in the election of the mayor as well as the members of the Standing Committee. He said that if the AAP had no apprehension of defeat, it would not have repeatedly postponed the meeting of the Municipal Corporation by creating a ruckus.

Delhi BJP MLA Vijender Gupta said the AAP comes up



with one or the other excuse to create a ruckus at the MCD House and stall the elections for the posts of mayor, deputy mayor, and members of the standing committee. He said although the AAP is opposing voting rights to the aldermen, it had nominated 10 members each in the three municipal corporations in 2017 -- they were merged in 2022 -- and "grabbed" the posts of chairpersons of zonal committees of the civic bodies with their help.

"The decision allowing voting right to aldermen was taken by the presiding officer

of the MCD House who is authorised to do so by the Act of the Parliament," Gupta said. Delhi BJP general secretary Harsh Malhotra said party councilors, aldermen and MPs who have voting rights in MCD House elections will stage a protest outside AAP office on the DDU Marg on Tuesday.

The first two sessions -- held on January 6 and January 24 -- were also adjourned by the presiding officer without electing a mayor following a row marred by acrimonious exchanges between the members of the BJP and the AAP.

Cong slams BJP, AAP for making mockery of people's mandate

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Monday lashed out at the BJP and the AAP, accusing them of stalling the mayoral elections and making a "mockery" of people's mandate in the MCD polls.

Delhi Congress president Anil Chaudhary alleged that the BJP and AAP had betrayed the people of Delhi by "disrupting" the poll for the third time.

He also accused the BJP councillors of clashing with the AAP councillors on the issue of allowing Alderman to vote.

The municipal House failed to elect a Mayor for a third time in a month on Monday after a ruckus erupted over the nominated members being allowed to vote in the election to the post.

"Why was the AAP rattled



by the alderman getting voting rights if the new MCD Act has provision for that? It seems that both AAP and BJP have conspired to disrupt the mayoral elections as the third session of the MCD House at the Civic Centre also ended in a ruckus again.

It has been two months since the MCD elections were held and the Capital is yet to get a Mayor," Chaudhary said. He alleged that the AAP has been running away from taking charge of the MCD

administration.

"The Kejriwal government had not fulfilled any of the promises made to Delhiites in the last eight years, with air and water pollution causing havoc to the health of the people.

Most government schools have been functioning without principals, vice-principals and teachers in key subjects, and corruption in every department has been reaching unprecedented levels," he alleged.

Kejriwal laments Indians going abroad to study medicine

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday lamented Indians going to foreign countries such as Ukraine to study medicine and said India should have developed the capacity to attract students from across the globe rather than "our youths having to go abroad".

Kejriwal's remarks came after the Union Ministry of Education said more than 30 lakh Indians went abroad for higher education during 2017-2022. "Even 75 years after Independence, we should have, by now, developed the capacity to attract youth from across globe to study in India rather



than our youth having to go abroad. Sad that our youth have to go to countries like Ukraine to study medicine? India can become no 1 destination for education," the Delhi chief minister tweeted.

In a written response to a question by JD(U) MP Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh and others, Union Minister of

State for Education Subhas Sarkar said 30 lakh Indians went abroad for higher education during 2017-2022.

Sarkar said 7.50 lakh Indians disclosed their purpose of visit as study or education while going abroad in 2022. The number in the preceding years was 4.40 lakh (2021), 2.59 lakh (2020), 5.86 lakh (2019), 5.17 lakh (2018) and 4.54 lakh (2017).

The minister was also asked if it was a fact that the money being spent by Indian students abroad was more than India's education budget and if the government had any proposal to establish an "international university of high standard" to save the funds.

LG for recruitment of teachers in Govt-aided schools through DSSSB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena has approved recruitment and appointment of teachers and non-teaching staff in Government-aided schools through the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) to curtail "malpractices", Raj Niwas officials said on Monday.

The DSSSB will assign a three-member panel to the selection committees of the Government-aided schools against every vacancy to be filled, they said.

"This would require amendment in the Delhi



School Education Rules (DSER), 1973 and the Delhi School Education Act (DSEA), 1973 that governs such provisions," a statement from the LG office said.

"The LG has directed the Delhi Government (Education Department) to follow the laid down proce-

dures in this regard," it added.

They said there are about 8,300 sanctioned posts in 207 government-aided schools against which recruitments have been done from time to time.

"While the DSER, 1973 provides for a Selection Committee, with the nominee of the Director of Education, for such recruitments, the Rules are silent about the procedure to be adopted by these committees for teachers and clerical staff," the statement said.

"This often leads to non-transparency, corruption and nepotism by the Government nominee in the selection of the candidates," it added.

Pvt schools publish 2nd list of shortlisted nursery students

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Several private schools in Delhi published the second list of shortlisted students for admission to entry-level classes on Monday, with many schools having already closed the process after the first list.

President of Delhi State Public School's Management Association R C Jain had earlier said several schools do not issue a waiting list or a second list of students as the seats fill up after the first draw of lots.

"All the 142 seats were filled in the first draw of lots. There were few vacancies and hence, only five to six names

made it to the second list that was issued on Monday. We have issued a waiting list of another five to six names as well," Sudha Acharya, Principal of ITL Public school, said. The first list was issued on January 20.

She said that students who got 90 points or above in the draw got their names for admission directly in the first list.

"There are 190 seats in total and 25 per cent of it goes to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). Students who got 90 points or above in the draw got their names for admission directly in the first list that was published two weeks ago," she said.

Delhi Govt hasn't agreed to provide financial aid to Delhi-SNB, Delhi-Panipat RRTS: Puri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has not agreed to provide financial support for the Delhi-SNB and Delhi-Panipat Regional Rapid Transit System corridors. In a written reply to a question, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri told Rajya Sabha on Monday that in absence of the nod, both corridors have not been approved by the Central Government and "the question of delay in completion of the corridors does not arise."

The question asked by Rajya Sabha member Kartikeya Sharma was regarding the cur-

rent status of the Alwar-Delhi-Panipat Rapid Rail Project and whether there is a delay in the completion of the project.

"The Detailed Project Report (DPR) with approval and financial commitment of Government of Haryana for Delhi-Panipat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor and approval with financial commitment of Government of Haryana and Government of Rajasthan for Delhi-SNB (Shahjahanpur-Neemrana-Behror) RRTS corridor which is part of Delhi-Alwar RRTS corridor, have been received," Puri said in the written reply.

However, the Government of National Capital Territory of



Delhi (GNCTD), has not agreed to provide financial support for Delhi-SNB and Delhi-Panipat RRTS corridors, the minister added.

According to him, the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) has identified two other RRTS corridors -- Delhi-Faridabad-

Ballabgarh-Palwal and Delhi-Bahadurgarh-Rohtak.

Puri also said that he has been informed by the Ministry of Railways that surveys have been sanctioned for the Delhi-Agra elevated high speed RRTS and Delhi-Rewari-Jaipur (speed up to 220 kmph) RRTS.

Govt orders autorickshaw & taxi drivers to wear uniform in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Monday ordered autorickshaw and taxi drivers in the city to wear their uniform while driving, warning them of heavy fines if they fail to comply, and suspension of licence for repeat offenders. Under Section 66 of the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 every taxi and autorickshaw driver is required to obtain the permit to ply on road. The permit is governed with certain conditions, prominent among them is that a person will not drive a vehicle without wearing the appropriate uniform as prescribed, said an order issued by the Transport Department of the Delhi Government. The

autos and taxi unions said they were ready to follow the order, but also urged the government to lower the Rs 10,000 fine.

A transport official said that initially the focus will be on creating awareness among drivers to wear uniforms as the city's going to host the G20 summit and the government does not want to give a bad impression.

"All the drivers of taxi and auto rickshaw are hereby directed not to drive the vehicle, without wearing prescribed uniform, failing which challan will be issued for violation of permit condition," the Monday order read.

The "habitual offender"

may face "stringent action" for not wearing uniform ranging from heavy challan along with either suspension or cancellation of driving licence or registration of vehicle, as deemed fit, it stated. Wearing of uniforms is also mandatory for drivers of electric passenger vehicles.

Rajinder Soni, general secretary of Delhi Autorickshaw Sangh, said that the uniform will give the drivers an identity. "However, there should not be a heavy fine, which is Rs 10,000, in case



some driver fails to turn up in uniform because of any genuine reason. Presently, the fine amount is not fixed, sometimes drivers are imposed Rs 500 and sometimes the amount is higher," Soni said.

Modi scuttling Adani debate in Parl: Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Breaking his silence on the current Adani Group controversy, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi who has been targeting Adani almost every now and then for last few years, on Monday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will do his best to avert a discussion on the Adani issue in Parliament. Rahul asserted that the country should know what power is behind the billionaire businessman.

In a follow up, his party posed another round of questions by asking the 'deafening' silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Adani issue and made a pun on his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' asking him whether it was an instance of 'Mann ki banking' to benefit his cronies.

"Modi ji will do his best to avert a discussion on Adani ji in Parliament. There is a reason for it and you know that. I want there should be a discussion on Adani issue and the truth should come out. The lakhs and crores of corruption that has taken place should come out. The country should know what is the power behind Adani," Rahul said talking to the media outside the Parliament.

"For a number of years, I have been talking about the government and 'Hum do, Humare do'. The government does not want and is scared of a discussion in Parliament on Adani ji. The government should allow a discussion in Parliament and there will be attempts to avoid it," he also said.

Congress stepped up the offensive against the govern-

ment over the Adani-Hindenburg issue and is seeking a discussion in Parliament. In a follow up, his party posed another round of questions by asking the "deafening" silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Adani issue and made a pun on his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' asking him whether it was an instance of 'Mann ki banking' to benefit his cronies. The grand old party said it will pose three questions to the Prime Minister every day starting Sunday.

Congress chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh alleged that the government has a track record of "bailing out" failing disinvestments such as IDBI Bank, New India Assurance, and General Insurance Corporation using LIC funds. "Is it not the duty of the government to ensure that vital public sector financial



institutions are more conservative in their investments than their private sector counterparts," he asked.

"Given this knowledge, did anyone in the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance, or the LIC itself raise any concerns about these questionable investments? Were such concerns overruled and, if so, by whom?" Ramesh asked his second question.

Ramesh said the LIC's own listed price has fallen by 14 per cent in the last two weeks compared with a dip of 2 per cent in the Nifty50 index. As LIC's misguided Adani investments are eroding the confidence of its 34 lakh retail shareholders, what steps will you take to ease their concerns, he asked making it the sixth question precisely during the last two days.

Soon, train passengers to order food via WhatsApp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

To make it easier for train passengers to order meals on board, the Indian Railways would enable a WhatsApp number, with an interactive Artificial Intelligence-enabled chatbot handling their queries on e-catering and for booking meals. The decision was taken by the Railways' catering arm Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) after a successful trial in delivering meals on couple of routes through publicised WhatsApp numbers.

"WhatsApp communication for e-catering services implemented on selected trains and passengers. Based on cus-



tomers feedback and suggestions, the company will enable the same on other trains in large scale," the Railways said in a statement on Monday.

Besides it meals on the wheels onboard readymade facitlie, IRCTC was already doing e-catering services through specially developed websites as well its e-catering apps. Currently, approximately 50,000 meals are being served in a day to the cus-

tomers through IRCTC's e-catering services enabled through its website as well as app.

"The implementation of e-catering services through WhatsApp was envisaged in two phases. The first phase has already been implemented. Under this, a business WhatsApp number sends a message to the customers booking e-ticket for opting in e-catering services by clicking on a designated website. They are then enables to book meals of their choice from the restaurants of their choice available at stations enroute directly through the e-catering website of IRCTC without even requiring to download the App," said a senior railway official.

CBI arrests two Railway officials, private contactor in bribery case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Monday said it has arrested a Deputy Chief Engineer and a Senior Section Engineer (SSE), both of Northeast Frontier Railway and a contractor of a private company based at Guwahati (Assam) in a bribery of Rs 8 lakh and recovered Rs 1.02 crore during searches at the premises of the accused persons.

The CBI has registered a case against four officials of Northeast Frontier Railway and others, including a contractor of a private company and employees of a private company.

Besides arrested SSE Santosh Kumar and Deputy



Chief Engineer (Construction), Rampal and Contractor Saijan Choudhary of Tribeni Constructions Ltd., the CBI has named Assistant Executive Engineer, Baktar Uddin Laskar, Senior SO (Accounts) besides Ashish Bhaduri, Kailash Chand Sharma, Pawan Mishra and

Pawan Mishra Ashish Bhaduri, all employee of Tribeni Constructions Ltd., Guwahati. The firm Tribeni Constructions Ltd. has also been accused in the case.

"It was alleged that the accused public servants along with private persons entered into a conspiracy for showing undue favours to the private contractors in award of contract agreement, preparation of Measurement Book, processing of running Account Bills, early release of payment against manipulated and inflated bills for the ongoing work of construction in North East Frontier Railway as well as for early release of Security Deposit and Bank Guarantees," the agency said in a statement.

Capt's wife slams Cong for show-cause notice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/PATIALA

Patiala MP Preneet Kaur on Monday hit back at the Congress for issuing her a show cause notice for alleged anti-party activities, saying it is free to take whatever action it wants to take against her. Kaur, wife of former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh who is now in the BJP, has been suspended by the Congress for alleged anti-party activities, after Punjab Congress and other leaders of the State complained against her.

Attacking the Congress Disciplinary Action Committee's Member Secretary Tariq Anwar, the Lok Sabha MP said, "I am surprised to see that a person who left the Congress party in 1999



on the issue of Mrs (Sonia) Gandhi being a foreign national, and stayed out for 20 years till 2019, and had to face disciplinary action himself, is now questioning me on a so-called disciplinary matter."

Anwar had returned to the Congress in October 2018, 19 years after he had quit the party over the issue of foreign origin

of Sonia Gandhi.

In reply to the notice issued to her, Kaur said, "Congressmen in Punjab, who have made allegations against me, are those who have many issues pending against them. If you call my husband who was then chief minister he will give you details about their doings. He protected them because they were from his own party. However, I suppose you will not do this".

The former Minister of State for External Affairs in Manmohan Singh UPA-I government was issued a show cause notice by the party's disciplinary committee on why she should not be expelled from the party for her 'anti-party activities'. The Patiala MP further said she will keep on working for her constituents.

"As per your show cause notice I have always stood by my constituents, constituency and my state Punjab and have taken up their issues regardless of which Government is in power," she said.

She clarified that every Minister of a Congress Government in any state has to meet his department's Union Government Minister, in this case the BJP Government, to get their state's issues resolved.

"This was done in the past by the Congress Government in Punjab and today I am sure that it is being done by the Congress government in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan as well. I too shall always continue to meet the state and Union Government to resolve such issues, whether you like it or

not," a defiant Kaur said. "As to action against me you are free to take whatever action you wish," she dared the Congress.

It is not the first time that Kaur has been served a show cause notice by the party. In November 2021, the Congress had issued her a show cause notice seeking an explanation for her alleged anti-party activities. Kaur had then said that she did not receive any such notice, but had only read about it in newspapers and on social media.

In the 2022 state assembly polls, Kaur even campaigned for her husband Amarinder Singh who contested the elections as an ally of the BJP. Kaur served as an MP in 1999, 2004 and 2009. She lost the Patiala Lok Sabha seat in 2014 but won it back in 2019.

CJI administers oath to 5 new SC judges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Monday administered the oath of office to five new judges of the Supreme Court. Justices Pankaj Mithal, Sanjay Karol, P V Sanjay Kumar, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Manoj Misra were administered the oath during a swearing-in ceremony held in the Supreme Court premises.

With the appointment of the five judges, the total number of judges in the apex court has risen to 32, two short of the full strength.

Their names were recom-

mended for elevation as apex court judges by the Supreme Court Collegium on December 13, 2022. On February 4, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju had announced the appointment of Justices Pankaj Mithal, Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court, Justice Karol, Chief Justice of Patna High Court, Justice Kumar, Chief Justice of Manipur High Court, Justice Amanullah of Patna High Court and Justice Misra of Allahabad High Court as apex court judges.

This came amid a tiff between the government and the judiciary over the process of appointing judges to the Supreme Court and the 25

High Courts. The apex court and the Government have openly expressed their differences over the Collegium system of appointment of judges in the higher judiciary. The Centre had assured the top court that the Collegium's recommendation for the appointment of five judges in the apex court will be cleared soon.

On January 31, the Supreme Court collegium had recommended two more names for elevation as top court judges-- Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Gujarat High Court Chief Justice Aravind Kumar. Once they are appointed and



take oath, the top court will have its full strength of 34. While recommending the two names, the Collegium had said that the names sent by it on 13

December 2022 "shall have precedence over the two names recommended presently for appointment to the Supreme Court."



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launched the Yuva Sangam portal in the presence of Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju, Union Culture, Tourism DNER Minister G Krishan Reddy, Union Youth Affairs & Sports and I&B Minister Anurag Thakur, Minister of State for Education Subhas Sarkar and Minister of State for Education, Rajkumar Ranjan Singh. Members of Parliament from the North-Eastern States also attended the event. **PNS**

16th Century Gujarat step well may soon get national importance tag



ARCHANA JYOTI ■
NEW DELHI

Pancham Mehta ni Vav, a 16th century old seven-storied ancient step well from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birth place Vadnagar in Mehsana district, Gujarat may be soon declared as a monument of national importance.

The Archeological Survey of India under the Union Culture Ministry has issued a draft notification on January 27, this year, seeking objection and suggestion from those concerned with the monument before declaring it as a centrally protected structure.

Pancham Mehta ni Vav was constructed by the same name sake businessman Pancham Mehta as a water structure for providing shade and drinking water to travellers. Though step-wells of

the medieval era are seen throughout Gujarat and Rajasthan, this Vav is unique, said an official from the ASI.

The Gujarat Government's Vadodara Department of Archeology had last year proposed that the intricately constructed structure be declared a heritage site at a central level. Now with the proposal being approved, this step-well is the first in the city to be named a national heritage monument

It has two wells and is linked to a water channel. The channel has outlets from which people at the upper levels could get drinking water, so that they didn't have to climb seven levels down to the well. The intricate carvings in the stone are picturesque and attract tourists from all over the country, according to details available on a website

about the monument.

Once declared of national importance, the site will be protected by the ASI which may restrict construction activity in its vicinity while ensuring its protection and conservation through the central fund. The ASI in its draft notification has sought objections and suggestions to be sent to it within a period of two months, after which it will be declared as the centrally protected monument.

There are at least 135 monuments in Gujarat which are under the ASI ambit. These include Rani-ki-Vav(Sun Temple , Monuments at Champaner, Buddhist caves, Ancient site Gohilwad Timbo, Fresco on the wall of Kashiviswanath temple, Borsad Stepwell, Jami Masjid, Khambhat, Talaja Cave and Old Ruined temple of Mahadev to name a few.

BJP indulging in ‘adharam’ in UP: Rahul

‘Yogi insulting Gorakhnath Math due to kind of language he uses’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday accused the BJP of indulging in "adharam" in Uttar Pradesh and said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath cannot be a religious leader for the language he uses. During an interaction with civil society members on the recently-concluded

Bharat Jodo Yatra at the Constitution Club in the national Capital, Rahul alleged that Adityanath was "insulting" the history of his Gorakhnath Math by the kind of language he was using.

"I am sorry, he (Adityanath) is not a religious leader, he is a common thug," Rahul Gandhi was quoted as saying by an attendee at the meeting which was not open to the media.

Asked how the Congress would tackle the "storm of religion" in UP, the former Congress chief said this was not about religion as he understands his religion, Hinduism, and has also studied other faiths such as Islam, Christianity,

Judaism and Buddhism

"This is not dharam but adharam," Rahul was quoted as saying while criticising the BJP.

Asking the civil society members to choose words carefully, the Waynad MP said that in Uttar Pradesh, Yogi is not a religious leader and does not understand Hinduism "because if he did, he would not be doing what he is doing."

In his interaction with them, which was coordinated by Swaraj India leader Yogendra Yadav, Rahul Gandhi said the Bharat Jodo Yatra was just the first step, and he had two-three ideas more which he will reveal in due course.

He also said that the over

4,000 km Kanyakumari to Kashmir yatra was a force for good, and everyone, from people to animals, participated in it. According to another attendee, Rahul said that during the course of the yatra some people were raising 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans and he asked them to chant 'Jai Siya Ram' instead. He said that during the Kashmir leg of the yatra, he was asked by security people if he was scared, that made him confront his fear and overcome it. Congress also emerged from the civil society and it will continue to work with it in the future, Rahul was quoted by a participant as saying.

India, Canada review bilateral ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India and Canada on Monday reviewed their extensive and deep bilateral ties during talks here between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his counterpart Melanie Joly. She is here on a two-day visit starting Monday.

The talks took place in the backdrop of alleged Khalistani supporters recently indulging in some anti-India activities in Canada and vandalising a temple. It is Joly's first visit to India as the Foreign Minister and both the sides were optimistic about ties between the two countries witnessing further cementing in all the spheres.

Taking to Twitter, Jaishankar said, "Welcomed Foreign Minister @melaniejoly of Canada today in Hyderabad



House. Look forward to productive discussions."

Prior to her visit, the Canadian press release said this trip would advance the country's engagement with India under the Indo-Pacific Strategy, and create opportunities for growth and prosperity for the two countries.

Both Ministers identified areas where Canadian and

Strategy.

She will seek to generate momentum for a stronger, more open, and more prosperous partnership between Canada and the Indo-Pacific region that firmly supports regional peace, stability, and the rules-based international order said the release.

"Simply put: the rise of the Indo-Pacific can create extraordinary local benefits, as well as opportunities for prosperity, economic growth and better-paying jobs across Canada. From Cleantech to critical minerals and education programs, there is a demand in India for what Canadians make, and grow, and the services we provide. I look forward to my first official visit to India in order to strengthen our engagement, which is paramount to our Indo-Pacific Strategy," said Joly.

143 passengers put on ‘No Fly List’ since 2017, Aviation Min tells RS



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Civil Ministry on Monday said three passengers have been put on the 'No Fly List' this year while a total of 63 passengers were placed on the list in 2022. A total of 143 passengers have been put on the list since 2017, according to data provided by the Ministry to the Rajya Sabha. These passengers were placed on the list as recommended by airlines' internal committees set up as per aviation regulator DGCA's Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) pertaining to the handling of unruly/disruptive passengers.

The CAR was notified in September 2017 as a measure to deal with the issue related to the handling of unruly/disruptive passengers.

"As on date, there are 143 passengers who have been placed in 'No Fly List' for such period, as per the recommendations of airline's internal committee... Since 2017," Minister of State for Civil Aviation V K Singh told the Rajya Sabha in a written reply. As per the data, Air India has put three passengers on the list in 2023.

Protests in Assam over Govt crackdown on child marriage

2,441 held in four days of action

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Amid protests in Barak Valley, Morigaon and Dhubri, the crackdown on child marriage in Assam entered the fourth day on Monday, with the number of arrests rising to 2,441.

A police statement said the arrests have been made based on 4,074 FIRs filed across the state. "Total arrest so far - 2441. Crackdown against child marriage continues in Assam," Sarma tweeted.

He had earlier asserted that the drive will continue till the 2026 assembly elections.

The crackdown has faced criticism from the opposition, and demonstrations at various places by the affected families.



Protests were staged in different parts of the state including in Barak Valley, Morigaon, Dhubri and Nagaon districts, by the affected families. "Our menfolk have been taken away by the police, leaving us without anyone to look after us or to provide for us," said Redshma Khatun, one of those protesting at Dhubri.

Till Sunday evening, 139 people were apprehended in

Biswanath district, followed by 130 in Barpeta and 126 in Dhubri, the statement said. Dhubri registered the highest number of FIRs against child marriages at 374 cases, followed by Hojai (255) and Morigaon (224), it added. Meanwhile, seven people got bail in child-marriage cases in Rangia in Kamrup district. The court of sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), Rangia, granted bail to

the accused, a lawyer said. "More are likely to get bail here by the end of the day," he said. Sarma had earlier said those facing Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) charges are under bailable sections, but the ones held under POCSO will face non-bailable charges. Questioning the motive behind the crackdown, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said that the Assam government should have concentrated on increasing literacy levels if it was actually seized of the problem of child marriage.

"Experts have said that if you want to stop child marriages, you have to open a lot of schools, (but) you have not done that. You have closed down the madrasahs too which were imparting some form of education," he alleged. Owaisi sought to know who will be responsible for the women left

in the lurch following the arrest of the men of the house. Assam Congress president Bhupen Bora said a humane approach was needed in dealing with the issue.

Assam recorded 17% teenage pregnancies in 2022, says Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Nearly 17 per cent of over 6.2 lakh pregnant women in Assam last year were teenagers, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday, justifying the crackdown on child marriages.

Citing data from the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) portal, Sarma said there were 6,20,867 registered pregnant women in 2022.

Russian Envoy: Ukraine ‘stress’ on ties with India

Ambassador takes potshots at US for exploiting India-China border deadlock

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Time-tested deep ties between India and Russia are under "stress" as a result of tectonic geopolitics shifts due to the ongoing Ukraine conflict, Russian ambassador to New Delhi Denis Alipov said here on Monday.

He also accused the US of "actively" exploiting the "contradictions" between India and China to its advantage. He said Russia would like to see normalisation of India-China relations and that it would hugely benefit the whole world's security and not only Asian security.

Making this assertion during a conference, Alipov said Moscow and New Delhi accumulated mutual trust and confidence based on decades-old ties that would help the two sides to deal with the current geopolitical turbulence.

In his address at the conference, Alipov, at the same time, said the India-Russia ties are "under stress" because of the tectonic geo-political shifts in view of the "arrogant" and "belligerent" approach by the US-led West on the Ukraine conflict.

The envoy said Moscow wants to expand its economic engagement with Islamabad as a "weak" Pakistan is not good for the entire region including India. In a tweet later, he clarified that he meant a "destabilised" Pakistan is not in the interest of anyone in the region. The conference on "Next Steps in India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Old Friends New Horizons" was organised by the India Writes Network and the

Centre for Global India Insights. Favouring normalisation of ties between India and China, the Russian envoy said, "We understand there are very serious impediments to that, a very serious border problem between the two countries."

We had a border problem with China, an armed conflict with the Chinese at some stage of the problem, it took us around 40 years to negotiate but ultimately this is the only way to find a solution.

"I am not going to suggest what India or China should do... This is entirely a bilateral matter between India and China and we don't interfere with that."

"But the sooner there is a normalisation between the two countries, the better for the whole world. We will do the utmost to facilitate

(that) if our efforts are needed," Alipov said. Explaining his comments on India-Russia ties coming under "stress", the envoy pointed out the impact of Western sanctions on trade and economic engagement between the two sides. Alipov claimed that the approach of the US towards India could change if it finds a new rapprochement with China or New Delhi manages to mend relations with Beijing.

"That, from the US perspective, will be a disaster. But from ours, and I believe from India's and China's point of view, it would be the most favourable outcome for the world at large. In any of these scenarios, America's hegemony would suffer," he said.

CAG seeks global cooperation to beat cyber security threats to auditing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Girish Chandra Murmu has called for global cooperation to combat cyber security threats to auditing. He also said that governments need to collaborate with private sector partners to improve cyber security.

Murmu was addressing delegates on the opening day of the 6th Meeting of the Heads of Supreme Audit Institutes (SAIs) of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Member States in Lucknow today.

He noted that the adoption of information technology in the public sector has brought concerns related to cyber security to the forefront. Therefore, it has become imperative for SAIs to develop adequate capacity to audit cyber security issues.

Murmu informed that SAI India, that is, the CAG is utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI) techniques in the audit process. He said this allows for a more efficient and effective approach to the process, and can improve the overall quality of the audit.

High-level delegations from eight SCO member countries are participating in the three-day multilateral event that is deliberating on issues related to cyber security and artificial intelligence, and the role of auditors of the SCO nations.

High-level delegations from eight SCO member countries are participating in the three-day multilateral event that is deliberating on issues related to cyber security and artificial intelligence, and the role of auditors of the SCO nations.

India currently holds the SCO presidency, which annually rotates among member countries. India's 2023 theme is 'Towards a Secure SCO', where it will work with the delegation of federal auditors from these eight countries.

Anti-encroachment drive: Omar says proper procedure should be followed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Several mainstream politicians including two former Chief Ministers came out of their hibernation on Monday as the Union Territory administration in Jammu and Kashmir is set to intensify its anti-encroachment drive in the coming days.

So far several hundred kanals of land have been retrieved by removing illegal structures and demolishing boundary walls of different residential buildings belonging to close relatives of top brass of the regional political parties in both Jammu and Kashmir regions. The UT administration has already made it clear that only influential and pow-

erful people who misused their position and violated the law to encroach upon the state land would face the law of the land.

The administration has also given assurances to different stakeholders that they will safeguard the habitants and the livelihood of the common man.

However, reacting to these developments on ground zero two former Chief Ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti addressed separate press conferences in Srinagar and New Delhi where they labeled the anti encroachment drive as a new weapon deployed by the Centre to suppress the people.

In Srinagar, Omar Abdullah maintained that the National Conference was not against

those who have grabbed State land but demanded "a proper procedure should be followed."

Omar also shared his piece of advice claiming that the government should make the bulldozer its last resort and give people a chance to prove their claim and issue proper notices to the people having illegal possession of State land.

"Bulldozers are being sent everywhere to demolish houses, complexes and buildings. But nobody knows what is the procedure and on what basis this demolition drive is being conducted," said Omar while addressing a press conference in Srinagar.

Omar said that the government should also make public a "genuine list of people who have occupied State land."

MVA rejects Shinde's plea not to put up candidates for two Assembly bypolls

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having rejected outright Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's appeal to the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) not to put up candidates for the two Assembly by-polls in Pune district scheduled for February 27, the MVA - comprising the Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena - is going ahead and contesting both the Kasba Peth and Chinchwad seats, much to the discomfort of the ruling BJP.

The BJP, which currently holds both the seats, has nominated its senior Pune city leader Hemant Rasane and sitting MLA Laman Jagtap's widow Ashwini Jagtap as its

candidates for Kasba Peth and Chinchwad constituencies respectively. On its part, the MVA has fielded the Congress' Ravindra Dhangekar as its united candidate for the Kasba Peth seat, while it is likely to announce its candidate for the Chinwad seat on Tuesday. In all likelihood, the MVA will field a nominee from the NCP for the Chinchwad by-polls.

The two Assembly by-polls have been necessitated by the death of Kasba Peth's sitting MLA Mukta Tilak - great-grand-daughter-in-law of the freedom-fighter Bal Gangadhar Lokmanya Tilak - and Chinchwad's sitting legislator Laxman Jagtap from Chinchwad, both from BJP.

13 MLAs, 3 MPs may quit BJP, join Trinamool: TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Suman Kanjilal a journalist-turned BJP MLA from Alipurduar in North Bengal - otherwise a strong BJP bastion - on Sunday switched over to the Trinamool Congress senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh on Monday said more saffron leaders were waiting to join the State ruling outfit and they were in constant touch with the party's top leadership.

"Our party's commander and national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee had once said that if we open the door hordes of BJP leaders will rush in ... today our leadership has decided to take in the good people in BJP ... Kanjilal is one of them who was not feeling at home in his party and so he quit it ... Just wait and watch at least 13 more MLAs and three MPs are waiting in the sidelines to join us," Ghosh said.

The BJP leaders have already met top TMC brass in Delhi and Kolkata and have offered to join the party at appropriate time he said. "They have met our leaders at Camac Street office in Kolkata and also in Delhi ... they will join us at appropriate time ... so if the TMC's popularity was falling and if the BJP is everywhere in demand has these leaders shown willingness to join us," Ghosh said.

After Kanjilal's joining the TMC the saffron party - which had won 77 seats in 2021 State elections - is left with 69 seats in the State Assembly. The Alipurduar legislator is the sixth MLA to quit BJP and join the BJP. Kanjilal's joining the TMC tends to come as big blow to the saffron leadership ahead of the panchayat elections likely to take place in a couple of months from now.

War of words has ensued between the two parties on Monday with TMC leader and State minister Firhad Hakim questioning the actual strength

of the saffron party in Bengal. "They are bringing in leaders from Delhi and film stars from Mumbai to pull crowd but they will not be able to win Bengal because we are a different culture ... the people of Bengal are secular and continue to remain so ... BJP will be wiped out from this State ... Kanjilal is not just the one MLA ... there are many more who waiting in the wings ... and finally in 2024 general elections the people will desert them completely."

His cabinet colleague JP Mullick said "only a few months ago their main attraction Mithun Chakrabarty was telling that 38 TMC leaders were in touch with him ... but now the actual story looks quite opposite."

St Xavier's University confers Didi with D.Litt

Kolkata: The St Xavier's University on Monday conferred honorary Doctor of Literature degree on Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her contribution in the field of education.

Dedicating the award to the "common people" the Chief Minister who received the honour from Bengal Governor C.V. Anand Bose said, "As I represent the common man I am dedicating this honour to the common, especially backward sections of the society," adding the honour would inspire her to work more for society.

Praising Banerjee, Governor Bose said that the "almighty becomes happy when a woman is honoured by the society," adding the honour was conferred to the Chief Minister not for her political activities but for her contributions in the field of art and literature. PNS

7th held in NIA crackdown on PFI for Champaran murder plot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing its crackdown on CPFI activists who had conspired to carry out targeted killings in Bihar's East Champaran district, the NIA on Monday said it achieved another success with the arrest of the seventh accused in the case late on Sunday from Jitauri village in Motihari.

"The suspect was identified as Irshad alias Md Belal, who was found to have been actively involved in PFI's criminal conspiracy to spread communal hatred and enmity. Irshad had attended training classes held under the garb of Physical Education at Ahmad Palace, Phulwarisharif, Patna.

He was also associated with PFI's Training Centres and activities. A printed PFI banner and two iron swords have been recovered at his instance from a hideout in village Parsauni, Muzaffarpur," the agency said in a statement.

The arrested accused is the son of Md Shahid, a resident of Harpur Kahuni, Ward 10, Bara Chakla, East Champaran, Bihar. On Sunday, the NIA had arrested two suspects from Motihari.

Earlier, four persons were arrested in this case relating to PFI's unlawful and violent activities, undertaken in the wake of their gathering in Phulwarisharif area of Patna last year.

The case was initially registered on July 12, 2022 at Phulwarisharif police station, Patna, and re-registered 10 days later by NIA, which subsequently took over the investigations.

One person, identified as Yakooob, is still absconding. He had recently posted a derogatory and inflammatory Facebook video post, aimed at disturbing peace and communal harmony. Many FB users had commented and trolled his post abusively.

Earlier on Sunday, NIA had carried out extensive searches in Motihari district of Bihar and had arrested two persons. Raids, which were conducted at eight locations, led to

the arrest of Tanveer Raza alias Barkati and Md Abid alias Aryan, both residents of Bahadurpur, Mehshi, East Champaran. Multiple digital devices were seized during the searches.

Investigations have further revealed that the duo had arranged weapons and ammunition to carry out PFI's plan of targeted killings, for which the

targets had been identified and reconnoitered. They had handed over the arms and ammunition to a PFI trainer, Yakooob, who had been conducting training sessions for PFI cadres. With the latest arrest, a total of seven accused have been taken into custody in this case. "More arrests are in the offing, as further investigations continue," the agency added.

Tension in Bihar's Saran district leads to suspension of social media sites



Patna: The Bihar government on Monday suspended a number of social media sites in Saran district, in parts of which prohibitory orders were imposed following large-scale arson triggered by the killing of a villager last week.

According to a notification issued by the state home department, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Telegram were among more than 20 social networking sites that will remain suspended till 11 pm "in the interests of peace and tranquility in Saran district".

Saran Superintendent of Police Gaurav Mangla said Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code has been imposed in Manjhi police station area which has seen tension after a resident of Mubarakpur panchayat was beaten to death on Thursday while two others sustained serious injuries.

The trio was allegedly abducted by a locally influen-

tial person and his associates over a petty dispute. They were taken to a poultry farm and mercilessly beaten up.

A video footage of the brutal assault had been doing the rounds on social media, triggering tension in the area, especially among members of the caste group to which the deceased belonged.

Notably, the accused's wife is the village head (mukhiya) of Mubarakpur and the prohibitory orders were clamped after a number of people raided the locality where the couple lived, setting many houses on fire.

"No person has been injured in the arson since occupants of the houses had fled sensing danger. The police have nabbed two persons in connection with the killing and are trying to catch the remaining accused. A Special Investigating Team headed by a Deputy SP has also been set up," said Mangla.



Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No 23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi-110005

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

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

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

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Kanchan Kumari (Borrower), Raghunath Sharma (Co-borrower) LBDEL00002866980	LIG Flat No. 276, Third Floor, Block B2 Pocket C, Narela, Delhi, Area 453.16 Sq.Ft	Rs. 15,30,604.35/- (as on February 03, 2023)	Rs. 12,15,000/- from Rs. 1,21,500/-	February 22, 2023 from 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon	March 01, 2023 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>)** The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **February 28, 2023 before 05:00 P.M.** failing which, this/these secured asset/s will be sold as per schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at: **ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No 23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi-110005** on or before **February 28, 2023 before 05:00 P.M** and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before **February 28, 2023 before 05:00 P.M** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at: **ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No 23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi-110005** on or before **February 28, 2023 before 05:00 P.M.** Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "**ICICI Bank Limited**" payable at **Delhi**

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the e-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited On 9372730494/7304914763**

Please note that Marketing agencies **1.M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2. Auggeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd** have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit **www.icicibank.com/n4p4s**

Date : February 07, 2023
Place : Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited



Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No 23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi- 110005

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(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Nipun Kamnatic (Borrower), Nisha Kamnatic (Co-Borrower) LBDEL00002345041, LBDEL00002350678	DDA Built LIG Flat Bearing No. 426, Fourth Floor, In Block A, Kondli Gharoli, Mayur Vihar Phase III, Delhi 110096 Area 301.38 Sq Ft	Rs. 26,91,471 as on February 01, 2023	Rs. 20,00,000/- from Rs. 2,00,000/-	March 02, 2023 from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM	March 16, 2023 from 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>)** The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **March 15, 2023 before 05:00 PM** failing which, this/these secured asset/s will be sold as per schedule.

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Date : February 07, 2023
Place : Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

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PAPER WITH PASSION

More sentimentalism

The saffron establishment should focus the Modi Govt’s economic feats rather than on emotive issues

Religious and cultural issues seem to be moving towards the centre of the political arena, with both the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) focusing on such matters. To be sure, the RSS may have been forced into such a debate. A few weeks ago, Bihar Minister Chandra Shekhar and then Samajwadi Party MLC Swami Prasad Maurya made uncharitable remarks about the pre-eminent Hindu epic Ramcharitmanas by Goswami Tulsidas. They highlighted some sections of the book which are seen as derogatory to women and the so-called lower castes. Tapasvi Chhawani Temple head priest Mahant Paramhans Das announced a cash reward of Rs 500 for anyone who could “bring him the head



of Samajwadi Party MLC Swami Prasad Maurya for the disrespect shown to Goswami Tulsidas’ Ramcharitmanas.” Undaunted, Maurya’s supporters in Vrindavan burned the photocopies of the pages of Ramcharitmanas for allegedly having “objectionable comments on women and Dalits.” As we commented earlier, the Samajwadi Party didn’t seem unhappy with Maurya, as it appointed him as the party’s national general secretary on Sunday, even though it officially distanced itself from his Ramcharitmanas remarks. Apparently, the RSS is concerned about the anti-Ramcharitmanas remarks, which are predicated upon the Mandalite ideology. This ideology is diametrically opposite to that of the RSS, the latter being all

about the glorification of everything Hindu. So, at an event on the occasion of the 647th birth anniversary of Saint Shiromani Rohidas, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said, “The truth is God. Whatever the name, ability and honour, everybody is the same and there are no differences. What some Pandits say on the basis of Shastras is a lie.”

The RSS believes that such revisionism would help it fight the cultural and political wars. The AIMPLB also seems to be gearing up for the battle with the votaries of Hindutva. It has opposed the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code and the demolition of people’s properties. In a recent resolution, it said the UCC “is neither relevant nor beneficial for a multi-religious, multicultural and multilingual country like India.” The AIMPLB’s stand over the subject is not new but its reiteration at this point of time has political undertones. It is a well-known fact that the Bharatiya Janata Party has always regarded the UCC as one of its three ‘core issues,’ the other two being the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and the abrogation of Article 370. So, the UCC is the only core issue left that the BJP would like to address, especially in the oncoming nine state Assembly polls and the general elections next year. Like the other two ones, it is also an emotive issue. It would, however, be a pity if the saffron establishment focuses on an emotive issue, even though the Narendra Modi Government has started doing better on the economic front. Another dose of sentimentalism in politics will do no good to our democracy.



The full moon sets behind the twin peaks of Les Jumeilles in the Chablais Valaisan, Switzerland AP/PTI

Set your house in order

The states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu would do well to manage their finances before blaming the Centre

If there are two States in India that stand out for gross financial mismanagement, they are Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The ruling CPI(M) shouts from rooftops that Kerala is the only welfare State in the country and had it not been for the BJP-led Central Government, it would have emerged as the numero uno long back. They attribute the Kerala Model of Development to the advances made by the State in the last seven decades. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin follows suit by declaring that what the world sees today is the result of the Dravidian Model Development. But not a single day passes in this part of the world without these progressive States cursing the Centre for not allowing them to borrow more and derailing their grand plans for “massive development”. K N Balagopal, Kerala’s finance minister, who was lambasting the Centre for “anti-people policies” hiked the cost of petrol and diesel by Rs two per liter in his budget proposals on Friday. Since the State is in a financial mess thanks to the salaries and pension running to Rs 2.5 lakh crore per year, Balagopal increased the fair price of land by 20 percent leaving the middle class and upper middle-class people to shell out more to construct their own homes. Application fee for building new houses stands doubled while taxes on existing houses were raised steeply.



Probably, the Govt wants to bring down the density of the population in the State from the present level of 859 per sq km which is almost twice the national average of 464 per sq km. There are no concrete proposals to make Kerala an investor-friendly State which means that the youth may have to continue with their exodus to eke out a living. No measures have been announced by the minister to check the exit of entrepreneurs from the State. Industrialists and entrepreneurs hailing from the State are setting up industries in other States employing the local population. Tamil Nadu should retrospect why entrepreneurs are downing the shutters and leaving the State en-mass. No private players have expressed any interest in setting up units in the Dravidian heartland except in newspaper columns. Tamil Nadu used to be the El Dorado for people from Kerala, Andhra, and Karnataka till the 1960s. The State’s fortunes took wings again when the Lady of Poes Garden was in command. It is time the Marxists and Dravidians pulled up their sleeves and rework their development ideology.

Budget waters down farm sector

Though the Budget 2023 pays lip service to the farm sector, it does not address the issues that are holding it back

At a time when there is a twin crisis in agriculture: in food and fertilizers, creating fears of a fall in production and availability of food, rise in food inflation, and shooting up prices of fertilizers and other farm chemicals, the budget miserably fails in addressing the most pressing problems in Indian agriculture. Unfortunately, it lacks scientific and grounded vision which was the need of the hour. The farmers were expecting that food and fertilizers subsidies would be retained or increased. But, the budget proved otherwise.

The expectations of the farm sector from the budget were two-fold. One, it must have taken steps to raise net incomes from cultivation, and two must-have protected farmers and consumers from the food and fertilizer crisis. But, the budget has failed on both counts. The food subsidy was cut from Rs 2.87 lakh crore in 2022-23 (RE) to Rs 1.97 lakh crore in 2023-24 (BE). Fertilizer subsidies have also been cut from Rs 2.25 lakh crore to Rs 1.75 lakh crore. These cuts would prove disastrous for the farmers and would leave them at the mercy of the market forces. The already disturbed input and output ratios of the production of crops would put the survival of farm families at stake.

The agriculture sector proved to be a saving grace in boosting the economy when all other sectors were on the decline, especially during the crucial phase of Covid-19. This stands authenticated by economic surveys which say that the agriculture sector has grown at an average annual growth rate of 4.6% in the past six years. However, instead of getting a better deal, agriculture and rural incomes are under stress. The purchasing power of the rural population has declined due to higher inflation in rural areas which has resulted in negative real rural growth and has been a matter of concern for the fast-moving consumer goods and other consumer durables players.

Official data show that between 2020-21 and 2022-23, annual growth rates in agriculture and allied sectors have been



stagnant between 3% and 3.5%. The real incomes from cultivation have fallen in absolute terms after 2015. The rise in support prices between 2020-21 and 2021-22 barely covered the rise in input cost, hardly leaving any space for higher net incomes. Yields in agriculture remain low on the production front as well.

There has been lower consumption of fertilizers in farms due to rising fertilizer prices which has led to imbalanced nutrient application and even poorer prospects of yield rise. On the other hand, there is a provision of Rs 459 crore in the budget to the National Mission on Natural Farming to promote “natural farming” which is likely to further reduce crop yields by 25-30% at the initial stage. The pertinent question is how can farming stay viable in the face of rising input prices and stagnant output prices. Does the government also need to explain why it failed to fulfill the promise of doubling the real incomes of the farmers between 2015 to 2022?

Although the Finance Minister made a series of announcements on Agriculture, the allocations for these schemes or scheme components are not listed in the budget documents. These



ALTHOUGH THE FINANCE MINISTER MADE A SERIES OF ANNOUNCEMENTS ON AGRICULTURE, THE ALLOCATIONS FOR THESE SCHEMES OR SCHEME COMPONENTS ARE NOT LISTED IN THE BUDGET DOCUMENTS

are fragmented allocations thinly spread across diverse departments with only an indirect or marginal impact on the agricultural sector. Agriculture Accelerator Fund, PM-Pranam, GOBARdhan, Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres, Mishti, and Amrit Dharohar are some examples. Much time was spent on millets, but, nothing much came out in terms of budget allocation except upgrading a Centre for Excellence in Hyderabad. Yet another announcement was on a targeted investment of Rs 6,000 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, but, the actual increase in allocation in the budget papers is only Rs 121 crore. Capital investment is required in agriculture not just for irrigation but also to create and sustain the infrastructure of agricultural markets/mandis. The total capex of the government in 2022-23 was Rs 7.5 lakhs crores, but, allocation under the capital accounts of crop husbandry, animal husbandry, dairy, and fisheries was just Rs 119 crore. This is expected to fall to Rs 84.3 crore in 2023-34. The budget allocation for irrigation and flood control in 2022-23 was only Rs 350 crore which is slated to fall to Rs 325 crore in

2023-24. The budget allocation for Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) in 2022-23 was Rs 500 crore, of which only Rs 150 crore was spent and the allocation of Rs 500 crore has been retained for 2023-24. Much needs to be done for improvement in agriculture. The main challenges to be faced are climate change, rising input costs, fragmented land holdings, sub-optimal farm mechanization, low productivity, and disguised unemployment.

There is a need for investment (both private and public) in infrastructure and Research & Development to be raised by having a relook on subsidies. Focus is needed on diversification to millets, pulses, oilseeds, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries, raising rural manufacturing and services, and more push on policies is required for revival of incomes and employment of MSMEs. The Centre needs to work closely with states to improve the incomes and livelihoods for growth and sustainability in agriculture and rural areas.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

SOUND BITE

Is it right to give funds to Taliban by cutting the funds of education, health and Delhi in the country? People are strongly opposing it.

Delhi CM
— Arvind Kejriwal

The situation on the front lines in the east of the country is getting tougher and Russia is throwing more and more troops into battle.

Ukrainian President
— Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Abhishek proved naysayers wrong with hard work. It is delightful for a father for his son but mostly for the son who has through the dint of his hard work and perseverance shown the mettle of his caliber and his confidence.

Actor
— Amitabh Bachchan

As a bowler, I feel Rohit Sharma is a far better batsman than him (Kohli). His technique is superb. He plays the ball very late, like he has all the time in the world.

Veteran Pakistan pace
— Sohail Khan

It is unexpected that the controversy around Gautam Adani’s business would affect investors’ confidence. India remains an absolutely well governed country and a very well-regulated financial market.

Finance Minister
— Nirmala Sitharaman

A man with many shades



The India-born former Army General and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf (79), who ruled for almost a decade after seizing power in a coup in 1999, has died in exile in Dubai. Not only in India, the response to his death even in Pakistan was muted, with many senior figures refraining from commenting on his complex legacy. The reason is that after seizing power from Nawaz Sharif, he suspended the

Constitution, declared emergency, designated himself the “chief executive”, sacked the chief justice of the Supreme Court and arrested activists and lawyers. In 2019, a court found Musharraf guilty of high treason, and he was sentenced to death by a special court but the sentence was later overturned.

He was also declared a fugitive in the assassination of former PM Benazir Bhutto and the Red Mosque cleric killing case. But on the other side, despite the breakdown of relations with India several times, Musharraf was involved in several diplomatic efforts, peace talks and negotiations with New Delhi, including the Agra Summit, the Lahore declaration, the Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism and numerous discussions regarding Kashmir. Interestingly, Musharraf visited India thrice (in 2001, 2005 and 2009). In reality, Musharraf was a cunning man who despite being a “Muhajir” enjoyed his youth in the Army, middle age as general, retired as President and died in exile. He must have no regrets as he lived his life to the fullest.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

resources towards these sectors is a testament to India’s commitment towards sustainable growth and global cooperation. A growing and modernising India will drive global economic growth, create new markets and increase trade and investment. India’s rich cultural heritage and diverse population make it a unique and influential player in the global community, and the reforms and growth taking place in our country have the potential to transform the world.

Atharv Patil | Ujjain

KCR PREPARES FOR PAN-INDIA ROLE

Sir — Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, who craves for a pan-India footprint, has started the journey to position himself in the run-up to the general elections with a rally across the border in Maharashtra’s Nanded and with an appeal to farmers. It is a right step in the right direction as more and more leaders

are coming forward and taking the lead in this regard. It is a deft move as, though no elections are due in this area, it has a chunk of Telugu-speaking population.

There is a demand among the people to merge this part of Maharashtra with Telangana as the people there enjoy various schemes in the neighbourhood and the less privileged would also like to receive a share of the benefits. The call for farmers to take control of the country is rather encouraging and it is time to make a concerted effort for him to corner glory. The winning formula is to be arrived at to make sure of getting recognition. Though it is not easy to get the coveted pan-India status in such a short time but the foundation is to be laid from now on.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BALLOONING TRUST DEFICIT AMONG LEADERS

Sir — This has reference to ‘Shot down’ (February 6). In the recent incident of shooting down by the US of a Chinese balloon over the Atlantic, the clock has perhaps been set back to the 1960s, the peak of the Cold War era. With state-of-the-art satellite surveillance and digital housebreaking today, this is more a festival of kites between two superpowers. Yet the tenor is ominous and shrill. But then we have been operating for long on a 30-year cycle in economics and one of 60, in politics.

The 1930s brought the new deal for inclusive economy, the 1960s signalled the advent of hedonistic capitalism and the 1990s a phase of liberalisation and tapering down of the Cold War. Now in the 2020s, we could be heating up geopolitics in dim global economic environs. Times are as inauspicious, when nations no longer produce leaders of vision, substance and sagacity. The UN in turn reflects the collective inability of men at the helm to rise to newer challenges of increasing global inequality, technology disruption and frightening sophistry of weaponry. Is not one inane misadventure over Ukraine enough?

R Narayanan | Navi Mumbai

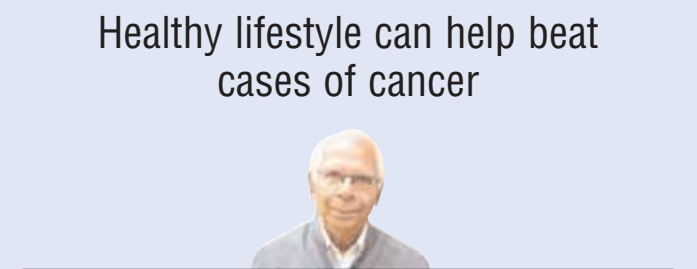
BUDGET TO TRANSFORM ECONOMY

Sir — I am writing to you to discuss the role that the Budget plays in achieving the goals of India’s growth and reform, and how these efforts will impact the world. The well-known quote “When India grows, the world grows; when India reforms, the world transforms,” is a testament to the significance of India’s growth and reform in shaping the future of not just our country, but the world as a whole. The Budget is a crucial aspect in determining the economic progress of a country. The recently released Budget’s focus on infrastructure, healthcare, digitalisation and green transition can lead to a more efficient and self-reliant economy.

Additionally, the allocation of

FIRST COLUMN

NATURE HOLDS KEY TO FIGHT AGAINST CANCER



HARISH BARTH WAL

Due to its successively rising prevalence, exorbitant cost of treatment and high mortality, cancer continues to be a challenge for the doctors, health planners and others. Despite huge spending on research, surveillance and treatment of cancer, only 70 per cent of those living with this dreaded disease survive five years from its onset. Most of the treatment modalities viz. chemotherapy, surgery and radiation entail much pain and severe side effects. Admittedly, a little relief has been witnessed in countries like the US, Denmark, Sweden and Slovakia with new, less toxic and less painful therapies. Yet, the overall condition worldwide continues to be grim.

In India, depending on the type and location of cancer, the therapy being administered and the type of hospital, one may have to shell out between Rs 90,000 to Rs 28 lakh. And mind that not all patients are medically insured or able to afford it.



A couple of years back, The Lancet, based on 2016 findings, reported progress in managing cancers and some decline in mortality due to cancer in a few developed countries. Yet, overall it remains a serious health threat worldwide. Globally, WHO attributes around 10 million deaths to cancer in 2020, highest in breast cases (2.26 million) followed by lung (2.21 million cases), colon and rectum (1.93 million cases), prostate (1.41 million cases), skin (1.20 million cases) and stomach (1.09 million cases).

Unpredictable movement of cancer cells and its rapid growth without a set pattern transmit to other body parts, damaging the normal cells; this is unlike behaviour of normal cells. "Cancer cells come pre-programmed to ... facilitate both their enhanced survival and their dissemination through the bloodstream. There is an air of conspiracy in the way tumours use chemical signals to create cancer-friendly niches in remote organs," says Paul Davies, professor at Arizona State University. To worsen the management of cancer, most cases are detected in late stages due to horrendous lack of awareness among people.

Women particularly hide the problem, and are brought to the surgeon when the tumour stretches 8-10 cm long. Public awareness on cancer together with expanding and strengthening screening centres is thus first priority in managing cancers. Yet, the third hurdle in managing cancer in most developing countries is the resource crunch. India spends less than half of what it should be doing on cancer care, regret the experts.

The Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the monitoring arm of WHO, implicates physical carcinogens (like ultraviolet and ionising radiation, chemical carcinogens (asbestos, tobacco components, smoke, alcohol, aflatoxin (food contaminant), and arsenic (potable water contaminant); and biological carcinogens (like infections from viruses, bacteria, or parasites) that have increasingly imbued our entity all around.

Cancer survival rates vary from country to country. However, higher five-year relative survival rate for most cancers combined have been reported in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, USA, Canada, Norway, Netherlands and Switzerland. Cancer is attrition of healthy cells due to little or no activity over time. Body parts and organs that remain active are able to maintain blood flow essential to stay fit and kicking.

Ironically, the close ones of the family and others ostracise the cancer patient when additional moral support is needed. Separation from mainstream activities only exacerbates the agony. The patient should be told, as William Arthur Ward, "Mountains are created to be conquered; adversities are designed to be defeated; problems are sent to be solved".

Further, little gestures like keeping conversations normal, delivering the meals when required, accompanying to health facilities, supplying essentials, and involving them in different activities trigger good sense and facilitate recovery.

(The author blogs on health, social and other issues)

Budget 2023 targets inclusive growth

The Finance Minister has given a push to growth through a judicious blend of encouraging investment and consumption

Guided by the overriding objective of laying the foundation of putting India on a rapid and sustainable growth trajectory, for three years in a row, the Narendra Modi government has presented an investment-led Budget. Most of the budgetary allocations are going into building infrastructure, while the government has taken measures to promote investment by the private sector.

The Budget for 2023-24 continues with this overarching strategy. In her maiden Budget for 2019-20, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had laid a roadmap for catapulting the Indian economy to \$5 trillion by 2024-25. In sync with this target, she had projected an investment requirement of over Rs 10 lakh crore to build the infrastructure over five years. Out of this, 39 per cent or Rs 39,00,000 crore was to come from the Centre and an equal amount from states and the balance Rs 22,00,000 crore from the private sector.

The outlay for capital expenditure (capex) in the Budget was Rs 439,000 crore during 2020-21 (revised estimate or RE), Rs 554,000 crore during 2021-22 (RE) and Rs 750,000 crore during 2022-23 (as per budget estimate or BE). This adds up to around Rs 1,700,000 crore. For 2023-24, Sitharaman has provided for capex of Rs 1 lakh crore up by 37 per cent over the RE for 2022-23. If Rs 1,200,000 crore could be added during 2024-25, the Centre would have fully achieved its target for the five year period.

It is also helping the states to boost their capital spend. During 2022-23, the Centre provided them 50 year Rs 100,000 crore interest-free loans.

For 2023-24, Sitharaman has hiked such transfers by 30 per cent to Rs 130,000 crore. As for promoting investment in the private sector, the Centre had given a plethora of incentives—the mother of all being the steep reduction in the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent for new manufacturing enterprises (22 per cent for existing enterprises down from 30 per cent) which get incorporated before March 31, 2023; that was in September 2019.

It also unveiled the PLI (production linked incentive) scheme covering over a dozen sectors besides tax incentives for 'start-ups'. In the Budget for 2020-21, FM extended the benefit of 15 per cent rate to "new" power companies also. Besides, "cooperatives" were made eligible for the 22 per cent rate sans exemptions and deductions. The FM also abolished dividend distribution tax (DDT). From April 1, 2020, the dividend is taxed in the hands of shareholders.

In the 2022-23 Budget, the eligibility of 15 per cent corporate tax was extended to new manufacturing entities which get incorporated before March 31, 2023, against the threshold of March 31, 2023. The start-ups got one more year (those set up before March 31, 2023) to avail of tax



THE OUTLAY FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE (CAPEX) IN THE BUDGET WAS RS 439,000 CRORE DURING 2020-21 (REVISED ESTIMATE OR RE), RS 554,000 CRORE DURING 2021-22 (RE) AND RS 750,000 CRORE DURING 2022-23 (BUDGETARY ESTIMATE)

(The author is a policy analyst)



holiday. The surcharge on profits of cooperatives was lowered from 12 per cent to seven per cent besides reducing MAT (minimum alternate tax) from existing 18.5 per cent to 15 per cent.

In Budget 2023-24, the finance minister has given one more year for new manufacturing enterprises to avail of the 15 per cent corporate tax benefit. Henceforth, this special rate will also be applicable to new enterprises set up in the cooperative sector. The tax holiday for start-ups gets extended by one more year. Additionally, they get 10 years to set off accumulated losses against future profits in case of change in ownership.

Initially, the private sector didn't respond to the above special dispensation due to lack of demand. However, the pace has picked up during the current year. New investment announced in the manufacturing sector during April - December 2022 was five times the corresponding level during 2019-20. Without doubt, efforts of the Modi government have generated the required growth impulses leading to GDP growth of 8.7 per cent during 2021-22 and estimated at seven per cent during 2022-23 despite a challenging global environment caused by the Ukraine War, geo-political tensions and rising interest rates.

How has it fared on the fiscal deficit (FD) front? During 2021-22, FD was contained at 6.7 per cent of the GDP against BE of 6.8 per cent. During 2022-23 also, Sitharaman has stuck to the target of 6.4 per cent set out in the budget.

That the government has been able to do it despite slippages in

expenditure on major subsidies (fertilizer subsidy outgo is estimated to be around Rs 225,000 crore against BE of Rs 105,000 crore, whereas food subsidy will be Rs 287,000 crore against BE of Rs 207,000 crore) is commendable. A lot of it has to do with the buoyancy in tax collection as the Centre's net tax receipts of around Rs 2100,000 crore have exceeded the BE by Rs 300,000 crore.

The FM has set a FD target of 5.9 per cent for 2023-24. Besides sustaining buoyancy in tax collection, she will bank a lot on a sizable cut in subsidies (food by Rs 90,000 crore and fertilizers by Rs 50,000 crore). In view of the withdrawal of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), even as the government can cut on food subsidy, reduction in subsidy on fertilizers is unlikely. A major highlight of the budget relates to changes in the personal income tax (PIT). Prior to 2020-21, a person having an income of Rs 2,50,001-Rs 5,00,000 per annum was required to pay tax of five per cent, those earning more than Rs 5,00,000 but less than Rs 10,00,000 paid 20 per cent tax, whereas someone having an income higher than Rs 10,00,000 paid 30 per cent. With these tax rates, individuals enjoyed a plethora of exemptions and deductions.

The 2020-21 Budget, even while retaining five per cent tax for annual income in the Rs 2,50,001-Rs 5,00,000 range, on income higher than Rs 5,00,000, it levied: 10 per cent for Rs 5,00,001-Rs 7,50,000; 15 per cent for Rs 7,50,001-Rs 10,00,000; 20 per cent for Rs

10,00,001-Rs 12,50,000; 25 per cent for Rs 12,50,001-Rs 15,00,000. For income above Rs 15,00,000, the 30 per cent tax continued.

Individuals were given the choice to go either for the new regime or continue with the old regime with exemptions/deductions. In the Budget for 2023-24, the FM has made the new regime highly attractive by altering the slabs and the rates to nil tax on income up to Rs 300,000; five per cent tax on income in Rs 300,001-Rs 600,000; 10 per cent in the Rs 600,001 - Rs 900,000; 15 per cent in Rs 900,001 - Rs 1,200,000; 20 per cent in Rs 1,200,001 - 1500,000 and 30 per cent on above Rs 1,500,000. The icing on the cake is 'no tax on annual income up to Rs 700,000'.

This will put more money in the pockets of individuals across all income levels up to Rs 1,500,000. For instance, a person earning Rs 900,000 needs to pay only Rs 45,000 as tax; the rest Rs 855,000 is available for spending. This will give a massive boost to aggregate demand in turn, spurring investment and growth.

It will propel en mass shift of assesseees to the new regime bringing an end to the era of exemptions and deductions and associated maladies. Besides giving a push to economic growth through a judicious blend of encouraging investment and consumption, the FM has come up with schemes and budgetary allocations to give a boost to sectors such as agriculture, MSMEs, startups, cooperatives, affordable housing, etc., which are fundamental to generating employment and buttressing 'inclusive' and 'green' growth.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

ONCE AN IMPLACABLE FOE OF INDIA, HE (FORMER PAK PRESIDENT PERVEZ MUSHARRAF) BECAME A REAL FORCE FOR PEACE (IN) 2002-2007. — CONGRESS LEADER SHASHI THAROOR



MISPLACED PRIORITIES OF A FORMER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER... CONGRESS EULOGISING A PERSON WHO ATTACKED OUR COUNTRY DURING KARGIL. — BJP SPOKESPERSON GAURAV BHATIA



Budget has spread net far and wide but lacks focus

Infrastructure is required as per needs but sudden increase in expenditure may lead to financial and economic problems

The Budget is a carefully crafted document aiming to cultivate voters of nine states going to polls this year with largess showered on agriculture and infrastructure projects. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is right in believing that the voter wants the glitz of infra in every field. It is a politically paying proposition.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been euphoric in announcing programmes. In her briefing to the press, she said, "Yes, we are a political party and do it for political purposes."

Despite natural disasters in Uttarakhand and severe flooding of various states, necessary review and check for infra investment has been



SHIVAJI SARKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

avoided. It means the risk to hills and fragile areas continues. It is time to pause roads after hitting over seven lakh kms of highways and rail projects turning into shopping malls. Little is learnt after failure of such metro projects in Delhi itself.

Effectively, it means on the global pattern capital expenses to go up to Rs 13.70 lakh crore, Rs 3.20 lakh crore more from Rs 10.53 lakh crore of 2022-23. It comes almost all from Rs 17.86 lakh crore of borrowings up by Rs 1.20 lakh crore. Borrowings are almost 40 per cent of the total budget of Rs 45.03 lakh crore.

This is questionable. Infrastructure is required as per needs but sudden increase in expenditure may lead to financial and economic problems, and burden the future generation. Also not only Joshimath but now even the plains are at risk.

A number of Amrit Kaal programmes right from incentivising savings for women to virtually every aspect that benefits farmers, a strong chunk of powerful voters with over Rs 15,000-crore schemes. There are Gobar-dhan gas plants, natural farms, PM-Pranam alternate fertiliser; digital public infra for agriculture - questionable as 4G and 5G eliminate many fauna like bird species; agricultural accelerator fund; enhance cotton crop; Antmanirbhar Horticulture Clean Plant; Shree Anna-Global Hub for Millets; Green Growth fuel energy efforts; Rs 6000 crore fisheries (Rs 1000 crore less

than last year) and higher Rs 20 lakh crore agri-credit for animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries.

While millet has higher production in the north, the research institute is to be set up in Hyderabad. Jowar, maize, and sama were part of the staple food till the Green revolution in the 1960s. Popularising it again with creation of such taste buds is time-consuming. Market increases as taste develops. The economy of scale creates remunerative prices for farmers.

This year kharif rice production has reduced by 6.2 per cent to 146 million tons, oilseeds by eight per cent (21.97 mt), sugarcane by 0.79 per cent, groundnut by a million ton. Losses have also

been noticed in maize, soybean and urad.

Still 17.25 lakh farmers have benefitted from MSP payments though for various coarse crops MSPs virtually are on papers. The government's Situation Assessment of Agricultural Household in Rural India has found that the best deal farmers could have from APMCs, maligned by vested interests and Farmers Production Organisation (FPO). The open or corporate market does not ensure prices or sustenance. This shows that farmers' stir was on its path and corporations have to mend their ways. One reason the BJP lost the Himachal Pradesh polls was the corporate monopoly of apple business causing heavy losses to growers.

It also needs to rectify and strengthen the APMC and government run silos. Krishi startups are fine but the new tax regime may be a dampener for investors as it virtually leaves none including foreign investors.

The perky five-step income tax is good up to an income of Rs 12 lakh. Beyond that it is rigmarole and even causes higher tax outgo for individuals. Most vocal are the intellectual groups within the BJP. Some experts say no income-tax up to Rs 7 lakh is wrong, as there is confusion in new and old schemes. There are views that if corporate taxes could be effectively at 15 per cent, India, as FM claimed, the highest I-T should not more than 20 per cent and not 39 per cent as of now with various kinds TDS, including foreign remittances.

So a political budget needs more caution. Mere doling out is not enough. A lot remains as the government's agri-extension system has not helped create skilled farm entrepreneurs. The apprenticeship scheme has remained since the 1970s but it has found less favour with private companies.

With too many programmes and acronyms, the budget has missed on creating the necessary mix of corporate, people and the farming class. It is also evident it cannot move out of APMC type marketing and now it has to move out of infra obsession for more inclusive improvement as development has become a cliché.

Ukraine defence Min expects help from Western warplanes

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's defense minister expressed confidence Sunday that Western allies would agree to the country's latest weapons request — warplanes to fight off Russian forces that invaded nearly a year ago.

Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov told a news conference in Kyiv that Ukraine has already received everything from its “wish list to Santa,” except planes.

“There will be planes, too,” Reznikov predicted. “The question is just what kind exactly.... Consider that this mission is already completed.” So far, Ukraine has won support from Baltic nations and Poland in its quest to obtain Western fighter jets.

But several Western leaders have expressed concern that providing warplanes could provoke the Kremlin and draw their countries deeper into the conflict, which has cost tens of thousands of lives and wreaked massive destruction. Kyiv says



such jets are essential to challenging Russia's air superiority and ensuring success in a Russian offensive that Reznikov predicted could begin around

the war's one-year anniversary, Feb. 24. “Not all Western weapons will arrive by then, but we have the resources and reserves to help stabilize and

sustain the offensive,” Reznikov told reporters. Since the war began, Western leaders have balked at some of Ukraine's requests, such as for longer-

range missiles and tanks, only to agree later. The warplanes are the latest example.

Ukraine has relocated its warplanes and concealed air

defense assets, hampering Moscow's efforts to gain full control of the skies. After suffering early losses, the Russian air force has avoided venturing deep into Ukraine's airspace and mostly focused on close front line support.

German-made tanks are on the way to Ukraine. Reznikov said his forces would begin training on Leopard tanks in Europe on Monday, before their delivery to Ukraine. So far, Canada, Poland, Germany, Great Britain and the United States have announced they will supply tanks to Ukraine.

The Kremlin has said Western countries' supply of increasingly sophisticated and more weapons will only prolong the conflict, and it has characterized NATO as a direct participant.

Reznikov, commenting on the supply of Western weapons and the state of the Ukrainian army, took the rhetoric further on Sunday, telling reporters: “I absolutely boldly claim that we have become a de facto NATO

country. We only have a de jure part left.” Ukraine has applied to join NATO, as have two of Russia's other neighbors, Finland and Sweden.

On the battlefield, Kharkiv regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said four people were injured Sunday when a Russian S-300 missile fell near an apartment block in Kharkiv city, and another was hurt when a missile hit a university building.

Video showed the building hit was the National Academy for Urban Economy, about 700 meters from the city's central square. Meanwhile, heavy fighting continued in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, one of four regions that Russia illegally annexed last year even though its forces do not fully control the area.

Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said five civilians were wounded in rocket attacks during the night in the city of Druzhkivka and that the town of Avdiivka and its outskirts were also fired on. In the Donetsk city of Bakhmut, the

epicenter of the fiercest fighting in Ukraine, the Ukrainian military said Sunday it had repelled Russian attacks. The founder of the mercenary group Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, said in a Telegram post that Kyiv's forces were not retreating and that “there are fierce battles for every street, every house, every stairwell.”

In the Black Sea port of Odesa, workers labored to connect temporary generators shipped in to restore electricity. The city and surrounding area were plunged into darkness over the weekend following a large-scale network failure.

Grid operator Ukrenergo said that the failure involved equipment “repeatedly repaired” after Russia's savage strikes on Ukraine's energy grid, and that residents should brace themselves for lengthy blackouts.

As of Sunday afternoon, about 280,000 customers — 40% of the customers — remained without power, said prime minister Denis Shmyhal.

Norway to donate \$7.3 billion to Ukraine

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Oil-rich Norway is looking to donate 75 billion kroner (USD 7.3 billion) to Kyiv as part of a five-year support package that would make the Scandinavian country one of the world's biggest donors to war-torn Ukraine, the Norwegian government said Monday. Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said the money would be split evenly between military and humanitarian assistance over five years, broken down to 15 billion kroner



NATO's Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana, left, and Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, speak at the Leangkollen Security Conference 2023 in the university hall in Oslo, Norway, on Monday.

AP photo

(USD 1.5 billion) annually. The proposed aid package will be put to a vote in parliament. Last week, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that overall, the European Union's economic, humanitarian and military support for Ukraine now amounts to almost EUR 50 billion.

Norway is not an EU member, but has given Ukraine more 10 billion kroner (USD 1 billion) in civilian and military aid last year. “It will lead to an increased use of oil money,” Gahr Store said, adding that he's hoping “a large majority” in the Norwegian parliament would approve the aid package. A parliamentary majority is expected to pass the proposal.

“Supporting Ukraine is supporting a people experiencing war, but it is also support for our fundamental security,” Gahr Store told a press conference.

Norway is one of Europe's largest fossil-fuel exporters, and the conflict in Ukraine has boosted its gas revenues. However, Norway has fended off accusations that it's profiting from the war in Ukraine.

A rush by European countries to secure alternative energy sources following Russia's invasion of Ukraine nearly a year ago dramatically increased the demand — and price — for Norway's oil and gas.

Russian forces keep up pressure as Ukraine anniversary nears

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces are keeping Ukrainian troops tied down with fighting in the eastern Donbas region as Moscow assembles additional combat power there for an expected offensive in the coming weeks, Ukrainian officials said Monday.

Weeks of intense fighting continued to rage around the city of Bakhmut and the nearby towns of Soledar and Vuhledar, Ukraine's presidential office said.

They are located in the Donetsk region, which with neighbouring Luhansk region makes up the Donbas region, an industrial area bordering Russia. “The battles for the region are heating up,” Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said in televised remarks, adding that “the Russians are throwing new units into the battle and eradicating our towns and villages.”

In Luhansk, Gov. Serhii Haidai said shelling there had subsided because “the Russians have been saving ammunition for a large-scale offensive.” Military analysts say the Kremlin's forces may be prob-



ing Ukraine defences for weak points or could be making a feint while preparing for a main thrust through southern Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is hungry for some battlefield success, especially securing illegally annexed territory in eastern Ukraine, to mark the anniversary of his invasion on February 24.

Russian forces made gains in the first few months of the war, though they failed to clinch key objectives and were then driven back from large areas by a Ukrainian counteroffensive. Western military help has been essential for

Five of those wounded were injured during the shelling of Kharkiv city, where Russian shells struck residential buildings and a university, the presidential office said.

The Russians again fired at targets across the Dnieper River from the Russia-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, damaging residential buildings and power lines in Nikopol and Marhanets across the River Dnieper, Ukrainian authorities reported.

Russian forces occupied Zaporizhzhia, Europe's biggest nuclear power plant, early in the war, and regular shelling of the area stoked major safety concerns.

The UN nuclear chief is expected to visit Moscow this week to discuss safety at Zaporizhzhia, according to a senior Russian diplomat.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov wouldn't reveal the exact date of International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi's visit to Russia, but confirmed that it is expected to take place this week and that the safety of the nuclear power plant was “a key issue” on the agenda.



NORTHERN RAILWAY

NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION



Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, Delhi Division, Northern Railway, in terms of Railway Board letter no. 2022/TC(FM)/10/04 dated 13.06.2022, invites bids through e-Auction (www.ireps.gov.in) for leasing of parcel space of SLR compartments/Parcel Vans for a period of two years as per detail and schedule given below:-

S. No.	Date & time of e-Auction	Assets to be auctioned
1	08.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12005 (F1), 12038 (F1), 12148 (R1), 12481 (F1, F2 & R1), 12646 (F1 & F2), 14812 (F1), 19702 (F1), 22421 (F1, F2 & R1), 22482 (F1, F2 & R1)
2	09.02.2023 at 11:30 am	01 LVPH (24 tonnes) in each train - 12226/12225, 12284/12283, 12425/12426, 12432/12431, 12438/12437, 12442/12441, 12445/12446, 12454/12453, 12488/12487, 14033/14034, & 20408/20407, 22412/22411, 22414/22413, 22420/22419, 22428/22427 & 22434/22433 01 VP (23 tonnes) - 22418/22417
3	10.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12802 (F1), 14303 (F1 & R1), 14305 (F1 & R1), 14331 (F1, F2 & R1), 14545 (F1, F2 & R1), 20409 (F1, F2 & R1), 20488 (F1, F2 & R1)
4	13.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12011 (F1), 12017 (F1), 12148 (F1 & F2), 12432 (F1), 12644 (F1, F2 & R1), 22418 (F2 & R1)
5	14.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12029 (F1), 12040 (F1), 12455 (F1), 14041 (F1), 14521 (F1, F2 & R1), 22454 (F1, F2, & R1)
6	15.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12013 (F1), 12015 (F1), 12031 (F1), 12448 (F1), 12459 (F1), 12463 (F1), 12986 (F1), 15280 (F1), 22210 (F1), 22414 (F1), 22429 (F1), 22472 (F1, F2 & R1)
7	16.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12045 (F1), 12963 (F1), 14152 (F1), 14164 (F1, F2 & R1), 14681 (F1), 20938 (F1 & R1), 22401 (F1)
8	17.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12265 (F1, F2 & R1), 12424 (F1), 12428 (F1), 12444 (F1), 12584 (F1), 14014 (F1), 14035 (F1, F2 & R1), 14212 (F1), 14553 (R1), 20840 (F1)
9	20.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12191 (F1), 12918 (F1), 14208 (F1), 14316 (F1), 15035 (F1, F2 & R1), 22463 (F1), 22485 (F1)
10	21.02.2023 at 11:30 am	01 LVPH (24 tonnes) in each train - 12236/12235, 12264/12263, 22429/22430, 22460/22459
11	22.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12457 (F1, F2 & R1), 14507 (F1, F2 & R1), 19338 (F1), 20914 (F1, F2 & R1), 20946 (F1), 22479 (F1), 22654 (F1)

Important notes:

- For more information, requirement and various aspects regarding these e-Auctions, interested bidders are advised to visit https://www.ireps.gov.in/html/helpdesk/learning_centre.html. (e-Auction leasing section).
- Earnest Money Deposit (EMD):** 5% of the total contractual bid value to be deposited online during the auction. EMD of the successful bidder will be retained as Security Deposit.
- Railway Administration reserves the full and absolute rights to short terminate these contracts at any point of time and/or for taking any decision regarding the discontinuation/continuation of these contracts with modified/additional terms and conditions depending upon the continuation/discontinuation of these trains or commencement of new train services.

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388/2023

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Extract of Standalone Unaudited Results for the Quarter Ended 31/12/2022						
S no.	Particulars	Quarter ended		(Rs in lakhs)		
		3 months ended (31.12.2022)	Preceding 3 months ended (30.09.2022)	Corresponding 3 months ended in the previous year (31.12.2021)	Nine months ended Year to date figures for current period ended (31.12.2022)	Year Ended Previous year ended (31.03.2022)
1.	Total income from operations (net)	4639.95	2041.67	3900.64	8860.50	7714.55
2.	Net Profit / (Loss)for the period before Tax and Exceptional items	(147.60)	(219.58)	40.93	(536.52)	39.52
3.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax and after Exceptional items	(147.60)	(219.58)	40.93	(536.52)	39.52
4.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax and Exceptional items	(144.67)	(215.25)	18.17	(525.67)	20.25
5.	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(144.67)	(215.25)	18.17	(525.67)	20.25
6.	Equity Share Capital (Face value Rs 10 each)	1025.98	1025.98	1025.98	1025.98	1025.98
	Other equity	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Earnings per share for discontinued & continuing operations (of Rs. 10/-each):					
(a)	Basic	(1.41)	(2.10)	0.18	(5.12)	0.20
(b)	Diluted	(1.41)	(2.10)	0.18	(5.12)	0.20
Notes:						
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Unaudited Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Unaudited Financial Results are available on the website of the Stock Exchange (www.bseindia.com) and on Company's website (www.prakashwoollen.com)						
By Order of The Board For Prakash Woollen & Synthetic Mills Limited Vijay Kumar Gupta Whole Time Director & CFO DIN: 00335320						
Place : Village Amhera (Amroha) Date : 06th February 2023						

AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

A Buddhist temple has been extensively damaged by fire in the Australian city of Melbourne. About 80 firefighters fought the blaze at the Bright Moon Buddhist Temple for more than two hours before it was brought under control late Sunday.

There were no injuries in fire visible for several kilometers (miles). The cause of the fire was not yet known, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Foster said. He told Australian Broadcasting Corp. That the effort to fight the fire was done with cultural sensitivity.

“Not only is it a place of worship, it's a place of gathering for the local Buddhist community, and at all times, we were engaging with members from



The damaged structure is seen at the scene of a fire at the Bright Moon Buddhist Temple in Springvale South, Melbourne on Monday. The Buddhist temple in Melbourne was extensively damaged by fire Sunday. About 80 firefighters fought the blaze at the temple. Fire investigators haven't yet determined the cause. No injuries were reported.

AP photo

that community to inform them what we were doing and taking into account their concerns,” Foster said.

Spanish PM urges to end EU reliance on imported food, energy

Madrid:Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Monday urged the European Union to “reindustrialise” to end its reliance on energy, microchips and food from outside the bloc and to learn the lessons of shortages provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine.

Shortages triggered by dependence on countries outside 27-nation EU highlighted “a serious threat to competitiveness of our companies or to the security and welfare of our fellow citizens,” Sanchez said.

He pointed to microchips and personal protective equipment from Asia during the pandemic and Russian natural gas and grains during the war in Ukraine. Sanchez was giving a speech in Madrid to outline policy priorities before Spain assumes rotating presidency of EU council.

Bomb kills soldier, wounds 11 people in southwest Pakistan

Quetta: A bombing near a vehicle carrying Pakistani paramilitary troops in southwestern Baluchistan province killed a soldier and wounded 11 people, mostly civilians, police and security officials said Monday.

The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place on Sunday. Pakistan has been battling an insurgency in Baluchistan for more than a decade, with separatists in the province demanding complete autonomy or a larger share of the province's gas and mineral resources.

The outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan — or TTP as the Pakistani Taliban are known — and other militants



also have a presence in the province, which borders Iran and Afghanistan.

Sunday's bombing took place near the Musa Khan checkpoint in Quetta, the Baluchistan provincial capital, said local police official Mohammad Khan. He provided no further details.

Shortly after the bombing, the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility, saying the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber.

Pope, Anglican, Presbyterian leaders denounce anti-gay laws

AP ■ ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE

Pope Francis, the head of the Anglican Communion and top Presbyterian minister together denounced the criminalisation of homosexuality on Sunday and said gay people should be welcomed by their churches.

The three Christian leaders spoke out on LGBTQ rights during an unprecedented joint airborne news conference returning home from South Sudan, where they took part in a three-day ecumenical pilgrimage to try to nudge the young country's peace process forward. They were asked



The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, right, Pope Francis, left, and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland Iain Greenshields meet the journalists during an airborne press conference aboard the airplane directed to Rome, at the end of his pastoral visit to Congo and South Sudan, on Sunday

AP photo

about Francis' recent comments to The Associated Press, in which he declared that laws that criminalise gay people were “unjust” and that “being homosexual is not a crime.”

South Sudan is one of 67 countries that criminalises homosexuality, 11 of them with the death penalty. LGBTQ advocates say even where such laws are not applied, they contribute to a climate of harassment, discrimination and violence.

Francis referred his Jan. 24 comments to the AP and repeated that such laws are “unjust.” He also repeated previous comments that parents should never throw their gay

children out of the house. “To condemn someone like this is a sin,” he said. “Criminalising people with homosexual tendencies is an injustice.” “People with homosexual tendencies are children of God. God Loves them. God accompanies them,” he added.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recalled that LGBTQ rights were very much on the current agenda of the Church of England, and said he would quote the pope's own words when the issue is discussed at the church's upcoming General Synod. “I wish I had spoken as eloquently and clearly as the pope.

US officials offer Congress briefing on Trump, Biden papers

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US officials have offered to brief congressional leaders on their investigation into the classified documents found at former President Donald Trump's Florida residence as well as President Joe Biden's Delaware home and former private office, people familiar with the matter said on Sunday.

A briefing could come as soon as this week. But it may not meet demands from lawmakers who want to review the documents taken not just from Mar-a-Lago but also from the locations belonging to Biden and the Indiana home of former Vice President Mike Pence.

Six months after federal agents first conducted an unprecedented search of a former president's home for classified documents, the White House faces bipartisan pressure to share what it found with lawmakers who say they are concerned about the potential damage to national security and intelligence sources.

Separate special counsels are investigating the documents found in the possession of Trump and Biden.

Officials have declined to answer most questions in public or private about what they found, citing the ongoing criminal investigations and a separate "risk assessment" of the possible damage to intelligence sources.

Rep. Mike Turner, who heads the House Intelligence Committee, told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that



the administration notified him it would brief on the documents this week.

"This administration needs to understand we do have national security urgent matters," said Turner, R-Ohio. He also called on the White House to brief him on the Chinese balloon shot down on Saturday.

"What's interesting is that the moment this balloon became public, I got a notice not from the administration that I'm going to get a briefing on this balloon, but they have to rush to Congress now to talk to us about Donald Trump's documents," he said, adding that a discussion

of Biden and Pence's records was expected to be included.

Three people familiar with the matter confirmed a congressional briefing was offered to the "Gang of Eight" — the Republican and Democratic leaders of the House and Senate and of both intelligence committees. The people spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

Any briefing is not expected to include direct access to the documents that were seized, the people said.

Sens. Mark Warner, D-Va., and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., the chairman and

vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, asked for that access in a letter last week to Attorney General Merrick Garland and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines.

The director of national intelligence's office and Department of Justice both declined to comment on Sunday.

The Justice Department says roughly 300 documents with classified markings, including at the top-secret level, have been recovered from Mar-a-Lago after being taken there after Trump left the White House.

Last August, FBI agents executed a search warrant at the property after developing evidence that led them to believe that Trump and his representatives had not returned all the classified files.

The material taken at that time included roughly 13,000 government documents, including about 100 bearing classification markings. Some of the material was so sensitive that Justice Department prosecutors and FBI counterintelligence investigators required additional security clearances to review them.

A special counsel, Jack Smith, is investigating whether to bring charges against Trump or anyone else related to the documents.

Prosecutors have revealed that they are investigating possible violations of multiple criminal statutes, including willful retention of national defence information and obstruction.

Judge: Banning guns for marijuana users unconstitutional

AP ■ OKLAHOMA CITY (US)

A federal judge in Oklahoma has ruled that a federal law prohibiting people who use marijuana from owning firearms is unconstitutional, the latest challenge to firearms regulations after the US Supreme Court's conservative majority set new standards for reviewing the nation's gun laws.

Lawyers for Jared Michael Harrison had argued that their client's Second Amendment right to bear arms was being violated by a federal law that makes it illegal for "unlawful users or addicts of controlled substances" to possess firearms. Harrison had been charged after being arrested by police in Lawton, Oklahoma, in May 2022 following a traffic stop. During a search of his car, police found a loaded revolver as well as marijuana. Harrison told police he had been on his way to work at a medical marijuana dispensary, but that he did not have a state-issued medical-marijuana card.

His lawyers had argued the portion of federal firearms law focused on drug users or addicts



was not consistent with the nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation, echoing what the US Supreme Court has ruled last year in a case known as New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen. That case set new standards for interpreting the Second Amendment.

Federal prosecutors had argued that the portion of the law focused on drug users is "consistent with a longstanding historical tradition in America of disarming presumptively risky persons, namely, felons, the mentally ill, and the intoxicated".

US District Judge Patrick Wyrick in Oklahoma City agreed with Harrison's lawyers,

ruling on Friday that federal prosecutors' arguments that Harrison's status as a marijuana user "justifies stripping him of his fundamental right to possess a firearm ... Is not a constitutionally permissible means of disarming Harrison".

"But the mere use of marijuana carries none of the characteristics that the Nation's history and tradition of firearms regulation supports," said Wyrick, who was appointed by former President Donald Trump.

In his ruling, Wyrick highlighted that under Oklahoma law, marijuana can be bought legally at more than 2,000 storefronts in the state.



Israeli troops kill 5 Palestinian gunmen in West Bank raid

AP ■ AQABAT JABR (WEST BANK)

Israeli forces killed five Palestinian gunmen linked to the Islamic militant Hamas group in a raid on a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Monday, the latest bloodshed in the region that will likely further exacerbate tensions.

The Palestinian president's office called the violence a crime, urging the United States to pressure Israel to hold back on its incursions. The military said the raid was meant to apprehend a militant cell that staged a botched shooting attack on a restaurant in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

The violence comes amid one of the deadliest periods in years in the West Bank and in the first weeks of Israel's new government, its most right-wing ever, which has promised to take a tough stance against the Palestinians.

The Israeli military said it was operating in the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp to apprehend the suspects behind a failed shooting attack last month at a West Bank restaurant, where attackers allegedly were thwarted by a

weapon malfunction.

The attackers then fled the scene, the military said, adding that they were members of the Hamas militant group that rules the Gaza Strip and has elements in the West Bank as well.

The military said it was searching Monday for the militant cell behind the shooting that it said had sealed itself inside a home in the refugee camp.

During the search, troops encountered gunmen and a gun battle erupted. The military said several of the gunmen who were killed were involved in the attempted attack on the restaurant.

"The new Israeli government is continuing its series of crimes against our Palestinian people," a statement from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' office said.

Jihad Abu Al-Assal, the governor of Jericho and the Jordan Valley, said the military was still holding on to the gunmen's bodies. Without access to the bodies, the Palestinian Health Ministry did not immediately confirm the deaths, saying only that three were injured, one of them critically.

Subversion trial for Hong Kong political activists opens

AP ■ HONG KONG

Some of Hong Kong's best-known pro-democracy activists went on trial Monday in the biggest prosecution yet under a law imposed by China's ruling Communist Party to crush dissent. The 18 defendants face up to life in prison if convicted under the national security law critics say is eroding the autonomy promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997, and its status as a global business centre.

They were among 47 pro-democracy figures who were arrested in 2021 under the legislation that was imposed following protests in 2019. They were charged in connection with an informal 2020 primary

election. The pro-democracy movement has largely dried up after activists were jailed or went into exile.

Growing numbers of young professionals have responded to the erosion of Hong Kong's Western-style civil liberties by leaving for Britain, the United States and other countries.

The United States imposed sanctions on officials it said were to blame for the abuses.

The primary in 2020 aimed at picking pro-democracy candidates who could win control of the territory's Legislative Council.

Prosecutors accuse them of trying to paralyse Hong Kong's government and topple the city's leader by securing a majority to veto budgets.



"The purpose of the conspiracy is to subvert the state power," the prosecutor said in his opening statement.

The prosecution involves many of the city's most prominent activists, including legal scholar Benny Tai, former student leader Joshua Wong and opposition party leaders Wu Chi-wai and Alvin Yeung.

Tai and four others were the

election organizers and had indispensable involvement, the prosecutor said.

In previous proceedings, the 18 activists had indicated they intended to plead not guilty.

But two of them — former district councillor Ng Kin-wai and businessman Mike Lam — later changed their minds, joining the other 29 activists, including Tai, Wong, Yeung and Wu, who plan to admit the charges.

While most of the 47 activists who were charged with conspiracy to commit subversion have been detained without bail for nearly two years, former lawmakers Raymond Chan and Helena Wong, who appeared in court on Monday, were among the minority who were granted bail based on strict conditions.

UK nurses, ambulance crews strike, straining health system

AP ■ LONDON

Tens of thousands of nurses and ambulance staff walked off the job in the U.K. On Monday in what unions called the biggest strike in the history of the country's public health system.

The walkout is the latest in a wave of strikes that has disrupted Britons' lives for months, as workers — especially in the public sector — demand pay raises to keep pace with double-digit inflation.

Teachers, train drivers, airport baggage handlers, border staff, driving instructors, bus drivers and postal workers also have all walked off their jobs in recent months to demand higher pay.

Teachers, health workers and many others say their wages have fallen in real terms over the last decade, and a cost-of-living crisis fuelled by sharply rising food and energy prices has left many struggling to pay their bills.

Britain's annual inflation rate was 10.5% in December, a 41-year high.

The Conservative government argues that giving public sector staff pay increases of 10% or more would drive inflation even higher.

The strike piles more pressure on the state-funded National Health Service, already staggering under demand from winter viruses, staff shortages and backlogs built up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nursing unions say emergency care and cancer treatment will continue during their 48-hour walkout, but thousands of appointments and procedures are likely to be postponed.

The ambulance service says it will respond to the most urgent calls during a daylong strike.

But Business Secretary Grant Shapps said the strike could put lives at risk, leaving people with "a postcode lottery when it comes to having a heart attack or a stroke."



Sharon Graham, general secretary of the Unite union representing some ambulance staff, said Sunday there were "no talks at any level whatsoever with the government" about pay.

She urged Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to "come to the table and negotiate — roll your sleeves up and negotiate on the pay in the NHS — that is what's required."

Pat Cullen, head of the Royal College of Nursing union, also said a "meaningful" pay offer from the government could bring the strike "to a swift close."

The unions are seeking a pay raise for the current year, but the government says it will only talk about the year ahead. Health Secretary Steve Barclay urged unions to call off the strikes, "look forward and engage in a constructive dialogue" about pay for 2023-2024.

Monday's nursing strike affects England. In Scotland and Wales — which have semiautonomous governments in charge of health policy — unions have suspended walkouts while negotiations continue.

Sunak's government also has angered unions by introducing a bill that will make it harder for key workers to strike by setting "minimum safety levels" for firefighters, ambulance services and railways that must be maintained during a walkout.

Pope planning India, Mongolia trips after Lisbon, Marseille

AP ■ ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE

Pope Francis has said he is planning to visit India next year and is studying a possible trip to Mongolia later in 2023 in what would be a first for a pope.

Francis outlined his upcoming travel schedule on Sunday during his flight back to Rome from South Sudan.

He confirmed that he would be in Lisbon, Portugal for World Youth Day the first week of August and would participate in a September 23 meeting of Mediterranean bishops in Marseille, France.

He said there was "the possibility" that he would fly from Marseille to Mongolia, which would be a first for a pope.

Looking further ahead, Francis said he thought he would visit India in 2024, after plans for a trip in 2017 fell apart.

Francis spoke to reporters after a six-day visit to Congo and South Sudan, where he was joined in the South Sudanese capital, Juba, by the Archbishop



of Canterbury Justin Welby and the moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rt. Rev. Iain Greenshields.

The Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian leaders made a novel joint visit to push South Sudan's political leaders to make progress on implementing a stalled 2018 peace accord that ended a civil war following the country's 2011 independence from Sudan.

Welby and Greenshields joined Francis aboard the papal plane back and took part in his

airborne news conference, during which they were asked if they would be willing to join Francis on future trips too.

Welby said he would be "delighted to" if it might be helpful, joking that the papal plane was "the best airline I've ever flown on."

Greenshields also was keen but noted his mandate ends in May.

In a nod to the nearly all-male Vatican delegation that accompanies Francis on his foreign trips, Greenshields pointed out that he would be replaced by "a very capable woman" as moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rev. Sally Foster-Fulton, an American. The Church of Scotland has had ordained female ministers since the 1960s.

"She would be delighted to do the same thing," he said.

The Vatican delegation, made up mostly of cardinals and bishops, traditionally only includes one woman: a protocol expert in the Vatican secretariat of state.

Avalanches kill 9 in Italy, Austria as heavy snow hits Alps

AP ■ FRANKFURT (GERMANY)

Nine people died in avalanches in Austria and Italy over the weekend as heavy snow and school holidays drew skiers into the Alps, with some of the victims dying after skiing in unmarked areas despite warnings of elevated avalanche risk, police said.

On Sunday a snow plow driver in East Tirol in Austria was recovered dead after being swept away.

In Oetztal a 32-year-old Chinese skier died, while in Zillertal a 17-year-old male from New Zealand was buried and in Kleinwalsertal a 55-year-old German man missing since Friday was found dead.

More than a dozen avalanches were reported in the Tirol region of Austria alone and authorities had set the warning level at four on a scale of five and urged caution.

A 31-year-old German woman was killed on Saturday



in the South Tirol region of Italy when a snowmass broke loose at 2,200 metres (7,200 feet) near the Limo Pass some 80 kilometres (50 miles) east of Bolzano, the dpa news agency reported.

Rescue efforts were complicated by 120-kilometre-per-hour (75-mile-per-hour) winds; her body was recovered from under 2.5 metres (8.2 feet) of

snow. Another woman skiing with her was freed from the snow unharmed.

Other victims on Saturday included a 29-year-old ski guide and his 33-year-old male guest who were skiing away from prepared ski runs when a snowboarder set off an avalanche above them in St. Anton in Austria.

Kenya labour court rules that Facebook can be sued

AP ■ NAIROBI

A judge in Kenya has ruled that Facebook's parent company, Meta, can be sued in the East African country.

Meta tried to have the case dropped, arguing that Kenyan courts do not have jurisdiction over their operations, but the labour court judge dismissed that in a ruling on Monday.

A former Facebook moderator in Kenya, Daniel Motaung, is suing the company claiming poor working conditions.

Motaung said that while working as a moderator he was exposed to gruesome content such as rape, torture and beheadings that risked his and colleagues' mental health.

He said Meta did not offer mental health support to employees, required unreasonably long working hours, and offered minimal pay.

Motaung worked in Facebook's African hub in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, which is operated by Samasource Ltd.



Following the judge's decision that Meta can be sued in Kenya, the next step in case will be considered by the court on March 8.

Meta is facing a separate court case in which two Ethiopians say hate speech was allowed and even promoted on Facebook amid heated rhetoric over their country's deadly Tigray conflict.

That lawsuit alleges that Meta hasn't hired enough content moderators to adequately monitor posts, that it uses an algorithm that prioritises hateful content, and that it responds more slowly to crises in Africa than elsewhere in the world.

Majority of Adani grp cos end lower

Group companies' combined mcap dips by ₹9.5 L cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of most of the Adani group firms ended lower on Monday, with the group companies' combined mcap witnessing a sharp fall of ₹9.5 lakh crore after US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research's adverse report.

Forex traders said the Hindenburg Research report has soured market mood towards Adani Group stocks, leading to a sharp decline in the stock prices.

At the end of Monday's trading session, six of the 10 Adani group companies ended in the negative territory, with Adani Transmission slipping 10 per cent, while the shares of Adani Total Gas, Adani Power, Adani Green Energy and Adani Wilmar declined 5 per cent each.

Shares of Adani Enterprises closed for the day at ₹1,572.40, down 0.74 per cent over its pre-



vious close.

Four of the Adani group companies defied the trend and settled in the positive territory with Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone closing higher by 9.46 per cent, Ambuja Cements (up 1.54 per cent), ACC (up 2.24 per cent) and NDTV (up 1.37 per cent).

"The Adani group stocks (including Ambuja, ACC and NDTV) have lost around ₹9.5 lakh crores or about 49 per cent of their combined market cap in the last nine trading sessions (from January 24 to February

6 2023)," said Manish Chowdhury, head of research at Stoxbox.

"Adani group stocks faced a selloff over the last few sessions following the report by short-seller Hindenburg. The calling off of the Adani Enterprises FPO also added to the volatility.

"News of the promoter taking steps to unwind the pledge of their shareholding in some of the companies seems to have stabilised sentiments in some companies," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

Sensex declines 334 points as metal, power shares retreat

Amid FII outflows, global selloff

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined by more than half a per cent at close on Monday due to selling in IT, power and metal shares triggered by a global equity meltdown on rate hike fears and FII outflows.

Snapping its five-day gaining streak, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled lower by 334.98 points or 0.55 per cent at 60,506.90. During the session, the index fell over 500 points to touch its intra-day low of 60,345.61.

The broader NSE Nifty dipped 89.45 points or 0.50 per cent to close at 17,764.60 as 34 of its stocks dropped.

"A strong job market in the United States pushed the global market lower on rate hike fears, as it offers the Fed more leeway in enacting stricter policy measures. This was in con-



trast to the recent rally in the global indices on the expectation that the economy is in its last phase of policy tightening.

"The RBI's policy announcement on Wednesday will provide more colour on its future rate actions, which is expected to hike rate by 25bps," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Tata Steel was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, falling 2.08 per cent, followed by Kotak Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, M&M, Ultra Cement and Tata Motors.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance, PowerGrid and ITC were among the major winners.

RBI's Monetary Policy Committee meeting starts amid expectations of lower rate hike

PTI ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) started its three-day meeting on Monday amid expectations of a smaller 25 basis points rate increase or a pause on the rate hiking spree that started in May last year to check inflation.

The decision of the six-member rate setting panel will be announced by the Governor on Wednesday.

With retail inflation showing signs of moderation and remaining below the Reserve Bank of India's 6 per cent upper tolerance level, and projected slowdown in GDP growth in the next fiscal starting April, experts are of the opinion that the central bank may only opt for a 25 basis points hike in the key interest rate.

Another opinion is that the RBI may press the pause button on rate hike on Wednesday itself.

"We expect the RBI to pause in February policy," State Bank of India's Economic Research Department said in a report titled 'Prelude to MPC Meeting on Feb 6-8, 2023'.

In the current rate cycle, it said that rate actions, both hikes and cuts, have been large-



ly synchronised with actions of the monetary authorities in the developed nations.

The stance, the SBI report said could continue to be withdrawal of accommodation, even as liquidity is close to neutral.

"Even though the RBI could pause as it allows past rate actions to work with long and variable lags, the RBI could still guide the markets with a rate action in future that will be purely data dependent," it said.

According to the report, 6.25 per cent repo rate could be the terminal rate for now.

In its December monetary policy review, the central bank raised the key benchmark interest rate (repo) by 35 basis points (bps) after delivering

three back-to-back increases of 50 bps.

Since May last year, the RBI has increased the short-term lending rate by 225 basis points to contain inflation, mostly driven by external factors, especially global supply chain disruption following the Russia-Ukraine war outbreak.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at Bank of Baroda, said the credit policy will be announced against the background of both the Budget that was presented as well as the Economic Survey that served as the prelude to it.

The Budget has maintained a virtually unchanged borrowing programme while the Survey has pointed to the persistence of higher interest rates in the coming year.

B'desh Min says no concerns on power supply from Adani

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Bangladesh has no concerns about Adani Group's ability to supply power from a plant in Jharkhand, said Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Adviser to the country's Prime Minister on energy.

Speaking on sidelines of the India Energy Week here, Chowdhury, who holds ministerial rank, said talks with Adani on the supply are private and can't be made public.

"Electricity will come very timely. Summer peak is coming and that 600 MW of Adani Power is very helpful," he said.

Adani Power's Godda thermal plant in Jharkhand is "already in place," he said. "So there is no reason to be concerned. People have gone and seen the plant."

There have been concerns about supply of power from Godda, which was set up to supply power to Bangladesh, as the transmission line that will carry the electricity wasn't complete.

There were reports that Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) has urged Adani Power for a discount on variable energy costs to compensate it for higher price of imported coal.

Adani Group is reportedly considering the proposal. An arm of Adani Power had inked a long-term power purchase agreement (PPA) for 1,496 megawatts (MW) with BPDB for 25 years in 2018.

However, Adani Power has reportedly denied any request for revision of PPA for the project by the BPDB.

Adani Transmission net up nearly 73% to ₹478 crore in Q3

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Transmission Ltd (ATL) on Monday posted a nearly 73 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit to ₹478 crore in the December quarter of 2022-23 on the back of a one-time income gain and higher revenues.

The consolidated net profit of the company was ₹277 crore in the quarter ended on December 31, 2022.

The consolidated revenue increased to ₹3,037 crore in the third quarter of FY2022-23 from ₹2,623 crore in the same period a year ago.

Consolidated PAT reported a strong upside of 73 per cent, aided by a one-time income of ₹240 crore from a regulatory order, a company statement said.

Adani Transmission MD

Anil Sardana said, "ATL's growth trajectory remains firm despite the challenging macro-economic environment. Our pipeline of projects and recently operationalised assets will further strengthen our pan-India presence and consolidate our position as the largest private sector transmission and distribution company in India."

Adani Transmission is the country's largest private transmission company, with a presence across 13 states of India and a cumulative transmission network of 18,795 ckm (circuit kilometers), out of which 15,371 ckm are operational and 3,424 ckm are at various stages of construction.

It also operates a distribution business, serving more than 12 million consumers in Mumbai and Mundra SEZ.

Paytm shares settle over 6% higher as firm narrows loss in December quarter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of One97 communications settled over 6 per cent higher on Monday after the company narrowed its consolidated net loss to ₹392 crore in the third quarter.

One97 Communications Ltd (OCL) is the parent entity of leading mobile payments and financial services company Paytm.

The stock ended at ₹558 apiece, up 6.31 per cent on the BSE. During the day, it climbed 7.8 per cent to ₹566.

On the NSE, it zoomed 6.11 per cent to close at ₹557 per scrip.

In volume terms, 3.12 lakh shares of the firm were traded on the BSE and over 91 lakh shares were on the NSE during the day.

Digital financial services firm One97 Communications



on Friday said it has narrowed its consolidated net loss to ₹392 crore in the third quarter ended December 2022.

The company had posted a net loss of ₹778.4 crore in the same period a year ago, it said in a regulatory filing.

Its revenue from operations jumped about 42 per cent to ₹2,062.2 crore during the quarter from ₹1,456.1 crore in the year-ago period.

The 30-share BSE Sensex benchmark ended 334.98 points or 0.55 per cent lower at 60,506.90 on Monday.

Gold plunges ₹574, silver plummets ₹2,113 amid weak global trends



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices plunged by Rs 574 to ₹57,155 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid weak global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹57,729 per 10 grams.

Silver plummeted by ₹2,113 to ₹68,133 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at ₹57,155 per 10 grams, down ₹574 per 10 grams," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities. In the overseas market, both gold and silver were trading lower at \$1,875 per ounce and \$22.48 per ounce, respectively.

Rupee falls 65 paise to close at 82.73 against US dollar



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee fell by 65 paise to close at 82.73 (provisional) against the US currency on Monday, weighed down by gains in the greenback and the overseas markets and a muted trend in domestic equities.

Sustained foreign fund outflows and firm crude oil prices further dented investor sentiments, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 82.35 against the greenback, and fell to an intra-

day low of 82.76. It finally settled at 82.73 (provisional), down 65 paise over its previous close.

In the previous session on Friday, the rupee settled at 82.08 against the US dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.24 per cent higher at 103.16, on robust economic data from the US, which raised expectations of a hawkish Federal Reserve.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures advanced 0.45 per cent to \$80.30 per barrel.

The Indian rupee depreciated on a rally in the US Dollar and weak domestic markets, said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

"Dollar gained on robust economic data from the US raising expectations of hawkish Federal Reserve.

CRC Group to develop ₹810-cr commercial proj in Noida; signs MoU with UP Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm CRC Group on Monday said it will invest ₹810 crore over the next four years to develop a premium commercial project in Noida, comprising 22 lakh square feet of built-up area.

The Noida-based firm has already signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Uttar Pradesh government under the Invest UP programme for the project, which has the potential to generate employment for 9,000 people.

"We have acquired 11.16 acre land from Logix and Uppal Group in Sector 140 A, Noida to develop a Grade-A integrated IT/ITeS commercial project. The land was acquired through Supreme Court order," CRC Group Founder and CEO Kunal Bhalla told reporters here.

Renault, Nissan to team up on new vehicle projects in India



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Renault Group and Nissan plan to collaborate on several new vehicle projects, including sports utility vehicles, in India as part of new initiatives announced by the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi Alliance on Monday.

The alliance announced a three-dimensional programme including creation of operational projects in Latin America, India and Europe.

As part of the new framework, the partners also seek enhanced strategic agility with new initiatives that all three entities can join.

Tata Steel slips into red, posts ₹2,502 crore loss in Q3

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Steel major Tata Steel on Monday reported a consolidated net loss of ₹2,501.95 crore in the quarter ended on December 31, 2022, on account of higher expenses.

The company had posted a net profit of ₹9,598.16 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing.

Total income on a consolidated basis fell to ₹57,354.16 crore in the October-December quarter from ₹60,842.72 crore earlier. The company's expenses rose to ₹57,172.02 crore in the quarter under review from ₹48,666.02 crore in the year-ago period.

Tata Steel Group is among the top global steel companies with an annual capacity of 34 MT.

NYLI TO INVEST TO ACQUIRE 49% STAKE IN MAXVIL PROJECT

New Delhi: New York Life Insurance Company will invest ₹290 crore to acquire 49 per cent stake in an upcoming commercial project in Gurugram being developed by Max Group firm Max Ventures & Industries Ltd (MaxVIL). In September last year, MaxVIL's arm Max Estates Ltd acquired Acreage Builders at an enterprise value of ₹322.50 crore. Acreage Builders owns 7.15 acre land at Golf Course Extension Road in Gurugram. In a statement, MaxVIL said Max Estates has completed the 100 per cent acquisition of Acreage Builders, which now has become a step-down wholly-owned subsidiary of the company. "New York Life Insurance has been onboarded as an equity investor committing Rs 290 crore in Acreage Builders," MaxVIL said. Sahil Vachani, MD & CEO of MaxVIL said, "This year, the company has embarked upon Max Estates 3.0 journey wherein it exited the speciality packaging films business and redeployed the capital to expand real estate portfolio." The company has entered in the residential segment, he said.

DRONE PILOT TRAINING COURSES AT RAXA ACADEMY

Hyderabad/New Delhi: RAXA Security Solutions Ltd, a premier security company of the GMR Airports Infrastructure Limited (GIL), today announced the launch of Drone Pilot Training Courses at its RAXA Academy. These courses have been specially curated to help individuals become market-ready in this new emerging drone technology sector. The Academy obtained the license to run the Drone Pilot Training course from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on December 6th, 2022. The Academy offers two courses in Drone training - the Drone Pilot Training Course and the more advanced Drone Industrial Training course. The training of the first batch of trainees is underway from January 23rd, 2023. The five-day Drone Pilot Training Course will include simulator and offline teachings to help individuals obtain the best in-sector training, post which they will be fully trained in drone flying operations.

ITC shares pare early gains; end nearly 1% higher

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of ITC Ltd pared early gains and ended nearly 1 per cent higher on Monday after the firm reported a 23.09 per cent jump in net profit for the third quarter ended December 31, 2022.

The stock which had opened at Rs 385.25 and later rose nearly 2 per cent to touch ₹388.20, its 52-week high level on the BSE, finally ended the day 0.74 per cent higher at ₹383.30 apiece.

Similar movement was seen on the NSE as well. The stock opened at ₹382.50 and ended the day at ₹383.50, higher by 0.75 per cent over its previous close.

In volume terms, 6.86 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and over 2.57 crore shares on the NSE during the day.

Meanwhile, the 30-share BSE Sensex benchmark closed 334.98 points or 0.55 per cent lower at 60,506.90 points on Monday.

Sebi puts in place operational guidelines on green bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital market regulator Sebi on Monday came out with operational guidelines on green bonds asking issuers to make additional disclosure, pertaining to environmental sustainability objectives of such debt securities in the offer document.

In addition, issuers of green bonds will have to disclose brief details of decision-making process followed for deter-

mining the eligibility of projects, for which the proceeds are being raised through issuance of green debt securities, Sebi said in a circular.

Apart from disclosure in the offer document, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has asked the issuer, who has listed green debt securities, to provide certain additional disclosures along with its annual report and financial results.

Also, the issuer will have



to appoint a third party reviewer for a green debt security for the post-issue management of the use of proceeds from the green debt security, and verification of the internal tracking and impact reporting.

Listing out responsibilities of the issuer, Sebi said that an issuer of green debt securities will have to maintain a decision-making process which it uses to determine the continuing eligibility of the project.

This includes, without limitation statement on the environmental objectives of the green debt securities and a process to determine whether the project meets the eligibility requirements.

The guidelines, to be effective

from April 1, 2023, have come against the backdrop of increasing interest in sustainable finance in India as well as around the globe, and with a view to aligning the framework for green debt securities with the updated Green Bond Principles (GBP) recognised by IOSCO.

The regulatory framework defines Green Debt Securities as debt securities issued for raising funds that are to be utilised for projects or assets

falling under certain categories.

With regard to disclosure in the offer document, Sebi said that issuers will be required to apprise about details of the procedures to be employed for tracking the deployment of the proceeds of the issue as well as details related to the perceived social and environmental risks and proposed mitigation plan associated with the project proposed to be financed through the proceeds among others.



Martinez fires Inter to Milan derby glory

AP ■ MILAN

Lautaro Martinez shot Inter Milan to a 1-0 derby triumph over crumbling champions AC Milan on Sunday but his team stayed 13 points behind Serie A leaders Napoli.

Argentina forward Martinez headed home his 12th league goal of the season in the 34th minute at the San Siro to make sure that Inter remained in second place and plunge their local rivals even deeper into crisis.

Martinez has been given the Inter captaincy as Milan Skrinjar wants to leave for Paris Saint-Germain as a free agent in the summer.

"Wearing the armband makes me very proud," he told DAZN.

"Ever since coming to Inter, I have tried to give my best, and this is a special game. We did it again."

A third straight league defeat leaves Milan in sixth and in a downward spiral that threatens to completely ruin a season which less than a month ago looked to be going more or less according to plan.

Stefano Pioli's side have earned just five points from their six league matches since the World Cup and have also been knocked out of the Italian Cup and beaten by Inter in the Super Cup.

Milan have to take on Tottenham Hotspur in their first Champions League last-16 tie since 2014 in less than 10 days. Having already been thumped twice by Chelsea this season their chances of advancing in Europe also look slim.

They didn't have a single shot on target in an underwhelming derby which was largely dominated by Inter, the nominal hosts on Sunday night, having changed formation and dropped Rafael Leao in order to stop conceding goals.

"We have been very solid at the back in recent weeks but we didn't want to play defensive football. That was our mistake," said Pioli.

"If we'd tried to play our true football we'd have only been in more difficulty."

Martinez could easily have had more than just the one goal which took his calendar year tally in all competitions to seven as he forced two smart saves from Ciprian Tatarusanu and headed a Milan Skrinjar cross just wide before he opened the scoring.

He also had a late goal ruled offside by the tiniest margin, his forehead just beyond the defenders before he poked under Tatarusanu, but it made no difference to a curiously comfortable derby win.

Kane dents Man City's title bid

AP ■ LONDON

Pep Guardiola admitted Manchester City's Premier League title defence had suffered a major blow after Harry Kane's record-breaking goal gave Tottenham a 1-0 win over the champions on Sunday.

Guardiola's side would have moved within two points of leaders Arsenal with a victory in north London, but Kane's first-half strike — which made him Tottenham's all-time leading scorer on 267 goals — left the Gunners firmly in control of the title race.

Second-placed City are five points behind Arsenal, who have a game in hand and host Guardiola's men on February 15.

That will be a must-win clash for City if they are to have any hope of overhauling Mikel Arteta's team, who had slipped up themselves on Saturday when struggling Everton snatched a shock 1-0 win against the Gunners.

Asked how frustrating it was to miss the chance to close the gap on Arsenal, Guardiola said: "Yes, of course, Arsenal have dropped few, few points so far and of course there was an opportunity."

"It was important to be close to Arsenal and leave the fifth place in the table, that Tottenham is right now, far away."

"We are not in the position to think about being champions."

Tottenham's plush new stadium has been a house of horrors for City since it opened in 2019.

They have lost on all five of their visits and are yet to score a single goal there.

After dominating possession in the early stages, City faded badly after Kane's history-making goal.

With Kevin De Bruyne left on the bench for the first hour and Phil Foden absent from the squad due to illness, City lacked the creative quality to supply Erling Haaland with the kind of chance that Kane buried.

Haaland, well marshalled by Cristian Romero before the Tottenham defender's late red card, failed to have a single attempt on goal for the first time since his move from Borussia Dortmund last season.

It was a worrying sight for Guardiola, who faced criticism for leaving



Man City charged by PL over alleged breaches of financial rules

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester City have been referred to an independent commission by the Premier League over alleged breaches of its financial rules, the English top flight announced on Monday.

The alleged breaches span a period from the 2009/10 season to the 2017/18 campaign.

City were banned from UEFA competitions in February 2020 for two years by European football's governing body for "serious financial fair-play breaches" but the sanction was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in July of the same year.

The defending Premier League champions are alleged to have breached league rules requiring provision "in utmost good faith" of "accurate financial information that gives a true and fair view of the club's financial position".

The Premier League said the accurate financial infor-

mation required related to "revenue (including sponsorship revenue), its related parties and its operating costs".

The second set of breaches listed refers to alleged breaking of rules "requiring a member club to include full details of manager remuneration in its relevant contracts with its manager" related to seasons 2009/10 to 2012/13 inclusive.

The club's manager between December 2009 and May 2013 was current Italy boss Roberto Mancini.

The second set of alleged breaches also refers to requirements for a club to "include full details of player remuneration within the relevant contracts".

The third section deals with alleged breaches of Premier League rules requiring clubs to comply with UEFA Financial Fair Play regulations while the fourth set of alleged breaches relates to the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules.

out Belgium playmaker De Bruyne for what he called "tactical" reasons.

'WE ARE NOT THE SAME'

With Joao Cancelo surprisingly allowed to join Bayern Munich on loan last week, Guardiola once again used teenager Rico Lewis at left-back.

Lewis has vast potential but his lack of experience in the role perfected by Cancelo as a defender with the licence to roam into midfield was apparent as Tottenham bypassed him with ease.

City's third successive away defeat also raised questions about Guardiola's faith in the underwhelming Jack Grealish and centre-backs Manuel Akanji and Nathan Ake — neither able to replicate the formidable presence provided by Ruben Dias and Aymeric Laporte, who were both among the unused substitutes.

Guardiola conceded his team's latest inconsistent display was part of a worrying pattern City have been unable to stem throughout a campaign that threatens to fizzle out.

"Of course I have a lot of gratitude for these players. Always I try to do my best, I don't want to drop much but I knew it," he said.

"I said many times I knew we are not the same after winning a lot. Me included, I am the first to talk about that."

"It doesn't matter what happened in the past or the success we had. No, we have to try to do it again. Now we are sad, tomorrow we will reflect."

After winning four titles in the last five seasons, City look more vulnerable than at any time in Guardiola's reign.

With their long-time rivals Liverpool languishing in 10th place, a changing of the guard in the Premier League could be looming.

Quizzed on his ability to battle with City and Liverpool for the major prizes when he was hired as Manchester United boss, Erik ten Hag suggested a shift in the balance of power was possible.

"I admire them both. They play fantastic football. Eras come to an end," Ten Hag said.

Guardiola will hope Ten Hag's bold prediction is not about to come true.

Barca crush Sevilla to expand La Liga lead

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona stretched their La Liga lead over Real Madrid to a substantial eight points with a comfortable 3-0 win over Sevilla on Sunday.

The Catalans, aiming to win their first Spanish title since 2019, punished second-placed Madrid for their 1-0 defeat by Real Mallorca earlier on, opening up a wide gap ahead of their rivals.

After a tight first half Jordi Alba broke the deadlock before the hour mark, with further goals from Gavi and Raphinha helping wrap up the win.

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez had criticised his team in recent weeks for not killing off games after taking the lead but they did not let him down at Camp Nou.

The victory was their 10th in their last 11 league games, while Barca are now unbeaten in 15 matches across all competitions.

Barcelona have conceded just seven goals in La Liga this season, with this their 15th clean sheet.

"I think we are having a very good season, we're playing well, letting opponents have few chances," Alba told DAZN.

"We're happy, eight points clear but there's a long way to go. It's a good distance (if we) keep going like this."



Barcelona's gameplan was initially set back when captain Sergio Busquets was forced off with an ankle injury after just four minutes, replaced by Franck Kessie.

Jorge Sampaoli's Sevilla, 16th after a dismal start to the season, sat deep with five defenders and looked to frustrate the Catalans at every turn.

Moroccan goalkeeper Yassine Bounou denied La Liga's top scorer Robert Lewandowski at his near post early on, while Ronald Araujo headed narrowly off-target from a corner.

Lewandowski nodded wide and Raphinha headed at Bounou at the start of the second half as the team came out with renewed vigour, keen to capitalise on Real Madrid's defeat.

Alba pounced with a tidy finish after a superb assist from Kessie, who turned well and dinked the ball into the Spaniard's path.

After Sevilla shifted to a more attacking formation Raphinha teed up Gavi for the second with a raking low pass that left the youngster with a tap-

in at the back post in the 70th minute.

Raphinha provided the cutting edge on a slick 17-pass team move for the goal, in an impressive outing in place of the injured Ousmane Dembele.

Lewandowski dragged a free-kick narrowly wide as Barcelona looked to kill the game off, with the Andalusians flagging.

Alba crossed for former Leeds United winger Raphinha to finish from point-blank range for the third goal, wrapping up a satisfying day for the hosts.



Laborde powers Nice to win at Marseille

AP ■ MARSEILLE

Gaetan Laborde scored one goal and played a key role in another as Nice defeated Marseille 3-1 in Ligue 1 on Sunday to leave Paris Saint-Germain eight points clear at the top.

Marseille had been the form team in France since the World Cup, but a first loss in 10 league games dealt a heavy blow to their hopes of catching bitter rivals PSG.

Sofiane Diop headed Nice ahead at the Velodrome and Laborde doubled the advantage before half-time.

Ruslan Malinovskyi's goal gave Marseille hope, but Billal Brahimi secured a fourth win in five outings for Nice under interim coach Didier Digard.

Croatia into Davis Cup Finals



AP ■ PARIS

Two-time champions Croatia treached the Davis Cup Finals on Sunday where they were joined by unheralded South Korea and Finland.

Croatia, the champions in 2005 and 2018, were 2-0 up on Austria in their qualifier in Rijeka overnight.

Lucas Miedler and Alexander Erler then upset doubles specialists Nikola Mektic and Ivan Dodig 6-3, 7-6 (13/11) to keep Austria in the tie.

However, world number 23 Borna Coric won his second singles rubber, seeing off former US Open champion Dominic Thiem 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 as Croatia joined the 16-nation group stage of the finals in September.

"I was pretty nervous," said Coric. "But I came out on court and I was playing great tennis today."

In arguably the performance of the qualifying round, South Korea overturned a 2-0 deficit to beat Belgium 3-2 in Seoul.

Hong Seong-chan, ranked 237 in the world, clinched the deciding point with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) win over Zizou Bergs, ranked 122 places higher.

Nam Ji-sung and Song Ming-kyu started the South Korean fightback with a 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5) doubles win against Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen.

Kwon Soon-woo then stunned David Goffin 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 on the back of 11 aces to level the tie.

Finland made the finals stage for the first time with a 3-1 win over 2016 champions Argentina in Espoo.

Emil Ruusuvuori won all three rubbers he played.

On Sunday, he teamed with Harri Heliövaara for a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-4 win over Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni.

The 23-year-old then fittingly secured the winning point by seeing off Facundo Bagnis 7-5, 6-1.

Three-time winners Czech Republic beat Portugal with impressive 21-year-old Jiri Lehecka sealing victory with his second singles success of the weekend, a 6-4, 6-1 triumph over veteran Joao Sousa in Maia.

The Netherlands defeated Slovakia in Groningen with Tallon Griekspoor and Tim van Rijthoven seeing off Alex Molcan and Lukas Klein 6-3, 6-3.

Chile downed Kazakhstan 3-1 at home to also make the last 16.

Also making it through were 10-time winners France, Serbia, Britain, Sweden and the United States.

The weekend's 12 winners all go through to the group finals in September where they will be joined by 2022 champions Canada, runners-up Australia and wild cards Spain and Italy.

The top eight then progress to the Davis Cup Finals knockout week in Malaga in November.

Musiala shines as 10-man Bayern go top

AP ■ MUNICH

A stunning solo goal from Bayern Munich teenager Jamal Musiala sealed a controversial 4-2 away win at Wolfsburg on Sunday, sending the visitors back to the top of the table.

The win, Bayern's first league victory in 2023, was marred by a late VAR decision to chalk off a Wolfsburg goal, which would have made the score 4-3 with seven minutes plus stoppage time remaining.

On the pitch, Bayern played the majority of the second half with 10 men after midfielder Joshua Kimmich picked up a second yellow card.

Bayern struck in the ninth minute through France forward Kingsley Coman, whose curling cross evaded a leaping Thomas Mueller but drifted past goalkeeper Koen Casteels and into the net.

Coman added another just five minutes later, hammering a floating Joao Cancelo ball past a helpless Casteels.

Coman then won a free-kick just outside the Wolfsburg box and Mueller headed in Kimmich's delivery to make it 3-0 with less than 20 minutes gone.

The goal, Mueller's first since September, came on his 427th league appearance for Bayern, equalling Gerd Mueller's all-time record.

Wolfsburg manager Niko Kovac, who won the league and cup double with Bayern, took off centre-back Maxence Lacroix for winger Jakub Kaminski after just 30 minutes.

The change had an almost immediate impact, with the Polish international scoring late in the first half to give the home side hope.

Kimmich picked up a second yellow for a foul on Wolfsburg's Max Arnold 10 minutes into the second half, prompting Julian Nagelsmann to make three changes.

Wolfsburg went on the attack immediately and should have had a second when Kaminski found an unmarked Ridle Baku in the box, but the midfielder headed the ball directly at Bayern 'keeper Yann Sommer.

Despite their numerical disadvantage,



Bayern absorbed waves of Wolfsburg pressure and were next to get on the scoresheet thanks to a sensational goal from Musiala.

Musiala collected the ball near the sideline and dribbled through the heart of the Wolfsburg defence, slaloming past several defenders before unleashing a low shot to beat Casteels.

Wolfsburg scored a second with 10 minutes remaining through Mattias Svanberg.

The 2009 Bundesliga winners had the ball in the net against just two minutes later, but the goal was controversially disallowed for a foul in the build-up.

The win saw Bayern reclaim their one-point lead over second-placed Union Berlin.

Nagelsmann praised Musiala for his "decisive goal" with the match in the balance.

"Thank god we got that goal," Nagelsmann said. Above all it's a win, which is very important for us."

"Jamal played very well. I am very, very satisfied (with him)."

ASHWIN SHOULD NOT OVER-PLAN, KULDEEP SHOULD BE THIRD SPINNER, SAYS SHASTRI

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Ravichandran Ashwin's form will decide the fate of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, feels former India head coach Ravi Shastri, who wouldn't want the team's premier spinner to "over-plan" against Australia in the upcoming four-match Test series.

Shastri, under whose tutelage India won back-to-back Test series in Australia, also has no hesitation in naming Kuldeep Yadav as his choice as the third spinner while keeping Suryakumar Yadav as a potent middle-order game-changer.

"Ashwin, you don't want him to over-plan. He is good enough to stick to his plans as he is real crucial player here. His form might decide the series. Ashwin comes as a package, he will get you important runs as well," Shastri said, while answering a query from PTI during an interaction organised by Star Sports, the official broadcasters of the Border Gavaskar Trophy.

"If Ashwin is on fire, that might decide the outcome of the series. He is world class in most conditions but in Indian conditions, he is lethal. If the ball starts spinning and there is enough bite off the surface, he will trouble most batters.

"So, you don't want Ashwin to over-think and try too many things. Just keep it there and let the pitch do the rest because as it is, it does enough in India," Shastri, one of the shrewdest brains in Indian cricket, said.



To another query from PTI on his choice as the third spinner, Shastri replied: "As far as third spinner is concerned, I would like to see Kuldeep play straightaway. Jadeja and Axar are pretty similar bowlers. Kuldeep is different. If you lose the toss on Day 1, you need someone

who will give it a rip.

"If anyone spins it one Day 1, it will be Kuldeep. If the track doesn't have too much on offer, then Kuldeep can come into play."

He also gave another important reason to include Kuldeep in the playing XI.

"As the game progresses with the fast bowlers the Australians have, the rough created on both sides of the track will come into play. So wrist spinners can get the ball to turn back in and out both ways."

Shastri is unapologetic when asked about the kind of track he would want.

"I want the ball to turn from Day 1. Lose the toss, so be it. Something there on offer from Day 1, playing at home, cash in on it."

SKY & SHUBMAN

Shastri reckoned that India should keep their 12 ready with Shubman Gill in the scheme of things and then decide looking at the conditions of the track.

He doesn't want Suryakumar Yadav to be ruled out from the playing XI as a quick 40 on a rank turner from him could be a potential game-changer.

"Tough choice. You have to pick the best player for that position (No. 5). Surya is one player who will be proactive and looking to rotate the strike.

"If you want to do well in India, you have got to rotate the strike and not let bowlers bowl maidens at you. Blocking won't help. A quick 30 or 40 could decide the fate of game. He (Surya) can get (the runs) quickly and disrupt the opposition. India should back themselves to win by two-match margin," Shastri, a veteran of 80 Tests said.

KOHLI'S RECORD VS OZ

Shastri is confident that Virat

Kohli's near 50 average in Tests against Australia will spur him on and if he gets going in the first couple of innings, he would spell doom for the Australians.

"His (Kohli's) record against Australia would spur him on. He would be charged up and want to start well. You should look at his first two innings. If he gets off to a start, he would be a thorn in flesh for Aussies. They would for sure won't want that to happen.

"Kohli has average of just under 50 against Australia. Amazing record, that should really get him going."

BETTER KEEPER

Rishabh Pant's absence would really hurt India and Shastri admitted that one tough call would be whether to choose a better batter in Ishan Kishan or a relatively safer keeper in Kona Bharat.

"That's a tough call for India. That's how important Pant is. He ticked all boxes. Not only did his keeping improved but he could get under the skin of the opposition. As a batter, he is so dangerous. Pant has played more match-winning knocks than any of our top five batters in recent times. So that's how big a blow it is."

As far as the choice between Kishan and Bharat, Shastri said, "If the pitch offers turn, the better keeper should play. For Jadeja, Kuldeep and Ashwin, they would need good keeper behind stumps. Now it is up to you, who do you think is a better keeper."

A series victory in India is bigger than Ashes win: Oz players

PTI ■ NAGPUR

A series victory in India is bigger than winning the Ashes, say Australian star players, including Steve Smith and David Warner, who are gearing up for their "toughest challenge in Test cricket."

India and Australia are up against each other in a high-profile four-match Test series for the Border Gavaskar Trophy, starting here on Thursday.

In a video uploaded by cricket.Com.Au.On Monday, the Australian team spoke about the challenges of playing in India.

"It's a difficult place to win a Test match let alone a series. So, if we are able to do that, it would be huge. I think if you win in India it is bigger than an Ashes series," Smith said.

Star opener Warner said he is looking forward to playing against the best spinners in the world.

"Being a part of the last Ashes was fantastic but to go to India and beat India in India is the toughest challenge in Test cricket for us.

"I'm looking forward to the tour, it's always a hard graft. One thing that I'm looking forward to is applying myself against the best spinners in the world," Warner added.

Pacer Josh Hazlewood said:

"Probably been long since Australia won there or less frequently they have won. In world cricket that's everyone's goal- to try and win in India.

Pace ace Mitchell Starc, who will miss the first Test due to a finger injury, said a series win in India "has always been a crown jewel for Australian touring teams."

"Winning a series in India will be really special for our group. I think it has always been a crown jewel for Australian touring teams. It's one of, if not the hardest place to play away.... Such foreign conditions and how strong the Indian team are as well.

"On one side you get all this history of the Ashes and on then you have this tour of India which has been for many Australian teams out of reach."

Starc and his captain and fellow quick Pat Cummins are looking forward for the opportunity to win the series in India and the Ashes in England later this year.

"If we could win an away India tour and an away Ashes that would be a unique opportunity to do this year," Starc said.

"Winning a series in India is like an Ashes away series but even more rare. It will be a career highlight, era defining series if we win out there," Cummins added.

India really going to miss Pant: Chappell



PTI ■ NAGPUR

Former captain Ian Chappell feels Rishabh Pant's presence would have given sleepless nights to Australia captain Pat Cummins but even then India would start firm favourites in the upcoming four-match Test series beginning here on Thursday.

Pant met with a horrific car accident in December last year and is yet to be discharged from the hospital after undergoing multiple surgeries on his knee and heel.

"India are really going to really miss Rishabh Pant. The Australians will be happy. He is a counter attacker, the guy who keep you awake are guys who score quickly and changes game in one session. Pant was one such player," Chappell said during an interaction organised by Star Sports, the official broadcasters of the Test series for the Border Gavaskar Trophy.

Chappell, one of the most respected voices in world cricket, feels that Ravichandran Ashwin will certainly be the biggest threat but the Australia batters need to be proactive against him.

"Why is Ashwin likely to be the threat? Because he is a smart cricketer. Ashwin will always be a problem. Now, if you let him bowl the way he wants to bowl, you are in trouble. He will be a threat to Australia throughout. They have got to be proactive," Chappell said.

"You got to be thinking about being proactive. If you are not dictating terms, then you are in trouble. You have to get singles and rotate the strike. He (Ashwin) then has to change (his strategy against) whom he is bowling to then."

Nathan Lyon, with 400-plus Test wickets, knows how to bowl in India but Chappell

would ideally like the wily off-spinner to also get his deliveries to drift away from right-handers.

Chappell then explained Lyon's methods.

"You judge Lyon by how many runs are right handers scoring against him on the on-side. If there are lot of singles, doubles, fours being scored on on side by right handers, then he is bowling too straight.

"One thing that Lyon could try and do better is to curve the ball away from right handers. Really good off-spinners curve the ball away from right handers and that opens up opportunities for batters to hit on the off side. And then when you turn it back in, you get the chance to get bowled, bat-pad, leg before," he further explained.

"For India, it is important that they don't let Lyon dominate them. If Lyon dominates, it becomes easy for Pat

Cummins to rotate his fast bowlers and he doesn't have to bowl both speedsters from both ends."

Chappell is dead against the idea of Australia playing Ashton Agar as the second spinner just because he is a handy lower order batter.

"Australia should not get carried away by left and right combination. India have got one in Ashwin and Jadeja who are both very good bowlers. Agar is a guy, who averages 40. If he is picked for few runs down the order, there would be a temptation to play him as Cameron Green can't bowl. But that theory is rubbish," said Chappell.

"If Agar is not among your two best spinners, then don't pick him. Bowlers are there to pick wickets. It is up to batters to get runs."

Chappell doesn't have too much faith in new age medical staff of cricket teams whose assessments are always hinged on the conservative side of things.

Asked about the absence of Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc due to injuries, Chappell wants skipper Pat Cummins to speak to the bowlers individually.

"It depends on whom Cummins is listening to. Do the bowlers want to play in a Test? Medical men are always conservative and will always say 'give this guy rest as this can happen or that can happen'."

"If I was the captain, I will ask Josh and Mitch 'can you get through five days? If they say we can't do, then we have to look at best available option. Lance Morris has got pace. They didn't pick him in Adelaide, so if they didn't pick him in Adelaide where there was bounce, why the hell will they pick him in Nagpur," he concluded.

Eventually leagues with cricketing ecosystem will survive, rest will fade away: Ganguly

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Players getting lured by the growing number of T20 leagues is a short-term phenomenon as eventually "only a few" financially sustainable leagues will survive, said former India captain Sourav Ganguly on Monday.

With the T20 leagues mushrooming around the world, players have started to prioritise franchise cricket over national duty.

The Big Bash League, which is an established product, just got over while inaugural leagues are being staged in UAE and South Africa at the moment.

A league is also planned in the United States later this year.

However, Ganguly said in the long term only leagues with an ecosystem will survive.

"We keep talking about the leagues around the world, if you look at the IPL it is in a different ecosystem and different league, the Big Bash in Australia does very well, The Hundred does very well in the UK and I see the South Africa league doing very well, I have been watching it for last three weeks," he said at a Sportstar event here.

"The common thing among all these leagues is that they are in countries where cricket is popular. So I believe over a period of time, four five years, it is going to get to stage very few will exist and I know which ones will exist.

"Certain (leagues) will remain and certain will move away because players will realise it is not that important. Right now they are new and everyone wants to be part of it so you see the rush.



"But ultimately it will get back to a stage where country will be as important as the league because only a few will survive because of the ecosystem."

Zimbabwe used to be a force to reckon with in world cricket in the 90s but cricket has declined in the country amid administrative issues.

"It has got to do a lot with administration (teams struggling in international cricket). I keep saying that, I have been president of CAB for five years and then BCCI president for three years and represented India in the ICC, I have seen the entire structure

and support system that makes the game possible," he said.

"I remember I played my first world cup in 1999, Zimbabwe could beat anybody. I am sure Zimbabwe cricket did not have a lot of money then, even India did not have that much money.

"The West Indies, days of Michael Holding, Andy Roberts and Joel Garner, where was the money? There wasn't. Administration is very important to hold on to the players.

"If the relationship between players and administrators is good lot of problems can get solved. Cricket has a lot more money now, I don't think money is the issue. There is a need to hold on to the players to play for the country."

Facing new ball on turners is hardest challenge: Khawaja

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Having enjoyed fair degree of success in past couple of years, Australia opener Usman Khawaja termed facing the Ravichandran Ashwin-led Indian spin attack as the "hardest challenge" of the four match series beginning in Nagpur on February 9.

The Pakistan-born batter, who arrived in India after his teammates due to a visa delay, will open the batting alongside David Warner.

Khawaja has played limited overs cricket in India but will finally get his opportunity in the longest format after being part of the Test squad in 2013 and 2017.

Recently named Australia's "Test Cricketer of the Year", the southpaw is expected to play a big role in his team's quest to win its first series in India since 2004-05.

"There's definitely a different feel. There are no guarantees in this game, but at least there's a bit more maturity particularly in the batting, and more maturity in the bowling.

"We've learnt a lot over the last 10 years, particularly the types of wickets we can get and how we think we can perform and go out and win Test matches out here. It feels like we are in a better spot than before, but it's always going to be tough," he told the Sydney Morning Herald.

Australia opted out of playing a warm-up game ahead of the Test series and instead chose to simulate spin friend conditions near Bengaluru upon their arrival last week.

They clearly see Ashwin as the biggest threat from the opposition, so much so that they got hold of his 'duplicate' as part of their preparation for the high-profile contest.

A team full of left-handers, Australia are working overtime to tackle the Ashwin threat.

"Ashwin is a gun. He is very skilful, he is got a lot of tricky little variations, he uses the crease quite well too. If you asked me the same question when I was younger, I probably wouldn't have been able to answer a lot of things because I didn't really learn about how to face what off-spinners are doing," said Khawaja. "But it's one of those really good challenges. The wicket's going to turn here at some point, whether day one, day three or day four, and he is going to be in the game and bowl a lot of overs.

Vinesh & Sakshi nominated for BBC ISWOTY Award

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wrestlers Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik, who recently staged a protest against WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and accused him of sexual exploitation and intimidation, were among five athletes nominated on Monday for the BBC Indian Sportswoman Of The Year award.

Others who made the cut were Tokyo Olympics silver medalist weightlifter Mirabai Chanu, ace shuttler PV Sindhu and boxer Nikhat Zareen.

The athletes were short-listed after a panel of jury, consisting of sports journalists and writers, voted for their pre-

ferred players, based on their achievements.

The winner will be chosen by a public vote that began on Monday and will continue till February 20 midnight. The winner will be announced on March 5.

Rupa Jha, the Head of India BBC News, announced that they have introduced a new award category -- BBC Indian para-sportswoman of the year.

Ekta Bhyan, the 2018 Asian para Games gold medalist, welcomed the move and emphasised on the need to make the stadiums more accessible to the physically challenged athletes.

PTI ■ KOLKATA

With the long-awaited Women's Premier League set to begin this year, Indian pace legend Jhulan Goswami says it's important to guide young players as they might struggle under the spotlight and lose track.

The inaugural season of the WPL will be played this year with the auction scheduled for February 13 in Mumbai.

The league will give the young Indian players, including those from the U-19 World Cup-winning team, a chance to rub shoulders with the elites of the game in the world. Performances are bound to garner attention and Jhulan feels the youngsters should have someone around them to help handle the attention.

"When you are playing a World Cup and suddenly the spotlight is on you, things will



be different but it's important you have a mentor with you, it can be a coach, a friend or parents," Jhulan said at a Sportstar event here.

"Their role is very important -- to make sure that the player is fit on the ground because they have huge talent and suddenly they are getting all the spotlight."

Jhulan, who retired from the game last year, will serve as a team mentor and bowling coach of the Mumbai Indians franchise in the WPL.

"And after the WPL start, they will earn money in this age. They need to be guided properly, in the right direction. This

is where the journey begins and we cannot lose out on talent because we want them to be match winners for the country.

"I'll suggest them, work hard and spend time on the field and cricket will take care of the rest. It's going to be an exciting time but it will be a huge challenge because the spotlight will be on you. It will be challenging for the youngsters."

She urged the state associations to also take pro-active measures.

"Associations can also arrange some classes as to how to handle all the stuff. My concern is that they should not be left over from this track. "