

WORLD 5

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WOES AS ELECTION NEARS

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Modi takes 'Kushti-Dosti' jibe at Cong-Left alliance

PNS | PTI ■
RADHAKISHOREPUR | AMBASSA

Lashing out at the Congress-CPI(M) alliance in Tripura, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that the two parties fight 'kushti' (wrestling) in Kerala and have done 'dosti' (friendship) in the northeastern State.

Making a veiled reference to Tipra Motha, Modi claimed that some other parties were also helping the Opposition alliance from behind but any vote for them will take Tripura several years backward.

"Old players of misgovernance have joined hands for 'chanda' (donation). Those fighting 'kushti' (wrestling) in Kerala have done 'dosti' (friendship) in Tripura," the PM said at an election rally in Radhakishorepur in Gomati district.

"The Opposition wants to divide the votes. Some small 'vote-cutter' parties are waiting for the election results, hoping to get their price. Those out with dreams of horse-trading, lock them in their homes now itself," he said.

Addressing another election rally in Ambassa in Dhalai district earlier in the day, he alleged that the Left and Congress Governments created division among tribals, while the BJP worked to resolve



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during a 'Vijay Sankalp Rally' for the upcoming Tripura Assembly polls, at Ambassa in Dhalai district on Saturday PTI

their issues, including that of the Brus.

"The BJP is working for the upliftment of tribals across India. We have rehabilitated in Tripura over 37,000 Brus displaced from Mizoram. Our Government has introduced tribal language Kokborok in higher education," he said.

In the Union Budget, the BJP Government at the Centre

has allocated ₹1 lakh crore for the development of tribal areas, Modi said.

Referring to the fight against Covid-19, he said, "In a Left-ruled State, a lot of people suffered of coronavirus and died, but Tripura was safe as the BJP worked for protecting people's lives."

Appealing to the people to vote for the "double-engine"

government to continue the streak of development in the northeastern State, he told the rally, "Beware of the double-edged sword of Congress and Left, they want to stop all schemes that benefit the people."

The PM said the Congress and the Left know only how to betray the poor, alleging that people have suffered due to years of their misgovernance. "The two parties want the poor to remain poor. They have countless slogans for the poor but have never understood or addressed their pain," Modi said.

The PM said that houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana were built for three lakh families, benefitting 12 lakh people, while five lakh poor people were made beneficiaries of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, and toilets were constructed in four lakh houses in the state. The first dental college in the state was also built under the BJP Government, the PM said.

He said that in Gomati district alone, ₹80 crore has been credited to the bank accounts of around 40,000 farmers, without any 'cut' or 'donation'. "Earlier, CPI(M) cadres used to control police stations, while the BJP established rule of law in the State," he said.

Continued on Page 2

US urges Modi to make efforts to end Russia-Ukraine war

PNS/AGENCIES ■
NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

As the war rages in Ukraine for the last one year, the US has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make efforts to end the conflict and said there is still time to stop violence.

These assertions were made by White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby late on Friday when asked if it is too late for Modi to stop the war between Ukraine and Russia or convince President Vladimir Putin.

Making his country's position clear, Kirby said, "I think there's still time for Putin to stop the war."

"I think there's still time for it. I will let Mr Modi speak to whatever efforts he's willing to undertake," adding, "the US would welcome any effort that could lead to an end of hostilities in Ukraine."

Ukraine on Friday said Russia had launched a major new wave of aerial attacks, as President Joe Biden announced he would mark one year since the invasion by visiting Kyiv's neighbour Poland.

Incidentally, Kirby's statement came a day after the National Security Adviser (NSA) held a meeting with Putin in Moscow.

Moreover, Doval earlier



this month led a high-level delegation to Washington to discuss strategic issues and met his US counterpart Jake Sullivan. Doval held parleys with Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

India has along favoured dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the Ukraine conflict and has refrained from voting against Russia on the issue in the United Nations.

Also, Modi in September last year told Putin that "today's era is not of war and I have spoken to you about it on the call. Today we will get the opportunity to talk about how we can progress on the path of peace" on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit.

Meanwhile, the US also said Putin was responsible for the destruction being caused across Ukraine.

Continued on Page 2

LG axes Govt's nominees from discoms' boards

'Members picked by Delhi Govt colluded with firms to benefit them ₹8K cr at exchequer cost'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In yet another tussle between Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and the AAP Government, the former has ordered removal of "Government nominees", including AAP leader Jasmine Shah and Rajya Sabha MP ND Gupta's son Naveen ND Gupta, from the board of private power distribution companies (discoms).

These members had allegedly acted in collusion with companies to bring them benefits of over ₹8,000 crore at the cost of exchequer.

Besides, Gupta, Shah, retired IAS officers AK Singh, Rashmi Krishnan, Umesh Tyagi and ex-DANIPS officer JS Deshwal have also been removed from the boards of private discoms. The Delhi BJP has demanded a CBI probe against the Government nominees who gave discoms benefits of over ₹8,000 crore at the cost of exchequer.

In an order, the LG said the Finance Secretary, the Power Secretary and MD of Delhi Transco would now represent the Government in the power discoms as per regular practice followed since Sheila Dikshit's time as CM, when these discoms came into existence.

Meanwhile, the Department of Vigilance of Delhi Government has also issued show-cause notices to these nominees and sought explanation from them within seven days for undue benefit to discoms. The power department of the Delhi Government issued an order removing the four nominees on Friday, following directions from the LG. The LG's directions for removal of the Government nominees came as an interim measure since the issue was referred by him for approval of the President which is still pending.

Continued on Page 2

L-G's step illegal, says Sisodia

New Delhi: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday termed the removal of the AAP Government-appointed members from discom boards by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena "unconstitutional and illegal".

Detailed report on P3

Mob breaks into police station, lynch blasphemy accused in Pak

PTI ■ LAHORE

A mob lynched a blasphemy-accused after storming a police station in Warburton, Nankana Sahib, some 80kms from Lahore, Punjab province of Pakistan on Saturday, police said.

A police officer said a mob stormed the police station took custody of Waris Issa, who was arrested for alleged desecration of the holy book, stripped him naked, and dragged him in the streets before beating him to death.

Residents of the area claimed that the man — who had returned after spending two years in jail — used to practise witchcraft by pasting his ex-wife's picture on holy books, Geo News reported.

Several video clips of the incident also went viral on social media. In one video, the mob, including young children, could be seen scaling the large gates of the police station. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has ordered action against those involved.

Continued on Page 2

Raj leg of Delhi-Mumbai e-way to open today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The much awaited first section of the ambitious Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is all set to be commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday. He will dedicate the first completed section, Delhi-Dausa-Lalsot of the 1,400 km Delhi Mumbai Expressway to the nation.

The opening of the Rajasthan leg of the expressway will reduce the travel time from Delhi to Jaipur from present five hours to around 3.5 hours and will provide a major boost to the economic development of the entire region.

The 246 km Delhi-Dausa-Lalsot section of the Delhi Mumbai Expressway has been developed at a cost of more than ₹12,150 crore.

Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will be India's longest expressway with length of 1,386 km.

It will reduce travel distance between Delhi and Mumbai by 12 per cent from 1,424 km to 1,242 km and travel time by 50 per cent from 24 hours to 12 hours.



It is passing through six States of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra and connect major cities like Kota, Indore, Jaipur, Bhopal, Vadodara and Surat.

When fully completed and operational, the Expressway will also serve 93 PM Gati Shakti Economic Nodes, 13 Ports, 8 Major Airports and 8 multi-modal logistics parks

(MMLPs) and will be useful to new upcoming greenfield airports such as Jewar Airport, Navi Mumbai Airport and JNPT port.

The expressway will have a catalytic impact in the developmental trajectory of all adjoining regions, thus contributing in a major way in the economic transformation of the country.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

ED ARRESTS YSR MP'S SON IN DELHI SCAM

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Raghav Magunta, son of YSR Congress Party MP from Ongole Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, in connection with its money laundering investigation linked to the Delhi excise policy scam.

AIRASIA FINED ₹20L FOR PILOT TRAINING GOOF-UP

New Delhi: After Air India, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has fined Tata Group AirAsia India (now AIX Connect) to ₹20 lakh for violation of certain norms relating to pilots' training.

INDIA CAPTURES UK'S SCOTCH WHISKY MARKET

London: India has overtaken France to become the UK's largest market of Scotch whisky in terms of volume with a 60 per cent hike in imports in 2022 over the previous year.

India close to WTC final berth



Indian cricketers Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja greet Australian cricketers Steve Smith and Scott Boland after the end of the 1st test cricket match between India and Australia, at Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur on Saturday (photo above). India's innings and 132-run victory against Australia in the first Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy has helped them move closer to a second World Test Championship (WTC) final berth, while extending the Pat Cummins-led side's wait for a title round spot confirmation. Earlier all-rounder Jadeja was fined 25 per cent of his match fee for applying the soothing cream without on-field umpires' permission during the first Test against Australia in Nagpur PTI





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UP scripting new saga of development: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said Uttar Pradesh was scripting a new saga of its development and investment journey of the State would gain further momentum with the European Investment Bank's support.

"During GIS-2023, you must have realised the immense potential that lies in Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh is scripting a new saga of its development. Better law and order, connectivity and availability of uninterrupted power have created an investment-friendly environment," he said during an interaction with the delegation that has come to participate in GIS-23 under the leadership of Kris Peeters, former deputy prime minister of Belgium and vice-president of European Investment Bank.

On the occasion, Yogi said, "UP is the largest state in India with a population of 25 crore,



which makes it the largest labour and consumer market in India. With the blessings of nature and almighty, UP is becoming the growth engine of India."

He said that a lot of work had been done in infrastructure development in the state in the last six years. "The Uttar Pradesh government has developed infrastructure at a rapid pace to ensure seamless connectivity through air, water, road and rail networks, which will enhance the accessibility of logistics to enable industries to access global and domestic markets," he said.

The chief minister underlined that there was presence of

a strong law and order in the state and that UP was not only self-sufficient in food grains production, but was also exporting the same.

Chief Minister Yogi said: "We are committed to safeguard the interests of every investor investing in UP. All possible assistance will be provided to the investors by the state government."

Vice-President of European Investment Bank and former prime minister of Belgium Kris Peeters thanked Chief Minister Yogi for providing an investment-friendly environment.

He said that the European Investment Bank had invested in the metro project in Uttar Pradesh. "Also, we are considering providing our cooperation in the field of various infrastructure projects like RRTS (Meerut), EV charging and aviation. We are investing 1.5 billion dollars in the state," he pointed out.

'Govt working to level number of medical UG, PG seats in 4 years'

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Saturday said the government was working to equal the number of undergraduate and post-graduate medical seats within four years so that all MBBS graduates can pursue PG courses.

Speaking at the 13th annual conference of the Global Association of Physicians of Indian origin (GAPIO) here, he also invited healthcare professionals from the Indian diaspora to invest in research and open hospital chains in the country with "assured business."

More than 70 countries will sign hospital-to-hospital, country-to-country and country-to-hospital MoUs at the 'Heal In India, Heal By India' expo to be held in April-May this year, he said.

"When we open a dispensary, we also need doctors. Eight years ago, India had



51,000 MBBS seats.

Today, we have 1,00,226 under-graduate seats, and post-graduate seats grew from 34,000 to 64,000," the minister said. "We have set a target to make the number of MBBS UG and PG seats equal so that all our doctors get the opportunity to enrol in PG courses and get the best healthcare education," he added.

Under the 'Heal in India' initiative, the plan is to "invite the world to India" and offer "affordable and quality healthcare, wellness and traditional medicine," the minister said.

The process has begun, and Gujarat is the best destination for medical travel, said Mandaviya.

"If you want to work in the health sector and want to build hospital chains, then I want to

give you assured business. If you have a 50-100 bed hospital and get affiliated to Ayushman Bharat, you will get assured business and opportunity to serve the public. If you want to run it commercially, you can do so under the Ayushman Bharat scheme," he said.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said while India has successfully come out of the shadows of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are greater challenges ahead in the healthcare sector due to the growing burden of non-communicable diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

"The way forward is to provide innovative solutions which are also cost-effective and can be availed of by all sections of society," he said. Dr Anupam Sibal, President of GAPIO, said it provides a platform to Indian-origin doctors practicing anywhere in the world to share their knowledge and exchange ideas.

5.9 mn tonnes of lithium found in J&K, says GSI

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The residents of Salal area in the Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir are basking in the glory of their new found identity ever since Geological Survey of India (GSI) has announced that it has discovered huge deposits of Lithium to the tune of 5.9 million tonnes in the region.

Several villages located in the close vicinity of the large block have overnight become 'hot spots' as several media teams have been camping in the area to cover the momentous occasion. The villagers in the area are also eagerly waiting for the new teams to arrive soon to start their advanced studies in order to determine the grade of the lithium deposits.

"We are feeling proud ever since the Geological Survey of India has confirmed the pres-

ence of Lithium deposits in our area", Rajinder Singh, Naib Sarpanch of the area said. Referring to the early days when GSI teams surveyed the whole area, Singh said the GSI teams from Lucknow worked hard for about two years along with local volunteers and collected comprehensive samples. Now they have confirmed the presence of Lithium deposits.

"We are hoping the problem of unemployment among the youth in the region will be addressed with the beginning of this new project".

Jaspal Singh, another local resident of Salal said, "The name of Reasi was famous for the Salal Power project and highest Railway bridge over Chenab. Now with these lithium deposits we have found a unique identity as Reasi becomes the only district in the whole of India where this mineral has been found".

TURKEY QUAKE Body of missing Indian found, identified through tattoo

IANAS ■ BENGALURU

The body of a Indian, who went missing following the massive earthquake in Turkey, has been found under the rubble of hotel on Saturday, the Indian Embassy said, adding that it would be sent to India as early as possible.

"We inform with sorrow that the mortal remains of Vijay Kumar, an Indian missing in Turkey since the February 6 earthquake, have been found and identified among debris of a hotel in Malatya, where he was on a business trip," the Indian Embassy said in a statement.

As per sources, Vijay Kumar's body was identified with his tattoo of the word "Om" on one of his hands as his face was badly disfigured.

Hailing from Uttarakhand's Kotdwar, Vijay Kumar worked at Bengaluru-based Oxyplants India Private Ltd and was on a business trip to Turkey's Malatya and staying at a four star hotel there. His family said that his body would be flown to Istanbul and then it will arrive in New Delhi, and then Uttarakhand.

'Kerala has not collected over ₹21K cr tax till March 31, 2021'

PNS ■ KOCHI

With Friday's statement by K N Balagopal, Finance Minister, that Kerala is in state of unprecedented financial crisis, there is total unanimity among experts cutting across party lines that the State is being devoured by massive corruption.

The office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has stated in its report that Kerala has not bothered to collect taxes worth ₹21,798 crore till 31 March 2021.

On Friday, the State's finance minister made it known that the Government would borrow ₹2000 crore to meet urgent expenditures like disbursement of social welfare pension, the payment o which has been suspended for months due to lack of funds.

To tide over the crisis, the Government of Kerala is holding Adalats across the State ostensibly to help litigants to resolve their long pending issues with motor vehicles department and private lending agencies.

A visit to the Adalat being held at Thrissur district court on Friday threw some interesting facts.

Robotic knee replacement programme launched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To address the growing orthopaedic burden in the country by leveraging medical technology, the CK Birla Hospital has launched India's first fully active robotic MIS knee replacement programme at their Punjabi Bagh facility.

The state-of-the-art robot system is the most advanced surgical equipment capable of 3D



pre-planning, accurate assessment of deformities and precise surgical results for exceptional patient outcomes.

"Compared to the traditional methods, this fully active robot offers immense benefits in the area of knee replacement surgery. For the first time in India, we are connecting M.I.S. technique with robotics technology. It is user-friendly and flexible and offers precision and safety," said Dr Ashwani Maichand, Department of Orthopaedics at the CK Birla Hospital.

SIT formed to probe scribe murder in Maha

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid fierce criticism by the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) that the law and order had ordered broken down in the State, the Maharashtra Government on Saturday announced the setting up of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to look into the alleged "murder" of journalist Shashikant Warishe in Ratnagiri district.

Forty-eight-year-old Warishe — who was working for a local Marathi newspaper "Mahanagri Times" — was mowed down by a speeding vehicle driven by a land dealer in Ratnagiri district on February 6. He succumbed to injuries at a local hospital on the following day.

Deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis, who holds the State Home portfolio, directed the state police administration to set up an SIT under a senior officer to investigate the alleged "murder" of Warishe, who was knocked down by a vehicle belonging to a local land dealer against whom the latter had written articles in his newspaper.

Warishe, who had written a series of articles against the proposed complex of Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (RRPCL) coming up with foreign collaboration, at Barsu, had published an article that named Pandharinath Amberkar, a supporter of the proposed refinery and alleged that he was criminal.

Mob breaks into police station, lynch...

From Page 1

He also questioned why the police failed to stop the violent mob and directed the Inspector General of police in Punjab to ensure law and order in the district.

"The rule of law should be ensured. No one should be allowed to influence the law," Sharif emphasised.

He said that the first priority of the institutions responsible for peace and order is peace and that it should always come first.

Punjab IGP Dr Usman Anwar suspended DSP Nankana Circle Nawaz Virk and SHO Warburton Feroze Bhatti from service.

The IGP also ordered DIGs Ameen Bukhari and Raja Faisal to reach the spot and submit a detailed report after identifying the responsible and those guilty of negligence.

"No one is allowed to take the law into his hands, no matter how influential he is, therefore strict departmental and legal action will be taken against those responsible for the incident and the perpetrators of negligence and professional misconduct," the IGP said in a statement.

In December 2021, a mob in Sialkot city of Punjab tortured a Sri Lankan man, who was working as a manager at a local factory, to death over blasphemy allegations. The incident drew widespread condemnation.

An anti-terrorism court in Lahore last year handed down the punishment to 88 suspects involved in Sri Lankan citizen Piryantha Kumara's lynching case. Six of them were sentenced to death.

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NOTICE

Dear Members of the Sabha,
AGM - General Body meeting of the sabha will be held on Sunday the 5th of March, 2023 at 12 noon at the Sabha's premises, 640, Khirki Patni Mal, Himmat Garh, Bazar Sita Ram, Delhi-110006.

The meeting will be followed by HOLI MILAN & GET-TOGETHER and Contributory Lunch at the following rates :

Non-veg - Rs. 600/- per person
Veg. - Rs. 300/- per person

Main Agenda of the AGM is the Election of New Office Bearers & Management Committee Members.

For Shri Chitra Gupta Sabha
(Sd/-) **Rajan B. Saxena**
Hony. General Secretary

PD(90266)C

Date : 09.02.2023

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PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that Mr. Neeraj Ahuja S/o Mr. Anil Kumar Ahuja is the owner of Built-Up Upper Ground Floor and First Floor up to ceiling levels built on Portion of Property bearing No. 493, area measuring 56.1/2 Sq. Meters, out of Khassa No. 4559/1042-1043-797 min., Situated in the area of village Chandawadi @ Shalada, (Jalgaon) District, Gujarat, India. The same is to be mortgaged to Capital India Home Loans Limited. The Original Sale Deed dated 28.12.2005 as Doc. No. 16523, Sale Deed dated 29.12.2005, as Doc. No. 16572, Sale Deed dated 07.03.2006 as Doc. No. 1158, Sale Deed dated 07.03.2007, as Doc. No. 1155 & Sale Deed dated 25.03.2008 as Doc. No. 2347, pertaining to the aforesaid property has been impounded. Any person(s) found in possession of aforesaid original sale deed, then kindly contact the undersigned along with original property document, within 7 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which, the claim as per aforesaid sale deed shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

Raghav Tiwari, Advocate
Ch. 830, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi - 110001
Mob:- +91-9078188328

Raj leg of Delhi-Mumbai...

From Page 1

According to the Road Transport Highways Ministry during the programme, the Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone of 247 kilometres of National Highway projects to be developed at a cost of more than Rs 5,940 crore.

This includes 67-km long four-lane spur road from Bandikui to Jaipur to be developed at a cost of more than Rs 2000 crore, a six-lane spur road from Kotputli to Baraodane, to be developed at a cost of about Rs 3,775 crore and two-lane paved shoulder of Lalot - Karoli section, being developed at a cost of about Rs 150 crore.

The expressway is being constructed with an initial budget of Rs 98,000 crore. According to Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, it will reduce the distance between Delhi and Mumbai by 180 km (from 1424 km to 1242 km).

Depending on the volume of traffic plans are thereby to expand it to a 12-lane expressway in the future.

The reduction in distance and travel time is set to result in annual fuel savings of more than 320 million litres and reduce CO2 emissions by 850 million kg, the Ministry esti-

mates. Over two million trees and shrubs are also planned to be planted along the highway.

Significantly, the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is set to introduce certain features seldom seen in road construction in India and a state-of-art traffic management system.

There will also be a dedicated three metre wide corridor for laying utility lines including fibre optic cables, pipelines as well as solar power generation.

The expressway will also have provisions for rain water harvesting at intervals of 500 m, with over 2000+ water recharge points.

A crucial feature of the project will be its provisions for "wildlife conservation". The expressway is the first in Asia and only the second in the world to feature animal overpasses and underpasses to facilitate unrestricted movement of wildlife.

Furthermore, the expressway has been aligned in a way to minimise destruction of protected forests.

Two iconic 8-lane tunnels will also be built, one through Mukundra sanctuary without disturbing the endangered fauna in the region and the second through the Matheran eco-sensitive zone.

LG axes...

From Page 1

"Whereas, LG considered the matter of illegal appointment of four private persons, namely, Jasmine Shah, Naveen D Gupta, Umesh Tyagi and JS Deswal as Government nominees on behalf of Delhi Power Company Limited (DPCL) on the Board of Directors of DISCOMs pursuant to the Cabinet decision no. 2755 dated 03.10.2019, vide order dated 01.11.2019, which was issued in gross violation of provisions of Rule 23(iv) of Transaction of Business of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Rules, 1993 (ToBR, 1993)," the LG said in his order.

The action triggered a fresh confrontation between the Raj Niwas and the AAP Government, with the latter terming the move "illegal, unconstitutional and contrary to the procedures" and that the LG "does not have the power to issue such orders".

"The LG's orders removing Shah and Gupta from the Board of DISCOMs is illegal and unconstitutional. The LG does not have the power to issue such orders. Only the elected Government has powers to issue orders on the subject of electricity. The LG has made a complete mockery of all the Supreme Court orders and the Constitution. He is openly going around saying that SC orders are not binding on him," the party said.

Demanding a CBI probe, Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva has said the BJP has been continuously saying there is a nexus between the Delhi Government and private power companies who are partners in power discoms and now it is getting proved. "Due to this nexus, the Delhi Government has allowed private power companies huge extra income through payment of subsidies and by allowing them to collect different surcharges," he said.

Meanwhile, the LG in his file notings observed "the matter being urgent and sensitive in nature warrants expeditious action, under Rule 51 of the TBR1993 read with Proviso to Article 239AA (4) of the

Constitution, I direct that immediate action be taken to replace these four private persons with senior Government officers as Government nominees..Pending decision of President of India."

"Had the Cabinet discussed in detail the implications of nomination of private persons on the boards of discoms, the government might not have faced the allegations of collusion of these private persons with the discoms resulting in purported loss of Rs 8683.67 crore to the government exchequer," said LG noting. The alleged loss was on account of lowering of late payment surcharge (LPSC) rates from 18 per cent to 12 per cent.

"I am not in agreement with views recorded by the Cabinet, owing to the fact that there are huge obvious and apparent complications/ implications of nominating private persons on the Boards of discom," noted the LG.

The Delhi Government owns 49 per cent stake in the discoms. Senior officers used to serve on the boards of the discoms earlier, but the Kejriwal Government started nominating politically affiliated persons to them, the sources claimed.

Stop anti-encroachment drive in Mehrauli: Govt to DDA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal Government on Saturday asked the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to stop its anti-encroachment drive in Mehrauli. Delhi Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot has ordered a fresh demarcation exercise in the area. The Minister said the residents of the area cannot be displaced until a fresh demarcation is conducted.

According to the DDA, nearly 1,200 square metres of government land was reclaimed during an "anti-encroachment drive" in the Mehrauli Archaeological Park area a day ago.

The drive was carried out by the Delhi Development Authority amid police security on Friday, triggering protest from various local residents and a blame game between the AAP and the BJP. In a major



development on Saturday, the Delhi Government has struck down the demarcation after finding fallacies in its process as the DDA had used Revenue Department's demarcation as

basis for its demolition drive. Gahlot has ordered a fresh demarcation to be conducted in the disputed area. The Revenue Minister has noted that the demarcation has been

conducted by keeping the occupants in dark, without serving any notices to them. He has directed DM (South) to conduct a fresh demarcation of the land and inform DDA

regarding the same immediately. Sources said the Revenue Minister has received two representations in the matter from Malviya Nagar MLA Somnath Bharti and the residents of Ladhra Sarai village whose land was falling under the demolition area.

In a statement, the DDA said a demolition drive has been started on Friday in co-ordination with Delhi Police for the removal of encroachment from the DDA Land of Ladhra Sarai Village falling in Mehrauli Archaeological Park. This park is home to about 55 monuments under protection of ASI, State Archaeological Department of Delhi government and DDA.

Earlier the DDA said during the demolition programme on Friday, approximately 1200 sq m of government/DDA land has been reclaimed from the encroachers so far, and the exercise is on to reclaim the rest

of the encroached government land for its rightful use by all citizens as a park," the DDA said.

"Earlier a demolition order dated 12.12.2022 was pasted on the encroachments existing on land along with marking with the directions to the encroachers to remove all the unauthorised construction from the land in question within 10 days. The land involved in the said demolition order is Government/DDA Land of Ladhra Sarai Village and is part of Mehrauli Archaeological Park," it said.

A demarcation exercise had been carried out as per direction of the High Court in the presence of DDA and Waqf Board representatives by the Revenue Department, GNCTD in Dec. 2021. The action was taken as part of a demolition drive that will continue till March 9, officials had said on Friday. It comes a

month ahead of a G20 meeting planned to be hosted at the archaeological park in south Delhi.

"The court has in the past taken note of the encroachment in the historic park in connection with multiple cases, and many people in the last few decades have built unauthorised structures, some, even five-storey or six-storey, in the area. A notice was issued last December and pasted on walls to alert people," a senior DDA official said on Friday.

According to the notice, the land on which the demolition is being carried out is part of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park and the "existing unauthorised encroachment is acting as a hindrance to the development of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park". The sprawling park is dotted with historic monuments, and while the area falls under the DDA, the heritage structures are

maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Official sources said the ASI is also working in full swing for the G20 meet at the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, planned to be held early March.

"The High Court of Delhi has, on many occasions, directed the government authorities to secure, protect and preserve the area falling under Mehrauli Archaeological Park by removing illegal encroachment," the statement said.

"The department is taking the action to remove the unauthorised/illegal encroachment from the government land and also to secure the Mehrauli Archaeological Park from encroachment," it said. A "demarcation exercise had been carried out as per direction of the High Court" in the presence of DDA and Waqf Board representatives by the Revenue Department of Delhi in December 2021, it said.

LG's removal of Govt nominees from discom illegal: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday dubbed the removal of the Delhi Government-appointed members from discom boards by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena as "unconstitutional and illegal". The LG has started a new trend of reversing decisions taken by the elected Government of Delhi, Sisodia said.

Further, on the allegations of "Rs 8,000 crore loss to the government exchequer", Sisodia said, "How can a scam happen here? The Centre and the LG come up with a new allegation every day either against me or any other minister.

They send out the CBI and ED after everyone in the government without any valid case. If they have any doubts in this case, then they must get an investigation done. But they do not have the power to overturn the decision of the government after four years." A new trend has been started by the LG as he reversed the Delhi Cabinet's four-year-old decision and



removed the members appointed to the boards of the discoms. This way, he could now upturn the government's decisions taken even four-10 years back," Sisodia said.

The deputy chief minister, who also holds the charge of the Delhi power department, said Saxena's decision was "unconstitutional, illegal and contrary to the established procedures". Sisodia also objected to the LG's decision to remove the members citing "difference of opinion".

"The 'difference of opinion' provision cannot be used like this. There is a procedure to do so and it can not be cited to frequently reverse the decisions taken by the government," he said. Sisodia also said, "The LG is a resident of this country and has been appointed as per the laws and he will have to follow the Constitution as well as the judgments of the Supreme

Court. He cannot change the decisions or the orders of the government whenever he wants."

The AAP has the move "illegal, unconstitutional and contrary to the procedures" and that Lt Governor "does not have the power to issue such orders". "The L-G's orders removing Jasmine Shah and Naveen Gupta from the Board of DISCOMs is illegal and unconstitutional. L-G does not have the power to issue such orders.

Only the elected government has powers to issue orders on the subject of electricity. L-G has made a complete mockery of all Supreme Court orders and the Constitution. He is openly going around saying that SC orders are not binding on him," the party said.

Earlier in the day, following the directions of Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, Delhi's Power Department removed "AAP Spokesperson" Jasmine Shah; Naveen Gupta, son of AAP Rajya Sabha MP ND Gupta; and other private individuals, who had allegedly been "illegally appointed" as government nominees on the board of private discoms. They have been replaced with senior government officials.

'LG abusing his constitutional office, dancing to BJP's tune'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi (DDC) former vice chairman Jasmine Shah on Saturday accused Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena is abusing his high constitutional office every single day to do BJP's bidding with complete disregard to constitutional norms and Supreme Court judgments.

Terming the Lieutenant Governor's allegations of causing financial loss as laughable, complete nonsense, slanderous and without a shred of evidence, Shah said that he has no powers to remove Delhi govt appointed directors on the board of Discoms.

"Yet he goes around openly saying that he will not follow SC orders and he has absolute authority over every matter in Delhi," he said. "It is becoming clear that he is being targeted personally by the present LG in a calculated and pre-



meditated manner starting with the illegal sealing of my office at DDCD (Dialogue & Development Commission of Delhi) last November".

"I would only like to ask the LG what is my fault? That I am a young, educated professional holding degrees from IIT Madras and Columbia University who dared to sacrifice his career to serve people of my country under the leadership of CM Kejriwal?," Shah said in a statement.

"Prior to my appointment on the board of Delhi Discoms along with Mr Naveen Gupta and two other professionals in 2019, only bureaucrats were

appointed. A study on their performance showed that they did not contribute anything to the Discoms and often skipped board meetings. Keeping this in mind, CM Arvind Kejriwal decided to appoint qualified professionals on the board to oversee the performance of Discoms".

"In our tenure as Directors, all the three Discoms have emerged as India's top-ranked Discoms in a study of 60 Discoms across 23 consumer service parameters published by the Central govt.

They have among the lowest T&D losses in the country today, are leading Delhi's ambitious transition to renewable power and electric vehicles, and provide free, 24x7 electricity to 2 crore residents of Delhi.

But the LG doesn't want that and therefore wants to revert back to the old system of appointing bureaucrats to oversee Discoms," reads the statement.

BJP seeks CBI probe against Govt nominees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP on Saturday demanded a CBI probe against the Government nominees appointed by the Kejriwal Government in the private discoms and how they were involved in the Rs 8,000 crore loss to the Government exchequer.

Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva has said the BJP has been continuously saying that there is a nexus between the Delhi government and private power companies who are partners in power discoms and now it is getting proved.

"Due to this nexus, the Delhi government has allowed private power companies huge extra income through payment of subsidies and by allowing them to collect different surcharges. BJP has been continuously saying that this is a well planned big scam from which Aam Aadmi Party gets kick back amount and to sup-

press this scam Arvind Kejriwal government by breaking all the old arrangements has appointed to power discoms board its party workers instead of government officers as per tradition".

"BJP believes that removing Jasmine Shah and Aam Aadmi Party's Dhan Kuber N. D. Gupta's son Naveen Gupta etc. from power discoms is not enough, we demand a C.B.I. inquiry be ordered as to how much profit power discoms minted with their connivance & how much kick back they gave to AAP," he said.

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that Kejriwal government has been exposed. "They are trying to break records of the Congress in the corruption.

They got huge majority in Delhi and trying to loot it. Kejriwal's corruption list is increasing daily whether it excise policy or bus purchase policy," Bidhuri added.

Delhi-Mumbai e-way to change face of South G'gram: Experts



PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The much-awaited first patch of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway (NH-248A), (Delhi-Dausa-Lalsot), will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 12. Once operational the project marks the beginning of a new chapter of economic growth in the region, real estate experts have said. This project has the potential to revitalise south Gurugram and the surrounding areas by driving economic activity and providing numerous benefits for all.

Real estate players are optimistic about the impact of this new development, with many expressing their excitement.

"The commencement of the eight-lane Delhi-Mumbai Expressway augurs more growth and prosperity for South Gurugram. As the biggest project of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), this modern state-of-art expressway will not only provide direct connectivity between Delhi and Mumbai but also further ease the traffic congestion flowing across the Millennium City and soon cut the travel time between

Mumbai-Delhi from 24 hours to 12 hours. The project will gain new logistical connectivity to the entire Delhi NCR region," Pradeep Aggarwal, Founder & Chairman, of Signature Global (India), Ltd. said. According to real estate experts, the launch of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will have a cascading effect on property prices in South Gurugram.

Consequently, the demand in both residential and commercial segments is expected to increase significantly in these regions.

They anticipate that social infrastructure developments around the expressway will have a multiplicative effect in bolstering the Indian economic growth story.

"The inauguration of the Sohna-Dausa stretch of the NH-248A is a momentous occasion, heralding a new era of Infrastructure transformation and economic growth in NCR.

Sohna is an entry point of the Mumbai-Delhi expressway, which will provide the much-needed fillip in its emergence not just as a pivot town for all economic activities but also as a prominent real estate destination.

We will make Govt schools in Delhi, Punjab best in world: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said education is "a priority" for the AAP-led dispensations and work will be done to make government schools in both Delhi and Punjab the "best in the world". AAP is the ruling party in Delhi and Punjab.

Kejriwal was addressing a gathering of principals at an event in the presence of his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann. Mann said that teachers in Punjab will not be engaged in anything other than teaching. The first batch of 36 academic staff from Punjab has returned on Saturday after their training module in Singapore.

In his address, Kejriwal said, "Improving and fixing education system in Delhi since we took charge here was very difficult." Infrastructure was given a push earlier and then the AAP government focused on training teachers and principals, the party supremo said.

Until teachers and principals are motivated, the impact will not be visible, he said. "If government wants, they can give best schools and educa-



tion, but intentions and priorities matter. And, education is our priority. We took seven years in Delhi, but it will take less time in Punjab," he said. "We will make government schools in Delhi and Punjab the best in the world," Kejriwal said.

Punjab will also experiment and Delhi will learn from it, the AAP chief said. Delhi government has so far sent 1,079 of its teachers to different countries through its various foreign exposure visits or training programmes. Of these, 59 teachers have gone to Finland, 420 to Cambridge and 600 to Singapore for training. Apart from this, till date 860 school principals have taken training in institutes like IIM Ahmedabad and Lucknow.

Earlier this month,

Kejriwal had cited Punjab's example while requesting Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to clear a file related to a foreign training module in Finland planned for the academic staff of Delhi.

A group of principals from Punjab government schools who underwent professional training in Singapore from February 6 to 10, shared their experiences during the event.

Punjab Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains was present on the occasion. At event, Manish Sisodia, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister who also holds the education portfolio, said this is perhaps first time that chief ministers and education ministers of both Punjab and Delhi have come together along with principals from both sides to have such a feedback session.

Punjab Chief Minister Mann on February 4 had flagged off first batch of 36 state government school principals to participate in a professional teacher training seminar in Singapore. With naming anyone, Mann said there are leaders who have never appeared in any examination but give advice on exams.

Jalebis, tikkis among favourite dishes at G20 food fest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aromas of golden jalebis dipped in sugar syrup, tikkis frying in oil and kung pao chicken being tossed in a wok waft through Talkatora Stadium, drawing food lovers to their favourite cuisines at the G20 International Food Festival.

"This is where the scent of chhole bhature is coming from," 13-year-old Himanshu tells his mother after meticulously searching the venue for his favourite dish. The two-day G20 International Food Festival, themed "Taste the

World", was inaugurated by Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri at 11:30 am on Saturday. Four G20 countries - China, Turkey, Japan and Mexico -- are participating in the festival.

Also on offer are cuisines from 14 Indian states and union territories -- Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Delhi, Bihar, Punjab, Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Manipur and Meghalaya.

More than 11 hotels, including Taj Palace, Taj Mahal, The Connaught, Taj



Ambassadors, Le Meridien, ITC Maurya and The Park, are

offering their signature food items. A large crowd was seen at the Tihar jail bakery stall where a range of products from biscuits to savoury snacks and jalebis kept the visitors coming. "All these products are prepared by prisoners of Tihar jail and that is why there is so much excitement among the people.

People are coming back for jalebis again and again," said Ashutosh, one of the workers at the stall. For 45-year-old Vikram, the food festival gave him a chance to try the food from Hotel Taj Palace. "This is the first time I am having food

from Hotel Taj Palace. It is a little more expensive than other stalls but it is a good experience," he said. At the Japanese stall, teriyaki chicken was the speciality of the day.

"It is fried chicken which is served with special sauces. Sushi with teriyaki chicken filling is also on the menu. Another dish being served today is dashimaki tamago (Japanese rolled omelette)," said Amrit, the stall manager.

A chef is busy rustling up authentic Chinese delicacies at a stall set up by a Saket-based restaurant owned by an Indian man and his Chinese wife.

them to undergo the rigmarole of a long-drawn trial, does not augur well for the criminal justice system of the country".

Delhi Police had registered an FIR in connection with the violence that erupted after a clash between police and people protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December 2019.

The accused in the present case also include Meeran Haider, Ashu Khan, Qasim Usmani, Mohammad Hassan, Mohd Jamal, Mohd Sahil Muddassir, Faheem Hasme, Sameer Ahmad, Mohd Umar, Mohd Adil, Roohul Ameer, Chandan Kumar and Saqib Khan.

Jamia Nagar police station had registered an FIR under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with a deadly weapon), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions) and 332 (Voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant from his duty).

New Delhi: A 19-year-old man was arrested and a juvenile apprehended for allegedly robbing a Faridabad-based businessman of Rs 50 lakh at gun-point in southeast Delhi, police said on Saturday. The accused has been identified as Aakash Sharma, a resident of Baghpat district in UP, they said, adding that he is studying in first year in a polytechnic institute.

Police were informed on Friday around 3.15 pm about the armed robbery at a garment godown in Jangpura Extension, a senior police officer said.

Complainant Aashish Chauhan stated that he came to Jangpura Extension for a money deal at the behest of the accused. But the two boys who apparently came for the dealing, robbed the cash at gun-point and ran away, the officer said.

During investigation, police got a tip-off about the accused. Later, raid was conducted and the two were apprehended from Baghpat, Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Singh Yadav said. All the looted cash and scooter used to escape have been recovered from their possession, police said.

It was revealed that in connivance with one Zubin Joshi, they trapped the complainant and called him in Jangpura on the pretext of providing Rs 75 lakh in white in exchange of Rs 50 lakh in cash, Yadav said.

They had done recce of the meeting point two days before the incident and had parked their scooter in the adjoining street as escape strategy after committing the crime, police said.

They took the weapon from one Shivam, cousin of Sharma. When the complainant showed Rs 50 lakh to the accused at the garment godown of one Sarbjit Singh, they threatened him by pointing out the gun and robbed bag containing cash, police added.

No freedom of speech inside or outside Parl, says Kharge

Cong leader claims that parts of his speech in Parliament were expunged

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
RANCHI/NEW DELHI

Hitting out at the BJP-led Government at the Centre, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday alleged there is no freedom of speech in the country. Kharge also expressed anguish, claiming that parts of his speech in Parliament were expunged.

“There is neither freedom of speech inside Parliament, nor outside. If someone speaks the truth, writes about it, shows it then they (BJP) send him or her behind the bars,” alleged Kharge addressing a rally in Jharkhand’s Sahibganj district.

The Congress president was speaking at Gumani Ground in Pakur after launch-



ing the party’s 60-day ‘Haath Se Haath Jodo’ mass outreach programme in the state. During the ‘Haath Se Haath Jodo’ programme, Congress workers will conduct door-to-door visits to make people aware of the Centre’s policies, which they claim are ‘anti-people’.

“I did not use any unpatriotic word or language to

describe the prime minister... Atal Bihari Vajpayee had used the same expression for former PM PV Narasimha Rao and the BJP used it for former PM Manmohan Singh,” Kharge said.

The Congress president also came down heavily on the BJP over the Adani issue. “Adani, who is Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s friend, has assets worth Rs 13 lakh crore now... His assets were worth Rs 1 lakh crore in 2019,” he claimed. “The PM works for him (Adani) and not for the poor,” Kharge alleged, claiming that Rs 16,000 crore was given by LIC to the Adani Group, and Rs 82,000 crore was given by the SBI.

When Rahul Gandhi raised this issue in Parliament it was

also expunged, he said. “BJP inducts many MLAs who face ED, IT, CBI cases... Modi and Shah have bought a washing machine in which they wash the blemishes of such MLAs who then come out clean,” he said.

Alleging that PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were “experts” in toppling elected governments, Kharge said, “They then talk about democracy. Why don’t you govern according to the Constitution written by Baba Saheb Ambedkar?” He said the BJP came to power in 2014 with the promise to stem inflation, but the price of essential commodities and poverty are on the rise ever since it formed the government.

Cong president forms panels for party’s 85th plenary session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday set up panels to prepare for the 85th plenary session of the Congress in Raipur from February 24 to 26, with communication general secretary Jairam Ramesh as chairman of the drafting committee and Pawan Khera as its convener, along with 21 other members.

There are half a dozen subgroups on different subjects. While Union Minister Dr M Veerappa Moily will head a 21-member subgroup for drafting the political resolution while former Finance Minister P Chidambaram will head a 14-member subgroup on economic affairs with spokesman Prof Gourav Vallabh as its

convener. Former union minister Salman Khurshid will lead a 13-member subgroup on international affairs with party MP Shashi Tharoor as its convener, while former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda will head a 16-member subgroup on farmers and agriculture with Dr Raghuvendra as its convener.

Senior advocate and MP Vivek Tankha will head a subgroup on social justice and empowerment while another group will take up youth empowerment and employment.



NIA arrests one more suspect in Raj PFI case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing its operations against PFI activists/cadres involved in conspiracies to commit violent and unlawful acts/activities, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested another accused from Jaipur in connection with the Rajasthan PFI case.

The accused was arrested on Friday. “The suspect was identified as Mohammad Sohail, who was found to have been actively involved in PFI’s criminal conspiracy to disturb peace and spread communal hatred and enmity,” the NIA said in a statement.

Son of Mohammad Salim, a resident of H No-13, Sector 12, Murshid Nagar, Savina police station, Udaipur, Rajasthan, Mohammad Sohail, along with PFI cadres/members, have conspired to radicalize Muslim youth to commit violent and unlawful activities, the agency said.

Earlier, the NIA had arrested two accused Sadiq Sarraf and Mohammed Asif in the case. The case was initially registered on September 19, 2022 at the NIA Headquarters here. This arrest has taken the total arrests to three in this case. In a separate case, the NIA conducted searches at two loca-

tions in connection with AQIS Case “After conducting searches at two locations in Bangalore and Mumbai on Saturday (11.02.2023), NIA is probing two suspects in a terror conspiracy case.

Searches were conducted at Thanisandra, Bengaluru and Palghar, Thane in Karnataka and Maharashtra respectively in NIA case RC-46/2022/NIA/DLI with the active help of Internal Security Division (ISD), Karnataka and local police,” it said.

Inputs had revealed that these two suspects were in contact with foreign based online handlers affiliated to proscribed terrorist organisations over encrypted communication platforms.

They were allegedly involved in a conspiracy to radicalize youth over social media platforms and provoke them to indulge in acts of violence and terrorism, it said. The case was initially registered as FIR No. 158/2022 dated July 24, 2022 at Tilaknagar Police Station, Bengaluru, Karnataka and re-registered by NIA on November 30, 2022.

During these searches, various digital devices and documents have been seized. Further investigations in case are in progress, it added.

AirAsia fined ₹20L for violation of pilots’ training norm

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



After Air India, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has fined Tata Group AirAsia India (now AIX Connect) to Rs 20 lakh for violation of certain norms relating to pilots’ training.

It has also ordered the removal of the airline’s head of training from his position for a period of three months besides imposing a fine of Rs 3 lakh each on eight Designated Examiners (DEs).

The fines collectively add up to Rs 44 lakh. This is the third enforcement action against a Tata Group airline in over a month. In the past few

days, the DGCA has levied fines on several airlines including Air India, Vistara, IndiGo and GoAir for lapses. AirAsia India, in a statement, said it is reviewing the DGCA order and considering an appeal against it. “We acknowledge that a finding related to training exercises of pilots was

observed by the DGCA following the main base inspection in November 2022.

Immediate corrective action was taken in coordination with DGCA and additional simulator training sessions to address the gap were implemented,” an AirAsia spokesperson said in the state-

ment. According to DGCA a surveillance inspection of AirAsia (India) Ltd was carried out by it during November 23-25, 2022. During the inspection, DGCA team observed that a few mandatory exercises of the pilots of Air Asia (India) Ltd were not done during pilot proficiency check/instrument rating check (which is an International Civil Aviation Organization requirement) as per schedule, resulting in violation of DGCA regulations, DGCA said in a statement.

DGCA issued show cause notices to the accountable manager, head of training and all designated examiners of the airline “as to why enforce-

ment action should not be taken against them for lack of oversight of their regulatory obligations”. “The written reply of accountable manager, head of training and all designated examiners were examined... Accordingly, a financial penalty of Rs 20,00,000 has been imposed on AirAsia (India) Ltd for violation of applicable DGCA Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs),” it said.

The DGCA has also directed the airline to “withdraw” its head of training from his position for a period of three months for failing to discharge his duties as per applicable DGCA CARs, as per the statement. “Financial penalty of Rs 3,00,000 (has

been imposed) each on eight Designated Examiners of AirAsia (India) for failing to discharge their duties as per applicable DGCA Civil Aviation Requirements,” the DGCA said in the statement.

AirAsia spokesperson said the airline has already conducted mandatory exercises of the pilots as part of a simulator training done beyond the mandated regulatory training requirements.

“We wish to reiterate that there is no deviation from safety margins required for our operations. Nonetheless, we are reviewing DGCA order and are considering making an appeal as per available regulatory provisions,” AirAsia India said.

Physiotherapists symbol of hope, resilience: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called upon the physiotherapists here to come forward to reach out to the earthquake-hit people in Türkiye devastated by the disaster by providing their services via video consulting and tele-medicine.

Lauding the professionalism of physiotherapists by calling them a symbol of hope, resilience and recovery, Modi said physiotherapists not only treat physical injury but give the patient courage to deal with the psychological challenge.

The Prime Minister in his virtual address to the Indian Association of Physiotherapist National Conference in Ahmedabad, requested the profession to develop ways of video consulting and tele-medicine.

He said this can be useful in situations like the earthquake in Türkiye where a large number of physiotherapists are needed and Indian physiotherapists can help via mobile phones and asked the

Physiotherapist Association to think in this direction. “The profession also symbolizes the ‘Sabka Prayas’ as patients and doctors both need to work on the problem and this is reflected in many schemes and Jan Andolans like Swachh Bharat and Beti Bachao,” he said.

The Prime Minister said that in the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsava, physiotherapists received a much awaited recognition as a profession as the government brought the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professionals Bill which recognizes the contribution of physiotherapists in the nation’s healthcare system.

“This has made it easier for all of you to work in India as well as abroad. The government has also added physiotherapists to the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission net-

work. This has made it easier for you to reach the patients,” PM Modi said. He also touched upon growing opportunities for physiotherapists in the environment of Fit India Movement and Khelo India. “It is important that people adopt the right approach regarding fitness. You can do this through Articles and Lectures. And my young friends can even do it through Reels”, he said.

The Prime Minister requested physiotherapists to take up the task of educating people about Right Posture, Right Habits, Right Exercises. “It is important that people adopt the right approach regarding fitness. You can do this through Articles and Lectures. And my young friends can even do it through Reels”, he said.

Drawing on his personal experience of physiotherapy, the Prime Minister said “It is my experience that when the expertise of yoga is combined with that of a physiotherapist, its power increases manifold. The common problems of the body, which often require physiotherapy, are sometimes solved in yoga as well.

Ministry launches nationwide drive to end filariasis disease

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Saturday launched a nationwide mass drug administration (MDA) campaign aimed at ending filariasis disease transmission through door-to-door administration of anti-filarial drugs, especially in 10 affected states including Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

The launch came a month after the programme received resounding support from Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to eliminate filariasis by 2027, three years ahead of the global target.

India has ramped up efforts to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF), a vector-borne disease caused by culex mosquitoes that leads to disabilities, well ahead of the global targets to safeguard communities from disabilities, as well as from social and economic insecurity.

The Centre has already

unveiled a renewed five-pronged strategy for the elimination of LF, a statement from the Ministry said.

Launching the campaign, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said, “Collective action is required to tackle LF”. He urged all the states to focus on directly-observed therapy rather than distribution of drugs and emphasised focusing on intensive monitoring at the block level.

Uttar Pradesh informed that through a D2C (direct-to-consumer) campaign, it is reaching out to 80 lakh families with LF messages and importance of MDA drugs through social media while Jharkhand will be conducting these rounds at 81 sites, covering close to 12,032 villages.

Similarly, Odisha aims to cover 1.36 crore beneficiaries through efforts at camps, schools and colleges, West Bengal will be conducting these rounds in seven districts, covering a population of almost 60 lakh.

It will also be deploying mobile health teams to avert any untoward incidents. Chhattisgarh will be under-

taking the rounds in two endemic districts and has also deployed rapid response teams. At the same time, Andhra Pradesh has engaged health volunteers who will go house to house in one district to ensure the consumption of these drugs, the statement said.

Maharashtra will be covering four districts and 16 blocks, Madhya Pradesh will be conducting the rounds in eight districts. Karnataka will be targeting the endemic district to house in one district to ensure the consumption of these drugs, the statement said.

Bihar has ramped up efforts towards a successful MDA campaign and celebrities who have a huge fan base on social media have been roped in for the campaign.

Roli Singh, Additional Secretary and Mission Director (NHM), Ministry of Health, said, “We have adopted a multi-pronged approach with MDA rounds in two phases, where 1,113 blocks in 90 districts across 10 states will be launching a campaign against filariasis.”

Global Investors’ Summit-2023: Welfare dept discusses affirmative action for inclusive growth

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a preferred destination for investors at the Global Investors’ Summit-2023. On the second day of the UP GIS-1023, a session on ‘Affirmative action for inclusive growth’ was organised by the UP Social Welfare department during the sectoral sessions.

In the session, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Dr Virendra Kumar was the chief guest, and he was joined by UP Minister of Social Welfare, Scheduled Castes and Tribes Welfare (Independent Charge) Aseem Arun, Minister of State for Social Welfare Sanjeev Gond and Minister of State for Backward Classes Welfare Narendra Kashyap.

Akash Goenka, Vice-President, CII, Uttar Pradesh, said that “the work being done by the Uttar Pradesh government and the Social Welfare department for the development of the deprived community is inspirational and motivational”.

“CII is committed to working in this direction. CII began

working with Tata Sons for which we formed a task force that is still operational today. We are running a scholarship programme for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students,” he said.

Principal Secretary (Social Welfare) Dr Hariom expressed his views and said that “the direct meaning of affirmative action is to empower the people deprived of development by connecting them with the mainstream of development.

This affirmative action is also described in our Constitution, which has analysed the people deprived of development through the right to equality.”

Special guest in this session, state Minister for Minority Welfare and Waqf Dharampal Singh, said that, “There are three levels of people sitting here: aristocrats, bureaucrats, and technocrats. All three together should invest capital in Uttar Pradesh through startups.”

He further said that, “If we talk about the greatest economist in the world, then I will take the name of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.”

Lion’s mane mushrooms improve memory: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI



Mushrooms are usually known to possess many health benefits, including boosting immunity, improving cognitive function and fighting off illness. Of various types of mushrooms available in nature, a team of researchers have discovered that Lion’s mane mushrooms is best as it improves brain cell growth and memory.

Hailing from University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, the researchers discovered in pre-clinical trials the active compound from the edible mushroom that boosted nerve growth and enhanced memory. Professor Frederic Meunier from the Queensland Brain Institute, UQ, said the team had identified new active com-

pounds from the mushroom, *Herichium erinaceus*. The study was published in the Journal of Neurochemistry. “Extracts from these so-called ‘lion’s mane’ mushrooms have been used in traditional medicine in Asian countries for centuries, but we wanted to scientifically determine their potential effect on brain cells,” Meunier said.

“Pre-clinical testing found the lion’s mane mushroom had a significant impact on the growth of brain cells and improving memory. “Laboratory tests measured the

neurotrophic effects of compounds isolated from *Herichium erinaceus* on cultured brain cells, and surprisingly we found that the active compounds promote neuron projections, extending and connecting to other neurons.

“Using super-resolution microscopy, we found that the mushroom extract and its active components largely increase the size of growth cones, which are particularly important for brain cells to sense their environment and establish new connections with other neurons in the brain,” said Meunier.

Co-author, UQ’s Dr Ramon Martinez-Marmol said the discovery had applications that could treat and protect against neurodegenerative cognitive disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease.

ED arrests YSR MP’s son in Delhi scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Raghav Magunta, son of YSR Congress Party MP from Ongole Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, in connection with its money laundering investigation linked to the Delhi excise policy scam.

Raghav Magunta was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) late on Friday, officials said. This is the ninth arrest in this case by the ED, and the third this week. It arrested Gautam Malhotra, son of former SAD MLA from Punjab Deep Malhotra, and Rajesh Joshi, the director of an advertising company called Chariot Productions Media Pvt Ltd, earlier this week.



Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai (2R), Karnataka BJP president Nalin Kumar Kateel (R), former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa and other leaders at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Central Nut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Corporation (CAMPCO), in Puttur, on Saturday

PTI Photo

BLASPHEMY UPROAR

Man lynched inside police station in Pak

PTI ■ LAHORE

A violent mob lynched a blasphemy-accused man after storming a police station in Punjab province of Pakistan on Saturday, police said.

A police officer said a mob stormed the police station at Warburton, Nankana Sahib, some 80kms from Lahore, and took custody of Waris Issa, who was arrested for alleged desecration of the holy book, stripped him naked, and dragged him in the streets before beating him to death.

Residents of the area claimed that the man — who had returned after spending two years in jail — used to practice witchcraft by pasting his ex-wife's picture on holy books, Geo News reported.

Several video clips of the incident also went viral on social media. In one video, the mob, including young children, could be seen scaling the large gates of the police station.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has ordered action against those involved.

He also questioned why the police failed to stop the violent mob and directed the Inspector General of police in Punjab to ensure law and order in the district.

“The rule of law should be



ensured. No one should be allowed to influence the law,” Sharif emphasised.

He said that the first priority of the institutions responsible for peace and order is peace and that it should always come first.

Punjab IGP Dr Usman Anwar suspended DSP Nankana Circle Nawaz Virk and SHO Warburton Feroze Bhatti from service.

The IGP also ordered DIGs Ameen Bukhari and Raja Faisal to reach the spot and submit a detailed report after identifying the responsible and those guilty of negligence.

“No one is allowed to take the law into his hands, no matter how influential he is,

therefore strict departmental and legal action will be taken against those responsible for the incident and the perpetrators of negligence and professional misconduct,” the IGP said in a statement.

In December 2021, a mob in Sialkot city of Punjab tortured a Sri Lankan man, who was working as a manager at a local factory, to death over blasphemy allegations. The incident drew widespread condemnation.

An anti-terrorism court in Lahore last year handed down the punishment to 88 suspects involved in Sri Lankan citizen Piryantha Kumara's lynching case. Six of them were sentenced to death.

TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE

Family of five rescued after 5 days

AP ■ ANTAKYA

Rescue teams in Turkey on Saturday pulled to safety a family of five who survived inside their collapsed home for five days following a major earthquake in a sprawling border region of Turkey and Syria. The death toll, however, was approaching 25,000.

They first extricated mother and daughter Havva and Fatmagul Aslan from among a mound of debris in the hard-hit town of Nurdag, in Gaziantep province, HaberTurk reported.

The teams later reached the father, Hasan Aslan, but he insisted that his other daughter, Zeynep, and son Saltik Bugra be saved first.

Then, as the father was brought out, rescuers cheered and chanted “God is Great!”

The dramatic rescue after 129 hours brings to nine the number of people rescued Saturday, despite diminishing hopes amid freezing temperatures. They included a disoriented 16-year-old and a 70-year-old woman.

“What day is it?” Kamil Can Agas, the teenager who was pulled out of the rubble in Kahramanmaraş, asked his rescuers, according to NTV television.

Members of the mixed Turkish and Kyrgyz search teams embraced each other, as did the teenager's cousins, with one of them calling out: “He is out, brother. He is out. He is



Rescue workers search for bodies and earthquake survivors on a collapsed building in Adana, southeastern Turkey on Friday

AP | PTI

here.”

The rescues brought shimmers of joy amid overwhelming devastation days after Monday's 7.8-magnitude quake collapsed thousands of buildings, killing more than 24,000 people, injuring another 80,000 and leaving millions homeless.

Another quake nearly equal in power and likely triggered by the first caused more destruction hours later.

Rescue workers in the Turkish city of Antakya carried Ergin Guzeloglan, 36, to an ambulance after they pulled him out from a collapsed building on Saturday.

Not everything ended so well, however. Rescuers reached a 13-year-old girl inside the debris of a collapsed building in Hatay province early on Saturday and intubated her. But she died before the medical teams could amputate a limb and free her from the rubble, Hurriyet newspaper reported.

Even though experts say trapped people can live for a week or more, the odds of finding more survivors were quickly waning. Rescuers were shifting to thermal cameras to help identify life amid the rubble, a sign of the weakness of any remaining survivors.

Earthquake compounds Turkish Erdogan's woes as election nears

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power 20 years ago riding a wave of public outrage toward the previous government's handling of a deadly earthquake.

Now, three months away from an election, Erdogan's political future could hinge on how the public perceives his government's response to a similarly devastating natural disaster.

“It is going to be a big challenge for Erdogan, who has established a brand for himself as an autocratic figure but an efficient one that gets the job done,” said Soner Cagaptay, a Turkiye expert at the Washington Institute and the author of several books on Erdogan.

The aftermath of a massive earthquake isn't the only parallel to the election of 2002. Back then, Turkiye was in the midst of a financial crisis that was punishing its economy.

Today, Turkiye's economy is being hammered by skyrocketing inflation, and Erdogan has faced widespread

criticism for his handling of the problem, which has left millions of poor and middle class people struggling to make ends meet.

Erdogan's political rivals have already begun criticising his government's response to the earthquake, saying that over the course of two decades he failed to prepare the country for the inevitable.

Experts point to lax enforcement of building codes as a major reason why this week's quakes were so deadly. But with less than 100 days before the election, Erdogan's rivals have yet to put forth a candidate to run against him.

The memory of how Bulent Ecevit, the late prime minister, was undone by his poor handling of financial and natural disasters two decades ago must be on Erdogan's mind as he tries to contain the twin problems he faces today, analysts say.

The 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck on Feb. 6 was followed nine hours later by another powerful quake, killing more than 24,000 people in both Turkiye and Syria.

UN human rights chief calls for special armed forces to Haiti

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE

The UN's human rights chief on Friday urged the international community to consider deploying a specialised armed force to Haiti, warning that violent gangs are creating a “living nightmare” for thousands of people.

“The appeal from UN Human Rights Commissioner Volker Turk came at the end of a two-day visit to Haiti at the request of a government unable to control gangs that are killing, raping and pillaging in a growing number of neighbourhoods.

Violence has spiked in the impoverished country since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise.

“It is time for the international community to help the Haitian authorities regain full control so this suffering can be stopped,” Turk said.

He added that since multiple crises around the world are competing for attention, he fears that “the situation in Haiti is not receiving the urgent spotlight that it deserves.”

6 killed, 27 hurt in building collapse in Egypt

AP ■ CAIRO

Cooking gas cylinders packed into the basement of a four-story apartment building in northern Egypt exploded on Friday, collapsing the building and killing at least six people. Twenty-seven were injured, authorities said.

“The explosion and the subsequent collapse took place in the Nile Delta city of Damanhour, about 150 kilometers (99 miles) north of the capital, Cairo. The office of Egypt's public prosecutor said the cylinders were stored in violation of regulations.

Among the dead were three children, the youngest was a 3-year-old, authorities said in a separate statement.

Search efforts were ongoing to find those still missing beneath the rubble while the injured were transported to a nearby hospital, it said. No further details were immediately provided.

Building collapses are common in Egypt, where poor construction and shoddy building maintenance are common across the country, especially in shantytowns, low-income neighbourhoods and rural areas.

Iran marks revolution anniv amid protests

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran on Saturday celebrated the 44th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution amid nationwide anti-government protests and heightened tensions with the West.

Thousands of Iranians marched through major streets and squares decorated with flags, balloons and placards with revolutionary and religious slogans. The military put on display its Emad and Sejil ballistic missiles and cruise missiles as well as its Shahed-136 and Mohajer drones.

Protesters began pouring into the streets in September after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, an Iranian-Kurdish woman detained by the country's morality police. Those demonstrations, initially focused on Iran's mandatory headscarf, or hijab, soon morphed into calls for a new revolution. In a speech at Azadi Square in the capital Tehran, President Ebrahim Raisi referred to the protests as a project by Iran's enemies aimed at stopping the nation from continuing its achievements.

Raisi called the celebration “epic” and a show of “national



Demonstrators carry a huge Iranian flag and posters of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during the annual rally commemorating Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, in Tehran, Iran on Saturday PTI

integrity” while praising post-revolution achievements in the country.

The remarks prompted the crowd to chant “Death to the U.S.”

Meanwhile, Telewebion, a web TV service affiliated with Iranian state TV, was briefly hacked during Raisi's speech, Iranian media reported. The khabaronline.Ir news website said the interruption lasted 19 seconds. “Edalate Ali” or “The Justice of Ali,” hackers group in a 44-second video published on Twitter invited people to take part in nationwide protests next week.

East Germany's last Communist leader dies at 95

AP ■ BERLIN

Hans Modrow, who served as East Germany's last communist leader during a turbulent tenure that ended in the country's first and only free election, has died. He was 95.

Modrow died early Saturday, the Left party parliamentary group tweeted.

“Modrow, a reform-minded communist, took over East Germany shortly after the Berlin Wall fell and later invited opposition forces into the government, but could not slow the gathering momentum for German reunification.

“The entire peaceful course of establishing German unity was precisely a special achievement of his,” the Left wrote on Twitter. “That will remain his political legacy.”

During 16 years as communist party chief in Dresden, starting in 1973, Modrow built a reputation as an anti-establishment figure. He rejected party perks and insisted on living in a normal apartment.

A post in East Germany's top leadership eluded him until he was made prime minister, a position that previously carried little clout, in November 1989.

US shoots down high altitude aerial object flying above Alaska

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A US fighter jet shot down an unknown object flying at the height of about 40,000 feet off the northern coast of Alaska on orders of President Joe Biden, officials said, less than a week after the military brought down a Chinese spy balloon that had flown across America.

According to Pentagon Press Secretary Brigadier General Pat Ryder, the object, which was about the size of a small car, was first detected inside American airspace on Thursday.

The object, whose origin is not known so far, posed a “reasonable threat to civilian air traffic,” he said.

This came almost a week after the US shot down a Chinese spy balloon off the coast of South Carolina in the Atlantic Ocean. It hovered over continental America for several days after entering the US airspace on January 30 in Montana.

China has acknowledged that the balloon was theirs but denied that it was for surveil-



lance purposes rather than for weather monitoring and that it had drifted off course.

About the unidentified

object over Alaska, Ryder told reporters at a news conference, “At the direction of the President of the United States, fighter aircraft assigned to US Northern Command successfully took down a high-altitude airborne object off the northern coast of Alaska at 1:45 pm Eastern Standard Time today (Friday) within US sovereign airspace over US territorial water.”

US blacklists six Chinese entities over spy balloon

AP ■ BEIJING

The United States on Friday blacklisted six Chinese entities it said were linked to Beijing's aerospace programs as part of its retaliation over an alleged Chinese spy balloon that traversed the country's airspace.

The economic restrictions followed the Biden administration's pledge to consider broader efforts to address Chinese surveillance activities

and will make it more difficult for the five companies and one research institute to obtain American technology exports.

The move is likely to further escalate the diplomatic row between the U.S. And China sparked by the balloon, which was shot down last weekend off the Carolina coast. The U.S. Said the balloon was equipped to detect and collect intelligence signals, but Beijing insists it was a weather craft that had blown off course.

UN draft resolution: Peace must keep Ukraine intact

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Ukraine's supporters have circulated a proposed resolution for adoption by the 193-member U.N. General Assembly on the eve of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of its smaller neighbour that would underscore the need for peace ensuring Ukraine's “sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.”

“The draft, obtained Friday by The Associated Press, is entitled “Principles underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.”

The proposed resolution is broader and less detailed than the 10-point peace plan that Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced at the November summit of the Group of 20 major economies. This was a deliberate decision by Ukraine and its backers to try to gain maximum support when it is put to a vote, U.N. Diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because discussions have been private.

General Assembly spokesperson Paulina Kubiak said Friday that a reactivated



emergency session of the General Assembly on Ukraine will start on the afternoon of Feb. 22. Dozens of speeches are expected to continue through most of Feb. 23 and the vote is expected late that day.

Ukraine's deputy foreign minister said last month that Zelenskyy wants to come to the U.N. For the anniversary, but diplomats said expectations of a major new Russian offensive may keep him at home.

The General Assembly has become the most important U.N. Body dealing with Ukraine because the Security Council, which is charged with

maintaining international peace and security, is paralyzed because of Russia's veto power.

Unlike the council, there are no vetoes in the assembly, but while its five previous resolutions on Ukraine are important as a reflection of world opinion, they are not legally binding.

The Security Council will hold a ministerial meeting on Feb. 24, the anniversary of the invasion. Russian and Ukrainian diplomats will be at the same table, as they have been at dozens of meetings since the invasion — but there will be no outcome.

Biden to visit Poland for anniversary of Ukraine war

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden will travel to Poland this month to rally allies one year after Russia's assault on Ukraine, the White House announced, as he aims to sustain a coalition that has supported Kyiv's defences.

“The visit, scheduled for February 20-22, comes as signs point to waning support for maintaining tens of billions of dollars worth of military and economic assistance for Ukraine in the protracted war.

“Russia, meanwhile, is believed to be planning a renewed offensive in conjunction with the anniversary and has stepped up its long-range strikes on Ukraine's military and civilian infrastructure in recent weeks.

“It remained unclear whether Biden might attempt a visit to Ukraine as many other Western leaders and members of Congress have done.

“White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the administration will “continue to stand with the people of



Ukraine for as long as it takes.”

“Biden visited Poland just weeks after the war began on February 24 when he delivered a forceful case for supporting Ukraine's defence in front of Warsaw's iconic Royal Castle.

“At the time, Biden said of Putin: “For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power,” though the White House has since backed off what initially seemed to be a call for regime change in Moscow.

“First lady Jill Biden briefly crossed the border on a trip in May and met her counterpart, Ukrainian first lady Olena Zelenska, in the latter's first public event since the war began.

Fourth day of pension reform stir to hit France

AP ■ PARIS

France is bracing itself for a fourth round of nationwide protests against President Emmanuel Macron's plans to reform pensions Saturday, but strikes will not hit transport services this time, allowing trains and the Paris Metro to run.

“Protesters are expected in the hundreds of thousands. “Earlier this week, French lawmakers began a rowdy debate on the pension bill to raise the minimum retirement age from 62 to 64. It's the flagship legislation of Macron's second term.

“The last day of protests, four days ago, saw over 750,000 people marching in Paris, the cities of Nice, Marseille, Toulouse, Nantes and elsewhere, according to the Interior Ministry. However, that represented significantly fewer than on the previous two protest days in January in which over a million people took to the streets. Tuesday's strike disruptions were also milder than those of Jan. 31.

The protests are a crucial test both for Macron and his opponents.

Prez Wickremesinghe calls for Tamils' support for development of Lanka's northern region

PTI ■ COLOMBO

President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Saturday he was committed to devolution of power within a unitary state as a solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic issue and underlined the need for Tamil diaspora's engagement for the development of the conflict-battered northern region.

Addressing state officials in Jaffna, President Wickremesinghe also expressed hope that India will contribute to the development of the eastern port of Trincomalee.

“He said the government wants to promote tourism between Mannar and Trincomalee.

“We should implement Trincomalee port development activities with the help of India, which will strongly affect the development of the northern province. Before the war, the northern province made a wide contribution to the country's economy. As a government, we hope to restore that situation and raise it rapidly,” he said.

“Wickremesinghe said the

northern province would be developed in such a manner that it could make a significant contribution to the country's national economy.

“I believe that a massive development in the northern province should take place in parallel to the economic development program in the country. The economy of Jaffna completely collapsed due to the war. It has not yet reached the anticipated level of economic development.

“Therefore, we hope to work under a 10-year plan to bring the country to that stage. We have to get not only foreign aid but also aid from the diaspora to realise this end,” he said.

“The civil war was fought in Sri Lanka from 1983 to 2009.

“On May 18, 2009, the campaign led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to establish a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation came to an end with the killing of LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran by the Sri Lankan Army in Mullaithivu's Vellamuliyaikkal.

FM addresses RBI's central board

Reviews economic situation

■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday highlighted the key thrust areas outlined in the Union Budget and the expectations from the financial sector.

She gave these directions while addressing the central board of directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The board also reviewed the global and domestic economic situation, and associated challenges, official sources said.

It is customary for the Finance Minister to address RBI's board after the presentation of the Union Budget every year. Complimenting the Finance Minister on the Budget, the RBI board members made a few suggestions for the consideration of the government. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said after the meeting that interest rates have just moved in to positive territory. "Negative interest rates for

a long period can create instability. Our interest rate increase is a part of price stability," Das said while interacting with mediapersons. He was referring to the recent repo rate hike of 25 basis points, which took it to 6.50 per cent.

Das added that the balance of payments situation is eminently manageable, while service exports are doing extremely well. "Remittances have gone up by 27 per cent and merchandise exports are moderating. Achieving an annual target of \$400 billion is getting achieved," he said.

On price rise, the RBI Governor said, "If oil prices go down significantly and if there is an advantage of other commodity prices, it will work to our favour in terms of leading to lower inflation."

Sitharaman was accompanied at the meeting by junior Finance Ministers Bhagwat Karad and Pankaj Choudhary. Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan, Tuhin Kanta



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das arrives for the 600th meeting of the Central Board of RBI, in New Delhi, on Saturday

PTI Photo

Pandey, Secretary in the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), and Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra, along with Chief Economic

Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran were also present in the meeting. Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth and Banking Secretary Vivek Joshi were also present.

India topples France as UK's largest Scotch whisky market

■ LONDON

India has overtaken France to become the UK's largest market of Scotch whisky in terms of volume with a 60 per cent hike in imports in 2022 over the previous year, according to the latest figures released by Scotland's leading industry body.

The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) revealed on Friday that India imported 219 million 70cl bottles of Scotch compared to France's 205 million last year – representing growth of the Indian Scotch market of more than 200 per cent in the past decade.

As one of the key sectors of focus for the UK in the free trade agreement (FTA) talks with India, now in their seventh round of negotiations, SWA pointed out that the hike in volume still makes up only a fraction of the Indian whisky market due to high tariffs.

G20 to deliberate on regulating crypto currencies: Sitharaman

■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the issue of regulating crypto assets will be taken up at G20 meetings as a collective view has to be formed on the matter.

"Crypto is heavily tech led and less of human intervention. We are talking to all nations that if regulation has to be framed then one country cannot frame it alone. So we are speaking to all for forming a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) so that it is effective."

"So all these are part of discussion. The process of discussion is on in G20," Sitharaman told reporters post her address to the RBI board here.

India has assumed the G20 presidency for 2023. The G20 is a premier forum for international economic cooperation that plays an important role in global economic governance. Sitharaman at various occasions had said India will press for collective efforts for global regu-



lation of crypto assets to check terror funding.

The minister outlined eight areas, including reforms in multilateral institutions and food and energy security, for discussion under its G20 presidency which has begun from December 1.

The recent collapse of crypto exchange FTX and the ensuing sell-off in crypto markets have placed a spotlight on the vulnerabilities in the crypto ecosystem. Crypto assets are self-referential instruments and do not strictly pass the test of being a financial asset because they have no intrinsic cash flows attached to them.

US regulators have dis-qualified Bitcoin, Ether and various other crypto assets as securities.

A rare joint statement by the US Federal Reserve, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) on January 3, 2023, highlighted their concerns about crypto asset risks to the banking system, the recent Economic Survey had said.

The geographically pervasive nature of the crypto ecosystem necessitates a common approach to the regulation of these volatile instruments, and the global response to cryptos is evolving, it had said.

Observing that crypto assets are new forms of digital assets implemented using cryptographic techniques, the survey had said its market has been very volatile, with its total valuation swinging from almost USD 3 trillion in November 2021 to less than USD 1 trillion in January 2023.

Sebi proposes to enhance role, accountability of mutual fund trustees

■ NEW DELHI

Amidst growing scale of the mutual fund industry, capital markets regulator Sebi has proposed to increase the role and accountability of the trustees in a bid to safeguard unitholders' interest.

In addition, the regulator has suggested to enhance the accountability of board of asset management company (AMC). Also, Sebi has proposed a common platform for dissemination of public announcements by mutual funds.

In order to have an independent review mechanism for the decisions of AMC from the perspective of the unitholders' interest across all products and services, Sebi has proposed to mandate that a "Unit Holder Protection Committee (UHPC)" should be constituted by board of AMC".



In its consultation paper, Sebi has suggested that trustees of mutual funds should focus on market abuse by AMC, its employees and mis-selling by the AMC to increase the asset base. Also, trustees should be responsible for fairness of fees and expenses charged by the AMC, compare its performance with peers and ensure that AMC's sponsor is not getting any undue advantage. In addition to the core areas, the trustees should be responsible for periodically reviewing the

steps taken by AMCs for the folios which do not contain all KYC attributes with bank details.

Further, Sebi has suggested that trustees and their resource persons should independently evaluate the extent of compliance by AMC and not merely rely on AMC's assurances. To facilitate trustees' supervision, AMCs should provide them with analytical information. Presently, the trustees primarily rely on the AMCs for ensuring compliance with the applicable rules.

Under the rules, trustees hold the property of the mutual fund in trust for the benefit of the unitholders.

The trustees appoint an AMC to float schemes for the mutual fund and manage the funds mobilised under various schemes, in accordance with the investment objectives.

India's toy exports touch ₹1,017 cr during April-Dec this fiscal

■ NEW DELHI

The country's toy exports have touched Rs 1,017 crore during April-December period this fiscal, according to the government data.

In 2021-22, the exports stood at Rs 2,601 crore.

"Made in India toys continue to tap global markets! India's toy exports rose to more than 6 times in April-December 2022 as compared to the same period in 2013," commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said in a tweet.

During April-December 2013-14, the shipments were at Rs 167 crore. The government is taking steps to promote domestic manufacturing and exports of toys from the coun-



try and reduce imports from countries like China, which are of low quality. In 2018-19, toys worth Rs 2,960 crore were imported into India. With the philosophy of 'vocal for local', the government took several steps to promote indigenous toys designed on Indian culture

and history. The overall import of toys in India reduced by 70 per cent to Rs 870 crore in 2021-22. In February 2020, import duty on toys was raised from 20 per cent to 60 per cent and now this year to 70 per cent, with an aim to discourage imports. The government is also considering rolling out a fiscal incentive scheme -- PLI -- for toys.

In 2020, the government issued a Toys (Quality Control) Order. As per the order, toys have to conform to the requirements of relevant Indian standards and bear the standard mark under a licence. It is applicable to both domestic as well as foreign manufacturers who intend to export their toys to India.

ReNew Sun Waves Private Limited				
CIN No. : U40300DL2019PTC347300				
Regd. Office : 138, Ansal Chambers II, Bikaji Cama Place, Delhi-110066				
Corporate Office : ReNew.hub, Commercial Block-1, Zone-6, Golf Course Road, DLF City Phase-V, Gurugram, 122009, Haryana, Phone – 0124-4896 670/ 80				
Statement of Unaudited financial results for the quarter and nine months ended 31 December 2022				
(Amounts in INR million, except share and per share data, unless otherwise stated)				
Particulars	Quarter ended 31 December 2022	Quarter ended 31 December 2021	Year ended 31 March 2022	
	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	Audited	
Total Income from Operations	454	386	954	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	80	32	128	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	80	32	128	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	57	35	131	
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	57	35	131	
Paid up Equity Share Capital	30	30	30	
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	2,733	2,452	2,506	
Net worth**	2,762	2,482	2,536	
Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt*	10,010	10,020	10,020	
Debt Equity Ratio *	3.02	3.00	3.00	
Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)				
1. Basic :	19.28	12.18	44.06	
2. Diluted :	19.28	12.18	44.06	
Debt Service Coverage Ratio *	4.20	85	168	
Interest Service Coverage Ratio	1.79	1.58	1.40	
	1.66	1.81	1.64	
Disclosures pursuant to Regulations 52(4) and 52(7) Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.				
- Credit Rating : CRISIL A+/- Negative				
- Change in credit rating : No				
- Asset Coverage Ratio : 156% (31 March, 2022 : 150%)				
- Debt Equity ratio: mentioned above				
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio : mentioned above				
- Interest Service Coverage Ratio : mentioned above				
- Outstanding redeemable preference shares (Quantity and Value) : Not Applicable				
- Net Worth ** (31 December, 2022) : INR 2,762 (31 March, 2022 : INR 2,536).				
- Net profit after tax : mentioned above				
- Earning per share : mentioned above				
- Debenture Redemption Reserve (31 December, 2022) : INR 420 (31 March, 2022 : INR 168).				
- There are no material deviation in the use of proceeds of issue of Non Convertible Debentures from the objects stated in the offer document (Regulations 52(7)).				
Notes :				
1. Ratios have been computed as follows :				
- Earning per share (Basic & Diluted) = Profit after Tax / Weighted average number of equity shares				
- Debt Equity Ratio* = Debt (Amount due to Debenture Holders) / Equity (Equity share capital + share premium + quasi equity i.e. Short term borrowing but excluding unamortized fees)				
- Interest Service Coverage Ratio = Profit before interest, prior period items, tax, extraordinary items and depreciation / (Total Interest Expense).				
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio* = ((PAT based on Project Revenues realised (excluding non-cash adjustment, if any) + Depreciation + Interest (Interest, Guarantee Fees, other financing costs payable under Debenture and Project Documents)) / (Interest + Principal Repayment+Guarantee fee).				
- Asset Coverage Ratio = (Total Assets) / Debt (Amount due to Debenture Holders)				
*As per Debenture Trust Deed dated 24 September, 2021.				
** Network represents issued subscribed and paid up capital plus reserves and surplus. Reserves and Surplus includes Capital reserve, General reserve, Debenture redemption reserve, Securities premium account and Profit and loss account balance.				
2. The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly financial results filed with the National Stock Exchange under regulation 52 of the Listing Regulations. The full format of the quarterly financial results is available on the website of the Stock Exchange and the Company - http://renewpower.in/renew-sun-waves/ .				
3. For the other line items referred in regulation 52(4) of the Listing Regulations, pertinent disclosures have been made to the National Stock Exchange and can be accessed on the URL - https://www.nseindia.com/companies/listing/corporate-filing-announcements .				
4. The company is in the business of development and operation of solar power. There is only one segment (business and/or geographical) in accordance with the requirements of IND AS - 108 "Operating Segments".				
5. The above financial results of the Company for the quarter and for the period ended December 31, 2022 have been approved by the Board of Directors of the Company at the meeting held on February 10, 2023. The statutory auditors of the company have carried out the limited review of the above unaudited financial results of the Company for the quarter and nine months ended December 31, 2022.				
For and on behalf of the ReNew Sun Waves Private Limited (Sd./-) Rahula Kumar Kashyapa Managing Director, DIN : 07637469				
Place : Gurugram Date : February 10, 2023				

TRAI releases consultation paper

New Delhi: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Saturday released a consultation paper on "Introduction of Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Provider Authorization under Unified License (UL)".

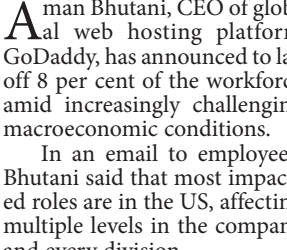
The National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP-2018) emphasises on digital infrastructure, stating that "Digital infrastructure and services are increasingly emerging as key enablers and critical determinants of a country's growth and well-being". It also envisaged "enabling unbundling of different layers (e.g., infrastructure, network, services, and applications layer) through differential licensing" as one of the strategies for fulfilling its 'Propel India' mission.

The purpose of the TRAI's consultation paper is to seek views of stakeholders on the proposed DCIP authorisation under Unified License. Written comments on paper are invited from stakeholders by March 9, and counter-comments, if any, by March 23.

PTI

GoDaddy CEO Aman Bhutani lays off 8% of workforce

■ NEW DELHI



Aman Bhutani, CEO of global web hosting platform GoDaddy, has announced to lay off 8 per cent of the workforce amid increasingly challenging macroeconomic conditions.

In an email to employees, Bhutani said that most impacted roles are in the US, affecting multiple levels in the company and every division.

"The planned impacts also include ongoing work to more deeply integrate three of our brands -- Media Temple, Main Street Hub and 123 Reg -- into GoDaddy," he wrote.

Impacted team members received a meeting invite from their leadership to learn the details of their transition, aligned with local employment processes.

"Media Temple customers and team members are already aware of the transition to GoDaddy infrastructure as we work to sunset the brand, and team members will receive a meeting invite today to explain the path forward for them," Bhutani informed.

Some roles in 123 Reg may not be required longer-term and "we will notify any impacted team members by March 1, 2023". The company is offering the impacted employees a transition package, in line with local laws and customs. In the US, this will include 12 weeks of paid administrative leave with continued core benefits coverage.

In addition, departing team members will be eligible for two additional weeks of severance per year worked (with a minimum of four weeks), extended healthcare benefits, as well as outplacement and immigration support to help with their transition, according to GoDaddy CEO. In less than two months into the new year, more than 336 tech companies have laid off more than 1 lakh tech workers, according to layoffs.

PTI

New Delhi: Drug major Sun Pharma is recalling over 34,000 bottles of a generic medication, used to treat high blood pressure, in the US market due to failed dissolution testing.

As per the US Food and Drug Administration's Enforcement Report, the US-based arm of Sun Pharmaceutical Industries is recalling lots of Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules which are used to treat angina, high blood pres-

'Millets to increase income of small, marginal farmers'

■ NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday said popularisation of millets in the country will lead to increase in the income of small and marginal farmers and urged international organisations, academia and hotel industry to revive the forgotten glory of 'miracle millets'.

The year 2023 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of the Millet, following a proposal by India, which wants to position itself as a global hub for millets. Several initiatives are being undertaken in this regard.

Addressing 9th International Chefs Conference organised by the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations here, Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Choudhary said millets are considered traditional food for more than half a billion people across Asia and Africa.

In India, millets are primarily a kharif crop, requiring less water and agricultural inputs than other similar staples.

"Millets are important by virtue of its mammoth potential to generate livelihoods, increase farmers' income and ensure food and nutritional security all over the world," he



said in a statement.

The minister also urged international organizations, academia, hotels, media, Indian diaspora, start-up communities, civil society, and all others in the millets value-chain to come forward and join hands to revive the forgotten glory of 'Miracle Millets' through a collaborative approach.

Agriculture Secretary Manoj Ahuja said, "With the popularization of millets in the country, it will lead to an increase in incomes of small and Marginal farmers."

Taking note of the high agricultural growth over the past few years and its robust contribution in overall GDP, he said the government is ready to take all steps to make the sector the most modern one through adoption of new and emerging technologies.

Sun Pharma recalls 34K defective bottles from US

New Delhi: Drug major Sun Pharma is recalling over 34,000 bottles of a generic medication, used to treat high blood pressure, in the US market due to failed dissolution testing.

As per the US Food and Drug Administration's Enforcement Report, the US-based arm of Sun Pharmaceutical Industries is recalling lots of Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules which are used to treat angina, high blood pres-



sure and some types of irregular heartbeats. Princeton (New Jersey) based Sun Pharmaceutical Inc is recalling the affected lot due to

"Failed Impurity (Deacetyl Diltiazem Hydrochloride) specification during stability testing and failed dissolution testing at FDA laboratory." The Mumbai-based drug major had produced the lot at its Halol-based manufacturing facility in Gujarat. PTI

The affected lot was later distributed in the market by its US-based unit.

The company initiated the Class II nationwide recall (US) on January 13 this year.

INDIA vs PAKISTAN in Women's T20 WC today



PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Searching for a long overdue ICC title, India will look to hit the straps in their Women's T20 World Cup opener against arch-rivals Pakistan here on Sunday.

An Indo-Pak contest always creates excitement but with India being a much superior side, the quality of cricket might not meet the high expectations.

Having said that, Pakistan had got the better of India their last meeting in the Asia Cup last year with the

latter making too many experiments.

In the last five years, the gulf between the two teams has widened with India challenging the supremacy of Australia and England on a consistent basis. Women's cricket in Pakistan, on the other hand, has stagnated.

With the game scheduled a day ahead of the inaugural Women's Premier League auction, there will be added motivation for the Indian players. For some, it could be a distraction.

India are fretting over the fitness

of their skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (shoulder) and Smriti Mandhana (finger) ahead of the opening game.

A call will be taken on their participation after the practice session on Saturday.

"They both are senior players and very important for the team. Even there is a slight doubt over their readiness for the game, we will not risk playing them as it is only the first game of the tournament," said a BCCI source.

India come into the World Cup having lost the recent tri-series final

to South Africa, a match they should have won. They also lost the warm-up game to Australia before beating Bangladesh.

India are expected to reach the semifinals of the ICC event again but if they are to beat the mighty Australia, they will need to up their game in all departments.

Barring Renuka Singh, the bowling unit doesn't inspire a lot of confidence. Veteran Shikha Pandey is yet to pick a wicket since her comeback last month and will be fired up to provide early breakthroughs in the

showpiece.

The performance of the spinners has also been below expectations of late.

In the batting department, Harmanpreet and Mandhana need all the support. Shafali Verma, fresh from leading India to the inaugural U-19 World Cup title, will be keen to prove her doubters wrong with a consistent showing.

Pressure will be on Jemimah Rodrigues to perform as she has not been able to play an impactful knock since her comeback.

The role of pace bowling all-rounder Pooja Vastrakar will also be critical to India's chances in the tournament.

Richa Ghosh is among the few players in the team with the X-factor and she would be relied upon heavily for big hitting in the death overs.

On Pakistan's front, Nida Dar will be the player to watch out for.

Pakistan go into the competition having a played a series against Australia. They beat Bangladesh in their opening warm-up match before losing to South Africa.



The former India men's team cricketer added that captain Harmanpreet Kaur has recovered fully from the shoulder niggle she picked up during the Tri-series against West Indies and South Africa.

"Harman is fit to play. She has batted for the last two days in the nets, she is fine," Kanitkar added. Earlier on Saturday, Mandhana posted her images on social media in full cricketing gear and captioned them, "Let's go T20WorldCup2023".

The Indian team is clubbed alongside England, Pakistan, West Indies and Ireland in Group B.

India come into the World Cup match having lost the recent Tri-series final to South Africa. They also lost the warm-up game against Australia before beating Bangladesh.

Mandhana will most likely not play against Pakistan: Kanitkar

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was on Saturday ruled out of the team's opening Women's T20 World Cup game against Pakistan on Sunday as she is "still recovering" from a finger injury.

The 26-year-old Mandhana had picked up the injury while fielding during the warm-up game against Australia earlier this week, which forced her out of the second warm-up tie against Bangladesh. "Smriti has a finger injury and is still (in) recovery, so she won't play most likely. It's not a fracture and we're hopeful she will be available from the second game onwards," stand-in coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar said during a press conference.

"You want to be playing the

strong teams, the arch-rivals if you can call them that. We are totally prepared for what happens, the atmosphere is good," added Kanitkar.



Markram expresses captaincy ambitions in IPL

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

One of the front-runners for Sunrisers Hyderabad's captaincy in IPL-16, South African batter Aiden Markram is ready to take up the challenge if given a chance.

Besides Markram, seasoned opener Mayank Agarwal and veteran India pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar are the other candidates in fray for the top job in the SRH franchise.

The 28-year-old Markram staked his claim by leading Sunrisers Eastern Cape into the final of the inaugural SA20 with a match-winning century in the last-four clash against Johannesburg Super Kings in Centurion on Thursday.

Mayank endured an unsuccessful stint as Punjab Kings captain before getting the boot. On the other hand, Markram has shown his leadership qualities by successfully leading the IPL franchise's South African outfit.

Asked if he is open to leading the side in the high-profile Indian Premier League, Markram responded in the affirmative.

"What's going to happen, to be honest... either way we back the management's decision about who they want to be in charge," Markram said.

"Becoming the captain is not the be all and end all. You can be in some form of leadership

role too. But I am okay with captaincy, it's something that I enjoy doing," he said ahead of the SA20 final against Pretoria Capitals. "I have been captaining for a while before this tournament started. It's been a nice experience, a fresh start, I would say," he added.

Mayank, who hit a double hundred in the ongoing Ranji Trophy semifinal against Saurashtra, has also brightened his chances of being named captain for the upcoming season of the T20 league. Bhuvneshwar, 34, is SRH's designated vice-captain and had led the side in former skipper Kane Williamson's absence previously.

As far as Markram is concerned, the South African scored 381 runs in 14 matches at a strike rate of 139.5 last season. The only thing that could work against him is the lack of experience in leading a team in the IPL.

While Markram is entering the final on the back of a brilliant century, his opposite number, Wayne Parnell of Pretoria Capitals, has doubts over his participation in the title clash owing to a groin strain.

Both captains — Markram and Parnell — believed the quality of cricket in the first-ever SA20 league has been high and it has brought a breath of fresh air into South African cricket after a difficult period.

DC rope in Jonathan Batty as head coach for WPL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former English first-class cricketer Jonathan Batty was on Saturday named as Delhi Capitals' head coach for the inaugural Women's Premier League (WPL).

The 48-year-old will be assisted by former cricketers Hemlata Kala and Lisa Keightley.

A former Surrey and Gloucestershire keeper-batter, Batty had coached the Oval Invincibles women's team to The Hundred titles in 2021 and 2022.

He also coached the Melbourne Stars in the Women's Big Bash League and the Surrey women's side.

"I'm absolutely thrilled to be

joining Delhi Capitals as head coach for the inaugural WPL," Batty said in a statement issued by the franchise.

"It's an incredible time to be involved in women's cricket and the WPL has the potential to transform the landscape of women's professional sport globally."

Kala, who has represented India in seven Tests and 78 ODIs, has also been the chief of the national selection panel.

It was during her tenure as chief selector that India reached the final of the ICC World Cup in 2017, a milestone moment for the women's game in the country.

"I am confident WPL will be



a game changer for women's cricket," Kala said.

Keightley, who played nine Tests and 82 ODIs for Australia, coached the England women's side to the 2022 ICC World Cup final.

She has also served as head coach of the Perth Scorchers and Sydney Thunder in the Women's Big Bash League.

Biju George, who had a successful tenure with the Indian women's team, has been named as the side's fielding coach.

George works in the same capacity with the Delhi Capitals men's side as well.

The inaugural edition of WPL will be held in Mumbai from March 4-26.

Athapaththu inspires Sri Lanka's stunning win over South Africa



PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Captain Chamari Athapaththu starred with the bat as Sri Lanka produced an inspiring performance to stun hosts South Africa by three runs in the opening match of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup at Newlands here. Athapaththu led from the front with a 50-ball 68 (12x4), Sri Lanka's highest-ever individual score at the showpiece event on Friday night.

Having set South Africa

130 to win, Sri Lankan spinners took control with guile and discipline to restrict the hosts for 126 for nine. It was Sri Lanka's first T20I victory over South Africa since 2016. Athapaththu and Vishmi Gunaratne (35 off 34b; 4x4) put on 86 for the second wicket, Sri Lanka's highest partnership for any wicket at the T20 World Cup, to lay the base for the team's total.

BRIEF SCORES

Sri Lanka 129 for four in 20 overs (Chamari Athapaththu 68, Vishmi Gunaratne 35; Nadine De Klerk 1/38, Marizanne Kapp 1/15) beat **South Africa** 126 for nine in 20 overs (Sune Luus 28, Laura Wolvaardt 18; Inoka Ranaweera 3/18, Oshadi Ranasinghe 2/20)

Chelsea held by West Ham despite Felix opener

AP ■ LONDON

Graham Potter admitted Chelsea are still "a work in progress" after their winless Premier League run extended to three games as Joao Felix's first goal for the Blues was cancelled out by Emerson in Saturday's 1-1 draw at West Ham.

Potter's expensively assembled side once again failed to live up to their price tags as the pressure mounted on the Blues boss.

Portugal forward Felix put Chelsea ahead in his second appearance for the club, only for Italy defender Emerson to haunt his former team with an equaliser before half-time.

Ninth-placed Chelsea have won just one of their past eight games in all competitions and are nine points adrift of the Premier League's top four.

Chelsea, without a win in their last seven away league games, splashed out more than £300 million (\$362 million) on new signings during the January transfer window.

Although Potter insists he is well aware of the pressure to get Chelsea back on track, the former Brighton boss has been unable to stop the rot and is certain to face further scrutiny about his position.



"The second half was more of a reflection of where we are in terms of integrating new players and getting players up to speed in the Premier League," Potter said.

"I think you saw the potential in the first half. You can't control what people say from the outside, you see it how it is and carry on working."

"They are a good group and we are excited with the team and the potential but it is

still a work in progress."

The Blues face Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League last 16 first leg on Wednesday and Potter desperately needs to steer his team through to the quarter-finals to earn some breathing space.

Failing to beat lowly West Ham was another black mark against Potter, with the east Londoners sitting just two points above the relegation zone.

Bengal at doorstep of second Ranji final in three seasons

PTI ■ INDORE

Bengal virtually assured their Ranji Trophy final berth for the second time in three seasons after stretching their overall lead to a massive 547 runs against defending champions Madhya Pradesh here on Saturday.

Bengal, who had a big first innings lead of 268 runs, decided against declaring their second essay and ended the penultimate day on 279 for nine.

Even if the semifinal match ends in a draw on the fifth day on Sunday, Bengal will make it to the final on the basis of first innings lead.

First innings centurion Anustup Majumdar, who was overnight 9, got out for 80 when he was dismissed by left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya in a dubious LBW decision.

Majumdar, who slammed 120 in the

first innings, was once again the top-scorer for Bengal. After Majumdar's departure, Bengal left-arm spinner Pradipta Pramanik, coming out at No. 8, showed the team's batting depth with an unbeaten 60 off 101 balls.

Pramanik has hit three fours and five sixes from 101 balls so far.

The duo of Pramanik and Ishan Porel (1 not out off 22 balls) kept the MP attack frustrated as Tiwary was in a mood to give his batters some much-needed practice ahead of the summit clash.

Resuming day four on 59 for 2, the first inning centurion duo of Majumdar and Sudip Gharami continued to pile on the runs.

Off-spinner Saransh Jain finally broke the partnership, trapping Gharami with a ball that did not turn much. The duo added 85 crucial runs for the third wicket.

Majumdar then paired with skipper Manoj Tiwary (15) in another useful part-



nership that yielded 39 runs.

Jain (6/103) and Kartikeya (3/63) toiled hard for MP, bowling 88 overs between them. But Bengal hung around as their tail waggled.

The final is scheduled from February 16.

SAURASHTRA CLOSER TO FINAL

Bengaluru: Skipper Arpit Vasavada hit a double century as Saurashtra took a crucial 120-run first innings lead against Karnataka to put one foot in the Ranji Trophy final.

Resuming at his overnight score of 112, Vasavada made 202 off 406 balls while Chirag Jani scored 72 to help Saurashtra finish their first innings at a massive 527 in reply to Karnataka's 407. Pacer Vidwath Kaverappa (5/83) took five wickets for the home team. If the match ends in draw, Saurashtra will qualify for the final by virtue of first innings lead.

Karnataka ended the fourth day at 123

for four with skipper Mayank Agarwal, double centurion in the first essay, scoring a quick 64-ball 55 before falling to Dharmendrasinh Jadeja.

Ravikumar Samarth, Devdutt Padikkal and Manish Pandey were the other Karnataka wickets to fall on the day.

Nikin Jose was holding the fort for Karnataka at stumps. He was unbeaten on 54 off 74 balls, having hit six boundaries.

Chetan Sakariya (2/24) went for runs but picked two crucial wickets of Samrth and Padikkal in Karnataka's second innings, while Jadeja (1/27) and Parth Bhut (1/41) claimed one each.

Saurashtra had won the Ranji Trophy 2019-20 season, beating Bengal but prior to that they qualified for the title clash thrice.

In 2012-13 and 2015-16, Saurashtra finished second best to Mumbai before losing final against Vidarbha in the 2018-19 season.

INDIA HUMILIATE AUSSIES IN NAGPUR

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Awily Ravichandran Ashwin blew away a panic-stricken Australia with a fifer as India dismantled visitors' second innings in a single session to win the opening Test by a comprehensive innings and 132 run-margin, here Saturday.

After taking a massive 223-run first innings lead, India decimated Australia for just 91 in 32.3 overs with the Test match finishing inside three days at VCA stadium in Jamtha.

It's rare that an Australian innings folds inside one session.

After Axar Patel's career-best 84 and Mohammed Shami's entertaining 37 took India to a commanding first innings total of 400, Ashwin (5/37) literally mauled the Australians with the new ball, taking his 31st five-wicket haul in Test cricket.

The Australian batters once again made the cardinal mistake of playing the pitch rather than the bowler and looked utterly confused on whether to defend or attack.

The Indian innings showed that demons were in the minds of Australian batters and not in the 22-yard strip.

The intent was to be positive but even with all the simulated training sessions, it was always going to be difficult to read Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja (2/34), latter playing the second fiddle this time.

They didn't have slightest clue which one was turning and which one was coming straight.

Usman Khawaja (5) after



hitting a boundary was lured with a tossed up off-break outside his off-stump and his half slash-half drive effort went into Virat Kohli's hands in the slips.

Marnus Labuschagne (17) hit a few boundaries but when

Jadeja flighted one which turned a shade after pitching, the right-hander premeditatedly rocked on to the back-foot rather than coming on the front-foot.

The result was an easy leg-before decision.

David Warner's (10) stay was struggle and after he charged Ashwin to get two boundaries, Ashwin bowled a slider and he wasn't half forward this time and got rapped on the pads.

Matt Renshaw was then trapped on the backfoot and right-hander Peter Handscomb got a classical off-break which would have disturbed the timber anyway. Alex Carey for the second time went for a non-exis-

tent sweep shot and perished.

Steve Smith could only helplessly watch as wickets fell like nine pins at the other end. He tried delaying the inevitable without much success.

Mohammed Shami (2/13), after a solid batting show put the final nail in the Australian coffin by trapping Scott Boland.

Earlier, Axar Patel's resolute 84 and Shami's entertaining 37 gave India a massive 223-run first innings lead. The hosts posted 400 by third day lunch session after resuming the day at 321 for seven.

They wouldn't have envisaged that Australia had lost it in their minds even before they came out to bat for the second time.

India had practically outbattered Australia on a track which the visiting media alleged was "doctored".

Jadeja (70) and Patel began the proceedings but the former did not last long as he shouldered arms to a Murphy delivery that was fired in from an angle and crashed on to the stumps.

The pitch didn't change its character much and it remained a slow turner where any batter, ready to grind, would get runs.

Lunch was taken when Indian innings ended.

Shami, who was dropped on 6 by Boland at long-on off Nathan Lyon, decided to launch a swift counter-attack on opposition best bowler Todd Murphy (7/124).

He hit the bespectacled off-spinner for three catches — a slog sweep over mid-wicket, a flat six

over long-off and monstrous hit over long-on — apart from a couple of boundaries during his 47 ball stay.

Adding 50-plus runs in just over an hour (65 minutes) was laudable and Patel on his part gave Shami bulk of the strike.

If Australia had any chance of wrapping it up, Boland's goof up proved costly as Shami made them pay dearly.

While Murphy has been impressive on debut, Lyon's (1/126) performance has been

disappointing to say the least as his bowling lacked the bite.

Almost all the Indian batters found it easy to defend the veteran off-spinner off the back-foot.

Once Shami was dismissed going for his fourth maximum off Murphy, Patel decided to attack and lofted the debutant straight into the sightscreen for his first six.

His and India's innings ended when he was bowled by rival skipper Pat Cummins.



Rohit & Co move closer to securing WTC final berth

PTI ■ NAGPUR

India's innings and 132-run victory against Australia in the first Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy here on Saturday has helped them move closer to a second World Test Championship (WTC) final berth, while extending the Pat Cummins-led side's wait for a title round spot confirmation.

Following the win, crafted by the Indian spin-bowling pair of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, No.2 India are now on 61.67 per centage points as compared to 70.83 of No.1 Australia.

However, India still need two more wins from the remaining three Tests of the series to guarantee themselves a minimum points percentage of 62.50, which would beyond doubt knock third-placed Sri Lanka out of contention.

If india win all the three remaining matches of the series, they could reach a best possible percentage of 68.06.

India's innings win, while extending Australia's wait in the WTC final race, also shut the door on England and the

West Indies' hopes of securing a berth in the 2021-23 cycle of the Test championship.

Australia still have plenty of cushion to make the WTC final, but a 0-4 loss to India could bring third-placed Sri Lanka back in contention, as the Islanders still have a two-match Test fixture against New Zealand commencing next week.

In the event of Rohit Sharma's side making a clean sweep of the series, Australia's points percentage will drop to 59.64. If Sri Lanka manage to win both their Tests against the Blackcaps, it will take their points percentage to 61.1, which will be good enough to get them past Australia and secure a WTC final berth.

However, Sri Lanka will be better served if Australia go undefeated in at least two of the next three Tests, as a 2-0 win for India would only take Rohit's side to 60.64 points percentage.

Sri Lanka can then better it by making a clean sweep of two-match Test series against the Kiwis and leapfrog India to seal a WTC summit clash against Australia.



Didn't expect Australia to collapse in one session: Rohit

PTI ■ NAGPUR

India captain Rohit Sharma Iwon't comment on the mental fortitude of the Australian team but certainly didn't expect them to get bowled out in just one session on the third day of the opening Test, here on Saturday. Australia suffered a crushing defeat by an innings and 132 runs after being all out for just 91 in their second essay in the session between lunch and tea on the third day.

"No, I didn't," is what the skipper said when asked if he expected the match to end well inside three days. "We were prepared to have hard day's bowling, spending session after session. We never thought they would get bowled out in a session. "As you saw, the pitch became slower and slower and there was no bounce on the pitch, so it was a bit of surprise for me," the Indian skipper said at the post-match press conference.

There was a lot of pre-match talk from the Australian

media with one leading newspaper terming the Jamtha track as "systematically doctored" while other termed it "dodgy" even before a ball was bowled.

The calm Indian skipper in his own inimitable manner rubbed it in when asked if he found his team to be mentally tougher than Australia.

"I don't know the mental status of the Australian team. I can vouch for our team and we are the ones who want to play on pitches like these and not just from now, we have been playing on pitches like these for last 3-4 years," the skipper said.

He continued with his sarcastic way of saying things. "Because we have all grown up playing on pitches like these, so there is no talk about pitches anymore in the changing room."

For the Indian skipper, preparation whether for a cricket match or in any aspect of life is key to success. "I give a lot of credit to training sessions in Civil Lines before we came here. We had four or five net sessions and

prepared the kind of pitch we were supposed to get here.

"Whether going down the track or sweeping, reverse sweep, hitting over top, when you prepare well, you get confidence and not just in cricket but everywhere," he stated.

During the historic series of 2021, India came back after being shot out for 36 in the first Test. An Australian scribe asked if their team can turn it around?

"It's a good question," Rohit said smiling wryly.

"Australia are always a good team. A lot of guys who played in that series are not there for Australia also. Australia love playing Test cricket and they take pride in representing the country and so we are quite aware of them bouncing back and what they can do as team as well. "We want to play the cricket we are playing and we would continue to do that in three games that we have. As captain, I need to focus on what we have in Delhi and then move on from there," he added.

Jadeja fined for applying cream on swollen index finger without permission from umpires



PTI ■ NAGPUR

India's hero in the opening Test victory over Australia here, Ravindra Jadeja was on Saturday fined 25 per cent of his match fee for applying cream on the swollen index finger of his bowling hand without taking permission from the on-field umpires on the first day of the match.

Jadeja, who returned figures of 7/81 and contributed 70 runs in the match that India won by an innings and 132 runs, was seen in a video receiving something from pace bowler Mohammed Siraj and rubbing it on his left index finger.

WE NEED TO BE BRAVE AND PROACTIVE: PAT CUMMINS

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Australia captain Pat Cummins admitted that his team was neither "brave" nor "proactive" in their thought process which led to a comprehensive defeat in the first Test against India here on Saturday.

Australia were bowled out for 177 and 91 in their two innings with Ravichandran Ashwin (8 wickets) and Ravindra Jadeja (7 wickets) sharing 15 scalps between them in India's win by

an innings and 132-run margin.

Asked what went wrong for his team, Cummins said: "Hard to know. That will be the review the next few days. I think everyone came with pretty clear plans. "The challenge is under the furnace to be brave enough to be proactive at the time. That will be the conversations over the next couple of days. We faced some pretty tough bowlers at times," the Australia skipper said at the post-match conference.

My plan was to lure Oz batters to play drives: Ashwin

PTI ■ NAGPUR

India's premier spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said on Saturday his plan to lure the Australian batters to play the drive shots and induce mistakes from them on a slow Nagpur track worked well as the home side won the first Test by an innings and 132 runs here.

Ashwin was India's highest wicket-taker with figure of 8 for 79, with a five-for in Australia's second innings on the third day on Saturday.

"The wicket was very slow. I have been saying this all through the Test. (It's) Not one of those pitches where you might get the gloves ripping off at short leg or silly point. You need to get the batsman driving on this wicket," Ashwin said after the match.

"So, I thought giving them (Australia batters) one of two balls to drive, induce them into shots and probably induce the other half of the bat as well."



highly about fellow spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel, who also scored big runs.

Jadeja scored 70 runs in India's first-innings total of 400 and took seven wickets for 81, while Axar contributed 84 with the bat to become the second-

highest scorer for India in the match after captain Rohit Sharma (120).

"To say (that I got) massive help from Jaddu (Jadeja) would be an understatement. He has been in phenomenal form. In the last three years, the way he

has batted and bowled, we don't need to talk how well he moves on the field and how much addition he has been to the team; he has just been a fantastic cricketer.

"I am so thankful that I got a bowling partner like him. Axar is also no ordinary bowler either. So, we have a very good set of spinners and we all can bat as well," said Ashwin.

Asked about the dominant win against a side like Australia, he said, "I will credit our batting unit, they kept them (Australia) long (enough) on the field. It was going to be difficult for them to come out to bat. The early wickets set the ton for us today."

In India's first innings, Ashwin came out ahead of Cheteshwar Pujara as night watchman after opener KL Rahul's dismissal on the first day on Thursday. He went on to score 23 runs.

Asked if he volunteered to come out at No. 3, Ashwin said, "It has been going on for a while. I really struggle to cope sitting inside and watching the guys bat

in the middle. Sometimes it is too nervous for me these days.

"I have been asking for an opportunity to go out and bat early on. There was an opportunity (in this Test). It presented itself. My friend Pujara just let me go as a night watchman with 20 minutes to go (on the first day) and I gladly took the opportunity.

"I really look forward to go out and bat. I just feel that I am getting into good position. If and when I get an opportunity, I am always ready. And knowing Puji (Pujara), I think it is going to happen (in future)."

Ashwin said Australia will look to bounce back with a firmer plan in the remaining matches. "I think they (Australia) will introspect and come out with different plans in the next game. I expect Australia to come back hard and strong. They are a world-class side, we all know that."

The second Test of the four-match series begins in Delhi on February 17.

KL selection in Test team is based on favouritism: Prasad



PTI ■ MUMBAI

KL Rahul came in for harsh criticism from former India medium pacer Venkatesh Prasad who claimed the opener's selection was based on 'favouritism' even as India demolished Australia by an innings and 132 runs inside three days in Nagpur on Saturday.

The 30-year-old was picked ahead of the in-form Shubman Gill as he continued his woeful form scoring just 20 runs off 71 deliveries in India's 400 allout in the first innings.

"Rahul's selection is not based on performance but favouritism. Has been consistently inconsistent and for someone who has been around for 8 years not converted potential into performances," Prasad wrote in his verified Twitter handle.

Citing the cricketer's Test statistics — a Test average of

34.07 in 46 games — Prasad said someone like Ravichandran Ashwin, who has good cricket acumen, should be made Rohit Sharma's deputy in the longest format of the game.

"A Test average of 34 after 46 Tests and more than 8 years in international cricket is ordinary. Can't think of many who have been given so many chances."

"When there are so many waiting in the wings & in top form. Shubham Gill is in sublime form, Sarfaraz (Khan) has been scoring tons in FC (first-class) cricket and many who deserve a chance ahead of Rahul.

"Some are just lucky to be given chances endlessly till they succeed while some aren't allowed to," said Prasad on Saturday.

"I have a lot of regard for KL Rahul's talent and ability, but sadly his performances have been well below par."

Rahul is also the captain of Indian Premier League side Lucknow Super Giants and the former India bowling coach claimed that it had a role to play in his extended stay in the Test side despite a string of below-par performances.

"One of the reasons why many ex-cricketers aren't vocal despite seeing such favouritism is the chances of losing out on potential IPL gigs," Prasad wrote in a series of tweets. Without mincing words, he further hit out at the BCCI: "They (Indian cricket board) wouldn't want to rub the captain of a franchise wrong way, as in today's age most people like yes men and blind approvers."

"Often well wishers are your best critics but times have changed & people don't want to be told the truth," added Prasad, a veteran of 33 Tests and 161 ODIs.

He named five cricketers in the current Indian setup who could ably don the role of vice-captain.

"And to make matters worse, Rahul is the designated vice-captain. Ashwin has a great cricketing brain, should be the vice captain in the Test format."

"If not him should be (Cheteshwar) Pujara or (Ravindra Jadeja) Jadeja. Mayank Agarwal had a far better impact than Rahul in Tests and so did (Hanuma) Vihari."

Both Ashwin and Jadeja played key roles in India's massive win over the visitors with the latter being also adjudged the "Player of the Match" for his seven wickets and 70 runs in the Test.

"I don't have a religion. I believe in a God. I don't know what it looks like but it's MY god. My own interpretation of the supernatural"
—Jennifer Aniston



SILENT SUFFERERS OF APATHY

The recent Joshimath tragedy and many other disasters have highlighted the fact that women face severe health issues, besides emotional turmoil, in coping with the crisis and relief measures have failed to lessen their agony, writes BISWAJEET BANERJEE

On January 28, women who were shifted to relief camps in Joshimath after their houses developed cracks following subsidence in the area, gheraoed district officials and asked how long they had to stay in makeshift accommodations which compromised their privacy and health. “The conditions in which we are living are unhygienic. Three to four families are staying in one big room. Students cannot study and women are facing health issues due to lack of privacy and dirty toilets which we are forced to use,” said Hima Devi, who was forced to leave her house in Singhdhar. Insomnia, anxiety and uncertainty torments most residents in relief camps but the protest by women exposed officials to a grim reality — they never planned about women and their specific needs while arranging relief for people who were shifted to makeshift camps. “Women are the biggest sufferers in any tragedy and we ignored their basic needs,” admitted Ranjit Sinha, a senior Uttarakhand officer looking after relief and rehabilitation. In October last year, incessant rains flooded large parts of Uttar Pradesh, forcing millions of people to leave their villages and move into relief camps. “Women and young girls, who braved the flooding, suffered from urinary tract infections (UTIs), reproductive issues and other health complications for many months despite returning to their villages after the water receded,” Dr Neelima Singh of Vatsalya, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) said. Manjula Singh, a health worker at the Primary Health Centre in Baasi (Siddharthnagar), who was posted in one of the relief camps, said that most of the women she met complained of abdominal cramps, excessive bleeding and unusual discharge during their menstrual periods and many had to use unsanitised cloth during their periods. The government had provided ration, including kerosene, but did not provide enough sanitary pads for women,” she said.

Dr Madhu Gupta, a former legislator of the Samajwadi Party and practicing gynaecologist in Lucknow, said in cases of natural calamities, women suffer shock because of trauma and anxiety due to the stress they experience. “Unhygienic personal care, using the same cloth for longer periods, holding urine for longer periods, using contaminated water for drinking and washing purposes, makes their life hell,” she said. The impact of climatic catastrophies and extreme weather events, such as floods and heat waves, have also been found to be disproportionately affecting women and girls. Activists and health professionals raised an alarm because women in India play a significant role in addressing natural calamities, particularly in rural and agrarian communities where they are often responsible for the management of natural resources, such as water and forests. They are also often the primary caretakers of families and communities, which makes them particularly vulnerable to the impact of such disasters. In rural areas, women are often responsible for collecting water and firewood for their families. As the frequency and intensity of droughts increase, women and girls have to travel further to find resources, putting them at risk of physical harm and sexual violence. In addition, women in agriculture-dependent communities are particularly vulnerable to the impact of changing weather patterns, which can lead to crop failures and food insecurity. Indigenous women, who have deep connections with the land and natural resources, are also facing new challenges as the impact of climate change disrupts their life. This can lead to a loss of cultural identity and exacerbation of poverty. “In India, women are often involved in agriculture and play a crucial role in food security. They are also responsible for collecting firewood and water, tasks that become more difficult as a result of climate change. Studies have shown that climate change disproportionately

THE KNOWLEDGE AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN HAS BEEN CRITICAL IN THE SURVIVAL OF ENTIRE COMMUNITIES IN DISASTERS. THEREFORE, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECOGNISE THEIR SPECIALISED SKILLS IN LIVELIHOOD MANAGEMENT IN MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION MEASURES



affects women, as they have fewer resources and less decision-making power to adapt to its impact,” says Shruti Nagvanshi, convener of Voice of People. In addition, the impact of climate change can exacerbate violence against women, as migration and displacement can increase the risks of sexual violence and exploitation. Climate Action Network South Asia's recent report on climate-induced displacement and migration in India states that 4.5 crore people in the country will be forced to migrate by 2050 because of climate disasters, three times more than the present figure. “Climate change-induced disasters, displacement and migration increases the burden on women considerably, adding up to 12-14 hours of work that includes agricultural work and household chores,” the report said, and added: “The phenomenon of ‘feminisation’ of agriculture has been observed in all research locations.” **GENDER-BIASED CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY** Despite facing so many hardships, why are women not the fulcrum of any climate change policy? There are several reasons why women may be under-represented in climate change policy in India and other countries. One reason is the lack of representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles. In India, women hold less than 25 per cent of leadership positions in the government, businesses, and civil society, which means that their perspective and needs are not adequately represented in the development and implementation of climate change policies. This leads to lack of consideration of the unique impact of climate change on women and their specific needs in policy planning and implementation. For example, women in rural areas may have limited access to resources and technology to adapt to the changing environment, and may also face added burden in responsibilities of daily chores.

“It is important for governments and organisations to actively consider the gender impact of climate change in their policies and programmes, and to ensure equal participation by women in decision-making processes. This includes providing resources and technology to help women adapt to the changing environment, and addressing systemic inequalities that contribute to their increased vulnerability,” says Dr Lenin Raghuvanshi, CEO of Peoples' Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCCHR). Jyoti Parikh, Director, of Integrated Research and Action for Development, in one of her papers, ‘Is climate change a gender issue’, highlighted that this disproportionate burden of climate change that women bear should prompt the government to develop strategies to enhance women's access and control over natural resources. “The knowledge and participation of women has been critical in the survival of entire communities in disasters. Therefore, the government should recognise their specialised skills in livelihood management in mitigation and adaptation measures,” she said. Another reason is the lack of data and information on the impact of climate change on women and their role in addressing it. This can make it difficult for policymakers to understand and address the specific needs and challenges faced by women, and to design policies and programmes that are effective in addressing them. “Efforts are needed to address these issues and ensure that women's voices and perspectives are included in climate change policy and decision-making, both in India and in other countries. This can be achieved by increasing the representation of women in leadership positions, collecting gender-disaggregated data, and implementing targeted programmes and policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women,” Dr Lenin Raghuvanshi said. It is crucial for the Indian government and international

organisations to recognise the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and to include them in decision-making processes as they develop and implement climate change policies and programmes. This includes providing resources and technology to help women adapt to the changing environment, and addressing systemic inequalities which contribute to their increased vulnerability. **GOVERNMENT RESPONSE** Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupendra Yadav said that the Government of India had recognised the importance of women in the sustainable management of natural resources and had taken steps to ensure their participation in the design and implementation of policies and programmes related to climate change. The National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), for example, prioritises the empowerment of women and their participation in the sustainable management of natural resources. In addition, he said, the government had also taken steps to ensure that women's perspectives were included in the design and implementation of policies and programmes related to climate change through the formation of a National Gender and Climate Change Alliance. This alliance aims to build the capacity of women's organisations and networks to engage with climate change issues and to provide a platform for women to participate in decision-making processes. “However, much still needs to be done to ensure that women are able to fully participate in the design and implementation of climate change policies and that their specific needs and concerns are taken into account. This includes increasing the representation of women in leadership positions, collecting gender-disaggregated data, and implementing targeted programmes and policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women,” Yadav said. (Biswajeet Banerjee is Political Editor, The Pioneer, Lucknow)

EPILEPSY IN KIDS: TIMELY CARE A KEY

Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological diseases globally. According to WHO estimates, around 50 million people worldwide have epilepsy and nearly 80% of these people live in low and middle-income countries with an estimated 12 million in India. It is the most common brain disorder in children. Ahead of the International Epilepsy Day on February 13, a well-known pediatric neurologist warns that symptoms of epilepsy in children often go unrecognised as their manifestation can be very different from the popular perception of how an epileptic seizure looks like. This can cause life-long cognitive and motor impairment. The HEALTH PIONEER brings forth several aspects of childhood epilepsy.

Late diagnosis of epileptic children is a major area of concern. Their brain is still developing, and recurring seizures at this stage can lead to life-long impairment. Seizures in young children often remain undiagnosed as they do not look like typical seizures, which people think essentially involve involuntary jerking and loss of consciousness” says Dr. Pratibha Singh, Head, Department of Pediatric Neurology, Amrita Hospital, Faridabad.

However, she adds, this does not necessarily apply to all children who have epilepsy and seizures. Symptoms of seizures in young patients can range from staring and rapid eye blinking to breathing difficulties, sudden jerks (which are mistaken as child getting afraid), going blank and not responding to words, twitching, loss of bladder control, falling suddenly without any cause, nodding head rhythmically, and appearing confused or in a haze. “People, and even many doctors, are simply not aware that these are also signs of epileptic attack in children.”

Dr Singh added: “Seizures and their manifestations differ greatly in young children compared to adults. Childhood epilepsy is extremely important because of the developing brain. If seizures are not taken care of in time, they can cause epileptic encephalopathy, which depresses the child’s development and causes severe cognitive and motor disabilities.

“So, it’s very important to recognize seizures in children early and start treatment without loss of time. However, even after treatment starts, compliance becomes another issue. For most children whose seizures get controlled, the parents stop their medication, thinking that the child has become fine. People should realize that anti-seizure medication (ASM) should never be stopped or decreased without consulting the doctor, otherwise the child may get bad seizures again.”

Cause for mysterious cases of epilepsy in children identified: Study

Modern medicine can prevent most seizure recurrences, but approximately 20% of patients do not respond to treatment.

In these cases, the reason may originate in patches of damaged or abnormal brain tissue known as “malformations of cortical development” (MCD), which results in a diverse group of neurodevelopmental disorders. Surgical resection or removal of the patch can cure seizures, and epilepsy surgery to improve neurological outcomes is now a key part of the modern medical armamentarium, but what causes the patches has largely remained a mystery.

The study is published in Nature Genetics. The researchers at University of California San Diego School of Medicine and Rady Children’s Institute for Genomic Medicine had collaborated with an international consortium of more than 20 children’s hospitals worldwide which helped them report a significant breakthrough in understanding the genetic causes of MCD.

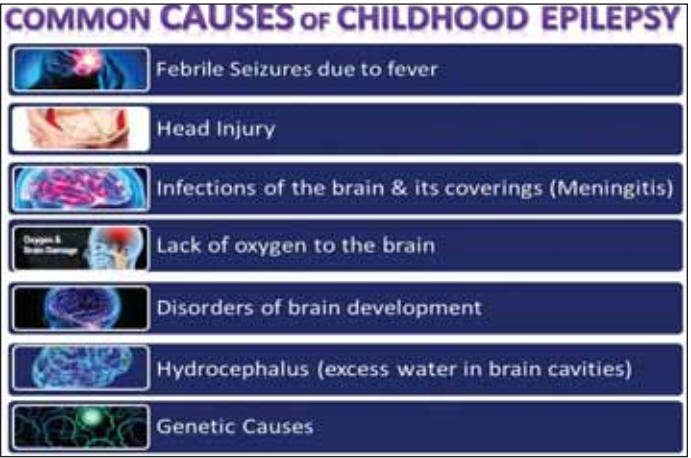
Members of the Focal Cortical Dysplasia Neurogenetics Consortium investigated 283 brain resections from children across a range of MCD types, with parental consent, looking for potential genetic causes. Because most brain tissue in these children is normal, the scientists focused on mutations present in a small subset of brain cells, a phenomenon termed genetic somatic mosaicism.

“This was a decade-long journey, bringing specialists together from around the world, to recruit patients for this study,” said senior study author Joseph Gleeson, MD, Rady Professor of Neuroscience at UC San Diego School of Medicine and director of neuroscience research at the Rady Children’s Institute for Genomic Medicine. “Until recently, most hospitals did not study resected brain tissue for genetic causes. The consortium organized a biobank to store tissue for high-throughput mosaicism analysis.”

Previous research by Gleeson and colleagues had shown that genetic somatic mosaicism in the mTOR signaling pathway was a contributing factor, said co-first author Changuk Chung, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow in



The MCD genes in patient brains have demonstrated critical roles during cortical development. These findings could lead to new molecular classifications for MCD, and ultimately to personalized therapies for epilepsy



the Gleeson lab. “But most patients remain undiagnosed, which hinders treatment. We tested for hidden mutations, detectable only by greatly expanding the cohort size and improving methods so that the results could be meaningful. We collaborated to solve technical and logistical bottlenecks. The pieces fell into place, but it took 10 years.”

The team conducted intensive genomic discovery using state-of-art somatic mosaic algorithms developed by the National Institutes of Health-sponsored Brain Somatic Mosaicism Network, of which UC San Diego is a member.

“We tried our best to detect mutations in as little as 1 percent of cells,” said co-first author Xiaoxu Yang, PhD, a postdoctoral scholar in Gleeson’s lab. “Initially we failed. To solve these problems, we needed to develop novel artificial intelligence methods to overcome barriers in sensitivity and specificity.”

The team ultimately identified 69 different genes carrying somatic brain mutations, the majority of which have never previously reported in MCD.

“We can draw parallels with the cancer field because these mutations disrupt cellular function and need to be resected,” said co-first author Chung. “However, unlike cancer cells, brain cells mostly do not divide so these cells misbehave by stimulating epileptic seizures. The question that arose was whether the newly found gene mutations were sufficient to cause MCD disease.”

Gleeson said the scientists found that the genes converged on calcium signaling, gene expression and synaptic functions, and noted that when the mutations were introduced into a mouse model, abnormalities similar to those seen in patients were observed. The study authors suggest the findings could be used to improve diagnosis and develop cures for MCD disease.

“The MCD genes in patient brains have demonstrated critical roles during cortical development,” said Gleeson. “These findings could lead to new molecular classifications for MCD, and ultimately to personalized therapies for epilepsy.”

FACTFILE

- Epilepsy is commonly diagnosed in children and can be confused with other conditions. An accurate diagnosis is essential.
- Seizures usually respond well to medication and most children with epilepsy will enjoy a normal and active childhood.
- The impact of epilepsy will vary for each child. Try to keep epilepsy in perspective for your child and your family.
- Remember to keep a balance between protecting your child and encouraging their independence.

COMMON SIGNS OF A SEIZURE INCLUDE

- Blank staring/Confused speech/Loss of consciousness/Uncontrollable shaking or jerking movements/Wandering

HOW TO HANDLE KIDS LIVING WITH EPILEPSY/ SEIZURE

- Avoid tub baths; showers are safer than baths
- Make sure the bathroom door is not locked
- No swimming without constant adult supervision
- Wear a life jacket at all times when boating or on a jet ski
- No climbing higher than 10 feet including ladders, trees and bunk beds
- Wear a helmet at all times when bike riding and horseback riding
- For children with frequent seizures, avoid bike riding on streets
- No cooking over an open stove (use microwave instead) or using an iron
- Teenagers with uncontrolled seizures shouldn’t drive, including ATVs, mini-motor cycles, 4-wheelers
- Do not allow the handling of firearms

Mental Stress Among Doctors A Hidden Epidemic

By DR. NIDHI RAWAL, Consultant, Dept of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, Madhukar Rainbow Children’s Hospital, Delhi



Being a doctor has long been considered one of the most rewarding and sought-after occupations. However, this profession also comes with stress—some unique to the medical profession, others typical of high-pressure and highly skilled occupations. Doctors are not immune to mental illness, with between a quarter and a third reporting increased symptoms of mental ill health, which has been heightened after Covid-19 Pandemic.

It is estimated that more than 1 million doctors are in India. Every year more than 80,000 medical students graduate as doctors from 529 medical colleges in India.

Doctors have 2.5 times the risk of dying by suicide as compared to the general population. We have been listening cases of medicos dying by suicide because of one reason or another. It is appalling given that doctors are there to protect the community. But, the fact is they also succumb to various mental health conditions and don’t have the framework to seek timely help.

Two important studies published in 2021 found the rates of mental health illness including suicides in Indian medical students, residents and doctors. A total of 358 suicide deaths were reported among doctors between 2010 and 2019.

Female doctors are at the highest risk, with highest suicide rates were from South

India excluding Kerala. Anesthesiologists and obstetricians/gynecologists had the highest rates of suicide. Hanging was the most common method used. Although multiple factors have found to contribute to mental illnesses amongst doctors, such as poor training environment, perfectionism, taboo associated with seeking help, high demand work profiles, lack of sleep and unregulated working hours, academic stress was found to be the most common reason amongst medical students and residents, whereas marital discord was the most common reason amongst doctors. 1 in 4 doctors (26%) exhibited suicide warning signs but only 13% sought any help.

We have known for almost 150 years that there is an increased risk of mental health illness amongst doctors. It’s time that we acknowledge this risk to our medical community and encourage changes in our training system as well as workplace environment and policies. New initiatives are required at all levels, especially at the organisational level, in both public and private sectors, to provide a healthy and positive work atmosphere, include mental health awareness and reduce the taboo associated with seeking help. Having a healthy, functional workforce of physicians is one of the most important parts of any country’s health system.

Tax hike on cigarettes welcome move, but more tobacco control measures needed

Economists and public health experts have welcomed hike in national calamity contingent duty (NCCD) on cigarettes by 16% in Union Budget 2023-24. During a webinar held recently, they hoped that higher taxes will be imposed on more tobacco products to make them unaffordable and make India, a tobacco-free nation in the ‘Amrit Kaal’. The HEALTH PIONEER shares the details:

Increasing the tax by 16 per cent on cigarettes clearly shows the government’s plans to further strengthen the tobacco control policy and levy higher tax on sin products that are consuming over 13 lakh lives every year while causing economic burden on health to the tune of Rs 177341 crore,” said noted economist and BJP Spokesperson **GOPAL KRISHNA AGARWAL**.



GOPAL KRISHNA AGARWAL

Participating in a discussion on “Amrit Kaal: A journey towards Tobacco-Free India” organised by Tobacco Free India, a citizen group platform, Agarwal strongly felt that hike in prices on such harmful products through tax policy is the most effective way to reduce tobacco consumption.

THIS CAN BE DONE BY IMPLEMENTING TRIPLE A CONCEPT: CUTTING DOWN AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF TOBACCO ITEMS BY HIKING TAX WHILE MAKING PEOPLE AWARE OF ITS HARMFUL IMPACT

This can be done by implementing the triple A concept: cutting down Affordability and Availability of tobacco items by hiking tax while making people Aware of its harmful impact, he said in the talk moderated by well-known journalist and writer Arun Anand.

“The total tax burden is currently about 53 per cent for cigarettes, 22 per cent for bidis and 60 per cent for smokeless tobacco. This shows that there is enough scope to enhance tax that will not have much impact on the earnings of the industry but will certainly help cut down tobacco consumption. Revenue earned through taxation can be invested for providing alternative jobs to poor and tribal people associated in tobacco related business,” he said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a uniform tax of at least 75 per cent for each tobacco product, he noted, adding that a Parliament Committee in its recent report too has highlighted that the existing tax on tobacco products is not enough. Currently 28% of the adult population of the country is using tobacco products while the tobacco burden amounts to Rs 1,77,341 crores which is 1 per cent of India’s GDP. This is worrisome, said Agarwal.

In the 75th year of Independence, India has entered into the ‘Amrit Kaal’ which will continue till next 25 years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his resolution to make India a Samridh (Prosperous India) touching the USD 5 trillion economy mark. “How will it be possible if earnings are wasted on treating tobacco causing diseases,” he asked.

Various researches show that increasing tax by 10% can reduce smoking by 08% in middle income countries like India. More than 40 countries around the world have levied tobacco taxes at more than 75% including Sri Lanka (77%) and Thailand (78.6%) in our region.



DR UMA KUMAR



DR RAHUL BHARGAVA



DR RAMBHA PANDEY

Participating in the webinar. Dr Uma Kumar, public health expert and Head of the Department of Rheumatology, AIIMS, Delhi too welcome the increase in taxes on Cigarettes as she presented disturbing status of the growing number of diseases linked with tobacco and its health burden on the household and economy. Tobacco is one of the most prominent risk factors associated with cancer as well many other diseases like respiratory, stroke and heart attacks.

Lamenting that affected families not only face the loss of their loved ones but are also drained financially, emotionally and mentally, she said that proposed amendments to the tobacco-control law COTPA by the central government should be implemented with immediate effect.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, Director of Haematology and Stem Cell Transplant at Fortis Hospital, Gurugram also termed increase in duty on cigarettes as exemplary measures and hoped that the taxes on all the tobacco products will be hiked in the next GST Council meeting in agreement with the States. “The idea is to make these sin products unaffordable to the people

and save their lives.”

Expressing concern that designated smoking zones at airports, hotel and restaurants were a major cause for second hand smoking, the public health expert battled for hundred per cent smoke free areas.

Dr Rambha Pandey, Radiation Oncologist from AIIMS, Delhi echoed similar views as she expressed her concern at the rising consumption of tobacco among people particularly children in the age group of 9-15 years. “This is the age when we as elders and policy makers should help the adolescents focus on their health and education but unfortunately many of them are getting addicted to the deadly tobacco and by the time they realize their mistakes it is too late for them as well as us,” lamented Dr Pandey. She also expressed concern about advertisements at Point of Sale.

Nearly 27 crore adults of 15 years age and above used tobacco in some form or the other, as per Global Adult Tobacco Survey-India (GATS -2016-17). India is the second largest consumer and the third largest producer of tobacco.

(The writer is a senior BJP leader and former Union Cabinet Minister)

